

Your Name
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Remember to include your last name and the page numbers in the upper, right hand corner of all pages except the first.

PD3: Jeffrey Cohen, the Trouble with Archives, & *Interstellar*

What is the key idea or concept(s) that you chose to illustrate from one or more of the readings, i.e. what are benefits and drawback of the concept(s) you chose?

In his blog post for *In the Middle*, Jeffrey Cohen shows how fictional representations of the future shape the choices people make in the present. For him apocalypse via deluge is premier among the ways that humans represent our possible futures to ourselves in the present. Cohen argues that anticipating a sudden and totalizing end to all life on earth elicits a variety of responses. Some people are resigned to their dangerous behavior when presented with the possibility that all the civilizations on earth will drown in man made waves (make hay while the sun shines). In contrast to resignation, Cohen explains most of us respond to our inevitable ends by collecting and storing up things that matter to us. While these collections, these archives, are often produced with the best of intentions, Cohen points lays bare the ways that archives create the very conditions to which they expect to respond. To redress the trouble with archives, i.e. creating scarcity and arbitrarily assigning value to people and things, Cohen suggest that his readers, "keep in mind that a future of submerged cities is a future of unequally distributed suffering, of environmental injustice. Katrina and New Orleans taught us that. So does the Noah story in its fullness. By not embracing resignation we *can* turn down catastrophe -- even if we cannot escape watery perturbations. An ark's value may not in in its walls so much as in their breaching, in their ability even as flotsam to enable as wide a collective as possible not to drown" (par. 21). In a way, the individual future of all living things is inevitably apocalyptic, and most of us respond to that inevitability through collecting and passing on what is meaningful to us. Cohen suggests that at both the individual level and at nation/global scale, we constantly examine the values we use to determine difference.

How does the media (movie, TV show, or video game) you chose illustrates the key concept(s) you chose from the reading(s)?

In my poster I show how over the course of its running time, *Interstellar* illustrates several of the concepts key to Cohen's argument. First, I show how the movie illustrates the several possible responses to living with apocalypse on the horizon. Next, I show how the movie contrasts different types of archives. Finally, I and I assess the relative value of each. (in a final draft, I would want to develop these benefits and drawbacks by naming them specifically...)

May also want to answer the question, "so what?" That is, what does reading these two (or more) texts together reveal that you didn't know before? AND/OR What does thinking these concepts in multiple media/modes do that a single mode cannot?

Analyzing representations of apocalypse in *Interstellar* via Cohen's theory of trouble with archives gives me a greater understanding of how influential and complex representations of the future can be. For example, I think about my own future in terms of the house my family and I can/will inhabit. The movie and the article both help me read this vision of my house as a kind-of archive. Just like the weird house that Cooper inhabits at the end of the film, the figure of the house, through which I conceive of my own future is both a relic of the/my past and closed off in ways that both the movie and the article suggest are dangerous.

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How do I move from this draft to a final draft—both the written Pitch and in the poster?

Analyzing representations of apocalypse in *Interstellar* via Cohen's theory of trouble with archives gives me a greater understanding of how influential and complex representations of the future can be. For example, I think about my own future in terms of the house my family and I can/will inhabit. The movie and the article both help me read this vision of my house as a kind-of archive. Just like the weird house that Cooper inhabits at the end of the film, the figure of the house, through which I conceive of my own future is both a relic of the/my past and closed off in ways that both the movie and the article suggest are dangerous.

Commented [MR2]: What if I make the last paragraph/response to the final question of the draft, the first paragraph of the pitch? What if I begin with the 'so what'?

In his blog post for *In the Middle*, Jeffrey Cohen shows how fictional representations of the future shape the choices people make in the present. For him apocalypse via deluge is premier among the ways that humans represent our possible futures to ourselves in the present. Cohen argues that anticipating a sudden and totalizing end to all life on earth elicits a variety of responses. Some people are resigned to their dangerous behavior when presented with the possibility that all the civilizations on earth will drown in man made waves (make hay while the sun shines). In contrast to resignation, Cohen explains most of us respond to our inevitable ends by collecting and storing up things that matter to us. While these collections, these archives, are often produced with the best of intentions, Cohen points lays bare the ways that archives create the very conditions to which they expect to respond. To redress the trouble with archives, i.e. creating scarcity and arbitrarily assigning value to people and things, Cohen suggest that his readers, "keep in mind that a future of submerged cities is a future of unequally distributed suffering, of environmental injustice. Katrina and New Orleans taught us that. So does the Noah story in its fullness. By not embracing resignation we *can* turn down catastrophe -- even if we cannot escape watery perturbations. An ark's value may not in in its walls so much as in their breaching, in their ability even as flotsam to enable as wide a collective as possible not to drown" (par. 21). In a way, the individual future of all living things is inevitably apocalyptic, and most of us respond to that inevitability through collecting and passing on what is meaningful to us. Cohen suggests that at both the individual level and at nation/global scale, we constantly examine the values we use to determine difference.

Commented [MR3]: If I begin with the 'so what,' what sorts of revisions/changes do I have to make this sentence? What does this sentence have to do to transition from the paragraph above and also introduce the paragraph to follow?

In my poster I show how over the course of its running time, *Interstellar* illustrates several of the concepts key to Cohen's argument. First, I show how the movie illustrates the several possible responses to living with apocalypse on the horizon. Next, I show how the movie contrasts different types of archives. Finally, I and I assess the relative value of each. (in a final draft, I would want to develop these benefits and drawbacks by naming them specifically...)

Commented [MR4]: When revising, look for "place holders" in earlier drafts that need to be expanded. For example, "benefits" and "drawbacks" doesn't tell the reader anything. I need to replace those terms with specifics from the text.

Finally, what sort of concluding sentences do I need to wrap up my revised draft?

Cohen, Jeffrey Jerome. "Noah's Arkive." *In the Middle: A Medieval Studies Group Blog*. 17 March 2015.

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