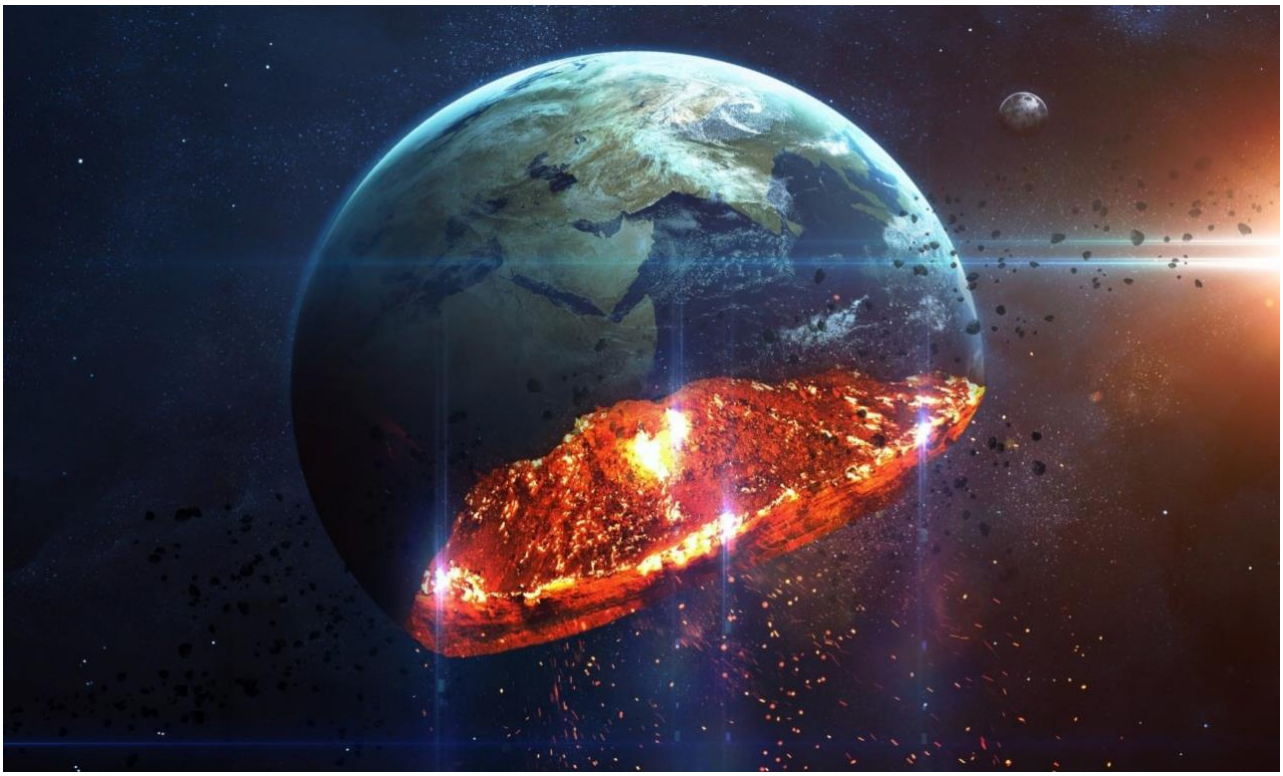
“We’re all 100% for sure gonna fucking die!”: Comparison of Apocalyptic Portrayals in *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004) and *Don’t Look Up* (2021)



Master’s Thesis
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Abstract

There is a great interest in apocalyptic stories in Hollywood. From 2012 to 2013, Hollywood released fifteen disaster, apocalyptic, and post-apocalyptic movies (Haas et al. 344). In the past, apocalyptic works have functioned as a tool to both manage times of crisis and to address the political, environmental, and social reality of the world (Garrard 94). Thus, there is a connection between the popularity of the apocalyptic genre and real-life events of crises. This study examines the fascination of apocalypticism, by looking at two different depictions of an apocalypse. Therefore, the purpose of my thesis is to compare the post-9/11 cli-fi *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004) about the consequences of abrupt climate change and Netflix's comedy *Don't Look Up* (2021), which depicts a disastrous comet hurtling towards Earth. The comparison especially examines similarities and differences between how the two films articulate apocalypticism. Furthermore, as *Don't Look Up* (2021) was filmed during the COVID-19 pandemic and *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004) came out three years after the 9/11 terror attack in New York, this thesis also compares how they each symbolize historical and critical events in America, specifically regarding political and environmental aspects depicted in the movies.

To compare *The Day After Tomorrow* and *Don't Look Up*, I first present several perspectives on what the comparative method entails, to properly employ the approach in my thesis. Hereafter, different accounts of apocalypticism as a concept are outlined. First, from a historical point of view of how apocalypses have been used. The use of apocalypses is also specified in the American context. Thereafter, the gravity of apocalypses is categorized into different taxonomies, which helps to establish the magnitude of the apocalyptic event. These are then used in the examination of the two movies, in regard to whether the movies follow a traditional, theological depiction of apocalypses or the more contemporary portrayal, and how the apocalypses are narrated in regard to their level of menace. Next, I include certain notions of the environmental history of America to contextualize the ecological portrayals in the movies. There are also descriptions of indications of 'political' movies and their effect, to compare the political aspects in the movies. This leads to the comparative discussion of the apocalyptic climate change in *The Day after Tomorrow* and the comet in *Don't Look Up,* concerning how the movies resemble real-life events of crises in America. In this context, there is also a discussion of the movies' apocalyptic stories, in regards to their potential impact on the audience.

This thesis concludes that the overt depiction of climate change in *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004) resembles the current environmental crisis and appurtenant political conflicts, as well as it speaks to the anxiety after the 9/11 terror in 2001. *Don't Look Up* (2021) is a caricature of the power and state of politics in the US, but it also covertly illustrates the management of the COVID-19 pandemic and global warming. Hence, the message in both movies demonstrates the problematic urge to utilize Earth's resources excessively and how this hinders the characters' change to avert the apocalyptic consequences. The comparison also derives that the movies symbolize the necessity of solidarity in times of crisis, such as global warming, the 9/11 terror attack, or the abruption of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021. Based on the comparative discussion of the movies, my thesis deduces that the apocalyptic narratives and the different comic and tragic endings in TDAT and DLU potentially affect the viewer's reception of the topics differently. Ultimately, the comparison of *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004) and *Don't Look Up* (2021) concludes that there is a connection between the films' apocalyptic portrayals, and contemporary, political, and environmental issues and conflicts in America.

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Introduction

A *Time* article from 2002 states that 59% of the U.S. population believe that the prophecies of Revelation, and thus apocalypse, will come true, and the horrors of World War II, the Holocaust, Vietnam, and September 11, 2001, have strengthened the belief of the world's doomsday (Krohn and Rendix 89). Hereto, according to *Religion News LLC*, a 2013 OmniPollsm research study for the 12th anniversary of the attacks on September 11, 2001, found that 41% of all U.S. adults believe the world is now living in the biblical end times. And a more recent YouGov survey from February 2020 (Ballard 2020), conducted during a time when several dozen cases of COVID-19 had been confirmed in the US, show that 19% of Americans said they believed a global pandemic was the most likely cause of the apocalypse, as well as 19% pointed to climate change.

There seems to be a connection between apocalyptic prophecies and contemporary events of crises. This tendency also resonates in popular culture, particularly in cinema. Between 2012 and 2013 alone, Hollywood released around fifteen disaster, apocalyptic, and post-apocalyptic movies (Haas et al. 344), hereunder *Olympus Has Fallen* (2012), *World War Z* (2013), *Elysium* (2013), *Oblivion* (2013), and *This Is the End* (2013) (Haas et al. 344). For that reason, it is fascinating to look further into the popularity of this movie genre and to consider how portrayals of apocalyptic disasters annihilating the United States, translate political and environmental discourses into cinematic language.

Of prominent apocalyptic films, I find Twentieth Century Fox's cli-fi movie *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004), released in the aftermath of the 9/11 terror attacks, and Netflix's satirical movie *Don't Look Up* (2021), filmed during the COVID-19 pandemic, to stand out the most. *The Day After Tomorrow* (TDAT) by Roland Emmerich, depicts the consequences of abrupt climate change. The movie centers around climatologist Jack Hall (Dennis Quaid), who alert U.N. officials that, as a result of global warming, ocean currents that circulate water around the world will shut down, heating up the tropics and cooling the North Atlantic. And after Jack's warnings go unheeded, an enormous superstorm and following catastrophic natural disasters throughout the world begins. Meanwhile, Jack's son Sam (Jake Gyllenhaal), is trapped in New York with his friends, experiencing the extreme weather and ice storm firsthand. Trying to get to his son, Jack and his crew must trek by foot from Philadelphia to New York, to get to Sam before it's too late, but they first arrive when the whole Northern hemisphere is already in a new ice age.

Don't Look Up (DLU) is directed by Adam McKay and follows professor Dr. Randall Mindy (Leonardo DiCaprio) and PhD. student Kate Dibiasky (Jennifer Lawrence),

after they discover a huge comet hurtling towards Earth, to arrive in about six months. They attempt to warn President Orlean (Meryl Streep), but they are unsuccessful. Orlean cares more about her re-election than the future of the planet. The two astronomers, therefore, go on a media tour to warn the rest of the population about the planet-killing comet. America becomes divided into comet deniers, following President Orlean's beliefs, and those supporting Dr. Mindy and Dibiasky. The United States turns to chaos as plans to deflect the asteroid in its orbit, ultimately fail, and Earth is destroyed in the end.

According to Anthony A. Leiserowitz in "Day After Tomorrow: Study of Climate Change Risk Perception" (2010), *The Day After Tomorrow* became one of the most commercially successful movies of all time, and a little more than a month, the movie reached about half a billion dollars worldwide (24). By January 2022, a month after publication, *Don't Look Up* was Netflix's second most successful movie of all time, and reached 791.863 USD at the box office. TDAT and DLU commonly have gained much attention with their apocalyptic stories, but the depiction and function of the apocalyptic narratives in the movies simultaneously appear to be different, which invites a comparison of the two. Based on the popularity of both TDAT and DLU, together with the increasing trend of the apocalyptic genre in cinema, the thesis statement is as follows: a comparison of *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004) and *Don't Look Up* (2021) concerning similarities and differences between how the films articulate their apocalyptic portrayals, and how these resemble significant and critical events in contemporary American society.

More specifically, this thesis will examine apocalyptic depictions as expressions of American contemporary, political, and environmental issues and conflicts. For that reason, I conduct a comparative analysis of different depictions of such conflicts or events of crises in DLU (2021) and TDAT (2004). To do so, several accounts describing 'apocalypse' as a literary term and its textual history are included before the comparison begins. These include Greg Garrard's apocalyptic descriptions in *Ecocriticism* (2011), Jakob Krohn & Mia Rendix's book *Apokalypsens Amerika* (2007), and Brain Graham's taxonomy of apocalypses in fiction (2013). As apocalyptic and life-threatening events often are seen as a hoax and mere conspiracies, the examination of these two movies will focus on how contemporary conflicts and events are articulated and managed differently and/or similarly within the movies.

Specifically, how the apocalyptic conflicts are treated by government and society. Both movies were released during a time of great challenges, why I also compare how they may represent the reality of the United States and the movies' possible imprints. Each of the

portrayals' environmental and political contexts will also be acknowledged to analyze potential connections between the contextualization and contemporary United States. Moreover, the comparison also examines their contexts' role in how controversial topics such as climate change are portrayed and navigated within the films. Hereafter, a comparative discussion of the reception and impact of the movies' messages, depending on their individual, distinctive portrayals.

As I use the approach of comparativism, I present several accounts of the comparative method, including Anne Ring Petersen, Frits Andersen, and Karen-Margrethe Simonsen's perspective on the comparative study of literature in "Sammenligninger" (2019), Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's "Rethinking Comparativism" (2009), Susan Stanford Friedman's discussion of "Why Not Compare?" (2011). To show awareness of other approaches within the field, I also present Anne Ring Petersen and Karen-Margrethe Simonsen's emphasis on "Relational Comparativism" (2019) and Frits Andersen's methodological proposal for comparing ecological texts, called "The Planetary Turn" (2019). I outline these different perspectives of the method, to determine what is best suited for my thesis' analysis of TDAT and DLU, though not all will be used exclusively, only relevant notions from each will be employed. But first and foremost, the history of comparativism is explored, to understand how to properly employ the method.

The Antecedents of Comparativism

With the intention of comparing the two movies The Day After Tomorrow (2004) and Don't Look Up (2021), the questions of why we compare and what it means to compare arise. In recent years, some forms of traditional comparativism have been discussed, criticized, or rethought, and a new mode of comparativism suggests a more dynamic, relational comparative approach. This ought to be explained and understood before initiating the comparison in the analysis. Hereto, several articles are presented. These concern discussions of what comparativism is, new forms of comparison, and the evolvement of the comparative method in the light of globalization, planetary and digital development. Though, before diving into this, I find it imperative to look at predecessors of the approach.

In "Sammenligninger" (2019), Petersen et al. explain that, generally speaking, comparativism was established as a modern discipline in the nineteenth century, and since then, the field of comparative method has developed dramatically (3). But it was first during the twentieth century that modes of comparativism within literary and cultural studies grew explosively, as it was no longer only literature that was compared, but also art, media, films,

cultural traditions, religion, among others (Petersen et al. 3). Though, more specifically, John Chr. Jørgensen explains in *Litterær Metodelære* (1974), that the field of method referred to as "comparative literature research" has a long tradition in the western world. Here, Jørgensen refers to Johan Fjord Jensen's descriptions of the development of the comparative method, especially in France and Denmark (Jørgensen 54). In *Den Ny Kritik* (1962), Johan Fjord Jensen places special focus on the preconditions of comparativism, based on the romantic and positivist developmental ideas, as well as the first phase of comparativism; the historical comparative research, that includes both Georg Brandes and Julius Paludan (54). It is specifically Brandes' essay "Goethe og Danmark" that is highlighted here, in which Brandes refers to Goethe as the most gifted human who has appeared in European literature since the Renaissance and how the Danish Golden Age poets are measured with "de Goethe' ske alen" (Jørgensen 100).

Comparison is as part of literary research, which Jensen defines as a "grænsevidenskab" (9). I translate this to a type of frontier science, that is, scientific ideas that were relatively new in 1962 according to Jensen. In literary research, a number of different sciences meet, for example the intellectual history, philosophy, history research, psychology, philology, linguistics, sociology, and sciences about other types of arts (Jensen 9). Therefore, comparative literature is an interdisciplinary field, used by several said departments. However, this eclecticism has led to much criticism, that charges comparative literature as insufficiently as such.

A Similar critique is also addressed by Jørgensen. When Jørgensen refers to comparativism as "research", it is because it has not been able to hold the concept of 'method', as it has not been determined in a specific and systematic way (55). In the same way, Jensen also describes as early as in 1962, that even though the movement of comparativism has existed as a school for a hundred years, it was without having determined any actual methodology, which is why Jensen calls it a strangely undeveloped science (44). Hereto, I argue that because of the lack of systematic and specific frame of the science in practice, comparativism, rooted in literary research, can be transferred to non-literary works, such as the media texts in my thesis, in an interdisciplinary frame.

In regard with Jensen's presentation of the critical steam "the new criticism" (a translation from the danish term "den ny kritik"), Jensen also reviews the 'old' methods, that is the *prehistoric* and *historical* literary research, before describing the *ahistorical* (the new critique). In this overview, romantic historicism is described as having preceded comparativism. Here, the organic philosophy of history arose, the awareness of unity and

contexts in cultural development as it were (Jensen 26). Especially in the form of Johann Gottfried Herder's historical philosophical work in separating cultural phases, where each cultural step follows and builds upon the other and every culture is considered an organism that both develops and ages (Jensen 26-27). This means that within the comparative perspective of literary research, the literary works to be compared, would be considered as part of a developmental process and it is from the position in this process that they are described. According to Jensen, Herder's literary research was of particular importance to comparativism (27). The literary conception of history referred to as '*historicism*' has thus gradually developed through the eighteenth century and up to the nineteenth century in the organic view of history of Romanticism with a focus on contexts in the historical course (Jensen 29-30).

The second and actual breakthrough period of literary research, however, is particularly characterized by Positivism, where attempts were made to transfer scientific views to the study of literature (Jensen 30). According to Jensen, it was this way of thinking that, erroneously, was marked as the characteristics of literary research throughout the turn of the century. This also applies within comparison, where natural scientists' valid determined natural laws also were employed to intellectual life, hereunder literature (Jensen 30). This means that although comparativism is a product of the nineteenth century, it was already in and around the eighteenth century's Romanticism, that an interest in development of connections emerged. Thereby, its actual breakthrough was first later in the eighteenth century when Positivism Determinism developed. In addition, according to Jensen, Positivism became a research methodological school in France, characterized particularly by scholars such as Paul Van Tiegham and M.-F. Guyard (1880-90) (42).

In Denmark, comparativism also had a prominent place, beginning with Brandes' "Hovedstrøminnger i det 19. Aahundredes Literatur" (1871-87), and Brandes' opponent, Julius Paludan, a scientific comparatist (1843-1926) (Jensen 43). As the French School's, Tiegham, examined works forensically, looking for evidence of 'origins' and 'influences' between works from different nations, it is also clear how, during Positivism, there was a specific focus on causalities around literature. Hereto, according to Jensen, research in causal relations became the biographical method and comparative method, which in themselves constitute the typical methods of literary research (32). Both the romanticistic and positivistic view will play a part in this thesis' comparative analysis, by focusing on certain notions of TDAT and DLU's contexts and influences.

In the context of research in causal relationships, comparativism, as a science in literary developments, also led to the study of literary *influences*, in the sense that 'influence' implies certain processes that once took place in the author's psyche as a foundation for literary work (Jensen 41). Even though for natural science reasons, these influences cannot be studied, they can however, in some instances, be reconstructed based on similarities and parallels (Jensen 41). Thus, according to Jensen, the comparative method consists of the separation of parallels and delimitations when positioned opposite to each other (41).

Hereto, Jørgensen discusses how much similarity there must be between two texts to be a probable influence, because earlier comparative research, the historical comparativism, negligently derived a connection between similarity and influence without considering the requirements for influence (59). This relates to Jørgensen's statement that the comparative literature research has evolved towards an emphasis on questioning the 'hows', and where these requirements that are prominent in the newer comparativism, move towards accuracy and precision. He suggests that a reasons for this turn, is due to the intensification of the natural sciences ideals in the nineteenth hundred (Jørgensen 59). The notion of probability and accuracy is also covered in a discussion of TDAT and DLU.

Jørgensen presents comparativism as having been predominantly historically oriented (58). Thereby, a general distinction is made between *ahistorical* comparativism, which compares without thereby deciding whether there is any developmental connection between the works being compared, and the *historical* comparativism, which precisely presupposes such a connection (Jensen 39). Thus, the historical comparative view, which is here alluded to as the original "traditional" method, compares two texts to see if there is a historical connection, either direct or indirect, and is referred to a 'genetic' comparison by Jørgensen (58).

To the ahistorical comparator, Jørgensen, on the other hand, explains that texts are compared in order to characterize the one with help from the other. The ahistorical comparison is also called the 'illustrative' (58). This means that the coherence between the two compared objects is derived on the basis of one of the objects illustrating the other. Nonetheless, Jensen argues that it is through confrontations with what comes before or after, that reveals each of their distinctive features (40-41). Therefore, Jensen presents "the new criticism" as a call for a union of text analysis and restrained historicism, of synchronicity and diachronicity (144). This means that the main view of Jensen's is that a historical perspective is necessary and that historical correlations of development should not be excluded, as this will help accentuate the compared texts' qualities and characteristics.

While progressing into the aspect of how a comparison can be approached and what thus can be derived, I want to elaborate on the fundamentals of comparison, what the method implies and its benefits and disadvantages. Therefore, the following section presents different perspectives on the comparative approach by Anne Ring Petersen, et al., Susan Friedman, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Anne Ring Petersen and Karen-Margrethe Simonsen, as well as Frits Andersen.

Why *Not* Compare?

Fundamentals of Comparing

To properly employ comparativism in my comparison of TDAT and DLU, different accounts of the method are now accentuated for a better understanding of it. First, in continuance with Jensen's perspectives from above, I highlight Jensen's definition as an overall definition. Jensen explains that, in the broadest sense, the comparative method includes everything that employs comparison between works of literature (39). Thus, the method is all that implies looking for correlations between texts, whether it be differences or similarities. From here, we can proceed to this paragraph's main perspectives, Petersen et al. and Susan Friedman's accounts for comparativism.

In "Why Not Compare?" (2011), Friedman gives an example of how one can define the comparative method. She explains that in analytic terms, comparison can help identify similarities and differences, commensurability and incommensurability, and areas of overlap and discontinuity (Friedman 754). To compare thus entails several elements. It is the practice of extracting similarities or differences, which involves elements or features from the objects that are identical or related. The comparative method is also about commensurability and incommensurability. Hereto, Friedman arguably refers to possible common basis', measures, or standards of comparison between the objects. The comparatists can also look for overlaps and discontinuity. This means to draw out connections or disconnections or to see how common measures divide or correlate.

Furthermore, Friedman lists three reasons why comparing is important. For example, the sense of comparativism that signifies the ability to first and foremost see sameness in difference, then difference in sameness, is central for all analytic or conceptual thoughts (Friedman 755). This means, that in the overt/explicit similarities that the objects up for comparison initially share, they potentially carry implicitly hidden differences. In contrast, they might share covert similarities in immediate differences. Secondly, Friedman explains that there is a social and cultural imperative to compare, as both individual and collective

identities require comparison, and according to psychologists, it is a vital component in not only literature, but also in all human behavior and experience, and everyday life (755). To put Friedman's accounts into perspective, comparison can be understood within the classification of fruit. For example, as a fruit, oranges and apples are the same collectively, they fit under the same category. However, they differ in their individual type of fruit. And in terms of this thesis' texts to be compared, TDAT and DLU fit under the category of apocalyptic, disaster films, but they display this in different ways.

A third imperative to compare is rooted in epistemological and political consequences of not comparing. Friedman argues that cognitively speaking, the act of comparing fosters a possibility of conceptual thought moves knowledge beyond pure particularity, which thereby enables theory. In this regard, 'theory' implies the cognitive capacity to see patterns of similarity as part of a broadly systematic form of thinking, as well as the ability to generalize and conceptualize (756). Hence, 'theory' requires comparison. For example, without the concept of fruit, we will be limited to an infinite regress of items or things, and knowledge will be confined to the 'individual' and 'particular', according to Friedman (756). In relation to this project's comparative analysis, it is necessary to conceptualize the 'common denominator', from which specifically selected topics will be in focus throughout the comparison, to see sameness in difference, and difference in sameness. As I perceive the concept of an apocalyptic crisis as the focal point of both TDAT and DLU, the concept of 'apocalypse' will thus be defined and theorized later in this project.

The comparison is founded upon the portrayals of apocalypses in TDAT and DLU, which are topics already established before the comparison is initiated. In this regard, according to Petersen et al., the objects for comparison are not and should not only be passive but have a certain amount of agency themselves in the comparative analysis (4). This stands in relation to Friedman's emphasis on the necessity of going beyond the traditional simple compilation of differences and similarities between the objects placed in their respective contexts because this traditional comparativism is too passive (Petersen et al. 5).

In the sense that agency is understood as power exerted by a person or object, the phenomena will thus have a certain authority in the process of comparison. Agency is accomplished if the compared phenomena are put in juxtaposition, as the main topics chosen by the comparatists then relies on the objects' already existing themes. This will result in the objects not being a victim of passive comparison in that there are presupposed similarities controlling the trajectory of the comparison. Instead, they play a role in deciding what similarities and differences constitute the comparison, as these will become evident

coincident with the analysis within the dynamic interrelation with other objects. In other words, the objects will become the director, instead of the directed.

I intend to aim for the preservation of TDAT and DLU's agency during the analysis, as the comparison is initiated on the foundation of the shared apocalyptic theme within TDAT and DLU. Tough, comparativism is not always uncomplicated and simple to employ. It is also necessary to consider its critical aspects, to understand the prospect of comparing and keep these in mind during the comparison of TDAT and DLU. Critical perspectives to the comparative method are the focus of the following.

Comparison as an Ambiguous Method

When comparison as a method has been discussed, it is often in relation to its politics, mostly to criticize comparativism, but sometimes also to defend it (Friedman 753). However, despite much criticism, Friedman also explains that comparison is still a necessity in many fields, for example within literary studies, where globalization and its intensification has fortified a higher degree of comparative analysis of culture or literature on a transnational and planetary scale (753). This also relates to Petersen et al.'s statement that the growth of comparativism in the twentieth century, meant that comparisons often went across the arts and across national borders, which the early comparativism only had worked within (3-4).

Yet, Petersen et al. also argue that the new global and planetarian consciousness is also a challenge for comparativism. Globalization is the reason that comparativism has been rethought, challenged, and critically discussed during the twentieth century (4). Among other critiques, comparativism has been accused of Eurocentrism, which will be further elaborated on in the succeeding paragraph. Hence, globalization played a role in encouraging the method of comparativism in not only literature but also other types of art. For this reason, I argue that this period in time was important and necessary for other fields of sciences to employ this, including my thesis on comparing two apocalyptic movies.

In the context of eurocentrism, Rita Felski and Susan Friedman describe this as an issue within comparativism *New Literary History* (2009). Felski and Friedman argue that comparison is never neutral, as it is developed within a history that has consisted of hierarchical relations (v). By hierarchy, Felski and Friedman refer to today's hierarchical dominated world, where the West is the universal standard, also called eurocentrism (v). This is illustrated by the homogenizing process that constitutes the models of comparison of the nineteenth century. The nineteenth century-model of comparing often draws out the

uniqueness of the objects being compared, as the comparison often downgrades certain cultures in relation to others (Felski and Friedman v). Such hierarchical relationship is also criticized by Friedman (2011). She argues, that when you describe one thing in terms of another, the comparison assumes some kind of knowledge of one of the objects, to which the other is compared, and when the known operates as the measure for the unknown, it creates an unequal relationship between them (754). This inequality or difference is just one of the reasons to not compare, according to Friedman. Though, the mere suggestion that the risk of inequality is a reason not to employ comparativism, appears to be a rather vague argument, and is arguably not reason enough. Instead, I reckon that the possibility of unequal positioning should inspire the comparatists to stay aware of the risk and aim for the opposite throughout.

Though Friedman is not alone in her critique. Friedman draws upon literary theorist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's description of a similar comparative imbalance in "Rethinking Comparativism" (2009). Spivak explains that "comparison assumes a level playing field and the field is never level" (609). Spivak's point of critique is thus that it is never a matter of comparing, but rather a way to judge and choose (Spivak 609). Hereto Friedman brings in literary scholar R. Radhakrishnan, who argues that the world is structured in dominance, and as a result, comparisons are initiated based on those dominant values, standards, and criteria. Friedman likewise cautions a similar concern that, politically speaking, acts of comparing on a global scale, are always associated with a risk of ethnocentrism.

Radhakrishnan argues that when the comparison is articulated and validated, the values that constitute the point of departure for the comparison will receive instant axiomatization as universal values (Friedman 754). The consequence of the ethnocentrism and injustice enshrined in global comparisons, according to Friedman, will cause a perception of the *others* as different, unknown, and thus inferior (754). Thereby, even though this thesis does not compare on a global scale, it is nevertheless important to recognize that when comparing across nations and cultures, the comparatists ought to be prudent and aware of the tendency to presume norms and values from one's own culture as universal and known, and use these as s frame of reference for judging and understanding others. It is therefore also the intention for this thesis' use om comparativism, to aim for equal terms between TDAT and DLU.

In contrast, even though a global comparison problematically reaffirms the universalism of the dominant part as the implied standard, Friedman additionally explains that there are also consequences to a narrow comparative analysis, that merely focuses on one

cultural group, one nation or one region of the world (756). Hence, while it can be problematic with a universal perspective, that is, a tendency to generalize from one culture to another when comparing, it is also not only beneficial to narrow the perspective to one nation or culture, according to Friedman. It is, therefore, necessary to consider the issue with my thesis' comparative analysis and its objects for comparison, as the focus of this examination will be centering on American society and America's handling of crises. Hence, as I will not go beyond the United States, I delimit the comparison to one culture, and this thesis' study will thereby have a narrow perspective. Critically speaking, according to Friedman, this method of approach is considered inadequate.

Based on Friedman's layout of advantages and disadvantages of comparativism, my comparative approach could thus benefit from a broader perspective that goes beyond the United States and the dominant standards of the west, as a comparison of different cultures and nations enables us to question the standards of the dominant, because the dominant is thereby revealed as not universal, according to Friedman (756). Nonetheless, I do not intend to follow Freidman's suggestions, as I argue that it is even more necessary and relevant to delimit the focus of comparative studies, to make them precise and to avoid derivation of unnecessary coherences that were not present in the first place, and thus would be redundant for a better understanding of the compared phenomena that are in focus. I thus argue that a beneficial comparison can be reached within national borders, as it often was conducted in earlier traditional 'genetic' comparativism, according to both Petersen et al. (3-4) and Jensen (144). My arguments for this will be exemplified and stressed in the following, as well as I later present the accounts of Petersen and Simonsen's notion of relational comparison. These will add to my argument for a delimitated point of view, which I consider is favorable, in contrast to Friedman's critique of narrow comparativism.

In a proceeding manner, Petersen et al. present a similar critical notion of comparativism. Petersen et al. argue that comparisons often turn out to be hierarchical in practice. They explain that this is rooted in this tendency to deploy one object as a standard of measure for the other, or that the objects are often compared based on a standard that favors the one (5). This is similar to Jørgensen's depictions of the current ahistorical, or 'illustrative' comparison, where texts are compared in order to characterize the one with help from the other (58), which thus also resembles an unequal relationship between the two compared objects. When conducting a comparative analysis, Friedman argues that the focus, instead, should be directed toward the dynamic interrelation between the objects to be compared. Hereto, Friedman states that because any comparison is characterized by contradictory

movements, she proposes that the comparative method should focus on active and incommensurable juxtaposition, on contrapuntal opposition and reciprocity (Petersen et al. 5).

Juxtaposition can occur when two objects are placed side by side to highlight contrasting elements. Hereto, the yin-yang symbol is an example of juxtaposition. Within the symbols' circle, there are the black and white elements, which stand in contrast to one another. They refer to the contrasts of the positive and negative. But even though they are opposites, they also complement each other. Employing juxtaposition enables evident contrasts to appear, which may help emphasize the uniqueness of each of the text's portrayals, as well as the correlation between the two. Positioning two objects in contrapuntal opposition create a relational counterpoint between the two. For example, comparing TDAT and DLU in 'contrapuntal', means that they are compared in two divided groups at the same time, to maintain the movies' independent depictions that will create an interdependent dialogue between them. Thus, the movies are being compared on the foundation that they are independent in some ways, but also related in their overall depiction of apocalypses.

To reach reciprocity between the elements during a comparison, means to position the two in, for example, juxtaposition or contrapuntal opposition, in which they mutually benefit of influence each other for the process of comparing. For example, when analyzing TDAT and DLU in regard to their apocalyptic portrayals, an outcome that is unique for DLU may influence a similar outcome to be derived from TDAT. It is also in this influential relationship between the compared objects, that will make the elements have an active function.

Hence, following Friedman's suggestion, the focus of my comparative analysis will position the two films side by side, to properly compare and juxtaposition reciprocal and contrary elements between the two objects in a dynamic interrelation, rather than using one of the films, for example, the earliest, *The Day After Tomorrow* (TDAT) from 2004 as a standard of measure for the more recent film *Don't Look Up* (DLU) from 2021. There is, however, also a complication with comparing elements in the search for commensurability and incommensurability, as it may discard the context in which the objects exist. This is another concern of Friedman's, which will be elaborated on in the succeeding paragraph.

The Need for Contextualization

Friedman also presents certain critical discussions surrounding the comparative method, which are important to be aware of while comparing. As mentioned in the beginning,

comparison derives similarities and differences, and commensurability and incommensurability. However, in doing so, comparison decontextualizes. More specifically, comparison dehistoricizes and deterritorializes. This is important to highlight, according to Friedman (754). While comparing, the comparatist thus removes the compared objects from their local and geohistorical specificity. For example, when you initiate a comparison, there is a risk of neglecting, or disregarding the context in which the object belongs, to allow for similarities and differences to become transparent in the derivation. This means that during a comparison, you automatically place the object in a specific context to find similarities or differences with another, which means that you sometimes need to take the object out of its original context in time and place, which essentially made the object unique in the first place. Thus, the comparison dehistoricizes/ deterritorializes, rather than treating the objects as isolated items. This relates to the inclined desire to treat the object as universal, in order to compare it with something else. The problem here is, as mentioned, the tendency to position the objects with a eurocentric view in a western understanding, or in other words, to 'westernize' it.

Friedman argues that if the comparison of texts from different places, times, and cultures are ignored, it essentially derives a problematic position that privileges a particular context in time and space and makes other contexts invisible (757). From a critical point of view toward my study's comparative approach, the films chosen for comparison do not go beyond American culture but are centered around the same place, time, and context. Hence, I recognize that my comparative analysis will prioritize a specific context, and the analysis will thus make other contexts in time and space invisible, as Friedman describes it. On the other hand, I also argue that it is, in this thesis, beneficial to narrow the perspective of the comparison.

Following up on Friedman's point of criticism in her proposal for cautionary factors with comparison, I thereby emphasize that in the act of analyzing a particular culture in one context in time and space, the films for comparison are perceived as relevant for the focus of this paper, that is, to examine representations of apocalyptic crisis in America. More specifically, how the apocalyptic events in the movies can be seen as symbols of how contemporary American society appear to handle crises regarding climate change or the recent pandemic. The intention for my comparison is thus to achieve this by establishing similarities and differences regarding specific topics outlined before initiating the analysis. This does, however, not ignore the possibilities of a more comprehensive comparison, by submitting to an extensive, multicultural comparison instead. If my main interest was to

simply explore different cinematic depictions that may resemble the management of said crises in general, Friedman's notion on comparing across cultures and times and accentuating texts with different roots would have been more relevant.

In relation to my applied method in the upcoming comparative analysis, Felski and Friedman explain that "comparison does not automatically authorize the perspective of those doing the comparing, but can also serve as a jolt to consciousness, initiating a destabilizing, even humbling, awareness of the limitedness and contingency of one's own perspective" (vi). This means, that comparativism can help unveil perspectives other than the one of the comparatists, which helps to understand that the initial perspective of the one comparing the phenomena, is not necessarily the normative conception. Thereby, to avoid the full authority of my perspectives in the comparative analysis of TDAT and DLU, I will approach the texts with an awareness of how my perspective on the topics examined within the movies, is at the risk of being limited and initially unconsciously founded on a narrow focus of perception, and the perspectives chosen for comparison in the analysis are thus not seen as the only true method. It is, however, my hope, that the comparison will open for other, broader perspectives by the similarities and differences derived from the analysis, that were not evident in the beginning.

Proposals for Future Comparison

From above mentioned critical aspects, it is clear that there is no simple or comprehensible approach when comparing. Therefore, Friedman encourages further reflection on the multiple types of methods there are, as well as the pros and cons of each (757). I have already touched upon a few critical aspects of possible risks inherent in comparativism, for example, the risks of inequality between the two compared phenomena. Additionally, there are the risk of using a normative standard, derived from one work or context for the evaluation of another work or another context, and the risk of reducing the uniqueness of an object to generic or topical dimensions.

But besides these, Friedman's continuous objective for her article consists in criticizing the lack of extensiveness and adequacy found in the traditional method of comparison. This includes the static approach of simple comparison and contrasting, with a standpoint that there are, from the beginning, already established significant similarities to discuss, which often stands as a reasonable foundation for comparing. Friedman argues that this static method is not sufficiently dialogical, as it obscures the tension between

commensurability and incommensurability, which Friedman coins as the contradictory core of all comparisons (757). Thus, this standard method with a preconception of already existing similarities to initiate a comparison, stands as an example of how comparing two objects should not exclusively consist of the simple intention to derive similarities and differences, but ought to be granted greater consideration to conduct a more comprehensible comparative analysis.

Hereto, Friedman advocates for a dynamic method, which can be reached as you connect objects that are similar and dissimilar at the same time, and thereby the comparison initiates a dynamic, insoluble paradox (757). For example, within the concept of fruit, apples cannot be reduced to pears, despite both being fruits. Likewise, the character of the apples and pears of fruit, Friedman explains, depends on a cognitive abstraction in which the resemblance resides (757). Hence, by comparing things that simultaneously share both equal and unequal elements**,** it creates dynamic relations between them, which this paper's comparison intends to employ. This can be obtained, as I argue that TDAT and DLU are both similar and dissimilar, as they share contexts and main themes that are much alike each other. But at the same time, the movies' apocalyptic narratives are communicated in different ways and to different degrees in relation to the context and time in which the movies take place. Moreover, the analysis will look at the particular of the compared texts, and they are thus presupposed from a local perspective, in other words, they are incommensurable individually. But the films are also positioned at an abstract level of perception, which assumes them as commensurable in what they share and how they correspond to each other, in accordance with Friedman's proposition (757).

What, then, can you accomplish by comparing things, objects, or phenomena, is a question Friedman seeks to answer. For example, it is possible to shed light on aspects that could have been overlooked if no comparison had been attempted (Friedman 758). In this context, Felski and Friedman also stress that comparison is "crucial for the registering of inequalities and for struggles against the unjust distribution of resources" (vi). The act of comparing can thus contribute to elucidating certain problematic power relations in an unbalanced world of injustice. Applying a dynamic, side-by-side comparison model, assures that one part of the comparison is not set as a normative standard of measure for the other (Friedman 756). With the two compared objects in juxtaposition, it is possible to avoid the inequality of the comparison that favors the normative dominance of the West. Thereby, the distinctiveness of the individual part is preserved, which results in a beneficial dialogue that puts the common features in focus (Friedman 758). Friedman's statement thus suggests that it

is important that the comparatists attempt to reach equality and preservation of the individual features of the texts, which makes them unique.

In continuance with the notion of equality, similar descriptions of comparison are also emphasized by Spivak, whom Friedman also draws upon several times. Spivak explains that "we mark a time toward a comparativism of equivalence", which he refers to as 'the new comparativism' in "Rethinking Comparison" (618). Spivak's perspective correlates with a new form of comparison, which Professor Anne Ring Petersen and lecturer in literary history, Karen-Margrethe Simonsen call 'relational comparativism'. Though, I will not be using this new type of comparative approach in the succeeding analysis particularly. I introduce Petersen and Simonsen's notion of relational comparativism and Frits Andersen's planetary view of comparison, to show examples of other comparative models that exist in the field. There are, however, certain critical aspects and ideas from relational comparison and pivotal propositions from Frits Andersen's description of planetary comparison, described later, that I find relevant to outline for inspiration to how I intend to approach the movies.

Relational Comparativism

In "Relationel komparatisme - komparatismens udfordringer og agens i en globaliseret verden" (2019), Petersen and Simonsen explain that the act of thinking in relationships is fundamental in comparativism (30). Though, the rethinking of comparativism that is taking place in these years, changes the understanding of these relationships and is now referred to as 'relational comparativism' (Petersen and Simonsen 30). First, Petersen and Simonsen critically discuss prior comparative perspectives. According to Petersen and Simonsen, the historical comparison, as the one Jensen refers to as the *old* comparativism, is challenged by the notion of delimited, national cultures due to an enhanced awareness of circulation, transcultural exchange, and cultural translation (29). Therefore, Petersen and Simonsen call for relational comparativism, which concentrates on aspects such as context, dynamics/agency and circulation (29).

Relational comparativism seeks to work with the 'particular' to derive the reciprocal relationship in history, rather than having an interest in essential cultural understandings and both old and new forms of universalism (30). It is the focus on the 'particular', that I intend to direct my attention to while comparing TDAT and DLU. I will thus attempt to perceive the phenomena as individual cases of distinctive features, to correlate potential similarities or differences. Petersen and Simonsen further elaborate on the perspective of context and

explain that it is achieved in the act of comparing two nations and comes from a requirement to broaden the horizon (Petersen and Simonsen 31).

However, critically speaking, the perspective of context is often too narrow (31). With that, it is understood that when the comparatist regards a comparison as contextual adequate, it is still possible that the perspective is not broad enough in the sense that it may go beyond borders, and thus not include other cultures or nations. Therefore, an alternative option to rethink the comparative method is to view the concept of culture as a palimpsest. In other words, treat culture as a blank canvas, a space for multiple layers of heterogeneous relations and an entanglement of different levels of culture (Petersen and Simonson 32).

Another option, and more interesting for my study, is to seek the dynamic between different objects in mutual and possible conflictual exchange (Petersen and Simonson 32). This does, of course, share a point of view similar to Friedman's suggestion that we ought to work with "in / commensurability", contrapuntal and dialectical comparisons, instead of *passive* similarities and differences, as these practices allow for a more progressive comparison. This will also accommodate a comparative method that questions the self-understanding of the phenomena to be compared, why this approach also can be considered relational, and the identified differences are thus not understood as eternal. Instead, the differences can change and are produced to some degree by the relationship created between the two entities, that is during the process of comparing (Petersen and Simonsen 33). Hence, by placing TDAT and DLU side-by-side, it is possible to study them individually, and thus derive connections that are both similar and different at the same time.

Additionally, the presupposed connections between the compared objects are thus not definitive, and new, alternative differences may appear during the comparison, as they are produced and change in the relation constructed between the two films. As I have mentioned, this thesis' comparison will aim to creates relations between TDAT and DLU. Hereto, Petersen and Simonsen likewise argue that the modern comparativist must not rely on a predetermined national entity (or a theoretical framework) but needs to submit to be challenged by the differences and relationships that are actually present. In a broad sense, this will remove the agency from the comparatist, as this enables the complexity of relations between the objects to set the framework for the comparative (Petersen and Simonsen 33). Thereby, it is understood that the agency is transferred from the comparatist to the objects for comparison. In doing so, it follows Friedman's call for an active and dynamic comparison, which is more favorable. With the risk of creating a passive, predetermined comparison, this thesis' comparison of the two movies will instead start off by considering them independently

and unaffected from their contexts, as they are positioned side-by-side, and hereafter, TDAT and DLU are considered in relation to their contexts.

In extension from the perspective of bringing the context into focus in a comparative analysis, Petersen and Simonsen also highlight the technical term of 'circulation', in which the notion of 'migration' of objects to be compared is presented. These concepts will not be directly employed in the comparison of TDAT and DLU, but I find it relevant to explain this affiliated perspective to a contextual comparison, as it is part of the newer understanding of comparison. This point of view also supports my choice to delimit the comparison of apocalyptic narratives to not extend further than the US. This is based on images' abilities to travel. Petersen and Simonsen initially state that images and visual forms of expression do not require linguistic translation, and can travel more easily across borders between nations, languages, and cultures than literature can (34). In other words, images migrate.

The term 'migration' means here, the mobility and migration of the theme or issue in images, and their ability to move from one environment to another, while they sometimes take root, infect entire populations, and at times move on as rootless nomads (Petersen and Simonsen 34). To exemplify, I position the term migration in relation to TDAT and DLU. Even though the audience must have the English language and certain aspects of American culture translated for better understanding, the portrayals in TDAT and DLU displaying the relevant topics such as climate change and events of crisis, are arguably more easily translated through the images of these events, which enable them to migrate from one environment, culture, or nation to another. Thus, the movies' content and messages can be understood on a global level, as I would argue, climate issues and apocalyptic happenings from nature's side are a part of a universal language, understood across borders and oceans. The texts' argued ability to travel across borders, makes the comparison in this paper, less narrow and hinders the risk of highlighting certain western cultural norms as universal or dominant.

I find images' ability to 'infect' populations relevant for my later comparative discussion of how the movies TDAT and DLU may influence the audience with their messages and themes. As Petersen and Simonsen explain above, images can infect other cultures beyond the one in which they are produced (34). This is because we live in a world characterized by intensive global information exchange and rapid communication technology development. As a result, this 'contagious' influence is increasingly taking place across national borders due to the ability of images to circulate as digital reproductions (Petersen and Simonsen 34). In essence, pictures' ability to travel globally, is thus important to be

employed politically, culturally, and socially and for how images influence places they move to. I argue that TDAT and DLU may also be contagious. How they are influential, is examined in regard to the movies' contexts and how there are connections between their contagiousness and contexts. This approach distinctively directs attention to, for example, power relations, inequalities, and hierarchies that conditioned the culture in which TDAT and DLU exist, as Petersen and Simonsen emphasize (34). It also creates a concentrated focus on the relations, overlaps and reciprocal influences, between the compared contexts of TDAT and DLU.

A concluding prospect of comparativism to stress is the necessity to ask the question of what qualities of the objects make us assume they are comparable, and on what basis do we understand something as comparable to something else (Petersen and Simonsen 37). Hereto, according to Petersen and Simonsen, French historian Marcel Detienne perceives the 'comparable' to be something the analyst constructs, and he calls the comparative analysis for a creative action (37). Before initiating the comparison of TDAT and DLU, it is therefore imperative to consider what elements of each object to analyze and hereafter categorize the elements before comparing similarities and differences that might surface. The comparatist's initial choices of categories or concepts are crucial to the outcome of the analysis, and it is not the individual categories, but the relationships they establish, that are important for the comparison (Petersen and Simonsen 37).

For this reason, I thus predetermine and select the topics within TDAT and DLU that will constitute the foundation for the comparison before it begins. To compare TDAT and DLU, and connect them to real American conflicts and challenges, this thesis addresses and examines the concept of apocalyptic narratives, the political depictions, and the environmental contexts in which the movies exist. Of contemporary American conflicts and challenges, I especially refer to Americas management of the environmental crisis, and the recent COVID-19 pandemic, of which a resemblance of these is present in TDAT and DLU. In context to the subject of environmental issues, I draw upon Frits Andersen's description of how a planetary view can contribute to a comparison of ecological themes.

The Planetary Turn – Frits Andersen

As globalization connects borders, nations, and cultures, so do accompanying issues that are not only national or regional but also globally known phenomena. For example, the notion of global warming or another event of a crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic. Such issues, I

argue, create a wide-ranging relationship between countries, and are seen migrating across oceans from culture to culture in multiple forms of mediation, which, as we know, does not require much translation when they travel in the form of images. In "Den planetære vending - En fremtid for sammenlignende litteraturforskning?" (2019), literary historian, Frits Andersen, argue that comparatists should attempt to manage new kinds of planetary perspectives and related vocabularies that deal with, for example, apocalyptic crises as in TDAT and DLU.

Andersen's accounts for comparativism are relevant to highlight, as I partly intend to position myself from a planetary view when approaching the apocalyptic movies. I also argue that TDAT and DLU exemplify the following points of Andersen's notions surrounding ecological representations in media portrayals. I embrace this approach as it will become clear in the following, that Andersen's view allows the comparatist to perceive the work with a broader outlook, as the planetary view produces a way for contextualization to serve as a guide during the interpretation and understanding of the compared texts. According to Andersen, the aspect of the 'planetary' is a proposal for the future of comparative literary history and is an expansive and radicalizing answer to the classic, but highly challenged question of what the subject of comparativism is or should be (52). It is therefore referred to as 'the planetary turn'.

The purpose of the planetary view is to theorize what Andersen describes as the 'cultural-aesthetic symptomatology'. This alludes to the understanding of a new form of global relationality and the rapidly changing, fluid and mobile networks and new political communities, which are primarily created by digitalization and climate change (Andersen 51). It is because of phenomena such as the latter mentioned climate debate, that Andersen urges comparatists to address and relate to these new environmental and common conditions. He further explains that there is a necessity for developing an 'aesthetically-critical vocabulary', that can capture the new and often contradictory factors of our present, which is in the process of unfolding (Andersen 51). For example, topics such as global warming.

According to Andersen, the paradigm of planetarity entails research that can capture the linguistic, economic, and ecological complexity of the planet better than concepts such as the global and world literature, as scholars on comparative literature Susan Friedman and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak proposes (67). Thereby, the planetary is understood as a perspective that differs from cosmopolitanism in that it includes not only human conditions but also the non-human organic world and the inorganic physical world (54). This means, the perception of cosmopolitanism, which consists of the idea that all human beings are part of

one community on a global level, only considers mankind. In contrast, the 'planetary turn' is a method to read the works from a planetary perspective which comprises all organic life and species existing on Earth as part of the organic universe in solidarity (Andersen 55). The concept of 'planetary' thus refers to the use a holistic perspective.

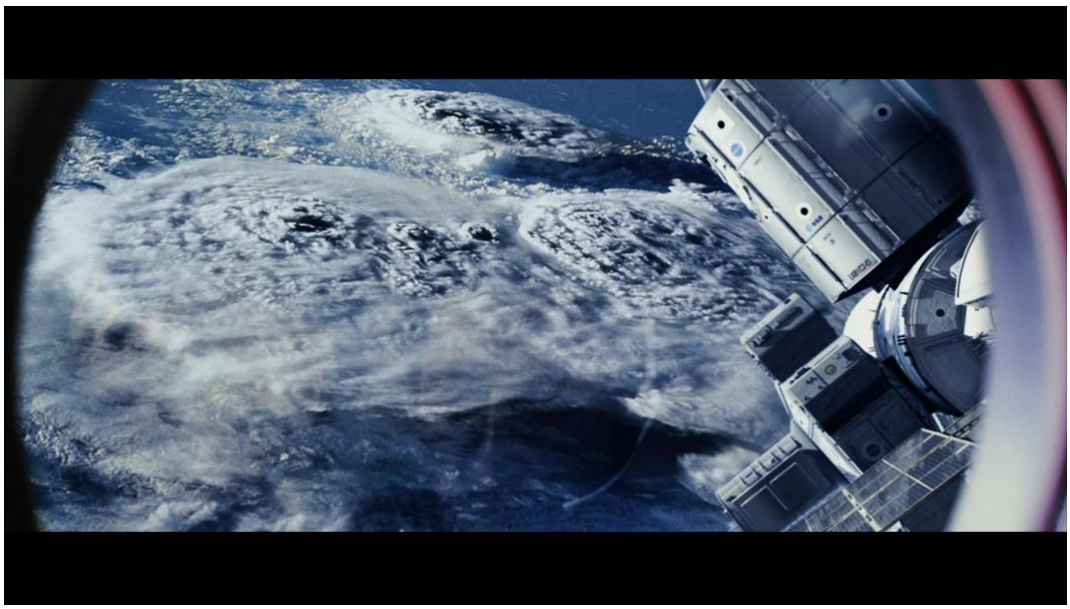
A similar holistic, planetary view is relevant to employ in my thesis, as the comparative reading of TDAT and DLU will focus on the apocalypses' impact on not only mankind but the entire organic universe. In accordance with the planetary view, this thesis' analysis will partially study the several prospects of the natural world, both non-human, organic, and inorganic parts of Earth. To do this, I use the planetary turn, along with Brian Russel Graham's categorization of the apocalyptic impact on the life of respectively humans, animals, vegetables, or minerals, which is presented later. The method to embrace the planetary view is now unpacked.

The goal of the planetary turn is to change the conceptual framework of the planet "from the globe as a financial-technocratic system to the planet as a world-ecology" (Andersen 54). Andersen thus encourages a disregard for the unfavorable system on Earth that centers on technocracy and the perception of the planet as a resource. Instead, planetary thinking entails the wish for proleptically and utopianly creating a world community where everything belongs to everyone and working for solidarity about seeing the planet as completely unique and alive (Andersen 64-65). I argue that a similar technocratic perception of Earth and a fight for the understanding of the planet as a world ecology are present in TDAT and DLU. In the two movies, there are ongoing clashes between the necessary counteractions to the apocalyptic event and the dominating hesitant actions of neglect towards the apocalypse. For example, there are the protagonists who advocate for the rescue of the planet, and the antagonists who lean more towards the preservation of the system that financially exploits the planet for its resources, putting human needs before the planet's need. Such portrayals are exemplified in the succeeding comparative analysis.

Andersen hereto argues that works concerning planetary ecology, ought to be read through comparisons at both micro and macro levels (66). Therefore, central to the approach is that the planetary reading perspective involves special attention to scale and employs combinations of macroscopic and microscopic analytical strategies (67). In relation to scale, Andersen explains that 'planetarism', in the sense of the wide range of theoretical, artistic, and critical views on the current state of the planet, often refers to the famous image of the Earth Ascension from the Apollo 8 expedition in 1968 "Earthrise", to illustrate the mode of scale-consciousness. This is presented in the framegrab below:

Framegrab of "Earthrise" from NASA.

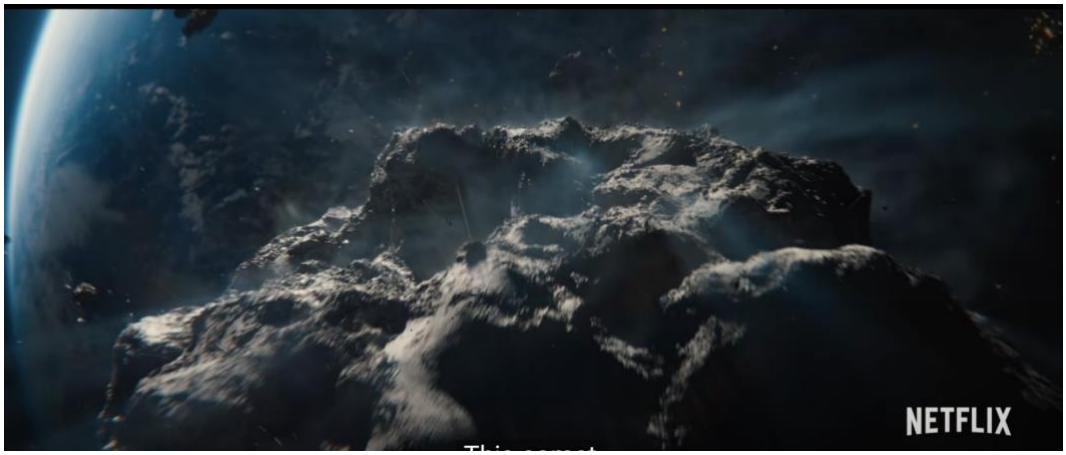
Multiple variations of this planetary perspective are repeated in media, popular culture, sci-fi and cli-fi, with inspiration from photos from NASA and new digital cartographies of, for example climate change (Andersen 65). In TDAT and DLU, there are also macroscopic images illustrate similar employment of upscaled perspectives. In TDAT, the settings often move from the apocalyptic crisis on Earth to a change in scale several times with travels to space. In the next framegrab, we see Earth from the perspective of astronauts, who have a clear view of the dangerous weather phenomena transforming Earth into a new ice age.



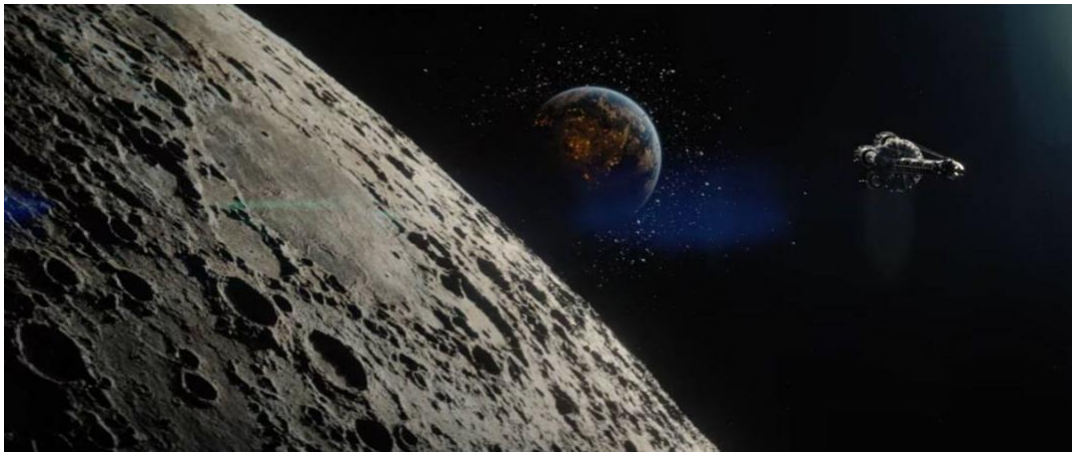
Framegrab of three superstorms above Earth in *The Day After Tomorrow* (0:16:15).

Framegrab of the Northern Hemisphere in a new ice age (*The Day After Tomorrow* 1:55:22).

The first picture from TDAT shows three enormous storm-systems above the United States observed from space at the beginning of the movie. The second picture portrays a post-apocalyptic state of Earth, where the planet is under ice. DLU also depicts space-images that show the trajectory of the enormous meteor moving towards Earth:



Framegrab of the Dibiasky comet on its way to Earth (*Don't Look Up* 2:02:20).



Framegrab of planet Earth after the comet hit in the end of *Don't Look Up* (2:07:40).

As with the pictures from TDAT, the first framegrab resembles a pre-apocalyptic view of planet Earth, while showing the comet traveling towards Earth before it hits. In the other image from DLU, we likewise see the planet in a post-apocalyptic state after the comet collided with Earth. This is right before the planet is fully scattered. The use of scale in DLU and TDAT arguably offers an idea of how threatening the imminent apocalypse is as the macroscopic view produces a sense of distance that minimizes the actuality of the danger. From a microscopic perspective, the up-scaling also gives the impression that despite how big the planet, on which the life of all its many species depends, may seem from up close, however, this can be reduced by a long-shot, that changes the power relations between the object (apocalypse) and the subject (planet Earth).

Andersen's call for a 'planetary' vocabulary which helps frame and understand environmental-and ecocentric themes, together with the consciousness of scale represented in such works, are arguably relevant ways to view environmental representations in my comparative analysis of TDAT and DLU. Based on Andersen's emphasis on such vocabulary and Friedman's call for conceptualizations before a progressive and equal comparison can commence, I purposedly offer a description of the specific topics which will be compared. The following will thus present the specific themes, on which the comparative analysis of *The Day after Tomorrow* and *Don't Look* Up will take its point of departure. As mentioned previously, the topics are the apocalyptic genre, the political aspects, and the environmental contexts of the movies, which I present in the next paragraph.

The Genre of Apocalypticism

As I go through several accounts and perspectives of 'the apocalypse' as a fictional genre, I intend to use the different descriptions in context with TDAT and DLU concurrently as the comparative analysis commences. Though before the analysis, the concept of apocalypse is to be placed in a historical context, to consider whether the two movies comply with a traditional perception and employment of apocalypses or if and how they deviate from this. In this regard, Greg Garrard (2011), Professor of Environmental Humanities, presents a historical overview. Garrard explains that the end of the world as an imminent event is a narrative which the world's population has believed in for millennia. Moreover, the construction of apocalypse as a distinctive narrative inflecting much environmentalism today already began around 1200 BCE (93). Since then, while some people have fought and died in fear and hope of impending apocalypses, others have adopted and adapted the apocalyptic rhetoric, with a continuant characteristic of prophecies about catastrophes or crises

inexorably fulfilling themselves (Garrard 93-94). Garrard stresses that this definition roots back to Judaeo-Christianity, noting that apocalypticism is a genre born out of a crisis, where it was thought to resolve embattled communities by presenting a vision of a sudden and permanent release from captivity (94).

Even though the concept of apocalypse stems from religious traditions, Garrard argues that eschatological themes and languages about the end of the world broke out of the discipline of theology long before the twentieth century (97). For example, William Wordsworth's (1770-1850) Romantic poetry and early twentieth-century modernists such as T.S. Eliot (1888–1965) and Wyndham Lewis (1882–1957) adapted and employed apocalyptic rhetoric for secular and politically revolutionary objectives (Garrard 97). These authors were mostly focused on the fate of human culture rather than ecological aspects. Here, there is also the side to apocalypses where sociopsychological collateral damages follow it. To human culture, the apocalypse often inclines embattled movements and events to paranoia, violence, as well as a moral dualism dividing the world into paradigms of the 'good' and 'bad', or friend and enemy (Garrard 94).

Different from these political objectives are the works of English writer and poet D.H Lawrence. These also include the perception of mankind as a part of the organic universe, for which man only ought to acknowledge its wonder and reject the urge to exploit it (Garrard 97). As distinctive and different as Lawrence's point of view is, it resembles a great deal the ecocentric perspective that Frits Andersen emphasizes in the planetary turn. As described, Andersen argues that there is a need for a change in the conceptual framework of the world, and the focus should be on the planet as a world-ecology rather than as a financial-technocratic system. Already in the writings of Lawrence, there was an interest in the planetary, which purposely includes both human conditions as well as the non-human organic world (Andersen 54). This planetary view included in apocalyptic writing is different from the tendency to religious associations in apocalypticism in America.

From the more general perspective on the concept of 'apocalypse', it is also relevant to aim the attention at the position and role of apocalypticism in an American context, both in relation to its appearance throughout American history and its various definitions and descriptions. Such accounts are to be found in *Apokalypsens Amerika* (2007) by Jakob Krohn and Mia Rendix. In continuance with the literary perspective of apocalypticism from above, Krohn and Rendix's descriptions concerning apocalypticism in American literature are notable to highlight. In this regard, writers of the American Renaissance were seen as isolated and solitary, due to their interest in the apocalyptic, which, in fact, was based on American

reality and mass culture, according to Krohn and Rendix (86). Yet, in that era, writings about apocalypses were not a new theme in literature. Apocalyptic writing has religious roots, as we will see in this section, and such writing dates back to the Old Testament and the New Testament. Hereof, the Book of Daniel and the Revelation of John were both written in times of crisis while there was a need to write or to read prophetic texts (Krohn and Rendix 98).

Krohn and Rendix hereto argue that all apocalyptic authors are distant descendants of the Puritan dissidents, that is, the religious reformation movement of English Protestants from the 16th and 17th centuries who sought to purify the Church of England and emigrated to America. This is because the transcendental overthrowing of spaces and individuals such apocalyptic authors create, does not represent an ultimate downfall but a type of catharsis, in the sense of purification (Krohn and Rendix 16). It is this purification that is also a key factor in Krohn and Rendix's definition of an apocalypse. In the Christian religious sense, it is the myths of creation that stands as the point of departure for the notions of the apocalyptic end (Krohn and Rendix 22). Hence, the perception is that the creation and the ultimate end coincide, similar to how Christ is the alpha and omega, to name just one of Krohn and Rendix's explanatory examples (18). Krohn and Rendix, therefore, take the position that they perceive the apocalypse in its religious traditional definition, during their study of precursors to the apocalyptic interest. Here the apocalypse means 'the clarification of everything', where all is illuminated by the apocalypse (21). Krohn and Rendix thus see the apocalypse as not only signaling destruction but also a rebirth to a new and better world (12). Likewise, Garrard accentuates the Greek term 'apo-calyptein', which means 'to unveil' (Garrard 94). Where the media image often portrays the apocalypse as finality, Krohn and Rendix thus highlight the life-giving and creative function of apocalyptic thinking, which they argue is the domicile for American ideology (12).

In the American apocalyptic context, it is thus Christian mythology that is at play, as Christianity to a very large extent contains many aspects of apocalypticism and is used as part of the rhetorical foundation for statements regarding moments of catastrophic horrors (21). Hereto, it is interesting to point out Garrard's explanation that as natural disasters served mediaeval millenarians, the current environmental crisis has, according to Garrard, a similar function, in the sense that such catastrophes are a sign of a forthcoming end of times, but the apocalypse was, however, not to be understood as a warning to mankind to avert it (97). It is thus not the intention to avoid the apocalypse that is in focus in the religious thought, but the acknowledgement that the end is coming and the anticipation of a revelation.

For this reason, it is interesting to see whether the apocalypses in TDAT and DLU follow similar religious patterns.

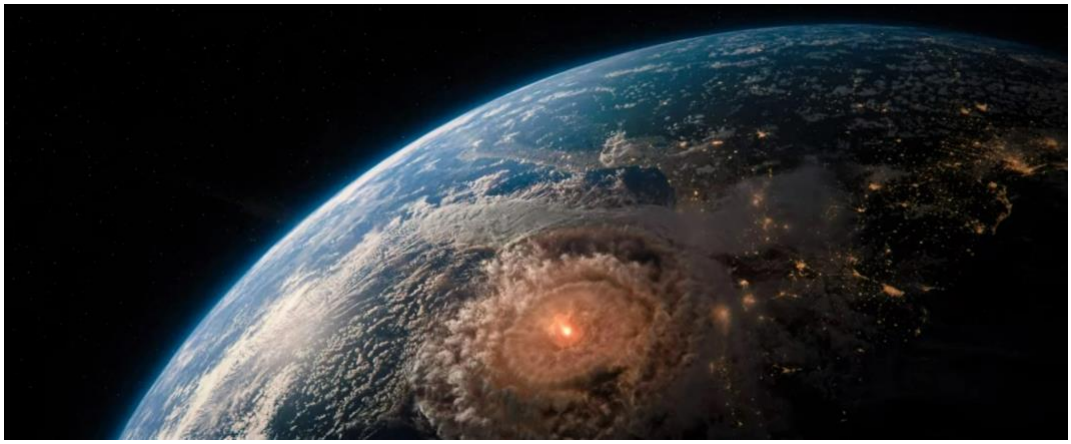
Such preaching of reason with the apocalyptic as the focal point is a rhetorical device used many times in American history. For example, apocalyptic rhetoric is epitomized in Ronald Reagan's first secretary of the interior, James Watt's arguments. Watt argued against environmental protection on the grounds that God would soon destroy the old Earth (Garrard 97). Additionally, Krohn and Rendix also bring several examples, as they point out an analysis of Georg Bush's statements in the wake of the terrorist attack of November 9, 2001. Studies of Bush's speech show that the president repeatedly based his statements on Christian dogmas regarding apocalyptic scenarios (21). With both TDAT and DLU including presidential actions and speeches, the movies can be compared in regard to if there are similar apocalyptic rhetoric used.

Krohn and Rendix furthermore present the argument that apocalyptic ideas help to create a form of social identity as they often describe a barrier between those who must survive and those who stand for perdition on the last day (23). Hence, what is important about the apocalypse, is not the end, but the actions taken before the apocalypse, as it is said this was how people were decided whether they deserve to reach the other side or not. In addition, the thought of apocalypse as purification arguably contributes to the self-understanding that makes it legitimate for the US government to start a war against Iraq (Krohn and Rendix 23). Thus, it is the structures in the Christian belief system that make it fair and reasonable to differentiate between humans and to relegate some people to hell and elevate others to paradise before the apocalypse (Krohn and Rendix 23). These aspects are arguably relevant to examine in relation to the two movies TDAT and DLU and will be looked further into later in the succeeding comparison.

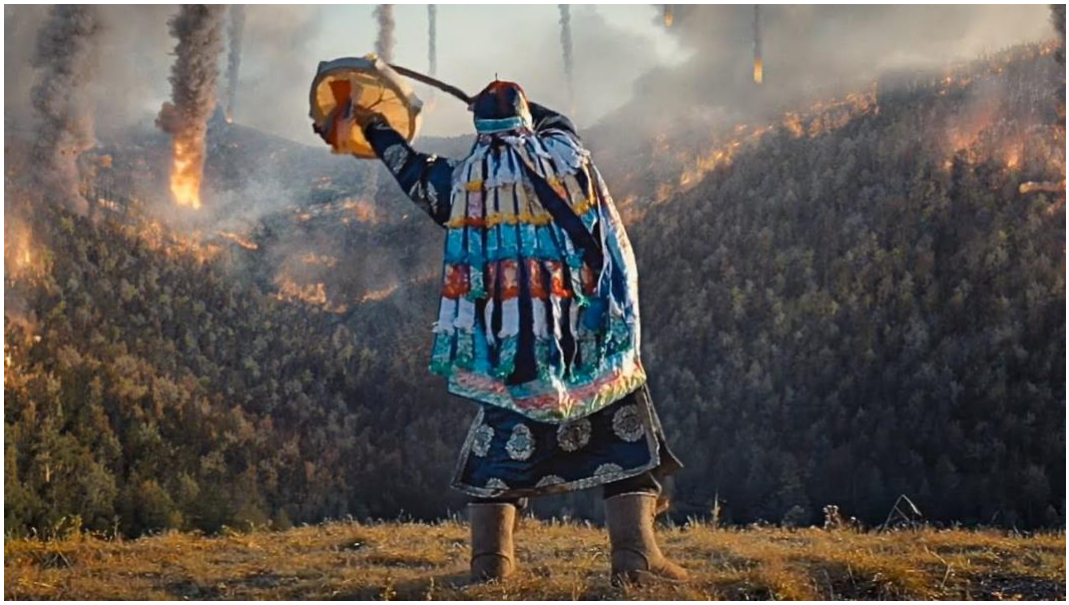
Comparison of the Apocalyptic Narratives in *The Day After Tomorrow* & *Don't Look Up*

Following the outline of several characteristics of apocalypticism in order to properly conceptualize the term for the comparative analysis, the descriptions of Garrard and Krohn and Rendix are forthwith analyzed in regard to the Twentieth Century Fox science fiction *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004) & the star-studded Netflix film *Don't Look Up* (2021). Moreover, I see great relevance in questioning whether the former described characterizations by Garrard and Krohn and Rendix, are conclusive and apply on equally grounds to TDAT and DLU, or if the two films deviate from the different depictions of an apocalypse. It is first and foremost engaging to look further into whether the apocalyptic

narratives in TDAT and DLU follow the tradition of theological and eschatological themes or if the movies present another objective and focus. DLU does portray some elements of a theological apocalypse to a small degree because the comet results in the planet's full destruction. To illustrate DLU's portrayal of the end of the world, two framegrabs are inserted below (2:03:02-2:06:22).



Framegrab of the comet creating big forces as it hits Earth (*Don't Look Up* 2:03:50).



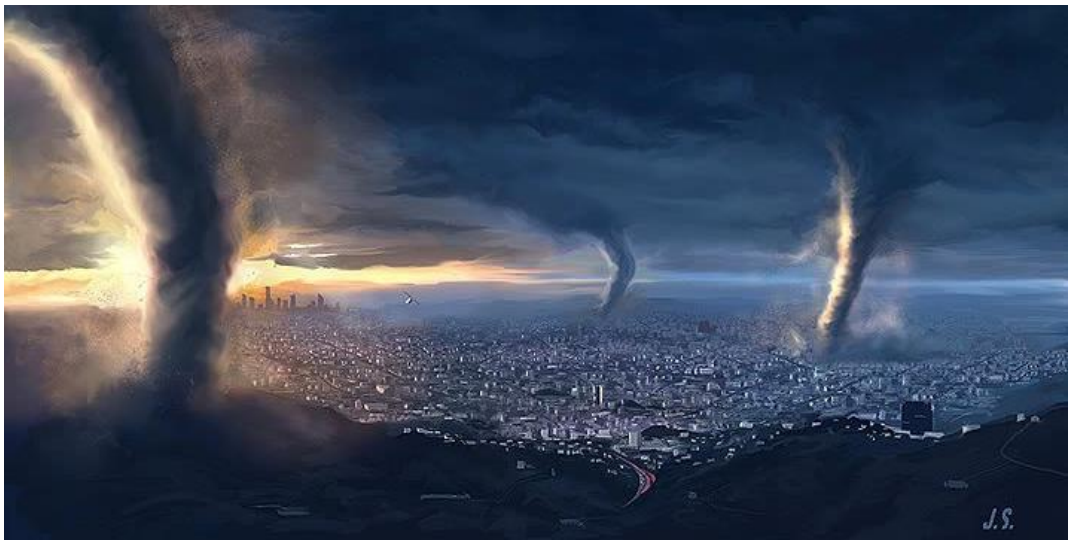
Framegrab of pieces from the comet destroying Earth (*Don't Look Up* 2:05:20).

The two images demonstrate the fatal arrival of comet Dibiasky, annihilating planet Earth. According to Dr. Mindy, the consequences will be far more catastrophic than a tidal wave. Dr. Mindy explains "There'll be mile-high tsunamis fanning out all across the globe. …it will the power of a billion Hiroshima bombs…there'll be magnitude of 10 or 11 earthquakes" (0:19:15). However, besides the depiction of the end of times as part of the apocalyptic

narrative, DLU mostly follows the politically revolutionary objective as seen in the later twentieth century to a greater extent. This will become apparent from the examples presented as the comparison proceeds.

Whilst both movies feature religious aspects through the apocalypse, I argue that TDAT is more traditional rather than political in the way it fits into the characteristics of apocalypticism. This is because the movie portrays planetary scenarios that not only resemble the religious perception of apocalypse as a catastrophic event, but the apocalypse in TDAT also brings the world to an end, to light up a new 'better' world. This correlates with Krohn and Rendix's explanation of apocalyptic. To demonstrate the impact of the apocalyptic climate changes, the following images are included.

Framegrab of large hailstones in Japan (*The Day After Tomorrow* 0:10:45).



Framegrab of multiple tornados in LA from *The Day After Tomorrow* (0:25:55).

Framegrab of the fatal tsunami destroying New York (*The Day After Tomorrow* 0:49:00).

These three images show the extreme weather event leading up to the ice storm. First, the global warming resulted in hailstones of the size of tennis balls in Japan. Then, several tornadoes appeared all over, while a catastrophic tsunami flooded New York City. The final scenes in TDAT exemplify the apocalypse' clarification, as the scenes depict the aftermath, when the Northern Hemisphere is under a new ice age (1:54:25). See framegrab below:

Framegrab of the sun lighting up New York after apocalyptic ice storm (1:47:35).

The framegrab is an illustration of the time after the ice storm has calmed. Here the sun rises above New York City and lights up the new, post-apocalyptic world.

Even though, Krohn and Rendix state that the life-giving function of apocalypses as a part of the theological thinking is the domicile for American ideology, there is not the same theological rhetoric displaying the apocalypse as a clarification in either movie. Despite the

religious perception of the apocalypse in TDAT, I nonetheless argue that the apocalyptic events both in TDAT and DLU serve as a warning for devastation, rather than it being a clarification of everything, as the characteristics of the traditional, theological definition of an apocalypse consists of. Hereto, what is interesting to highlight about the apocalyptic narratives in TDAT and DLU, is how they are different in their general focus on the world's end and the extent to which the planetary plays a role. Both movies include a planetary view in that it is also non-human organic world as well as human conditions that are at stake to become extinct by the apocalyptic event of both the ice age in TDAT and the comet in DLU. However, I argue that the points of departure for the end of times in the movies are different.

In TDAT, there is both a great focus on the whole planet's ecological system and how this is interrupted by global warming and caused by humans. At the beginning of the movie, Hall also advocates for the fate of the whole organic universe to be stopped exploitation (0:06:20), and the ice age in TDAT is depicted as an ecological crisis that includes the whole planet. Therefore, the objective in TDAT arguably accentuates the necessity for the fictional characters and leaders to see the planet as a world-ecology rather than as a financial-technocratic system, as it is portrayed that it was global warming that started the climate change affecting every country, continent, and ocean. But there is also much attention given to the attempts to save human culture throughout TDAT, and as one of the subjects of issue consists of humankind exploiting Earth as a financial-technocratic system, TDAT thereby includes a secular and politically objective, themes often used in the twentieth-century apocalyptic narratives (Garrard 97).

Likewise, in DLU it is first implied that in the preceding scenes prior to the comet's arrival, the focus is solely on the fate of human culture, rather than the whole organic universe of the planet. This is based on the themes emphasized in DLU, that insinuate political objectives to portray the issues with seeing the planet as a financial-technocratic system. An example that resembles such mindset is portrayed through the character of Peter Isherwell, a tech CEO of Bash who hopes to exploit the comet's precious minerals for his company (1:09:10), which arguably may symbolize America's leading billionaire visionaries. Hence, both TDAT and DLU include the topic of human exploitation of the planet. But the movies deviate, in the way the apocalypse in TDAT is a consequence of this issue, whereas it in DLU is a tacit sub-theme, only expressed through the character of Peter Isherwell, supported by the US government, who arguably caricatures the contemporary and capitalized people. This topic will be further compared in regard to the American environmental context when this is described later.

Of other apocalyptic characteristics described by Krohn and Rendix is the understanding of apocalypse as texts able to see through- and understand the present to an extent that they can be considered ahead of their time, which is inspired by the Revelation of Saint John (115). However, it is also concurrently stated that the reader should be reminded that the apocalyptic genre should not be interpreted as an expression of eternal truth endowed with a concrete historical goal by a God-given communicator (Krohn and Rendix 115). In this context, Garrard also explains that in narratological terms, apocalypticism is always 'proleptic'. This means that it has yet to come into being. Garrard stresses that this is worth remembering because apocalypticism is inevitably bound up with imagination (94).

I immediately see these two points as both being two relevant aspects to address. The former contains precisely the perspective that possibly makes apocalypticism popular and thus also constitutes the interest that makes the apocalyptic a genre. At the same time, there is also the aspect to it, that not every text or work that can be considered predictive or proleptic narratives is apocalyptic at its core. For example, the American animated sitcom *The Simpsons*. According to the article "17 Times *The Simpsons* Accurately Predicted the Future" (2017) from *Time*, the sitcom portrays the current reality of America to such an extent that the show has a reputation for having predicted certain events before they happen, without the show being apocalyptic. The latter is an important point to keep in mind when dealing with works that consist of any kind of apocalyptic factor, to consciously not give the author or director too much credit in the intentions of their work or to see the apocalyptic as the principal truth with a specific message to convey. However, the study of authorial intentions calls for an auteur approach, separate from this thesis' comparison.

Nevertheless, by simply being conscious about not submitting to the apocalyptic fiction as a direct picture of reality, I still consider this definition of the apocalyptic, not as definitive, but as an important part of understanding the concept. In relation to TDAT and DLU, I see similar proleptic traits in both movies. However only in the sense that they to some extent appear to understand the current state of the world in terms of representations of crisis such as ecological threats, virus pandemics, terrorism, as well as certain social and political issues that endure the planet and particularly in the United States in this context. While following the notion to perceive the apocalyptic works as mere fiction, it is only within the portrayals symbolizing reality, that the movies are able to serve as predictions. Though, the movies are not considered proleptic in that they predict the future of the planet with their portrayals of a global crisis, why the movies in this regard do not comply with said described features that defines apocalyptic narratives.

In this context, I emphasize that there are, of course, other ways of understanding apocalypse than the previously described, theological way; as both the rebirth and doom of the Earth, or the above description inspired by the Revelation of John, about the predictive ability of apocalyptic texts. To shortly name an example, Krohn and Rendix (2007) also acknowledge Lois Parkinson Zamora's *The Apocalyptic Vision in America* (1982), where the concept of apocalypse has been differentiated with the polarity between utopia and dystopia to the criterion of whether a given text is apocalyptic (15). In relation to Zamora attention to the dystopian concept, Ihab Hassen also describes that the apocalyptic strikes the tone of the spiritual utopia, and that no matter how dark the idea of an apocalypse may be, it will always be closely related to utopia (Krohn and Rendix 184). Thereby, it is understood that apocalypse and utopia are connected in the belief of a potential utopia being unveiled from the apocalyptic event.

The fact that a utopia coincides with certain dystopian themes of apocalypticism, I argue, is sensible in that there are often utopian beliefs behind the eschatological actions in apocalyptic fiction. For example, in Margaret Atwood's futuristic dystopian novel *The Handmaid's Tale* from 1985. *The Handmaid's Tale* centers around the dystopian Gilead. Here, it is the appointed antagonist of the story, who are guilty of creating dystopia in Gilead, which is managed by a radical political group called the "Sons of Jacob" that uses theonomic ideology. They base their society on utopian ideas from the Old Testament in order to correct the current dystopian state of the world in an era of environmental pollution and radiation, but this ends up having the opposite effect.

Granted that there is a certain dystopia present in the pre-apocalyptic state in TDAT and DLU, as the apocalypse within the movies is set to happen upon a 'broken' society or world in the first place, the level of such utopia being unveiled by the apocalyptic event differs in TDAT and DLU. Though this polarity between utopia and dystopia is not the focus of my comparison, I argue that the extent of utopian/dystopian features within the movies, says a great deal about how the narration of the endings differs in how the apocalypses are attempted to be handled before and after the apocalypse. More specifically, the apocalyptic narratives in TDAT and DLU arguably diverge from each in how they are considered comic or tragic. The literary concepts of comedy and tragedy are presented and applied to TDAT and DLU in the following.

Comic & Tragic Elements in The Day After Tomorrow & Don't Look Up

In his descriptions, Garrard argue that the drama of apocalypse is shaped by a 'frame of acceptance' that either is 'comic' or 'tragic', and the choice of how the apocalyptic story is framed, determines the way in which the representation of time, agency, authority, and crisis are dramatized (95). For example, Garrard explains that tragic time is often predetermined and epochal, as well as it careers towards a final, catastrophic conclusion. But time framed as comic is open-ended and episodic (95). Besides the fact that, by definition, a comedy has a happy ending stand in contrast to the unhappy ending in a tragedy, there are other notable differences to highlight. For example, the plot of a comedy shows the uprise of the protagonist, also referred to as the comic hero. In contrast, the tragedy is characterized by the downfall of the tragic hero, and the tragic typically causes fear and pity in the audience, with the effect of purgation, or 'catharsis' (Aristotle 8-14). The element of purgation evoked by tragic narratives thus also correlates with Krohn and Rendix's notion of catharsis from apocalypticism.

Based on this description, TDAT is considered comic, as there are scenes portraying the aftermath of the apocalypse surrounding the survival of small groups of people in the new New York covered with ice (1:54:19), as well as the presidential speech on how humankind come together in recovery (1:51:43). The apocalyptic narrative has thus an open ending, resembling a new time of life of the planet, giving the characters as well as the audience a sense of catharsis upon the partly survival of humankind. Contrary to TDAT, DLU is a tragedy, because the film's trajectory is portrayed to end in a conclusive manner that appears to be the end of time for planet Earth where the whole organic universe is extinguished, except the few people invited by the president to travel to a new planet (1:59:45, 2:08:24).

Moreover, despite DLU being a satirical parody, the film is also a tragedy because the narrative is predetermined by the calculation of the comet's time of arrival in approximal six months (0:07:30). Though, in this regard, time is also framed as tragic to some extend in TDAT as the apocalypse of the ice age is predetermined during the estimated time until full climate change, we receive twice. The first time is at the climate conference in New Delhi, after Hall explains that global warming could lead to a new ice age, and when he is asked when he think it might happen, he says "maybe in 100 years, maybe in 1000" (05:00-07:45). However later in the film, Hall recalculates, and inform US Vice President, Raymond Becker, that there are only 6-8 weeks until a new ice age (0:35:48).

Besides looking at the portrayal of the end and post-apocalyptic scenes, the comic and tragic also differs in how the apocalypse is attempted to be handled before the happening.

Hereto, Garrard explains that in a tragic narrative, the evil is decided in terms of guilt, and its mechanism of redemption is victimage, which is closely related to how the tragic plot moves inexorably toward sacrifice. In contrast, comedy conceives of evil as error, which is exemplified by its mechanism of redemption being of recognition rather than victimage (Aristotle 13-14). Hence, the comic plot does not move towards a sacrifice but is often defined by the exposure of fallibility (Garrard 95).

In addition to the open ending that makes TDAT comic, there are also corresponding displays of the comic characteristic of fallibility in the movie. For example, when the protagonists, multiple times, attempt to notify about the climate changes and extreme weather conditions. First, when American paleoclimatologist, Jack Hall presents his research showing that climate change could cause an ice age at the New Delhi conference (0:05:00). Here his concerns are dismissed. Hall then tries to get Vice President Becker to consider evacuations in the Northern States, but Becker refuses (0:37:10). Later in the movie, Jack's son Sam also tries to advice the people around him in New York, to seek inside before the ice storm, by recommendation of his father, but some does not listen. Despite much struggle, humankind fall due to this fallibility and later the superstorm kills people with its cold at approximal negative 150 degrees Fahrenheit (00:41:30).

Subsequently, the redemption in TDAT consists of the recognition of mistakes that has led them towards the extreme weathers and later the new ice age, which thereby contributes to the comic narrative. Additionally, societal issues in the US regarding class, as well as certain problematic positions and attitudes are also portrayed and brought into light during the movie. For example, the pre-apocalyptic scenes during the extreme weather portrayals presented earlier in images, show that such problems with laws and norms are not left behind during a fatal crisis. Among others, a homeless man and his dog is refused to seek shelter in a New York library, as streets were flooded during the tsunami in New York, before the superstorm (0:46:24).

Furthermore, at the US borders to Mexico, Americans are refused access into Mexico to evacuate south for survival (1:13:03), resulting in Americans illegally and desperately crossing the borders into Mexico in other ways. This is depicted in the framegrab below:

Framegrab of US citizens crossing into Mexico (*The Day After Tomorrow* 1:13:03)

The image above illustrates the gravity of the consequence of the borderland rivalry between the United States and Mexico. The conflict between the US and Mexico and the environmental issues are brought up again after the apocalyptic storm. Here, the mistakes in the handling of the crisis is recognized in the presidents' televised speech. President Becker says:

> These past few weeks have left us all with a profound sense of humility in the face of nature's destructive power. For years we operated under the belief that we could continue consuming our planet's natural resources without consequence. We were wrong. I was wrong. The fact that my first address to you comes from a consulate on foreign soil (Mexico), is a testament to our changed reality. Not only Americans, but people all around the globe are now guests in the nations we once called The Third World. In our time of need, they have taken us in and sheltered us, and I am deeply grateful for their hospitality. (1:51:45)

In this final scene, it is thus implied that last of American population, together with the now befriended countries try to redeem themselves. Thereby, it is also clear how the apocalyptic narrative can be considered as a clarification of current problems in contemporary American society. Though this is further exemplified later.

In relation to DLU, even though the movie frames the ending as tragic, there are also comic features implemented in DLU. The Netflix film is considered a satire, and according to Aristotle's distinction between tragedy and comedy, the comedy aims at representing men as worse, where tragedy typically depicts the better than in actual life (Aristotle 5). Similarly, DLU is comic in this sense, as it arguably parodies the human state of real life's problematics and mankind as bad, instead of being a portrayal of the better. DLU is also considered comic

by the exposure of fallibility in the movie, when the protagonists fail to avert the comet twice, as well as Professor Randall Mindy and Kate Dibiasky fails to warn about the incoming threat in the sense that it is taken seriously. On the opposite side, there are also tragic sacrifices made in DLU to avert the comet. Though, there are not many sacrifices, an example is when the retired astronaut, commander Benedict Drask, needs to accompany the rocket, to deflect the comet away from Earth (1:03:32-1:07.00). Instead of trying to blow the comet out of its course solely by remote technology, the president needs a hero for the task, where to Dr. Oglethorpe explains "Washington's always gotta have a hero…" (0:52:07). The choice then falls on patriot, Benedict Drask, and about his mission, Drask says: "some says this is a… suicide mission. Well, all I ask is, if I get snuffed, that you all earn the extra living my sacrifice give to you" (0:53:00). In accordance with Garrard's notion on tragedy's typical depiction of sacrifices, DLU is also a tragedy in this sense.

Even though it is not many grand sacrifices depicted in TDAT, the movie nevertheless also includes a few scenes where necessary sacrifices are made in the struggles to survive the global cooling. For example, when Hall and his accompanies trekked a hundred miles on snowshoes to get to New York, one of Hall's friends dies in order for the rest of the crew to continue the mission (1:22:40). Though it is not the ultimate sacrifice, Halls' son Sam also sacrifices himself in to obtain medical supplies from a stranded ship in the middle of a frozen New York City (1:33:09-1:41:10). However, the examples of sacrifices in TDAT and DLU are equally minimal and arguably low in the degree of importance in contrast to grand sacrifices in tragedies of passion such as *Romeo and Juliet*. For this reason, I argue that the tragic element of sacrifice is rather vague in both movies. Besides the tragic sacrifices, TDAT arguably also provides the audience with sense of fear from the apocalyptic ice storm's deadly impact, why the movie is tragic in this sense. Equally to TDAT, DLU may also cause fear and pity in the audience, when the characters fail to deflect the comet and it therefore destroys planet Earth. Thus, both movies correlate with Garrard's outline of apocalyptic characteristics typically seen in comic and tragic narratives to different degrees. Because TDAT and DLU feature elements of both tragedy and comedy, it appears that the two movies cannot be categorized diametrically into being either comic or tragic,

The Magnitude of the End

TDAT and DLU are two different types of apocalyptic fiction. TDAT depict environmental problems leading the eschatological narrative in a more transparent manner, while DLU portrays a disastrous apocalypse as an end of all times, with implicit parallels to the climate crisis. For this reason, a secluded sub-category of apocalypticism with a focus on environmental themes such as pollution becomes evident. Garrard (2012) explains that conceptions of the end of the world was redefined as the imagery of nuclear detonation became more popular, particularly with the portrayals of pollution being exceptionally potent (103). Hereto, Rachel Carson's environmental science book *Silent Spring* from 1962, exemplifies this type of apocalyptic writing, that regards problematic themes such as radioactive fallout, chemicals, and in general, the consequences of pollution (Garrard 103).

A characteristic feature of such tragic apocalyptic rhetoric is how pollution is irrecoverable, and the chain of evil it initiates, can be regarded as irreversible. This is also why the warning, often stating that the dangers are not only imminent but also already under way, is presented as absolute authority (Garrard 103). In Carson's apocalyptic rhetoric, it seems as if she does not offer a sense of hope that the catastrophe may be averted, because the threats outlined are so pervasive and irreversible (Garrard 104). Even though the themes of the apocalyptic works TDAT and DLU does not portray the threat of pollution as such, I argue that it is, nevertheless, interesting to examine the degree of whether the apocalypse in TDAT and DLU can be regarded as irrecoverable or irreversible. This is relevant to look further into, as the apocalyptic rhetoric used in each movie, may determine how the narrative of the end of the world unfolds, specifically regarding the different endings in TDAT and DLU.

First and foremost, both TDAT and DLU portray an imminent threat that is under the way in the movies' beginning at an alarming speed, and thereby I consider both apocalypses to be pervasive in the sense that both the climate change in TDAT and the meteor in DLU are threating to the whole planet. The warnings, however, are not perceived as with full authority, as when the characters in both movies alert the US leaders, the dangers are disregarded. Thereby, the apocalyptic narratives of TDAT and DLU contradict Garrard's remark on apocalyptic characteristics from above. Both movies, however, present an apocalyptic rhetoric in which the narrative implies a focus on preservation of human culture and how to avert the catastrophe, rather than an interest to safe the organic universe in its entirety of species.

However, the movies are different in the sense that the apocalypse in DLU evolves into being severely irreversible, as the closed ending of the movie suggests that once the disastrous comet hits Earth, there are no planet or humans that can survive. This is for example portrayed in the beginning of the movie, as Dr. Mindy tells Dr. Calder from Kennedy Space Center and Dr. Oglethorpe, head of The Planetary Defense Coordination Office that the comet is five to ten kilometers wide, which means an extinction-level event (0:6:00-0:8:10). Furthermore, Dr. Mindy and Kate Dibiasky's multiple attempts at telling people about the dangers of the comet consists of a rhetoric that establish the ending as final, when Dibiasky says "we're trying to tell you that the entire planet is about to be destroyed… we're all 100% for sure gonna fucking die!" (0:37:10-0:41:00). Thus, despite presenting a sense of hope, both for the fictional characters as well as the audience, in the attempts to preclude the comet, there are no catharsis in this apocalyptic story.

On the contrary, the open ending in TDAT suggest a sense of hope and recovery of the planet that just entered a state that resembles a new ice age. Moreover, the rhetoric used throughout in TDAT arguably foreshadows and shapes the open ending. This is based on its focus on how the population may be able to endure and withstand the superstorm as Jack proposes Vise president Becker to evacuate American population to the souths or to seek shelter. There is also a scene where Jack was able to recreate a thermal cycle on a computer program which shows that the storm will hit in seven to ten days. It is here, that Jack uses the words "when this storm is over, we'll be in a new ice age" (0:52:05-0:53:11). TDAT is therefore different from DLU, as this apocalyptic rhetoric allow for a catharsis to happen in the narrative of apocalypse as not only destruction but also life-giving by the 'unveiling' elements. The apocalypse in DLU is thus regarded as irrecoverable to a greater extend that in TDAT. In relation to evaluating the degree of the apocalypse' menace in the movies, there is also another way to classify the level of threat of a fictional apocalypse, which is described in the succeeding paragraph.

Taxonomy of Apocalypse - Brian Russel Graham

Despite the outline of apocalyptic descriptions in regard to its definition and narrational employment, also additionally specified in an American context, there is another perspective to be taken. To get a deeper understanding of the concept 'apocalypse', I thus present Brian Russel Graham's account for the meaning of apocalypse in "Fictions of Apocalypse: Taxonomy and Meaning" (2013), as Graham divides the term into different degrees, or

taxonomies if you will. According to Graham, from a general point of view, studies of post-apocalyptic fiction often focus on one of three issues: the genre's didactic focus, theoretical association with the postmodern, or the genre as a subtype of the utopian/dystopian genre. However, Graham argues that a study specifying the types of post-apocalyptic fiction is missing, why he set out to outline these (21). Graham's point of departure is based on the notion that depending on the specific degree of apocalypse, it will point to different types of stories (21). Even though Graham's focus is on post-apocalyptic fiction, which the interest of my thesis does not comply to, his description of apocalyptic fiction in general is relevant for my attempt to characterize the gravity of the apocalypses in TDAT and DLU. This will contribute to the comparison of how TDAT and DLU operate with the eschatological depictions

As the genre often is perceived as pessimistic, in that it often focuses on a terrifying end of times, Graham takes on the position that the genre can also encourage to consideration of positive social goals. More specifically, in the sense that we return to visions of restoration and redemption from spiritual and religious traditions (22). Graham's point of view is expressed in the way he describes fictions of apocalypse, saying that even though it is often represented by scenes of devastation, there are different ways of interpretating the kind of devastation (22). There is of course the traditional type of devastation, where the demise is divided into affecting both mankind, the animal kingdom, and the vegetable world, implying that the destruction of the world is total, and the emphasis is on the passing of the old rather than the arrival of the new (Graham 23). It is however, these three categories in which Graham separates and categorize the level of devastation. For example, in some apocalyptic fiction, the end of the world only affects human life, and animal and plant life are left intact. Similar to how we also can categorize the stories in which we see human and animal life be extinguished, and where plant life survives (Graham 24). Other apocalyptic fictions appear to add a fourth and a fifth category, so it is not only human, animal, vegetable life, but also the mineral, including cities and deserts, and the watery world that are destroyed (Graham 24).

Based on these taxonomies that Graham lays out, it is interesting to see which degree of apocalypse is present in the narratives of TDAT and DLU. In terms of TDAT, the apocalypse is considered to affect the human, animal, vegetable and to some degree, mineral life by the climate changes, extreme weather conditions and at the end, the new ice age. However, based on the assumption that the superstorm took out much animal and vegetable life, there are still part of the human life that survived and cities standing, though not completely intact, also mentioned above. In contrast to DLU, where all five categories

essentially suffer from demise, even though we can only assume this from the closed ending. Despite the focus on different levels of destruction, Graham takes on a rather positive perspective to it. Hereto, Graham adds that the worlds in which such apocalyptic narratives exist, are often characterized by unstable hierarchy and on-going fights for supremacy (27). For example, the explicit environmental view of TDAT as well as the implicit narrative of climate debate in DLU expresses the troubles of the hierarchy in which mankind dominates nature.

In addition to this, there is arguably also a hierarchy to be spotted from a Marxist and social perspective, as both TDAT and DLU shows the audience problematic hierarchies and attitudes that still circulate the American society. Here, the Presidential speech in the end of TDAT, mentioned previously, exemplifies such topics that are being illuminated by the apocalypse. The covert ecological themes in DLU comprise the movie to a story of climate change, science denial, as well as it highlights the dynamics that prevent societies from confronting existential challenges. DLU stresses the problems of how a foundation of post-modern individualism have a negative influence on the choices made during a crisis, both from political, societal, and environmental point of views. For example, President Orlean cares more about her campaign than the future of the planet (0:49:00-0:50:12), while she has chosen a strategy of 'comet denial' at the prodding of tech industry plutocrat, Peter Isherwell (1:39:29-1:41:30). The attempt to deflect the comet lies thus only on selfish grounds. In the final post-apocalyptic scenes, where the comet assumingly has destroyed the whole planet, there is also a notion of class inequality, that represents how the rich, important characters are able to survive as they go aboard of the president's rocket and travel to a new planet, as the rest of the planet are left to diminish (2:08:31).

Continuing with the subject of social classes, a rather beneficial prospect to eschatological stories, it that they namely bring social issues and inequalities into light. According to Graham, apocalyptic fictions invite us to consider what a world with no hierarchy or fight for supremacy world look like (29). Hence, the apocalyptic world, is really a world of desires, in which I assume the hierarchy between levels of reality has been abolished. Moreover, another optimistic point of view to apocalypses lies in the aspect in which the demise of one category also entails the survival and rise of another. Thus, the demise of mankind and the animal kingdom, means the rise of plants, or destruction of humans, animals and plants, often means the rise of the mineral world (Graham 28-29). The point to be drawn here is that with the rise of a specific type of life, also comes the planet's redemption and revelation of preeminence and other issues from the pre-apocalyptic society.

However, I only recognize TDAT as the type of apocalyptic fiction that can have the ability to show a new 'better' world after the apocalypse by presenting hope for utopia. Nevertheless, the apocalyptic genre can thus encourage consideration of positive social goals in the scenes of restoration in for example TDAT (1:47:48-1:55:50).

Based on employment of Garrard's notion of taxonomy of apocalyptic narratives to TDAT and DLU, it is thus evident how much of an impact the comet in DLU and the ice storm in TDAT have, due to Graham's taxonomy, of which only three categories are affected in TDAT, but all five suffer from the comet in DLU leading to the ultimate demise. Thereby, this sub-analysis derives the possibility to broaden the perspective for the audience to perceive the apocalypses, similar to Andersen's planetary view, where the use of scale contributes to a larger outlook and a global view of the gravity and menace of the apocalypse. the effect of the planetary view of the apocalypses in TDAT and DLU are further discussed later.

The Good Versus the Evil

In a similar context to Graham's notion of positive effects of the apocalyptic genre, Garrard (2011) likewise believes that eschatological narratives shed light on philosophical and political problems. Furthermore, he argues that they tend to polarize responses, prodding skeptics toward scoffing dismissal and potentially inciting believers to confrontation and even violence, which is a pattern that has familiarity from conflicts between liberal society and apocalyptic cults (114). Together with the notion that apocalypses can result in paranoia, violence, and a moral dualism of good and bad, mentioned above (94), Garrard thus suggests that features of polarization between the characters are typical in apocalyptic narratives. According to Garrard, polarization "fosters a delusive search for culprits and causes that may be reductively conceived by conflating very varied environmental problems within the concept of a singular, imminent 'environmental crisis'" (115). The quote thereby implies that the search for culprits is often hidden underneath the depiction of environmental problems, that is, the apocalypse. Thus, in apocalyptic narratives, it is actually not the apocalypse that is the antagonist, despite it being presented as the overall threat. It is, however, often conflicts between the skeptics, being the antagonist and the protagonist heroes, that dominate the portrayal and stands as the cause. Regarding my comparative analysis, it is fascinating to examine the two movies in relation to how the apocalyptic rhetoric in the works shares a

similar tendency in polarizing the responses of the good and evil, as well as whether there is a certain focus on finding a culprit**.**

I have already shortly touched upon the protagonist and antagonist of the movies, however, in this context, it is interesting to conduct a further comparison of whether the characters also are divided into the good versus the evil in TDAT and DLU. Hereto, the movies are also examined in regard to how they comply with the tendency of a determined culprit in apocalyptic fiction. The antagonists of the two eschatological stories are surprisingly not the apocalypse itself but often established by the moral division between humankind. In TDAT, the protagonist Jack Hall, as well as his son Sam resembles the 'good'. They are portrayed as the intelligent heroes who seek to save humankind in a fight to warn the leaders of America to take precautions while the vice president believes there are other more important matters to attend. Thereby the ignoring leaders are established as the antagonist of the story already in the beginning. They are depicted as the 'bad' in the search for culprits or causes, guilty of the mistakes made during the apocalyptic climate change. In accordance with Garrard's descriptions, TDAT reduces the overall theme and message of the current environmental crisis into depicting several severe weather events. The search for culprits or causes is obscured by the larger focus on the hailstorm, tsunami, and tornados, rather than the real cause to the environmental problem. The cause for the apocalyptic climate change is first acknowledged in President Becker's speech at the end of the movie. Becker's speech, presented previously, addresses that the cause lies on the mistake of mankind to believe that it is possible to continue consuming the resources of the planet without consequence (1:51:45).

In DLU, a similar moral polarization of characters is portrayed. In DLU, it is the intelligent Dr. Mindy and PhD. student Kate Dibiasky who resembles the 'good' side. They fight to warn US President Orlean and try to get help with the propaganda about the dangers of the comet. But Orlean and her supporters, degrade the disastrous threat of the comet in denial when they first learn about it, and later when the mission to deflect the comet is cancelled in midair, Orlean promotes a "don't look up"- campaign against the asteroid hurtling towards Earth. Thus, in DLU, it is likewise the people in charge, who are established as the 'bad' characters. Additionally, it is not only the main characters who are divided. DLU also show how the apocalypse splits the American society in two. Portrayals of the role of social media show that there are both groups of "just-look up"- supporters (1:38:50) and conspiracy groups denying the comet (0:46:36, 0:55:52). However, in DLU, the search for causes or culprits is portrayed differently. The president and comet-deniers serve as the

culprits, as there is not the same explanation of the cause of the comet's destruction of Earth, why the blame falls upon the antagonist of the story.

As Garrard states, the point of departure for determining the good and the evil in apocalyptic, and specifically environmental narratives, often concerns moral division. Both TDAT and DLU exemplify this. Especially through the depictions of the heroic protagonists, who are portrayed to be morally correct in the attempts to save as much of the population as possible before the catastrophic event occurs. It is thus the people in charge, who are morally in the wrong, that is. However, from a deeper look at TDAT, some scenes show that the notion of correct moral decisions is more ambiguous than the mere polarization of what is right and wrong. For example, during an emergency meeting between the Jack Hall and President Blake, Vice President Becker, General Pierce, and the Secretary of State, Hall proposes to evacuate the Northern American cities that have yet to be affected by the superstorm, saying "evacuate everyone south of that line". Hereto, Hall is asked: "what about the people in the North?", to which Jack explains "I'm afraid it's too late for them. If they go outside, the storm will kill them". Becker then replies, "we can't evacuate half the country, because one scientist thinks the climate is shifting". And after the Secretary of State points out to Becker that "we need to save the people we can". Becker then asks: "what about the other half of the country?... I don't accept that abandoning half the country is necessary!" (1:03:10-1:06:10).

Thus, Hall's use of consequentialism in TDAT implies that saving as many people as possible is morally right. However, Becker challenges this utilitarian, moral logic. He uses his deontological intuition instead because he also considers the people in the North already affected. The antagonist in TDAT becomes more complex than first determined. Even though there are no implications that the apocalyptic purification of the world is used as a legitimation of the deaths, there are nevertheless utilitarian notions of an implicit hierarchy that determines who gets to survive and who does not. This is also present in DLU when President Orlean exploits her advantages in her high position. She has her own escape spaceship so she can abandon Earth in case of an apocalypse when the rest of the population is forced to stay back. Orlean lives to see the annihilation of the planet, even though she is morally incorrect in her actions, or lack of actions, to avert the apocalypse. Hence, it is not morals and values that determine whether a person deserves to live through the clarification of the apocalypse, but the dysfunctional morals of the utilitarian government in DLU. Hence, the comparison derives that politics and power are prevalent factors in TDAT and DLU, why these henceforth are further analyzed. Heretofore, the comparison has studied the manner in

which TDAT and DLU articulate the concept of apocalypticism. For the purpose of a comprehensive comparison of TDAT and DLU, I now direct the attention towards the contexts of the two movies.

Contextualization - Environmental History

Following up on the different perspectives regarding political notions such as the above-mentioned portrayals of leaders as antagonists, specifically concerning President Becker in TDAT and President Orlean in DLU, I find it relevant to examine representations of politics portrayed in the two movies further. For this reason, I later present Elizabeth Haas, Terry Christensen, and Peter J. Haas' book *Projecting politics: political messages in American film* (2015), in order to consider the political context of the movies. This is because Haas et al. argue that there is a coincidence between recent American federal government dysfunction, and the disaster-apocalyptic movie genre. They also advocate the recognition of that confluence, by looking at the popular disaster films in their political context of their times (344). The latter notion also correlates with my goal of studying the contexts.

Hereof, my inspiration also derives from Quentin Skinner's notion of textual agency, about the necessity of heeding the context of the text you are reading. Skinner argues that to uncover a text's historical identity, one needs to see what it was doing at the time of publication, as well as how it engages(d) with social realities (Jensen, 2021 20). Therefore, in the pursuit of contextualizing the apocalyptic movies TDAT and DLU to get a comprehensive understanding of the two, I will first highlight a few relevant aspects of America's environmental history as a foundation for the analysis of the context in which TDAT and DLU exist.

In *The Oxford Handbook of Environmental History* (2014), Andrew C. Isenberg writes that textbooks in American, European, and world history from thirty years back, included very little environmental history, why historians need also to consider encounters and collisions with all organisms in the Earth's ecosystem (1). In relation to this, Frits Andersen's call for a more comprehensive ecological framework or vocabulary, that can encapsulate the world's current environmental position and portrayals of such, appears relevant here. Following Andersen's view, I immediately emphasize historical accounts from Isenberg's book to understand the antecedent of the world's ecology from an American perspective. This may help interpret the environmental context in which TDAT and DLU exist, as well as to study the accuracy of the ecological (problematic) portrayals the films provide.

The newer form of environmental history functions as a host that integrates other subfields equally complex as itself, namely fields engaging in class, race, ethnicity, gender, consumption, borderlands, labor, law, and the history of science (Isenberg 10). However, the following description merely specifies the latter topics such as consumption, borderlands, and labor, based on their relevance to TDAT and DLU. The environmental history that is explained here, is also specified in the American context. Studies and historians appear to both recognize that one cannot simply divide culture and nature into diametral camps (Isenberg 23-24). Therefore, today's scholars do not only examine the direct and indirect impacts of climate on societies, but also climate as a social construct rather than only examining climate in its physical, measurable forms (Isenberg 24).

The most influential climatic shifts in human history include the Younger Dryas (12,900-11,500 years ago), the Holocene (11,500 years ago), a rapid-onset cool period from about 8,200 years ago, the Medieval Warm Period (around 1350 AD), the little Ice Age (from 1450-1850), and since the end of the Little Ice Age, we have lived in the age of the Global Warming, also called the Anthropocene. This era is characterized by a pronounced human impact on Earth (Isenberg 25). In relation to the environmental impact of specifically America, there are several, both positive and negative aspects to present. First and foremost, the twentieth century is known to have carried environmental consequences of resource consumption, energy use and pollution, unlike any century that preceded. But, on a positive note, it is also important to recognize the twentieth century for the prominent work to protect the natural world, particularly by the United States for establishing the idea of national parks (Isenberg 282).

On the contrary, from a negative point of view, consumerism has been a great part of environmental concern in America. Isenberg explains that, with help from the industrial agricultural system and great support from the government since the nineteenth century (474), the question of why Americans would not restrain their appetites, serving as the source of the entire problem, was rather prevailing during the nineteenth century (481). The United States also has a history with fossil fuels as a problematic consumer product, as Petroleum greased the rails of industrialism, according to Isenberg, and thus became a great concern over a degraded natural world (486). Even though an environmental movement began by the end of the nineteenth century in America where recycling where more advocated as a response to consumerism (Isenberg 488), there was still a problem from the mid-nineteenth century, where the idea of claiming lands to mine and exploit minerals was essential for much of the US's economy, regardless of the impact according to Isenberg (528-529). Later

in the comparison, it is examined how these elements of consumerism and exploitation also play a role in the apocalyptic movies. Likewise, it will become prevalent how there also is a connection to historical factors such as borderlands issues.

In this regard, other scholars have also focused on the ecological impact of national boundaries, including the politics of boundary creation, and the role of borders in the formation and maintenance of national identity (Isenberg 669). For example, the study of the Río Grande, which borders Mexico and the United States, stands as the flashpoint for the international rivalry between the two nations (Isenberg 670). The river is a great example of how nature not always abides by the dictates of federal officials trying to establish boundary laws or treaties, as the river shifted its course around 1868. Isenberg also adds that the United States on the first try in 1911, rejected a solution to resolve the territorial dispute before presidents John F. Kennedy and Adolfo Lopez-Mateos signed the Chamizal Treaty in 1964 (670). In addition to the US-Mexico borderland controversies, the idea of transnational parks such as the Chamizal International Peace Park is another illustration of how national boundary causes problems. Despite the idea of peace-parks was intended to commemorate the resolution between Mexico and the United States, the park foundered as the US had concerns about illegal immigration and national security (Isenberg 671).

Since the massive industrial expansion of the late nineteenth century, transborder pollution has been a great concern in North America. For example, the issue of acid rain that falls on the border between America and Canada, where an international report states that up to 80 percent of the pollution is attributed to the United States (Isenberg 674). Despite US president Jimmy Carter urging a solution to this pollution, Ronald Reagan was not interested in solving the problem (Isenberg 674). However, on a rather positive note, the concern of pollution did lead to the environmental implication of the NAAEC treaty in 1994 between the US, Canada, and Mexico, to ensure cooperation and improvement in the environmental protection provided by each country to regulate their impact (Isenberg 675). Though this was made difficult as later presidencies have prioritized the environmental problems differently.

According to Isenberg, the United States was the main obstacle to specific climate goals that were postponed and not turned into policy (Isenberg 707). For example, the Bush Administration announced that the United States would not implement the Kyoto Protocol, an international treaty signed in 1997 in Kyoto, Japan requiring nations to reduce their individual greenhouse gas emissions. Isenberg argues that President George W. Bush had been unsympathetic to the notion of the US should take part in pursuing precautionary approaches to climate change (707). According to the article "Repudiation and Regret: Is the

United States Sitting Out the Kyoto Protocol to its Economic Detriment?" (2007), the reason that the Bush Administration rejected the protocol, was because they claimed that ratifying the treaty would create economic setbacks in the U.S (442).

Environmental change is also connected to the effect of emerging or re-emerging infectious diseases (EID), as we have seen the recent COVID-19 pandemic suddenly erupted. According to Isenberg, it is anthropogenic and frequent environmental changes that trigger new epidemics (94-95). Isenberg notes that due to the irruption of the global AIDS pandemic in the 1980s and the following focus on the failure of the public health establishment, it is now assumed that technological and economic development play a part in the production of change in disease patterns. Therefore, Isenberg predicts that EID will constitute a great concern within health establishments throughout the twenty-first century (94). Reasons for increased EID outbreaks are for example the combination of reforestation, suburban development, and industrialized agriculture in the US (Isenberg 95). Hereto, Isenberg emphasizes the effect of tuberculosis, or "the white plague", in industrialized cities, calling it a penalty that the capitalistic society paid for ruthless exploitation of labor (86-87). Moreover, as industrialization in the US was driven by the consumption of coal, the increase in diseases is also associated with pollution (Isenberg 88). Hereof, it becomes clear how economic, capitalistic goals and the accelerated evolvement of technology helped industrialize agriculture and exploitation of for example coal.

Though, an opposed notable remark of Isenberg's gives a brief mention of the benefits of technological development. Technologies also helped materialize the environment as a concept. For example, technology enables the US space program and widely distributed Apollo photographs of Earth to have helped foster the image of planet Earth as cohesive, interdependent, and vulnerable (237). According to Isenberg, an explosion in satellite employment reinforced consideration for the planet and the need for earthly politics, as it facilitated a new conception of the world's continents and planetary landscapes as a whole (237). This point resonates with Andersen's notion of the planetary view, allowing a broader perspective to view environment texts such as TDAT and DLU. The relevance and benefits of this broad planetary view will become apparent later in a discussion of how TDAT and DLU symbolize American reality, where the up-scaled point of view is exerted in regard to functions of iconography and the illustrations of Earth in the movies.

Comparison of Environmental Depictions in *The Day After Tomorrow* & *Don't Look Up*

As we thus have seen, there are several specific environmental notions from American history I have chosen to highlight above, that provide insight into certain past events and implications. These invite a comparison of how TDAT and DLU represent such moments from the records of America's environmental history. More specifically, it is interesting to look further into whether portrayals of social, political, and environmental collateral causes and actions from the apocalypses in TDAT and DLU, display past or present controversies and debates in the United States. For example, prior to the arrival of the apocalyptic ice storm in TDAT, Jack Hall suggests the Northern states be evacuated as South as possible. Hall proposes: "Mexico will be best", however, Vice President Becker responds skeptically: "Mexico? Maybe you should stick to science and leave policy to us" (1:03:45). Hereafter, scenes of US citizens trying to evacuate show that they are hindered in passing the borders to Mexico. A reporter says: "breaking news from the U.S.-Mexico border…Mexican officials closed the border in the light of so many U.S. refugees who are fleeing south in the wake of the approaching storm" (1:13:03). Another reporter states: "and now in a dramatic reversal of illegal immigration, thousands of people are crossing the Rio Grande into Mexico" (1:13:20). Hence, these scenes show an apparent parallel between this situation and the controversy between the United States and Mexico described above. Particularly in relation to how the US has had concerns about illegal immigration, that prevented the so-called peace parks between the US and Mexico, stands out as a prominent insinuation and possible parody of the past rivalry.

Subsequently, there are also several references in TDAT to the US history of pollution. As presented above, President Becker talks about the United States' role in pollution and the country's tendency to consume during his post-apocalyptic speech (1:51:45). Jack Hall also warns about the pollution of the US, saying: "at the rate we're burning fossil fuels and polluting the environment, the ice caps will soon disappear" (0:7:10-0:7:56). I argue that there is a connection between these two references and Isenberg's emphasis on the United States' history with fossil fuels being a problematic consumer product as a result of the industrialized agricultural system. The core of the problem presented in the films as well as Isenberg's account of American environmental history is the same: the tendency of a capitalistic urge to consume in the US. And a factor that both the movies and the reality of the US have in common, is the lack of government action and presidential neglect. By this, I allude to Isenberg's accounts, explaining that, despite US president, Jimmy Carter urging the problem of pollution to be solved, Ronald Reagan and

George W. Bush neglected to pay interest in solving the problem. This will also be commented on later, as political aspects in the movies are compared.

In relation to DLU, the satirical disaster film arguably symbolizes another issue from American history, regarding the great interest in mineral search and exploitation hereof. As Isenberg states, a great concern from the mid-nineteenth century was the idea to claim lands in order to mine and exploit the minerals. This was because mining was believed to be essential for the economy of the US, and they kept on mining, regardless of the environmental impact, according to Isenberg. There is a resemblance between the desire of the US to mine coal, and the portrayal of billionaire, Peter Isherwell wanting to exploit the comet in DLU for its valuable resources, which stops the attempt to redirect the comet. The need for minerals from the comet is prioritized, regardless of the impact of the attempt to do so, which results in the planet's destruction. In the age of capitalism, DLU thereby performs as a story that showcases the consequences of capitalistic, explorative goals that lead to pollution. Based on Isenberg's findings from above about how pollution plays a part in emerging diseases, I detect a similar occurrence in reality. Here, I refer to the sudden irruption of AIDS in the 1980s and the abrupt Coronavirus disease of 2019 that led to the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, there may be a parallel between this underlying theme in DLU depicting environmental issues with exploitation and pollution, and recuring virus pandemics in contemporary society.

Though it is of course difficult to speak of the intentions of the apocalyptic narrative in DLU, and whether the COVID-19 pandemic is a part of the political parody on the minimal actions towards climate change. Though the themes depicting the failure of collective effort, individualism, and lack of climate management, nevertheless echo the challenges and state of America during COVID-19. Proceeding from this, there are also distinct examples of political aspects depicted in the two movies, that ought to be analyzed. As I have used specific aspects of the American environmental context to derive certain depictions and references that may symbolize the reality of the US, TDAT and DLU likewise exist in a political context. There is arguably a connection between the two movies' context and their political portrayals, from which I deduce specific parallels in the following.

Projecting Politics: Comparing Political Portrayals in *The Day After Tomorrow* and *Don't Look Up*

Throughout the apocalyptic story of TDAT, the audience is provided with a rather overt representation of environmental problems in contrast to DLU's covert portrayals hereof. In

contrast, TDAT is more implicit in its political messages and tacit references than DLU, which portrays a great deal of criticism towards the American government and political systems in a satirical, overt manner. Thus, political criticism appears more evident in DLU, whereas it in TDAT seems not to be the primary focus of attention. The following comparison will center around the political aspects of the two movies. Concurrently with this comparison, I offer a different perspective on ways a film can be regarded as political, together with the different ways political messages are represented in movies.

In *Projecting Politics: Political Messages in American Films* (2015) Haas et al. bring forward their attempt to define a political film and the directorial intentions behind it. Though this thesis does not aim to resemble a political analysis, and the filmmakers' possible motivations for the two films are irrelevant to the following analytical comparison of TDAT and DLU's political representations. This section, regarded as a sub-analysis within this thesis' comparison, purposely overlooks factors of intent, by only centering the dimension of content by examining political aspects that may or may not represent the American reality for the purpose of comparing TDAT and DLU. Haas et al. presume political films as: "those that depict various aspects of the political system, especially (but not necessarily) political institutions, political actors, and/or the political system" (5). This suggests that political content often entails a depiction of more or less accurate or realistic aspects of political reality. Haas et al. explain that films that make an effort to describe political institutions, might be able to help the audience to understand political phenomena (9-10). To divide such political content, Haas et al. present a figure, in which political films are categorized (11). There are the 'pure political', which evidently portrays political content with the most intent, the 'socially reflective' including the least political content and intent, the 'auteur political' which only covertly mirrors political content with metaphorical and artistic means, and lastly the 'politically reflective' films that are obvious in their political content but the message centers other topics (Haas et al. 10-11). Most relevant to this comparative analysis of TDAT and DLU, are the type of films designated pure political and politically reflective.

The 'pure political' movies entail that the political nature is fairly evident to the audience as they depict political actors and institutions and are set in a recognizably political environment (10-11). DLU arguably conform to this description of a pure political film to some degree, through the portrait of President Orlean as well as the institution of the US government. About the politically reflective films, Haas et al. stress that these are films that are devoid of intentional political messages, but still depict obvious political content as they often mirror popular ideas about political phenomena, why they are labeled 'reflective'

political films (12). Hereto, Haas et al. elaborate that movie genres such as romantic comedies and thrillers fit under this label, where political institutions are used as convenient backdrops or ploys to evoke other themes, as in *Independence Day* from 1996 for example (13). This explanation entails that DLU may also be considered reflective, as the political institution function as a backdrop for the main problem of the comet. Likewise, in the same manner as Haas et al. categorize a film such as *Independence Day* as a politically reflected film, TDAT arguably also fits under this label as it mirrors political aspects covertly, directing the attention towards the environmental problem.

Besides stating that political content can help describe and explain how politics works, as well as provide insight (Haas et al. 10), Haas et al. say that the politically reflective movies are significant in the way they provide symbolic referents to political phenomena (13). Thereby, in regard to political films' impact, Haas et al. present the postulate that when such films unintentionally create political meanings for audiences, it is due to a covert means of symbolizing political reality. Rather than experiencing politics through direct involvement, the audience may be influenced by filtered symbolic representations (Haas et al. 13). Though the impact of political films will be explored more thoroughly later in a discussion, the notion of how TDAT and DLU correspond to Haas et al.'s descriptions of political portrayals in movies ought to be considered more elaborately.

While TDAT provides the audience with an explicit representation of the world's environmental issues, the film from 2004 does not imply overt political themes. Granted, TDAT addresses political issues to an extent, but in general, the film uses the political institution of the US merely as a device to generate the main subject or agenda of the movie. In contrast, DLU reflects a smaller, implicit focus on environmental themes, but a larger extent of mirrored political messages and references than TDAT. Through comedy, DLU reflects reality in that it provides insight into how politics, elections, and the presidency works, from a rather critical, satirical perspective. From here, it is relevant to examine to what degree TDAT and DLU are typical representations of political movies. Looking at one of the earliest political films in history as an example of what comprises a political film, enables an analysis of what such.

From a historical point of view, a film which explicitly showcases clear political messages and has had the greatest impact is D.W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) from the silent era (Haas et al. 97). According to Haas et al., Griffith's controversial portrait in *The Birth of a Nation* (TBOAN) of politics and politicians uses stereotypes and conventions, which later became entrenched in later political movies. Specifically, the

contrasting stereotypes of the saintly leader (Lincoln) and the evil politician (Stoneman and Lynch) were typical for this century's political films. Griffith also provides a populist, collective solution to the issues, as seen in later political films, which typically showed the protagonists (in Griffith's case, the oppressed white Southerners) band together, forming a vigilante group to take the law into their own hands, instead of seeking a leader to help them (Haas et al. 98-101). Moreover, according to Haas et al., one of the primary villains in political movies of the decade of 1920s was the political boss. Haas et al. note that an ongoing feature of such movies often showed how heroes and heroines could redeem themselves by exposing fraudulent political leaders and corruption within the civic (103).

Based on the descriptions of typical portrayals of villains and heroes, I find it engaging to analyze whether TDAT and DLU follow similar patterns of political movies, also in regard to the displays of villains and heroes. Going back a hundred years to Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), TDAT and DLU also make use of certain stereotypes and conventions from the movies' time in which they exist. TDAT also portrays a few evil politicians, such as Raymond Becker, who does not listen to the climate warnings in the first place, and a saintly leader, President Blake. In his brief screen time, Blake does take action, as he chooses to take up Hall's appeal for evacuation before dying during the storm in the Northern States. But TDAT does not, in contrast to TBOAN, provide the same stereotype of a populist group of heroes similar to Griffith's oppressed white Southerners, that take the law into their own hands. The heroes in TDAT are the scientists that seek the leaders for help, and it is with the leaders' help, that the Southern States of America is ordered to be evacuated.

On the opposite side is DLU, as this recently released film from 2021 is more similar to TBOAN. DLU provides the audience with a portrait of the evil politician (President Orlean and her team) as the villain and the oppressed white astronomers (Dr. Mindy and Dibiasky) need to band together and take the law into their own hands after they failed to get help from the not so saintly leader. Thus, in contrast to TDAT and TBOAN, DLU does not portray a similar saintly leader, why I argue that a shift in political portraits has happened, as DLU appears different from Griffith's movie. Hence, it seems that more suspicion is regarded politicians and leaders in contemporary America than during the century before, or at least that is what these movie portraits suggest.

Haas et al. also argue that disaster films, as Hollywood films in general, tend to emphasize heterosexual norms and patriarchy, often stress individualism over any competing value, as well as they writ large privilege individual effort over communal or government action (368). This correlates with the prevalent theme of DLU, in which the movie arguably

comments on society's inability to act collectively to stop the comet. Additionally, similar to previously mentioned notes on President Orlean in DLU, it also seems to be a case of individualism in DLU, where Orlean is portrayed as selfish throughout the whole movie, as she only focuses on her election campaign above the problem of the comet. An example of this is when Orlean says: "when are the mid-terms?...three weeks… so, if this breaks before then, we lose Congress…the timing is just…it's atrocious" (0:21:30). The scene from the Oval Office during Dr. Mindy and Dibiasky's briefing exemplifies President Orleans' selfish focus on her re-election. DLU thereby comply with the tendency of disaster movies, as it also prioritizes the actions of privileged individuals to this extent.

However, in the light of communal actions, DLU does emphasize the effects of collective actions, as the United States appear to be divided into two parties. There are those supporting Dr. Mindy and Kate Dibiasky's imploringly appeal to "just look up" (1:38:15) and those who support President Orleans' campaign "don't look up" (1:39:40), symbolizing political parties of the US. Here, it becomes clear how communities are quick to be established and how large of an impact they can have. Regardless, the film does highlight the efforts of the white privilege protagonists, astronomers Randall Mindy and Kate Dibiasky, for their cautionary actions against the devastating comet.

TDAT contradicts Hass et al.'s descriptions because the movie is different in the way it portrays individualism. In TDAT, the leaders do seem to have collective motives, despite their attention is not directed towards the problematic climate change at first. This is, however, based on a matter of risking economic downfall, that thus also regards the whole country and not just for the president or the leaders' own sake. Thereby, it is also arguable that TDAT differs in the focus on the individualism of leaders, but the film does center around the efforts of the white privileged heroes, scientist Jack Hall, and his team, as well as Hall's son Sam and his efforts to evacuate friends and acquaintances in Manhattan during the ice storm (0:50:30). Along with the portrayals of presidents in TDAT and DLU, the former comparison also proposes a further analysis of how the political portraits in TDAT and DLU are accurate and may symbolize the reality of American politics.

Analysis of *The Day After Tomorrow* and *Don't Look Up* Symbolizing American Reality

In TDAT, particularly two characters are notable for their realistic representation of reality. We have Perry King as Blake, the president of the United States, and Kenneth Welsh who plays Raymond Becker, the vice president of the United States who later succeeds Blake. According to Haas et al., Emmerich's casting of an almost absent president and the

resemblance of vice-president Kenneth Welsh to Dick Cheney were intended to criticize the climate change policy of the George W. Bush administration (261). This statement is to be further analyzed, to see if there may be a connection here. As mentioned in the outline of American environmental history, the Bush Administration withdrew the US from the Kyoto Protocol in March 2001, because the requirement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, would damage the U.S economy.

This is depicted in TDAT when paleoclimatologist Jack Hall warns the New Delhi conference of his findings. Hall says "maybe in a hundred years, maybe in a thousand… If we do not act soon, it is our children and our grandchildren who will have to pay the price", where to VP Becker answers "and who's going to pay the price of the Kyoto Accord? It would cost the world's economy. Hundreds of billions of dollars". After Hall has stressed that "the climate is fragile. At the rate we're burning fossil fuels and polluting the environment, the ice caps will soon disappear", Becker responds "our economy is every bit as fragile as the environment. Perhaps you should keep that in mind before making sensationalist claims" (0:7:10-0:7:56). The quote shows that as the vice president refuses to take the extremely rapid climate change and the doctor's estimated calculations seriously, it is on the grounds that it could economically destroy the United States even more than climate change will do.

In relation to DLU, a similar parallel between former US President, Donald Trump and his general approach actions during his presidency, and the portrait of President Janie Orlean in DLU can be deduced. DLU provides a state-of-the-nation story that looks much like the management of crises such as climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic as of the US' boss of the time, Donald Trump. For example, when the comet becomes visible to the naked eye, comet deniers ignore the campaign 'Just Look Up', and thus also ignore rationale and science, calling the comet a hoax (0:46:36, 0:55:52). The film, therefore, appears as a dig at anti-vaxxers during the COVID-19 pandemic and the denial of global warming. President Orlean, portrayed by Meryl Streep, is arguably meant to caricature Donald Trump, as she personifies the denialist, bidding her supporters not to look up at the comet hurtling toward Earth and threatening to extinguish all life on the planet. A similar, though more vastly representation of science degradation is also present in TDAT, as Jack Hall's estimated time of the apocalyptic ice storm is rejected by VP Becker, as he says: "I thought you said it wasn't gonna happen in the 100 years", where to Jack admits: "yes I was wrong", and Becker responds "well, I suppose you're wrong this time" (0:37:20).

In connection to these examples from the movies, there are real cases where Donald Trump downplayed or denied science during the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, Trump ignored or contradicted many recommendations from health officials in his messaging. According to the article "Trump calls WHO's global death rate from coronavirus 'a false number'" from the *Guardian*, Trump declared live on television that he did not believe the World Health Organization's assessments. Furthermore, according to findings of the study "Coronavirus misinformation: quantifying sources and themes in the COVID-19 'infodemic'" by Sarah Evanega et al., Trump also promoted misinformation about unproven treatments and the availability of testing. In regard to previous mentioned presidential actions against climate change, a study on Trump's environmental actions during his presidency in "The environmental legacy of President Trump" (2021), also found environmental neglect. The study state that Trump also reversed numerous environmental regulations, withdrew the US from the Paris Agreement on climate change, and often employed a discourse of climate denialism. Thus, DLU and TDAT arguably depict the down-valuation of peer review and show how scientific voices are ignored, as we have seen during climate debate and COVID-19's disposition of power to news platforms, giving the entertainment news cycle more agency.

Besides the political representations in TDAT and DLU depicting political realities, there is also a level of social implications to highlight. As mentioned earlier, the two apocalyptic shifts in the Book of Daniel and the Revelation of John were written in times of crisis where there was a need to write or to read such prophetic texts, according to Krohn and Rendix (98). Thereby, in relation to how TDAT and DLU may resemble notions from American reality, I detect a parallel between the need for prophetic texts then and how there may be a need now for prophetic texts today, both with the current stage of the planet and of mankind at the time of TDAT and DLU released. More specific to this thesis' treated subjects of attention, I refer to crises such as climate change or pandemics, the problematics of the materialistic, capitalist way of living, and events of terror. Despite the plot of the apocalyptic doom in TDAT and DLU, the movies provide insight into what is really going on.

Hereto, Haas et al. also argue that the spate of films regarding ecological catastrophes or epidemics from the late 1990s into the new century, is similar to how fantastic threats like asteroids and volcanoes resemble the anxiety about Earth's fragile ecosystem (15). Such films also often symbolize the population of the world's susceptibility to outbreaks of disease and crisis (15). Haas et al. furthermore explain that as movies from the 1950s and 1960s centering on nuclear disasters and brainwashing expressed this era's

fears and uncertainties, apocalyptic and postdisaster dystopian films like *The Day After Tomorrow* express the twenty-first-century's era of imagination of disaster (364). Thus, in accordance with Haas et al.'s argument, DLU and TDAT may symbolize the realities of the two movies' presents, regarding fear of epidemics and issues with climate change. Hereof, it is also appealing to discuss the accuracy of the comet in DLU and the ice storm TDAT in regard to the gravity of the threat and whether the imagined disasters encompass a realistic depiction.

Based on the analysis of TDAT and DLU up to now, the comparison derives a general discourse in TDAT and DLU that focuses on how rapidly the new ice age and the apocalyptic comet will arrive. For example, repeating previous references from TDAT, they have six to eight weeks before full climate change (0:35:39). Additionally, when Jack Hall warns about the urgency of a new ice age, he gets the response: "we are making all the necessary preparations for this storm, what more do you expect", where to Hall explains: "Mr. vice president, if we don't act now, it's gonna be too late!" (0:37:10). And in DLU, they have six months and 14 days until destruction (0:7:24). Though, the relationship between facts and fiction in the moves and the differences hereof may be unclear to the audience. Therefore, the scientific accuracy and political implications of the films ought to be granted more consideration.

To assess the likelihood of considerably smaller events leading up to the big ice storm in TDAT, climate research scientist, Anthony A. Leiserowitz' article "Day After Tomorrow: Study of Climate Change Risk Perception" (2010) is relevant. Leiserowitz writes that some scientists used the controversies around the film to educate the public about climate change, but other climatologists criticized the underlying science and many of the main elements of the film. Specifically stressing the physical impossibility of a "quick-freeze", a tidal wave hundreds of feet tall, and that the shutdown of the thermohaline circulation could happen that quickly or have such extreme consequences (25). Thereby, it appears that TDAT has exaggerated the portrayals of the severe weather leading up to the ice storm.

Regarding the possibility of an ice age, I argue that the climatic records of environmental shifts throughout history, outlined above, allow for a broad generalization that shows how the climatic eras have turned from warm to cool climates several times (Isenberg 25). Most relevant for the analysis of TDAT, is the last three periods, from the Medieval Warm Period to the Little Ice Age, turning into today's Global Warming. The tendency of climate changes corresponds to the cooling shift in TDAT. However, a climate shift of such acceleration in TDAT arguably seems inaccurate, turning the dramatic climate portrayals in

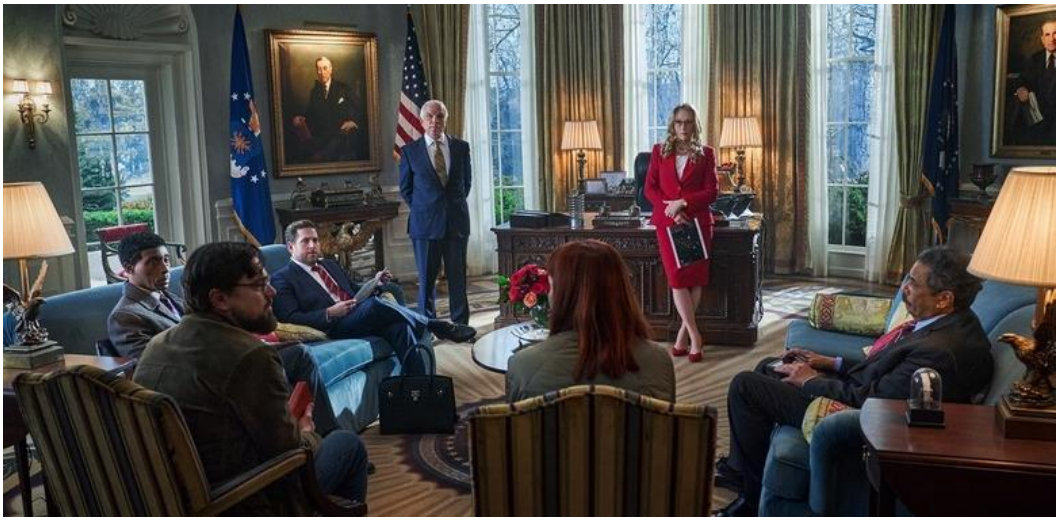
TDAT into a faulty representation. Though, Hall's first estimation of a hundred years before arrival seems to be a fair conclusion, in accordance with the timetable from Isenberg. Here, Isenberg explained that the Little Ice Age (from 1450-1850) took place roughly a hundred years after the Medieval Warm Period, which lasted until 1350 (Isenberg 94). Yet, in contrast to the depiction of a clear sky and the sun already appearing the next day after the ice storm in TDAT, the last ice age in human history lasted four hundred years, making the ice age in TDAT less severe.

In regard to the gravity of the threat in DLU, the comet is mostly articulated through its spoken dimensions of it, as Dr. Mindy and Dibiasky assume it to be nine kilometers wide, and the comet is compared to the asteroid that killed the dinosaurs. Kate Dibiasky says: "A comet, bigger than the asteroid that destroyed the dinosaurs, is headed directly at Earth. If it isn't deflected, the entire planet dies" (0:29:20). However, a similar analysis of the accuracy of the comet in DLU, regarding actual possibilities, seems forthwith difficult and unattainable in this thesis. This is due to the environmental history accounts presented above lack records beyond Earth's atmosphere. Moreover, there is yet not much research on DLU, in contrast to TDAT where to I draw upon the study of TDAT's impact on risk perception by Leiserowitz (2010). Hence, I can not compare the two movies on equal foundations and the analysis is thus confined to the limited accentuation of DLU's portrayal above to determine a resemblance between DLU and American society. This perspective does, nevertheless, open up for a separate study of the films' accuracy, where to, a further discussion of the viewer's recognition of fact versus fiction could be examined, as I argue it is a complicated practice to separate the difference between political and-environmental fiction and reality.

The Function of Iconography in Apocalyptic Stories

In relation to references to American reality in TDAT and DLU, another notion for comparison between the movies consists in how the films use certain famous locations with emotional value or are of social or political importance. In this regard, Haas et al. argue that disaster films often aim for the impact of immediacy (345). With consideration to scale, immediacy is achieved by settings and iconography. Haas et al. explain that portrayals of spectacular destruction stand-in for the iconography as seen in the western, gangster, or politically overt films. The latter typically includes scenes with White House settings, campaign props or elements of legislative mise-en-scène (345).

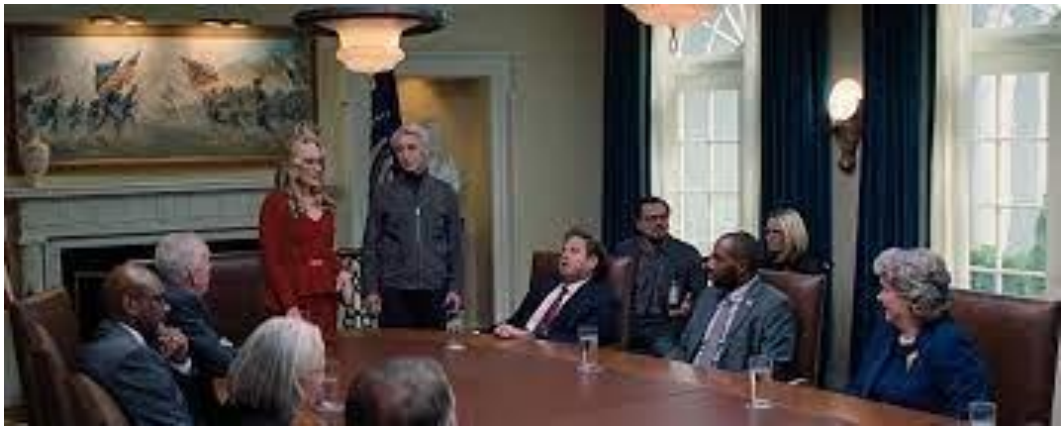
Haas et al. thus propose that using real, recognizable places or locations, can help shape the audience's perceptions of a film's setting. Moreover, if known places of value are presented as targets for destruction, the movie arguably evokes emotions, and the audience thus may gain more compliance with the film's message or subject (345). As mentioned above, DLU fits under the category of a pure- and reflective political film with its portrait of politicians and the political institution, specifically the official residence and workplace of the president. In DLU, it is clear how the movie emphasizes the rather famous location in Washington DC, the White House (0:10:00), to imitate the political reality of the US. Most notable is the recreation of the iconic centerpiece of the White House and the U.S. federal government, the Oval Office, often considered a mainstay of political films.



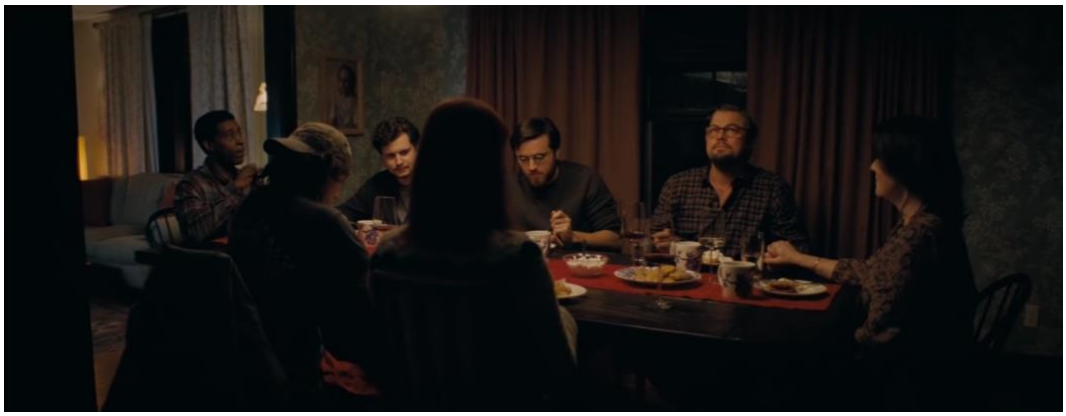
Framegrab of the Oval Office in *Don't Look Up* (0:18:00).

The image above depicts the first meeting between astronomers Dr. Mindy and Dibiasky, and Dr. Oglethorpe from NASA, presenting the news of the comet to President Orlean. Even though the White House is represented, it is the only iconographic location used in the movie. DLU therefore differs in the use of scale. Rather, the film's scope stands out. DLU tends to focus on the characters most of the time rather than iconic places buildings or monuments, in contrast to TDAT which includes more recognizable locations to achieve a different kind of realism from authentic places. The following images help exemplify the focus on the characters in DLU:

Framegrab of The Daily Rip studio from *Don't Look Up* (0:38:33).



Framegrab of President Orlean and Peter Isherwell's plan to mine the comet's minerals (*Don't Look Up* 1:09:04)



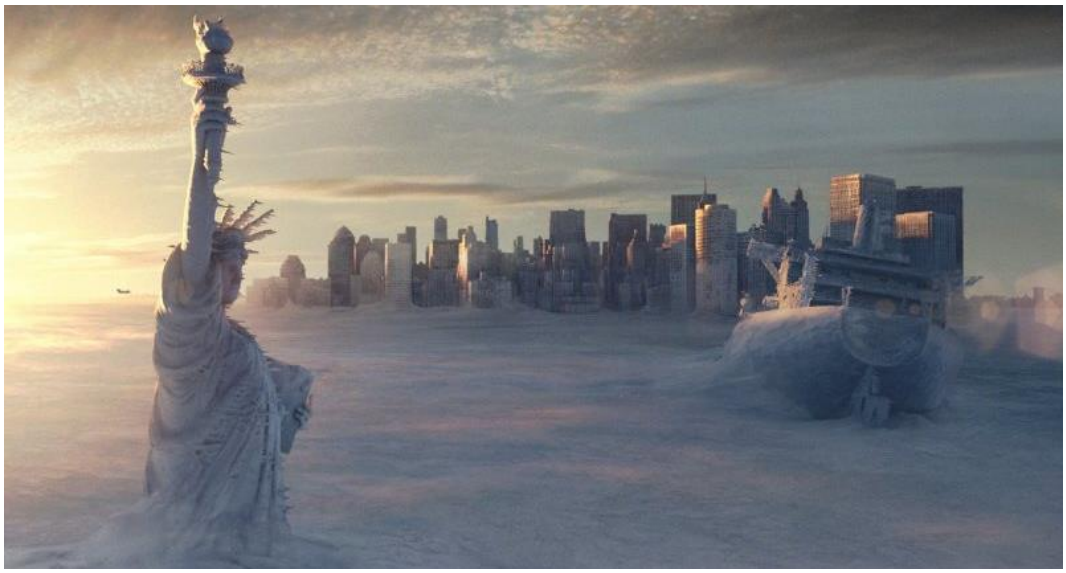
Framegrab of the last dinner between Dr. Mindy's family and friends as the comet arrives (*Don't Look Up* 2:05:46).

The framegrabs above show how DLU focuses on the characters' expressions and reactions to the crisis. Moreover, the characters are often seen in similar gatherings as demonstrated above, to show the interactions between the characters, which also play a great part in depicting power relations and the challenges society is faced with during the crisis. The latter presented framegrab of Dr. Mindy's family and friends having a last dinner, displays the importance of unity, which may help amplify the viewer's engagement and emotional response. A similar display of unity is also present in TDAT, though the movie differs in how the sense of unity is achieved with the use of scales. From Haas et al.'s example of *Planet of the Apes* (1968) where the ruins of the Statue of Liberty are discovered, the use of American iconography to present nostalgia to suggest irrevocable loss stands out (360). The employment of iconic or national monuments as a means to invoke strong feelings from the American past is repeated in TDAT. Particularly, as the movie centers around the flooded New York City and shows a tornado in LA, destroying the Hollywood sign pre-apocalypse:

Framegrab of the tsunami heading to New York (*The Day After Tomorrow* 0:48:09).

Framegrab of tornados in LA and the Hollywood sign being destroyed (*The Day After Tomorrow* 0:27:05).

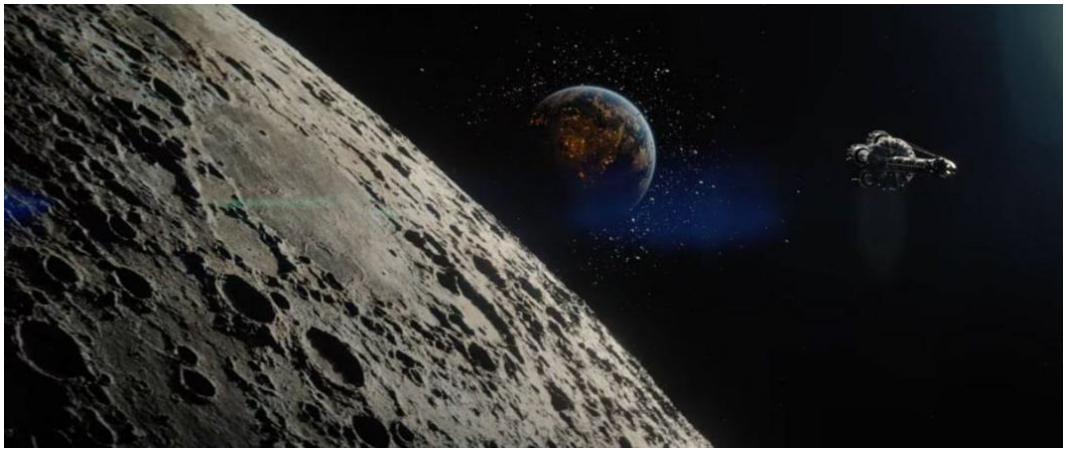
The most prevalent iconography in TDAT is the several appearances of the Statue of Liberty, as illustrated below. The Statue of Liberty is both present in the movie and in the paratext, because the historical monument serves as figurehead for the movie and is used as the movie-cover



Framegrab of the Statue of Liberty post-apocalypse (*The Day After Tomorrow* 1:46:40).

With the inclusion of scenes of a devastated New York City and the Statue of Liberty covered in ice three years after the terror attack on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, the film may showcase how people in the face of disaster, need to come together in unity. These scenes arguably also amplify emotional response and engagement, but they may also function as a tool to generate a sense of realism and show sympathy to the audience during the current fear and state of mind hovering in the US at the time of TDAT's release. This correlates with Garrard's descriptions of how an apocalypse, resembling a real-life crisis, such as the 9/11 terror attacks, is often associated with psychological consequences of paranoia or the tendency of moral dualism dividing the world into friend and enemy. The scenes in TDAT that portray solidarity in cases of terror, may thus speak to the necessity hereof in contemporary American society. In addition to said iconic locations used in TDAT and DLU, the two movies commonly provide a prevalent use of Andersen's idea of up-scaling and Isenberg's mention of planetary view. Returning to previous illustrations, the images show how both movies shift the frame of setting to outer space several times, showing the iconic shots of Earth, as inspired by NASA's "Earthrise". For demonstrative purposes, I reinsert the framegrabs below:

Framegrab of the Northern Hemisphere in a new ice age (*The Day After Tomorrow* 1:55:22).



Framegrab of planet Earth after the comet hit in the end of *Don't Look Up* (2:07:40).

What these pictures resemble, correlates with Garrard 's term 'Spaceship Earth', which merely refers to the Earth-image from space. According to Garrard, the concept of 'Spaceship Earth' was once proposed by R. Buckminster Fuller, an architect and cosmologist, to resemble a figure for the possibility of total cornucopian management of the planet that was in great human interests (182). The idea that the Earth-image resonates a transcendental power over the planet that humankind tends to think we possess, complies with this thesis' examined themes in TDAT and DLU. However, I also argue that the depiction of Earth from space has other effects.

Drawing upon Isenberg's positive account of technology's beneficial role in environmental records, the depiction of Earth in TDAT and DLU, may also foster a sense of global cohesion and interdependence between Earth's nations, countries, and continents, symbolizing a call for unity in times of crisis. Moreover, based on the previous demonstrations of Earth from TDAT and DLU, the Earth depictions explicitly show the

comet and the ice storm's trajectories and development. The portrayals of Earth from space thereby become imperative in serving as images of urgency and vulnerability. This is because the level of destruction and impact of the apocalypse in both movies becomes more prevalent. Therefore, the movies' ideological use of iconographic settings arguably speaks to the immediacy of the apocalypses in TDAT and DLU, to imitate the severity of real issues such as climate change.

When Apocalyptic Stories Mirror Real Issues – A Discussion

The notion of political films messaging real-life issues such as climate change invites a further discussion of how the different apocalyptic narratives in TDAT and DLU are articulated, especially regarding the ending of the films. According to Haas et al., representations of climate change being solved in movies can be problematic. About reflective political movies portraying climate change, Haas et al. explain that political films serve as "case studies for hegemony by taking the potentially subversive topic of human contribution to climate change and trivializing it, draining it of urgency, and convincing audiences nothing need be done" (262). Thereby, their statement suggests that even though a movie intentionally aims to reflect specific realistic societal problems, there is a risk that the message may not appear as transparent as intended. The portrayals of climate change may lead the audience in the opposite direction as a result, making them question the severity of the depicted crises. A reason for this, I argue, is found in the way the apocalyptic crises are painted in the movies, for example by the ecological focus in TDAT or the satirical measures used in DLU. Hereto, Haas et al. argue that the ubiquitous happy endings often seen in Hollywood films further mute the challenges of society because the happy ending suggests that problems are easily solved (18). Based on this suggestion, it is thus discussable whether TDAT degrades the climate problems represented in the movie by showing a happy, open ending, in contrast to the tragic ending in DLU, as mentioned previously.

From TDAT, several scenes may contribute to diminishing the importance of immediate action that needs to be taken. For example, as Jack Hall urges the vice president to take better precautions and evacuate the Northern States of America, VP Becker degrades the problem by saying: "mankind survived the last ice age. Were certainly capable of surviving this one. All depends on whether or not we're able to learn from our mistakes" (1:44:29). Here, it appears that Becker thinks of climate change as a minor, unimportant problem. Yet, most notable is the final scenes post-apocalypse, where it is revealed that there are people who survived the ice storm (1:53:40). This makes Becker's prediction that mankind could

survive the ice age, occur to be true and propose that he was correct in downgrading the problem. On the opposite side, the apocalyptic scenes of extreme weather events and the rather quick devastation of the Northern hemisphere may also help to exaggerate the image of the dangers that global warming poses. This can be considered a fair assessment, as amplification of how rapid the extreme weather phenomenon occurs in the movie, may seem unlikely in regard to real ecological plausibility.

This argument is supported by Leiserowitz' study of the audience's perception of climate change and its likelihood. Leiserowitz (2010) states that, while the movie has some elements of truth and was applauded for its outstanding quality of special effects, it includes several scientific distortions and outright fabrications (26). Besides scientists' claim that the "quick-freeze", hundreds of feet tall tidal waves, and a shutdown of the thermohaline circulation featured are physical impossibilities (Leiserowitz 25), there are two specific elements that the participants from Leiserowitz' study perceived as more unlikely: the onset of a new ice age and shutdown of the Gulf Stream current (Leiserowitz 27). Hence, there is arguably a risk that the audience will perceive TDAT as comic or absurd, to a degree that the film becomes subject to ridicule.

Based on Haas et al.'s notion of the negative effect of happy endings, the tragic ending in DLU resembling no hope or survivors after the comet should have the effect that it evokes a sense of seriousness of the problem. However, as with TDAT, it is possible that DLU falls in the attempt to resemble a political reality with the use of satire throughout the movie. Together with the final scene of Earth's annihilation (2:03:57), the satirical and dramatic portrayals of how people handle the crisis, which almost look like a parody, could make it difficult to maintain the political message and the implied imitation of the climate debate, why the effect on the audience thus diminishes. Moreover, DLU likewise downplays the dangers of the apocalyptic comet, throughout the film. For example, when the news reporters Jack and Brie from The Daily Rip program mostly joke about the comet during the segment where Dr. Mindy and Dibiasky present the dangers. The two reporters do not take the warnings seriously and try to make it jollier as they explain: "we just keep the bad news light…it helps the medicine to go down" (0:37:10). President Orlean's perception of the apocalyptic warning also exemplifies similar disregard and diminish of the dangers when she at the beginning of the movie rejects Dr. Mindy and Dibiasky's calculation of a 100% chance of impact. Orlean says: "please, don't say 100%...call it 70% and let's move on" (0:19:27).

There may also be a possible risk that the audience is left with a feeling of despair or discouragement, from viewing the failed attempts to change the orbit of the comet, and

despite the effort, Earth is still destroyed by the apocalypse. In connection with this, is Garrard's (2012) perspective on apocalyptic endings relevant to add. In his final remarks, Garrard stresses that it is sensible for apocalyptic narratives to represent meaningful intervention as difficult, but not impossible, because it is only if the audience is left with the imagination of a future on the planet, that there is a better chance the viewer will get a feeling of responsibility for it (116). Garrard's notion arguably does not apply to TDAT and DLU on equal grounds. As the comic ending in TDAT assures a part of humankind to survive, the viewer can imagine the planet's future. However, in DLU, there is no future left after the apocalypse, and it is thereby sensible to believe that the audience cannot see a future, and therefore the chance of the audience to recognize the message of responsibility may decrease.

Yet, I see relevance in discussing Garrard's argument on the chance of the audience getting a sense of responsibility even further, by drawing on the sensation of hope in TDAT and the lack hereof in DLU, previously highlighted. Even the titles of the two movies may appear to give an opposite answer if discussed more closely. The title *Don't Look Up*, initially resemble the ongoing contradictory campaigns within the movie from respectively the president and the astronomers. However, the title may also resonate a different, but important part of the general theme of issue in DLU. "Don't look up", may be a reference to how the population need not look up for the problems of for example climate change or other encompassing, societal problems. Instead, humankind should look down on themselves and their ways of life, to properly see the cause of the problems. Thereby, DLU appears to carry the message of a blinded mankind and may advocate for humans to become aware before it is too late.

Nevertheless, this comparison still derives that DLU represents no hope, in contrast to TDAT. While the title *The Day After Tomorrow*, from the beginning, presents hope for humankind to survive the ice age, as the title signals there will in fact come a day after the apocalypse. However, it is this depiction of hope that may have the opposite effect. I argue that it is possible for DLU to have the most effect on the viewer's sense of responsibility and how serious it is, when DLU allows for no hope, in contrast to TDAT, which shows how human survives the climate shifts, and thus need not to take the warnings seriously. On the contrary to the number of critical points on issues with dramatizing the apocalyptic narratives TDAT's comic ending and DLU's tragic ending, it is also relevant to highlight positive aspects.

Potential Impact of Political & Environmental Movies

Ass I previously mention, Graham's notion of apocalypses producing utopian imaginations, proposes that the 'comic' ending in TDAT provides the audience with an image of a new world after the apocalypse. This exemplifies how the apocalyptic genre is beneficial because a disaster movie like TDAT encourages the viewer to consider positive social, political, and environmental goals for (American) society in prospective. Especially the final scenes of restoration (1:47:48-1:55:50), resembles a cleansed society, where notions of individualism, hierarchy, fight for supremacy, and rivalry are abandoned as the survived population unites.

Moreover, in contrast to certain factors in the movies that diminish the problems, I argue that the way both TDAT and DLU present the apocalyptic events as a more rapid and immediate crisis, can have the opposite, and beneficial effect, of the apocalypses, nevertheless, evoking a sense of the seriousness of the problem. This is based on Garrard's interesting perspective, as he points out that news media tend to report environmental issues as catastrophes, due to the drama it generates but also because it is easier for news to report events rather than processes (113-114). Likewise, the choice of portraying a disastrous apocalypse with implicit political and social messages can be more effective on the audience. Leiserowitz deduced a similar, beneficial influence of TDAT in his study. From his U.S national study, that tested the hypothesis that public risk perceptions are powerfully influenced by representations of risk in popular culture (24), Leiserowitz concludes that watchers were significantly more likely than non-watchers to perceive global warming as a greater risk after the movie. Particularly, he found that 80 percent of the moviegoers, "watchers", believe more intense storms, hurricanes, and tornadoes are somewhat or very likely to increase due to global warming (Leiserowitz 28). Leiserowitz, therefore, states that the commentators who had warned that the film would influence the public to dismiss the whole issue, were incorrect in their forecasting (27), which stands in contrast to my previous proposal for the disadvantageous impacts of TDAT.

Hereto, Garrard also explains that apocalyptic narratives can provide a frame of reference that is emotionally charged, and in which long-term and complex issues (such as climate change) are reduced to monocausal crises (113-114). Following Garrard's description, the apocalypses in TDAT and DLU resembling climate issues, have a better chance of being adopted by the audience, if presented and distorted as an adjacent menacing event, rather than a threat that has been underway for a long time, as global warming has. The long-term issues, which Garrard refers to, are often diminished into a single event that only can have been caused by one thing, perhaps to make it more believable or valid to its

otherwise rather complex frame of contributory causes. Thereby, Garrard suggests that the real problems ought to be reduced to a single, more dramatic catastrophe, as TDAT and DLU present their apocalypses.

Thus, even though the comet in DLU is a reference to climate change, there may be a reason that the film tells the story of a comet, rather than the gradual accumulation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. This is a great part of what differentiates the two movies' thematic foundation. In accordance with Garrard's suggestion, an approaching comet offers a certainty of impact that the real problematics of climate change lacks, as it is arguably more difficult to determine the deadline or precise moment it will strike. A similar statement is endorsed by Leiserowitz (2010). According to Leiserowitz, global climate change belongs in the class of "hidden hazards", because even though it leads to great consequences for society, and until it reaches disaster proportions, it generally goes unnoticed or unheeded, why the concept of environmental change is often understood as a geographically and temporarily distant concern (25). The magnitude of climate change thus appears to be difficult to comprehend due to the remote and subtle progress of the disastrous phenomenon.

Continuing the subject of influence, it is relevant to revisit Haas et al.'s explanation of how the audience best accepts a political film and its messages. As mentioned before, it is due to covert means and symbols of political reality, that enable films to create political meanings for the audience (Haas et al. 13). Haas et al. derive this about cinematic impact based on a large sample investigation which concludes that "popular films retain the power to shape political attitudes in part because the possibility for persuasion is greatest precisely when one is least aware that political messages are being communicated" (Hass et al. 4). This conclusion proposes that controversial topics and political messages, which can evoke certain feelings depending on what values the viewer has, should be implemented merely as covert, filtered symbols, or implicitly use subtle references, so the audience would not notice them immediately. Based on Haas et al.'s notion, TDAT fails to delicately refer to current environmental changes and might contribute to the viewer disregarding the movie's message. In contrast, DLU references climate change in an obscure manner, to the extent that the audience may not realize that he/she has consciously accepted the themes. Additionally, the roles seem to be reversed between TDAT and DLU regarding signaling political messages and portraits, as DLU fails to shadow these in contrast to TDAT which only hints at social and political issues.

This perspective invites a further look into the possible impact of the movies, and hereto, Leiserowitz' study becomes relevant again. Leiserowitz states that there are opposite opinions on whether TDAT would influence risk perception and attitudes towards global warming or have no impact at all (23-24). An examination of this synergism between fiction and reality was the focus of Leiserowitz' research. His study concluded that the group which did watch the movie, had a significantly higher risk perception than non-watchers, also mentioned above. Leiserowitz concludes that TDAT had a "considerable impact on the global-warming risk perceptions of those who saw the movie" (28). More specifically, 83 percent of the moviegoers said they were somewhat or very concerned, and 49 percent of the moviegoers said the film made them more worried about the climate, against the 42 percent where the level of worry did not change (Leiserowitz 26-27). Based on these results, it appears that Leiserowitz is right in his argument of influence.

Though, Leiserowitz' study only derives that TDAT influenced watchers to worry more about climate change. The study did not derive a direct change in the watchers' overall understanding of the concept. Instead, the study turned out to conclude that moviegoers, no more likely than non-watchers, both viewed the climate system as extremely sensitive to human disturbance. Therefore, the extreme and catastrophic impact depicted in TDAT did not lead the watchers to suddenly see the climate as such, as they already had this perception. Yet, Leiserowitz did find that watchers believe the climate to be unstable and global warming to have an impact. Leiserowitz argues that TDAT, nonetheless, had a physical impact, influencing the viewers to act and make actual changes in their lives (29).

Moreover, Leiserowitz' study asked the participants about certain groups, including the Bush Administration, NASA, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and scientists. Hereto, moviegoers responded with a greater distrust to the Bush administration and were more likely to trust scientists, than non-watchers (Leiserowitz 33). I argue that this result correlates with Haas et al.'s (2015) emphasis on a small-scale audience study from the mid-1990's exploring the direct behavioral impact of specific films. This study found that viewers of Oliver Stone's controversial biopic *JFK* (1991) reported a significant decrease in their intentions to vote (4). Thereby, Stone's political movie had a physical impact on the audience's following actions and attitudes towards the presidential system in the U.S. Hence, there is arguably a connection between motion pictures' environmental and political portrayals and the influence on the audience's attitudes towards these.

As mentioned, studies of the impact of DLU are not yet accessible, but there is, nevertheless, a broad reaction to DLU saying the movie is rather controversial (Sinclair

2021). Moreover, in relation to the accuracy of DLU, Laura Hiscott's review of DLU "Laughing in the face of danger" (2022) from *PhysicsWorld*, states that some parts of the astrophysics portrayed are incorrect. Hiscott claims that UK astronomer, Martin Rees, sent them a letter explaining, that the risk of astronomical bodies colliding with Earth was not concerning to him, because the impacts are calculable, small, and not increasing (44). Thus, compared to TDAT, DLU likewise includes some elements where the applied science is distorted. However, as Leiserowitz explained, even though some parts of the exaggerated scenes of environmental disasters in TDAT are incorrect or distorted, there was still an increased shift in the attitude of moviegoers. Therefore, based on these results from impact studies, DLU may arguably also influence a similar shift in attitude towards political administration during the time of DLU's release, despite the film's misrepresentation of the comet.

Although this could lead to an interesting discussion of whether TDAT and DLU hypothetically have the same or different impact on the audience in terms of the eschatological charged political and environmental themes' direct influence. However, I argue it will require a great deal of research and ideally, experimental data. As this is a rather isolated and separate perspective to the focus of this comparison, I propose this could be a topic for further examination for others, why it is left out of my study. Nonetheless, the use of comparativism to analyze TDAT and DLU did enable me to derive that there are similarities and differences between the movies' potential effects on the viewer's engagement and emotional response. The following will discuss the employment of comparativism to the analysis of TDAT and DLU.

Evaluation of the Comparative Method in the study of *The Day After Tomorrow* and *Don't Look Up*

The use of the comparative approach in this thesis turned out to be favorable for the focus of my examination, and I will now elaborate on how. As Friedman argues, the comparison of objects that simultaneously share both equal and unequal elements create a dynamic relation between them. While both TDAT and DLU similarly centers around an apocalyptic event, they also differ in the way this is displayed. As they have equal and unequal elements to examine, the employment of comparativism in this thesis thereby also produced a dynamic connection between TDAT and DLU. The difference between the apocalypses in TDAT and DLU was clear from the beginning, but the comparison additionally helped shed light on aspects that initially were not evident in the beginning. For example, the analysis also derives

the common feature of the displays of the capitalistic, exploitational, and problematic view of mankind, as the main part of the movies' messages, in extension to the overt and covert environmental themes.

Subsequently, imperative for comparing TDAT and DLU was to position TDAT and DLU in a dynamic juxtaposition as I find that this effectively assured that the movies obtained agency and a certain authority throughout because the main topics chosen in the beginning relied on the movies' already existing themes. Friedman's attention to assuring that one part of the comparison is not set as a normative standard of measure for the other has also shown to be beneficial for my thesis. I applied the dynamic, side-by-side comparison model, and find that either TDAT or DLU was positioned as the standard for the other. Though, there is a possibility that the comparative discussion of the movies' impact, could seem unequal as there only were pre-published studies on the influence of TDAT to include and no on DLU so far, why I retained the discussion to a hypothetically level and ceased to examine the direct, physical effect of the two. Nonetheless, I derive that Friedman's proposal for a comparative approach serves as a favorably method for my thesis' goal to extract similarities and differences, areas of overlap and incommensurability, in terms of how they explicitly and implicitly translate an apocalyptic crisis as a symbol of the conflicts modern American society deals with.

I would notwithstanding argue that this thesis' comparative approach not only consisted in the new form of dynamic comparison but also turned out to be inspired by earlier approaches, such as Jensen's descriptions of historic romanticism and positivism. Romanticism became a part of the analysis through the recognition and interpretation of the movies' contexts. The positivistic perspective turned out to play a role, as the focus of the comparison concurrently leaned into an analysis of causal relations between the two movies. Both in terms of looking for evidence of the texts' origins, by drawing upon contextualization to better interpret the apocalyptic portrayals, but also in the way TDAT and DLU influenced each other in practice, during the comparison. Particularly, because the dynamic comparativism produced interrelations between the movies. Just as one outcome appeared from TDAT, it inspired a further comparison of how and if the same outcome were present in DLU and vice versa. Moreover, there was also a focus on influential relations between the films, as the comparison centered around the study of parallels between the depiction of apocalyptic crisis in TDAT and DLU and real-life American conflicts and challenges.

As Jensen encourage contextualization as part of comparativism, I outlined certain aspect of the American environmental history and past and present characteristics of political

films for the purpose of considering TDAT and DLU within their contexts in time. By doing this, the comparative analysis registered inequalities and unjust distribution of resources and power. Two outcomes are clear. First, the ecocritical point of view in the comparison of the two films, clarify the presence of modern environmentalism through the depictions of anthropocentric and contemporary climate themes and issues. Where TDAT display the consequences of pollution and climate change as the primary subject, an environmental message is also interpreted from the secular implicit focus in DLU.

Second, I argue that the choice to compare political aspects in TDAT and DLU contributed to elucidating problematic power relations in an unbalanced world of injustice. Particularly in regard to the US presidential and governmental system. Hereto, TDAT depicted the challenges of how the US government attempted to handle the climate crisis, to which politics is also a great part of the decision-making. Whereas DLU more clearly is a parody of the political institution's dominance, unjust power relations, and the individualistic, capitalistic reasoning. These aspects are merely one part of what the comparison derives. The last section emphasizes the other outcomes from the comparative analysis of TDAT and DLU.

Concluding Notes from the Comparison of *The Day After Tomorrow* and *Don't Look Up*

The study of this master's thesis has compared and examined the different depictions of apocalypses in TDAT and DLU and how there arguably are connections between these and the reality of the United States. Hereto, I chose to focus on selected topics such as the concept of apocalypticism, the environmental contexts of the movies, and political depictions in TDAT and DLU. In relation to the relevance and efficiency of the several apocalyptic descriptions, Krohn and Rendix's outline of apocalypticism contributed to an understanding of the movies' depiction of apocalypses. Here, the comparison deduces a portrayal in TDAT to correlate with the traditional, religious sense of apocalypticism, serving as a revelation and purification. While the contemporary sense of apocalyptic narrative with a secular political focus is more present in DLU. Thereby, both TDAT and DLU depict theological notions in that the apocalyptic narratives center around prophecies about catastrophes. Thereby, the comparison also enabled me to see the sameness in difference, and difference in sameness.

Garrard's account of eschatological narratives has also shown to be beneficial to compare TDAT and DLU. In some ways, TDAT and DLU contradict Garrard's descriptions, in other ways they comply. The initial interpretation of the movies suggests that TDAT is comic due to the open ending, resembling a new time of life on the planet. and DLU is tragic

because of the film's closed ending, depicting an end of all time for the whole organic universe. Though, the comparison also derives that TDAT and DLU both have comic and tragic elements. In both movies, time is framed as tragic, through the estimation of the apocalypses' arrival. in contrast, they are both comic in the sense that there are features of fallibility. However, TDAT is different from DLU, as this apocalyptic rhetoric allows for catharsis to happen in the narrative of apocalypse as not only destruction but also life-giving by the 'unveiling' elements. The apocalypse in DLU is thus regarded as irrecoverable to a greater extent than in TDAT.

Subsequently, in TDAT it is shown that human culture survives, and the organic universe does not, why the film from an initial point of view seem to privilege the fate of human culture above others. But by looking deeper into the movie, the message changed. It is now clear that the message consists in the necessity of people tossing the organic hierarchy and seeing Earth as a whole planet, where Earth is not only there for humans. The depiction of an ultimate end in DLU addresses a similar lesson of how the urge to utilize Earth's resources excessively stands in the way of the change the characters have to avoid the annihilation. Hence, the comparative analysis of TDAT and DLU concludes that both TDAT and DLU include the topic of human exploitation of the planet. But the movies deviate, in the way the apocalypse in TDAT is a consequence of this issue, whereas it in DLU is a tacit sub-theme. Graham's apocalyptic taxonomy added a general knowledge to compare the different types of apocalypses in TDAT and DLU, as it was helpful to determine the severity of respectively the ice storm in TDAT and the comet in DLU, as well as how the movies operated with the concept differently and similarly.

With a combination of Graham's taxonomies and Andersen's notion of employing a planetary view, it was possible to interpret and understand each movie's distinctive means of portraying the immediacy and magnitude of the apocalypses. This relation is especially demonstrated in the Earth images within the movies. In addition to the use of scale, the comparison derives other features in TDAT and DLU that contribute to the compliance and reception of the political and environmental messages. For example, by adding Haas et al.'s explanations of means employed in political movies, the function of iconography and scope in TDAT and DLU added to the understanding of how the movies could be connected to their contextual realities of the United States in respectively 2004 and 2021. For instance, the analysis shows how the symbolism of solidarity and the necessary hereof in TDAT and DLU, may speak to the crisis of the 9/11 terror attack in 2001, as well as the abruption of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021.

From this comparison, a curiosity about how the movies' messages are received and perceived by the audience, as well as the movies' impact, arose. Based on the comparative discussion of the movies' influence, it became evident how the different comic and tragic portrayals in TDAT and DLU, and specifically their endings, potentially affect the audience's reception of the topics, as well as the degree to which they affect the viewer. Concludingly, the climate change in *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004) evidently accentuates environmental crisis and appurtenant political conflicts and may reminisce the anxiety after the terror attack on the World Trade Center, due to the movie's release three years later. As *Don't Look Up* covertly depicts environmental crisis, there is room for broader interpretations of the Netflix film. *Don't Look Up* is most prominently a caricature of the power and state of politics in the US. But DLU also demonstrates humanity's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and global warming, as well as it is a battlecry against the anti-science reality often seen in contemporary American society. Therefore, in relation to the thesis statement, the comparison of *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004) and *Don't Look Up* (2021) conclude a connection between the two films' depictions of apocalypses, and contemporary, political, and environmental issues and conflicts in America.

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