

“Ein Liebhaber des Mysterii, und ein großer Verwandter deßelben.”

Toward the Life of Balthasar Walther: Kabbalist, Alchemist and Wandering Paracelsian
Physician.

by LEIGH T.I. PENMAN

Despite continued scholarly interest in *Jakob Böhme* (1575-1624) and his circle, very little is known about the man *Böhme* called his “especially good friend”¹ and who is reputed to have been his truest adherent; the Liegnitz physician *Balthasar Walther* (1558-c.1630).² Indeed, almost every detail that we have concerning *Walther*’s life, interests and character derive from two sources: a short but fascinating paragraph in *Abraham von Franckenberg*’s ‘Bericht [...] von dem Leben [...] Jacob Böhmens’ and sporadic mentions within *Böhme*’s ‘Theosophische Sendbriefe.’³ The picture that emerges from these sources, and which has subsequently influenced later scholarship, is one defined by seeming paradox. *Walther* is a cipher; a man whose reputation as a master of occult arts has developed in the historiography to almost mythic proportions, yet the course of whose life encapsulates the fragile philosophical duality not of a master, but a seeker. On the one hand, *Walther* is renowned as the experienced traveler and Paracelsist, the author of theological and magical works who introduced kabbalistic aspects into *Böhme*’s thought,⁴ who lent scholarly Latin terms to the shoemaker’s clumsy German

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¹ *Werner Buddecke* (Hg.): *Jacob Böhme. Urschriften*, 2 vols., Stuttgart, 1966, II, p. 399.

² Only two articles have been dedicated to *Walther*: *Erich Worbs*: *Balthasar Walther. Ein Porträt aus dem schlesischen Frühbarock*, in: *Schlesien* 11 (1966), pp. 8-13; *Leigh T.I. Penman*: *A Second Christian Rosencreutz? Jakob Böhme’s Disciple Balthasar Walther (1558–c.1630) and the Kabbalah. With a Bibliography of Walther’s Printed Works*, in: *Tore Ahlbäck* (Hg.), *Western Esotericism*, Turku, 2008, pp. 154-172. An earlier article, *Georg Gustav Fülleborn*: *Balthasar Walther aus Glogau, ein Schüler Jakob Boehmes*, in: *Die Schlesische Provinzialblätter. Lit. Beilage* 20 (1794), pp. 353-360 is of little value.

³ *Abraham von Franckenberg* (1593-1652): *Gründlicher und warhafter Bericht von dem Leben und Abschied des in Gott selig-ruhenden Jacob Böhmens [...]*, in: *Böhme: Sämtliche Schriften. Faksimile-Neudruck der Ausgabe von 1730*, 11 vols., Stuttgart, 1961, X, p. 15; *Böhme: Epistolae Theosophicae*, in: *Idem.: Sämtliche Schriften*, IX, pp. 121-262. In addition to letter number 7, which is addressed to *Walther*, the physician is mentioned in letters 1.17; 10.12; 10.50; 12.76-77; 23.7; 26.2-3; 27.2; 27.6; 30.6; 34.21; 44.2; 55.11; 55.18; 57.2; 66.6; 67.1; 71.3-5. *Walther* was also the addressee of an unprinted letter of the theosopher; see *Böhme: Urschriften*, (see above, note 1), II, pp. 399-402, and is mentioned further in the unprinted letters II (p. 402) and IV (p.404).

⁴ *Will-Erich Peuckert*: *Das Leben Jakob Böhmens*, in: *Böhme, Sämtliche Schriften*, X, p. 139: “Walther hat Böhme dies oder jenes aus der Kabbalah erhalten. Was er vorher an ähnlichen Gedanken geäußert, formt er nun nach ihr um.” *Peuckert* further describes *Walther* as “[der] grundgelehrte Mann in den geheimen Wissenschaften.” (ibid.); cf. *John Schulitz*: *Böhme und die Kabbalah. Eine vergleichende Werkanalyse*, Frankfurt, 1993, p. 16; “Die

equivalents,⁵ who edited and corrected his friend’s manuscripts —or indeed wrote them himself⁶— who admonished *Böhme* for a lack of respect for rights of diet and ritual,⁷ and who signed his name with the epithet “knight of Jerusalem.”⁸ *Walther* is here the giver: a stern, senior—even fatherly— figure, and a teacher. On the other hand, it was *Walther* who implored *Böhme* to answer forty questions concerning the nature of the human soul, who was admonished by *Böhme* for not exercising enough caution in his enthusiasm for the shoemaker’s philosophy, who repeatedly sought simplified explanations concerning *Böhme*’s teachings that were too difficult for him to grasp, and who, filled with awe, christened the Görlitzer Philosophus Teutonicus.⁹ Here, *Walther* is the receiver, a beneficiary of *Böhme*’s knowledge; a student. Compounding the problem is the fact that *Walther* himself seems to have left behind no autobiographical writings, or writings that offer more than the shallowest glimpse of his life and circumstances. Was he indeed a “second Christian Rosencreutz,” as *Peuckert* called him?¹⁰ Or merely another seeker of the wisdom?

This article aims to address these difficult questions, in addition to communicating several recently (re)discovered finds in various European archives, in fleshing out the details of *Walther*’s hitherto unknown biography. An important step in this regard has been the identification of the source of *von Franckenberg*’s influential account of *Walther*’s life; a series of short autobiographical statements made by *Walther* to *Johann Angelius Werdenhagen* (1581-1652), which were included in *Werdenhagen*’s 1632 edition of *Böhme*’s ‘Vierzig Fragen von der

Wahrscheinlichkeit ist [...] groß, daß Böhme bereits sehr früh umfassende Kenntnisse von der Kabbalah und ihrer mystischen Spekulation von seinem Freund und Tutor Balthasar Walther bezog.”

⁵ *Franckenberg*: Bericht, (see above, n. 3), pp. 11, 14-16.

⁶ *Johann Heinrich Zedler*: Grosses vollständiges Universal-Lexicon, 64 vols., Leipzig, 1732-1750, LII, p. 1828: “[S]oll ihm [i.e. *Walther*] Böhme seine Bücher zugeschickt haben, daß er sie durchgehen und ausbessern möchte, weswegen auch einige dafür halten, er habe nach eigenem Gefallen vieles darinne geändert, ausgestrichen und hinzugegan, welches aber andere verneinen.” The orientalist *Abraham Hinckelmann* (1652-1695), who in fact claimed to be *Walther*’s grandson, insisted that *Böhme* “did not write a single line” of the works attributed to him, which were instead composed by *Walther* himself. See *Peter Dahlmann*: Schauplatz der Masquirten und Demasquirten Gelehrten, Leipzig, 1710, pp. 308-314; Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie, Leipzig, XII, pp. 460-462 [hereafter ADB].

⁷ *Franckenberg*: Bericht, (see above, n. 3), p. 15.

⁸ See *Walther*’s entry in the Album Amicorum of *Joachim Morsius* located in the Bibliothek der Hansestadt Lübeck, [hereafter Lübeck StB] MS. hist. 25,4, pp. 826-827.

⁹ *Franckenberg*: Bericht, (see above, n. 3), p. 15.

¹⁰ *Will-Erich Peuckert*: Das Rosenkreutz, 2nd ed., Berlin, 1973, pp. 230-231.

Seelen Urstand’ under the title ‘Ψυχολογια vera.’¹¹ Also valuable is the opening up of some new leads concerning *Walther*’s extensive connections with Paracelsian and dissident networks throughout Europe and beyond, stretching from France to the Holy Land. I hope that this study might offer new clues and suggest new directions in which yet further information concerning *Walther*’s life, philosophy and legacy might be found and explored. As it stands, the information presented in this, as well as in an earlier study,¹² can offer a more informed approach to investigations of kabbalistic influences upon *Böhme*’s philosophy, or at least those that have traditionally been attributed to *Walther*’s influence.

Early Years

Born in 1558,¹³ we have no details of *Walther*’s circumstances before he matriculated at the University of Frankfurt/Oder in 1579 as “Balthasar Waltherus Liginicensis.”¹⁴ While his entry into the university at the age of 21 is relatively late, it is certainly possible that *Walther* had previously studied elsewhere. His matriculation entry is enough to conclude that *Walther* was a native of the city of Liegnitz in Silesia, and probably spent the majority of his youth there. Later, *Abraham von Franckenberg* would report that *Walther* hailed from Groß-Glogau in Silesia, which might have come from information given by *Walther* himself.¹⁵ In the middle decades of the sixteenth century, Liegnitz was an important economic hub, as well as a centre for followers of *Caspar Schwenckfeld von Ossig*.¹⁶ Given his later contact with Liegnitz noblemen in *Böhme*’s circle and his interaction with dissident communities in Harpersdorf —a rural stronghold of

¹¹ *Werdenhagen* (Hg.): *Ψυχολογια vera* I. B. T. XL Quæstionibus explicata, et rerum publicarum vero regimini: ac earum Maiestatico iuri applicata, Amsterdam, 1632). *Franckenberg*: Bericht, (see above, n. 3), expressed his indebtedness to *Werdenhagen*’s text on pp. 14-15; 29-30; 35.

¹² *Penman*: A Second Christian Rosencreutz? (see above, n. 2).

¹³ *Walther*’s date of birth is fixed by *Paul Nagel*’s letter to *Arnold Kerner* of 30 September 1621 (Leipzig, Universitätsbibliothek [hereafter Leipzig UB] Ms 0 356, fol. 36r) in which *Nagel* reveals that *Walther* was born 63 years prior. Earlier, *Richard Jecht*, *Die Lebensumstände Jakob Böhmes*, in: *Jecht* (Hg.), *Jakob Böhme. Gedenkgabe der Stadt Görlitz seinem 300 jährigen Todestage*, Görlitz, 1924, p. 64, speculated that *Walther* “muß etwa 10 Jahre älter als *Böhme* gewesen sein.”

¹⁴ *Ernst Friedlander, Georg Liebe & Emil Thenner* (Hg.): *Älterer Universitäts-Matrikeln*. I Universität Frankfurt a.O., Leipzig, 1887, p. 270b. In 1580 a *Baldasar Walther* of Frauenstadt commenced his studies at the same University (p. 277b). *Ulman Weiß*: *Die Lebenswelten des Esajas Stiefel, oder vom Umgang mit Dissidenten*, Stuttgart, 2007, p. 453, points to a certain *Balthasar Waltherus Thuringus* who matriculated at Wittenberg in 1573. This is almost certainly *Walther*’s namesake, *Balthasar Gualther* or *Walther* (1560-1640) of Allendorf, Thuringia, professor of Greek and Hebrew after 1611 in Jena, after 1623 Lutheran Superintendent in Gotha, and later superintendent also in Braunschweig. On him see *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, XLI, p. 96.

¹⁵ *Franckenberg*: Bericht, (see above, n. 3), p. 14.

¹⁶ *Horst Weigelt*: *Spiritualistische Tradition im Protestantismus: die Geschichte des Schwenckfeldertums in Schlesien*, Berlin, 1973, passim.

Schwenckfeldianism— it is possible that, from a young age, *Walther* identified with Schwenckfeldian teachings.

Concerning *Walther's* course of study in Frankfurt, his later employment as a Leibmedicus at several European courts, considered together with *von Franckenberg's* description of him as a “medicum chymicum,”¹⁷ means that it is almost certain that he was a student of medicine. *Walther* probably concluded his course of studies at Frankfurt within four or five years. During his time there he composed two Gelegenheitsgedichte for friends of middling quality.¹⁸

By 1585 *Walther* was already present in Zerbst, one of the largest cities of the principality of Anhalt. *Walther* would remain there, probably as an employee of the court of Prince *Joachim Ernst* (1536-1586), for at least two years.¹⁹ It was in Zerbst in 1585 that the Liegnitzer authored his first full-length publication. It was a short poetic tract, entitled ‘Ode dicolos tetrastraphos,’²⁰ and published by the Zerbst printer *Bonaventura Faber*.²¹ Numbering only six quarto leaves, the text is an ingenious and elegant devotional piece of an indeterminate Protestant confessional character, emphasising the devotional necessity of following *Christ's* teachings. It is especially interesting for its distinguished structure and mastery of biblical citations, although perhaps most interesting for the present narrative is the fact that it suggests *Walther* possessed little or no interest in magical or Paracelsian literature during the Zerbst period. If this was indeed the case, fate was about to decisively intervene.

Görlitz & Magical Writings

In the Summer of 1587, having departed Anhalt in the wake of the death of Prince *Joachim Ernst*, *Walther* found himself in “eine[m] Hochburg des Paracelsismus”: the Upper Lusatian city

¹⁷ *Franckenberg*: Bericht, (see above, n. 3), pp. 14-15.

¹⁸ See *Penman*: A Second Christian Rosencreutz? (see above n. 2), pp. 167-168.

¹⁹ *Walther* would also contribute a poem to a publication honoring the prince after his death. See: Trostschrift [...] Herrn Georgen Fürsten zu Anhalt., Zerbst, 1587, fol. C7r. On *Joachim Ernst von Anhalt*, see ADB XIV, pp. 69-71. *Walther* might have found employment either at his court in Dessau, or the Zerbst Gymnasium, which was established by the prince in 1583.

²⁰ *Balthasar Walther*: Ode dicolos tetrastraphos totum redemtionis opus, à Christo Seruatore nostro humano generi praestitum, breuiter complectens/ Baldasar Waltherus Iun, S., Zerbst, 1585.

²¹ Concerning the printer *Bonaventura Faber*, more commonly called *Bonaventura Schmidt*, see *Josef Benzing*: Die Buchdrucker des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts im deutschen Sprachgebiet, 2nd ed., Wiesbaden, 1982, p. 518.

of Görlitz.²² Despite the towering reputation that the town on the Neiße river would come to possess amongst students of Paracelsianism and Christian mysticism, a recently rediscovered text shows that *Walther* probably arrived in Görlitz for more mundane reasons. Namely, it seems that *Walther* went to the town in order to attend the wedding of a Zerbst friend, fellow physician *Francis Gröschel*, to a native Görlitzer, *Dorothea Peucer*. The celebratory pamphlet issued for the occasion by printer *Ambrosius Fritsch* contains a beautiful poem concerning the virtues of love, written especially by *Walther* in honour of the pair.²³

Yet an unexpected result of *Walther's* trip would be his life-changing contact with members of the secta medicorum Paracelsi, a burgeoning community of learned and enthusiastic Paracelsians housed within the town's walls.²⁴ Chief among this sect was the astronomer, mathematician and cartographer, who had once studied with *Tycho Brahe* in Leipzig, *Bartholomäus Scultetus* (1540-1614).²⁵ Another person whom *Walther* undoubtedly encountered was *Scultetus'* step-brother, the physician *Abraham Behem* (†1599). *Behem* was not only an expert in matters Paracelsian, renowned for his knowledge throughout Lusatia, Saxony and beyond: in 1579, he also corresponded with the Zschopau pastor *Valentin Weigel* (1533-1588) on the finer points of Paracelsian cosmology and cosmogony. As we shall see, *Walther* would later reciprocate an interest in *Weigel's* philosophy.²⁶

We do not know how contact was first made between the men. Was a casual remark at the wedding celebration enough for a flash of recognition to pass between them? Or was *Walther*

²² *Siegfried Wollgast*: Philosophie in Deutschland zwischen Reformation und Aufklärung, 1550-1650. 2nd ed., Berlin, 1993, p. 513.

²³ *Balthasar Walther*: Coniugio doctissimi et hvmanissimi viri, domini Francisci Croschelii Svervsiensis, sponsi: et pvdicibimæ virginis Dorotheae Peucerianæ, IOACHIMI filiaë, Gorlicensis, Sponsa. Görlitz, 1587. This pamphlet was discovered in late 2007 by Matthias Wenzel in the collections of the Oberlausitzische Bibliothek der Wissenschaften, Görlitz. I thank him for bringing it to my attention.

²⁴ See *Ernst-Heinz-Lemper*: Görlitz und der Paracelsismus. Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie, 18 (1970), pp. 347-360, although this text, on account of several mistakes, must be used with caution.

²⁵ On *Scultetus* see *M. Reuther*: Der Görlitzer Bürgermeister, Mathematiker, Astronom und Kartograph Bartholomäus Scultetus (1540-1614) und seine Zeit. Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Technische Hochschule Dresden, 5 (1955/56), pp. 1133-1162; *Ernst Koch*: Moskowiter in der Oberlausitz und Bartholomäus Scultetus. Neues lausitzisches Magazin 83 (1907), pp. 1-90; 84 (1908), pp. 41-109 & pp. 225-290; 86 (1910), pp. 1-80; *Richard Jechr*: Bartholomäus Scultetus, Görlitz, 1914; ADB XXXIII, p. 407; *Ernst-Heinz Lemper*: Voraussetzungen zur Beurteilung des Erfahrungs- und Schaffensumfelds Jakob Böhmes, in: *J. Garewicz & A. M. Haas* (Hg.), Gott, Natur und Mensch in der Sicht Jacob Böhmes und seiner Rezeption, Wiesbaden, 1994, pp. 41-70, esp. pp. 48-55; *Joachim Telle & Wilhelm Kühlmann*: Corpus Paracelsisticum, Bd. 2, Tübingen 2004, pp. 705-728.

²⁶ On *Behem*, see *Winfried Zeller*: Naturmystik und spiritualistische Theologie bei Valentin Weigel, in: *Antoine Faivre and Rolf-Christian Zimmermann* (Hg.), Epochen der Naturmystik. Hermetische Tradition in wissenschaftlichen Fortschritt, Berlin, 1979, pp. 105-124; *Andrew Weeks*: Boheme. An Intellectual Biography of the Seventeenth-Century Philosopher and Mystic, Albany, 1991, p. 30.

indeed intent on ferreting out his mysterious and knowledgeable Görlitz counterparts from the very beginning, as part of a deliberate strategy to engage with the mysteries of the universe? While the exact circumstances are now no longer knowable, the lost ‘Diarium’ of *Scultetus* indicates that on 19 July 1587 both he and *Walther* convened for a lengthy meeting. Evidently, the conversation revolved around secret knowledge, a topic over which the pair struck up an immediate and enduring friendship. For whether or not *Walther* had read many texts of *Paracelsus* or other practitioners of esoteric arts before this meeting, by the time he left Görlitz, he would possess not only intellectual enlightenment: he would also be the custodian of a substantial collection of magical and Paracelsian manuscripts given to him by *Scultetus*.²⁷

Copies of some of the texts passed on to *Walther* at this time, including tracts in his own hand, are today preserved in Lübeck.²⁸ A further volume of manuscripts, formerly in the Rhediger collection of the Wrocław Stadtbibliothek, was lost or destroyed during World War II.²⁹ Whether these works inspired *Walther*’s interest in magical, kabbalistic and Paracelsian ideas and philosophy, or merely echoed it, is difficult to say. Almost certainly, however, their wisdom led to a rapid deepening of his interest in this type of material.

We possess two important descriptions of the Wrocław folio. The first was prepared by *Karl Sudhoff*, who described its contents thoroughly in his ‘Kritik der echtheit der Paracelsischen Schriften’ in the late nineteenth century.³⁰ The second was provided by *Kurt Goldammer*, who examined the original manuscript carefully, noting watermarks, scribal hands and paper types, as he completed a transcription of its contents prior to the second world war, in preparation for the edition of Paracelsus’ theological works.³¹ Both descriptions concur that this massive folio numbered almost 275 leaves, and consisted entirely of Bible commentaries—all considered genuine—authored by *Paracelsus*. These were, therefore, examples of the long suppressed Paracelsian theologica, which passed from hand to hand, along networks of religious dissent

²⁷ Concerning *Scultetus*’s status as a trade and copyist of Paracelsian manuscripts, see *Ernst Koch*: *Scultetica*. Neues lausitzisches Magazin 92 (1916), pp. 4, 26, 30-31; *Jecht*: *Lebensumstände*, (see above, n. 13), p. 60; *Karl Sudhoff*: *Kritik der Echtheit der Paracelsischen Schriften*: II. Theil. *Paracelsische Handschriften*, Berlin, 1898, Items 15, 83-85, pp.

²⁸ Lübeck StB, Ms. math. 4° 9. On the discovery of the manuscript, see Penman, ‘A Second Christian Rosencreutz?’ (see above, n. 2).

²⁹ Former Cod. Rhed. 334. For information concerning the current status of this manuscript, I am indebted to *Mariola Loś* of the Manuscript Department of the Biblioteka Uniwersytecka, Wrocław.

³⁰ *K. Sudhoff*: *Paracelsische Handschriften*, (see above n. 27), pp. 499-538.

³¹ See *Paracelsus*: *Sämtliche Werke*. 2. Abteilung. *Theologische und Religionsphilosophische Schriften*, *Kurt Goldammer* (Hg.) Stuttgart 1955, IV/1, pp. xxxv-xxxviii. The Wrocław folio is identified throughout the edition as Ms B₂.

throughout the Holy Roman Empire in the second half of the sixteenth century. While the vast majority of the commentaries in the Wrocław folio consisted of texts and extracts of *Paracelsus*'s numerous writings on *Matthew*, several leaves also presented commentaries on *Luke* and the prophets *Isaiah* and *Daniel*, in addition to a collection of sermons, general theologica, and a significant selection of commentaries on the Psalms. Several of these texts contained tantalising references to *Paracelsus*'s belief in an enduring mystery school of kabbalistic and spiritual wisdom: the extracts 'Ex alio fragmento super Matthaem' and the 'Ex enarrationibus super Matthaem quarum prine: est 3. cap.' being representative of this particular type of work.³² Numerous texts also contained significant millenarian references, in particular several of *Paracelsus*'s sermons and his 'Piscium multitudo capta Luc. 5.'

The Lübeck codex, which in its long life has witnessed a series of travels almost as impressive as those undertaken by *Walther* himself,³³ is somewhat more surprising in its content. Indeed, it incorporates, almost exclusively, magical, astrological and kabbalistic works. A comparison to known extant handwriting samples of *Walther* demonstrates conclusively that all the tracts in the collection are indeed written in *Walther*'s own hand. The codex begins ominously, with extracts from the Latin 'Picatrix' (fols. 1r-34v),³⁴ interpolated with extracts from *Johannes de Rupescissa* (fol. 25v),³⁵ and *Conrad Gessner*'s 'Historia Animalium' (fol. 34v).³⁶ It continues with two German tracts attributed to *Paracelsus*: an account of a transmutation completed in 1527 (fol. 35r, to be discussed below), and a text entitled 'Die heimliche Offenbahrung Hermetis' (fol. 37r-40r). A short tract by a certain *Michaelis ab Eyking*

³² *K. Sudhoff*: *Paracelsische Handschriften*, (see above n. 27), pp. 507-508. Concerning *Paracelsus*'s commentaries on *Matthew*, see *Arlene Miller-Guinsburg*: *Paracelsian Magic and Theology: A Case Study of the Matthew Commentaries*, in: *Rosemarie Dilg-Franck* (Hg.) *Kreatur und Kosmos. Internationale Beiträge zur Paracelsusforschung*, Stuttgart 1981, pp. 125-139, with citations of *Goldammer*'s transcription.

³³ The MS was removed from the Bibliothek der Hansestadt Lübeck in the 1940s, and was only repatriated from a Georgian collection in the late 1990s. In the meantime, it was considered lost or destroyed. See *Jörg Fligge & Robert Schweitzer*: *Aus Georgien zurück. Ein Beispiel für Restitution von Bibliotheksgut. Bibliotheksdienst 8* (1997). Based on the handwritten catalogue of *Paul Hagen* and *Gustav Sack*: *Beschreibendes Verzeichnis der mathematischen, naturwissenschaftlichen und technologischen Handschriften der Lübecker Stadtbibliothek*, (1932) (Lübeck StB, Cat. Man. 105), *Paul Oskar Kristeller* was able to outline the content of this manuscript in his *Iter Italicum. Accedunt alia itinera I. A Finding List of Uncatalogued or Incompletely Catalogued Humanistic Manuscripts of the Renaissance in Italian and other Libraries*. Leiden 1983, p. 601.

³⁴ For an analysis of this fragment, see *David Pingree*: *Picatrix. The Latin Version*. (Studies of the Warburg Institute 39), London, 1986, pp. xxiv-xxvii. Because of the absence of the manuscript from Lübeck at this time, *Pingree* was forced to rely on notes made by Dr. *Elsbeth Jaffé* in the 1930s.

³⁵ *Walther*'s marginal notation points to the work of *Paracelsus*: "De tugandis dæmonibus ex. lib. 2 vel lib. 3 Wundartzney." The extract is apparently misbound, for it interrupts the text of the *Picatrix* itself.

³⁶ *Walther*'s marginal notation reads: "Gesneris de quadrupedib. De Lamia lib. 1. fol. 641."

Pannonii concerning the celestial kabbalah (fols. 47r-62r)³⁷ then precedes a Latin version of several books of the infamous ‘Liber Raziel’ (fols. 63r-110v).³⁸

Following the ‘Liber Raziel’, there is a version of the magical text ‘Imagines Abelis filii Adæ’ (fols. 111r-133v),³⁹ extracts from *Trithemius* concerning the “seven spirits or angels” (fols. 135r-138v),⁴⁰ a short German tract by *David Origanus* on astral influences (unfoliated),⁴¹ and *Pseudo-Paracelsus*’s ‘Liber de VII stellis’ (fols. 143r-149r).⁴² Concluding the volume is an ‘Experimenta annulorum’ attributed to *Pietro d’Abano* (fols. 150v-152v),⁴³ an incomplete German tract entitled ‘Summa lib. de Magica & Cabala,’ authored by a certain “Fr. Br. von Straßburgk A° 1570” (fols. 155r-163r), part of a ‘Liber Th[eophrasti]’ entitled ‘De arte magica,’ (fols. 166r-171r) and, finally, a version of the infamous ‘Liber Hermetis de XV stellis, lapidus et herbis’ (fols. 171r-174v).

In addition to being in his own hand, *Walther*’s personal connection to the Lübeck manuscript is demonstrated by several annotations within the volume, appearing mainly in the ‘Liber Raziel.’ On one leaf we find the words “Gorlicii ex scripto Cracovij Rhetici scriptj Barthol. Scultety 21 Febr. A° 1567. Ex huius scripto B. Walthery Iun. 30 Aprilis A° 89 novi calen. Harper[sdorf].”⁴⁴ This annotation is significant, not only because it supplements previous evidence of *Scultetus*’s role in the copying and distribution of Paracelsian and magical manuscripts during the 1560s, but because it also definitively links *Walther* to heterodox religious communities in Harpersdorf.⁴⁵ Of this connection there is no doubt. Although *Sudhoff*’s description shows that the Wrocław folio was devoid of any mention of Görlitz, *Scultetus*, or

³⁷ A note, written upside down in the bottom margin reads: ‘Baron[?] Scotus ex opera 3. ad Clementem,’ although its connection to the Eyking work is unclear.

³⁸ On the *Liber Raziel*, see *Reimund Leicht: Astrologumena Judaica*, Tübingen, 2007; *Susanna Åkerman: Queen Christina’s Latin ‘Sefer-ha-Raziel’ Manuscript*, in: *Allison P. Coudert*, et al. (Hg.), *Judeo-Christian Intellectual Culture in the Seventeenth Century*, Dordrecht, 1999, pp. 13-26.

³⁹ This is almost certainly the ‘Invenit Abel filius Adæ hunc librum’ described by *Johann Trithemius: Antipalus maleficiorum Iohannis Tritemii Spanhemensis et Heripolensis quondam abbatis. Quatuor libris comprehensis*. Reprinted in *Johann Busæus* (Hg.): *Paralipomena opusculorum [...] Ioannis Trithemii [...]*. Mainz 1605, p. 295.

⁴⁰ A marginal note indicates that the text was extracted from *Trithemius, De septem secundeis id est intelligentijs sive spiritibus orbes post deum moventibus*, Nuremberg 1528.

⁴¹ The full title reads ‘Wie das Astrum das man Magiter nennet zuvorsuchen sey.’

⁴² Cf. *K. Sudhoff, Paracelsische Handschriften*, (see above n. 27), pp. 22-23, pp. 685-686.

⁴³ Cf. *Trithemius: Antipalus maleficiorum* (see above, n. 39), 309. *Jean-Patrice Boudet* (Université d’Orléans) is presently conducting research upon this tract.

⁴⁴ Lübeck, StB, Ms. math. 4° 9, fol. 88r.

⁴⁵ Concerning the Harpersdorf Paracelsians, see *K. Sudhoff: Paracelsische Handschriften* (see above n. 27) pp. 499-538. *Sudhoff* further remarked that many of the Harpersdorf tracts are closely related to *Scultetus*’ Görlitz copies of *Paracelsus*’s works (pp. 530, 534, etc.)

indeed *Walther* himself, the texts in that manuscript were completed during a comparable time frame (August 1588- Pentecost 1589)⁴⁶ to the Lübeck codex (May-July 1589).⁴⁷ Equally, the paper used in each manuscript stemmed from identical sources in Bautzen and Silesia. *Goldammer* mentioned two clearly identifiable watermarks in the Wrocław folio, both of which are present in the Lübeck manuscript.⁴⁸ Furthermore, *Goldammer* claimed to identify three scribal hands in the Wrocław folio, at least one of whom was given to writing in two tight columns.⁴⁹ This was almost certainly *Walther* himself, who evinced the same habit in the Lübeck codex, which he seemingly developed while copying the ‘Liber Raziel’ in May 1589. With these diverse magical and Paracelsian texts in his possession, many of which had already been designated by *Trithemius* in his ‘Antipalus maleficiorum’ (c.1508) as works “opposed to religion,” *Walther* therefore possessed a unique sampling of the dissident astrological, magical and esoteric wisdom of his age. It would prove an irresistible temptation to seek further after the hidden truths that had been for so long occluded by established religion.

Walther’s connection to the Silesian village of Harpersdorf is significant for precisely this reason. Earlier, I suggested that it was likely that *Walther* was somehow involved with the Liegnitz Schwenckfelders, possibly during his youth. Harpersdorf was of significance during the final third of the sixteenth century mainly as the central point of a thriving and tolerant community of Schwenckfelders and other sectarians, especially those earlier expelled from Liegnitz; the city from which *Walther* claimed to hail.⁵⁰ The two Harpersdorf manuscripts

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 534. As *Sudhoff* notes, Glogau was the home town of the editor of the 1594 edition of Paracelsus’ works, *Johann Huser. Franckenberg: Bericht*, (see above, n. 3), p. 14, claimed that *Walther* was from Glogau.

⁴⁷ Indications of date and place in the Lübeck MS include: fol. 35r, “A° 86 21 Mai [symbol for sun] in tracte germinos intelligit” although this does not seem to refer to the date that *Walther* copied the text; fol. 40r, “Anno 89 im Juli”; fol. 91r, “Ex scriptis Cracovi h[abet] Scultetus & Walthery ab eo[...]”; fol. 94v, “1 May Anno 89 Harpersdorf ex Bart. Scultetij”; fol. 110v, “Ex libri Bartholomaii Sculteti Gorlitiani et scripti 3 Mai[...]”; fol. 111r, “3 Mai A° 89 novi Calend. ex Sculteto Gorlitiano Mathem.”; fol. 126r, “Scriptum Bartol. Sculteti Gorlitiani Mathem. libris. 6 Mai A° 89 calendarium novum computatum in Harpersdorff.” A final date appears on fol. 171r: ‘Trotzendorff 16 Decemb. A° 90. Ex. lib. Abrah. Maffredi. [i.e. Abraham Meffert, physician in Liegnitz]’

Trotzendorf, also Trójca or Troitschendorf, is a small village several kilometres to the east of Görlitz.

⁴⁸ *Goldammer* ‘Einleitendes’ in Paracelsus: Sämtliche Werke. 2. Abt. vol. IV/1, p. xxxviii, mentions watermarks of the arms of the city of Budissin (Bautzen), which was produced by the Bautzen paper mill between 1557-1599, as well as a wheel with eight spokes, of unknown middle and eastern German provenance. These watermarks can be clearly seen, respectively, after fol. 142v and on fol. 165 in the Lübeck codex.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. xxxv.

⁵⁰ *Weigel*: Schwenckfeldertums in Schlesien, (see above, n. 16), pp. 195-212. Concerning a non-conformist prophet in Harpersdorf in 1590, whose visions of the imminent Last Judgment attracted a following of some several thousand persons, amongst them many Schwenckfelders, Paracelsians and perhaps even *Walther* himself, see *F. Luca*: Schlesiens curieuse Denckwürdigkeiten [...], Frankfurt, 1689, p. 352; *G. Wernsdorffius & G. Liefmannus*: Dissertatio historica, De Fanaticis Silesiorum [...]. Wittenberg [1698], fol. C1r.

therefore suggest the existence of an enduring connection between *Walther* and Schwenckfeldian communities in Silesia. This is a connection that would continue after *Walther* made *Böhme*'s acquaintance, for the shoemaker himself was supported by several Silesian nobles, each with their own contacts to Schwenckfeldian groups.⁵¹

Because the Lübeck manuscript contains no significant original works authored by *Walther*, it is difficult to gauge the depth to which he read in these particular treatises, or assess the level of proficiency that he had reached by working with them. Its pages are filled, however, with small annotations, underlining, and the odd nota bene, suggesting that, if these markings did indeed stem from *Walther* himself, that he spent many long hours studying the texts he had copied and collected.⁵² On fols. 138r-v, there is a capable page long summary of *Trithemius*'s work, evidently by *Walther* himself. Yet we should probably keep in mind that magical books and manuscripts enjoyed consistent popularity during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries mainly on account of their bizarre, dangerous, decorative, and therefore attractive nature. Indeed, *Federico Barbierato* suggests that the majority of those who possessed works such as the 'Picatrix' or 'Liber Raziel' probably did not even use them for magical purposes.⁵³ I find it however difficult to doubt that *Walther* himself was not a true 'enthusiast of the mysteries' —as *Böhme* would later name him— especially given the extent of his later undertakings in search of magical, kabbalistic and occult knowledge.

The discovery of *Walther*'s Lübeck and Wrocław manuscripts also finally fleshes out a statement issued during the 1650s by *Gottfried Richter*, son of *Böhme*'s opponent *Gregor Richter*, attesting to *Walther*'s kabbalistic expertise. Namely, *Richter* recorded that *Walther* had supplied *Böhme* with information taken from *Reuchlin*'s 'De arte cabalistica' (1514) for use in the theosopher's 'Mysterium Magnum.'⁵⁴ In light of *Walther*'s possession of magical and

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 205. *Weigelt* here specifically mentions *Johann Sigismund von Schweinichen*, who provided shelter for several Schwenckfelder families from Harpersdorf around 1590. Later, he was a loyal patron of *Böhme* and one of the nobles who requested the philosopher compose his 'Clavis' in 1624 (See *Böhme: Sämtliche Schriften*, IX, pp. 75-120). Cf. *Werner Buddecke & Matthias Wenzel: Jacob Böhme. Verzeichnis der Handschriften & frühen Abschriften*, 2nd ed., Görlitz, 2000, p. 123. *Karl von Ender*, perhaps *Böhme*'s foremost patron, was also a Schwenckfelder. See *A. Weeks: Boehme*, (see above, n. 26) p. 21.

⁵² An annotation on fol. 92v concerning the seven planetary figures, for example, shows that *Walther* was also familiar with book two of *Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa*'s *De philosophia occulta*.

⁵³ *Federico Barbierato: Magical Literature and the Venice Inquisition from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Centuries*, in *C. Gilly & C. van Heertum* (Hg.): *Magia, Alchimia, Scienza dal '400 al '700. L'influsso di Ermete Trismegisto*. 2 vols., Florence, 2002, I, pp. 159-175 at p. 163.

⁵⁴ See *Werner Buddecke: Die Jakob Böhme-Ausgaben. Ein beschreibendes Verzeichnis*, Göttingen, 1937, p. 80-86. I have not seen the original edition in question. The anecdote was reprinted in two major subsequent editions of

Paracelsian manuscripts —albeit with the absence of *Reuchlin*— *Richter's* comment takes on renewed plausibility. In a prior article, I also suggested that another concrete example of *Walther's* kabbalistic influence upon *Böhme's* thought might be the ‘Wunder-Auge der Ewigkeit’, a graphic representation of the cosmos prepared at *Walther's* request which subsequently appeared in all editions of *Böhme's* ‘Vierzig Fragen von der Seelen-Urstand’; a work also inspired by *Walther*.⁵⁵

Following his initial visit to Görlitz in 1587, *Walther* would return to the town on three occasions during the following year: 19 February, 1 August and 26 December 1588. It is perhaps worth noting that *Walther's* reasons for visiting might not have been entirely motivated by his quest for wisdom, for *Andrew Weeks* has suggested the possibility that *Walther's* wife was a native of the city.⁵⁶ In any event, there can be no doubt that while on these visits *Walther* conversed at length with *Scultetus*, perhaps also with *Abraham Behem*. Their talks would have encompassed philosophy, theosophy, astrology, magic and, no doubt, religion. On more than one occasion, their debates may have coaxed them from the stuffy rooms in *Scultetus's* home on the Peterstraße and led them out into the bracing night air of Görlitz's winding cobbled streets. Perhaps on their peripatetic forays they wound their way past the imposing Nikolaiturm, through the city walls and up to the hill upon which the Heiliges Grab, the town's most famous landmark, lay. Local legend holds that the complex, a fifteenth-century reconstruction of the crypt of the church of Saints *Peter* and *Paul* in Jerusalem, was built by a Görlitz mayor, *Georg Emmerich* (1422-1507), who undertook a pilgrimage to Jerusalem in search of absolution after impregnating a local girl in 1465. Enthused by his experiences, and having been made a knight of the order of the holy sepulchre during his quest, in 1480 *Emmerich* began the impressive project of constructing a replica of the temple buildings he found in Jerusalem, for the edification

Böhme's works. See the account of Anon: Mehrere Merckwürdigkeiten von J. Böhmens Wohnung und Begräbniß; von seiner Person und Beruff: nebst umständlicher Wiederholung aller seiner Schriften, in *Böhme: Sämtliche Schriften*, (see above, n. 3), X, pp. 61-96 at pp. 65-66 and pp. 91-93: “Es findet sich in den Collectaneis des jüngern Richters eine dienliche Anmerkung/ so in dieses Buch Myst. Mag. gehört/ und zwar zum 19. Cap. § 20 [*sic!* the reference should be to Chapter 18 § 20] der letzten Zeilen wo Autor schreibt: Wie Gott Mose eine andere Schrift auf eine Kugel gab. Dabey besagter Collector folgendes erinnert: Daß allhie, der Autor scheint wider den klaren Text Mosis, Exod 34:1, Deut 10:1, 1 Reg 8:9 zu schreiben/ der von steinern Taffeln expresse schreibt/ damit verhält sichs also: des sel. Jacob Bøhmens Teut. Meinnung von den 2. Kugeln/ darauf das Gesetz geschrieben/ rühret her aus mündlicher Conversation mit Dr. Balthasar Walthern, der es bey dem Reuchlino gelesen/ und ein ganz viertel Jahr bey dem J.B. gewohnet. Denn dieser Reuchlin schreibt in seinem dritten Buch von der Kabalistischen Kunst pag 705. etc.”

⁵⁵ See *Penman: A Second Christian Rosencreutz?* (see above, n. 2), pp. 166-167.

⁵⁶ *Weeks: Boehme*, (see above, n. 26), p. 30. See further below, note 60.

of all the town.⁵⁷ For *Walther*, who sought to blend his faith, dissident tendencies and magical proclivities into a unified philosophy, the “Görlitz Jerusalem” might have given him some idea in which direction he had to turn to next in order to pursue the esoteric wisdom revealed to him by *Scultetus*. Like *Emmerich*, he too would have to become a knight of Jerusalem. But the time had to be right. Almost a decade would pass before *Walther* could set off to the Holy Land, a trip which, according to *von Franckenberg*, was undertaken “with the greatest industry and effort in search of the true hidden wisdom, which one might call kabbalah, magic, alchemy, or, more correctly, theosophy.”⁵⁸

Die Morgenlandfahrt

Walther’s trip to the Holy Land has long been a source of intense speculation, a situation not helped by the survival of two apparently contradictory accounts of the event. In 1632 *Johann Angelius Werdenhagen*, *Walther*’s earliest “biographer,” enthusiastically stated that the physician had spent no less than six years traveling in Africa, Asia minor and the Holy Land in search of magical wisdom; a testimony he claimed to have received from *Walther* himself.⁵⁹ Our other source, another entry in the now lost ‘Diarium’ of *Bartholomäus Scultetus*, tells us that *Walther* had spent considerably less time on his magical pilgrimage:

On 19 August 1599 Balthasar *Walther* visited my Stepmother’s bath house garden (*Bädgartlein*) and laid out the items he had collected since 1597 when he journeyed outwards (*ausgewandert*) from Poland through Walachia, Greece, Asia, Syria, Egypt and the Mediterranean.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ See *Till Meinert*: *Die Heilig-Grab-Anlage in Görlitz. Architektur und Geschichte eines spätmittelalterlichen Bauensembles*, Essen, 2004.

⁵⁸ *Franckenberg*: Bericht, (see above, n. 3), p. 15.

⁵⁹ *Werdenhagen*: *Ψυχολογια vera* (see above, n. 11), pp. 63-64. “Ipse [Walther] mihi retulit, quod in hoc conatu integrum sexennium in Ægypto, Arabia, & illis vicinis terris confecisset.” This account was repeated in *Franckenberg*: Bericht, (see above, n. 3), p. 15.

⁶⁰ *Jecht*: *Lebensumstände Jakob Böhmes*, (see above, n. 13), p. 63; *Koch*: *Moskowiter*, (see above, n. 25), p. 74: “Aug. 19 [1599] Balthasar Walther, so seither An. 1597 von Polen aus durch die Walachei, Graecium Asiam Syriam Aegyptum und per mare medit gewandert, in der Schwiegermutter Badegärtlein kommen und seine mitgebrachten Sachen ausgelegt. Ich habe empfangen ein gemein Kreuz vom Oelbaum [mit eingelegten Heiligtum geschnitzt], zwei Paternoster, eines de terra Adami bei Damasco schwarz, das andre von Oelbaumholz ex monte Oliveti, Johannsbrot ex deserto Bethabarae, 4. Samen der Baumwolle aus der Insel Cypem.’ *A. Weeks*: *Boehme* (see above, n. 26), p. 30, believes that *Scultetus* here was referring to *Walther*’s own stepmother.

Scultetus's notice makes it clear that *Walther*'s experiences were not gathered during some epic six year journey; nor even a two year odyssey. Instead, his travels consisted of several shorter excursions conducted after 1597 from a base somewhere in Poland.

Walther's own literary work demonstrates that *Scultetus*'s account is more accurate than that of *Werdenhagen*, for his travels were indeed confined to the period between 1597 and 1599.⁶¹ As far as they can be reconstructed, the circumstances are as follows: In 1597, *Walther* was present at the Warsaw court of *Sigismund III Vasa* (1566-1632), monarch of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. In late May of 1597, he accompanied a Polish-led diplomatic mission to Wallachia and Constantinople, part of a futile effort by the Poles to ensure territorial guarantees from both the Turks and the Wallachians in Moldavia and lands adjacent to the commonwealth. Travelling from Warsaw, the diplomatic unit, led by *Stanisław Golski*, had reached the Targoviste court of the Wallachian ruler *Michael the Brave* (1558-1601) by June of 1597. *Walther*'s presence in the diplomatic retinue is difficult to explain, particularly with regard to the delicate political circumstances of the period.⁶² Evidently, however, the Silesian *Walther* was not there to choose sides.⁶³ Although he might have served the Polish group as a travelling physician —*Walther* referred to *Golski* specifically as his patron— *Walther*'s praise of European rulers with imperial pretensions in Wallachia, Moldavia and Transylvania was lavish in his account of the journey.⁶⁴

In Targoviste, the group mediated a series of unsuccessful negotiations between *Michael* and the Turks. *Walther* remained in the Wallachian city for around two months, before departing the negotiations in early August for Constantinople. Making his way first by boat to Dobruja, *Walther* then proceeded down the Danube to the Black Sea through the sacked fortress-towns of Cernavoda, Rasgrad and Badabag, amongst others. When they finally reached the Ottoman capital, *Walther*'s party was received at the court of Sultan *Mohammed III*. Met with a diplomatic stonewall by the Turks, the sojourn in Constantinople would not endure long. **The Polish retinue departed Constantinople and were back in Targoviste by November of 1597.**

⁶¹ See *Balthasar Walther: Brevis et vera descriptio rerum ab illust. ampliss. et fortiss. militiae contrapatriæ suæ Reique Pub. Christianæ hostes Duce ac Iōn Michaele Moldaviae Transalpinæ sive VValachiaē Palatino gestarum. In eiusdem aula Tervvisana fideliter collecta opera & studio Baldassaris Waltheri Iun. S., Görlitz, 1599.*

⁶² On competing imperial pretensions of the Ottomans, Polish, Hungarians and Habsburgs in Transylvania, Wallachia and Moldavia see *Kurt W. Treptow* (Hg.): *A History of Romania*, Iași, 1996, pp. 155-164.

⁶³ On this see *Dan Simonescu: Cronica lui Balthasar Walther despre Mihai Viteazul în raport cu cronicile interne contemporane. Studii și materiale de istorie medie* 3 (1959), pp. 15-18.

⁶⁴ *Walther: Brevis et vera descriptio* (See above, n. 61), passim.

Discharged from diplomatic duties, *Walther* resumed his travels in the East, this time in search of arcane knowledge.⁶⁵

What did *Walther* do during his further travels in the Levant? Whom did he visit there? His itinerary, at least as far as he informed *Scultetus*, must have led him through Greece, “Asia” and Syria, meant that at one point he again crossed the Ottoman territories independently of his diplomatic duties for the Polish crown. That he brought back with him cotton seeds from Cyprus indicates that one leg of his journey was undertaken by sea, probably on a trading vessel. Assuming *Walther* had a command of Hebrew or Arabic —by no means certain, at least according to his surviving literary efforts— he might have been able to make contact with kabbalistic practitioners during his journeys. European merchants and traders were common in the Ottoman Empire as well as the Holy Land: as a physician *Walther* would have been afforded every courtesy, and been in a position to learn from those who had spent a considerable time in the near east.

Even armed only with Latin and Greek, it is not impossible that *Walther* could have made some progress within the magical communities of the region, despite the strict emphases on secrets and secrecy within contemporary mystical groups.⁶⁶ He might, for example, have encountered followers of *Isaac Luria* (1534-1572) in Safed, or met with any number of the numerous kabbalistic and alchemical writings circulating in the region at this time.⁶⁷ Perhaps he went in search of a copy of the ‘Zohar’, so praised by *Reuchlin*. It would have been easy to come across. As the incredible objects that *Walther* collected during his pilgrimage and then gave as gifts to *Scultetus* demonstrate, the physician had indeed reached the Mount of Olives, the Syrian capital of Damascus, the sprawling desert of Betharaba beyond the river Jordan, and the island of Cyprus. For the time, this was a journey of considerable distance and hardship. The very fact that it was undertaken at all is proof of *Walther*’s lasting resolve to capture esoteric wisdom.

Walther was indeed successful in winning friends during his travels, even if they were somewhat closer to home than the famed Magi of the east. *Fechner* reports that *Walther* spent a profitable time experimenting in the laboratories of the Hungarian mines.⁶⁸ Equally, in

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, fols. A2r-A3v.

⁶⁶ *Gérard Nahon*: *La terre sainte au temps des kabbalistes, 1492-1592*, Paris, 1997.

⁶⁷ See *Raphael Patai*: *The Jewish Alchemists. A History and Sourcebook*, Princeton, 1994, pp. 321-394.

⁶⁸ *Hermann Adolph Fechner*: *Jakob Böhme. Sein Leben und seine Schriften, mit Benutzung handschriftlicher Quellen dargestellt*. *Neues lausitzisches Magazin* 33 (1857), pp. 313-446 at p. 381. *Fechner*’s source was *Christian*

Targoviste, the physician established connections to members of the Wallachian court, connections which would grant him an enduring place in the history of Wallachia and of Romania. This place was not as an alchemist or mystic, however, but instead in the unlikely role of historian. Namely, in Targoviste, *Walther* received a Walachian manuscript from *Michael the Brave's* court chancellor *Teodosie Rudeanu*, which detailed the ruler's impressive military exploits.⁶⁹ *Walther* promptly had the text transposed into Polish by one of his diplomatic companions, extracts of which he then set into Latin, weaving his own observations into the story, and adding a poetic 'epigram' and 'elegy' to its conclusion.⁷⁰ Whether or not *Walther* hoped to secure the patronage of a great European leader with this work—a difficult task, given the manifold and fractious claims to Wallachia during this period—the text was printed shortly after the feast day of St Michael in 1599 by *Johann Rambau* in Görlitz.⁷¹ It contained a warm dedication to *Walther's* "great friend and supporter" *Bartholomäus Scultetus*, as well as to the **Görlitz** councilman *Sebastian Hoffmann*.⁷² Much like his earlier volume of poetry, the text communicates precious little biographical information, and indeed no information at all concerning *Walther's* enthusiasm for esoteric material. Still, outside of his influence on Jakob Böhme's works, this short book would prove to be *Walther's* most enduring and influential literary creation. It was reprinted several times in the seventeenth century, once again in the eighteenth, and in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the text has twice been translated into Romanian.⁷³

Among the Dissidents

Knauthe: 'Bibliotheca Böhmistica' (Wrocław, Biblioteka Uniwersytecka, AKC 1947/70). I have not been able to examine this source while preparing the present study.

⁶⁹ *Walther*: Brevis et vera descriptio (See above, n. 61), fol. A2v. Cf. *Alexander Koyré*: La Philosophie de Jacob Boehme, 3rd ed., Paris, 1979, p. 48.

⁷⁰ Ibid., fol. E3r ('Epigramma, In ejusdem Palatini effigiem Tervisi ab Autore scriptum & dedicatum') and fols. E3v-E4r ('Elegia, in generosæ indolis Dn. Dn. Petri Palatinidis Moldavivæ Transalpinæ Natalem ipso Divorum Petri ac Pauli festo Targovistæ Anno M.D. XCVII scripta & exhibita.')

⁷¹ On *Rambau* see *Benzing*: Buchdrucker, (see above, n. 21), p. 159.

⁷² *Walther*: Brevis et vera descriptio, (see above, n. 69), fol. A3v.

⁷³ *Walther's* tract would be reprinted in 1603, 1627 (using the sheets of the 1603 edition) and again in 1770. See the bibliography in *Penman*: A Second Christian Rosencreutz? (See above n. 2), pp. 169-170. Two more recent Romanian translations exist, see **A. Papiu Ilarianu: Tesauru de monumente istorice Romania. Atâtu din vechiu tiparite câtu si manuscripte. Tomu 1, Bucharest 1862, pp. xi-xv, 1-74.** *Simonescu*: Cronica lui Balthasar Walther, (See above, n. 63), pp. 55-57. I hope to edit an English-language edition of this fascinating text in the near future.

We know little concerning *Walther's* movements immediately following his return from the Holy Land in 1599. *Walther* informed *Werdenhagen* that at the conclusion of his journeys he simply returned to Silesia,⁷⁴ while *Worbs*, following *von Franckenberg*, has suggested that the physician might have spent some time in the city of Glogau.⁷⁵ *Werdenhagen's* rather glib account, which gave birth to the long standing belief that *Walther* met *Böhme* for the first time immediately following his return from the Holy Land,⁷⁶ was however the result of *Walther's* omission to inform his friend about a curious period that was evidently a source of intense embarrassment for him. For, sometime before April 1609, when he physician was sojourning in Straßburg,⁷⁷ *Walther* befriended and came to enthusiastically support the doctrines of an antinomian and chiliastic heretic from Langensalza in Thuringia, *Esajas Stiefel* (1561-1627).⁷⁸ Although almost entirely forgotten today, *Stiefel's* name, along with that of his nephew *Ezechiel Meth* (1588-1640), will be familiar to anyone who has occupied themselves with *Böhme's* literary output; albeit as staunch opponents of the shoemaker's doctrines. How is it then, that *Walther, Böhme's* "truest adherent" could also have been a follower of one of the shoemaker's bitterest opponents?

As a comparison of their numerous writings quickly reveals, both *Stiefel* and *Böhme* attempted to answer similar questions regarding the nature and fate of the human soul, as well as the **Menschwerdung Christi**, albeit in dramatically different ways. Therein lay the appeal of the doctrines of both men for *Walther*. For the intensely charismatic *Stiefel*, the world consisted of stark absolutes. If a person fully absorbed Christ and his teachings he then himself became Christ: the end result of meditation upon the imperfect human condition could result in both spiritual and physical perfection. This idea contravened *Böhme's* foundational dialectical

⁷⁴ *Werdenhagen*: *Ψυχολογία* vera, (see above, n. 11), p. 64: "Verum quum nec ita obtinisset votum, rediit in Patriam Silesiam, ubi tunc offendit Theosophum nostrum in magna simplicitate domi suæ quidem, sed non sine persecutione viventem."

⁷⁵ *Worbs*: *Walther*, (see above, n. 2), pp. 9-10; cf. *Peuckert*: *Leben Böhmes*, (see above, n. 4), p. 138.

⁷⁶ *Franckenberg*: *Bericht*, (see above, n. 3), p. 15; *Jecht*: *Lebensumstände*, (see above, n. 13), p. 64 was the first to quash this idea.

⁷⁷ One 'Schreiben' communicated by *Walther* to *Stiefel* (dated 30 November 1609) and another from *Stiefel* to *Walther* (dated 24 April 1609) are mentioned in lists of books and manuscripts seized by Saxon authorities from *Stiefel's* home in 1613, in the course of an action against *Stiefel* for heresy. See *Carlos Gilly*: *Wege der Verbreitung von Jacob Böhmes Schriften in Deutschland und den Niederlanden*, in: *Jacob Böhmes Weg in die Welt. Zur Geschichte der Handschriftensammlung, Übersetzungen und Editionen von Abraham Willemsz van Beyerland*, Amsterdam, 2007, pp. 410-11, at note 4.

⁷⁸ On *Stiefel* see *Gottfried Arnold*: *Fortsetzung und Erläuterung [...] der unpartheyischen Kirchen- und Ketzer-Historie*, 2nd ed., Frankfurt, 1729, pp. 32-52; *Paul Meder*: *Der Schwärmer Esajas Stiefel. Ein kulturgeschichtliches Bild aus Erfurts alter Zeit. Mitteilungen des Vereins für die Geschichte und Altertumskunde von Erfurt*, 20 (1899), pp. 93-128; *U. Weiß*, *Lebenswelten* (see above, n. 14), *passim*.

principle, which combined evil with good and insisted that of itself the human being was incapable of achieving any sort of transcendence. Indeed, acceptance of this imperfection was one of the critical requirements of the achievement of true wisdom. As *Böhme* wrote in condemnation of *Stiefel*: “so that although God and Christ be born in us, yet we can by no means say, when we speak of the whole Man, I am Christ; for the Outward is not Christ. But thus we can and may say upon good ground, I am in Christ, and Christ is become Man in me.”⁷⁹

Yet in comparison with *Böhme*'s sublime exploration of the same questions, it became clear to many contemporary observers that *Stiefel*'s ideas laboured under a desperate confusion of the will of the divine and the human subjects. As *Böhme* warned in his second work against the antinomian (1622), “one must at all times distinguish the human from the Godly, and human will from the will of God.”⁸⁰ It was a lesson *Walther* would eventually heed, and a distinction he would recognise, but only several years after he met *Böhme* and intensely studied the philosopher's works.

Stiefel's radical antinomianism —as seductive and empowering as many people must have initially found it during this difficult and chaotic time— appealed to *Walther* on numerous levels. *Stiefel*'s self-confidence and messianic charisma also certainly played a significant role. But *Stiefel* was not the only occult mentor that *Walther* sought out at this time. His journey to the east had not slaked *Walther*'s thirst for occult insight: it had merely whetted it. In a set of four manuscript volumes from the 1620s preserved today in Leipzig, *Gottfried Gloger von Schwanbach*, a member of *Böhme*'s wider circle, copied a text attributed by him to a certain “B.W.” entitled ‘Clavis philosophiæ’, alongside works by *Caspar Schwenkfeld*, *Paracelsus*, *Paul Nagel*, *Christof Kotter* and the mysterious *Johann Henuriades du Verdun*, amongst others. As it turns out, the ‘Clavis’ was not by *Walther* himself, but is instead an unpublished work by none other than *Valentin Weigel*.⁸¹ Its existence demonstrates that following his return from the Holy Land, *Walther* had cast a broad net to satisfy his earnest quest for knowledge of the hidden, providential and axiomatic wisdom that underwrote the great mechanism of the universe.

⁷⁹ *Böhme*: Anti-Stifelius I, in *Sämtliche Schriften*, (see above, n. 3), V, pp. 165-198, at p. 180: “Obgleich Gott in Christo in uns geboren wird, so können wir noch lange nicht sagen wenn wir vom ganzen Menschen reden, ich bin Christus; denn der äußere ist nicht Christus. Sondern also können wir mit Grunde sagen: Ich bin in Christo, und Christus ist in mir Mensch geworden.”

⁸⁰ *Böhme*: Anti-Stifelius II, in *Sämtliche Schriften*, (see above, n. 3), V, pp. 199-346, at p. 224.

⁸¹ Leipzig UB, Ms. Rep. 106 IV I, fols. 29v-34v, ‘Clavis Philosophiae, Schlüssel oder Zugang zur Himmlischen und Irdischen Weißheit.’ *Weigel*'s authorship of this text was confirmed by *Gilly*: *Wege der Verbreitung*, (see above, n. 77), p. 413.

One of the chief attractions of *Stiefel*'s sect for *Walther* must not only have been the heretic's theological conjectures, but also the social connections afforded by his extended network. Important amongst them were two Leipzigers, the alchemist *Arnold Kerner* and the Torgau based chiliast and theosopher *Paul Nagel* (†1624).⁸² *Nagel*, who was an enthusiastic follower of *Valentin Weigel* and *Paracelsus*, and who possessed manuscript copies of the Rosicrucian 'Fama Fraternitatis' and a German translation of *John Dee*'s 'Monas hieroglyphica,'⁸³ was a lukewarm observer of *Stiefel*'s distinct antinomian philosophy during the middle 1610s, as visitation records to Torgau demonstrate.⁸⁴ Later, like *Walther*, he would migrate to *Böhme*'s circle, actively copying and distributing the theosopher's writings, as well as incorporating many of the shoemaker's ideas into his own works.⁸⁵

While it remains unclear how and when *Nagel* and *Walther* met, the Torgauer moved in similar circles to the Liegnitz physician.⁸⁶ He possessed contacts to princely courts in Anhalt, Saxony and Silesia, to the Paracelsian community in Görlitz—including numerous members of *Böhme*'s circle—and to alchemical enclaves in Poland. *Nagel* was also befriended with the Polish alchemist *Michael Sendivogius* (c.1566-c.1636), for whom he prepared several astrological nativities, and who visited him in Torgau on at least one occasion.⁸⁷

Nagel's letters to *Kerner* contain significant information regarding *Walther*'s activities during his time as a follower of *Stiefel*. For example, *Nagel* noted that *Walther* was not only an intense defender and adherent of the antinomian, but also that he often visited *Stiefel*'s home,

⁸² Leipzig UB, Ms 0 356, contains letters from *Nagel*, *Esajas Stiefel*, *Ezechiel Meth*, *Paul Felgenhauer*, *Johann Rehefeldt* and others which shed considerable light upon the movements of actors on the fringe of *Böhme*'s circle. On *Nagel* see *Leigh T.I. Penman*: Climbing Jacob's Ladder. Crisis, Chiasm and Transcendence in the Thought of Paul Nagel (†1624), a Lutheran Dissident during the Time of the Thirty Years' War, in: *Intellectual History Review* (forthcoming) and *Penman*: Unanticipated Millenniums. The Lutheran Experience of Chiliastic Thought, 1600-1630, Dordrecht (forthcoming), chapter three.

⁸³ The *Fama* is in London, Wellcome Medical Institute Library, Ms. 150, fol. 129r-139r. The codex also contains other significant prophetic works. *Nagel*'s copy of *John Dee*'s 'Monas' (a German translation, completed without any of the figures and in *Johann Rehefeldt*'s hand) can be found in Erfurt, Bibliothek des evangelischen Ministeriums, [hereafter BevM], Ms 21, fol. 521r-561r.

⁸⁴ Wernigerode, Landeshauptarchiv Sachsen-Anhalt, Abteilung Magdeburg, Rep. A 29b, II Nr. 35, fols. 578r-v, 581v-582v. 'Visitation der Inspektionen Wittenberg, Torgau [...] &c.' (18 September 1617).

⁸⁵ See *Leigh T.I. Penman*: Repulsive Blasphemies. Paul Nagel's Appropriation of Unprinted Works of Jakob Böhme and Valentin Weigel in his *Prodromus astronomiae apocalypticæ* (1620). (Forthcoming).

⁸⁶ In *Nagel*'s second letter to *Kerner* (20 Nov. 1618, Leipzig UB, Ms 0 356, fol. 97r) he reports that he had worked together with "Herrn Walthero Siles. [...] für etzliche Jahren." This indicates that *Walther* was known to both men well before 1618.

⁸⁷ Leipzig UB, Ms 0 356, fols. 13r, 17r, 19r, etc.; For *Sendivogius*, see *Roman Bugaj*: Michał Sedziwój (1566-1636) Życie i Pisma, Wrocław, 1968, pp. 50-160; *Zbigniew Szydło*: Water Which Does Not Wet Hands. The Alchemy of Michael Sendivogius, Warsaw, 1994, pp. 27-42.

providing the Thuringian with modest sums of money in order to pay for food and accommodation. During these visits, *Walther* no doubt listened to *Stiefel* preach.⁸⁸ Perhaps in addition to the superficial similarities of *Stiefel's* teachings to those of *Böhme*, *Walther* had also come under the influence of Lurianic kabbalah while in the Holy Land, an experience that might have intensified his desire to acknowledge a kind of unspecific messianism.⁸⁹

Enter *Jakob Böhme*

It was not until 1617 that *Walther* first met *Böhme*. Perhaps they encountered one another through the Schwenkfelder nobleman *Karl von Ender* (c.1568-1624), who, in addition to being *Böhme's* great patron, also knew *Nagel* and other members of *Kerner's* circle.⁹⁰ Perhaps it was through mutual friends in Görlitz itself. In any event, the shoemaker first mentioned *Walther* in a letter to *von Ender* dated 18 January 1618, which suggests that the two men had met during the previous year.⁹¹ Shortly before *Böhme* wrote this letter, *Walther* had provided the Görlitzer with forty questions concerning the nature of the soul.⁹² *Böhme* intended to answer these queries in the form of a short tract. The forty questions must have represented the core of the fundamental esoteric problem with which *Walther* struggled. Questions which the desire to find the answers to, had led him to the Holy Land and back again: What can I do to ensure my salvation? How can I ensure that I will reach the heavenly kingdom and become a knight of Jerusalem? What is the nature of the true psychology? Probably, he posed the same or a similar set of queries to *Stiefel*. Certainly, he tested theologians and scholars at universities throughout the Holy Roman Empire, and probably beyond, with them as well.⁹³

While *Franckenberg* insists that *Walther* put these forty questions to *Böhme* during a marathon three-month session at the shoemaker's home on the Görlitz Neißbrucke, this story appears to have been his own invention. *Walther* informed *Werdenhagen* that he had indeed on

⁸⁸ Leipzig UB, Ms 0 356, fol. 36r. *Nagel* to *Kerner*, 30 September 1621: "Er [*Walther*] für wenig Jahren H[err] Stifelio 62. Reichstahler undt 93 Ducaten vbersendet damit er künfftig, wan er zu ihnen kommen würde, bey ihnen auch ein auffenthaldt und sein Nahrung hete."

⁸⁹ See *Lawrence Fine: Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos: Isaac Luria and His Kabbalistic Fellowship*, Stanford, 2003.

⁹⁰ For the role of *Ender*, see *Peuckert, Leben Böhmers*, (see above, n. 4), pp. 127-28. *Paul Nagel* dedicated a *Prognosticon astrologicum: Das ist, Natürlich, gründliche Weissagung aus Krafft, Wirkung und geheimer Bedeutung des gestirnten Himmels [...] aus rechten Grunde der warhafftigen Astronomiae auff's Jahr MDCXXI*, Goßlar, [1620], to *Ender* and another *Böhme* supporter, *Karl von Fürstenau*.

⁹¹ *Böhme: Epistolae*, (see above, n. 3), 1.17.

⁹² *Franckenberg: Bericht*, (see above, n. 3), p. 14.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

occasion met with *Böhme* for the purpose of debate, but he didn't indicate that he stayed with the cobbler for a significant period of time.⁹⁴ Further, *Böhme* himself specifically stated that *Walther* sent (geschickt) the forty questions to him.⁹⁵ In any event, although they were transmitted sometime in 1617, by January of 1618, *Böhme* had still not completed the arduous task of composing a reply to the testing inquiries.⁹⁶ Indeed, while *Böhme* would later hope that the Devil would not hinder the general public's reception of the text, it must have seemed that his ability to answer *Walther*'s difficult questions were already being manipulated by the prince of darkness: the 'Vierzig Fragen' would remain incomplete for almost two more years as *Böhme* wrestled with the complexity of his task.⁹⁷

In the meantime, it appears that *Walther* and *Böhme* encountered each other with some degree of regularity. Perhaps stemming from his first-hand observance of a highly disciplined and ascetic ritual-magical and religious culture in the Holy Land, it was probably during these meetings that *Walther* cautioned *Böhme* against a lack of respect for strict ritual and dietary customs, a fact related by a decidedly miffed *Böhme* to *von Franckenberg*.⁹⁸ While an indifferent *Böhme* found *Walther*'s demands "Mosaical" and "Hartmännisch", it is worth pointing out that such remonstrations may ultimately not have been without effect. *Böhme* eventually developed an unusual and disciplined food ideology focussed on vegetarianism.⁹⁹ But while the shoemaker had by this point still failed to produce any convincing answers to *Walther*'s forty questions on the soul, the physician still maintained contact with *Stiefel* in Erfurt.

Walther's enthusiasm for *Böhme*'s philosophy was, however, growing nevertheless. Already in 1617, he had converted a toll collector in Sagan, *Christian Bernhard* (†1649), to the

⁹⁴ *Werdenhagen*: *Ψυχολογία vera*, (see above, n. 11), p. 64.

⁹⁵ *Böhme*: *Epistolae*, (see above, n. 3), 10.10ff: "Und dann zum dritten, wurden mir 40 Fragen von einem trefflich Gelehrten und Verständigen auch Liebhaber des Mysterii, und ein großer Verwandter desselben, geschickt, und ward vermahnet, ihme ja nach diesen Gaben und Geiste darauf zu antworten, welches zwar die allerhöchsten Fragen von dem Urstand der Seelen und aller Heimlichkeit des Mysterii sind, von vielen grossen und tiefen Geheimnissen, darüber ist eine solche Antwort erboren worden, dessen sich wol billig die Welt solte erfreuen, wann des Teufels Zorn und Bosheit nicht das verhinderte."

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.17: "[W]as der gute und wohlbekante Herr Balth. Walther wegen des Menschen und seiner Seelen Urkund, Wesen, Leben und Trieb, auch endlichen Ausgang, begehret hat: allein es ist nicht gar gefertigt."

⁹⁷ *Peuckert*: 'Einleitung' in *Böhme*: *Sämtliche Schriften*, (see above, n. 3), III, 6-7. By *Peuckert*'s reckoning, the work must have been completed before 16 September 1620. *Böhme* reports on its continuing preparation during the interim in *Böhme*: *Epistolae* (see above, n. 3), 10.42, 10.50 and 12.65.

⁹⁸ *Franckenberg*: *Bericht*, (see above, n. 3), p. 15: "[Walther war] in seiner Diät und allem Thun sehr strenge, und wie J.B. meldete, gar Mosaisch und Hartmännisch gehalten, auch nicht wol vermercket, daß Jacob Böhm hingegen mehr frey- und sanftmüthig oder indifferent, und ohne eigenwehlichen Aufsatz gewesen."

⁹⁹ See *Ken Albala*: *Jacob Boehme and the Foundations of a Vegetarian Food Ideology*. *Petits Propos Cullinaires* 76 (2004), pp. 20-29.

shoemaker's philosophy, and later won over another Liegnitz physician, *Friedrich Krause*.¹⁰⁰ *Walther's* enthusiasm was apparently so great that in a letter dated 7 June 1620 —almost a year before *Walther's* split with *Stiefel*— *Böhme* admonished the physician for being too enthusiastic in discussing or distributing his work.¹⁰¹ In this letter, *Böhme* warned *Walther* “not to commit my writings into the hands of every one, for they belong not to every one.”¹⁰² Recalling the rhetorical strategies of *Valentin Weigel*, he made clear that his works were not intended for those with “full bellies,” but rather for them with empty stomachs who hungered after the true knowledge of God: “therefore I entreat you to manage my writings wisely, and also to conceal my name.”¹⁰³ *Böhme* was distinctly unhappy that *Walther* insisted on “casting the pearl [of wisdom] upon the path” where it could be trampled upon by the common people, or even *Böhme's* enemies.¹⁰⁴

The demand, which probably resulted from growing tensions between *Böhme's* and *Stiefel's* followers, as well as suspicious divines in Görlitz, appears to have been heeded. Indeed, *Böhme's* imploration to *Walther* might have been a signal for the physician to return to a forgotten practice. Even as *Walther* was dealing with *Christian Bernhard* in 1617 he was extremely circumspect. Suppressing *Böhme's* name entirely, he informed *Bernhard* that the incredible theosophical books in his possession were “written by a person living in Prague” (es wohnte eine person zu Prage, welcher diese bücher thete schreiben).¹⁰⁵ *Böhme's* renewed demands for anonymity appear to have been taken up; not only by *Walther*, but also his wider circle. *Nagel's* letters to *Kerner* of 1620 refer to *Böhme* solely under the codename “Teutonicus.” This might suggest that this moniker that *Walther* created for *Böhme* might not have been born of rapt and adoring adulation, as *von Franckenberg* initially portrayed, so much as expediency.

Yet excepting whatever minor difficulties that *Böhme* might have encountered when dealing with the “Mosaicall” *Walther*, he clearly considered the Liegnitz physician, and his many contacts, a valued prize for his cause. Soon after *Böhme* had completed the ‘Vierzig Fragen,’ he

¹⁰⁰ *Böhme*: Epistolae, (see above, n. 3), 26.2 (to *Bernhard*); 30.6 (to *Krause*, 17 July 1622). *Walther* probably met *Krause* through *Nagel's* circle, for *Krause* is mentioned several times in their correspondence before his conversion to *Böhme's* philosophy. See Leipzig UB, Ms 0 356, fols. 19r (10 October 1620), 21r (21 October 1620).

¹⁰¹ *Böhme*: Epistolae, (see above, n. 3), 7.10.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 7.1: I have here used *John Sparrow's* translation, from *Böhme: The Way to Christ Discovered [...]*, London, 1648, fols. K2r-K4v.

¹⁰³ *Böhme*: Epistolae, (see above, n. 3), 7.4, 7.7.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.2.

¹⁰⁵ Wolfenbüttel, HAB, Cod. Guelf. 67 Noviss. 4°, p. 12. (Letter of *Christian Bernhard* to *Michel le Blon*, undated). Cited in *C. Gilly*: *Wege der Verbreitung*, (see above, n. 77), p. 78.

transmitted a copy to a noble supporter, *Abraham von Sommerfeld*, secretly hoping that *von Sommerfeld* might provide some critical advice on the tract before it was given to *Walther*.¹⁰⁶ Securing *Walther*'s loyalty for his cause was a matter that necessitated the utmost care.

Crisis and Conversion

Torn between the competing doctrines of two influential spiritual leaders, *Walther*'s demeanor during this period must have been grave, if he was not indeed gravely confused. A comfort and distraction was undoubtedly provided by a series of appointments to several German courts that began at this time. From mid 1619 until early May of 1620, *Walther* found employment in the Dresden laboratories of *Johann Georg I*, Prince-Elector of Saxony. While *Zedler* reported that *Walther*'s job there was the supervision (Aufsicht) of the Prince-Elector's secret alchemical laboratories,¹⁰⁷ *Worbs* has since discovered documents that explicitly described *Walther*'s task; to prepare medicaments under the orders of the Elector's Leibmedicus.¹⁰⁸ The position offered *Walther* yet another opportunity to win adherents for *Böhme*'s philosophy. *Walther*'s successor in the Dresden position, and later his step-brother, *Benedikt Hinckelmann*, became another close friend and convert to *Böhme*'s theosophy. Indeed, when *Böhme* was summoned to Dresden in 1624, *Hinckelmann* offered the shoemaker accommodation, and later amassed an important collection of the cobbler's manuscripts.¹⁰⁹

While the Dresden position might not have been as prestigious as *Walther* would have liked—a position as the prince's personal physician would have certainly paid better—it did lead to another appointment, following a brief break spent between Leipzig¹¹⁰ and Görlitz,¹¹¹ this time at the court of *August von Anhalt-Plötzkau* (1575-1653) during the winter and spring of

¹⁰⁶ *Böhme*: Epistolae, (see above, n. 3), 10.50; *Peuckert*: Einleitung, in: *Böhme*: Sämtliche Schriften, (see above, n. 3), III, p. 7.

¹⁰⁷ *Zedler*: Universal Lexicon, (see above, n. 6), LII, p. 1828; *Peuckert*: Leben Böhm's (see above, n. 4), p. 137.

¹⁰⁸ See *Worbs*: *Walther*, (see above, n. 2), pp. 11, 13, who cites a document in the Dresden Hauptstaatsarchiv, Loc. 32 668. I have been unable to see this document while preparing the present article.

¹⁰⁹ *Böhme*: Epistolae, (see above, n. 3), 57.3; 61.1-2; 62.2-5; 62.10-12; 63.3; For the *Hinckelmann* collection, see the anonymous contribution: *Theologia Manuscripta*, in: *Monatliche Unterredungen einiger guten Freunde von allerhand Büchern und andern annehmlichen Geschichten: allen Liebhabern der Curiositäten zur Ergetzlichkeit und Nachsinnen herausgegeben Aprilis 1692*, Leipzig, 1692, pp. 258-274; *Buddecke & Wenzel*: *Böhme Handschriften*, (see above, n. 51), Items 221 & 223. Several of *Hinckelmann*'s *Böhme* manuscripts are now in the possession of the Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel.

¹¹⁰ Leipzig UB, Ms 0 356, fol. 21r-v. *Nagel to Kerner*, 19 Oct. 1620, mentions that mail for *Walther* could be deposited at an address on Nicolai Straße in Leipzig.

¹¹¹ *Böhme*: Ungedruckte Sendbriefe, in: *W. Buddecke* (Hg.) *Jacob Böhme: Urschriften*, (see above, n. 1), II, p. 404. (Sendbriefe IV, perhaps to *Christian Bernhard*, dating from 'Frühjahr 1620.')

1620-21.¹¹² *August* was befriended with *Nagel* and *Kerner*, and possessed intensive contacts with all manner of heterodox dissidents, Rosicrucians and chiliasts. He was also obsessed with alchemical experimentation, and had even established a private laboratory in Zerbst in which to conduct his own experiments.¹¹³ However, *Walther's* time in Plötzkau would not be without controversy. As he worked away in *August's* castle, someone had sent some of *Stiefel's* writings to *Böhme* in Görlitz, asking for the theosopher's opinion.¹¹⁴ By 28 April, *Böhme's* friendly but firm critique of *Stiefel's* philosophy, which indeed recognised the antinomian as a kind of kindred spirit, was complete. The first time he encountered this work must have been an uncomfortable moment for *Walther*. As a wavering follower of both men, it must have pained him at some level to read *Böhme's* sensible, precise and withering analysis of *Stiefel's* philosophy, a condemnation that urged the antinomian to abandon his messianic pretensions.

From Plötzkau, *Walther* headed directly to the court of the count of Gleichen in Ohrdruf. While there can be little doubt that *Count Johann Ludwig* would have welcomed *Walther's* services and medical expertise enthusiastically—not only because as a youth he also desired to travel in the Holy Land¹¹⁵—the Liegnitzer's appointment undoubtedly owed more to the influence of the countess *Erdmuth Juliane* (1587-1633). An early convert to *Stiefel's* teachings and a collector of Rosicrucian and magical books, before *Walther's* arrival she had already installed *Ezechiel Meth* as court alchemist and appointed *Stiefel* himself as manager of her Erfurt residence.¹¹⁶ In such close quarters, *Walther's* relationship with the antinomian dissidents would either thrive or die. Given *Stiefel's* ever more exacting demands of loyalty and *Walther's* growing enthusiasm for *Böhme's* work, the relationship disintegrated rapidly.

Concerning the exact circumstances of *Walther's* break from *Stiefel's* group, we have two accounts, each of which is more or less indirect. The first is from *Böhme* himself, who in a 1621 letter, sent on the feast day of Mary's ascension to *Caspar Lindner* in Beuthen, mentioned that *Walther* and *Ezechiel Meth* were having some difficulties at court in Ohrdruf; namely that they

¹¹² *Böhme*: Epistolae, (see above, n. 3), 12.76; *Walther* is also mentioned in the correspondence of *August* with the Augsburg physician *Karl Widemann*. Oranienbaum, Anhaltisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, [hereafter Oranienbaum AHStA] Abt. Köthen A 17a, fols. 1-175. Concerning *August*, see *J. Chr. Beckmann*: Historie des Fürstenthums Anhalt, Zerbst, 1710; *Carlos Gilly*: Adam Haslmayr. Der erste Verkünder der Manifeste der Rosenkreuzer, Amsterdam, 1994, pp. 118-133 & passim.

¹¹³ *Gilly*: Haslmayr, pp. 118-121.

¹¹⁴ *Peuckert*: Einleitung, in: *Böhme*: Sämtliche Schriften, (see above, n. 3), V, p. 10 suggests that *Walther* himself was responsible.

¹¹⁵ *Caspar Sagittarius*: Gründliche und ausführliche Historia der Grafschaft Gleichen [...], Frankfurt, 1732, p. 453.

¹¹⁶ Erfurt, BevM, Ms 83, fol. 440r-v. (*Zacharias Hogel*: Chroniken von der Stadt Erfurt, 320-1628).

were “not of the same mind.”¹¹⁷ To expand on this slightly ominous report, we can add the testimony of *Paul Nagel*, who indeed might be seen as a catalyst for the entire event. The key incident occurred sometime before July 1621. Apparently, two followers of *Stiefel* had visited *Nagel* in Torgau, seemingly in order to express concerns about their master’s hardening demands of loyalty, combined with renewed persecution of the sect by Lutheran authorities in Saxony. During this conversation, *Nagel* diplomatically mentioned —most likely in order to preserve his delicate financial ties to both the Erfurt and Görlitz groups— that *Böhme* had written “a great many good things,” and that his writings were not to be dismissed as lightly as *Stiefel* insisted. Returning to Erfurt, *Stiefel*’s followers mentioned this to their leader. Shortly thereafter, when *Walther* showed and praised several of *Böhme*’s writings in front of the antinomian, the reaction was predictable. *Stiefel* exploded in a rage, and forbade *Walther* to consult such material in the future.¹¹⁸ Their relationship would never be the same.

Walther’s defection to *Böhme*’s circle would mark the beginning of a concerted effort by *Stiefel* to cleanse himself of any and all stigmas of heresy by alienating and expelling all followers of *Böhme* from his group. To this end, the antinomian authored a series of withering manuscript tracts against *Böhme*, *Nagel* and indeed *Walther* himself in a bid to whitewash his reputation and maintain unchallenged authority within the sect.¹¹⁹ In his letters and manuscript tracts, the antinomian dismissed *Walther* as “Walt- oder WeltHerrn”; that is, a person whose knowledge drew nothing from the Godly channels open to *Stiefel*.¹²⁰ Such an undertaking was fully supported by his patron, countess *Erdmuth Juliane*, who by this stage was not only sharing *Stiefel*’s philosophy, but also his bed.¹²¹ Given the undoubtedly poisonous atmosphere at court, *Walther* appears to have spent as much time absent from Ohrdruf as possible; perhaps he even sought an early end to his appointment there.

During this period he was often in contact with other members of *Böhme*’s circle, and in September *Walther* announced his intention to travel to Görlitz in order to visit *Böhme* and his

¹¹⁷ *Böhme*: Epistolae, (see above, n. 3), 12.77.

¹¹⁸ Leipzig UB, Ms. 0 356, fol. 32r. *Nagel* to *Kerner*, 30 June 1621: “Undt ist darzu kommen, dz Herr Balth: Walther Gräff Leibmedicus, des Jacob Böhmes schrifften H. Stiefelio gezeiget, solche approbiret undt gelobet, drübe Stiefel: hefftige erzündert und H. Bal: Wal: davon abgewahret.”

¹¹⁹ See for example *Stiefel*’s tract concerning the ‘Gottliches Wesen,’ Erfurt, BevM Ms 21, fols. 385r-390v. (Another copy is in Leipzig UB, MS 0 356, fols. 1r-6r.)

¹²⁰ I owe this reference, which I initially overlooked, to *U. Weiß*: *Lebenswelten*, (see above, n. 14), p. 459.

¹²¹ Erfurt, BevM, Ms 83, fols. 440r, 443r.

patrons *Karl von Ender* and *Kaspar von Fürstenau*.¹²² In October, *Nagel* mentioned that *Walther* was currently residing with him in Torgau, and that he refused to praise the work of *Stiefel*'s sect in Erfurt.¹²³ The process was complete when, in the autumn of 1621, *Walther* authored a tract, which unfortunately no longer survives, against his former mentor.¹²⁴

That the relationship between the two men had disintegrated so quickly was a matter of no little surprise for *Nagel*, who had been impressed by *Walther*'s early enthusiasm for *Stiefel*'s philosophy. Although he found that *Walther*'s ultimate tract against *Stiefel* smacked of scholasticism, being composed "aus bloßer Vernunft"¹²⁵ instead of drawing on the spiritual inspiration of God and the Holy Spirit, he nevertheless remained an admirer of the physician. Still, *Walther*'s split from the antinomian was something of a shock. As *Nagel* remarked in yet another letter to *Kerner* in Leipzig:

I am astounded by *Walther*, who at the very beginning was such a zealous adherent and defender of *Stiefel*'s teachings and ideas. With regards to the speed with which he changed his mind, I often can't help but think; quantum mutatus ab illo.¹²⁶

Die Seestädte

By the beginning of 1622, less than six months after first arriving in Ohrdruf, *Walther* was again underway. His split from *Stiefel*'s group was, in any case, complete.¹²⁷ In February of that year, *Böhme* wrote to *Ender* stating that *Walther* had contacted him from Lüneburg, where the physician was then residing.¹²⁸ It was there that *Walther* must have made the acquaintance of *Leonhard Elver* (1564-1631), a friend of *Joachim Jungius*, the founder of the *Societas*

¹²² Leipzig UB, Ms 0 356, fol 36r, *Nagel* to *Kerner*, 30 September 1621.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, fol. 40r. *Nagel* to *Kerner*, 21 October 1621.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, fol. 36r. *Nagel* to *Kerner*, 30 September 1621. Neither the tract nor its true title has yet been located. The text in question is also mentioned by *Johann Rehefeldt* in a letter to *Kerner* dated 5 March 1622 (fol. 43r).

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, fol. 36r. *Nagel* to *Kerner*, 30 September 1621.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*: "Mich hat wunder genommen wegen Walth[er], der erst und anfanglich der Lehr und Meinung Es[aias] Stiefel adhaerirte und hefftig defendirte. Wie er bald sich verendert, dz ich auch offft bey mir selbst gedacht von ihm: quantum mutatus ab illo."

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, fol. 58r, *Esajas Stiefel* to *Arnold Kerner*, 17 June 1622. Here *Stiefel* categorically rejected the ideas in 'B[althasar] W[althers], Jacob Behmens, Johann Rehefeldts und alle Lästerlichen Schrifftten.' *Stiefel*'s letter was in reply to *Böhme*'s second tract against him, which, as *Nagel* reports, was inspired by *Abraham von Einsiedel*, one of *Nagel*'s best friends and patrons. See the letter of *Nagel* to *Kerner*, 29 April 1622 (fol. 52r): "Herr Jacob Böhmen hat aber maß wider Stifelium geschrieben, wz abgehen laßen auff die Fragen so von Erffurt dem von Einsiedel zugeschickt."

¹²⁸ *Böhme*: *Epistolae*, (see above, n. 3), 22.7. "Herr Balthasar Walther hat mir aus Lüneburg, alda er sich ietzo aufenthält, geschrieben und anbefohlen, den Juncker zu salutiren."

Ereunetica, the “first learned society north of the Alps.”¹²⁹ It was the beginning of a profitable connection between like-minded Rosicrucian and Paracelsian sympathizers in northern Germany and members of *Böhme’s* circle. By 10 May 1622, for example, *Paul Nagel* had already dedicated one of his major works, the ‘Astronomiae Nagelianae’ to *Elver*.¹³⁰

Walther appears to have been able to remain in Lüneburg for an extended period of time—as late as Easter 1623—and was supplied there by *Böhme* with various manuscript tracts.¹³¹ By this point *Walther* was occupied full-time with spreading the shoemaker’s philosophy. *Böhme* indicates on several occasions that *Walther*, along with *Nagel*, were garnering interest for his writings at the Leipzig book fair and indeed throughout Saxony.¹³² During his time in Schleswig, *Walther* would also visit Lübeck, where he made the acquaintance of another enthusiastic Paracelsian, manuscript collector and Rosicrucian respondent, *Joachim Morsius* (1593-c.1643).¹³³ Like many other luminaries, *Walther* left a message in *Morsius’s* Album Amicorum, one dated in 1623.¹³⁴

The connection to *Morsius* might have been the result of *Walther’s* established friendship with *Elver*,¹³⁵ or simply have occurred through word of mouth. *Walther* arrived in Lübeck in the company of *Johan Staricius*, a lawyer, musician, poet laureate, physician and editor of numerous Paracelsian, Rosicrucian and Weigelian books, and a man who had earlier held disputations with *Böhme*.¹³⁶ Much like *Walther* himself, *Staricius* had spent a great deal of time of studying kabbalistic and magical writings.¹³⁷ The senior *Walther*, with freshly prepared copies of *Böhme’s*

¹²⁹ *Donald R. Dickson: The Tessera of Antilia. Utopian Brotherhoods and Secret Societies in the Early Seventeenth Century, Leiden, 1998, p. 91. On Elver’s membership in this group see Wollgast, Philosophie in Deutschland, (see above, n. 22), p. 427.*

¹³⁰ *Paul Nagel: Astronomiae Nagelianae fundamentum verum, [Halle], 1622. Nagel also reveals more information concerning the circumstances of the dedication in a letter to Arnold Kerner, 22 September 1622. (Leipzig UB, Ms 0 356, 64r.)*

¹³¹ *Böhme: Epistolae, (see above, n. 3), 22.7, 71.4-5. The shoemaker would often supply Walther with tracts to copy. See for example 44.2, etc.*

¹³² See especially *Böhme: Epistolae, (see above, n. 3), 71.4-5.*

¹³³ See also *Heinrich Schneider: Joachim Morsius und sein Kreis. Zur Geistesgeschichte des 17. Jahrhunderts, Lübeck, 1929, pp. 36-44.*

¹³⁴ *Lübeck StB, MS. hist. 25,4, pp. 826-827.*

¹³⁵ *Elver’s connection to Morsius is asserted in Wollgast: Philosophie in Deutschland, (see above, n. 22), p. 436. However, Elver did not sign Morsius’s Album Amicorum, although Walther did in 1623. See H. Schneider: Morsius, pp. 86, 107.*

¹³⁶ *On Staricius, see Helmut Möller: Staricius und sein Heldenschatz, Göttingen, 2003; Will-Erich Peuckert: Gabalia. Ein Versuch zur Geschichte der magia naturalis im 16. bis 18. Jahrhundert, Berlin, 1967, pp. 320-337. Staricius is further mentioned in Böhme: Epistolae, (see above, n. 3), 15.3, 15.7 and 41.1-2, 41.11.*

¹³⁷ *A copy of the Latin Picatrix in Staricius’s hand was formerly in Lübeck, StB Ms. math. 4° 8, ‘Picatrix vel Picatrix Arabi de rebus magicis.’ See P. Hagen & G. Sack: Beschreibendes Verzeichnis, (see above, n. 33), fol. 11v.*

writings amongst his possessions, clearly made a dramatic impression on *Morsius*. However, the Liegnitzer was not only trafficking in *Böhme*'s philosophy. Alongside the previously mentioned magical manuscripts from Görlitz and Harpersdorf, *Walther* supplied *Morsius* with a series of magical figures (perhaps a corrupted form of *Agrippa*'s magical alphabets)¹³⁸ said to have been copied from the pommel of *Paracelsus*'s sword, which supposedly encoded the secret of successful alchemical transmutation.¹³⁹

This short text ultimately found print in *Morsius*'s collection of pseudo-Paracelsian and general prophecies, 'Magische Propheceyung Aureoli Philippi Theophrasti Paracelsi' (1625),¹⁴⁰ under the title 'Mysterium Lapidis Philosophorum, ex MS codice Balthasaris Waltheri Silesij.'¹⁴¹ As a symbol of his gratitude and the high esteem in which he held the Liegnitz physician, *Morsius* there praised *Walther* as "Equitis Hierosolymitani, Theosophiæ [sic] & Secretioris medicinæ eximiè periti, amici carissimi."¹⁴² In addition to passing on the tract concerning the magical symbols of *Paracelsus*, *Walther* also contributed two small poetic pieces to the publication, both signed with the initials 'B.W.'¹⁴³

While *Walther* facilitated direct contact between *Morsius* and *Böhme*,¹⁴⁴ his efforts at promoting the shoemaker's philosophy in the Hanseatic city also resulted in *Morsius* being summoned before the Lübeck spiritual Ministerium to answer charges of heresy in 1624. While records of the original hearing do not seem to have survived, *Walther*'s name is mentioned twice

¹³⁸ See *Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa: De occulta philosophia libri tres, V. Perrone Compagni* (Hg.), Leiden, 1992, especially book 3, chapter 30, "Alius characterizandi modus a cabalistic traditus" (p. 491-497).

¹³⁹ Lübeck, StB Ms. math. 4° 9, fol. 35r. According to *K. Sudhoff*, *Bibliographia Paracelsica*, Berlin, 1893, p. 541, the text is "zweifellos unächt." *Walther* also passed on this work to *Nagel*, for a copy is also in a collection of texts in his hand in Karlsruhe, Badische Landesbibliothek, Ms. Allerheiligen 3, pp. 348-349.

¹⁴⁰ *Anastasio Philaretus Cosmopolita [Joachim Morsius]* (Hg.): *Magische Propheceyung Aureoli Philippi Theophrasti Paracelsi, von Entdeckung seiner 3. Schätzen [...]*, No Place, 1625. (Hannover, Niedersächsische Landesbibliothek, Signatur N-A 841).

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, fol. B1r-B1v. This comment conclusively demonstrates that Lübeck StB, Ms. math. 4° 9 was once in the possession of *Morsius*, as has long been suspected.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, fol. B1r. Contrary to the assertion of *Worbs*: *Walther*, (see above, n. 2), p. 12, *Walther* was not the "hoherleuchteter Theosophos" whose manuscripts were catalogued in *Joachim Morsius: Nuncius Olympicus [...]*, No Place, 1626. As *Carlos Gilly* has recently demonstrated, these texts were authored by the Tyrolean Paracelsian *Adam Haslmayr*. See *Gilly*: *Haslmayr*, (see above, n. 112), p. 239.

¹⁴³ The fragments may be found in *Ibid.*, fols. B4r & B4v, respectively.

¹⁴⁴ See especially *Böhme: Epistolae*, (see above, n. 3), 55.1, cautiously addressed to a 'Herr N.N. in Lübeck,' mentions a letter from *Morsius* dated 24 January 1624. A further letter, (57.2, dated 5 May 1624) addressed to *Christian Bernhard* in Sagan, mentions that the shoemaker had sent copies of his 'Weg zu Christo' to the "two gentlemen in Lübeck" (that is, *Morsius* & *Elver*), "welche Herrn Waltern wol bewust sind."

in a 1633 protocol that makes reference to the incident.¹⁴⁵ The uproar began when *Morsius*, a known disseminator of supposedly “evil books,” had several works confiscated after attempting to transmit a newly-printed copy of *Böhme’s* ‘Weg zu Christo’ (1624) to a friend in Mecklenburg.¹⁴⁶ With the council aware that *Morsius* had trafficked with both *Staricius* and *Walther*, a search of his home was ordered, during which a number of tracts were seized. Amongst them was a “magical book” and another copy of *Böhme’s* text.¹⁴⁷ Because the ‘Weg zu Christo’ also reprinted *Böhme’s* 55th Sendbriefe to *Morsius*, *Leonhard Elver*—whose name was mentioned therein— also found himself summoned before the Ministerium to account for his own enthusiastic tendencies.¹⁴⁸ It was revealed that both men often met with *Walther* (mit Waltern viel umgegangen). The outcome of this 1624 action remains, however, unknown. *Walther* was, in any event, not personally implicated, nor ordered to appear before Lübeck authorities. Presumably, he had already moved on to another port of call.

Endings and Beginnings

Böhme’s final mention of *Walther’s* movements comes on 5 May 1624, several months before the shoemaker’s death in November of the same year. In this letter to *Christian Bernhard*, *Böhme* reports that he had recently written to *Walther* at the Leipzig book fair, sending along handwritten copies of several of his tracts in addition to three copies of the printed edition of ‘Weg zu Christo,’ the book that had already provoked uproar in Lübeck.¹⁴⁹

It is interesting to note that right up until this point, *Walther* was still an active student of *Böhme’s* philosophy, striving ever more to uncover and understand its occasionally abstruse depths and byways: byways that had developed significantly since *Walther* read *Böhme’s* comparatively simple ‘Morgen Röte im Aufgang’ (1612) several years earlier. To this end, he wrote to *Böhme* and questioned him concerning the “seven characteristics of the eternal nature,

¹⁴⁵ The protocol of the 1633 action against *Johann Wessel*, *Johann Tancmarus*, *Morsius* and *Elver* was in the Lübeck Stadtarchiv, Ecclesiasticum vol. III, Fasc. 7 (Religionsirungen), fol. 11ff. The file was transcribed by *Caspar Heinrich Starck*: *Lubeca Lutherano-Evangelica, das ist [...] Lübeck Kirchen-Historie*, Hamburg, 1724, pp. 795-797.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 796

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ While I have not seen the Görlitz 1624 edition of the ‘Weg zu Christo,’ the second edition (No Place: No Printer, 1628) also reprints the letter. The often repeated statement that *Böhme* “counted *Elver* amongst his truest adherents” is thus an extrapolation stemming from the 1633 protocol on account of this letter; it is not a statement made by *Böhme* himself at any point. See *Starck*: *Kirchen-Historie*, (see above, n. 145), p. 796; *Wollgast*: *Philosophie in Deutschland*, (see above, n. 22), p. 436.

¹⁴⁹ *Böhme*: *Epistolae*, (see above, n. 3), 57.2.

which compose the three principia or Worlds” which *Böhme* had elucidated in several of his later writings. Under the title of ‘Principia sind der geoffenbarte Gott, oder das ausgesprochene Wort,’ *Walther*’s query was answered by the shoemaker by March of 1624. Comprising a declaration of the often idiosyncratic terms employed in *Böhme*’s philosophy, the text, in addition to being an aid for *Walther*’s own understanding of his mentor’s philosophies, must also have been intended as a teaching aid in the attempt to win further adherents. A manuscript copy, in *Walther*’s own hand, is preserved today in Wrocław.¹⁵⁰ As for *Walther*’s movements following *Böhme*’s death in November of 1624, we know little. There is, however, no reason at all to doubt *von Franckenberg*’s assessment that on the way to his final resting place in Paris, *Walther* continued to make *Böhme*’s writings known and deposited copies of them with many significant people both within the Holy Roman Empire and elsewhere.¹⁵¹

One of these persons was undoubtedly the previously mentioned *Johann Angelius Werdenhagen*; *Walther*’s first biographer.¹⁵² A former professor of philosophy at Helmstedt University, member of the princely Lüneburg council and a possessor of extensive connections to crypto-heterodox networks in the Netherlands and throughout Germany, it was *Werdenhagen* who in 1632 printed one of the earliest editions of any of *Böhme*’s works, a Latin translation of the ‘Vierzig Fragen’ under the title given to it by *Walther*; ‘Ψυχολογια vera.’¹⁵³ While this book was indeed printed in Amsterdam, this is unfortunately not a confirmation that *Walther* was also active in the Netherlands.¹⁵⁴ In his introduction, *Werdenhagen* makes clear that although he had

¹⁵⁰ Wrocław, Biblioteka Uniwersytecka, AKC 1975/263, fols. 33r-51v. The text in question was reprinted in *Böhme: Sämtliche Schriften*, (see above, n. 3), IX, pp. 111-116. *Böhme* refers to the circumstances surrounding the composition of this tract in a letter to *Morsius* of 20 April 1624: “Was aber anlanget den Grund der hohen natürlichen Geheimnissen, dessen der Herr um mehrer Erläuterung nebenst Herrn Waltern und Herrn Leonhard Elvern behgehret, wolle er bey Herrn Waltern darum nachfragen: Dann ich habe euch und ihm eine Erklärung nebenst andern neuen Schriften mitgeschicket; so euch dieselben belieben, so könnet ihr sie lassen nachschreiben, ihr werdet gar grosse Erkenntniß darinnen finden.” *Epistolae*, (see above, n. 3), 55.11

¹⁵¹ *Franckenberg*: Bericht, (see above, n. 3), p. 15; *Johannes Claassen*: Jakob Böhme, sein Leben und seine theosophischen Werke im geordneten Auszüge, 3 vols., Stuttgart, 1885, I, p. 142; *Worbs*: *Walther*, (see above, n. 2), p. 12; *Christoph Geissmar*: Das Auge Gottes. Bilder zu Jakob Böhme, Wiesbaden, 1993, p. 15.

¹⁵² On *Werdenhagen*, see *Horst Dreitzel*: ‘Johann Angelius von Werdenhagen’ in: *W. Schmidt-Biggemann & H. Holzhey* (Hg.), *Die Philosophie des 17. Jahrhunderts*, IV/1, Basel, 2001: ADB XXXI, pp. 759-62; *Arnold*: *Ketzer-Historie*, (see above, n. 78), III, pp. 89-97; *Govert Snoek*: *De Rozenkruisers in Nederland voornamelijk in de eerste helft van de 17e eeuw*, Haarlem, 2006, pp. 146, 301, 441, 453, 461.

¹⁵³ *Werdenhagen*, *Ψυχολογια vera*, (see above, n. 11). See *Werner Buddecke*: *Die Jakob Böhme-Ausgaben*. Teil II. *Die Übersetzungen*, Göttingen, 1957, pp. 1-4. The dedication was dated at Leiden, 16 December 1631. On account of its contents, this book would find its way onto the Vatican list of prohibited books. See *Snoek*: *Rozenkruisers* (see above, n. 152), p. 441.

¹⁵⁴ The historical background to the arrival of *Böhme*’s writings in the Netherlands has been addressed by *Chr. Sepp*: *Jacob Böhme’s oudste vrienden in Nederland*. *Geschiedkundige Nasporingen*, Leiden, 1872, pp. 137-226;

met with his “great friend” on many occasions in order to debate the ‘Vierzig Fragen’ and other matters, such meetings had taken place in Lüneburg.¹⁵⁵

While it is not exactly clear when these colloquia took place, passages in the ‘Ψυχολογία vera’ evidence that it was *Walther*’s discussions with *Werdenhagen* that inspired the latter to set his book in print.¹⁵⁶ It is highly likely, therefore, that the two men made each others’ acquaintance some time after *Böhme*’s 1624 death: perhaps as late as June 1630, when *Werdenhagen* met *Joachim Morsius* in Germany.¹⁵⁷ In any event, *Werdenhagen* himself would be a tremendous win for *Böhme*’s cause in the Netherlands, and therefore his growing international reputation. In addition to the ‘Ψυχολογία vera,’ *Werdenhagen*, or perhaps *Abraham Willemsz. van Beyerland*, would later set the very first edition of *Böhme*’s ‘Morgen Röte im Aufgang’ in print, and indeed under the title given to it by *Walther*: ‘Avrora.’¹⁵⁸

Precise details concerning *Walther*’s death are difficult to come across. As already mentioned, *von Franckenberg* tells us that *Walther* died in Paris at an unknown date. *Alexander Koyré*, on the other hand, asserted that the physician “est mort en 1625 à Paris.”¹⁵⁹ This claim, however, cannot possibly be true: a letter of October 1626 from the Erfurt physician *Johann Rehefeldt* to *Arnold Kerner* in Leipzig demonstrates that *Walther* was still alive and well at this time.¹⁶⁰ Another possible date was communicated by *Georg Rudolf*, Duke of Breslau, to *August of Anhalt-Plötzkau*. In a letter dated 9 March 1652, *Rudolf* reported simply that “Walterus ist todt.”¹⁶¹

While **Carlos Gilly** has suggested this information, read in connection with *von Franckenberg*’s ‘Bericht’, indicates that *Walther* died c.1650, I contend that this letter was in

Ferdinand von Ingen: *Böhme und Böhmiſten in den Niederlanden im 17. Jahrhundert*, Bad Honnef, 1984; *Frank van Lamoen*: *Abraham Willemsz. van Beyerland. Jacob Böhme en het Nederlandse hermetisme in de 17e eeuw*, Amsterdam, 1986, as well as in the recent volume, *Jacob Böhmes Weg in die Welt*, (see above n. 77).

¹⁵⁵ *Werdenhagen*: *Ψυχολογία vera*, (see above, n. 11), fols. C5r-C5v: “Interim tamen nobis solamen non leve attulit collegium illud Lunæburgicum, quod piæ conversationi destinabamus cotidiè quum nobiscum esset D. Balthasar Waltherus, cui 40. Quæſtiones hujus libelli de Anime natura debentur.”

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, fols. C5r-C5v (the dedicatory epistle) & pp. 63-64 (*Werdenhagen*’s ‘Introductio’).

¹⁵⁷ *Schneider*: *Morsius*, (see above, n. 133), pp. 48-49, 108.

¹⁵⁸ *Jacob Böhme*: *Avrora: Das ist Morgen Röthe im Auffgang vnd Mutter der Philosophiæ [...]*, No Place, 1634. For the identification of *Werdenhagen* as editor see *Lamoen*: *Abraham Willemsz van Beyerland*, (see above, n. 154), p. 6. This identification has, however, recently been authoritatively challenged in favour of *Beyerland*. See *Gilly*: *Zur Entstehung und Wirkung der Handschriftensammlung Abraham Willemsz van Beyerlands*, in: *Jacob Böhmes Weg in die Welt*, (see above n. 77), pp. 101-102.

¹⁵⁹ *A. Koyré*: *Philosophie de Jacob Boehme*, (see above, n. 69), p. 49.

¹⁶⁰ Leipzig UB, MS 0 356, fol. 91r. *Johann Rehefeldt* to *Arnold Kerner*, 4 October 1626.

¹⁶¹ Oranienbaum AHStA, Abt. Köthen, A 17a, Nr. 50, fol. 282v.

fact written on the Duke's receipt of the 'Bericht' itself, the final version of which was completed by its author on 13/23 September 1651.¹⁶² The true date of *Walther's* death actually lies sometime between October 1626 and late 1631. For, in the introduction to his 'Ψυχολογία vera,' dedicated on 16 December 1631, *Werdenhagen* reported that his "summus amicus" *Walther* was already dead.¹⁶³

Conclusions

With his death in Paris, *Walther's* itinerant life finally came to an end. His quest for occult wisdom had taken him from his home in Silesia through Bohemia, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Wallachia, Moldavia, the Ottoman Empire, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Transylvania, Jordan, Cyprus, Greece, Italy,¹⁶⁴ France and likely a dozen other nations and territories in between. Significantly, *Walther* used his travels to gather a body of wisdom, derived from a variety of different sources and intellectual traditions in order to assemble what *Abraham von Franckenberg* praised as a "theosophical" knowledge. With the discovery in Lübeck of magical—and in Wrocław of Paracelsian—manuscripts once in *Walther's* possession, indeed in his own hand, we can finally confirm his magical and kabbalistic interests, proof that in the past has proved elusive.¹⁶⁵ With the added realization that *von Franckenberg's* testament to *Walther's* interests was not simply another fabrication in an account often "filled with fantasy", but was instead based on *Walther's* autobiographical statements to *Johann Angelius Werdenhagen*, it is now no longer possible to doubt *Walther's* long-rumoured experience with magical and kabbalistic texts.

Whether and to what extent such interests filtered through to *Böhme* himself remains questionable. While there are some who would like to stress the independence and originality of *Böhme's* thought, the numerous parallels within *Böhme's* theosophy to kabbalistic concepts are undeniable and have been demonstrated on numerous occasions.¹⁶⁶ While it seems unlikely that

¹⁶² *C. Gilly*: Wege der Verbreitung, (see above, n. 77), p. 415 note 42.

¹⁶³ *Werdenhagen*: Ψυχολογία vera, (see above, n. 11), p. 63.

¹⁶⁴ See *Ehrenfried Hegenicht*: Ausführlicher Bericht von J. B. Leben und Schriften, in: *Böhme*: Sämtliche Schriften, (see above, n. 3), X, p. 62.

¹⁶⁵ *J. Schulitz*: Böhme und die Kabbalah, (see above, n. 4), p. 16: "Eine direkte Linie zwischen der Tradition der christliche Kabbalah der humanistischen Periode und dem von der Böhme-Forschung weitgehenden unbeachteten Kabbalisten und Arzt Dr. Balthasar Walther ist bis heute noch nicht erwiesen."

¹⁶⁶ In addition to *Schulitz*, other works which emphasize *Walther's* role include *E. Feliner*: Die Sprachauffassung Jakob Böhmes und ihr Zusammenhang mit der Kabbala, (PhD Diss., Vienna), 1935; *W. Schulze*: Jakob Böhme und

Böhme himself had direct access to a kabbalistic source such as the ‘Zohar,’ *Reuchlin*’s ‘De arte cabalistica’ or even something like the ‘Liber Raziel’ —works which, in any event, were authored in languages beyond the cobbler’s grasp— the possibility that knowledge of concepts within these works filtered down to him, through *Walther* or through others, is highly plausible. A desirable undertaking would be a systematic investigation of *Böhme*’s works to identify specific correspondences to the magical and Paracelsian tracts once in *Walther*’s possession. However, given the anxieties of tracing influence, especially oral influence, and the particular difficulties of establishing reception inside esoteric traditions, this might indeed prove a difficult undertaking. There was, in any event, a myriad web of alchemists, scientists, and marginal religious figures who stood on the periphery of Görlitz’s intellectual life at the turn of the sixteenth century, any number of whom might have influenced *Bohme*’s thought more or less than *Walther*.¹⁶⁷

The existence of such a network might have been *Walther*’s primary reason for coming to Görlitz in the first place, and indeed the Lübeck and Wrocław manuscripts derived from works in *Scultetus*’s collection. To aggressively tug at a single thread from this rich tapestry of actors wagers indeed the possibility of seizing upon a definite —although by no means definitive— ‘conclusion,’ but also risks distorting or destroying the image depicted upon the tapestry itself. Indeed, this is particularly so when the question of influence might just as easily be turned on its head: If *Böhme*’s ‘Morgen Röte im Aufgang’ (1612) contained traces or cognates of kabbalistic thinking derived from local sources in Görlitz, then it might be *Walther* himself who sought out *Böhme* on the basis of such cognates or actual parallels in 1617.

The final word on *Walther* and his manifold influence as alchemist, kabbalist, physician, theosopher and historian remains to be written. It is however clear that the Liegnitz physician’s intellectual development, despite the many points of contact with the person and theosophy of *Böhme*, is interesting and valuable in its own right as an example of an unusually active and itinerant Paracelsian disciple who traveled far and wide in order to expand his esoteric

die Kabbala. *Judaica* 11 (1955), pp. 12-29; *W. Huber*: Die Kabbala als Quelle zur Anthropologie Jakob Böhm’s. *Kairos* 13 (1971), pp. 131-150; *Susanne Edel*: Die individuelle Substanz bei Böhme und Leibniz. Die Kabbala als tertium comparationis für eine rezeptionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung., Stuttgart, 1995; *Cyril O’Reagan*: Gnostic Apocalypse. Jacob Boehme’s Haunted Narrative, Albany, 1995; *Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann*: Jakob Böhme und die Kabbala, in: *W. Schmidt-Biggemann* (Hg.), Christliche Kabbala, Ostfildern, 2003, pp. 157-182.

¹⁶⁷ *A. Weeks*: Boehme (see above, n. 26), p. 30. *Arlene Miller-Guinsburg*: Von Paracelsus zu Böhme: Auf dem Wege zu neuen Bestandsaufnahmen in der Beeinflussung Böhm’s durch Paracelsus, in: *Paracelsus in der Tradition*, Vienna, 1980, pp. 96-118.

knowledge. I hope at least that this short account can suggest new avenues and places where further discoveries concerning *Walther*'s life and thought might be made.

Abstract:

Despite the attention recently paid to *Jakob Böhme*'s life and works, the Görlitz theosopher's most famous disciple, *Balthasar Walther* (1558-c.1630), remains something of a historical puzzle. Utilizing several recently rediscovered print and manuscript sources located by the author, the present article seeks to provide the first detailed biographical study of *Walther*, highlighting his significance to sixteenth and seventeenth century history in a myriad of contexts. Far from being merely a follower of *Böhme*, *Walther* emerges as significant in his own right as a physician, Paracelsian, Kabbalist, Weigelian, religious heretic, and distributor of magical manuscripts, whose personal networks extended across Europe and beyond. In addition to providing a biography, this article seeks to discover new avenues of enquiry in which information concerning *Walther*'s life and thought might be uncovered and contextualized. This investigation simultaneously throws light upon *Walther* himself, as well as *Jakob Böhme*'s often neglected intellectual and social Umwelt. It also points to new and entirely unexamined sources for *Böhme*'s thought.

Keywords:

Balthasar Walther, Jakob Böhme, Paracelsus, Görlitz, Lusatia, Alchemy, Kabbalah, Science, Paracelsianism, Joachim Morsius, Paul Nagel, Heterodoxy, Jerusalem, Travel, Holy Land, antinomianism.