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Ariel Hessayon
Goldsmiths, University of London

‘Teutonic’: Knowledge of Boehme Among English Speakers Before the English Civil War

Abstract

This chapter focusses on knowledge of Boehme and his work, particularly among English speakers, before his writings had been translated into English. Accordingly, it covers the period from 1624 to 1641. Unsurprisingly, the people under discussion here – with one known exception – were foreigners, emigrants or those who had travelled abroad. Moreover, as might be expected, they were not monolingual but usually had command of Latin and sometimes German and Dutch as well.

Motivations for learning about and engaging with Boehme’s texts varied widely. For some the goal was evidently to achieve Protestant church unity, or at least to be forewarned about the nature of potential sectarian dissent. For others the impulse derived from a new spirit of prophecy that had sprung forth during the Thirty Years’ War – especially following the initial victories of Gustavus Adolphus. For others still, their concern was to accommodate Boehme within Paracelsian, alchemical-medical and Rosicrucian frameworks.

Keywords

Jacob Boehme; Hamburg; Lübeck; Amsterdam; Samuel Hartlib; John Dury;
Theodoricus Gravius

Elsewhere I have discussed the question of why Jacob Boehme's writings were translated into English and the mechanisms behind this process. That essay primarily focussed on the period after the outbreak of Civil War in August 1642.¹ Here I want to go earlier by examining a time frame from Boehme's death until the breakdown of pre-publication censorship in 1641. Accordingly, my account concentrates on what happened before Boehme's writings had been translated into English. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the people under discussion here – with one known exception – were foreigners, emigrants or those who had travelled abroad. Moreover, as might be expected, they were not monolingual but usually had command of Latin and sometimes German and Dutch as well. Motivations for learning about and engaging with Boehme's texts varied widely. For some the goal was evidently to achieve Protestant church unity, or at least to be forewarned about the nature of potential sectarian dissent. For others the impulse derived from a new spirit of prophecy that had sprung forth during the Thirty Years' War – especially following the initial victories of Gustavus Adolphus. For others still, their concern was to accommodate Boehme within Paracelsian, alchemical-medical and Rosicrucian frameworks. Finally, there was also interest in Boehme among certain Walloons and Mennonites, as well as among owners and readers of Caspar Schwenckfeld – several of whom had contacts in England. Consequently, it is important to emphasise that Boehme was not read in isolation but as part of wider interests and agendas.

I

To begin we must go back to when Boehme's follower Johann Sigismund von Schweinichen paid for the unauthorized printing of *Der Weg zu Christo* ([Görlitz], 1624). This transition from scribal publication to print marked an important stage in the dissemination of Boehme's writings. Four years later a posthumous second edition of *Der Weg zu Christo* appeared. Published anonymously, this much expanded book contained a preface and eight short titles. Among them was a letter by Boehme addressed to Joachim Morsius (1593–1644) of Lübeck and mentioning Leonhard

* All precise continental European dates are given according to the Julian and Gregorian calendar; all English dates according to the Julian only. The year is taken to begin on 1 January. For reasons of space sources have been kept to a minimum. I am most grateful to Leigh Penman for his comments; to Lorenza Gianfrancesco and Diego Lucci for clarifying some of the Latin; to Benno Gammerl for some of the German; and to Helmer Helmers for some of the Dutch.

¹ Hessayon, 2007: 129–165.

Elver (1594?–1649?), patrician of Lüneburg and then resident of Lübeck. Morsius was acquainted with Boehme’s student and mentor the physician Balthasar Walther (1558–c.1630), while Elver was the dedicatee of Paul Nagel’s *Astronomiae Nagelianaë* ([Halle], 1622).

In the summer of 1631 the latter part of Boehme’s lengthy commentary on Genesis, ‘Mysterium Magnum’, was issued in German as *Iosephus Redivivus Das ist Die Vberaus Lehr vnd Trostreiche Historia von dem Ertzvatter Joseph* ([Amsterdam], 1631). Printed by Veit Heinrichs, the book was enlarged with excerpts from the writings of the ‘highly learned’ German Dominican and mystic Johannes Tauler (c.1300–1361). It contained a short preface by I.S.M.S.T.P.A., i.e. Johannes von Sack [Saccus], a Silesian knight, and was edited by the Silesian nobleman Abraham von Franckenberg, who also supplied a memoir of Boehme. The next year Boehme’s ‘Forty Questions on the Soul’ appeared in a Latin translation by the ‘noble and very learned’ Lutheran scholar, jurist and relatively prolific neo-Latin poet Johannes Angelius Werdenhagen (1581–1652). The work was published by Johann Janssonius (1588–1664) and entitled *Ψυχολογία [Psychologia] vera I[acobum] B[öhmen] T[eutonicus]* (Amsterdam, 1632). Formerly a philosophy professor at Helmstedt University and member of the Lüneburg town council as well as being, in Leigh Penman’s words, ‘a possessor of extensive connections to crypto-heterodox networks in the United Provinces and the Holy Roman Empire’, Werdenhagen was afterwards syndic of Magdeburg and then privy counsellor of the Prince-Archbishop of that city. According to one sympathetic account, had his ‘godly interference’ succeeded then the ‘pitiable destruction’ of Magdeburg in May 1631 would have been prevented. But as it was, Werdenhagen lost his library and home.² Accordingly he retired to Leiden and The Hague, engaged in correspondence with the theologian Gerardus Vossius (1577–1649) and quickly published two lengthy treatises. One was a history of the Hanseatic cities, the other a peculiar radicalisation of Monarchomach theory which Martin van Gelderen has seen as written in ‘reaction to the rise of the absolutist princes’.³ The prolix dedication of *Ψυχολογία vera* to a number of eminent statesmen dated 6/16 December 1631 indicates that Werdenhagen had met with his ‘great friend’ Balthasar Walther at Lüneburg on several occasions. Walther had provided the original forty questions on the nature of the soul and, as Werdenhagen recounts, it was

² DWL, MS 186.17 (15): fol. 61; Penman, 2012: 52, 54, 62–63.

³ Van Gelderen, Skinner, 2002: 207–208.

their extensive discussions that motivated him to translate Boehme's treatise from German into Latin.⁴

Interestingly, Werdenhagen supplemented Boehme's text with extracts from Johann Arndt, Martin Luther and Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa's *De incertitudine & vanitate scientiarum* (1531), as well as with his own speculations concerning the application of Boehme's theosophy to contemporary politics. For Werdenhagen there was a parallel between an individual's soul and a state's constitution. Only if each was well tended could true Christianity flourish. Accordingly, *Ψυχολογια vera* was placed on the Roman index of prohibited books on 9/19 March 1633. Despite this at least eighty copies of the work survive today, including a number with ownership inscriptions. Seventeenth and early eighteenth century English-speaking possessors included Robert Greville (c.1638–1677), fourth Baron Brooke; Michael Harding (1664); John Moore (1646–1714), bishop of Norwich and then Ely; Luke Rugeley (c.1615–1697), a Cambridge-educated physician; James Sherwood (1673); and 'I F S' (fl.1639), who may have been a Scotsman that had entered a Dutch university.

In early 1634 Samuel Hartlib recorded in his ephemerides (manuscript diary) that Joachim Morsius possessed all of Boehme's books, supplementing this with information that Morsius was a doctor and patrician of Hamburg. A further entry added that Boehme's books could be obtained from Morsius, through Johann Moriaen (c.1591–1668?). A former minister of the clandestine Reformed church in the predominantly Catholic city of Cologne with interests in Helmontian medicine and chymistry, Moriaen had previously mentioned Morsius in a letter from Nuremberg dated 2/12 March 1633 addressed to Hartlib's friend John Dury (1596–1680).⁵ For his part, Morsius was a Rosicrucian sympathizer and collector. Born in Hamburg, the youngest son of a wealthy goldsmith and engraver, he was educated at Rostock University – where he served briefly as librarian – as well as the universities of Leipzig, Jena and Leiden. He was also extremely well-travelled, visiting England between November 1618 and March 1620 before temporarily settling at Leiden, where he edited a number of scholarly texts for publication. Indeed, Morsius's extensive album amicorum contains a number of autographs from this period including inscriptions from William Camden, Robert Fludd, Ben Jonson and John Selden. Other notable signatories were Johannes von Sack, who would provide the

⁴ *Ψυχολογια vera I.B.T.* (Amsterdam: J. Janssonius, 1632), sigs. a2^r, c5^{r-v}.

⁵ SUL, HP 9/15/2A; HP 29/2/12A–B.

preface to Boehme's *Iosephus Redivivus*, and the Socinian Martin Ruar (1589–1657), whom Morsius commended in his introduction to the works of a Polish poet. By this time, however, Morsius had abandoned his wife on the pretext that she had insulted him, and he would later be imprisoned as a result of failing to live an orderly life and adopting a God-fearing profession – only to be eventually released on the intervention of Christian IV of Denmark.

In 1623 Morsius met Balthasar Walther, probably about June at Lüneburg, and through him became one of Boehme's correspondents. Even so, Morsius's attempt to disseminate Boehme's *Der Weg zu Christo* resulted in his being brought before the ecclesiastical college of Lübeck and charged with heresy in 1624. Undeterred, the following year Morsius issued a collection of pseudo-Paracelsian prophecies under the pseudonym Anastasius Philaretus Cosmopolita, having previously used this alias to publish *Epistola sapientissimae F[raternitati] R[oseae] C[rucis] remissa* ('Philadelphia', [i.e. Hamburg, 1617?]). In 1626, again using the same pseudonym, he brought out a catalogue of 228 theosophical, Kabbalistic, magical, alchemical, medical and philological manuscripts written by an 'ancient and famous philosopher and physician', now identified as the Paracelsian Adam Haslmayr. Morsius had also met with Werdenhagen in June 1630, so it is noteworthy that in January 1633 along with Leonhard Elver, a patrician and most likely Boehme's contact of that name, Johann Wessel (*fl.*1651), and Johann Tanckmar (*fl.*1652), Morsius was named in a further action brought by the authorities in Lübeck. This resulted in written confessions from Wessel and Tanckmar, Morsius's voluntary departure from Lübeck, together with a ban on the trade in 'fanatical' books.⁶

Having noted in his ephemerides for 1634 that Morsius had all of Boehme's books, Hartlib added laconically that Hans von Keerbergen (*fl.*1640) merchant of Hamburg, Johann Permeier (1597–1644?) a Viennese lawyer turned chiliast, and Johannes von Sack, who lived in Amsterdam, were members of 'the fraternity' of the Rosy Cross and had some manuscripts of Boehme.⁷ Hartlib's intelligence was excellent for on 21/31 May 1631 Permeier had written from his dwelling at the port of Emden to the Mennonite Anthon van Hoeck (*fl.*1644) at Amsterdam reporting the safe receipt of Boehme's manuscripts. Although Permeier was concerned that these texts may have become corrupted during the copying process, and indeed thought the

⁶ Starck, 1724: 795–797; Schneider, 1929, 47–56, 105, 108.

⁷ SUL, HP 29/2/12A.

financial risk would militate against their publication, nonetheless just over two weeks later on 8/18 June 1631 von Sack wrote to him outlining how money had been given to support the printing of *Iosephus Redivivus*.⁸ As we have seen, von Sack provided a preface under an acronym to *Iosephus Redivivus* and the work would be reprinted at Amsterdam in 1635 by Bernt Arents. For his part, Permeier began corresponding with Hartlib by 1643. Like Hartlib, he too developed an epistolary network, the *Societas Regalis Jesu Christi*, whose aim was to initiate a ‘general reformation’ through the circulation of key aspects of knowledge during the last days before the apocalypse. Dury, however, came to regard Permeier as ‘a very strange man’ puffed up with extravagant fantasies, such as bestowing upon himself the title of ‘Great Monarch’ and who knew what else.⁹

Dury himself was no stranger to the Netherlands and northern Germany. Born in Edinburgh, educated at the Walloon seminary in Leiden, the Huguenot academy in Sédan and briefly at Oxford, he was the son of an exiled Scottish Presbyterian minister and skilled in several languages. Dury had served as minister of the secret Walloon Church (‘du Verger’) in Cologne and afterwards as pastor of the English and Scottish merchant congregation at Elbing, where he became acquainted with Hartlib. In July 1631 he had embarked from England on a mission to meet Gustavus Adolphus (1594–1632) king of Sweden, who was thought to be encamped at the Pomeranian capital Stettin (modern Szczecin, Poland). Writing to Hartlib, Dury recalled that en route he had stopped eight days at Amsterdam. There he attended to some business with Justinus van Assche (1596–1650), an Emden-born student of theology and medicine educated at the universities of Franeker and St Andrews, and Petrus Serrarius (1600–1669), London-born son of an affluent Walloon merchant. Afterwards Dury was shown ‘divers secrets in nature’ at Hamburg by Joachim Jungius (1587–1657), a mathematician, educational reformer and professor of natural science.¹⁰ In 1622 Jungius had established an academy at Rostock called the *Societas Ereunetica* or *Societas Zetetica*, a short-lived Baconian enterprise financially supported by Leonhard Elver of Lübeck (probably Boehme’s contact of that name). Accordingly, Dury regarded Jungius as an autodidact with an extraordinary ‘German wit’. Jungius also maintained an extensive correspondence network. Thus Morsius

⁸ Gilly, 2007a: 85–88.

⁹ SUL, HP 3/1/1A; HP 3/1/5B.

¹⁰ SUL, HP 60/5/1A–2A; HP 1/9/4B.

would write to him in September 1643 concerning the apparent dispersal of Rosicrucian texts to a dozen prominent recipients (including Johann Moriaen ‘most pious chemist’), not to mention a request that Morsius be remembered to certain ‘eminent citizens’ of Jungius’s ‘republic’ – particularly the ‘most distinguished’ Lutheran theologian and supposed author of two Rosicrucian tracts Johann Valentin Andreae (1586–1654), Dury, Hartlib and ‘other British people’.¹¹

Tarrying at Hamburg longer than expected because a wagon had been robbed, Dury eventually made his way in a convoy of two armed coaches to Lübeck, principle city of the Hanseatic League. From there his party sailed to Stralsund and thence to Stettin, where Dury prevailed on his acquaintance Sir David Drummond (1593–1638), a colonel in the Swedish army and governor of the town, to secure lodgings for him.¹² On 1/11 May 1634 Dury returned to Hamburg, this time in an attempt to reconcile the Lutheran and Calvinist churches in the region. Writing to William Laud, archbishop of Canterbury, he related how the churches of Hamburg, Lübeck and Lüneburg had collectively decided on proceeding uniformly in public matters as a triple ministry – ‘particularly in dealing with the Socinians; with the Swenckfeldians; & with a new sect of enthusiasticall Prophets’, which was causing them a great deal of trouble.¹³

That Dury was aware of these so-called new prophets suggests that he had met with Nicolaus Hunnius (1585–1643), Lutheran superintendent of Lübeck as well as with other ‘preachers & learned men’.¹⁴ Hunnius had previously published treatises at Wittenberg attacking the doctrines of Paracelsus, Caspar Schwenckfeld, Valentin Weigel and the Rosicrucians, and in 1634 he followed this by producing an exhaustive several-hundred page ‘report on the new prophets’.¹⁵ Addressing Lübeck’s inhabitants, Hunnius exhorted communal action against ‘the enemy’:

should not all orders and ranks, where such an evil bestirs itself, do nothing else but join together, helping to control and to dampen, as must occur by an outbreak of fire, and not desist before the evil is remedied, and all is returned to a peaceful prosperity?

¹¹ SUL, HP 29/3/14B, 15A; HP 2/6/6A, 7B; Rothkegel, 2005: 73, 76, 77, 87, 90–91, 96, 354–355, 377, 528–532.

¹² SUL, HP 60/5/2A–B; BL, MS Sloane 654: fol. 283^r.

¹³ PA, MS Braye 1: fol. 145^{r-v}; TNA: PRO, SP 16/283: fol. 216^v.

¹⁴ TNA: PRO, SP 16/269: fol. 1^r; cf. SUL, HP 42/13/5A; HP 5/28/1A-2B; HP 5/28/4B; HP 6/4/68B; HP 2/2/30A; HP 2/9/17B; HP 6/4/153B.

¹⁵ Hunnius, 1634.

Chief among these ‘enthusiasts’ was the Bohemian-born chiliast and visionary Paul Felgenhauer (1593–1661), whose *Das Geheymnus von Tempel des Herrn* ([Amsterdam: Johann Janssonius], 1631) had been sold in Lübeck’s market and whose ‘false teachings’ Hunnius condemned as engendering conflict, strife and disorder.¹⁶ But the group also included the Wittenberg-educated preacher Christoph Andreas Raselius (1590–1660), author of several printed works including *Der güldene Schlüssel Davids / zum Hause Gottes* (1632), as well as three of Morsius’s associates: Elver, Wessel and Tanckmar.¹⁷

Significantly, Dury had previously written to Felgenhauer on 14/24 September 1632, probably from Frankfurt am Main. Assuming that a copy of this letter has survived, Dury here addressed Felgenhauer as a brother in Christ, compassionately reminding him of God’s mercy towards repentant sinners. He then gently pointed out some errors of scriptural interpretation in both Felgenhauer’s *Aurora Sapientiae Das ist Morgenröthe der Weißheit* ([Magdeburg: Lorenz Grammendorf], 1628) and the above mentioned *Das Geheymnus von Tempel des Herrn*. Acknowledging his own sinful condition, Dury outlined his vision of Christian unity and concomitant aversion to schisms and divisions.¹⁸ The contrast in tone and approach to Hunnius is not only noticeable but indicative of Dury’s mission to peaceably settle theological differences among contending Protestant confessions and spiritual communities. Indeed, having noted in his ephemerides for 1634 that Morsius had all of Boehme’s books, Hartlib added Dury’s information that Felgenhauer’s *Aurora Sapientiae* and *Tempel* were highly recommended.¹⁹ By 1635 *Aurora Sapientiae* had been translated into English at the behest of ‘Mr Ruthen’, a man who also conducted alchemical experiments.²⁰ Most likely he can be identified as Patrick Ruthven (1584–1652), youngest son of William Ruthven, first earl of Gowrie, whose alchemical commonplace-book is still extant. Ruthven thought Felgenhauer’s *Aurora Sapientiae* ‘one of the sublimest bookes’ that he had ever read, ‘wherin is compacted a whole body of spiritual divinity in all their

¹⁶ Strandquist, 2012: 32–34, 152–156.

¹⁷ Starck, 1724: 790–797, 805, 966–967, 971–976; Schneider, 1929: 47, 100, 105, 108; Strandquist, 2012: 156–60.

¹⁸ SUL, HP 29/2/15A; BL, MS Sloane 654: fols. 153^r–54^v. Although Hartlib noted in his ephemerides for early 1634 that he did not yet have a copy, I am assuming that this is the undated letter from Dury to Felgenhauer preserved amongst copies of Dury’s correspondence in the Sloane manuscript.

¹⁹ SUL, HP 29/2/12B, 15A, 18B, 20A; HP 29/2/25B, 26A.

²⁰ SUL, HP 27/34/6A; HP 29/3/31A, B; HP 29/2/14B; HP 29/2/39A; HP 29/3/2B; HP 29/3/63A; HP 30/4/11A.

new-principles, so that all Men must admire it'.²¹ Even so, Hartlib believed it contained a horrible error concerning Christ's flesh. Elsewhere in Hartlib's papers is a copy of letter written from Amsterdam in September 1638. Its author angrily wondered if Felgenhauer was sane, denounced whoever approved of Felgenhauer's prophecies and condemned his doctrine as diabolical: 'this monstrous man is not ashamed to affirm that Christ and Beelzebub are one and the same'.²²

Dury too eventually despaired. Writing from Hamburg in March 1640, he recounted a 'face to face' doctrinal dispute with Felgenhauer whom Dury now regarded as a 'dangerous man' and propagator of an ancient heresy concerning Christ's human nature (Felgenhauer denied Christ's humanity, believing him to be entirely divine). Fearful lest Felgenhauer persuade the simpler sort with his overly-confident claims to unfold the mysteries of Scripture, Dury mildly attempted to lead him away from error but found Felgenhauer maintaining 'strange evasions & perversions of the sense' of key biblical passages:

Lastly I laboured to put him in doubt with his opinion in opposing the Authority of those Authors *which* hee did most esteeme of unto his judgement, as Iacob Boheme & <Schwenkfeld,> who all though they agree *with* him & indeed are more sound & *profound* then hee in the Spirituall Sense of holy Scripture & in the knowledge of heavenly Mysteryes yet deny not the truth of Christs humane nature... but hee did not yeeld at all any respect unto their Iudgement noe not soe much as to bee willing to doubt & Suspend his opinion in reverence to them whom in other things hee acknowledged to have beene his Masters.²³

Just as Dury wrote to and then encountered Felgenhauer, so he would have dealings with three more of the so-called 'new prophets': Morsius's associates Leonhard Elver, Johann Wessel and Johann Tanckmar. Although Elver had several namesakes with whom he has often been confused, notably Leonhard Elver (1564–1631) lawyer and sometime mayor of Lüneburg, it seems that Boehme's contact, Nagel's dedicatee, Jungius's financial backer and Morsius's acquaintance were all the same person.²⁴ Doubtless he was also the same man, described as a patrician of Lübeck, who

²¹ SUL, HP 29/3/31A.

²² SUL, HP 29/3/31B; HP 27/7/6A; cf. BL, MS Sloane 638: fol. 24^r.

²³ SUL, HP 1/29/6A; HP 1/29/18A; HP 6/4/30A-32B; HP 2/2/1A; HP 30/4/53A.

²⁴ I am grateful to Leigh Penman for discussing this point.

requested Dury to have the works of Francis Bacon sent to him.²⁵ Regarding Wessel, Dury met him at Tanckmar's house in Lübeck. Indeed, Dury's presence at Tanckmar's dwelling, which can be dated to either sometime between July and August 1631 or more likely between May and June 1634, was cited as evidence against Wessel by the Lübeck ministry during their proceedings in early 1635.²⁶ For his part, Tanckmar was subsequently mentioned in correspondence dating from 1639 between Johann Moriaen and Hartlib; between Justinus van Assche and Dury; and between Dury and an unknown recipient.²⁷ Moreover, Tanckmar wrote several letters to John Winthrop from Hamburg between October 1642 and September 1649. Besides these connections, the Silesian physician, linguist and educational reformer Cyprian Kinner (*d.*1649) was also familiar with Tanckmar. Writing from Elbing in July 1648, Kinner informed Hartlib that Tanckmar was a well-known educationalist and counsellor of the Duchy of Saxe-Lauenburg. Kinner hoped that through Tanckmar's intercession he would be able to get a copy of his short pedagogical work *Cogitationum didacticarum Diatyposis summaria* to Jungius.²⁸ Afterwards Hartlib recorded in his ephemerides that Tanckmar was a 'great Chymist' and Dury's 'special acquaintance'. According to Dury, who was then in Hamburg, Tanckmar hoped to attain understanding of the whole process of the 'great Worke' of 'spiritual Regeneration'.²⁹

II

Within just under a decade of Boehme's death three of his works had been published: two in the original German, *Der Weg zu Christo* (1624, 1628) and *Iosephus Redivivus* (1631), one in Latin translation, *Ψυχολογια vera I.B.T.* (1632). Autographs and manuscript copies of his treatises and letters were also circulating. During this period the French invaded Italy and the Swedes Germany. The Protestant city of Magdeburg was sacked and an estimated 20,000 of its inhabitants slaughtered by Imperialist troops of the Catholic League (May 1631), their terrible fate widely publicised in newsbooks, pamphlets and broadsheets. Gustavus Adolphus with his Saxon allies

²⁵ SUL, HP 2/6/6A.

²⁶ Starck, 1724: 809; Strandquist, 2012: 157–158.

²⁷ SUL, HP 37/24A; HP 37/29A; HP 5/29/1A, 4A; HP 1/21/1A; HP 37/54A; HP 37/66A.

²⁸ SUL, HP 1/33/41A; HP 21/34/12A–B.

²⁹ SUL, HP 28/2/22A, 33A; HP 4/2/27B, 45B.

triumphed against the Imperialists at Breitenfeld (September 1631), routed the Imperialists again at Rain (April 1632), but was then himself slain during another Swedish engagement at Lützen (November 1632). Certain Protestant commentators had interpreted Gustavus Adolphus's dramatic victories as providential blows struck by the faithful against 'Romish superstition', while he himself was seen as 'the golden issue of Heaven', a '*Deliverer*' who would unite the contending Lutherans and Calvinists of Germany and open a pathway to the 'very gates of *Rome*', citadel of Antichrist.³⁰ Moreover, some believed him to be the living fulfilment of prophecies concerning both the appearance of a new star in the constellation of Cassiopeia and the coming of a Lion of the North, or Midnight Lion. Even his death on the battlefield did not immediately prevent the circulation of visions that Gustavus Adolphus was still abroad and would return to fight the 'blind whore of Babylon'.³¹ Little wonder that one of the 'new prophets', Christoph Andreas Raselius, dedicated a work to him.³²

Despite the devastation caused by years of war, the Free Imperial city of Hamburg continued – in Geoffrey Parker's words – to sustain 'a brisk maritime trade' and even benefited from an influx of immigrants. Meanwhile the Hanseatic city of Lübeck, site of a peace treaty signed by Christian IV of Denmark (May 1629), was spared besiegement partly because of its policy of neutrality, partly through expedient financial 'contributions' to threatening military commanders. Combined with expensive fortifications and the heavy taxation needed to pay for them, this resulted in a prolonged financial crisis exacerbated by hyperinflation, outbreaks of plague and a steady flow of refugees.³³

As several historians have documented, there were dozens of Lutheran lay prophets spreading their message in northern Europe during the Thirty Years' War; to say nothing of their Calvinist and Catholic counterparts. Besides Felgenhauer it seems likely that several of the 'new prophets' active in Lübeck were also familiar with Boehme's writings. Moreover, we have seen that Boehme was not being read in isolation but alongside Agrippa, Arndt, Luther, Paracelsus, Schwenckfeld and Tauler as well as an assortment of alchemical, apocalyptic, astrological, magical, medical and Rosicrucian texts. Yet with one known exception (of which more shortly), the

³⁰ Forbes, 1631: sig. A^r-2; Gil, 1632: 44; Gouge, 1632: 284–291.

³¹ *CSPD 1633–1634*: 204.

³² Raselius, 1632.

³³ Parker, 1987: 79–80, 212; Strandquist, 2012: 7–8, 114–138, 143.

only English speakers familiar with Boehme at this time were foreigners, emigrants or those who had travelled through the United Provinces and Holy Roman Empire. It must be emphasised that these people tended to read either German or Latin, and usually both languages. Apart from Hartlib and Dury, it is possible that one or two English merchants resident in Hamburg and Elbing may have known of Boehme. Similarly, it is not implausible to suggest that a few Scottish soldiers serving in the Swedish army may also have heard of 'Teutonicus'. If so, an example might include Dury's acquaintance Sir David Drummond since another member of the House of Drummond, David Drummond (1611–1692), third Lord Madertie, would possess an extensively annotated copy of Boehme's *The Way to Christ* (1656).³⁴

As for Hartlib, by summer 1634 he was not only well-informed as to who possessed copies of Boehme's books and manuscripts but also knew of Felgenhauer, Morsius, Permeier, von Keerbergen, von Sack and Werdenhagen.³⁵ In addition, Dury had met both Tanckmar and Wessel. This was entirely in accord with their burgeoning circle's wider project to effect unity among Protestants; or as Dury termed it, the work of 'ecclesiasticall pacification' to resolve the 'lamentable breach' between Calvinists and Lutherans.³⁶ Indeed, in an undated document seemingly drafted between about November 1633 and March 1634 Dury outlined several reasons for his planned journey to Germany. Besides advancing the cause of 'Peace in the Churches', he intended to discover more about particular fields that the Reformers were said to excel 'former ages and other societies' in – notably unveiling 'the mysteriyes of the Propheticall scriptures'; perfecting knowledge of the 'Orientall tongues' so as to deal with the Jews, whose calling was supposedly imminent; 'Arts and Sciences Philosophicall, Chymicall & Mechanicall; whereby ... the secrets of Nature are thought to be unfolded'; and a 'Magicall Language wherby secrets may bee delivered and preserved'. Furthermore, Dury wanted to learn about:

The state of the Churches in Germ[any]: to know all the sects, divisions and subdivisions of them that professe Christ in those places with their particular and different opinions, and the circumstances, occasions, causes and effects of their controversiyes, as for example of the Socin[ians], Sem[i]-Arri[ans], Anabaptists, Swenkfeldians, Famelists, Weigelians, Nagelians, & to purchase the chief bookes of all their Tenents, and to observe the

³⁴ Innerpeffray Library, F5.

³⁵ SUL, HP 29/2/43A.

³⁶ SUL, HP 1/9/1A–6B.

difference of their Churches, orders and customes serving either for Decency or Discipline.

Finally, Dury determined to gather intelligence about:

The notable and eminent men either in sects as Ring Leaders of the rest, or in the Church as lights to others, or in the Common wealth as nursing Fathers, that wee may know them & w[ha]t use may bee made of them to good works or w[ha]t evill may bee feared from them.³⁷

Against this backdrop, the triple ministry of Hamburg, Lübeck and Lüneburg collectively wrote to their confessional counterparts at Amsterdam concerning both Felgenhauer's *Tempel* and a forthcoming work whose printing and distribution they wished to prevent. This book was to be published at Amsterdam by Johann Janssonius and they gave its title as 'Morgenröthe der Weißheit', presumably identifying it as Felgenhauer's *Aurora Sapientiae Das ist Morgenröthe der Weißheit*.³⁸ As János Bruckner has persuasively suggested, however, the triple ministry were in error since Felgenhauer's *Aurora Sapientiae* had been issued in 1628 at Magdeburg and 1629 at Amsterdam – but did not appear thereafter under that title. Rather another work was apparently meant: Boehme's *Aurora Das ist: Morgen Röthe im Auffgang und Mutter der Philosophiae*. Although this book was issued without notice of either printer or publisher, the Frankfurt book fair catalogue of autumn 1634 indicates that it had been published earlier that year at Amsterdam by Janssonius.³⁹ Bruckner's point is strengthened by a letter from the Lübeck ministry to the town council written during their campaign against 'fanatical' books in January 1633. Here they highlighted the dangers posed by several works that were being smuggled into Lübeck from Amsterdam and, they suspected, Görlitz – namely Felgenhauer's *Morgenröthe der Weißheit* and *Spiegel der Weißheit und Wahrheit* ([Johann Janssonius], 1632), as well as Boehme's *Iosephus Redivivus*. Condemning the 'enthusiastic spirit' of their enemies together with their belief in Christ's imminent thousand-year monarchy, the ministry urged the magistracy to join them in their fight against perceived Enthusiasm.⁴⁰

³⁷ BL, MS Sloane 654: fols. 247^r–49^v; SUL, HP 18/17/2A–3B.

³⁸ Starck, 1724: 973–974.

³⁹ Bruckner, 1971: x–xi, 40, 62–63.

⁴⁰ Starck, 1724: 974–976; Bruckner, 1971: x.

Evidently by incorporating Boehme into the titles of a couple of his own books – a later treatise was called *Mysterium Magnum* – Felgenhauer confused some contemporaries as to their authorship. Indeed, a seventeenth-century owner of several of Felgenhauer’s works in English supplied an erroneous attribution on the flyleaf; ‘this manuscript I take be parte of Ja. Boehmens workes translated’.⁴¹ To complicate matters further, Felgenhauer sometimes adopted pseudonyms such as ‘Christianum Crucigerum’ and probably also ‘[Sancto] Johannes de Monte’ and ‘Angeli Mariani’.⁴² While ‘Johannes de Monte’ partially resembles Abraham von Franckenberg’s alias ‘A. Franc. de Monte. S.’, scholars have generally followed the Pietist historian Gottfried Arnold in identifying ‘Angeli Mariani’ as Boehme’s Latin translator Johannes Angelius Werdenhagen.⁴³ This seems unlikely because the contemporary English translator of ‘The Gate of the Heart sett open to the true Kingdome of Christ’ ascribed it to P[aul] F[elgenhauer] under the supposed name ‘Angelus Marianus’. Whatever its attribution, *Offene Hertzens-Pforte Oder Getreue und freye Einleitung* was written in 1632 and dedicated to the Swedish Chancellor Axel Oxenstierna, but possibly not published until 1685.⁴⁴

Despite these misunderstandings, Dury at least was careful to distinguish authorship. Thus, he evidently clarified the distinction between Felgenhauer’s *Aurora Sapientiae* and Boehme’s *Aurora* since Hartlib subsequently noted in his ephemerides under the heading ‘spiritual theology’ that there were ‘2. of the Aurora’s’.⁴⁵ Nonetheless, Janssonius’s edition of Boehme’s *Aurora* was based on a flawed and abridged copy of Boehme’s text, occasioning a new edition printed at Amsterdam in 1656. Although one modern scholar thought that Werdenhagen oversaw the 1634 version, this has been convincingly challenged by Carlos Gilly who demonstrated that the editor was Abraham Willemsz van Beyerland (1587–1648).⁴⁶ For reasons of space discussion of van Beyerland’s important contribution must regrettably be omitted. Instead, it is necessary to consider contemporaneous developments in England.

⁴¹ BL, MS Sloane 728, fly-leaf.

⁴² SUL, HP 29/2/12B, 18B.

⁴³ Arnold, 1700, part iv: 647–652.

⁴⁴ BL, MS Sloane 1304: fols. 68^r–81^r.

⁴⁵ SUL, HP 29/3/26B.

⁴⁶ Gilly, 2007b: 101–105.

III

Just as all but one of the first English speakers who knew about Boehme were foreigners, emigrants or those who had travelled abroad, so the first known reader of Boehme in England was also a foreigner. This was Theodore Graw (c.1600–fl.1658), Latinized as Theodoricus Gravius. Until relatively recently Gravius had attracted little attention, except from a handful of specialists mainly researching Boehme’s reception. But he is now the subject a fine little article by Will Poole.⁴⁷ Originating from Spangenberg in the Landgraviate of Hesse and with an academic peregrination that took in the universities of Marburg (1615), Herborn (May 1617), Wittenberg (May 1618), Atldorf (October 1618) and Jena (1623), Gravius recounted in an autobiographical preface dated 6 August 1631 to his ‘highly revered’ benefactor Richard Napier (1559–1634) that for sixteen years he had been a student of various disciplines – notably theology, Peripatetic physics, Galenic medicine, astronomy and chymistry.⁴⁸ Exiled from his German homeland by the tumults of the Thirty Years’ War and ‘abandoning his benches and furnaces’,⁴⁹ Gravius eventually made his way to the United Provinces where he corresponded with Caspar Barlaeus (1584–1648), shortly to be appointed professor of philosophy at the Athenaeum Illustre in Amsterdam. While at Haarlem on 2/12 June 1630 Gravius completed the annotation, and seemingly also transcription, of a work simply called ‘Das III Buch’. In his mid-nineteenth century catalogue of Elias Ashmole’s manuscripts bequeathed to the Bodleian Library, William Black erroneously described this document as ‘eleven chapters of a Dutch treatise on mystical philosophy, the secret nature of things, and the philosophers’ stone’; with marginal notes by Gravius. Actually, this manuscript was a German text that would not be published in the original language for thirty years: Boehme’s *Hohe und tieffe Gründe von dem Dreyfachen Leben des Menschen* (Amsterdam: Hendrick Beets, 1660). The English version would be called *The Third Booke of the Authour being The High and Deepe Searching out of The Threefold Life of Man* (London: Humphrey Blunden, 1650).⁵⁰

It is unclear how Gravius had obtained Boehme’s third book. But by mid-February 1631, and probably ‘extremely poor’, he can be placed at Great Linford,

⁴⁷ Poole, 2009: 239–252.

⁴⁸ Bodl., MS Ashmole 756: fols. 1^r–2^v, 4^r; Poole, 2009: 240–241.

⁴⁹ Bodl., MS Ashmole 1399, part II: fols. 72^r, 76^r, 77^v; Poole, 2009: 240.

⁵⁰ Bodl., MS Ashmole 1442 V; Black, 1845: col. 1199.

Buckinghamshire where the astrological physician Richard Napier was rector. There this ‘extremely honest’ German ‘Medico-chemic’ worked ‘assiduously and diligently’ in Napier’s laboratory – as Napier recounted to his patient George Hakewill (1578–1649), a Calvinist clergyman and controversialist with whom Gravius subsequently corresponded.⁵¹ On 6 August 1631 Gravius completed his translation of a treatise entitled ‘De Signatura Rerum Liber Harmonicus Theosophicus et Philosophicus’. Black mistakenly thought this was a Latin translation from the Dutch of a work by ‘Conradus’; presumably Conrad Khunrath (*d.*1613?), Paracelsian physician of Leipzig. Although Conrad did not write such a work, his more famous younger brother Heinrich Khunrath (1560–1605) of Leipzig, ‘doctor of both medicines and faithful lover of theosophy’, had published a book called *De signatura rerum naturalium theses* (Basel, 1588).⁵² However, Gravius’s translation has long been identified as the opening nine or so chapters of Boehme’s ‘Signatura Rerum’ (completed by August 1621), a work that would not be published in the original German until 1635.⁵³ Predating Werdenhagen’s *Ψυχολογια vera I.B.T.* by several months, it therefore represents the earliest extant translation of ‘Teutonicus’. Moreover, as Poole has rightly observed, since Gravius incorporated a preface addressed to Napier in which he extolled ‘this divine author’, ‘De Signatura Rerum’ is thus the earliest known Boehme translation ‘prepared for an English reader’.⁵⁴ Gravius’s decision to render Boehme – presumably from the original German – into Latin rather than English also suggests that he was more comfortable with the former language, the common tongue of European scholarship.

Besides Boehme, Gravius compiled Latin excerpts from the fifth edition of Conrad Khunrath’s German work *Medulla Destillatoria et Medica* (originally published in 1594), which Napier apparently lent to one Mr Bates on 27 February 1632. In 1632 he also translated from a German manuscript into Latin some alchemical procedures by master Olevianus – doubtless Francis Anthony Olevian (*d.*1646?), a learned physician originating from Oggersheim in the Lower Palatinate who had been admitted to Gloucester Hall, Oxford in 1616 and who would be endenized in May 1633. There are, moreover, a number of other surviving

⁵¹ Bodl., MS Ashmole 1492, part VIII: 105–106, 109; Poole, 2009: 243.

⁵² Black, 1845: col. 368. I am grateful to Peter Forshaw for clarifying the sometimes questioned relationship between Conrad and Heinrich Khunrath.

⁵³ Struck, 1936: 196 n. 8; Buddecke, 1937–1957, vol. 2: 233–234.

⁵⁴ Bodl., MS Ashmole 756: fol. 1^v; Poole, 2009: 240.

alchemical and medical manuscripts in Gravius's hand. Not to mention a political allegory concerning Maximilian I (1573–1651), Duke and Elector of Bavaria – similar to a 1632 satirical pamphlet, originally issued in German, celebrating Gustavus Adolphus's victories; the first section of the fifth book of George Hakewill's *Apologie or Declaration of the Power and Providence of God* (c.1631); and some correspondence.

Following Napier's death at the beginning of April 1634, supposedly while on his knees in prayer, Gravius was endenized on 8 July and then succeeded his patron as rector of Great Linford when he was presented to the living on 7 September 1634 by Napier's nephew Richard, a licensed physician and Fellow of All Souls, Oxford. Yet there would be prolonged periods when Gravius was not resident, notably because of his travels overseas including a trip to Paris and perhaps also Amsterdam. Various documents – Bishop's transcripts, a glebe terrier, taking the Protestation oath, a sizeable contribution in aid of Protestants in Ireland – indicate his presence at Great Linford between March 1637 and January 1642. Some years later Gravius was mentioned briefly in several letters from Dury to Hartlib, as well as in the House of Commons regarding whether he should be naturalized. On 9 September 1658 he signed articles of agreement concerning the enclosure of land in Great Linford, but on 18 May 1661 Gravius was succeeded as rector by George Kindleton (*d.*1667). At present nothing else is known of him. He was not buried at Great Linford.⁵⁵ Nor has a will or an administration been found. Moreover, Gravius is not listed as an ejected clergyman. So he may have gone abroad again.

Important questions remain, however, as to what motivated Gravius to transcribe and translate Boehme, as well as how he obtained certain texts by 'Teutonicus'. Firstly, there is 'Das III Buch'. The published Dutch version entitled *Het derde Boeck des Auteurs, Zynde Hooge ende diepe Gronden van 't drievoudigh leven des Menschen* was issued without indication of printer, publisher, translator or date. Even so, it certainly preceded the English *Threefold Life of Man* (1650) and German *Dreyfachen Leben des Menschen* (1660). Moreover, the Dutch edition incorporated an ornate title-page depicting a celestial tree inscribed with the names of Christ in Latin and Jehovah in Hebrew. The tree is nourished by the water of life and surrounding it are twelve people seated on clouds, with an additional six figures behind them (three on the right,

⁵⁵ Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies, PR 131/1/1.

three on the left). Below are fifteen men representing various philosophical schools, seemingly oblivious to the heavenly scene. It was engraved by Salomon Savery (1593–1683), and contained a forward by ‘V.L. Mede-Borgher van dese wereldt’ (‘fellow citizen of this world’), a phrase used by Abraham Willemsz van Beyerland. Since van Beyerland employed the same expression in his forward to a two-part Dutch selection of Boehme’s writings printed at Amsterdam between November 1634 and December 1635 by Paulus Aertsz van Ravesteyn (c.1586–1655), *Drievoudigh leven des Menschen* has correctly been dated 1636. Yet there are notable differences between Gravius’s manuscript and van Beyerland’s printed edition, which was based on a copy in the hand of Christian Bernhard of Sagan that had been ‘spared from the destruction of war’.⁵⁶ Although both contain a brief description of the contents of Boehme’s third book (also present in the printed English and German versions), Gravius’s manuscript lacks a summary of every paragraph prior to each chapter. Also absent from Gravius’s manuscript is the paragraph numbering present in the printed editions. Consequently, while Gravius may have obtained the original manuscript during the first half of 1630 from someone within van Beyerland’s circle, it is equally likely that he did not – especially since van Beyerland’s interest in Boehme seems to date from after his writings began to be published at Amsterdam in summer 1631. Instead, as we shall see, Gravius may have acquired it from a different community of Boehme readers.

Secondly, there is ‘De Signatura Rerum’. Although issued in German in 1635 without indication of printer, publisher or translator, the work was listed among several Boehme titles in Johann Janssonius’s *Catalogus librorum* (Amsterdam, 1640). This suggests Janssonius had published as well as sold it at Amsterdam. *De Signatura Rerum* also contained a forward by ‘E.L. Mitburger von dieser Welt’ – van Beyerland’s customary tag.⁵⁷ The Dutch origin of Gravius’s manuscript is confirmed in his preface to Napier, where he bemoaned that he had acquired it at considerable expense and difficulty from Holland.⁵⁸ Ernestine van der Wall has proposed that the person who procured him the text was Petrus Serrarius, and this will be discussed more fully shortly.⁵⁹ As for Gravius’s translation itself, his version contains paragraph numbering whereas van Beyerland’s edition does not. Yet Gravius’s Latin so closely

⁵⁶ Böhme, [1636]: sigs. A2^r–A3^{v-2}; Gilly, 2007a: 81, 83, 92.

⁵⁷ *Catalogus librorum* (Amsterdam: J. Janssonius, 1640), sig. X^v; Böhme, 1635: sigs. Aii^r–Aiiii^v.

⁵⁸ Bodl., MS Ashmole 756: fol. 1^v.

⁵⁹ Van der Wall, 1987: 71 n. 653.

resembles the printed German – and indeed the printed English translation of 1651 (which does have numbered paragraphs) – as to suggest that all three versions ultimately derive from a common German manuscript.

Regarding motivation, by the time he transcribed and translated ‘Teutonicus’, Gravius had become an adherent neither of Aristotle nor Galen ‘but of truth’.⁶⁰ Accordingly, he urged his patron Napier to facilitate the dissemination of Boehme’s texts both in the original and Latin since Gravius considered Boehme to be an original and challenging thinker; one that rewarded perseverance and who had been unjustly stigmatised for his obscurity and inherent difficulty.⁶¹ Elsewhere among Gravius’s extant papers is a Latin commentary on selections from Boehme’s theosophy. Consisting of several pages in Gravius’s hand, it briefly outlines Boehme’s ideas concerning the great mysteries of God, eternity, creation, Chaos, Sophia or wisdom, the archetypal world, angels, the Devil, the microcosm of man, Christ and the Philosophers’ stone. Interestingly, it concludes with a brief statement in support of the secret brotherhood of the Rosicrucians, whom Gravius felt had been unfairly criticized. Since many of these themes are treated in the third and seventh chapters of Boehme’s ‘Signatura Rerum’, this text was likely Gravius’s principal source. Gravius compiled his reading of these extracts for ‘R.T.’, whose approbation he sought for this endeavour.⁶² R.T., however, is otherwise unknown. So perhaps these letters did not signify someone’s initials, but rather an abbreviation for ‘Reverendum Tuum’; i.e. Napier. Either way, it alerts us to the significance of Gravius’s social network.

Between the conclusion of his university career and the outbreak of the English Civil War, Gravius can be linked with more than thirty people. Besides his mother and some female medical patients, they were all men. Among them were scholars, clergymen, physicians, apothecaries, a merchant and an artist. Gravius’s correspondence in Latin, German and Dutch with some of these figures survives. Thus he exchanged letters with Roger Langford, Fellow of Jesus College, Oxford about Paracelsus and the Philosophers’ stone together with miscellaneous chymical matters. Other people from whom he received epistles and to whom he sometimes drafted replies included Caspar Barlaeus (March 1626 & September 1630), Adam Heinrich von Lunigenberg (November 1626), Petrus Serrarius (February 1631 &

⁶⁰ Bodl., MS Ashmole 1399, part II: fol. 76^r; Poole, 2009: 240.

⁶¹ Bodl., MS Ashmole 756: fols. 1^v–2^v.

⁶² Bodl., MS Ashmole 1399, part II: fols. 88^r–93^v.

September 1633), Henri vom Steenwijck (May 1632), Mr Alardin (May 1632), Richard Napier (April 1633), George Hakewill (undated), Edmund Deane (January 1634), and Philippus Gualterus Schreckenfuchs (July 1641).

Barlaeus has been mentioned briefly. Von Lunigenberg was a knight of Meissen and had signed an album amicorum at Jena in August 1620 (a university where Gravius matriculated in 1623). Vom Steenwijck was the Flemish Baroque painter Hendrik van Steenwijck the younger (c.1580–1640?) who was then living in London. On 21 April 1632 Gravius had sent him two texts: *Wasserstein der Weysen* (Frankfurt, 1619), an alchemical work attributed to Johann Siebmacher and commended by Boehme; and a copy of Boehme's 'Explicatio', which may have been Gravius's Latin commentary on selections from Boehme's theosophy discussed above. Steenwijck then forwarded these documents to Mr Alardin, while Gravius drafted a letter in German to the same unidentified man. Schreckenfuchs wrote from Southampton but originated from Oppenheim in the Palatinate. In May 1637 he was admitted as a student at Groningen University and afterwards signed the album amicorum of the biblical scholar Jacobus Alting. Edmund Deane (1572–c.1640) was an Oxford-educated medical doctor living at York who had written a little treatise in English on the medicinal properties of acidic spa water found near Knaresborough. He had also edited a collection of eight tracts by the Bristol alchemist Samuel Norton, published as separate volumes at Frankfurt in 1630 by William Fitzer. Interestingly, Fitzer had previously issued a book by the Rosicrucian apologist Robert Fludd (1574–1637). Deane evidently sought patronage through his edition of Norton and among the various dedicatees was Edmund Sheffield, first earl of Mulgrave (1565–1646), an acquaintance of Fludd's as well as an auditor and supporter of John Everard (c.1584–1640/41), Doctor of Divinity, author, scribe and translator of alchemical and mystical works as well as writings attributed to Hermes Trismegistus.

As for Serrarius, he was born in London and baptized at the French Church in Threadneedle Street on 11 May 1600. He matriculated at Christ Church, Oxford in November 1617 and then studied theology at the Walloon seminary in Leiden, where he remained until 1623. Afterwards he matriculated at Leiden University in May 1624. In June 1626 Serrarius succeeded Dury as minister of the secret Walloon Church in Cologne. Serrarius, however, was subsequently suspected of an unspecified disciplinary error and removed by the Walloon synod after less than two years. Although the evidence is retrospective, it has been suggested that he had imprudently

expressed heterodox opinions – variously thought to be the teachings of Schwenckfeld, millenarian beliefs, enthusiasm for mystical theology or rejecting the notion that Christ had assumed human nature. Thereafter Serrarius studied medicine at Groningen University, where he matriculated on 9/19 December 1628. From Groningen he wrote in Latin to his friend Dury (then at Elbing) in February 1629. But by September 1629 Serrarius had abandoned his formal medical studies and settled at Amsterdam. There he developed an interest in chymistry, married Sara Paul van Offenbach in 1630 and then obtained work as a proofreader for Janssonius. Apart from intermittent trips to England, Serrarius would reside at Amsterdam for the remainder of his life, living near the Westerkerk on Prinsengracht next to a brewery at ‘The Red Heart’ in later years. Throughout this time he also engaged in correspondence, writing regularly to Justinus van Assche at Middelburg and occasionally to Gravius at Great Linford.

These letters discuss a variety of topics such as the military situation in Germany and alchemical preparations, as well as mentioning several individuals – including three known to Serrarius, van Assche and Gravius: Laeckhuysen, Popkenii and Salomon. They can be identified as Cornelis Laakhuysen (1583–1648?), Popke Popkens (*fl.*1662) and Salomon Opey (*d.*1661). Significantly, all three men were Mennonites. Laakhuysen was a button-seller, lay preacher and advocate of community of goods who was banished from the ‘Oude Vlamingen’ congregation and thereafter joined the Waterlanders in November 1637. He was also a poet and, according to one modern commentator, influenced by Boehme. Popkens was a prominent member of the Waterlander congregation at Groningen, while Opey was a craftsman at Amsterdam specialised in the manufacture of ebony furniture with silver mounts. Opey also knew Johann Permeier and the Mennonite Anthon van Hoeck, while Popkens corresponded with the so-called ‘German Lazarus’ Hans Engelbrecht (1599–1642), a controversial Lutheran lay preacher, visionary and author. Besides his association with Heinrich Ottendorf (*fl.*1635), another suspected ‘new prophet’ active in Lübeck, Engelbrecht shared with Popkens an interest in Boehme. Significantly, in October 1636 Popkens wrote to van Assche requesting him or their ‘beloved friend’ Serrarius to acquire a copy of Boehme’s *Drievoudigh leven des Menschen* from van Beyerland.⁶³ Just over four years later Tonis Jansen [Teunis Janze] (*fl.*1644) of Emden

⁶³ Uppsala UL, Waller Ms benl-00852.

– a figure known to Permeier, van Hoeck, Popkens and Serrarius – wrote to van Beyerland concerning the proposed publication of Engelbrecht’s vision of ‘the three states’.⁶⁴ Subsequent evidence suggests that van Beyerland facilitated the printing of Engelbrecht’s treatises in Dutch, while some contemporary English translations also circulated in manuscript.⁶⁵

Turning to van Assche, he owned Boehme’s *Der Weg zu Christo* (1628) together with several titles by Schwenckfeld.⁶⁶ Johann Moriaen also wrote to him concerning Felgenhauer’s *Monarchen-spiegel* (1633). As for Serrarius, at the time of his death he possessed a number of titles by ‘Teutonicus’, both in print and manuscript, in German, Dutch and English.⁶⁷ Yet although Serrarius had a long-standing interest in Boehme there is no evidence, so far as I am aware, indicating that he was familiar either with Boehme’s writings or van Beyerland prior to the mid-1630s. Consequently, and contrary to what is usually thought, it does not appear that Serrarius obtained Boehme’s ‘De Signatura Rerum’ for Gravius. More likely is that Gravius ultimately acquired his Boehme manuscripts from Permeier, probably by way of a Mennonite intermediary.

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So far as is known, before the outbreak of Civil War not a word of Boehme had been translated into English. Nonetheless, it has been shown that several English speakers had read some or at least knew of ‘Teutonicus’. Among them were Dury, Gravius, Hartlib, Napier, Serrarius, van Assche and van Steenwijck the younger. In addition, Theodore Haak (1605–1690) of Neuhausen, a natural philosopher who settled in England in autumn 1638 and would translate part of Milton’s *Paradise Lost* into German, acquired a printed work by Boehme towards the end of 1640 – possibly *Mysterium Magnum*.⁶⁸

Taking an overview of developments, what has been discussed in this article constitutes an important preliminary phase in the dissemination of Boehme’s writings among English speakers. Indeed, the social networks and channels of communication

⁶⁴ Engelbrecht, 1697, part ii: 232.

⁶⁵ SUL, HP 45/1/33B–34A; HP 31/22/33B; BL, MS Sloane 2555; MS Sloane 2569: fols. 91–125.

⁶⁶ *Catalogus variorum ... Justini van Assche* (Rotterdam: S. Fischer, 1650).

⁶⁷ *Catalogus variorum ... Petri Serrarii* (Amsterdam: J. van Velfsen, 1670).

⁶⁸ SUL, HP 37/70A; HP 37/71A.

outlined here, and which operated within wider contexts – intra-Protestant conflict and accusations of heterodoxy; an upsurge of prophetic and millenarian activity during the Thirty Years' War; the circulation and interpretation of writings by or attributed to Paracelsus, Schwenckfeld, Arndt and Tauler, as well as various alchemists and purported Rosicrucians – not only stimulated interest in 'Teutonicus' but also facilitated the acquisition of texts that would subsequently be translated into English and then circulated through scribal and print publication.

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