

A Counter-Apocalypse For Our Time

An essay in six polemical theses
(Virgilio Rivas)

FIRST THESIS

Is there a counter-narrative to the apocalypse? And to whose apocalypse are we to offer a different story? Starting from the ancient Greeks who understood the apocalypse as the unveiling of what came before the start of a new era, the idea of the 'end' was bound to the notion of the uncanny. The past is unveiled by the apocalypse as in itself the trace of what preceded it, and so on.

If 'Greek' is considered the language of the apocalypse, it was a language used later in the Gospel in a very bad, creolized sense (Hebraic Greek), not to mention "sloppy and errorless."⁸⁸ If we expand this interesting detail to a certain affirmation of dead traces, traces whose origins were already lost, then as the revelations of John were to give us the unmistakable example, "a creolization of the Greek dominant language with Semitic lexical and syntactical elements," as one scholar accordingly observes, "would have been a spoken language only"⁸⁹ which means no "literary traces" could ever attest to it.⁹⁰ The intrigue goes on:

"The language of the apocalypse presents not the dialect of a subaltern community that has only imperfectly internalized the dominant language, but an idiolect, the peculiar language of one author, unattested anywhere else in antiquity."

This enigma of the idiolect will give us something to unveil in the next few pages.

⁸⁸ L. Mathewson, *Verbal Aspect in the Book of Revelation: The Function of Greek Verb Tenses in John's Apocalypse* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 1993), 2.

⁸⁹ J. Callahan, "The Language of the Apocalypse," *The Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 88.4 (October 1995), 458.