

PARALLEL SESSION ABSTRACTS

THURSDAY 14 SEPTEMBER 2017

PARALLEL SESSION I: PROPHECY AND THE BIBLE

Panel A: Biblical Prophecy

“Reading Writing, Re-voicing Silent Israel”

Katherine E. Brown, Catholic University of America

Isaiah’s interleaving of idol parodies and servant songs demonstrates the prophetic impulse to challenge the worldview of the present and “to propose alternative visions.” The idol parodies (e.g. Isaiah 44:12-19) evoke Ancient Near Eastern ritual practices believed to enliven crafted images with the real presence of the god(s). The texts not only confront the construct that claimed divine identity for the human-made forms but also implicate Israel’s identity as a God-formed image of the LORD. The poetry enables the prophet’s audience to resist the claims pertaining to the foreign idols and to recognize its own call to image God - and its failure to live that potential, its inability to serve as witness to power of the LORD. The parodies are juxtaposed with “servant songs” (Isaiah 42:1-9; 49:1-8; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12). These poems depict one who, though filled with God’s breath (42:1), is initially blind and deaf as any mocked idol (42:18-19) yet ultimately fulfills the commanded vocation of witness. The silent servant’s exaltation (53:12) leads to the imperative “Sing!” (54:1) which revoiced Israel now is able to do. The interleaving of the parodies and poems not only presents this vision of Israel’s reviving but brings it into being. The reading of the prophetic word effects the experience it depicts and transforms the present as silent Israel becomes singing witness.

“Ezekiel’s Weak Prophecy and the Question of Textuality”

Yosefa Raz, Hebrew University of Jerusalem

When Julius Wellhausen distinguished between oral and written torah, the prophet Ezekiel marked the moment of transition. For Wellhausen, and for biblical scholars to follow in the twentieth century, Ezekiel stands at the juncture between oral and written prophecy and Hebrew culture, between authentic inspiration to scribal imitation and interpretation, between the cessation of unmediated prophecy and the rise of the apocalypse, between Jerusalem-centric theology and the exilic dispossession. Ezekiel is the first to prophesy outside the holy land. As I will show, this system of binaries starting with Wellhausen’s Romantic legacy, re-inscribes strong prophecy as authentic, direct, oral, and inspired. In the shadow of Wellhausen, Ezekiel’s “weak prophecy” has been deemed as epigonic, scribal, baroque, deformed, failed, weakened, and decayed. Contrary to Wellhausen, though, who marks Ezekiel as uniquely unprophetic among the prophets, my work examines the case of Ezekiel’s textuality as metonymic of the problems and potentials of textuality in the entirety of the classic prophetic corpus. Thus, the pernicious “problems” or “weaknesses” of the special case of Ezekiel are also true for large parts of Isaiah, Jeremiah and the Minor Prophets. Specifically, in my reading of the first part of Ezekiel 6, I propose to consider Ezekiel’s weakness through his vocative gestures, reading apostrophe or personified address as a trope marking or complicating lateness, distance, and textuality.

“Light from Light: The Psalm of Tobit and the Vision of Isaiah”

Joseph P. Riordan, S.J., University of Notre Dame

The Book of Tobit is a Jewish novella from the Hellenistic period relating the story of a faithful Israelite who went into exile with the northern tribes in the 8th century B.C.E. The elder Tobit expresses on his deathbed the conviction that every word of the prophets will come true in their appointed times, and he explicitly appeals to Israelite prophecies to interpret his own experience and to forecast future weals and woes. Along these lines, Tobit dines with the words of the prophet Amos on his lips when his own feast at Pentecost takes a tragic turn, just as he appeals to the word of Jonah against Nineveh when he urges his son to flee the city. It is clear that the author of Tobit is steeped in the oracles of the prophets no less than in the “law of Moses” (Tob 7:12), counting as an

early witness to an incipient form of “canon consciousness.” Whatever its origin and relation to the Grunderzählung may be, the hymn in Tobit 13 shares a similarly biblical pedigree. For all the attention paid to questions of intertextuality in the secondary literature, the imprint of Isaiah on the hymn remains opaque. My aim in this paper is to fill in this scholarly lacuna. More specifically, I track how Tobit’s account of the eschatological sequence that will unfold hearkens back to the dramatic vision of Zion’s restoration in Isaiah 60 rather than to Psalm 72 or Zechariah 8, as some scholars claim.

Panel B: Bible, Prophecy and Poetry

“The Poetic Prophet: Ezekiel and the Religious Problem of Aesthetically Pleasing Prophecy”

Ethan Schwartz, Harvard University

Much of the Hebrew Bible’s most beautiful poetry is found in the prophets, who aim to captivate the audience in order to pierce their callousness and stir them to action. What happens, however, if poetic prophecy is so beautiful that the audience regards it as mere entertainment? In this paper, I examine two moments in which Ezekiel explicitly grapples with this conundrum (Ezek. 21:5 and 33:30-33). At issue are the dynamics of language within the life of the people amongst and against whom he prophesies. Both Ezekiel’s prophecy and the people’s vulgar speech are instantiations of *māšāl* (“parable,” “proverb”), which denotes the mediate character of language—its inevitable distance from the ideas it is meant to express, whether divine or human. Ezekiel carefully implements the term *māšāl* in coordination with other speech-words—most importantly, *dābār* (“word”). I argue that even as the prophet promotes and exemplifies Israel’s exilic turn to book religion, in which written language is the locus of religious authority, he issues a stern warning thereto: every attempt to distill divine revelation into human language, necessary though it may be, invites the risk that it will be mistakenly understood not as poetic prophecy but simply as poetry. I further illuminate this by comparison with the Western philosophical tradition’s foundational reflection on the problematic power of poetry: Book X of Plato’s Republic, where Socrates sets up poetry as the enemy of truth in a manner with which Ezekiel would sympathize but likely reject.

“Eliot and Claudel as Readers of Ezekiel: Echoing Overtones of the ‘Dry Bones Prophecy’ (Ezek. 37)”

Fr Nicolas Bossu, LC, Pontifical Athenaeum Regina Apostolorum, Rome

While the “crazy years” were giving way to the Great Depression, two giants of western literature, TS Eliot and Paul Claudel, independently treated the theme of death with the help of the “Dry Bones Prophecy”. The French poet offers us a spectacular staging in “*La Danse des morts*”, an oratorio for Honegger (1938). The Dance of Death is defeated by a divine intervention, prophesied by Ezekiel and realized by Jesus Christ, and leads to the sureness offered by the Church already on earth (*you are Peter...*). In the wake of “*The Waste Land*”, the English poet also resorts to Ezek. 37 in the second part of “*Ash Wednesday*” (1930), but cultivates ambiguity since the opening: “*Because I do not hope to turn again*” might be either the desperate voice of the exiles in Babylon (cf. Ezek. 37,14), or the poet’s own desire not to fall into temptation...

Thus, these two Christian converts deeply transform the biblical metaphor: in order to submit it to a militant catholic faith, or to illustrate the paradoxical aspects of Christian existence... Paul Ricœur (*La métaphore vive*, 1975) allows us to understand these two opposite tendencies with the concepts of “*torsion de sens*” and “*procès métaphorique*”. In either case, the interpretations reflect the deep personality of Ezekiel himself, who loved metaphors both to denounce political corruption (Ezek. 34) and to express mystical visions that are difficult to understand (Ezek. 1).

“My Tongue is the Pen of a Skilful Writer: Poetry as Exegesis”

Erin Martine Sessions, Australian College of Theology

Traduttori? Traditori! We know that something is always lost in the translation, but do we lose something when our exegesis is in a different genre and form to the original text? As a burgeoning bible scholar, I have experienced the difficulty of translating and interpreting Hebrew poetry. And as a poet, I believe that poetry is a powerful and prophetic form of communication. It seems to me

that, similar to losing something of the meaning when we translate from Hebrew to English, we also lose something of the meaning when we ‘translate’ from poetry to prose. Exegesis is a complex business: considering the text as “historical, literary and sacred.” We must continue to explore and examine new methods of exposition and explanation, striving always to be people ‘who correctly handle the word of truth.’ This paper explores the viability of what I am calling ‘exegetical poetry’ as a means of elucidating poetic texts, and will focus on Psalm 45 – interpreted by some as a prophetic poem. The analysis will take the form of an amalgam of regular prose-commentary and my own original exegetical poetry.

Panel C: True and False Prophecy in the Bible and Late Antiquity

“Elisha – A Literary Wonder: Emic Perspectives on the Theological Tensions between Magic and Prophecy”
Yotam Jezreely, Tel Aviv University

In the academic discussion it has lately been stressed that "Magic" had served western research as an agency for belittling indigenous "primitive" cultures perceived through scientific Western structures. But once these structures were exposed, western scholars have generally grown more cautious of their bias, thus contributing to the emergence of the *emic/etic* distinction. The extrication from these Judeo-Christian structures made way for the re-evaluation of the biblical history in which these structures evolved, giving rise in turn to new understandings about the fundamental political and economic motivations that lay in these structures' foundations.

A key point in this deconstruction of biblical Magic is its alleged similarity with Prophecy. Both of these are mentioned in Torah law, but a simple "What's the difference" question – which is not mentioned – raises important suspicions concerning the political and economic motivations for legitimizing prophecy and delegitimizing magic. A post-modern materialistic approach such as this, however, is once again, a bias. An *emic* reading of biblical culture and religion is therefore needed, one that sheds light on how the Bible *itself* understood the relationship between Magic and Religion, and that is the premise of this paper.

Through a close reading of the stories of Elijah and Elisha, by far the most "magical" prophets, one can examine the *emic* differences between magic and prophecy and prove that although not mentioned explicitly in Torah law, these differences are treated with great care through the prophetic narratives, culminating in the stories of Elisha.

“The Discourse about Ritual Authority in the Prophetical Writings with Special Regard to Ezekiel 13:17-21”
Rüdiger Schmitt, Münster University

The paper will examine the polemics against prophetesses in Ezekiel 13: 17-21, which are directed not against actual prophetic or divination activities, but against healing rituals performed by freelance female specialists. It will be demonstrated that in this polemic, Ezekiel – in his authority as a priest – denies any ritual authority of the prophetesses by accusing them of performing witchcraft, which is in line with the prophetic law in Deuteronomy 18:9-22. The paper will further examine other polemic texts in the prophetic writings (Jeremiah 27:9; 14: 13-16; 23: 9-22; Isaiah 8: 19-20; Ezekiel 12: 21-28; Zecharia 13: 2-6 etc.) and their rhetoric, in which certain ritual practices were either condemned as witchcraft or necromancy. Accusations of witchcraft and necromancy were used by priestly authorities like Ezekiel and Jeremiah (or their literary images respectively), to denounce any ritual activity that is performed by non-priestly ritual specialists as witchcraft. It will be shown that these polemics, in particular those from the deuteronomic Jeremiah-collection, are part of a broader discourse about legitimate and illegitimate divination practices rooting in Deuteronomy 18 and thus were used in the construction of the concept of the “true” prophet of Yahwe in exilic-postexilic prophetic literature. The subject of the paper has recently been discussed in my monograph *Mantik im Alten Testament*, Alter Orient und Altes Testament 411, Münster: Ugarit-Verlag 2014.

“Quid virgo canit? True and False Prophecies in Late Antiquity: The Case of Dracontius”

Maria Jennifer Falcone, University of Erlangen-Nuremberg

The poems of the Late Antique period are characterized by a complex allusive relationship towards the poetic word of classical authors; the case of prophecies is paradigmatic in this regard.

In particular, the poet Dracontius shows himself as a very interesting case study due to his twofold production, both pagan and Christian.

In fact, in his Christian works (*Laudes Dei* and *Satisfactio*) there are references both to the true prophecies of the Old Testament and to the theme of God’s omniscience and the complex relationship between his foreknowing and human free will (cf. *Satisfactio* vv. 11-18).

Even more interesting for scholars in the field of Latin literature is the substantial change of perspective towards the classical prophetic scenes and figures, which is to find in his pagan works. A significant case is the scene of prophecy in the poem *De raptu Helenae* (*Romul.* 8, vv. 119-210). Here the traditional prophetic voices of the *vates* Helenos and the *furibunda sacerdos* Cassandra, who speak about the future destiny of Troy, are strongly contradicted by Apollo himself (vv. 188 f.: *quid virgo canit? cur invidus alter / exclamat? Helenus deterret Pergama verbis?*). The classical god, hypostasis of the Christian God as elsewhere in Dracontius’ pagan production, is the only one who can truly prophesize (v. 191: *stant iussa deorum*).

This astonishing change of perspective confirms that Late Antiquity is a crucial turning point in the new interpretation and allusive utilization of traditional poetic prophecies.

PARALLEL SESSION II: POETRY AND PROPHECY

Panel A: Word of God, Prophecy and Poetry in Abrahamic Religions

“The Word of God as Authentic Prophetic Speech in the Abrahamic Traditions”

María Enid Rodríguez, Catholic University of America:

Humans desire communication with the divine. This desire is seen in the manner religions incorporate divine communication with established parameters of what constitutes authentic divine speech. Divine communication has various and varying subdivisions, with prophecy (distinct from extispicy, possession, etc.) holding a prominent place within this category. While scholarship has focused on the person of the prophet, the work of cognitive scientists and linguists has elucidated aspects of cognition and language that converge on the study of prophetic speech as well as the impact of language on thought. The phrase “word of God” is a specific linguistic expression that elicits a special focus within prophetic language and rhetorical formulae. The phrase “word of God” has also been reused with theological meanings within the Abrahamic traditions that developed from its appearance within prophetic texts. Consequently, the line between the linguistic functions of the phrase within its context in prophetic literature and the theological functions that came to be linked with the phrase afterwards has become blurred. This paper employs the cognitive science of religion to facilitate a comparative analysis of the phrase “Word of God” in the Abrahamic traditions, looking specifically at the occurrence of the phrase in the writing prophets of the Hebrew Bible and as well as throughout the Qur’an. This analysis will explore the authoritative weight of the phrase “word of God” and the human need for divine communication while simultaneously demonstrating the irreconcilable differences in the features associated with the phrase “word of God.”

“The (Believing) Poet-Prophet Paradox: A Reading of the Contradictions in the Prophetic Poems of Muhammad Iqbal”

Sania Iqbal Hashmi, Jawaharlal Nehru University

Saabib-e Sarmaaya aṣ nasl-e Khalil - Yaani aaN paighambar-e bay Jibraeel

Woh Kaleem-e bay tajalli woh Maseeh-e bay Saleeb - Neest paighambar wa laikin dar baghal daaraad kitaab!

Muhammad Iqbal on Karl Marx

The author of *Das Kapital*, a son of Abraham, is a Prophet without Gabriel,

This Moses sans thunder, this Jesus sans cross, may not be a messenger but he has a Scripture.

*Jahan-e-Maghrib Ke Butkudon Mein Kaleesaon Mein, Madrason Mein
Hawas Ki Khoon Raizyan Chupati Hai Aqal-e-Ayyar Ki Namaesh*
Muhammad Iqbal, 'Voice of Karl Marx'

In this idolatrous Western world of temples, pulpits, and schools,
Your advertisement of intellect works but to mask your ravenous greed for our blood.

With such examples from Iqbal's various poems, in the first part of this paper I shall attempt to locate the theological and philosophical contradictions in Muhammad Iqbal's prophetic poems, particularly 'Zamaana Aaya hai Behijaabi ka' (March 1907) from *Bang-e-Dra*. While focusing on Iqbal's own writings on Abrahamic-Prophets and Philosopher-Prophets, I shall observe how the poet as philosopher questions the epistemological consequences of Occidental research and philosophical enquiries in the second part of my paper. Questioning the possibility of separating the literary oeuvre from the philosophical/theological oeuvre, in the third and final part of my paper, I shall observe the manner in which the categories of 'poet' and 'philosopher' come together to (un)make a Prophet.

"Hermann Cohen and the Jewish Prophetic Tradition"

Michael Weinman, Bard College Berlin

Hermann Cohen, in *Religion of Reason out of the Sources of Judaism*, argues that it is the poetic character of the Jewish prophetic tradition that grounds the uniqueness of the Eternal. More than that, the singularity of Abrahamic monotheism that preserves Judaism as a unity and Israel as a community derives from this poetic essence. Judaism achieves its place as the "primary origin" of religion of reason through this prophetic/poetic tradition, in which the ethical demand—to welcome the stranger—is yoked to the theology of a unique Godhead beyond the realm of nature. It is through their wisdom as poets, entwining this moral teaching and this theology within the full range of classical poetic forms (with the conscious exclusion of drama), Cohen argues, that the Jewish prophets announce a "pure humanity" that can only be realized in the rational adherence to the moral maxims that the continuous and eternal revelation of the Law. This entails that the prophet/poets must be read in the tradition of "rational exegesis" that demonstrates the timeless and unique character of the moral law/the Godhead through an intensifying and purifying response to the Pentateuch.

In my presentation, I will: expose Cohen's fundamental starting points in laying out this argument; exemplify the argument through his readings of Isaiah and Nechemiah in particular; and reflect on the relevance of his approach for thinking about what makes for a true or false prophet more generally.

Panel B: Prophecy, Poetry and the Romantic Vision

"The Prophetic Power of the Lyric 'I' in Romantic Poetry"

Elizabeth S. Dodd, Sarum College

This paper explores lyric as a site of prophetic discourse through a focus on its first-person perspective. It begins with a brief outline of the relationship between theology and lyric theory, noting the curious absence of the category of 'lyric' in theological aesthetics in favour of discussions of narrative, drama and poetry. It suggests that the lack of a developed theo-lyric may be due to the individualistic associations of the lyric 'I'. It then goes on to outline developments in lyric theory which highlight the public character of lyric; particularly Jonathan Culler but also Ian Patterson, Alan Jacobs, Jacob Blevins and Stephen Greenblatt. The final section applies these insights to theological understandings of the prophetic power of poetry through a focus on the Romantic poets. Blake is indeed the obvious example of poet as prophet, but I also draw on Wordsworth and Coleridge as examples of a poetic that is rooted in personal experience but also public-facing. Through these figures I examine the authority and persuasiveness of the lyric 'I' within prophetic speech. Thus what might seem to be counter-intuitive – finding a prophetic voice in the solipsism of a first-person perspective – is in fact a natural outworking of the devices of lyric. This argument has relevance for

discussions of prophetic literature in the scriptures. It also intersects with discussions of a poetics of testimony, but is particularly attentive to the capacities of a fictional persona to speak authentically on behalf of the other or as an expression of communal experience.

“Fearful Symmetry, Seventy Years On”

Michael Kirwan, Heythrop College, University of London

In 1947 the Canadian critic Northrop Frye published *Fearful Symmetry*, one of the most important commentaries on the work of William Blake in the twentieth century. As a nonconformist Christian minister, writing during wartime, Frye was perhaps more alert than any other critic to the relevance of Blake as a prophet for our turbulent age. This paper will give an inevitably cursory overview of the theme of ‘prophecy’ in Blake’s writings. More specifically, it will serve as a commemoration and a critical assessment of *Fearful Symmetry*, seventy years after its appearance.

“Poetry as Prophecy in the Leningrad Cultural Underground”

Josephine von Zitzewitz, University of Cambridge

This paper centres on four poets who produced their most seminal work in the unofficial cultural sphere of Leningrad in the 1970s and 1980s and are now often referred to as members of the so-called ‘Leningrad School’: Oleg Okhupkin, Elena Shvarts, Viktor Krivulin, and Aleksandr Mironov. The paper will focus on how these underground poets adapt one of Russia’s most canonical texts in the “prophetic” tradition: Alexander Pushkin’s “The Prophet” (1826). This poem introduces the quintessential image of the poet-prophet, presenting prophetic insight as an unasked-for gift that entails spiritual and physical suffering. It employs motifs from an Old Testament scene (Isaiah 6:6-7) but adapts them to suit the poet’s agenda.

The cult of the poet as a prophetic visionary who pays for his initiation with exclusion from society, which had its origin in Romanticism and thrived during the modernist ‘Silver Age’, survived in Soviet Russia virtually unbroken. Theoretical preoccupations that were prominent in the West, such as Roland Barthes’ claim that texts exist independently from the author’s persona and intentions, had little clout. On the contrary, the persona and fate of the author were inextricably entwined with the text and invested it with meaning. A writer in danger of persecution for his literary activity was a tragic figure; his texts bore witness to his truth. Such an understanding of their role helped the unofficial poets justify, even idealise, their social marginality. Unlike Pushkin, some of them understood ‘poetic prophecy’ in explicitly religious terms.

Panel C: Art, Poetry and the Prophetic

“Prophetic Calling and Poetic Form: Christopher Smart, Jubilate Agno and De Sacra Poesia Hebraeorum”

Ewan King, Baptist Union of Great Britain

Christopher Smart’s masterpiece, *Jubilate Agno* not only displays many classic *topoi* of Hebrew prophecy, whether in sharp challenge to contemporary pieties; intense compassion for victims of societal injustice, or heightened consciousness of the national religious situation, but helps us understand better a tradition, which can itself be illuminated by (e.g.) a consideration of the centrality of non-human and particularly animal creation to Smart’s poetry.

Mental health bulks so large in the Smart reception history that in considering the poet as prophet, the relation of prophecy and madness might seem the easiest point of departure. From a biographical point of view, there are indeed significant parallels with the Old Testament prophets. Smart’s compulsive kneeling in public places recalls Isaiah’s public nudity, or Ezekiel’s 430-day prostration around his miniature Jerusalem; Jeremiah’s entrance into the royal presence in his “yoke of straps and bars” parallels Smart’s having “blessed God in St. James’ Park till I routed all the company”. Dr Johnson believed one cause of Smart’s incarceration to be that he “did not love clean linen”: an accusation which might fairly be levelled at Jeremiah.

But this paper will strike out in a different line, focusing on the stylistics of prophecy. As a skilled Hebraist, Smart had a long, fruitful relationship with Lowth’s celebrated and controversial *De Sacra Poesia Hebraeorum*. In his creative appropriation of Lowth’s stylistic analyses, Smart was first and

foremost a poetic technician, and his practical response to Lowth's theory allows us to sidestep outworn concepts of *furor poetica* or *prophetica*, and newly assess what might paradoxically be called the *technical achievement of prophetic verse*.

“*Learning to See: Rainer Maria Rilke's Sonnets to Orpheus as Prophetic Vision*”

Mark S. Burrows, Protestant University of Applied Sciences, Bochum

“We are those who transform the earth, and our entire existence, with the soarings and stumblings of our love, prepares us for this task (alongside of which no other of any substance exists).”

—Rainer Maria Rilke, letter to Witold Hulewicz (13 November 1925)

“Wolle die Wandlung. O sei für die Flamme begeistert,
drin sich ein Ding dir entzieht, das mit Verwandlungen prunkt [. . .]“

“Commit to transformation. O give everything for the flame
that takes a thing, flaunting its changes, from you. . .”

—Rilke, *Sonnets to Orpheus* II.12

This paper takes as its point of orientation W. Kandinsky's notion of the prophetic in art, drawing on his writings in defense of expressionism. While his primary interest is in the visual arts—above all painting—his approach opened a new way of thinking about the prophetic in terms of aesthetic traditions and movements. As a case-study of this thesis, I turn my attention to Rilke's late *Sonnets* to discern how these answer Kandinsky's controversial call that art “creates its own means of expression, placing along with the ‘real’ world a new world, which has nothing to do with reality”—by which he means the presumed “reality” that is really only the “*Lumpenwelt*” of our flattened expectations, as Wallace Stevens later put it. The opening part of the paper will bring Kandinsky into conversation with Stevens and, more recently, Gianni Vattimo on the question of the arts as prophetic witness.

This paper then turns to explore Rilke's late sonnets, extending a line of inquiry I explored with the paper I gave at the Power of the Word Conference in Rome. In that paper, I considered a dimension of the same question in terms of *The Duino Elegies*. What was essential to my argument in that paper was how Rilke focused on the realm of “things” as a means of inviting us to indwell the world with a sense of wonder—or what he simply called “the Open” in his later writings. The current paper deepens this line of inquiry in turning to his *Sonnets*, written in a three-week period just after Rilke completed the last of his *Elegies*. Here the poet shifts gears dramatically to suggest how the “things” of the world, viewed from the perspective of Eurydice writing to *Orpheus*, become an invitation—not unlike the one Kandinsky attributed to expressionist paintings—to “encounter a new world and attempt [through the artwork] ‘to inhabit it’” (see Gianni Vattimo, “The Ontological Vocation of Twentieth-Century Poetics”).

“*An aquatic reverie: Stéphane Mallarmé's Writing on Water and the Naming of Waves*”

Clark D. Lunberry, University of North Florida

Stéphane Mallarmé once confided to a friend, “I no longer write a poem without an aquatic reverie running through it,” and that, for him, poetry was like an “oar stroke,” and the sail, a “white page.” At his home outside Paris, in Valvin, Mallarmé spent much time on his small boat dreamily sailing upon the Seine, seeing this body of flowing water as a site for inspiration and inscription. One might imagine the poet drifting upon the river's darkened depths, looking closely at that which lies beneath its reflecting surface, that opaque space into which one might gaze but not breathe. Floating upon the water, the known world is mirrored above, while reminding of that which remains unknowable, uninhabitable below (and beyond). When Mallarmé lectured at Oxford University in 1894 on “La Musique et les Lettres,” he did not speak specifically of time spent on the water, his life on the Seine, but his own prophetic pronouncements on poetic form and function seem inspired by his own aquatic reveries about surfaces and depths, transparency and opacity, and of those fluid spaces of the imagination that can be approached but not penetrated, of liquid impressions seen but not solidified.

In my talk, I will speak of Mallarmé's seminal Oxford lecture and the ways in which his time on the water, his reveries floating upon its surface, offer a way into his poetic pronouncements, as well as into a poetry that remains to this day rich in mystery, power and enduring inspiration

PARALLEL SESSION III: THE PROPHETIC WORD IN CLASSICAL ANTIQUITY AND EARLY MODERNITY

Panel A: Prophetic Voices in Classical Antiquity

"The Tragic Poet as Master of Truth or 'Prophetic Genius': The Prophetic Word in Euripides' Helen"

Marcela Alejandra Ristorto & Silvia Susana Reyes, Universidad Nacional de Rosario:

Unlike Christianity, ancient Greek religion had no written divine texts or revealed truth. But gods communicated with humans through specific practitioners, the seers. The poet, who like the seer could access knowledge beyond the natural world, spread the stories of the gods among men and was concerned with the divine. For this reason, poets were considered "masters of truth", intermediaries between gods and men.

Fifth century tragedy became the distinctive means to explore the religious realm. Drama usually put on stage myths in critical situations, for the re-actualization of conflicts establishes a strong link between the mythical past and the present.

Euripides may be thought to be a 'prophetic genius', since in his plays he evokes the religious debates of his time and raises disturbing questions about the role of gods in human suffering. We will focus our study on the prophetic figure of Theone in *Helen*: her relationship with the gods, and also her relationship with the caste Helen, because both women defy violence. Moreover, the prophetess words allow us to think over ideas about afterlife, over the soul access to a blissful hereafter. From this point of view, it is possible to think about Euripides as a "prophet", who dares to question, though not overtly, the polis official civic religion by proposing alternative views. The impact of his challenge led some philologists to read *Helen* as "a drame initiatique", insofar as Helen's myth can be interpreted with respect to the prevailing Orphic and mystery doctrines.

"The Pythia and Divine States of Mind: Rebukes, Complaints and Expressions of Joy"

Angel Ruiz, University of Santiago

Oracles were the only channel Greeks had if they wanted to listen to actual words from the Gods. Even normal people (at least in literary retellings of the oracles by authors in the line of Herodotus) could get long utterances that, ideally, would reflect the varying moods of the divine mind in a given situation, in a much more complex and nuanced way than the usual signs, -e.g. omens or bird signs- always in need of a clarification by a prophet, who in the end would use just his plain and humble human words, not the ones from the gods.

My research has been focusing on a particular kind of utterance by the gods, rebukes, in classical Delphic oracles and also in the ones in stone from Claros and Didyma in late antiquity, comparing them with the literary representation of Gods, as shown specially in the *Iliad*.

The Pythia is special because her words are not her own: she channels the gods, and not only their words, but also their mindset (e.g. anger, sadness or joy) as a reaction to human situations. And she does that using poetry, in fact the epic tradition of hexameter.

My paper aims at addressing that singular situation: how poetry became the best way to contact the Greek gods, and getting to feel their moods for instance in the form of rebukes, complaints to humans and expressions of joy.

"The prophecy that the ancient oak spoke': Prophecies and Prophetic Voices of the Sanctuary of Zeus in Dodona"

Olga A. Zolotnikova, Hellenic Open University

"...The prophecy that the ancient oak spoke..." (Sophocles, *Trachiniae*, 172-173). Prophecies and prophetic voices of the sanctuary of Zeus in Dodona

The aim of the paper is to characterize the prophetic voices of the Dodonian sanctuary of Zeus in regard to their nature and modes of uttering prophecies, as well as to estimate the prophecies delivered in Dodona in regard to their value in Greek mythic and actual history. According to the ancient tradition, in Dodona prophecies were spoken by the sacred oak of Zeus: the voice of the divine tree sounded as rustling of leaves and / or cooing of doves, which were sitting on its branches. It was believed that the “words of the oak” were truthful and therefore were heard by the god’s prophets – priests *Selloi* / *Helloi* and priestesses *Peleiae*. Those announced the prophecies to the inquirers; however, the roles of the former and of the latter are not exactly certain: probably, *Selloi* / *Helloi* formed the sentences, which the *Peleiae* uttered. There are indications that in the most important cases the prophecies had the form of poetic verses chanted or sung by the *Peleiae* in the condition of madness caused by the god. The usual number and the names of male prophets are unknown; priestesses-oracles were usually three or two, and the first of them had quite symbolic names. The prophecies spoken by the Dodonian oak through the prophets and oracles were highly esteemed by the ancients and practically were never doubted, while any disparity with the prophesized was ascribed to human misunderstanding of the prophecy meaning. The paper will attempt to explore the grounds, on which such sacredness of the words of the Dodonian oak was based, and to determine with more precision the ways of prophesying on behalf of Dodonian Zeus.

Panel B: Prophetic Voices in Classical Antiquity

“So Spoke the Prophetic Lines of Medea: Prophecy and Power in Pindar’s Fourth Pythian Ode”

Dennis Alley, Cornell University

Pindar begins his 299 line Fourth Pythian ode— the longest surviving lyric composition from Greek antiquity— with a nearly fifty-line first-person prophecy delivered by the Colchean princess Medea. (P.4.12-57) Traditional readings of the ode have downplayed the passage’s divine rhetoric in favor of a purely propagandistic reading. I suggest this reading has overlooked the significance of the prophetic rhetoric to the poet’s larger aims.

In this paper I argue that Pindar aligns Medea’s prophetic voice with the Delphic oracle to appropriate the authority of the prophetic center. (P.4.8-12) By doing so, Pindar bolsters the regime’s cultural capital in an environment where the dynasty’s authority was actively being challenged. Indeed, Herodotus records a prophecy which foretells the end of the Battiads in the eighth generation from Battis’ foundation of the royal line; exactly the time of Pindar’s composition. (Hdt. 4.163.2-3) By offering the ruling king, Arcesilaus IV, a powerful validation of his kingship, I suggest that Pindar is engaging in an exchange to secure the repatriation of an exile, whose formal plea is entered at the ode’s conclusion. On this view, Pindar’s poetic authority, expressed through Medea’s prophetic speech, offers the ruling dynast much needed political propaganda. The price of this, I argue, is the exile’s return. By situating Medea’s prophecy in the context of inspired rhetoric, I hope to show that Pindar, rooted in the Greek tradition of the inspired poet, had greater cultural authority than is traditionally assumed.

“Lucretius, Empedocles, and the Prophecy of the End of the World”

Manuel Galzerano, Università degli studi Roma Tre

The aim of my paper is to analyse Lucretius’ self-representation as a prophet who announces the end of the world and its relationship with the Empedoclean poetic model. In fact, in *De rerum natura* 5.91-112, Lucretius presents his eschatological message as a new type of prophetic revelation. These verses (in particular 5.110-112) have a strong connection with *De rerum natura* 1.716-741, where analogous words are used to describe Empedocles’ discoveries and their implicit apocalyptic message. Thus, Lucretius represents himself as the heir to the most important Greek eschatological poet. Therefore, it is no wonder that, in *De rerum natura* 5.101-103, Lucretius translates and reformulates Empedocles’ verses (cf. DK B133) in order to elevate the Epicurean doctrine of cosmic mortality to a divine status. Obviously, Lucretius’ inspiration comes from the “god” Epicurus, whose divine discoveries (*divina reperta*) can lead humanity to happiness, despite the inevitable ruin of this world. This self-representation is more than a simple literary topos: it is the most solemn declaration

of Lucretius' literary credo. In fact, Empedocles' apocalyptic sublime becomes a means to combine the ultimate truths of the Epicurean ratio and the psychagogical power of traditional apocalyptic poetry

"Sibylla bacchatur: the Sibyl's Prophetic Frenzy in Virgil's Aeneid"

Francesco Montarese, Independent Scholar

The conference poster, Michelangelo's depiction of the Sibyl, provided the idea for this proposal. Virgil describes the process of the Cumaean Sibyl's prophetic frenzy, and the resulting prophecy of Aeneas' future in lines 35-155 of *Aeneid* 6.

The *Aeneid* is notable for the specific description of religious ritual: Virgil's fascination with religious experience and practices is evident from his mention of *haruspices* only in religious contexts that pertain to Etruscans, or his veiled reference to the Carthaginian moon goddess Tanith in his description of Dido in book 6. It is not surprising therefore that the Sibyl, a staple of Roman religion, should receive special attention in book 6, especially when one considers that his patron Octavian Augustus had moved the Sibylline books, so sacred in Roman religion, to the new temple of Apollo he built on the Palatine Hill in 27 B.C., a project alluded to by Aeneas himself in lines 69-70 of book 6.

In my paper I would like to focus on Virgil's momentous description of the experience of divine seizure by the god of prophecy, Apollo. In analysing Virgil's description - conveyed mainly through a protracted metaphor from horse racing - I should like to consider his achievement in the light of earlier descriptions of similar episodes in Classical Literature.

Panel C: Prophecy, Poetry and Early Modernity

"Prophecy and Salvation in Renaissance Europe"

Dilwyn Knox, UCL

The Renaissance inherited many, sometimes divergent, ideas of prophecy from the ancient Greeks and Romans, the Church Fathers, and medieval Jewish, Arabic and Latin authors: prophecy was one of the major testimonies to the authenticity of the Christian faith; the prophet, according to one interpretation, was little more than a vehicle possessed by an alien power, whereas according to another view, the prophet understood by dint of intellection signs about the future that escaped everyone else; the pagans of antiquity had had true prophets, notable examples being the sibyls and Hermes Trismegistos. And so on. One theme remained paramount. Prophecy showed that God afforded salvation to all who listened. Regrettably, the pagans, with few exceptions, had scorned their prophets, in much the same way as the obdurate Jews had done. They had merited damnation. God was just.

The Renaissance contributed a distinctive twist to this story. Damning virtuous pagans was out of tune with Renaissance sympathies for the ancient world. The moral to be drawn from the existence of pagan prophecies was that pagan learning generally was inspired. This showed that virtuous pagans had, in many cases, earned salvation and, importantly, that their works were suitable objects of study for a Christian. Such views were particularly popular among thinkers associated with the Renaissance revival of Platonism. Needless to say, they were deemed unacceptable by mainstream Reformation theology.

"Delivering the Word of God: The Prophetic Dimension of Sacred Poetry on the Example of Angelus Silesius' Cherubinischer Wandersmann"

Krzyszyna Wierzbicka-Trwoga, University of Warsaw

The "prophetic dimension" in the title of my paper refers to the ancient meaning of the word "prophet", as it was used in the archaic religions of Mesopotamia, ancient Greece, the region of Canaan, and last but not least by the Hebrews. A prophet does not foretell the future: in all these archaic religions he is the one who speaks the Word of God. The Hebrew prophets, however, are specific, because they are primarily concerned with delivering the Word and not with delivering a vision (see Anna Świderkówna, *Rozmowy o Biblii*, Warszawa 1997, p. 107). This feature links them

with the sacred poetry of the 17th century, a poetry in which words were supposed to be able – on certain conditions – to reveal transcendence, to make God present in verse. This idea was justified by the theological idea of Logos, developed by the Church Fathers and later by the medieval representatives of the Logos-mysticism. Poets in 17th century Europe were striving for such an inspiration by the Word, as can be best seen on the example of Angelus Silesius (Johannes Scheffler). Scheffler dedicated in 1675 his *Cherubic Wanderer* to “the Eternal Wisdom – God”, from Whom came the “drops of eternal wisdom”, as he called his epigrams. The Silesian poet created a special design for his *Cherubic Wanderer* to enable the circulation of the Logos, by way of delivering the Word of God in poetry and directing it back to Him, as I will show in the analysis of Scheffler’s poetic sequence.

“Sidney’s Logocentrism in a Protestant World”

Gerald Barr, University of Houston:

In *The Defense of Poesy*, Sir Philip Sidney suggests that “right” poetry is an emblem of a golden world, a space of pure goodness and virtue. Right poetry has a performative linguistic function and duty to move its reader to this virtue. Sidney argues that the imagination contains a creation impulse inherited from God. Sidney says, “For poesy... must be gently led, or rather, it must lead—which was partly the cause that made the ancient-learned affirm it was a divine gift, and no human skill... A poet no industry can make, if his own genius be not carried into it; and therefore it is an old proverb, *orator fit, poeta nascitur* [An orator is made; a poet is born]” (1076). Thus, the poet has a similar function as a divine maker of an Eden-like world. Sidney’s *Defense* coheres to Protestant poetics of the English Reformation. This movement emphasizes the Word’s complete and total divinity. So, the question arises if Sidney’s poetic word has the same power as the Gospel’s Word. For Protestants, the Word has volitional creative powers to move its reader to enlightenment. For Sidney, “right” poetry has the same logocentric power. The words of poetry, like the divine Word, are essentially performative in that they move the reader to a higher condition. Sidney secularizes this Protestant logocentric ideal, and incorporates it into his poetic theory of a right kind of poetry that presents a golden world of virtue.

FRIDAY 15 SEPTEMBER 2017

PARALLEL SESSION IV: MODERN PROPHETIC AND POETIC VOICES

Panel A: Modern Prophetic and Poetic Voices

“Prophetic Dimension of Czesław Miłosz’s Poetry”

Anna Szczypan-Wojnarska, Cardinal Wyszyński University

“It is as I’d been sent, to extract as many colours, tastes, sounds, smells, to experience everything that I a man’s share, to transpose what was felt into a magical register and carry it where, from whence I came. Cz. Miłosz, “Wherever” This paper will examine prophetic aspects and perspectives of poetry written by Czeslaw Miłosz’s – Polish poet of 20th century and Nobel prize winner. When uncertainty prevails and fear is real, the faithful long to hear the authoritative word of God. Those who believe themselves to have a special relationship with Yahweh are The Prophetic Word.docx.pdf Saved to Dropbox • 19 Jan 2017, 10:24 themselves to have a special relationship with Yahweh are ready to comfort such need and they feel able to read God’s intentions and articulate his will and judgements and as a result, they act almost as God’s spokesmen. Miłosz’s poetry is written in the opposite manner while referring to the horrendous times of IIWW and its impact on the contemporary culture. However, the poet denies readiness to become the religious figure; he serves religion by overcoming inexpressibility of its experience simply even by announcing its existence. Power of prophecy expressed in poetry is based upon many tasks such as: representing and expressing power, supporting power (or just rulers) and opposing it, finally going beyond power when it is the poetry itself that “rules” the reality. Miłosz’s prophetic manner combines all of them in changing proportions. The paper will present an analysis of selected poems questioning the role of a

poet and a poem in the light of dynamic relation between the prophet and prophecy. It will also highlight discrepancies and limits of identification both with each other.

“Yeats and Bonnefoy as Prophets: From Catachysm to the Cataphatic”

Kathryn Wills, University of Glasgow

Within the poetry of W.B. Yeats there is a strand of authentic prophecy which examines contemporary political strife and his own personal struggles with the passion of love and patriotism, employing ideas from his metaphysical schema, *A Vision*. Some of this poetry might suggest that he fulfils the conventional role of the prophet who foresees future possibilities, in his case, destruction and desolation. For all Yeats’ esoteric religion, poems such as “Byzantium” and “A Bronze Head”, however, reveal a deeply Protestant sense of flaw, a Neo-Platonic rift in human affairs, one that will usher in a tumultuous revolution.

Yves Bonnefoy, the key French translator of Yeats, is a very different prophet, more in a Catholic, Plotinian mould, reading poetry as a way of both discerning and healing the fractures caused by a poetry which employs the Neo-Platonic Image, Jean-Luc Marion’s idol. This paper will examine how his translation of “A Bronze Head” might explore the core of Yeats’ suffering, both personal and political and suggest how an “auto-analysis” of personal narrative might enable the beginning of healing. How might the word “hantise” (haunting/obsession) which he adds to the translation, prove to be the key to Bonnefoy’s methods here? To what extent is Bonnefoy the prophet of wholeness, of human desire and finitude, opposed to Yeats, the prophet of dissolution?

“Prophecy con sordina’: The Definition of Poetry in the Work of Paul Celan”

Esther Cameron, Independent Scholar

The poetry of Paul Celan makes no professions of faith and often expresses skepticism and pessimism. Nevertheless, in his 1960 speech “Der Meridian” there are veiled references to the prophetic tradition and a tentative, elaborately-qualified assertion of the poet’s claim to speak in the name of the absolute, even to initiate a redemptive process. Connecting threads can be drawn from “The Meridian” to poems written both before and after it.

This claim seems to be based not on any perception of direct connection to the divine, but rather, paradoxically, on a complete immersion in contingency, especially at crisis points where the subject touches the limits of existence. Speaking in acceptance of the Georg Büchner Prize, Celan finds analogues to poetic experience in the crises of two Büchner characters: Lucile in *Danton’s Death*, who suicidally calls out “Long live the King” after her husband is guillotined, and the title figure of the novella *Lenz*, who undergoes a schizophrenic crisis. Both of these figures, as Celan portrays them, confront deterministic reality and are thrust out of it, in an exodus which is an alienation from life but also a moment of transcendence, of truth and freedom. The poem, Celan suggests, springs from such moments. The awareness of the *hearer* of poetic speech adds a further dimension, on which the poet tentatively bases a hope of human solidarity, even of “u-topia.”

Panel B: Modern Prophetic and Poetic Voices

“Arguing with a Saint: Mystical Considerations in the Poetic Disagreements between Thomas Merton and Czesław Miłosz”

Jon M. Sweeney, Independent Scholar

Milosz and Merton shared a mostly epistolary friendship, beginning in 1958. Over a ten year period, Milosz would tell Merton that his writings on war and peace were removed from reality. Merton, Milosz believed, knew little of real suffering. Milosz was also critical of Merton as romantic in his approach to the natural world, evoking Manichean-style debates. As this paper will show, essential to Merton’s views, and frustrating to any real friendship between Merton and Milosz, was an acceptance of the mysticism of Bernard of Clairvaux: a personally powerful, completely unmeasurable, understanding of the love and knowledge of God.

I will focus on Bernard’s Sermon 8, from his series on the Song of Songs, and its impact upon Merton. Bernard’s interpretation is that the “kiss” which the spouse seeks in the Song, and

which stands for true union with (what Francisco de Osuna, a later mystic, called *recogimento*: absorption, withdrawal into) God, comes in receiving the Holy Spirit, thus being united to the Father in the Son. This union “is above all a union of love,” Merton taught his novices in 1964. Merton summarizes Sermon 8, and his own perspective, thus: “The kiss, which is the Holy Spirit, introduces us by knowledge and love into the deep inner mystery of God, and gives us possession of the secrets of his love for us. This possession is not a matter of human striving, but of divine gift. It is realized not in achievement but in peace and rest above and beyond all understanding. The Spirit of God in our heart produces a peace and a joy which is the spirit of sonship in which we cry Abba, Father.” Imagine how this would sound to one who experienced Stalinist Poland firsthand, or who lambasted the influence of “intricate and abstruse books of philosophy” in *The Captive Mind*.

Milosz is understandably critical of the indefensibility of Merton’s perspectives. He offers responses that show psychological depth, as well as an agnosticism, that his Trappist friend could never understand; for example, from a letter in May 1961: “I have been praying and I know moments of great joy and harmony. To what extent is it honest?”

“Prophecy, Freedom and Christianity in Russia Today: The Poetry of Olga Sedakova”

Jeremy Pilch, Heythrop College, University of London

My paper will focus on the work of the major contemporary Russian poet and thinker, Olga Sedakova. Following a brief consideration of the significant role that Russian writers and poets played in both the Tsarist and Soviet rule, I will offer a short introduction to the contemporary Russian poet (b. 1949), considering her formation in the cultural underground of Moscow in the 1970s, mentored by Sergei Averintsev. Since the end of the Soviet Union her poetry has been published and been recognized internationally. She has been the recipient of many prizes, including the first Vladimir Solovyov prize, awarded by John Paul II in 1998. In the bulk of the paper I will examine Sedakova’s contemporary significance as a poet - deeply rooted in the Orthodox faith and tradition but also receptive and responsive to the west, both religious and secular. In particular I will consider her work as an extension of the philosophical and theological insights of the Russian religious renaissance, and explore how this often prophetic voice of renewal resonates in Russia today. Finally, I will examine her poems and philosophical writings in the light of her own conviction that poetry is ‘a gift blessed by heaven and earth’ which may ‘give a voice to that which is silent’.

“‘Nature is never spent’? The Prophetic Voice in Contemporary Canadian Ecological Poetry”

Deborah C. Bowen, Redeemer University College

Gerard Manley Hopkins in “God’s Grandeur” (1877) considered the negative effects of humankind on God’s good creation, and concluded that “nature is never spent: / There lives the dearest freshness deep down things”— not because nature has inherent power, but because “the Holy Ghost over the bent / World broods....” In our own recently-named Age of the Anthropocene, in which the overwhelming effects of human intervention into the created order are seen as well-nigh irreversible, it can be difficult to maintain Hopkins’ calm assurance. In this paper I will consider three poems by contemporary Canadian poets of differing spiritual persuasions for whom poetry provides a prophetic voice in which to propose alternative modes of ecological being. P.K. Page in “Planet Earth” sees the work of human hands as vital for the health of the planet, but only when combined with the care of archangels and art as an act of love. Don McKay in “Twinflower” enacts the “poetic attention” that he calls “a species of longing which is without the desire to possess,” and celebrates in botanical whimsy “the wilderness of the other.” John Terpstra in “Flames of Affection, Tongues of Flame” shows how paying attention even to rocky outcrops in broken urban nature can be a lifegiving experience that challenges the status quo and reminds us of the transcendent. All three poets honour the natural world in prophetic voices that arouse hope by encouraging attention and creative response.

Panel C: Modern Prophetic and Poetic Voices

"The Simeons of the End of the Centuries: Francis Thompson and George Mackay Brown"

Katarzyna Dudek, Franciscan University of Steubenville

And what if a poet is called to be like Simeon? T. S. Eliot's two poems, "Gerontion" and "A Song for Simeon", well present a difference between the prophet of despair and the prophet of hope. While the two old men wish to see a sign, only one of them recognizes Messiah in "the Infant, the still unspeaking and unspoken Word". The poetry of Francis Thompson and George Mackay Brown, though different, seems to be marked by such prophetic spirit. The two Catholic poets can be compared to Simeon as they recognize the presence of the Word made flesh in the earthly and ordinary, and through the ritualised and ceremonial language of their poetry, they recreate the world and bring Evangelical newness. Prophetic quality of their verse has been already acknowledged though not widely discussed: G. K. Chesterton named Francis Thompson "a major prophet". Even the telling title of the Victorian poet's volume, *Sight and Insight*, indicates his wish to see a sacrament in all external things. George Mackay Brown called himself a minor prophet and a guardian of language. His wish was to "sing for the island" and revive lost rituals and symbols. According to the two poets, poetry goes beyond the "fair deceits" and participates in the vision which "should be like a loaf or a fish, simple and real" (Mackay Brown), and which should lead to the recognition of "Christ walking on the water not of Genesareth, but Thames" (Thompson).

"Western Civilisation in the Poetic Mirror of G.K. Chesterton"

Anna Walczuk, Jagiellonian University

By many of his readers and critics G.K. Chesterton has been acclaimed a great thinker and prophetic genius of modern times. Chesterton's versatile and impressive work of poetry and prose shows not only his great involvement with current political, cultural and socio-economic issues of the four decades before World War II, but it also reveals his farsightedness and singular ability to grasp the timeless through the temporal. Much of Chesterton's writing takes issue with the general condition and all-embracing message of European civilisation which in Chesterton's view is founded upon the paradigm of values deriving from Antiquity and Christianity. Deeply concerned with the well-being of Western civilisation Chesterton speaks with the zeal and urgency of a prophet against Europe going secular and he warns against squandering her spiritual heritage. Chesterton possesses a unique religious instinct and philosophical insight which empower all his work both in prose and in verse.

The focus in the following paper is on Chesterton's poetry, especially *The Queen of Seven Swords*. While discussing his grand issues in discursive prose Chesterton uses logic and clever argument; in poetry, with the same goal in view, he takes a shortcut through poetic vision. The aim of the paper is to demonstrate how the debater's ideas expounded in his argumentative and expository prose get translated into the idiom of poetry. It is going to analyse how the power of words manifest in the visionary quality of Chesterton's poems conveys the message of a prophet to the community of readers.

"John Henry Newman, Ronald Knox, G.K. Chesterton – the Prophets of/for Today?"

Marta Zajac, University of Silesia

The paper examines chosen aspects of the life and works of J.H. Newman, R. Knox and G.K. Chesterton in the light of A.J. Heschel's presentation of the figure of the biblical prophet. As Heschel insists, biblical prophets do differ, they are not impersonal instruments of some extraterrestrial power which gets hold of them. My discussion of Newman, Knox and Chesterton, on the one hand – prominent British converts to Catholicism and men of immense influence, on the other – individuals with dramatic life stories of their own, follows a similar route. What aspects of their life and what characteristics of their speech can be seen as modern equivalents of the biblical prophets' message? How to discern the act of prophesying behind the veneer of apparently mundane and trivial choices?

The accompanying problem is the adequacy of the Old Testament paradigm of prophecy for the contemporary world. Is the idea of biblical prophecy compatible with its intensely anti-

metaphysical climate? Or, perhaps, *decorum* and an adopted rhetorical strategy take place of inner seriousness and commitment to the voice which comes from beyond? My answer is tentatively positive: even nowadays prophesying in the biblical sense happens to be at work. Still, I examine the inevitable transformations which the prophets of today undergo to maintain their position partly with and partly against the community which their words are to reach.

PARALLEL SESSION V: THE PROPHETIC WORD AND TIME

Panel A: Prophecy and Poetry in the Abrahamic Religions

“The Unimaginable Future, Imagined: Palestinian and Israeli Literary Prophecies”

Ella Elbaz, Stanford University

The question of how words can become actions, imagination turn to reality and prophecies come true is at the center of my paper. Looking at contemporary literary imaginations of the near political future, I examine the effects and power of the prophetic voice, specifically in the Israeli and Palestinian context. By analysing poems, short stories and a novel written in Hebrew and Arabic from the past decade, all which are attempting at depicting the same geographical place under changing political regimes, I claim that not only is literature responding to the political discourse but also has an impact on it by describing possibilities. Through an exploration of the ‘feasibility’ and ‘practicality’ of these fanciful imaginations – some are distant utopias and some are grim dystopias – and comparing them to the political discourse produced by Palestinian and Israeli political thinkers, I point at the specificity of the poetic discourse in producing an effective prophecy. These contemporary writers – among which are Dror Burstein, Almog Behar, Adi Keisar, Husam Othman, Ala Hlehel, Hanna Eady and others – assume and appropriate the ancient position of the prophet while attempting to break out of the constrains of the present days by thinking beyond the here and now, onto their here and then. I wish to point at a burgeoning literary phenomenon in contemporary culture of the region that has one eye towards the past – its promises and failures – while the other turns to the future and breaks away from what seems to be an insolvable present onto imagining an almost-unthinkable future.

“All Things in the World are Messengers from God’: Joseph, Imagination and Poetry in the Islamic Tradition”

Axel Marc Oaks Takács, Harvard University

This presentation will turn to the Islamic poetic tradition (as particularly manifested in the *mudhhab-i ‘ishq*, or School of Love) and to Akbarian mystical philosophy, the school of thought inaugurated by Muḥyiddin ibn ‘Arabī (d. 1240), in order to explicate the power of poetic imagination within the Islamic context. In order to narrow the topic, I will analyze particular texts from the tradition in which Joseph and the imagination are interpreted in terms of poetry, prophecy, and revelation; examples from both prose and poetry will be cited (ibn ‘Arabī, Rūmī, Qaysarī, Fakhr al-Dīn ‘Irāqī, Ḥāfiẓ Shirāzī, Jāmī, and others, perhaps). Through a close reading of these texts and by way of textual examples, I seek to demonstrate the ways in which poetry and revelation, particularly the Qur’ān, both find their sources in the Imaginal World and are conveyed via the imagination. Poetic imagination becomes for these traditions what Shahab Ahmed has called the Pre-Text of the textual revelation (the Qur’ān), in that it rests beyond the text of the Qur’ān, grants a truth that encompasses the Qur’ān, and is itself the source of revelation. As such, poetry is revelatory and even prophetic. The power of poetry is not only textually grounded in this tradition, but is even historically and socially obvious when one looks at the impact poetry, metaphor, aesthetics, and paradox had on the formation and constitution of societies of Muslims in the classical, post-classical, and pre-modern eras of the Islamic world.

Panel B: Philosophy and Prophecy

“Prophetic Time’ as a Paradigm for Understanding ‘Historical Time”

Montserrat Herrero, *University of Navarra*

Every historical narrative is written not only looking to the past, but also looking to a future expectation —or what Koselleck calls “expectation’s horizon.” Prophetic narratives particularly consider the integration of the three temporal axes: past, present and future and because of that are archetypical for considering historical time differentiated from chronological time. Therefore the paper discusses Agamben’s thesis of the messianic time as paradigmatic for the understanding of historical time. In arguing that the paper considers the distinction between: 1. ancient forms of action’s destination (as divination, augury or omen); 2. messianic time; 3. eschatological time; 4. prophetic time; and 5. modern functional substitutions such as prediction or statistics.

“Pascal as a Prophet of Contemporary Atheism in Augusto Del Noce’s Perspective”

Giorgio Durante, *Heythrop College, University of London*

Following the argument of the Italian philosopher Augusto Del Noce (1910-1989), I would like to present Blaise Pascal as a ‘prophetic genius’ who foresaw, four centuries ago, the nature of contemporary atheism.

I understand ‘prophetic genius’ as a person who looks beyond the culture of his/her time and is able to anticipate its possible development. I understand ‘contemporary atheism’ as a form of ‘postulatory atheism’, namely the most radical form of atheism which is not interested to go in search of proofs against the existence of God, because it considers from the beginning the problem of God as meaningless. In this context, the negation of God as a value comes before the negation of his existence.

I argue that Pascal understood from the beginning that the roots of this position, which brings to coherence the essence of atheism, lies in a vision of the human nature as self-sufficient, able to overcome its condition of ‘minority’ only by using and reinforcing its own resources. Facing this position, Pascal rejects as useless the metaphysical proofs of the existence of God. Rather, he tries to emphasise on the one hand the postulatory character of a vision of reason as self-sufficient and, on the other hand, to show the limits of this position through an existential analysis of the human being which sheds light both on the greatness and wretchedness, and, ultimately, on the mystery of the human nature.

Panel C: Prophecy, Poetry and Eschatology

“Salute the last and everlasting day’: John Donne and Romanos the Melodist in Dialogue”

Chrysostom Koutloumousianos, *Holy Monastery of Koutloumous*

In the patristic tradition, the idea of the *last things* signifies not only a reality at the end of a linear history, nor simply the last scene in the drama of life. Rather, the *eschata* form the thread of a presence that unifies personal and communal life, synchronically and diachronically. This paper takes up the theme of the last things as part of the human (individual and communal) experience and the response such experience evokes in the mind of two great poets distanced in time, space and cultural environment: St Romanos the Melodist, the greatest hymnographer of the Greek-speaking East since the sixth century, and John Donne, the most enthralling poet and preacher of early modern England. In their verse, the mystic and the prophet, the world and the wilderness, darkness and light, silence and whispers, vision and transformation, time and eternity intersect to give birth to prophetic utterances; these are twinkles of realised and future eschatology, expressing and disclosing the meaning of what is immanent and imminent either of the mysteries of the kingdom of God or the mystery of iniquity. As such, they address the perennial drama of humanity in the face of trials, frustrations, transitions, death, and hope.

The dialogue of the two major poets on these matters reveal both continuities and discontinuities, and more importantly a common message addressed to the present worldly wilderness, where human being is deeply dispirited and dejected in vanished utopias, blind extroversion, confused transcendentalism and eschatological fantasies.

“Poetry, Prophecy and the End of Days: Lyric Theodicy and Robert Pollok’s The Course of Time”

Deryl Davis, University of Glasgow:

Claims for prophetic vision and utterance are nearly synonymous with Romantic literature of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. We think of Blake's bard 'Who Present, Past & Future sees', of Coleridge's poet drinking 'the milk of Paradise', and Shelley imploring the west wind to carry his voice as 'The trumpet of a prophecy'. Outside of England, we have Klopstock and Hölderlin in Germany and a host of others.

My paper looks at a unique and almost entirely forgotten Scottish Romantic-era poet, Robert Pollok, and his claim to prophetic authority in the bestselling religious epic, *The Course of Time* (1827). Written in response to attacks upon biblical authority, Pollok's 8500-line poem combines the rhetoric of Hebrew prophecy, the stylistic tropes of English Romanticism, and traditional Calvinist theology to defend orthodox faith and the conception of final judgment. Through the voice of 'an ancient bard of earth,' Pollok recounts the spiritual history of humankind, makes claims for divine inspiration, and depicts apocalypse and final judgment, castigating blaspheming poets (Byron) and theologians (Joseph Priestley) along the way.

In this paper, I explore Pollok's claim to and use of prophetic authority in *The Course of Time*, as well as his prophetic and poetic sources, and the possibility that the poem was written in response to a public call for a religious eschatological epic to counter recent secular vision poems by Lord Byron and Robert Southey. I will also consider the reasons for the poem's tremendous popularity in the nineteenth century (80,000 copies, 25-plus editions) and near disappearance in the twentieth.

PARALLEL SESSION VI: THE PROPHETIC WORD IN POETRY AND PHILOSOPHY

Panel A: Philosophy's Prophetic Voice

"Existential Hope and Philosophy's Prophetic Voice"

Jill Graper Hernandez, University of Texas at San Antonio

All philosophy, existentialist Gabriel Marcel wrote, is essentially a personal response to a call. But given that philosophy of religion draws both skeptical and devout thinkers alike, the question must be posed as to whether Marcel could have meant that philosophy could provide a univocal prophetic voice to the world. This paper answers in the affirmative. Philosophy, Marcel observed, is a vocation which relies upon a subjective framework of experiences that ought to prescriptively engage with the world through hope. Existential hope, then, is the message that philosophers uniformly project to the world, but the way that they succeed is by facilitating an intersubjective 'communion' with others—especially in a time in which secular values of life, dignity, and health are in crisis globally. Poetry, art, and music all are subjectively experienced but share the power to transcend such "structural matters" to be present to non-aesthetes. Marcel contends philosophy similarly requires that a wide range of experts communicate goods to others, so that the voice of the philosopher is about and entwined with the end goal of providing fresh hope for the world. The prophetic voice of philosophy, then, resides in its ability to ultimately *transmute* suffering through existential hope. If hope is a transmuted good, philosophy can help override atrocious harm.

"Hearing the Silent Call of the Last God: On Heidegger's Mythical and Prophetic Language"

Javier Pérez-Jara, Beijing Foreign Studies University

Until 1928, Heidegger insisted that true philosophy has to be methodologically a-theistic, and that his own thinking denied the ontic existence of God. Nevertheless, after being unable to write the projected second part of *Being and Time* due to the insufficiencies of traditional metaphysical language, Heidegger started to use poetic and prophetic language around the concept of being. In *Contributions to Philosophy*, Heidegger, influenced by Hölderlin, talked about a future and mysterious "last god" linked to a new understanding of being in general, hidden now in the epoch of planetary technology. In his *Letter on Humanism*, Heidegger rejected Sartre's consideration of his own philosophy as atheistic, and in other texts Heidegger divided the world into earth, sky, mortals, and the god(s). At the same time, Heidegger presented his thinking as a *Destruktion* of onto-theo-

logy, understood as the worldview that considers God as the Supreme Being that explains all the other beings. With the ontotheological God's death, mankind's technological prowess has generated the dangerous illusion of man as the new Lord of beings. Using the language of prophecy, Heidegger held that the only salvation from this situation was to wait for the future coming or absence of the last god. Moving away from some known scholars' perspectives, my paper will investigate who this enigmatic god is, and why Heidegger decided to combine the language of philosophy, poetry, and prophecy in order to lead towards a deeper understanding of existence.

"Explanation, Silence and then Poetry: Wittgenstein and the Possibility of Poetic Philosophy"

Paul Grosch, University of St Mark & St John

'I believe I summed up where I stand in relation to philosophy when I said: really one should write philosophy only as one *writes a poem*'.

(L. Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, 28e)

I wish to undertake the following five things in this paper. Firstly, I want to say something general about Plato's account of the 'quarrel' between philosophy and poetry, as discussed by Rosen. For example, do the poetic, and occasionally prophetic, narratives of myth (*muthos*) take over if, or when, the analytical arguments (*logos*) of philosophy fail?

In attempting some kind of an answer to this I want, secondly, to focus on the work of Wittgenstein whose profound understanding of the power of language, as is well-known, gave rise to two opposing schools of philosophy. His earlier work, most notably the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, represents the culmination of the modern Cartesian project of giving an accurate description and explanation of the world, one which is dependent on a 'picture theory' of language. However, famously, the closing seventh proposition requires us to remain forever silent in respect of those things in life that cannot be so described, but that *really* matter, namely, art, morality and religion.

Thirdly, I then wish to concentrate (albeit briefly) on Wittgenstein's later writings, especially, the *Philosophical Investigations*. Here, along with many others (e.g. Cavell, Gibson, Eldridge, Read and Cook), I argue that Wittgenstein helps us, therapeutically, to witness the fundamental poetry of the world in all its variegated beauty, and through the multiplicity of 'language games' enables us to live the kind of meaningful 'form of life' that he had earlier counselled us to 'pass over in silence'. In this later work, a kind of extended prose-poem, he encourages us to recognise how the power of language shapes the world we inhabit and the reality we ascribe to it. In doing so he offers a prophetic vision of human life as a kind of poetic interaction between self and other, and self and the world.

Fourthly, (and almost by way of an aside) however, I point up (as do e.g. Perloff, Schalkwyk, and Rozema), the strange irony of the fact that it is the *Tractatus L-P* which exhibits most effectively the form and style of a poem. Lastly, I conclude by returning to our initial question to see how far we are in a position to answer it.

Panel B: Philosophy, Poetry and Prophecy

"Prophecy and Poetry in Avicenna in the Light of Gadamerian Mimesis"

Selami Varlık, İstanbul 29 Mayıs University

For Avicenna, imagination is central to revelation and poetic creation. In both cases, the (Qu'anic or poetic) symbol (*mithāl*) is not the intelligible truth itself but its imaginative imitation (*muhākāt*). Similarly, the spiritual narratives of Avicenna himself represent a poetic copy of his peripatetic philosophy. It has often been argued that poetic revelation merely represents allegorically for the mass the theoretical truths that the elite should conceive directly.

Yet, as Gadamer shows in his Neoplatonic reinterpretation of mimesis, aesthetic imitation is not a mere shell that should be transcended to reach the original. On the contrary, it represents the very manifestation of the being of the model. In order to justify this conception, Gadamer has recourse to Neoplatonic emanation, which is fundamental for the Avicennian conception of revelation since the latter is an effusion in the prophetic intellect of the divine flow emanating from the universal Intellect.

Thus, for Gadamer, understanding is achieved through by an experiential participation to the mimetic representation. He illustrates this, inter alia, through the importance that Aristotelian ethics – also central for Avicenna – attributes to the idea of ethical and legal application. Our aim is then to show to what extent the Gadamerian conception of mimesis makes it possible to question the idea that the revealed poetic words are only secondary elements to be transcended intellectually. Indeed, in Avicenna it is also the moral and spiritual application of the symbol that makes participation to the emanation of divine flow possible.

“Saving Power: Poetry and Prophecy in Nietzsche and Heidegger”

Richard Elliott, Heythrop College, University of London

For my prospective paper for this instalment of the Power of the Word project, I will argue that Nietzsche and Heidegger both inherently tie the poet or the poetic to the task of salvation, sharing deep affinities with those who link poetry and prophecy with a religious motivation.

I will discuss the role of the poet as prophetic through the prism of two perhaps unlikely thinkers; Nietzsche and Heidegger. Heidegger frames poetry as a form of salvation, as the ‘saving power’ that bestows the opening of possibilities of a more authentic comportment towards Being. In this sense, Heidegger, despite manifest claims that his philosophy is explicitly atheistic or secular, shares much with the history of (in particular) the Christian tradition in terms of how we view the prophet as the arbiter of salvation. I will attempt to discuss the manner in which Heidegger views the poet, particularly in the later works, as the one who can do what philosophy cannot, in heralding new modes of thinking, as opposed to philosophy’s task of mapping out the existing modes.

In the paper I will also argue, ironically, that Nietzsche too has the poetic prophet assume a role close to that of the Christian tradition. Nietzsche utilises written verse to display many of his most enigmatic and profound insights: it is also the case that even though Nietzsche is explicitly anti-theistic in relation to (Pauline) Christianity, his work cannot be called irreligious without risking extreme reductivism. Much of his insight he defines himself as prophetic or ‘untimely’, as well as claiming to offer a new meaning to life through his subversion of the social absolutization of Christian-moral commitments. As such, it is worth deconstructing the role of poetry in relation to Nietzsche’s normative commitments.

“The Poetics of Liturgy: A Contextualization of Ricoeur’s Theory of Language”

Timothy Derrick Witherington, KU Leuven

Paul Ricoeur has written of language’s poetic and metaphorical aspects, that is, its creative potential to create new horizons of meaning. One of the more compelling aspects of this theory is how the metaphorical and poetic elements of language can transform societal narratives which have lost their creative potential. Through ‘boundary situations’ such as war, famine, economic crises, etc., we become acutely aware of the dysfunction of our narratives and are plunged into an existential crisis wherein we are pushed back to the mythico-poetic nucleus of our society which compels us to test the openness of our narratives according to the criterion of a universal liberation of humanity (Cf.: Paul Ricoeur and Richard Kearney, “Myth as the Bearer of Possible Worlds: Interview with Paul Ricoeur,” *The Crane Bag* 2 (1978)). In this paper, we will investigate further what Ricoeur means by this mythico-poetic nucleus, as well as what he means by the universal liberation of humanity. We will propose that these insights are further enhanced through adopting the liturgical context as elaborated by Louis-Marie Chauvet as the privileged locus for the poetic use of language and the proclamation of metaphor. Furthermore, we will show how Chauvet’s liturgically-situated theory of poetics and metaphor complements and enhances Ricoeur, providing a context wherein the mythico-poetic nucleus is meaningfully encountered, and universal liberation is given a form both delineated and open. Ultimately, this will enable us to reclaim the liturgy as a locus of prophetic empowerment and discernment as to what constitutes authentic liberation.

Panel C: Poetry and Prophecy in T.S. Eliot and Tadeusz Różewicz

“Voices Crying in the Wilderness”

Malgorzata Grzegorzewska, University of Warsaw

In *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, T. S. Eliot invokes two prophetic figures: John the Baptist, the last of the Old Testament prophets, who recognised in Jesus of Nazareth the Lamb of God, and Lazarus, raised by Jesus from the dead. As implied also by James Joyce's reference in the concluding sections of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, the first of these figures seems to speak particularly to the spiritual deserts of the 20th century. Though the speaker of Eliot's dramatic monologue declares unequivocally, „I am no prophet”, thus disclaiming any affinity with John, yet he nevertheless dreams of playing the role of Lazarus „come from the dead”, equipped with the knowledge of life and death, and so becoming a prophet of a kind, who in circumstances that „seem unpropitious”, as Eliot was later to put it, might still be able to “tell you all”. This paper will explore the connection between the two “prophetic” figures in Eliot's poem, and the way that they possibly foreshadow the apophatic strain in the poetry of R.S. Thomas.

“Tadeusz Różewicz - The Poet as Visionary: Poetry as the Speech and Silence of a Prophet”

Joanna Lisiewicz, Gdańsk University

Tadeusz Różewicz (1921-2014) did not leave any poetic manifesto and never proclaimed one. In Poland he has been read and interpreted in extreme terms - often as a nihilist and atheist. Outside the country, he was declared by Rowan Williams to be the greatest religious poet of the twentieth century. His poetry explores with equal force the value both of creative expression and of silence. Observing the world contemporary to him with regard to its historical, cultural, religious (strongly ecumenically treated) and philosophical associations, he designs images of the future in which man is placed in the centre. Różewicz is an excellent example of a poet and a man who came to experience the plight of being a prophet in his own country.

“T. S. Eliot and Tadeusz Różewicz: the Prophetic Strain”

Jean Ward, Gdańsk University

In 1951, in a Polish journal named, in the spirit of the Stalinist period, *The New Culture*, the critic Andrzej Braun singled out a promising young poet called Tadeusz Różewicz for censure, finding in his poetry “unfortunate” similarities with the atmosphere of early Eliot and even obvious quotations from the latter's work. Braun took these as evidence that Różewicz had “thoroughly mastered the rat-hopeless poetry of the English decadent”! This paper will examine the subtle dialogue with Eliot in the work of the poet who changed the face of Polish poetry, attempting to present the relationship in a quite different light, revealing Różewicz's fascination with a writer in whom he discovered a “prophetic genius”, a diagnosis of ills and a drive to “challenge the world from which his work arose” that was deeply in tune with his own. I argue that for Różewicz, in spite of knowing Eliot only in translation and despite huge differences of historical context, this genius makes of the Anglo-American poet one of the very few “distinguished shamans” in an “insane century” who, as another Polish poet of Różewicz's generation puts it, “knew the secret / of conjuring a form with words that resists the action of time” (Zbigniew Herbert, “To Ryszard Krynicki – a Letter”, translated by John and Bogdana Carpenter).

PARALLEL SESSION VII: THE PROPHETIC WORD, THEOLOGY AND THE WIDER WORLD

Panel A: The Theologian as Prophet

“Jeremiah as a Role Model for Paul the Theologian”

Steven Muir, Concordia University of Edmonton

Paul is the first theologian of Christianity. He identifies with prophetic figures of the Jewish tradition and thus validates his vision of God's new plan and his role as an agent of God. While scholars often identify Isaiah as a determinative figure, I argue that the combination of prophetic destiny with

suffering fits Jeremiah more closely than Isaiah, and thus Jeremiah is a more significant figure in the Pauline tradition.

In the book of Jeremiah, we read that he was formed in the womb and consecrated before birth by God, and his role is to be a prophet “to the nations” (Jer 1:5). His suffering as part of his prophetic ministry is shown through beatings, being put in chains, and imprisonment (20:2; 37:15). Paul alludes to a similar process of divine formation and providence (Gal 1:15), and his rehearsals of the afflictions he has suffered include being beaten and imprisoned (2 Cor 6:5 and 11:23). The issue of Paul’s ministry to the Gentiles (the “nations”) is basic to his self-understanding, and Jeremiah’s “new covenant” (Jer 31:31-34) theology is attractive to Paul.

The suffering prophet Jeremiah also looms large in Luke’s imagination. This explains a perplexing *non sequiter* which juxtaposes the themes of “chosen instrument” and “suffering” in the announcement of Paul’s destiny (Acts 9:15-16). Luke provides an episode of Paul being beaten, put in chains and thrown in prison (Acts 16:22-24), likely as a parallel to Jeremiah’s account. We see suggestive evidence of Lucan familiarity with Paul here.

“The Preacher as a Prophet: Origen’s Exegesis of Jeremiah as a New Form of Prophecy”

Tommaso Interi, *Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore*

As recent studies have pointed out, Origen’s concept of prophecy completely differs from that of divination usually ascribed to seers in Greek and Roman antiquity. Deeply convinced that the Logos and the Holy Spirit themselves inspired Old Testament’s prophets and spoke through them, Origen argues that whoever preaches God’s word and unveils its true spiritual meaning can be regarded as a prophet. Therefore, he draws a connection between the mission of OT prophets (and also apostles) and his role as preacher and exegete of the Scripture, partially or almost entirely identifying these ministries. A few cases taken from three Homilies on Jeremiah (namely I, V and VI) will highlight two of the main features of Origen’s exegesis: on the one hand, how he deliberately inferred preaching methods and hermeneutic guidelines from the Bible itself, and consequently employed them in his preaching on the same prophetic book. On the other hand, they will provide an example of how Origen combines different related verses from the Scripture in order to explain it, thus fulfilling also the prophets’ duty of unveiling God’s will by speaking his word. This almost poetic re-writing of Bible’s verses is a conscious intertextual composition which allows Origen to enrich the exegesis of Jeremiah’s text and to introduce his public to it while actualizing its message. Overall, this analysis will provide an insight in some of the exegetical techniques Origen relies on in order to spread and renew the meaning of prophetic ministry.

“The Theologian as Prophet: Rethinking the Figure of the Theologian in the Light of the Callings of Pope Francis”

Cristina Bustamante, *Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile*

For classical theology the figure of the theologian is that of the person who thinks about faith, bringing reason for his/her hope. This has allowed the theologian to be faithful to the hermeneutic task of theology, that is, to make explicit the content of the proclamation of the Gospel in the categories of cultures in which it is inserted, and to fulfill his/her mission as an intellectual service to the Church.

Today, we are witnessing a complexification of the work of the theologian. Along with the inculturation of faith, Pope Francis has made an explicit call to both male and female theologian to pay attention to our cultural climate, but this time, with a tone of urgency. The cry of the outskirts and the earth, together with the necessity to transform our life forms from a new rationality and a renewed broad ecological spirituality, make us rethink our work as theologian to realize a prophetic intelligence of the faith, to denounce with vigor all that today destroys the plan of the Kingdom of God, in order to bring a new intelligence of the hope of salvation to the whole world.

Panel B: Theology, Poetry and Prophecy

“Poetry, Prophecy and Presence: Exploring the Linguistic Epistemology of Jacques Ellul’s Theology”

Jacob Rollison, *University of Aberdeen*

The 20th century French sociologist and lay protestant theologian Jacques Ellul, whose vast corpus is only beginning to be explored for its relevance to our times, belongs remarkably well at the intersection of prophecy and poetry. Ellul explicitly conceived of the vocation of theological ethics as a contemporary equivalent to the Biblical role of prophecy. And if the test of a Biblical prophet was whether what they said occurred or not, then we can take journalist Jean-Luc Porquet's 2012 book *Jacques Ellul, l'homme qui avait presque tout prévu* (Jacques Ellul, the Man Who Predicted Almost Everything) as an indication that Ellul's unique blend of Barthian, Kierkegaardian and Marxian influences was a fecund source of prophetic insight.

Ellul's efforts at prophetic understanding naturally took on a poetic incarnation, with special reference to the book of Revelation. Drawing on Kierkegaard's description of the Christian life as an 'existence-communication,' the poetic relation between form and content is the only manner to appropriately communicate what the writer of Revelation intended, "to express something infinitely shifting, unknowable by a logical, rational discourse—something that cannot be known except in living it." Ellul pens two books of poetry, both relating to the apocalypse. For Ellul, consciously quarreling with post-structuralist critiques of *presence*, only the presence of God as poetically given in prophecy can enable theology to depart from representing an abstract ideal, to find the Word of God, not intellectually or as a principle, but as revealed in the *hic et nunc* which we inhabit.

"David Jones: Prophecy through Gestalt"

Martin Potter, University of York

This paper will explore the way that David Jones' artistic practice in his poetry, as well as in his painting, can be elucidated with the help of Hans Urs von Balthasar's account of the aesthetic. David Jones treats, words, poems, and pictures, as signs – signs of things, which in turn are themselves signs, and therefore point beyond themselves, ultimately towards their transcendent originator. Thus an aesthetic engagement with things by a perceiver can lead to what Balthasar calls transcendental apperception, a knowing which involves an interaction with the deep dimension of the reality of the thing (including its existence and its dependence) – Balthasar's volume *Epilog* will be the main reference point for these ideas. Perception of the gestalt of a thing leads to a knowledge of deeper, time-independent truths, and this kind of knowledge implies ethical consequences. It is the announcing of truths of this kind (transcending the historical moment and with ethical consequences) that is characteristic of the prophet. It will be suggested that Jones' artistic practice endeavours to re-present the gestalt of the things he is concerned with, and the knowledge he derives from this attention generates the prophetic moral stances which emerge in his work and thought, such as his concern for the land environment, and his warnings about technological-bureaucratic civilisation (as attested to in his collection *The Sleeping Lord and Other Fragments*).

"Gerard Manley Hopkins' Poetic Prophecies 'Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves'"

Ewa Borkowska, University of Silesia

The word "prophet" comes from the Greek word *propheteia* which means a "gift of interpreting the will of the gods" (Dictionary of Etymology). The poet is the one with access to the divine mystery and "in-scapes" the "instress" of God to spell out what is the "earnest, earthless...attunable, vaulty, and voluminous" (Hopkins) message of God. The poet's "self steeped and pashed" in the hermeneutic act can "disremember, dismember all now", that is interpret the Word of God to man. Prophesying is a poetic epiphany in which "sheathe- and shelterless thoughts against thoughts in groans grind". As John C. Hampsey claims, "through his arcane language and the awe-inspiring images it evokes, the poet [Hopkins] attempts a leap from temporality to eternity". Spelling from Sibyl's leaves literally means "spelling the will of gods" ("sibyl" meaning "will of god") and poetry seems to be the "book of prophecies" in which the poet who was once "a seer" (*roeh*) "converts" to a prophet (*nabi*) who explains that wisdom by which God created the world (I Samuel 9:9). I shall attempt to search for (and perhaps find) the major prophecies of the poet-convert-prophet, as was the case of Hopkins and other poets of his rank and "words' power".

Panel C: Prophecy, Poetry and the Wider World

“The Poets before Pilate”

Daniel Gustafsson, Independent Scholar

This paper will take as its point of departure Fyodor Dostoevsky’s so-called poem, parable or legend of the Grand Inquisitor, from *The Brothers Karamazov*.

This piece is remarkably prescient – indeed, prophetic – about 20th- and 21st-century attitudes to evil and social eudemonism; about the core conflicts in modern life and thought, between freedom and compulsion, spiritual and secular solutions to existential problems.

More pertinently, the piece is also prophetic of recent developments in theology and philosophy of language, not least as articulated by Rowan Williams and Charles Taylor.

Most interestingly – and this will be the main focus of this paper – Dostoevsky’s ‘poem’ instantiates the mode in which Christian art and poetry is best equipped to engage a post-Christian cultural climate.

In particular, Dostoevsky’s rendering of the silence of Christ before the Grand Inquisitor signals the need for a new ‘apophatic turn’ in philosophy, theology and Christian poetry. This is epitomised by R.S. Thomas, whose piercing negative theology constitutes a challenge to both religious and secular complacencies.

Thomas, as Dostoevsky, confronts a godless world with the implications of its own commitments; not by restating old propositions, nor by offering supposed proofs and theodicies; but by manifesting anew the pregnant silence of a neglected gospel of suffering love; and by showing the limitations of a positivistic language and philosophy.

Thomas thus gives us a poetry of paradox and epiphany, capable of granting powerful religious intimations and experiences at the very edge of words.

“Visions from the Age of Anxiety: Exploring Ferlinghetti’s Poetry between Prophecy and Political Engagement”

Olga Campofreda, UCL

What are poets for in such an age? In the collection *Poetry as Insurgent Art* (2007), San Francisco’s poet laureate Lawrence Ferlinghetti states that poetry should be regarded as a prophetic medium with which to view the contemporary world, as well as a tool through which to change the immediate future. This paper aims to analyse the apocalyptic prophecies used by the poet as a critical attack to his contemporary age: the prediction of a Second Coming and ‘a war to be fought which will make the world safe’ (in the poem *I am waiting*). Ferlinghetti predicts that another war is coming also in the verses of his own autobiography that can be regarded as well as a biography for the American society in the ‘Age of Anxiety’. What does this war stand for? What is the real meaning of this prophecy? What is Ferlinghetti’s idea of Second Coming? This paper will try to give an answer to these questions by comparing his first collection to *Poetry as Insurgent Art* (2007), published fifty years later. In the latest work, Ferlinghetti turns his visions into an effective tool, which can be effectively used by the poet to make a comment on his own time. It will also be shown how the Catholic imagery of Ferlinghetti’s cultural background survives in his idea of Paradise on Earth, which the power of poetic word can contribute to achieve.

“Voices in the Desert: Prophetic Voices in Australian Poetry and Prose”

Peter Stiles, Excelsia College

In a country that is renowned for being very secular, there are few poets who align their writing with traditional Christian precepts and values. This issue is compounded by the fact, that inherent within Australian society, there is a deep scepticism regarding the value of poetry as a means of articulating things of value, particularly with regard to the often ignored, metaphysical domain. While Australia continues to produce many prominent novelists, and robust narratives are the preferred genre, there are few poetic voices that are widely known, let alone those that touch on traditional expressions of faith.

This paper will give attention to the writing of the solitary figures whose verse evinces a clear recognition of these hallmarks of Christian understanding (including Les A. Murray, Kevin Hart and

Andrew Lansdown), but it also demonstrates that the prophetic, salvific voice within Australian literature is now to be found in the well regarded prose works of authors such as Tim Winton. His recent volumes of collected essays demonstrate a deliberate and sustained attention to societal and environmental issues, often exploring the liminal aspects of life in Western Australia, where he prefers to live. Quite often an edgy, eschatological tone pervades his work.

PARALLEL SESSION VIII: PROPHECY, POETRY AND SPIRITUALITY

Panel A: Prophecy and Poetry: Theoretical Perspectives

“The Subjunctive, Poetry and Prophecy”

Sinkwan Cheng, UCL

Like Seamus Heaney’s “redress of poetry,” Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy associates the subjunctive with human freedom—that is, with the power of all forms of “as if”s (including poetry) to “challenge the world from which [they have] risen” (CFP), and to “stimulate alternative ways of being in the world.” Closely associated with the subjunctive is the “prejective”—the ability of speech to project oneself into a future different from existing reality—a grammatical module which Rosenstock-Huessy associates with prophecy. In face of oppression, prophecy and the subjunctive offer hope by granting human beings access to the voice of an Other. Prophecy announces the message from God which effects a transferal of reality from this world to the Other world—an Other world which the subjunctive (including poetry, arts, and love) can also reveal independently of religion. Poetry and prophecy, just like love according to Arendt, have the power of negating the world. In their Otherness to this world, they are unworldly and even anti-worldly, and it is for this reason rather than their rarity that they are inspiring, revelatory, and speaking powerfully to all imprisoned in the human condition. The power of speech (what this conference calls “the power of words”—of which poetry can be viewed the highest embodiment), resides in its being a responsive and creative act in which we do not just discover but also remake ourselves, each other, and the world. Significantly, the etymological origin of poiesis (ποίησις) is ποιέω which means “to make.” The root of “poetry” is a verb—an action that transforms the world. The power of the Word begins here.

“Who Has the Right to Speak? Some Reflections on the Prophetic Voice in the Poems of T.S. Eliot, R.S. Thomas and Czesław Miłosz”

Joanna Soćko, University of Silesia

T.S. Eliot begins *The Waste Land* with a pessimistic motto which expresses Sibyl’s desire to die. How is it related to the supposedly prophetic message of the poem itself and what is the role of Tiresias as the speaking person? In my paper, I would like to address these question briefly in order to show that in *The Waste Land* Eliot creates a prophetic voice characteristic (to some extent) of the post-war poetry in which the vision of the future is usually black and arises from the judgement of the actual human condition. The main thesis of my paper results from Eliot’s conviction that a poem should resound with echoes from the literary tradition. On the basis of my interpretation of a few fragments selected from the poems of Eliot, Thomas and Miłosz, I come to a conclusion that the speaking subject – in order to be “prophetic” - must be “haunted” by other voices. Referring to Jacques Derrida’s notion of “hauntology” I describe how different temporal perspectives intersect in Eliot’s poem in order to make the prophetic voice legitimate. Thomas and Miłosz – both greatly inspired by Eliot – also created poetry which commented on our contemporary spiritual condition with a voice “haunted” by other non-contemporary voices. I would like to trace these connections and discuss the manner in which contemporary poetry might continue the prophetic tradition.

“Beyond the Immanent Frame’: Charles Taylor as a Reader of Poetry”

Łukasz Tischner, Jagiellonian University

Charles Taylor whose monumental *A Secular Age* is considered a key text for understanding contemporary religious/cultural landscape is a devoted reader of poetry. His passion for poetry is not just a sign of his subtle sensitivity but also an ally for his religious quest. His investigations are often

associated with Romantic poetry (especially Wordsworth) and the term “epiphany”, which he elaborated in *Sources of the Self*. His more recent surveys, however, develop his earlier insights. I mean especially his reading of Gerard Manley Hopkins (see: *A Secular Age*, chapter *Conversions*) and his interpretation of Paul Celan’s poems (see: *Celan and the Recovery of Language*, in: *Dilemmas and Connections*). He aims at describing poetic language as capable of striving “to render God or something which transcends humanity” (*A Secular Age*, p. 756). Taylor’s attempts may bring to mind Paul Ricoeur’s essay *Religion, Atheism, and Faith*, in which Ricoeur referred to poetry, while searching for a faith that would go beyond “accusation” and “consolation”. Nevertheless, Taylor additionally accents a genuine character of poetry as something, which arises a sensually sensed energy resonating in ourselves. According to him, the energy of poetic language, its epiphanic potential are always given in an “incarnated” form of a specific, bodily sensed event. In my talk I would like to evaluate the importance of poetry for Taylor’s own religious quest. I have based my deliberations on his own texts and the ideas he expresses during our personal contacts.

Panel B: Prophecy, Poetry and Spirituality (1)

“Models of Being: The Power of Spiritual Poetry in a Secular World”

Hilary Davies, Poet and Independent Scholar

In this paper I shall look at how a poetry of the spirit offers a challenge and an alternative to the dominant world models in Western thought since the rise of humanist realism and Enlightenment rationalism. With the post-Cartesian split between the world outside man, explained in terms of mathematics, physics and technological observation, and the sentient world of the feeling, expressive subject came a corresponding opposition between science, and poetry and religion. This in turn led to the marginalisation of both poetry and religion as myth by the self-proclaimedly rational, objective world of the scientist. Even where the vatic nature of the poet has been championed, as in the Romantic period, the paradoxical result has been for much poetry to shrink to a ‘personal’ space circumscribed by its own relativity. Using examples taken from such diverse poets as Hopkins, Dickinson, Christina Rossetti, Francis Thompson, Patrick Kavanaugh, Tom Scott, David Jones, and George Mackay Brown, I shall examine how spiritual poetry embodies an incarnational and visionary truth about God’s creation that has anticipated new trends in theological and scientific thought.

“Poets in a Destitute Time”

Jennifer Reek, University of Glasgow

In Hölderlin’s poem ‘Bread and Wine’, the question is raised: What are poets for? What are poets for in a destitute time? This paper will address that question for our own arguably destitute time. It will begin with the poet/prophet Isaiah, who calls us out of despair and into hope: ‘I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?’ Francis Landy, in one of his many analyses of this poetic/prophetic book, notes how it brings both the exiles and the readers of the text out of the temple and into ‘an imaginary homeland, a homeland of the text’, toward ‘an expansion, reconstitution and displacement of sacred space.’ Hélène Cixous, in her essay ‘Poetry, Passion, and History’, engages the title question by looking at ‘texts that take up the most difficult moments of our existence’, often texts written by women in Russia and Nazi Germany: Etty Hillesum, Marina Tsvetayeva, Anna Akhmatova. These texts, she writes, are ‘probably more familiar with darkness than with light’, yet what each writer asks is ‘what she can do so that life be blessed’. Cixous herself has the same intent, saying ‘My own recipe stays always the same. It consists in urging readers to plant flowers, both metaphorically and concretely.’ My reading of her reading of the poets in destitute times suggests that simply asking what we can read/write/do so that life be blessed is a very good thing indeed in our own destitute time.

“This to Do’: R. S. Thomas and the Changing Lens of the Prophet”

Carys Walsh, St Mellitus College

Amongst the many epithets applied to the poet R. S. Thomas, ‘mystic’ has been more frequently used than ‘prophet.’ And yet throughout his poetic and priestly life, R. S. Thomas responded to his world with the eyes of a ‘seer’; he reached into the landscape he inhabited, looked into the lives and hearts of parishioners, and responded to the glimpses of a God both absent and present in his motley, ordinary world. His, could be seen as a prophetic, visionary quest for discovering the contours of God’s life in the everyday, and the human capacity to turn towards or away from God. But what happens when the spiritual trajectory of a prophetic seer-into-things impacts on the vision they present? What happens if a prophet sees an old demon through different lenses?

This paper will explore, through the work of R.S.Thomas how we might understand, or re-understand, the prophetic vision of a poet whose vision changes. It will consider the ways in which Thomas’s prophetic vision of the sacred at the heart of the technological world, an often-explored theme in his poetry, was mediated through a soul in transit, travelling through a poetic life. From his early uneasy relationship with the tractor, to his vision of a world capable of technological destruction, to his glimpses of the ‘Lord of the molecule and the atom,’ the paper will consider how Thomas’s developing vision of the technological world was mediated through the gradually changing lenses of a man prepared to reach within and ‘search for the door/to [himself].’

Panel C: Prophecy, Poetry and Spirituality (2)

“Nun as an unfaithful prophet’s wife’: Prophecy between Bible and Everyday Life in Silja Walter’s Cycle Der Tanz des Gehorsams oder die Strohmatten”

Bernard Sawicki OSB, Pontifical University of Sant’Anselmo

The classical, monastic tradition of reading Bible, *lectio divina*, being highly personal interpretation of the Scripture, has always been the base of monastic spirituality. The figure of prophet has always been regarded as a model of monastic life. A modern resumption of this topic by a Benedictine nun and, at the same time, prominent poet, S. Silja M. Hedwig Walter OSB from Fahr Abbey in Switzerland, opens new perspectives not only for interpretation of monasticism in prophetic categories but also for understanding the figure of prophet might play in everyday life. Monasticism by itself tries to saturate everyday life with spirituality. However, lived in secularized modern times, monasticism reveals new and interesting affinities with prophecy. In her cycle of poems *Der Tanz des Gehorsams oder die Strohmatten* S. Silja Walter OSB explores courageously and deeply this affinity. However, simultaneously she also transposes it into an expressive and powerful vision. Meditating the book of prophet Osea, she identifies herself with prophet’s wife, prostitute Gomer. The successive chapters of the cycle follow the crucial fragments of this book of the Bible. The story of Gomer interlaces with the life of nun in monastery highlighting the essential questions about God’s presence in our life. They remain equally challenging both for the prophet and for the nun.

“Czesław Miłosz and R.S. Thomas as Prophetic Voices of our Era”

Przemysław Michalski, Pedagogical University of Cracow

In my paper I would like to discuss Czesław Miłosz (1911-2004) and Ronald Stuart Thomas (1913-2000) as two prophetic figures of our era. If the word “prophet” primarily invokes certain visual characteristics, it is safe to say that both poets certainly “looked the part.” Always carrying an air of forbidding self-absorption, Thomas reminded many people of an Old Testament figure. So did Miłosz, with his bristling eyebrows and a thunderous voice. But of course it would be puerile to approach the problem from this angle. Both poets can be regarded as prophetic voices in far more profound senses of the term. First of all, a common understanding of the word “prophet” refers to a person who can predict the future. Even in this narrow sense both men can be considered prophets. Especially in his early verse, written before the outbreak of WWII, Miłosz often paints a terrifying picture of a cataclysmic disaster which – he predicts – will soon engulf the whole planet. There is an uncanny precision to some of these juvenile poems, which feature black crematoria and ruined cities.

Thomas's prophecies rely to a greater extent on his concern with the future of Wales, while in the poems wrestling with the implications of modern science he often speculates about the eventual fate of the whole Universe. More importantly, however, both can be regarded as prophets understood as individuals blessed (and cursed) with a remarkably penetrating insight into reality.

"There and Back Again: Literature, Theology and the Prophetic Vision of Childhood"

Brett H. Speakman, University of St Andrews

'There are some themes, some subjects, too large for adult fiction; they can only be dealt with adequately in a children's book' –Philip Pullman In his influential book, *A Secular Age*, philosopher Charles Taylor elucidates the permeation of evolutionary theory beyond the natural sciences and into all areas of human existential and epistemic encounters with the world. In particular, he maintains that a 'secular humanism' tends to pervade Western thought that initiates an intellectual and theological progression from childhood to adulthood, in which individuals eschew the imaginative for the rational, the transcendent for the immanent, and religious faith for the empirically verifiable. If this assessment is indeed true, what does one do with Jesus' teaching that each person must receive the kingdom of God like a little child (Luke 18:17)? By establishing the importance of the spiritual dimension found in childhood, this interdisciplinary paper will propose a counter-narrative, in which the way forward existentially and theologically is by returning to the past. Rather than increasing in our knowledge as we grow into adults, perhaps childhood provides the clearest vision for an essential understanding of religious life. As a result, this paper will argue for an 'adolescent epistemology' as put forth in the literary works of Antoine de Saint-Exupery and Kenneth Grahame, as well as a consideration of sociologist Peter Berger's oft-neglected, argument from play, and its suspension of time as a prophetic vision for eternity. Thus, a vision of the future is obtained, in the words of J.R.R. Tolkien, through a 'recovery' of a beatific reiteration and deathlessness experienced in childhood that provides glimpses of an alternative perspective for both individual and collective fulfilment.