

‘Lift up your heart’: The poem *Sursum corda* by Margaretha Susanne von Kuntsch Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens (Lamentations 3:41)

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I: Introduction

Margaretha Susanna von Kuntsch (1651-1717) was a well-read, pious, Protestant author who blended a strong religious faith with a neo-Stoic philosophy in her writings, which encompass lyric poems and an operetta. She is a seriously under-appreciated writer whose work is rarely assessed from an aesthetic standpoint. Rather, she attracts attention for her political remarks on the loss of Strasburg in 1681 to France,¹ or for her *meditatio mortis*, as reflected in her poetry of parental bereavement.² Kuntsch is the victim of rudimentary literary analysis that reduces her work to occasional poems and interprets many writings primarily as an expression of maternal grief: she lost all but one of her children to an early death. This extra-literary approach is heavily dominated by biographical criticism.

Although we are far from the kind of pseudo-analysis offered

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- 1 Eduard Müller, *Margarethe Susanne von Kuntsch*. In ‚Rund um den Friedenstein‘ 3, no. 10 (1926), 4.
 - 2 Anna Linton, *Poetry and Parental Bereavement in Early Modern Lutheran Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), esp. 174ff. See, also, Stephanie Wodianka, *Betrachtungen des Todes*. Formen und Funktionen der ‘meditatio mortis’ in der europäischen Literatur des 17. Jahrhunderts (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2004), 71ff. One of Kuntsch’s poems on a dead child is contained in the anthology *Deutsche Dichterinnen vom 16. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Gisela Brinker-Gabler (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1978), 104-5.

by Gustav Friedrich Klemm, who wishes to see in the engraving portraying Kuntsch that accompanies her collection of poetry the traits of a faithful and loyal German 'Hausfrau',³ the critical discussion has not advanced materially. The few scholars who have commented on her oeuvre cannot even agree whether she intended her literary work to be limited to small, domestic circles or wished it to be more widely known.⁴ Whatever the resolution to this question might be, one could easily gather the impression from scholarship that her poetry is for auto-consolation only, therefore is a kind of diary in which any introspective sentiment is to be interpreted as autobiography and as applying only to her person. And when it comes to an overall assessment of her work, even her champion Anna Carrdus, when critiquing the violence male editors did to the poetry of Kuntsch, offers a very muted judgment of the merits of her writing, using subjective and vague terminology: '... (Kuntsch skillfully presents a) claim to a literary character epitomised by simplicity and spontaneity'.⁵

In addition, it is both a scholarly dead-end and a diminution of the achievement of Kuntsch when Elke O. Hedstrom claims that *Sursum corda*, the poem with which the present essay is concerned, expresses a world-negating attitude, employing typical, antithetical statements, as well as images of *vanitas*.⁶ *Vanitas* is, of course, an ancient theme,

3 Gustav Friedrich Klemm, *Die Frauen* (Dresden: Arnoldsche Buchhandlung, 1859), 6: 292.

4 For a background of the critical discussion, see three studies by Anna Carrdus, *Consolation Arguments and Maternal Grief in Seventeenth-Century Verse. The Example of Margarethe Susanna von Kuntsch*. In 'German Life and Letters' 47, no.2 (1994), 135-151; *Margaretha Susanne von Kuntsch (1651-1717) und 16 Altenburger Dichterinnen*. In Kerstin Merkel and Heide Wunders, eds., *Deutsche Frauen der frühen Neuzeit. Dichterinnen, Malerinnen, Mäzeninnen* (Darmstadt: Primus, 2000), 123-38; and *Margaretha Susanna von Kuntsch*. In Hilary Brown, ed., *Landmarks in German Women's Writing* (Oxford/Bern/Berlin: Peter Lang, 2007), 25-42.

5 Anna Carrdus, *Why and How Men Edited Women's Texts. The Case of Christoph Gottlieb Stockmann (1698-after 1733) and his Grandmother Margaretha Susanne von Kuntsch (1651-1717)*. In 'Wolfenbütteler Barock-Nachrichten' 34, no. 1 (2007), 25.

6 Elke O. Hedstrom, *Margarethe Susanne von Kuntsch (1651-1717). Eine unbekannte deutsche Dichterin aus der Barockzeit*. In 'Daphnis' 19, no. 2 (1990), 233. We are uncertain when Kuntsch wrote *Sursum corda*. This essay cites the poem according to the edition by Anna Carrdus, *Das 'weiblich Werk' in der Residenzstadt Altenburg*

inspired in Christian art and literature by Scripture (Cf. Ecclesiastes 1:2; 'Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all *is* vanity'). It is only to be expected that Kuntsch in our poem, which Caardus says 'fulfils the devotional purpose of preparation for death,'⁷ conforms to accepted standards by searching out conventional imagery that supports her theme. Given that originality in our sense of the term was not the goal of a seventeenth century-poet, it is unfair to judge her work with criteria such as 'typical'. To write poetry in Kuntsch's era was both to work with a storehouse of images and motifs and to obey the dictates of rhetoric. The standards for success were the skilful adaptation and re-shaping of convention, as well as clever manipulation of language within well-defined parameters, not the least of which were rhyme and metre. Identifying the *topos* is therefore only the first step. What must interest the researcher is the manner in which an author manipulates established usage.

To expect a breaching of literary norms in *Sursum corda* is thus unrealistic, and to judge Kuntsch for following convention is no standard of aesthetics. In that poem she creates artful combinations from common motifs – and deserves to be recognized for her achievement. The treatment of canonical themes is the mark of her craft, and no reader of our poem can fail to note how skilfully she constructs the verses, using a turn of phrase here and there to cast well-worn motifs in a fresh light. For example, the stormy sea and ships (Stanza 4) are familiar images of life's journey, of *vanitas*, and of death.⁸ But Kuntsch now makes the combination of time and human transgression the concepts against which these nautical images operate, thus shaping, with a perhaps unexpected pairing, the very landscape of death. Her treatment of the evanescence of earthly beauty (Stanza 3) is likewise striking. It rests on a metaphor traceable in German literature to the medieval courtly love lyric and goliardic poetry: 'lilies and roses of the cheeks'. This was in the Middle Ages a stock image for a woman's attractiveness: red and white are the color of love, pointing to a woman's complexion and

1671-1720. *Gedichte und Briefe von Margaretha Susanna von Kuntsch und Frauen in ihrem Umkreis* (Hildesheim/Zürich/New York: Olms, 2004), 70-71.

7 Carrdus, *Why and How Men Edited Women's Texts*, 24.

8 For a discussion of the motif, see David Halstead, *Ships, the Sea and Constancy. A Classical Image in the Baroque Lyric*. In 'Neophilologus' 74, no.4 (1990), 545-60.

cosmetics, as well as to the flush of cheeks in erotic arousal.⁹ However, Kuntsch adapts the imagery for a pedagogical, not an amatory purpose, following which the heart in her poem must learn from the fleeting time of ‘lilies and roses of the cheeks’ about the transience of human loveliness. Her technique here is a studied de-contextualization – and form of *contrafactum* – according to which she places a literary commonplace with erotic currency inside her sacred text.

A new reading of Kuntsch is certainly apposite. A case in point is *Sursum corda*, our subject here. One might be tempted, given the tenor of Kuntsch-criticism, to interpret Stanza 8, for instance, holding a reference to the deceased, as autobiographical. But we will resist here the pull of biographical and extra-literary factors. Instead, we focus on the artistic design in these verses, attempting to appreciate how the poem functions as a lyric statement. Written in sestets, employing dactylic metre, it consists of nine strophes. My English rendering follows:

1) On high, my heart! What are you seeking here below,
 where nothing of true satisfaction can be found?
 Up there you can lay claim to a richer patrimony
 that neither thief can rob, nor flame sear.
 No need for concern that this legacy might disappear
 beneath the flood-waters.
 Therefore: on high, my heart!

2) On high, my heart! Here winged Fortune
 is wont to balance on a globe.
 She staggers and stumbles and, since blind, her fickle
 glance falls on pious ones more often
 than on those of evil will.
 You are searching for a happiness that never wavers.

9 For example, see the lyric poem by Walther von der Vogelweide (d.c.1230), ‘Nement frowe, disen cranze’, especially the third stanza, with a reference to the beloved’s cheeks as being like a red rose among lilies. Cited by Christoph Cormeau, ed., *Walther von der Vogelweide. Leich, Lieder, Sangsprüche* (Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1996), 167-68. Cf. the reference to Venus in the Latin love-lyric, ‘shining white and red,’ as cited by Peter Dronke, *The Medieval Lyric* (Cambridge: University Press, 1977), 141.

Therefore on high, my heart!

3) On high, my heart! Where resplendent beauty is revealed:

a beauty that blossoms eternally, withering never.

On earth, the lilies and roses of our cheeks fade away;

the purple glow of our lips grows pale;

the years of golden hair turn to snowy sheen.

Therefore, on high, my heart!

4) On high, my heart! Where sublimity and uprightness hold sway,

unbroken neither by strife nor human chronology—

both of which one can liken to the storm-tossed sea.

For just as soon as an auspicious ship's journey is promised,

our vessel plunges ere long into the ocean depths.

Therefore, on high, my heart!

5) On high, my heart! Where effulgent blessings are the antithesis of the shameful putrescence of earthly goods.

Such tawdry trifles are able only to comfort simple minds.

These vulgar things, attained with travail and trouble,

and diligently protected, will be destroyed with wailing and woe.

Therefore, on high, my heart!

6) On high, my heart! Where wisdom fills the blissful breast, wisdom that the earthly ear has

yet to perceive.

Up there your grasping longings will be stilled.

There you will desire to know the right.

Here, no matter the degree of comprehension, our understanding remains deficient.

Therefore, on high, my heart!

7) On high, my heart! Where the purest of all loves
is changeless and permanent.

In this (earthly) place, temporality, the cross one must
bear, envy and calumny often darken
that which formerly had glowed in bright, purified
flames.

Up there nothing of this sort can possibly occur again.
Therefore, on high, my heart!

8) On high, my heart! Where you will welcome again
those persons whose decease you had lamented while on
earth;
those most worthy ones who (in death) had half-taken you
with them;
those who are one with you by virtue of bonds of mind
and blood.

Let the transfiguration come about sooner than later!
Therefore, on high, my heart!

9) On high, my heart! Where Jesus is king,
where our true wealth is. There justly is the heart.

Up there Faith will lead you to see.

There you will reap joy, not sorrow or pain.

I yearn! If only I could see Jesus this very day.

Therefore, on high, my heart! ¹⁰

10 MEin Hertz in die Höhe/was suchst du hienieden/Wo gar nichts zu finden was dich recht ergötzt/Dort ist dir ein besseres Erbtheil beschieden/Das Diebe nicht stehlen/die Glut nicht verletzt/Nicht sorglich ist/daß es durch Fluth untergeh/Drum Hertz in die Höh' (Stanza 1); Mein Hertz in die Höhe/hier pflegt das Gelücke/Auf einer geflügelten Kugel zu stehn/Es wancket/und weil es blind/muß seine Tücke/Die Frommen viel öffter als Böse angehn/Du suchest ein Glück/das sich niemahls verdreh'/Drum Hertz in die Höh' (Stanza 2); Mein Hertz in die Höhe/wo Schönheit wird prangen/Die ewiglich blühet und nimmer verwelckt/Hier schwinden die Liljen und Rosen der Wangen/Es blassen die Lippen mit Purpur umnelckt/Die Jahre der Haare Gold kehren in Schnee/Drum Hertz in die Höh' (Stanza 3); Mein Hertz in die Höhe/ wo Hoheit und Ehre/Die wede der Neid noch die Zeit unterbricht/

II: The Heavenly Journey

Sursum corda is structured as an apostrophe to the heart of the lyric voice of the poem, not identifiable as man or woman, and henceforth referred to in this essay as 'the speaker'. Using the first-person singular form of address, this speaker immediately establishes a Biblical framework for the subsequent monolog to his/her heart by adapting the formula: 'Seek, and ye shall find' (Matthew 7:7), in order to exhort the heart to abandon its earthly search for pleasure. According to the speaker's argument, the heart can only find bliss in heaven.

Throughout the poem, the speaker attempts to persuade the heart to lift itself up, to proceed heavenward to unite with Christ, citing multiple reasons why it should fly away. Each stanza exposes the emptiness of terrene existence, for example, the vagaries of fortune (Stanza 2)¹¹ and ephemeral beauty (Stanza 3). And each contains

Hier gleicht sich diß beydes dem stürmenden Meere/So uns bald recht glückliche Schiffarth verspricht/Bald unser Schiff schmeisset in Abgrund der See/Drum Hertz in die Höh' (Stanza 4); Mein Hertz in die Höhe/wo herrliche Güter/Dargegen die Irdischen schändlicher Koth/Ein solcher Tand labet nur schlechte Gemüther/Der da wird erworben mit Arbeit und Noth/Mit Sorgfalt erhalten/verlohren mit Weh/ Drum Hertz in die Höh (Stanza 5); Mein Hertz in die Höhe/wo Weißheit erfüllet/ Der seelgen Brust/die hier kein Ohr ie gehört/Dort wird dein begierges Verlangen gestillet/So allzeit was rechtes zu wissen begehrt/Hier bleibts unvollkommen was man auch versteh;/Drum Hertz in die Höh (Stanza 6); Mein Hertz in die Höhe/wo reineste Liebe/Die weder Veränderung noch Unbestand kennt/Hier macht Zeit/Creutz/Eifer/Verleumdung offit trübe/Was sonst in hell lautersten Flammen gebrennt/Unmöglich ist/ daß solches dort mehr gescheh/ Drum Hertz in die Höh (Stanza 7); Mein Hertz in die Höhe/wo du wirst bekommen/Diejenigen wieder/so du hier beweint/Die werthesten/die dich schon halb mit genommen/Weil sie dir mit Muths=und Bluts=Freundschaft vereint/Der Wechsel erfolge ie lieber ie eh/ Drum Hertz in die Höh (Stanza 8); Mein Hertz in die Höhe/da JESus regieret/Wo unser Schatz ist/da ist billig das Hertz/Dort wirst du vom Glauben zum Schauen geführt/ Dort erndtest du Freude vor Trauren und Schmerz/O seufftze: Ach daß ich nicht JESum heut seh// Drum Hertz in die Höh (Stanza 9). Cited according to the edition *Das 'weiblich Werk'* (see n. 6).

- 11 Kuntsch' reference to Fortune as winged and balancing on a sphere shows awareness of the allegorical version of the figure, also known as Nemesis, as depicted, for example, c. 1502, in the engraving by Albrecht Dürer (The British Museum, 1895, 0915.346). The notion of Fortune/Nemesis as winged and balancing is an ancient one, traceable at least to the Hymn to Nemesis by Mesomedes in the 2nd century A.D.

argumentation meant to convince the heart immediately to depart this earthly place.

Fundamental to the speaker's reasoning is that the heart is being sent back to its natural home: heaven. This, in turn, recalls the Scriptural reference to mankind's return to the place of origin: 'All are of the dust, and all turn to dust again' (Ecclesiastes 3:20). To reinforce the return to beginnings, Kuntsch strives for a marriage of form and content. Just as the theme is the return of the heart to heaven, the rhyme scheme is circular, Kuntsch adapting the *da capo*-stanza.¹² This type of stanza has, of course, the form of a circle, relying on repetition of those elements at the beginning and end. Each of the nine sestet-stanzas here, in enjoining the heart to ascend beyond the temporal sphere, opens with the phrase: 'On high, my heart'. Line 6, the final half-line of each stanza, varies line 1, but retains the speaker's address to the heart: 'Therefore, on high (my) heart'.

The speaker tells the listener/reader through this anthropomorphic form of address to the heart that true life, as contrasted to the false existence of this apparent world, is found in the heights of heaven, to which the heart must aspire, and to which place it must hasten. The motion is thus dynamic, at the same time it is circular, the second mention of 'high,' in the sixth line of each sestet serving as the summary verse. This concluding verse, anchored by the repeated adverb 'therefore', has a dual purpose. It is both meant to echo the first line ('On high, my heart' / 'Therefore, on high, (my) heart') and to serve as the heart's metamorphosis. Between the first citation of 'on high' and the second 'on high' of each stanza, the speaker makes an argument, attempting to convince his/her heart that its rightful place is in heaven, not on earth.

Each stanza of the poem, one sees, is framed by the insistent rhetorical device of the speaker's exhortation to its heart to ascend

12 The true *da capo*-stanza requires the repetition of the first and last verses. Here, using a variant of it, Kuntsch echoes, but does not fully repeat, the first and last verses. She combines the *da capo* with the sestet-form (a-b-a-b-c-c) employed in the German Baroque by Paul Fleming (d.1640), for example. On Fleming's groundbreaking lyrical work, see Marian R. Sperberg-McQueen, *The German Poetry of Paul Fleming. Studies in Genre and History* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1990).

beyond this world – almost twenty such appeals. The key rhyme word is, perhaps surprisingly, not 'heart,' but 'high' (*Höhe*), which, as upwards motion towards heaven, is the direction, fundamental subject, and proposition of the poem. Kuntsch places the word 'high' at the end of the first half-line of each stanza, where it rhymes with the last word of each stanza. The heart, thus urged to union with Christ, has in the preceding verses been made familiar with the wishes of the speaker. It is expected both to comprehend the passionate arguments against earthly life and to act on them by abandoning the world and its blandishments.

The structure of *Sursum corda* reinforces the speaker's message that the heart's true home is in heaven, as seen, by the repetition and rhyming of the words: 'On high'. To augment the theological statement, Kuntsch not only repeats 'on high', thus linking beginning and end of the stanza, but rhymes the fifth verse with the word 'high' in the sixth. The final word of the fifth verse is therefore the final word of the argument for the superiority of heaven over earth. The speaker here goads the heart on to communion with God by laying out the perils and emptiness of earthly life – in rhyme. Stanza 1, for example, chooses death in flood-waters (*untergeh*) as the rhyme with 'high' (*Höh*); in Stanza 2 the rhyme for 'high' is *verdreh*, that is, the threat to eternal happiness; in Stanza 3, the rhyme is the snowy hair of old age (*Schnee*); in Stanza 4 it is the sea in shipwreck (*See*); in Stanza 5 it is the general woe of earthly things (*Weh*); in Stanza 6 it is deficient understanding on earth (*versteh*); in Stanza 7 the rhyme is the contrast between heaven and earth, as seen in the verb *gescheh*; and in Stanza 8 the metamorphosis of human existence is yet to come (*ie*). This pattern of contrasting lines 5 and 6, ends only in the final stanza. There the rhyme-word for 'high' (*Höh*) is 'see' (*seh*), said visual act referring to Christ – the union with whom the speaker passionately desires:

I yearn! If only I could see Jesus this very day.
Therefore, on high, (my) heart!

To convince the heart to make its journey to Christ, the speaker cites reasons in each stanza for rejecting mundane existence. These range, as said, from blind fortune and the transience of human beauty to

temporality, human strife, and death. Repeated three times – appearing in the beginning and end as a circular justification for despising the world – is the motif of earthly assets. First, the speaker refers to the threats posed to earthly treasure and all species of inheritance by natural forces (Stanza 1). These include fire and floodwaters. Next, one learns that all earthly goods are vulgar and foolish, causing misery (Stanza 5). The conclusion – and the argument in the closing stanza – is that the only true wealth resides in Jesus Christ; He alone can grant the heart faith, bliss, and the wholeness of merit.

Over the course of the poem, from the beginning stanza to the final one in which the speaker voices a fervent wish to be in Christ's presence, human treasures reveal themselves to be worthless and idiotic. Each stanza contrasts 'here' and 'there', the former the earth and the latter heaven, and from the opening words the speaker admonishes the heart to alight skyward to Christ, who is the exemplar of the heavenly hoard, identified here as 'our treasure' (*unser Schatz*: Stanza 9).¹³ Any believer who is longing to possess this divine treasure, so the logic of the poem goes, must fully reject the earthly sphere. How, then, one might possibly bring about the desired transformation of existence, bartering the mouldy treasures of earth for those of heaven, without wilful death, is the blank spot – and mystery – in our poem.

What Kuntsch does make clear is that the heart needs to learn through the speaker's argumentation that nothing on earth has permanence or value. The failure of humankind to grasp the futility of the secular realm is due to deficient understanding, and the remedy is enlightened awareness, for which the human heart is the herald. In Stanza 6 the speaker sets the heart against the human ear (*Ohr*). The ear reigns on earth: it is the organ of flawed perception, of partial understanding only, of erroneous discernment, and blemished wisdom. True wisdom, the speaker stresses, is reserved for heaven, where the heart, the divinely ordained medium of understanding and insight

13 Kuntsch here plays on Christ's own words. He links the heart and treasure in two prominent passages: 'For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also' (Matt. 6:21); and 'A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good' (Luke 6:45). Further Jesus speaks of 'treasure in heaven' (Matt. 19:21). It is this heavenly treasure, which Kuntsch identifies with Christ Himself, that is the goal of the heart in *Sursum corda*.

into God's design for the universe, will, once aloft and returned to its origins, gain a perception of truth passing all understanding. In heaven the heart will commune with the Saviour, thereby removing the need for the reliance on Faith that characterizes earthly devotion.

That the heart can acquire knowledge is the speaker's premise, thus making of *Sursum corda* a pedagogical poem in the spirit of the Biblical verse that speaks of wisdom entering the heart (Proverbs 2:10). Accordingly, the heart of the opening verse in each stanza, ignorant of some important aspect of mundane life, learns through the tutelage of the speaker to set earthly life in crude contrast to Paradise, and thus emerges wiser at the closing of each stanza. By affirming belief in the possibility that the human heart can be educated, Kuntsch echoes a centuries-old theological premise, as put forth by Augustine and Gregory the Great, for example.¹⁴ The schooling of the heart prepares it to assume the correct posture to receive God's blessings.

It is plain that the metrical scheme supports the content of our poem. What is not so clear to the modern reader is that the *da capo* was in this era characteristically a musical form. It is typically an aria of the Baroque cantata and oratorio.¹⁵ One cannot know whether Kuntsch was pointing to a musical form, with its formal *ritornello*, but certainly she was aware that her chosen verse form is musical in its circularity, repetitive in rhyme, and that the metrical scheme is suitable to singing. It might therefore be said that our poem is a kind of *da capo* aria for the heart.

The element of music takes us to the words of the Latin title that Kuntsch has chosen for her verses, the exhortation *sursum corda*, literally: 'hearts above' / 'upwards, hearts', which is usually translated as: 'Lift up your hearts!' In a bold and surprising move, Kuntsch, a devout Protestant, chooses not only a Latin versicle as the title for her

14 Xenja von Ertzdorff, Das Herz in der lateinisch-theologischen und frühen volkssprachigen religiösen Literatur. In 'Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur' 84, no.3 (1962), 264-5. See, also, Erich Mühsam, Zur Lehre vom Bau und der Bedeutung des menschlichen Herzens im klassischen Altertum, unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Aristotelischen Schriften. In 'Janus' 14 (1910) 797-833.

15 'Aria.' In Don Michael Randel, ed., *The Harvard Dictionary of Music* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 54-55.

vernacular poem, but appropriates it from an unlikely source, the Holy Mass. 'In the Eucharistic liturgy', F.L. Cross and E.A. Livingstone explain, the words *sursum corda* are 'addressed by the celebrant to the congregation immediately before the Preface'.¹⁶ They are sung in plain chant. The reader, thus prompted from two directions that our poem is intended to be sung, looks more closely at the title – and its role at the Sacrifice of the Mass. An important part of the celebration of the Eucharist, the Roman Catholic phrase *sursum corda* appears within a dialogue between the priest and the congregation. When the priest admonishes: 'Lift up yours hearts' (*sursum corda*), the congregation responds: 'We lift them up unto the Lord' (*Habemus ad Dominum*). Nicholas Gihl explains: the significance of the *sursum corda*:

...These words...signify that we should withdraw the faculties of our soul from what is earthly and consecrate them exclusively to intercourse with God and divine things....The heart becomes aglow with holy love of God and disengages itself from the bonds of worldly inclinations and desires that enchain it in the dust; it rouses itself from its sluggish indolence and tepidity that it may with holy ardor soar heavenward with all its powers.¹⁷

In using the phrase *sursum corda*, encoded as it is in liturgy, Kuntsch permits, indeed begs, the reader to identify the speaker of her poem as one who officiates at a religious service—indeed, as a kind of priest. However, to follow this analogy is to realize that, within the context of the Mass, the celebrant addresses a multitude: therefore the word 'heart' in the Mass text is in the plural: *corda*. Our verses, by contrast, have reduced many hearts to one, the heart of the speaker. Also, Kuntsch has pared down the dialogue in the Mass to a monolog: the speaker exhorts and instructs the heart, but the heart does not respond. In summary, whereas in the Mass the members of the congregation

16 *Sursum corda*. In F.L. Cross and E.A. Livingstone eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, (Oxford: University Press, 1997), 1561. The *sursum corda* appears already in the 3rd century (St. Hippolytus of Rome and St. Cyprian).

17 Nicholas Gihl, *The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass* vol. 2. *Dogmatically, Liturgically and Ascetically Explained* (1902; rpt. Whitefish, MT: Kessinger, 2006), 600. See, also, E. Ferguson, *The Liturgical Function of the 'Sursum Corda'*. In Elizabeth A. Livingstone, ed., *Studia Patristica*, vol. 13 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1975), 360-63.

respond to the exhortation of the priest to lift up their hearts, Kuntsch's speaker addresses a single heart, then renders it mute,

Considering that a phrase from the central Catholic sacrament serves here as the framework for a Protestant song-poem, it is doubly surprising that Kuntsch not only appropriates it, but then fractures, and discards, its very framework, elevating the speaker to a priest-figure and transforming a congregation of believers into the human heart. Where is the church in this analogical structure, not to speak of the Eucharist? And what has become of the dialogue between priest and congregation? Our poem is therefore either striking blasphemy, or the attempt to create a *da capo* prayer to the heart that lays claim to being its own sacrament.

Whatever the interpretation – and I posit here that Kuntsch confects a sacrament of the heart – it is certain that the writer adopts traditional Catholic phraseology, altering the context from dialog to monolog, from public devotion to private and personal exhortation, from priest to lone celebrant, and from many hearts to a single, individual heart. Let us hasten to add, however, that her decision to remove the heart from the multitude of hearts in a community of worshipers does not mean that one must interpret her poem as a private sort of confession. Her purpose in focusing on a single heart, I would argue, is to encourage, and to inspire, the individual to follow the austere path that the speaker blazes to self-reflection.

It therefore follows that the poem's fervent exhortation to the heart has, in touching the concerns of all the faithful and devout, a universal appeal. Appearances deceive. Upon first reading Kuntsch's *Sursum corda*, one seems to encounter an introspective analysis of a single soul, an inner-body monolog with one's own heart. Further readings make it plain that the speaker's apparently personal admonition to self is, in its explicit longing for union with the Divine, neither solely introspective nor limited to a single gender or reader. It pertains to all believers, to mankind, each heart urged to follow, then re-enact, the quest to raise one's heart to God.

Kuntsch's borrowing, and variation, of a collective formula from the Holy Mass offers one sub-text for interpretation. The other is a Scriptural passage that influenced the wording in the Mass,

Lamentations 3:41: 'Let us lift up our hearts with our hands unto God in the heavens'. Here, again, the speaker (the prophet Jeremiah?) is addressing a multitude. A modern Biblical commentary attempts to place this mournful plaint into context: 'In the darkness, crushed and battered to the point where all hope dies, faith still rekindles at the thought of God in all his love and mercy. When he (the lamenter) is all but lost, there comes the knowledge that God is near'.¹⁸ This same combination of a lament and a full affirmation of divine consolation is present in Kuntsch's *Sursum corda*. Its bedrock is faith, here expressed in the full assurance that union of the heart and Christ is both possible and the solution to the present world of woe.

III: The Heart: Metaphor and Self

When Kuntsch chooses the heart as the addressee of our poem, she does so in a century, the 17th, that might profitably be called the 'century of the heart'.¹⁹ First, there is the medical aspect. The English physician William Harvey (d. 1657), described the role of the heart in the circulation of blood, thereby valorising it as the apparatus and organ of life itself. Second, there is the literary aspect. Authors, as for instance, Madeleine de Scudery (d.1701), made the heart the metaphor for self and interiority in fiction. Henceforth, a 'language of the heart,' based on psychological emotion and grounded in the valorisation of the heart as the seat of sensibility, gained currency.²⁰ Third, and most important for our inquiry here, is the religious aspect. This, in turn, divides into two branches, the first of which is the devotional practice

18 'Lamentations'. In David Alexander and Pat Alexander, eds., *Eerdman's Handbook to the Bible* (Carmel, NY: Guideposts, 1973), 414. Cf. Psalm 28:2.

19 Concerning the heart in the 17th century, see Joan DeJean, *Ancients against Moderns. Culture Wars and the Making of a Fin de Siècle* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 78-123. On the symbolism of the heart, see Wilhelm Geerlings and Andreas Mügge, eds., *Das Herz. Organ und Metapher* (Paderborn/München/Wien/Zürich: Schöningh, 2006).

20 DeJean, *Ancients against Moderns*, 79. Cf. DeJean, 'Mapping the Heart', lecture given at the Einstein Forum in Potsdam, 1999. http://www.zefg.fu-berlin.de/media/pdf/querelles_jahrbuchaufsatz3.pdf (last accessed March 2013)

that dates from 1675, thus during the lifetime of Kuntsch: the Sacred Heart of Jesus. What had begun as a private vision by the French nun Margu rite-Marie Alacoque, when the Savior appeared to her, asking to be honored under the sign of His radiant heart, the locus and image of divine love, soon became profoundly influential as a public exercise in devotion, recognized by popes and monarchs and promoted by religious communities, as well as by the laity.²¹ In brief, promoters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus revere His heart as the emblem of love per se — love for mankind and for the creator.

The second branch that explores the religious dimension of the heart manifests itself prominently in a type of Lutheran pantheism in German Baroque literature, as explored by Johann Anselm Steiger.²² Poets look to the heart as a triune poetic metaphor for the self, the soul and all those faculties whereby man can appreciate and celebrate Creation. Identifying the heart as the agent for apprehending the wonders of the created world, authors make close observation of God's handiwork the basis for lyric tributes, the most celebrated of which is the hymn by Paul Gerhardt, *Geh aus, mein Herz, und suche Freud* (Go forth, my heart, seeking bliss; 1653).²³ Certainly Kuntsch was familiar with Gerhard's devotional text and with the literary practice of making the heart the source for religious sentiment.

It is revealing to compare Gerhardt's verses with the *Sursum corda* of Kuntsch, both of which contain a formulation of the

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- 21 Karl Richstaetter, *Herz Jesu*. In Michael Buchberger, ed., *Lexikon f r Theologie und Kirche* (Freiburg: Herder, 1932), 4:1011-5. On this devotion in Germany, see John Moore, *Herz-Jesu-Verehrung in Deutschland. Religi se, soziale und politische Aspekte einer Fr mmigkeitsform* (Petersberg: Imhof, 1997). A fervent reference to the heart of Jesus appears, as well, in 17th-century poetry by Protestants, as when Catharina Regina von Greiffenberg (d. 1694) composes verses in the shape of the cross and speaks of Christ's passionate desire to press believers to his heart, which is 'burning with love' ('liebheisses Herz'). In Martin Bircher and Friedrich Kemp, eds., *Catharina Regina von Greiffenberg S mtliche Werke. Band 1* (Millwood, NY: Kraus Reprint, 1983), 404.
- 22 Johann Anselm Steiger, 'Geh aus, mein Herz, und suche Freud'. Paul Gerhards Sommerlied und die Gelehrsamkeit der Barockzeit (Naturkunde, Emblematis, Theologie) (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 2007).
- 23 In Eberhard von Cranach-Sichart, ed., *Paul Gerhardt, Wach auf, mein Herz, und singe. Gesamtausgabe seiner Lieder und Gedichte* (Wuppertal and Kassel: Oncken, 1982), 89-90.

command: ‘Go hither, my heart!’ Each poet honors the status of the heart as the conventional Christian center and seat of life, each making it representative for the whole person as *pars pro toto*. The heart, which is referred to scores of times in Scripture, is often used interchangeably there with the soul. Within the heart all the sacred, emotional, cognitive, and rational processes of man are accomplished and fulfilled. Although the Bible holds negative comments about the heart,²⁴ the positive assessments, by virtue of the heart’s association with God, outweigh any criticism. The Lord, who ‘looketh on the heart’ (I Sam. 16:7), knows our hearts (Luke 16:15), rewarding all men for proper conduct. God strengthens the heart (Psalm 27:14), and, beyond this, is able to grant a new, purified heart (Ezek 36:26; Jeremiah 24:7; Acts 15:9 and Eph. 3:17). Therefore, even though the human heart is deceitful, wicked and inclined to sin (Jeremiah 17:9), it can be brought to a more desirable state through divine instruction.

Where Kuntsch and Gerhardt profoundly divide is in their attitude toward this world. Gerhardt writes a song of spring, sending the heart out to seek joy in God’s beautiful, bountiful creation. He validates secular existence by praising the wonders of the world – trees, birds, animals, and nature. To be sure, the second half of his hymn promises that someday the pleasures of heaven will surpass those of earth, but the song itself is not dominated by images of earthly transience and the inevitability of death, as is Kuntsch’s. Her speaker, by contrast, fervently wishes to induce his/her heart to escape the secular plane. Perhaps the most telling factor is the location of bliss in the two songs that we are comparing. Whereas Gerhardt’s lyric voice beckons the heart into the world to seek joy, Kuntsch’s speaker rejects the world, locating felicity in heaven (Stanza 9).

This difference here in execution regarding the motif and metaphor: ‘My heart’ illustrates that sacred verse of the century can employ the emblem to varying effect. Both authors, echoing Scripture, incline their hearts to the Lord (Joshua 24: 23). But Kuntsch makes no easy identification of God with Creation; not does she celebrate the

24 Christ Himself states the evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornication, thefts, false witness and blasphemes proceed from the heart (Matt. 15: 18-9).

wonders of this world. The aspect of Creation which she lauds is heaven, a transcendent goal requiring the believer to reject the phenomena of this life. Her concentration on union with the divine makes fully clear that none of the charms of the world can hold the heart back from its heavenly flight. In fact, *Sursum corda* is able to list not a single bounty of this life, replacing earthly rewards with calamity, capricious fortune, transient beauty, perverted values, false treasures, deficient wisdom, and the death of loved ones. This world, in all respects, is utterly no place for the heart.

What remains is the sacerdotal gesture. Kuntsch relies on the reader's knowledge that the priest, while saying the words *sursum corda*, extends and raises his arms reverently towards heaven.²⁵ He gestures upward, raising his hands in the direction towards which Kuntsch has beckoned the heart in her poem.

25 Gühr, *The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass*, 599, explains the gesture thus: 'At the words *Sursum corda* the priest raises his hands in order by this gesture to manifest and accentuate the inward soaring of the mind and his desire to give himself wholly to the Lord. By this movement of the hands is expressed the longing for that which is above us, that which is heavenly and eternal'.