

# 1 Upper Lusatia

An engraving from an early Dutch edition of Boehme's works shows him writing at his workbench amidst the tools of his trade. The floor is littered with a fold of uncut leather, scraps, and a pattern-cut piece for a shoe. This, together with the fact that he is wearing a heavy apron, announces that a simple shoemaker has momentarily paused in his accustomed labors. The quill is gripped in a firm artisan's hand. An hourglass on the bench measures the fleeting minutes stolen from his handicraft.<sup>1</sup>

It is certainly not impossible that Boehme wrote his first book like this. His writing has certain artisanlike qualities. Despite the sublimity of his themes and the originality of his verbal innovations, his first endeavors at extended composition were ponderous and mechanical. Patterns of Biblical sequence are taken over and maintained, even when they run counter to his developing train of thought. Refractory cogitations come up repeatedly, as if he were hammering out his ideas from a verbal material, widening, altering, and shaping them.

The engraving also strikingly emphasizes the isolation of the shoemaker-mystic. The shadowy walls of his workroom lock out the exterior world. Dramatically, the light from an unseen high window falls upon the writer's intense countenance and touches his manuscript. The angle formed by this light from above with his downward gaze suggests that his writing reflects an invisible source. The dim milieu of scattered objects is on hand merely to contrast with the luminous transfer. The image has a strong graphic appeal—precisely because it sums up the Jacob Boehme legend.

Another facet of this same legend is the anachronism of many German studies: the designation of Boehme as a "Silesian mystic." Görlitz and Eastern Lusatia were incorporated into a Prussian-administered Silesia only between 1815 and 1945. In his scant remarks touching on his home region and its neighbor to the east, Boehme consistently mentioned Silesia (*Schlesien*) as a distinct neighboring territory. When he stated his "country" by name, it was Lusatia (*die Lausitz*),

never Silesia.<sup>2</sup> Silesia, from Caspar Schwenckfeld to Angelus Silesius, was the terrain of Eastern German mysticism. By overlooking a seemingly minor detail of historical accuracy, scholars absorbed the Lusatian writer into the nimbus of the nearby territory. Displacing the man also shifted the perspective on his work toward otherworldliness.

Lusatia and Silesia shared much in common as northern crown lands of the Kingdom of Bohemia, but there were also significant religious and political differences, especially in Boehme's time. These differences should not be glossed over in the interest of consolidating German literary landscapes.

### Two Centuries of Religious Upheaval

Situated between Bohemia to the south, Silesia to the east, Brandenburg to the north, and the lands of Saxony and Meissen to the west, Lusatia was a characteristic Middle European territory, rocked by the fall of dynasties and the upsurge of new religious movements. For two centuries, in intervals of about fifty years, its mixed Slavic and German populace suffered the reverberations from shifting centers of power and changing doctrines of faith. For even longer than that, the small territories of the Margravates of Upper and Lower Lusatia had been handed or wrenched from one dominion to another. The two Lusatias had already been ruled by the Holy Roman Empire, Poland, and Brandenburg before they became Bohemian crown lands in the fourteenth century.

In the course of passing between dominions, the cities of Upper Lusatia acquired a degree of territorial cohesion which was cemented by the League of Six Cities, (*der Sechsstädtebund*), founded in 1346. By the end of the fifteenth century *das Land der Sechsstädte* had become an alternate name for Upper Lusatia.<sup>3</sup> Prominent in the federation were the city of Bautzen (which is now the center of the Slavic Sorb minority of East Germany) and, about one day's journey east of Bautzen, Görlitz on the Neisse. History is eschatology in Boehme's writings, not chronicle. He mentions no specific events of the past—not even of the religious strife which lay within the living memory of his older contemporaries. In the allegorical preface of his first book, even the Reformation appears as one episodic altercation in the incessant battle of truth against falsehood. However, this lack of historical perspective is in itself revealing of the circumstances of a region over which waves of order and discord rolled seemingly without end. The prefatory allegory obliquely recalls a time of "war and stormwinds" between the allegorized adulteration of the truth by Rome and the

revival of truth by the Reformation (I 11/49). In Middle Europe, the great period of war and turmoil prior to Luther was the era of the Hussite Wars in the fifteenth century—a period which was not forgotten by Boehme's contemporaries. One of them, the Humanist Mayor Scultetus of Görlitz, even undertook to reconstruct a chronicle of his city during the years of the Hussite Wars.

In 1415, Jan Hus, the leader of the Czech Reformation which preceded Luther's by a hundred years, was burned at the stake at the Council of Constance. The followers of Hus rebelled against the pope and their Catholic king. Their religious and national uprising began in earnest in 1419 with the first "Defenestration of Prague." Marching beneath the banner of the chalice (signifying the Utraquist demand for Communion in both kinds), the Hussites defeated the Imperial armies and invaded the surrounding German territories. The Upper Lusatian League of Six Cities remained staunchly loyal to Rome and to the expelled King Sigismund of Bohemia. When the victorious armies of Hussites and Taborites marched north toward Brandenburg and the Baltic Sea, Lusatia and Silesia lay in their path. The stalwart League of Six marshaled its burgher forces and hired mercenaries to resist the invaders.

During this distant age of "war and stormwinds," Lusatia had fallen into a state of violent lawlessness. Feuding nobles and "outlaw knights" (*Raubritter*) declared war on towns, raiding and burning their outlying villages and terrorizing the roads and countryside. The outlaw knights lived on, not only in legend;<sup>4</sup> their progeny continued to terrorize the townspeople. Noble bandits and marauding criminals still imperiled the main road through Upper Lusatia in the middle of the sixteenth century.<sup>5</sup>

The fabled memory of the outlaw knights reverberates in Boehme's most persistent metaphor for the power of evil. From the first fragment to the last voluminous tome, Lucifer inhabits a figurative "outlaw castle," a *Raubschloß*. In a treatise on melancholy, the satanic robber knight descends upon his victims under cover of darkness, invading their melancholy imaginations and convincing them that they are challenged by the just wrath of God. These characteristic metaphors for the *Anfechtung* or trial of the spirit provide clues to the background of the mysterious treasure from Boehme's childhood and of his characteristic fear of violence and disorder.

During the fifteenth century, the burghers of the League responded to the *Raubritter* by carrying out military expeditions against the outlaw bastions and executing the defeated nobles. One of the most destructive of these strongholds stood on the promontory of *die Landeskron*e overlooking the city walls of Görlitz.<sup>6</sup> In 1422, the com-

bined League forces stormed, conquered, and razed the fortifications, delivering a stinging blow to a class enemy who, if granted the opportunity, knew how to retaliate viciously. The summit of the *Landeskron*e became one of the legendary sites of an outlaw treasure trove said to lie beneath the ruins of a *Raubschloß*.<sup>7</sup>

The Lusatians, who continued to suffer the excesses of their violence-prone gentry, expressed their fears in numerous legends, songs, and superstitions. A confused mixture of mortal terror at the thought of retribution, and of guilt at the prospect of being tempted with illicit wealth, must have invaded the imagination of the boy Jacob on the legendary summit of the *Landeskron*e. In *Aurora*, the fallen Prince Lucifer is a lawless vassal who becomes inflamed by pride. When he attempts to usurp the highest place within the divine order, his vain fury ignites a corrupting fire in nature. After a successful counterassault by Prince Michael, the fury of the usurping host is contained and hemmed in. The forces of good in this world can only ward off satanic incursions by maintaining constant vigilance. The devil still dwells in the darkness between the moon and the earth, favoring deep caves and places of stony desolation (I 370/25.20).

However, there is a curious ambiguity in Boehme's metaphors for evil, an ambiguity characteristic of the divided longings for order and freedom, experienced by the mystic and by his fellows. In one and the same tract, the devil may appear both as a fallen prince, an enemy of the rightful order, and in a second guise: as an executioner or, lower still, as the mere lackey of the judge or executioner, as the *Henkersknecht* or *Büttel-Knecht*, who leads the condemned to the scaffold. In Upper Lusatia, as elsewhere, the executioner was thought to exercise a dishonorable, though necessary, profession. Even in the view of the mystic, human evil called for the punishing sword of justice. However, Upper Lusatia had also known numerous executions of a kind understandably feared by Boehme and his fellow Protestants in a region in which Protestantism was threatened: executions of heretics.

Aside from the *Raubritter*, a second pattern had been set by the violence of the fifteenth century. During the Hussite Wars, the Upper Lusatian cities not only defended themselves against the invaders—who are referred to in the annals simply as *die Ketzer*, "the heretics"—the burghers also acted against certain Lusatians who were accused of collaborating with the heretical foreigners. Everywhere—writes the historian Jecht—even in Görlitz and Bautzen, these heretical sympathizers and traitors were ferreted out: the merest suspicion resulted in torture and execution. Jecht, a man of National Liberal inclinations, was obviously perturbed by the record of these persecutions. He

offers makeshift explanations: Terror drove people to treason. The townspeople were rebelling against the harsh rule of their urban governments. Hussite spies were recruiting agents. Old personal scores were being settled. Conspicuously, Jecht fails to consider two possibilities: that the accused heretics may have been Upper Lusatian Sorbs; and that the heretics, whether Sorbs or Germans, may actually have been true converts to the Hussite creed. The Sorbic population was located mainly in the countryside.<sup>8</sup> Significantly, Jecht stresses that the "heretics" were not only in the villages, but even in the cities.<sup>9</sup> It would stand to reason that the alleged *Ketzer*, who were accused of aiding and informing the invaders, were those in the populace whose Slavic tongue enabled them to communicate with the invaders. An exceptional urban heretic was the city council member of Bautzen named Peter Preischwitz, a Germanicized Slavic name. Preischwitz had been active in the defense of his city. Accused of shooting messages tied to his arrows to the besieging Hussites, he was cruelly disemboweled and beheaded for treason. A legend in Bautzen identified one of the stones in the city gate with his impaled head.<sup>10</sup>

Beyond this, why should the possibility be excluded that the victims, whether Sorbs or Germans, were converts to the Hussite faith? The Hussite banner and creed were not hard to decipher. If the Lusatians, Germans and Sorbs alike, in later times stood ready to sacrifice themselves for the sake of various religious causes, some of them may have done so even earlier as Utraquists.

What is certain is that, in the centuries that followed, the Lusatians suffered repeatedly because of conflicts between power and faith. In the aftermath of the Hussite Wars, a subsequent generation in Lusatia found itself in the peculiar dilemma of having to choose between loyalty to an acknowledged king and fidelity to a no less devoutly acknowledged pope. In 1467, Poděbrad, the new Bohemian king whom the Six Cities solemnly accepted as their ruler, was excommunicated as a heretic by the pope. Upper Lusatia was plunged into confused warfare between the Poděbradian loyalists and the forces loyal to pope and emperor. Reluctantly, the Six Cities disengaged themselves from their king. And, again, Görlitz witnessed persecutions, as its heretics were exiled, tortured, and executed.<sup>11</sup> These events were also chronicled by Mayor Scultetus during Boehme's time.<sup>12</sup> Even unchronicled, the pattern of a persecution brought on by the uncoordinated relations of political and religious allegiance can only have been well known to all, since it in fact recurred in ever more dire variants, right down to the fateful replay of the Defenestration of Prague at the outset of the Thirty Years' War.

A century after the Hussite invasions of the 1420s, and a half

century after the crisis of the Poděbradian turmoil, Lusatia was again unsettled, this time by the Lutheran Reformation. Its centers of influence were in the Saxon domains that lay to the west of the League of Six Cities. The patrician leadership of the Lusatian cities responded coolly to the new Reformation. The city councillors were resolved to remain loyal to the old faith. Johann Hass, a city scribe who became a tyrannical mayor of Görlitz, even threatened to eradicate all heretical elements.<sup>13</sup>

The advent of the Reformation in Upper Lusatia conformed to the pattern in other German provincial regions. It was a popular movement, supported from below. It was accompanied and at times overshadowed by the struggles of the local guildsmen against the ruling patrician oligarchy. But, all in all, the Reformation was carried out with more caution and restraint than in other areas, where peasant uprisings and iconoclastic riots took place. The Reformation in Lusatia was implemented haltingly and without the aid of an inspiring local leader like those who led the movement in other regions.<sup>14</sup> An unimportant Catholic priest named Franz Rotbart was responsible for the church reform in Görlitz.

Rotbart did not arrive as a reformer in Görlitz, but as the new parish priest, whose docility had made him acceptable to the orthodox city fathers. Rotbart at first kept his sympathies to himself, performing the mass, and even allowing the papal ban of Martin Luther to be nailed to his church door in February of the year 1521.<sup>15</sup> Later in the same year, one of the recurrent plague epidemics reached Görlitz. The epidemic undermined the unpopular Catholic doctrine of salvation by good works. In the name of the citizenry, and expending the wealth of their city, the patrician oligarchy had performed "good works" by building and outfitting churches and shrines. Plague epidemics delivered a powerful rebuttal to all such *Werkheiligkeit*. The wealthier burghers, including most members of the city council, fled their city in order to escape from the plague. The priest Rotbart remained in his parish and preached the Evangelical message of Luther to an aroused congregation. The new message of justification by faith alone provided solace to his stricken parishioners.<sup>16</sup>

This marked the beginning of the reform in Görlitz. Several years passed before it was established. The city council drove Rotbart from his parish, but later allowed him to return. The situation was complicated by the fact that the weavers' guild was preparing an insurrection against the patricians, and this was complicated further by a disastrous fire that broke out before the guild could act. The weavers were demanding a role in city government as well as the acceptance of the Lutheran reform. The council stood firm against

their political demands, but allowed Rotbart to be installed as the Lutheran pastor of Görlitz.<sup>17</sup> In 1527, when the revolutionary conspiracy of the guildsmen was at last quelled, its leaders were beheaded and quartered. A stone beside the door of the house where they had plotted was engraved with initials signifying: "the Door of the Traitors' Mob." The stone still marks the *Verrätergasse*, the "Street of Traitors," in Görlitz.<sup>18</sup> Pastor Rotbart's difficulties continued: he married the daughter of an influential weaver and was once again hounded out of Görlitz by the zealous Mayor Hass. Philipp Melanchthon intervened from Wittenberg but could not save Rotbart's pastoral position. In Görlitz, Catholic recidivism marred the transition to Evangelical Protestantism.<sup>19</sup>

In 1526, just as the burghers of Görlitz were recovering from their great fire and growing accustomed to receiving the Holy Communion or *Abendmahl* in both forms from Pastor Rotbart, their new sovereign, King Louis II of Bohemia and Hungary, was undertaking a momentous military expedition against the Turks who had recently captured Belgrade. In August 1526, the twenty-year old monarch led a gallant Hungarian army across the Danube at Mohács in southern Hungary in order to engage the vastly superior forces of Süleyman the Magnificent. In the ensuing debacle, the childless king drowned in a Danubian swamp. The Crown of Bohemia went to his brother-in-law, Ferdinand I of Austria: the Lusatians embarked upon the Reformation beneath Habsburg sovereignty.

In 1547, the Habsburg emperor defeated the Protestant Schmalkaldic League at Mühlberg in Saxony-Anhalt. By this time, the burghers of Görlitz were confirmed Protestants. As in the Poděbradian conflict of the preceding century, the city councils were again torn between loyalty to their sovereign and fidelity to their religious faith.<sup>20</sup> Because of these hesitations, the Land of the Six Cities was convicted, along with other Protestant cities of the region, of withholding support from their lawful sovereign in his just war against the German Protestant states. The Upper Lusatian delegates were humiliated and imprisoned in Prague. The *Pönfall* imposed severe political and economic sanctions which put an end to the age of urban autonomy and prosperity. Inadvertantly, however, the *Pönfall* also drew the Upper Lusatian estates together. Burghers and nobles alike suffered a loss of autonomy under the oppressive government of the Imperial *Landvogt*. Both estates had reason to rejoice when the acute threat of complete subjugation had passed them by.<sup>21</sup>

An extended interim of relative peace and calm set in. There was even an incidental benefit of the *Pönfall* in that the tighter central controls imposed by the emperor eliminated the blight of the aristocratic

highway robbers.<sup>22</sup> Workable relations with the Imperial government were restored after 1559.<sup>23</sup> Perhaps as a palliative against rebellion, the Lusatians were left more or less unmolested in their confessional practices. Lutheranism remained the measure of burgher independence, not the standard of rebellion, in Görlitz. The dream of peacefully reconciling order with freedom could retain its credibility.

### Protestant Internecine Conflicts toward 1600

Born in 1575, Boehme inherited a Lutheran culture which was firmly established—albeit against perilous odds and within an environment in which confessional, social, and political affairs were entangled so as to vex him and his fellows. The situation in Lusatia was an anomaly by the norms of the day. The standard of the time was *cuius regio, eius religio*: the subjects had to conform to the religion of their territorial rulers. The Margravates of Upper and Lower Lusatia functioned as “republics of the estates” (*Ständerepubliken*). They had no territorial ruler, his role being filled by the *Landvogt*, the governor appointed by the emperor to administer a crown land. In Protestant Bohemia, Lutherans or Utraquists were tolerated; and this toleration was formalized by the Letter of Majesty in 1609. *De facto*, the religious autonomy of the Lusatians was also respected. However, unlike the Bohemians, they were not successful in their attempts to obtain a Letter of Majesty formalizing this state of affairs.

Since they had no Lutheran territorial ruler, they also had no *Consistorium*, no official church administration. The *Summus Episcopus* in Upper Lusatia was an administrator appointed by the Roman Catholic bishop of Meissen. This Catholic deacon, Johann Leisentritt of Bautzen, installed the Lutheran pastors in office and acted as the highest arbiter in disputes over church law.<sup>24</sup> There was also a residual Catholic population in Lusatia, mainly in Bautzen, where the church was a *Simultankirche*. (Catholic and Lutheran altars stood at opposite ends; and the church served the two confessions in alternating shifts.)

The absence of a territorial church *Consistorium* reinforced the longstanding subordination of the local clergy to the local city council—a state of affairs which sometimes provided more latitude to doctrinal individualists. Precariously enough, then, the Upper Lusatians actually enjoyed a modest degree of *de facto* pluralism precisely because their status as Protestants ruled by a Catholic sovereign hung in the balance. To be sure, the Catholic threat was always on the horizon, evinced by assaults on Protestant peoples from Holland to Hungary. Yet during Boehme’s formative years, the Counter-Reformation

was either upstaged by other disputes closer to home, or overshadowed by the elusive prospects of confessional harmony.

Unfortunately, the situation in the whole region passed from crisis to crisis. The Reformation of the sixteenth century had pitted Protestant Germans against the Roman Catholic pope and the Holy Roman Emperor. In midcentury, the first round of religious warfare ended in 1555 with the Peace of Augsburg. The Religious Peace allowed only for a Protestant denomination which followed the unchanged version (*Invariata*) of the Augsburg Confession with its strictly worded doctrine of Christ's real presence in the Eucharist. This excluded the Calvinists and any other sects or doctrines deviating from orthodox Lutheranism or Catholicism.

This also excluded the Anabaptists, who had already fallen victim to frightful persecutions during and after the Peasant Wars. Though there were no significant peasant uprisings in Lusatia, the Anabaptist movement did spread in the 1540s to the rural folk just east of Görlitz. Cruel persecution obliterated their congregation.<sup>25</sup> However, reports of wandering Anabaptist preachers in the countryside in nearby Silesia suggest that the Anabaptist threat of religious and social rebellion could not have been discounted altogether even during Boehme's lifetime.<sup>26</sup>

Around Görlitz, the situation was further complicated by the presence of three aristocratic families interrelated by marriage, which either were, or had been, affiliated with the teachings of Caspar Schwenckfeld. Schwenckfeld was an early Silesian leader of the Reformation who incurred Luther's condemnation by shunning the Lutheran doctrines and hierarchy. Rejecting what they viewed as unspiritual and hypocritical, Schwenckfeld and his followers took issue with the Lutheran understanding of the Eucharist and abstained from Communion. After a final dispute in 1540, Luther declared Schwenckfeld a religious outlaw and had him barred from Silesia.<sup>27</sup> His adherents persisted among the Silesian gentry and peasantry in the form of conventicles. A scion of one of these Schwenckfeldian families near Görlitz, Carl von Ender, later became Boehme's chief patron within the gentry.

Unlike the communalist Hutterites in Moravia, the landowning Schwenckfeldians could hardly have been interested in abolishing private property. An intriguing explanation for their social motivations has been advanced by Lemper.<sup>28</sup> The Schwenckfeldians in general rejected the Lutheran centralized church hierarchy, which consisted of the old parishes, governed by the new territorial *Consistoria*. The opponents of this hierarchical church called it *die Steinkirche* or *die Mauerkirche*, the "church of stone" or "walled church"—epithets also used by Boehme. By stressing spiritual brotherhood, the Schwenckfel-

dian conventicles had the effect of bolstering the community of the aristocratic landowner with his laborers. For the Schwenckfeldian landowners around Görlitz, this spiritual brotherhood filled an important social need. As members of a recent nobility which had acquired its lands when former church properties held by the city council were sold to pay the fines of the *Pönfall*, the Schwenckfeldian landowners employed agricultural laborers: men without long ties of subservience, in some cases Protestant refugees from Bohemia, who had artisanal skills and independent doctrinal opinions. The landowners themselves were of burgher origin. They were better educated than the older Lusatian gentry, and they were not molded by the old spirit of rivalry and revenge. Some held offices in the Imperial service. As a class, they had a strong interest in confessional alternatives of a conciliatory nature.

In midcentury, the Lutheran pastors of Görlitz carried out a campaign against the Schwenckfeldian families. In 1544, one of the Schwenckfeldians exercised his autonomy as lord of the estate of Leopoldshain by appointing an uneducated cobbler from Görlitz to preach in the village church. With the weapons at its disposal, the clergy of Görlitz fought back, refusing church burial to deceased members of the noble families who had rejected church Communion. With some success, the aristocrats appealed to the city council and, in one instance, even to the Catholic emperor; but the pastors maintained their authority. The protracted feud embittered both sides. A pastor who had been forced by the city council to bury a noble woman insulted her family in his sermon. Her husband then engraved on her tombstone the words: "The Pharisees (*Schriftgelehrten*) damned Christ to Hell." In order to secure the religious peace so essential to the survival of their city, the council finally threatened the Schwenckfeldians with exile, forcing them to lay aside their grievances and forbidding the local printing of Schwenckfeldian literature.<sup>29</sup>

Toward the end of the century, these internal conflicts were overshadowed by supraterritorial religious tensions. As in the past, tiny Lusatia ran afoul of the dynastic shifts and changing doctrines in the neighboring centers of power. The new conflict stemmed from the controversies that divided the major Protestant confessions. The Calvinists, who had been effectively excluded from the Religious Peace, began gaining ground on their Lutheran opponents. The Calvinists objected to the laxity of Lutheran observances. They regarded the Lutheran Communion as a form of "idolatry," ridiculing the doctrine of ubiquity which held that the flesh and blood of Christ were consubstantially present in the bread and wine of Communion. Apart from their reasons of conscience, the German advocates of the

Calvinistic reforms, known as the "Second Reformation," also had reasons of state:

Characteristic of Germany was that the change, or attempted change, from the Lutheran to the Reformed faith was imposed by fiat of the ruler. . . . The Second Reformation was also accompanied by a reorientation to a more aggressive and international stance in foreign policy, and therefore ultimately, towards 1600, by a change in defence arrangements under the influence of the militia schemes of the House of Nassau.<sup>30</sup>

When so inclined, the Protestant territorial rulers could convert and impose Calvinistic practices. In the nearby territories of Saxony-Anhalt, Electoral Saxony, and Brandenburg, attempts were made to introduce religious reforms by official decree; this resulted in popular upheavals of a common folk that still clung passionately to the old beliefs, resisting the imposition of the new practices from above. Several Silesian duchies were pledged by their territorial rulers to Calvinism in 1609 and 1616.<sup>31</sup>

In this spirit, *Aurora* also rejects the eucharistic doctrine of "Calvinus." However, for Boehme, the real culprit was neither the prince, nor even the follower of Calvin's teachings. By far the gravest offense—responsible for all the religious troubles and conflicts of the age—arises from the class of theologians, philosophers, lawyers, and scholarly know-it-alls: their disputes are presented as interminable, and as being ever at the point of escalating from insults and recriminations of "heresy," to blows, bloodshed, murder, *autos da fé*, warfare, and desolation.

In the last few decades of the sixteenth century, the increasingly strident Lutheran professors and churchmen of Saxony condemned the deviations of "Philippism" and "Crypto-Calvinism." The fact that the former used Melanchthon's name to designate the furtive betrayal of the Lutheran faith is characteristic of the undertow of doctrinal conformism during the second half of the sixteenth century. The Humanistic fellow reformer and successor to Martin Luther, Philipp Melanchthon, was blamed by the orthodox Lutheran churchmen for having compromised Luther's true creed in order to appease the Calvinists. Melanchthon had changed the eucharistic words of institution to "*cum pane*" in the *Variata* of the Augsburg Confession. This change was denounced by orthodox Lutherans as a betrayal of the true doctrine of real presence. Seeberg's *History of Doctrines*, a work of the late nineteenth century, summarizes the background of the Philippist controversy with reference to Melanchthon:

The great Reformer had two souls, one of which was orthodox Lutheran and the other Humanistic. The heirs of Humanism had since 1574 been branded as Crypto-Calvinists and regarded with suspicion, and they were also the supporters of the positions in which Melanchthon differed from Luther. Some of them, influenced in part by the adoption of the Formula of Concord, went over to Calvinism.<sup>32</sup>

After Melanchthon's death in 1560, the Philippists and "Crypto-Calvinists" were in and out of favor in Saxony, depending on the inclinations of successive Saxon princes. Elector Prince August, favoring orthodoxy, commissioned the Book of Concord, published in 1580, in order to codify the acceptable creed. Under threat of dismissal, the Lutheran pastors of Saxony were required to affirm their adherence to the Formula of Concord. One who signed but secretly continued to write heretical works was the mystical Pastor Valentin Weigel—who had connections in Görlitz. During this period of repression, Caspar Peucer, a Wittenberg professor and son-in-law of Melanchthon, was sentenced to life imprisonment as a Crypto-Calvinist. A Bautzener by birth, Peucer whiled away the time during his eleven years in prison by composing a lengthy Latin poem in praise of his native Upper Lusatia, "*Idyllium in Patria*."<sup>33</sup>

Peucer's fortunes improved, along with those of the pro-Calvinist faction in Saxony, when August's successor, Elector Christian I, pulled Saxony back toward the opposite side in the Lutheran-Calvinist quarrel. The new elector's energetic adviser, Nikolaus Krell, set about reforming Saxony, thereby modifying its religious practices in the interest of the Second Reformation.<sup>34</sup> Pastors were no longer required to sign the Formula of Concord. Pro-Calvinist professors came to prominence at the universities. Unfortunately, this new trend hardly promised a triumph of free opinion. An incidental consequence of the change was the abrupt termination in 1588 of Giordano Bruno's happy stay in Wittenberg. The pro-Calvinists did not hold power for long. After the early death of Christian I in 1591, his successor, Christian II, reverted to the Book of Concord; and the Lutheran faction came back with a vengeance. An English visitor in Dresden reported that the houses of the Calvinists were assaulted by student-led mobs: "My eyes and eares were witnesses what threatnings, what reproaches, what violent abuses the Lutherans cast upon the Calvinists preferring the Papists yea Turks before them. . . ."<sup>35</sup> The prolonged denouement to the Crypto-Calvinist repression was Krell's legally dubious imprisonment and execution on charges of high treason—after a trial that lasted ten years and involved the collusion of the

Catholic emperor's government in Prague.<sup>36</sup> The suppression of Crypto-Calvinism in Electoral Saxony also had consequences for the small neighboring territory. Acting in concert with the Imperial authorities in Prague, the Saxon church officials prepared public inquests in order to enforce the Book of Concord in Upper Lusatia. Many among the older generation of Lusatian pastors and scholars had been educated in Wittenberg under the milder aegis of Melanchthon.<sup>37</sup> They naturally leaned toward Philippism, and refused to see the doctrines of their former teacher as heretical. There were also Crypto-Calvinists, or at least people open to Calvinistic ideas, notably at the *Gymnasium*. When its rector, Ludovicus, died, Calvinist books were found among his effects. Abraham Scultetus (a Silesian graduate of the Görlitz *Gymnasium* who later became the notorious Calvinist court chaplain to the king of rebel Bohemia) praised Ludovicus as an enlightened Philippist, and his old school for having breached numerous aristocratic houses in the manner of a "Trojan horse."<sup>38</sup>

When Peucer was released from prison in 1586, he sought his patriotic *Idyllium* in Bautzen. When the second wave of Calvinist or Crypto-Calvinist pastors and officials was expelled from Saxony in 1591, they were cordially received in Upper Lusatia.<sup>39</sup> This augmented the suspicions of the orthodox. A commission of inquiry was convened in Bautzen. Rumors circulated concerning military intervention, either by the emperor or by the Saxons acting on his behalf.<sup>40</sup> However, the proceedings were soon interrupted by distant events. The Turks were gaining ground against the Empire in Hungary so that a united home front was needed for raising taxes and recruits.

Around the year 1600, the crisis again intensified. As in the previous war, Upper Lusatian support for the imperial war effort proved inadequate. Compensatory war taxes were levied, less punitive ones than in the *Pönfall*, but still burdensome.<sup>41</sup> The propaganda of Emperor Rudolf II portrayed the dire threat of a new Turkish advance north toward Brandenburg—along the old Hussite invasion route.<sup>42</sup>

In 1601, the inquest into the alleged Upper Lusatian Crypto-Calvinist circles was resumed in Bautzen. The new Elector Prince of Saxony made the Formula of Concord again binding, at the same time confirming the death sentence of Nikolaus Krell. According to Gottfried Arnold, Krell's execution was attended by a chorus of orthodox Lutheran preachers, who clamored that the condemned man was responsible for the perdition of infant souls. (Because of his reforms, the words of exorcism had not been invoked regularly at christenings.) The prayers of the condemned man on the scaffold were greeted by derisive laughter; the executioner congratulated himself on a "Calvinist blow."<sup>43</sup> The entire ugly affair was much publicized in the region.

It could only have been observed with the keenest interest in Upper Lusatia. In the same year, 1601, Martin Moller, chief pastor of Görlitz, was accused of Crypto-Calvinism by the Wittenberg professor, Salomon Gessner. There followed a public controversy, conducted by means of published accusations and rebuttals. Official hearings were held in Bautzen in 1602. Teachers and clergymen from Görlitz attended and reported back. The controversy was never formally resolved: it came to an end because Gessner died in 1605 and Moller in 1606.<sup>44</sup>

Against this background, one can better evaluate the consistent features of Boehme's seemingly contradictory attitudes toward doctrine and authority. Like the common folk in much of Protestant Germany, he maintained his adherence to the Lutheran understanding of the Eucharist. The popular nature of this loyalty was no doubt part of his self-conception as *Philosophus der Einfältigen* (I 256/18.80)—but it was only one part. The philosopher of the simple folk was also open to numerous ideas, influences, and doctrines, and willing to subject even the word of Scripture to critical scrutiny.<sup>45</sup> His rejection of the sole authority of Scripture was accompanied by an assertive anti-authoritarianism: "Listen, if it is not proper for me to ask questions, then it is not proper that you judge me . . ." (I 326/22.43). This was no mere personal defense. It was expanded into an anticlerical warning against violence, in anticipation of the future and, very probably, in remembrance of the past: "Oh blind human beings, desist from quarreling. Do not shed innocent blood, and do not lay waste on this account to land and cities in accordance with the devil's will . . ." (I 327/22.45).

### Heretical Pluralism in Görlitz

Upper Lusatia looked back on a long history of "war and stormwinds," on centuries of religious and political stirrings, risings, and repressions. Görlitz itself was a breeding ground of heterodox theories and doctrines. From the beginning, the writings of the shoemaker reflect this diversity of ideas and beliefs. He labors over them. He attacks and defends them, and searches for a common ground of synthesis. He endeavors to reconcile his faith in the Bible with the findings of science and scholarship, and to reconcile his Lutheran articles of faith with the spiritual equality of "Jews, Turks, and heathens." The results are often contradictory; but even in its contradictions, his thought becomes implicated in the speculative openness of a kind of philosophy. The author of *Aurora* is a rural peasant turned burgher, suspicious of, but hardly less fascinated by, the diverse culture of his adopted city.

Among its population of not quite ten thousand, Görlitz supported a surprising number and variety of writers, publicists, and speculative truthseekers. Many of the currents of Renaissance and Reformation culture had accumulated in this backwater corner of Middle Europe.

Bartolomäus Scultetus dominated the intellectual life of his city. During Boehme's formative years in Görlitz, Scultetus was the mayor. He was a renowned mathematician and scholar who had written and published on a wide variety of topics. Born in 1540, Scultetus embodied the most cosmopolitan aspects of his city's Humanistic age. He had studied at Leipzig and Wittenberg, at the latter university before the death of Melanchthon. Despite his promise as a scholar, Scultetus had failed to obtain a position at the university. Returning to his home city in 1570, he taught at the *Gymnasium*, served as a judge and city council member, and finally as mayor, until his death in 1614.<sup>46</sup> From his student days, he knew the Danish astronomer Tycho Brahe and continued a correspondence with him. Through Brahe, Scultetus also made the acquaintance of Johannes Kepler, who visited Görlitz in 1607. Kepler recruited a local youth in Görlitz to copy the *Astronomia Nova*.<sup>47</sup>

Scultetus's universal interests also brought him into contact with men of other confessions. He met with Rabbi Jehudah Löw on two occasions. When the illustrious scholar and Kabbalist paused in Görlitz in transit to Prague, he conversed with Scultetus who took the opportunity to solicit instruction on the calculation of the Jewish calendar and possibly also on kabbalistic questions.<sup>48</sup> Scultetus was consulted by the Jesuit scholar and papal delegate Possevino in order to discuss the modalities for carrying out the calendar reform of 1582.<sup>49</sup> Thanks to the good offices of the Mayor, this papal reform which caused turmoil elsewhere came into effect without delay or incident in Protestant Lusatia (although the Lutheran sermons scheduled for the obliterated calendar days had to be preached in shifts, and the League City Zittau directed anxious inquiries to Görlitz).

As mayor, Scultetus continued his projects of astronomical measurement, cartography, the construction of calendars, and the compilation of Biblical and historical chronologies, of the lives of Christ and the Disciples, and of the heroic deeds of the past in Görlitz. (To the Humanist, time was mathematical and chronological, but certainly not secular.) Scultetus was not alone in the pursuit of his varied interests. Others in Görlitz followed the developments of the new astronomy and dabbled in the study of comets.<sup>50</sup> Scultetus and Peucer, who visited Görlitz soon after being released from prison, understood astronomy as a theoretical and practical, prognostic science. Both men probably continued to adhere to the modified geocentric cosmology of Tycho Brahe.<sup>51</sup>

Judging by the titles of their publications (*Lusatia, Hortus Lusati-ae, Idyllium in patria*), the Humanists were united in their local patriotism. Humanist scholarship was also represented by the influential professors at the *Gymnasium*, who authored books of a learned nature. Buchholzer, the city scribe, was the son of a famous scholar and pastor. The son continued the work of his father by finishing their chronicle of world history from the Creation to 1580, a terminal date suggesting that Abraham and Gottfried Buchholzer remained orthodox in their Lutheranism.

However, the chief pastors of Görlitz were Philippists—by some standards even Crypto-Calvinists. This applies as much to the shoemaker's longstanding enemy, Gregor Richter, as to the latter's precursor, the mystically inclined Martin Moller. Both pastors were mentally active, writing and publishing books.

Recent scholarship has pointed to the lack of evidence to support the time-honored claim that Boehme's enemy, Richter, was a narrow, orthodox Lutheran; and that Moller was Richter's benevolent counterpart, the spiritual patron who launched the young shoemaker into his theosophical speculation.<sup>52</sup> Nevertheless, the circumstantial evidence continues to suggest that Moller's early pastoral tenure and person could only have been more congenial to the shoemaker than Richter's. Gregor Richter was an accomplished scholar. He was not closed to new scientific ideas, but he preferred to write in Latin, an abomination to the shoemaker who knew only German. Moller translated Latin texts and published popular works in German. Thematically as well, the publications of the aging, blind Pastor Moller must have been more congenial. Moller's German *Meditationes sanctorum Patrum* was a devotional collection of sayings, prayers, and verses, inspired by the works of Augustine, Bernhard, Tauler, and others. Printed in Görlitz in 1584, it had gone through numerous reprintings by 1600. A skilled translator, Moller had rendered the Latin hymn *Dies Irae* in a manner that was impressive, as well as indicative of widespread sentiments. His verses bespoke the final "day of wrath," the "signs and wonders" of the age, and the daily perils of war, inflation, pestilence, fire, and great suffering in "these last, onerous times."<sup>53</sup> One of Moller's titles anticipated that of Boehme's ultimate large book: *Mysterium Magnum*.

Scultetus's circle of association was the singing club called the *Convivium Musicum*. Most of its members were locally born professionals or nobles, about his own age. Most were university educated, frequently at the University of Wittenberg.<sup>54</sup> Members of the Schwenckfeldian nobility belonged, as did Pastor Richter. Had the cobbler tried to gain access to the *Convivium Musicum*, he would have

been rejected on several counts. The author of *Aurora* is a man profoundly pained and insulted by his exclusion from the circles of the educated—whose knowledge he alternately admires and despises.

Threatened from without, as in 1601, the leading citizens of Görlitz were capable of closing ranks to defend their city vis-à-vis the Imperial officials or the Saxon church authorities. Considered from within, and judged by the standards of the orthodox, Görlitz presented a diverse panorama of potential heresies. The alleged secret Calvinism of the pastors and Humanist professors was only one hue in the spectrum.

The tradition of alchemy preceded the Reformation and the influence of Paracelsus. As early as 1500, a man named Georg Goer, a tradesman or communal employee, had corresponded with another alchemist in Mainz. Goer had claimed to work by day and to pursue his esoteric interests by night. The fact that he was preoccupied with a *sal indicum* makes it appear probable that his alchemical research was aimed at developing dyes for the thriving textile industry of Görlitz (a purpose nearly as venerable as the art of gold-making). Goer knew at least the titles or rubrics of the alchemistic writings of Raymond Lull, Geber (Jabir), Avicenna, and the Pseudo-Aquinas. Goer also cited the term or title *Turba Philosophorum*. In Boehme's writings, *Turba* and *turbiren* are frequently used to signify a kind of vortex of thought at the outer limits of the knowable. Another work of Pseudo-Aquinas, though it is not mentioned by Goer, is called *Aurora consurgens*—the Latin equivalent of Boehme's first manuscript title. An additional notion, which is again quite important in *Aurora*, is expressed in Goer's view that, "in the number of the seven days all things are conceived."<sup>55</sup> The existence of a forerunner like Goer lends a strong resonance to Boehme's intimations of a store of *popular* knowledge, more ancient than that of the new science.

In Boehme's time, the medical doctors of Görlitz were mainly adherents of Paracelsian medicine. Already in 1570, a Paracelsian heresy had caused a stir of controversy. A book was printed in Görlitz denouncing the "unheard-of blasphemies and lies which Paracelsus spewed out against God, His Word, and the laudable art of medicine, in the books of the *Philosophia ad Athenienses*."<sup>56</sup> (I will argue in chapter seven that this work contains a probable prototype for both the title and concept of Boehme's *Mysterium Magnum*.) Because of such accusations, the alchemistic physicians of the city were summoned to the *Rathaus* for questioning, to determine if they belonged to an heretical *Secta Paracelsi*.<sup>57</sup> The summons and interrogation were presumably mere formalities, since the medical men had a friend with influence in the city hall.

One of the Paracelsian physicians was a man named Conrad Scheer. When Scheer died in 1615, a chronicler in the city hall archive noted that during forty years in Görlitz "the old Conrad" had never once been observed attending church, and no one even knew what he believed in.<sup>58</sup> Whether Scheer was a disgruntled Christian, a secret Jew, or a freethinker, the fact that he could maintain his independence suggests something about the latitude of nonconformity in a city of under 10,000.

A second member of this group is even more intriguing. His name was Abraham Behem. In 1579, when Jacob Boehme was only four, Abraham Behem—Scultetus's brother-in-law—corresponded with the heretical Valentin Weigel. At the time, Weigel's reputation as a mystic was known only to a few colleagues or correspondents. His writings did not circulate in print until 1609. The name *Behem* is an orthographic variation of *Boehme*. The name with its variants was too common in the region to establish any kinship. Whether they were related or not, Abraham clearly anticipated a number of Jacob's mystical tropes. If the shoemaker had a single important mentor, it was this mysterious figure who had previously proffered his theories to Weigel.

Another important contributor to the underground culture of Görlitz was a man, younger than Behem, but older than Boehme: Dr. Balthasar Walter. By origin a Silesian, Walter's wife was from Görlitz. He visited the city before the turn of the century, but it was only after 1612 that he is known to have formed his close friendship with Boehme. Walter was remarkable for his readiness to undertake journeys, immense for the time, in pursuit of his unusual goals. In the last years of the sixteenth century, he traveled to the Near East. Franckenberg records that Walter's journey led him to "Araby, Syria, and Egypt," and served the purpose of his research into the wisdom of "Kabbalah, magic, alchemy."<sup>59</sup> Later, in 1619 or 1620, Walter is said to have sojourned with Boehme for three months, conferring with him at great length. The biographer also alludes to an apparent clash of personalities between the "Mosaically" severe Walter and the gentler Boehme (X 14–15). The wandering *medicus* died in Paris after having done much to spread his friend's fame abroad.

Lastly, Scultetus himself was implicated in the same kind of questionable pursuits. The mayor was an official Humanist and an unofficial Paracelsian. The writings of Paracelsus were being collected and edited in Görlitz, and Scultetus himself worked on a treatise concerning the plague—a work which accounted for the spread of epidemics by theorizing about the magic powers of pregnant women left to die of the disease, a notion certainly not far removed from the mentality of witchcraft.<sup>60</sup>

Around 1600, witchcraft hysteria was approaching its zenith in Germany. Persecutions occurred in Electoral Saxony, Electoral Brandenburg, Moravia, and, probably, Silesia.<sup>61</sup> In Germany, the confessional border areas were prone to the worst persecutions.<sup>62</sup> Though Upper Lusatia was just such an area, Görlitz and the other League Cities were apparently spared the terrors of witchhunts.

Several factors which fomented the persecutions elsewhere were missing in Lusatia. There was no local church orthodoxy backed up by princely power and preaching the fundamental rift between the elect and the damned. The prevailing philosophy of Melanchthonian Aristotelianism conceded the "synergistic" freedom of the will. On the Protestant side, the Calvinist and Lutheran orthodoxies, both of which saw the will as bound, were more conducive to the supposition that Satanic wickedness is incorrigible and everpresent within the world. For the most part, the clergy in Görlitz lacked both the compelling incentive and the authority to galvanize the people against alleged witches in their midst.

All of this notwithstanding, Humanistic enlightenment and burgher independence surely provide only a *partial* answer to the question why there were no witchcraft persecutions in Görlitz. Not long after the Paracelsian controversy of 1570, the beliefs and practices of "white magic" had begun to attract the elite of the city. What would have caused alarm elsewhere aroused curiosity in Görlitz. This shows, for example, in Scultetus's interest in nature. Meticulously and credulously, he noted observations of events—real and phantasmagorical. Grain has fallen from the sky like raindrops—in sufficient quantities to be carried to market. A giant meteor has crashed to earth—roaring like an artillery barrage.<sup>63</sup> The miraculous and supernatural exists, but comes in good and evil variants. With his customary attention to detail, the mayor even made note of having enlisted the services of a wise woman to conjure away the dysentery of his son, dryly recording that the treatment proved successful.<sup>64</sup> Boehme was not relapsing into rural backwardness in recognizing the existence of both "good witches and whores of magic" (II 225/16.25).

However, even without witchcraft hysteria, there were enough dismal superstitions and cruel punishments in Görlitz.

### Darkness and Light in Upper Lusatia

The assumption that Boehme was inspired by a universal experience of light, shared equally by all mystics but unknown to nonmystics, disregards the important fact that the "light" and "illumination" of

his usage are opposed to a more specifically characterized "darkness." If not the light, then the surrounding darkness is a vast repository of experiences shared with his fellows. Huizinga argued in *The Waning of the Middle Ages* that fifteenth-century Europe knew extreme contrasts of darkness and light, winter and summer, and punishment and mercy. In Boehme's writings, these contrasts are no less harsh. His mystical notion of darkness is identified with *Ängstlichkeit*: "fearfulness." Darkness is a natural and societal reign of terror.

Harsh class justice was either the rule of the time, or at least a matter of very recent memory—as the memorial stone in the Street of Traitors suggests. Between 1567 and 1577, no less than fifty executions or corporal punishments were recorded in Görlitz. They included twenty-three beheadings (some for minor theft), six hangings, two quarterings, and two "aggravated death penalties" (involving torture and mutilation).<sup>65</sup> The frequency of these executions apparently slackened under the mayoralty of Scultetus; for in 1606, the executioners' guild protested of a work shortage.<sup>66</sup> Class justice was still the rule. Most of the executed criminals were either peasants or artisans. Between 1591 and 1600, the Görlitz city council repeatedly appealed to the Imperial authorities to intervene against the disorderly and occasionally murderous conduct of the nobles who made a sport of terrorizing Görlitz by firing their weapons in the city streets. Duelists and felonious aristocrats were punitively sent to fight in the Turkish Wars in Hungary. With the *Pönfall*, Görlitz had lost its jurisdiction over the nobles. This removed a source of conflict between city and country but also weakened the rule of burgher justice, loosening the reins on an unruly class enemy.<sup>67</sup>

"Darkness" in Boehme's writings is not a momentarily conditioned absence of light. It is a world unto itself, infested with spirits and ghosts. By night, a certain "Juncker Hans" is said to gallop from heaven into hell and death (I 348/23.74). An Upper Lusatian legend recorded in the nineteenth century recounts that the ghost of a *Junker Hans* was caught in a sack by a village fiddler, who then wasted away and died of fright. *Junker Hans* is a characteristic folk legend of a feudal past.<sup>68</sup> Boehme's ghosts are said to visit houses, fields, and churches and to entreat the living (III *Dreyfaches Leben* 244/12.24). Ghosts wander, clothed in the fiery form of their last earthly existence (II 306/19.23). Are they the outlawed noblemen who were decked out in red robes before they were hanged from the highest gallows in Görlitz, or the spirits of heretics who were burned at the stake?<sup>69</sup> In his treatise on the "four complexions," Boehme wrote that people are afraid of the dark, not out of concern for their flesh, but out of fear for their souls (IV 244/90). Even before it is defined, the "soul" is adum-

brated by darkness. The devil and the elements are implicated in darkness, since it was Satan's uprising against God that extinguished the light of a once translucent world. The same rebellion gave rise both to the clump of matter which is the element and to the black depths of space (I 356/24.14). Even the stars occupy a combat zone between darkness and light (I 292/20. 50ff.). The elements are never neutral, not even in their everyday condition. The first chapter of *Aurora* describes an innate reaction within the element of water. The reaction results in "flying pestilence and sudden death" (I 28/1.22).

In the summer of 1585, a great plague epidemic descended upon Görlitz. Scultetus kept detailed records describing the progress of the epidemic which killed off nearly a fourth of the city's population before being halted by cold weather. He recorded the following harbinger of the plague: on the warm July night that preceded the first instances of the plague, an evil vaporous "stench and foul taste" wafted up mysteriously in the streets of Görlitz.<sup>70</sup> One wonders if the smell came from the dead epidemic-bearing rats. Or did the city's gutters, privies, and tanneries stink with a will of their own? Boehme's writings associate the devil not only with the darkness of violence and anger; a further trademark is his hellish stench, which is like the smell of a sewer or cesspool (*Cloaca*). Of the same mind, Luther, in arguing that our world is the battleground for the kingdoms of Christ and Satan, observed that the common folk knew and feared this duality of existence, acknowledging its reality in their constant prayers and proverbs.<sup>71</sup>

Nature, in the vision of the most lyrical of nature mystics, is full of violence, stench, pain, death, ugliness, wicked creature cannibalism, and beastly incest. "This corrupted world" is infested with, "vipers and snakes . . . with all sorts of vermin, of worms, toads, flies, lice, and fleas. And hence also lightning, thundering, flashing, and hail . . ." (I 218/15.66). Yet, incongruously, nature also presents a spectacle of perfect harmony, love, joy, and beauty. The variety of a field of wildflowers allegorizes the peaceable kingdom in which freedom flourishes amidst plurality. The beautiful and harmonious diversities of the plant kingdom convey the utopian designs of Paradise.

The two irreconcilable aspects of a good and an evil nature evolve into two interpenetrating eternal worlds, the light-world and the dark-world. The moral-philosophical nucleus of Boehme's thought consists of his realization that good and evil are not simply inextricably bound up together in all things. They are the mutually conditioning, opposing powers, without which the world could not have arisen and could not go on recreating and revitalizing itself in time.

*Aurora* is written from the perspective of the man from the coun-

try. This accounts for its unique vitality and charm among all his writings. The *Philosophus der Einfältigen* requires no academies or learned treatises in order to see by what Paracelsus called "the light of nature." The tone and style of his book impart this same point of view. His symbolic language intimates colorful fragments of village life. *Aurora's* leitmotival supernatural dawn and eschatological marriage (based on Matt. 22, 25) are epitomized as a nocturnal peasant wedding feast with music by a village fiddler and dancing for all who are not lame from gout and come appropriately attired, in angelic garments, with their lamps properly lighted and adorned. (The same author condemns all dancing and frivolity which are associated with urban mores.) *Aurora's* exhortations, invectives, and evocations of bliss can hardly be in imitation of the sermons of academically trained pastors; in tone, they owe more to folk sermonizing. The reader is addressed as a "half-dead angel"; and consoled: "So, you, child-of-man, don't be so fearful . . ." (I 270/19.38). The devil is subjected to baits and taunts: "Listen, Lucifer! Whose fault is it that you're a devil?" (I 174/13.48). There are interior dialogs: "Dear fellow, tell me, why was the devil expelled? . . . Guess Fritz! With what—what sort of power did he have? Now say what you know! If nothing, then be still and listen . . ." (I 274/19.60). Words are sounded out to reveal their hidden meanings in the Adamic "language of nature." The exposition incorporates rhymed ditties. The continuing creation which expands on Genesis appears to offer the scenarios for vivid folk fairy tales.

The author of *Aurora* is sufficiently sure of himself to ridicule peasants and scholars in a single diatribe. The learned seekers after the key to nature are compared to a peasant who looks for his horse and does not notice that he is mounted on it (I 323/22.17). But although the peasant is already a stock type whose mind is closed to whatever cannot be taken in hand, the author still stands on his peasant common sense. This is evident in the tone of his most essential reflections concerning the old and renewed controversy over the Creation *ex nihilo*:

... but it makes me wonder that with so many excellent men, not one has been found who could describe the true ground; all the more, since the same God has been from eternity who is now. For where there is Nothing, nothing arises. Everything must have a root; otherwise nothing can grow . . . (I 273/19.55–56).

Gradually, in tract after tract, these seemingly naive speculations are worked into an immense, ramified edifice of beliefs, intuitions, symbols, and ideas.