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are rich in fresh insights and in incisive restatements of accepted views. However, some statements should be qualified. Cascardi's assertion that Cervantes's family was "almost certainly of *converso* origin" (p. 4) needs to be weighed against the reservations expressed by other scholars. A more important issue is Cervantes's "perspectivism," proposed by Américo Castro in 1925 and developed by Leo Spitzer in an essay published in 1948 and reprinted in his *Representative Essays* (Stanford, 1988). Cascardi refers to "the 'perspectivism' that has so often been identified as the hallmark of Cervantes' . . . writing in *Don Quixote*" (p. 2) and "the perspectivism for which he is justly famous" (p. 7) but fails to note that a number of scholars have denied that it exists. Cruz's assertion that "Leo Spitzer's perspectivist approach . . . proscribes any 'right' view, underscoring Cervantes's relativism" (p. 188) attributes to Spitzer himself an attitude that he ascribes to Cervantes and equates perspectivism with relativism despite Spitzer's explicit declaration that "qua moralist, Cervantes is not at all 'perspectivistic'" (*Representative Essays*, p. 271). I examine Spitzer's treatment of *Don Quixote* in an article, "Cervantes perspectivista," in *Nueva Revista de Filología Hispánica*, 40 (1992), 293-303.

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THE RHETORIC OF ROMANTIC PROPHECY. By Ian Balfour. Stanford: Stanford University Press. 2002. 346 p.

Ian Balfour's expansive and thorough discussion of a prophetic strain running through Romantic poetry is a work to be welcomed. It complements with numerous other writers and contexts the typically exclusive focus on Blake as the sole representative of a radical religious politics during the Romantic era. Moreover, Balfour's important study deepens our awareness of the rhetorical and philosophical implications of Romantic prophecy by moving beyond its historicist "placement" in contexts (e.g., in the work of David Erdman, E.P. Thompson, and Jon Mee), an institutional echo of Romantic philology evidently meant to assure us that the spiritual is, in the end, just another covertly temporal phenomenon. Already in its organization, *The Rhetoric of Romantic Prophecy* evinces a far more ambitious agenda. Its introduction establishes the parameters of prophetic writing, with Walter Benjamin as the critical beacon, and Wordsworth and Novalis as early exemplifications of "the prophetic." Part 1 features three chapters on eighteenth-century attempts by Lowth, Warburton, and Hurd, as well as Herder and Eichhorn, to make philological and interpretive sense of prophecy as *the* most genuine and authoritative species of poetry. Part 2 completes the study with scrupulous chapters on the prophetic mode in Blake, Hölderlin, and Coleridge.

To call it a "mode" or, simply, "the prophetic" (the latter being Balfour's preferred designation) is to acknowledge that "there is hardly such a thing as prophecy in the sense of a clearly codified genre with definite contours . . . in European Romanticism" (p. 1). Still, the prophetic appears to be concentrated in a specific period (1740-1820), it is clearly favored by Protestant and Pietist culture in England and Germany, respectively, and it is fuelled by both spiritual and intellectual concerns for which other expressive techniques seem far less accommodating. Above all, it is this last point which fuels Balfour's study, namely, to show how the prophetic marked "what was possible to be thought and done at a given moment" (p. 3), for which reason a straightforward historicizing of Romantic prophecy would be exactly the wrong approach to take. For "even if a text, prophetic or

otherwise, were *produced* in a single historical moment, the text, as text, resists ascription to that single moment. To acknowledge that fact is not to deny the text's historicity but to recognize its complexity" (p. 3). With that timely remark about prophetic writing exposing the "poverty of . . . historicism" (p. 3), Balfour embarks on an earnest and often compelling recovery of the intellectual and ethical motivations that, in the works of Blake, Coleridge, and Hölderlin above all, find expression in a grammar oscillating between the future and future perfect tense. Benjamin's early writings on language, fate, and Messianic elements in philosophy provide Balfour with a uniquely enabling "master schema" (p. 14) whose epistemological, spiritual, and political valences Balfour's reading of Benjamin unfolds for us with exemplary precision, patience, and clarity. Benjamin's move away from philosophies that treat language as a vehicle for information to a conception of language as an instance of conjury or magic aptly sets the stage for considering pronouncements by Lowth, Hurd, and Herder about the intrinsically revelatory nature of poetic language in the Hebrew prophets.

Balfour next takes up Wordsworth and Novalis, two strong examples of "the prophetic," though their concurrent development of a Bardic, retrospective, or archeological voice is not to be confused with the prophetic and its apocalyptic overtones. By virtue of its inherently "hypothetical character" (p. 40), the latter approximates the basic intellectual figurations of poststructuralism, that is, a mode of writing "that is simultaneously a philosophy of language and a philosophy of poetry" (p. 48). While ostensibly suspending the referential and communicative functions of everyday speech, prophetic writing actually does not so much forsake as broaden their underlying mimetic principle, such that the language of prophecy would seek its fulfillment in, for example, the genesis of the modern Nation. Such is clearly the case in Novalis and, even more obviously, in Fichte, for whom "prophetic discourse, with its orientation to the future, its air of authority, and its unverifiability, lent itself perfectly to the national(ist) projects" (p. 51).

Arguably the foundational document of eighteenth-century thought about prophetic writing, Robert Lowth's *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews* contended that Hebrew prophecy ought to be understood as the very archetype and exemplar of genuine poetry. Positing distinguishing features such as the "essential rhythm" of Hebrew prophecy and its frequent and purposive "obscurity," Lowth ultimately centered his discussion on metaphor as "the master trope of Biblical discourse" (p. 63). For Balfour, Lowth's arguments presage central tenets of deconstruction about the ineluctable primacy of figurative language. Yet because of their apparent stress on metaphoric rather than metonymic structures of signification in prophetic language, Lowth's *Lectures* also make it difficult, if not impossible, to ascertain the temporal framework in which the seemingly predictive utterances of the Hebrew prophets are to be understood. The chapter is followed by an equally thorough discussion of Hurd's and Warburton's conceptions of prophetic imagery and its interpretive difficulties. In Hurd's *Twelve Sermons Introductory to the Study of the Prophecies* (1772), we find Hebrew and Gracco-Christian conceptions of the predictive (or hortatory) and the apocalyptic dimensions of prophecy curiously entwined. Here again the problem of figurative language dominates, for "the knowledge afforded by revelation . . . is always, in principle, negative knowledge, knowledge of the revealed as both disclosed and hidden" (p. 89), just as its expression in written form is prompted by a desire or expectancy for the end of all prophetic writing. Balfour offers a meticulous discussion of Hurd's "semi-circular" argument whereby the "assumed truth of one 'half' of the Bible is enlisted in the demonstration of the truth of the whole" (p. 91). One of the familiar, though in Hurd's case more extreme implications of this position is that not only did the Jews "not understand their own language," but, because of their allegedly "narrow and literal" understanding of the prophetic word, they also remained quasi "illiterate in their own language" (p. 101).

At bottom, the hubris of Hurd's and Warburton's argument about the hieroglyphic significance of the prophetic sign is rooted in the paradox that a "reading of a prophetic text before the event prophesied . . . cannot tell the difference between the literal and the figural, for the one could always turn out to be the other" (p. 105). Arguably, this conundrum defines the epistemological challenge of the book, a conundrum Balfour himself eloquently states at the end of his fourth chapter. For the obscurity and undecidability of the figural properties in prophetic writing have spurred perspicacious readers, in the eighteenth century no less than in the age of poststructuralist critique, to devise remedial constructions that "are just as often fraught with contradictions" (p. 104). As Balfour nicely summarizes the dilemma, any critique of the prophetic invariably aspires to become "a story of obscurity and error overcome in the end by knowledge. There may be no criticism without such a story implied. But with regard to the story of the hieroglyph, and its exemplary expression in the prophetic word, perhaps what is called for is precisely a resistance to a narrative that would resolve all difficulties into a coherent story. The power of the prophetic word *is* this resistance" (p. 105).

Beyond the impressive critical acumen and impeccable scholarship that recommend Balfour's study and make it unique in a field still dominated by historicist miniatures, *The Rhetoric of Romantic Prophecy* also stands out for its fully developed comparatist agenda. Two of the book's strongest chapters focus on Herder and Eichhorn and on Hölderlin's poetry, respectively. The former of these concludes the book's first half, which is concerned with eighteenth-century models of interpreting the prophetic. Herder in particular proves to have been decisive in shifting the prophetic away from its predictive and (potentially) superstitious character and orienting it toward a political, proto-Nationalist mission. The future is to be realized not by prediction; rather, it is to be shaped through the performative intensity of the prophetic word (*das thatvolle Wort*). Anticipating Coleridge's 1795 Bristol *Lectures on Revealed Religion*, in which a primordial Hebrew constitution is reinstated as a viable, quasi-mythic blueprint and exhortation for the just, equitable, and moral society that Britain so obviously is not, Herder interprets the Hebrew prophets as having bequeathed a deracinated modernity the expressive, formal-linguistic "model for an elusive future" (p. 114).

The readings of Blake, Hölderlin, and Coleridge in Part 2 of the study are consistently engaging. The discussion of Hölderlin's writing is particularly compelling, despite, or perhaps because of, the poetry's nearly ineluctable relation to the prophetic. In contrast to Hölderlin's heavily qualified poetic syntax, Blake's prophecies seem ferociously self-assured. Even so, the Lambeth books also betray a profound uncertainty about the epistemological status of prophetic (spiritual) meanings that can only come to us in textual form. It appears that the poetic word doesn't so much prophecy an event as it begs (or solicits) its own fulfillment in the spurious certitudes of critical interpretation. Because "spirit" tends to come in letters of its own" (p. 159), the prophetic signs must be scrutinized not only with regard to their putative referential function but also, *prima facie*, with a view to their equivocal status as signs. Though he was not to designate any of his poems expressly as prophecies, as Blake had done with *America* and *Europe*, Hölderlin wrote poetry that inquires into the status of the prophetic word *as* sign. Indeed, as Balfour's excellent reading of the often neglected or ideologically misappropriated hymn *Germanien* shows, it is this inquiry itself which in Hölderlin's poetry supplants more colloquial notions of the prophetic altogether. Without succumbing to Heidegger's oracular, often peremptory readings or, for that matter, to Adorno's lucid polemic (still dialectically circumscribed by its target, viz. Heidegger's exegeses), Balfour stays clear of a "simple-minded historicism that would try to consign and confine Hölderlin's poetry to its own time" (pp. 175-76). Indeed, Hölderlin's preoccupation with "interpreting the uninterpretable [or indistinct]" (*Undeutlichkeit deuten*) exemplifies the philological, critical, and creative fasci-

nation and challenge of prophetic writing to Romanticism. Echoing Adorno's famous "Parataxis" essay on Hölderlin, Balfour acknowledges the insistence of "something built into Hölderlin's abstract and mythologizing poetry that resists direct statement and opens itself to divergent readings" (p. 178). Again, it is the open and uncertain question of Germany's future as a Nation that lends focus and substance to what might otherwise remain empty formalist observations about the often noticed openness of Hölderlin's late hymns. Like prophecy in its basic formal presentation, the modern Nation, too, is "very much a thing of the future," something, as Balfour (following Hobsbawm) points out, whose forever anticipated and *eo ipso* unrepresentable character proves virtually homologous with the formal and metaphysical structure of Romantic prophecy.

Before embarking on the final chapter, on Coleridge, which to this reader seems to be slightly less compelling than most of what precedes it, Balfour interpolates a lengthy but eminently informative excursus on "Revelations, Representation, and Religion in the Age of German Idealism." While admittedly not indispensable to an argument that, by this point, has been richly and firmly established, the section nonetheless deserves careful reading and much praise for its lucid and well-informed reflections on Idealism as a development prompted, it seems, by the perception of a lacuna intrinsic to all prophetic writing. For at the heart of Hölderlin's *Germanien* and many other of his late hymns, Balfour finds a fundamental rupture, a "gap between the humanity of the text and the divinity of its content"; and it is this gap which, because it "must be filled by reason operating independently" (p. 217), spurred post-Kantian religious *cum* philosophical speculative thinking (especially in Niethammer, Fichte, and Schelling). Here, as throughout the book, Balfour's prose is nuanced without becoming precious, generously informed while wearing its learning lightly. In sum, the book showcases all the strengths and virtues of the "Cultural Memory" series in which it appears, and it thus makes Stanford's ill-considered abandonment of its previously significant commitment to publishing in the humanities all the more acutely felt.

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THE HISTORICITY OF EXPERIENCE: MODERNITY, THE AVANT-GARDE, AND THE EVENT. By Krzysztof Ziarek. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2002. 342 p.

It is not unusual for art and poetics to find themselves described in terms of the "avant-garde." Implicitly, the avant-garde holds a sense of the future—of arriving not only before others, but also differently. Too often, however, such difference gets read historically and is reduced to negative (that is, oppositional) interpretations of the conventional. After all, much has been written about the "anti-art" (or, "non-art") climate that drove much of Dadaism. Contesting the notion that the avant-garde is "primarily of historical interest," Krzysztof Ziarek's *The Historicity of Experience: Modernity, the Avant-Garde, and the Event* argues, instead, for its futurity, a "form of critique more radical than critique based on negation" (p. 294, 299).

Setting out with the goal of rethinking the modern, Ziarek makes his case by moving deliberately from art to poetics, reading a selection of avant-garde poetics through the lens of Continental philosophy. Those familiar with the work of Walter Benjamin, Martin Heidegger, and Luce Irigaray (among others) will not be surprised at Ziarek's turns (and returns) to the notions of *history, aesthetic, everydayness, experience, event, technology, sexual*