CHAPTEr SEVEN

TOWARDS AN ANATOMy OF APOCALyPTICALITY

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.¹

The reading experience of the Apocalypse enhances boundary crossing and stimulates conceptual movement within the unreal world, the unfolding of which leads to the temporary displacement of the reader's own reality. In the narrative, the real and the possible coexist. The possible would remain shapeless were it not for the dialogue with something that has been experienced and already exists in real-life frames, available to the creation of meaning.

The appeal of the narration of the Apocalypse does not appear to lie in the potential interpretation of the imagery or in solving the intricacy of showing through telling but paradoxically in its experiential, thus unstable, design. This feature compels imaginative participation and elicits emotions, feelings and convictions as it also resists conceptualization.² Our senses are, for the most part, employed in the narration, yet an enquiry of whether the apocalypse privileges sight³ over the other senses⁴ does not attend to the narrative experience. The Apocalypse constantly reminds in a very direct manner of the subjective dimension in the narrated world: I see, I hear, I am in rapture, I fall, I feel, I hate, I endure, I vomit, I cry, I know, I smell, I taste, I eat, I am astonished, I am taught, I worship, I testify, I write – I experience. The impression of

¹ This is an extract from T.S. Eliot’s “Little Gidding” (Four Quartets), which reflects the poet’s religious enquiry. For an analysis of the poem, see Scofield, M. T.S. Eliot: The Poems (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) 214–42.
² Schüssler Fiorenza, E. Revelation 31.
⁴ Resseguie makes a point that, in the Apocalypse, hearing, with 55 references, has a dominant role. Resseguie, J. L. Revelation Unsealed 33. Discussing the senses, Philo, much in line with Aristotle, considered taste, smell and touch as senses beneath approval. Philo. De Abrahamo 149–53; Aristotle, De anima 2.7–11.
someone’s subjective position involves a re-representational suggestion of events oscillating between the moment of narration, the moment at which the narrated actions take place, the moment of narrativizing the imagistic experience. The narratee is absorbed between narrativity, the ‘now’ of an experience, and the literarity, as the ‘now’ of having had an experience and telling about it.

In the previous chapters, cognitive narratology provided tools for an initial analysis of the Apocalypse from an experiential perspective. This has led to a narratological discussion focused on the choice of the fundamental elements for a narrative experience: the blending of narrating voices, the participation of the reader as narratee, the positioning of one’s self and the other, the activation of real-life frames, including the literary, cultural and historical dimensions of knowing while reading. What emerges from the analytical work is that the experiential elements, due to their resonance with factors in cognition and emotion and their presence in several life frames and scripts, cannot easily be captured into a structure. However, the aspects in the narrative experience of the Apocalypse that were recognized by using narratological parameters can lead towards an anatomy of apocalypticality that, through the guiding principle of an ‘open’ mind, or, as mentioned in earlier chapters, through the guiding ‘nous’ mindful of literary freedom, brings together their relationship and functionalities. This was discussed in Chapter Two, where I treat the literary Scripture profile of the Apocalypse.

In this final chapter, I proceed to discuss action in space and time that are cognitive parameters guided by the term ‘spatialization’ that David Herman introduces in his discussion on how narrative constructs space. After a discussion on conceptual blends, I conclude with


8 Herman, D. Story Logic 263–99. See also Abbott, H. P. The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative 173.