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Prophecy, Alchemy and Strategies of Dissident Communication: A 1630 Letter from the Bohemian Chiliast Paul Felgenhauer (1593–c. 1677) to the Leipzig Physician Arnold Kerner

Introduction

Preserved in a slim folio-sized volume in the library of the University of Leipzig is a collection of forty-six letters, written by various persons between 1618 and 1630, all addressed to the Leipzig physician Arnold Kerner (fl. 1608–c. 1631).¹ This fragment of Kerner's correspondence is an invaluable source for the study of dissident thought in the Holy Roman Empire in the early seventeenth century. The volume contains letters to Kerner from the likes of the Torgau astrologer and prophet Paul Nagel (c. 1580–1624), the Langensalza antinomian Esajas Stiefel (1566–1627), his nephew Ezechiel Meth, the Bohemian chiliast Paul Felgenhauer, and several others. These letters touch on a variety of topics, including the printing and distribution of heterodox literature, the structure and nature of inchoate networks of heterodox personalities – particularly the group surrounding Jakob Böhme (1575–1624) – as well as communicating important biographical and autobiographical information of individual dissidents and their supporters.

One of the most significant letters in this collection is that of Paul Felgenhauer to Kerner, written in Bremen on 12 April 1630. Its discovery contributes not only to our presently limited knowledge of Felgenhauer's biography, but also to the activities of other dissident personalities, such as the Silesian lay-prophet Christoph Kotter (1585–1647) and indeed Kerner himself. It also adds to our appreciation of the construction of group identities and strategies of communication within transnational heterodox networks in the early seventeenth century. Finally, it also sheds some light on matters diverse as book history, the history of trade in Leipzig and even German postal history. It is presented here in facsimile, with a transcription of the original German and an annotated English translation.

* The author wishes to thank Howard Hotson, Vladimír Urbánek, Sigrid Lange, Hans Otte and Adam McLean for their assistance while preparing this paper. In addition, I would like to acknowledge the insightful recommendations and information provided by Petr Maťa and an anonymous referee of *Acta Comeniana*, which contributed the solution to several perplexing issues.

¹ The collection has the call number 0 356. A paper label on the eighteenth-century paper binding is marked 'Stifeliana'. The manuscript has been catalogued, albeit not entirely accurately, by Detlef DÖRING, *Die neuzeitlichen Handschriften der Nullgruppe* (= Katalog der Handschriften der Universitäts-Bibliothek Leipzig, Neue Folge, Bd. 1, T. 2), Wiesbaden 2002, p. 84.

The Author

Paul Felgenhauer was born in the Bohemian market town of Puschwitz (modern Buškovice, Czech Republic), on 16 November 1593 (old style).² According to his own account, delivered to Lutheran authorities at an inquisitorial proceeding against him in Syke in 1658, Felgenhauer was always destined to a special future. Before his birth, his father, a violent man and a Lutheran pastor in Puschwitz, had a premonition that his son was destined to be favored by the divine. As if in confirmation of his foreordained calling, Felgenhauer claimed that he emerged into the world shrouded in a birth caul; a propitious sign of divine sponsorship since ancient times.³

Following the early death of his father, Felgenhauer was educated at Latin Schools in nearby Annaberg, as well as further afield in Braunschweig and Seehausen. In 1608 he left behind his difficult childhood for the University of Wittenberg, where he indeed studied on theology. Felgenhauer's studies went well, at least initially. In the *Schloßkirche* in Wittenberg Felgenhauer delivered his first and only sermon, concerning John 16:5, and thereby earned a recommendation from faculty member Wolfgang Frantzius of such glowing positivity that Felgenhauer was made *Diakon*, or secondary pastor, in the same church.⁴ Yet Felgenhauer left Wittenberg shortly thereafter, becoming a tutor to the children of his cousin, Valentin am Ende in Dresden.

According to his later testimony in Syke, a deep depression gripped Felgenhauer

² The following account is based largely on the manuscript preserved in Hannover, *Peinliche Verurteilung des Paul Felgenhauer wegen Ketzerei und seine Gefangenschaft zu Syke*. (Niedersächsisches Hauptstaatsarchiv [hereafter Hannover, NHSA], Cal. Br. 23 Nr. 654). Felgenhauer's testimony in this document has been utilised as the basis of the biographical accounts given in Ernst-Georg WOLTERS, *Paul Felgenhauers Leben und Wirken*, Jahrbuch für niedersächsische Kirchengeschichte 54, 1956, pp. 63–84 and 55, 1957, pp. 54–93, and Johannes GÖHLER, *Wege des Glaubens. Beiträge zu einer Kirchengeschichte des Landes zwischen Elbe und Weser*, Stade 2006, pp. 217–235. An important complement to these studies, based mainly on Felgenhauer's printed works and focusing on his view of his Bohemian homeland, may be found in Vladimír URBÁNEK, *Eschatologie, vědění a politika. Příspěvek k dějinám myšlení pobělohorského exilu* [Eschatology, Knowledge and Politics: On the Intellectual History of the Post-White-Mountain Exiles], Prague 2008, pp. 104–144, along with the older work by Josef VOLF, *Pavel Felgenhauer a jeho náboženské názory* [Paul Felgenhauer and his religious views], ČČM 86, 1912, pp. 93–116. Information on Felgenhauer's connections to heterodox epistolary networks can be found in Noémi VISKOLCZ, *Reformációs Könyvek. Tervek az evangélikus egyház megújítására* [Books for Reformation. Plans for the Renovation of the Lutheran Church], Budapest 2006, pp. 148–154. Still of some use, despite its adversarial tone, is Johann Christoph ADELUNG, *Paul Felgenhauer, ein Schwärmer*, in: IDEM, *Geschichte der menschlichen Narrheit, oder Lebensbeschreibungen berühmter Schwarzkünstler, Goldmacher, Teufelsbanner, Zeichen- und Liniendeuter, Schwärmer, Wahrsager, und andere philosophischer Unholden*, vol. 4, Leipzig 1787, pp. 382–407. The article by Brian G. COOPER, *Three Seventeenth-Century Mystics. Religion and Science in the Thought of Everard, Belmont, and Felgenhauer*, *The Aryan Path* 35/1, 1964, pp. 3–7 and 35/2, 1964, pp. 54–57, provides few insights, but is interesting for its recognition of Felgenhauer's international reception.

³ Hannover, NHSA, fols. 57r–v.

⁴ Hannover, NHSA, fols. 58r–59r. WOLTERS, *Felgenhauers Leben und Wirken*, p. 64.

during this period: at times he wept uncontrollably, and was terrorized by a deep-seated and apparently existential fear, concerning his own fate, as well as that of humanity generally. It may or may not be a coincidence that these fears occurred about the time of the Bohemian Rebellion in Felgenhauer's homeland. On 7 January 1617, God sent the archangel Gabriel to Felgenhauer in a dream. Later, Felgenhauer would claim that the angel bestowed upon him 'godly wisdom', and that he thereafter understood the Bible in a manner different to that prior to his vision. He was now enlightened, free, radiant in the light of the Holy Spirit; or at least, this is what he told authorities some twenty years later. Felgenhauer's contemporary works, however, demonstrate that he did not know what to make of this brief initial encounter with the divine, nor how to channel his contact with angelic intelligences for the benefit of his fellow man.⁵ Subsequently offered two pastorates in Bohemia, he refused them, apparently in light of the unrest in the region.⁶ Subsequently claiming the title *Theosoph* on the basis of his divine sponsorship, Felgenhauer instead turned to popular preaching. His initial published works, among them *Speculum temporis: Das ist, Zeit Spiegel* (1620)⁷ were chronological and essentially Lutheran apocalyptic in nature, emphasizing the need for repentance in the light of the coming Day of Judgment.

In 1620, however, in light of Saxony's unconscionable stand of 'Political Papism' on the Bohemian revolt, a stance undertaken with the support of influential Dresden court-preacher Polycarp Leyser, Felgenhauer was compelled to initiate political prophecy and religious rebellion. In his printed works, Felgenhauer mercilessly attacked Saxony's 'corrupt' stance and their refusal to support Frederick V, newly-elected Calvinist King of Bohemia. The subtitle of an early prophetic work, *Decisio prophetica belli Bohemici*, printed under the pseudonym 'Christianus Crucigerus,' not only parodied the language of the Saxon anti-Calvinist propaganda of the period, but also strongly promoted

⁵ In this sense his case may be compared with that of a contemporary new prophet, Wilhelm Eo Neuheuser, who heard a 'divine voice' in 1583, but was only able to make sense of the encounter (i.e., elaborate it into a sustained prophetic mission) some twenty-five years later. On Eo, see L.T.I. PENMAN, *Ein Chiliast aus Steyr*, in: Wolfgang Mantler *Bücherneues*, Vienna 2008, p. 28; and chapter three of L.T.I. PENMAN, *Unanticipated Millenniums: The Lutheran Experience of Chiliastic Thought, 1600-1630*, New York - Cologne - Dordrecht (= Studies in Early Modern Religious Reformation), forthcoming.

⁶ WOLTERS, *Felgenhauers Leben und Wirken*, pp. 64-65.

⁷ Paul FELGENHAUER, *Speculum Temporis oder Zeit Spiegel*, Prague 1619. I shall make no attempt here to exhaustively document Felgenhauer's extensive corpus of printed works. A bibliography of more than sixty texts is presented in WOLTERS, *Felgenhauers Leben und Wirken*, pp. 71-84, which can now be supplemented with the additions mentioned in URBÁNEK, *Eschatologie, vědění a politika*, 115, note 381. This near-complete listing will be updated by Carlos Gilly in his forthcoming *Bibliographia Rosicruciana*. Felgenhauer's early chronological works were attacked by, among others, Johannes KEPLER in his *Kanones Pueriles: Id est, Chronologia Von Adam biß auff diß jetz lauffende Jahr Christi 1620: In Sechs unterschiedene Glieder außgetheilet/ und auß H. Schrift Alten und Newen Testaments bewehret/ mit Zuziehung Heidnischer Antiquiteten und Astronomischer Rechnung. Der newlich in Truck außgegangenen Chronologiae Pauli Felgenhawers Puschwitzensis Bohemi; so auch der Anno 1612. zu Hall außgegangenen Jacobi Tilneri, welche fast mit der vorigen zutriffi/ entgegen gesetzt*, Ulm 1620.

the Protestant Union.⁸ A passionate call for Protestant unification under Frederick V, together with the restoration of a 'pure' evangelical faith that had its roots with Jan Hus, this declaration appears to have marked Felgenhauer's decisive break from orthodox Lutheranism. From here out, he alone carried Luther's legacy: 'oh blessed and true Luther,' he wrote, 'if you could but see, hear, and read the words of your disciples and how they lust after the Roman whore!'⁹

In November 1620, Felgenhauer was exiled from Bohemia following Frederick's catastrophic defeat by the Catholic League's army at the battle of White Mountain. In the journeys that followed, he sought out numerous contacts with heterodox personalities throughout the Holy Roman Empire. Apparently inspired by the works of fellow New Prophets Paul Nagel and Philip Ziegler – Felgenhauer had personally encountered the latter while a student in Wittenberg¹⁰ – he shrugged off his earlier apocalyptic calculations, which placed the Last Judgment in the mid eighteenth century. Instead, Felgenhauer began to predict, in a series of increasingly-emphatic prognostications, the imminent descent of the New Jerusalem to the hills of Prague, and the restoration of Frederick V and the true Hussite church for 1623.¹¹

Of course, as time itself has demonstrated, this prediction ended in disappointment.¹² He consulted with fellow visionaries like Christoph Kotter, Philipp Ziegler and Georg Zimmermann, concerning their shared experience of the numinous, but to no avail.¹³ Distraught and wracked by doubt over the nature of his prophetic mission, Felgenhauer retired to Bremen, where his cousin, the aforementioned Valentin am Ende, was then residing. Sometime after October 1624, he was sought out there by the so-called *German Lazarus* Hans Engelbrecht (1599–1644).¹⁴ Engelbrecht, a bizarre figure who had

⁸ [FELGENHAUER], *Decisio Prophetica Belli Bohemici. Eine sehr nothwendig und nützliche Frage zu diesen letzten zeiten: Darinnen decidiret wird/ Mit wem man es (das Böhmische Wesen betreffend) halten oder nicht halten solle*, s.a. 1620. On this important work see URBÁNEK, *Eschatologie, věděni a politika*, pp. 120–124.

⁹ [FELGENHAUER], *Decisio Prophetica*, sig. G1r.

¹⁰ WOLTERS, *Felgenhauers Leben und Wirken*, p. 64.

¹¹ See URBÁNEK, *Eschatologie, věděni a politika*, pp. 124–132; Alexander HAMILTON, *The Apocryphal Apocalypse*, Oxford 1999, pp. 182–183.

¹² The final victory of the Bohemian rebels and the restoration of Frederick V was predicted in, among other places, [FELGENHAUER], *Decisio prophetica*, sig. F2r.

¹³ Hannover, NHSA, fol. 69v. '[Felgenhauer] hette [...] auch mit M. Philippo Ziglero, Georgio Zimmermann, Christophoro Kötter einem gärber aus Schlesien, welche alle Visiones gehabt, selber mündlich geredet von denen Visionibus, welche dieselbe gehabt hatten.'

¹⁴ On Engelbrecht, see August Friedrich Wilhelm BESTE, *Hans Engelbrecht. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Mystik des 17. Jahrhunderts*, Zeitschrift für die historische Theologie, Neue Folge 14, 1844, pp. 122–155; Jürgen BEYER, *Lay Prophets in Lutheran Europe*, Leiden, forthcoming, chap. 6; L.T.I. PENMAN, *The Unanticipated Millennium. Orthodoxy, Heterodoxy and Chilastic Error in Paul Egard's Posaune der göttlichen Gnade und Liechts (1623)*, Pietismus und Neuzeit. Ein Jahrbuch zur Geschichte des neueren Protestantismus 35, 2009, pp. 11–45, here 28–29. Also of great importance is Philipp Julius REHTMEYER, *Historiæ ecclesiasticæ inclytæ urbis Brunsvigæ, Oder: Der berühmten Stadt Braunschweig Kirchen=Historie [...]*, vol. 4, Braunschweig 1715, pp. 417–432, 472–483, with documents edited in vol. 5, pp. 279–347.

purportedly 'died' and came back to life in 1622, was a notoriously effective and controversial Lutheran lay-preacher, who used his terrifying first-hand visions of heaven and hell to demand penitence of his audience. Apparently inspired by the weighty words of an angel, Engelbrecht accused Felgenhauer of a criminal arrogance, and urged him to repent from his sins.¹⁵ Although at first the prophet thought better of Engelbrecht's warning,¹⁶ ultimately the encounter proved revelatory – a true companion to his defining experience of 1617 – and prefaced a new path, duly confirmed by his experience of two complementary visions in January 1625, which symbolized for Felgenhauer his expulsion and readmittance to godly Grace.¹⁷ Following his repentance, the prophet became a convinced pacifist and embarked on a new course of spiritual and theosophical teachings, apparently influenced by Johann Arndt, and also by the Lusatian prophet Jacob Böhme (1575–1624).¹⁸

After 1625, Felgenhauer would lead an increasingly itinerant life, swept from post to post by controversies and persecution. As his testimony in Syke shows, the majority of his travels were confined to northern Germany, and in particular to the regions around Bremen and Hamburg, where he possessed established social and financial connections. On occasion, Felgenhauer found himself in the United Provinces, where many of his works were printed, as well as in Berlin and Danzig. In Hamburg and the village of Wiarden, Felgenhauer learnt the trade in medicine and surgery, an 'essential complement' to his strivings 'for the spiritual health of Protestantism.'¹⁹ He married in 1631 and thereafter fathered several children. He lived a quiet life, evidently in or around Hamburg. One source suggests that sometime during this period Felgenhauer may have lived briefly in Amsterdam, and perhaps even visited London.²⁰ After apparently serving

¹⁵ The encounter is described at length in a manuscript work by FELGENHAUER, *Speculum poenitentiae, Das ist: Buß-Spiegel*, [s.l.] 1625, pp. 56–57 (Hannover, Niedersächsische Landesbibliothek, shelfmark T-A 444 (4)). The present author is preparing a study of this important text, under the provisional title 'A Seventeenth-Century Prophet Confronts his Failures: Paul Felgenhauer's *Speculum poenitentiae* (1625).' Felgenhauer's meeting with Engelbrecht is further alluded to, albeit recast in a negative light, in Hannover, NHSA, fol. 69v.

¹⁶ FELGENHAUER, *Speculum poenitentiae*, p. 56.

¹⁷ Hannover, NHSA, fols. 60v–61r; Paul FELGENHAUER, *Postilion, or a New Almanack and Asrologic, Prophetical Prognostication*, London, 1655, pp. 17–18.

¹⁸ The first mature product of this viewpoint is [FELGENHAUER], *Aurora Sapientiae Morgenröthe der Weißheit Von den Dreyen Principiis und Anfang Aller Dinge im Geheymnüß der Weißheit*, Amsterdam, 1628. Subsequent editions were printed in 1629 and 1630.

¹⁹ Hannover, NHSA, fol. 61r.

²⁰ This rather tentative suggestion is based on two nineteenth-century articles in an English journal. Initially, E.A.C., *P. Feldencaldus*, *Notes & Queries*, s2-vi 150 (1858), p. 396, issued a query asking for more information on a certain P. Feldencaldus, who was the author of a work entitled *Judicium Cælorum et Terræ* (Hamburg 1642). A later reply to this query suggested that Feldencaldus was in fact a pseudonym or corruption of 'Felgenhauer': See FITZHOPKINS, *P. Feldencaldus*, *Notes & Queries*, s2-vii 158 (1859), p. 33. The *Judicium Cælorum et Terræ* is, however, absent from Wolters's bibliographical survey, as well as that of Gerhard DÜNNHAUPT, *Personalbibliographien zu den Drucken des Barock*, Stuttgart 1990, pp. 1457–1477. The work is also not named in the selective list of printed and manuscript works Felgenhauer provided to Syke authorities

for a short time as a military field-doctor in Poland, it was not until the middle of 1638 that Felgenhauer and his growing family found a relatively stable home, in the market town of Bederkesa, near Bremen. By this time Felgenhauer was earning a pittance, yet nevertheless enough to survive, practicing medicine and surgery, and devoting time to his writing and correspondence, such as with members of the intellectual circle around Samuel Hartlib. In Bederkesa, Felgenhauer visited Reformed church services (although he did not, he maintained, participate in communion), and gathered a small and informal religious community about him.

In 1653, however, he sought out the Calvinist pastor in Debstedt, Matthias Kregel, in a vain attempt to demonstrate the rectitude of his theosophy. This misguided effort was perhaps made to clear his name and forego periodic interference from church authorities once and for all. It proved a catastrophic tactical failure. Felgenhauer's miscalculation launched a tumultuous period of stress for the prophet, as he was forced to openly defend all his doctrines against a tenacious Reformed church in Bremen, whose concerns were soon echoed by the Spiritual ministry in nearby Hamburg.²¹ Ultimately, Felgenhauer would be forced to flee Bederkesa, like Bohemia before it, when the town was sacked in 1654. In December of that year he met Menasseh ben Israel at the house of Petrus Serrarius in Amsterdam, and was drawn to comment on the supposed imminent conversion of the Jews in his *Bonum nuncium Israeli* (1655).²² According to Felgenhauer, this work was printed and published at Menasseh ben Israel's own cost and instigation.²³ Despite the minor celebrity this work afforded him, Felgenhauer was soon back in Bremen and its surrounds, and again in trouble with local authorities. Late in 1657 his son Israel was arrested, which gave rise to a lengthy trial in the town of Syke, during which Felgenhauer found himself imprisoned for several months. The prophet's own precise reports concerning these events, authored as he languished in prison, is located today in Hannover. Felgenhauer's extensive testimony is, to a large extent, corroborated by the piecemeal account of his fate communicated in the letters of Johann Moriaen to Samuel Hartlib during this period.²⁴ Ultimately, in March 1658, after his

in 1658 (Hannover, NHSA, fols. 158r-v), nor in the bibliographies at the conclusion of Felgenhauer's *Postilion* (1655) and the *Bonum nuncium Israeli* (1656). Furthermore, there is no account in Felgenhauer's own work or his biographical statements to the Syke authorities concerning any trip to London. I have unfortunately been unable to locate a copy of the original *Judicium*.

²¹ WOLTERS, *Felgenhauers Leben und Wirken*, p. 68. Felgenhauer's difficulties there may be traced in E.-G. WOLTERS, *Briefe von und gegen Paul Felgenhauer seine Verdrängung aus Bederkesa betreffend*, *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für niedersächsische Kirchengeschichte* 29–30, 1924–1925, pp. 186–196.

²² See the dedicatory epistle in P. FELGENHAUER, *Bonum nuncium Israeli, quod offertur Populo Israel et Iudae in hisce temporibus novissimus de Messia* [...], Amsterdam 1655. Felgenhauer further elaborates on the circumstances of his meeting with Menasseh in Hannover, NHSA, fols. 61v, 66r–66v.

²³ Hannover, NHSA, fol. 61v: 'Demnach habe Er [Felgenhauer] zu Amsterdam mit Menasse Ben Israel auch geredet, wie das Buch *Bonum nuncium* außweiset, welches gedachten Rabbi hette selbst verlegt und drucken lassen.'

²⁴ See Sheffield, University Library, Hartlib Papers [hereafter HP], 31/18/13B-14A (Moriaen to Hartlib, 12 March 1658); HP 31/18/17B (Moriaen to Hartlib, 26 April 1658).

books had been publicly burnt before the Syke Town Hall, Felgenhauer was expelled from the territories of Braunschweig-Lüneburg, forever.²⁵

Concerning Felgenhauer's final years, we presently know little. According to Wolters, in 1659 the prophet was again in Bremen, and thereafter in Hamburg. On occasion, he found himself in Amsterdam, although his experience in Syke seems to have been warning enough for the prophet to keep a low profile. Despite this, Felgenhauer's international reputation was growing. In England, several of his works, beginning with the *Aurora Sapientiae* (1628) were translated and distributed in manuscript form.²⁶ Two of the prophet's books, *Jehi Or* (1640) and the *Postilion* (1655), were translated into English and printed in London in 1655 and 1673, respectively.²⁷ In 1655, Felgenhauer corresponded on the subject of 'magical performance' with the London publisher Humphrey Blunden,²⁸ who himself 'turned an extraordinary Chymist, and got Jacob Behem his Books translated and printed.'²⁹ He also traded epistles with Hartlib's friend, John

²⁵ Hannover, NHSA, fols. 153r-154r. Cf. Moriaen's report to Hartlib in HP 31/18/17B: 'Felgenh[auer] ist seiner gefängnis erledigt, des landes zue ewig[en] tagen verwiesz[en] und seine schrifft[en] durch den scharpfrichter verbrandt.'

²⁶ An English translation of Felgenhauer's *Aurora Sapientiae*, apparently prepared c. 1630-1640, is in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 358, this has been printed as Robert AYSHFORD, *The Dawn of Wisdom (Aurora Sapientiae)*, Arthur VERSLUIS (ed.), St Paul 2005. A near-contemporary copy of this translation is at MS Ashmole 1417. Several other translations and fragments of Felgenhauer's corpus can be found in London, British Library, MS Sloane 728 and MS Sloane 1304, including fragments and full translations of his *Christianorum Christianus secundum sensum Christi: Sieben Fragen vom Wahren Christenthumb [...]*, Amsterdam [1630]; *Apologia Christiana oder Christliche Verantwortung gegen die animalischen Sekten [...]*, [Amsterdam 1634]; *Das Büchlein Adam ...*, [Amsterdam 1636]; and *Das Büchlein Jehi Or, oder Morgenröhte der Weißheit*, [Amsterdam] 1640. The author is presently writing an article dedicated to Felgenhauer's reception in England, which will discuss these manuscripts in detail.

²⁷ Felgenhauer's *Postilion oder neuer Kalendar und prognosticon astrologicum*, Amsterdam 1655, was translated anonymously as *Postilion, Or a new almanacke and astrologicke, propheticall, Prognostication*, London 1655. The eleventh chapter of this work was further reprinted in Samuel HARTLIB (ed.), *Chymical, medicinal, and chyrurgical addresses*, London 1655, pp. 176-181. Felgenhauer's *Das Büchlein Jehi Or, oder Morgenröhte der Weißheit*, [Amsterdam] 1640, based on the anonymous translation in London, BL, MS Sloane 728, was published by William Cooper as *Jehior the Morning Light of Wisdom, or the Three Principles of all things whatsoever* in 1673. While no copies of the separately-printed octavo edition of 1673 appear to have survived (the edition is advertised by Cooper in several of the books he printed), the text was included anonymously as the final tract in W. COOPER, *The Philosophical epitaph of W.C. Esquire for a memento mori on his tomb-stone [...] with Jehior, aurora sapientiae [...]*, London 1673.

²⁸ The correspondence is mentioned in John BEAUMONT, *An Historical, Physiological and Theological Treatise of Spirits, Apparitions, Witchcrafts, and other Magical Practices*, London 1705, pp. 321-324, which includes an extensive summary of one of Felgenhauer's replies. Blunden also corresponded with another of Felgenhauer's friends, the Amsterdam chiliast Petrus Serrarius. On Blunden, see Ariel HESSAYON, *Blunden, Humphrey (b. 1609, d. in or after 1654)*, in: *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford 2004 [<http://ezproxy.ouls.ox.ac.uk:2117/view/article/59849>, accessed 9 May 2010].

²⁹ Richard BAXTER, *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, London 1696, i, p. 11.

Dury.³⁰ Yet Felgenhauer was not only read in England. Between 1664 and 1671 the Swedish chiliast, physician and pacifist Anders Pedersson Kempe (1622–1689) rendered three of Felgenhauer’s works into his native language, and had them published at his own expense in Amsterdam.³¹ Felgenhauer’s final book, almost certainly a confirmation of his continuing activity as a medical practitioner during his final years, was the *Anthora* (1677). A tract against the plague, the title page declared that Felgenhauer wrote the text ‘out of love for his neighbor’.³² Felgenhauer’s date of death, and indeed his earthly fate, remains, however, unknown.

The Recipient

Arnold Kerner (also Körner, Köerner, etc.) was a Leipzig-based physician.³³ Educated in Basel as well as at a handful of German universities, we possess very little information concerning his life. Because the MS collection at the University of Leipzig only contains letters addressed to Kerner, and none of his replies, we glean only incidental pieces of biographical information from these sources; none, unfortunately, of great insight. Living on Leipzig’s central and bustling Nicolaistraße, at the address of a certain Georg Braun, Kerner evidently operated a private practice as a physician, although dedicated much of his time to the production of herbal medicines, and evidently was involved in pharmacology.

On the title-pages of his several publications, Kerner designated himself a *Philochymiatrum* (“lover of chymistry”), indicating his active interest not only in applied medicine, but also its philosophical and alchemical bases. This interest is amply represented in

³⁰ See London, British Library, MS Sloane 654, fols. 153r–v. (Dury to Felgenhauer, n.d., [c.1634?]).

³¹ Kempe’s Swedish translations include P. FELGENHAUER, *Probatorium theologicum eller Theologischer Proberung*, Amsterdam 1664; P. FELGENHAUER, *Perspicillum Bellicum. Det ähr: Krigz-Perspektiv*, Amsterdam 1664; P. FELGENHAUER, *Harmonia fidei et religionis. Troons harmonij*, Amsterdam 1671. On Kempe see Hans-Joachim SCHOEPS, *Philosemitismus im Barock*, Tübingen 1952, pp. 45–53; Carl Jonas Erik HASSELBERG, *En jämtländsk mystiker och hans läroåskådning. Några meddelanden om Anders Pedersson Kempe och hans tyske lärofader P. Felgenhauer*, Från Ådalar och fjäll. Härnösands stifts julbok (1921), pp. 21–36; Ronny AMBJÖRNSSON, *The Last Struggle. Andreas Kempe, a Swedish Pacifist in the Seventeenth Century*, in: Claes-Christian ELERT – Gunnar ERIKSSON (eds.), *Suppression, Struggle, and Success. Studies on Three Representatives of Cultural Life in Sweden: Frederika Bremer, Andreas Kempe and Linnaeus*, Stockholm 1982; Claes-Christian ELERT, *Andreas Kempe (1622–1689) and the Languages Spoken in Paradise*, *Historiographia Linguistica* 5/3, 1978, pp. 221–226.

³² P. FELGENHAUER, *Anthora, das ist: Gifftheyl, oder Beschreibung des Giffts der Pestilenz*, Amsterdam 1676, several later editions to 1700.

³³ The only biographical entry of note concerning Kerner is the glib notice in Christian Gottlieb JÖCHER, *Allgemeines Gelehrten-Lexicon*, vol. 2, Leipzig 1750, col. 2070, expanded by J.C. Adelung in 1810. Further information on Kerner, largely deduced from his printed texts, may be found in Govert SNOEK, *De Rozenkruisers in Nederland voornamelijk in de eerste helft van de 17e eeuw*, Haarlem 2007.

his published output, which moved easily between his many interests.³⁴ It also accounts for his interest in the medical powers and goals of the Rosicrucian fraternity, which are sometimes discussed in correspondence to Kerner, written at the physician's request. Much of Kerner's time was evidently occupied in copying magical, prophetic and alchemical texts, including works by Jacob Böhme, Paul Nagel, Paul Felgenhauer, Esajas Stiefel, and others.

Kerner's correspondence demonstrates that he was also a practicing alchemist, and was in regular contact with a variety of like-minded physicians from Thuringia, Saxony and Silesia. Some of these personalities are today relatively well known. It is evident from Kerner's correspondence with the Torgau chiliast Paul Nagel, for example, that he was personally acquainted with the likes of Polish alchemist Michael Sendivogius, the Silesian physician Balthasar Walther – who introduced kabbalistic ideas into Jacob Böhme's thought – as well as several lesser-known physicians, many of whom, like Friedrich Krause and Johann Rehefeldt of Erfurt, stood on the periphery of Jacob Böhme's circle.³⁵ Indeed, Kerner's intimate and friendly correspondence with the likes of Stiefel, Meth, Nagel and the visionary Abraham von Einsiedel, indicate his abiding interest and his also support of heterodox ideas, groups and personalities.

We do not know when or how Kerner first encountered Felgenhauer. The physician was, however, already familiar with Felgenhauer's work at least as early as February 1623, for in a letter written from Torgau on the eighth day of that month, Abraham von Einsiedel thanked Kerner for sending him two of Felgenhauer's tracts, which had led him to new insights for his own speculations concerning the roaring voice of the prophetic Lion of Judah.³⁶

³⁴ Among these works we may count Arnold KERNER, *Tetras Chymiatrica: Proponens Praestantiam Et In Medicina Efficaciam, Auri, Mercurii, Antimonii, & Vitrioli, & Medicamentorum ex illis paratorum; Opposita Misochymis eadem sat frivole calumniantibus*, Erfurt 1618; *Balsamus Vegetabilis. Das ist/ kurtzer/ doch Gründlicher Discurs, von einem köstlichen vegetabilischen Balsam: So zu vielen Kranckheiten heilsam und nützlich zu gebrauchen*, Erfurt 1618; *Loimologia: Das ist: Kurtzer/ doch gründlicher Discurs, Von der giftspendenden Seuche der Pestilentz*, Leipzig 1626.

³⁵ On this network, see Carlos GILLY, *Wege der Verbreitung von Jacob Böhmes Schriften in Deutschland und den Niederlanden*, in: Theodor HARMSEN – Cis van HEERTUM (eds.), *Jacob Böhmes Weg in die Welt. Zur Geschichte der Handschriftensammlung, Übersetzungen und Editionen von Abraham Willemszoon van Beyerland*, Amsterdam 2007, pp. 71–98; L.T.I. PENMAN, *Ein Liebhaber des Mysterii, und ein großer Verwandter desselben. Toward the Life of Balthasar Walther, a Wandering Paracelsian Physician*, *Sudhoffs Archiv. Zeitschrift für Wissenschaftsgeschichte* 94/1, 2010, pp. 73–99.

³⁶ Leipzig, UB Ms 0 356, fol. 69r: “Auß beiden vberschickten tractätenlein P: Felgenhawers, wie auch auß andern so H[err] Mag[ister] [Paul] Nagel auß Preußen bekommen vnd eins wils mir Communiciret, habe ich erfrewlichen erfahren, welcher gestalt nunmehr geendetern Silentio der Lew auß Juda, seine brüllende stimme in den seinen widerumb erheben [...] wird.” The content of Einsiedel's communication suggests that the texts he received were parts of Felgenhauer's pamphlet series *Bon' Avisa*. On these tracts see URBÁNEK, *Eschatologie, vědění a politika*, pp. 127–132. On Nagel, see L.T.I. PENMAN, *Climbing Jacob's Ladder: Crisis, Chiliasm, and Transcendence in the Thought of Paul Nagel (†1624), a Lutheran Dissident during the Time of the Thirty Years' War*, *Intellectual History Review* 20/2, 2010, pp. 201–226.

Kerner and Felgenhauer also, however, shared an acquaintance in the person of Christoph Kotter (1585–1647), a visionary tanner from Sprottau in Silesia, who is indeed mentioned in Felgenhauer’s letter. Although we also do not know when Kerner and Kotter first encountered each other, Kotter is obliquely mentioned in Kerner’s correspondence as early as September 1621. In June 1622, Nagel sent to Kerner a manuscript copy of some of Kotter’s visions.³⁷ Be that as it may, Felgenhauer’s letter to Kerner from 1630 is the first evidence we have of direct contact between the two men, and also of Kerner’s acquaintance with Kotter.

The Letter. Summary and Remarks

Felgenhauer’s letter conforms to what little we already know concerning his Bremen period. In terms of subject matter, the missive can be roughly divided into three distinct parts. In the first part Felgenhauer greets Kerner, asks him to pass on some recent publications and a letter to the Silesian prophet Christoph Kotter, and informs him about some of his recent activities in terms of his ‘studies’, medicine, chemistry and distillation.

The second part consists of the details of a strange story regarding a chemical laborant who claimed to have recently achieved the alchemical magnum opus, whom Felgenhauer met in Holland. He then states that he himself might be privy to an important alchemical procedure relevant to achieving the *opus philosophicum*, which the mysterious laborant indeed did not know.

The letter concludes with a request by Felgenhauer for a reply from Kerner, together with a report on how Kerner may contact him. Finally, a post scriptum reports on recent efforts undertaken by the Dutch to arm their navy and army (*zue waßer vnd Land*) to an extent ‘never before seen,’ in preparation for combat.

The character and tone of Felgenhauer’s letter is to a certain extent determined by its immediate function. The letter itself is a brief cover-note, originally attached to a packet which contained 16 copies of one of Felgenhauer’s publications, along with a personal letter from the prophet to the Silesian visionary Kotter. If Felgenhauer was able to contact the itinerant Kotter directly via post, he would have no need of Kerner’s assistance.

As such, the letter is invested with a certain economy of social exchange. Felgenhauer emphasizes on several occasions his present state of poverty, which is presumably intended to contrast favorably with Kerner’s comfortable and sedentary lifestyle in Leipzig.³⁸ Reading between the lines, however, it seems clear Felgenhauer regarded this as his lot due to divine providence; it was the path that a prophet of God must

³⁷ Leipzig UB, Ms 0 356, fol. 37r, Nagel to Kerner (30 September 1621) concerning contemporary rumours concerning Frederick V; “[...] vnd ich habe gelesen wz fvr visionen ein alutarius zu Sprottau vnd fvr deuten responsa von disem Frederico gehabt.”; and fol. 56v: Nagel to Kerner (16 June 1622), “[...] des Schreiben in welch[en] die visiones deß Alutary zu lesen wird der Herr doctor hierbey zu empfang[en] haben.”

³⁸ Concerning Felgenhauer’s poverty, see WOLTERS, *Felgenhauers Leben und Wirken*, p. 67.

endure. Despite this poverty, Felgenhauer is at pains to provide Kerner with adequate consideration for the task of contacting Kotter. This comes in several different forms. Firstly, he provides information concerning the state of his prophetic studies, with reference to works completed, published, and soon to be published. Secondly, he provides Kerner with six copies of his most recent work. He then goes on to provide the physician with information about his own modest undertakings in medicine and surgery, as well as the distillation of flowers. This latter item, essential in the creation of perfumes and aromatic oils, was potentially of considerable value. The most tantalizing piece of information, however, concerns the adept in Holland. In addition to relating the bare details of the encounter, Felgenhauer's own insistence on being privy to a process of 'mortifying' metal demonstrates his belief that he possessed information which could be significant to Kerner.

Such transactions in knowledge are placed again in the context of informational exchange in Felgenhauer's concluding paragraph, where he returns to the initial request of the letter – for Kerner to supply the enclosed books and letter to Kotter – by requesting that Kerner write to him during the trade fair in Leipzig. This reply is presumably requested in order to report on the success, or lack thereof, of Kerner's meeting with Kotter at the fair, and whether or not the enclosed items could be successfully passed on.

Felgenhauer's letter is of significance because it throws much-needed light on a variety of different areas of interest concerning his life and movements in and immediately before April of 1630. However, it also illuminates tangential issues, such as the scale of social and informational economy in a heterodox correspondence network, the intricacies of dissident book production in the United Provinces, the history of trade in Leipzig, the role of commercial agents in facilitating contact between dissident personalities, and even the role of the Dutch in Bremen's postal history.

Felgenhauer's Letter: Transcription and Translation

The letter, as it survives, is written on one side of half of a large folio sheet, measuring 35.5 x 21.5 cm. The body of the letter is written on one side of the sheet only (fol. 99r of MS 0 356), while the reverse features Kerner's address and an example of Felgenhauer's personal seal. No detectable watermark is present.

The letter is written in German, with the occasional Latin word or phrase employed, a practice frequently encountered in the correspondence of German-speaking intelligentsia of the period. Felgenhauer's epistle is composed in a small, almost microscopic, handwriting. The characters are exceptionally neat, well-formed and precisely rendered in a mixture of gothic and italic hands. There are no corrections or words struck through, which suggests that this might have been a deliberately executed fair-copy letter, although Felgenhauer himself was renowned for his concentration and ability to write lengthy manuscripts in a single sitting, without a single word requiring correction.³⁹

³⁹ Hannover, NHSA, fols. 59v–60r. This assertion is largely – although not entirely – borne out by the Felgenhauer manuscripts I have personally seen, which are often extremely neat in their appearance.

Felgenhauer very sparingly employs abbreviations in the letter, which gives it a certain formal appearance. The language of the communication is itself formal, although not unusually so for the time.

Felgenhauer's letter has been, like many of the surviving letters to Kerner in the Leipzig MS, carefully annotated with a note in an italic hand, expanding Felgenhauer's slightly cryptic signature, 'Paulus F' to 'Paulus Felgenhau[er].' This note was added by a later possessor of the manuscript, someone who evidently had an extensive knowledge of Kerner's network, and who was more than likely a participant in this network. Based on a comparison of handwriting samples, this note might be tentatively attributed to the Erfurt physician Johann Rehefeldt.

The following transcription is as faithful as possible. I have expanded Felgenhauer's rare abbreviations, where they appear, in square brackets. Capitalization, orthography and punctuation of the original letter have been retained. Interestingly, Felgenhauer employs a Latin comma in preference to the virgule, or sloped-stroke / which was common at the time.

The translation strives to be as literal as possible. I have, however, taken the liberty of dividing the body of the letter into paragraphs conforming to its shifting subject matter. Words added for the sake of facilitating comprehension are indicated in square brackets. Annotations have been added in the form of footnotes.

Transcription

Salutem à DOMINO

Ehrenuehster hochgelahrter mein geehrter Herr vnd vertrauter werther Freundt. Demnach ich in Holland vergangenen Herbst gewesen vnd meinen Christianum von neuen meis sumtib[us] auflegen laßen, als habe ich hiemiet dem Herrn auch 16. exemplaria wollen einhändigen laßen, dauon denn vnser freund Christoff Kötter zehen haben soll, die ihme der Herr wolle vnbeschwehrt, nebenst dem brieflein an ihn, zustellen, weil ich hoff daß er auf die Meße do wird sein, die andern 6. wolle der Herr vor sich vnd vor liebhaber der warheit behalten, hab sonst in meinen studijs newlich per DEI gratiam Templum DOMINI absolviret, in drey vnterschiedenen partib[us], als Atrio, Sancto, et Sancto Sanctorum, ist ingesambt bey 33. bogen, möchte vielleicht mit der Zeit auch ad prælum kommen, DEO providente. Neben meinen Studijs nun delectire ich mich auch in Medicina vnd Chirurgia also auch in Destillando, so viell meine armuth leiden will, wie ich denn eine invention gefunden, do ich ein iegliche blum mit ihrer farbe kan distilliren ohne einigen zusatz in wenig stunden allsobald. Darbenebenst wolte ich wohl auch in Chymicis etwas furnehmen, sed desunt sumtus. Habe sonst in Holland Einen angetroffen, der opus philosophicum mit seinen henden inn 12. wochen ex meris metallis gemacht, nicht zwar propria inventione, sondern er ist eines andern sein minister gewesen, weiß alle hand grijf vnd ist zu allem zugelaßen worden, ja hats selbst mit eigenen henden alles gemacht, excepta tantum Germinificatione, so der Meister alleine gethan: Vnd ob ich wohl mit demselben in gute kundschaft kommen, so ist er doch gantz heymlich vnd an sich haltendt, vnd spricht daß die gantze kunst in illo

Theophrasti libro Vexationum sive coelo Philosophorum, ut inscribitur, deutlich genugk beschrieben sein soll, seine handgrieffe sollen gantz einfeltigk vnd schlecht sein. Er braucht auch weder glas noch ofen aber wohl daß abtreibens auf den Teß. Er rihmt auch Sendivogium in seinen 12. Tract[aten], hat zwar bisher seind er seinem Meister gedient hierin nichts wieder fur genommen, lebt gar still vnd fast einsam vnd ist ein Einfeltiger frommer Mensch, hat aber noch alles aufgezeichnet bey sich in verwahrung, vnd weill ihm sein Meister, dem er gedienet gift beygebracht hat, vmb willens Ihn hinzu-richten, ist er etlich jahr dauon kranck gewesen, biß es endlich wieder von ihm kommen, doch ist er gleichwohl vnterweilen nicht wohl auf. Solches hab ich dem herrn Vertrauter weise hiemit schreiben wollen, wird Ihme vielleicht seltsam vorkommen, quia ex meris et puris putis metallis, welches ich aber meinem wenigen vnd einfeltigen iudicio nach alles wahr zu sein, halte. Habe demnach wohlgemercket daß die metall durch gar schlechte handgrieff per calcinationem veram et mortifica[ti]o[n]em reduci ret werden müßen ad radicem, daraus sie gewachsen, alsdenn geben sie ihr semen von sich, daß wird germinificiret, vnd dann gespeiset, so wechst es zu einem regenerirtem metall, so alle metallen per incera[ti]o[n]em zu gutem gelde, Aurum vero ad Tincturam tingiret, so achte ich demnach daß dieß sey vera reductio metallorum in primum ens scilicet die metall mortificiren, daß sie kein metall mehr sein noch auch forthin werden können, welches denn durch einen sehr leichten handgrieff gar wohl vnd bald müglich sein magk als ich gemerket. Im übrigen, bitte ich freundlich mich mit einem brieflein zubesuchen, vnd entweder in ietziger Meße einem Bremer Kaufman Herrn Heinrich Wippenhorst, der in der Katerstraßen bey Christof Schiller sein gewelbe hat, einantworten, oder mit über Hamburgk gehen laßen, vnd die inscriptionem nur frey also machen, nemlich Herrn Hendrich Felderman, niederländischem Postmeister in Bremen, muß aber biß Hamburgk bezahlt werden. Hiemiet Göttlicher gnade vns sämptlich empfelendt. Datum Bremen den 12. April A[nn]o 1630.

deß Herrn

d[ienstwilliger ?]

qvem novit

Paulus F.

Neues ist in specie noch nichts sonderliches, es rusten aber Hollandj zue waßer vnd Land stärker zu als nie geschehen: die Anseen haben mit Schweden heymlich guten verstand, so bald er ins feld kompt, werden sie denn keyserischen nicht mehr gratificiren.

[At bottom right, in Johann Rehefeldt's hand:] Paulus Felgenhau[er]

[At bottom centre, date and manuscript marks in pencil, a later hand:] 12/4 [16]30, 46.

Translation

Praise be to God

Honorable, most learned and revered gentleman, my trusted, valued friend. Since I was in Holland this past autumn⁴⁰ and had, at my own cost, my *Christianum* published once more,⁴¹ I therefore desired to have sixteen copies delivered to the gentleman, of which our friend Christoph Kotter⁴² should receive ten, which the gentleman will no doubt deliver unto him along with the enclosed letter, as [Kotter] will be, I hope, attending the fair there.⁴³ The gentleman may retain the remaining six copies for himself and for [other] lovers of truth. Otherwise concerning my studies I have recently, by the grace of God, completed the *Templum Domini*, in three separate parts, namely the atrium, the temple, and the holy of holies. The work numbers in total thirty-three folios, and may perhaps, with God's providence and in the fullness of time, also be brought to the press.⁴⁴ In addition to my studies I presently – to the extent my poverty allows – delight in medicine and surgery as well as in distillation, and indeed I can now distill any flower and its colour, without any further materials, in as little as a few hours.⁴⁵ Additionally I have wanted to undertake something alchemical, but lack the means.

In Holland I have otherwise encountered an individual who, from a simple metal, achieved the *opus philosophicum* with his own hands inside twelve weeks. [This was] indeed not according to his own discovery; he was, rather, an aide to another. Yet he knows all the processes and witnessed everything, indeed did everything with his own hands, with the exception only of the process of germination, which his master alone achieved. Although I have a good rapport with this person, he remains extremely secretive and keeps much to himself. He says that the whole art is described in that book of

⁴⁰ That is, the autumn of 1629.

⁴¹ [P. FELGENHAUER], *Christianorum Christianvs secundum sensum Christi. Sieben Fragen vom Wahren Christenthumb [...] Nach dem Sinn Christi kürztlich verfasset aus der H. Schrift/ vnd bezeuget nach des Geistes dareichung in der Gnade Gottes. Durch Der Sechsten Gemeine zu Philadelphia beruffenen Diener*, [Amsterdam] 1629. As stated, this work was a new edition of FELGENHAUER, *Christianus simplex. Das ist, Einfeltige Betrachtung der Wissenschaft unseres Christlichen Glaubens und Christentums in sieben unterschiedene kleine Fragen geteilt und nach der Wahrheit beschrieben*, Wahrenburgk [Halle] 1624.

⁴² Concerning Kotter (1585–1647), see discussion in text above.

⁴³ The fair mentioned is not the annual *Leipziger Buchmesse*, but probably a trade fair for leather or consumer goods, such as those in which Kotter, as a tanner, dealt.

⁴⁴ The text in question was anonymously published later in 1630 in three parts. A collected edition was issued in 1631 as [P. FELGENHAUER], *Das Geheymnus von Tempel des Herrn in seinem Vorhof, Heyligen und Allerheyligsten: In drey unterschiedenen theilen [...] zu betrachten fürgestellt [...] der Gemeinen Christi, durch die Gnade des Geistes, am Dienst der sechsten Gemeine zu Philadelphia*, [Amsterdam] 1631.

⁴⁵ In Hannover, NHSA, fols. 60v-61r, Felgenhauer remarks that he learnt the *rudimenta distillationis* from a certain Anna von Beckum, widow of a Lutheran pastor, in Hamburg in 1629. A letter from Felgenhauer to Beckum and her husband (?) is included in the appendix to his *Aurora Sapientiae*, [Amsterdam] 1628.

Theophrastus called *Liber vexationum sive cælum philosophicum*,⁴⁶ and claims – a thing that should be made clear – that his technique was very simple and primitive. Indeed, he employed neither alembics nor an oven, but completed everything on the test.⁴⁷ He also praised the twelve tracts of Sendivogius.⁴⁸ But since that time in which he assisted his Master he has attempted nothing further [in the art], has led a quiet and almost solitary life, and is a simple, devout man. He has, however, detailed everything [concerning the achievement of the *opus philosophicum*] and guards it by his person. And for this reason, the master, whom he once served, did poison him in an attempt to end his life. He was ill for several years, until finally the malady lifted from him, although he remains as yet not entirely healthy. This story I wished to set down for the gentleman in trust; it will perhaps seem strange to him, both according to reason and according to the unadulterated and pure metal itself, yet it is a story that I, in accordance with my slight and simple judgment, hold to be true.

In connection [with this story], I have also noticed that a metal can be reduced to its base matter through a simple technique of true calcification and mortification, after achieving which state it grows, as if producing a seed of itself, which then germinates and then liquidizes, as if it would become a regenerated metal. Thus may all metals, through being rendered waxy, turn to a fine yellow, a colour approaching the tincture of true gold. And I thereafter remarked that this is of course the mortification of a metal through reduction to its foremost state, so that it is no longer a metal and can no longer once more become one, which may indeed be rendered possible through a very straightforward technique, as I have stated.

Otherwise I entreat [the gentleman] most friendlyly to favour me with a little letter, and indeed to reply during the present fair via a Bremen salesman Heinrich Wippenhorst, who has his vaults in the Katerstraße with Christoph Schiller,⁴⁹ or to send the

⁴⁶ Attributed to Paracelsus (1493–1541), the *Cælum philosophicum seu liber vexationum* (c. 1567) here mentioned was written or publicised by Adam von Bodenstein and Michael Toxites long after the physician's death. A literally vexatious and riddling text on practical alchemy and the properties of metals, it was widely available to contemporary readers by means of its inclusion in Johann Huser's edition of Paracelsus' works in the 1590s, and the later editions by the likes of Lazarus Zetzner.

⁴⁷ According to Jacob GRIMM and Wilhelm GRIMM, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, vol. 2, Leipzig 1854, pp. 1030–1031, a 'Test' or 'Dest' is 'ein flaches schmelzgerät von besonderer erde, worauf man das silber probiert und die blicke brennt, damit das silber fein werde.' The *Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford 1980, states the test is a 'moveable hearth of the reverberatory furnace in which silver is separated from lead by cuppellation.' It is similar to the cup[p]el, a 'small, flat, circular porous vessel, with a shallow depression in the middle.'

⁴⁸ Michał Sedziwój (1566–c. 1636), or Michael SENDIVOGIUS, *De Lapide Philosophorum Tractatus Duodecim, e Naturae Fonte, Et Manuali Experientia deprompti*, s.l. 1604. The text was reprinted numerous times during the seventeenth century, often under the title *Novum Lumen Chemicum*. Sendivogius himself was known personally to Kerner and Paul Nagel, a fact to which Felgenhauer may or may not have been privy.

⁴⁹ Katerstraße was a common abbreviation for Leipzig's Catharinenstraße, one of the three major *Handelstraßen* in the city centre, located in the vicinity of the *Altmarkt*. The Catharinenstraße

letter via Hamburg, only then by all means inscribe it thus, namely to Herr Hendrich Felderman, Dutch postmaster in Bremen,⁵⁰ although the message should then be paid to Hamburg. May God in his grace recommend us all. Dated Bremen, 12 April 1630.

The gentleman's willing servant

one recognized

Paulus F.

[*Post scriptum*:] This news is of itself nothing special, but the Dutch are arming themselves, both on water and in the field, to an extent never before seen. The Hanseatic Cities possess an uncommonly good understanding with Sweden: after the Swede enters the war, the League will no longer be so obliging to the Empire.⁵¹

was known primarily as a vending place for luxury goods, such as silks, textiles and smoking wares, and remained so until the beginning of the nineteenth century. See Friedrich Gottlob LEONHARD, *Geschichte und Beschreibung der Kreis- und Handelstadt Leipzig nebst umliegenden Gegend*, Leipzig 1799, pp. 679–680. Petr Maťa has brought to my attention several sources concerning Wippenhorst (or Webbenhorst, Wübbenhorst, Wuppenhorst, Wibbenhorst, etc), a prominent arms merchant and trader throughout northern Germany, the Netherlands, and Scandinavia, with connections to the fringes of Comenius's circle. On him, see E. W. DAHLGREN (ed.), *Louis De Geers brev och affärshandlingar 1614–1652*, Stockholm 1934, p. 246, 265, 690; J. RÖMELINGH, *Een rondgang langs Zweedse archieven: een onderzoek naar archivalia inzake d. betrekkingen tussen Nederland en Zweden 1520–1920*, The Hague 1986, p. 229; Andreas RÖPCKE, *Inventar der Bremer Reichskammergerichtsakten*, Bremen 1995, p. 183.

⁵⁰ Hendrich Felderman (or Hinrich; Velderman, Fellerman, etc.) (born c. 1580 in Riede, south of Bremen) was a close friend of Felgenhauer's since at least 1624 (Hannover, NHSA, fol. 60v). Felderman was also apparently an agent of a sea-going postal service that linked Hamburg and Amsterdam via Bremen, in the first half of the seventeenth century. On this service see Johann Hermann DUNTZE, *Geschichte der freien Stadt Bremen*, vol. 3, Bremen 1848, p. 516–517. The London-based intelligencer Samuel Hartlib knew that Felgenhauer could be reached via Felderman in mid-1634: '*Bremæ Iohan[n]es de Monte inveniri p[ossi]t alias voca[tur] Paul[us] Phelgenhawer ap[ud] Heinric[um] Fellerman Nederlandische Postmeister.*' See HP 29/2/12B (1634), and this information was apparently still useful in 1641, when Felgenhauer lived in Bederkesa outside Bremen: '*Die brieff an H. Paul Felgenhawer mög[en] bestellt werden durch H. Heinrich Velderman postmeister zu Bremen der sein guter freund.*' (HP 30/4/74B).

⁵¹ Felgenhauer here communicates to Kerner some intelligence from the recent Lübeck Diet (*Hansetag*) of early 1630. By this time, responsibility for a uniform defence policy across the league had been entrusted solely to the councils of Lübeck, Bremen and Hamburg in the so-called *Dreistädtebund*. On this see Philippe DOLLINGER, *The German Hansa*, London 1977, p. 368. I thank Petr Maťa for his assistance with puzzling through Felgenhauer's reference to the Hansa.

SUMMARY

Prophecy, Alchemy and Strategies of Dissident Communication: A 1630 Letter from the Bohemian Chiliast Paul Felgenhauer (1593–c. 1677) to the Leipzig Physician Arnold Kerner

This article concerns a short but significant letter of April 1630 from the Bohemian prophet, alchemist and theosopher Paul Felgenhauer (1593–c. 1677) to the Leipzig alchemist and physician Arnold Kerner. The letter is presented in transcription, with an annotated English translation. It is prefaced by an introduction incorporating a new biographical account of Felgenhauer, which draws on overlooked or unknown manuscript material preserved in Germany and England. The letter itself shines a rare light on a variety of different areas of interest concerning Felgenhauer's life and activities in the years prior to 1630. These areas include his immediate contacts and associates (such as with the Silesian prophet Christoph Kotter), interest and undertakings in alchemical experimentation, publishing and bibliographical activities, methods of communication, his circle of wider contacts and the nature and extent of broader interpersonal and epistolary networks in which he participated. However, it also illuminates tangential issues, such as the scale of social and informational economy in a heterodox correspondence network, the intricacies of dissident book production in the United Provinces, the history of trade in Leipzig, the role of commercial agents in facilitating contact between dissident personalities throughout the Holy Roman Empire, and the postal history of Bremen.

RESUMÉ

Proroctví, alchymie a strategie komunikace náboženského disentu. Dopis českého chiliasty Paula Felgenhauera (1593–asi 1677) lipskému lékaři Arnoldu Kernerovi z roku 1630

Předkládaná studie se zabývá krátkým, ale významným dopisem z dubna 1630, jehož odesílatelem byl prorok, alchymista a teosof Paul Felgenhauer (1593–asi 1677) pocházející z Čech a adresátem lipský lékař Arnold Kerner. Dopis je zde poprvé vydán spolu s překladem do angličtiny, opatřeným poznámkovým aparátem. Úvodní studie zahrnuje nové shrnutí Felgenhauerova života, jež vychází zejména z nevyužitých nebo neznámých rukopisných materiálů dochovaných v Německu a Anglii. Samotný dopis osvětluje nejrůznější zajímavé aspekty Felgenhauerova života a činnosti v období předcházejícím rok 1630. Zejména se jedná o Felgenhauerovy kontakty a známé (např. o slezského proroka Kryštofa Kottera), jeho alchymistické zájmy a aktivity, publikování a shromažďování informací o knihách, způsoby komunikace, širší okruh jeho kontaktů a o povahu a rozsah širších korespondenčních sítí, v nichž byl zapojen. Některých témat se dotýká jen okrajově, jako např. problému ekonomie sociální a informační výměny v korespondenčních sítích heterodoxních kroužků, nelehké situace heterodoxní knižní produkce v Nizozemí, dějin obchodu v Lipsku, role obchodníků ve zprostředkování kontaktu mezi osobnostmi náboženského disentu na území Říše a v neposlední řadě poštovních dějin Brém.