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Teotwawki and Other

Neoliberal Gods

A Reflection on End-of-the-World Politics

TEOTWAWKI Y OTROS DIOSES NEOLIBERALES
UNA REFLEXIÓN SOBRE LA POLÍTICA DEL FIN DEL MUNDO

ABSTRACT

Why is it easier to imagine the End of the World than the End of Capitalism? As a contribution to the (as yet) hypothetical discipline of *Apocalyptolog*y, which would be devoted to studying Capitalism's multiple connections with the End of the World, this essay seeks to answer that question through a historical and critical analysis of what American Survivalists call *Teotwawki* as a meta-narrative framing for a variety of political discourses, ranging from Survivalism itself to the insurrectionary anarchism of the Invisible Committee, or the anarcho-primitivism of the Deep Ecology Movement and some accounts of the Anthropocene. Ever since the end of the 1970s, in a context where Capitalist Realism polices the boundaries of collective imaginaries, pre-empting any alternative to the Neoliberal order, end-of-the-world plots and tropes have been displacing end-of-capitalism narratives by redirecting the desire for radical social change towards the imagery of catastrophe and collapse and away from visions of revolution.

Keywords

Apocalyptology, Teotwawki, Survivalism, Anarchism, Invisible Committee, Neoliberalism, Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Capitalism

RESUMEN

¿Por qué resulta más fácil imaginar el Fin del Mundo que el Fin del Capitalismo? Para responder a esa pregunta, dentro del marco de la (aún) hipotética disciplina de la *Apocaliptología*, que se dedicaría a estudiar los múltiples vínculos entre Capitalismo y Fin del Mundo, este artículo desarrolla un análisis histórico-crítico de lo que los Sobrevivencialistas norteamericanos denominan Teotwawki, como forma de meta-relato que proporciona un marco semántico a una gama de discursos políticos que abarca desde el propio Sobrevivencialismo, hasta el anarquismo insurreccional del Comité Invisible, pasando por el anarco-primitivismo del movimiento de la Ecología Profunda o ciertas visiones del Antropoceno. Desde el final de la década de 1970, en un contexto donde el Realismo Capitalista vigila las fronteras de los imaginarios colectivos, impidiendo que florezca cualquier alternativa al orden neoliberal, las estructuras narrativas centradas en el Fin-del-Mundo han venido desplazando a las que giraban en torno al Fin-del-Capitalismo, desconectando el deseo de transformación social radical de la idea de revolución, y reconduciéndolo hacia la retórica de la catástrofe y el colapso civilizatorio.

Palabras Clave

Apocaliptología, Teotwawki, Sobrevivencialismo, Anarquismo, Comité Invisible, Neoliberalismo, Antropoceno, Capitalocene, Capitalismo

1 TEOTWAWKI: USER'S MANUAL

The phonetics of its name notwithstanding, Teotwawki (/ˌtiːə(ʊ)ˈtwɔːki/) is not an Aztec god, although arguably one of its avatars turned up at Tenochtitlan in 1521, and then visited Tawantinsuyu shortly afterwards. Actually, there may not be a single corner of the Earth that Teotwawki has not visited, clad in one of its various shapes, at some point in the last five hundred years. For Teotwawki has ravaged every continent, razed cities of all kinds, massacred whole nations, burned down entire civilizations. If it were a god, Teotwawki would be a jealous one, adept at destroying, banishing or displacing any rival deity. To such a degree has Teotwawki colonised global collective imaginaries in recent decades, that when most people think of the future- if they think about it all- it is nearly exclusively Teotwawki's grim visage that they glimpse. Most people in early 21st Century advanced societies don't seem to be capable of envisioning anything else but Teotwawki ahead of them. They don't seem to be capable of telling other stories. Understanding how and why is the purpose of this essay.

Teotwawki- an idiomatic term developed by the members of American survivalist groups in the 1990s- derives from the acronym for the phrase "The End Of The World As We Know It". Lexicalized as a proper noun (vaguely evocative of some Lovecraftian monster-god from the Cthulhu Mythos), *Teotwawki* will be used below as a rubric under which a number of otherwise seemingly unrelated dimensions of the Neoliberal/Capitalocene condition, and especially certain meta-narratives and discursive constructs, may be seen in a new light. Before proceeding any further, however, I would like to address two methodological objections that might arise at this point:

1. Should we not start with some sort of dictionary definition for the neologism we are going to be discussing? The answer to this question must be most emphatically *no*. When a term possesses a certain level of political complexity- as I hope to show is the case with *Teotwawki*- a dictionary definition is simply just another story (the lexicographer's) in a battlefield of opposing significations crisscrossed by semantic forces that cannot be tamed through the simple expedient of privileging a lexicographical entry above all other accounts. In what follows I shall be using the term *Teotwawki* in phrases such as *Teotwawki events*, *Teotwawki narratives*, or *Teotwawki politics.* As Theodor W. Adorno remarks in his essay on "The Essay as Form" ([1958] 1991)- where he developed a critique of the seamless, unequivocal style of textual organization, and the type of definitions commonly employed in the humanities and the social sciences[1]-, "when a word covers different things, they are not completely different; the unity of the word calls to mind a unity, however hidden, in the object itself" (*op. cit*., p. 22). Under this light, it is not unreasonable to think that if a term like *Teotwawki* is used in several seemingly disparate or contradictory senses, there may be a dimension in its referents according to which those usages might not seem so incompatible. That dimension cannot be dispatched with some simple definition at the start, however, since its gradual construction is actually the whole purpose of the essay.

2. Is Teotwawki a legitimate subject of knowledge at all? As it occurs in common usage in English, the noun phrase "the end of the world as we know it" may be understood to be

equivalent in meaning to the sentence "the world we know ends"[2], which seems to imply an epistemological as well as an ontological boundary, for if the world that is the object of our knowledge should end, so would the validity of our knowledge in the absence of a referent. This whole interpretation, however, is premised on the pronoun "it" in the above phrase being taken to refer to the antecedent noun "world". And yet English syntax and morphology allow for an alternative parsing of the phrase, with a rather different overall meaning, if we simply interpret "it" to refer to "End". In that case the phrase implies that there is an object or event called "the-End-of the-World", such that we may possess valid knowledge about it[3]. In brief: if we shift from "the End of the world as we know (it = the world)" to "the End of the world as we know (it= the End)" a radically new perspective opens up. Could it be the case that the End of the World is not only *not unknowable*, but that we do know quite a lot about it? Even much more than we think? An epistemological question is in order here: supposing this interpretation of the phrase makes sense at all, what is it that we "know" about the End of the World "as we know it" (i.e. insofar as we know this ending)? What type of knowledge is this, and what is its object?

2   INTRODUCING APOCALYPTOLOGY

Just as there is such a thing as the science of Egyptology, which combines several disciplines (geography, history, archaeology, philology) into the study of an ancient civilisation, could there be a science of *Apocalyptology*, devoted to studying Teotwawki? Assuming an affirmative answer to that question, we might posit as Apocalyptology's main object of study the relationship between Capitalism and the End(s) of the World. This field might in turn be subdivided into three main areas:

(1) HISTORY: Much of what has been theorised as *accumulation through dispossession* (Rosa Luxemburg, David Harvey) could actually be reconceptualised as *accumulation through devastation*, or indeed *accumulation through apocalypse*. As landmark works such as Mike Davies' *Late Victorian Holocausts* (2001) show, world-wrecking or world-ending played a key role in the emergence of a global capitalist order; and as rubrics such as "shock therapy" (Naomi Klein, 2007) or "disaster capitalism" (A. Loewenstein, 2015) suggest, societal destruction continues to be a major factor in contemporary regimes of accumulation, to such a degree that we may wonder whether Teotwawki is not actually structurally internal to Capitalism itself, as a mode of production that necessitates the End of the World from time to time. For theorists such as Silvia Federici, even the very inception of Capitalism derives not from an inevitable evolutionary process, but from a Teotwawki Event: namely, the Black Death pandemic that wiped out nearly 40% of the European population in the 14th C., ruining the feudal order. "It was in response to this crisis," Federici argues, "that the European ruling class launched the global offensive that in the course of at least three centuries was to change the history of the planet laying the foundations of a capitalist world-system" (2004, p.62). As for the question "how will Capitalism end?", the picture sociologists like Wolfgang Streeck (2016) paint in reply is that of a prolonged period of social entropy and disintegration, a Teotwawki interregnum more akin to the fall of the Roman Empire and the end of the Ancient world than to the French Revolution or the birth of the Modern Age. A triangulation of all these perspectives suggests then the possibility of framing the whole history of Capitalism, from beginning to end, not in terms of orderly "progress", but as a series of Teotwawki processes or events, much like great extinction events signal the boundaries between geological eras. "Capital was

born from extinction, and from Capital, extinction has flown," writes J. McBrien; "Capitalism leaves in its wake the disappearance of species, languages, cultures and peoples. It seeks the planned obsolescence of all life. Extinction lies at the heart of capitalist accumulation" (2016, p.116). From this standpoint, there would be no Capitalocene as such, as distinct from other, putatively "less pathological" dynamics of Capital, or the Capitalocene would be just another name for Capital itself as ongoing, ever-present, world-wrecking catastrophe. Or should we call it *Apocapitalism*?

(2) **GEOGRAPHY:** Teotwawki may also be seen from another perspective as spatial, rather than evental, *i.e.* as a key element in the entire capitalist structuration of human space. In this sense, the end of the world has always already been here, only unevenly distributed. As the theorists of uneven and combined development, from Lenin and Trotsky to Neil Smith ([1984] 2010), have amply demonstrated, the capitalist world system cannot function without creating veritable hellscapes and apocalyptic zones. These "pockets of underdevelopment, zones of abject poverty and domination, and startling gaps between rich and poor regions", Evan Calder Williams explains, "are not the consequence of an irrational or badly managed global economic order. They are the [...] mechanism by which capitalism, taken as a totality, assures its overall preservation and development" (2011, p.155). Since the beginning of the Modern Age, as historian Domenico Losurdo ([2006] 2011, pp. 301, 309-311) points out, the Atlantic bourgeoisie, in congruence with the protestant spirit of early Capitalism, divided the world into a "sacred space" of the chosen people, where liberalism and rights prevailed, and a "profane space" of fallen nature and inferior populations- a separation, we may add, which already features prominently in one of the earliest prototypes of post-apocalyptic fiction: Edgar Allan Poe's *The Mask of the Red Death* (1842), a hauntingly modern depiction of a gated community of the wealthy barricading themselves against an unstoppable pandemic that has decimated the poor. Teotwawki in this spatial sense is also geopolitical class-warfare: "in Europe, this arrangement of social upheaval, destruction, and lingering smoke gets called *apocalyptic*. But when that same mode of looking moves South, towards, say, sub-Saharan Africa, it just gets called *Wednesday*. It is read as quotidian recurrence, a general condition, neither an emergency nor a break" (Williams, 2014).

(3) **DISCOURSE ANALYSIS:** Finally- and this is the area that shall be explored below-, Teotwawki may be studied as a narrative framing for political discourse, in the sense George Lakoff (2004, pp.3-34) assigns to this term. From this perspective, the focus is not on the huge tradition of apocalyptic myths and stories- variously interpreted by a vast body of comparative cultural, literary and mythographic analysis, from Frank Kermode's classic *The Sense of an Ending* (1967) to D. Danowski's and E. Viveiros de Castro's recent *The Ends of the World* ([2014] 2017)-, but rather, on the binary opposition between 'End-of-the-World' and 'End-of-Capitalism' as narratological frames competing for hegemony within the space of the political imagination. Appealing to the most basic principle of Saussurean structuralism, namely that linguistic units stand in binary oppositions such that each member in a pair asserts itself by displacing its contrary, in what follows I want to provide an explanation for the famous paradox, attributed to Fredric Jameson, according to which "it is easier to imagine the End of the World than the End of Capitalism" (2003, p.76). My contention below is that there is a causal link at play in this phenomenon: the collective obsession with the End of the World in most Western countries today is proportional to the widespread inability to imagine the End of Capitalism, precisely because the former type of narrative has displaced the latter, and this has been the result of decades of social and ideological engineering. Just like the basic fact about the phoneme /p/

is that it is not /b/- and vice versa-, the basic meaning of Teotwawki narratives is that they replace, displace, cancel or pre-empt narratives of Revolution. Contrary to a widespread view, what has happened in the last forty years is not so much that our epoch has become incapable of conceiving the very notion of the future[4], but rather that the space formerly occupied within the collective imagination by narratives of social change as revolution or post-capitalism has been colonised by narratives of change as catastrophe: Teotwawki narratives. The latter are not simply, as might be thought, the secularised version of the old millenarian tradition of apocalyptic eschatology but constitute a new semantic universe where agency- whether divine or human- is replaced by a void populated by the faceless, cataclysmic randomness of out-of-control natural or social systems.

In order to throw some light on this process, in what follows I shall be undertaking a double exploration. First, in section 3 below I will travel back in time to the "scene of the crime": the period at the end of the 1970s when Teotwawki narratives began migrating from the fringes of acceptability towards the mainstream of public discourse, while simultaneously visions of radical political change were undergoing a parallel shift in the opposite direction across the Overton Window. Then in sections 4 and 5, I shall perform a kind of *autopsy* on the body politic of Teotwawki narratives, looking for the traces of what lies buried or repressed within them, seeking to understand how what might be called *Teotwawki politics* (whether Right- or Left-wing oriented) replaces the End of Capitalism with the End of the World through a sort of neurotic syndrome of displacement whereby, in a twofold movement, the possibility of imagining socialist revolution is suppressed or banned from the imagination, and in its absence, civilizational collapse replaces sociopolitical transformation as the catalyst or the focal point towards which the repressed energies and desires for existential change are rerouted. Finally, in section 6, I shall try to sketch some concluding remarks on the structural limits of Teotwawki politics, and its connection with other types of discourses.

3   FROM ALTERNATIVE 3 TO TINA- AND BACK

Springtime, 1977.

After three years of protracted crisis, the British Government under Labour Prime Minister James Callaghan, having capitulated to the humiliating terms of an IMF loan a few months earlier, has begun to implement enormous cuts to public spending, especially the welfare bill, and is already advancing monetarist policies in line with the interests of the City of London and the then emergent theories of the Chicago School of economics. Margaret Thatcher has already been elected leader of the Conservative Party- but this is still a pre-Thatcherite world. Heat-waves and race riots had characterised the Summer of the previous year, and are expected this year too. In the UK at this time you can only watch four analogue TV channels: BBC1, BBC2, Channel 4, and ITV.

On June 20th, 1977, ITV regional franchise station Anglia TV airs what at first seems to be an ordinary episode of the weekly non-fiction series *Science Report* titled *Alternative 3*. In actual fact, however, the programme (originally intended as an April Fools' Day presentation, but then rescheduled to a later date owing to poor coordination between Anglia and ITV) is a hoax of truly magnificent proportions, probably the best of its kind since Orson Welles' *War of the Worlds* radio broadcast in 1938. With a suitably atmospheric electronic music score by (then

not yet famous) Brian Eno, accompanying a convincing, gravitas-infused performance by actual presenter (and later Tory MP!) Tim Brinton, and polished, naturalistic delivery by a team of professional actors, together with extensive use of stock footage, *Alternative 3* exhibits all the hallmarks of what we now call a *mockumentary*- a genre that was still in its infancy at that time, and was not as recognisable by wider publics as it may be today.

The airing of the show caused an immediate uproar. Within minutes, Anglia TV was flooded with calls from angry, outraged or simply upset viewers demanding further information and/or confirmation of the story presented in the spoof documentary. According to an article in *The Daily Mail* the next day, more than 10,000 people phoned in about the show (Keith, 1994, pp. 7-8). But from our perspective today, four decades later, the most striking fact about *Alternative 3* is not that the show caused such a stir at the time, but the reasons *why* it did.

Alternative 3 begins as a purported investigation into the scientific 'brain drain' afflicting crisis-ridden Britain at the time, but soon slides into the shady territory of what- to average audiences in those days- sounded like the mother of all conspiracies: scientists are not simply relocating to other countries in search of better jobs, the show reveals- they are being covertly shipped off-world to secret colonies on the Moon and Mars, as part of a vast plan organised by the world's elites to ensure their own survival in the face of impending environmental disaster threatening to render the Earth uninhabitable in the near future. The impact of the 'Greenhouse Effect', it seems, is much worse, and is increasing at a much faster rate, than the general public has been led to believe so far. The term "climate change" (rather fateful today, but simply technical at the time) is explicitly mentioned at one point. Confronted with the certainty of doom in a matter of decades, the experts secretly working for the leaders of global powers and corporations suggest three alternatives: the first two seem unworkable, as they require complex geo-engineering plans and drastic reductions of the world's population; the third alternative, which is the preferred option, involves a black-ops space programme on a huge scale, aimed at building domed cities in extraterrestrial locations to which what we would now call the 1 % (and their minions) will be flying in droves.

To better gauge the impact of such a story in 1977 Britain, we must consider that, while audiences in those days were quite familiar with a number of environmental threats, 'climate change' was far from being the most prominent among them. In the mid-1970s, the term wasn't even in circulation outside specialised articles, and rather belonged to the domains bordering on *fringe science*. Paul Ehrlich's 1968 *The Population Bomb* mentioned the possibility that the "greenhouse effect" might be enhanced by increased levels of carbon dioxide, but speculated that this might be countered by the cooling effects of other pollutants (Ehrlich,1968, p. 52). A survey of the literature on climate from 1965 to 1979 shows 7 articles predicting global cooling and 44 predicting warming, as opposed to many more making no predictions on change at all (Peterson, Connolley, & Fleck 2008). In 1972, John Sawyer published his study "Man-made Carbon Dioxide and the 'Greenhouse' Effect" in *Nature*, making what decades later have turned out to be accurate predictions on the rate of anthropogenic global warming (Sawyer, 1972). But in the same years, the much more widely disseminated 1972 and 1974 *Reports for the Club of Rome* barely mentioned climate change at all, dismissing global "thermal pollution" as an environmental threat whose effects might not be felt (if at all) until after 2100 (Meadows et al., 1972, pp. 73-75). At the 1979 World Climate Conference in Geneva, scientists cautiously suggested that an increase in CO_2 levels might "result in significant and possibly major long-term changes of the global-scale climate", but this timid statement attracted little or no political

attention (Weart, 2008, p.112). In 1981, surveys found that only about a third of Americans had heard or read about "the greenhouse effect" (*ibid*.). It is safe to say, then, that around 1977 'climate change' was still a radical, not yet fully theorised concept- rather marginal in its circulation and carrying none of the weight it has today. As for stories about conspiracies of the rich and powerful attempting to escape from a doomed Earth, they solidly belonged to the sphere of science fiction tropes, with novels such as Philip High's 1973 *Sold for a Spaceship*. In brief: the *Alternative 3* story was pieced together from materials originating on the fringes of what was then mainstream culture, and hence its shocking effect when broadcast on prime-time TV.

Flash-forward to 2019: what is perhaps most striking about *Alternative 3* today is how utterly unimpressed most global audiences would be by its intendedly portentous revelations. Forty years after the show was aired, the basic plot devices in its Teotwawki narrative of Solar-system-wide conspiracy- namely (a) catastrophic climate change, and (b) the literal off-world flight of the global elites- carry no element of surprise; they are well known (if not almost already trivial) facts, realities with which vast sectors of public opinion worldwide are quite familiar, perhaps even to the point of relative desensitization or boredom:

(a) As for *climate change*, after- and despite- decades of denialism, and notwithstanding President Trump's last-ditch efforts at discrediting the science behind it, this is a term few people can be unfamiliar with today; on the contrary, it may actually be seen to constitute one of the most widely circulated signifiers of our times, saturating both online and traditional media outlets on a global scale. At the time of the writing of this paper a simple search for the keywords "climate change" in Google.co.uk yields about 280,000,000 results, although according to the digital marketing analysis website mondovo.com, it only ranks in the 653rd place among the 1,000 top search queries in Google worldwide, with a global monthly volume of 40,500 searches. The related term "global warming" fares much better, ranking in the 197th position, with a monthly volume of 74,000 searches[5]- but still below the query "what to watch on Netflix", which is on the 192nd position in the scale. According to Google Trends, interest on the keywords "climate change" is currently (as of April, 2019) only at 73% of what it was when it reached the peak of its popularity in December 2010; while "global warming" peaked in March 2007 and is now at about 15%[6]. A number of factors may be behind these downward-trending figures: as corporate-sponsored denialism loses momentum, debates on causality and consequences seem now to be drawing to a close and fading from public view, while simultaneously, media saturation may have triggered a desensitizing feedback loop, acculturating populations to climate change and thus effectively deactivating politicised interest about it- be that as it may, the situation suggests that climate activism, if it is to succeed, must struggle to reintroduce a sense of outrage and scandal into the global conversation on the subject.

(b) As for privately sponsored space programmes involving luxury space hotels, recreational trips to the Moon, Low Earth Orbit habitats for billionaires, or initiatives for the colonization of Mars launched by Silicon Valley tycoons- such stories are on the news all the time[7], or in Hollywood blockbusters such as Neill Blomkamp's *Elysium* (2013). And who hasn't heard about Elon Musk's Mars project? At gatherings of investment bankers these days, conversations revolve around Teotwawki events and what commentators aptly term *the survival of the richest* [8].

That the rich should be "abandoning ship" and leaving everybody else behind carries no surprise, no shock-effect. If the 1% are already withdrawing to their gated communities, their private

islands, their secure enclaves, as is surely the case, why not colonies on the Moon or Mars? Isn't this absolutely congruent with a whole range of socio-economic inequalities separating a tiny privileged fraction of the world population from the rest of humankind, disparities in power and wealth that by right ought to be mind-boggling but to which, for decades, public opinion in most countries was deliberately desensitised and prevented from reacting politically? After the triumph of the so- called 'Washington Consensus' in the 1990s, two key developments enshrined the elites' entitlement to break the social pact and get away with it as one of the unwritten rules of globalisation:

(1) The cornerstones of Neoliberal economic policy- namely, the wholesale deregulation of economic life (and especially the financial sector), the virtual elimination of taxation for large corporations and the top percentiles of income earners, and the free movement of capitals facilitated by a worldwide network of off-shore tax-havens-, have all catapulted the world elites to a position comparable to that of the sovereign in Carl Schmitt's theory of the *state of exception*: partly outside and above the socio-political order, immune to regulation, or capable of evading it, or even capable of rewriting regulation to their advantage by capturing the state apparatus altogether[9]. Whether they are CEOs from Silicon Valley, real-estate developers from Beijing or drug lords from Medellín- undeniably in many ways also textbook capitalists-, the extra-territoriality of financial capital affords this class a special status, a kind of externality with regard to political barriers, frontiers and juridical constraints, above and beyond the power of nation-states. Secure in their own privatised domains of sovereignty, protected by their own private armies in fortified palaces, and mostly unfettered by the trappings of unions, political parties, elected assemblies or state regulations of any kind thanks to the development, throughout the globe, of Special Economic Zones where ordinary state jurisdiction is suspended (Davis & Monk, 2007), the 1% dwell and operate in post-institutional spaces where capital has re-coded, superseded or discarded its entire traditional political and fiscal superstructure.

(2) If deregulation and freedom of movement for capital largely explain the mechanics of how the elites managed to break away from the social pact, for the question as to how they managed to get away with it, the answer lies in TINA, the nickname cabinet minister Norman St. John-Stevas gave to Margaret Thatcher on account of her most famous slogan[10]: *There Is No Alternative*."For thirty years we've lived with TINA," writes journalist L. Flanders: "Globalized capitalism, so called free-markets and free trade were the best ways to build wealth, distribute services and grow a society's economy. Deregulation's good, if not God" (2013). The triumph of Neoliberal doctrines, condensed in the one-idea system of economic orthodoxy that *Le Monde Diplomatique* editor Ignacio Ramonet and others termed *pensée unique*[11] (or the zeitgeist that Mark Fisher [2009] called "Capitalist Realism"), also involved the ideological and institutional capture, when not the wholesale reconstitution, not only of conservative political parties, but also of those centre-left parties that had traditionally implemented and supported welfare state and redistribution policies in most Western democracies. *There was no alternative*. After May 1968, and for a brief period during the political turmoil of the 1970s, the radical supersession of Capitalism had seemed quite feasible. To name but a few examples: Allende's government in Chile, the Carnation Revolution in Portugal, the thriving Communist parties in Italy and France, the radical program of economic democracy conceived by left-wing Labour minister Tony Benn in the UK, or the Meidner plan for the gradual dismantling of private ownership of corporations, adopted by the Swedish social-democrats in 1976- all seemed part of a global scenario where radical socialist transformation was in the horizon. Yet all these different political movements, plans and initiatives were thwarted, cancelled or defeated, and as the flames of the 1968

revolts died off, and the radicalism of the 1970s faded away, opposition to Capitalism migrated towards the fringes of the political spectrum (a shift that was well under way long before the disintegration of the Soviet Union seemed to confirm its inevitability[12]). Then under Blair's and Clinton's new "Third Way" politics, electorates were told in the 1990s that inequality was no longer necessarily a bad thing; actually, thanks to the principle of "trickle-down" economics, it could be a positive growth factor. As British politician Peter Mandelson explained, "New Labour [was] intensely relaxed about people getting filthy rich"[13]. This state of "intense relaxation" about inequality became the dominant common sense across the mainstream political spectrum in most Western societies at the end of the 20th Century, and explains how the veritable flight of the rich could happen in plain sight, with no need for secrecy or conspiracies of the kind depicted in *Alternative 3*, and how it could go largely unquestioned for decades, outside the issues framing political debate for most electorates and constituencies throughout the world, and especially across developed countries, at least until the 2008 financial crisis set in motion a chain of events that led to the 2011 revolts, and then to the recent crisis of legitimacy that started with the Brexit referendum and Trump's election in 2016- the so called 'crisis of democracy" (Geiselberger, 2017).

Whether the crisis symbolised by the signifiers "Brexit" and "Trump" signals a change of direction, and the end of the Neoliberal consensus in the two core capitalist nations where it originated, or merely constitutes the scandalous anomaly some centrists[14] take it to be, remains to be seen. The true scandal I want to highlight here, however, lies in how, in the four decades since 1977, something like the *Alternative 3* plot (in both the narratological and the political sense of the term) should have shifted as it has across the whole spectrum of plausibility, from the fringe spaces of paranoid conspiracy theories all the way to the uncontroversial landscape of mainstream common sense. Given what is at stake- resignation in the face of global catastrophe and near acquiescence to the fact that only a few will survive- this is probably one of the most dramatic examples ever of a shift in what sociologists call the Overton Window, *i.e.* the range of ideas tolerated in public discourse, with degrees of acceptability going from the "unthinkable" publicise in one extreme, all across the categories of the "radical", the "acceptable", the "sensible", the "popular" and then finally established "policy" at the other end of the scale[15]. But what makes this transformation even more spectacular is the fact that, from the perspective of public opinion in the mid-1970s, the *Alternative 3* scenario wouldn't even have been within the outer limits of the Overton Window- it was something *unheard of* and *horrifying*. It was the stuff of dystopian science fiction.

To recap: the last forty years have witnessed two parallel, massive ideological migrations across the Overton window, going in opposite directions- visions of social transformation and the end of Capitalism were moving away from the space of political plausibility towards the boundaries of the unthinkable, at the same time as scenarios of ecological collapse, civilizational breakdown, and the end of the World (the Teotwawki picture) were travelling from the realm of fantasy or speculation towards increasing credibility. But how is it possible to go from a world where ending Capitalism looks like a viable option, and *Alternative 3* is a paranoid science fiction story, to a world where there seems to be no alternative to Capitalism, and in the face of global warming, the *Alternative 3* narrative retrospectively looks a lot like the *only alternative* actually being implemented: namely, the flight of the elites to secure spaces while the rest of the population faces the consequences of catastrophic climate change? And can the simultaneous occurrence of these two huge, parallel reversals be merely coincidental, or might there be a causal nexus involved in the process? Is there a fundamental link between Neoliberalism- understood not

simply as a set of doctrines or a global order, but as the tip of the iceberg of a whole project of class domination-, and the drift towards the current global warming crisis in the last four decades?

Trying to explain how we have arrived at the current global political conjuncture, after Donald Trump's election, Science Studies theorist Bruno Latour (2017) offers us a tale of social engineering which he postulates as a 'plausible fiction'- and eerily resembles the *Alternative 3* scenario. According to Latour, the 'enlightened elites', realized after the 1990s that the dangers posed by climate change were quite real, but they were not willing to pay the price for the impending catastrophe. They decided instead to deny the reality of climate change for as long as was possible, and to externalize the cost of global disaster on the rest of society. If this hypothesis is correct, Latour argues, "it enables us to grasp the 'deregulation' and the 'dismantling of the welfare state' of the 1980s, the 'climate change denial' of the 2000s, and, above all, the dizzying increase in inequality over the past forty years". All these phenomena, Latour suggests, are part of the same process:

> the elites [...] realized there would be no future for the world and that they needed to get rid of all the burdens of solidarity as fast as possible (hence, deregulation); to construct a kind of golden fortress for the tiny percent of people who would manage to get on in life (leading us to soaring inequality); and, to hide the crass selfishness of this flight from the common world, to completely deny the existence of the threat (i.e., deny climate change). Without this plausible fiction, we can't explain the inequality, the skepticism about climate change, or the raging deregulation.
> (Latour, *op.cit.*)

One does not need to endorse Latour's politics or the underlying metaphysics of his Actor Network Theory to accept the plausibility of this narrative, for, as he argues, it seems to be the only account that manages to join all the dots. The picture that emerges resembles what I described above as the condition of *Apocapitalism*. By this term I am referring not only to the profitable management of end-of-the-world scenarios as a form of class warfare, but more generally to a whole regime of accumulation through dispossession that operates mainly by means of unevenly distributed devastation, if not outright civilizational collapse[16]. Apocapitalism under this light would the higher stage of Neoliberalism, and in retrospect, quite clearly its ultimate goal as both a socio-political process and a hegemonic project of class domination on a world scale.

Latour ends his analysis evoking the metaphor of the *Titanic*: "enlightened people see the prow heading straight for the iceberg, know that shipwreck is inevitable, grab the lifeboats, and ask the orchestra to play lullabies so that they can make a clean getaway before the alarm alerts the other classes". But as the lower classes on board the ship wakes up to the reality of the situation and watch the lifeboats sailing away into the distance, "the music [of the orchestra] is no longer enough to cover the howls of rage [...] that such a betrayal arouses" (Latour, *loc. cit.*). Whether this is an apt metaphor or a somewhat worn-out cliché, the point I find interesting in it is the closing mention of *rage*. As a radically political affect, rage has been one of the most powerful motivations behind uprisings and revolts throughout history. But where has this revolutionary affect gone, in an age when revolution itself has been largely banished from mainstream collective imaginaries, beyond the bounds of plausibility? Where have the revolutionary energies of rage been diverted to? Have they been sequestered by other forms

of politics?

To answer this question, we must now turn to the politics of Teotwawki, trying to dissect its narrative structuration.

4   THE POLITICS OF TEOTWAWKI

Leaving aside the discourses of religious fundamentalist groups, where Teotwawki is subordinated or assimilated to the imagery of the ancient Western millenarian tradition of apocalyptic eschatology (characterised by divine agency and collective redemption[17]), it is no easy task to define precisely what tropes, storylines or plot structures distinguish a modern, purely secular Teotwawki narrative. As used in the Survivalist circles where it originated, the term may vaguely apply to any emergency situation arising after a nuclear attack, a pandemic that wipes most of the population or a number of other 'natural' or 'man-made' disasters (in the latter case mostly of the kind where agency is non-existent, irrelevant, randomised, or retroactively cancelled by chains of unexpected consequences). In most Survivalist websites, what these scenarios exactly entail is not clearly explained, as the emphasis is on the "preparation for survival" that defines the movement. However, while carrying out the background research for this paper I came across the one exception to this rule: a Survivalist website where the "105 Ways Your Life Will Change After TEOTWAWKI" (J.I.C. Jack, 2015) are explicitly described in full detail. What makes this particular account of life after Teotwawki worth discussing here is what might be called its *mutational*, rather than evental focus: the fact that it centres on social changes and transformations of everyday life, rather than on the doomsday event itself.

The website owner (presumably also the content writer), who goes by the pseudonym "Just In Case" Jack (hereafter J.I.C. Jack), presents himself as a married white man in his mid-thirties, born and raised in Iowa, with a Bachelors degree in Mechanical Engineering, and currently living in Colorado. "So my admired historical heroes," he explains, "include George Washington, Patrick Henry, Benjamin Franklin and Ronald Reagan"- a pantheon which, we may add, any mainstream Republican voter in the USA can identify with, and does not necessarily suggest an extremist affiliation, or the profile of an Alt-Right Trump supporter.

Jack's list of 105 post-Teotwawki transformations comes with detailed descriptions for each item (often fully narrativised in the form of short sketches that cannot be reproduced here for lack of space), but follows no apparent order or attempt at classification. Different categories of events and situations are piled up at random, wonderfully exemplifying- howbeit unintentionally- the trope called *chaotic enumeration*. The overall effect somehow resembles the assemblage of disparate items in Borges' Chinese Encyclopaedia (which famously inspired Michel Foucault's concept of the heterotopian [1966]), and the resulting juxtapositions sometimes produce sequences of grim, probably unintended humour:

> 44-No More Morning Cup of Coffee
> 45-Cannibalism Will Become Much More Prevalent[18]
> 46-Entitled Attitude Will Be Eradicated

But what is truly striking about this haphazard catalogue of post-Teotwawki transformations is the extent to which it is not- contrary to what might be expected- a simple dystopian inventory

of horrors and catastrophes, or in other words, an expression of dread and anxiety, but rather predominantly a fantasy of wish-fulfilment channelling strong currents of repressed social and political desire. Actually, out of the 105 items in the list, only 19 (18%) correspond to the category of what might be regarded as self-evidently apocalyptic health risks, life-threatening situations or infrastructural collapse, with obvious hazards such as "Limited Communications" (item 21), "Roads Will Be Terrible To Drive – Many Impassable" (item 22), "Rodent Populations Will Balloon Out of Control" (49), "No More Indoor Plumbing" (8), "No Emergency Services Available" (14) or "More Deaths Due To Basic Illnesses" (10). Another 9.5% of the list enumerates a series of ecological changes, not all of which, however, may be necessarily negative: although there will be "A Lot Less Wildlife" (item 40), and "Bigger, Larger, Longer Wildfires" (101), nevertheless "Air Pollution Will Vanish" (76), "Light Pollution Will Be A Thing Of The Past" (79), and "No One Will Give A Damn about Global Climate Change" (77).

By contrast, a remarkably larger proportion (36%) of the list is taken up by what might be categorized as glimpses of a simplified, less phony, less artificial or consumerism-oriented way of life, made possible by the disappearance of most of the trappings of everyday existence in suburban America under advanced capitalism. Although we cannot study here the detailed description accompanying each item, this part of the list is worth quoting here in full:

1–No More Mowed Lawns.	55–Children's Sleepovers Won't Happen.
2–No More Daily Traffic Jams.	56– No More Night Clubs or Bars.
3–No More Video Games.	61–No More Pet Food.
5–No More Restaurants, Fast Food, or Delivery.	62–Canned Food "Best Buy" Dates Won't Matter.
9–No More Designer Weddings-Fewer Weddings in General.	67–Makeup/ Fragrance/ Hair Care Products – All Rare.
12–No More Professional Sports.	70–Home Depreciation Will Be More Noticeable.
13–Online Purchases Will No Longer Exist.	78–Backyard Pools Will Not Be Used For Fun.
17–No More Movies or Fancy Actors/ Actresses.	82–People Will Stop Complaining About 1st World Problems.
18–No More Concerts or Fancy Musicians.	84–No More Showers– Occasional Baths at Best.
20–No More Flying.	87–No More Internet – No More Email.
24–Popular Recreation Will Be Gone.	89– Digital Photos Will Be Lost.
31–No Colleges or Universities.	91– Bathing Suits and Suit & Ties Will Seem Silly.
33–Body Hair Will Not Be Groomed.	96–No More Car Washing or Car Washes.
35–No More Dieting and Weight Control Programs.	98– More DIY/ Fix It Yourself.
39–No More Planning Around the Weather.	100– Sugary Treats Will Be Rare.
41–The Concept of Weekend Will Vanish.	102–Shopping Malls and "Going Shopping" Won't Exist.
44–No More Morning Cup of Coffee.	105–Amusement Parks Will Be Abandoned.
46–Entitled Attitude Will Be Eradicated.	
48–Body Piercings and Tattoos Will Be Less Popular.	
51– No More Elaborate Funerals.	
54–Workout Gyms Will No Longer Exist.	

Alongside this "no-more-mowed-lawns" vision of post-consumerism, another sizable part (20 %) of the list is comprised of predictions depicting a kind of return to a "greener", more traditional, thoroughly rural, explicitly pre-digital, and even in some respects pre-capitalistic society, where "Real Books Will Be Worth a Lot More" (item 6), "Star Gazing & Storytelling Will Be Popular" (item 69), "Large Backyard Gardens Will Become More Popular" (15), "Bikes Will Be Much More Popular" (23), "Hand Tools Will Become Worth More" (27), "People Will Take Up Old School Skills" (28), "Small Survival Villages Will Form" (43) and "Families Will Live

Closer Together" (83). This scenario somehow evokes what the young Marx of the *Communist Manifesto* (1848) sarcastically termed "the patriarchal, idyllic relations" that the bourgeoisie had everywhere ruthlessly drowned in the "icy waters of egotistical calculation" (Marx [1848], 1976, p.82). And yet by the same token, in a dialectical reading we cannot dismiss them as simply or uncomplicatedly reactionary, for they express the rejection of a capitalist world where- again in words from the *Manifesto*- the only nexus between human beings is "callous cash payment" (*loc.cit.*).

The internal complexity of the emergent Teotwawki narrative in this list does not mean that its author's political motivations are not, in congruence with the right-wing orientation of the Survivalist movement in the USA, openly reactionary. Inevitably, the traditional hobby-horses of the American Right are also present in J.I.C. Jack's Teotwawki list (amounting, however, to only 7.6% of the items), with predictable NRA mantras such as "Firearm Carry Will Become the Norm" (item 38) and "Handheld Weapons Will Become More Popular" (item 57), alongside typical Libertarian/Tea-Party shibboleths such as "No More Welfare Handouts" (103), and the anti-establishment slogans "National Politics Won't Matter" (36) and "No More National Elections– No More Democrats or Republicans– Everyone Will Be Of The Party *Survivalist*" (90), spiced up with Hobbesian admonitions about "Less Trust in Strangers" (item 59).

In the context of American politics, one common set of tropes that mainstream Conservatives and Neoliberals seem to share with fringe Survivalists revolves around the Frontier mythos, with its putative values of "self-reliance" and "rugged individualism" as cornerstones of the "American Spirit", as first formulated by ideologues and historians such as Frederick Jackson Turner ([1893] 1920). A case could be made that Survivalist texts like the Teotwawki list we are considering here, with their figurations of autarkic life in the wilderness, are nothing but expressions of nostalgia for the lost American Frontier. And yet this would be an over-simplistic reading. For one thing, the Frontier ideologeme is so prevalent, so deeply embedded in the fabric of public discourse and common sense in the US, as to qualify as a textbook case of a floating signifier, capable of serving nearly any conceivable politics. The Frontier myth is a sort of rhetorical default setting that can be activated by the most disparate discourses: from the ethos driving Henry David Thoreau's retreat to the woods in his anti-imperialist *Walden* (1854), to the "New Frontier" imagery variously invoked in FDR's New Deal, in JFK's 1960 campaign, or in John Perry Barlow's 1996 "Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace"- not to mention Ronald Reagan, Elon Musk, or Disneyland's Frontierland[19].

And secondly, whatever the underlying authorial intentions may be, the fact remains that J.I.C. Jack's Teotwawki list is a patchwork assemblage of conflicting visions, a heterotopian articulation of dislocated desires that does not allow for a univocal reading. At least 56% of the items in the text paint the picture of a non-capitalist world. And added to this, there is a further 4.7% of the list reflecting explicit aspirations to the abolition of class distinctions, along with the whole cycle of financial capitalism and even the money economy: "Greenback [=dollar bills, paper money] Won't Be the Recognized Currency" (item 34); "No More Financial Debts (*Student Loans / Mortgages / Taxes*)" (item 53, emphasis in the original); "Credit Scores Will Be Meaningless" (93); "No More Income Inequality In The Traditional Sense" (97).

In order to understand where this multilayered political complexity comes from, it may be interesting to briefly examine here one of the most popular Teotwawki narratives in recent years: *The Walking Dead.* Most of the characters in both Robert Kirkman's original comic books

as well as in the AMC TV show, observes critic Michele Fazio, "lived fragmented lives, barely making it before the world became inundated by flesh-eating monsters. They were consumed by fear of debt and failure, and now with no government, media, or material items to distract them […], the apocalypse becomes a turning point—an endgame moment—for [them] *to reclaim power and control over their lives*" (Fazio, 2018, pp. 61,71 [emphasis added]). The notion of reclaiming power and control is worth highlighting here as it replicates almost verbatim the extremely successful populist slogan of the Vote Leave campaign in the 2016 Brexit referendum in the UK: *taking back control*, an idea that hit a raw nerve in many disenfranchised working class communities across Britain, and likewise profoundly resonates with the disenfranchised working class characters of *The Walking Dead*. Is there an affinity between populism and Teotwawki politics? Is one a subspecies of the other? This equation may cut both ways: we may choose to see the Brexit referendum as a sub-species of Teotwawki politics, channelling rage and discontent into a cataclysmic, paradigm-shattering event, or we may focus instead on the zombie apocalypse in *The Walking Dead* as the Teotwawki Event that brings about a huge populist moment, destabilizing all hierarchies and gathering together survivors from different socioeconomic backgrounds- as theorists of populism Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe might put it- into a new universe of shared signification[20].

It would be over-simplistic, however, to try to account for the politics of *The Walking Dead* (or Brexit, for that matter) simply or entirely in terms of populism. Beyond populism, whether Right-wing or Left-wing, there is a strong anticapitalist undercurrent that *The Walking Dead*, especially Kirkman's graphic novels, shares with many other Teotwawki narratives- as we saw above in J.I.C. Jack's list. This is demonstrated, as commentators have remarked, "by many of the characters' relief in having escaped the endless cycle of commerce, consumerism, and capitalism that consumed their lives before the zombie invasion" (DiPaolo, 2018, p.37).

In the AMC show, class antagonism is often focalized through the character of Daryl Dixon (Norman Reedus), who defines himself as a "redneck asshole". In one particularly interesting episode ("Still", March 2014)[21], Daryl and fellow survivor Beth wander into a country club's golf course. As they explore the pro-shop and clubhouse, working their way through the animated corpses of the wealthy undead (presumably former club members), which they liquidate with increasing rage, Daryl's class resentment boils into full-blown anger. As Michele Fazio points out, "the display of wealth, as seen by well-dressed zombies wearing blazers, polo shirts, and pearls, along with a female corpse bearing the sign 'Rich Bitch' fastened to her chest, triggers a strong reaction in Daryl," who starts obsessively clubbing a dead man's head, as though playing golf, and later shoots darts at framed photographs of the club presidents, all of which "further shows the impact Daryl's transgression—of crossing over class boundaries and entering a space previously off limits—has on him, as he begins to exact his own kind of retaliation against the wealthy" (*loc.cit*., p.67). *Transgression* and *retaliation* are two keywords here. Although rage, as I mentioned earlier, can be a powerful revolutionary affect, its radical potential is nevertheless squandered if it is merely consumed in acts of transgression and retaliation that do not lead to any substantial transformation of the social order. Nothing like a reconstruction of society based on new principles (in other words, something akin to revolution) is ever depicted in *The Walking Dead*- in season after season of the show, bands of survivors keep disintegrating under internal or external pressures, mostly engaging in a constant state of warfare against one another.

I do not believe it is necessary here to go into complex psychoanalytic interpretations to see how this type of Teotwawki narratives- and therein lies in part their likely affinity with Fascism

and Right-wing populism- channel but also simultaneously displace and neutralise a desire for radical change, by drawing on the revolutionary affects and energies of collective rage fuelled by class antagonism, and redirecting them towards fruitless symbolic retaliation against displays of wealth, or mindless violence against escape-goat targets, away from the actual, underlying mechanisms of class domination whose overthrow might bring about true social change. Without a project aimed at rebuilding social life upon new economic and political foundations, the latent, but ill-defined anti-capitalism of J.I.C. Jack's Teotwawki list ends up conjuring a conservative vision of an idealised rural, patriarchal past, while Daryl's rage in *The Walking Dead* is consumed in acts of violence that may afford the character brief symbolic compensation for past personal humiliations, but lead to no real political transformation. Daryl's pointless beating of the dead man's head encapsulates a symbolic space that cannot move beyond the neurotic re-enactment of the death of the old order- which is already dead from the start. The old status quo has collapsed, replaced not by a new regime, but by a permanent state of exception with no new social order worthy of that name on the other side. In the final analysis, it does not look like Teotwawki politics can go much farther than this.

5   TEOTWAWKI AND INSURRECTIONARY CATASTROPHISM

Is Teotwawki politics merely a surrogate for a thwarted or repressed revolutionary politics, with no likely prospect other than gravitating towards the orbit of Fascism and Right-Wing populism? Or can there be something like a Left-wing version of Teotwawki politics, just like there is a Left-wing populism? From the political semantics of Revolution, the Teotwawki narratological framing preserves what might be seen as a warped version of the *destituent* moment- i.e., the destructive phase in which sovereignty and order are suspended, overthrown, de-instituted-, yet shorn of collective agency or any subsequent *constituent* moment seeking emancipatory goals. This is strikingly evident if we analyse the Oxford English Dictionary definition of the term *Teotwawki*[22]:

> teotwawki
> NOUN *informal*
> A catastrophic event that destroys the existing institutions and norms of society.

The emphasis on catastrophe- at the expense of other possible dimensions of the Teotwawki event- in this lexicographical entry is the main reason why it cannot be granted any privileged explanatory status, but must simply be treated as another piece of the puzzle- *just another story*-, as it partly obscures the political dimension of the concept I have been trying to explore here. A slight change in the wording suffices to push the term towards the idea of *insurrection*:

> [An event] that destroys the existing institutions and norms of society.

Anyone acquainted with the history of Anarchism may recognise in the above alternative definition the key elements in the distinction between *insurrection* and *revolution* first conceptualised by Max Stirner in *The Ego and its Own* (1846): "Revolution and insurrection must not be looked upon as synonymous. Whereas revolution aims at new arrangements, insurrection leads us to no longer let ourselves be arranged, but to arrange ourselves, and sets no glittering hopes on 'institutions.'" ([1846] 1995, pp. 279-280). According to historians Michael Schmidt and Lucien van der Walt (2009), the evolution of Anarchism seems to oscillate between the

attraction of these two poles: what they call *mass anarchism* opts for organization, institutions, and revolution (in Stirner's sense), while on the other side of this dichotomy, *insurrectionist anarchism* emphasises spectacular, exemplary acts of violence (called "propaganda by the deed") as the primary means of triggering a state of insurgency. Thus, at the end of the 19th Century and the beginning of the 20th, for example, while the insurrectionists became fixated on a nihilistic *politique du pire* that crystallised into acts of terrorism, in countries like Spain other branches of the Anarchist movement evolved into mass Anarcho-Syndicalist organizations with an active presence in workers' struggles, not shirking away- especially during revolutionary periods- from proletarian institutions such as workers' councils; and then once again in the 1970s, mostly in Germany and Italy, a similar strategic bifurcation developed in the spaces of Workerist, Autonomist and other far-Left movements, some of which may be seen in part as offshoots of the Anarchist tradition.

Not surprisingly then, the contemporary branches of this genealogical tree that continue to emphasize the purely destructive, insurrectionary moment- over and above any constituent project of societal reconstruction- embrace forms of apocalypticism that arguably belong within, or come very close to, the territory of the kind of Teotwawki politics we saw above. In the US, for instance, the "green" Anarcho-Primitivists of the Zerzan-Kaczynski persuasion, with their gospel of extreme technophobia that demonises even mathematics and agriculture, and an overall tone that is difficult to distinguish from Christian fundamentalism, have carved for themselves a chunk of the highly competitive market for apocalyptic narratives, while in France, the neo-Autonomists of the Invisible Committee, on their part, have developed a kind of *insurrectionary catastrophism* that, to a certain extent, and inasmuch as it combines Anarcho-Primitivism, insurrectionism, and an unmistakeably Survivalist approach to societal breakdown and ecological collapse, blurs the boundaries between Right-wing and (allegedly) Left-wing versions of Teotwawki politics.

The Invisible Committee are worth discussing here not only because their texts furnish a clear example of a Teotwawki-dominated discourse, but also on account of the inordinate degree of attention and the relatively widespread cultural influence they have accrued in the last 12 years. Beyond the activist circles- anarchist and otherwise- where their works might reasonably have been expected to have an impact, as was indeed the case, and to a considerable degree, in the years before the 2011 revolts-, the Invisible Committee have managed to reach sectors of society where anarchist discourses do not normally find resonance. From the start they attracted a huge- and as yet unflagging- interest from the academic world (with citations in 131,170 papers at the time of the writing of this essay, according to the academic social networking site Academia.edu[23]), motivated perhaps by the fact that, as one early reviewer observed, many of the ideas they embraced had become so canonical in Western graduate programs in recent decades as to render the label "academic anarchism" pertinent in their case (M. Truscello, 2010, p.36). In a process of circular validation, in other words, the academic world found in the Invisible Committee a kind of militant regurgitation of its own ideologemes. But scholars were not the only ones to project their own fears and desires onto the Invisible Committee's discourse: in France, the publication of their first manifesto (*L'Insurrection qui vient*) in 2007 was accompanied in November of the following year by arrests and trumped-up charges of terrorism brought against a group of graduate students who were accused of having authored the book as an instruction manual for terror bombings. Then in July 2009, the English translation (*The Coming Insurrection*) was presented (and discussed at length) by Fox News' ultra-conservative pundit Glenn Beck as "the most evil book I've read in a long, long

time"- a comment which in a few days managed to boost the sales of the book on Amazon, even catapulting it to Number 1 in the best-seller list for a brief period.

By then *The Coming Insurrection* had acquired what is usually called *cult status*, featuring in articles in the anti-consumerist magazine *Adbusters* and even in the *New York Times*. Then it jumped across platforms and media, being adapted to the theatre by Coline Struyf from the National Theatre of Belgium in September 2010. Finally, in 2014 it featured as one of the sources of inspiration acknowledged by Science Fiction writer Jeff Vandermeer, the author of a trilogy of novels that were adapted into the film *Annihilation* (a hybrid of horror, post-apocalyptic and eco-disaster fiction) released digitally by Netflix in 2018. In Vandermeer's *Acceptance* (book 3 in the trilogy), the effects of the so-called Anthropocene are being reversed by a faceless, inscrutable, and perhaps alien phenomenon that is wiping out, assimilating or reshaping humanity at the molecular level, and in this post-human setting, a character utters fatalistic, somewhat grandiloquent sentences quoted or paraphrased from *The Coming Insurrection*, such as "never has a setting been so able to live without the souls traversing it," or "the only solution to the environment is neglect, which requires our collapse" (Vandermeer, 2014, pp.241, 242). In sum: in their first work, the Invisible Committee had managed to articulate a discourse whose figurations transcended politics and resonated with deep-seated desires and anxieties across different cultural contexts- from anarchist circles to academia to Netflix films.

What made this possible was without doubt the powerful vision of generalised collapse which is the book's main premise, or, in other words, its Teotwawki discursive framing. A scholar who chose for his review the title "It's The End Of The World As They Know It, And They Feel Fine", defined *The Coming Insurrection* as "a cross between Anarcho-primitivism and Neo-Situationism" (Truscello, *loc.cit.*); and yet in my view Survivalism is probably an even more important ingredient in the mix. For one thing, as some critics have noted, the autarkic, de-linked collectivities ("communes") that the Invisible Committee conceives as both vectors and end-points of insurrection are strongly reminiscent of the communities of North-American survivalists that have been gearing up for the apocalypse ever since the 1970s (Jappe, 2011). Rather than on the traditional guerrilla fighting strategy of taking to the hills, theorist Marla Zubel observes, the Invisible Committee's approach to insurgency is based on "a retreat from the metropolis for the cultivation of self-sufficiency", ultimately motivated by a rather pessimistic and "dismissive attitude towards humanity's future. The friendship-group commune has found do-it-yourself, alternative solutions to meeting life's basic needs (not so unlike the Christian fundamentalist back-to-the-lander stockpiling canned goods and ammunition in preparation for Armageddon) and so should you" (Zubel, 2013).

In *The Coming Insurrection*, revolution is indeed discussed, but only as an abstract potentiality whose connection with insurrection is never fully theorised (Wolfe, 2016, p.181-188). Although the noun/adjective pair *revolution/revolutionary* appears 22 times in the 135 pages of the English version of the book, the overall word-count for the combined semantic field represented by *breakdown* (*défaillance* in the original French), *collapse* (*effondrement*) and *catastrophe* (*catastrophe*) is nearly identical, with 23 occurrences. Furthermore, and just in case there might be any doubt as to where the text's main semantic attractor might lie, the authors openly and literally welcome the prospect of civilizational collapse and the Teotwawki Event, envisioned in terms of Peak Oil and social and infrastructural disintegration: "Let the petroleum reserves run out earlier than expected; let the international flows that regulate the tempo of the metropolis be interrupted; let us suffer from some great social disruption and some great 'return to

savagery of the population', a 'planetary threat', the 'end of civilization!' Whatever" (Invisible Committee [2007] 2009, p. 81-82).

What is most distinctive about the Invisible Committee's insurrectionary catastrophism, however, owes perhaps less to the Anarcho-Communist tradition than to Martin Heidegger's metaphysics and to Carl Schmitt's political philosophy. The influence of Heidegger's notion of truth as *unveiling* is evident in passages where the Teotwawki Event is not simply the catalyst for the breakdown of the status quo, but also represents something like the opening up of a revelation space pregnant with metaphysical epiphanies on the true nature of being[24]: "what makes the crisis desirable is that in the crisis the environment ceases to be the environment. We are forced to re-establish contact, albeit a potentially fatal one, with what's there, to rediscover the rhythms of reality" (*ibid*.). As for Carl Schmitt, his doctrines of *political decisionism* and the state of exception form the backbone of the Invisible Committee's approach to insurrection: the apocalyptic event, they claim, is "a fact, [which] must be translated into a decision. Facts can be conjured away, but decision is political. To decide for the death of civilization, then to work out how it will happen: only decision will rid us of the corpse…" (Invisible Committee, *loc.cit*., p. 94). According to decisionism, it is not the *content* of a political decision, but rather the fact that it is a decision made in the correct way, or in consonance with the right principles, which determines its validity. In particular, the decision on the state of exception is of paramount importance: "Sovereign is he who decides on the exception", states Schmitt in the first line of his most famous work ([1922] 1985, p.25). Above and beyond the constitutional order, the power to declare the state of exception, and the power to rule over the ensuing emergency situation, define sovereignty. Perhaps that is why "everybody wants to own the end of the world", as Don DeLillo writes. For the Invisible Committee, the strategy is clear: "Decide for the death of civilization", i.e. decide for Teotwawki first, work out the details later.

At this point it may be worth noting how distant the Invisible Committee's Teotwawki leftism is from the ideas that- also partly as a response to Schmitt's notion of the state of exception- were developed by thinkers such as Walter Benjamin, whose "Theses on the Philosophy of History" (1940) famously conceived Revolution as "the emergency brake in the locomotive of history" (1974, p. 1232)[25]: *i.e.* as a suspension of civilization's *drift into* barbarism, not a suspension *of* civilization itself *through* increased barbarism, as the Invisible Committee seems to advocate. Granted, the Invisible Committee rightly diagnoses that "the normal functioning of the world serves to hide our state of truly catastrophic dispossession" (Invisible Committee, *loc.cit*.); but if, as Theodor Adorno observed in his "Theses on Need*"*, "in class domination, the reproduction of life and its oppression form a unity" ([1942] 2017 103) - or, in the even more sombre words from *Minima Moralia*: "the mechanism of the reproduction of life, [and that of] its exploitation and annihilation, [are] immediately the same", ([1951], 2005: 53)-, then surely the question is how to suspend the latter without suspending the former; how to disentangle their unity, and not how to embrace catastrophe as salvation. What the Invisible Committee- and the Teotwawki narrative framing, in general- presents us with is a false dilemma in which we are asked to opt between the continuity of civilized life, construed as also entailing the continuity of the violence and the injustice perpetrated against life, on the one hand, or the cessation of the violence and the injustice against life, but at the likely price of the cataclysmic annihilation of life and civilization itself, on the other. We are asked to choose one package or the other, without the possibility of recombining their elements into a different option.

Aware perhaps of the criticisms that have been levelled against them, in more recent works such as *To Our Friends*, the Invisible Committee are at pains to be seen to distance themselves from "the craving for apocalypse, the lust for Armageddon that permeates the epoch" ([2014] 2015, p.35), an "apocalyptic passion" traditionally "favoured by the powerless since early antiquity", which is now, however, "totally absorbed by capital" (*op. cit.*, pp. 35-36). Yet despite this astute diagnosis, their passion for destitution remains fixated on ruin porn: "the decomposition of this world, taken on as such, creates openings for other ways of living" (*ibid.*, p.37). They are enthralled by the euphoria of extreme catastrophe, emergency situations, and "the disappearance of a civilization" (*ibid.*). Citing examples from the 1985 earthquake in Mexico City and the 2003 hurricane in Halifax, they paint a picture where survivors "in the euphoria of regaining control of their urban existence, [...] conflated the collapse of buildings with a breakdown of the political system, releasing the life of the city from the grip of government" (*ibid.*, p.38). Catastrophe seen in this way is a reinvention of "the revolutionary carnival," and although it is "not quite a street party, [still] everyone [was] out at once- it was a happy feeling to see everybody" (*ibid.*). Left out of this droll picture, however, are all the hardship and the pain and the practical complications of communal self-organization, as well as institutional and infrastructural reconstruction.

As is typical in insurrectionary anarchism- and in Teotwawki politics in general- the issue of transformative agency is never quite clarified by the Invisible Committee. Their writings do not paint a picture of Revolution brought about by mass movements, but rather of the generalised collapse of civilisation generating events that may provide opportunities for self-organizing bands of "friends" to "disengage" from the system. And when they do turn their attention to the question of mass uprisings, the Invisible Committee are confronted with a problem that- from the standpoint of anti-organizational anarchism- must necessarily constitute a nearly insurmountable obstacle: infrastructures. Belatedly evolving beyond the naive Survivalism of their first tracts, in *To Our Friends* the Invisible Committee recognize the importance of infrastructures, acknowledging the "need to have a technical knowledge of the organization of this world at our disposal," in order "both to neutralize the dominant structures and to secure the necessary time for organizing a material and political disengagement [...], not haunted by the spectre of extreme poverty, by the urgency of survival" (*op.cit.*, p.95-96). Yet this raises the issue of the internal structural limits of insurrectionary anarchist politics. "So long as we can't do without nuclear power plants and dismantling them remains a business for people who want them to last forever," they candidly admit, "aspiring to abolish the state will continue to draw smiles; so long as the prospect of a popular uprising will signify a guaranteed fall into scarcity, of health care, food, or energy, there will be no strong mass movement" (*ibid.*). Occupying and maintaining the infrastructures without which millions of people might die is, on the one hand, a pre-requisite for gaining mass support, as you cannot reasonably expect the multitudes to cheerfully embrace a prospect of disease and starvation, but requires, on the other hand, the kind of technical expertise and organization that insurrectionary anarchism is precisely allergic to.

The Invisible Committee continue to uphold the slogan "let's block everything!", even though they admit that "there is no point in knowing how to block the infrastructure of your enemy if you do not know how to make it function, if needs be, in your favour" (*loc.cit.*, p.99). But as a Leninist would reply, does this not hold true in general for *all* kinds of infrastructures *and* superstructures, including the State itself? Does this not mean that, as Lenin famously said, you cannot build communism without socialism *and electricity*[26]- *i.e.*, the material infrastructure of advanced civilisation? And does this admission not blow up the whole edifice of the Invisible Committee's thought in the last 20 years: does it not betray the fact that in the end the only

infrastructure the Invisible Committee can block is that of their own arguments? After nearly two decades of insurrectionary theorising, they find themselves back to square one: they can imagine the end of the world, but not the end of capitalism- unless both ends be one and the same. They can imagine the collapse of the infrastructures, but not what to do with them; they can conceive generalised civilizational breakdown- but not societal transformation. Breakdown and collapse, rather than revolution, are their master tropes. All these years, in their own words, they were "already situated within the collapse of a civilization. It is within this reality that we must choose sides" ([2007] 2009, p. 96)- which may be taken as an unwitting acknowledgement that it is society's disarticulation, rather than its reconstruction, that circumscribes the mental universe they inhabit, and cannot transcend.

Although this essay if of course not the place for the monumental undertaking involved in delineating what the right methods, plans and blueprints for worldwide socialist transformation might be, nevertheless on a much more modest scale it seems safe to say that the Teotwawki insurrectionism embraced by the Invisible Committee is a dead-end for emancipatory politics. "A planet of 7 billion people," McKenzie Wark (2015) points out, "is a planet of infrastructure"; while it might make sense for tactical reasons to block certain things, such as pipelines, oil rigs, or chainsaws, it is doubtful that such a strategy could be extrapolated and applied universally. The key question, Wark remarks, "is whether [the current] infrastructure is capable of building a qualitatively different one".

Embracing Teotwawki politics does not seem to offer a viable alternative for anticapitalist thought and action, but rather signals the nadir of the anticapitalist imagination: **the point at which certain strands of anticapitalism,** after 40 years of TINA zeitgeist, seem to have been so thoroughly colonised by the apocalyptic, end-of-the-world imaginary, that Revolution itself becomes inconceivable except as a version of Teotwawki, the former trope having become, not the binary alternative to the latter, but rather simply what in phonetics is called an *allophone*, i.e., one of the various phonetic realizations of a phoneme that do not establish a distinction of meaning in a language. Teotwawki politics then, whether Left- or Right-wing oriented, does not offer a way out of, or a real challenge to, the Neoliberal order of globalisation, but rather, inasmuch as it transcodes any conception of change into figurations of catastrophe, it constitutes a manifestation of that order's discursive closure, and of the structural limitations it imposes on the collective imagination.

5   SOME CONCLUDING REMARKS

Despite the irony involved in the use of the term *conclusions* in the context of a discussion that ultimately refers to visions of the End of the World and the End of Capitalism- which, as Viveiros de Castro points outs are "seemingly interminable topics- at least until [they] happen" (Danowski & Viveiros de Castro [2014] 2017, p.1)-, nevertheless an attempt can be made here to offer some closing remarks on Teotwawki discourses, and their possible intersection with some contemporary debates, arranged in the form of a Q & A exchange:

How can the Teotwawki metanarrative best be defined in light of the above discussion? Rather than a definition, *stricto sensu* (*i.e*. a statement of the exact meaning of a word), the operation of cognitive mapping attempted here yields a cartography that can be roughly summarised as follows: elements of the Teotwawki metanarrative- of which there is no fixed version or ideal

type- can be found across a wide range of discourses, in different platforms and media, in both fictional and non-fictional genres, and across the most diverse political orientations. The Teotwawki master trope frames a cataclysmic process or event of a drastic transformative nature ("the End of the World")- rather than human agency operating through a revolutionary dynamic (the End of Capitalism), or divine intervention unleashing Judgement Day and Salvation- as the catalyst for the destruction of the social order, which may be seen as oppressive, decadent and corrupt, though often not simply on account of socioeconomic reasons, but rather owing to moral or metaphysical causes: "It's not the world that is lost, it's we who have lost the world and go on losing it", state the Invisible Committee in *To Our Friends*: "the crisis is not economic, ecological, or political, the crisis is above all that of presence" ([2014] 2015, p.31). However, in contrast with millenarian eschatology, whose narrative arc begins with God's intervention and ends with Redemption, or revolutionary politics, which secularises divine power translating it into popular sovereignty and brings redemption down to earth in the form of an emancipated society, Teotwawki narratives remain suspended in the state of exception, in an emergency situation of ongoing collapse without a redemptive horizon in sight. In this sense they are regressive with regard to both traditional-religious and modern-secular visions of social change. The ultimate ideological purpose they serve is the dismantling of agency and the pre-emption of political mobilization.

What is the connection between Teotwawki narratives and the discourses on/of the Anthropocene and the Capitalocene? "The Anthropocene," explains Jason W. Moore, "has become the most important and also the most dangerous environmentalist concept of our times", not because it gets the facts of planetary crisis wrong, but because it mystifies the history behind them and stages "a colossal falsification. Global warming is not the accomplishment of an abstract humanity, the *Anthropos*. Global warming is Capital's crowning achievement. Global warming is capitalogenic" (Moore, 2016a). While the broad family of discourses that might be termed *narratives of the Capitalocene*- from Naomi Klein's *This Changes Everything* (2014) to Moore's own *Capitalism in the Web of Life* (2015), or Andreas Malm's *Fossil Capital* (2016) focus on the confrontation between Capitalism and the planet, issuing forth a call for revolt that identifies a clear constituency (the vast majority of present and future humanity) and a clear antagonist (the capitalist class), the discourses of the Anthropocene- much like Teotwawki narratives tend to do- confound the issues of agency and responsibility. There is a fundamental sleight-of-hand that works in slightly different ways in the two main types of Anthropocene narratives that, for the purposes of our discussion, can be identified here. In the 'centrist', or 'progressive' Neoliberal type, centuries of devastation, exploitation and oppression are subsumed under the indefensible abstraction of a "we" that pre-empts political mobilization by robbing it of a target. "If humanity as a whole drives the locomotive," observes Andreas Malm, "there is no one to depose. A revolt against business-as-usual becomes inconceivable" (2016, p.389). This type of discourse, exemplified by Mark Lynas' *The God Species* (2012), favours geo-engineering solutions, so-called 'Green Markets", and the continuity of the socio-political status-quo. Combined with necropolitical[27] disaster-management and a large Malthusian culling of surplus populations, this approach would reboot Capitalism and ultimately ensure that the dispossessed continue to pay the price for the global crisis. The other type of Anthropocene narrative is exemplified by the 'Deep Ecology', 'Deep Green Resistance' and Anarcho-Primitivist movements, all of which fall squarely within the orbit of Teotwawki politics analysed here. Like the green-washing Neoliberals, the Teotwawki Greens also blame an undifferentiated abstraction (humanity, or civilization as such including everything from mathematics to urban life) for the coming disaster, which they too welcome as a great necropolitical cleansing: "And if I die in the

population reduction that takes place as a corrective to our having overshot carrying capacity, well, that's life, too," states Deep Ecology leader Derrick Jensen: "Finally, if my death comes as part of something that serves the larger community, that helps stabilize and enrich the landbase of which I'm a part, so much the better" (2006, p. 123). These two types of discourses, however, are deeply entwined: "The death wish of the Deep Ecologists and the death drive of Capital," J. McBrien observes, "lie in the same misanthropic fantasy of a world emptied of ourselves-the former in a masochistic longing to erase our sins, the latter in the hope to become pure abstract value unmoored from material entropy and death" (2016, p.155). This environmental catastrophism leads either to Fascist Survivalism, or to a politically sterile fatalism.

The radical sterility of Teotwawki politics stems in part from one of its basic premises: the voiding of agency. In this regard, although millenarian, populist, revolutionary, and Teotwawki-oriented meta-narratives may intersect and share common tropes, they are not equivalent, nor can their structures be easily mapped onto one another, as the issue of agency delimits a crucial divide between them. In contrast with populism, revolutionary politics, and the tradition of Millenarianism- of which it cannot be seen to be a simple secular version-, the Teotwawki narrative frame is characterised by a void or a blur in the semantic space corresponding to agency. Whether it is a nuclear war, an asteroid impact, or a Zombie infestation, the Teotwawki Event is the result of a random concatenation of natural processes, or of human decisions whose consequences escape human control, or of a combination of both, but at any rate, unlike the millenarian eschaton, the populist uprising, or socialist revolution, it lacks a clear form of agency at its source. Either the very concept of an agent is irrelevant to the Event, or if there is one, their plans have gone horribly wrong; their agency has been thwarted, confounded, truncated. In some extreme cases, human agency must be entirely extirpated: for the Deep Ecologists, for instance, if you love the Earth, you ought to allow yourself to die. In millenarian, populist and revolutionary politics, by contrast, agency and intent are paramount: the transformative events at the heart of the corresponding meta-narratives are unleashed in clearly defined terms by divine intervention, by the people self-identified as such, or by an oppressed class. The Teotwawki Event, however, lacks a foundational constituency. Teotwawki has not been triggered by the survivors; it is not a scenario of their choosing, but one to which they react as best they can; their agency, inasmuch as they possess any, is limited and purely reactive, disconnected from the root cause of the situation they find themselves in. For the insurrectionary catastrophists of the Invisible Committee, for instance, what the world needs is our collapse, and what we must do is enjoy the euphoria of the spontaneous carnival of survivors emerging from the ruins. But these survivors are not the community of the faithful who are the causal attractor of God's intervention; nor are they the populist community instituting their own sovereignty as "we the people", or the revolutionary class that shakes and rebuilds society's foundations. Surviving is not the same as living, and the state of exception is always about community-wrecking, not community-building. Beyond this structural boundary, should the bands of survivors manage to become a stable community, then such a change of gears would shift the plot outside the Teotwawki framing altogether, and into another narrative mode; namely, that depicting the reconstruction of a new, different world- Utopia.

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NOTAS

1. For Adorno the conventional mode of academic writing is an incarnation of *instrumental rationality* fundamentally linked to Capitalism and to the most catastrophic historical events of the 20th Century. In its academic variety, instrumental rationality operates like a Fordist knowledge-factory, assimilating concepts to the commodity-form, and thinking to an industrial process: standardised methodologies (taylorised production techniques) must be applied to all kinds of subject-matters (all raw materials) regardless of their particularities (all materials are fungible, all commodities interchangeable), with precise definitions (quantified, pre-processed units) deployed in arguments progressing in linear fashion (processed in a conveyor-belt across the factory space). While this form of rationality is not the Hegelian 'Cunning of Reason' that would lead "universal history [...] from savagery to civilisation," it surely is the thread "which leads from the slingshot to the hydrogen bomb" (Adorno [1966 (1973)] 1990, p.320).

2. To be precise: (1): There is a world [*W*]: ▢[*W*]; (2): We possess knowledge [K] of this world: ▢[K {*W*}]; and (3): This world comes to an end: ¬▢ [*W*]. As a corollary we have (4): ¬▢ [*W*] ▢ [K {*W*}] = [K {▢}] ▢ ¬▢ [*K*]. In a chain of semantic equivalences this means that the End of the World implies the End of Knowledge (¬▢ [*W*] ▢ ¬▢ [*K*]), or that the End of the World is unknowable, since our knowledge becomes null and void when its referent is reset to zero ([K {▢}] ▢ ¬▢ [*K*]).

3. ▢ [¬▢ {*W*}]; ▢ (K [¬▢ {*W*}])

4. For an example of this type of conventional explanation see Franco Bifo Berardi's melodramatic *After the Future* (2011).

5. These are monthly averages calculated using the data collected over the last 6 months. See https://www.mondovo.com/keywords/most-asked-questions-on-google

6. These are relative data, as Google Trends does not report the actual number of searches. Popularity scores are calculated taking the period with the top number of searches as 100 percent, and then representing the other months as percentages of that peak.

7. On January, 21st, 2019, the Daily Mail offered its online readers a view into the "first luxury space hotel from Aurora Station", a modular space station designed by Houston-based company Orion Span (https://www.dailymail.co.uk/video/news/video-1845870/Video-Look-inside-luxury-space-hotel-Aurora-Station.html)

8. "The CEO of a brokerage house explained that he had nearly completed building his own underground bunker system and asked, 'How do I maintain authority over my security force after the event?' [...] The Event. That was their euphemism for the environmental collapse, social unrest, nuclear explosion, unstoppable virus, or Mr. Robot hack that takes everything down" (Rushkoff, 2018).

9. "Sovereign is he who decides on the exception", according to Schmitt's famous definition (Schmitt [1922] 1985, p.5). I shall be returning to this definition in a different context below in section 5.

10. Borrowed in turn from 19th C. social Darwinist Herbert Spencer (See Berlinski, 2008)

11. The expression was coined by Jean-François Kahn, editor-in-chief of *L'Événement du Jeudi*, in an editorial in January 1992. Ramonet then further developed the concept as a designation for the neoliberal consensus in an article in *Le Monde Diplomatique* (Ramonet, 1995).

12. For an overview of how the Neoliberal consensus was built, see Harvey (2005).

13. In a speech to executives in Silicon Valley, California, October 1999
     (Cf. http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780191826719.001.0001/q-oro-ed4-00007051)

14. For some centrist (i.e., 'progressive- Neoliberal') perspectives on this issue, see Johnson & Meriams (2017)

15. On the origin of this concept in the world of neoliberal think-tanks, see D. Robertson (2018).

16. For a somewhat similar account, see J. McBrien (2016), where extinction is the one ontological constant behind capitalist accumulation across multiple dimensions: "extinction is not simply the biological process of species extinction. It is also the extinguishing of cultures and languages, either through force or assimilation; it is the extermination of peoples, either through labour or deliberate murder; it is the extinction of the earth in the depletion of fossil fuels, rare earth minerals, even the chemical element helium; it is ocean acidification and eutrophication, deforestation and desertification, melting ice sheets and rising sea levels; the great Pacific garbage patch and nuclear waste entombment; MacDonalds and Monsanto" (*loc. cit*, p. 117).

17. Abercrombie et al. define a millenarian movement as "a collective, this-worldly movement promising total social change by miraculous means. Millenarianism in Europe flourished between the 11th and 16th centuries among the disprivileged, for example the Anabaptist movement. Anthropologists sometimes include Melanesian 'cargo cults' and 'nativistic movements' in this category. Millenarian movements in this wider context (e.g. North American Indian Ghost Dance or Islamic Mahdi movements) are pre-political responses to social tensions following European colonialism" ([1984] 1994, p. 267). Norman Cohn in *The Pursuit of the Millennium* ([1957] 1990) and Eric Hobsbawm in *Primitive Rebels* (1959) document the long European history of peasant millenarianism as proto-revolutionary or proto-anarchistic movements. In the United States, however, most millenarian movements are associated with the far right (cf. Kaplan, 1997). Without disregarding the possibility that all modern political ideas, as Carl Schmitt ([1922] 1985) and others suggest, may be but secularized versions of theological notions, I have chosen to leave religious movements outside the scope of this essay, and to focus on secular Teotwawki discourses.

18.   In light of which, item 66 unsurprisingly announces that "Vegans Will Convert".

19. On the Frontier, "rugged individualism" and neoliberalism, see Slatta (2001), and Morris, et al. (2014).

20. For an overview of the debates on populism- in itself a hotly contested notion-, including but not limited to Laclau's and Mouffe's position, see Panizza (2005).

21. "Still", Episode 12 in Season 4, written by Angela Kang and directed by Julius Ramsay.

22. Cf. https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/teotwawki

23. https://www.academia.edu/people/search?utf8=&q=invisible+committee. There are no data on the amount of graduate or post-graduate courses, seminars or programs where the Invisible Committee's works feature as set texts or topics for analysis, but if there is any correlation with the volume of papers generated so far, it is safe to infer that the number cannot be small.

24. This is also congruent with the etymology of the term *apocalypse* (*ἀποκάλυψις*, from *ἀπό* and *καλύπτω*, literally meaning "an uncovering", or, in Biblical usage *a revelation*). For a critique of the Invisible Commitee that highlights their debt to Heidegger, see Jappe (2011).

25. This is one of the preparatory notes to the "Theses", which does not appear in the final versions of the document.

26. In actual fact, according to the *Oxford Dictionary of Political Quotations*, Lenin's exact words, in his Report on the Work of the Council of People's Commissars at the All-Russia Congress of Soviets on December 22, 1920, were: "Communism equals Soviet power plus the electrification of the whole country". He then went on to explain, exactly like the Invisible Committee does in *To Our Friends*, that the Revolution needed more engineers than politicians.

27. On this concept, see Mbembe (2003).