

## Alessandro Sbordonì The Coming Apocalypse

Something unforeseeable and incomprehensible [...]  
Come.  
Radically other [...]  
Come.  
Let every one say,  
Come.

— Fragment from the apocryphal *Book of Élie*  
(cited in Caputo 1997, 69)<sup>1</sup>

**T**he *Coming Apocalypse*: this is the title of a text that I have not written yet.

“There is only one alternative to the coming apocalypse” (The Invisible Committee 2009, 68). Seventeen years after The Invisible Committee’s *The Coming Insurrection*, the apocalypse has not taken place. It is always yet to come.

According to Jacques Derrida, the apocalypse itself is nothing but this “coming” (Derrida 1984).

The Derridean phrase “the coming apocalypse” is an example of rhetorical tautology, similar to the phrase ‘the fire burns.’ The ‘apocalypse’ is always to come. ‘Fire’ is always what is burning. The presence of the former is always returning to the latter.

Logical tautology is defined by Ludwig Wittgenstein as a true statement produced by means of logical deduction. In contrast, rhetorical tautology is a repetition, even a redundancy, that is not by all means ‘always’ true. According to the *Tractatus*, the logical tautology “say[s] nothing” (Wittgenstein 2002, 47) and is always “certain” (42). The rhetorical tautology, on the other hand, says more than nothing: it says it twice.

<sup>1</sup> The word ‘come’ in the *Book of Élie* translates the French word ‘viens’ in the original quote; the phrase ‘radically other’ in the epigraph translates the French phrase ‘tout autre.’ The same criterion also applies to the Derridean phrase “come, come, yes, yes” cited below, which John D. Caputo reproduces in French as “viens, oui, oui” (1997, xxiii).

“The coming,” repeats *Of an Apocalyptic Tone*, “is always to come” (Derrida 1984, 25). That is the meaning of the revelation, if there is one.

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Jacques Derrida writes, again, in his texts about the end of all things: “come, come, yes, yes” (see Caputo 1997; Derrida 1984, 2010, 2014). It is according to this epizeuxis, this grammatical repetition, that the sign of whatever is yet to come is differentiated from the saying as such.

Friedrich Nietzsche is the philosopher who showed that grammar is the metaphysics of the common people. There is no such thing as fire before the burning of the flame, except in grammar. To rephrase *On the Genealogy of Morals* (see Nietzsche 1989, 45), such is the truth of the common people who reduplicate the noun (‘fire’), and its rhetoric, into the verb (‘burns’). In the phrase ‘the fire burns,’ the same is written *twice*. This is its tautology as well as its grammatical law.

Burn, burn. This is to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

The word ‘repetition’ is etymologically retraced from the Latin prefix *re-* (‘again’) and the verb *petere* (‘to speak’), literally then ‘to say something twice.’ Tautology is a kind of repetition in which ‘nothing more’ is said the second time. The second time is always like the first.

The fire is returned to what it was, like in the French homonyms *feu* and *fut* (‘fire’ and ‘was’). The Algerian-French philosopher writes in *Cinders*: “I will say nothing but this rough sketch obviously in order to say that nothing will have had to annul what is said in its saying, to give it to the fire [*feu*], to destroy it in the flame, and not otherwise. No cinder without fire [*feu*]” (Derrida 2014, 19).

Jacques Derrida (whose middle name is *Élie*) scrawls in his notebook in 1981 that the *Book of Élie* had not been written “yet” (Bennington and Derrida 1999, 281). It never was. In the next century, it is always yet to come. The apocryphal *Book of Élie*, forged by John D. Caputo from two different sources by Jacques Derrida (that is, *Parages* and *Points...*), is the repetition of the same revelation. The meaning is deferred.

In the French language, there are two words to signify the future. The word *futur*, representing the future as the development of the present time, and the word *avenir*, representing a difference from the present itself (another day, another century, another time). According to the Derridean grammar, it is only what is à *venir*, ‘to come,’ that represents the future as such. Again, it is a question of grammatical structure. Yet, what if there was no *other* day, no *other* century, no *other* time but the present

one and its contradiction? What if there was no more time to wait on? The future is always impossible, except as a word.

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The formulaic language of “come, come, yes, yes” first appeared in Jacques Derrida’s 1982 book on Friedrich Nietzsche, whose second part was edited from a roundtable discussion at the University of Montreal, where he says that the eternal recurrence of the same, too, “repeats an affirmation (yes, yes), since it affirms the return, the rebeginning, and a certain kind of reproduction that preserves whatever comes back” (Derrida 1985, 20). According to Jacques Derrida (after Maurice Blanchot), the return as such already produces the law of identity (Blanchot 1992; Derrida 1985). Then, the sign of the past returns to haunt the future.

What if some day or night a demon were to come to you...

In contrast with the “*Dämon*” of Zarathustra (see Nietzsche 1974, 273), the Derridean demon is nothing more than a succubus, a spirit of fire who repeats the words “come, come, yes, yes” for the purpose of reproduction alone. The spirit is always returning to reproduce itself after the textual act. Notwithstanding, there is ‘nothing else’ beside the return. This is the structure of the tautology, if it is not the nightmare of the same.

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The coming is always yet to come. Two thousand years later, the most certain thing is no longer the end but its endlessness. The impossibility of the end is what is always present, again and again.

And yet, the apocalypse disappoints. “Nothing is older than the end of the world. The apocalyptic passion has always been favored by the powerless since earliest antiquity. What is new in our epoch [and otherwise than in the epoch of Jacques Derrida and Maurice Blanchot] is that the apocalyptic has been totally absorbed by capital, and placed in its service. The horizon of catastrophe is what we are currently being governed by. Now, if there is one thing destined to remain unfulfilled, it’s the apocalyptic prophecy, be it economic, climatic, terrorist, or nuclear. “It is pronounced only in order to summon the means of averting it” (The Invisible Committee 2015, 36, my addition). Therefore, the *nom de plume* that signed *The Coming Insurrection* concludes, in their second official communiqué, “the purpose of prophecy is never to be right about the future, but to *act upon the present*: to impose a waiting mode, passivity, submission, here and now” (2015, 36). The rhetoric of the end is never in the active form.

'Burn, burn, yes, yes' is restated with another significance by the anonymous authors. Destruction is also an affirmation. The question is no longer about the invocation of what is coming but the revocation of *what has not come*. The text is only the beginning. And, to misquote from the first book published by The Invisible Committee (see 2009, 34), everywhere the law of identity is starting to crack.

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