Quirinus Kuhlmann (1651-1689): Poetry and Prophecy[1]

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Moscow. October 4, 1689. In a Russia still relatively closed to outside influence and divided between official orthodoxy and schismatic *raskolniki;* where Peter I, not yet the Great, is a seventeen-year old struggling to assert imperial power, two German prisoners are taken from their cells and led through the city streets. The one, Conraedt Nordermann, is a merchant who has been attracted to the writings of Protestant dissenters and mystics. The other is Quirinus Kuhlmann, a widely traveled poet and Protestant chiliast who has been disseminating his extraordinary verse writings among German expatriates. Denounced by the orthodox Lutheran pastor of the expatriate community, the two have been arrested and tortured as heretics. Leaving prison under guard, they now have some cause to hope for imminent release. They are allowed to pause and drink a brandy paid for by friends. But then the procession halts at an execution site. Death sentences are read out. Henchmen set to work. The two are bound in a wooden structure loaded with straw and pitch. As the flames ignite and engulf what looks to foreign spectators like a bathhouse, Kuhlmann's wretched voice can still be heard from within proclaiming his innocence and commending his soul to God.[2]

This is how one of the strangest episodes in the annals of prophecy concludes. The case of Quirinus Kuhlmann is distinguished not only by the geo-political dimension of his religious prophecy, a feature shared with the Fifth Monarchy men in England,[3] with the Swedish-German prophetess Eva

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[1] With minor changes, this is the transcript "Quirinus Kuhlmann: Poetry and Prophecy," presented at the Goldsmiths Conference on History and Prophecy, June 26, 2014.

[2] Walter Dietze, *Quirinus Kuhlmann: Ketzer und Poet. Versuch einer monographischen Darstellung von Leben und Werk* (Berlin: Rütten & Loening, 1963. The account given by the witness N. Werner seems the most objective and disinterested (337); see also testimony and speculation including the role of a possibly sympathetic Czar Peter I (333-37). Further references cited in parentheses to WD.

[3] See B.S. Capp, *The Fifth Monarchy Men: A Study in 17th-century English Millenarianism* (Totowa: Rowman and Littlefield, 1972).

Margaretha Frölich,[4] and others of their century. Kuhlmann's prophecy stands out by virtue of the dynamic role of the geo-sectarian aspirations of his intricately refined poetry. Kuhlmann embodies the creative visionary as subversive prophet. In this respect, he anticipates the modern revolutionary poet-intellectuals in the mold of an André Breton or Vladimir Mayakovsky. Any comparison with modern avantgarde poet-prophets must of course be taken loosely. Notwithstanding his flair and innovation, Kuhlmann hardly stood in the forefront of seventeenth-century advancement. Descartes, Spinoza, or contemporaneous progress in the natural sciences did not register with him. Seeking his inspiration in the prophetic past, Kuhlmann self-consciously aspired to be a prophet's prophet and a poet's poet. His amalgamation of prophecy with a poetic persona provided the material and motive of his imposing verse cycle *Der Kühlpsalter*. This *Cool Psalter* (which by merely adding an umlaut qualified Kuhlmann as the "Cool Man" of his own poetic-prophetic mythology) institutes an authorial self-reference of heroic proportions, more grandiose even than the self-mythologizing Walt Whitman. Kuhlmann's intentions are Christian-chiliastic and heretical and sufficiently resolute to result in his death by fire in a Moscow street. Though a man of his time, he was no less the precursor of the modern typology of the tourist-memoirist whose travel experiences recover the past, critique the present, and anticipate the future.

Kuhlmann is somewhat simplistically designated as a mystic. He appears as one in basing his prophetic voice on divine authority; however, he claims a personal, poetic, chiliastic, and missionary authority which transcends the character types more commonly associated with mysticism. Appearing near the culmination of the early modern tradition of German mystical writing, Kuhlmann divests the role of the mystic of the otherworldly trappings accruing to it. Aside from his egomaniac introspection and spiritualistic turns of phrase, he has little in common with those later remembered as introverted Pietistic *Stillen im Lande.* Kuhlmann exposes an underlying reality of a challenged, yet defiantly asserted

[4] Bo Andersson, "Order in Insanity: Eva Margaretha Frölich (d. 1692) and Her National Swedish Eschatology," in *Mental Health, Spirituality, and Religion in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age,* ed. Albrecht Classen. Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture 15, ed. Albrecht Classen and Marilyn Sandidge (Berlin, Boston: de Gruyter, 2014), 579-592.

authority: a craving for power and influence which can lurk in the heart of piety, poetry, or mysticism. It must be noted in qualification of any plausible suspicion of facile charlatanism that he courted and paid the ultimate price for his claims. Abnormal psychology might find a fertile subject in the trajectory of his verse autobiography; but if Kuhlmann was indeed insane, his insanity resonated with his time, an era of false messiahs, famously so in the person of the Jewish "mystical messiah" Sabbatai Sevi (1626–1676)[5] whose claims inspired the Jews of Amsterdam (WD 238)

We need to outline the genesis of Kuhlmann's remarkable poetic prophecy and then consider how the outlines that seem exceptional to his foreshortened career actually highlight a common aspect of prophecy: its reliance on epic narratives that refer not only to the future but to the present and past. The poetic features of rhyme, strophic form, motif, and repetition further sustain the arc of prophecy. Kuhlmann's prophecy constitutes a coherent narrative encompassing the past, present, and future, in a manner that overlays the prose of his international travels with the poetry of an imagined spiritual mission. This exposition cannot approach doing full justice to Kuhlmann's multi-facetted persona and poetry. It can perhaps suggest how rich are the motherlodes that await exploration in his life and work.

Born in 1651 in the Silesian city of Breslau, Kuhlmann was the son of a merchant father who died during the early childhood of Quirinus. Patronage enabled the son to attend the finest Lutheran schools of his culturally brilliant native city. Seventeenth-century Breslau was on the frontline of confessional tension and a Parnassus of literary brilliance. Martin Opitz, the Silesian Renaissance poet credited with founding modern German literature, was a figure celebrated in his native Silesia with patriotic fervor. Confessional-political tensions seem to have been sublimated in artistic achievement.

As an eager scholar of humanistic studies, fluent in Latin and receptive to the literary currents of the Baroque era, the young Quirinus turned to poetry. As a student, he published lyrics in an erudite

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[5] Most notably, see Moshe Idel, *Messianic Mystics* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1998) (Chapter Six: Sabbateanism and Mysticism, 183–211; Gershom Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah: 1626–1676* (London: Routledge Kegan Paul,1973; American Edition, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1973).

Baroque style. As a learned craftsman-like versifier, he is remote from the later type of the Romantic poet of inspired originality and visionary genius. The young Kuhlmann is a skilled imitator, beholden to learned authority and eager to please his benefactors. Their aid allows the youthful prodigy first to study law in Jena and then to continue at the renowned Dutch Protestant mecca, the University of Leiden. After arriving in Leiden, he reads the work of the German speculative mystic, Jacob Boehme: a plebeian master of the German language who would inspire Romantic poets. Reading Boehme at once catalyzes the academic prodigy into a prophet and wayward son of the Lutheran faith. Kuhlmann was to undertake journeys to London, Paris, Constantinople, Jerusalem, and finally Moscow, in order to win over the uncommitted Turks, Jews, and Orthodox Christians for a chiliastic anti-papal union.

How was the poet transformed into a prophet? We can only speculate about the deeper well-springs of Kuhlmann's metamorphosis: his humiliating dependence on patronage or his quest to find, or become, a powerful father-figure.[6] Leaving psychological speculation aside, I would submit from the literary evidence that in the process of his transformation the poetic element never recedes or loses its dominance. Prophecy does not overshadow or subordinate poetry: it hyper-charges Kuhlmann's lyric with passion and relevance, thereby making him a more original and arguably more modern poet. Prior to his prophetic phase, he had done his homework as a humanistic compiler of mystical, biblical, and patristic tropes in an early collection of poems *Himmlische Libes-Küsse* or *Celestial Kisses of Love*. He attempted to ignite this amassed poetic kindling by means of an erotic-mystical pathos, bolstered by the inspiration of Lull's *Ars magna sciendi sive combinatoria*. In doing so, he earned a poet's laurels, but

[6] See Quirinus Kuhlmann, *Der neubegeisterte Böhme,* ed. and intro. by Jonathan Clark. Bibliothek des literarischen Vereins in Stuttgart, 317 (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1995). Cited as NBB by volume and page. See NBB 1:xxii (In his fine introduction, Clark describes Kuhlmann's youthful religiosity. It is of course possible that he associated God with his deceased father. What pious Christian might not? References to illness and its effects are molded by the self-stylization of Kuhlmann's later *Quinarius* (Amsterdam 1680) yet they need not be doubted in substance.

modern critics regard his *Kisses* as bathos or *Schwulst*.[7] It was prophecy that would intensify Kuhlmann's poetry to the point of coalescing mystical vision with personal experience.

As mentioned, his transformative crisis took place shortly after the twenty-two-year old arrived in Leiden as a student in the fall of 1673. He created a published record of his conversion in his prose paean, *Der neubegeisterte Böhme*, "the newly inspired Jacob Boehme": the title proclaims that the mystical shoemaker of Görlitz who had died a half century earlier had been revived through the inspiration of Kuhlmann (NBB 1:38). What could Boehme offer that all the previous mystics known to Kuhlmann did not? Boehme was more direct and personal than other sources. He claimed immediate inspiration as well as deep insight into the souls of Christians and a prophetic overview of troubled Christendom. Kuhlmann picks up on Boehme's anticlerical and antiacademic antiauthoritarianism.[8] The young poet focuses on the criticism of the professional clergy, of the learned and the universities. He is aware that Boehme's humble status had its biblical precedents in the lowliness of the patriarchs and apostles; and he seizes on Boehme's disdain for academic Pharisees.[9] The shoemaker of Görlitz was only the most prominent among many such plebeian prophets. Their Christian "footsteps of the deed" ("ihre Thatfustaphen"—NBB1:40) extend from Tauler, Waldo, Wyclif, Hus, Luther, and Johann Arndt

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[7] See Clark, Introduction, NBB 1:xxiv-xxv, on the evolution of K.'s poetry (Darüber hinaus zeichnen sich seine Lieder durch neue sprachliche und stilistische Ausdruckformen aus. Angefüllt mit Ausrufen, Gleichniswörtern, zusammengesetzten Substantiven und Adjektiven und, am auffälligsten, mit Anaphern sind die Libes-Küsse als Musterbeispiel barocken Schwulstes von vielen modernen Kritikern abgewertet worden"). See also Wilhelm Kühlmann, "Quirinus Kuhlmann," in Deutsche Dichter, vol. 2 (Reformation, Renaissance und Barock) (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1988), 402-403 ("Als Übergang zum Kühlpsalter lässt sich ein bereits während der Schulzeit begonnener Sonettenzyklus (Himmlische Libes-Küsse, 1671) ansehen, für den Kuhlmann vom Rudolstädter Hofrat Ahasver Fritsch zum Dichter gekrönt wurde (4. März 1672). Der Name Johann Arndts steht hier für Kuhlmanns Hinwendung zur zeitgenössischen Reformorthodoxie…. [Die Sonette] bemühen Motive der Hohelied-Mystik (Jesu-Minne) und verstehen sich als geistliche Kontrafaktur der erotischen Kuß-Lyrik älterer Renaissance-Dichter (Janus Secundus, Paul Fleming).")

[8] Jonathan Clark's introduction does justice to this attitude (NBB 1:xxxiv-xxxv). In NBB 1:69, Kuhlmann cites Boehme's *Mysterium Magnum* 36:60-61 against the institutions of learning, "So spricht nun di vernunft: das sind ja lehrhäuser / da man den Unverständigen lehret / da man singet und betet. Si auswendig in und bei den buchstabischen Menschen ist nur der thurm und stad Babel . . . verwüsten land und leute. . .").

[9] NBB 1:73, "…so wohl bei Theologen als Juristen / lehret Böhme im 11. capitt. von der Genadenwahl [cf. § 13-16]: 'Der falsche Mensch /' spricht er / 'sätzt sich wohl in den Tempel Gottes / und nennet sich einen Christen / treibet auch vil scheinwerke . . . er lernet kunst / studiret und weiß vil von Gott zu sagen; er lehret andere; aber um nutzens und ehre willen / wie die Phariseer thaten . . .'").

through the prophets of his present, Christoph Kotter, Christina Poniatovska, Antoinette Bourignon, Nicholas Drabnik, and the Dutch prophets Johan Rothe and Tanneke Denys, as well as English Fifth Monarchists, culminating in the poet himself.

Before all such witnesses, Christendom stands accused of dissension and war and of failing to embrace the eternal gospel of peace and love foretold in its prophetic tradition. This prevalence of witnessing points both to the resonating potency and potential contradiction of Kuhlmann's mission. The abundance of prophetic voices would have lent resonance to each new voice. Yet by its nature each bespoke its own unique veracity. Walter Dietze has much to say about the resulting complexities of Kuhlmann's prophecy and its scriptural-traditional underpinnings.[10] The dynamic of competition surely must have compelled the prophet to ever more flamboyant and action-oriented expressions of prophetic authority. They are embodied in the hypothesis of Kuhlmann's initial vision inspired by Boehme, in the experimental "footsteps of the deed" of his journeys, and in the synthesis of a visionary thesis with its enacting journey within his unique and ever growing and blossoming cycle of poems.

Der neubegeisterte Böhme was printed in Leiden in 1674, two years after the *rampjaar* or year of Dutch disaster inflicted by foreign invasion, economic collapse, flooding, and turmoil. Kuhlmann's allusions to current events is an underestimated current in his masterwork.[11] In an era of terror, hope, and renewal, *Der neubegeisterte Böhme* met with a sympathetic reception in dissenting circles. A potent chemistry resided in its compounding of the learned with the lay, the high with the low, the traditional with the new. In the aftermath of the Dutch disaster which called for reevaluation and reconstruction in a concrete sense, Kuhlmann's mixture was empowered by his appropriation of the prophetic voice and highlighted by the atmosphere of the times. One finds a polar opposite in Spinoza's revolutionary *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* of 1670, which was as radical in its incisive skepticism as Kuhlmann in his

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[10] WD 263-77.

[11] See Anette Munt, "The Impact of the Rampjaar on Dutch Golden Age Culture," *Dutch Crossing: Journal of Low Countries Studies* (1997), 21:1, pp. 3-51.

eclectic credulity. Both would respond to the prevalence of religious dissension and conflict: the one with a burgeoning harvest of new prophecy, the other with the culling acid of skepticism; Kuhlmann, however, additionally with his new poetic synthesis.

Before Kuhlmann's conversion experience, he had been a conventional poet. After it, he could claim a place in a lineage of prophets as well as in creative idiosyncrasy. Converted to an antiacademic anticlericalism, he turned against his Lutheran creed and scholarly class. Yet the new man is rooted in the old. Even after his declarations against all papal, Lutheran, Calvinist, and Turkish authorities, he appeals by letter to the Jesuit polymath Athanasius Kircher for support and recognition (WD 102-106). Even after the success of his *neubegeisterter Böhme*, the poet is the type of antiauthoritarian who craves recognition of learned authority. He marshals and reclaims for himself every retrievable spiritual precedent. Among the precedents, he includes Agrippa von Nettesheim—not the magician but the skeptic—as well as the illustrious Silesian poet Andreas Gryphius who had studied earlier in Leiden and cast similar aspersions on the value of academic learning (WD:130). Critical of worldly knowledge and inspired by visions of uneducated folk prophets, Kuhlman becomes the erudite anti-establishment voice who nevertheless continues to court higher recognition in a learned but original style. Rejecting authority to gain higher authority is a radical role which Jesus had modeled but few could master.

Having gained recognition among dissenters, Kuhlmann moves with ease in their circles, first in Lübeck and then in and near London. Beginning in the spring of 1677, he resides among kindred spirits at the Bromley estate of a well-to-do religious enthusiast John Bathurst (WD 153). The chiliastic schemes Kuhlmann had harbored since his Leiden conversion acquire practical dimensions. Bathurst shares his chiliastic purposes. According to the Book of Revelation 7:9, a great multitude from all tribes, peoples, and languages is destined to submit itself to the Lamb of God before the end of time. Accordingly, the next programmatic step was the conversion of heathens, Turks, and Jews. Bathurst

would approach the heathens with a mission to Jamaica. Kuhlmann would take charge of converting the Turks with a mission to Constantinople (WD 154). What a simple and practical division of labor!

On March 3, 1678, he sets off by way of Calais, Paris, Avignon, Marseilles, Sicily, Malta, and Smyrna for Constantinople. Spared any necessity of an encounter with Mahomet IV, who is away on a military campaign, the would-be missionary returns first to Smyrna where degrading quarrels with his profligate associates await him, then by way of Cadíz and the Atlantic to Amsterdam, arriving on April 1, 1679 (WD 158). He is now twenty-eight. In the next ten years, he moves between dissenting circles in Amsterdam, London, and Paris with excursions as far as Edinburgh and Berlin. He leads a cosmopolitan lifestyle in which men and women mix and reside together freely in a milieu of prophetic counterculture, dependent upon patronage and the generosity of fellow enthusiasts.

Kuhlmann's relations with women are an inducement to speculation. Dietz and others have assumed that the erotic metaphors of his *Kühlpsalter* insinuate a sexual intimacy with the married Tanneke Denys (WD 118). It seems, moreover, that Tanneke's older friend, the widow Magdalena von Lindau who joined the prophetic group in Lübeck regarded the poet as her own. Hearing of his plans to move on without her, she raised such a ruckus that the poet fell into fits of self-pity over the claims of this doting woman old enough to be his mother. Rhyming "Ehe" with "Wehe," marriage with woe, he was inclined to reject matrimony altogether (WD 118-19). Elsewhere, the community of dissenters consisted of men and women sharing common quarters and moving in unsupervised circles.

In the 1680s during the period of Kuhlmann's declining influence, he married twice, first with an English prophetess with whom he traveled to Oxford before settling down in a common law or legal marriage in Amsterdam. Mary Gould whom he referred to as Maria Anglicana died in November 1686 (WD 235). He then undertook a formal courtship, betrothal, and marriage to Esther de Haes, a stepdaughter of his first Dutch publisher. Again, prophecy was a component of their relationship. Kuhlmann expected his women to report prophecies about him. The couple had a child, unexpectedly

a girl who died a shortly after a premature birth. Kuhlmann applied his threefold prefigurative schema to Magdalena, who still had claims upon him, Maria, and Esther (WD 235-36). Esther must have given credence to Kuhlmann's prophetic mission. Her "witnessing" encouraged his final mission to Russia (WD 260).

In August 1681, between his journey to Constantinople and his final tragic mission to Russia, he set off on a second grand mission journey to convert the Jews in Jerusalem. Traveling south through France he gets diverted to Geneva where he loses his way and spends six months as a guest of the preacher to the German community in Geneva, his compatriot Pastor Otto Korn of Bremen (WD 203). The continuing journey takes place only in spirit. After coming under suspicion of heresy, he returns to London on October 15, 1682 (WD 204). Could there be a clearer sign of failed prophecy?

But the prophet is also a poet, and poetry is the alchemy of experience. In the aftermath of his first mission journey, Kuhlmann had adapted the theological and exegetic concept of prefiguration to encompass and interpret meaningful sequences of related events, persons, and symbols. Everything essential is realized in three stages: the stage of the sign, of the figure, and finally of being or essence (*Wesen*). For example, the androgynous Adam of Boehme's theory sleeps for forty hours. The children of Israel wander forty years in the desert. For forty days, Jesus is tempted in the desert: his triumph is the realization of an essence, prefigured and symbolized by the sleep of Adam and the wandering of Israel (WD 175). In a prophetic tradition leading up to the poet, Boehme was the "sign" for which Johann Rothe was the "figure," for whom Kuhlmann is the "essence" or "being." Within this versatile framework, prior events and persons could be re-interpreted through the experiences and writings of the poet. The falsifiability of a future-oriented prophecy is replaced by the more subtle literary dialectic of anticipation and fulfillment. The last and most comprehensive work of the poet, his *Kühlpsalms*, weaves past, present, and future into its complex literary structures.

A massive daunting work, *Der Kühlpsalter* is bewildering because of the many levels of reference it encompasses. In the literature of the time, its main prototypes or parallels (not to say influences) are found in the nonfiction travel report of this era of wandering, exile, and globalization; in the allegorical peregrinations of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* and Comenius's *Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart;* in the erotic and religious-meditative variants of Baroque poetry; and in such personal accounts of pious introspection as Boehme's. What is striking is that Kuhlmann can blend the nonfiction of the travel or introspective report with his allegory and poetic refinement. Travel, allegorically heightened, is embodied in his prose introductions to his verse cantos. Dated matter-of-factly, composed in the third person, his prose intermezzi can also be subtly allegorical. For example, the fourth Cool Psalm of Book One is prefaced: "As he contemplated the danger for the illuminated children of God in descending from the Holy Spirit into the worldly spirit, sung—for the sake of true spiritual abandonment—at Paris, on March 26, 1678." What follows are cantos blending the mystical images drawn from Boehme with veiled references to the Sun King, Louis XIV, whose military aggression had recently devastated the Netherlands. Fire and light are thus contrapuntal and associative. Through the prism of poetry, the human being becomes "solar" when the Son of God rises within him. The Dutch had recently gone through the fire of their *rampjaar* and were assuredly seeking their spiritual bearings and enlightenment. For Kuhlmann no less than Boehme, fire is the ground of the soul. Fire and light are metaphysically distinct and spiritually at play. When the soul reflects upon itself, its light takes flight (KP 54). This image which draws on Boehme is at the heart of the poetic prophecy of Boehme or Kuhlmann. It suggests the reasons for its historical resonance. An age that knew the fierce fires of transformation was seeking the light of a new clarifying understanding of time and the world.

Though the Görlitzer did not write poetry, his monumental *Mysterium Magnum* was a massive esoteric exegesis of Genesis translating the historical or literal sense of the first book of Moses into the symphonic epic of the divine source spirits. These interweave the life of the soul, the outer life of

nature, and the eschatological course of the world. Boehme's late, uniquely ambitious and stylistically powerful and mysterious treatise had an impact on Kuhlmann. He undertook to craft a poetic equal of its monumental prose. In the *Cool Psalms,* to be sure, it is not creation that establishes the base line but the poet's own self-creation. When his expedition to Constantinople stalls at Smyrna, he intensifies his creative energies to a white heat of alchemical transformation. The fire of his hellish inner torment alternates with the light of his self-reflection. His verses encompass allusions to the mythology of Boehme's first Adam whose passion was abused and turned to carnal lust ("Wollust"), whereby his vanity gambled away the gifts of paradise ("Als ich in Adam dich verlohr,/ Und fremde Buhlschafft mir erkohr, / So ward mein feur in wollust misgebraucht, / Gelibt di welt, di euserlich verraucht, / Di Eitelkeit stat himmlisches erhaben, / Das ich verschertzt di Paradisesgaben."—KP 138). Taken in terms of Boehme's arcane symbolism, one can surmise from this that the poet is working through his guilt for carnal transgressions or amorous flights of fancy. He emerges from this ordeal in verses that convey an even more formidable conviction of his mission and election.

In his allegorical introspective mode, his meter and rhyme are full of inflected variations. Life and poetry, epic and lyric are uniquely interwoven. His verse can evoke stalwart collective experience, recalling the fortitude of Lutheran hymns or conveying the *Volkslied* tenderness of a German departing his beloved homeland. It can resound in regal fanfares of triumph. Naive youth is mirrored in simple paired rhymes that turn more complex, more like resolute chorales, as the poet matures to the prophet. His *Psalms* can be read therapeutically, as the testimony of an outsider healing himself from his spiritual crises with the self-medication of his versified introspection. The *Kühlpsalter* projects a developmental myth analogous to the *Bildungsroman.* A simple soul is driven and tormented to reflection and thrust onward toward revelation and prophecy.

The developmental core of the work is enriched by its allusions to the past, present, and future. In singing his self-referential psalms to the Lord, the poet declares that his spirit is "*Davidizing*" (Sein

Gemütt Davidisirte—KP 6). David the warrior poet is reborn in Kuhlmann the revived Boehme, the humble soul confronting papal or orthodox Goliath. When he visits cities or countries on his journeys, he experiences them like a cultivated tourist as the sites of past events which cast their shadow over the present with portents for the future: Lyon is the city of Peter Waldo, who anticipated Wyclef, Hus, Luther, and Kuhlmann himself; Malta is the island of the Apostle Paul; Paris the lair of the Sun King who embodies the primal fall into selfhood (KP 54). Avignon evokes the Babylonian captivity of the Church. At Smyrna he claims to see the ruins of Troy. The past infuses the present with a feverish megalomania. Kuhlmann had once encountered Edward Coleman, the alleged Catholic conspirator in the Popish Plot, executed in 1678. The poet thereafter proclaimed himself the arch-rival of this popish fiend. He is the Coolman and *Refrigerator* who heralds an age of cooling refreshment after the hellish coals piled on by the crypto-papist Coleman (WD 119, 240-41).

His "five month-long journey" from the biblical-apocalyptic "Pathmus of the seven cities in the Orient *[Morgenland],*" circumventing "toward Midnight" "the old Rome between Asia and Europe, Africa and Europe, America and Europe, across more than a thousand nautical miles in a semicircle" (KP 92) combines cosmography and his personal pilgrimage into a cryptic-prophetic clockface that is said to be all the more glorious for the travails experienced by the poet under supernatural guidance. The cosmic perspective harbors recollections of the child's stammering and fearfulness (KP 108, 109). It encompasses his amorous friendships with women (KP 116, 117) and recalls the role of his father's mysterious early disappearance, news of whose death only reached the family three years after the fact (KP 108). He seems to have projected the mystery of his existence onto the pre-apocalyptic globe.

Kuhlmann is of course not the only author who has conceived of his role as prophetic. His adaptation of prefiguration, type and antitype, accords with the way we still use literary tradition. We understand that Yeats' poem, *The Second Coming,* is informed by the Book of Revelation and that the latter is further actualized as much by Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart* as by Joan Didion's *Slouching*

Toward Bethlehem, vastly different as those echoes might appear. We extend the reciprocity of type and antitype to incorporate every tense and time frame. It can lead in multiple directions without losing its symbolic validity. For Kuhlmann, prophecy crafts a more complex and intimately literary voice. Poetic prophecy empowers his voice to carry. He embraces the hortative role of the poet. When he exhorts his native Germany, one is reminded of Brecht's great poem of Germany, *Pale Mother* (KP 31).

Kuhlmann is a man of his own time in fervently believing that poetry is more than imaginative whimsy. He appears to have absorbed all the tropes of his illuminist counterculture, from medieval mysticism to the esoteric nature philosophy of Paracelsus to the inspirations of an international wave of prophecy. In effect he pursues to the final consequence one of the alternative options of his age. Spinoza chose critical reduction based on the principle that contradictory biblical prophecies cannot all be true: Kuhlmann opted for an expansive credulous eclecticism, believing that all prophecies could be subsumed within a single sublimely inspired synthesis. What the inspired poet, steeped in prophetic precedent and dignified by verse, brings to life has a sacred purchase on belief. Even in Russia, where he journeyed after years of faltering momentum, he declaimed and disseminated his hermetically difficult *Cool Psalms* to woo converts to his chiliastic faith.

A poet as prophet, Kuhlmann's sincerity is authenticated by his tragic death by fire. One can only wonder whether he retained his gift of transforming material fact into poetic vision within sight of the instruments of his execution. A prophet of the past and future, Kuhlmann was inspired no less by a present arguably freer and more modern in Holland than any society heretofore. The dialog with changing times merits examination in other prophetic or mystical figures.

I will make three points in summary. The first concerns Kuhlmann as the type of the prophet as influencer. A skeptic might think that all modern prophets are making it up as they go to gain power and influence; but this tells us very little. We can point to the distant but relevant parallel in Jonathan Spence's study of *God's Chinese Son*: Hong Xiuquan, the leader of the mid nineteenth-century Taiping

Rebellion. As a failed, disillusioned student, Hong read Chinese Bible translations, expanded them to focus on himself, and led an uprising against idol worship that nearly overturned the Manchu dynasty in what historians consider the bloodiest civil war of the nineteenth century. In triumph or failure, Hong remained the intellectual poet, reconciling the Bible with Chinese tradition, extracting relevant lessons from Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, and composing cycles of poetry celebrating his epic travails.[12] Goethe coined the concept of World Literature, *Weltliteratur*. In Hong or Kuhlmann, one finds early exotic variants of a literature that responds to globalization with a hyper-charged synthesis combining universal religion with a personal mythology which is poetic and prophetic.

A second point of summary has to do with the place of the *Cool Psalms* in literary history. They represent a hallmark in the personalization of literature. What is the personal but a matter of context? We regard Montaigne's *Essays* as more personal than Pascal's *Thoughts* because the essays give us not only the thoughts but the thinker and his worldly encounters: context becomes content. The *Kühlpsalter* excels at this, framing its cantos with prose accounts of the poet's personal context, indeed shaping the forms and rhythms of its lyrics to reflect personal development. In this, it is not absurd to claim that Kuhlmann anticipated the young poet Goethe of the early Strasbourg period.

Finally, there is the fabulous *sui generis* of Kuhlmann as a poetic prophet, as one who uniquely unites the personal with the apocalyptic and the universal. For though the prophet Kuhlmann has his precedents, his poetic-prophetic persona as the *Refrigerator* is highly unique in prophetic history. His role as the Cool Man is inseparable from his embodiment in his *Cool Psalms*.

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[12] In addition, to the modern political or poetic prophets who are typologically relevant precisely because they are as remote as possible from Kuhlmann while nonetheless displaying affinities, one might compare *God's Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan,* in the book of that title by Jonathan Spence (New York: Norton, 1996). Like Kuhlmann, Hong was frustrated with the hierarchy of learning; disoriented by the chaos of globalization in China, and resolved to write himself into a great prophetic trajectory which blended the Western-Christian and Eastern past into a single universalistic vision.

Appendix of Kuhlmann's contemporary prophets.

See NBB 2:267-68. Christoph Kotter (*1585, Langenau near Görlitz; † 1647 in Upper Lusatia) was a tanner with visions of combat between an eagle (the Habsburgs) and a lion (Protestant opponents) which were recorded and found their way into Comenius' Lux in Tenebris auf (1657, expanded edition 1665) with a widespread impact. Also included in Comenius' work were the revelations of the Polish prophetess and Bohemian refugee Christina Poniatovska (1610-1644) and Nicholas Drabnik (1588–1671), a fellow Bohemian Brethren with prophetic visions of Habsburg defeat, who achieved universal fame and ended by being burned at the stake in Bratislava. "Antoinette Bourignon de la Porte (1616-1680) was a French-Flemish mystic and adventurer. She taught that the end times would come soon and that the Last Judgment would then be felled. Her belief was that she was chosen by God to restore true Christianity on earth and became the central figure of a spiritual network that extended beyond the borders of the Dutch Republic, including Holstein and Scotland. In Amsterdam, she met Jean de Labadie, Comenius and Anna Maria van Schurman" (Wikipedia). Kuhlmann at first idolized and cultivated Bourignon; but it seems that in the end no love was lost on either side: she considered him "ein vermessener Mann / über welchen der Teufel viel Gewalt hat" (WD 115-16). The Dutch prophet Johann Rothe (1628-1702) comes to Kuhlmann's attention at the end of his Wunderwoche: the contact between the two extends the prophetic tradition to his person, and expands its scope to England, where Rothe was a sympathetic observer of the Fifth Monarchist movement and its demise. Since Rothe was a popular figure with a following, he may also have been a role model for Kuhlmann. Through Rothe, Kuhlmann learns of the Fifth Monarchists, seeking precedents for them in Boehme's writings. Tanneke Denys was the daughter of a tradesman („eines Bleichers Tochter aus Blumenthal bei Harlem"--Kuhlmann quoted from WD—117) who had written some religious pamphlets that seemed in agreement with Boehme's thought; she had a sympathizing husband and lived with him in dissenting circles in Lübeck where she met Kuhlmann. Dietz considers it likely that she and Kuhlmann had an erotic relationship (WD 118). Other members of these circles are Friedrich Breckling (1629-1711), an early Pietist who fled to the Netherlands and initiated a circle; Johann Georg Gichtel (1638-1710), an associate of Breckling, also a malcontent German Lutheran who fled to the Netherlands, helped found a community of the "Brethren of the Angelic Life," and edited Boehme's writings which appeared in 1682; Ludwig Giffteil (1595-1661), an early Pietist and pacifist dissenter; and Paul Felgenhauer (1593-c. 1677), author of dissenting chiliast writings printed in the Netherlands. The last two died before Kuhlmann arrived in Amsterdam, but they were like him German dissenters. See also Ariel Hessayon, „Gold Tried in the Fire": TheaurauJohn Tany and the English Revolution (Ashgate 2007).