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Climate Migration in Post-Apocalyptic Narratives on the Mainstream Screen

Linda Koncz [1,2]* and Alex Villas Boas [3]

[1] Research Centre for Communication and Culture, Universidade Católica Portuguesa, 1649-023 Lisboa, Portugal
[2] DHI Postdoctoral Program, Católica Doctoral School, Universidade Católica Portuguesa, 1649-023 Lisboa, Portugal
[3] Research Centre of Theology and Religious Studies, Universidade Católica Portuguesa, 1649-023 Lisboa, Portugal
* Correspondence: konczlinda@gmail.com

Abstract: Through the perspective of 'catastrophising thought', this work undertakes a comparative analysis of five post-apocalyptic films dealing with climate migration: *Waterworld*, *Snowpiercer*, *Interstellar*, *Mad Max: Fury Road* and *Mortal Engines* in order to identify recurring themes within their dystopian societies. These narratives share an apocalyptic literary approach, intertwining biblical elements to draw a subjectivity that enables us to see the end of our known world order simultaneously as a new beginning. In the plots, technological development is related to the disrespect of ecological harmony and, therefore, extreme climate conditions. The changes in the films' narratives lead to a new kind of spirituality and a new concept of home. This article concludes by evaluating how these findings relate to the real, contemporary world.

Keywords: climate; migration; future; dystopia; post-apocalypse; film; home; catastrophe; narrative

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1. Introduction

'Catastrophising thought' is a way to imagine the worst outcome of a situation on an individual or collective level. In the case of climate change, catastrophising is a relevant reaction found in religious, philosophical, and artistic narratives. This article overviews these narratives and dives deeper into the cinematic representation of natural catastrophes within the climate fiction, cli-fi subgenre. The paper focuses on how *Waterworld* (Reynolds 1995), *Snowpiercer* (Joon-ho 2013), *Interstellar* (Nolan 2014), *Mad Max: Fury Road* (Miller 2015), and *Mortal Engines* (Rivers 2018) depict environmental, social, and technological changes and represent the new moral and social set-up and humanity's new home.

All these movies envision dystopic future societies. Dystopia is interconnected with utopia; dystopia is a negative vision of the future, not the exact opposite of utopia but the negative counterpart of it. Dystopia is typically marked by fear, oppressive governments, environmental catastrophes, or other features linked to a dramatic societal downfall (Definition of 'dystopia' 2012).

Why has dystopia become such a significant way of imagining the future in mainstream sci-fi films? We must look into the contemporary world to understand why we depict dystopian futures. Contemporaneity can be understood from the description by Georgio Agamben, an Italian philosopher, as the position in the present towards disconnection and dissociation. Contemporary 'does not coincide perfectly' with the time in which people live, not because they are anachronistic but 'diachronic'. It means someone who lives in another time, not as a romantic, nostalgic for a distant past or an illusory future disconnected from time, but who inserts themselves into a perception in which they begin to live the present time 'diachronically' (Agamben 2009).

Agamben's contemporary meets the concepts of utopia and dystopia, suggesting that ideal readers are people who are uncomfortable with their time. Utopian thinking is a sign of resistance and political non-conformity that nourishes hope and the exercise of ethical discernment. Dystopia even takes the resistant mindset a few steps further, to a place and time with less hope of finding the lost equilibrium.

This collective dystopian mindset is deeply connected to catastrophising thought. Albert Ellis, a psychologist, first coined the term, describing catastrophising as experiencing 'an irrationally negative forecast of future events' (Quartana et al. 2009, p. 745). He applied the term within the psychology framework to the individual.

Catastrophising is not confined to psychology; it extends into the realm of philosophy, particularly to our reflections on human history. Uncertainness emerges as we grapple with understanding Earth's place in the universe and the intricacies of atoms and particles, challenging what we think we know about ourselves. This uncertainty serves as the psychological and philosophical foundation of catastrophising, affecting individuals and society as a whole. Collective catastrophising tends to occur during paradigm shifts in perception, marked by intense debates about essential subjects for human understanding and our position in the cosmic order. Throughout history, various milestones in human cognitive evolution have triggered collective catastrophising. Examples include periods of reformation, the Copernican revolution, the advent of Darwinism, advancements in optical tools and methodologies, developments in quantum mechanics, and the rise of artificial intelligence. These moments signify paradigm shifts, which are fundamental changes in basic concepts and experimental practices of scientific disciplines (Passannante 2019).

Catastrophising, as a 'side effect' of paradigm shifts, has become a technique woven into biblical, philosophical, and artistic narratives, serving as a creative and innovative element in their respective processes, as further elaborated in the following section.

2. Climate Change Today and in Biblical Times

Since the advent of the agricultural revolution, humanity has always lived in a relatively narrow temperature range, with a preference for avoiding extreme cold or heat. The main reason for this is cultivating crops and vegetable seeds. According to climate studies, the planet will face an extreme temperature increase in the next 50 years. One-fifth of the planet can become a desert-like dry land where humans cannot thrive. Already in this century, monsoons and droughts make farming so hard that approximately 8 million people from Southeast Asia have migrated towards regions such as the Middle East, Europe, and North America. A similar pattern can be observed in Africa, where millions have relocated to coastal areas due to extreme droughts and crop failures (Xu et al. 2020).

The United Nations Environment Program emphasises that global environmental challenges significantly endanger public health. This includes approximately 8 million annual deaths due to air pollution, 4.3 million premature deaths linked to household air pollution, and 3.7 million deaths from air pollution (primarily from transport, energy production, and industrial activities). More than half of the world's hospital beds are filled with people suffering from water-related diseases, and 90% of diarrheal diseases are caused by environmental pollution and inadequate access to safe water and sanitation, resulting in 760,000 deaths annually. Climate change contributes to cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, with an estimated 6300 annual deaths in the 21st century. Weather-related disasters claim over 60,000 lives each year. Developing countries suffer from environmental health issues, especially when exposed to chemicals and waste in impoverished conditions. Ecosystem degradation directly relates to malnutrition, affecting around 1.5 billion people who rely on degraded farmlands and reducing food production. Malnutrition is responsible for roughly 45% of child deaths, with about 827 million of the 842 million undernourished people residing in developing countries. Unfortunately, increased global warming is expected to worsen these challenges (UNEP 2021, pp. 1–2).

Climate change leads to catastrophising scenarios as it signals the end of the era when we lived in balance (or not in visible imbalance) with the environment. The alarmist

narratives presented by the United Nations Environment Program are familiar because there were already stories about climate change in ancient texts.

There are several references to climate-related phenomena within the context of religious texts such as the Bible. Jesus refers to earthquakes and famine (*ESV Bible* 2001, Luke 21:11; Matt 24:7), and the book of Revelation tells extreme prophetic examples of catastrophes and natural disasters. These narratives depict an apocalyptic scenario known as the Eschaton, a time following Armageddon when God will pass judgement upon all individuals on Earth based on their earthly lives.

The Bible also portrays characters who are climate migrants searching for a new homeland. For example, due to food scarcity, Abraham and Sarai left Bethel in Canaan to seek refuge in Egypt. They had a hard time integrating into their new home country; Sarai had to pretend that she was the sister of Abraham so that the Egyptians and the Pharaoh himself would not kill Abraham to take away his beautiful wife (*ESV Bible* 2001, Genesis 12:1–16). Similarly, Isaac and the Philistines were guided to Gerar by God to find fertile land capable of agricultural productivity (*ESV Bible* 2001, Genesis 26:1–5, 12–17).

In the biblical narrative, a divine command was given to Isaac, stating, 'Do not go down to Egypt; stay in the land of which I shall tell you. Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you and bless you, for to you and to your descendants I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath which I swore to your father Abraham. I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven, and will give your descendants all these lands; and by your descendants all the nations of the Earth shall be blessed; because Abraham obeyed Me and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My laws' (Genesis 26:2–5).

Furthermore, Naomi and her family had to leave Bethlehem because of the drought. Naomi, her husband Elimelech, and their two sons, Mahlon and Kilion, had to go to Moab, the hill country. Eventually, Naomi's husband and even both of her sons died. Naomi was left alone in Moab and heard that God gave food to her people in her homeland; therefore, she eventually returned to Bethlehem with her sister-in-law, Ruth (*ESV Bible* 2001, Ruth 1:1–21).

Such stories emphasise the connection between human experiences and climatic conditions within the religious framework. The selected films also revolve around the central theme of famine, drought, floods, and resulting food shortages. This article will delve into how mainstream cinema portrays narratives of climate migration and explore the solutions for survival presented in the plots.

3. Natural Disasters in Philosophy

Within the realm of philosophy, a great exploration of the religious, social, and cultural dimensions of natural disasters is found in the writings concerning the 1755 Lisbon Earthquake. In 1755, on the 1st of November at 09:40, a catastrophic earthquake hit Lisbon. It was one of the deadliest and most destructive earthquakes in history, killing almost 100,000 people. The quake caused a tsunami and several fires, severely damaging the Portuguese capital. The earthquake created political tensions and disrupted the country's colonial expansion. Given Lisbon's status as the capital of a predominantly Catholic nation, the earthquake's impact was very serious as it ravaged virtually every significant church; consequently, for the theological framework of the time, it was hard to interpret this terrible act of 'God's anger' (Nichols 2014; Kendrick [1956] 1956, pp. 45–71).

The earthquake profoundly influenced the thinkers of the European Enlightenment as it had a transformative impact on European culture and philosophy. Numerous philosophers of the era made direct or metaphorical references to the earthquake in their works, for instance, Voltaire in *Candide* (Voltaire [1759] 1928) and his poem, *Poème sur le désastre de Lisbonne* (Voltaire [1756] 1977). Voltaire's satire, *Candide*, challenges the notion of this world being the 'best of all possible worlds', highlighting the irrationality of the earthquake (Voltaire [1759] 1928, p. 25).

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, reflecting on the earthquake, attributed its devastating impact to the densely populated nature of cities. Rousseau utilised the earthquake as an argu-

ment against urban environments, which are unnatural because people live in cramped conditions without having space to breathe (Rousseau [1759] 2005).

Immanuel Kant partially developed the concept of the sublime as a response to his attempts to comprehend the significance of the Lisbon earthquake. Kant produced three texts examining the earthquake, gathering information from various news pamphlets and constructing his own theory regarding its causes. He posited that the earthquake resulted from shifting massive subterranean caverns filled with hot gases. Kant's analysis represented an early, intricate approach to understanding the earthquake, incorporating elements from diverse disciplines such as science and sociology (Kant 1756a, pp. 417–27; 1756b, pp. 427–61). According to Kant, the event could be comprehended not solely as a religious manifestation or divine punishment but also as an aesthetic phenomenon and a subject of scientific inquiry. Kant contemplated the sublime quality of visually experiencing a natural disaster such as the Lisbon earthquake. He argued that the harmonious design of nature served as evidence for 'an architect of the world', yet he did not see the Lisbon earthquake as a definite sign of God's punishment (Kant 1756a, pp. 417–27; 1756b, pp. 427–61).

Kant tried to explain the Lisbon Earthquake scientifically and had specific recommendations on how to rebuild the Portuguese capital to make it resilient against potential future earthquakes. He explored ways to ensure urban safety and discussed how societies should respond to natural disasters to overcome such tragedies without chaos. Kant's approach is applicable to our current times, filled with environmental crises that are more relevantly human than God-made. Kant's writings serve as precursors to approaching climate change issues as he considers the multifaceted impacts of such events on philosophy, science, politics, and religion.

4. Natural Disasters in Cinema

The paradoxical interplay between the terrifying impact of depicted disasters in artistic works and the physical safety of the spectator—whether in a museum, at a cinema, or at home—results in an immense rush of adrenaline; therefore, these works attract audiences.

Stories and narratives have a strong role in popularising facts and circulating knowledge in society. Throughout human history, narratives have been dominant in fostering a sense of interconnectedness among individuals and shaping national histories and personal identities (Harari 2015, p. 40).

Narratives are also essential in raising climate awareness, and cinema has an important function in telling climate stories as it has the visual aspect of shocking. However, previous research warns against the excessive use of fear-inducing imagery without providing viable solutions, as this approach may leave audiences feeling helpless and less inclined to construct scenarios for addressing the issue. On the other hand, narratives that offer solutions foster relatability and generate empathy (O'Neill and Nicholson-Cole 2009). This line of investigation aligns with Susan Sontag's essay on photography, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (Sontag 2003), wherein she asserts that merely presenting shocking images does not necessarily raise awareness and may even desensitise viewers: 'People can turn off not just because a steady diet of images of violence has made them indifferent but because they are afraid. As everyone has observed, there is a mounting level of acceptable violence and sadism in mass culture: films, television, comics, and computer games. Imagery that would have had an audience cringing and recoiling in disgust forty years ago is watched without so much as a blink by every teenager in the multiplex. Indeed, mayhem is entertaining rather than shocking to many people in most modern cultures. But not all violence is watched with equal detachment. Some disasters are more apt subjects of irony than others' (Sontag 2003, p. 79).

Ecocinema encompasses films that explore contemporary ecological and environmental issues. This term includes blockbuster eco-disaster films, environmentalist documentaries, and avant-garde films, as defined by Scott Macdonald in his essay, *The Ecocinema Experience* (Rust et al. 2012, pp. 17–43). There is a debate about the most appropriate cinematic expression of ecological issues. Adrian Ivakhiv argues in favour of independent

and experimental filmmaking, citing the complex, metaphoric tools of expression found in art films while critiquing Hollywood's predictable narratives that reinforce consumer ideologies (Ivakhiv 2008, p. 16).

Contrastingly, Sakellari emphasises the effectiveness of classical narrative cinema conventions in fostering audience empathy with characters and engagement with catastrophic scenarios (Sakellari 2015, pp. 833–37). Also, mainstream scenarios are more explicit, making it easier to perceive their eco-critical subtext (Neilson 2019).

While this article focuses on mainstream climate fiction films, it is crucial to note that outside Hollywood and Hollywood-like productions, art cinema also presents various visions of environmental devastation. Examples include films like *The Red Desert* (Antonioni 1964), *The End of August at the Hotel Ozone* (Schmidt 1967), *Stalker* (Tarkovsky 1979), *Tender Spots* (Andrejew 1981), and *Dreams* (Kurosawa 1990). A comprehensive exploration of non-Hollywood films contributing to the dialogue on ecological concerns can be found in the essay book *Transnational Ecocinemas* (Kääpä and Gustafsson 2013).

4.1. The Three Waves of cli-fi

Climate fiction (cli-fi) films are Hollywood fiction films that deal with the issues and consequences of climate change. *Yale Climate Connections*, a web-based multimedia platform for climate change, has developed a guide that explores cli-fi films and their connection to significant climate events (Svoboda 2020). The evolution of cli-fi films can be understood through three distinct waves, each tied to crucial developments in environmental awareness and scientific understanding.

The first wave is connected to the first environmental science books at the end of the 1960s. Works such as *Silent Spring* (Carson [1962] 2018), which exposed the damaging effects of pesticides and chemical industry practices, and *The Population Bomb* (Ehrlich [1968] 1971) set the stage for environmental consciousness. The inception of the first Earth Day in 1970 further fuelled the momentum of environmental awareness. This initial wave of environmental awareness inspired filmmakers to explore themes of overpopulation and heatwaves, as depicted in films like *Soylent Green* (Fleischer 1973).

The second wave of cli-fi films emerged in the 1990s, with Hollywood producing several movies with climate-related themes, including *Waterworld* (Reynolds 1995), *The Arrival* (Twohy 1996), and *Twister* (Bont 1996). Yale's cli-fi guide associates these films with Al Gore's influential book *Earth in the Balance* (Gore [1992] 2006), which addressed pressing ecological issues and the Rio Earth Summit in the same year, prioritising sustainability concerns.

The third wave is connected to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change activity at the beginning of the 2000s. One prominent film representing this wave is *The Day After Tomorrow* (Emmerich 2004), which became the highest-grossing disaster film of its time and sparked extensive political and scientific discussions. The film prompted an ongoing debate concerning disaster films, as they can raise awareness of climate issues among a wide audience, but they also circulate non-accurate scientific facts. Paleoclimatologist Daniel P. Schra, for instance, expressed both appreciation for the film's attention to climate change but also concern about its exaggerated effects, stating the following:

'On the one hand, I'm glad that there's a big-budget movie about something as critical as climate change. On the other, I'm concerned that people will see these over-the-top effects and think the whole thing is a joke. . . We are indeed experimenting with the Earth in a way that hasn't been done for millions of years. But you're not going to see another Ice age—at least not like that' (Bowles 2004).

4.2. The Seven Film Genres of cli-fi

There are more than 60 films in the cli-fi genre, and according to the *Yale Climate Connections* study, there are seven different sub-genres within climate fiction films. These narrative subgenres include disaster movies, apocalypses, dystopias, psychological dramas, comedies, animated children's movies, and alien/superhero movies.

Disaster films typically revolve around a group of individuals who navigate extreme, life-threatening events like tornadoes, hurricanes, or disruptions caused by human technology that disturb the ecosystem. The main characters most often manage to survive, work on rebuilding their environment and return to their 'normal life'. Examples of this subgenre include *Twister* (Bont 1996) and *Geostorm* (Devlin 2017).

Apocalyptic movies are similar to disaster films in their plot structure, but they do not end on a positive note. These films portray a world irreversibly transformed by the disaster, making it impossible to restore conditions to their pre-crisis state. The survivors of the climate event have to adapt to brand new conditions on Earth, such as frozen, flooded, or dried land. *The Day After Tomorrow* (Emmerich 2004), *Interstellar* (Nolan 2014), and *Noah* (Aronofsky 2014) are relevant examples of this subgenre.

Dystopian stories begin where the apocalypses end. Life must be reconstructed on new grounds with higher sea levels, frozen ground, or dried-out desert land. Significant examples include *Waterworld* (Reynolds 1995), *Snowpiercer* (Joon-ho 2013), *and Mad Max: Fury Road* (Miller 2015).

There are also psychological dramas like *First Reformed* (Schrader 2017) and *The Arrival* (Twohy 1996), superhero films like *Avengers: Endgame* (Russo and Russo 2019), and even comedies like *Downsizing* (Payne 2017) in this subgenre.

This study focuses on five post-apocalyptic films that explore climate migration: *Waterworld* (Reynolds 1995), *Snowpiercer* (Joon-ho 2013), *Interstellar* (Nolan 2014), *Mad Max: Fury Road* (Miller 2015), and *Mortal Engines* (Rivers 2018). These movies have gained popularity as representations of environmental issues over the past two decades. They are blockbusters, like *Snowpiercer, Interstellar*, and *Mad Max: Fury Road* or initially highly anticipated films that later became box office flops. *Waterworld*, for example, started as the most expensive film of its time and flopped initially but later gained a cult following (Rust et al. 2012, p. 196). Similarly, *Mortal Engines*, despite being the directorial debut of the visual effects prodigy of Hollywood, faced box office disappointment (Box Office Mojo).

All of these films are considered mainstream because they adhere to canonical narrative structures and boast high production values. *Snowpiercer*, a transnational production, stands out as the most expensive Korean film made by a Czech production company with renowned English actors (Rawle 2018). *Mortal Engines* is a US–New Zealand co-production, *Mad Max: Fury Road* is Australian, and *Waterworld* and *Interstellar* are Hollywood productions. Covering various catastrophic events like floods, extreme temperature changes, droughts, and nuclear disasters, these films, with their Hollywood-like budgets, cutting-edge visual effects, and CGI techniques, have reached broad audiences globally, solidifying their places in the popular cultural canon.

The following section describes the dystopic environment and brief plot of the films, highlighting their specific take on representing the future of humanity. It is followed by the methodical take of examining how these films envision the future of humanity by identifying common elements in their narratives.

4.2.1. Waterworld

Kevin Reynolds' *Waterworld* presents a post-apocalyptic narrative in which the melting of the polar ice caps has significantly increased sea levels, submerging the continents beneath the water. The remaining humans are squeezed into floating cities or pirate the wild ocean by themselves in search of the legendary 'dryland'. There is a shortage of drinkable water, fruits, vegetables, and human connections. The survivors of the genocidal flood live in extremely harsh conditions with daily battles for food and shelter on the open waters.

The protagonist, known as the Mariner, arrives at a floating city, seeking to trade the valuable commodity of 'dirt' (sand), symbolising both a remnant of the past and a hope for the existence of dryland. He is a mutant; he has gills and frog-like skin in between his toes and is acclimated to the new living conditions on Earth. The inhabitants of the floating city decide to kill him because he is not a human anymore. Meanwhile, the Smokers, a tough

group of pirates, attack the city. Enola and Helen, a young girl and her guardian, save the Mariner and they escape together. Initially exhibiting brutal and animalistic behaviour, the Mariner's actions towards the women gradually evolve as he becomes emotionally attached and learns to live in a community with them. Initially, he is sceptic about the existence of dryland, but later he discovers a tattooed map on Enola's back, pointing at the possible location of the land. Eventually, as they follow these coordinates, they arrive at the summit of Mount Everest, which unexpectedly has lush greenery, waterfalls, lakes, and wildlife. The survivors are ready to inhabit the land, except for the Mariner, who does not feel like belonging to the drylands anymore and decides to return to the open sea.

On the land, the Mariner feels land sickness instead of sea sickness because he eventually got used to the constant movement of the waves. He adapted so strongly to his new environment that he underwent an epigenetic modification as his body and sense of balance changed. This image of the future human, who does not feel fully human anymore but also is not any other species, is a nightmarish vision of the future where humans become deviant on a genetic level. This kind of alienation is connected to other dystopian imaginaries, such as the protagonist of *Blade Runner* (Scott 1982), who wonders if he is a human or a machine. The loss of identity in both films plunges the characters into extreme states of loneliness. While having a lack of national or cultural identity is one thing, experiencing biological detachment represents another dimension of alienation.

4.2.2. Snowpiercer

Snowpiercer is a post-apocalyptic sci-fi film directed by Bong Joon-ho and based on the graphic novel *Le Transperceneige* (Lob et al. 1982). The story takes place on a train, the *Snowpiercer,* which is perpetually riding through the planet, carrying what is left of the human race. The plot unfolds in a world where Earth has succumbed to extreme cold after failed attempts to counteract global warming through climate engineering. Spending even 7 min outside can be deadly. The narrative starts 17 years after the ice age hit, and humanity circles the globe in a self-sustaining train. The train's different compartments symbolise distinct social classes, with the elite indulging in luxurious interiors and delicacies, while the working class is cramped in the tail section, subsisting on insect protein bars and facing the oppressive rule of ruthless military power.

The protagonist is Curtis, who becomes the revolutionary leader in the tail of the train and fights his way through towards the front compartment. Meanwhile, Curtis' group, Namgoong and Yona, see a landmark outside, and they consider that the ice might have started melting. Wilford, the head of the train, protects the sacred engine, which a young slave child operates because he is small enough to fit into the machine and turn its intricate parts. Wilford reveals to Curtis that the previous rebellion was orchestrated to maintain a delicate balance of life aboard the train by reducing the tail's population. The revolutionaries breach the engine compartment and ignite a fire, triggering an avalanche that derails the train. Curtis sacrifices his arm to save the boy inside the engine. Yona and the engine boy escape the train and make their first steps outside in the snow. They suddenly see a snow bear, proving that life does exist outside the train.

The train serves as a microcosm of a hierarchical system, with the tail section occupied by the poor and the front cars reserved for the elite. The precisely designed ecosystem of the train is a totalitarian regime, where only the upper classes have rights and the lower ones are kept under control by brutal army forces. Wilford believes that everyone has a 'preordained' position on the train, which cannot be changed for the sake of humanity's survival.

4.2.3. Interstellar

Interstellar is a science fiction film directed by Christopher Nolan. The story takes place in the future, where climate change causes extreme struggles for farmers in cultivating essential crops, such as wheat, corn, or other plant seeds. Dust storms destroy all crops and cause serious health problems. The protagonist is Cooper, an ex-astronaut forced to be a farmer because, since the massive famine in 2067, all scientific research and exploration was

stopped to focus on re-growing food sources. Cooper gets hired to a secret NASA project; he and his crew have to decide which planet seems most viable to accommodate humanity.

Cooper must make the difficult decision to leave his young children behind to embark on a journey to explore a massive black hole to find a new home for humanity. If the crew cannot return to Earth, a plan B involves using pre-fertilised human eggs to restart human life on another planet. This plan means leaving humanity behind on Earth with famine and dust storms, and Cooper cannot see his family again. The first planet they encounter is uninhabitable, entirely covered in water, while the second is frozen. The local researcher, Dr Mann, faked his results to attract the crew so he did not have to die alone on a frozen, uninhabitable planet. After a heavy struggle with Dr Mann, Cooper has to detach himself from the ship and finds himself in a five-dimensional space where he can peek into moments of his daughter's bedroom in the past. Employing gravity as a medium, he communicates a crucial message to his daughter—now working at NASA—through Morse code.

Cooper leaves his home, daughter, and son for decades to search for a new habitable planet for the survival of humanity. This sacrifice haunts him throughout the narrative, while the film underscores the profound power of love, ultimately driving Cooper's actions. Eventually, he manages to transmit the knowledge he gains from the other side of the black hole, offering a solution to save humanity to his daughter.

4.2.4. Mad Max: Fury Road

Mad Max is a post-apocalyptic action film, the third part of the Mad Max trilogy, directed by George Miller. In the first two parts, Mel Gibson is a police officer trying to establish order in a lawless society. The first two films depict a dystopian Earth plagued by gang warfare over scarce oil resources, reflecting the socio-political climate of the 1970s and its petroleum crises. In the new instalment, *Fury Road*, even basic resources, like water, have become a rare commodity.

The remainder of society is concentrated in the Citadel under the rule of Immortan Joe and his army. He is an evil warlord and cult leader who enhances his people with chrome spray and promises a glorious afterlife in Valhalla. He milks women and bleeds men for his needs. The protagonist, Max, is imprisoned in the Citadel while Joe's five captive wives escape during a petrol trade. Max joins forces with Imperator Furiosa in a sandstorm rally to save the escaping wives, one of whom is heavily pregnant. As they evade the pursuing army of Joe, Furiosa reveals her childhood memories of a place called 'Greenland', where plants are growing. Following an intense desert chase, Furiosa, Max, and the wives arrive at Greenland, where they find an all-female tribe living in an uninhabitable swampland. Subsequently, Max and Furiosa return to the Citadel and kill Joe through a desert battle, giving hope for a new life to the wives and the Citadel's people.

Fury Road encapsulates the unique intersection of climate change and toxic masculinity themes. Within the narrative, a matriarchal society initially presents a promising hope of a fertile home, but it eventually turns out that the female warriors' land has also dried out. This desolate, harsh environment traumatises all inhabitants; the notion of love between the wounded protagonists, Max and Furiosa, is unimaginable.

4.2.5. Mortal Engines

Mortal Engines is a steampunk film set around a thousand years in the future. A 'Sixty Minute War' with high-powered technological weapons partly destroyed the world. In the aftermath, the survivors devised mobile 'Traction Cities' that roam the landscape, engaging in predatory behaviour by hunting and assimilating smaller cities through a concept known as 'Municipal Darwinism'. All this happens in Britain and Europe's 'Great Hunting Ground', while the opposition is settled in mobile cities in Asia behind the 'Shield Wall'. London has an 'Old-Tech Museum' where all 'Old-Tech' items, such as computers, smartphones, weapons, and toasters, are kept from the past.

The narrative centres around Hester Shaw, who is a new migrant in London, and Thaddeus Valentine, the city's head historian. Eventually, Thaddeus turns out to be a devilish dictator and pushes Hester and Tom—a young historian—to the harsh Hunting Ground. Here, Hester tells Tom about her tragic life story. Thaddeus killed her archaeologist mother because she dug out some 'Old-tech' in the 'Dead Continent' of America. Hester was a young girl at this time, and she managed to escape the murder scene with a necklace from her mother and a scar from Thaddeus and was eventually raised by a cyborg.

Thaddeus tries to rebuild the mortal quantum-energy weapon used in the 'Sixty Minutes War' from the core stolen from Hester's mother. Hester manages to eliminate the weapon with a kill switch from her mother and kills Valentine, who confesses to being her father. This is how the war ends, and London makes peace with the Asian traction.

According to Mortal Engines, humanity does not learn from the lessons of history. A superweapon destroyed the crust of the Earth, and then the continents rearranged themselves, leaving the planet non-fertile. Although different groups hid the remaining parts of the superweapon, the evil historian recollects them and commits the same mistake again, endangering the planet for the sake of power.

4.2.6. Common Elements

Throughout history, humans have been captivated by the concept of end times or doomsday, which is evident in religious texts and cultural narratives. With technological, medical, and political advancements, concerns grew about the consequences of misusing our power over each other and the environment. Apocalyptic events, whether in religious or secular contexts, are portrayed as judgments or corrective responses to societal ills. According to this perspective, apocalyptic texts function as a political critique of established orders. Douglas Kellner states, 'Hollywood films provide cinematic visions concerning the psychological, sociopolitical, and ideological makeup of U.S. society at a given point in history' (Kellner 2011, p. 18). Wallis and Aston (2011, p. 54) and Rosen (2008) posit that the apocalyptic genre not only conveys a sense of ultimate order but also serves as a vehicle for social criticism. Therefore, it is not surprising that there are common patterns in the films that represent a twisted social order after apocalyptic events.

The genre features mythic images rooted in texts from the Hebrew Bible (Reynolds 2011, pp. 45–46), rich in symbolic meaning, and exhibits characteristics such as pessimistic cosmological and historical surveys and dualism (Lewis 2004, p. 12). The exploration of post-apocalyptic scenarios in fiction and film has not only fascinated society for generations but has also developed its own thematic storytelling schemes. These stories, set after apocalyptic events, explore the psychology of survivors and the struggle to keep the 'savaged' human race united. They take place in a non-technological future world or one with remnants of society and technology, where the main task is to find humanity's new home and a new equilibrium with the environment (Nicholls et al. 2023).

All the examined films depict a post-apocalyptic scenario involving climate migration with stunning visuals, yet they follow distinct storylines. Each film presents a unique scientific trigger for a catastrophe (famine, flood, climate experiment, or a quantum weapon), compelling characters to survive and seek a new home (on the altered surface of Earth, in outer space). Despite their diverse narratives, there are central themes and recurring motifs in all the films, stemming from the basic elements of the apocalypse genre. These common elements exist in varying ratios across the films. The protagonists in all the films undergo a form of transformation within their harsh living conditions and brutalized societies, a crucial part of their journey before discovering a new world and a new way of surviving. This narrative structure and the central thematic elements of the films reinforce their genre as mainstream post-apocalyptic. This article focuses on the shared elements, emphasizing their commonalities while acknowledging their specific differences.

Before the article dives into the thematic elements, let us focus on the visual commodity of the films' representation of their environment, because the environments are in the centre of the storylines. In his 2002 essay titled *Between Setting and Landscape in the Cinema*, Martin

Lefebvre makes a distinction between two ways of portraying space in films: as a setting and as a landscape. Lefebvre defines landscape as a 'space freed from eventhood', essentially a backdrop without significant plot developments. Mainstream cinema commonly depicts natural or outdoor spaces as settings, serving as only backgrounds for the unfolding action. This is justified by the dominance of narrative in mainstream films; the storyline is above all other elements. However, narrative cinema not only conveys stories through events but also provides a visual spectacle. These are two aspects of the viewing activity: a 'narrative mode' and a 'spectacular mode', constantly interacting with each other. The 'narrative mode' suddenly becomes secondary when the viewers focus on the cinematic spectacle. This is the 'autonomizing gaze'—rooted in the Western landscape painting—that allows the 'transition from setting to landscape' (Lefebvre 2002, p. 29).

Mad Max: Fury Road exemplifies these two aspects of viewing activity by placing the environment at the forefront, shifting to 'spectacular mode' during the road battle scene. A long shot captures a huge sandstorm, where the car chase almost disappears in the landscape. Similarly, in *Interstellar*, the vast space and uninhabitable planets with endless water or ice frequently turn on the 'spectacular mode'. *Snowpiercer* often depicts the fast-moving train from a distance, showcasing the hostile environment of the perpetual snowscape. *Waterworld* portrays boats as tiny specks in the expansive water through extremely high-angle shots, and *Mortal Engines* shows vast, barren land devoid of vegetation.

On the thematic level, the five films represent post-apocalyptic climate change scenarios with recurring patterns. Some elements appeared in all these films, indicating that the films, made in different years by different directors of different nationalities, share the same vision of humanity's future. It is worth examining these common elements and how they relate to reality. When themes repeatedly appear in science fiction, they show that those topics are circulating in the collective consciousness; they represent our fears and anxieties. Fictional narratives are cultural digestions of emerging threats and innovations. Science fiction films are collectively thinking of the future, raising awareness and looking for solutions to the problems of the present reality.

On the unconscious level, they can be interpreted as preparations or rehearsals for the future of humanity. Early film theorists coined the 'oneiric theory', combining arguments about the metaphoric connection between films and dreams. It highlighted that films also have latent content that can be analysed collectively (Mitry 2006). If we combine the oneiric approach of cinema and evolutionary psychology's view on dreaming, suggesting that life-threatening events are rehearsed in dreams (Revonsuo 2000), we can state that common sci-fi scenarios are like collective unconscious training.

A. Brutalised Society:

All the films imagine a future where severe climate change caused a fictional apocalypse. In this post-apocalyptic setting, the planet's wounds are mirrored in the wounded characters who struggle to establish emotional connections and trust one another. For instance, in *Mad Max: Fury Road*, both the antagonist and the protagonist embody brutal killers. Similarly, in *Waterworld*, the main character nearly trades away the woman he later develops feelings for. In *Snowpiercer*, the privileged upper class of the train demonstrates a willingness to sacrifice the lives of the poor passengers for the sake of a 'balanced ecosystem'. Furthermore, in *Mortal Engines*, Thaddeus Valentine, the power-hungry historian, kills his love and scars his daughter for possessing a deadly quantum weapon. Despite the bleakness of these dystopian scenarios, glimmers of hope emerge. In *Mortal Engines*, for instance, Hester's declaration of love towards Tom, the young historian, prevents the cyborg from turning her into a machine. In *Interstellar*, Cooper leaves his family behind to save humanity; however, at the film's end, love becomes a fundamental factor through which he communicates the equation to his daughter to save the human race.

B. The survivor hero:

All these dystopian worlds create a new kind of hero, a survivor man or woman with a different set of survival skills. In *Waterworld*, the most important skills are building

and driving a ship and knowing how to fish and dive. In *Mad Max: Fury Road*, driving through the desert and fighting on top of moving vehicles are essential to stay alive. In *Mortal Engines*, being an engineer and understanding old technology are indispensable skills. In *Interstellar*, all professions of the old world lose their importance, except being a farmer. Cultivating seeds is the only way to keep humanity alive during sandstorms and dying crops.

There is an important concept in narrative theory: the 'hero's journey'. It provides a comprehensive template for understanding the phases experienced by the protagonist. Hero myth pattern studies were popularised by Joseph Campbell, who describes the 'hero's journey' in the following way: 'A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered, and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man' (Campbell [1949] 2008, p. 30).

In the case of the climate survivor hero, this 'supernatural wonder' and 'mysterious adventure' is even more accurate in a literal sense. The climate hero's journey exemplifies all facets of survival as the surrounding environment turns hostile towards humanity. Through the 'heroes' journeys', they not only seek their own survival but also acquire the power to help humanity as a whole.

C. Class struggle:

In the films, social tension between classes is pushed to the extreme. *Snowpiercer* highlights class struggles among the last remnants of humanity in the face of extreme climate change. The poor on the train were kept extremely poor, while the front sections lived in a luxurious environment with nourishment and education. The leader, Wilford, believes that everyone has a 'preordained' position, which cannot be changed for the sake of humanity's survival. In *Mad Max: Fury Road*, the masses have nothing to eat or drink, while the disillusioned warlord lives on mother milk and blood transplants; he exploits the poor for his own survival. In *Waterworld*, the pirates trade fish, sand, and old objects for clean water or lemon while the masses are starving. In *Mortal Engines,* large predator cities thrive, while on the Great Hunting Ground, there is slavery.

According to the films, in the dystopian future, the gap between poverty and wealth will widen dramatically, which aligns with real experts' predictions. During the COVID-19 pandemic, several specialists were requested to predict the societal changes that would occur in the years following the outbreak (Anderson et al. 2021, pp. 3–8). Their responses indicated that economic inequality would worsen as individuals with high digital literacy and access to advanced technological tools would advance professionally, leaving behind those with limited access and training. Technological change would become even more radical and eliminate jobs, resulting in a high unemployment rate. Furthermore, the influence of mega-corporations would expand through the exploitation of big data and algorithmic decision-making, exacerbating imbalances between the privileged and marginalised segments of society. Most of the population would be trapped in economic insecurity (Anderson et al. 2021, pp. 3–8).

D. Biblical references and religious arguments

D.1. The Chosen Child

The concept of the 'chosen child' finds its roots in biblical narratives. According to Isaiah, Jesus Christ is the Chosen One and his role is to 'bring justice to the nations' (Isaiah 42, p. 16). The birth of Jesus, indicated by the appearance of a guiding star that led the kings to Bethlehem, further emphasises his chosen status, as depicted in the Gospel of Matthew.

Similarly, in all the films, a child is the key to the survival of the human race. In *Snowpiercer*, there is the small boy who is tiny enough to fit in the engine to turn it with his little fingers, and there is the young girl with the map of dryland tattooed on her back in *Waterworld*. *Mad Max: Fury Road* features a pregnant woman carrying the cruel leader's only child, and there is the protagonist in *Mortal Engines*, who obtained a key as a child to stop the lethal weapon that can destroy humanity. Moreover, there is Murph, Cooper's

daughter in *Interstellar*, who eventually understands her dad's coded message to save the human race.

D.2. The Ark

Another biblical reference in the films is a kind of Noah's Ark, a vehicle or a moving city, with the only survivors of the human race. Noah's Ark is the ship in the Book of Genesis that Noah built for his family and animals (Genesis 7:1). In *Waterworld*, the floating city shares similarities with Noah's Ark, serving as a refuge for the remnants of humanity after a catastrophic flood. *Mortal Engines* features mobile cities on wheels that carry survivors of a global war. At the same time, *Snowpiercer* depicts the train as an ark perpetually traversing the frozen Earth, providing shelter for the last remaining humans following a drastic drop in temperatures. In *Interstellar,* according to plan B, the spaceship carries enough pre-fertilised human eggs to restart human life on another planet.

In all the films, the 'arks' are aggressive machines, penetrating the landscape. They remind us of how we destroyed the environment, but they also carry the reminiscence of humanity. They represent the controversial quality of industrialization.

D.3. Sacrifice

All the films have a moral dilemma where a character must choose between two conflicting choices. This often leads to sacrificing a loved one or oneself for the sake of saving humanity. Sacrifice is a common theme in the most ancient forms of storytelling, such as mythology and the Bible, serving as a religious rite to restore equilibrium and order. In the Bible, the willingness to sacrifice is proof of full dedication to God. For example, according to the Hebrew Bible, God commands Abraham to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice. After Isaac is bound to an altar, a messenger from God stops Abraham before the sacrifice finishes, saying, 'Now I know you fear God'. Abraham looks up, sees a ram, and sacrifices it instead of Isaac (Genesis 22:12).

In *Mortal Engines*, Hester is faced with the difficult decision of killing her father to end the war. *Snowpiercer* highlights the hypocritical nature of the elite, who sacrifice the poor to maintain a sense of balance within the train. Moreover, Curtis, the protagonist, sacrifices his arm to save a child in the train's engine. In *Waterworld*, the young girl with the map on her back becomes a potential sacrifice to find dry land.

Interstellar delves into numerous moral dilemmas and sacrifices. Amelia must choose between two potential habitable planets, attempting to separate her personal attachment from her objective decision-making. NASA Professor Dr Brand is confronted with the task of solving the gravity equation, which would enable humanity's relocation to a new planet, while also considering the option of abandoning humanity and starting anew with frozen eggs on another planet. Dr Mann faces the dilemma of accepting the uninhabitable nature of his planet and the prospect of dying alone or deceiving the mission through falsified research. Cooper's dilemma revolves around the limited time available to him, weighing the choice between helping humanity and being present for his family. Additionally, Cooper's daughter struggles with the moral dilemma of reconciling her father's abandonment and the opportunity to assist him in saving humanity.

D.4. (Re)Education/Indoctrination

Education plays a significant role in the post-apocalyptic scenarios as a means of indoctrinating children into the new world order. In *Snowpiercer*, children are taught about the waves of failed revolutions, highlighting the severe consequences of rebellion. This serves as an attempt by the ruling class to prevent future uprisings. Moreover, children are exposed to scientifically inaccurate information. Minsoo's observation of melting ice beneath the Yekaterina Bridge is evidence of the contradicting teachings they receive on how the whole planet is frozen. The presence of a polar bear at the film's conclusion further challenges the truth of this indoctrination. Similarly, in *Interstellar*, the education system portrays the moon landing as fake news to motivate children to prioritise agriculture over

exploration. The survivors of the human race must become farmers rather than explorers or engineers, given the importance of crop resources for survival.

The education systems depicted in these dystopian worlds resemble the concept of indoctrination, instilling specific beliefs, attitudes, and cognitive strategies in individuals. Those subjected to indoctrination are discouraged from questioning or critically examining the doctrines they have been taught. In a political context, indoctrination can be viewed as a tool of class warfare employed by state institutions to maintain the existing social order. Schools, law enforcement, and, in extreme cases, the entire state apparatus may be implicated, forming totalitarian regimes (Snook 1972).

D.5. Technology/Science vs. Religion/Spirituality

Within these post-apocalyptic narratives, belief systems often take precedence over scientific evidence. Without modern technology, survival becomes centred around farming, sailing, or simply staying alive on a train. The diminished focus on scientific pursuits is evident in the films. In *Snowpiercer*, the potential for the planet's habitability is regarded as a mere myth. In *Mortal Engines*, common modern technologies, such as toasters, have become mythical objects. Only a selected few possess the knowledge and access to machinery required to create another deadly quantum weapon. The existence of dryland in *Waterworld* becomes a subject of myth, with some placing their faith in it and others doubting its reality. Similarly, in *Mad Max: Fury Road*, Greenland remains a belief of a small group. In *Interstellar*, Cooper's daughter persists in searching for signs from her father, prioritising her spiritual belief over the scientific plausibility of receiving a message from the future. These films explore the idea that in future societies, strong beliefs can supersede scientific knowledge, echoing a historical context where religion held greater power than science. These post-apocalyptic scenarios envision a paradigm shift where technology is eradicated and faith and belief systems regain prominence.

Science and religion are interconnected even though their respective natures are very different. The scientific method relies on objectivity, facts, and logical reasoning, while religion operates on beliefs and power and employs subjective narratives (Harrison 2015). Before the Scientific Revolution, most of the scientific and technological advancements were accomplished by religiously ordered societies. The Scientific Revolution, characterised by advancements in mathematics, physics, astronomy, biology, and chemistry, fundamentally reshaped societal understanding of the natural world. Later, each discipline developed specialised techniques to study and potentially manipulate their specific subjects (Hannam 2011). However, there is a certain rapprochement and progress in the current dialogue between science and religion in so-called post-secular societies (Villas Boas et al. 2023). Although, there is still a phenomenon of dualisation between a certain public rationality and a self-referential religious way of thinking (Teixeira et al. 2022).

The post-apocalyptic scenarios depicted in the films highlight this dualisation. Wars or cataclysmic events have resulted in the destruction of existing technology. In the absence of scientific tools in daily life, society turns to religion for guidance. These fictional scenarios evoke a sense of savagery and superstition that is supposedly reminiscent of the Middle Ages. The absence of technology compels the characters to revert to older systems and beliefs.

Technology is connected to capitalism; Karl Marx asserts that machines play a crucial role in the historical progression of labour. The introduction of machinery, according to Marx in *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* (Marx [1867] 1992), was aimed at increasing the relative surplus value for capitalists rather than easing human labour (pp. 436–37). The use of different kinds of machines has widened the gap between social classes, as not everyone can afford to work with machines, and many workers have become replaceable by machines. Examining the impact of machines over time, it becomes evident that they harm the environment by destroying surroundings, contaminating water, and polluting the air.

Beyond the material realm, films with apocalyptic themes highlight the ethical and moral consequences of machines created by advanced technology. These machines lead

to a loss of interpersonal sensitivity, turning humanity into brutal, machine-like entities (illustrated by characters like the Mariner in *Waterworld*, Furiosa in *Mad Max: Fury Road*, and Hester in *Mortal Engines*). Furthermore, the colossal machines, such as the quantum weapon in *Mortal Engines*, jet skis in *Waterworld*, trucks in *Mad Max: Fury Road*, and the train in *Snowpiercer,* contribute to an inflated human ego, resulting in the emergence of god-like characters like Thaddeus Valentine, Deacon, Immortal Joe, and Wilford. These post-apocalyptic leaders lack spiritual qualities such as compassion, gratitude, humility, and forgiveness.

The discussed films are post-apocalyptic fiction, a genre inspired by symbols from the Hebrew Bible (Reynolds 2011, pp. 45–46). However, the repeated use of biblical themes does not solely stem from the genre's characteristics but is also influenced by the visual richness inherent in biblical literature. Some of the sacred texts in the Old Testament are considered to be poetic literature. They go beyond merely recounting events, logically offering an aesthetic experience through vivid imagery. The language of Hebrew poetry is described as a 'language of images' and uses symbols and metaphors to visually 'translate' imaginable scenes (Lowth 1995, p. 206).

The biblical themes found in the five films not only connect thematically with the Bible but also visually. The recurring biblical themes emphasise the visual quality of biblical language, making them suitable for climate fiction films that operate in large-scale and spectacular imaginary worlds. The familiarity of these biblical themes in mainstream films stems from their roots in ancient texts, making Noah's ark resemble a spaceship, an immediately recognisable motif. Biblical themes are ingrained in our collective consciousness as visual images, making them easily detectable in mainstream films.

5. Conclusions

All the films echo real political or climate issues. At the beginning of *Interstellar*, in 2067, there are interviews with survivors of an apocalyptic dust bowl. Those scenes are real interview bits from survivors of the Dust Bowl, which nearly destroyed the midwestern United States in the 1930s. During the real drought, the unanchored soil turned to dust. The strong winds blew dust to New York and Washington, blackening the skies (McLeman et al. 2014). The phrase, 'we should not have joined Europe' by London residents in *Mortal Engines* strongly references Brexit. Although the film premiered in 2018, the idea of leaving the EU was already strongly present in the political atmosphere. The UK officially left the EU in 2020, but the referendum was held in 2016 (Brexit 2023). *Mad Max: Fury Road* and *Snowpiercer* reflect the rising temperature. In reality, the Earth's temperature has risen by an average of 00.08° Celsius per decade since 1880 (Lindsey and Dahlman 2023). In *Mad Max,* the world turned into a vast, hot desert where no plants can grow. In *Snowpiercer*, global warming is so extreme that engineers try to reduce the temperature by introducing aerosols into the atmosphere to create a cooling effect. The method does not work out and pushes the Earth's temperature to the equivalent of a new Ice age. *Waterworld* refers to the effect of climate change on the world's waters, as in the film, all drylands disappear under the rising sea levels. In reality, climate change affects the world's waters in complex ways, from unpredictable rainfalls and floods to shrinking ice sheets and rising sea levels (Climate Action 2023).

In these post-apocalyptic scenarios, when the common home, our planet, is in danger, class tension becomes extreme, while micro-groups and family bonds become strong. These climate migration films present moving cities, floating cities, trains, and desert caravans as temporary homes of humanity. As a consequence of life's extremely altered circumstances, humanity itself changes in all these films. People not only become more brutal in the rough world, but they also develop health problems, like blood deficiency (*Mad Max: Fury Road*) and lung disease (*Interstellar*), and the new living conditions even modify human genetics (*Waterworld*). The plots raise the question of whether we remain the same if our home planet changes so much. If we have to leave our homes, do we also leave our identity? These scenarios push the long-standing nature versus nurture debate to the extreme because

both nature and nurture change if we lose our homes; therefore, the idea of the home gets idealised. These films present generations who still remember or have heard of the past concept of 'home'. They also present the next generation of climate migrants who do not even know or believe that a fertile and safe 'home' ever existed.

Within these Hollywood climate migration scenarios, survival becomes the primary objective for the characters, and the pursuit of food and shelter dominates their lives. Cultures, traditions, and spiritual practices do not fade away in these rough times; on the contrary, they are strongly present as a last resort for the memories of 'home'. In *Mortal Engines*, tea is still an essential English commodity to accept guests even if it is made with wasteland ingredients in wartime. In *Mad Max: Fury Road*, men praise machines in reckless desert races, and the new priest plays an electric guitar crucified on a speeding truck. He is the one who shows the way to the masses in post-apocalyptic hopelessness. These films represent the future of climate crises, where decontextualised traditions and new forms of religious practices remind us of the past.

Drawing on Kant's previously discussed exploration of the sublime, particularly inspired by earthquakes, it is argued that finding satisfaction in witnessing the power of nature can transform into an even greater pleasure when we perceive the end of the world as a potential new beginning. Kant terms this idea as a 'cyclical image', suggesting a continuous process of resistance, deconstruction, and reconstruction (Kant [1755] 2012, p. 271). The emphasis is not on surrendering or capitulating but on rebuilding a new world order. Kant's 'cyclical image' and the concept of 'paradigm shift' create catastrophisation as a 'side effect'. Despite the bleak environmental scenarios depicted in the films discussed in this article, they all share a common theme of envisioning not only the worst possible outcomes but also imagining new beginnings in line with the idea of the 'cyclical image'. It is not sufficient to merely depict the end of the world or to create alarm but to offer hope for a new beginning. The films share common elements that contribute to ushering in a new beginning for humanity. These include the presence of a chosen child, a modern-day Noah's Ark, and themes of sacrifice and indoctrination, all working together to prepare for a re-start. These elements form part of a collective effort not to reconstruct the pre-catastrophe system but to train society for a new structure.

The films capture new world orders that require a new subjectivity, which is closely tied, in a Foucauldian sense, to the dynamics of power (Foucault 1971). A new kind of subjectivity is not just a new point of view or existentialist argument revolving around whether individuals can or should break free from their own personal perspectives. This understanding of subjectivity challenges the idea of a stable, transcendental subject. Foucault explores how historical, social, and institutional forces shape subjectivity and emphasises how modern societies regulate individuals not only through explicit political mechanisms but also through various institutions and discourses (Foucault 1982). Subjectivity is a product of power relations, and individuals are both the subjects and objects of these power dynamics. The recurrent post-apocalyptic motifs in the films, such as the emergence of a new hero figure, the recurring conflict between technology and spirituality, and intense class struggle all indicate a shift in subjectivity. This new subjectivity is related to a new kind of power dynamics, a new relation between nature, society, and technology. In the five films analysed and in the real world of the 21st century, one of the major threats is the health of our planet. The quality of the environment significantly affects people's overall well-being, and when the environment deteriorates, it can lead to moral decay and intense political power struggles. In the final scenes, the war ends between different parties (*Mad Max, Mortal Engines*) or humanity finds a liveable environment to restart life on Earth (*Waterworld, Snowpiercer*) or outside of Earth (*Interstellar*). The proposed end solutions involve a new kind of subjectivity, creating a balance between technology and spirituality and adopting a holistic approach to recreate a peaceful society with a balanced co-living with nature.

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