

Freemasonry, secret societies, and the continuity of the
occult traditions in English literature
Volume I

Marsha Keith Manatt Schuchard

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FREEMASONRY, SECRET SOCIETIES, AND THE CONTINUITY
OF THE OCCULT TRADITIONS IN
ENGLISH LITERATURE

by

MARSHA KEITH MANATT SCHUCHARD, B.A., M.A.

DISSERTATION

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FREEMASONRY, SECRET SOCIETIES, AND THE CONTINUITY
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ENGLISH LITERATURE

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This dissertation examines the role of Freemasonry and related secret societies in the transmission of the occult traditions in English literary history from the seventeenth to twentieth centuries. The study draws upon recent Renaissance and Hebrew scholarship to define those elements of vision-inducement and magical theories of art which were developed into the syncretic Renaissance tradition of Cabalistic and Hermetic symbolism. After the publication and subsequent suppression of this occult tradition during the Rosicrucian agitation in Germany, Rosicrucianism was assimilated into the secret traditions of Freemasonry in England in the mid-seventeenth century. Many English literary figures, such as John Dee, Francis Bacon, Elias Ashmole, and John Milton, were involved in this theosophical, millennial reform movement.

From the merging of the neo-Rosicrucian "invisible college" into the Royal Academy of Science in the 1660's, Freemasonry became the repository of contradictory strains of thought--rational egalitarian

deism and occultist hierarchical theism. Both strains influenced Samuel Butler, Alexander Pope, Jonathan Swift, and their contemporaries in France. The 1753 splitting of English Freemasonry into radical "Ancient" lodges and conservative "Modern" lodges, and the proliferation of occultist "high degrees" in European Masonry, are shown to be major factors in the scholarly lacunae and confusion about what happened to Rosicrucian occultism after it went "underground" from the 1630's to 1860's.

Swedenborg and Mesmer developed Cabalistic visionary techniques which were practiced in occultist lodges in Europe. This study analyzes for the first time the impact of these Masonic theories of Animal Magnetism and psycho-political regeneration on English secret societies. Special emphasis is given to William Blake from 1780 to 1827, showing the involvement of Blake's Swedenborg Society with the occultist, revolutionary "Illuminism" of European Masonry. Materials from Swedenborgian and Masonic archives and publications document the Masonic activities and Mesmeric practices of Blake and his associates in the arts world, Welsh Druid societies, astrological groups, and British Israelite movement.

The study traces the role of John Varley and Bulwer-Lytton in transmitting documents, oral instructions, and ritual practices from Blake's societies through Victorian Rosicrucian-Masonic orders to Yeats's Cabalistic society. Blakean occultism influenced the Rossetti family and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, the Tennyson family, and the English colony at Florence. The differences between the "spiritualism" of Mrs. Browning and Harriet Martineau and the Rosicrucian "magic" of

Bulwer-Lytton and Richard Burton are discussed in order to define the complex theosophical milieu which emerged by the 1880's.

Yeats revitalized the artistic significance of this neo-Masonic occult tradition. He drew upon Masonic archives and oral materials in order to accurately place Blake in an occultist, millennial tradition, rooted in seventeenth-century Rosicrucianism and carried on in Blake's day by fellow Masonic Illuminés in Europe, such as Goethe, Lavator, Cagliostro, Mozart, Grabianka, Lafayette, Saint-Martin, and the Duke of Orleans. Thus, for nearly three centuries, Freemasonry provided a continuous reservoir of occultist philosophy, visionary training, and political radicalism, which linked many English writers with an international world of ideas.

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Freemasonry, Secret Societies,
and the Continuity of the
Occult Traditions in English Literature

When W.B. Yeats suggested in 1893 that William Blake was probably a member of a Rosicrucian Society--the "Hermetic Students of the G. D."¹--and held up his work on Blake to Madame Blavatsky as proof of his own "obedience" to the "work of theosophy,"² he was widely ridiculed or patronized by most literary critics. Among the "great deluge" of Yeats and Blake scholarship since then, there has still been no serious study of Yeats's ground-breaking critical edition of Blake's works or any thorough scholarly investigation of why Yeats believed in Blake's association with an occultist secret society. But any objective examination of Yeats's occultist milieu and of his active participation in secret societies, which had handed down from generation to generation a corpus of ritual instruction and magical theory, soon makes clear that Yeats knew much more about Blake and his era than he has been given credit for.

When the historical antecedents and lines of transmission which issued in the theosophical societies of the nineteenth-century fin de siècle are traced back to their origins, a verifiable, consistent, and complex picture of actual secret societies--with oral traditions, private archives, and hereditary instruction--emerges as an important "non-literary" source for many of the

¹ Edwin Ellis and W.B. Yeats, eds. The Works of William Blake (London: Quaritch, 1893), I, 24.

² W.B. Yeats, Memoirs, ed. Denis Donoghue (New York: Macmillan, 1973), p. 281.

preoccupations and themes of major works of English and Continental literature. The omission of this historical phenomenon from English literary research has left many gaps and theoretical red herrings in the scholarly information available on a wide range of English writers--from Milton to Blake to Bulwer-Lytton to Yeats, with a host of figures in between. The reasons for the inadequate research on the role of secret societies in English literary history are many, but the predominant ones are, first, a rationalist bias on the part of scholars against occultism in general, and, second, the difficulty of access to the documents and archival materials of groups which maintained strict vows of secrecy. Thus, Yeats's statement that Blake would have said nothing about his Rosicrucian initiation, "even if he had received it" (Ellis and Yeats, I, 24), was not as lame as it seemed to rationalist critics, but it did point to a major area of scholarly difficulty.

Fortunately, the probing work of many contemporary Hebraic and Renaissance scholars is beginning to shed much light on the origins and nature of the occult traditions and their impact on Renaissance art,³ and works in progress by George Harper and William O'Donnell on the unpublished occult journals and autobiographical novel of Yeats should yield new material on late nineteenth-century "schools" of occultism. But the major gap between these areas of ongoing investigation occurs in the eighteenth century, a gap which has left Blake's

³ Especially valuable are the works of Gershom Scholem on the Cabala and traditions of Jewish mysticism, and of Francis Yates, D.P. Walker, and Robert J.W. Evans on Renaissance occultism and secret societies.

biography still in the "pre-scientific state" that David Erdman diagnosed over twenty years ago.⁴ Ironically, though the eighteenth century provides the major stumbling block in tracing the history of secret societies in English literary history, there is a mass of scholarly material on the eighteenth-century French and German secret societies in European literary history. That these Continental groups were in contact and working closely with their English counterparts provides a major point of entry into the previously obscure and perplexing role of Freemasonry, Rosicrucianism, and related occult societies in English literature.

The French Revolution provided a watershed in the development of Freemasonry, in all of its schisms and branches, for the Masonic societies reached their greatest political power and intellectual prestige before and during the Revolution. After the failure of republican ideals and the establishment of the Napoleonic Empire, Freemasonry was both praised and vilified for its suspected role in fomenting the Revolution. In England, where parliamentary democracy and Masonry survived without a revolution, official Masonic historians went to great pains to divorce Masonry from the turbulence and carnage of the European revolutions. Thus, most English Masonic historians downplay and gloss over the more radical elements of eighteenth-century Freemasonry. But, on the Continent, where the struggle for democratic political reform continued against oppressive governments throughout

⁴ David Erdman, "Blake's Early Swedenborgianism: A Twentieth-Century Legend," Comparative Literature, V (1953), p. 247.

the nineteenth century, Freemasonry was often prohibited by law, and those who were genuinely secret members were proud of their radical heritage.

The importance of the preservation and publication of material on politically radical Freemasonry in Europe to our understanding of English literary traditions lies in the role of Masonry as the major repository of the eclectic occult traditions of the Renaissance. The highest secret teachings of Masonry consisted of ancient Cabalistic techniques of vision-inducement and symbolic interpretation of nature, Hermetic traditions of symbolic alchemy, rituals of ceremonial magic, and a wide variety of the ancient mystery religions of many cultures. That these carefully guarded arcana of the most private aspects of traditional Masonry should be intimately related to the widespread, public political ramifications of radical Freemasonry is one of the most provocative phenomenon in post-Renaissance European history. This linking in the secret societies of the prophetically exalted "magical" consciousness with apocalyptic political millenarianism provides a valuable key to much visionary literature from the seventeenth century to the first World War.

Because the question of the relation of Rosicrucianism to Freemasonry involves a broad historical scope and a complex process of piecing together the evidence for this relation, I will focus in this study on those elements of the occult traditions which have had a major impact on the artistic imagination, especially in the techniques of vision-inducement practiced by various artists, and on the historical context within which the artists became "adepts" of such visionary initiation.

That the training of the magical consciousness also involved "revolutionary" concepts of sexuality and social organization-- both within the framework of religious reform-- indicates the pervasiveness and the complexity of the secret-society mentality.

Though there is much popular publication presently on Cabalism and the occult and many recent articles tracing parallels between Cabalistic theories and those of various writers, the aspects of Cabalism actually taught and practiced in the secret societies have not been clearly pointed out. Because these are not readily available in the literary criticism which ostensibly deals with Cabalistic influences, I will concentrate on the history of those Cabalistic rituals which were practiced by many writers, as well as on certain aspects of Cabalistic sexual theories which have been largely ignored or treated too euphemistically by scholars. That this discussion must go all the way back to Solomon's Temple and ancient Jewish mythology to clarify many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century practices indicates the historical breadth and complicated nature of the Cabalistic traditions.

Drawing from the extensive research and new materials of contemporary Renaissance scholarship into the Hermetic traditions, I will summarize the process of assimilation of Jewish magical traditions into the Christian eclecticism of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century "synthetic" scholars. It was due to the Florentine revival of interest in secret Jewish theosophy as well as Egyptian Gnosticism and neo-Platonism that the impact of the occult sciences on art was most vividly expressed. The increasing alliance of occultism with Protestant reform movements, which reached a climax in

the Rosicrucian furore of 1614-1620, will be analyzed in terms of the ramifying effects of the Rosicrucian effort, and failure, to regenerate mankind through magic and art.

The crushing of the Rosicrucian movement in 1620 sent the secret societies underground, and from then on, the occult traditions were increasingly assimilated into the rituals and traditions of Freemasonry, which eventually included a Rosicrucian degree as its most elevated stage of initiation. It is from this point, in the mid-seventeenth century, that the relation of Freemasonry to English literature became both more important and more obscure. I will briefly point out the possibilities-- sometimes with certain proof, sometimes as merely circumstantial probability-- of the neo-Rosicrucian or Masonic involvement of writers such as Milton, Pope, and Swift, especially through their association with definite members of secret societies, as a means of leading into the complicated and provocative milieu of late eighteenth-century radical, occultist, and international Freemasonry.

Though German scholars have amply documented the Masonic involvement of Goethe, Schiller, Herder, Lessing, and Novalis, and French scholars have written lucidly on the bizarre Masonic occultism of many of the Encyclopedists, Lafayette, the Duke of Orleans, and most of the major intellectuals of the revolutionary decades, English scholars have largely ignored the close collaboration and intellectual sympathy between European Masons and English radicals and artists in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Because this has been largely

unexplored ground, and still needs much new research in English Masonic archives (which are still closed to outsiders), I will discuss at length and in detail the presently available evidence and new possibilities for information on the occultist and Masonic milieu in England from the 1780's until the 1820's-- a milieu which directly affected Blake, Southey, Coleridge, De Quincey, Shelley, and Byron, and which brings into new prominence several figures who played a major role in all these writers' lives, but who have been little examined. A look at the profound influence of Swedenborg's and Mesmer's development of Cabalistic vision techniques on the widespread interest in Animal Magnetism, and at the role of Freemasonry in proselytizing for Magnetism in all its forms, sheds much light on the visionary literature of the late eighteenth century.

After identifying those people in London who were involved with secret societies and the occultism of the French revolutionary decades, I will define the direct lines of transmission of these occult teachings in the Rosicrucian and Masonic activities of such nineteenth-century figures as Bulwer-Lytton, Gabriele Rossetti père, and General Ethan Allen Hitchcock, as well as the many artists, theosophers, and statesmen with whom they were associated. In the mid-nineteenth century, a split began to develop between the sentimental Victorian "spiritualists" or "table-rappers" and the serious, erudite students of ceremonial magic and the occult sciences. The apparently "faddish" nature of the spiritualism of Mrs. Browning, Harriet Martineau, and others has possibly prevented a thorough investigation of the genuinely learned occultism of Bulwer-Lytton and Sir Richard Burton,

as well as their associates in the highly exclusive, secret magical schools. But it will become increasingly clear that there was a direct transmission of occult teaching and skills from family to family as well as in the more elevated ranks of Freemasonry. Given this context, many known facts of nineteenth-century literary history-- such as Tennyson's "spirit communication" with Hallam, the "Brotherhood" aspect of Pre-Raphaelism, Disraeli's Cabalistic romances and obsessive fear of a Masonic conspiracy-- will take on a new significance.

But most important to this study, the sources of W.B. Yeats's opinions on Blake and a host of literary and theosophical figures will be revealed in the oral traditions, knowledge lectures, and actual archival and manuscript material, which had been carefully preserved in the vaults of Freemasons Hall since the days when Blake lived across the street from that Masonic center of activity. That one of the same families associated with Blake and a secret society was also associated with Bulwer-Lytton, Yeats, and other Rosicrucians points to the highly personal as well as organizational continuity of the accumulated occult traditions of the English secret societies.

Because so much material still lies unresearched in English Masonic and theosophical archives, I will try to indicate areas where new research may be profitably undertaken, as well as throwing out some unresolved leads and unanswered questions about possibly relevant figures. Especially in the long section on Blake, there are still so many open questions, along with new possibilities for scholarship, that even this amassing of detailed evidence

is only a preliminary step toward remedying the lamentably "pre-scientific state" of Blake's biography. But the revelation of an undeniable and continuous occultist milieu-- including Doehmenism, Swedenborgianism, Cabalism, Rosicrucianism, Freemasonry, Animal Magnetism, Odic forces, and Electro-Biology-- within the English literary heritage certainly makes even the unanswered questions worth raising.

Chapter I: The Cabala, Sexual Magic, and the
Jewish Visionary Traditions

One of the major difficulties in deciphering the influence of occult societies on English literature, besides the secrecy of the orders themselves, lies in the peculiar relation of Jewish Cabalism, the central teaching of the societies, to mainstream Jewish culture and scholarship. As Kenneth Rexroth notes, "There is singularly little on Jewish mysticism of any sort to be found in English. Furthermore, most of it is not very rewarding. Much of it is definitely antagonistic."¹ As Jews became more accepted and assimilated into Western culture, from the eighteenth century on, there was a growing Jewish rejection of the traditions of the Medieval ghetto, in the name of Enlightenment rationalism and tolerance. Thus, at the time of flourishing Jewish historical and literary scholarship in the nineteenth century, study of the Jewish Cabalistic traditions was not only neglected but suppressed by those who were best equipped to deal with them. As Gershom Scholem points out, the hostile attitudes of the great nineteenth-century Jewish scholars toward the Cabala were those of combatants rather than scholars, for they were grappling with a real foe in the rise of the neo-Cabalistic Hasidic movements in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.²

¹ A.E. Waite, The Holy Kabbalah, introd. Kenneth Rexroth (1902; rpt. New Hyde Park, New York: University Books, 1965), p. vii. Hereafter cited as Waite, HK.

² Gershom Scholem, Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism, rev. ed. (1941; New York: Schocken, 1954), pp. 1-2. Hereafter cited as Scholem, MT.

Ironically, until Scholem's major historical and linguistic studies of the last few decades, the only works with any sympathetic insight into the world of Cabalism were by Christian scholars with theosophical interests, such as the German Franz Joseph Molitor³ and the Englishman A.E. Waite. Both Molitor and Waite, moreover, were Freemasons and their interest in the Cabala points to the preservation of Cabalistic lore within Masonry at a time when it received little scholarly attention. Waite pointed out the similar relation of Cabalism to Jewish Orthodoxy and that of occultism to Freemasonry:

It is possible to institute a comparison between the Talmud and the Kabbalah as between Freemasonry and late Western Occultism. The Talmud is not Mysticism, but it became the asylum of some mystical traditions. Freemasonry is not an occult teaching, but under the standard of the Craft all occult arts of the eighteenth century found not only a refuge, but a field of work and of development. The way of entrance in the one case was the Haggadic morality; in the other it was the High Grades. (Waite, KH, p. 29).

Waite was a friend and fellow Golden Dawn member with W.B. Yeats, and since he interpreted and taught the Cabala through the accumulated traditions (including oral and practical instruction), of the secret societies, his studies are of great importance to students of literature and have not been superseded, despite the greater scholarly accuracy of Scholem and contemporary Jewish researchers.

³ Franz Joseph Molitor, Philosophie der Geschichte oder über die Tradition (Frankfurt am Main, 1827).

The study of Cabalistic writings had not been neglected in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century secret societies, but it was not of a scholarly sort and centered mainly on the training of an initiate in Cabalistic magical methods and vision-inducement. Thus, though Magregor Mathers, Yeats's Cabalistic mentor in the Golden Dawn, produced in 1887 the first English translation of Knorr von Rosenroth's Kabala Denudata (a brief, highly Christianized, seventeenth-century selection from the Zohar), Mathers' real interest lay in magical rituals. Many of Blake's contemporaries also drew on Rosenroth's seventeenth-century Latin text and on the oral traditions of the secret societies. The scholarly study of the authentic Cabalistic texts in the Renaissance academies was another, more complicated matter, however, through the mixture of neo-Platonism, Gnosticism, and Christianity in the far-reaching Renaissance syncretic method. The sixteenth-century Christianization of Jewish theosophy then added to the scholarly confusion, a problem to be dealt with in the next chapter.

But the elements of the Cabalistic tradition which were most important to Western writers were those emphasized in the neo-Masonic societies which proliferated after the seventeenth century. Because these elements are the ones least analyzed by literary critics, this chapter will define and trace the historical origins of the Cabalistic sexual, linguistic, and visionary theories which made up the "hidden wisdom" of the secret orders.

One of the most important aspects of the Cabala for imaginative artists stems from the early role of myth within Judaism, a proudly non-mythic, anti-iconic religion.

For it was in its mythic concepts of sacramental sexuality and its method of interpreting the universe and Holy Scripture through these concepts that Cabalism made a unique contribution to the complex Renaissance occult tradition. In its cosmic and psychic theory of sexuality, Cabalism also differed fundamentally from neo-Platonism, and the ignoring or minimizing of this difference has led to many interpretive errors in studies of neo-Platonic and Hermetic influences on writers such as Donne, Milton, Swedenborg, Blake, and Yeats, for whom the sexual theory of Cabalism was of prime importance. The survival and periodic upsurge of this sexual mysticism within Judaism provides a prototype of the relation of all the occult traditions to Classical and Christian orthodoxies, and an investigation of its psychological and historical motivation brings light to many of the recurring conflicts between "mysticism" and rationalism in the succeeding centuries.

In his study of ancient Hebrew sexual myths, The Hebrew Goddess (Ktav Publishing House, 1967), Raphael Patai points out that down to the very end of the Hebrew monarchy, worship of the old Canaanite nature-gods was an integral part of the religion of Israel.⁴ Modern readers of the Old Testament often tend to forget that the cries of the Prophets against idolatry were from men largely "crying in the wilderness," waging lonely fights against wide-spread practices. Thus, as the

⁴ Because Patai's important study has not been utilized in English literary criticism on Cabalism, the following discussion will summarize many of his leading points.

Hebrews journeyed through or were conquered by other cultures, they came into contact with the potent Near Eastern female goddesses-- called Asherah, Astarte, or Anath-- and many assimilated her into their worship. Though the prophets might call her a foreign seductress, she was to her worshippers a "true Hebrew goddess," who fulfilled the same deep emotional needs as the mother-goddesses of all religions (Patai, p. 26).

Astarte, the prototype of the love goddesses, derived etymologically from "womb," and in consort with Baal, formed a generative begetter and conceiver. Thus, the psychological gratification of belief in and service to the Astarte-type goddess (the loving, motherly, "giver of fertility"), sustained her mythic role, despite the increasing vigor of Yahwist monotheism. Like the other Near Eastern goddesses, the Hebrew goddess had an ambivalent nature; as a goddess of love, she was both chaste and promiscuous, merciful and bloodthirsty in battle, and perennially fruitful without ever losing her virginity (Patai, pp. 51-60). This complex ambiguity within the female divine power had important effects on the later Cabalistic development of the Hebrew goddess. But before that thirteenth-century phenomenon, another role, uniquely Jewish in nature, grew for her:

Following the death of the "spirit of idolatry" in the days of Nehemiah, the Hebrew goddess succeeded in surviving. She underwent, to be sure, an astounding metamorphosis, but that too is the mark of a living deity. On one of her manifestations she penetrated-- in what period we can only conjecture-- the rebuilt sanctuary as a female cherub, poised in marital embrace with her male partner in the dark cell of the Holy of Holies. (Patai, p.26).

Throughout Israel's officially anti-iconic history, there had always been an exception in the cherubim, winged human figures which were an integral part of all Hebrew sanctuaries and temples. Though the cherubim were certainly "graven images," they figured prominently in Jewish temple ritual until the end of the Second Jewish Commonwealth in 70 A.D. Moreover, in their last version, they depicted a man and woman in sexual embrace, an erotic representation that was considered obscene by the pagans when they had a chance to glimpse it. Their presence in the Holy of Holies, the innermost sanctuary of the Temple, and the ritual significance attached to them, were always referred to as a "most sacred mystery." Only the Hellenistic-Jewish authors, such as Philo of Alexandria and Josephus Flavius, spoke about the Cherubim with embarrassment, for they were apprehensive that pagan Greek readers, for whom they wrote, would consider the Cherubim as merely the Jewish equivalent of their own gods and goddesses, and thus find a basis to refute and reject the claim that the Jews worshipped only one invisible God (Patai, pp. 101-02). As Waite noted, in distinguishing between gentile mystical systems and Philo's:

National ambition . . . rather than eclecticism influenced the Jews, and though it was impossible, having regard to their environment, that they should not be tinged largely, it was their object to tinge other systems and not to modify their own, to show that the ethnic philosophers owed everything to the Divine Doctrine of Palestine. Philo the Greek of Alexandria to some extent Hellenised the Hebrew religion that he might the better Judaize the philosophy of Hellas. (Waite, HK, p. 70)

The Old Testament description of the Cherubim, however, became an integral part of the sexual mythos. In the Solomonic temple, the Cherubim shielded the Ark in the Holy of Holies, and in Exodus, Yahweh spoke to Moses "from between the two Cherubim" who were upon the Ark of Testimony. The Cherubim were symbolical of the clouds "out of the midst" of which God spoke, and which served also as his mount or chariot. To all of these Old Testament descriptions was attached an increasingly sexual significance, until by the first century A.D. the figures had assumed the character of secret mystical symbols. Philo, whose tri-level interpretation of Scripture became so important to Christianity and the Renaissance occult tradition, was reticent about these Cherubim; thus, he discussed God's goodness as the begetter, i.e. the male principle, yet mentioned no conceiver or female principle. But in speaking of the creation of the world, he made this significant step:

. . . the Architect who made this universe was at the same time the Father of that which was born, whilst its Mother was the Knowledge possessed by its Maker. With this Knowledge, God had union, not as men have it, and begot created things. And Knowledge, having received the Divine seed, when her travail was consummated, bore the only beloved son who is apprehended by the senses, the world which we see. (Patai, p.114)

Thus, the process of creation, though presented in symbolic terms, was unequivocally viewed as procreation. In two other passages, Philo spoke of the Cherubim as representing respectively male and female attributes. This was the earliest written indication of the sexual symbolism and was consonant with the later Talmudic tradi-

tion which described a sculpture of the sexual embrace of the Cherubim in the Holy of Holies of the Second Temple. This statuary was shown to the pilgrims who flocked to the Temple on the three Pilgrimage-festivals, and Patai thinks Philo may have seen the entwined Cherubim in the Jerusalem Temple at one of these (p.115). The two sets of divine "virtues" or powers formulated by Philo subsequently became a part of Talmudic theology and were systematically developed as male and female potencies in the theosophy of the Medieval Cabala.

Patai notes an ancient midrash that says, "The tabernacle was made so as to correspond to the creation of the world. The two Cherubs over the Ark of the Covenant were made so as to correspond to the two Holy Names," that is, Yahweh and Elchim, which took on increasingly male and female connotations. A Talmudic tradition later claimed that as long as Israel fulfilled the will of God, the Cherubs' faces were turned toward each other, but when Israel sinned they turned away from each other. But at some time in the first century A.D., Gentiles entered the temple and put the statuary on public display, mocking its obscenity and idolatry. Rabbinic "reform" eventually suppressed the Feast of Booths, a great outburst of sexual license in which the populace indulged in its old traditional practice of imitatio dei, hoping for a momentary glimpse of the divine mystery (Patai, pp. 123-25).

It is possible that Hellenized Jewish goldsmiths in Alexandria in the third century B.C. were influenced by Egyptian or Hellenistic mysteries to depict the marital embrace, or possibly emulated early Indian temple sculpture, as at Konarak, which may have been known to

them during the cultural contact between Hellenistic India and Egypt. But for centuries after the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple by Titus in 70 A.D. and the consequent disappearance of the Cherubim statuary, the problem of the symbolic significance of the figures preoccupied many of the outstanding thinkers of Judaism. Rationalists tended to disregard the Talmudic traditions of the marital embrace, attributing a non-sexual, purely symbolic meaning to them. But the "mystic" seized precisely upon the sexual nature of the Cherubim, as a reinforcement of their basic doctrine of the sanctity and cosmic necessity of cohabitation between man and wife (Patai, pp. 130-33). By the time of the major Cabalistic work, the Zohar, in the thirteenth century, the Cherubim-in-embrace had been developed into two central Cabalistic doctrines: one, that only the togetherness of male and female is a state of blessedness; and, two, that when a man sins he thereby causes a separation between the male and female aspects of the deity, which, in turn, leads to a transcendental and universal disaster.

The enormous influence of the ancient Jewish sexual myth on the development of medieval Cabalistic traditions was intensified by the growth of the Shekinah myth, which became the most important and singular of the Cabala's contributions to the occult traditions. In the late Biblical period, personified, mediating entities were increasingly interposed between God and man, at first viewed as attributes of or emanations from God, but eventually as angel-like beings. The most frequently appearing was Hokhma or Wisdom. In the Book of Job (28:13-28), Wisdom is described as a personage whose way is understood and place known only by God himself, while

the Book of Proverbs (8:22-31) asserts that Wisdom was the earliest creation of God, and that since those primeval days she has been God's "playmate" (a term whose Cabalistic significance became important later in Boehme and Milton). In the Apocrypha, this role of Wisdom is even more emphasized. A passage in the Wisdom of Solomon states that "she proclaims her noble birth in that it is given to her to live with God, and the Sovereign Lord of All loved her." Scholem notes that the term "symbiosis" used in this passage appears again in the same chapter in the sense of marital connubium, and that it is clear that Wisdom here was regarded as God's wife.⁵

The post-Biblical Talmudic developments of the Shekinah gradually endowed her with increasingly physical attributes, to distinguish between the Deity himself, who is beyond all sense perception, and his tangible manifestation as the Shekinah. Thus, the Shekinah spoke to Adam, the serpent, and the fishes, causing these three species to copulate face to face, while all other animals perform face to back (an obscure point which crops up in Renaissance occult writings as well as in William Blake). The sign of the Covenant, circumcision, allowed Israel to gaze at the Shekinah. As Waite explains,

The characteristic physical sign of all Israel on the male side has issued . . . from the region of arbitrary ordinance into that of most sacred symbolism. If at first it was a hygienic observance or one that might act as an aid to continence, it has become in the Secret Tradi-

⁵ Gershom Scholem, "Zur Entwicklungsgeschichte der kabbalistischen Konzeption der Schechinah," Eranos Jahrbuch, 21 (1952), pp. 48-49.

tion a seal of purity . . . the male side of humanity in its separation from the female had no true title to the name and prerogative of man. (HK, p. 300)

Circumcision constituted the foundation of the Sacred Name, a notion rooted in the phallic shape of the letter Yod with which the Name commences. All the forces of nature centered in the organ of the Covenant, and if a husband and wife were "worthy," the Shekinah rested between them. But, at the same time, the Shekinah measured millions of miles, and comprehended the ambivalencies of the Near Eastern love-goddesses, especially in their punitive aspects. All of these elements of the Shekinah's role and relationship with the circumcized "son of God" have been viewed by literary critics as puzzles when they appear in Cabalistically-influenced writers, ranging from Milton to Blake.

As Patai points out, this latency of the feminine element in the Jewish God from about 400 B.C. to 1100 A.D. is psychologically remarkable (p. 155), for the official God of Judaism remained a lone and lofty father-figure, much like Blake's Nobodaddy. But the more abstracted God became, the more humanized the Shekinah became. It followed that "She is He, She as God in manifestation and He the God in Hiddenness; She Who is attained and Known, He Who is Unknown, except as we know in Her" (Waite, HK, p. 162). Rather than developing into a separate goddess, though, the Shekinah was transformed into an organic process within the comprehensive nature of God himself (or "themselves"), through the uniquely Jewish bent for monotheism.

The earliest Cabalistic document, the Book Bahir,

appeared in southern France around 1180. It immediately aroused intense opposition from orthodox Jews, who were shocked at its frankly mythic mentality. The sexuality of the Shekinah and the Tree of Life, the definition of a principle of Evil which lies in the North of God, the highly anthropomorphic nature of the male and female potencies within the Deity, all combined to bring charges of polytheism and antinomianism against the Cabalists.⁶ But the intense yearning of the Cabalists for a more psychologically penetrating and emotionally exalting religion issued in the late thirteenth century in the most influential of Cabalistic works, the Zohar or "Book of the Splendour." The author, Moses de Leon, was a Spanish Jew who began as a follower of Maimonides and student of "enlightened" Aristotelian rabbinical teachings. But de Leon became disenchanted with the aridity and legalisms of orthodox Judaism, and after studying other Cabalistic works and the neo-Platonists, especially Plotinus' Enneads, he became preoccupied with fin de siècle apocalyptic prophecies and asserted that the end of Israel's exile would occur in 1300.

In the Zohar, de Leon created a highly individual, private expression of his own theosophical experiences and hungers, all in an artificial "antique" Palestinian setting and an almost self-invented "literary" Aramaic (which had not been a living language since the second century A.D.). De Leon wrote the voluminous work (of which

⁶ Gershom Scholem, On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism (New York: Schocken Books, 1965), pp. 90-93. Hereafter cited as Scholem, KS.

only half is contained in Simon and Sperling's five-volume English translation of 1931-34), to stem the growth of a radical rationalistic mood which was widespread among his educated contemporaries (Scholem, MT, pp. 156-204). As Waite notes, "Those who loathed the yoke of Aristotle, which . . . Maimonides would have placed on the neck of Jewry, accorded it glad welcome. All that great section of Jewry which was addicted to Astrology and Magic took it to their heart of hearts; it was neither Magic nor astrology, but it harmonized with their peculiar aspirations" (HK, p.46). But to many educated Medieval Jews, the "narrative philosophy" of the Zohar (called by Schelling an "ideal method"), represented a backward step, an unwanted "mythic reaction in the heart of Judaism" (Scholem, MT, p.157). The great distinction of the time was between the Jews who had adopted Aristotelian principles and those who opposed the innovation: "the enlightenment and culture were incontrovertibly on the side of the former; the fascination of bizarre thought, and its occasional flashes of a great mystical light . . . went into the opposite scale" (Waite, HK, p. 93). Significantly, the great outburst of Cabalism in the eighteenth century occurred in precisely the same psychological context of "Enlightenment."

In his probing study of the Cabala and myth, Scholem points out that the original religious impulse in Judaism, which found its valid expression in the ethical monotheism of the Prophets and its conceptual formulation in Medieval Jewish philosophy, had always been characterized as a reaction against mythology:

In opposition to the pantheistic unity of God, cosmos, and man in myth, Judaism aimed at a radical separation of the three realms; and, above all, the gulf between the Creator and His creature was regarded as fundamentally unbridgeable. Jewish worship implied a renunciation, indeed a polemical rejection, of the images and symbols in which the mythical world finds its expression. Judaism strove to open up a region, that of montheistic revelation, from which mythology would be excluded. (KS, p. 88)

This dissociation of the Law from myth, from cosmic events, and thus from its emotional roots was the great and paradoxical achievement of normative Rabbinical Judaism, which thought it had banished occultist theosophy for good, when it crushed the Gnostic heresies in the second century A.D.:

Gnosticism itself, or at least certain of its basic impulses, was a revolt, partly perhaps of Jewish origin, against anti-mythical Judaism, a late eruption of subterranean forces, which were all the more pregnant with myth for being cloaked in philosophy . . . but in the Cabala this gnostic view of the world not only re-emerged as a theosophical interpretation of Jewish monotheism-- and this at the height of Medieval Jewish rationalism-- but was able to assert itself at the center of Judaism as its most sacred mystery. (Scholem, KS, p.98)

In contrast to the increasingly arid abstraction of the distant Yahweh, the Cabalists developed a God who was a living, dynamic organism. What to the Jewish theologians were mere attributes of God became "potencies, energies, hypostases and vitalistic stages within an intradivine life-process" (Scholem, KS, p. 94). A general summary of this cosmological yet deeply human vision in the Cabalistic traditions will demonstrate how complex and often imaginatively rich a mythic construct was needed to fit the powerful Shekinah element-- a near goddess-- into

a still monotheistic Judaism.

The root of the development of Cabalistic theories lay in the Jewish conception of Hebrew as a sacred language, which the Cabalists viewed as the living manifestation of a living God. Philo's account of the Jewish sect of Therapeutae in Egypt revealed that they interpreted the entire Torah as a living being: "the literal sense is the body, while the soul is the secret sense underlying the Word" (Scholem, KS, p. 45). As the orthodox Medieval Jew chafed under the burden of an Aristotelian schematization of the Law, the Cabalist, ironically, transformed the strict adherence to the Law into a mystical experience, by viewing every letter and anecdote of the Torah as a symbolic expression of God's organic life. When God spoke his name, the mysterious four-lettered Tetragrammaton, he brought into manifestation the four-leveled universe. All that lives is an expression of God's holy language, and reality is a perpetual act of creation through expression.

The peculiarities in the Masoretic writing of the Torah, the different types of sections, paragraphs, marginalia, etc., suggested to the pre-Zoharic Cabalist Azriel a comparison with a complete, self-contained organism:

Just as in the body of a man, there are limbs and joints, just as some organs of the body are more, others less, vital, so it seems to be with the Torah. To one who does not understand their hidden meaning, certain sections and verses of the Torah seem fit to be thrown into the fire; but to one who has gained insight into their true meaning, they seem essential components of the Torah. Consequently, to omit so much as one letter or

point from the Torah is like removing some part of a perfect edifice. Thence it also follows that in respect of its divine character no essential distinction can be drawn between the section of Genesis 36, setting forth the Commandments of Esau (a seemingly superfluous passage), and the Ten Commandments, for it is all one whole and one edifice. (Scholem, KS, p. 45)

The phrases I underlined point to a Cabalistic concept that became central to Freemasonry, i.e., the symbolical interpretation of Scripture as a means of rebuilding the edifice or temple of human nature, through the "living stones" of the human organism.

The conception of the Torah as a "name" and a living organism was further developed in the Zohar:

He who labors in the Torah upholds the world and enables each part to perform its function. For there is not a member in the human body that does not have its counterpart in the world as a whole. For as man's body consists of members and parts of varying rank, all acting and reacting upon one another so as to form one organism, so is it with the world at large: it consists of a hierarchy of created things, which, when they properly act and react upon one another, together form one organic body. (Scholem, KS, p. 46)

Here, the underlined phrase points to the impact Cabalism later had on political reform movements, when many eighteenth-century Masonic advocates of the "religion of Humanity" spoke of the world as maximus homo. The further identification of this divine organism with the community of Israel, each of whose members is a vital element of the organism of the Torah, became important in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Messianic outbursts within Judaism, stimulated by revivals of Cabalism (which, in turn, influenced radical, occultist branches of Freemasonry).

Superimposed upon this linguistic, human, ethnic, and macrocosmic-microcosmic symbolism was that of the living tree:

The Torah is called the Tree of Life . . . Just as a tree consists of branches and leaves, sap and roots, each one of which components can be termed Tree, there being no substantial difference between them, you will also find that the Torah contains many inner and outward things, without difference between them . . . and although among the sages of the Talmud one forbids what the other allows, one declares a thing to be ritually clean which another terms impermissible . . . nevertheless it is necessary to know that the whole is one unity. (Scholem, KS, p. 46)

The latent antinomianism implied in this doctrine, in which everything is holy in some sense, had grave repercussions in the doctrine of the "holy sinner" promulgated by Sabbatai Zevi and Jacob Franck in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁷ The influence of these Cabalistic "Messiahs" on the sexual and political antinomianism of William Blake and the British Israelite movement, with which he was associated, will be examined later.

The subversive nature of this mystical view of the Torah within orthodox Judaism was intensified by the ancient traditional distinction between the two laws and two trees of Eden. Moses was believed to have received two different sets of tablets on Mount Sinai. The first set was from the Tree of Life, before the sin of the Golden Calf; only Moses read these laws, which constituted a

⁷ See Gershom Scholem's works, The Messianic Idea in Judaism (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), and Sabbatai Zevi: the Mystical Messiah (Princeton Univ. Press, 1974).

truly spiritual Torah, in which everything was holy and there was no need to hold the powers of uncleanness and death in check by prohibitions and restrictions. In this Torah, the essential mystery was fully revealed (an experience interpreted by some Cabalists as Moses' vision of and sexual consummation with the Shekinah). But the Utopian moment soon vanished; the "letters engraved upon them flew away" and the first tablets were broken. Since then, the Law of Life has been visible only to the visionaries, who can perceive it even beneath the new outer garments in which it appeared on the second tablets, from the Tree of Knowledge, expressed as a merely historical garment and power (Scholem, KS, p. 69). According to the Zohar, the second Tablets embodied "the Law of opportunism, the Law of mine and thine-- of prohibition and denial," but the "Secret Doctrine, with all the Oral Law by which that Doctrine is encompassed, is the Tree of Life" (Waite, HK, pp. 308-09). It is the repressive form of temporal Jewish Law that Blake, a Cabalistic visionary, waged "intellectual warfare" against. The sexual symbolism of the second tablets suggested that the Tree of Knowledge was "that evil woman who is the wife of Samael and intercourse with whom is incest, idolatry and murder. It is the averse side of the Sex Mystery" (Waite, HK, p. 268). It was Blake's graphic portrayal of this perversion of visionary sexuality that led his literary executor to destroy most of his work.

The vision of the universe as God's living nature, which Moses experienced on Sinai, and, according to Cabalistic tradition, was handed down through secret theosophical schools, consisted of an emanationist theory of creation, which had close analogues with Gnosticism

and neo-Platonism. But the "Secret Tradition of Israel" contributed the uniquely Jewish concepts of the Shekinah and the Ain Soph. Ain means "nothing" in Hebrew, but in the sense of the ineffably, incomprehensibly "infinite". The Ain Soph was the unknown and unknowable God of ancient Judaism, but by the Middle Ages it had become rarified beyond all comprehension. As Waite notes, "The non ens dwelling in the non est is like the cipher of the decimal system; of itself it is nothing, and its extension produces nothing; so also it is not possible to add to it, but it gives power to all numbers" (HK, p. 192). But through a "crisis" within the Ain Soph, it was transformed from repose to creation. This crisis, creation and self-revelation in one, constituted the great mystery of Cabalism:

The primary start or wrench in which the introspective God is externalized and the light that shines inwardly made visible, this revolution of perspective, transforms En-Sof, the inexpressible fullness into nothingness. It is this mystical "nothingness" from which all the other stages of God's gradual unfolding in the Sephiroth emanate, and what the Cabalists call the highest Sephira, or the "supreme crown of divinity." To use another metaphor, it is the abyss which becomes visible in the gaps of creation. (Scholem, MT, p. 217)

The manifestation of the Ain Soph is close in concept to the Gnostic Pleroma and the Sephiroth to Gnostic and neo-Platonic emanations. But in the concept of Tsimtsum (or zimzum), the Cabalists gave the Gentile concepts a new twist, which opened up Cabalistic theosophy to a non-dualistic, non-ascetic vision of life that was essentially different from Gnosticism and neo-Platonism. In the Tsimtsum, God contracts his essence, which becomes more and more hidden. Without this contraction, there

would be no cosmic process, for it is God's withdrawal into Himself that first creates a pneumatic, primordial space and makes possible the existence of something other than God and his pure essence:

When we consider that Holy One . . . is infinite and all-pervading, it can easily be understood that all idea of creation would have been impossible without Withdrawal. How indeed can water be poured into a cup already filled to the brim? So the Holy One . . . limited the holy light which constitutes his essence . . . by withdrawing a part of himself from himself . . . to make possible the existence of the heavenly and material worlds. 8

There is thus no ex nihilo creation, but merely a process of individuation of the Eternal. This negation of wholeness, or separating power, engenders by emanation further separation, creating the fourfold world of Emanation, Creation, Formation, and Action. The first two degrees or worlds constitute that part of the essence of God in which light has been dimmed to allow souls, angels, and material worlds to exist. Significantly, "it is this part of God that our holy masters designate as Shekinah. The creation is the work of the Shekinah and she watches over it as a mother watches over her children" (Saurat, p. 84). The Shekinah is thus to God "that which the vowel point is to the letter--a thing not distinct therefrom but the means of its utterance" (Waite, HK, p. 347).

This contraction within God is also a primordial exile or self-banishment. The powers of Judgment, which in God's essence were united in harmony with the "roots"

⁸ Quoted in Denis Saurat, Literature and Occult Tradition (New York: Dial Press, 1930), p. 84.

of all other potencies, are gathered and concentrated in a single point, namely, the primordial space from which God withdraws. But the powers of stern judgment ultimately include evil, so that this "smelting out" of the elements of evil from the divine organism and into "created" space is the origin of evil in the universe. But it is also an act of love by God, who thus makes creation possible (Scholem, KS, p. 111). In the Zohar, the related description of the beginning of creation within God Himself also points to the Sephirothic creation process:

"In the beginning," when the will of the King began to take effect, he engraved signs into the heavenly sphere (which surrounded him). Within the most hidden recess a dark flame issued from the mystery of eyn sof, the Infinite, like a fog forming in the unformed--enclosed in the ring of that sphere, neither white nor black, neither red nor green, of no color whatever. Only after this flame began to assume size and dimension, did it produce radiant colors. From the innermost center of the flame sprang forth a well out of which colors issued and spread upon everything beneath, hidden in the mysterious hiddenness of eyn sof.

The well broke through and yet did not break through the ether (of the sphere). It could not be recognized at all until a hidden, supernal point shone forth under the impact of the final breaking through.

Beyond this point nothing can be known. Therefore it is called reshit, beginning--the first word (out of the ten) by means of which the universe has been created. 9

⁹ Gershom Scholem, ed. The Zohar (New York: Schocken Books, 1963), p. 27.

This primordial "point" is the second Sefira, or the first departure from the divine nothing implied by the image of the point. It is the world seed, the male-paternal potency, which is sown in the primordial womb of the "supernal mother," who is the product but also the counterpart of the original point. This moment of creation, which is perpetual, is the "Supreme Joy." Fertilized in this womb, the world-seed manifests through the Shekinah the other seven potencies, which the Cabalists interpreted as the archetypes of all creation, but also as the seven "first" days of Genesis (Scholem, KS, p. 103).

One of the major conceptual difficulties of the Cabala is that the emanation of the ten Sephiroth is conceived as process which takes place within God and which, at the same time, enables man to perceive God. In their emanation, something which belongs to the Divine is quickened and breaks through the closed shell of his Hidden Self. This something is God's creative power, and every word of the Torah corresponds to one of the ten Sephiroth, making the Holy Writ a vast corpus symbolicum, representative of that hidden life in God which pulsates back and forth in the Sephirotic potencies (Scholem, MT, p. 209). Every Sephiroth and every word is also a four-fold world, mirroring the four-fold universe. To see and feel all of this in a state of ecstatic trance-vision is what Blake meant by "four-fold vision," and possibly what Milton meant as he watched out the night with "thrice great Hermes."

The most common symbolic representation of this Sephirotic world is the Tree of Life. Each Sefira represents a branch whose common root is unknown and

unknowable. But Ain Sof is not only the hidden Root of all Roots, it is also the sap of the tree. This Cabalistic concept of the Tree of Life is crucial to the meaning of W.B. Yeats's famous lines in "Among School Children":

O Chestnut-tree, great-rooted blossomer,
Are you the leaf, the blossom or the bole?
O body swayed to music, O brightening glance,
How can we know the dancer from the dance?

This mystical tree of God is also the skeleton of the universe and grows throughout the whole of creation. All created things live only because something of the power of the Sephiroth lives and acts in them.

Another symbol of the Sephiroth, the nut with its shell, lies at the root of the pervasive imagery of the Kelippoth, the crude, empty husks which form the lowest level of material creation:

When King Solomon "penetrated into the depths of the nut garden," it is written, "I descended into the garden of nuts" (Cant.6:11), he took up a nut shell and studying it, he saw an analogy in its layers with the spirits which motivate the sensual desires of humans, as it is written, "and the delights of the sons of men (are from) male and female demons" (Eccles.2:8).

The Holy One, be blessed, saw that it was necessary to put into the world all of these things so as to make sure of permanence, and of having, so to speak, a brain surrounded by numerous membranes. The whole world, upper and lower, is organized on this principle, from the primary mystic center to the very outermost of all the layers. All are coverings, the one to the other, brain within brain, shell within shell. (Scholem, Zohar, p. 28)

What Blake called the "limit of opacity" consisted of a world of despiritualized shells, which were at the material

limit of divine creation, and were the waste-products of that "smelting out" of evil mentioned earlier.

The most provocative and complex symbol of the Sephiroth, however, is the vast figure of Adam Kadmon, the primordial man, which influenced Blake's Albion and Joyce's giant Finnegan (Yeats was always more taken with the Tree of Life symbol). The Biblical statement that God created man in his own image was interpreted by the Cabalists to mean that the power of the Sephiroth, the paradigm of divine life, is active also in man. Thus, the limbs, organs, and energies of the human body are images of a four-fold spiritual mode of existence which manifests itself in Adam Kadmon, the Microprosopus. Since "male and female He created them," in his own image, the Cabalists defined a God essentially androgynous in nature, containing within "himself" both male and female, begetting and receiving potencies. As Waite notes, the body of Microprosopus is androgynous and the Zoharic symbolism is concerned largely with sexual organs. Waite's fellow theosophist, Gerald Massey, said that "Nature is not ashamed of her emblems," and that for the Cabalists the body of man was peculiarly sacred. Thus there would be "nothing repellent in dealing exhaustively with its typology" (Waite, HK, p. 144).

The dynamic relationship among the Sephiroth is one of sexual relationships, expansion and contraction, attraction and repulsion, what Blake called "the prolific and devourer." This sexual element recurs with rising intensity in several pairs of Sephiroth, but is expressed most forcefully in the last two. The ninth Sephira, Yesod, is the male potency, described with graphically phallic symbolism, and is the "foundation" of all life.

In blissful union with the tenth sephira, Malkuth (the Shekinah), Yesod consummates the hieros gamos, the holy unification of the male and female powers within God (Scholem, KS, p. 104). The body of this sacred form-- both God as androgyne and Adam Kadmon-- is described fully as that of "the male perfect in all its members." But, significantly, there is a counterpart of perfect womanhood:

These two were primordially side by side, till the Ancient of Days put the Lesser Form to sleep and detached the female principle, whose name is Matrona, Bride, Daughter, Betrothed, and Twin-Sister-- for the Zoharic allegories institute strange marriages in the world above. The object of separation was that the Bride might come to the Bridegroom and, in the great sacrament of matrimonial union, that they might become one body and as if one flesh. All is mercy in this union; it constitutes the Law of the Sabbath; . . . The sacred organ of intercourse is called Yesod on the male side, and it has access to the concealed and mysterious region of the female side which is called Zion. (Waite, HK, p. 209)

The marital embrace is so tight that the two make the impression of one body. This first manifestation of God is called the Crown, or hermaphroditic first principle; it is a three-fold world, consisting of male plus female plus the consummation between them. The consummation is also simultaneous creation. Christians later unconvincingly interpreted this highly erotic symbolism as the Trinity, with Christ as the non-feminine third element, but its essential sexuality was accurately maintained in the secret Cabalistic teachings of Rosicrucianism and Freemasonry. The achieved "Crown" is a joyous state of nuptial bliss, exactly parallel to Blake's three-fold Boulah, and is the reason why God ever emanates in the first place.

In the many complex accounts of the "Fall into Division," as Blake described the Cabalistic disruption of God's harmony, the most dominant and influential for literature was that describing Adam's loss of imaginative wholeness and harmonious vision. Adam Kadmon represented the spatial-temporal manifestation of God, the world below in the image of the world above. He was originally a purely spiritual figure, a "great soul," whose body was a spiritual substance of light. All the upper potencies flowed into him, and within his unified male-female nature, he represented the macrocosmos in perfect equilibrium or harmony within itself. All the Sephiroth were revealed to Adam in the shape of the Tree of Life and Tree of Knowledge, i.e., in the middle and last Sephira. In his ecstatic vision of God's wholeness, he had the power to maintain his own and God's perpetual nuptial bliss. But his imaginative vision failed when he separated the middle from the last Sephira, the Tree of Life from the Tree of Knowledge, and concentrated on the latter as an alluring female potency. Thus, he perceived and worshipped only the separated Shekinah, without recognizing her union with all the other Sephiroth.

By separating and isolating the female out of the originally "androgynous" tight embrace, Adam interrupted the stream of life which flows from sphere to sphere (the Biblical river flowing into Eden), and brought separation, isolation, and an unbalanced, degraded lust into the world. The various symbolic descriptions in Cabalistic works of this sexual sin range from the tearing of the genital grapes from the Tree of Life, to the sexual defilement of Eve by the Serpent, and to Adam's intercourse with Lilith, the mother of demons. The vivid mythological images, with

coiling phallic serpents, demonic perverted females, nightmarish copulations, etc., exude the power of an intensely psychological and--paradoxically--religious eroticism, which evokes a dark sense of the ancient mystery religions (see Waite, HK, pp. 274-83).

The process of fragmentation reverberates through the universe, as the "breaking of the Vessels" which once contained the streams of God's and Adam's fructifying energy sends a chain-reaction of "fallen sparks" and "seedless shells" through an increasingly dark and opaque world. Adam Kadmon, with his vast cosmic structure, shrinks to his present dimensions, and the Shekinah falls into tragic exile (Scholem, KS, p. 115). Since Adam's failure of imaginative vision, in which his mind and body originally comprehended God's whole, unified nature, there has been, somewhere deep within, a cleavage between the upper and lower worlds, the masculine and feminine, the Holy One and his Bride. The distortions and incompleteness of man's psyche and emotions, and the debilitating effect on his capacity for right action which results from this deep perversion of his sexual and psychic nature, are probed with often penetrating insight and shockingly frank analyses of the incapacities and cruelties of fallen man. It was this "Vision of Evil"¹⁰ which so moved W.B. Yeats in his Cabalistic studies, and which led him to criticize the vague "spiritual lubricity" of George Russell and his vegetarian associates (Yeats, Memoirs, p. 147).

¹⁰ William Butler Yeats, Autobiography (1924; New York: Macmillan, rpt. 1965), p. 165.

The sundering of Adam's nature affects all the balanced polarities of the Sephirotic Tree, so that the right merciful side is separated from the left stern side, the Tree of Life from the Tree of Knowledge, the kernel from the shell, the stream from its receiving ocean, the male Jehohavah from the female Elohim. Most tragically of all, to the Torah-reading Cabalist, the primordial name of God, YHWH, is split apart into the male Y and female H, causing the divine off-spring W and H to non-exist. This last "fall into divison" of the Divine Name calls forth a complicated mythical narrative about the relations of the holy tetrad, a father-mother, son-daughter group, whose desires, jealousies, affections and cruelties, reveal again the psychological perceptiveness of the great Cabalistic thinkers. Though there are parallels in Hindu mythology, the closest equivalents to this family tetrad in Western literature are the splitting and re-uniting of Blake's "Zoas" and the complex, ambivalent, role-shifting psychic family life of Joyce's Finnogans Wake, both of which draw upon Cabalistic lore.

The role of the fallen Shekinah, now called the Matronit, as the exiled mother of Israel and bride of God, presents one of the most complex and provocative views of female nature in literature: she is affectionate and merciful at times but often the unbalanced generator of sternness and cruelty; she is the alluring, radiant virgin waiting for her reverent spouse, and the demonic temptress of lust, a rival and protégé of Lilith. As Scholom notes, the Cabala is completely a male creation from a strictly patriarchal culture, and the contradictory features of the Matronit demonstrate the "male's fundamental

ambivalence" in his relationship with women (MT, p. 37). This grand, paradoxical figure anticipates a later Jew's despairing question, when Freud asks, "What do women want?"-- or, more precisely, what do men want in women?

Both as woman and dwelling-place of the soul, the Shekinah has its terrible aspect. Insofar as all the preceding Sephiroth are encompassed in her (as rivers in the sea), and can exert a downward influence only through her mediation, the powers of mercy and stern judgment are alternately preponderant in the Shekinah, which as such is purely receptive and "has nothing of its own." Since the power of stern judgment in God is the source of evil as a metaphysical reality, the loss of equilibrium due to the fall into separation and division allows the powers of restrictive judgment to dominate at different states of the world (and of the individual psyche). As the Zohar puts it: "at times the Shekinah tastes the other, bitter side, and then her face is dark," a resurgence of ancient sun and moon symbolism (Scholem, MT, p. 107). When the equilibrium is broken, the sternness cruelly represses the life-forces, and the Shekinah is called the "Tree of Death," demonically cut off from the Tree of Life.

Paradoxically, the Zohar, with its often terrifying vision of the radical reality of evil and the possibilities of human depravity, is at the same time the most optimistic of all the great religious books. For through a recognition of how man fell and how nature became dislocated into a cosmos of unbalanced forces, the reverent student of "the mystery" can gain the vision of possible redemption. The great restorative process, called the tikkun, can take place partly in God, but-- most importantly-- partly in man, as the crown of all created being and the

image of God himself. Since the world below is as the world above, the actions and thoughts of man below call up corresponding states in the world above. As Scholem points out:

Man's action restores the structure of Adam Kadmon, who is at the same time the mystical structure of God as He reveals himself. Just as the idea of the microcosm meant that because the world is wholly contained and reflected in man, he acts upon the world with direct magic, so the Cabalistic conception implies the idea of a magical nexus which, however sublimated and spiritualized, is brought about ritually by magic. (Scholem, KS, p. 128)

The achievement of this ritual magic for the Cabalists came in two vital areas: first, within the sacred consummation of marriage, which as imitatio dei stimulates a corresponding joy in God; second, within the ritualized training of the imagination, until it becomes capable of envisioning God and the harmony of forces in ecstatic trance-visions.

It is the experiential certitude of visionary sexuality and practical magic that Cabalism offered its initiates more than any other Western "mystical" system, and which rooted the Cabala firmly and affirmatively in concrete human life. Unlike the negation of matter as evil in the dualistic systems of neo-Platonism, or the aim of annihilation of the individual personality in the godhead of classical mysticism, the Cabala sees the way to redemption through the reconstruction of the human consciousness. Through the balanced intensification of all its potencies, man's imagination can regenerate him into the "complete" man, united with his female counterpart, to form the "completely human" and therefore the "completely divine."

During the week, the pious student of the Cabala meditated upon and envisioned the totality and unity of God, until on the night of the Sabbath, at midnight, he and his wife would have intercourse, in full cognizance of performing a sacramental act in direct imitation of the simultaneous union of the Supernal Couple. The Cabalistic texts studied in preparation were unembarrassedly, joyously explicit:

At midnight, the tinkling of bells he wore around his ankles announced the coming of the King. As he approached, he was accompanied by a host of divine youths, and the maidens of the Matronit welcomed him and them by beating their wings with joy. After singing a song of praise to the King, the Matronit's maidens withdrew, and so did the youths who accompanied him. Alone, the King and Matronit embraced and kissed, and then he led her to the couch. He placed his left arm under her head, his right arm embraced her. The pleasure of the King and Matronit was indescribable. They lay in tight embrace, she impressing her image into his body like a seal that leaves its imprint upon a page of writing, he playing betwixt her breasts and vowing in his great love he would never forsake her. (Patai, p. 195)

As Waite says, the often condemned "eroticism" of the Zohar arises from the fundamental belief that "the soul as well as the body shares in the gaudium inexprimabile by which children are engendered" (HK, p. 380).

The divine union has cosmic significance, for on it depends the well-being of the universe. Thus, their sundering-- the deeply Judaic sense of self-exile-- was a metaphysical tragedy. The visible expression of the separation of the King and Matronit was the destruction of their bedchamber, the Temple. But since the Zohar taught that everything done by the individual or community in the mundane sphere is magically reflected in the upper

sphere, "whon desire wakons beneath it awakens also on high," every man has the blessed opportunity of participating in and aiding the great tikkun or healing process within God and man (Scholem, MT, p. 233).

Thus, for the Jew reared in the theosophical tradition of his faith, the Sabbath was a day whose pleasures, both physical and spiritual, amply compensated for the drabness, narrowness, and frequent sorrowfulness of the weekdays. Each Sabbath, a queenly visitor entered even the humblest abode, which was transformed into a royal palace, with table set, candles burning, wine waiting, and fresh greenery strewn about. As Patai describes this deeply human "magical" ceremony,

The mistress of the house became mysteriously identified with the Queen Sabbath, who was also identical with the Shekinah, the divine Matronit, God's own consort. As to the master of the house, he felt his chest swell and his consciousness expand due to the "additional soul" which came down from on high to inhabit his body for the duration of the Sabbath. All these supernal presences made man and wife feel part of the great spiritual world order in which every act was fraught with cosmic significance, and in which the supreme command of the day was "Rejoice!" When midnight came, and the fulfillment to rejoice on the Sabbath found its most intense expression in the consummation of the marital act, this was done with the full awareness . . . of aiding thereby the Divinity himself in achieving a state of male-and-female togetherness which God is just as much in need of as man. (p. 268)

As Waite observes, "In spite of a monstrous symbolism the Kabbalistic narratives have at times the touch of Nature which gives them kinship with this world of ours" (III, P. 147). Patai points out that to this day, in every Jewish temple, the Shekinah is welcomed in the Friday evening

prayers with the words, "Come, O bride!" although the old greeting has long been emptied of all mystical meaning (p. 27).

That the fundamental beliefs and motivations behind so personal and private an experience for the Cabalist-- the devout hope that man can exert a "beneficial influence upon the great ultimate realities of the metaphysical world" (Patai, p. 269)-- should also form the basis of the ritualized practice of magic, conjuration, astrology, hypnotic influences, etc., that became the public image of the Cabalist (to both Christians and Jews), is revealing of the central paradoxes of the whole theosophy. For, though the greatest Cabalists condemned magic and astrology, the very nature of Cabalistic ritual and training of the consciousness led inevitably into magic-- and thus raises provocative questions about the relation of the magical consciousness and the artist's creative imagination.

Waite reminds us that the Cabalistic ideal "did more than exist on paper" and that it represented "the practice of a secret school" (IKK, p. 404). His fellow Rosicrucian, Yeats, testified to the powerful impact on his own consciousness of Cabalistic magic, when he described his steady practice of symbolic evocation, learned in the secret society from Magregor Mathers (Memoirs, p. 27). Much of the critical confusion and vagueness about the use of symbols rooted in magical traditions by "Cabalistic" poets has arisen from the euphemistic and ill-informed use of the word "mystical" to cover a profusion of highly dissimilar states of consciousness. The frequent failure to distinguish

between the voyant and the mystic has led to a tendency to dismiss as eccentric the myriad of concrete details (Blake's "minute particulars") which is the substance of what the visionary claims to see. Within this confusion of terms lies an important difference in the concept of the individual personality, the clarity of consciousness at the exalted moment, and the ultimate aim of the seer's (versus the mystic's) relation to God.

Classical studies of mysticism (especially by Underhill, Inge, and Jones), agree that the ultimate aim of the mystic is annihilation of the personality in a mystical union with God, an ultimate nirvana of human nothingness. In Etudes d'Histoire et de Psychologie du Mysticisme, Delacroix concludes that "the states of the mystics must be placed among the exalted states of what we may term the unprecise series of psychological states."¹¹ Scholem refutes the claim that the Hebrew prophets were mystics on the grounds that the mystic's experience is by its nature indistinct and inarticulate, while the prophet's message and vision are clear and specific. The prophet hears and sees, while rooted in human reality, and records in minute detail the substance of his visionary experience.

But it is precisely the indefinable, incommunicable character of mystical experience that is the greatest barrier to our understanding of it. It cannot be simply and totally translated into sharp images and concepts, and often it defies any attempt to supply it with positive context. Though many mystics have attempted such "translation," have tried to lend their experience form and body, the center of what a mystic has to say always remains a shapeless experience, regardless of whether we choose to interpret it as unio mystica or as "mere" communion with the divine. (Scholem, *KS*, p. 10)

¹¹ Quoted in Denis Saurat, Blake and Modern Thought (London: Constable, 1929), p. 57.

The combination of "giant forms" articulated by "minute particulars" which characterises Blake's visionary descriptions fulfills the Cabalistic conception of art so well that even Yeats found Blake "too literal a realist of the imagination."

Scholem points out that the essence of Biblical "throne-mysticism" is not absorbed contemplation of God's true nature, but perception of His appearance on the throne, as described by Ezekial, and cognition of the mysteries of the celestial throne world.¹² This Merkabah or "Chariot" tradition (from the chariot which carries the seer to the sphere of the throne), was taught by secret schools, who closely guarded their techniques and accounts of visions, in that "period of ubiquitous Jewish and Christian heresies," from the first century A.D. to its peak in the Byzantine court worlds of the fifth and sixth centuries A.D. The throne world was to the Jewish theosophist what the pleroma or "fullness"--the bright sphere of divinity, with its potencies, aeons, archons, and dominions--was to the Hellenistic and early Christian mystics of the period, usually designated as the Gnostics and Hermetics respectively (Scholem, MT, pp. 40-45).

But the Jewish "mystic-gnostic-hermetic" (all three terms have been confusingly applied) expressed his vision from the unique conditioning of his own religious background. God's transcendence, his awesome otherness, was stressed, while the point of the seer's "voyage in the chariot" of his own consciousness was to intensify his imagination to

¹² See Gershom Scholem, Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1960).

the pitch of splendidly colored and detailed vision of God's magnificent throne and palace world. Interestingly, the Merkabah visions were influenced by the same Byzantine courts and architecture which formed an imaginative ideal for Yeats. In the accounts of these visions, there is never a sense of annihilation of the individual, but rather one of intensified powers of the individual until he is ecstatically conscious enough to truly see. Scholem explains this simultaneous perception and revelation of the seer and God as "a mystical jeu de mots":

The Hebrew word for nothing, ain, has the same consonants as the word for I, ani-- and . . . God's "I" is conceived as the final stage in the emanation of the Sefiroth, that stage in which God's personality, in a simultaneous gathering together of all its previous stages, reveals itself to its own creation. In other words, the passage from ain to ani is symbolical of the transformation by which the Nothing passes through the progressive manifestation of its essence in the Sefiroth, into the I-- a dialectical process whose thesis and antithesis begin and end in God. (Scholem, MT, p. 218)

The Ethiopic Book of Enoch best represents the oldest Jewish esoteric literature which was handed down in the secret schools:

The combination of apocalyptic with theosophy and cosmogony is emphasized almost to excess: Not only have the seers perceived the celestial hosts, heaven and its angels, but the whole of apocalyptic and pseudepigraphic literature is shot through with a chain of new revelations concerning the hidden glory of the great Majesty, its throne, its palace . . . the celestial towers towering up one over the other, paradise, hell, and the containers of the souls (Scholem, MT, p. 43)

Significantly, the Ethiopic text brought to England in 1778 by James Bruce, a Freemason himself, was believed to

be a Hebrew text of Enoch in its original state, and set off a spate of Cabalistic speculation among the Freemasons and Swedenborgians with whom Blake associated. Both Blake and Flaxman followed the controversies and sketched illustrations to the work long before its English translation in 1822, when they both published the fruits of their studies (see ahead, Chapter XI). The connection between the secret Merkabah schools and the groups which produced many of the pseudepigrapha and apocalypses of the first centuries before and after Christ, and the possible influence of the Essenes on this "hidden" visionary tradition, have fascinated Masonic investigators since the late seventeenth century. De Quincey, once a Freemason himself, shaped the predominant, nineteenth-century view of early Masonic history with his theory of the relationship of secret societies of Therapeutae and Essenes to early Rosicrucianism and Masonry.¹³

Despite the eventual solidification of official orthodoxies out of these early centuries of fragmentation, short-lived heresies, and theosophical drift (a milieu so similar to Yeats's and Pater's "Nineties"), the apocalyptic and essentially Jewish visionary teachings have remained trouble-spots for both Christian and Rabbinical establishments. Part of the subversive element in the Merkabah tradition lay in the methods of initiation and training for its students, for Merkabah developed in its adepts an overwhelming conviction of religious authority, that too

¹³ Thomas De Quincey, "Historico-Critical Inquiry into the Origin of Rosicrucianism and Freemasonry," Collected Writings, ed. David Masson (1824; London: A.C. Black, rpt. 1897), XIII, 384-448.

often conflicted with Rabbinical norms. These methods became important to medieval Cabalists, who defined and refined them in a process of training which was later handed down through Rosicrucian, Masonic, and Swedenborgian "secret schools," until it reached Yeats in the 1880's with its visionary power still intact. Thus, a summary of the methods of vision-inducement, which influenced many later artists, will conclude this introductory section on the Jewish contribution to the occult traditions of the secret societies.

In the oldest Jewish secret schools, the initiate had to pass physiognomical and chiromantic tests, as well as moral and scholarly ones. In the Zohar, four general types of the human countenance are distinguished (by the lines of the face and hands), and these are referred to the faces of the Four Living Creatures of Ezekiel's vision: the leonine, bovine, aquiline, and one "corresponding to the likeness of a man." Physiognomy, however, does not consist in the external lineaments, but in the features which are drawn mysteriously within us":

The features of the face vary, following the form which is impressed on the inward face of the spirit. The spirit only produces all those physiognomical peculiarities which are known to the wise, and it is through the spirit only that the features exhibit meaning. When spirits and souls pass out of Eden, they possess a certain form which is afterwards reflected in the face. (Waite, HK, p. 174).

The Zohar also claims that every feature in a given countenance indicates to those who can read it whether it is possible for the possessor to be initiated into Divine Mysteries.

These physiognomic criteria for admission to the Jewish secret schools were paralleled by those of the neo-Platonic schools of the fourth century A.D. Iamblichus, in his biography of Pythagoras, asserted that entry into the Pythagorean school was dependent upon the possession of certain physiognomic characteristics. But the Jewish criteria was typically based on a Scriptural phrase, the "perception of the face" mentioned in Isaiah III:9. The strange physiognomical theories of Blake and his fellow "Illuminé," William Sharp, seem to draw upon these Jewish traditions, and will be discussed in more detail later.

Those who passed the test were considered worthy to make the "descent" to the Merkabah (the change from "ascent" revealing the psychical nature of the voyage). The visionary journey was prepared for by a period of ascetic practices to discipline the initiate to withstand the hostile planet-angels who would harrass him as he journeyed through the spheres. The typical bodily posture was that of Elijah in his prayer on Mount Carmel, i.e., "he put his face between his knees" (I Kings 18:42), which when joined with deep meditation is favorable to "the induction of pre-hypnotic auto-suggestion" (Scholem, MT, pp. 48-49). Interestingly, at a time when there is evidence of Blake's practice of Cabalistic vision-inducement, he described his success in a similar psychic journey:

I have travel'd thro' Perils and darkness not unlike a Champion. I have conquer'd, and shall still go on conquering. Nothing can withstand the fury of my Course among the Stars of God and in the Abysses of the Accuser. My Enthusiasm is still what it was, only Enlarged and confirm'd. (Letter to Thomas Butts, 22 Nov. 1802; CW, p. 816)

The Merkabah hymns created a crescendo of glittering and majestic attributes of God, in a slow, compelling rhythm, which became cyclical as "the key-word of the numinous" recurred with increasing force. The progressively sonorous incantations induced in those who were praying a state of mind bordering on ecstasy. This "polylogy" or verbiage of the visionaries drew from the repelled Talmudists restrictions against extravagant "enthusiasm" in prayer: "he who multiplies the praise of God to excess shall be torn from the world" (Scholem, MT, p. 60). Along with the hymns, there was intense concentration on the Hebrew language and the "secret Names of God," leading to often bizarre and novel word combinations (a Cabalistic tour de force which Joyce emulated in the puns of Finnegans Wake). Since each letter and word of the Torah contained a concentration of God's energy and simultaneously corresponded to elements within the human being and cosmos, the "combining of the letters" involved a strenuous imaginative process of conceptualization and visualization at the same time. In the always startling manner by which the Jewish theosophist could transfer, in an intuitive flash, the linguistic mode into the numerical mode (based on numerical values for letters) and simultaneously into the anthropomorphic mode, the trance-state often produced a vision of a huge "spiritual" figure, the "body" of the Creator as Living Word, complete with mathematical figures for the length of each organ. This sense of a huge spectral figure was later used as a test for authenticity of vision by the eighteenth-century Animal Magnetisers, who drew heavily on Cabalistic trance-techniques.

The ultimate release into an ecstatic trance-vision was not self-oblivion, as in mysticism, but self-transcendence. In its proud assertion of the power of the human will and imagination to manipulate the hidden sources of God's power, it was definitely not mystical but magical:

The occult powers acquired by the initiate to the Merkabah are . . . a prelude to the vision of the glory and knowledge of the measures of its mystical body. The highly formalized descriptions of these powers combines purely magical elements with those of a visionary character. The power of "combining the letters" . . . constitutes an early parallel to the Talmudic saying that Bezalel, the builder of the Tabernacle (which reflects in itself the structure of the cosmos), "knew to combine the letters by which heaven and earth were created." (Scholem, Jewish Gnosticism, p. 79).

The phrases I underline here point to the attribution of Cabalistic talents to the "Grand Architect," which became the central myth of Freemasonry.

These early secret trance-techniques were preserved in the pious Hasidic communities of medieval Germany. Judah the Hasid was fully convinced of the effectiveness of magic and other occult disciplines, but he was sharply opposed to their practice. He sensed clearly the contrast between the magician who prides himself on control of the elements and the humble Hasid who craves no form of power:

[For the Hasidim,] humility, restraint, and self-abnegation rank higher than the pride of heart which fills the visionary in the mystical presence of God. The place of the ecstatic seer, whose mystical dian carries him across all barriers and hindrances to the steps of the heavenly throne, is taken by the meditative

devotee, sunk in humble contemplation of the Omnipresent Infinite. (Scholem, MT, p. 98)

But this was Judah the Hasid's wishful image of himself; the legends that developed during his own lifetime granted him magical power precisely because he wanted nothing for himself. Thus, during a period of supposed repression of occultism, "a veritable magician was given a saintly Jewish halo."

Judah was also credited with possessing the oldest extant recipes for creating the Golem, that wildest of magician's dreams. The medieval recipes originally aimed at producing ecstatic states of consciousness, through the old techniques of Merkabah letter-magic and rituals. The Golem came to life only while the ecstasy of his creator lasted. Spanish Cabalists insisted that the Golem was not corporeal but a "creation of thought," and others defined the process as a purely mystical operation, ridiculing the folly "of those who study the Book Yetsirah in order to make a calf, for those who do so are themselves calves" (Scholem, KS, p. 188). The relation of this "thought-created" spectral figure to Ezekial's figure on the throne, and to the modern theosophical concept of "the Masters," points to the continuity of this visionary phenomenon during many centuries.

It was in Hasidic literature also that the old "letter magic" developed into the complex techniques of visionary speculation which are popularly supposed to represent the core of Cabalism-- such as, Gematria, a cryptographical system, by which the letters of a word were converted into numbers, and the arithmetical value

was used to explain its internal sense; Notarikon, a system of shorthand, by which each letter of a word was taken as the initial of another word, or, conversely, the initial letters of an entire sentence were combined to form a word, which was held to throw light on the sentence; Themurah, the transposition of letters in a given word or sentence (Waite, HK, p. 36). These techniques were important only to the Cabalists influenced by the German Hasidim, and played a minor role for the author of the Zohar, who was more preoccupied with mythical elements. Through the eighteenth-century German Rosicrucian branches of Freemasonry, however, this "practical Cabala" was passed down through the secret societies, and became the core of Cabalistic instruction in Yeats's order. His fellow Golden Dawn initiate, W. Wynn Westcott, wrote much upon these Germanic traditions, as in An Introduction to the Kabbalah (London: John M. Watkins, 1910).

Of even greater importance to the teachings of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Cabalistic societies was the influence of medieval Hasidic "letter-magic" on Abraham Abulafia, whose great thirteenth-century manuals of meditation-techniques have provided a rich reservoir of materials for voyants down to the present day. Though born in Spain, Abulafia travelled widely in the Near East, Greece, and Italy, diligently seeking "secret knowledge," and came into contact with many non-Jewish mystics. In developing his theory of the "search for ecstasy and for prophetic inspiration," Abulafia drew upon Indian and probably Tibetan theosophies. Abulafia's aim was to "unseal the soul, to untie the knots which bind it," a process of returning from multiplicity and separation

toward the original unity. This "untying of the knots" occurs also in the theosophy of northern Buddhism (Scholem, MT, p. 131).

Two of Abulafia's techniques have had a profound influence on imaginative artists. The first involves the mystical contemplation of letters and their configurations, as the constituents of God's Name, which Abulafia compared to musical counterpoint. The alphabet takes the place of the musical scale, and the meditation produces an ecstatic sensation closely akin to that of listening to musical harmonies. The significance of this Cabalistic theory of music to Mozart's Masonic compositions will be examined later. The second method was called "skipping" or "jumping," and was a remarkable way of using associations as a means of meditation. Abulafia gave definite, formal rules of procedure to start the process. Every "jump" opens a new sphere, and within this sphere, the mind may freely associate. The "jumping" causes extraordinary "widening of the consciousness" of the initiate and "brings to light hidden processes of the mind." Abulafia claimed, "It liberates us from the prison of the natural sphere and leads us to the boundary of the divine sphere" (Scholem, MT, p. 136).

These techniques were restricted by Abulafia to an elite society of adepts, and "jumping" was considered the highest grade of initiation, containing and superseding all the others. Abulafia's moving description of the "literary" preparation for and experience of the "divine influx" sheds much light on the automatic-writing and spirit-dictations of Swedenborg, Blake, and Yeats, all of whom practiced Cabalistic meditation:

If it be night, kindle many lights, until all be bright. Then take ink, pen and a table to thy hand, and remember that thou art about to serve God in joy of the gladness of heart. Now begin to combine a few or many letters, to permute and to combine them until thy heart be warm. Then be mindful of their movements and of what thou canst bring forth by moving them. And when thou feelest that thy heart is already warm and when thou seest that by combination of letters thou canst grasp new things which by human tradition or by thyself thou wouldst not be able to know and when thou art thus prepared to receive the influx of divine power which flows into thee, then turn all thy true thought to imagine the Name and His exalted angels in thy heart as if they were human beings sitting or standing about thee. And feel thyself like an envoy whom the king and his ministers are to send on a mission, and he is waiting to hear something about his mission from their lips, be it from the king himself, be it from his servants. Having imagined this very vividly, turn thy whole mind to understand with thy thoughts the many things which will come into thy heart through the letters imagined. Ponder them as a whole and in all their detail, like one to whom a parable or a dream is being related . . . and try thus to interpret what thou shalt hear . . . And all this will happen to thee after having flung away tablet and quill or after they will have dropped from thee because of the intensity of thy thought. And know, the stronger the intellectual influx within thee, the weaker will become thy outer and inner parts. Thy whole body will be seized by an extremely strong trembling, so that thou wilt think that surely thou art about to die, because thy soul, overjoyed with its knowledge, will leave thy body . . . Then return to the matters of the body, rise and eat and drink a little, refresh thyself with a pleasant odor, and restore thy spirit to its sheath until another time, and rejoice at thy lot and know that God loveth thee! (Scholem, MT, p. 137).

Abulafia regarded this ecstatic state as the highest reward of religious contemplation. To his school of Cabalism, the prophetic faculty could be deliberately

brought about through systematic training until the human intellect reached a point of union with the divine intellect, which manifested itself in prophetic vision. A disciple of Abulafia wrote a book in 1295, in which he described the three paths of spiritual expansion. His autobiographical account of the impact of Abulafia's meditation-techniques on his spiritual experience bears many striking resemblances to cryptic remarks by Swedenborg and Blake. After the second week of "combining the letters," the power of meditation became so strong in him that he could not write down the profusion of combinations, which automatically spurted from his pen during the influx. After two days and nights of intense concentration, he received two signs by which he knew he was in the right receptive mood:

The one sign was an intensification of natural thought on very profound objects of knowledge, a debility of the body and strengthening of the soul until I sat there, my self all soul. The second sign was that imagination grew strong within me and it seemed as though my forehead were going to burst. Then I knew that I was ready to receive the Name . . . And behold, I was still speaking [by Spiritual Influx] and oil like the oil of anointment anointed me from head to foot and very great joy seized me which for its spirituality and the sweetness of its rapture I cannot describe . . . Indeed, there is no proof in this science except experience itself.
(Scholem, MT, p. 151)

Though the general concept of the intellectus agens, or divine influx, was widely recognized in the Middle Ages, Abulafia's theory was actually a Judaized version of systematic Yoga as practised by Indian theosophers. An important part in his system was played by techniques of breathing (a point important to remember in examining Swedenborg's visions in the eighteenth century), and by

requirements of body posture, forms of recitation, etc., which found their highest developments in Yoga.

Abulafia taught that the supreme stage of vision is the perception of one's spiritual mentor, usually visualized as a young or old man, whom the visionary not only sees but hears:

"The body," Abulafia says, "requires the physician of the body, the soul the physician of the soul, to wit the students of the Torah, but the intellect (the highest power of the soul) requires a mover from outside who has received Kabbalah concerning the mysteries of the Torah and a mover from inside . . . who opens the closed doors before him."
(Scholem, MT, p. 139)

Abulafia differentiated between the human and divine teacher, and pointed out that one could manage, if necessary, without the former, but never without the spiritual teacher who confronts man at the secret gates of his soul. This spiritual master was much like the Indian guru, but Abulafia implied that when the adept is confronted with his master, while in the ecstatic state, he is in some way identical with him. In Abulafian prophetic vision, then, man encounters his own self, confronting and addressing him, but Abulafia veiled this crucial doctrine in obscurity. It was obviously the highest mystery of his school, much more than the visions of light usually accompanying ecstasy (Scholem, MT, pp. 139-42). The visionary spiritual master was later called an angel, and complex methods of evocation developed which were called "Cabalistic angel-magic," especially among seventeenth-century Rosicrucians. It is significant in this light to note that Virgil's words to Dante, "Ego Dominus Tuus," were interpreted by Gabriele Rossetti, a nineteenth-century Freemason, as referring to

a real master in a secret Cabalistic society. The same words were also used by Yeats, a student of Abulafia's vision-techniques, as part of his self and anti-self theory of symbolic art (see ahead Chapters XIII and XV).

A final point from Abulafia's "school of vision" which gained renewed importance in eighteenth-century Mesmerism is the phenomenon of the "inside becoming the outside," a brilliant offshoot of that "revolution in perspective" which manifests the Ain Soph. After the ultimate stage of "skipping" is reached, which "heats the thinking and so increases joy and desire,"

. . . if sufficient strength remains to force oneself even further and draw it out still farther, then that which is within will manifest itself without, and through the power of sheer imagination will take on the form of a polished mirror. And this is "the flame of the circling sword," the rear revolving and becoming the fore. Whereupon one sees that his inmost being is something outside himself. (Scholem, MT, p. 155)

The importance to the occult traditions of this visionary phenomenon, in which man's interior becomes externalized, is demonstrated by the Mesmerists' usage of it to diagnose disease. Blake's description of the same process and use of the "circling sword" image derived from his Cabalistic and Mesmeric studies. Waite noted that Abulafia made use of theurgic formulae combined with contemplation to achieve "exteriorization of mental images," as an ultimate mystical experience (HK, p. 98). Yeats, who studied Cabala with Waite, gives ample evidence in his journals of his own experiments with Cabalistic meditation in order "to summon up his opposite."

Scholem notes that it is an oddity of modern research into Cabalism that Abulafia has sometimes been

called the author of the Zohar, for "no two things could be more different than the outlook of the Zohar and that of Abulafia" (MT, p. 130). The main reason for this confusion, however, is that the Cabalistic traditions that survived in the post-Renaissance Masonic societies developed from a fusion of the Zoharic sexual myths and the Abulafian trance-techniques. As Rexroth noted about Waite, who spent a lifetime investigating the "hidden mysteries" of secret societies,

. . . the "innermost secrets" of the Kabbalah are what are "occult" in all occultism, erotic mysticism and a group of practices of the sort we call yoga--autonomic nervous system gymnastics. For the Kabbalist the ultimate sacrament is the sexual act, carefully organized and sustained as the most perfect mystical trance. Over the marriage bed hovers the Shekinah. (in Preface to Waite, HK, p. ix)

The influence of this combination of sacramental sexuality with visionary techniques on various bizarre theories of "sympneumatic bliss" and "conjugal love" in the Boehmenist and Swedenborgian movements of the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries, which in turn influenced Goethe, Balzac, Blake, and Yeats, will be discussed hereafter. But first it will be necessary to see what became of the purely Jewish Cabala as it was taken up by the syncretic Christian scholars of the Renaissance.

Chapter II: The Christian Interpretation of the Cabala
in the Renaissance, and the Development of
the Syncretic Occult Tradition

Though Cabalistic sexual, linguistic, and visionary theories became important elements of occultist Freemasonry from the seventeenth century on, and effected many "initiated" writers and artists, there has been little examination of this uniquely Jewish element in post-Renaissance literary developments. Part of the difficulty in deciphering purely Cabalistic elements in works after the seventeenth century is caused by the assimilation of the Cabala into the eclectic, Christianized occultism of the Renaissance. Under the misleading generic title of "neo-Platonism," a melange of often mutually contradicting philosophies has been applied in literary criticism as a unified, homogeneous tradition, as in Kathleen Raine's Blake and Tradition (Princeton Univ. Press, 1969). But the non-ascetic, non-dualistic emphasis of Cabalistic theosophy differed fundamentally from the other "mystical" philosophies with which it became allied through the studies of sixteenth-century scholars. As Waite warns, "We must not fall into the error of supposing that the Kabbalah is Platonism derived through Philo and the Jewish school of Alexandria, or that it is Jewish tradition modified by Philoism" (HK, p. 71). But in the Renaissance, many non-Jewish theories were grafted on to the Cabala (and vice-versa), especially psycho-religious theories of art and the rudiments of experimental science, which eventually created the pluralistic "tradition" of Cabalistic visionary techniques, Egyptian talismanic art, and Hermetic alchemy which became the "hidden wisdom" of the later secret societies.

Because the motivations and premises of this sixteenth-century search after ancient knowledge were periodically revived and repeated in the antiquarian and visionary studies of later Masonic societies, it is important to our understanding of the Masonic influence on literature to examine the Renaissance creation of a supposedly primordial occult tradition, which the later societies considered "authoritative."

In her important study, Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition (London: Routledge, 1964), Frances Yates demonstrates that the returning movement of the Renaissance to the study of "ancient" knowledge was based on a radical error in dating, in which the enthusiastic scholars of the Florentine academies thought they were rediscovering works of profound antiquity. In 1463, when Cosimo de Medici ordered Ficino to set aside the manuscripts of Plato in order to translate the Greek manuscripts of the Corpus Hermeticum, he firmly believed they would find a wisdom of ancient Egypt, older than that of the Bible and the source of Plato's "derivative" works.

But most of the manuscripts pouring into Florence were actually produced in those early centuries after Christ, especially the second century A.D., which we have already discussed as a confused, fragmented, and highly experimental period of religious pluralism. In the melting pot of the Empire, under the Pax Romana in which all religions were tolerated, intellectual nostalgia for an ancient, unified "religion of the world" drove many thinkers to seek a deeply personal gnosis, a certitude of religious experience within mystery cults and magical rituals. The world of the second century was weary of Greek dialectics which seemed to lead to no certain results, for "Greek

thinking, with all its brilliant speculativeness, never took the momentous step of experimental verification of its hypotheses" (Yates, Bruno, p. 4). Thus, within the profusion of small, secret religious societies, there was a retreat from Greek reason into the occult. The parallel contemporary developments within Jewish theosophy, in the visionary Merkabah schools, emphasise the widespread yearning for "felt" religion and personal "illumination."

Coupled with this theosophic impulse was the second-century "cult of the barbarians," which glorified the remote Indian gymnosophists, Persian magi, and Chaldean astrologers as possessing a more ancient and holy sense of religion than the Greeks. As Yates points out, Apuleius of Madaura was a striking example of the religious mentality of the time. Born about 123 A.D. and highly educated in the general culture of the Graeco-Roman world, he became weary of the stale teachings of the schools and sought for salvation in the occult, especially in the secret magical tradition of ancient Egypt. In his novel, The Golden Ass, the hero passes through many stages of spiritual despair, until he achieves an ecstatic vision of the goddess Isis. Eventually he becomes a priest of Isis in an Egyptian temple (Bruno, pp. 9-12). The occult importance of "lifting the veil of Isis" would become a major motif in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century secret societies, via Cagliostro, Mozart, Bulwer-Lytton, Eliphas Lévi, and Madame Blavatsky.

But the Hermetic literature which so intrigued Cosimo de Medici and his scholars, as they eagerly bought up manuscripts, was a mixed production of several kinds of secret schools, all basically motivated by a spirit akin to that of Apuleius. The root of the system went

back to an eclectic mythology in which the Egyptian god, Thoth, scribe of the gods and divinity of wisdom, was identified by the Greeks with their Hermes, and sometimes given the epithet "thrice-great." A large literature in Greek developed under the name of Hermes Trismegistos, concerned with astrology, occult sciences, sympathetic magic, and astral talismans. There developed also a philosophical literature to which the same revered name, "Hermetic," was attached.

The most important of these philosophical Hermetica were the Asclepius and the Corpus Hermeticum (circa 100 and 300 A.D.). The works were cast in a pseudo-Egyptian framework but were written by various unknown authors, all probably Greeks, though whatever Egyptian elements may genuinely be there is a subject of scholarly controversy. In a cautious summary, M.W. Bloomfield views them as chiefly the product of Hellenistic-Egyptian neo-Platonists, who were greatly influenced by Stoicism, Judaism, Persian theology, and possibly by native Egyptian beliefs, as well as by Plato, especially the Timaeus. "They were perhaps the bible of an Egyptian mystery religion, which possibly in kernel went back to the second century B.C." (quoted in Yates, Bruno, p. 3). In other words, the Hermetica represented the pluralism and cosmopolitanism of these early "Christian" centuries, when Christianity was still only one among a myriad of attempts at true religion. It was thus appropriate that for the syncretic Renaissance scholars, also seeking a "religion of the world," this cosmopolitan theosophy should seem shrouded in holiness, and that to the eventually established church it should seem a major threat, to be rigorously suppressed. Despite the church's opposition, however, many of the magical,

alchemical, and astrological writings called Hermetica were still known in the Middle Ages.

Since it was originally through Ficino's efforts that the Hermetic tradition became grafted on to Christianity (though never comfortably), to be followed by Pico's grafting on of the Cabala, a brief summary of what Ficino believed to make up of the core of Egyptian religion will be useful. The Asclepius purported to describe the secret religion of Egypt, and by what magical rites and processes the Egyptians drew down the powers of the cosmos into the statues of their gods. It defined a religion of the mind, in which man's intellect made him a magnum miraculum and participator in the divine intellect. The famous "Lament" (or "Apocalypse") predicted the disintegration of the Egyptian religion, and was suffused with a moral indignation reminiscent of Hebrew prophecy, by which the author may indeed have been influenced. The prophecy of the eventual healing work by the "Demiurge of the One God," who will bring back the world to its first beauty in a "holy and most solemn restoration of Nature herself" (Yates, Bruno, p. 39-41), is strikingly similar to the healing process of tikkun within later Jewish theosophy. The Renaissance Christian scholars reversed the medieval Church's condemnation of the Asclepius, and viewed it as a means of infusing new spirit into Christianity, with the Demiurge obviously fulfilled in Christ. This lifted the risk of heresy in their work, and opened up the more intriguing study of the magical techniques also included in the Asclepius.

Among the treatises in the Corpus Hermeticum, a collection of fifteen Hermetic dialogues, was the famous Pimander, which gave a Gnostic account of the world, often

reminiscent of Genesis. The other treatises described the ascent of the soul through the spheres of the planets to the divine realms above them, or gave ecstatic descriptions of a process of regeneration by which the soul cast off its chains and became filled with divine powers and virtues (Yates, Bruno, p. 3). What Ficino brought to these Hermetic traditions, which they had never gained during their degeneration into highly superstitious, practical magic in the Middle Ages, was a persuasive view of their chronology which led to their absorption into the Christian traditions (or vice versa). Thus, in the argumentum before his translation of the Corpus Hermeticum, Ficino affirmed that Hermes Trismegistos was a real priest, with startling resemblances to his "contemporary," Moses (Ficino was never sure whether he actually was Moses), who revealed the arcane mysteries of the Mosaic works even better than Moses himself, because he saw "long before the Incarnation that the creative word was the Son of God" (Yates, Bruno, p. 26).

It was in other so-called "Hermetic" treatises, especially the Picatrix and the Emerald or Smaragdine Tablet, that Ficino found a theory of magic which had a great influence on Renaissance art. The Picatrix was originally written in Arabic in the twelfth century A.D., and though Ficino misread it as ancient Hermetic lore, it was indeed influenced by Hermetic and Gnostic theories, with an extension into the processes of talismanic magic. The doctrine of the One Original Unity, the hierarchical relation between Above and Below, and the "linking" through correspondences, repeated the basic occult view of the world, but there was a greater emphasis on man's power to raise himself above the seven heavens through

the training of his intellect. D.P. Walker defines Ficino's magic as based on a theory of spiritus as the channel through which the influence of the stars is diffused. Between the soul of the world and its body there is a spiritus mundi which is infused throughout the universe and through which the stellar influences come down to man's spirit and the whole corpus mundi. The spiritus is a very fine and subtle substance.¹

In the Picatrix, magic consists of guiding or controlling the influx of spiritus into materia, especially through the use of talismanic images. A talisman is a material object into which the spiritus of a star has been introduced, and which stores the spiritus (Yates, Bruno, p. 69). The Picatrix describes how Hermes founded the magical city of Adocentyn in Egypt, ruled by a beneficent magician-priest. Hermes filled the city with talismanic statuary, which controlled the Nile against the motion of the moon and drew down the spiritus who lived and spoke within the statues. The similarity of this magical city of art to Blake's Golgonooza and Yeats's Byzantium is striking. Ficino's deeply artistic nature was stirred by the possibility of creating talismanic images which could stimulate the reconstruction of higher images (the archetypes, supernals, or Platonic ideas), in such a way that the divine influences were

¹ D.P. Walker, Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella (London: Warburg Institute, 1958).

recaptured and reconducted into the deteriorated sensible forms. For Ficino was distressed by the same apparent deterioration of man's image-making faculty that bothered W.B. Yeats in the 1890's, when he turned to the study of talismanic magic as a source of poetic images.

In Ficino's talismanic conception of art, the most powerful image of all was "the figure of the world," which was used as an object of meditation, whether in the form of an elaborate jewel, intricate sculpture, or painting upon a domed ceiling. The work of art could favorably arrange the celestial images, so as to draw down favorable influences and exclude unfavorable ones, just as Hermes arranged them in Adocentyn, which was planned as an image of the world. E.H. Gombrich has analyzed Botticelli's "Primavera" as such a talismanic work of art,² and a contemporary of Michelangelo recorded that in old age, Michelangelo believed that art was divinely magical and the artist a thaumaturge.³ Ficino's pious hope was that meditation upon the "figure of the world" would imprint it permanently on the memory and thus permanently reconstruct his own consciousness into an image of the original celestial harmony. The similarity of this astrological, magical, and artistic tikkun of consciousness to the Cabalists' more psycho-sexual religious process became important in the further fusion of the two systems by Pico della Mirandola.

² E.H. Gombrich, "Botticelli's Mythologies: a Study in the Neoplatonic Symbolism of his Circle," Journal of the Warburg-Courtauld Institute, 8 (1945).

³ Sir John Pope-Hennessy, "Michelangelo: the Fruits of Age," Sunday Times Magazine, (London, 9 February 1975), pp. 12, 15.

"There is nothing to be seen more wonderful than man." In agreement with this opinion is the saying of Hermes Trismegistus: "A great miracle, Asclepius, is man." . . . At last it seems to me I have come to understand why man is the most fortunate of creatures and consequently worthy of all admiration and what precisely is that rank which is his lot in the universal chain of Being-- a rank to be envied not only by brutes but even by the stars and by minds beyond this world . . . Man is rightly called and judged a great miracle.⁴

With these resounding words, Pico della Mirandola, in 1486, hoped to open a public debate in Rome on his Nine Hundred Theses, a still startling attempt to synthesize and reconcile all philosophies. But the debate never occurred, as Pico was accused of heresy on thirteen of his conclusions, a sentence which was only lifted through the advent of a new Pope, Alexander VI, in 1493. This "Borgia Pope" was deeply interested in magic and strange learning, and under him much occult lore was brought into Christian scholarship. Number Four of Pico's condemned conclusions stated, "There is no science which makes us more certain of the divinity of Christ than Nagia and Cabala."⁵ This linking of Hermetic magic and the Cabala into the Christian tradition was a momentous step for Renaissance theories of art and religion, with important ramifications into the secret societies of modern times.

Pico was a youthful contemporary of Ficino and accepted with enthusiasm his theories of natural and

⁴ Pico della Mirandola, "Oration on the Dignity of Man," The Renaissance Philosophy of Man, ed. Ernst Cassirer (Univ. of Chicago Press, 1971), p. 223.

⁵ See Waite, HK, pp. 445-452, for a translation of Pico's other "Kabbalistic Conclusions."

talismanic magic. But Pico also had many Jewish friends, with whom he studied Hebrew and Aramaic.⁶ Through them he gained the most thorough knowledge of Cabalistic works, including parts of the Zohar and Abulafia's manuals, of any Gentile up to that time. He mentioned a request also from Pope Sixtus IV for a translation of some Cabalistic manuscripts. This interest in Jewish theosophy on the part of Christian scholars (for Pico was above all a sincere Christian), established a precedent for viewing the Cabala through decidedly Christian lenses, which colored all subsequent development of Cabalistic traditions in Europe. There had been early recognition among Jews that some Cabalistic positions came dangerously close to Christian belief, and much Jewish opposition to the Cabala stemmed from this. For Pico, led to Cabalistic studies by congenial and tolerant Jewish friends, it was an easy step from the Jewish Messiah who shall come to the Christian Messiah who had come. The three highest Sephiroth became the Trinity, and, with the substitution of the Book of Revelation for the apocalyptic books of the Jews, Pico envisioned the formulation of a Christian "Work of the Chariot" (Blau, pp. 13-15).

Thus, Pico's Seventh Conclusion affirms that "No Hebrew Cabalist can deny that the name of IESU, if we interpret it according to Cabalistic principles and methods, signifies God, the Son of God, and the Wisdom of the Father through the divinity of the Third Person," following the Cabalistic methods used on YHWH. The obvious difficulty

⁶ Joseph L. Blau, The Christian Interpretation of the Cabala in the Renaissance (Columbia Univ. Press, 1914), p. 24.

of turning the Shekinah into the Son, and of stretching the Trinity into a Quaternity, would plague Christian Cabalistic groups well into the eighteenth century. Blake's Swedenborg Society, an essentially Christian Cabalistic group, was torn by just such a quarrel, stimulated by a visit from an "illuminated" French Freemason. But to Pico, the great synthesizer, all religious terms were correspondences; he translated Orphic phrases into Cabalistic phrases, Zoroastrian into Christian, etc., in a manner which set the tone for the syncretism of the occult traditions from the Renaissance on. The great hope of Christian Cabalists was to convert the Jews to Christianity through the via media of the Cabala, which would be the penultimate step toward that Messianic redemption of the world which both religions prayed for. Pico also firmly believed that the Cabala was an ancient secret doctrine, which Moses had imparted only to a few initiates in a secret order and which unfolded mysteries not fully explained by the patriarch in Genesis.

Besides his Christianizing of the Cabala, which was vitally important in gaining the freedom to study it, Pico championed the full implications of its magical theories, much more explicitly than Ficino had done with Hermetic magic. Condemning the banned medieval magic as "obviously" bad, Pico praised the natural magic of the Hermetics and Ficino as establishing beneficent "links" between earth and heaven, by the right use of natural substances in accordance with the "mutual rapport of all things." The astral links of Ficino's talismans and the Orphic hymns were good magic, and Pico admired the way that Ficino sang these hymns, accompanying himself on the lira da braccio, as a talismanic act of drawing down

spirits. But to Pico, these methods were too weak unless Cabalistic magic was added to them (Yates, Bruno, pp. 83-91). He recommended the Cabalistic ars combinandi, use of the secret names of God and the hierarchies of angels, Abulafian techniques of meditation, and contemplation of the Sephiroth as a progressive visionary experience.

Pico also merged the "characters" or pictorial talismans of natural magic with the letter and number magic of practical Cabala. But he always affirmed that Cabalistic magic reaches beyond the stars into the celestial spheres and thus near God himself, whereas natural magic uses only intermediary causes and cannot go beyond the stars. The Eleventh Conclusion was the most "mystical," as it described a supreme trance, in which the soul is separated from the body and the Cabalist can communicate with God through the archangels, in an ecstasy so intense that it sometimes results accidentally in the death of the body, a way of dying called "the Death of the Kiss" (Yates, Bruno, p. 99). Pico was greatly preoccupied with this experience and was perhaps trained in the most "secret mystery" of Abulafia's school. Indeed, the Masonic theorist, Gabriele Rossetti, claimed in the nineteenth century that Pico and his fellow scholars were "initiates" of a secret Cabalistic school and that the Florentine academies were neo-Masonic "lodges."⁷

Walker points out that Ficino's magic was mainly subjective and was used chiefly on himself (Magic, pp. 82).

⁷ See Gabriele Rossetti, Disquisitions on the Antipapal Spirit, trans. Caroline Ward. 2 vols. (London: Smith, Elder, 1824).

It worked through the imagination and conditioned the mind to receive the divine forms of the natural gods:

It was the magic of a highly artistic nature, heightening the artistic perceptions with magical procedures. The same is probably true of Pico's use of practical Cabala, that it was mainly a subjective use of Cabalist magic by a deeply religious and artistic nature . . . and perhaps it is also chiefly in this imaginative and artistic sense that we should understand of the Renaissance magic inaugurated by Ficino and Pico. The operative Magi of the Renaissance were the artists. (Yates, Bruno, p. 104)

Yates further shows that the change in status of the magician from the outlawed medieval necromancer, with his filthy concoctions, into the philosophical and pious Magi of the Renaissance parallels the change in status of the artist from the mere mechanic of the Middle Ages to the learned and refined companion of princes of the Renaissance. This alliance between Cabalistic magic and the imaginative artist would be repeated during the great wave of Masonic occultism in the late eighteenth century.

The sixteenth century also produced several giants of the occult traditions who carried the theosophical learning of the Florentine academies much further into the realms of medicine and science. Such figures as Reuchlin, Agrippa, Paracelsus, Bruno, and Boehme were constantly cited as "authorities" in later Masonic societies, and a brief survey of what they preserved and transformed of the Cabalistic-Hermetic-Alchemical traditions will indicate the highly eclectic nature of the magical heritage from the Renaissance on.

Perhaps the most important link between Pico and Agrippa was the German, John Reuchlin (1455-1522), who was initiated into the Cabala by Pico and several Jewish acquaintances. His antiquarian bent, which became a hallmark of later Freemasonry, was demonstrated in an early "beginner's book" on the Cabala, called On the Wonder Working Word. He traced the derivation of all languages from the Hebrew and showed how many mystical words which were no longer understood in the rituals of the Druids and Hindus were derived from mispronounced Hebrew sacred words. Capnion, the Christian member of his dialogue, proved that Pythagoras, the Cabala, and Christian authority showed the name Jesus to be the "wonder working word" (Blau, p. 41).

By his second Cabalistic dialogue, Reuchlin had become the leading Hebrew scholar of the age. Because of his insistence on studying the Hebrew texts of the Bible, he is considered a precursor of Protestantism, and foreshadows the later linking of Cabalistic studies and underground Protestant reform movements. Reuchlin dedicated On the Cabalistic Art to Pope Leo X, and in it defined practical Cabala as a sublimated form of alchemy-- thus revealing the third stream of occult tradition to be grafted onto Renaissance Christianity. Describing Cabalism as an "internal," spiritual alchemy, which purifies the soul of man from dross to gold, he defined a Cabalistic process of transforming external perceptions into internal perceptions, which he described as a Sopherotic-alehomyistical transmutation. Hoping that interest in the Cabala would resurrect Pythagorean studies, especially of Plotinus and Porphyry, Reuchlin proclaimed that "out of the infinite sea of the Cabalists, Pythagoras brought his river into the limits of the fields of the Greeks" (Blau, pp. 41, 55).

This increasing inclusiveness of the tradition is typical of the constant accretions from many students of the occult. The angelic hierarchies of Dionysius the Aeropagite were accepted as analogous to the Sephiroth and Hebrew angelology, while neo-Platonists, Druids, Indians, and all manner of vitalistic "chemists" were found to relate to the essential occult world-view. It is this eclectic system, through the direct influence of Reuchlin, that Cornelius Agrippa drew upon for his vast survey of Renaissance magic, On Occult Philosophy.

Agrippa (1486-1535) wrote this important compendium in 1509, but did not publish it until 1531. The manuscript circulated, however, in the secret orders which Agrippa founded to carry out his experiments and to share "hidden knowledge" with adepts. The Masonic scholar, R.F. Gould, notes that Agrippa founded a secret society in London in 1510, similar to one in Paris, which had secret signs of recognition for correspondence with alchemists all over Europe.⁸ Affirming the influence of the upper worlds over the lower, Agrippa went further than the Florentines into operative magic, through his approval of magical manipulations of the lower world in order to control the higher celestial powers. The magician should try to discover the virtues of the elemental world by medicine and natural philosophy, the virtues of the celestial world by astrology and mathematics, and the virtues of the intellectual world

⁸ R.F. Gould, "The Medical Profession and Freemasonry," Ars Quatuor Coronatorum, 7 (1912), p. 149. Hereafter cited as AQC.

through studies of the holy ceremonies of religion (Yates, Bruno, p. 131). In giving high importance to mathematics and emphasising practical Cabala and "mechanical" magic, Agrippa foreshadowed the increasing development of alchemical and magical operations into experimental science, which would dramatically emerge in the 1660's in the mixed membership of Rosicrucian occultists and "modern" scientists in the Royal Academy of Science in England.

When Agrippa visited London, he stayed with Dean Colet (1466-1519), the famous Greek scholar who met Pico in Italy, studied Reuchlin and Dionysius the Areopagite, and influenced the neo-Platonism of Spenser and other English poets. Colet was at one time annoyed with his friend, Erasmus, who was not interested in the Cabala and who sent Reuchlin's Cabalistic works on to Bishop John Fisher of Rochester rather than to Colet, who had been eagerly waiting for them. Fisher (1459-1535) then publicly praised "the revered oral tradition of the Jews" in a sermon against Luther. The increasingly widespread currency of the Cabalistic-Hermetic traditions in Europe and England at the same time as there was increasing difficulty with the Church, was epitomized in Agrippa's many learned, high-ranking associates and his simultaneous need to safeguard himself with the publication of The Uncertainty and Vanity of the Sciences and Arts in 1526. This was a "satire from within" which displayed a vast knowledge of the Christian and occult traditions. After attacking both the Fathers and the Cabalists, he felt safe enough to finally publish On Occult Philosophy in 1531 (Blau, p. 80).

The most dominating figure of sixteenth-century occultism, however, was the physician, Paracelsus of Hohenheim (1493-1541), who drew heavily upon the occult traditions yet was a man of startling originality in everything he did. His whole life and work seemed an attempt at implimenting Ficino's ideal of the priest-physician. Paracelsus travelled all over Europe, India, and Egypt in search of "hidden wisdom,"⁹ and in his active, controversial life of research into scientific and religious problems, he prefigured the career of Emanuel Swedenborg in the eighteenth century. Like the Swedish seer-scientist, Paracelsus was interested in mining and metallurgy, practical chemistry and alchemy, and uninhibitedly in anatomy and priciples of sexuality. At the same time, he was a devout occultist and Christian, whose searches into arcana were motivated by a profound disgust with the spiritual conditions of his age.

Paracelsus based his doctrine of "signatures" on the correspondence between the upper and lower worlds, and directed his study of nature and human physiology to finding the elemental patterns or essences revealed in the manifested "signatures":

If we would know the inner nature of man by his outer nature; if we would understand his inner heaven by his outward aspect; if we would know the inner nature of trees, herbs, roots, stones, by their outward aspect, we must pursue our exploration of nature on the foundation of the Cabala. For the Cabala opens up access to the occult, to the mysteries; it enables us to read

⁹ Sunoon Kim, The Formative Factors in Jacob Boehme's Understanding of God (Temple University, Ph.D. Dissortation, 1971).

sealed epistles and books and likewise the inner nature of man . . . and it is founded on the works of Christ.¹⁰

In those "pre-scientific" days, Paracelsus had a genuine insight into the relationship of chemical properties, forces, magnetic influences, heat and cold, etc., which often gives his occult proclamations a startling modernity.

But Paracelsus did not divorce these physical processes from the spiritual world, for he defined an intermediary "spiritual substance of fine corporeality . . . the life of the object from which it is extracted in the form of a fluid," and which was the real object of his investigation and medical work. By manipulating the "sympathy" in nature between all the forces of attraction and repulsion, which exist within and between every element, the physician-magician may bring them into healthy equilibrium. This doctrine of the "magnetic fluid" gained amazing popularity in eighteenth-century "magnetic cures," as practiced in many Masonic societies.

In his vast faith in the powers of human imagination to pierce nature's secrets, Paracelsus epitomized the Renaissance belief in man's capacity to receive the divine mens:

Imagination is Creative Power. Medicine uses imagination fixed. Phantasy is not imagination, but the frontier of folly. He who is born in imagination discovers the latent forces of Nature.

¹⁰ Desirée Hirst, Hidden Riches: Traditional Symbolism from the Renaissance to Blake (London: Eyre, 1964), p. 64.

Imagination exists in the body without the perfect spirit. Because man does not imagine perfectly at all times, arts and sciences are uncertain, though, in fact they are certain, and obtained by means of imagination can give true results. Imagination takes precedence over all. Resolute imagination can accomplish all things (Hirst, p. 66. Italics mine)

Thus, Paracelsus summed up the Cabalistic belief that Adamic man falls through a failure or fragmentation of imagination and rises through the reconstruction into "holy equilibrium" of his imagination. In applying this occult concept clearly to art, Paracelsus made himself one of Blake's "masters."

Another sixteenth-century student of the occult traditions who is important to this study is Giordano Bruno (1548-1600), because the ramifications of his controversial career opens up the Pandora's Box of the "going underground" of the seventeenth-century occultists into secret societies.

Yates points out the irony of Bruno's heroic position in the history of science for his fearless advocacy of Copernicus' theory before the Doctors at Oxford in 1583, for Bruno's interest in Copernicus was as a reinforcer of his own Hermetic-Ficinian sun magic. Bruno actually belittled Copernicus for having understood his own theory only as a mathematician, whereas Bruno had seen its more profound magical meanings. Thus, Bruno really appeared at Oxford as an ultra-conservative, a believer in the magical religion of the Egyptians as described in the Aesclepius, prophesying its imminent return and taking the Copernican sun as a portent of this "restoration." To Bruno, the

scientific Copernican diagram was a hieroglyphic of divine mysteries (Yates, Bruno, p. 155).

The influence of Bruno's Hermetic theories on many Elizabethan writers is amply demonstrated by Yates (see Bruno, pp. 290, 356, 392), but what is most significant to Masonic history is Bruno's theory of "magic memory," and the probable transmission of this theory through later secret societies. Bruno based his concept of memory on Ficino's description of planetary images painted on a vaulted ceiling, which when memorized could reorganize the consciousness of the perceiver. Bruno utilized Agrippa's zodiacal and talismanic images to develop solar rites, in which the solar talisman was cultivated with rituals and solar hymns until the imagination received "a kind of imprint." The adept would then proceed to the Art of Memory with an imagination already stamped with celestial images, the necessary preliminary stage for magic memory. At the ultimate state, the magic images were placed on the wheel of the memory system, to which corresponded other wheels on which were remembered all the physical contents of the terrestrial world and the whole sum of human knowledge, accumulated through the images of great men and inventors. This complex material was geometrically arranged on the great wheel, and the possessor of this system thus rose above time and reflected the whole universe of nature and of man in his mind (Yates, Bruno, pp. 198-201). This ritualized method of imprinting geometrically arranged symbols on the "regenerated" imagination influenced various Masonic and Rosicrucian rites of graded initiation. Yates described many experiments in which he tried to imprint geometric patterns on the imaginations of fellow initiates, in order to evoke visions from "the great memory."

One of Bruno's many controversies brings us to the question of his influence on the formation of secret societies. This was his quarrel with Fabrizio Mordente in 1586 over the latter's invention of a new compass (a possible forerunner of Galileo's proportional compass), which he showed to Bruno. As with the Copernican diagram, Bruno published four dialogues about the compass, in which he patronized the inventor for not having seen the full meaning of his own invention. In Idiota Triumphans (1586), Bruno explained how Mordente's compass should be mystically interpreted by "mathesis," after the manner of the Pythagoreans and Cabalists. Mordente was furious and destroyed the editions of the dialogues, and then reported Bruno to the authorities in Paris. The "mystical compass" became a major emblem among anti-Catholic secret societies in the early seventeenth century and in later Freemasonry. The Brunonian interpretation of the emblem was absorbed into Masonic lore.

During his last years, Bruno travelled throughout Europe, preaching his Egyptian counter-reformation, based on a non-sectarian, magical view of the world, with its ceremonies based on his meditation and memory techniques. In Germany, he claimed to have founded a sect of "Giordanisti" among the Lutherans, and cut the blocks himself for the strange emblematic designs which were possibly used by members of the sect as its symbols or cipher messages (Yates, Bruno, pp. 31^h-20). When Bruno was imprisoned by the Inquisition in 1600, he refused to recant anything; he accepted the truth of the charges that he said there are innumerable worlds, magic is a good and licit thing, the Holy Spirit is the anima mundi, and Moses and Christ were Magi after the Egyptian manner.

But the Inquisition execution of Bruno was not motivated by the desire to repress a great modern scientist (the popular modern view) or to punish a magician (a widespread contemporary view), but to stop his organizing work among heretics (Yates, Bruno, p. 354). The striking resemblance to that other wandering proselytizer for a magical Egyptian reformation, Count Cagliostro, who was imprisoned by the Inquisition in the 1790's for his work in organizing the Egyptian Masonic movement, raises provocative questions about what became of the "Giordanisti" after Bruno's execution. In the next chapter of this study, it will become evident that many of Bruno's theories, and possibly his followers, were absorbed into the budding Rosicrucian and Masonic societies.

The final Renaissance Christian Cabalist to be discussed here is Jacob Boehme (1575-1624), who was a bridge figure into the seventeenth-century world of secret societies. Boehme embodied the most complex and eloquent development of Renaissance occultism, as well as the problems of increasing secrecy and "invisibility" which characterized occult practices from the seventeenth century on. His life was spent in the fin de siècle malaise in Germany, made turbulent by a profusion of chiliastic dreams and apocalyptic prophecies of millennial terror--a fin de siècle mentality strikingly repeated in the late second century A.D., the period after the 1492 expulsion of the Jews from Spain, the revolutionary turmoil of the 1790's, and the outburst of occultism in the 1890's when Yeats thought he saw the "trembling of the veil." Boehme's reaction to this millennial turbulence forms a prototype of the combination of radical politics, occultism, apocalyptic expectations, and secret societies, which have recurred so consistently in Western history.

Boehme grew up in a pious Lutheran family, in the same area where the "Giordanisti" allegedly functioned, and before he wrote the Aurora in 1612, he had already come into contact with alchemists and occultists. This first book showed his familiarity with the works of Paracelsus and the Christian Hermetists. It derived from Paracelsus' own Aurora and from his millennial prophecies which pointed toward the period of 1599-1603 as the age of regeneration.¹¹ Chapter 12 of Paracelsus' work foretold the time of wonder, with 1604 hinted at as the year when "Elias the Artist" would remove man's misery. Significantly this prophetic figure appeared again in the eighteenth century, when a shadowy personage called Elie Artiste was claimed as the Cabalistic mentor of the Swedenborgian Freemasons with whom William Blake was involved.

In 1600, the same year when Bruno was burned for his work among the Lutheran heretics, Boehme had a mystical "illumination." As Yeats described this visionary experience,

Boehme had for seven days what he called a waking trance that began by his gazing at a gleam of light on a copper pot and in that trance truth fell upon him "like a bursting shower."²

Boehme firmly believed that this vision into "the innermost ground or centre of the . . . hidden nature" was an apocalyptic message which heralded the coming of the

¹¹ J.J. Stouidt, Sunrise to Eternity: a Study in Jacob Boehme's Life and Thought (Pennsylvania Univ. Press, 1957), p. 33.

¹² W.B. Yeats, "Notes" to Lady Gregory's Visions and Beliefs in the West of Ireland (1914; New York: Oxford Univ. Press, rpt. 1970), p. 304.

new age (Hirst, p. 85). Though most critical books on Boehme pass over this period of his life as that of the innocent, unlearned shoemaker having spontaneous visions (much like the view of Blake as an innocent naïf), in the Aurora, he clearly stated his indebtedness to the "learned traditions" of his time.¹³ He stressed the mathematical and scientific skills of the alchemists and astrologers whom he knew and included bizarre mathematical and chemical symbolism in the Aurora. Besides an essentially Brunonian interpretation of "mathesis," Boehme referred to a strange magical wheel which certainly resembled Bruno's magical memory wheel:

For the being of God is like a wheel, wherein many wheels are made one in another, upwards, downwards, crossways, and yet continually turn, all of them together. Which indeed when man beholds the Wheel, he highly marvels at it, and cannot at once in its turning learn to conceive and apprehend it: But the more he beholds the wheel, the more he learns its Form or Frame; . . . and the greater longing he has to the wheel. (Aurora, I, 211)

That even at this early date Boehme was working with some secret group is revealed in the ciphers and odd initials used in the Aurora, i.e., "and R.A.RA.RP. will be pressed in the Winepress without the City, and therewith to R.P. These are hidden mystical words" (Aurora, I, 211). Significantly, these ciphers are mentioned by Boehme in connection with the impending revolution in which the secret things of a few men will be made open to all. Paul Arnold, in Histoire des Rose-Croix et les origines de la Franc-Maconnerie (Paris: Mercure de France,

¹³ The Works of Jacob Boehme, the Teutonic Philosopher, "with figures illustrating his principles, left by the Reverend William Law, M.A.," 4 vols (London: George Ward and Thomas Langcake, 1764-1781), I, Preface. All references to Boehme's works will be to this edition.

1955), p. 33, points out that similar initials were used by the first Rosicrucians, who were contemporaries and possibly co-workers with Boehme:

Suivent les initiales des six frères de la première ronde: Fr.I.A., Fr.C.H., chef de las fraternité par èlection, FR.G.V.M.P.G., FR.R.C. junior, héritier du Sain Esprit, FR.F.B.N.P.A. peintre et architecte, FR.GG.N.P.I. Cabbaliste et rois del deuxième ronde . . . successeur de pere Christian Rosencreutz triomphant dans le Christ.

Boehme began the Aurora in 1612, at the same time when the first Rosicrucian manifesto was circulating in manuscript, but did not get to finish it because it "was taken by violence from the author." In 1620, at the peak of Rosicrucian excitement in Germany, he added a note to the manuscript that "the Devil intended to put a stop to it, and suppress it, when he perceived that the Day would break forth therein" (Aurora, I, 269). He proclaimed that since he originally wrote it, the Aurora has passed and "the work has gone on by Day," thus referring to the period between 1614 and 1620 when the Rosicrucian Manifestoes and associated political activity were out in the open and creating great excitement in Germany.

Between 1613 and 1619, Boehme had been forbidden to write anything by the city magistrates of Görlitz, but it was during these "silent years" that he became the center of a group of high-ranking and learned occultists. Most important of them was Balthazar Walter, a brilliant Cabalist and distinguished physician. The Preface to the Aurora, written by Sparrow in 1665 and included in William Law's famous edition of 1764, described Walter in these terms:

Of those learned men who conversed with him in the greatest familiarity, was one Balthazar Walter; this gentleman was a Silesian by birth, by profession a physician, and had in search of the ancient Magic learning travelled through Egypt, Syria, [India] and Arabia, and found there such small remains of it, that he returned unsuccessful and unsatisfied into his own country, where hearing of his man (Boehme) he repaired to him, and did, as the Queen of Sheba with King Solomon, try him with those hard questions concerning the soul. (Aurora, I, xxi)

Apparently Walter had seen a copy of the still unpublished Aurora, known until 1620 as Morgenröthe im Anfang, which was circulated secretly in Germany. It was Walter who got Boehme to change the title to the Paracelsian one (Kim, p. 208).

The "hard questions" were later published, with Boehme's answers, as Forty Questions Concerning the Soul, "proposed by Dr. Balthazar Walter . . . including the Philosophic Globe or Wonder-Eye of Eternity, or Looking Glass of Wisdom." The reference to the Philosophic Globe is significant, for Walter took it from Reuchlin's De Arte Cabalistica and introduced Reuchlin's works to Boehme. The Cabalistic globe and "Wonder-Eye of Eternity" later became important Masonic emblems. Walter spent three months with Boehme, "had secret confidential talks with him" (Kim, p. 261), and taught him the Zoharic Cabala and other occult works such as the Jewish apocalypses and the Fourth Book of Ezra (Stoudt, p. 95).

Thus, during Boehme's seven-year silence, he became an accomplished Christian Cabalist, to the extent that he did not accept much of the Christianizing of the Cabala that had developed during the sixteenth century. For example, he always identified the Shekinah (or Wisdom, as he called

her), with the third member of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, rather than with the Son. He refused to identify the Shekinah with the Virgin Mary, and he viewed Christ's words, "It is finished," as representing the final reconstruction of his androgynous nature. But Boehme's descriptions of Christ as the Cabalistic Messiah were more powerful and convincing than any preceding Christian Cabalist. Through a profound understanding of the difficult concept of Ain Soph--or Ungrund, as he called it--Boehme defined a theosophy in which there is no God without Christ because Christ "is the discovery and power of the Father" (Kim, p. 389).

Boehme's training in Cabala stimulated more visionary experiences, and by 1619 he felt fully "illuminated." Encouraged by Walter and many occultist associates in high places, he defied the ban and began to write again:

I was not able to comprehend that light till the breath of the most high did help me again, and awakened a new light in me, and then I obtained a better style of writing, also a deeper and more grounded knowledge: I could bring everything better into outward expression . . . I have written out of my own book which was written within me. (Stoudt, p. 101)

The underlined phrases point to the breathing-techniques, visions of light, and exteriorization of mental images which were part of Boehme's Cabalistic trance experiences. His absorption in the narrative mythology of the Zohar also caused a significant change in his style, for the incredibly crabbed and convoluted mathematical and alchemical imagery--with its trinities and quaternities, saliters and oils, calcifications and precipitations, etc.--which characterized his pre-1613 works became

increasingly translated into emotional and psychological terms. But it is vital when studying Boehme to read the early work, in order to comprehend what complexities he strained to express in the later "humanistic" works. The anthropomorphism and vivid mythological style of the Zohar influenced him to relate the Brunonian "scientific" processes much more explicitly to human life, especially in its basic sexual nature.

In 1621 Boehme was definitely a member of a secret society, a "brotherhood of secret discourse"; his letters are full of veiled revelations and hints and warnings about concealing knowledge from the unworthy and uninitiated (Stoudt, p. 134). As will be shown in the next chapter, in 1620 all the suspected "Rosicrucian" occult societies underwent a devastating defeat and ongoing persecution. Boehme published furiously as theosophical hopes foundered, however, and underwent an exhausting trial for subversion and heresy just before his death in 1624. In the Preface to the 1665 English edition of the Aurora, there is a description of the emblems and mottos on his gravestone, which have been interpreted as secret ciphers by the many "Boehmenist" occultists who followed him (Aurora, I, xxii).

Despite the provocative evidence of Boehme's involvement in a secret society which had significant political and religious effects in Germany, and, eventually, in England, there has been no thorough study of his relation to other known occult orders of the day. He is usually treated in isolation from the historical context of Rosicrucianism and Cabalistic millennialism, much in the same way as Blake, a professed Boehmenist, is viewed as a cultural "aberration." But as Waite

points out, Boehme's version of the Renaissance occult traditions became "the source and well-spring of most Protestant theosophy down to the end of the eighteenth century . . . much as the French Magus Eliphas Lévi is the well-spring of modern occultism."¹⁴ Since the literary lineage from Boehme runs directly through Blake in England and Lévi in France to merge in the Cabalistic symbolism of Yeats, it is necessary for an understanding of the occultist content of this literary heritage to examine Boehme's central concepts.

Boehme translated the Cabalistic Ain Soph and Shekinah into the Ungrund and Grund (or Abyss and Byss). He paralleled the ten Sefirot with the alchemistical Trinity (Sulphur-Father, Mercury-Son, Salt-Holy Spirit) plus the seven Principles of Nature (Threefold Life of Man, II, 10). He identified the Holy Spirit with the third female Sefira, and defined it as the shaper or framer, "the essential creating power," which men receive through the imagination. In clearly recognizing the sexual nature of this psychic process, Boehme was able to deal with the Cabalistic concept of "equilibrium" in a provocative way. His equivalent term was the Tincture, an alchemical term from Paracelsus denoting the highest and most organized state of an essence, which Boehme raised into the primary state of God's own essence. The primary impulse within God is Desire, for "the Nothing hungers after the Something, and the Hunger is a Desire,

¹⁴ A.E. Waite, The Way of Divine Union (London: William Rider, 1915), p. 94.

viz. the Verbum Fiat." The transcendental sexual joy of this primary impulse was constantly emphasized:

The Eternal Understanding of the Abyss introduces itself into the Byss Essence; viz. into an eternal Generation and Devouring, wherein the manifestation of the Abyss consists, and it is an eternal Love-play; that the Abyss wrestles, sports, and plays with itself in its own conceived (or amassed) Byss; it gives itself into Something, and thence brings or gives forth another thing . . . When the powers of the Eternal Word . . . are made manifest . . . (that each Power or Property is manifest in itself, and enters into a Feeling, Tasting, Smelling, Hearing, Seeing each other in their holy conjunction; wherein the Real Divine Kingdom of Joy consists). (Mysterium Magnum, III, 22)

Thus, the Tincture is this state of perfect equilibrium between all elements within the individual and between man and woman in a vitalistic, dynamic condition of pure joy. This essentially orgasmic condition occurs within the imagination of the adept at the highest point of vision.

This harmony of Hearing, Seeing, Feeling, Tasting, Smelling, is the true Intellectual Life; for when one power enters into another, then they embrace each other in the Sound, and when they penetrate each other, they mutually awaken and know each other . . . as if the Mind did play and melodize in a Kingdom of Joy within itself. (Mysterium Magnum, III, 24)

This state is also the finding of the Philosopher's Stone and completion of the Great Work.

The fall of man, which brought the devastating Turba, or dislocation of Tincture, into the universe, was caused by Adam's failure of imagination. The profound disruption of human and cosmic equilibrium implied by the Turba fascinated Yeats, who wrote of visionary attempts to

*escape from the turba magna, the great wrath and dream-like transformation into the shape of beasts" (Visions and Beliefs, p. 339). In his poem, "The Magi," Yeats's famous line, "the uncontrollable mystery on the bestial floor," owes much to Boehme's concept. In the paradisaical state, Adam was the perfect manifestation of God, a spiritual "substance" in which the male and female potencies, which included an enormous number of chemical, mathematical and biological elements, "wrestled in perpetual loveplay." But Adam's imagination fragmented:

This was his fall: His soul imagined after the outward Fire of the Out-Birth, after the Spirit of this World [the Shekinah], and turned himself away from God, and desired to live in his own property (or self) . . . The soul became captivated in the fire of God's Anger: It had the heavenly Tincture no more. (Threefold Life of Man, II, 112)

Boehme used the Cabalistic version of Adam's concentration on the stern female Sephiroth alone, thus losing sight of the whole Sephirotic Tree, and he added Adam's concentration on his selfhood or proprium. This term became important to Swedenborg and Blake, who held "the annihilation of the Selfhood" as the necessary step to imaginative redemption. But as in the Cabala, and Boehme, Blake did not mean annihilation of the individual personality, but rather the reconstruction and intensification of that personality into a completed man --with the complex male and female elements of the psyche in perfect Tincture.

With the Fall, man gained his earthly body, split into separate male and female "envelopes." But God in his mercy gave man the holy sign of circumcision, which reveals that this is a fragmented state and in the supernal

world, man will have no bestial member. Thus, circumcision is a sign of baptism also; it is the symbolical key to the means of regeneration:

Herein lies the Philosopher's Stone (to know) how the Seed of Woman bruises the Serpent's Head, which done in the Spirit and Essence temporally and eternally; the seed of the Serpent is God's anger-fire and the woman's seed is God's love-fire, which must be again awakened and illustrate (shine through, irradiate) the Anger, and deprive the Wrath of its might, and put it into the Divine Joyfulness, and then the dead soul, which lay immersed in God's curse does arise . . . which does again make a Love-Essence in itself, viz. an heavenly body of the earthly . . . As God dwells in Time, and Time comprehends Him not, unless it be translated and wrapped up into Eternity, that the Divine Light does again shine in its source, and then the Time is manifest with Wonders in Eternity. (Signatura Rerum, IV, 41)

Boehme concluded this redemptive tikkun with the statement, "In the sweet name Jesus Christ the whole process is contained." It was in this sense that Boehme so shocked many of his contemporaries by interpreting the central Christian passion, Christ's crucifixion, as an emblem of his resumption of Tincture, his primordial androgynous state. For Boehme, like Blake, did not believe in the scapegoat nature of atonement; man must be his own savior through the "Christifying" of his own imagination. For Christ was the perfect man, and therefore the perfection of God.

One of the points of Boehme's "theosophy" (his own word) that so fascinated Goethe, Schelling, Blake, Coleridge, and Yeats, was the exalted role he gave to the Artist in the redemptive process. Boehme used Artist, Alchemist, Fabor(maker), and Smith synonymously, and

defined the Artist's labor as the reunification of the sick and dying old Adam (Signatura Rerum, IV, 32). Thus, the Artist "must have the understanding of the Generation of Nature . . . so he is able to Tincture Venus and Mars," he must reunite the Virgin Sophia and the faithless bridegroom, and he must complete the "Process of the Wise Men with the Precious Stone" (Signatura Rerum, IV, 63, 101, 41). As Boehme clearly explained, the "Process" is the sacramental marital union, both as an earthly reality and as an act of individual imagination. The Artist must assist the couple

. . . so they both in their Marriage Bed of Love might lift up their desire to God, and so with their desire God's essence may be pregnant in their desire, and then in their copulation they will beget such a child (the magical child) . . . But when the Essence is in its wrestling and combat, the Artist must assist the Soulish, viz. the fiery Property, till the Soul's Spirit attains its life . . . and the new Soul casts away the vegetable life of its parents. (Signatura Rerum, IV, 45).

That this state was the same as the visionary sexual experience of the Cabala was made clearer when Boehme advocated marriage and conception as sacramental acts and described marital consummation as an experience in which "the one imagination embraced and conceived the other" (Threefold Life of Man, II, iii).

But the process also took place within the individual imagination and was the generator of works of art and prophecy. The artistic spirit of God was called "the right Hammer," which strikes the soul so that the longing of love awakens the soul:

When the Hammer of the Holy Ghost sounds through the ears into the heart, then the Tincture of the soul receives it instantly . . . it unifies the longings and achieves the Balance. (Threefold Life of Man, II, 194)

This exalted role for the Artist found its greatest poetic expression in Blake's mythic figure of Los, who labors with his hammer at the furnaces to "keep the divine vision in time of trouble."

A further indication of the magical power of the Artist--for good or for evil--was Boehme's description of Lucifer as an Artist who abused his powers:

Lucifer had still been an angel . . . had he but continued in the Harmony wherein God created him . . . This beautiful star overshadowed its Light . . . His Meekness, wherein the Love-will arises, is shut up and entered again into a nothing . . . Was it not his [Lucifer's] purpose beforehand to rule the magical ground as an Artist? His aim and endeavor for the Art, that he would play with the center of the transmutation of properties . . . [He] desired to be an Artist, and absolute Lord, like the Creator. (Mysterium Magnum, III, 36)

Many of Blake's vehement diatribes against other artists were rooted in this attitude toward art. For Blake, following Boehme's theory of the Artist, bad art was not only "tasteless" but a real evil and a transcendental disaster.

As a final note regarding Boehme's relation to the secret societies of his day, whether Giordanisti, Rosicrucian, or some other, we need to point out the premises he held in common with them--i.e., his interest in healing and searching for the panacea, his opposition to repressive laws in church and state, and his non-sectarianism. To

Boehme, all visionaries, whether Turk, heathen, or Jew, were Christ-like, and he yearned for the reunification of man's individual magical consciousness which would lead to the reunification of religion. In his last work, Boehme piously called upon every man to be a "true Magus." That all of these doctrines were affirmed by the underground followers of Bruno, by the Rosicrucians, and by the early Freemasons, as the carnage of the Thirty Years War brought the terrible Turba into European life, provides some clues to the puzzling origins and motivations of these three mysterious movements.

Chapter III: The Rosicrucian Furore in Seventeenth-Century Germany and England

The period of Boehme's life, from 1614 to 1620, when he proclaimed that the Aurora had grown into the work of the daylight, was a period of crisis within Protestant resistance to the Hapsburg-Catholic domination of Europe. In The Rosicrucian Enlightenment, Francis Yates has analyzed for the first time the political context within which the German theosophical prophets operated, though she does not deal with Boehme in any detail. The six-year period of the "high noon" of the theosophical reform movement was also the "bright day" of hopes for an Anglo-German alliance, through the Protestant Elector of the Palatinate, Frederick V, and of the resounding Rosicrucian manifestoes which called for the political and spiritual reform of Protestantism. Interestingly, Yates' scholarly investigation largely documents the hypotheses about Rosicrucian and Masonic origins that A.E. Waite tentatively hazarded from his research in the archives and traditions of the modern Rosicrucian and Masonic societies.

In tracing the career of John Dee (1527-1608), the famous Elizabethan mathematician, geographer, astrologer, and occultist, Yates substantiates Waite's early conjecture that Dee probably stimulated and possibly founded an early Rosicrucian society.¹ The relation of Dee's proselytizing efforts for reform through magical religion and science

¹ A.E. Waite, The Real History of the Rosicrucians (London: George Redway, 1887), p. 15.

with those of his contemporary Giordano Bruno are intriguing scholarly questions, but still not fully investigated. Their paths crossed several times in the 1580's and 1590's, and both ended in personal disaster--Bruno burned at the stake in 1600, Dee dying in poverty and disgrace in 1608.

After a distinguished scientific career and role as astrologer to Queen Elizabeth, in 1583 Dee suddenly left his circle of close and brilliant friends (centered on Sir Phillip Sidney, who studied "chemistry" under Dee) to spend six mysterious years in Bohemia, trying to influence the Emperor Rudolph II in his far-reaching "imperial mysticism" and magical reform. Dee's political plans were based on Sidney's and Leicester's hopes for a Protestant League in Europe. Sidney himself had visited Rudolph II in Prague in 1577, and sought out Protestant leaders in the Palatinate, seeking their support for the league. After Sidney's death in 1586, his closest friend, Edward Dyer, kept up the Anglo-German contacts (Yates, Rosicrucian, p. 15).

As noted earlier, Bruno came to England in 1583 and debated the "podants" at Oxford, a visit that overlapped for a short but significant time with Dee's presence, and which revealed their mutual involvement with the Polish occultist, Albrecht Laski, the Palatine of Sieradz.² Though Laski has traditionally been pictured as a credulous, profligate, and ambitious "alchemist," the circumstances of his visit to England in 1583 suggest a more serious

² Robert J.W. Evans, Rudolph II and His World (Oxford: Clarendon, 1973), p. 219.

purpose. He was given a "lavish but serious reception" by Sidney and Leicester, and was introduced by them to Dee and his new assistant, Edward Kelley. Later a stay in Oxford was arranged (probably by Sidney), and Queen Elizabeth ordered "entertainment" for Laski, which included the famous debate by Bruno, in which he upheld Copernicus' findings as proof of his own Ptolemaic sun-magic. On the way back to London from the debates, Sidney and Laski visited Dee and Kelley, who together entered Laski's service when he left England. The three occultist reformers then travelled together to Poland (Evans p.220). In the meantime, Bruno stayed on in London until 1585, where Sidney included him in his circle and probably learned about "magic mnemonics" from him (which had a possible influence on Sidney's important Apology for Poetry, first written in 1583).³

It is well known that Dee's departure for the Continent was precipitated by his meeting with Edward Kelley (1555-1598?), whose mysterious past included attendance at Oxford, a secretaryship with Thomas Allen, the occultist, and several brushes with the law (including one which resulted in the cutting off of his ears, hence his famous skull cap). Kelley presented himself at Dee's house in 1582, where he introduced himself as a spiritualistic medium. Dee had spent years in Hermetic and Cabalistic research, but Kelley astounded him with the visions he could see in Dee's "shew-stone."⁴ With

³ Peter J. French, John Dee (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), p. 149.

⁴ Theodore Besterman, Crystal-gazing (1924; New Hyde Park, New York, new ed. 1965).

Kelley as "skryer," Dee began the nearly eight years of seances in which they communicated with angels, who revealed to them the need and the methods for the magical regeneration of mankind. Dee's minutes of these seances cover hundreds of pages of his Spiritual Diaries. The sessions continued on Laski's estates in Poland and at the nearby university town of Cracow, where Dee sought out other scientists and occultists. At this time, Dee was obsessed with number mysticism and Cabalistic manipulations.

In August 1584, Dee and Kelley went to Prague, where Dee sought in Rudolph II a vehicle for the same magical reform he had preached in Poland. As Dee made clear in his supplication to Rudolph, he had already served a Hapsburg emperor, when he visited Rudolph's father, Maximilian II, at Pressburg in 1563 and dedicated his vast Monas Hieroglyphica to him. Since many other Magi and reformers came to Prague in the late sixteenth century--including Sidney, Edward Dyer, the young Henry Wotton, Kepler, Tycho Brahe, Bruno, and Boehme--a brief account of Rudolph's court, the mecca of wandering scientists and occultists, may throw some light on the peculiar fin de siècle milieu, which erupted in the public Rosicrucian furor in 1614.

Though Rudolph II (1552-1612), as Holy Roman Emperor and King of Bohemia and Hungary, was Catholic and Hapsburg, he held aloof from the fanaticism of his nephew, Philip II of Spain, and a mainspring of his policy was a growing revulsion against the Papacy. He turned to the Renaissance "religion of the world" and welcomed students of the ancient theosophical traditions to his court. On his death bed, he adamantly refused the last rites of the

Catholic Church (Evans, p. 86). Under Rudolph's influence, Prague became a center for alchemical, astrological, and magico-scientific studies of all kinds, and became a relatively tolerant city in an increasingly intolerant era. Rudolph allowed Jews full freedom for their Cabalistic studies and officially tolerated the native Protestant church (Yates, Rosicrucian, p. 17).

The Prague that Dee came to in 1584, and Bruno in 1588, centered on the spectacular castle where Rudolph amassed his enormous collection of paintings, sculpture, jewelry, magico-mechanical artifacts, and alchemical laboratory equipment. In the center of the city also was the Prague Ghetto, where the Jews prospered and enjoyed a revived intellectual life based on renewed study of the Cabala (Evans, p. 240). The Prague Cabalists were especially interested in the system of Isaac Luria, which stressed millennialist reform and theories of creative or visionary prayer. The famous Rabbi Loew of Prague (1520-1609), whom legend says created the golem, was an erudite Cabalist and friend of Rudolph. But the most "Jewish" influence on Rudolph came through Johann Pistorius (1564-1608), a Jew who converted first to Lutheranism, then Calvinism, then Catholicism. Pistorius, who edited one of the leading collections of Cabalistic writings in the Renaissance, was Rudolph's favourite religious advisor. Towards the end of his life, Pistorius openly recanted his youthful involvement with practical Cabala, which he then dismissed as a "Lutheran stupidity"-- a provocative phrase, in the light of the Luthoran connections of Bruno, Dee, and Boehme.

Under Rudolph's patronage, "mannerist" art flourished, for the Emperor loved highly erotic, mythological canvases, with stylized and contorted couples. Evans points out that Rudolph and his artists were preoccupied with "suggestive, even indecent" subjects in the 1580's and 1590's (Evans, p. 167). The art works abounded in occult and alchemical symbolism, and Rudolph used his collection "for private contemplation," suggesting the influence of Cabalistic sexual-trance and meditation techniques on his attitude to works of art. The Emperor was highly secretive about his collection, and the artists at court formed a close-knit, esoteric group, who were linked to the alchemists in their mutual emphasis also on the applied arts. In the light of Ficino's theory of art as talismanic magic, Bruno's theory of art as an aid to "magical memory," and Boehme's theory of art as the stimulator of psycho-sexual Tincture, it is interesting to note Rudolph's amassment of a famous collection of Dürer and Brueghel, whose styles seemed to him to best manifest "art as magic." Rudolph's interpretation of the magical style is instructive when dealing with Blake's similar "Mannerist" work. What appealed to the Cabalistic visionary in Rudolph was the combination of monumentality and precise observation of detail in these works, as in Blake's "giant forms" and "minute particulars." Evans notes that the engravers and printers, as well as the artists, who were so instrumental in the spread of occultist literature from the 1580's until 1620 were "not only business men but initiates" (p. 282), a situation which was repeated among Blake's Masonic friends in the engraving and printing business.

John Doe apparently had a difficult time trying to

penetrate into the Emperor's secret world. Though he stayed in Prague nearly two years, he got to see the Emperor only once and was constantly harassed by a Catholic intrigue against him. One possibility for the suspicions about Dee was that his séances with Kelley in 1585 stimulated many to chiliastic dreams and the fervent belief that Kelley's Cabalistic "angels" were revealing a divine prophecy. This millennial provocation is documented in the papers of that strange Italian heretic, rebel, and wanderer, Francesco Pucci, who attended the séances and wrote in a 1585 letter:

I heard from the angel most weighty propositions concerning the coming of Anti-Christ in a short space and received great confirmation of my hopes for an imminent renovation of all things, which God will accomplish through persons authorized by him and adequate to that task. (Evans, p. 103)

Pucci's revolution would provide renewal through the education and dictation of "an enlightened College," a phrase that became increasingly important in the controversies over the Rosicrucians and the "invisible college" in England. The question of whether Pucci was a Catholic spy (as Dee came to suspect), or a genuine reformer, is an open one, despite his execution by the Inquisition in 1597.

Dee's séances and revolutionary proselytizing caused Rudolph's Catholic advisers to push for his banishment, but he gained refuge with Count Rosenberg, on his adjoining estate of Trebona. Rosenberg's court was second only to Rudolph's in alchemical and occult interests, and his family also came to the aid of the Rosicrucian movement twenty-five years later. The séances continued at Trebona, punctuated by visits from Laski and

Sidney's friend, Edward Dyer, until Dee returned to England in 1589. On his journey home, Dee met Heinrich Khunrath, the great Christian Cabalist, in Bremen and apparently influenced him to seek employment with the Rosenbergs. Khunrath became court physician to Rosenberg in 1591, and worked on the series of books which culminated in Amphitheatrum Sapientiae Aeternae Christiana-Kabalisticum (first published in 1595, with many subsequent editions). His massive works were filled with Cabalistic incantations and visions of a "Sophic Utopia," which were echoed in many Rosicrucian works (Evans, pp. 212-214).

Edward Kelley moved to Prague after Dee's departure, where he gained great alchemical fame. Dyer persuaded Queen Elizabeth and Lord Burghley, who were both interested in alchemy, to try to lure Kelley back to England.⁵ But he stayed on in Prague until Rudolph apparently became disillusioned with his alchemical skills and imprisoned him. An attempted escape injured Kelley, who died sometime between 1595 and 1598. Back in England, Dyer maintained his own alchemical and Cabalistic interests until his death in 1607. John Aubrey, in his Lives, said Dyer "labour'd much in chymistry, was esteemed by some a Rosicrucian, and a great devotee to Dr. John Dee and Edward Kelley" (DNB). Dyer's famous poem, "My mind to me a Kingdom is," reflects the intellectual "enthusiasm" of this whole era of projected "visionary reform."

⁵ Ralph M. Sargent, At the Court of Queen Elizabeth: the Life and Lyrics of Edward Dyer (Oxford, 1935), pp. 102 ff.

In the meantime, while all these English secret manoeuvrings were taking place, Bruno came to Prague in 1588. He had been teaching in France and Wittenberg, but now dedicated a small book, One Hundred Sixty Articles against the Mathematicians, to Rudolph in Prague. The work heralded "the whole Brunonian philosophy of a true universal religion rooted in occultism, and the salvation of mankind through the intuitions of an intellectual elite" (Evans, p. 230). The body of the volume continued his quarrel with Mordente over the mystical significance of his compass. Bruno had many contacts in Prague, but it is still unknown whether he saw Dee and Kelley there. From Prague, he went to Brunswick where he worked with Duke Julius of Brunswick, who later himself went to Prague and worked closely with Rudolph in his last years. The royal family of Brunswick continued to be involved in occult interests and societies throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and in the pre-Revolutionary decades of the latter century, another Duke of Brunswick played a major role in the Rosicrucian branches of Freemasonry which influenced William Blake.

The final figure at Rudolph's court to be briefly noted here provides a transition from the intrigues of Dee and Bruno in the 1580's and 1590's to the turbulent revolutionary outbursts of 1614. This was Michael Maier (1568-1622), court physician to Rudolph until 1612, when at the Emperor's death, he moved to the court of Hesse-Cassel, another scene of occultist activities throughout the next two centuries.⁶ From Hesse-Cassel, Maier

⁶ See J.B. Craven, Count Michael Maier (Kirkwall, England: William Poace, 1910).

visited England several times and was intimate with Robert Fludd, whom many consider his disciple. Maier was a Lutheran, Paracelsan, alchemist, and Christian Cabalist, and produced a remarkable series of occultist emblematic works between 1614 and 1620, all published in the Rhineland Palatinate, where the scene of the occultist reform movements shifted after Rudolph's death. He also published two famous defenses of the Rosicrucians in 1617 and 1618, and thus provides our first definite link between Rudolph's world and the Protestant Palatinate of Frederick V.

In her pioneering work on the political events occasioned by Rudolph's death, Frances Yates has shown how 1612 marked a crisis for the Protestant reform movements. The Bohemian succession went briefly to Rudolph's aged brother and then in 1617 to the fanatical Catholic-Hapsburg, Archduke Ferdinand of Styria, a pupil of the Jesuits, who was determined to stamp out heresy (Yates, Rosicrucian, p. 17). Ferdinand thought he faced a movement of formidable proportions in the Rosicrucian developments within the Rhineland Palatinate. The passionate hopes and crushing disasters, which involved many important figures in England and Germany in the affairs of Frederick V, had ramifications into the European Thirty Years War and the English Civil War. As Yates points out, the major Protestant hopes were pinned on a royal wedding.

When Princess Elizabeth, daughter of the English King James I, married Frederick V, Elector Palatine of the Rhine, in 1613, the Protestant forces in Germany had high hopes of using English influence and power to defy the increasingly oppressive Catholic-Hapsburg power.

The wedding was enormously popular in England and preceded by great festivities. Francis Bacon and Inigo Jones, whose names became involved in many Rosicrucian-Masonic controversies, both devised masques for the wedding. Shakespeare probably inserted the masque in The Tempest for performance before the royal bride and groom. Parliament backed the political goals of the marriage, but was soon to find that James I indeed ruled by "divine right," without Parliament, thus setting in motion an eventual Bohemian tragedy and the discords which finally erupted in the English Civil War (Yates, Rosicrucian, p. 24).

When the young couple arrived at Heidelberg Castle, however, the world seemed all before them. Salomon de Caus, a friend of Inigo Jones, developed the "magical gardens" and grottoes, with speaking statues, singing fountains, and other mechanical marvels, until the palace seemed a magician's dream. Both De Caus and Jones were influenced by Hermetic-Cabalistic theories of art (which was apparently the major reason for Jones' quarrel with Ben Jonson, who poured ridicule on occultists of all kinds). Frederick was also interested in alchemy and occult theosophy, and may have had contacts with some of the numerous secret society members in the Palatinate.

Under the guidance of Christian of Anhalt, Frederick became the standard-bearer of the attempted Protestant-theosophic revolution which the Rosicrucian manifestoes began to herald in his lands. Anhalt was a friend of the Rosenberg family in Bohemia, who had hosted John Dee in the 1580's, and who maintained their patronage of occult reformers for many years. Anhalt's physician, Oswald

Croll, was a famed Paracelsan alchemist and Cabalist, and had acted as Anhalt's agent to Rudolph II (Evans, p. 142). At some time, still unknown, Balthazar Walter, who was Boehme's Cabalistic mentor, became physician to the Anhalt family (Hirst, p. 86).

Under the tolerant, theosophic reign of Frederick V and Anhalt, the Palatinate became the scene of the sensational and mysterious movement occasioned by the publication from 1614 to 1616 of three Rosicrucian manifestoes in German and Latin. The pamphlets affirmed that a secret and mysterious order had subsisted in Germany for nearly two centuries, full of a strange knowledge derived "from a hidden center in the Near Eastern World" (Waite, Rosicrucians, p. 2). Since Safed in Palestine had developed into a center of Cabalistic studies, featuring the apocalyptic mysticism of Isaac Luria (1534-1572), which was popular in Rudolph's Prague and had much in common with the tone of the manifestoes, there may be some basis in fact for the "legendary" attribution to a "center in the Near Eastern world" (see Scholem, Major Trends, p. 253, for the Cabalistic possibilities). The first Rosicrucian pamphlet, Fama Fraternitatis, or "A discovery of the most noble order of the Rosy Cross," appeared publicly in 1614, though it had circulated in manuscript as early as 1610.

The Fama called for the "Universal and General Reformation of the whole wide World" and the development of a perfect method for all the arts and sciences; it then attacked the restrictive authority of the Pope, Aristotle, and Galen. The legendary founder of the order was a certain Christian Rosencreutz, born in 1378, who gained illumination in the Near East, North Africa and

Spain. He organized a fraternity based on the teachings of Paracelsus and the Christian Cabala, and built a "House of the Holy Spirit" as the center of instruction, where "Students of Nature" would share their knowledge. Rosencreutz bequeathed to the brothers a magical language and writing, with a large dictionary, and the mysterious book "M." Their rules were to heal the sick free of charge; to follow the mode of dress and language of whatever country they were in; to meet once a year at the House of the Holy Spirit; to train and appoint a successor before each one died; and to remain silent for a hundred years (Yates, Rosicrucian, p. 243). When Rosencreutz died in 1484, he was secretly buried in a vault which he had designed. In 1604, after the hundred-year silence had been fulfilled, the vault was discovered and this signalled the new millennial regeneration:

We know that . . . there will now be a general reformation, both of divine and human things . . . for it is fitting that before the rising of the Sun, there should break forth Aurora, or some clearness, or divine light in the sky. And so in the meantime some few, who shall give their names, may join together, thereby to increase the number and respect of our Fraternity. (Yates, Rosicrucian, p. 249)

The similarity of wording and purpose to Boehme's Aurora, written in the same year, is unmistakable. The Fama referred to two new stars, which appeared in 1604, and this was the date when Paracelsus' prophecy said Elias the Artist would manifest the New Day. The vault in which Rosencreutz' body was miraculously preserved became a central feature of the Rosicrucian legend. It was lighted by an inner sun, included Paracelsus' works, many treasures, magical bells and ever-burning lamps, and was

decorated with occult emblems. A.E. Waite has pointed out the similarity of this tale with that of finding Hiram Abif's tomb in Freemasonry. (Waite, Rosicrucians, p. 139).

The Fama caused a sensation and was followed in 1415 by the Confessio Fraternitatis, in Latin and addressed "to all the learned of Europe." The first edition contained a commentary written by "Phillip a Gabella," a pseudonym which possibly recurs in the late seventeenth-century Comte de Gabalis, hero of a famous Rosicrucian romance. Gabella's "Brief Consideration" was based on John Dee's Monas Hieroglyphica and linked the words Rose and Cross with the alchemical terms, Ros(dew) and Crux (solvent of gold). This second pamphlet was even more stirring with its millennial predictions, criticisms of the oppressors of the world, and its visions of a new society of learned "illuminati" (see Waite, Rosicrucians, pp. 87, 109; Yates, Rosicrucian, p. 45). Hundreds of pamphlets were printed in response to the Confessio, but none of them were publicly answered.

The third pamphlet, The Chemical Wedding of Christian Rosencreutz (1616), was an alchemical romance, following the Seven Days of initiation of Rosencreutz in a fantastic castle, with visions, theatrical performances, ceremonies of initiation into chivalric orders, and alchemical labors. It is certain that Johann Valentin Andraea was the author of this pamphlet, and probably of the two preceding ones.⁷ Andraea's connection with

⁷ C.H. Joston, "Truth's Golden Harrow," Ambix, 3 (April 1949), p. 100.

Palatinate politics and later English theosophical and political movements provides the best clues available on the origin and nature of the "invisible colleges" of the seventeenth century--both in England and Germany.

Andraea (1586-1654) was a native of Wurtemberg, the Lutheran state which adjoined the Palatinate. At the University of Tübingen Andraea combined an interest in the English theater, especially through contacts with travelling English players, and in political reform. Ben Jonson scornfully referred to the relation of English actors to "Rosicrucianism" (Yates, Rosicrucian, p. 143). During Andraea's student days, the reigning Duke of Wurtemberg, Frederick I, was an alchemist, occultist, and enthusiastic Anglo-ophile. Hoping to establish an alliance with Queen Elizabeth and to obtain the Order of the Garter, Frederick I visited England several times, and welcomed English visitors to his court and university. Elizabeth allowed his election to the Garter in 1597, but it was actually conferred upon him in 1603, in Stuttgart, by special embassy from the new king, James I (Yates, Rosicrucian, pp. 30-32). The lavish ceremonies and theatrical entertainments accompanying the Garter ceremony, which took place in Tübingen as well as Stuttgart, impressed Andraea enormously, and he wrote an early, unpublished Chemical Wedding in 1603, which was a highly theatrical, chemical romance of chivalric initiations.

The year after the Garter ceremony, in 1604, Simon Studion dedicated to the Duke of Wurtemberg his Naometria, a wildly apocalyptic work which implied a secret Protestant alliance between Protestant France, England, and Denmark, which had been in existence since 1586 and was called the

"Militia Evangelica." The immense work used involved numerology based on Biblical descriptions of the measurements of Solomon's Temple and interpreted certain dates of European history in terms of a Protestant revolution. A.E. Waite investigated the unpublished manuscript of Naometria in Stuttgart and affirmed it as a basic source for the Rosicrucian movement.⁸ Since Studion's type of prophecy recurred in the Rosicrucian and Masonic movements of the late eighteenth century--especially that of Blake's acquaintance Richard Brothers, in the 1790's--it is instructive to compare it to the later occultist prophecies of the French Revolutionary era. Andreae, the prime force behind the Rosicrucian movement in its earliest days, definitely drew upon the Naometria, which he mentioned by name in Turris Babel, sive Judisorum de Fraternitate Rosaceae Crucis Chaos (Strasbourg, 1619). Studion's relation of English politics to German Protestant reform movements and stress upon 1620 as a date of great crisis, were echoed in Andreae's works (Yates, Rosicrucian, pp. 33-35).

When Frederick V, recently made a Knight of the Garter by James I, moved into Heidelberg Castle in 1613, there were once more elaborate ceremonies heralding the re-affirmed Anglo-German Protestant alliance. In 1616, when Andreae published his revised Chemical Wedding at Strasbourg, he drew upon the two previous Rosicrucian manifestoes, which most scholars now view as his own, and added a fantastic description of a magical castle (which greatly resembles Heidelberg), and of more chivalric

⁸ A.E. Waite, The Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross (London, 1924), pp. 639 ff.

Initiations (much like the Garter ceremonies). The second manifesto, the Confessio, had appeared in 1615, preceded in the volume by Gabella's work based on Dee's Monas Hieroglyphica. In the Chemical Wedding, Andreae used Dee's Monas symbol in the margin beside a poem dealing with "The Royal Wedding" (Josten, "John Dee," p. 98). Josten points out that the Monas symbol also appeared in the English translation of Boehme's Clavis (1624). Yates thinks Andreae's early alchemical romance was updated to represent Frederick V and Elizabeth in Heidelberg castle, with its magic gardens and artistic marvels, and their euphoric hopes for a theosophical-political reformation, which Andreae hoped their reign would bring about.

The Chemical Wedding stirred the controversy over the Rosicrucian "invisibles" to new heights, and a flood of pamphlets attacking or defending them poured from German and French presses. In the early eighteenth century, Lenglet du Fresnoy's Histoire de la philosophie hermetique, tome III (Paris: 1742), listed nine hundred forty seven works for or against the Rosicrucians in the first years-- an important tabulation, since so many of the pamphlets are now lost (Arnold, Histoire, p. 140). Andreae became disturbed at the controversy, which he called a furor, and passed off his Chemical Wedding as a "ludibium" or theatrical farce. But he next published Invitatio fraternitatis Christi ad amoris candidatos (1617), a serious invitation to all high-minded men to form a Christian society or brotherhood which would carry out the basic Rosicrucian aims of scientific and philosophic study for the good of mankind.⁹

⁹ Margaret Bailey, Milton and Jakob Boehme (New York: Oxford, 1914), p. 18.

Andreae actually established such a society between 1618 and 1620, and evidence of its program and purpose turned up recently among Samuel Hartlib's papers. Two small Latin works by Andreae, A Modell of a Christian Society (1619) and The Right Hand of Christian Love Offered (1620), which had long been lost, were found in the 1647 English translation of John Hall. The translator addressed Hartlib as an acquaintance of Andreae's "Christian Society":

Your self (who were acquainted with some members of this society in Germany) can witness tis more than an Idaea; and tis a great deal of pity both that warre discontinued it when it was first instituted; and that it is not again revived.
(Yates, Rosicrucian, p. 151)

According to the Modell, the head of the society was a German prince, and a letter written by Andreae in 1642 to Prince August, Duke of Brunswick and Luneberg, suggests that he was the head. The connection of Samuel Hartlib with Andreae's society is highly significant and will be discussed in the next chapter, especially as it concerns his work with the "invisible college" in England and his friendship with John Milton. It will also become evident later that the Duke of Brunswick preserved the documents and rituals of this secret society, which his descendants continued to use in Rosicrucian rites of Freemasonry in the eighteenth century. Both Swedenborg and Blake were involved in these occultist movements.

The two works in Hartlib's possession described a society of pious men, gathered for scientific investigation of nature and theosophical speculation, who aimed to apply their findings to benefit mankind. But Andreae's greatest description of his Sophic Utopia was in Christia-

nopolis (1619), a work which attempted to give a more lucid and less sensational form to his Rosicrucian visions. Andreae's work shows the influence of Campanella's City of the Sun, for one of Andreae's friends, Tobias Adami, actually visited Campanella in prison in Italy and brought his manuscripts back to Tübingen in 1613 (Arnold, Histoire, p. 63). Campanella's own interest in a Rosicrucian-style reform movement was demonstrated in his De Sensu Rerum et Magia (Frankfurt, 1620), which attempted to merge neo-Platonism and Cabalism (Waite, HK, p. 71).

The preface to Christianopolis praised men of spirit who called for a time of spiritual renewal. Referring to the Rosicrucian furor of the past few years, Andreae revealed why he dropped the open use of Rosicrucian terminology:

A certain Fraternity, in my opinion a joke, but according to theologians a serious matter . . . promised . . . the greatest and most unusual things, even those things which men generally want, it added also the exceptional hope of the correction of the present corrupted state of affairs, and . . . the imitation of the acts of Christ. What a confusion among men followed the report of this thing, what a conflict among the learned, what an unrest and commotion of impostors and swindlers . . . Some made accusation against the principles of Christian life as heresy and fanaticism.¹⁰

Despite his denigration of the sensation (and subsequent witch-hunts) which the manifestoes set off, Andreae's Utopian city was obviously a fulfillment of the Rosicrucian vision of a Christian Cabalistic, alchemystical brotherhood,

¹⁰ F.E. Held, Christianopolis, an Ideal State of the Seventeenth Century (Oxford, 1916), p. 138.

whose scientific researchers would investigate the microcosm as one harmonious world of correspondences.

The period from 1619 to 1620, when Andreae published his plans for "pansophic" colleges of "illuminati," were the high point of Frederick V's Protestant cause. In 1619, the Bohemian Protestants rebelled against the Hapsburg Emperor Ferdinand and claimed that the Bohemian crown was elective rather than hereditary. Stimulated by Anhalt, the rebels offered the crown to Frederick, Elector Palatine. Frederick pondered the move for a month, which prompted the poet, John Donne, who preached before Frederick at Heidelberg, to write of his own involvement in Frederick's decision. When Frederick decided to accept the Bohemian crown, Protestant reformers in England and Germany were jubilant. As noted earlier, Jacob Boehme, who lived within the Bohemian realms, declared that in 1619 he received a new illumination and resumed the writing of his theosophic scheme for regeneration with increased millennial fervor. In fact, Boehme was definitely in Prague in 1620, and paid other visits to Cabalistic groups there.

Frederick and Elizabeth moved their court to Prague and spent the winter of 1619-1620 in Rudolph's castle, surrounded by his fabulous occult and artistic collections. Despite enthusiastic popular and parliamentary support in England, however, James I refused to back his daughter's venture. When James, in his "frantic cult of Spanish friendship," abandoned Elizabeth, the German Protestant princes wavered and did not come to Frederick's assistance when the Hapsburg armies attacked. At the battle of White Mountain, outside Prague, Frederick's armies were

completely defeated on 8 November 1620. The Spanish Army invaded the Palatinate, and Frederick and Elizabeth fled to an exile's life at The Hague--to be known henceforth as "the winter king and queen" of Bohemia. The native Bohemian church was completely suppressed, and mass executions and purges exterminated all resistance (Yates, Rosicrucian, pp. 22-24).

But it was in England that the most far-reaching effects of the Palatinate and Rosicrucian effort at reform were to be found. Both the hopes and the disasters had a direct impact on English political and religious developments in the next half-century. James I's action, or lack of action, and his rejection of the will of Parliament, which was unanimous in support of Frederick, aggravated the internal unrest in England which eventually led to the Civil War. The defeat in Europe, meanwhile, riveted Hapsburg domination on Germany and Central Europe for another decade, and initiated the Thirty Years War (Yates, Rosicrucian, p. 23)

The major early channel of Rosicrucian ideals from Germany into England came from defenses of the Rosicrucians in the midst of the furore by the German Michael Maier and the Englishman Robert Fludd. Both had their works published in the Palatinate by Theodore de Bry, who had deliberately come to the Palatinate in 1613 to work under Frederick V. De Bry moved back and forth from London to the Palatinate, and fled to Frankfurt during the devastation of 1620. As noted earlier, Maier visited London several times and became intimate with Robert Fludd, probably before the Welsh physician published his first book, an apology for the Rosicrucians, in 1616. Maier

mentioned other Englishmen he met, but as Josten concludes,

We know little more about the personal relations of the whole group of learned men who backed the Rosicrucian cause in the early seventeenth century--such as Maier, Fludd, Andreao, Morsius, Sporber--than that they were in contact, and we can only presume that they could have met through the agency of some already existing secret alchemical or mystical society. (Josten, "Golden Harrow," p. 100)

Maier's most famous work, the Atalanta Fugiens (1618), was a book of complicated emblems in which spiritual alchemy reached a high point of artistic development. It should be compared with Dionysius Andreas Froher's emblems of the 1720's which illustrated Boehme's works, and which were greatly admired by the Rosicrucian associates of Blake and Yeats. In his two defenses of the Rosicrucians, Silentium Post Clamores (1617) and Themis Aurea (1618), Maier responded to the Rosicrucian manifestoes in a manner that seemed both to give and withhold information. He maintained that the Rosicrucian fraternity actually existed but that he was too humble to be a member of such an exalted brotherhood (Yates, p. 85). In affirming the Rosicrucians' concern with experiment and tentative inquiry in the investigation of nature, Maier was possibly influenced by Francis Bacon's Advancement of Learning (1605). In the Themis Aurea, Maier purported to reveal the structure and laws of the Rosicrucian Society, and discussed its grades in terms of an Order of Chivalry--including the Order of the Garter--in similar fashion to Andreao's Chemical Wedding (1616).

Maier disappeared at Magdeburg in 1622 when the Hapsburg troops took that city, but his friend and possible agent, Robert Fludd, lived on in a quiet village in Kent until 1637. During that period, Fludd became the most important figure--and still a puzzling one--in the early history of Rosicrucianism and Freemasonry in England.¹¹ Fludd took a degree from Oxford and then traveled in Europe from 1596 to 1602, when he could have met Maier and other Cabalists in Germany. In 1605, he finished a medical degree at Oxford and became a successful Paracelsan physician, known for his healing influence on the minds of his patients as well as his pharmaceutical skills. His writings cover a wide array of subjects, including medicine, physiognomy, mechanics, pneumatics, surveying, optics, music, cosmology, and meteorology, as well as Cabalistic philosophy, alchemy, astrology, chiromancy, and geomancy. His illustrations to optic experiments are still in use, and he was possibly the inventor of the thermometer. As Josten remarks: "He combined a very systematic mind with originality and an exalted flight of imagination" ("Golden Harrow," p. 96).

Fludd's defenses of the Rosicrucians provide an example of the difficulty of documenting Rosicrucian history. As a matter of policy, the Rosicrucians would not reply to either their admirers or critics; thus, the usual way of trying to contact them was to publish something addressed to them. If this approach was

¹¹ J.B. Craven, Doctor Robert Fludd: the English Rosicrucian (Kirkwall, England: Occult Research Press, 1902).

responded to, the vow of silence would be imposed. Therefore, most of the documents we have on the Rosicrucians were from public addresses to them or apologies for their beliefs, rather than actual Rosicrucian replies. In fact, the theme of Maier's Silence after Noise was the withdrawal into invisibility after the loud trumpeting of the Rosicrucian manifestoes (Yates, Rosicrucian, p. 75).

Fludd's first work, probably stimulated by Maier, was his Apologia Compendiaria (1616), a defense against Libavius' attacks on the Rosicrucians as rebellious heretics. Fludd maintained that the brothers were indeed anti-papal, but were true Christians, illuminated by God. In the attached Epilogue from the author to the "Fratres de Roses Crucis," he informed the brothers of the society that he would be overjoyed to become the latest member of the group. Thus, in 1616, Fludd assumed that the Rosicrucian order existed as a tangible organization of living individuals. The Declaratio Brevis, which Fludd addressed to James I at the same time, exonerated the brothers from charges of heresy, and demonstrated again Fludd's belief in the actual existence of the Rosicrucians, for as Josten asserts, "surely no one would have sent such a declaration to the king in defence of mere allegories" (Josten, "Golden Harrow", p. 99). Fludd also appended letters from French and German friends who supported the Rosicrucian aims. His next public defense, The Apologetic Tractatus for the Society of the Rosy Cross (Leiden: 1617), carried further his defense of Rosicrucian magic. He assured his readers that the Rosicrucians used only good magic, that is, mathematical mechanical, and Cabalistic angel-magic. He

approved the Rosicrucian call for the reform of science and mathematics, and ended with a plea to be allowed to participate in their work (Yates, Rosicrucian, p. 77).

Yates thinks that Fludd received his answer in an invitation to publish his work in the Palatinate with the DeBry firm at Oppenheim. In 1617, De Bry printed his History of the Macrocosm, with Volume I dedicated to James I, as "Ter Maximus," the epithet of "Thrice Great Hermes." Fludd was obviously disappointed at James' lack of response and did not dedicate the next two volumes in 1618 and 1619 to him. When replying to accusations in 1631 that he published on the Continent because his books contained forbidden magic, Fludd replied that the De Bry firm gave him far better illustrations for his complex Cabalistic hieroglyphs than would have been possible in England (Yates, Rosicrucian, p. 79). Certainly, the precise and doctrinally accurate engravings demonstrate a clear understanding of Fludd's theosophy, and make one recall Evans' comment that the engravers and printers of occultist literature were "initiates" themselves.

The defeat and invasion of the Palatinate in 1620 and Maier's apparent death in 1622 ended Fludd's open advocacy of Rosicrucianism. A repressive Rosicrucian "witch-scare" led to the persecution in France and Germany of suspected heretics and rebels of all sorts. As Paul Arnold points out:

Au milieu d'une floraison d'heresies et de sectes, l'Allemagne luthérienne connaissait alors une intransigeance et un esprit de suspicion sans précédent . . . Il suffit de lire n'importe quel pamphlet anti-rosicrucion (l'Allemagne en regorge à partir de 1615) pour s'apercevoir du danger qui menace le défenseur de la Rose-Croix. (Arnold, Histoire, p. 9^h).

In 1623, Gabriel Naude's "Instruction à France sur la vérité de l'histoire des Freres de la Rose Croix," published in Paris, responded to the "hurricanes of rumors" by explaining the good and bad aspects of Rosicrucianism, and mentioned Dee, Bruno, and Fludd as associated with Rosicrucian teachings (Yates, Rosicrucian, p. 107).

It was under the first excitement of the manifestoes that the young Descartes sought out the Rosicrucians in Bohemia from 1618 to 1623, and apparently met their associates but not the brothers themselves. When he returned to Paris in 1623, at the height of the scare, Descartes was accused of Rosicrucianism, and thus "deliberately made himself visible to all the world, and particularly to his friends . . . to convince them he was not of the Rosicrucians or Invisibles." Descartes' 1691 biographer, Adrien Baillet, concluded:

His presence served to calm the agitation of his friend Father Mersenne . . . who had been all the more upset by this false rumor because he was less disposed to believe that the Rosicrucians were Invisibles, or merely chimerical, after what several Germans, and Robert Fludd, the Englishman, had written in their favor. (Yates, Rosicrucians, p. 116)

Mersenne went on to write many attacks upon the Hermetic-Cabalistic traditions, as based on the "faked" manuscripts of the Hermetica (he knew Causabon's work of 1614 which proved they were not ancient texts). But his main attack was on Robert Fludd, who furiously replied to Mersenne in 1626 in his Sophiae cum moria certamen, in which he claimed a tradition of profound wisdom whereas Mersenne was superficially "mechanical" (Yates, Bruno,

p. 438). In 1629, Fludd used a pseudonym for his Summum Bonum, in which he claimed that "the Magia, Cabala, and Alchymia of the Brothers of the Rosy Cross" was the highest good, and continued the attack on Mersenne, which became an all-out battle of the books that kept the attention of the learned in Europe for years. By 1633, the strain of defending the Rosicrucians was telling on Fludd, and in Clavis Philosophiae et Alchymiae Fluddanae, he still defended the order, but sadly admitted that "those who were formerly called the Brothers of the Rosy Cross are today called the Wise, the name (of Rose Cross) being so odious to contemporaries that it is already buried away from the memory of man" (Yates, Rosicrucian, p. 102).

This sense of the Rosicrucians changing their name or "going underground" is important, for from this time on, the history of Rosicrucianism became inextricably linked with the secret societies of Freemasonry, and Fludd has long been viewed as the bridge between the two orders.

Chapter IV: Freemasonry and the "Invisible College" in
Seventeenth-century England

In the period between Fludd's reference to the changed names of the Rosicrucians in 1633 and his death in 1637, he became associated with a figure who played a vital role in the development of English Freemasonry. This was Elias Ashmole (1617-1692), who met Fludd in London during this period of increasingly secret Rosicrucian activity.¹ Many Masonic scholars claim that the original Rosicrucianism of 1614-1616 was transformed into Freemasonry around 1630-1635, "grâce à Robert Fludd puis toute une cohorte de vrais Rose-Croix, au premier rang desquels se placent Vaughan et Ashmole" (Arnold, Histoire, p. 235). Since Ashmole was probably a repository of German Rosicrucian secrets and was definitely a Freemason, as well as an associate of Samuel Hartlib's "Invisible College" and a founding member of the Royal Society, an investigation of his preoccupations and contacts throws new light on--and raises more questions about--the puzzle of what became of the Rosicrucian impulse in the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The record in Ashmole's diary in which he mentions his initiation into a Masonic lodge at Warrington on 16 October 1646 is often claimed as the earliest known record of speculative Freemasonry in an English lodge. But the note evidences an advanced stage rather than the

¹ C.H. Josten, "William Backhouse of Swallowfield," Ambix, IV, no's. 1 and 2 (December 1949), 3.

beginning of "that evolution by which the lodges of craft Freemasonry were gradually transformed into esoteric societies of gentlemen and members of all professions and trades."² Because the origins and early history of Freemasonry are even more shrouded in controversy than those of the Rosicrucians, a brief summary of the major theories and available documentation on this society, which became so important in late eighteenth-century affairs, will show the political and theosophical affinities between Freemasonry, Rosicrucianism, and most of the Renaissance occult traditions.

Freemasonry as an operative organization developed as a craft guild during the construction of the Gothic cathedrals in the Middle Ages. As with all Medieval guilds, the techniques and secrets of the craft were handed down to apprentices or "initiates" in a closely-guarded tradition. But the Freemasons, by virtue of the awe and reverence stimulated by the great cathedrals, always had an air of mystery and power about them. In England, the profound impression made by the building of the spectacular cathedrals and monasteries never fell into the disfavor that "Gothic" suffered in France during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Part of the air of mystery about the Masons came from their secret traditions of Oriental and Jewish lore, which were bound up with building techniques. The Medieval bricklayer's technique was originally the

² C.H. Josten, ed. Elias Ashmole (Oxford: Clarendon, 1966), I, 34. Hereafter cited as Ashmole.

creation of Mesopotamian artisans, and came to Lombardy by way of Syria, Byzantium, and Ravenna. The basic principles of architectural design and structure were influenced by Jewish science and mathematics, the most advanced at a certain period of the Middle Ages, when Jewish scholarship flourished in Arab Spain and North Africa. Significantly, this was also a time of intense Cabalistic studies. The original "hidden secret" of Freemasonry was the principle of architectural drawing, that Vitruvian geometry which so fascinated Renaissance occultist and artists. The Masons were forbidden to communicate it to anyone except properly indentured (or "initiated") stonemasons' apprentices.³

Every craft guild had a religious significance, with patron saints and special rites, but the Masons' ceremonies included the mysterious and often "forbidden" lore of the Jews and the Middle East. Thus, the liturgy, professional secrets, and nature of their clandestine meetings--coupled with the apparently magical power involved in the towering Gothic construction--started rumors and gossip which later caused Freemasonry to be envied, watched, and finally considered dangerous by many outsiders. Fay points out that the Freemasons were not the only craftsmen for whom such traditions existed, and that similar customs were to be found among the printers.⁴

³ Robert Freke Gould, The History of Freemasonry (New York: John C. Yorston, 1886), I, 165.

⁴ Bernard Fay, Revolution and Free Masonry, 1680-1800 (Boston: Little, Brown, 1935), pp. 81-83.

In England, many noblemen sought out the secrets of Freemasonry, both for supervising the construction of their own buildings and often for a secret base for political intrigue; thus Freemasonry in medieval England became a powerful factor in British society. But with the Renaissance, the great era of cathedral building was over, and Freemasonry became increasingly speculative; the transformation of its aims and rituals into more and more symbolical significance was reinforced by its syncretic accretion of more occult legends and traditions. By the eighteenth century, when Freemasonry was a powerful, international force, it had become the repository of all the Renaissance occult and antiquarian traditions, and provided the major channel for these ideas into the arts, politics, and religion. Whether this theosophical eclecticism had been present before the mid-seventeenth century or whether Fludd and Ashmole were the mediums through which Rosicrucian elements--trailing alchemy, Cabalism, and Hermetism behind them--merged with Freemasonry is still open to question. But, as we will see, by the late eighteenth century, a high-grade Mason could eventually become a Rosicrucian as his supreme achievement.

The legendary history of Freemasonry goes back to the building of Solomon's Temple, which the Masons interpreted as a microcosm of God's creation. The central symbol of Masonry was the demiurgos "Grand Architect of the Universe," who was a lineal descendant of or successor to the Jehovah of the Pentateuch.⁵ He was sometimes

⁵ A.E. Waite, A New Encyclopedia of Freemasonry (London: William Rider, 1921), p. 366.

viewed as an emanation from the Unknowable Deity (a Jewish Gnostic or Cabalistic concept) or as the Creative Deity himself. The greatest Master-builder for the Grand Architect was Hiram Abif of Tyre, whose legend developed from two scriptural references (I Kings VII:13 and II Chronicles II:7). Solomon asked the King of Tyre to send him a craftsman, who was an artist in brass and "a man cunning to work" in all metals. Hiram Abif of Tyre, "a cunning man endued with understanding," a skilled engraver, and a brilliant architectural draughtsman, was sent to Solomon. Hiram constructed all the ornaments of the Temple, including the important symbolic pillars, Jachin and Boaz. He gathered the red clay of Succoth in order to construct the sacred objects. According to Masonic traditions, Hiram was connected with the Dionysian "secret fraternity" in Tyre, and communicated its mysteries to the Jewish builders (i.e. masons) of the Temple. Some Masonic groups also claim that he was assassinated by treacherous workmen, who were seeking the mysteries of the Temple. Thus, Hiram Abif was viewed as the archetypal architect, craftsman, adept of occultism, and martyr to the cause of rebuilding the symbolic Temple of human regeneration.⁶

A parallel legend of assassination and martyrdom was also developed within Freemasonry, which connected the symbolism of building the Jerusalem Temple and Hiram's murder with the fate of the Knights Templar. The Templars

⁶ Albert G. Mackey, A Lexicon of Freemasonry, 3rd ed. (Philadelphia: Noss, Brother, and Co., 1858), pp. 199 ff; and Waite, Freemasonry, pp. 366 ff.

were a religious and military order established during the Crusades to protect Christian pilgrims to the shrines of the Holy Lands. The King of Jerusalem gave them quarters in an area of the former Jewish Temple (hence their name). The Templars became a wealthy and powerful fighting force, and adopted rules of absolute secrecy to cover their internal activities. Masonic tradition claims that they were initiated into the secret societies of the Druses in Syria and practised many of their occultist rites. A growing fear of the Templars' power and a desire for their wealth led Philip IV ("the Fair") of France to seek their destruction in the early 1300's. He accused them of bizarre forms of heresy and of sexual immorality (connected with their esoteric rites), and persuaded Pope Clement V to suppress the order. In 1310, Philip treacherously lured fifty-four knights to his territory and had them burned at the stake. In 1314, Jacques De Molay, "Master of the Temple" of Solomon and head of the Templars, was also burned, and a savage extermination of the Templars was carried out. But De Molay, in anticipation of his fate, had appointed a successor, and Freemasons claim that there has been a regular and uninterrupted succession of Grand Masters (including Philip, Duke of Orleans in 1705, whose family played a dominant role in eighteenth-century occultist Masonry).

Enough Templars were said to have escaped to Scotland to maintain in secrecy the traditions of the order, and Scotland was recognized by Freemasons as the primal home of post-medieval Masonry. Other knightly orders, with similar legends, were assimilated into Freemasonry, including the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem,

who were descendants of the Jewish stonemasons who fled Jerusalem when Titus destroyed the Temple. They too settled in Scotland, but during the Crusades, they returned to Jerusalem and merged with the Christian Knights of Jerusalem to form a Masonic order. The Knights of Kadosch developed from Templar rites, and focussed on the mourning and desired revenge for the assassination of Jacques De Molay. In eighteenth-century France, the Kadosch lodges of Freemasonry became increasingly violent in their symbolism and subversive in their politics. During that period, there was a great proliferation of knightly degrees on the Continent, and many half-factual, half-legendary initiation, revenge, building, and occult traditions were added to the knightly lore. The role of the Grand Master developed in prestige and power, but how much was symbolical and how much operative is a matter of controversy, especially during the seventeenth century in England.

Of the first Grand Masters of English Freemasonry, the earliest substantial claim is for Inigo Jones, the great architect and theatrical designer, already noted in connection with Hermetic philosophy and Frederick V's Palatinate politics. Besides the often confused and contradictory oral traditions of Masonry, the major documentary evidence for the claim is the "Inigo Jones Manuscript," sold at auction in 1879. The cataloguer described it as "The Ancient Constitution of Free and Accepted Masons. A very curious folio Manuscript, ornamented title and drawing by Inigo Jones . . . dated 1607." It has a frontispiece of Masons at work, with the words "Inigo Jones delin" at the bottom. The document itself and the existence of the position of Grand Master

at such an early date are still controversial matters. Gould describes several Masonic "charges" (statements of purpose and rules for lodges) between 1610 and 1646, but whether they already represent the eclectic, theosophic Freemasonry associated with post-Ashmole developments is still unknown (Gould, I, 61-64). But a Masonic poem published at Edinburgh in 1638 indicated a linking of Freemasonry, Rosicrucianism, and occultist concerns (i.e. clairvoyance and prophecy) within a year after Fludd's death:

For what we do presage is not in grosse,
 For we be brethren of the Rosie Crosse:
 We have the Mason Word and second sight,
 Things for to come we can foretell aright.⁷

Ashmole, often cited as the infuser of Rosicrucian elements into the doctrines and rituals of the Masonic lodges, was apparently introduced to the German theories by Fludd, and later added a cipher note to a list of books in manuscript, "Robert Fludd in his apology for the Brethren of the Rosie Cross hath gone very far herein" (Ashmole, II, 681n). In his Summum Bonum, Fludd discussed at length the symbolism of architecture and of Solomon's Temple, showing how study of the Cabala and magic will enable adepts to change "from dead blocks to living stones," affirming that "Jesus is the cornerstone of the human temple," and showing that "a brother labors to the perfecting of this task [the attainment of illumination] under the symbol of an architect" (Gould, II, 242-243).

⁷ Douglas Knoop, G.P. Jones, and Douglas Hamer, Early Masonic Pamphlets (Manchester, 1945), p. 30.

Craven relates that Fludd lived close to a speculative Masonic lodge in 1737, and that an inventory of the Lodge's goods, taken just before the fire of London in 1661, recorded "Item: one book of the Constitutions that Mr. Ffllood gave," but it is not positive that this refers to the same Dr. Fludd (Fludd, p. 260). Despite the obscurity of this point in Fludd's life, it is certain that Ashmole, who was associated with him temporarily, was involved with both Rosicrucians and Freemasons.

Ashmole's training in Rosicrucianism was carried out by William Backhouse of Swallowfield (1593-1662), who was a man of exceptional intelligence and education, "a great experimenter," collector of rare books and manuscripts, antiquarian, alchemist, botanist, student of Gothic architecture, and lover of Renaissance garden designs (Ashmole, I, 76). William's father, Samuel Backhouse (d. 1627), was a friend of Edward Dyer, the alchemical collaborator of Dee and Kelley, and was claimed by Aubrey as a Rosicrucian. Samuel Backhouse deciphered for Dyer an old alchemical manuscript that Dyer's German friends had failed to unravel. Samuel found it to be written in Dutch, and he and Dyer thus got Cornelius Drebbel, famous for his mystical writings on physics, to translate it (Josten, "Backhouse," p. 31). William Backhouse, his son, was apparently a brilliant youth who finished his studies at Oxford at seventeen, and could have met Fludd when both were members of Christ Church Colloge, sometime between 1605 and 1610. A curious manuscript written to Backhouse around 1610 by John Blagravo, the celebrated astrologer and mathematician,

was found by Lady Russell, who noted, "It is probable that it was this and similar communications that induced William Backhouse to enter deeply into the study of Rosicrucian philosophy."⁸ Josten could not find the manuscript but noted that Blagrave died in 1611, and that Backhouse left Oxford without his degree to travel on the Continent from 1610 on (Josten, "Backhouse," p. 3). Though there is no direct evidence that Backhouse was a Rosicrucian, Josten concludes that he was definitely stimulated by the Rosicrucian manifestoes and was possibly a member of an existing Rosicrucian or related society. Anthony Wood, who probably received his information directly from Ashmole, called Backhouse "a great Rosy Crucian" in his Athenae Oxonienses, II, Col. 576. Backhouse's possible connection with Freemasonry at the same time is suggested by one of his manuscripts which has a triangle with a Hebrew letter in each corner--"an ancient symbol of Masonry" (Josten, "Backhouse," p. 32).

The earliest of Ashmole's notes mentioning Backhouse is dated 3 April 1651, and records that Backhouse asked him to be his "son" and call him "Father" Backhouse. The adoption, which culminated a long previous collaboration, was an alchemical initiation, intended to link Ashmole with a long chain of Hermetic ancestry who from Hermes onwards transmitted their secrets only by oral tradition to their spiritual sons, i.e., each to one carefully selected disciple (Ashmole, II, 567). Michael Maier, in his Rosicrucian defense, Themis Aurca, discussed

⁸ Lady Russell, Swallowfield and its Owners (London, 1901), pp. 101-102.

Hermetic adoption, and the 1656 English translation of Maier's work was dedicated to Ashmole as "the only philosopher in the present age" (Josten, "Backhouse," p. 18). John Heydon, the Rosicrucian philosopher who annoyed Ashmole and Backhouse with his distorted Rosicrucian ideas, also discussed this type of adoption.

Ashmole himself regarded it as an initiation, conferring on him by a new birth those powers of visionary perception which are peculiar to adepts. In his Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum, which he began in 1651 with Backhouse's help, Ashmole explained how the heir of the secret wisdom was under "the weighty obligations" of an oath never to divulge the secrets of their holy art. Backhouse's own motto, Sache Cacher-- "Know how to Conceal"--indicates his retiring disposition and his desire for anonymity. He contributed anonymously an alchemical poem, "The Magistery," which he had written in 1633, to Ashmole's volume on the English alchemists, and supplied him with original manuscripts and authentic copies of ancient texts to be printed in the volume (Ashmole, I, 77-78).

In the next two years, Backhouse introduced Ashmole to his fellow adepts and learned acquaintances. When he thought he was dying in 1653, Backhouse called in Ashmole, who cryptically recorded that his "Father Backhouse" told him "in Silables the true matter of the Philosopher's Stone," which "he bequeathed to me as a Legacy." The "Silables" were possibly alchemical symbols, which a French alchemical text described as forming "un mot significatif ou un caractère universal," which revealed

"le véritable nom et caractère de la matière première" (Ashmole, I, 102-104). Or the "Silables" may have been a magic formula, supposed to be so powerful in promoting the alchemical process that it was regarded as the prime matter itself. But the matter remains confused, and Ashmole himself wrote in an interleaf of his own copy of Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum:

Thinke not on Salts, Blood, Minerals; ther's no cost
 In the one Simple Matter: Labor's lost
 In chymicks; Patience, and a happy close,
 Are the cheife Parents of yo Peereless Rose
 (Ashmole, I, 105)

The phrase "happy close" with its possible sexual connotation recalls the importance of sex-mysticism and trances in Cabalistic traditions and Boehme's spiritual alchemy. The "Peereless Rose" has a definite Rosicrucian ring. When Backhouse surprisingly recovered and lived on until 1662, Ashmole resumed his silence on his occult "master," except to note his death.

In the preface to Theatrum Chemicum, Ashmole noted the neglect of Rosicrucians and alchemists like Maier in England, and among his papers is his own hand-written copy of an early seventeenth-century English translation of the Fama and Confessio. He added an elaborate letter in Latin, also written in his own hand, addressed to the "most illuminated Brothers of the Rose Cross," petitioning them to be allowed to join their Fraternity (Yates, Rosicrucian, p. 194). In 1656, the English translation of Maier's Themis Aurea was dedicated to Ashmole either by Thomas Vaughan (whose Rosicrucian apologies became famous in England) or by Nathaniel and Thomas Hodges, two known Rosicrucian enthusiasts (Ashmole, I, 106). The

puzzling question of authorship was not helped by Ashmole's comment at one time that the Hodges were the translators, versus his later remark that he was unsure of the authorship--"those letters being put for a Blind: but I believe it was but one person" (Ashmole, II, 680). Another bit of evidence for Ashmole's Rosicrucian interests is his brief cipher note, "The Fratres R.C: live about Strasburg: 7 miles from thence in a monastery." The note is from 1653, and the top of the page is inscribed in cipher, "Notes out of Dr. Child's Book." Interestingly, Childs was a member of Hartlib's "Invisible College," and was probably the author of the "Eireneus Philalethes" papers on Cabalism and alchemy. To conclude this section on Ashmole's probable Rosicrucianism, it should be noted that Anthony Wood, Ashmole's friend and correspondent, stated in Athenae Oxonienses, IV, col. 35⁴ff., that Ashmole was "accounted a great Rosy Crucian." Waite, who was skeptical about most traditional accounts of origins, accepted Ashmole's Rosicrucian membership and subsequent influence on Freemasonry (Waite, Rosicrucians, p. 372).

Ashmole's lifelong interest in John Dee and his efforts at collecting manuscripts and biographical information on that encyclopedic Elizabethan occultist were connected with his interest in Rosicrucianism and Freemasonry, and were invaluable in preserving documents on a figure who was very much under a cloud at the time. When Dee returned to England in 1589, he remained in favor with Queen Elizabeth, but at James I's accession in 1603, he entered a period of poverty and disgrace until his death in 1608. James's notorious fear of witchcraft (which he believed in) has been cited as the reason for his abhorrence of Dee, whose mathematical genius and

Cabalism were popularly viewed as conjuring and necromancy. The possible influence of James's hatred of magic on Francis Bacon's writings, in which Bacon omitted mathematics from his scientific proposals, will be discussed later. Ashmole's steady acquisition of Dee manuscripts indicates his contacts with sources who maintained their interest in Dee, despite his bad reputation. The bibliography of Dee manuscripts and materials in the Ashmolean papers (as cited in French, Dee, pp. 21¹/₄ ff), reveals the vast amount of material Ashmole collected. Ashmole began writing in cipher around 1643, and his code was not broken until several years ago when Josten compared it to Dee's cipher writings. Since Backhouse was the supplier of many manuscripts and texts to Ashmole, he may have been the source for Ashmole's access to Dee's cipher code and occult papers. But Ashmole also gained valuable help from his acquaintance with John Dee's eldest son, Dr. Arthur Dee of Norwich.

Ashmole's first publication, under the pseudonym James Hasolle (an anagram of his name), was the Fasciculus Chemicus (1650), which contained translations from the Latin of Art ur Dee's Fasciculus Chemicus (1629) and of Jean d'Espagnet's Arcanum Hermeticae (Paris, 1623). To these translations was prefixed a hieroglyphical frontispiece, which included a column, "which refers to his Ashmole's proficiency in music and to his being a Freemason" (Gould, II, 256). In the Prolegomona, which Anthony Wood declared to be "laced with Rosy-crucian language" (Athoniae Oxonienses, IV, 354), Ashmole praised Arthur Dee for communicating this material from "Alchemists

blessed with the knowledge of this Divine Mystery." But he warned the reader that in alchemical writings, "the Golden Throd of the Matter is so warily disposed, covertly concealed, and so broken off and disperst," that even the best-principled student will not find its scattered ends, "unless the Father of Illuminations prompt, or lend an angel's hand to Guide." The guiding angel recalls John Dee's angelic communicators as well as the Rosicrucian use of angel as a term for a fratre. Affirming the importance of secrecy, Ashmole went on to assert the benevolent purpose of natural magic and "Magnetik philosophy," and pledged to "endeavor to remove and purge this pure and Heroick Science (almost generally held contemptible) from the dross and corruption of imposture" (Ashmole, I, pp. 64-67).

Before publishing the Fasciculus Chemicus, Ashmole learned that Dr. Arthur Dee of Norwich was the son of John Dee and the author of the tract he was translating. Ashmole wrote to confirm this and to send him the translation for proof-reading. Dr. Dee replied that he was indeed the son, but discouraged Ashmole from publishing secrets to the vulgar public, for "the art ys vilified to much already by scholars that daily deride it" (Ashmole, I, p. 68). But Ashmole took up the challenge when he wrote the Prolegomena, and hoped for a wide distribution of learned writings, for which he recommended a universal written language of hieroglyphs. Dee asked Ashmole to visit him, but Ashmole could not get to Norwich at the time, and sent Dr. Thomas Wharton and Dr. John Bathurst instead. They reported to Ashmole the "long discourse," which prompted Ashmole to seek more information from Sir Thomas Browne, Dee's close friend in

Norwich. French points out that the relationship between Arthur Dee and Browne, the "greatest literary exponent of the occult traditions in the seventeenth century," has never been adequately studied (French, Dee, 14). In a remarkable letter from Browne to Ashmole, dated March 1654, Browne recounted his and Arthur Dee's efforts to find John Dee's many unpublished papers, and their disappointment at how many had disappeared. He concluded with Arthur's description of life with his father in the Prague of Rudolph II:

I have heard the Doctor [Arthur Dee] say, that he lived in Bohemia with his Father, both at Prague and in other parts of Bohemia. That Prince or Count Rosenberg was their great Patron, who delighted much in Alchimy. I have often heard him affirme, and sometymes with Oaths, that he had seene Projection made, and transmutation of Peuter-Dishes and Flagons into silver, which the Goldsmiths at Prague bought of them, and that Count Rosenberg plaid at Quoits, with Silver Quoits made by Projection as before. That his Transmutation was made by a small Powder they had which was found in some old Place, and a Booke lying by it conteyning nothing but Hieroglyphicks, which Booke his Father bestowed much tyme upon, but I could not heare, that he could make it out. He said also that Kelly dealt not iustly with his Father, and that he went away with greatest part of the Powder . . . That his Father Dr: John Dee presented Qu: Eliz: with a litle of the powder, who having made tryall thereof, attempted to get Kelly out of Prison, and sent some to that purpose, who giving opium drinke to the Keepers, layd them so fast sleepe, that Kelly found opportunity to attempt an escape . . . but the busines unhappily succeeded.

. . . Dr: Arthur Dee was a young man when he saw this Projection made in Bohemia, but he was soe inflamed therewith, that he fell really upon that Study, and read not much all his lyfe but Bookes of that subject . . . The Dr: to my knowledge was serious in his busines . . . (Ashmole, II, pp. 662-663)

Ashmole's interest in Dee was stimulated even more by Meric Causaubon's publication of John Dee's A True and Faithful Relation of what passed for many years between Dr. John Dee . . . and some Spirits (London, 1659). These excerpts from Dee's "spiritual diaries" of his séances with Kelley, coupled with Causaubon's preface which pictured Dee as a fanatic deluded by devils as well as by Kelley, caused a sensation and prevented serious consideration of Dee as a scientist for generations. Meric Causaubon, son of the Isaac Causaubon who exposed the post-Christian dating of the "ancient" Hermetica, later admitted he published Dee's diaries both to clear himself of charges of atheism and to attack enthusiasm and inspiration in General (French, Dee, pp. 11-12). But Elias Ashmole was fascinated by the revelations, and practised Dee's methods of skrying and conjuration of angels, while working tirelessly on Cabalistic sigils. In 1672, he was delighted to receive manuscripts of five lost Cabalistic works in Dee's own hand. Ashmole assiduously studied Kelley's hand-written manuscript, "The Book of Enoch revealed to John Dee by the Angels," and became so absorbed in the study and practice of Dee's magic that he gave up for a time his work on Dee's biography (Ashmole, I, 187). These "Enochian Tables" were used by Cabalistic Freemasons in Blake's days and, in combination with Animal Magnetism, allegedly evoked many angelic visions.

From 1673 on, John Aubrey tried to persuade Ashmole to write a biography of Dee, and as late as 1685, Ashmole still planned to. Despite the value of Ashmole's collection of manuscripts and documents on Dee and his

times, his failure to write the biography is a great loss to scholarship, for he spent years seeking first hand reports, oral traditions, and materials in the archives of secret societies. He was in contact with figures in Germany, Poland, and Bohemia, whose families were involved with Dee at Prague or through the Palatinate. As late as 1684, Ashmole got a Polish visitor to promise information on the Polish Count Laski, who was involved with Sidney and Bruno as well as with Dee (Ashmole, I, 260). Coupled with his failure to write his projected history of Freemasonry, the great light Ashmole could have shed on Dee's influence on Rosicrucianism and Freemasonry was irretrievably lost.

Another of Ashmole's driving interests was the Order of the Garter, which played an important role in English-German relations during the early Rosicrucian days. When Frederick V was run out of Bohemia, his Garter insignia and documents were pillaged, and he was ridiculed in cartoons as the "garterless" king (Yates, Rosicrucian, p. 32). When Ashmole began to collect material for his great work on the Order in 1655, the survival of the Order depended entirely on the precarious chances of the Stuart monarchy, then in exile. Ashmole was distressed to "see the honor of it trampled on, and it self sunk into a very low esteem among us" (Ashmole, I, 180). He worked on the book for seventeen years, sparing no effort or cost in collecting material from England and the Continent. When The Institution, Laws, and Ceremonies of the Most Noble Order of the Garter was published in 1672, it was hailed for its scrupulous scholarship and vast materials on the history of knight-hood and ceremonies of initiation. The book remains the

definitive work on the subject, and in its own day was used as a major gift between royalty and statesmen.

The relevance of Ashmole's work on the Order of the Garter to Rosicrucian, Masonic, and Palatinate movements is intriguing, for the research, composition, and distribution of the book involved Ashmole with all three groups. For example, several of the engravings were by Wenceslaus Hollar, who had been involved with the Rosicrucian printers in Bohemia (Yates, Rosicrucian, pp. 9, 82). While working on the book, Ashmole consulted visiting German alchemists, who had been involved in the earlier theosophical movement, and he was on intimate terms with Samuel Hartlib and Theodore Haak, both refugees from the Bohemian troubles and disciples of Andreae's Rosicrucian-style "colloge." After publication of the book, German members of the Order were presented with copies and Ashmole himself made special arrangements for its presentation to Charles Lewis, Prince Elector of the Palatinate and son of Frederick V (Ashmole, I, 112, 237, 240). The parallels between the chivalric grades of initiation in Andreae's Rosicrucian romances, in Ashmole's history of knighthood, and in the knightly grades of Freemasonry point to similar theosophical and ritualistic concerns. French Masonic theorists in the eighteenth century claimed that Ashmole's innovations in the initiation rites of Freemasonry were the source of the knightly high degrees, which became the seedbeds of revolutionary occultism in the 1780's. In fact, the Avignon Freemasons who influenced William Blake claimed their derivation directly from Ashmole's London lodge.

Ashmole's further connections with the remarkable group of emigré German theosophical scientists who stimulated the founding of the Royal Society, as well as the rebellion which led to the English Civil War, points to the complex ramifications in England of the "failed" Rosicrucian movement. Hugh Trevor-Roper has analyzed the relation between events in Germany and Bohemia in the early 1600's to the philosophical motivations which led to the English Civil War. The 1620's, when Protestant Europe was almost destroyed, was a period of shame to many Englishmen. The Long Parliament which met in 1640 for the first time in eleven years was filled with members who angrily disapproved of the government's foreign policy of "peace with ignominy," while the Protestant cause sank in Europe.⁹ Trevor-Roper proves that Cromwell's supporters were fired by a vision of society,

. . . made vivid to them by three philosophers, none of whom was English but who may be called, both in their limited practical aims and their wild bloodshot mysticism, the real philosophers and the only philosophers, of the English Revolution. (Trevor-Roper, p. 240).

The three foreigners were Samuel Hartlib, John Dury, and John Comenius, all of whom were refugees from the Bohemian disaster of the 1620's, and were the center of a theosophical, scientific, and political group which had great influence on Cromwell:

⁹ Hugh Trevor-Roper, "Three Foreigners: the Philosophers of the Puritan Revolution," in Religion, the Reformation, and Social Change (London: Macmillan, 1967), pp. 237 ff.

For he, like them, was essentially a man of the 1620's, and had drawn messianic conclusions from that era's hopes and failures. He believed the New Heaven and New Earth were coming, and that the Jews must be brought into the Christian fold. (Trevor-Roper, p. 281)

These three men, together with Theodore Haak and a number of important Englishmen, were also the organizers of the "invisible college" which became the visible Royal Society in 1660. By examining their backgrounds and associations, the connections between the secret societies and radical politics, which emerged in the Rosicrucian years from 1614 to 1620, in the Puritan Revolution of the 1640's, and which would erupt again--significantly, in the same places--in the 1780's, become increasingly substantiated.

Samuel Hartlib (1593-1670?) came to England in 1628 after the Catholic conquest of Elbing in Polish Prussia, where he had been the center of a "mystical and philanthropic society," an Antilia influenced by Andreae (Yates, Rosicrucian, p. 175). Hartlib had studied at Cambridge in the 1620's and was "captivated by Baconianism," but it was the Bacon of The New Atlantis and not Bacon the "materialist" who interested him (Trevor-Roper, p. 249). Hartlib and his associates viewed Bacon from a Rosicrucian perspective, and their efforts at implementing his Utopian proposals brought Bacon, at first seeming so incongruous, into the many theories about what happened to the Rosicrucian movement. Unfortunately, the modern proponents of the "Rosicrucian Bacon as Shakespeare" theories are so ludicrous and credulous that the possible connections have not been seriously examined.

Trevor-Roper writes off Hartlib's efforts as "vulgar Baconianism," which turned Bacon's ideas into "inflamed apocalyptic millennialism" (Trevor-Roper, p. 258). But Hartlib saw no great difference between Bacon's New Atlantis, Andreae's Christianopolis, and the Rosicrucian manifestoes, and he formed his "Invisible Society" as a fulfillment of their concepts. As noted earlier, Yates thinks Bacon was frightened by James I's negative reaction to John Dee's magical mathematics, and therefore eliminated mathematics and Paracelsan trappings from his proposals for the "great instauration of learning." Recent Bacon scholars, such as Paolo Rossi and A.W. Green, have affirmed his adherence to many Renaissance vitalistic theories, especially the basic occult view of the universal correspondences or "linking" of all things, manifested as attraction or repulsion.¹⁰ He believed a spirit or spiritual body was contained in all substances; it was subtle and invisible yet situated in actual space. He believed in the occult powers of imagination, used all the terms of alchemical transmutation (and even gave a recipe for making gold), was fascinated by astrology (which he hoped to reform), and was sure a universal medicine could be found to prolong life indefinitely. Where Bacon did differ from the Renaissance occultists, though, was in his concern about the individualistic hubris involved in magic. He praised magic for its endeavors to dominate and improve nature, but he condemned its practice on ethical grounds--the often demonstrated propensity to fraud, "craze of genius," and megalomania.

¹⁰ Paolo Rossi, Francis Bacon: from Magic to Science. Trans. Sacha Rabinovitch (Univ. of Chicago Press, 1968), pp. 12-13.

The magician's secrecy encouraged a selfish search for personal power rather than serving collective needs (Rossi, pp. 13-14, 32).

With these qualifications to the "scientific modernism" of Bacon in mind, The New Atlantis, which he wrote between 1612 and 1614 but never published, is seen to fit in strikingly with the millennial, theosophic reform movements of the Rosicrucian territories. When Dr. William Rawley, his secretary, published The New Atlantis in 1627, a year after Bacon's death, he stated in his preface that the fable was a model or description of a "college," and the similarity of its aims and methods to the pansophic colleges of Pucci, Andreae, and Boehme indicate Bacon's familiarity with the Bohemian theosophical movement (or vice versa). New Atlantis, called Bensalem in the native tongue, was a haven for those who would penetrate the secrets of nature. The "lanthorn of this kingdom" was Solomon's House, an "Order or Society . . . dedicated to the study of the works and Creatures of God," otherwise called the "College of Six Days Works." The object of the order was the "knowledge of causes, and the secret mysteries of things, and the enlarging of the bounds of human empire, to the effecting of all things possible."¹¹

The Bensalomites had "laws of secrecy for our travellers," and they all possessed the apostle's "gift of tongues." The Hebrew, Persian, Indian and native residents all read the Bible through a universal language.

¹¹ A. Wigfall Green, Sir Francis Bacon (New York: Twayne, 1966), pp. 174-177.

The narrator met a Jewish merchant who loved Bensalem and believed "people thereof were of the generations of Abraham, by another son, whom they called Nachoran; and that Moses by a secret Cabala, ordained the laws of Bensalem."¹² After noting the miraculous healing at no charge, the narrator said, "It seemed to us a condition and property of divine powers and beings, to be hidden and unseen to others, and yet to have others open, and as in a light to them"--thus repeating two major Rosicrucian themes, free healing and an all-knowing "invisibility." The Governor of Bensalem answered that it sounded "as if we thought this a land of magicians, that sent forth spirits of the air into other countries" (Bacon, p. 260).

Thus, Bacon's call for inductive experiment and painstaking investigation of nature was based on a firm belief that a new era in the history of mankind was at hand, and that man--through collective sharing of knowledge--could regain his prelapsarian power over all created things (Rossi, p. 130). This spiritualistic science was the "vulgar Baconianism" that Hartlib saw as synonymous with Andreae's Rosicrucian work. Another seventeenth-century figure who viewed Bacon from a Rosicrucian context was John Heydon, the rather notorious plagiarist and Rosicrucian philosopher with whom Ashmole quarreled, who based his Holy Guide (London, 1662) on an openly Rosicrucian adaptation of The New Atlantis. That this theosophical view of Bacon was shared by many others is demonstrated by the address of Joseph Glanville,

¹² Francis Bacon, New Atlantis, in Works, ed. Basil Montagu (Philadelphia: Parry and McMillan, 1845), I, 255-270.

a famous student of occultism and believer in spirits, to the Royal Society, in which he affirmed that "Solomon's House in The New Atlantis was a prophetic scheme for the Royal Society" (Green, p. 177).

The major instigator of the combined Baconian, Rosicrucian, and "invisible college" efforts at founding a center for occult and scientific research, which were viewed as the same thing, was Samuel Hartlib, who viewed politics, education, and religion through the perspective of the 1620's in Bohemia. Hartlib was probably introduced to Andreae by his brother George Hartlib, who was a student at Heidelberg from 1612 to 1620 (Yates, Rosicrucian, p. 157). As noted earlier, Samuel Hartlib was an associate of Andreae's secret society just before 1620, and he retained the two tracts which described its aims and purposes. Hartlib himself established a pansophic college in Elbing before he fled to England, where he soon established a school at Chichester on similar principles, between 1628 and 1630 (Trevor-Roper, p. 249). He moved to London in 1630, and while ostensibly a merchant, he worked tirelessly with refugees from Bohemia, Poland, and the Palatinate to unite with English "seekers after hidden knowledge" to form an "invisible college," a group of men bound by their common search for scientific, political, and spiritual renewal. That this college would include the occult sciences of the Rosicrucian program is indicated by a 1633 letter from Johann Fridwald, who wrote Hartlib from Germany, offering to send agents for the establishment of Antilia, a secret college based on Andreae's outline. Fridwald referred cryptically to a lord who would subsidize an alchemist, whose fool-proof

process for achieving the Philosopher's Stone would help the Antilia.¹³

In 1637, Hartlib received a patent from the Prince Elector of the Palatine, Charles Ludwig, son of Frederick V, to help in the effort for his restoration to the Palatinate throne (Turnbull, p. 2). Hartlib carried on a massive correspondence, mainly with Andreae's followers, and worked with Palatinate refugees and English sympathizers for his "invisible college" plans. As the college drew in more distinguished members, Hartlib became a close friend of John Milton, probably from 1639 on. They became daily and intimate associates in 1643, after Milton's first wife left him (Turnbull, pp. 39-40). Whether Milton was a member of the Antilia is unknown, but his interest in Hartlib's essentially Rosicrucian educational theories is demonstrated in his dedication of the tractate Of Education to Hartlib in 1644. Milton noted that Hartlib's "earnest entreaties and serious conjurements" led him to write the pamphlet, while also preoccupied with his divorce pamphlets, because he thought Hartlib a "person sent hither by some good providence from a far country to be the occasion and the incitement of great good to this island." Milton pointed out his own familiarity with Hartlib's "learned correspondence which you hold in foreign parts," which consisted largely of theosophical plans and occult anecdotes exchanged with German alchemists, ex-Rosicrucians, and millenarianists.¹⁴ Milton then affirmed that the end

¹³ G.H. Turnbull, Hartlib, Dury, and Comenius (London: University Press of Liverpool, Hodder and Stoughton, 1947) p. 72.

¹⁴ In Frank A. Patterson, ed. The Student's Milton (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1930), p. 725.

of learning "is to repair the ruins of our first parents by regaining to know God aright."

Interestingly, Milton's pamphlets on divorce, which he also wrote in 1644, reveal his study of Jewish traditions to buttress his arguments for the sacredness of mutual pleasure--of body and mind--that must underlie marriage. His belief that peaceful divorce is less a breach of wedlock than "still to soil and profane that mystery of joy and union with a polluting sadness and perpetual distemper" (Patterson, p. 586), may draw on the Christian Cabalistic texts that Hartlib and his associates all studied and admired. For in those texts, especially in Boehme, the role of conjugal sexuality in raising the imagination to God receives its most eloquent tribute. Fletcher has documented the wide Cabalistic learning of Milton's tutor Gill,¹⁵ and Saurat has pointed out the Cabalistic nature of Milton's concept of sex in Paradise Lost.¹⁶ But the atmosphere of Christian Cabalism and occultism surrounding Milton in the company of Hartlib and his friends has not received adequate scholarly examination.

Milton's and Hartlib's proselytizing took place in an atmosphere of euphoria in the early 1640's. That the millenium was in sight seemed obvious to many in England, for after Parliament succeeded in getting the great oppressor Strafford tried and executed, there was a national mood of exhilaration, like that in the early days of the

¹⁵ Harris H. Fletcher, The Intellectual Development of John Milton (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1956), I, 281 ff.

¹⁶ Denis Saurat, Milton: Man and Thinker rev. ed. (1925; London: John Dent, 1944), pp. 233-247.

French Revolution. "Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive," wrote Wordsworth of the 1780's, and in the summer of 1641, John Milton felt the same way. He envisioned England as a young man, glowing in his strength, waking and shaking off his past torpor, and bondage, singing the "jubilee and resurrection of the state" (Trevor-Roper, p. 264). Milton's vigorous Albion became an important influence on Blake's Albion, in a similar theosophical-revolutionary context in the late eighteenth century. Since Civil War had been avoided and the new reform would now begin, Hartlib eagerly wrote John Comenius and John Dury, two of his theosophical correspondents in Germany, to return to England to help build the new society. He addressed to Parliament his Description of the Famous Kingdom of Macaria in 1641, a "Sophic Utopia" based on the works of Andreae and Bacon.

John Comenius (1592-1690) grew up in the Bohemian province of Moravia, under Rudolph II, and in 1613 moved to Heidelberg to continue his studies at the University. He was there when Frederick V and his bride arrived, and he met George Hartlib, Samuel's brother, who was at the University and who became the intermediary between theosophical reformers in England and Germany. Comenius asserted the central influence of Andreae's work on his own pansophic visions, and probably met Andreae during the course of their mutual studies and travels. When Comenius returned to Bohemia, the 1620 defeat of Frederick V led to the proscription of the Bohemian Brethren, a mystical reform sect, of which he was a member. Comenius fled to Brandeis in 1622, where he wrote The Labyrinth of the World, the "Czech Pilgrim's Progress," and a disillusioned view

of a failed Sophic Utopia. In it he described the great hopes of the Rosicrucian movement, demonstrating his familiarity with Rosicrucian documents as early as the 1612 manuscript stage, and how it was shattered "in my presence" by the fall of the Bohemian throne (Yates, Rosicrucian, pp. 157, 161 ff.). Comenius' writings, which called for renewed efforts at pansophic reform, attracted the attention of Samuel Hartlib as early as 1632, and he urged Comenius to visit England, sought financial aid for him, and got his works published in England (Turnbull, pp. 161 ff.). When Comenius finally agreed to accept Hartlib's invitation, to come to England in the new "Aurora" of 1641, it was with full expectations of fulfilling his early Rosicrucian dreams.

Comenius had been interested in the occultist-apocalyptic visions of Christopher Cotter, published during the Rosicrucian furor from 1616 to 1624. In the 1640's, he collaborated with Cyprian Kenner, a Silesian who studied Lithuanian Jewish sects and devised a system of "Physical, Technical, Mystical" education, which would teach through analogies and correspondences (Turnbull, p. 387). Through contemplation and study on the "external signatures, knowledge can be reached of the whole . . . right to the inside of the indwelling essences and qualities . . . The method deserves also to be called Divine" (Turnbull, pp. 387, 397, 448). Influenced by Cotter's and Kenner's visions, Comenius wrote Via Lucis while in England, an alchemystical-millionaire tract on scientific and educational reform, which circulated in manuscript but was not published until 1668. That Comenius' educational plans were of the occultist-

scientific tenor of the Rosicrucian manifestoes is borne out by all his works.

John Dury (1596-1680), the third refugee from the Bohemian disaster, was the son of a Scottish minister who lived in Europe. Dury knew Hartlib at Elbing, and he too fled the Catholic troops. He then moved all over Europe, seeking collaborators for his theosophical reform movement. It has been suggested that Hartlib came to England in 1628 as an agent of Dury's proselytizing; when Dury visited London in 1630, the two worked to implement Dury's "Platform of the Journeys that Must be Undertaken for the Work of Peace Ecclesiastical." The similarity of Dury's platform to the Rosicrucian and Boehmianist reform plans is striking. After gaining "Peace in the Churches," the first major effort, the platform called for a gathering together of rare scientific and philosophic texts, and a joining together of investigators of nature in a society. Then, under "Things to be observed," Dury listed:

1. The proceedings and Intentions of the Reformators whom this latter time hath brought forth in Germany; that we may (know) the things wherein they are thought to excell former ages and other societies which are these:
 - (1) Some extraordinary meanes to perfeit the knowledge and unvail the mysteryes of the Propheticall scriptures.
 - (2) Meanes to perfeit the knowledge of the Orientall tongues and to gaine abilities fitt to deale with the Jewes, whose calling is supposed to be neere at hand.
 - (3) Arts and Sciences, Philosophicall, Chymical, and Mechanical; whereby not only the Secrets of Disciplines are harmonically and compendiously delivered, but also the Secrets of Nature are thought to be unfolded. . . .

- (h) A magical Language whereby secrets may be delivered and preserved to such as are made acquaint with it traditionally. 17

The reference to the need for Hebrew and Aramaic studies and the "calling of the Jews" points to another channel of Cabalistic knowledge into England and to a major event in Jewish history. Trevor-Roper has noted the philo-Semitism and messianism of the Protestants during the Thirty Years War, but he does not analyze the heavy Cabalistic influence on the reform movements (Trevor-Roper, p. 248). As noted earlier, Pistorius had called his practical Cabalism a "Lutheran stupidity," and the voluminous correspondence and theoretical works of Hartlib, Comenius, and Dury about Protestant reform are full of Cabalistic lore--and all three were enthusiastic for recalling the Jews through Christian Cabalism.

The air was full of prophetic pamphlets with Cabalistic interpretations of the Apocalypse, including the Clavis Apocalyptica of Joseph Mede (d. 1639), Milton's tutor. The increasing influence of Boehme's Christian Cabalistic works (first published in English in 1644, but circulated before), with their praise of Cabalistic Wisdom and call for Christian Jewish cooperation, helped create the mood of philo-Semitism that led to the Jews' re-admission into England in 1655, after more than four hundred years of exclusion.

Dury's active role in this historic event was important, for he put Cromwell, who used him for diplomatic

¹⁷ Margaret Bailey, Milton and Jacob Boehme (New York: Oxford, 1914), pp. 66-67.

missions, into contact with his old friend, the Jewish philosopher, Menasseh Ben Israel. Menasseh shared the theosophical enthusiasm of the reformers, and was himself adopt at Cabalistic magic.¹⁸ Dury had written on the Cabala in the 1620's, and long acted as Menasseh's London agent, distributing his "mystical Works" and fostering his millennial views. Dury hoped that Menasseh and Boreel, at Oxford, would help translate the Cabalistic and Mishnaic works into Latin and Modern Hebrew, making them more accessible to the "common sort of Jews," and thus interesting them in Christian Cabalism through the symbolic interpretation of the New Testament (Turnbull, p. 257).

Dury also wanted Judah Leon of Amsterdam to demonstrate his "exact model" of the Temple of Jerusalem, which illuminated many passages in Scripture and various "Mysteries," such as the Holy of Holies (Turnbull, p. 262). Intriguingly, in view of the obscurity which shrouds this period of Anglo-Jewish history, an eighteenth-century Masonic writer connects Judah Leon with early English Freemasonry. In 1764, Lawrence Dermott wrote in the second edition of his Ahiman Rezon that Leon was a Masonic brother, and implied that his model of Solomon's Temple was important to Masonic symbolism. Leon also designed the coat of arms which was officially adopted by the London Grand Lodge of Freemasonry in the early eighteenth century.¹⁹

¹⁸ See article in the Jewish Encyclopedia (1964).

¹⁹ Samuel Oppenheim, The Jews and Masonry in the United States before 1810 (Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society, no. 19 (1910), p. 94.

Judah Leon was a colleague of Menasseh ben Israel, and was delighted at Menasseh's visit to England in 1655, which heralded the return of the Jews to England. Leon also came to England, sometime before 1678. In England in 1655, Menasseh visited with Milton as well as with Dury, revealing a significant mutual friendship between the three men. Dury translated Milton's Eikonoklastes into French in 1651, with Milton personally revising the translation. At the same time, Dury published a Cabalistic, millenaral work, Clavis Apocalyptica (London, 1651), which drew on the Cabalistic learning of his two Jewish friends. Dury left England for the Continent in 1661 and never returned, but he continued to correspond with Hartlib about "curious subjects" in alchemy and theosophy, which he thought Hartlib's "Academie of Virtuosi" should investigate (Turnbull, pp. 270, 292). Meanwhile, in England, Menasseh's circle of Christian friends included Comenius, Hartlib, and Frankenberg (Boehme's patron and biographer), as well as Milton and Dury (Bailey, p. 89). As more Jews migrated to England, where they were welcomed by the Christian Cabalists and reformers, the opportunities for Cabalistic learning greatly increased.

When Comenius had first arrived in London in 1641, with such enthusiastic hopes, he was met by Theodore Haak, an emigré scholar and refugee from the Palatinate. Haak was the agent and treasurer of other Protestant refugees and a dedicated proponent of the need for an "invisible college." In 1641, the refugees worked on plans for the college and searched for a site. But the Irish rebellion broke their euphoria, and it soon became clear that the country was drifting towards civil war (Trevor-Roper, p. 271). Comenius stayed in England long

enough to write Via Lucis, a blueprint for the new society, which circulated in manuscript. He then left for Sweden, where Gustavous Adolphus loomed as the new Protestant hope for Europe, a hope significantly revived in the 1780's when Gustavus III reigned as an openly Rosicrucian-Masonic monarch. Dury temporarily returned to The Hague, where he served the exiled Queen of Bohemia.

Hartlib, however, remained in England and tirelessly pursued his efforts. In 1645 a brief peace gave him hope again and he enlisted translators to edit the works of Andreae, Campanella, and Comenius. In 1646 the translator John Hall dedicated the preface to Andreae's 1618 and 1620 "Modells" of a secret society of "illuminati" to Hartlib, who had known the early members of Andreae's group. In 1651, Hartlib edited a work of Boehme's aristocratic Silesian friend, Abraham von Frankenberg, which indicates the English interest in Boehme as a representative of pan-sophic, Cabalistic ideals. Frankenberg (1593-1652) was a personal friend of Boehme, who dedicated one of his epistles to him; in 1643, Frankenberg wrote the biography of Boehme which became a standard source. He was at the same time an advocate of Andreae's ideas. Hartlib had known Frankenberg as early as 1646, and tried to publish his alchomystical works in England. A remarkable letter from Frankenberg to Hartlib in 1646, sent from Dantzic, Poland, is filled with phrases suggestive of possible Rosicrucian and Masonic connections with the "invisible college."

In the letter, Frankenberg opened with a "mystic pledge of our dear friendship, the EYE and KEY," symbols for initiation used by Rosicrucians and Masons. He

affirmed the profundity of their secret wisdom, despite the carping of the vulgar, and vowed to continue his work, to be titled with a "mystic name," encouraged by Comenius and others. He discussed theosophical works to be exchanged between them, and asked for more books, "if they offer and show any mystical and occult secret wisdom of God, Nature, and Art." He noted his research into the transmigration of souls and in metamorphosis, "or the separation, illumination, and perfection of body, soul, and spirit, in a word, deification or participation in and communion with the Divine Nature." He mentioned the receipt from Upsala, Sweden (where Comenius now was), of ancient Nordic runes replete with Hermetic, Cabalistic, and Rosicrucian lore, some of which he sent on to Athanasius Kircher in Rome, whose occultist emblematic engravings soon became famous. Frankenberg concluded with news from Comenius and from Benedictus Figulus, a Rosicrucian philosopher, and noted that he was sending Hartlib a pamphlet on "magnetic cures." This revealing letter, which substantiates the wide-ranging occult interests and contacts of Hartlib and his friends, is reproduced in full in Bailey, pp. 85-88.

Hartlib and Dury were finally able to publish Frankenberg's Clavis Apocalyptica, the German edition of which caused Frankenberg's exile. Frankenberg was also a friend of Menasseh ben Israel, and possibly introduced Hartlib to John Sparrow, a lawyer and officer in Cromwell's army, who began the English translation of Boehme's works in 1644. Sparrow was instrumental in the widespread reading of Boehme among Cromwell's army of "Saints." The increasing interest in Boehme in England is indicated also by Ashmole's acquisition of several manuscripts and

works on Boehme, and his view that Boehme was part of the Rosicrucian tradition (Bailey, pp. 58-79).

During the lull of 1645, Hartlib and Theodore Haak were finally able to establish their "invisible college"--a group which apparently had no formal meetings, but which was bound by vows of sharing knowledge and by common studies. Hartlib kept close records on its activities and members, who included many alchemists and occultists, such as Elias Ashmole, Kenelm Digby, Robert Child, George Starkey, John Dury, and the American, John Winthrop, many of whom became members of the Royal Society in 1660.²⁰ But the most important member was the famous chemist, Robert Boyle (1627-1691), who has left some important notes on the secret society. In a letter to Francis Tallents in 1646, Boyle enthusiastically described his group:

The best on't is, that the corner-stones of the invisible, or (as they call themselves), the philosophical college, do now and then honor me with their company . . . men of so capacious and searching spirits, that school-philosophy is but the lowest region of their knowledge . . . persons that endeavor to put narrow-mindedness out of countenance, by the practice of so extensive a charity, that it reaches into everything called man, and nothing less than universal good-will can content it. And indeed they are so apprehensive of the want of good employment, that they take the whole body of mankind for their care . . . their chiefest fault . . . is that there are not enough of them. (Wilkinson, "Hartlib," 15, p. 59).

²⁰ See R.S. Wilkinson, "The Hartlib Papers and Seventeenth-century Chemistry," Ambix, 15 (Feb. 1968) and 17 (Mar. 1970).

Though Boyle may seem an incongruous figure to include among the occultists, he is claimed as a Rosicrucian by modern theosophists.²¹ Certainly his letters ring with Rosicrucian and Masonic phrases, as he calls members "living corner-stones" and the "invisibles," a name that Boyle himself gave to the society. But Boyle as a young man had been greatly influenced by Sir Henry Wotton, that upholder of Palatinate ideals, who was his headmaster at Eton in 1635. Boyle spent the years from 1638 to 1644 traveling in Europe and meeting other scientists and theosophers. In Geneva he experienced a powerful spiritual conversion, after which he learned Hebrew, Greek, Chaldee, and Syriac, although by nature averse to language studies, in order to study the Scriptures in the original. He maintained his theological, or theosophical, studies to the end of his life. As soon as he returned to England in 1644, Boyle sought out Hartlib and joined his endeavors, but whether his spiritual experiences in Europe were inspired by Hartlib's theosophical associates there is still unknown.

The Hermetic nature of Boyle's chemistry is made clear throughout his writings. For example, he complained on a visit to his disorderly Irish estates in 1652 that Ireland was such a barbarous country that he could not get any chemical equipment and "it was hard to have any Hermetic thoughts in it" (DNB). Boyle, who had become an ardent disciple of Hartlib, returned to Oxford in 1654, where the "invisible college" then included Christopher

²¹ R. Swinburne Clymer, The Book of Rosicruciae (Quakerstown, Penn: Philosophical Publishing Co., 1946), III, 35.

Wren (often cited as a Grand Master of Freemasonry), John Wilkins (chaplain in England to the Elector Palatine), and Robert Hooke (who helped Boyle with chemical and alchemical experiments). Anthony Wood, in his autobiography, recounted how Boyle brought to Oxford in 1659 a "noted Rosicrucian," Peter Sthael of Strasburg, who took in students for the study of alchemy (Wood, Athenae Oxonienses, I, liii). Wood himself took the course, with ten fellow students, one of whom--John Locke--had such "a turbulent spirit, clamorous and never contented," that he refused to take notes from the master. But Christopher Wren, another student, greatly admired Sthael, who stayed on at Oxford until 1662, when he was called to be operator to the Royal Society until 1670. As noted earlier, Ashmole recorded in his diary some information about a Rosicrucian group at Strasbourg, a city which became again a center of secret society agitation during Blake's era.

In his article on the still inadequately examined Hartlib papers, Wilkinson discusses the alchemical and theosophical activities and correspondence of the whole "invisible college" group, making clear the comprehensive nature of their occult investigations. M.B. Hall, in Robert Boyle and Seventeenth-century Chemistry (Cambridge, 1958), admits the "alchemical and mystic" nature of the group, but concludes rather glibly that it therefore could not have been important for Boyle. Unfortunately, the letters from Boyle and Milton to Hartlib were removed by Oldenburg after Hartlib's death and are now missing. But the Hartlib papers do demonstrate fully the group's associations with the Rosicrucian Freemason Ashmole, the Rosicrucian Thomas Vaughan, and many "adepts" in the old Rosicrucian territories in Europe.

Boyle was deliberately secretive about his source of alchemical knowledge, never giving out names. But he sought out adepts and so postured his alchemical friends into divulging secrets that they made him promise not to reveal them in plain words.²² Boyle's first publication was an anonymous tract which appeared in "Chymical, Medicinal, and Chirurgical Addresses made to Samuel Hartlib" (London, 1655), under the heading "Philaretus to Empyricus." The volume also included the first work of Eiraneus Philalethes, who was probably either Child or the American alchemist, Winthrop, and a translation of a "Theosophical German Treatise" (West, p. 115). But Boyle was not afraid later to publicly vouch for the truth of the "demon of Mascon" and for the "magnetic cures" of the Irish healer, Greatrakes the Stroker, who was viewed by eighteenth-century Freemasons as the forerunner of Mesmer and Animal Magnetism. Boyle's curious experiments on breathing techniques, electricity and magnetism, and sympathetic cures were rooted in Hermetic-Cabalistic traditions and later stimulated many similar experiments in the eighteenth-century secret societies, which viewed Boyle as one of their own. Thus, when we read of Boyle's great desire at the end of his life to complete a collection of elaborate alchemical processes, which he is said to have entrusted to a friend as "a kind of Hermetick legacy," but which were never

22 Muriel West, "Notes on the Importance of Alchemy to Modern Science in the Writings of Francis Bacon and Robert Boyle," Ambix, 9, (June 1961), pp. 102-114.

made known, (DNB), the question of Boyle's possible Rosicrucianism does not seem as ludicrous as first appears in modern Rosicrucian annals.

During the Cromwell years, the "invisible college" was never persecuted, but it did maintain strict secrecy and anonymity. As England moved toward the Restoration in 1659, Meric Causaubon published his exposé of John Dee's séances as part of a government crackdown on that "enthusiasm and mysticism" which had led to such turbulence in the preceding decades (Yates, Rosicrucian, p. 188). Many members of the "invisible college" had been interested in Dee, including Boyle's assistant, Robert Hooke, whose efforts at interpreting Dee's seance journals as political ciphers deserve scholarly consideration. Hartlib urged in 1655 that Dee's Preface to Euclid be published in Latin so that more European scholars could read it (French, p. 175). But when Charles II took the throne in 1660, the members of the older college were extremely careful to appear non-sectarian and non-enthusiastic when seeking Royal patronage for their society.

The group of scientists and theosophers who became the original members of the Royal Society in 1660 included men of different religions and political affiliations-- both Cromwellians and Royalists--united by their common investigation of the secrets of nature. Ashmole, who continued his lifelong research into John Dee's theories, became a founding member of the Royal Society but never published anything more on Dee, and Masonic annals were curiously silent on Dee's possible influence on Freemasonry. But the first published Constitutions of the Free-Masons,

by James Anderson in 1723, was full of echoes of John Dee's Preface to Euclid, including the mystical implications of mathematics and a call for experimentation "by the Magi" (French, p. 175). Whether the public claim of the Royal Society to be interested only in scientific experiment and research, with no political or religious reform goals, was an effort to avoid the charges of radicalism, magic, and subversion associated with Dee, the Rosicrucians, and German secret societies, or whether it was "a Blind," to use Ashmole's term, is still an open question. But the haziness and many gaps in historical studies on the origins and development of the Royal Society from 1660 until the 1720's indicate the secrecy and anonymity involved in many members' activities. That so many members of the "invisible college" became Royal Society members also makes it clear why Isaac Newton, who read all the Rosicrucian materials, was heavily influenced by Boehme, corresponded with many alchemists, and wrote a Cabalistic interpretation of the apocalypse (Bailey, pp. 78-80), saw no great difference between Renaissance vitalistic science and "modern" science.

A final point to consider in the relation among Rosicrucians, Freemasons, and the Royal Society is the role of Sir Robert Moray, the first President of the Royal Society, in all three movements. Moray (ca. 1602-1673), spent most of his early life on the Continent in military and diplomatic service, and his correspondence reveals his studies in alchemy and contacts with adepts in Germany. As mentioned before, he became a Freemason in 1641 in Edinburgh, and in the 1650's became the patron of Thomas Vaughan (1622-1666), the Welsh alchemist and twin brother

of the poet, Henry Vaughan. Thomas Vaughan was involved with many alchemical members of the "invisible college," knew Ashmole, and published the first English editions of the Fama and Confessio in 1652. Vaughan was called a Rosicrucian by his contemporaries, and popular rumor said that he had made a pact with the devil (DNB). His first work, Anthroposophia Theomagica (composed 1648; published 1650), was thoroughly Cabalistic and Rosicrucian in concept and was written during the period of Backhouse's training of Ashmole. Whether Vaughan was one of the adepts that Backhouse introduced Ashmole to is unknown, but Vaughan and Ashmole did correspond. Moray, who was a close friend of Ashmole and corresponded with him during his own years of working with Vaughan, was called "a great patron of the Rosie-Crucians" by their mutual friend, Anthony Wood (Athenae Oxonienses, III, 725). Moray was also a serious Freemason and often included a Masonic pentagram in his signature. In letters to Alexander Bruce, Moray discussed the symbolism of the pentagram as well as his own visionary experiences. His interest in magnetism and alchemy is suggestive, when compared to eighteenth-century Animal Magnetism, for he had used their techniques to stimulate spiritualistic effects. He noted that God had given him "many pregnant and sensible experiments, for confirming my faith and his truth."²³

At the time of his Rosicrucian and Masonic involvement, Moray was the driving force behind the founding of the Royal Society. Some historians suggested that the

²³ D.C. Martin, "Sir Robert Moray, F.R.S.," The Royal Society: its Origins and Founders (London: Royal Society, 1960), pp. 240-46.

Royal Society's rule to exclude religion and politics from its discussions and the taking of an oath by the President to further the objects of the Society was influenced by similar rules in respect of Masonic meetings (Martin, p. 246). That Freemasonry may have provided a secret anonymous home for continued magical and alchemical activity, while the Royal Society provided a public forum for more strictly "scientific" work, is a valid possibility, especially when it is shown that several original Royal Society members, including Ashmole, Noray, and Christopher Wren were simultaneously members of both groups.

The linking of Rosicrucians, Freemasons, and Hermetists of all stripes with Whig political groups, which would become the hallmark of eighteenth-century Freemasonry, seemed to be already developing by the late seventeenth century, as a 1676 Masonic pamphlet pointed out:

To give notice that the Modern green-ribbon'd Caball, together with the Ancient Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross; and the Hermetick Adepti and the company of Accepted Masons intend all to dine together. (Yates, Rosicrucian, p. 211)

A comic menu was then described and those who thought of going were advised to wear spectacles, "For otherwise 'tis thought the said Societies will (as hitherto) make their appearance Invisible." The green-ribboned Caball was a Whig political club, indicating the various kinds of associations grouped under the Masonic umbrella during the period when the Royal Society was building its respectable and "modern" image.

When Thomas Sprat, a member of the "invisible college," published his History of the Royal Society in 1667, England had gone through another year of millennial turbulence, as anti-royalists and "enthusiasts" viewed the plague of 1666 (the apocalyptic number) as a punishment by God upon the restored King, Charles II. Sprat "steered his long awaited book masterfully into these troubled waters of propaganda and counter-propaganda,"²⁴ praising the King on the one hand and the anti-royalists' devotion to liberty of inquiry on the other. The book and the Society survived the renewed political antagonisms, but Sprat's effort to portray the King as a unique upholder of aims and purposes formerly associated more with theosophical and political rebels, soon stimulated a counterblast from Henry Stubbe. In Legends no Histories: or a Specimen of some Animadversions upon the History of the Royal Society (London, 1670), Stubbs indignantly pointed out:

It is a sign that our Virtuoso (Sprat) is little acquainted with the condition of Europe . . . in that he says, that of all the Kings of Europe, his Majesty was the first, who confirmed this noble design of Experiments by his own example. Had not the Emperor Rudolphus, a Colledge of Chymists to promote Natural and useful experiments in Physick and Philosophy, did he not oftentimes work himself in those laboratories? (Sprat, "Notes," p. 1)

Thus, though Sprat pictured the Royal Society as an "establishment" group enjoying royal patronage, the response from readers who knew the German traditions of

²⁴ Thomas Sprat, History of the Royal Society, ed. J.I. Cope (St. Louis, Missouri: Washington Univ. Press, 1958), p. xiv.

"illuminated colleges" placed it firmly within those traditions. The aged theosopher, Comenius, published in 1668 his Via Lucis, which he had written in the euphoric days of 1641, and dedicated it enthusiastically to the Royal Society. Addressing its members as fellow "illuminati," Comenius praised them for fulfilling his old "pansophic" dream (Trevor-Roper, p. 289). But he also warned the "Torch Bearers of the Enlightened Age" that if their investigations of nature were only objective and for the sake of knowledge alone, rather than for the benevolent reform of society and regeneration of mankind, then their work might turn out to be a "Babylon turned upside down, building not towards Heaven, but towards Earth" (Yates, Rosicrucian, p. 191). As Bernard Fay pointed out, it was later those friends of Newton in the public and "purely scientific" Royal Society who were most concerned with spiritual and educational reform who sought in Freemasonry the secret channel for their activities (Revolution, pp. 81, 93). Comenius' prophetic words about "secular science" were later echoed in Blake's condemning of the public Newton for his "single vision," while praising the "four-fold vision" of Paracelsus and Boehme, and, as we shall see, while associating with the alchemistical and occult activities of a revolutionary Masonic group in the late eighteenth century.

Chapter V: Eighteenth-century Freemasonry:
Deism versus Occultism

The period from 1662 and 1723 in the development of Freemasonry is sparsely documented, and there are only scattered bits of evidence for what was happening to the two strains--modern, rational science and Renaissance, occult science--which both found a refuge in the Masonic secret societies. But the old vitalistic science became increasingly secretive, and the publications of the Royal Society emphasized non-spiritualistic, verifiable demonstrations.

That the political context of the Restoration influenced this trend is exemplified in Samuel Butler's Hudibras, which he had worked on for years but was afraid to publish until Charles II was on the throne. Butler attacked the Puritan and Cromwellian patronage of occultists and quacks, as well as the more ambitious aims of the Royal Society "enthusiasts." As Wilders remarks, Butler judged human behavior from the standpoint of empirical common sense; he valued the reasonable, practical, and useful, and saw truth only in statements which could be verified by human experience.¹ Butler gained his precise and extensive knowledge of the theosophic and alchemystic aspects of the reform movements of the 1640's and 1650's through his service in Puritan houses. His attacks upon the credulity and extravagances of the "invisible college"

¹ Samuel Butler, Hudibras, ed. John Wilders (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p. xxxi.

types give important substantiation to how much a part of the English Revolution the Rosicrucian impulses were.

The Presbyterian knight, Hudibras, a pedantic scholar encumbered with abstract scientific learning, is viewed in collaboration with his theosophical squire, Ralpho, an Independent and disciple of Thomas Vaughan, who spouts the whole Hermetic-Rosicrucian tradition in hilarious outbursts. Sidrophel, the astrologer, is a parody of William Lilly, a pro-Parliament man and friend of Ashmole, who is often linked with Ashmole's Freemasonry in Masonic annals. Butler's experience of the English Civil Wars and Protectorate made him a thorough skeptic; he believed all religious groups were intolerant and built "their faith upon the holy Text of Pike and Gun" (*Hudibras*, p. 7). He was merciless in his exposé of all the militant "Saints" who proclaimed their "inner light," for 'tis a dark Lanthorn of the Spirit, which none see by but those that bear it" (p. 16). That the "lanthorn" refers to the profusion of Hermetic and Cabalistic emblems of the lantern leading into the cave of the Illuminati seems likely, for Butler went on to describe Ralpho's enthusiasm as stemming from that tradition:

Thus Ralph became infallible,
 As three or four-legg'd Oracle,
 The ancient Cup, or modern Chair;
 Spoke truth point-blank, though unaware:
 For mystick Learning, wondrous able
 In Magick, Palisman, and Cabal,
 Whose primitive tradition reaches
 As far as Adam's first green breaches:
 Deep-sighted in Intelligences,
 And much of Terra Incognita,
 Th' Intelligible world could say:
 A deep occult Philosopher,
 As learn'd as the Wild Irish are,

Or Sir Agrippa, for profound
 And solid lying much renown'd:
 He Anthroposophus, and Floud,
 And Jacob Behmen understood;
 Knew many an Amulet and Charm,
 That would do neither good nor harm:
 In Rosy-Crucian Lore as learned
 As that Vere adeptus earned. (pp. 16-17)

Noting Ralpho's visions of Paracelsus' "first matter" and Vaughan's "chaos," Butler concluded that they were both "cousin-germans, and right able To inveigle and draw in the rabble" for the great "Reformation" (p. 18). Butler had read Causaubon's exposure of John Dee and parodied the séances with Kelley, Laski, and Rudolph II (p. 159). He scorned the "devil of Mascon" whom Robert Boyle publicly defended, ridiculed Menasseh ben Israel's occult theories of the coccyx bone, mocked the philo-Semitism of the reformers, and swept away Kenelm Digby, Van Helmont, Athanasius Kircher, Robert Hooke, and most of the astrologers in scatter shots at his occultist contemporaries (pp. 391, 440, 3).

For Butler, the imagination was not a source of illumination or insight; it was a "certaine slight of the Minde" which "delivers things otherwise then they are in Nature" (p. xxvi). Thus, in 1678 he wrote:

Who would believe, what strange Bug-bears
 Mankind creates it self, for Fears?
 That spring like fern, that Insect-weed
 Equivocally, without seed;
 And have no possible Foundation,
 But merely in th' Imagination:

.....
 For fear do's things so like a Witch,
 'Tis hard t' unriddle which is which:

Sets up communities of Senses,
 To chop and change Intelligences,
 As Rosi-crucian Virtuoso's,
 Can see with Ears, and hear with Noses;
 And when they neither see nor hear,
 Have more than Both supply'd by Fear.
 That makes 'em in the dark see Visions,
 And hag themselves with Apparitions. (p. 278)

Butler's common sense and empiricism were echoed by another figure who knew Rosicrucianism and Freemasonry from the inside, the rationalist philosopher John Locke, who became the bête noire of eighteenth-century occultism.

As noted earlier, Locke attended Sthael's Rosicrucian lessons at Oxford in 1659, which he did not enjoy, and in 1696, he wrote Thomas, Earl of Pembroke, about his curiosity concerning the Freemasons. Locke discussed a letter in the Bodleian library from King Henry VI on Freemasonry, and said the letter "has so much raised my curiosity, as to induce me to enter myself into the fraternity, which I am determined to do (if I may be admitted), the next time I go to London."² Locke annotated the letter and apparently believed in its authenticity, which, however, is doubted by modern Masonic scholars. What may have come of Locke's Masonic venture is as yet unknown, but his brand of rational enquiry and empiricism became the dominant public strain of both the Royal Society and Freemasonry by the time of Anderson's doistic Constitutions of the Freemasons in 1723.

² William Hutchinson, The Spirit of Masonry, 2nd ed. (Carlisle: F. Jollie, 1795), pp. 262-270.

But that the old occult traditions were still alive is evidenced by Robert Samber's Long Livers (London: 1722), a treatise using Thomas Vaughan's pseudonym, "Eugenius Philalethes," and which was "a curious history" of the "rare secret of Rojuvenescency," the old Rosicrucian claim. It was dedicated to "the Grand Master . . . and Brethren of the Most Antient and Most Honorable Fraternity of the Freemasons of Great Britain and Ireland." Samber warned the "Illuminati" not to let the vulgar "look behind the veil," called them "living stones, built up (in) a Spritual House," and wanted the "Vermin of the Law rased forever out of the Book M." He noted that these essentially Rosicrucian secrets were reserved for Brethren of the higher class, who were "illuminated with the sublimest mysteries and profoundest Secrets of Masonry." Samber, who wrote this in 1721, dedicated in the same year a Hermetic-Cabalistic "Treatise on the Plague" to the Duke of Montague, whom he extolled as best master, friend, and benefactor. Montague was elected Grand Master of the Freemasons that year, was also a Royal Society member, and was a popular and revered figure in both groups (Gould, II, 248-251).

Another literary example of the co-existence of skeptical rationalism and interest in occultism within late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Freemasonry is Alexander Pope's Rape of the Lock. Early London registers list both Pope and Swift as Masons in 1730,³

³ John Herron Leppor and Philip Crossle, History of the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of Ireland (Dublin: Lodge of Research, 1925), 1, 445.

and their membership probably goes back earlier. Pope first wrote the Rape of the Lock in 1711, and then in 1712, "his head teeming with the scheme,"⁴ he added the Rosicrucian machinery which lent such grace and wit to the satire. In the 1612 dedication, Pope said he determined to raise these machines "on a new and very odd foundation, the Rosicrucian doctrine of spirits":

The Rosicrucians are a people I must bring you acquainted with. The best account I know of them is in a French book, called Le Comte de Gabalis . . . According to these gentlemen, the four elements are inhabited by spirits, which they call sylphs, gnomes, nymphs, and salamanders. The gnomes or demons of earth delight in mischief; but the sylphs, whose habitation is in the air, are the best conditioned creatures imaginable. For they say, any mortals may enjoy the most intimate familiarities with these gentle spirits, upon a condition very easy to all true adepts, an inviolate preservation of chastity. (II, 144)

George Berkeley, whose Hermetic interests will be discussed later, congratulated Pope "upon the display of powers more truly poetical than he had shown before" (II, 117), and the popularity of his poem stimulated a new English translation of the Comte de Gabalis in 1714. The translation noted that it was originally published at Paris in 1670, where it became highly popular, and that some think it was originally founded upon two Italian alchemical letters written by Joseph Francis Borri.⁵ Others thought Borri took the chief hints in

⁴ Alexander Pope, Works (London: John Murray, 1871), II, 116.

⁵ Abbé de Villars, The Count of Cabalis (London: Lintott and Curll, 1714), Preface.

his letters from Villars. Borri (1616-1695) was described as "a famous chymist, quack, and heretick," who was born in Milan and imprisoned in Castel San Angelo by the Inquisition in 1695, where he died. In the late eighteenth century, Borri was hailed as the precursor of the martyred Masonic magician Cagliostro, who died in exactly the same way at the same place in 1795.

Prefixed to the translation of the Comte de Gabalis was Monsieur Bayle's account of Villars and the Rosicrucian sect. Describing the brass statue and ever-burning lamp in the tomb, he traced the sect's German origin, its concerns with reforming the Arts and Sciences, its adherence to the wisdom of Egypt, Chaldea, Persia, and India, and its alchemical wonders. After 1610-1614, "that Society, which in reality is but a sect of Mountebanks, began to multiply, but durst not appear publickly." He noted that the "Inlightened or Illuminati of Spain proceeded from them," and described the announcements in 1622 of the Rosicrucians' arrival in Paris. Bayle concluded that the Rosicrucians have now disappeared, "though it be not the sentiment of that German chymist, the author of . . . De Voluci Aborea, and of another who both composed . . . De Philosophia Pura."

The text opened with news of Gabalis' death from apoplexy, and the narrator asserted that

. . . the Virtuosi will not fail to say, that that sort of death is particular to those who blab abroad the secrets of the Sages. For (since Raymond Lully of happy Memory, has ordered it so in his will) an Angel- executor was never wanting to writhe the necks of those who indiscreetly reveal the Cabalistic mysteries (Villars, p. 1)

Occultists of all types in the eighteenth century claimed that Gabalis was actually strangled on the road to Lyons by the Rosicrucian brothers, or "angels," for divulging their secrets. The narrator, who was half-sceptical about his initiation by Gabalis, noted that the Rosicrucians were "in mighty expectation of the arrival of a certain German, a great Lord, and as great a Cabalist, whose estate borders upon Poland." He had promised to visit the brothers at Paris on his way to England. The narrator, who now hoped to enter "the Society of Sages," noted that he only needed a "small spice of Melancholy to make all those (brothers) confess that I was a Subject very proper for the Reception of occult sciences. It is true, without Melancholy, there is no making any progress in them" (Villars, pp. 2-5).

Among all the astrological, Cabalistic, and geomantic lore, the section of the Comte de Gabalis that Pope used was that on the four elementary spirits, a notion which Paracelsus developed from Germanic folklore. To the Rosicrucians, the "immense space between heaven and earth is filled with countless Multitudes of Nations of a human figure" (Villars, p. 14). The spirits were invisible but substantial, were great "lovers of Science," and loved to have intercourse (of several kinds) with illuminated "Sages." The air was filled with Sylphs, the waters with Undines or Nymphs, the earth with Gnomes, and the fire with Salamanders, who "serve the philosophers." The work concluded with the Rosicrucian belief that Paradise can be regained in this lifetime, within the illuminated individual psyche:

Averroes says the Supreme Good consists in the conversation of Angels . . . which is not Cabalistic enough: for Man, even in this life, can, and is created to enjoy God, as you will one of these Days understand and experience when you are ranked among the Sages. (Villars, p. 88)

Pope's notes to The Rape of the Lock are interesting, as they reveal his grasp of odds and ends of Hermetic lore. His note to the line about Ariel, who ranged "the crystal wilds of air/In the clear mirror of thy ruling star" (Canto I, 105-106), claims that this is "the language of the Platonists, the writers of the Intelligible world of Spirits, etc." This vague use of Platonist for neo-Platonic and Hermetic ideas would become more diffuse and confusing in the later eighteenth century. Pope also quoted "Rabbinic" opinion, another vague term for Mishnaic and Cabalistic lore (Canto I, 145-146). He indicated his familiarity with seventeenth-century astrology when he mocked John Partridge, Ashmole's collaborator (Canto V, 137-140). Whether Pope gained his eclectic--and superficial--knowledge of Rosicrucianism, Hermetism, and the "Rabbis" from Masonic contacts is not certain,⁶ but it was Freemasonry which became increasingly the repository of the whole occultist and antiquarian mélange which Ashmole epitomized in the seventeenth century.

Just how eclectic this Masonic tradition had become is revealed in a comical Masonic letter of 1724, attributed to Jonathon Swift. Though there are still many unanswered questions about Swift's Masonic affiliation, his name on a 1730 London register and his

⁶ On the probability of Pope's Masonic involvement, see W.J. Williams, "Alexander Pope and Freemasonry," AQC, 38 (1925), pp. 111-118.

parodies of Masonic rituals (especially "The Grand Mystery Discovered") indicate a thorough knowledge of the secret symbols and substantiate the claims of Irish Masons for his active membership. Lepper thinks Swift possibly became a Mason as early as 1688, in the Trinity Colloge Lodge, or in 1711, when he was much in the company of Steele (Williams, p. 132). The "Letter from the Grand Mistress of the female Free-Masons to Mr. Harding the Printer" (Dublin: Harding, 1724) is similar in style and spirit to Swift's other Satires and was first reprinted in the London edition of Swift's works in 1755. But on the title-page, the well-known name of George Faulkner was substituted for John Harding. The letter was reprinted in this form by Faulkner himself in his great 1760-69 edition of Swift's complete works. It was reprinted in the German edition of 1760, but has been absent from all subsequent editions (Lepper, pp. 445-54). Davis, the most recent editor of Swift's works, includes the letter but is not sure if it is Swift's. He concludes that "it is curious that it was printed among Swift's works in the eighteenth-century, and is still accepted in some quarters."⁷

The importance of the letter in revealing at such an early date the mixture of Hermetic-Cabalistic elements with Irish mythology, which formed the eighteenth and nineteenth-century traditions of Irish

⁷ Jonathon Swift. Miscellaneous and Autobiographical Pieces, Fragments and Marginalia, ed. Herbert Davis (Oxford: Shakespeare head, 1902), V, 358.

Freemasonry, will become obvious when we deal with Yeats's training in and poetic usage of these same Masonic-Rosicrucian traditions. With rollicking high spirits, the "Grand Mistress" wrote Harding to assure him that her lodge had "the Whole Mystery as well as any Lodge in Europe." An aside followed, which noted that "by this time any reader who is a Mason, will, I know, laugh, and not without indignation" (Swift, p. 324). The joke seemed to refer to the fact that ladies were not admitted into Freemasonry, though this was changed later in France. After a long, portentous, and amusing "Cabalistic" explanation of Hebrew words, a mock-genealogy of Freemasonry was given, as based on "a Silly Pun upon the Word Bee":

----- A Bee has in all Ages and Nations been the Grand Hieroglyphick of Masonry. . . . Masonry or Building seems to be the very nature of essence of the Bee, for her building not the ordinary Way of all other living Creatures, is the Generative Cause which produces the Young Ones (you know I suppose that Bees are of Neither Sex). . . .

The Egyptians, always Excellent and Antient Free-Masons, paid Divine Worship to a Bee under the outward shape of a Bull, the better to conceal the Mystery, which Bull they call'd Apis, is the Latin word for a Boo, the Enigma of Representing the Bee by a Bull, consists in this; that according to the Doctrine of the Pythagorean Lodge of Free-Masons, the Souls of all the Cow-kind transmigrate into Bees, as one Virgil, A Poet, much in favour with the Emperor Augustus, because of his profound skill in Masonry, has described . . .

Our Guardian is of Opinion, that the present Masonry is so tarnish'd by the Ignorance of the working, and some other illiterate Masons, that very many, even whole Lodges fall under the Censure of the venerable Chinese Brachman, whose history of the Rise, Progress, and Decay of Free-Masonry, writ in the Chinese tongue, is lately translated into a Certain European Language. This Chinese Sage

says, the greatest part of current Masons Judge of the Misteries and Use of that Sacred Art . . . as the Famous British Free Mason MERLIN says of the Stars in the Firmament, when view'd by a Child, etc. But I shall not trouble you with the Length of the Quotation at present, because Morlin and Fryar Bacon on Free-Masonry are soon to be dressed up in Modern English, and sold by our Printer Mr. Harding, if duly encourag'd by Subscribers; and also a Key to Raymundus Lullius, without whose Help our Guardian says it's impossible to come at the Quintessence of Free Masonry. . . . (Swift, p. 328)

Within these passages, which seem worth quoting at some length, the sweeping eclecticism of Freemasonry and its methods of neo-Cabalistical etymologies of words, and the finding of correspondences between anything that happens to fall within its mythological genealogy-mania, are both more thoroughly and more amusingly revealed than in any other literary document on Freemasonry. Swift--if it is he--went on in the burlesque to define an Irish version of Masonry's family tree, which will become significant when we deal with the Irish Masonic connections of Yeats and his in-laws.

The Branch of the Lodge of Solomon's Temple, afterwards called the Lodge of St. John of Jerusalem on which our Guardian fortunately hit, is as I can easily prove, the Antientest and Purest now on Earth. The famous old Scottish Lodge of Killwinnin of which all the Kings of Scotland have been from Time to Time Grand Masters wit' out Interruption, down from the days of Fergus, who Reign'd there more than 2000 Years ago, long before the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem . . . adorn'd the Antient Jewish and Pagan Masonry with many religious and Christian rules.

Fergus being Eldest Son to the Chief King of Ireland, was carefully instructed in all the Arts and Sciences, especially in the natural Magick, and the Cabalistical Philosophy (Afterwards called the Rosecrution) by the Pagan Druids of Ireland and Mona, the only true Cabalists then Extent in the Western World. (For they had it immediately from the Phoenicians, Chaldeans, and Egyptians. . . . The Egyptians had it immediately from Abraham, as the Scripture plainly hints in the Life of that Patriarch; and tis allow'd I am told by Men of Learning, that the Occult as well as Moral Philosophy of all the Pagans was well besprinkl'd and enrich'd from the Caballistical School of the Patriarchs. . . .

Fergus before his Descent upon the Picts in Scotland rais'd that famous Structure, call'd to this Day Carrick-Fergus after his Name, the most misterious Piece of Architecture now on Earth, (not excepting the Pyramids of the Egyptian Masons, and their Hieroglyphicks or Free Masons Signs) . . . he built it as Lodge for his College or Free Masons in those Days call'd Druids, which Word our Guardian assures us signifies an Oak in the Greek language . . . the Word Druid or Worker in Oak . . . had nothing to do with Stones of any Kind until Jason a famous Druid or Free-Nason used the Loadstone when he went in Quest of the Golden Fleece as it is called in the Enigmatical Terms of Free-Masonry, or more properly speaking of the Cabala, as Masonry was call'd in those Days. Freemasons in all Ages, as well as now, have been look'd upon to deal with Sprites and Demons, and hence came that Imputation, which they have in many Nations lain under, of being Conjurer's or Magicians; witness Merlin and Fryar Bacon. . . .

Our Guardian also says, that Caesar's Description of the Druids of Gaul is as Exact a Picture of a Lodge of Free Masons as can possibly be drawn. . . . (Swift, p. 330)

That these Irish traditions of Freemasonry incorporating magic, Cabala, and divination were still alive in the late nineteenth century was pointed out by Yeats and Lady Gregory, who recounted how when they spoke of a friend's

visions to an old countryman, he replied, "He must belong to a society." Yeats added that the country people often attributed magical powers to Orangemen and Freemasons, "and I have heard a shepherd at Doneraile speak of a magic wand with Tetragrammaton Agla," a key Cabalistic phrase, "written upon it" (Yeats, Visions and Beliefs, p. 302).

There are several other letters and pamphlets dealing with Freemasonry attributed to Swift, and a letter to him in 1723 discusses Rosicrucianism and occultism in Ireland. Viscount Bolingbroke wrote Swift about "a learned Rosycrucian of my acquaintance, who is a fool of as much knowledge and as much wit as ever I knew in my life." The Rosicrucian spoke much of "the natural and theurgick magic," and informed Bolingbroke that "though the sages who deal in occult sciences have been laughed out of some countries and driven out of others, yet there are to his knowledge, many of them in Ireland."⁸ In a letter of 1730, Swift discussed Dean Delaney as "one of us: But like a new Freemason, who hath not yet learned all the Dialect of the Mystery" (Lepper, p. 446). Swift's good friend, Dr. John Arbuthnot, was an active Freemason in the 1720's, and most likely discussed Masonry with Swift.⁹

⁸ Harold Williams, ed. The Correspondence of Jonathon Swift (Oxford: Clarendon, 1903), II, 472-73.

⁹ Robert Freke Gould, "The Medical Profession and Freemasonry," Ars quatuor Coronatorum, 7 (1894), p. 151. This Masonic journal is hereafter cited as AQC.

In Swift's comic letter on female Freemasonry, the association, even in its burlesque form, of Druidism with Cabalism and of the Irish heroes with occult traditions forms a neglected part of the intellectual milieu and background of the wild antiquarian theories of the eighteenth century, which greatly influenced writers like Robert Southey and William Blake, and "illuminist" political movements like the Anglo-Israelites.

The occult aspects of Freemasonry in England, though, remained part of its "secret mystery," as far as early eighteenth-century publications indicated. The public view was conditioned largely by the rational, deistic tone of the first published Constitutions of the Freemasons in 1723, by the Reverend James Anderson, which became the model for the non-sectarian tolerance of lodges in England and on the Continent. The scattered, obscure nature of the English lodges was remedied by the unification of four lodges in London in 1717 to form the Grand Lodge of London. The Grand Lodge was still a precarious and insignificant group, though, until an expatriated French Huguenot, J.T. Desaguliers (1683-1744), strengthened its organization and stimulated its intellectual concerns in the direction of Newtonian science and "natural religion." Desaguliers was a close friend of Newton, and while the latter was President of the Royal Society, Desaguliers was made "Curator and Demonstrator" for the Society (Fay, Revolution, p. 93).

Desaguliers attacked the Papacy and the absolute monarchy of the French Bourbons, praising instead in an allegorical poem the "Newtonian System of the World, the Best Model of Government":

I have considered Government as a Phenomenon, and looked upon that Form of it to be most perfect which did nearly resemble the Natural Government of our System according to the laws settled by the All-wise and All-mighty Architect of the Universe. (Fay, Revolution, p. 95)

Desaguliers was made Grand Master in London in 1719, and influenced the codification of the ancient rituals as well as turning Masonry more towards deistic science. This increasing public "respectability" and rationalism drew in many distinguished scholars and scientists, as well as the enlightened English nobility. Working with James Anderson, Desaguliers supervised the collection of documents on Masonic history and duties, and imprinted his "enlightened" tone on the Constitutions which Anderson published in 1723.

The Constitutions gave a brief summary of Freemasonry's universal history, starting with Adam, "created after the image of God, the Great Architect of the Universe," passing through the Hermetic lineage of the Middle East, and ending with a "discreet" reference to Christ as "God's Messiah and the Great Architect of the Church" (Fay, p. 109). The document then asserted the extremely tolerant view of religion which exercised a profound influence on the French and German lodges in their resistance to religious and state tyranny:

A Mason is oblig'd by his Tenure to obey the Moral Law; and if he rightly understands the Art, he will never be a stupid Atheist nor an irreligious Libertino. But though in ancient times Masons were charg'd in every country to be of the Religion of the country or nation, whatever it was, yet 'tis now thought more expedient only to oblige them to that Religion

in which all Men agree, leaving their particular Opinions to themselves, that is to be good Men and true, or Men of Honour and Honesty, by whatever Denominations or Persuasions they may be distinguished: whereby Masonry becomes the Center of Union and the Means of conciliating true Friendship among Persons that must have else remain'd at a perpetual Distance. (Fay, Revolution, p. 110)

In this essentially non-occultist document, however, several old figures turn up with definite theosophical histories. French has pointed out the curious similarities between Anderson's Constitutions and John Doe's Mathematical Preface to Euclid. Anderson's work was full of theories on philosophical mathematics and its mystical significance, directed to the interest of the Magi. Linked with occult mathesis was a call for experimentation and practical application--a call which got John Dee condemned as a Conjuror. V.A. Kerndorfer's famous Handbuch der Freimaurer (Leipzig, 1806) notes that Anderson and Desaguliers were both influenced by Comenius' Panegersia in their shaping of emblematic Freemasonry. Findel, another famous German Masonic historian, agrees, and states further that whole passages in Anderson's Constitutions were taken literally from Comenius (see Waite, Freemasonry, p. 130).

As the Grand Lodge grew from its original jurisdiction over four lodges to dominating over several hundred, an increasingly short shrift was given to the theosophical lodges, which were publicly dismissed as "eccentric and charlatanic."¹⁰ But, at the same time,

¹⁰ Heinrich Schneider, Quest for Mysteries: the Masonic Background for Literature in Eighteenth-century Germany (Cornell University Press, 1947), p. 5.

the tolerant and eclectic nature of Freemasonry allowed the admission of members with widely varying religious attitudes, including occultists and Cabalistic Jews, so that the reservoir of old Rosicrucian attitudes survived within the occult lodges as well as in the main ones. Ironically, while mainstream English Freemasonry developed its increasingly deistic format, a counter-reaction began in favor of the old occult traditions, especially in France.

This occultist counter-reaction was largely stimulated by Andrew Michael Ramsay (1686-1743), a Scot who spent much of his life in France. After studying theology and philosophy at Scottish universities, Ramsay came to London in 1707 to study mathematics with Fatio de Duilliers, a Swiss disciple of Newton.¹¹ He had suffered religious doubts while in Scotland, but in London he became a member of the Philadelphian Society, a small Boehmenist and millenarist sect which had considerable influence on late eighteenth-century occult Freemasonry in France and Germany.

The Philadelphians originated in a group centered on John Pordage (1607-1681), who was Vicar of Ashmole's estate at Bradfield until 1654, when he was ejected-- though not by Ashmole-- for "blasphemy and immorality." According to contemporary accounts, Pordage and his group "lived in community" and held "visible communication with angels."¹² He had experienced an illumination in 1649

¹¹ D.P. Walker, The Ancient Theology (Ithaca, New York: Cornell Univ. Press, 1972), p. 234.

¹² W.H.G. Armytage, Heavens Below: Utopian Experiments in England, 1560-1960 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961, p. 32.

while reading Boehme's work and became a convinced millenarian. In the 1660's he began to work with Jane Lead, whose fantastic visions were recorded in her spiritual diary, A Fountain of Gardens. She was a fervent chiliast, believing the New Jerusalem was imminent, as her Heavenly Cloud Now Breaking (1681) breathlessly demonstrated. After Pordage's death in 1681, she used his tracts, which were never published during his lifetime, to supplement her own voluminous output. She attracted a large German following, and an important convert, Francis Lee (1660-1719), a physician who sought her out in 1694. Another convert, Dr. Richard Roach, experienced visions and "extraordinary communications from above." The three soon formed the Philadelphia Society, which published a monthly periodical, Theosophical Transactions, which became a rare and revered possession of Blake's occultist friends in the 1790's.

But the Philadelphia group was hurst by scandals among its German followers, especially by the trial of Eva Von Buttlar, who with two adherants professed to be representatives of the Trinity. She preached complete community of goods and unlimited sexual intercourse for her followers. At her trial in 1706, she alleged that a writing of Pordage's lay at the root of her ideas. Armytage points out the recurrence of sex scandals and rather lurid theories in Boehmenist sects from the late seventeenth century on (pp. 33-36). The Philadelphians broke up as an organized group in 1703, and Francis Lee became a Roman Catholic just before his death in 1719.

Whether Ramsay knew Lee and influenced his later conversion to Catholicism is unclear, but the period from 1707-1710 when Ramsay was a Philadelphian in London would suggest an acquaintance at the least. Fatio de Duilliers, Ramsay's mathematics tutor, also introduced him to the "French Prophets" or Camisards, who wore their shirts outside their breeches. They were Protestant refugees from France, who propounded a doctrine of four-fold vision, experienced convulsive spiritual visitations, and preached violent prophecies of doom and the descent of the New Jerusalem (Armytage, p. 42). Fatio, the Newtonian, became a disciple of the French Prophets (Walker, p. 261) and was followed in 1713 by Sir William Whiston, a fellow of the Royal Society, who succeeded Newton as Lucasian Professor of Mathematics at Cambridge. Despite--or possibly because of--Whiston's wild prophetic theories and occultist associations, he was admired by Swift, used as a model for The Vicar of Wakefield by Goldsmith, and was a friend of Addison and Steele (Armytage, pp. 43-44). Steele, who is claimed as a Freemason,¹³ published a brief account of the Rosicrucians in The Spectator, V, no. 379, and thus may have had some common interests with Whiston, who constructed famous models of the Tabernacle and Temple in 1726, translated Josephus in 1737, and confidently predicted the millenium would occur in 1746 when the gaming laws would be swept away.

¹³ Rao Blanchard, "Was Sir Richard Steele a Freemason?" PMLA, 63 (1948), pp. 903-07.

Andrew Ramsay, though stimulated by the Boehmenism and Christian Cabalism of the Philadelphian Society, refused to accept as divinely inspired the doom-laden prophecies of the French Prophets. He left England for Holland in 1710 and stayed with Pierre Poiret, a student of Boehme and the quietistic mysticism of Antoinette Bourignon and Madam Guyon (Schneider, p. 80). Poiret sent him on to Archbishop Fénelon at Cambrai, where he remained for five years. After many doubts and discussions, Ramsay accepted Fénelon's tolerant religion of "pure love" as the essence of Catholicism, and he converted in 1715. In his famous 1729 biography of Fénelon, Ramsay expressed a concern which explains his interest in Freemasonry as much as in Catholicism:

Born in a free country where all forms of thought may express themselves without constraint, I went through nearly all religions in order there to find the truth. The wrangling and the contradictions in all the different Protestant systems produced in me a revulsion from all the Christian sects. (Schneider, p. 15)

Schneider notes that this statement sounds like a renewal of the old Rosicrucian yearning for a non-sectarian Christianity (p. 82). Ramsay's portrait of Fénelon as a man of vast tolerance and benevolence influenced the admiration of the sceptical French philosophes as well as Freemasons for this truly "catholic" Catholic.

After Fénelon's death in 1715, Ramsay spent two years with Madame Guyon, participating in her visions and automatic writing, until her death in 1717. He acted as secretary and translator for Madame Guyon and her English correspondents. In the letters, Christ was called the P.M., standing for "le Petit Maître." That this may have

referred to the Masonic concept of Christ as the second Grand Master, after God, is suggested by Ramsay's parallel interest in quietist mysticism and Freemasonry. Gould thinks he was initiated in London around 1728-1729 (Gould, III, 336), but it could have been during his earlier stay, and perhaps in one of the obscure theosophical lodges which would have appealed to him in his Philadelphian days. After Madame Guyon's death, Ramsay lived mainly in France, as a tutor to the sons of noblemen. His short stint as tutor to the sons of the English Pretender in Rome, from 1724-1725, has linked his name with Masonic-Jacobite political maneuverings (Gould, III, 335). He published a profusion of books, including an edition of Fénelon's Télémaque (1717) and his own famous novel, The Travels of Cyrus (1727), in French, with an English translation by Pope's friend Nathaniel Hooke. Cyrus revealed Ramsay's Hermetic interests, as he quoted from the whole tradition and even included the musical notation for the Hymn to Isis at the end of Apuleius' Golden Ass (Walker, p. 247).

Ramsay's Masonic reputation as the innovator of high grades--i.e., increasingly occultist grades beyond the basic, universal three--was based on his theosophical interests and on a speech he delivered as Grand Orator to a Parisian lodge in 1737. In the oration, which was translated and reprinted many times, he asserted that all that is necessary to be a Freemason is "humanity, pure morals, inviolable secrecy, and a taste for the fine arts." Claiming that "the world is nothing but a huge republic, of which every nation is a family, and every individual a child," he traced Freemasonry back to the ancient mystery religions, which were maintained by the Crusaders in their

Knighthly Orders. The secret signs and language of Masonry were used by the Knights to protect themselves from the Saracens and were brought to Scotland after the persecution of the Knights by oppressive kings and Popes. Ramsay's interest in Knighthly Orders was reinforced earlier by his admission to the Order of St. Lazarus in the 1720's by the Regent, Phillippe d'Orleans, whence his title, "Chevalier" Ramsay. The connection of the Orleans family with Freemasonry, occultism, and eventually revolutionism would become important in the later eighteenth century. Whether Ramsay stimulated the profusion of "knighthly" high degrees which developed in France after 1740, or whether they were already implicit in Freemasonry (from Ashmole's influence), is a matter of controversy. Ramsay hardly seems the kind of man to be vilified as a political schemer and perverter of "pure" Masonry, but his suggested influence on the development of high-grade Freemasonry in France has placed him in many Masons' black books (Gould, III, 332-38). For the Knighthly degrees soon went far beyond any allusions contained in Ramsay's Oration, which said nothing about the various "Degrees of Vengeance" -- i.e., Elus, Kadosch, Templars, De Molay, Assassins, etc., which proliferated in France.

In 1729 Ramsay visited England for a year, partly to oversee a new edition of Cyrus, again working with Pope's friend Hooke, to renew old acquaintances, and to join the Royal Society. He hoped to meet Jonathon Swift, with whom he had already been in correspondence, and who had praised Ramsay's works in Ireland and England. Ramsay wrote Swift, who was in Ireland, acknowledging the

influence of Swift's ideas of universal religion on him when he was "a very young man." Walker, the most recent commentator on Ramsay, is puzzled by this mutual acquaintance and interest between "the gentle Platonic mystic and the bitter satirist," and notes that the only work of Swift's that Ramsay could have known when very young was the Tale of a Tub, published in 1704 (Walker, Theology, pp. 237-238). But the possibility of a mutual Masonic relationship seems more relevant--for both Swift and Pope. In 1742, at Pope's personal request, Ramsay wrote to Louis Racine, son of the dramatist, to affirm Pope's orthodoxy. Racine had attacked Pope's "deistic theodicy" in the Essay on Man, but Ramsay assured him that Pope was a believer in Original Sin and the Fall, and, significantly, in Fénelon's Catholicism (Williams, p. 116).

Ramsay's magnum opus was "The Philosophical Principles of Natural and Revealed Religion, unfolded in a Geometrical Order," published in 1748, five years after his death. David Hume, who admired Ramsay's rationalism and Masonic toleration, also described his "peculiar religion" as a "kind of Origenism, and supposes the pre-existence of the souls of both men and beasts, and the eternal salvation and conversion of all men, beasts, and devils" (Walker, p. 239). Whatever the question of his deliberate role in occultist and knightly Freemasonry, however, it was in the development of occultist and "vengeance" high-grades that French and subsequently German Freemasonry diverged from their parent form in England. English Masons had the enlightened nobility, including many members of the Royal family, on their side, and the most tolerant form of government of

the age. With their predominantly scientific and mildly deistic interests, they were no real threat to the mid-eighteenth-century social order. The occultist lodges remained peripheral, and almost undocumented, until they were stimulated by French and German contacts in the revolutionary decades at the end of the century. But, on the Continent, the more reactionary Church and State gradually forced Freemasons into a subversive and essentially Rosicrucian role. Pope Clement issued a Bull, In Eminente, in 1738, condemning Freemasonry and threatening ex-communication to any adherents. It was followed by another sterner one in 1751. The Gentleman's Magazine (April 1739, p. 219) noted that one of Ramsay's Masonic works was publicly burned in Rome.

In mid-eighteenth-century France, the Masonic Lodges became increasingly the gathering place for intellectual and political malcontents. The Masonic rules of egalitarianism within the lodge, of hospitality with no questions asked for Masons from anywhere in the world, of encouragement of free discussion, and of ultimate secrecy about what was said in the lodges, provided a unique institution in the eighteenth century. In England, Masonic lodges met more publicly in taverns and ale-houses, but in Germany, Italy, and to a lesser extent, France, with more oppressive governments, secrecy became so intensified that Freemasons were distrusted by the public as well as the Church and State. The transition within Masonic preoccupations in France--from enlightened deism and worship of reason in mid-century to occultist, apocalyptic revolutionism in the later decades--paralleled political developments from the earlier

attempts at rational reform to the turbulence of the Revolution.

In Ramsay's Oration of 1737, he announced a Masonic project of a grand encyclopedia:

All the Grand Masters in Germany, England, Italy, and elsewhere exhort all the learned men and all the artisans of the Fraternity to unite to furnish materials for a Universal Dictionary of the liberal arts and useful sciences, excepting only theology and politics.

The work has already been commenced in London, and by means of the union of our Brothers it may be carried to a conclusion in a few years. . . . By this means the lights of all nations will be united in one single work, which will be a universal library of all that is beautiful, great, luminous, solid, and useful in all the sciences and in all the noble arts. (Gould, III, 341)

The influence of this Masonic undertaking on the famed Encyclopédie of the philosophes is a matter of scholarly debate. There is evidence that Denis Diderot (1713-1784), who began the Encyclopédie in 1752, was a Freemason.¹⁴ When the Encyclopédie was proscribed in 1759, Diderot continued to work through clandestine meetings until 1772. His ability to escape the spies of government and Church for such a long time is often ascribed to his Masonic contacts, who helped in the secret lodges. C.S. Cochin, who designed the frontispiece of the first edition of the Encyclopédie, was a Mason, and the Masonic character of the design with its square and compass and

¹⁴ Norman Mackenzie, ed. Secret Societies (New York: Hold, Rhinehart, Winston, 1967), p. 107.

other symbols was taken as evidence by those who viewed the work as an essentially Masonic product. Cochin also drew up the plan for the section Dessin of the third volume of plates, and himself drew three places.¹⁵ Montesquieu (1689-1755), who was initiated in a London lodge in 1730, became a leading Freemason, but was forbidden by Cardinal Fleury to remain a member of the Order in 1737. But his L'Esprit des Lois (1748) was full of Masonic ideas (Fay, Revolution, p. 169), and he was a major contributor to the Encyclopédie. Voltaire, the guiding spirit of the effort, however, was not initiated into Masonry until 1778. In his survey of the Masonic connections of the Encyclopédie, Shackleton concludes that Freemasonry may have had tentative associations with the French project, but that they developed in the main on independent lines, until the 1770's when Masonry had grown into a more powerful intellectual and social force and exerted a strong influence on the Supplement to the Encyclopédie, which included many significant contributions by Masons (p. 237). But after the French Revolution, there were many attacks on the Freemasons as allies with the philosophes of the Encyclopédie to overthrow Church and State. According to Abbé Barruel, "Les Sophistes de l'impieété et de la rébellion" first destroyed public respect for established institutions through their deistic publications and then utilized the secret network of Masonic lodges to organize

¹⁵ Robert Shackleton, "The Encyclopédie and Freemasonry," Studies Presented to Theodore Besterman (Edinburgh, 1967), pp. 225-37.

their "pagan" revolution:

Les Sophistes . . . voulurent savoir ce que c'étaient que des mystères dont les profonds adeptes se trouvaient leurs plus zélés disciples. Bientôt les philosophes français se firent tous maçons. (Shackleton, p. 225)

The connection of this enlightened French Freemasonry from the 1750's through the 1770's with Masonic developments in North America was an important aspect of the motives, methods, and eventual outcome of the revolutionary movement in each country. When it is recognized that the two leading Freemasons in America were George Washington and Benjamin Franklin, and that fifty-three of the fifty-six signers of the Declaration of Independence were Masons,¹⁶ the controversial question of Masonic influence on the American revolution is revealed as a significant historical problem. A brief account of Franklin's early Masonic activities may serve to illustrate the connection between movements for democratic reform and enlightened Freemasonry (the occultist high-degrees will be analyzed later).

Documents and letters of Franklin's private life show that as a young man he was a follower of the seventeenth-century "English Pythagoreans." He believed in metempsychosis and in a Supreme Deity surrounded by innumerable inferior gods, with Christ for one of his prophets. He gathered these ideas during his boyhood in the curious society of anti-clerical radicals, doctors,

¹⁶ Harry C. Schmur, Mystic Rebels (New York: Doubleday, 1949), p. 314.

shopkeepers, tavernkeepers, and journalists, which he and his brother James frequented from 1720 to 1723.¹⁷ Armytage has pointed out how many of these immigrants were members or descendants of the Boehmenist, theosophical millenarial groups of seventeenth-century England, France, and Germany (Chapters II-VI). While leader of the lower middle class artisan groups through his position in the Junto, Franklin sought out Masonic membership in 1731 to link him with the professional and aristocratic echelons which provided the intellectual force of Freemasonry. He developed an essentially Masonic press for them, which spread egalitarian and deistic notions. Franklin was a zealous Freemason for the rest of his life (Fay, Revolution, pp. 146, 233).

When Franklin visited England and France, he always utilized his Masonic contacts and officiated at many lodges. By 1756 he was also a member of the Royal Society and by 1773 of the Society of Antiquaries. In the 1770's he made Passy in France the center of a philosophic-economic Masonic group, and French Freemasons were active in distributing his pamphlets. When he was initiated into the Loge des Neuf Sœurs in Paris, it spurred a craze of etchings and pictures, with the symbols of American liberty intertwined with Masonic symbols (Fay, Revolution, pp. 353, 256). As will be shown later, many of Blake's prophetic political "emblems" grew out of this same Masonic engraving context.

¹⁷ Bernard Fay, Franklin: the Apostle of Modern Times (Boston: Little, Brown, 1930), p. 167.

In an act which summed up an era--and prophetically ushered in a new one--Franklin initiated the seventy-nine year old Voltaire into the Loge des Neuf Soeurs in 1778. Their embrace was proclaimed as the unification of intuitive wisdom and rational wisdom, and the gesture became famous. That it really did become a symbol of the end of the Age of Reason and the Aurora of an unexpectedly irrational, occultist, and revolutionary age is perhaps an irony of history. For when Voltaire died a few months later, King Louis XVI, who was also a Freemason, became irritated at the Neuf Soeurs lodge, because the government had forbidden any honorary celebrations for Voltaire, a decree which only the Neuf Soeurs defied when they celebrated Voltaire's apotheosis. As the King then moved against the lodge, from within the Masonic organization, they defended themselves by electing Franklin Grand Master in 1779 (Fay, Franklin, p. 484). Franklin's brilliant administration for the next two years drew in illustrious members, including the pirate John Paul Jones, Pilatre de Rozier, Comte d'Artois, and a host of literary and scientific aristocrats. But at the same time, the die was cast in the widening gap between Freemasonry and the government which had uneasily tolerated it during the past thirty years.

During Franklin's diplomatic efforts in France, the influence of Freemasonry on the American revolutionary developments was crucial. According to Fay, the center of the revolutionary movement was the St. Andrew Lodge (a grand lodge of the Scottish rite, one of the French originated high-degrees), which met in Boston under

Dr. Joseph Warren, Franklin's intimate friend, and which included Paul Revere, who later became Grand Master of Massachusetts. The lodge met at a tavern near the harbor, "the Green Dragon or the Arms of Freemasonry," which was owned by the Masons. Fay traces the major involvement of this lodge in the Boston Tea Party of 1773, and in events leading up to the Declaration of Independence in 1776, interpreted by Brothers in Europe as the finest statement of Masonic ideals (Fay, Revolution, pp. 238 ff). Interestingly, it was at this same Masonic tavern that James Glen, a Freemason and fellow-Swedenborgian with Blake, began the first organizing work for a Masonic-Swedenborgian society in America in 1784.¹⁸

George Washington, who became a Mason in 1752, and was nominated for Grand Master of America in 1780, utilized Masonry to keep his battered army together from 1776-1783. He stimulated the creation of military lodges, an act copied by French Masons in the 1780's, and personally participated in their activities, including a striking appearance in full Masonic regalia at the head of three hundred brothers who marched through Philadelphia to celebrate the re-taking of the city in 1778. The Marquis de Lafayette, whose bizarre Masonic career demonstrates the connection between occultism and political radicalism in France, was initiated into American Freemasonry (he was already a French Mason), at the military camp in Valley Forge, with Washington presiding and officiating as Master Mason. In 1825, Lafayette recalled

¹⁸ Albert Nason, "Planting of the New Church in Massachusetts," How Jerusalem Messenger, 47 (1884), p. 130.

that only after he became an American Mason did Washington seem to trust him entirely, and soon gave him command of an army.

Fay stresses the importance of Freemasonry to the army which fought for independence:

All the staff officers Washington trusted were Masons, and all the leading generals of the army were Masons; Alexander Hamilton, John Marshall, James Madison, General Greene, General Lee, General Sullivan, Lord Sterling, the two Putnams, General Steuben, Montgomery, Jackson, Gist, Henry Knox and Ethan Allen were Masons. They all gathered around their Master Mason Washington and they all met at the "Temple of Virtue," . . . a rude structure flanked by two Pillars Jachin and Boaz. The monument had been built by order of the Commander-in-Chief as an assembly hall for the meeting of the field lodges. (Fay, Revolution, p. 250).

During the struggle, the great friends of the Colonies in Parliament, William Pitt and Edmund Burke, were both Masons, and the Grand Master of English Freemasonry, the Duke of Manchester, was an outspoken champion of the Americans (Fay, Revolution, p. 252). That Burke would soon be an equally strong donouncer of the French Revolution reveals the difference between mainstream British Freemasonry, with its rational, benevolent attitude, and the increasing chiliasm and occultism (so similar to the English rebels in the 1640's) of French Masonry. That the occultist, radical strain of revolutionary Masonry in France and Germany "infected" many lodges in England in the 1730's and 1790's--which in turn "infected" the youthful radicalism of Blake and many of his Swedenborgian and artistic associates, as well as Southey, Coleridge, and eventually Shelley--will be

demonstrated in the next chapters. But before that, an account of the revived, or survived, Rosicrucian and occultist traditions of the "illuminated lodges" in France and Germany will be necessary to define the wider context within which many English radicals of the late eighteenth century operated.

English Freemasonry, which was the parent form of all European Masonry, was built on three degrees of initiation: Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft, and Master Mason. Within the training process, the initiate learned the history and duties of Freemasonry and received rather superficial instruction in the occult traditions--i.e., Cabalism, symbolic alchemy, Hermetism, and the ancient mystery religions--which had been part of the Masonic heritage since the seventeenth century. All the lodges stressed the deterioration of spiritual experience under the oppressive laws of established religions. The Jewish law of the Pentateuch was especially singled out as the prototype of empty religion--"the service of God became clouded and obscured by ceremonies and rites"; "the old law was dead and become rottenness." The brothers would affirm:

We Masons, describing the deplorable estate of religion under the Jewish law, speak in figures: --"Her tomb was in the rubbish, and filth cast forth of the Temple, and Acacia wove its branches over her monument. 19

This opposition to Jewish law was not anti-Semitic; rather, it was rooted in Jewish Cabalistic traditions of opposition

19 William Hutchinson, The Spirit of Masonry, 2nd ed. (Carlisle: F. Jollie, 1795), pp. 97-99.

to the Aristotelian, rationalist theology and repressive Rabbinic law of Medieval times. The symbol of the Acacia, the new growth out of dead law, probably became the basis for the name of the first divergence from English Freemasonry, as the French developed new degrees called Écossais--which through an etymological accident became translated as Scot (Schneider, p. 91). Thus, ironically, Scottish Rite Masonry, which became the most famous (or infamous, according to one's political views) form of eighteenth-century Freemasonry, probably had no connection with Scotland at all.

The Acacia or Écossais Masons, who first appeared in 1740 in France, claimed superiority to English-style Masons through their more ancient origins and superior secret wisdom (Gould, III, p. 346). Important Scots lodges were developed at Marseilles and Avignon, with many branches. Avignon became the center of that late eighteenth-century Masonic "illumination" which had a direct impact on William Blake and his artistic associates. In 1741 a Scots lodge of the "Three Globes" opened in Berlin, and was followed by lodges at Hamburg, Leipzig, and Frankfurt. Between 1742 and 1746, more than forty-seven Scots lodges appeared in Germany. In France, the Scots soon united with the Knights Templar, stimulated by the Masons at Lyons, who invented the rather blood-curdling Kadosch degree which represented the vengeance of the Templars.

The proliferation of degrees which followed amazed and repelled most English Freemasons, who were at pains to point out the difference in the systems. In the Scots and related degrees, the egalitarian nature of Masonry was

maintained at the lower level, but was increasingly diluted as the upper hierarchy became more and more autocratic. In its most extreme forms, the highest degree swore blind allegiance to "Unknown Superiors." For example, the whole system of the "Strict Observance" was based on the fable that at the time of the destruction of the Templars, a number of Knights took refuge in Scotland, and there preserved the existence of the Order. The sequence of Grand Masters was presumed never to have been broken, and a list of these rulers was known to initiates. But the identity of the actual Grand Masters was always kept secret during his lifetime--hence, the term "Unknown Superiors" (Gould, III, p. 353). These "Invisibles" have created a hornet's nest for scholarly investigation of high-degree Freemasonry.

Most of these lodges were assimilated under the Grand Chapter of Clermont in France in the 1760's. What united the proliferating high-degree lodges was a passion for alchemy, occultism, and spiritualism--the whole Rosicrucian package, minus in the early years its political reform purposes. The "philosophical degrees," from eighteenth to thirty-second grades, were also called "apocalyptic degrees," being connected with "the symbolism of the Spiritual Temple of the New Jerusalem."²⁰ The strength of these lodges in the old Rosicrucian territories, where the same aristocratic families were involved in the eighteenth century as in the seventeenth, suggests the

²⁰ Kenneth Mackenzie, The Royal Masonic Encyclopedia (New York; J.W. Bouton, 1877), p. 563.

preservation in family archives and libraries, as well as in secret practices, of the old Rosicrucian traditions of instruction, of manuscripts and documents, and possibly of hereditary initiations. Thus, we find secret occult societies under the Masonic aegis headed by the Landgraves of Hesse-Cassel and Hesse-Darmstadt, by the Duke of Brunswick, and surfacing in Strasburg, the Rhine Palatinate, Silesia, Bohemia, and Prussian Poland (Gould, III, pp. 362 ff).

Many of these Masonic groups developed the degree of Rose-Croix as their highest grade, and by the 1760's, a more bizarre group of "New or Gold Rosicrucians" developed in Germany. They claimed to be the originators of Freemasonry and to possess the highest secrets of alchemy and the Cabala. A certain J.G. Schropfer opened a Masonic coffee-house in Leipzig in 1768, where he conjured "spirits from the vasty deep," and soon converted the Duke of Courland (Gould, III, p. 370). After his last séance, Schropfer committed suicide in 1774, but his influence was felt in lodges all over Germany, Poland, and Russia, as they became increasingly preoccupied with Cabalistic angel-magic and alchemy.

The movement became powerful in Prussia through its patronage by the Royal Family. Frederick the Great, king of Prussia from 1740 to 1786, had become a Freemason in 1738 and became the eighteenth-century model of enlightened monarchy. He corresponded and collaborated with Voltaire from 1736 until the latter's death, and subsidized much of the Encyclopedie, which included a

panegyric on the Masonic monarch.²¹ The question of his efforts to overthrow Bourbon rule in France, pressed through his Masonic affiliations in secret French lodges, is debated by scholars, but his powerful influence on French and German high-degree Freemasonry and political reform movements is undoubted. Frederick the Great's nephew, Frederick William II, who became King of Prussia at his uncle's death in 1786, was not only a Mason but an ardent Rosicrucian. From 1786 to 1787, rumors flew of scandal, fraud, and black magic in the Rosicrucian lodges, until the "Unknown Fathers" ordered a general silantium or cession of work, which immediately took effect in South German Rosicrucian societies. But the new King Frederick William II and his chief adviser Wöllner continued to support the movement in Prussia until the King's death in 1797 (Gould, III, p. 371). These Rosicrucian activities in Germany directly involved several associates of Blake in the 1790's and, as we shall see, were the source of doctrine and rituals used in English Rosicrucian lodges from Blake's day through Yeats's.

Another Masonic development in Germany had widespread political ramifications in France, England, and North America, and is still shrouded in controversy. An active political role, which was forbidden in English Freemasonry, was stimulated by Adam Weishaupt in Germany. Weishaupt (1748-1830) was educated by the Jesuits in Ingolstadt, Bavaria, and became Professor of Law at the

²¹ Nesta Webster, Secret Societies and Subversive Movements (London: Boswell, 1924), p. 161.

University there in 1772. Weishaupt developed a sincere resentment at the persecution and oppression by the Jesuits, and chose to use their own methods of organization and pedagogy to counteract them. He was also fascinated by the attractive power of the Elousinian Mysteries and the influence exerted by the secret cult of Pythagoras, and hoped to form a secret society which could work for social and political regeneration in the same way.

Though Weishaupt tried to gain admission to Freemasonry in the early 1760's, he was rebuffed because of "insufficient funds," and went on to utilize what little he had grasped of Freemasonry to develop his own Order of the Illuminati with three initial grades in 1776.²² He worked mainly among his students at the university, and developed a system of secret organization and communication influenced by the Jesuits and Masons. In 1777 Weishaupt joined Freemasonry at Munich and soon utilized its high-degree structure to further his own system. An important convert was the Baron Knigge (1752-1796), a writer, lawyer, and long-time member of Strict Observance Masonry. Knigge was interested in theosophy, magic, and alchemy, and was affiliated with the German Rosicrucian groups. He helped Weishaupt to work out his long-sought higher grades, and the important alliance between revolutionary "Illuminism" and Freemasonry was officially effected. Weishaupt now spread his doctrines of the struggle against supersti-

²² Vernon Stauffer, *New England and the Bavarian Illuminati* (New York: Russell, 1918), pp. 140-51.

tion, despotism, and tyranny through the medium of Masonic lodges, and soon gained many distinguished recruits--including Goethe, Herder, Pestalozzi, and Duke Ernst of Gotha, as well as those traditionally Rosicrucian aristocrats, Prince Karl of Hesse and Duke Ferdinand of Brunswick (Stauffer, pp. 169-172).

By the end of 1784, the Illuminati leaders boasted of nearly three thousand members, all of influential position in German society. But at the moment of brightest prospects, the Order began to fall apart. The Masonic Rosicrucians, who feared the Illuminati's subversive political aims, as well as their alchemical competition, joined the Jesuits in public attacks and secret intrigues against them (Gould, III, p.377). Weishaupt and Knigge quarreled, and Knigge left the Order. In June 1784, the Emperor Karl Theodore issued the first of his edicts against secret societies, including capital punishment for membership, which eventually shattered the Order in Bavaria. Persecution and imprisonment without trial became severe, and Weishaupt fled to Saxe-Gotha, where he found refuge with the "illuminist" Duke Ernst II, who made him his librarian and archivist. As a pamphlet war raged in Germany over the aims of the Illuminati, the house of one of its members, Zwack, was raided in 1786, and a large supply of Weishaupt's papers was confiscated. The publication of these--which included an unsavory abortion scandal, as well as clear statements of his Machiavellian (or Jesuitical) political intrigues--created a European sensation and ruined Weishaupt's reputation. He spent the rest of his life in apologetic writings, and gradually sank into obscurity (Stauffer, pp. 180-186). However,

Blake's good friend, Crabb Robinson, sought out Weishaupt in 1804, having been fascinated by the furor about Weishaupt and Freemasonry which was created by several exposés in 1795 (see ahead, Chapter XII).

Before dealing with radical political "illumination" à la Weishaupt of many French, English, and American Masonic lodges, we must trace the amazing developments of occultism and chiliastic prophecy in French Freemasonry from the 1750's to the eve of the Revolution. It has been one of the major over-simplifications of popular history to view the French Revolution as the logical outcome of the Age of Reason, for the Revolution developed and was largely led by men deeply involved in the greatest outburst of occultism in French history. Whether this movement from scepticism and deism to fervid superstition and occult belief is viewed as part of a conspiracy, as many writers after 1795 would claim,²³ or whether it is viewed as the inevitable "mystical reaction" within overly-rational Freemasonry, as Schneider suggests, or whether both strains--rational scientific scepticism and theosophical magic--were implicit within Freemasonry from the seventeenth century on, are all questions of scholarly debate. But it is certain that it was Freemasonry in France which became the refuge for the major and apparently contradictory strains of French thought in the later eighteenth century--

²³ See Augustin de Barruel, Memories pour Servir a l'histoire du Jacobinisme. 4 vols. (A Londres: de l'imprimerie Francoise, chez Ph. le Boussonier, 1797), and John Robison. Proofs of a Conspiracy . . . in the secret meetings of Free Masons, Illuminati, and Reading Societies, 2nd. ed. (London: Cadell and W. Davies, 1797).

non-sectarian, democratic deism and ritualistic, hierarchical occultism.

As noted earlier, from 1740 onwards, several cities in France developed as centres of occultist high-degree Masonry. Masonic schools of Hermetism and Cabalism developed in Avignon, a city which played a vital role in the exportation of Masonic occultism into England in the 1780's. A major alchemical, Cabalistic group at Avignon was called the Académie des Sages, which had branches all over France, and even in the Ukraine and Sweden. According to the French Masonic scholar Thory, the Académie originated in the society founded by Elias Ashmole in London, based upon Bacon's New Atlantis.²⁴

The Avignon movement was strengthened by the work of Dom Antoine Joseph Pernety (1716-1800), a Benedictine monk who forsook his vows in 1765 after a trip around the world. Pernety sought refuge with Frederick the Great and was made the king's librarian, in preference to another Masonic applicant, Gottfried Lessing (Schneider, p. 108). Pernety had already published a Dicticonnaire Mytho-Hermetique (Paris: 1758), which was admired by Frederick, and he soon flourished under Frederick's Masonic reign:

De ces milieux fort différents, il rapportait une érudition prodigieuse, et son activité brouillonne s'exerçait dans les domaines les plus divers: il publie indifféremment une relation géologique, géographique et ethnographique de sa randonnée aux îles Malouines. Une dissertation sur l'origine et la caractère de l'Amérique et des Américains, et

²⁴ Thory, Acta Latamorum, ou Chronologie de l'histoire de la Franche-Maconnerie (Paris: Pierre-Elie Dufart, 1815), p. 289.

une Physionomie par laquelle il s'efforçait vainement de concurrencer Lavator. . . . Lorsque ayant groupé quelques adeptes, il se sera mis en relation avec des êtres supérieurs, c'est lui qui se chargera d'en consigner les réponses. 25

Pernety worked to link Freemasonry under Frederick even more closely to the occult sciences, and apparently collaborated with the King in his anti-Bourbon political maneuverings.

While at Berlin, Pernety became the "spiritual guide" of Count Thaddeus Grabianka, the Starost of Podolia in Poland and a wealthy landowner.²⁶ Grabianka, who played a vital--and heretofore little examined--role in Swedenborgian and Masonic affairs in England (which involved Blake, Richard Brothers, and many of their mutual associates), used the revenues from his estates to support alchemical, occultist, and possibly revolutionary political activity. Grabianka came to Berlin to study in the alchemical lab that Pernety established, with materials supposedly furnished by "Élie Artiste," who some claim as Swedenborg's friend and subsidizer, though others claim as a collective name for the Rosicrucians. The importance of the symbolical figure, Elias the Artist, who was supposed to usher in the spiritual revolution to Paracelsus, Boehme, and seventeenth-century Rosicrucians has already been noted.

²⁵ Auguste Viatte, Les Sources Occultes de Romantisme (Paris: Librairie Ancienne Honore Champion, 1928), II, 90.

²⁶ N.L. Danilowicz, "The King of the New Israel: Thaddous Grabianka, 1740-1807," Oxford Slavonic Papers, 1. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), pp. 49-73.

Grabianka was a Knight Templar, "Strict Observance" Freemason and was instrumental in stimulating occultism within Polish Freemasonry in the 1760's. He also became an important influence on Polish Romanticism.

While at Berlin, Pernety and Grabianka both became interested in the writings of Swedenborg and infused his teachings into high-grade Masonry. The question of Swedenborg's possible connection with Rosicrucian or Masonic societies is a vexing one and has not received thorough scholarly investigation. Though Swedenborg's theosophy will be dealt with more fully in the next chapter, the evidence for his connection with secret societies on the Continent will be briefly touched on here. Swedish Swedenborgian Masons have always claimed that Swedenborg was initiated in an English lodge, Emanuel Number Six, in London. In 1839, Professor J.I. Tafel collected all the testimonies of Swedenborg's personal friends, his letters, and related documents, and then concluded that Swedenborg indeed joined a London lodge in 1710. French traditions have connected him with "Élie Artiste," who supposedly subsidized his alchemical works and his travels to spread a Swedenborgian form of Rosicrucianism or Freemasonry.²⁷

Kenneth Mackenzie, whose work on Freemasonry cannot be ignored but cannot be entirely trusted either, did not

²⁷ William White, Life of Emanuel Swedenborg (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1866), p. 204.

think Swedenborg was a Freemason but a member of some other related secret society. Mackenzie claimed that Swedenborg received overtures from Pernety to join with the "Society of the Sun of Mercy," one of the early Avignon Masonic groups (Masonic Cyclopedia, pp. 701-704). Toksvig notes Swedenborg's early contacts around 1733 with Boehmenist and occultist groups in Germany and Poland, who led him to connect revelation and reason, or as his subsequent works demonstrated, science and "occult" science.²⁸ In his later years, in the 1760's, Swedenborg mentioned in a letter that he sent copies of his work to Cardinal Rohan,²⁹ an eminent Freemason, student of occultism, and future patron of the famous Masonic magician, Cagliostro. Swedenborg's own description of a society of "angels" recalls the use of that term for Rosicrucians, and he also tacitly acknowledged his indebtedness to Comenius,³⁰ whose Rosicrucian and "invisible college" connections have already been discussed. The difficulty in pinning down Swedenborg's role (or non-role) in secret societies arises from his own silence as to the nature of his many travels in Germany and France. In his voluminous

²⁸ Signe Toksvig, Emanuel Swedenborg: Scientist and Mystic (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1948), p. 82.

²⁹ Samuel Sandel, An Eulogium on the lately deceased Emanuel Swedenborg . . . (London: Robert Hindmarsh, 1784), p. 37.

³⁰ Inge Jonsson, Emanuel Swedenborg (New York: Twayne, 1971), p. 82.

Journals, this is a significant omission. We do know that he worked with the Duke of Brunswick, a notable Rosicrucian and Masonic figure, in the 1720's, and that Benedict Chastanier, one of his earliest supporters, was a longtime Freemason and Cabalist, and one of the founders of the Avignon Illuminés. Finally, a Swedenborgian rite of Freemasonry was developed as early as the 1750's in Stockholm.³¹

Significantly, both Pernety and Grabianka, who got their information from personal friends of Swedenborg, believed he was an occultist Mason. At Berlin, their study of Swedenborg and the Cabala stimulated angelic communications. Grabianka received reinforcement for an old prophecy made by a fortune-teller that he would become King of Poland, win control over Turkey and Asia, and transfer his capital to Jerusalem for a brilliant theosophic reign (Danilewicz, p. 50). Pernety received a prophecy that he would found a new city as a center of occult revelations. Thus, in 1783 the whole group of adepts moved to Avignon and by 1785, they had developed the already existing Masonic occult groups into the Illuminés--a Swedenborgian, alchemical, Cabalistic, and highly visionary Masonic society. The group wielded a powerful influence in France, and its intriguing relationship with English Freemasons, Swedenborgians, and radical reformers will be examined closely in the next chapter.

³¹ Samuel Boswick, The Swedenborg Rite and the Great Masonic Leaders of the Eighteenth Century (New York: Masonic Publishing Co., 1870), p. 71.

Meanwhile, in France, another Masonic group in Lyons developed a system based on Cabalism and Boehmenism. The moving spirit behind this group was Martines de Pasqually (1710-1774), a "Rose-Croix" Mason of Spanish and supposedly Jewish descent (Webster, p.165), who developed the Rite des Élus Cohens or Masonic Order of the Elect Priesthood around 1754. Pasqually possessed a large number of Jewish manuscripts on Cabalistic magic, and he trained initiates to "communicate with unseen intelligences by the observance of ceremonial magic."³² Abbé Fournie, a disciple of Martinism (as the school was soon called), described Pasqually's faculty of confirming his instructions by means of "external visions at first vague and passing with the rapidity of lightning, but afterwards more distinct and prolonged" (Waite, Saint-Martin, p. 35). One of the rituals was based on the "occult mystery of the Enochian Tablets," according to the memorials of Dr. John Dee in The Faithful Relation.³³ Pasqually's important book, Traité de la Reinterration des Êtres, was circulated in manuscript but not published until 1899, by Dr. Papus, a Rosicrucian associate of Yeats. In it, the important influence of Boehme, the seventeenth-century Rosicrucians, Swedenborg, and Cabalism on Pasqually's teachings was revealed.

Pasqually's most important convert to Masonic "Martinism" was Louis Claude Saint-Martin (1743-1803).

³² A.E. Waite, Saint-Martin, the French Mystic and the Story of Modern Martinism (London: William Rider, 1922), p. 14

³³ A.E. Waite and W.P. Swainson, Three Famous Mystics (London: William Rider, 1939), p. 25.

Martinism was named for Martines de Pasqually and not for Saint-Martin, but the duplication of names has led to much confusion. Saint-Martin was a cultivated aristocrat of impeccable character, who was initiated into Pasqually's order by Monsieur de Balzac in 1768. Saint-Martin later wrote that Pasqually, "our Master, had the active key of all that our dear Boehme sets forth in his theories, but he did not regard us as fitted for such high truths" (Waite, Saint-Martin, p. 33). Pasqually left for Santo Domingo in 1772 and died in 1774, leaving the leadership of the proliferating Martinist societies to Saint-Martin, who then began his attacks on materialist philosophy which made his works famous in Europe.

Under the pseudonym "le Philosophe Inconnu," Saint-Martin published Des Erreurs et de la Vérité in 1775, which ridiculed rational materialism and hinted at a secret source of profound wisdom and at secret colleges working for the Hermetic regeneration of mankind. Saint-Martin wrote profusely and brilliantly, and his spiritualistic interpretation of Boehme, the Cabala, and Swedenborg, had a profound impact on Freemasonry. He also visited lodges all over Europe, and made a special trip to London in 1787 to inspect the Swedenborgian Masonic groups there, including one that Blake was associated with (Waite, Mystics, p. 178). The voluminous correspondence between Saint-Martin and Nicholas Kirchner, chief Consul at Berne, from 1762 on, ranks among the most valuable sources for the history of the occult secret societies, and documents the Masonic influence on the "Sturm und Drang" movement in Germany, on French political affairs, and on the mutual preoccupations and

correspondence between important artists and writers in Europe and England (Schneider, p.55).

The third aspect of Freemasonry in France to be dealt with in this general survey centers on the Orleans family, whose patronage of occultists and political radicals had a devastating effect in the 1780's. As noted earlier, Phillippe d'Orleans, Regent of France, had knighted the "Chevalier" Ramsay in the 1720's, and Ramsay's influence on the knightly high-degrees of Freemasonry has been interpreted as the channel through which intensified Cabalistic and occultist preoccupations permeated French Freemasonry. The Regent's son, the Duke of Orleans, became involved with Cabalism through the ministrations to his wife of Jacques Casanova, the great libertine, who was also a Rosicrucian, Freemason, and practicing Cabalistic magician. Casanova's Memoirs provide a vivid encyclopedia of eighteenth-century occultism and Masonry, made more persuasive by his jaundiced view of the whole scene, when he reminisced as an old man.

Casanova (1725-1798) had been initiated into Cabalism and alchemy in 1746 by three elderly aristocrats in Venice, a city associated with Rosicrucianism since the seventeenth century furor. In 1750 he joined the Freemasons at Lyons, the most consequential step of his life, as he acknowledged in his Memoirs when he urged ambitious young men to become Masons in order to have free access to the interesting men of the time.³⁴ He next

³⁴ Giacomo Casanova, History of My Life, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harcourt, 1966).

joined the Clermont lodge in Paris and quickly became a Master Mason. Childs points out that Freemasonry provided an "open Sesame" for Casanova, and that it is probable that more of his hundreds of friends and associates were Masons than has been possible to identify.³⁵ As a Scottish Rite Mason, he achieved the Nineteenth Degree called "Rose-Croix of Heredom," and apparently was also a member of a separate Rosicrucian group.³⁶ In 1752 Casanova met the Duchess of Chartres, the young wife of Louis Phillippe, who became the mother of "Phillippe Egalité," the revolutionary Duke of Orleans. She was president of the women's Masonic lodges, another French innovation, and sought out Casanova for instruction in Cabala and for Rosicrucian "physic" for her disfiguring pimples. His cures were temporarily successful and he became a favorite of the Orleans family and the Masonic nobility (Masters, p. 335).

A witty and erudite conversationalist, Casanova enjoyed the confidence of Frederick the Great and Benjamin Franklin, and was used by the French government on several obscure diplomatic and espionage missions. The Inquisition set spies on Casanova and interrogated him about Cabalism and Freemasonry. They confiscated his books and arrested him, but in 1755 he made a spectacular escape from the formidable prison, "The Leads"

³⁵ J.R. Childs, Casanova (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1961), p. 61.

³⁶ John Masters, Casanova (New York: Bernard Geis, 1969), p. 79.

(Masters, p. 100). In his Memoirs, Casanova recounted his meetings with the Comte de Saint Germain, that mysterious Rosicrucian alchemist who visited Frederick the Great's court, was a favorite of Madame de Pompadour, and whose "spying" trip to London was recorded by Horace Walpole.³⁷ Casanova also met Cagliostro, whose later career will be dealt with in detail, and who begged Casanova for a letter of introduction to the Avignon Freemasons (Maynial, p. 42). The extent of Casanova's Rosicrucian claims is revealed in his own account of the wild "rejuvenescency" he attempted on Madame d'Urfé, a hilarious story which takes up one fourth of his Memoirs.

The Marquise d'Urfé was "that shining type of a crazy great lady, crammed with esoteric knowledge, avid of supernatural colloquies with 'elementals,' addicted to the practice of alchemy and magic, immured in her laboratory among her retorts, furnaces, and Cabalistic books" (Maynial, p. 8). In many ways she was a precursor of Lady Hester Stanhope, whose bizarre career was related to several of Blake's associates in the early nineteenth century. The Orleans family recommended Casanova to her, and he was granted access to her renowned library, which included Raymond Lull's manuscripts and a mass of occultist and Rosicrucian documents (Childs, p.93). Casanova first met Saint-Germain at her house in the 1750's, but he outshone the "master" by decoding her

³⁷ Edouard Maynial, Casanova and His Times, trans. E.C. Mayne (London: Chapman and Hall, 1911), p. 42.

valuable enciphered manuscripts. She soon believed that Casanova possessed the Philosopher's Stone and could communicate with the elemental spirits. Apparently during a lull after his mysterious negotiation work with Frederick the Great and the Augsburg Congress in 1762, Casanova attempted a fantastic Rosicrucian reincarnation rite with the aged Marquise:

It was decided that I should seek a maiden in a place which the spirits would indicate to me, whom I was to impregnate with a male child in a manner known only to the Rosicrucian fraternity. The boy is to be born alive; he has, however, only obtained a soul from nature. Immediately after his birth he is presented to Mme d'Urfé and she hides him for seven days in her bed. On the termination of these seven days Madam dies with her lips on the lips of the child who receives her soul. From this moment it becomes my obligation to watch over the boy in collaboration with a secret chief of the Order. As soon as my son is three years of age Mme d'Urfé recovers consciousness. (Childs, p. 158)

The operation had to take place at the full moon of April, May, or June, and after obtaining the services of a beautiful young "assistant" from the Venetian Rosicrucians, Casanova performed the bizarre ceremony on 8 April 1762. Madame d'Urfé solemnly assisted at Casanova's magical ceremonies and mutual bathings while he tried to impregnate "the Corticelli," a doubtful virgin, with that male child into whose soul that of the Marquise would pass. Fortunately, the Cabalistic oracle pronounced the ceremony incomplete, so a second trial was fixed for Aix-la-Chapelle, and Casanova promptly left town. The ritual was dragged out for months, with often hilarious mishaps and deceptions. In 1764, Saint-Germain told Casanova that Madame d'Urfé had died of an "overdose of

the Panacea," but she actually died in 1775 (Maynial, p. 4).

Casanova's account of the "Great Work" with the credulous but immensely learned Madame d'Urfé has been called a precious document for its revelation of the state of people's minds in eighteenth-century France. It was a mentality divided between "the extremes of rationalist doubt and mystic credence, between the most audacious scepticism and the most absurd credulity" (Maynial, p. 148). Casanova, who was a sceptic, an enlightened philosophe, and a man of encyclopedic knowledge, found in Freemasonry a compatible home for the supposedly incompatible strains of scientific inquiry and occultist beliefs. That these two strains were in mutual reaction is revealed in Casanova's curious private note about Voltaire, whom he had eagerly sought out for a four-day visit:

Voltaire, the bold Voltaire whose pen has no curb, who devoured the Bible, and ridicules our faith, who doubts, and having made proselytes of impiety, is not ashamed, in the last moment of his life, to ask for the sacrament, and to put upon his body more relics than Louis XI had at Amboise.
(Maynial, p. 120)

This private but tenacious hostility to Voltaire's "natural religion," coupled with admiration for the man's courage and critical attitude, was echoed in Blake's ambivalent reaction to Voltaire. Schneider has analyzed this ambivalence as the inevitable counter reaction to the secular religion of enlightened deism underlying English Freemasonry, which was "wholly lacking in the mysterious and inadequate for the deeper religious needs" (Schneider, p. 67). Both enlightened scepticism about the existing

social order and its institutions and millenarial theosophical yearnings for spiritual and political regeneration co-existed within French Freemasonry, providing a catalytical formula for Revolution. The career of an active proselytizer for both strains--the third generation of Orleans, the Duke who became "Phillipe Egalité"--demonstrates the highly combustible nature of the mixture.

The Duke of Orleans (1747-1793) grew up in a household fascinated by occultism and dedicated to political reform. He was called the Duke of Chartres from 1752 to 1785, when he assumed the Orleans title at his father's death. He became a Freemason in his youth and in 1771 became Grand Master of the Grand Lodge at Paris. Orleans' role in events leading up to the Revolution is a matter of heated scholarly debate, ranging from the views that he was too much of a weak-minded libertine to engineer anything, that he was the naive dupe of sinister plotters, and that he was the Masonic champion of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity who organized the lodges to unleash the Revolution, etc. The charges of his Masonic conspiracy, which were widely accepted in post-Revolutionary Germany and France, were based on his maneuverings to include the whole French system under his Grand Orient Lodge in Paris, and his subsequent use of Masonic channels to gain support for the Revolution.³⁸ Under Orleans' leadership, the Grand

³⁸ Robert Clifford, Application of Barruel's "Memoirs of Jacobinism" to the Secret Societies of Ireland and Great Britain (London: E. Bookor, 1798), p. xviii.

Orient thrived and established branches all over France and the New World (Gould, III, p. 416). He centralized the organization and set up committees of correspondence which gave them increased unity of purpose and action. The Loge des Neuf Soeurs launched an intellectual campaign which drew in all the leading philosophers of the day, including Franklin, Court de Gebelin, Brissot, and La Harpe. The Philalethes, or Amis Réunis, were especially devoted to alchemy and theurgy, and included Lafayette, Mesmer, and Cagliostro in their ranks.

Those who affirm Orleans' Masonic conspiracy note his great hostility to Marie Antoinette, his many travels to Masonic lodges in England and Europe, and the use of his vast fortunes to further revolutionary causes. According to this view, the already revolutionary Orleans was "illuminized" by Mirabeau, who had joined the Illuminati at Berlin in 1786. On his return to Paris, Mirabeau requested that the Illuminati send him two influential adepts to aid in the illuminizing of French lodges. Bode and Von dem Busche arrived in Paris in 1787, and while ostensibly studying "Animal Magnetism" under Mesmer, proceeded to radicalize the Grand Orient system (Stauffer, p. 196).

While Orleans was building a popular following through his work in Parliament in 1789, he was simultaneously using his Masonic authority to promulgate his republican views. As John Robison, an English Freemason who was in France and Germany in the 1780's, observed in 1795:

He had almost unbounded authority among the Freemasons. In this country [England], we

have no conception of the authority of a National Grand Master. . . . In the great cities of Germany, the inhabitants paid more attention and respect to the Grand Master of the Masons than to their respective Princes. The authority of the Duke of Orleans in France was still greater, in consequence of his employing his fortune to support it (Conspiracy, p. 381).

Robison then quoted a 1789 manifesto sent from the Grand National Lodge of Freemasonry at Paris, signed by Orleans as Grand Master, to all the lodges of Europe, "exhorting them to unite for the support of the French Revolution, to gain it friends, defenders and dependents; and according to their opportunities, and the practicability of the thing, to kindle and propagate the spirit of revolution through all lands" (p. 412). Robison also pointed out that the chief actors in the Revolution were distinguished office-holders in the great lodges--Mirabeau, Condorcet, Rochefoucault, Lafayette, Abbé de Sieyes, and others (p. 386). It was also later claimed that the famous Jacobin club in Paris was a secret Masonic lodge (Clifford, p. xix).

After the King's flight, the Commune of Paris re-named Orleans as "Phillipe Egalité," and in 1792 he voted for the execution of the King. But the anarchy and turbulence of the Revolution caught up with him, and he was accused of plotting for the throne himself. On 24 February 1793, he published the following abject manifesto in the Journal de Paris:

. . . Notwithstanding my quality of Grand Master, I am unable to give you any information concerning these matters to me unknown. . . . However this may be, the following is my Masonic history:--at a time when truly no one foresaw the Revolution, I joined Freemasonry, which presents a sort of

picture of equality, just as I entered Parliament, which presented also a sort of picture of freedom. Meanwhile I have exchanged the shadow for the substance. . . (Gould, III, p. 417.)

He added that on 5 January 1793, he had written an inquirer about Freemasonry:

As I know nothing of the composition of the Grand Lodge, and moreover do not believe that there should exist any mystery nor any secret assembly in a republic . . . I desire in no way to be mixed up with the Grand Orient, nor with the assemblies of Freemasons.

On 8 August 1793, the Grand Orient published a circular announcement that the Grand Mastership had been declared vacant; on 6 November 1793, Phillipe Egalité died on the guillotine; by 1794 Freemasonry in France had practically ceased to exist. It would be revived with the Buonaparte family at its head. The charges of Masonic complicity in the French Revolution reverberated all over the world, and in England especially, a political "witch-hunt" for suspected subversives and Illuminati in the 1790's frightened Blake into veiled utterance and led to prison for many of his friends and associates. The relation of Orleans' Masonic activities in London in the 1780's to these developments, his occultist contacts there, and their ramifications in the "illuminized" London Masonic groups will be analyzed in detail in the next chapter.

Given the tremendous social and political impact of Freemasonry in France, it is interesting to look at the artistic and philosophical impact of it in Germany during the same decades. Nettl and Schneider have pointed out that the artists and philosophers

Goethe, Mozart, Haydn, Lessing, Wieland, Fichte, Herder, Krause, Bürger, Chamisso, Claudius, Kleist, Klingler, Klopstock, and Novalis, as well as the statemon Frederick the Great, Frederick William II, and Duke Karl August of Weimar, were all Freemasons.³⁹ A brief look at the Masonic careers of Mozart and Goethe will clearly demonstrate the imaginative fascination of these two great artists with the reservoir of symbolism and mythology preserved within Freemasonry.

Mozart (1756-1791) was initiated into Freemasonry in Vienna in 1784 and was fascinated by the Cabalistic and Egyptian mysticism studied in the lodge. His colleague, Franz Joseph Haydn, was initiated in 1785, but was not as active in Masonry as Mozart was. Mozart's interest in Freemasonry went hand in hand with his Anglophilia, for he viewed England as the best representative of Masonic ideals and considered making it his permanent home. After his death, Mozart's widow wrote in 1800 about his long preoccupation with Freemasonry and his desire to found a secret society to be called Grotte ("the Grotto"). She had found a fragment of an essay outlining his plans, but unfortunately it cannot be traced now (Nettl, pp. 15,21). The importance of Masonry to Mozart's musical achievements has still not received adequate investigation, despite Nettl's important study. For the period of Mozart's most active Masonic involvement, from 1784 to 1791, was the time of

³⁹ Paul Nettl, Mozart and Masonry (New York: Philosophical Library, 1957), pp. 3-5. Nettl also notes (p. 127) that there is much circumstantial evidence but no definite proof that Beethoven was a Freemason. See also Schneider, passim.

his greatest musical productivity-- which yielded The Marriage of Figaro, Don Giovanni, Così fan Tutti, his greatest symphonies and chamber music, and his great public tribute to Freemasonry, The Magic Flute.

Even a cursory examination of Mozart's Masonic musical associates points to the great importance of Masonry to his work. Among his close friends in Vienna in the 1770's was the Masonic physician, Franz Anton Mesmer, who discussed occultism, Cabalism, and Paracelsan magnetism with him, and played the glass harmonica, with its eerie, supernatural music, at séances in the Mesmer family garden.⁴⁰ After Mesmer was run out of Vienna by the medical establishment, he went to Paris where his skill at Animal Magnetism created a sensation in the Masonic lodges, which soon spread into a popular craze. After Mozart himself joined the Vienna lodge, of which Mesmer had been a member, he met many Jews who were active in the secret society. The lodge album contains a large assortment of Cabalistic number exercises, "a matter of great interest to Mozart's music," which has still not been analyzed (Nettl, p. 27)⁴¹ In 1783, he met a Jewish Freemason, Lorenzo da Ponte, who became his librettist. Da Ponte had already written the text for Naumann's

⁴⁰ See Michael Levey, The Life and Death of Mozart (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971).

⁴¹ Interestingly, Leonard Bernstein's latest work, Dybbuk, is based on a Cabalistic legend, and Bernstein contends that there is a mystical relationship between the occult numerology of the Cabala and his score. (Time, 27 May 1974, p. 87).

Masonic opera Osiris in 1781, which anticipated Mozart's use of Masonic lore in the Egyptian mysticism of The Magic Flute in 1791. After composing the Masonic Funeral Music in 1785, Mozart turned to Italianate opera, working with Da Ponte on Figaro in 1786. In Prague, Da Ponte introduced Mozart to another Freemason, Jacques Casanova, who had known Da Ponte since 1777 and who collaborated with them on the libretto of Don Giovanni (1787), Mozart's greatest opera.⁴² In 1790 Mozart paid tribute to his old Masonic acquaintance, Mesmer, now in official disgrace in France, by including him as a magnetizing doctor in Così fan Tutti.

Mozart viewed the sceptical, rationalistic spirit of the scientific commission which "exposed" Mesmer as a threat to the human spirit and creative imagination. He regarded Voltaire as "France's godless rationalism incarnate," and in the last year of his life, he composed The Magic Flute as his counter-statement to Voltaire and affirmation of the mystical and imaginative exaltation he had found in Freemasonry. His librettist for the opera was another Mason, Schikaneder, and the original printing of the libretto, with its Masonic emblems and designs, proves beyond doubt the Masonic purpose of the work. In The Magic Flute, Mozart was more successful than any other Masonic musician at transmuting his visionary and occult experiences, achieved through initiation into the higher grades, into

⁴² Paul Nettl, "Casanova and Don Giovanni," Saturday Review (28 January 1956).

musical expression, especially in the beautiful Priests Chorus, "Oh Isis and Osiris."

Most people in the audiences watching The Magic Flute did not understand the Masonic symbolism, but one who did was Goethe, himself an "illuminized" Freemason of high Rose-Croix degree. In 1794 Goethe saw a performance of Mozart's work in Weimar, and was stirred to write a sequel to it. He sought out the Masonic musician, Paul Wranitsky, for the musical setting and wrote a Masonic libretto himself. But Goethe interpreted much of the Egyptian symbolism differently, possibly because of his recent disenchantment with Cagliostro's Egyptian Freemasonry, and continued to work on the fragment, The Magic Flute, Part II, in 1803 and 1814. The unfinished state of the work and his twenty-year preoccupation with it reflects Goethe's deep ambivalence about Freemasonry, which he both ridiculed and actively participated in for over sixty years.

Goethe (1749-1832) became fascinated with occultism and secret societies at an early age. His first primer was Comenius' Orbis sensualium pictus, and in his youth at Darmstadt he was a member of a neo-Masonic secret society.⁴³ After a collapse from overwork at Law School in 1768, Goethe spent his long convalescence studying alchemy, Cabalism, Paracelsus, Boehme, and Swedenborg, in collaboration with the Quietist mystic, Fraulein von Klettenberg. She belonged to the Herrnhuter,

⁴³ Richard Friedenthal, Goethe: his Life and Times (New York: World Publishing Co., 1905), pp. 21, 31.

a sect founded by the occult-minded Graf von Zinzendorf. The Herrnhuter also studied Sir Thomas Browne, John Fordage, Jane Lead, and the English Quakers, as well as Bruno, Campanella, the Rosicrucians, and the neo-Platonists.⁴⁴ Thus, during these highly formative years in the 1770's, Goethe became learned in the whole Renaissance occult tradition that has been discussed in this thesis.

In 1770 Goethe wrote Fraulein von Klettenberg from Strasburg that chemistry, meaning alchemy, was still his "secret love" but that he hid from the more sceptical Herder his "mystical-cabbalistical chemistry and all things related to it" (Gray, p. 54). He tried to discover the Panacea and experimented endlessly, using old occultist documents as his texts. In 1772, Goethe had joined another secret society in Wetzlar, and dedicated several songs to the lodge. He became completely absorbed in alchemical and Cabalistic studies and practical experiments. As Viatte points out, "Goethe put experimenter lui-même les aventures qu'il mit en scène dans Faust" (Viatte, I, 29).

From 1771 to 1775, he became fascinated with Swedenborg, who seemed to combine the same wide-ranging scientific interest and intense visionary yearnings that always characterized Goethe. He called Swedenborg "the worthiest seer of our age, to whom the spirits spoke through every sense and limb, in whose bosom angels dwell"

⁴⁴ Ronald D. Gray, Goethe the Alchemist (Cambridge University Press, 1952), p. 48-49.

(Friedenthal, p. 67). He corresponded and collaborated with the physiognomist Lavater throughout the 1770's on their mutual Swedenborgian and theosophic studies. In 1781 Goethe told Lavater, "I am more inclined than any man to believe in a world outside the visible one, and I have sufficient poetry and life in me to feel even my own limited self expand into a Swedenborgian universe" (Gray, p. 63). Friedenthal has pointed out the influence of Swedenborg's visionary accounts on the spirit-world of Faust, and thinks Goethe took his basic concept of the Erdgeist from Swedenborg (p. 68).

But the Swedenborg Goethe drew from was definitely viewed from a Masonic and Rosicrucian perspective. In 1780 Duke Karl August asked Goethe to join the Weimar Masonic lodge, which was associated with Weishaupt's Illuminati and included a Rose-Croix high degree, which Goethe achieved. From Weimar, he kept up and corresponded with Masons, Illuminati, and theosophers all over Europe, and was especially fascinated by the careers of Mesmer and Cagliostro. In 1784-1786, he worked on Die Geheimnisse, an unfinished poem on Rosicrucianism, and studied Andreac's Chemical Wedding and other Rosicrucian works. Later in 1786, Goethe travelled to Italy, with enthusiastic hopes to fulfill his powerful "dream vision of the peacock"--which he interpreted according to Paracelsus' statement that "it is necessary that you persevere in the work until the peacock's tail is quite consumed . . . and the vessel attains its degree of perfection" (Gray, p. 66). While in Italy, Goethe sought out many occultists and Freemasons, and made a special trip to Sicily to investigate Cagliostro's origins.

Though Goethe's Contributions to Optics, no. 1 (1791) is often cited as proof of his "modern scientific mind," he knew no mathematics and despised Newton with a virulence matched only by Blake. In fact, a major influence on Goethe's works was Fraulein von Klottenberg and her alchemical theory that colors mark stages in the development of the great work. His discovery of the intermaxillary bone in man, as well as his botanical search for the Urplanze, were motivated by the same theosophical dream of signatures, correspondences and the maximus homo that drove "scientists" from Paracelsus to Lavater to articulate their complex, vitalistic cosmologies. Thus, Goethe's scientific, anatomical, and botanical work all re-state the theories of expansion and contraction, attraction and repulsion, the "prolific and devourer" that were so important to the alchemists, Cabalists, Boehme, Swedenborg, and Goethe's contemporary, Blake.

Though Goethe's relation to Freemasonry was not always smooth, the problems lay in his deep belief in the ideals of Freemasonry and in his worries about charlatanic occultist aberrations and violent political subversion in France. His obsession with Cagliostro and its eventual exorcism in the play, The Grand Cophta (1790), will be analyzed later, but in 1795, Goethe demonstrated his continuing loyalty to Masonic ideals in the "Märchen," a fairy-tale crammed with mysterious prophecies, occultism, and symbolical fancies, which included a Masonic Temple of Human Love, in which the living stones are Wisdom, Beauty, and Strength (Gray, p. 177). In 1813, in a gesture that epitomized the contradictory strains in Freemasonry, as well as his

attitude to it, Goethe conducted a huge, elaborate Masonic funeral for the great sceptic, free-thinker, and fellow Mason, Christoph Martin Wieland. And in 1815, Goethe was delighted when his son August (1789-1830) was initiated into Masonry (Faivre, Kirchberger, p. 265).

Goethe was much like another Illuminatus, Blake, in his own day, who read Bacon, Newton, and Locke in order to refute them and who affirmed, "If the sun and moon should doubt, they'd suddenly go out!" He was also like another Rosicrucian, Yeats, who was ejected from an occult society for being "too scientific" and who simultaneously asserted, "The mystical life is the centre of all that I do and all that I think and all that I write." For Goethe had the same passionate yearning for "felt" spiritual experience that drove Blake and Yeats into visionary experiments in secret societies. But his own scientific aspirations led him to be critical of the very experiments he endlessly practiced. That he chose to carry out his dialectic between scepticism and belief within a Masonic context testifies to the strength and resourcefulness of that institution in the eighteenth century.

Chapter VI: Freemasonry in England in the Late Eighteenth Century: the "Illuminized Lodges" and the Occult Traditions

Though English Freemasonry never equalled the Continental lodges in the development of occultist, "apocalyptic" degrees and never played as dominant a radical political role, the English lodges did not go untouched by European developments. During the first half of the eighteenth century, Freemasonry strengthened its relations with the Hanoverian ruling family, and from 1782 to 1790, the Duke of Cumberland, brother of King George III, was Grand Master. From 1790 to 1813, the Grand Master was the Prince of Wales, who became King George IV in 1820 (Fay, Revolution, p. 217). But a mid-century schism had split English Freemasonry into two branches, the Moderns and the Ancients, and the latter often collaborated with revolutionary developments in Europe, America, and--clandestinely--in the British Isles.

The split was stimulated by the maladministration of Lord Byron, great-uncle of the poet, who was Grand Master from 1747 to 1752. Byron spent much of his tenure abroad and the "spectacular and generally libertine aristocrats who ruled the regular lodges" acted with arrogance and frivolity. In 1752 Lawrence Dermott, an Irishman dissatisfied with the state of Anglo-Irish Masonry, began his own rite, which claimed to be closer to "ancient" Masonry in theory, and which was much more "modern" in its politics. Dermott opened the higher degrees and offices to merchants and tradespeople, and the Ancients soon

represented the younger, more democratic, and more politically active side of British Freemasonry. The Earl of Blessington, whose family's continued interest in liberal politics and occultism was later related to Blake's circle, became Grand Master of the Ancients from 1756 to 1761, and from then on, many powerful, liberal aristocrats joined the Ancients (Gould, III, 205). The Irish and Scottish lodges affirmed allegiance to the Ancients, whose outspoken criticism of reactionary elements in church and state made them the major Masonic element in America by the 1770's. That the Ancients have been viewed as schismatics by the major Masonic historians has influenced the lack of investigation into their connections with revolutionary politics and theosophy. Before dealing with the radical political activities of many English Freemasons during the revolutionary decades, it will be necessary to examine the occultist and millenarian groups associated with Freemasonry which inspired many English political radicals in the 1790's.

In 1767 Benedict Chastanier, a French surgeon, master of the lodge "Socrate de la Parfaite Union" at Paris,¹ and member of the Avignon Illuminés, founded in London a Masonic lodge named the "Illuminated Theosophists." It had nine degrees, including the "Celestial Jerusalem"; it was apparently a centre of occult studies, and maintained ties with Pernety's Cabalistic and alchemical group (Mackenzie, Masonic Cyclopedia, p. 117). Chastanier

¹ Gordon P.G. Hills, "Notes on the Rainsford Papers in the British Museum," AQC, 26, (1913), p. 110.

became a convert to Swedenborgianism, though the precise date is unclear. Matter, Swedenborg's French biographer, says Chastanier was "un des plus anciens amis de Swedenborg,"² but Block says he discovered the writings of Swedenborg in 1768, just four years before Swedenborg's death.³ Chastanier's advocacy of Swedenborgianism through Masonic channels in London, though, is certain and provides the earliest evidence of the originally Masonic character of the Swedenborgian Society that Blake was involved in during the 1780's. Swedenborg's teachings became a major channel of the occult traditions in England, and their visionary character became allied with Mesmerism--the major "scientific" and "spiritual" mania of the 1780's and 1790's--in a manner which had a pervasive influence on literature and the arts. Thus, an account of Swedenborg's life and occult "sources" is of prime importance in understanding the pre-Romanticism of the German Sturm und Drang, the visionary apocalypics of Blake and his Swedenborgian associates, and the inflamed imagination of revolutionary France.

Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) established a distinguished scientific career in Sweden, where he was an official of the Swedish Department of Mines for thirty-one years. He displayed an encyclopedic curiosity and

² M. Matter, Emmanuel de Swedenborg: sa vie, ses écrits, et sa doctrine (Paris: Didieret Cie, 1863), p. 421.

³ Marguerite B. Block, The New Church in the New World (New York: Holt, 1932), p. 58.

produced many works on mathematics, anatomy, physics, geology, etc. As a university student at Upsala, he had studied the works of Philo Judaeus and possibly the Zohar, which was taught by a converted Jew while he was there.⁴ In 1721, he suddenly asked for a leave of absence and began the mysterious travels which have linked him with secret societies in Germany, Holland, and England. Whether this was stimulated by his claimed Masonic initiation in 1710 in London is unclear, but his movements through Europe are marked by an increasing Cabalistic preoccupation in his journals. In the 1720's, Swedenborg stayed in Brunswick and carried out chemical and metallurgical research with Duke Louis Rudolph,⁵ a devotee of alchemy and the occult. But in his early scientific works, Swedenborg sharply criticized the occult doctrines of alchemy, and his Principia (1734) belonged to the realm of pure mathematics, "a world of bloodless energies . . . a geometrical world of gyres, vortices, and magnetic fields" (Toksvig, p. 71). A kind of "Engineer-God" was acknowledged and viewed as identical with the Infinite, with a purely mathematical "nexus" as the point of juncture with the Finite.

But Swedenborg moved to Dresden in 1733 and his writings began to hint at an increasing theosophical attitude. The "nexus" was vaguely suggested as the

⁴ Joseph L. Blau, "The Diffusion of the Christian Interpretation of the Cabala in English Literature," Review of Religion, VI (1941-42), p. 166.

⁵ Samuel Sandel, An Eulogium on the lately deceased Mr. Emanuel Swedenborg (London: Robert Hindmarsh, 1784), p. 9.

"Infinite and Only Begotten" Christ, not mathematical at all. This change from deism to theism was apparently influenced by his meeting with un-named "other minds," whom he credited with opening his inner vision. In a short, fervent book, Of the Infinite (1734), he noted his collaboration with these minds and hinted at some mysterious religio-sexual experience. He affirmed that man, in this world, can receive the divine, and through a singularly intense "faith," can become aware "in love, or delight resulting from love, of a peculiar connection with the Infinite" (Toksvig, pp. 82-83). That this was not a Platonic love was demonstrated throughout Swedenborg's completely uninhibited writings, and seems to indicate his discovery of the "sexual mysticism" of the Cabala or of Boehme.

Though Swedenborg would later deny having read Boehme or the Cabala, after the "Spirits" forbade him to read theological works in the 1750's, a denial accepted by many Swedenborgian scholars, there is undisputable evidence that he knew them and the Hermetic tradition in general. In 1784 a Swedenborgian disciple recounted the following anecdotes:

One who was a great follower of Behmen, asked him (Swedenborg) at London what he thought of that Author. He was a good man, replied Mr. Swedenborg; it is a pity he has let some errors slip into his writings, particularly on the Trinity.

One asked him if there was any truth in the Hermetic Philosophy. Yes, replied he, I believe it is true, and one of the greatest wonders of God; but I advise no person to engage in it. (Sandel, p.24).

In his private notebook, Swedenborg admitted to knowledge of the Cabala, and his disciple Chastanier later confirmed

that "Sa doctrine . . . reproduit la Cabala Denudata" (Viatte, I, 72). Swedenborg also studied the Cambridge neo-Platonists, including More and Cudworth, who drew on Boehme and the Christian Cabala, as well as Comenius and Leibniz, who had Rosicrucian experiences of his own. Thus, Swedenborg's claims of unique revelation, based on no sources outside himself, at the same time that his writings became more "traditionally" occultist, present a vexing scholarly problem.

In 1736, while in Amsterdam, Swedenborg worked on The Economy of the Animal Kingdom, a frank and brilliant study of anatomy and physiology. In it, he dissociated himself from those "who stubbornly refuse to stir a step beyond visible phenomenon," and from those who "prefer to drown their ideas in the occult at the outset." But Paracelsian and Cabalistic ideas pervade even the Economy. It was apparently at this time that Swedenborg had the first of his visionary experiences, and it was also a time when he was in frequent contact and preoccupied with un-named Jews (White, Swedenborg, p. 373). Amsterdam, from the days when Menasseh ben Israel and Judah Leon headed a millenarial, theosophical group there, was a center of Jewish Cabalistic studies, and also one of the few places where there is evidence that a Rosicrucian sect survived intact throughout the seventeenth century (Schneider, p. 44). Interestingly, James Hyde points out that the main Hebrew Bible used by Swedenborg for his Cabalistic exegeses was the edition by Menasseh ben Israel, a rare text at the time. [see "Swedenborg's Bibles," New Church Magazine, 20 (1901), p. 351].

In his diary, Swedenborg mentioned the powerful

vision of light which accompanied his method of regulated breathing:

In the morning the same kind of weakness or faintness came over me as I had in Amsterdam, when I was beginning the Economy of the Animal Kingdom . . . It came when I saw the light. . . .
 . . . There is a certain cheering light and joyful confirmatory brightness, that plays round the sphere of the mind; and a kind of mysterious radiation--I know not whence it proceeds--that darts through some sacred temple of the brain.
 (Toksvig, p. 127)

He later called the light "the Sign," and viewed it as a divine revelation:

. . . a flame of divers sizes and with a diversity of color and splendour has often been seen by me. Thus while I was writing a certain little work, hardly a day passed by for several months in which a flame was not seen by me as vividly as the flame of a household hearth; at the same time this was a sign of approbation, and this happened before spirits began to speak with me viva voce.
 (Toksvig, p. 127)

In the Economy, Swedenborg discussed the connection between the motion of the brain and the motion of the lungs, and noted that shallow mouth-breathing cuts off sense perceptions to the mind. In his diary, he recorded the unusual effects upon him as a child through inhibited breathing while he was praying, a practice he renewed while writing or meditating from 1736 on. The intensified development of his power of regulated breathing was directly related to the intensity of his visionary experiences. Several scholars have pointed out the similarity to Yogic techniques, but no one has pointed out the greater similarity to Abulafia's Cabalistic techniques of vision-inducement. As discussed in Chapter I, Abulafia

developed breathing techniques, which when accompanied by the "right intention" and psycho-sexual "equilibrium," would stimulate visions of light and joy, and at the supreme point, a vision of one's theosophical "Master." That Swedenborg's increased proficiency at breath-control ran parallel with his Hebrew studies, Cabalistic exegesis of the Torah, and increasing sexual preoccupations reveals the impact of Cabalistic visionary methods upon him. In 1931 Acton discovered in Swedenborg's unpublished notebooks many references to the Cabala, including notes on the Sephiroth, and quotes from the Rosicrucian novel, The Comte de Gabalis.⁶ Swedenborg also owned a rare copy of Borri's Cabalistic work, The Key to the Cabinet, which was believed to be the source of Gabalis.

Swedenborg's visionary experiences bewildered him at first, and in 1741 he worried about his sanity. In The Fibre (1742), he discussed mental diseases, and differentiated between "fanatic imagination" and "ecstasy energumene." The first was obviously hallucination, but the second was a state in which the soul voluntarily separated from the body. As proof, he cited the case of persons "skilled in the art of magic" from the northern regions.

Swedenborg began to keep a diary in 1743 and recorded the increasing power of these experiences. Finally on 6 April 1744, he experienced the vision which

⁶ Alfred Acton, ed. A Philosopher's Notebook (Philadelphia, Penn.: Swedenborg Scientific Association, 1931), p. 10, 79.

set him on his prophetic mission and assured him of divine authority for it. That night Swedenborg began shivering and then trembled violently; he heard the sound of many storms colliding and saw his own body thrown down. He began to pray intensely, when suddenly a hand grasped his hand hard: "In the same moment I lay in his bosom and saw him face to face. It was a face of such holy mien and everything indescribable and smiling. . . ." (Toksvig, pp. 130, 142). After initial doubt and confusion about the symbolism of the "Master's" words, Swedenborg came to accept this as a prophetic vision of Christ. The similarity to Abulafia's description of the trance-vision of one's spiritual Master is striking, and the further development of Swedenborg's capacity for automatic writing--with ambiguous, puzzling references to the Jews who surrounded him--raise provocative questions about the nature and manner of these "Cabalistic" experiences.

Swedenborg moved to London in 1744 and took lodgings with Moravian artisans. Swedenborg described the London Moravians as a secret society with hidden mysteries. He said they "pretended to some form of occultism" delighted "in the enthusiasm which comes from the semi-possession of spirits."⁷ Many Moravian groups were considered neo-Masonic, and Hyde notes that Swedenborg's description of them as an occult society was accurate, causing their founder, Zinzendorf, to apologize for them.

⁷ See James Hyde, "Zinzendorf and the Moravians," New Church Magazine, 41-42 (1922), pp. 206-207.

White points out that in Swedenborg's diary of 1744, "the entries in England are even more mysterious than those in Holland" (Swedenborg, p. 126). His works note with increasing frequency the automatic nature of his writing: "these words . . . were said to me verbally and almost enunciated, and this by infants who were then with me and who also spoke by my mouth and moreover directed my very hand." He went on to claim, "I have written entire pages and the spirits did not dictate the words, but absolutely guided my hand, so it was they who were doing the writing." At the same time, he noted his greater respiration control; he also learned to regulate his heart beat to coincide with his breathing, and could slow down the whole process until a state of ecstatic trance would be achieved.

Swedenborg concluded at one point that the "design of all this" respiratory and pulmonary control "was that every kind of state, every kind of sphere, and every kind of society (of spirits), particularly the more interior, might find in my own a fit respiration . . . and that thus a medium of intercourse might be afforded with spirits and angels" (Toksvig, p. 219). When the more interior spirits of heaven were operating in his body, he noted a fourfold effect--in the left temple, the lungs, the heart, and the loins. The latter area of "spiritual activity" was the object of his study, De Generatione, in which he analyzed the psycho-physical pleasures of love, and at the same time interpreted his own sexual dreams and visions as religious experiences.

The Cabalistic nature of these psycho-sexual trances is reinforced by the fact that Swedenborg was immersed in Hebrew studies throughout this period. In

1741 he had begun work on a Hieroglyphic Key to the Bible, and after the great vision of 1744, he became completely absorbed in Cabalistic exegesis of the Torah. By 1748, he noted in his diary that heaven had the form of a Grand Man, an obvious reference to Adam Kadmon of the Cabalists. The angels who revealed the nature of correspondences with the Maximus Homo promised Swedenborg "still greater arcana" if he were worthy. But Swedenborg's reaction to these Cabalistic "angels" was ambivalent--nearly all the Biblical exegesis and Cabalistic lore was expressed in the abnormal handwriting of his automatic trance state. These words, he noted in one place, "were written by my hand, and dictated by Isaac, the father of the Jews." Abraham, Jacob, and Moses also spoke through him, but in the automatic script, fierce anti-Semitic outbursts began to intrude on the Cabalistic revelations. As Swedenborg felt increasingly surrounded by inimical Jews, he unleashed confused and venomous anti-Jewish diatribes that besmirched Moses, Solomon, and the whole Jewish heritage. He wrote, "These words are written in the presence of Jews who are around me, nor do I doubt but that Abraham is also present," and added that they were still intent on turning everything into phantasies (Toksvig, pp. 207, 214, 289). These ugly outbursts never appeared in his non-automatic writings, where he achieved so thorough a Christianization of Cabalistic lore that his sources are almost invisible.

Though Swedenborgian scholars have suggested few explanations for these sub-conscious struggles, I think they indicate a real association with Jewish

instructors--probably under a neo-Masonic aegis--that both fascinated and frightened Swedenborg. An anecdote preserved by Benedict Chastanier, the French Masonic organizer of Blake's Swedenborg Society, reveals Swedenborg's involvement with some Jewish group in London. In his Tableau Analytique et Raisonnee de la Doctrine Celeste . . . (Londres, 1786), pp. 21-24, Chastanier related that while Swedenborg was in the company of two Jews, he fell into a kind of "ecstasis" or trance. The Jews took advantage of his condition to steal a watch, but Swedenborg refused to prosecute "these good Israelites." At the same period, Swedenborg's automatic scripts reveal increasing irritation at his Jewish contemporaries, and often seemed to be addressing a present Jewish adversary (Toksvig, p. 210). Swedenborg himself fought against the venom of these tirades, and at times tried to suppress them. That the Cabalistic arcanum he was preoccupied with were closely guarded secrets of his "angel" mentors is revealed in the frequently repeated question of whether it would be permitted to reveal something, whether it would be allowed to publish this, and whether he needed to consult before he could interpret something. That Swedenborg was possibly experiencing a guilty Christian reaction to his Cabalistic investigations, which eventually led to his denial of having learned anything or studied from any mentors (a denial we know is untrue), and that his silence in his journals at the times when his Masonic involvement was supposed to be highest was a deliberate silence, is not just idle speculation. For there is evidence of secret Cabalistic groups, headed by Jewish instructors, which operated within the Masonic structure in several areas where Swedenborg lived.

The most fascinating of these Baal-Shems, or Cabalistic "Masters of the Word," lived in London from 1742 until his death in 1782, and gave clandestine instruction in Cabala to occultist Masons whose discretion could be trusted. Though the possibility of Swedenborg's contact with the London Baal-Shem has never been pointed out, and requires more documentation from Masonic archives to be more than a hypothesis, it is worth investigation, as the figure of Samuel Jacob Chayim Falk played an intriguing but still inadequately analyzed role in the development of occultism and radicalism within English Freemasonry, Swedenborgianism, and politics. The period when Swedenborg could most likely have worked with Falk dates from the Cabalist's escape from Germany to Holland and London circa 1740-1742. Dr. Falk was born in Poland around 1710, probably from a Portuguese Sephardic family, and became a follower of the seventeenth-century "Messiah," Sabbatai Zevi.⁸ Falk became famous as a thaumaturgist and Cabalistic magician, and was admired by Freemasons in Poland and Germany. Archenholz, a Swedish Mason and trustworthy observer, noted in his England und Italien, I, 149, that he heard an account of Falk's alchemical wonders from another Masonic occultist, Count Rentzov, who observed them in Brunswick on his father's estate in the late 1730's (Adler, p. 152).

But in Westphalia, Falk was condemned as a sorcerer, and sentenced to be burned alive. He escaped

⁸ Hermann Adler, The Baal-Shem of London (Berlin: von H. Itzkowski, 1903), p. 151.

first to Holland (Viatte, I, 110), and was there during Swedenborg's stay, and then moved to London in 1742, where Swedenborg moved in 1744. He at first lived at 35 Prescott Street, East End, but with rising prosperity moved to a fine house in Wellclose Square. Significantly, Swedenborg himself came to Wellclose Square and lived in the Kings Arms Tavern there for a ten-week period which coincided with Falk's presence. Eric Bergstrom, the tavern keeper, said Swedenborg went out each morning on some unknown business, and that he returned to the area often for many years.⁹ Falk had a "business address" on London Bridge, where he maintained an alchemical lab, with an outer division into which only the initiates might enter and an "inner camp" separated from the rest by magical inscriptions.¹⁰ He was also the director of a "Brotherhood," who hoped by their piety and Cabalistic magic to hasten the advent of the Messiah. One of the initiates, Suzman Sheznowski, wrote his son in Poland, describing the holy wonders of Falk, but then swore him to secrecy--"for here in London this matter has not been disclosed to anyone who does not belong to our Brotherhood" (Adler, p. 59).

Falk became well-known in England, however, and entertained many notable visitors, receiving perhaps greater deference from Christians than from Jews. The

⁹ R.L. Tafel, Documents Concerning the Life and Character of Emanuel Swedenborg (London: Swedenborg Society, 1875), II, 536.

¹⁰ Cecil Roth, Essays and Portraits in Anglo-Jewish History (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1962), p.145.

Christian Freemason Archenholz visited him in London and described the splendid Cablistic decorations of his house (Roth, Essays, p. 142). Falk's list of books indicates that he occasionally engaged in religious disputations with Christian acquaintances, which recalls Swedenborg's polemical defenses against a "present Jewish adversary." The evidences of Falk's important Masonic contacts will be discussed later, but in connection with Swedenborg, it is noteworthy that in the 1770's Falk taught Cabala to the Marquis de Thomé, who was Swedenborg's first propagandist in France, who instituted a Swedenborgian Masonic lodge in Paris in 1783 which included several personal acquaintances of Swedenborg, and who was closely involved in the London Swedenborgian group that Blake belonged to. G.P.Hills, an eminent rationalist Masonic scholar, notes of Falk that "if Jewish Brethren did introduce Cabalistical learning into the so-called High Degrees, here we have one, who if a Mason, would have been eminently qualified to do so."¹¹ Count Rentzov called Falk a "Rose-Croix," and Savalette de Langes, a leading French Mason who corresponded with the London Swedenborgian Society, noted that "in all sects of savants in secret sciences he passes as a superior man. He is at present in England" (Webster, p. 189). The Swedenborgian scholar Toksvig, who knew nothing of Falk and his Cabalistic group, affirmed that Swedenborg was in contact with some society which the "angels" represented (Toksvig, p. 289).

¹¹ See G.P. Hills, "Rainsford," pp. 100-02, and Viatte, I, 85.

Whatever the nature of Swedenborg's Jewish mentors, by 1749 he felt confident enough in his own Cabalistic powers to spend the next years on the voluminous Arcana Coelestia, "or the Heavenly Secrets which are in the Sacred Scripture or the Word of the Lord, disclosed: here those which are in Genesis: together with the wonderful things which have been seen in the World of Spirits and in the Heaven of Angels." In this huge work, Swedenborg rejected the dead husk of the Jewish religion of law, never mentioning that the Jewish Cabalists did the same thing, and made veiled references to an ancient tradition of hieroglyphical interpretation of the Bible. But he also made the first of his claims to the uniqueness of his vision:

The Christian world . . . is as yet profoundly unaware of the fact that all things in the Word, both in general and in particular, nay the very smallest particulars down to the most minute iota, signify and enfold within them spiritual and heavenly things. 12

It was such unfounded claims that drove Blake to say, "Swedenborg has not written one new truth . . . Swedenborg's writings are a recapitulation of all superficial opinions, and analysis of the more sublime," and to point out that Paracelsus and Boehme lay behind Swedenborg's ideas.¹³ It was perhaps the overwhelming sense of authority that Swedenborg's visions produced in him that stimulated his claim to unique divine

¹² Cyriel O. Sigstedt, The Swedenborg Epic (New York: Bookman, 1952), p. 231.

¹³ William Blake, Complete Writings, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (Oxford: 1971), pp. 157-58. Hereafter cited as Blake, CW.

revelation, for in Arcana Coelestia he incorporated many of his own spiritual experiences, which he considered quite as important as the expositions of Scripture. What Swedenborg did bring to his derivative theosophy, though, was the trained mind of an analytic scientist. When he described the way in which spirits form societies, which are in perfect harmony with themselves and others, and which ultimately join in the universal unit of Maximus Homo, he analyzed the spirits as though they were tissue particles under a microscope.¹⁴ The matter-of-factness of Swedenborg's bizarre descriptions led Yeats to claim that Swedenborg's assertion that "the angels do not like butter" would make admirable folk-lore."¹⁵

In his next major work, Of the Worship and Love of God, Swedenborg incorporated all of his occultist theories into an interpretation of the creation of the world and of Adam and Eve. Significantly, the mental faculties or "intelligences" of Adam and Eve were personified as beautiful women. "Wisdom," a daughter of Adam's soul, told him that "it is the life of our love which we live, that life is of such quality as the love is" (Toksvig, 149). The Wisdom figure played the same role as the Cabalistic Shekinah and Boehme's Sophia; she was a purely female principle within the Godhead and the human psyche. But it was in Swedenborg's last work, The Delights of Wisdom pertaining to Conjugal Love,

¹⁴ Inge Jonsson, Emanuel Swedenborg (New York: Twayne, 1971), p. 144.

¹⁵ W.B. Yeats, Uncollected Prose, ed. John P. Frayne (Columbia Univ. Press, 1970), I, 190.

"after which follow the pleasures of Insanity pertaining to Scortatory Love," that he carried the Cabalistic Shekinah or Wisdom to new extremes. In it he dealt with sexual and marital experience in the after-life, and defined a view of "conjugal love" which would trouble his followers for the next one hundred and fifty years.

In the 1758 Heaven and Hell, Swedenborg had spoken of marriage in heaven as purely of minds, but in 1759 he began work on Conjugal Love (published 1768), which concluded that heavenly marriage included the same physical sensations as a successful marriage on earth. He had earlier affirmed the Cabalistic magical view that Man can stimulate sensations in God: "This law, of his Ordaining, appears to be that our Willing should excite His Willing." He believed that sensation was a power of the soul rather than of the body, a power the soul continued to possess after "death," to such an extent that it could hallucinate itself a spiritual body with more exquisite sensations than it had before (Toksvig, pp. 121, 319).

While in London, Swedenborg cultivated friendships among several physicians who helped translate his work and spread his views. One of them, Dr. Thomas Hartley (1709-1784), was already a student of Boehme and millenarial religion when he met Swedenborg in 1769. In that year, Swedenborg sent a copy of a letter to the Swedish Royal Society and another to Doctors Hartley and Messiter, urging them to study the science of correspondences:

As the knowledge of correspondences was esteemed by the ancients the knowledge of knowledges and constituted their wisdom, it would surely be of importance for some one of your Society to devote

his attention to it; and for this purpose he might begin . . . with the correspondences disclosed in The Apocalypse Revealed. Should it be desired, I am willing to unfold the meaning of the Egyptian hieroglyphics, which are nothing else but correspondences--these being discovered and proved from the Word in The Apocalypse Revealed--and to publish their explication; a work which no other person could accomplish. 16

Apparently not bothered by Swedenborg's irritating claim of unique illumination, Hartley and Messiter decided to pick up some useful books on hieroglyphical learning, and they began to translate Heaven and Hell, working with Swedenborg in London (Sigstedt, p. 386). In 1773 the Reverend John Clowes in Manchester was converted to Swedenborg by a remarkable vision of the words Divinum Humanum, and began a life-work of translating and proselytizing, which included angelic visitations and automatic writing.¹⁷ In 1777 the Reverend Jacob Duché, who was a Boehmenist, became a Swedenborgian also, and the center of a group in London which met to study theosophy in general (Odhner, p. 110).

But it was the French Freemason, Benedict Chastanier, who actually began to organize a Swedenborgian study group under the Masonic aegis. In 1778, Chastanier, whose "Illuminated Theosophists" had been interested in

¹⁶ Emanuel Swedenborg, Works, Rotch edition (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1907), XXII, 34-35.

¹⁷ Carl T. Odhner, Annals of the New Church, 1688-1850 (Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania: Academy of the New Church, 1904), I, 106.

Swedenborg since 1767, met Thomas Hartley, who gave him much information on Swedenborg's last years. In 1783, Chastanier and his London "Illuminés" founded the Journal Novi-Jerusalemite and began to publish French translations of Swedenborg from London. Viatte indicates the importance of Chastanier's work in both England and France:

L'Angleterre prend désormais la direction du mouvement: Swedenborg y prime n'importe quel mystique; "ses disciples son nombreux, ils ont un service public, et un culte et rite particulieres." Les premiers que l'on rencontre en France viennent de là: Chastanier qui fonde à Londres, en 1783, le Journal Novi-Jérusalémite, y avait reçu des 1766, "cette auguste Verite"; bien que son influence s'exerce plus spécialement sur la colonie française de Grande-Bretagne, ses traductions font connaître le prophete du Nord à l'ensemble de ses compatriotes. (Viatte, I, 87).

That Chastanier was an eclectic occultist is revealed in his references to "tous les philosophes hermétiques, depuis Hermes lui-meme jusqu' à Élie l'Artiste," and his acknowledgement of Swedenborg's heavy debt to Cabalism, both discussed in Chastanier's Traité de la Vie (London, 1787). Chastanier's Swedenborgian Masonic group was visited by important foreign Masons, such as the Marquis de Thomé, already mentioned as a student of Dr. Faik as well as of Swedenborg, who helped Chastanier's group in London through his own Swedenborgian Masonic lodge in Paris. Viatte notes Thomé's interest in practical Cabala and alchemy:

. . . comme Élie Artiste, il s'intéresse surtout aux expériences pratiques, et à la pierre philosophale; il s'inspire des chemistes de la Renaissance, et se persuade que la découverte du grand oeuvre entraînerait celle de plus hautes vérités. (Viatte, I, 88)

Beswick claims that Thomé proudly affirmed that the Swedenborgian system of Freemasonry had a "controlling influence over the secret orders which swayed the revolutionary period of 1792 in France " (p. 199). Thomé's Illuminized lodges shielded the revolutionary activists from political harm and secretly organized public opinion.

One of the most important foreign visitors to the London Swedenborgian lodge was the Swedish chemist and mining engineer, Augustus Nordenskjöld, who visited the London group in 1780 and established close relations between them and his alchemystical Masonic group in Stockholm (Odhner, p. 114). Like Thomé and Chastanier, Nordenskjöld maintained a friendship and correspondence with Pernety, the chief of the Berlin and Avignon Illuminés. That the three foreigners put Swedenborgians in England in touch with Pernety is demonstrated by a letter from Charles Springer, who knew Swedenborg for many years (he spoke of their ancient friendship), and who became a founding member of the London Swedenborg Society. Springer wrote Pernety at Berlin on 18 January 1782, to honor his request for some works of Swedenborg's and for information on his life. Springer mentioned that his good friends the Nordenskjölds directed Pernety to him, and then listed Swedenborg's major English friends-- Doctors Messiter, Hartley, and Hampé. He then recounted anecdotes of Swedenborg's clairvoyance, conversations with the dead, and instances of extra-sensory perception (Sandel, pp. 31-36). As noted earlier, Pernety and Grablanka then incorporated Swedenborgianism into their "Illuminated" Freemasonry, and in 1782 Pernety published

a translation of Swedenborg's Merveilles du ciel et de l'enfer (Berlin), which was decorated with Masonic emblems. The translation drew criticism from Thomé, who complained about its untrustworthiness in a 1782 letter to Nordenskjöld (Odhner, p.117).

These details of foreign Masonic involvement in the London Swedenborgian group show that the 1783 "study group" instituted by Robert Hindmarsh and usually cited as the first Swedenborgian group in London grew out of and was intimately related to occultist Masonic groups in England and abroad. According to Beswick, the Swedenborgian rite of Freemasonry which had been developed in Sweden in the 1750's was brought by two Swedish Masons to London and communicated to Chastanier, Robert Hindmarsh, and Dr. Messiter (pp. 71-73). Chastanier became important in Masonic history as the originator of several Swedenborgian degrees. This Masonic origin has never been mentioned in works dealing with Blake's Swedenborgian association, and this whole complex, multi-national milieu within which Blake lived and studied has never been examined. When David Erdman, the most thorough of Blake's historical scholars, said in 1953 that "Blake's biography is still in a pre-scientific state" ("Blake's Swedenborgianism," p.247), he exposed the failure to examine Blake's life within a wider context than purely literary "sources," a criticism that still holds true. A study of Blake's friends and associates in the Swedenborgian group throws new light on the artistic and psychological mentality of the late eighteenth century, especially in reference to trance-techniques, prophetic millenarianism, and the widespread occultism of the day. What becomes obvious is that Blake--like Yeats later--learned a great deal from oral

traditions and conversations with fellow "students," from instruction within a secret society, and from actual experiments with visionary techniques. What also becomes obvious is that Blake was not born out of due time but was perhaps the most articulate artistic spokesman in England for the same Zeitgeist that Goethe expressed in Faust, Part I. For Blake responded to and expressed a spirit of the age that was occultist, millennial, and multi-national, and which found its major home in the only institution which allowed it, international, high-degree Freemasonry.

Ironically, less can be found out about Blake's English associates in the early Swedenborg Society than about the foreign ones. Part of the reason is that the London Masonic archives are still closed to outsiders, whereas the French Masonic archives were confiscated by the Vichy government during World War II when it banned Freemasonry. After the Allied victory, the Masonic collections were placed in the National Library in Paris and became available to scholars. Also ironically, Bernard Fay, whose valuable works on Freemasonry and Revolution and on Franklin's Masonic career opened up many new areas of research, was sentenced to life-imprisonment in 1946 for divulging lists of Masonic members to the Vichy government (Schneider, p. 12).

The "official" English history of the group began with a meeting in 1783 called by Robert Hindmarsh (1759-1835), a printer and son of James Hindmarsh, one of Wesley's ministers. Robert became acquainted with Swedenborg's writings in 1778 and was also interested in the Pietists Antoinette Bourignon and Engelbrecht.

On 5 December 1783, he advertised for people who were interested in Swedenborg to meet at the London Coffee-House, Ludgate Hill,¹⁸ a major Masonic Tavern (Hutchinson, p. 338). Four others came, including Dr. Peter Provo, William Bonington, J.A. Tulk (who had conversed with Swedenborg himself about "conjugal love" in heaven), and Dr. William Spence (who was at one time a Freemason and a friend of Nordenskjold, Chastanier, Charles Springer, Pernety, and many Avignon Illuminés).¹⁹ Spence's Essays, published in 1792 by Hindmarsh, are filled with information on Blake's contemporaries and on the mania for magic and Animal Magnetism during the 1780's. They will be explored fully later.

At the next meeting of the study group, four more members were added, including Henry Peckitt (Doctor and Apothecary), Joshua Gilpin (Minister), James Glen (a plantation owner from South America, who in 1784 began the first Swedenborgian-Masonic propaganda in America with a series of lectures in Boston at the Masonic Green Dragon Tavern), and Benedict Chastanier. About this time, Augustus Nordenskjold came to London and connected himself with the "Theosophical Society," as the group was called after it moved to New Court, Middle Temple.²⁰ Nordenskjold had been busy in Stockholm, where he established an alchemical lab in 1780 by command of King Gustavus III

¹⁸ George Trobridge, Swedenborg: Life and Teaching (London: Swedenborg Society, 1935), p. 222.

¹⁹ William Spence, Essays in Divinity and Physics . . . with an exposition of Animal Magnetism and Magic (London: Robert Hindmarsh, 1792), pp. 38, 58, 61, 91.

²⁰ Robert Hindmarsh, Rise and Progress of the New Jerusalem Church (London: Hodgson, 1861), p. 23.

(Odhner, p. 114). With the court poet, J.G. Halldin, Nordenskjold had made the Swedish court a center for the study of alchemy, Cabala, and Animal Magnetism, as well as Swedenborgianism. He and Halldin published a weekly paper, Aftonbladet, in which they openly avowed these doctrines, but after eight months it was killed by clerical opposition (Block, p. 52). In 1783, Nordenskjold was claimed as the author of Oneiromancy, or the Art of Interpreting Dreams (in Swedish), a "mystico-cabalistic" work on Swedenborgianism. When he returned to London in early 1784, he brought many of Swedenborg's manuscripts for publication and translation (Odhner, pp. 120-123).

The close relation between the Swedenborgian Masonic groups in Sweden, France, and England was demonstrated by mutual visits and correspondence, which became increasingly important after Nordenskjold's next venture. This was the establishment in 1786 of the "Exegetic-Philanthropic Society" in Stockholm, which was modeled on the London Society, for the ostensible purpose of translating Swedenborg into many languages. But it was mainly concerned with occultism and Swedenborgian "spiritualism." The Society established a Printing Office "in conjunction with that of the Free Masons," (Odhner, p. 133) and drew in many distinguished nobles, including the future king of Sweden, most of whom were already Masons. The Exegetic Society established correspondence with Masonic groups at Avignon and Strasburg, as well as London, and in 1788 became involved in a public dispute over Swedenborgianism and Animal Magnetism with the French lodge of Amis Réunis, which created a minor "Rosicrucian furor" in Europe, and will be dealt with

later in connection with Mesmer's activities in France.

Meanwhile, in London in 1784, the Theosophical Society was attracting more members: John Flaxman (1755-1826), the sculptor who was Blake's lifelong friend; William Sharp (1749-1824), the celebrated engraver, who was also involved with Blake for many years, and whose radical political activities, adventurous occultism, and connections with the Avignon Illuminés raise many questions about Blake's similar connections; Phillipe J. de Louthembourg (1740-1812), the famous painter, whose documented connections with the Avignon Illuminés, occultism of every degree, and the most famous Masonic magician of the century, Cagliostro, provide a wealth of new information on Blake's milieu and friendships; Manoah Sibly (1757-1840), a friend of Blake, student of the occult traditions and brother of Ebenezer Sibly, the most famous Masonic writer on occultism in England; F.H. Barthelemon, the eminent violinist and composer, a Freemason and former Musical Preceptor to the Masonic Duke of Brunswick; Thomas Parker, an unknown; and most important for this study, General Charles Rainsford, whose forty volumes of unpublished papers in the British Museum form the major source material for the study of English Freemasonry and occultism in the late eighteenth century. A thorough examination of Rainsford's papers, which has never been done by a Swedenborgian or Blakean scholar, will undoubtedly open a whole new chapter on Blake's life and on early Swedenborgianism in England. In the only studies of the Rainsford papers, by Brother Gordon P.G. Hills for the scholarly Masonic journal Ars

Quatuor Coronatorum,²¹ more scatter-shot information is given on occultism, Freemasonry, Rosicrucianism, Swedenborgianism, and Jewish Cabalism in late eighteenth-century England than in any other published material. General Rainsford was a remarkable man whose interests, personal associations, and erudition ran the whole gamut of late eighteenth-century antiquarian, scientific, political, theosophical, and artistic developments. In a sense, he was the Elias Ashmole of the eighteenth century.

According to his brief autobiographical account, General Charles Rainsford (1728-1809) lived an active military life and served all over Europe, at the same time that he pursued his researches in language, theosophy, and antiquarianism. He was a member of the Society of Antiquaries and the Royal Society, whose President was Sir Joseph Banks, Rainsford's cousin and close friend, who was also a Mason. But his major interest throughout

²¹ Gordon P. G. Hills, "Notes on the Rainsford Papers in the British Museum." Ars Quatuor Coronatorum, 26 (1913) pp.93-129--"Notes on Some Masonic Personalities at the End of the Eighteenth Century," Ars Quatuor Coronatorum, 25 (1912), pp. 141-164.

See also, G.P. Hills, "Notes on Some Contemporary References to Dr. Falk, the Baal-Shem of London, in the Rainsford Manuscripts at the British Museum," Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England, Sessions 1915-1917 (London: 1918), pp. 122-128.

his life was in the activities of the secret societies in England and on the Continent. In 1745 he served under the Duke of Cumberland in Flanders and maintained his friendship with the Duke, who became a high-ranking Freemason and Grand Master from 1782-1790. Cumberland opposed his brother, George III, on his American policy and personally inspired Lafayette's defense of the American colonies, urging him to go to America in 1776 (Fay, Revolution, pp. 217, 248).

From 1745 to 1751, Rainsford headed the Coldstream Guards stationed in London, and apparently pursued his occult and Masonic activities during this comparatively leisurely period. Hills speculates that he may have learned of the Cabalist, Dr. Falk, at this time, for Rainsford was later considered a repository of information on the London Baal-Shem (Hills, "Falk and Rainsford," p. 123). Rainsford's whereabouts from 1751 to 1757 is uncertain, though there is evidence of his contacts with Continental Freemasons at this time. In 1758, Rainsford was appointed Private Secretary to the Governor of Gibraltar, where he also studied engineering. At some time between then and 1761, he was involved in efforts at merging the French Masonic lodge "L'Immortalité de l'Ordre" in London with the English Lodge of Antiquity, the outcome of which is still confused in Masonic annals (Hills, "Rainsford," p. 94).

In 1761, he received a company and served under Duke Ferdinand of Brunswick in Germany. The resulting friendship with this high-degree German Freemason and student of occultism proved important to Rainsford. Ferdinand took a leading part in Freemasonry generally,

and participated in several of the Masonic "Convents" which attempted to unify Freemasonry in Germany and which established collaboration in occult studies. Rainsford's extensive knowledge of Continental Freemasonry may have been influenced by the Duke of Brunswick (Hills, "Rainsford," 95). At the important Convent of Paris in 1784, Brunswick led the German delegation and Rainsford led the English one (which included several London Swedenborgians).

Meanwhile, Rainsford served a year in Portugal in 1762 and became an M.P. for Malden in Essex in 1763, through the influence of the Duke of Northumberland, a Freemason who later corresponded with Rainsford in 1799 over the recent exposés connecting Freemasonry and "Illuminism" (Webster, Secret Societies, p. 147). In 1772 he was in Rome, where he recorded in his own handwriting the "Alchymical Processes, communicated to me, at Rome, 1772, by Gaspare Landi." Rainsford's investigations into alchemy through Masonic channels throws an early light on another Englishman, Peter Woulfe, an eminent chemist, fellow of the Royal Society, and a Freemason, whom Rainsford knew earlier than 1776. Rainsford put Woulfe into contact with German alchemists, and the two collaborated for years (Hills, "Rainsford," p. 108). Woulfe became a London Swedenborgian, an Avignon Illuminé, a fanatical follower of Richard Brothers, and and was still practising alchemy in London in 1803. His involvement with Blake's friends from 1780 to 1800 will later be analyzed in more detail.

In 1777 Rainsford was at The Hague, superintending the embarkation of foreign troops for the American War.

On 11 November 1777, he visited his friend, "Boas the Jew Banker." The brothers Simeon and Abraham Boas headed an important firm of bankers at the Hague. Rainsford and Boas' son "fell upon the topic of Dr. du Falk, the famous Cabalist, whom I had heard a great deal of" in England and Holland. Rainsford had "long known" that the Boas family "had a particular knowledge and correspondence with him," and he questioned the son about Falk's early activities in Brunswick, as described in the work "by Count Rentzov, published at the Hague in 1741." The son told him everything he knew about Falk, and about his German friend, Cosman Lehman, who had helped Falk financially and at present was in France, trying to get help for him. Rainsford concluded the account by noting his long previous friendship with Lehman, his present "close correspondence" with him, and mysterious hints at some collaboration between the two and possibly Falk:

I expect to see (Lehman) at my return to England, upon some particular Business between us. He is now at Versailles, in close connexion with the Chevalier de L_____g and the P. de Tingri, and the conversation I had with Boas (about Falk) will be of no small use to me in futuro. (Hills, "Rainsford," p. 105)

The Chevalier du Luxembourg mentioned in the note was a seeker after the Philosopher's Stone and was probably the "prince of noble blood" to whom Falk "fermé sa porte"-- thus astounding people with his social power and independence (Viatte, I, p. 110).

Among Rainsford's papers (23,669, f.l.) is a translation of a letter from the Abbé Pernety to Charles Frederick Nordenskjöld at Stockholm. It is dated Berlin,

1781, and was communicated to Rainsford in French by Mr. Spence, Surgeon. The letter reveals Pernety's correspondence with Grabianka over immediate signs of the Second Advent, especially through the prophetic visions of two peasants in Podolia who rose from their graves but were then forbidden to speak of their communications with the dead (see Danilewicz, p. 57, for the correct date, and Hills, "Rainsford," p. 115). Since Podolia was Falk's homeland, where he had many Cabalistic disciples, and since Grabianka was apparently a first-hand witness of these wonders, the possibility of an association between these two Illuminists is intriguing. Waite points out that Israel of Podolia, a Cabalistic Jew, established a community of "New Saints" and a recipe for miracles by means of the name Tetragrammaton (Kabbalah, p. 81). Israel's work, significantly, was contemporary with the Podolian "miracles" described in Rainsford's letter, and Grabianka's Avignon Illuminés were sometimes called the "New Saints."

Rainsford's interest in Falk continued and in October 1782, he answered a letter from an unnamed correspondent who was seeking information on Falk. The letter was given to Rainsford by General Pasquale de Paoli, a Freemason and Corsican revolutionary, whose family had been involved with Baron Theodore de Neuhof, who overthrew Genoese reign in Corsica in 1736 to rule briefly as King of Corsica. Neuhof too was a Mason and proclaimed religious liberty in Corsica, inviting Jews and Protestants to settle (Hills, "Rainsford," p. 103). The French army drove him out, and he came to England seeking military and financial aid for his "Masonic" Corsican Order of Knighthood. He sought out Dr. Falk

in 1749 to help him raise funds through alchemy and the finding of buried treasures (one of Falk's and the seventeenth-century Rosicrucians' specialities). Neuhof lived near Epping Forest (Roth, Essays, p. 147), where Falk supposedly held secret meetings for alchemical experiments (Hills, "Rainsford," p. 100). At one point, Neuhof escaped arrest by hiding with his brother-in-law, supposedly the Viscount Kilmarnock, who was a prominent Freemason executed for Jacobite political intrigues. Neuhof was finally caught in 1749 and placed in King's Bench Prison for debt. Fashionable crowds thronged to see him, including the Freemasons Horace Walpole and Horace Mann.

Neuhof occasionally initiated a visitor into his Corsican Knighthood of the Order of Liberation. Falk was another visitor, and the old tales of Neuhof's addiction to the practice of magic (which the Genoese had circulated in their effort to overthrow him) became current again in London. Walpole and Garrick tried to gain public support for him, and at his death in 1756, Soho gave him a mock royal funeral, for which Walpole drew up the epitaph. The further interest of General Rainsford in Falk and Neuhof is revealed in the General's long collaboration with Cosman Lehman, who was Neuhof's agent to Falk throughout the 1750's (see Roth, Essays, pp. 160, 162, 147). Rainsford was also later involved with Neuhof's son, Colonel Felix Frederick, in 1774 (Hills, "Rainsford," p.123).

The long letter Rainsford wrote in October 1782 in answer to General Paoli's unnamed friend, with whom Rainsford maintained a "continued exchange of information as to works and discoveries," revealed some planned

collaboration with Falk:

As to the Kabbala, all is upset by the unexpected death of Dr. Falk. I have spoken with his great friend Lehman, who is . . . his heir to the sum of £15,000 sterling, but up to now I have found nothing certain relating to that famous Rabbi, whether he is genuine or a knave. What does your friend in Franconia say about it, who was so desperately taken with him? Believe me, I have found news about that Jew among the Jews of Algiers and they have told me some extraordinary stories about him, even so far as to attribute their success against the Spaniards to him--Voilà! I don't know his real origin! (Hills, "Rainsford," p. 105)

Falk left a large perpetual charitable fund to the Jews of Fürth in Franconia, where he had many followers.

Rainsford goes on in his letter to relate a Rosicrucian experience in Algiers, where he spent 3 March to 21 March 1782:

I have found some rather curious MSS at Algiers in Hebrew relating to the Society of Rosicrucians, which exists at the present under another name with the same forms. I hope, moreover, to be admitted to their true knowledge. A chemist named Dr. Price has recently printed some experiments to verify the possibility of Transmutation.

Rainsford did join a Rosicrucian group at Paris in the 1780's, but apparently was first initiated in Algiers in 1782. However, his journals relating to the Algerian experience are tantalizingly silent on the very topics of the trip, Cabala and Rosicrucianism, which the letter reveals (Hills, "Rainsford," p. 94).

His reference to Sir James Price (1752-1783) brings up another practising alchemist in London (he is loosely called "the last of the alchemists" in the DNB

and many histories of chemistry, but, as we shall see, there has not been a "last alchemist"). Price was a wealthy physician and chemist, who became a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1781. In 1782 he performed alchemical experiments before witnesses, including the Swedenborgian, William Spence, which really produced gold. Price's pamphlet, "An Account of Some Experiments on Mercury, Silver, and Gold. . . ." (Oxford: Clarendon, 1782), caused a sensation and was immediately published in Germany. In a second edition in 1783, Price regretted that people thought he had the Philosopher's Stone, "which in the usual sense of the word, he . . . thinks merely chimerical" (Hills, "Rainsford," p. 107). Price said his stock of "powders" was exhausted and he did not have the strength to renew the experiments, but the Royal Society pressured him to repeat them. Price desperately tried to obtain further information from "German Hermetic processes" but failed. Finally, in August 1783, when only three Royal Society members showed up for his demonstration, he committed suicide in front of them by drinking his own chemical concoction. Price had told friends that the mysterious person who sold him the original powders possibly cheated him. Whether this was Falk, who died in 1782, or Peter Woulfe, or some other Illuminé from the secret societies is an intriguing question.

Rainsford concluded his long, revealing letter of 1782 with a statement of his own philosophy:

Perhaps I am too visionary and too eager for the great secret. Whether it is true, or it is folly, it is always amusing, at the same time to fathom the secrets of Nature; and when the study tends

to extend knowledge, not to hurt one's neighbor, that is always commendable, and to be pardoned, and whilst the world is employed in cutting throats on the one hand, one is well in the right to honor God and study His Works on the Other. These are my true sentiments on which I vaunt myself boldly. Employed as I am by Profession in Politics and in War, or as a Man of the World, I profess nonetheless Religion, Morals, and Philosophy, and I pursue them by all Paths to reach a good Haven and to perform my Duty as an Honest Man. I write to a Philosopher and an Honest Man; consequently I speak without reserve.

When Rainsford returned from Algiers in 1782, he "remained quiet" until 1793. But this eleven year period was filled with important and complicated work among various Masonic and occultist groups, and his journals are replete with names, dates, meetings, etc., which shed new light on the intimate and complex relationships between Masonic Swedenborgian groups in England, France, and Sweden during the last revolutionary decades of the eighteenth century. For during his "quiet" years, Rainsford noted his active membership in the Royal Society, the Society of Antiquaries, the Society for Making Discoveries in Africa, the Society for Helping the Poor, the Exegetic Society of Sweden, a Rosicrucian Society at Paris, Masonic lodges at London, Paris, Lyons, Avignon, and Strasbourg, and many others, besides the unlisted London Swedenborgian Society, for which other documents prove his membership. He concluded that he was "Inspector of All Lodges universally, and Member of Thirty-two Elevations to the Seventh Degree exclusive," meaning that he had passed through every elevated degree of Freemasonry and had achieved supreme "adeptship" (Hills, "Rainsford," p. 155). Thus, it is not surprising that when the Grand Orient of France called an international

Convent in Paris in 1784, Rainsford was heavily involved in the negotiations.

The Convent at Paris was called by the Grand Master, the Duke of Orleans, and was guided by Savalette de Langes, the Keeper of the Royal Treasury (Gould, III, p. 374). The purpose was to investigate the proliferation of occultist high-degrees in Masonic lodges all over the world and to try to unify the confusingly eclectic systems. The French lodges of Amis Rénunis and Philalethes, which possessed the same Swedenborgian, Martinist rites, were responsible for the invitations and the organization of the Convention. Both of these lodges were started in the early 1770's as scholarly, speculative associations and shared many members with Franklin's Neuf Soeurs. Their members included many of the leading French intellectuals of the day: Court de Gebelin, famed author of Le Monde Primitif (1773), whose theories on the Tarot cards possibly influenced Blake's Job drawings; J.B. Willermoz, a longtime Swedenborgian and Martinist from Lyons; Lafayette, the great Republican and occultist Freemason, who backed Mesmer and Cagliostro; Marquis de Chefdebien, whose correspondence is replete with valuable information on occultist French Freemasonry; Condorcet, Secretary of the Academy of Science, and student of Mesmerism; and the German representatives, the Duke of Brunswick, Landgraves of Hesse-Darmstadt and Hesse-Cassel, Baron Gleichen, Count Stroganoff, and many others. Most spectacular of all, though, was the association of the three leading Masonic Magi of the day-- Mesmer, Saint-Martin, and Cagliostro (Hills, "Rainsford," p. 95). Their tremendous impact on Freemasonry in France and England will be analyzed later.

Among the Englishmen who attended with Rainsford were Brothers Maubach, Heseltine, John Brooks, R.A., and, most significantly for this study, William Bousie. Bousie and his brother were Englishmen who had lived in Berlin and then joined the Avignon Illuminés (Danilewicz, p. 57). Though the Bousies are rarely mentioned in English Swedenborgian works, Viatte identifies William Bousie as the "négociant londonien" between English and French Swedenborgian Freemasons, a role he continued to play until 1811 (Viatte, I, 181; II, 72). Robert Hindmarsh recorded his meeting with Bousie in Paris in 1802, but as usual gave few details on anyone connected with "Illuminism" (Hindmarsh, p. 181). Bousie apparently traveled all over Europe in his role as négociant, and was a good friend of Barthelemy, the French ambassador in London, who "fréquentait volontiers les mystiques" (Viatte, II, 72). Bousie's later role in initiating one of the Duché family and two followers of Richard Brothers, and perhaps Brothers himself, into the Avignon Illuminés will be analyzed in connection with Blake's acquaintances in the 1790's. Rainsford's papers indicate his close collaboration with Bousie in 1783-1784 in attempts at merging German, French, and English high-degree lodges in London (Hills, "Rainsford," pp. 97, 156).

The Paris Convention asked Rainsford and Bousie to obtain information on ten points, mainly on personalities and processes within contemporary English Freemasonry, but including questions on the nature of the John Locke Masonic manuscript, on the Irish Freemason Charles Vallency's works on the origins of languages, and, most importantly on Dr. Falk and Swedenborg (Hills, "Rainsford,"

pp. 96-97). Savalette de Langes, the driving spirit of French intellectual Freemasonry, followed up with more inquiries to Rainsford on the Jewish Cabalist and Swedish seer.

The state of confusion and turbulence within European Freemasonry which necessitated the Paris Convention of 1784 was stimulated by the spectacular careers of Franz Anton Mesmer and "Count" Cagliostro, whose influence on the psychological and intellectual climate of Europe during the decades of revolution was astonishing. Because the influence extended into the London literary and artistic world and has not been examined in terms of its impact on English writers and artists from 1780 to 1820, an examination of the origins and ramifications of their careers will be necessary.

Franz Anton Mesmer (1734-1815) grew up in Vienna and received a doctorate from the University for his 1766 dissertation "On the Influence of the Planets upon the Human Body," which described a Universal Fluid which permeated man and the cosmos. The dissertation was almost a plagiarism from the writings of Paracelsus, Van Helmont, Fludd, Kenelm Digby, and the seventeenth-century astrologers, whom Mesmer had studied from his youth.²² Van Helmont was a collaborator with Boyle, Ashmole, Henry More, and Ralph Cudworth in the seventeenth

²² John Campbell Colquhoun, trans. Report of the Experiments on Animal Magnetism . . . of the French Royal Academy of Sciences (Edinburgh: Robert Cadell, 1833), p. 43.

century, and was probably the greatest channel of influence on Mesmer. Van Helmont's Latin treatise "On the Magnetic Cure of Wounds" developed Paracelsian theories on the "occult influence which bodies exert over each other . . ., whether by attraction or repulsion." The medium or vehicle of this influence he designated the Magnale Magnum--a universal fluid, not corporeal but somehow an etherial substance. Van Helmont called the fluid "ecstatic" or "magical," and described (often in veiled terms) the "peculiar energy" or "magical power" which resides in man, which can be stimulated by "energetic and concentrated volition" until he can impress a virtue or exercise an influence upon another man, even at a great distance (Colquhoun, pp. 26-32). The philosophical key to Mesmer's theory lay in Van Helmont's conclusion:

Material Nature doth daily draw down Forces by its magnetism from the superior Orbs . . . and the Heavens do in exchange invisibly allure something from the inferior bodies, that there may be a free and mutual passage and a harmonious concord of the members of the whole universe. 23

Robert Fludd, in his highly Cabalistic Mosaicall Philosophy (London: 1651), further spiritualized this process:

The Etheriall Sperm or Astrallicall influences are of a far subtler condition than is the

23 Frank Podmore, From Mesmer to Christian Science (New Hyde Park, New York: University Books, 1963), p. 33.

first vehicle of visible light. . . . It is not the starry light which penetrateth so deeply, or operateth so universally, but the Eternal Central Spirit. . . . The rays themselves are only the vehicle of the Indwelling Spirit. (Podmore, pp. 35-36)

The seventeenth-century interpreters, especially Kenelm Digby, laid more stress than Paracelsus and Van Helmont had done upon the dual and reciprocal action of the forces directing the universe. The attractive and repulsive action of the magnet corresponded to the alternation of light and darkness, heat and cold, the flux and reflux of the tides, centrifugal and centripetal action, and the mystery of the sexes. Man himself was a magnet and "containeth within himself no otherwise his heavens, circles, poles and stars that the great world doth" (Podmore, pp. 34-37).

The members of the seventeenth-century "invisible colleges" and their associates were mainly interested in the application of magnetism to medicine, and their journals record many attempts at "sympathetic cures." Valentine Greatrakes, an amateur Paracelsian physician from Ireland, won great fame in the mid-seventeenth century with his cures by the stroking of his hands. Ralph Cudworth was one of his patients, and, as noted earlier, Sir Robert Boyle broke his "occultist silence" to testify publicly to Greatrakes' effectiveness (Colquhoun, p. 43). Thus, Mesmer's theories were totally derivative, despite his Swedenborg-like claims to unique inspiration. But the times were ripe for Mesmer, and he utilized the flourishing Masonic lodges to spread his theories.

After receiving his doctorate, Mesmer spent several

years in Vienna, experimenting with magnetic cures. During this period, from 1769 on, he was a close friend of the Mozart family and demonstrated his theories at pleasant gatherings in his garden. Mesmer fascinated young Wolfgang Mozart with his glass harmonica, invented by Benjamin Franklin, which produced eerie supernatural sounds. Goethe thought he had heard in it "the heart's blood of the world" (Netti, Mozart, pp. 140-143). Accompanying his magnetic operations with the glass harmonica, Mesmer soon developed a reputation as a magician and was pressured out of Vienna by the conservative medical faculty. He then travelled in Germany and Switzerland, where he met the famous Swabian exorcist Gassner in 1775-1776, whose spiritual "cures" he observed. Gassner influenced Mesmer to give up his magnetic rods and to rely purely on the magnetic force within the human organism. Mesmer called this "Animal Magnetism" in contrast to artificial "Mineral Magnetism" (Colquhoun, Report, pp. 49-51). From then on, the terms "Mesmerism" and "Animal Magnetism" would be synonymous.

Mesmer came to Paris in 1778, where he performed his increasingly elaborate magnetic séances in the salons and lodges of his fellow Freemasons. At a séance, Mesmer or one of his assistants would sit en rapport with a patient:

They sat with the patient's knees enclosed between their own and ran their fingers all over the patient's body, seeking the poles of the small magnets that composed the great magnet of the body as a whole. Mesmerizing required great skill, for the small magnets kept shifting their positions. The best method of establishing rapport was to rely on stable magnets, such as those of the fingers or nose (Mesmer forbade the taking of snuff because of

the danger of upsetting the nose's magnetic balance), and to avoid areas like the North Pole at the top of the head, which usually received mesmeric fluid from the stars, and the South Pole in the feet, which were natural receptors of terrestrial magnetism. Most Mesmerists concentrated on the body's Equator at the Hypochondria, on the sides of the upper abdomen, where Mesmer located the common sensorium. 24

This practice stimulated much gossip about "sexual magic" and the convulsions and trances which preceded a cure were pointed out as much more frequent among females.

The concentration on the "abdominal Equator" was also rooted in the theories of Paracelsus and Van Helmont on the Cerebrum abdominale, which explained much of the sexual "exaltation" that accompanied the psychological "ecstasy" of Mesmeric treatment. To the older vitalists, the abdominal area contained an important ganglion, the Archaeus, which acted as a sort of demon, and presided over the stomach, "acting constantly by means of the vital spirits, performing the most important offices in the animal economy, producing all the organic changes which take place in the corporeal frame, curing diseases, etc." (Colquhoun, Report, pp. 100-101). The magnetic treatment operated principally upon the nervous system, especially on the nerves in the abdominal region. There a great ganglion of sympathetic nerves called the plexus solaris housed a system of nervous influence opposed to that of the brain. Older theosophers saw it as the seat of the soul. When D.H. Lawrence deplored science for blunting men's sensitiveness to the great mystery, he referred to

24 Robert Darnton, Mesmerism and the End of the Enlightenment in France (Harvard Univ. Press, 1968), p.4.

the solar plexus as the seat of real perception--and based his allusion on his own study of Cabalistic and Mesmeric lore.²⁵

Van Helmont even held that by virtue of the Archaeus, man was approximated to the realm of the spirits, since in cases of ecstasy, catalepsy, and somnambulism, "the excited sensibility of the Archaeus predominates over the cerebral energy, supplies its functions with increasing activity and seems to transport us into another world." The theory of Mesmer was that Magnetism manipulates the concentrations of energy in the different poles of the body, and can withdraw energy for the cerebral region to stimulate the exalted sensibility of the ganglionic region" (Colquhoun, Report, pp. 101-103). Why this "physic" appealed to the libertines of the Parisian salons much more than the common medical practices of purging and leeching is obvious!

In 1778 Mesmer published his Memoir sur la découverte du Magnetisme Animal in Paris, and it created a sensation, stimulating nearly violent feuds among the medical schools. He received a great boost from Court de Gebelin, the celebrated writer and scientist, who had been near death for six months but was restored to health by Mesmer. De Gebelin sent a letter to all his subscribers, which included the leading intellectuals and

²⁵ See The Letters of D.H. Lawrence, ed. Aldous Huxley (New York: Viking, 1932), xiv-xv, and William York Tindall, D.H. Lawrence and Susan his Cow (Columbia Univ. Press, 1939), pp. 24 ff.

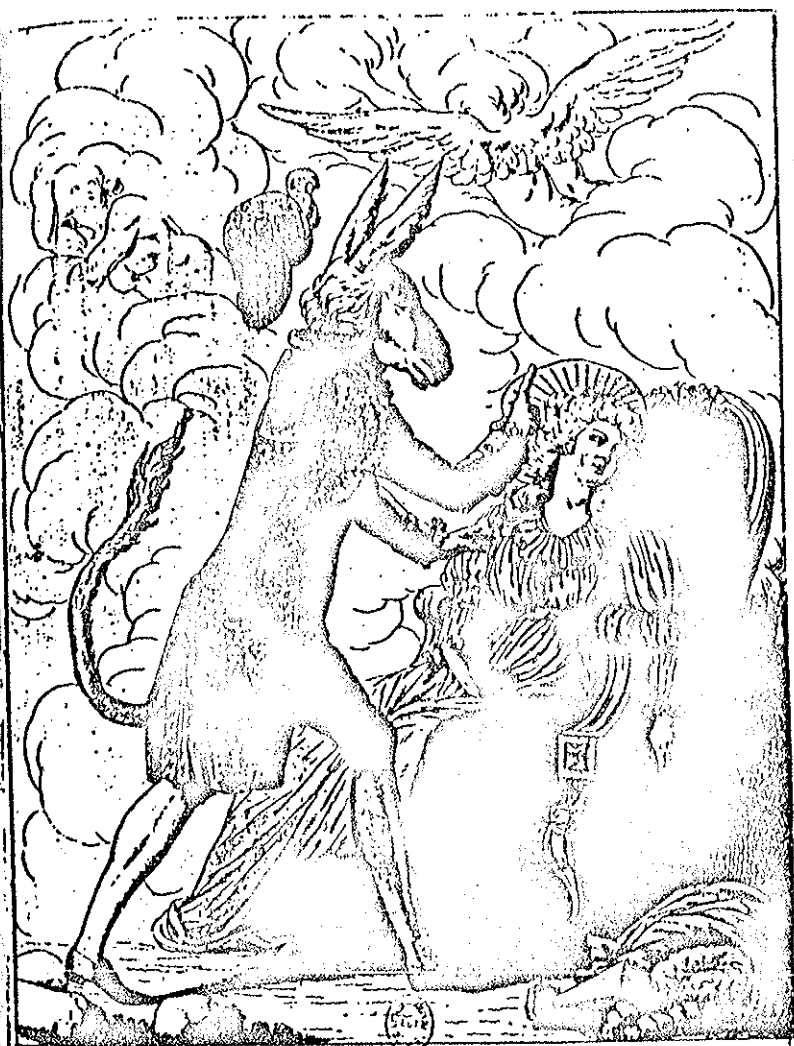
Freemasons of Europe and England, extolling Mesmer and his "magnetic Panacea" as the greatest discovery in history (Colquhoun, Report, p. 58). De Gebelin's Masonic friends rallied to Mesmer's cause, and the séances took on more and more of the occultist trappings which accompanied initiations into the high degrees. He enveloped his treatment in mystery, using darkened chambers filled with mirrors and with mystic hieroglyphics on the walls, while the stately ceremonies were accompanied by music from the glass harmonica or harpsichord (played by Mesmer himself). Dressed in grandiose magician's turban and robes, Mesmer massaged the patient's Equator or induced him (or more often, her) into a state of visionary trance. His successful cures drew in crowds of scientists, theosophers, and the affluently curious (Darnton, p. 24).

Lafayette, Mesmer's fellow initiate in the Masonic "Society of Harmony," became one of his staunchest supporters, and demonstrated the radical political interpretation of Mesmer's doctrine. By merging Mesmer's theory of the removal of obstacles to the peaceful flow of the fluid within the individual, with the Cabalistic-Swedenborgian idea of human society as the Maximus Homo, Lafayette was sure that the peaceful flow of the fluid would produce a blissfully happy, healthy, and justly organized France (Darnton, p. 114). King Louis XVI, a rather ambivalent Freemason himself, asked Lafayette, shortly before the young hero's departure for the United States in 1784, "What will Washington think when he learns that you have become Mesmer's chief journeyman apothecary?" In fact, Lafayette had already written Washington about the newest grand arcana of Freemasonry:

A German doctor named Mesmer, having made the greatest discovery about animal magnetism, has trained some pupils, among whom your humble servant is considered one of the most enthusiastic--I know as much about it as any sorcerer did . . . Before leaving, I will obtain permission to let you into Mesmer's secret, which, you can count on it, is a great, philosophical discovery. (14 May 1782; Darnton, p. 88)

Lafayette carried with him a special commission from the Society of Harmony, which planned to establish extensive branches in America. He fulfilled his commission so energetically that Jefferson tried to prevent a wave of Mesmerizing in America by sending to influential friends anti-Mesmerist pamphlets and copies of the recent French Commission's report which condemned Mesmerism.

By 1784, the medical establishment felt seriously threatened by the Mesmeric mania created in Paris, and which divided its own faculty. The government also sensed that Mesmerism was a force to be reckoned with. La Harpe, the great literary critic, member of Neuf Soeurs, and backer of Mesmer, estimated that half the Parliament supported the movement (Darnton, p. 87). The government's fears were possibly valid, for it was in the most politically radical Masonic lodges that new rites of "Iatric Masonry," or Mesmeric healing, were developed. Thus, the government appointed an official commission, which included Lavoisier, Benjamin Franklin, and Bailly. But the commission, for some strange reason, did not investigate Mesmer himself and focused its study on Deslon, one of his followers. Mesmer sent them an open letter which disavowed Deslon's version of Animal Magnetism and offered to place himself before the group. But the Commission refused, and after observing Deslon's much less



LE DOÏGT MAGIQUE
 OU LE MAGNÉTISME ANIMAL
Simlus semper Simlus

Plate reproduced from Darnton, Mesmerism and the End of the Enlightenment in France, p. 51.

skilled and less intelligent method, concluded that Mesmerism was just a folly of the imagination (Darnton, pp. 62-64). The public condemnation hurt Mesmer's personal career, and he left Paris to take up a wanderer's life in England (dates unknown) and on the continent until his death in 1815.

A private report to the king from the commission, however, which was kept in secret manuscript for fifteen years, affirmed the power of Mesmerism and warned of its threats to morality. The "sexual magic" was viewed as a real danger to the women of France:

. . . Women, having less stable nerves than men, a more inflammable imagination . . . were predestined victims of such a system. "Touch them in one point, and you touch them everywhere." 26

Franklin, who had corresponded with Mesmer since 1779, when they collaborated on the glass-harmonica, acknowledged in a letter to his grandson, Temple Franklin, that

. . . many wonder at the Force of Imagination described in it (Commission's Report), as occasioning convulsions, etc., and some fear that consequences may be drawn from it by infidels to weaken our Faith in some of the Miracles of the New Testament. (Lopez, p.173)

Since Franklin himself had little faith in the miracles, his remark was quite ambiguous. Lafayette was outraged at the Commission; he praised Mesmer as a "benefactor of mankind" and branded Deslon a traitor. He ended his open

26 C.A. Lopez, Mon Cher Papa: Franklin and the Ladies of Paris (Yale Univ. Press, 1906), p. 175.

letter with a sly allusion that Temple Franklin himself had recently been initiated into Mesmer's own lodge of Iatric Masonry, the Society of Harmony, and a letter from Mesmer confirmed this (Lopez, p. 173).

Though the commission succeeded in damaging Mesmer personally, Mesmerism thrived as it was taken up as a political issue. Hundreds of pamphlets depicted Mesmer as the victim of oppression by the medical and governmental establishments, and by 1785 the ardent Mesmerists viewed the government as the incarnation of evil for its persecution of the most humanitarian movement of the age (Darnton, pp. 83-87). There was much movement of radical-Mesmerist politicians between Paris and London in an effort to keep the now subversive alliance alive. That this movement occurred mainly through the secret Masonic associations became increasingly significant in political developments. For by 1786, the process of political "Illuminizing" of the French lodges by Mirabeau and the German Illuminati was in full swing.

That the politically innocent, genuine theosophers in the lodges were used as a screen by the political conspirators became a widely held belief after the French Revolution. Thus, as Robert Clifford in 1794 looked back at Masonic political action in the 1780's, he blamed Mirabeau for the manipulation of credulous, "Mesmerized" dupes. He claimed that when Mirabeau "Illuminized" French Freemasonry, it was received with enthusiasm all over France:

But another group had grown very common in France;
 . . . these were the Martinists, and were the same

sect as the Swedenborgian Illuminés. It was against these that Mirabeau wrote his pamphlet on the Illuminés, and really laid open all the intrigues and pursuits of that part of them which pretended to be powers of ghost raising, evoking spirits, and raising and interrogating the dead. But, with regard to the other part of them, who were prosecuting the mysteries of Equality and Liberty, he is silent; and indeed, his object in writing was no other than to mislead the generality of the world as to the existence of the Atheistical sect. It was because the Swedenborgians were perpetually talking of God and of Spirits, that they were styled Theosophical Illuminés, though their mysteries led to as rank Atheism as those of the modern Spartacus (Weishaupt), only by different means. They have spread all over Europe, and travelling adepts initiated into the mysteries such Masons as were judged worthy of them. (Clifford, pp. xvi-xvii)

Clifford's allusion to ghost-raising and conversations with the dead referred to a highly spiritualistic development of Mesmerism at Strasbourg, and after it is examined, the stage will be set to deal with that other phenomena he mentioned, the "travelling adepts" of occult Freemasonry--Counts Grabianka and Cagliostro.

One of the Freemasons who took Mesmer's expensive course in Magnetism around 1783-1784 was the Marquis de Puységur, from the Amis Réunis lodge at Strasbourg. He and his brother developed the trance-techniques of Mesmer into much greater efficacy and soon discovered (or re-discovered) the states of "lucid somnambulism" and "induced hypnosis." J.P.F. Deleuze, who observed both Mesmer and the Puységur brothers at work but who was antagonistic to spiritualistic practices, described the state of lucid or magnetic ecstasy:

The absolute insensibility of the organs of sense and of . . . motion, united to the exaltation of sentiment and thought, are . . . symptoms that life is drawing towards the brain and the epigastrium. The spirit seems to disengage itself from the organs, the somnambulist becomes independent of the will of the magnetiser. This state . . . which many German authors have considered the most elevated state of magnetism, is exceedingly dangerous. 27

One of the results of the spirit's disengagement from the body was that the somnambulist could see his own insides and thus diagnose his ailment. Puységur banished Mesmer's chambres de crises, piously calling them chambres d'enfer, and concentrated on hypnotic influences on the mind. He analyzed the progressive degrees of the trance-experience, which included at the third step a magnetic sleep, at the fourth simple somnambulism, and at the fifth self-intuition (which produced a clear knowledge of one's own internal mental and bodily state, as well as that of others in magnetic rapport with one). From the fifth step on, all states were of "lucid vision" (in French, clairvoyance and in German, Hellsehen), which could extend to all objects near and far in space and time, and was called "universal lucidity" (Colquhoun, pp. 76, 88). It was the combination of "epigastric exaltation" (an obviously erotic experience) and "psychic exaltation" which gave the magnetic experience such power. The similarities to Cabalistic sexual trances and Swedenborgian erotic, spiritual visions suggest the common methods of the three doctrines.

27 J.P.F. Deleuze, Practical Instruction in Animal Magnetism, trans. T.C. Hartshorn (Providence, R.I.: B. Cranston, 1837), p. 86.

The descriptions of somnambulistic visions which flowed from the presses seemed to explain a great deal about Swedenborg's earlier experiences. Deleuze pointed out that the "new mode of perception" created in the somnambulist fostered such an overwhelming sense of authority that the patient felt inspired by divine influx. The magnetisers taught that the seer was illuminated by a light which the spirit received from God at the first moment of its existence. "This light, anterior to human education, shows to man that which is the foundation of all religion." In the ecstatic state, the "sensibility which is proper to the organs of internal life is exalted; from the latent state in which it is, it becomes perceptible; and these organs are then the instruments of the soul." The most profound visionary would convince his audience that he had seen another order of things, different from the present order, and would describe "the source of pure and durable felicity, which nothing external, terrestrial, and transient can impart" (Deleuze, pp. 94-97). His astounding faculties would lead over a thousand paths in the vast domain of imagination:

Hence it has resulted that among those who have had opportunity to see this extraordinary somnambulism, some have regarded it as the result of a communication with spirits; some, as a gift of prophecy; others, as the effect of the soul's exaltation; again, as a transient insanity. Sometimes we perceive in it illusions of the strangest kind . . . sometimes a mixture of superstitious notions with very astonishing previsions; sometimes metaphorical language and incoherent images. (Deleuze, p. 195)

As the Revolution approached, Mesmerists tended increasingly to neglect the sick in order to decipher hieroglyphics,

manipulate magic numbers, and communicate with spirits (Darnton, p. 70). Deleuze, who believed in Animal Magnetism but opposed its increasingly prophetic role, warned about those somnambulists who discourse about religion and the social organization, as well as those whose "imagination controlling all other faculties, their matter of utterance, and the expression of their features, stamp them as enthusiasts" (Deleuze, p. 98).

Puységur's medical treatment was based on the theory that a sick person in the state of somnambulism was like a magnetic needle replaced on its pivot, or, conversely, that the healthy man was like a vase in connection with an inexhaustible reservoir of fluid. The channel of connection was unobstructed and the vase was always full, but in the sick man, the channel with the universal was obstructed. The magnetist opened a channel between himself and the sick man, who then received his fill, while the level in the other remained unaltered. Puységur identified the fluid itself with dephlogistated air, whose recent discovery had set the scientific world in a ferment (Podmore, p. 76). Other magnetisers dabbled in electrical experiments, interpreting Franklin's theory of electricity in occultist terms, and even Newton's gravity in terms of ethereal influx. But the greatest public excitement was stimulated by the first balloon flights in 1783, when "miraculous gases" sent man nearer the angels. J.H. Meister summed up the profusion of Mesmeric and related "scientific" fads which obsessed his contemporaries in the 1780's:

In all our gatherings, at all our suppers, at the toilettes of our lovely women as in our academic lyceums, we talk of nothing but experiments, atmospheric air, inflammable gas, flying chariots, journeys in the air. (Darnton, p. 24)

Thus, when Blake satirized "Inflammable Gas" and "Balloon Hats" as fashionable frivolities, in An Island in the Moon (1784), he indicated his own awareness of the current Magnetic mania (Blake, CW, pp. 44, 52).

At the same time, a Parisian correspondent of the Journal de Bruxelles remarked on the era's peculiar plethora of "hermetic, cabalistic, and theosophical philosophers, propagating all the old absurdities of theurgy, divination, and astrology, etc." Theories of Animal Magnetism became the new repository of wide-ranging "theo-scientific" ideas, and Mesmerism soon seemed to provide the bright young radicals of Paris with a "deeper, more satisfying kind of science, that left room for his religious impulses, without excluding his sympathies for philosophy." Mesmer seemed to be the "new Paracelsus" called for in the Encyclopédie (Darnton, pp. 34, 59).

These exciting "new" theories were not confined to France, but were carried through Masonic channels and presses throughout Europe and England. But the greatest excitement was stimulated in the Swedenborgian Masonic groups, because Animal Magnetism seemed to confirm and explain the visions of the Swedish seer, who was now hailed as the original discoverer of Mesmerism. In Sweden, Nordenskjöld and his Exegetic-Philanthropic Society experimented with Mesmerism and soon discovered

in the somnambulistic trance a means of communicating with spirits and angels exactly like Swedenborg's. In 1788 the Exegetic Society of Stockholm sent a circular letter to Puysegur's Strasbourg lodge describing their experiments and claiming a high religious (i.e., Swedenborgian) importance for them. The Swedes explained how they received through the mouths of their mediums news of the spirit world and of recently deceased friends and acquaintances. The spirits affirmed generally the truths of the doctrines taught by Swedenborg, and explained that the spirits who spoke through the lips of entranced persons were not devils but either good spirits or spirits of mixed character, waiting in the "chemin de milieu" to be drafted to the Swedenborgian heaven or hell. The spirits sometimes prescribed for diseases, and the success of this "magnetic physic" reinforced the millenaral sense that the New Jerusalem was descending ever faster to the earth (Podmore, pp. 197-198).

The letter from Sweden, which circulated among all the Masonic lodges, was picked up by newspapers and German university journals, and incited a pamphlet and journalistic barrage of ridicule and "magnetic battles" (Odhner, p. 133). The magical and alchemical activities of the magnetic lodges were publicly exposed, and Puysegur defended his own practices by claiming them as "purely natural" processes. The Exegetic Society was so ridiculed and attacked by the odd political bedfellows of deists and the established church that it collapsed in 1791. But in 1796, some of the members organized a secret society, "Pro Fide et Caritate," to continue the publication of Swedenborg's works. They kept a manu-

script journal of their trance-experiments and corresponded with other Swedenborgian groups, including Blake's, for nearly twenty years.

Besides the closely linked activities of the Swedish Exegetic Society and the London Theosophical Society, the other major channel of Mesmeric excitement into London was through the proselytizing efforts of the Avignon Illuminés, who added Mesmer's and Puységur's techniques to their practices of Cabalistic angel-magic, alchemy, and Swedenborgianism. As noted earlier, when Abbé Pernety and Count Grabianka moved to Avignon, they reorganized the occultist lodges which already had been operating for decades and joined them into the "Académie des Illuminés Philosophes." Later, in 1786, they published their Observations sur les Franc-maçonneries, les Visions de Swedenborg, etc., which Block calls the earliest documentary evidence of the connection between Swedenborgianism and French Freemasonry (Block, p. 59), though the Rainsford papers reveal still earlier evidence.

The new Avignon lodge soon won fame for its skill in astrology, magic, spirit-raising, and interpretation of dreams. They built a bizarre temple, embellished with allegorical pictures, all in accordance with a dream-vision of Swedenborg. It was based on a four-fold interpretation of Solomon's Temple, and next to it was an alchemical lab where "the elixir constantly simmered" (Danilewicz, p. 57). The four-fold vision or Quaternité was the central doctrine of the Illuminés, and was based on the Cabalistic sexual tetrad or divine family. They developed a cult of the Virgin Mary, who was called the "Great Mother" and who represented the fourth element in

the Holy Trinity. The celebration of the Mother's consummation with God the King was an openly erotic ritual of Cabalistic sexual magic, which included both sexes, a feast, music, and incense. During the ceremony, the initiate was stripped naked for twelve hours while imbibing the "mysterious elixir," which condensed the blood and evoked a state of exaltation (Danilewicz, pp. 58-66). Despite scandalous rumors and criticism from more conservative Freemasons, the Avignon Society flourished and soon had over a hundred members, all of whom were high-degree Freemasons.

The Avignon Illuminés were great proselytizers and urged Benedict Chastanier, a founding member, to propagate their views among London Freemasons and Swedenborgians. Chastanier issued a call in his Plan d'un Journal Novo Jerusalemite to Freemasons in London to join the professors of similar doctrines of the New Church and work in common. In 1782 he also inserted into his translation, De la Nouvelle Jerusalem et de sa Doctrine Celeste, a "Plan General d'une Société Universelle." This pamphlet was sold by the occultist bookseller, John Denis, and the society was designed "afin de favoriser l'Elite des Alcymites, des Cabalistes, des Franc-Maçons, et, en une mot, de tous les Savans occultes" (p.1). The role of General Rainsford and his French Illuminist associates in this Universal Society will be examined later.

Chastanier was acquainted with Mesmer and Cagliostro, the two most famous exponents of somnamubulistic trances (Beswick, 129); he also studied Animal Magnetism under De Mainaduc for ten months. William

Spence, a longtime friend of Chastanier, noted in his Essays that the French Swedenborgian found magnetism's "evil tendency" and eventually abandoned it. Spence himself believed in the Swedenborgian interpretation of the magnetised "crisis" as a spiritual influx (Spence, Essays, pp. 58-59). Another Masonic associate of Chastanier, Dr. Bell of the "Philosophical Harmony Society" at Paris, came to England as early as 1785 to lecture on Mesmerism all over the country (see "The General and Particular Principles of Animal Electricity and Magnetism, etc.," by Monsieur le Docteur Bell, 1792).

But the greatest excitement over magnetism in the London Swedenborgian group was stirred by the visit of Count Grabianka in 1786. Robert Hindmarsh, who was extremely hostile to Grabianka, left a detailed account of the visit. He said Grabianka used the pseudonym, Count Sutkowski, and attended all the meetings of the Theosophical Society, joining in familiar conversation with each member. He actively proselytized for the Avignon lodge, which aroused great antagonism in Hindmarsh, but great curiosity in others:

An air of mystery hung over the whole account given of this Society by the Count; and strong suspicions were entertained that he came to England with the view of making proselytes to some peculiar tenets of his Society. . . .

It was remarkable that in almost all the meetings which Count Grabianka attended, he gave us to understand that he and his Society were in the possession of some grand secret. . . . It was to enlighten the understanding beyond all former discoveries of truth, not excepting even the writings of Swedenborg himself; it was to be the crown and summit of all mysteries, the key to all wisdom, etc. . . . (Hindmarsh, pp. 41-42)

While whetting the Swedenborgians' appetites for the Grand Arcanum, Grabianka introduced them to the marvels of Animal Magnetism and spiritualism, which stirred such excitement that the more conservative members issued stern warnings, and a minor letter war developed in the Swedenborgian presses during the next twenty years. Spence described the heavy correspondence between the London and Avignon societies over these questions, and issued his own warnings to

. . . those who imagine Swedenborg's writings in the least to favor magic or magnetism (for some have put quotations out of his works in print, as if to that purpose), while they pretend to represent some species of it as lawful, under the name of natural magic. (Spence, Essays, p. 70)

Grabianka was a good friend of the Reverend Jacob Duché, whose home at Lambeth was the center of theosophical studies from 1782 on (Danilewicz, p. 63), which were probably attended at some time by William Blake. Though Blake's name does not appear on a Swedenborgian membership list until 1789, he possibly knew Duché as early as 1779, for he was a subscriber to Duché's Discourses on Various Subjects (London, 1779). Blake also knew Flaxman as early as 1780, and Sharp as early as 1782 (Erdman, "Swedenborgianism," p. 257), and both of these Swedenborgian artists attended Duché's gatherings. Thus, there is a solid possibility that Blake attended these early meetings, and they should be considered as a possible source for his satire, An Island in the Moon, probably written between 1784-1785, with a domestic setting and a collection of eclectic-occultist enthusiasts, who are suggestively similar to the Swedenborgian group. That many theosophists and "speculators"

who were not signed members of the group often met with it will become apparent as we examine the turbulent developments in the society over the next few years.

Much of that turbulence was generated by Grabianka, for it was probably at Duché's that the Count finally revealed the "Grand Secret," which Hindmarsh scornfully described:

There are actually Four Divine Persons in the Godhead; the Virgin Mary, having in consequence of giving birth to the Saviour Jesus Christ, been ultimately deified herself, and associated with the other Three Persons as an equal participator in Divinity! (Hindmarsh, p. 44)

Shocked more by the neo-Catholicism of this Mariolatry than the sexual implications, Hindmarsh said the Swedenborg Society rejected this "visionary, impious, and atrocious creed," though he admitted they had all been charmed and stimulated by Grabianka. However, in an important article, which has never been utilized in Blake studies, James Hyde points out that the "great secret" which Grabianka revealed was a Masonic one, "the purport of which Hindmarsh altogether ^{mis}understood," or willfully suppressed [see "Benedict Chastanier and the Illuminati of Avignon," New-Church Review, 14 (Boston, 1907), p. 195].

While in London, Grabianka was also in close touch with General Rainsford and Chastanier, with whom he had probably visited at the Masonic Convent at Paris in 1784-85. Chastanier, Rainsford, and Grabianka all wrote answers to the Convent's questions (Viatte, I, 99). The Rainsford papers contain information on the period of Grabianka's visit, which Hills unfortunately only

alludes to briefly:

The Rainsford MSS contain papers relating to Count Grabianka and Swedenborgian propaganda;-- letters from Chastanier (1785-1802), who mentions an impending visit of the Marquis de Thomé;-- particulars of the Illuminés at Paris;-- particulars of magnetic healing;-- a list of books relating to Mesmer;-- alchemical notes, etc. all showing General Rainsford's interest in these movements. 28

Another London friend of Grabianka was Samuel Best (1738-1825), a "fanatical supporter of Swedenborg," and a magnetic healer. Best was famous for his skill in palmistry, which he used as part of his cures in his bizarre London Surgery, and he became popularly known as "Poor-help." His involvement with many members of Blake's Swedenborgian society and with various European Illuminés provides more evidence of the complex relationships between the London group and its counterparts on the Continent. Both Chastanier and Thomé sought out Best and discussed Swedenborg's Apocalypse Explained with him.²⁹ Chastanier described at length Best's communications with spirits and prophetic visions, in his translation, Du Commerce établi entre l'ame et le corps (Londres, 1785), p. 128. In 1787, when St. Martin, the major proponent of "Martinist" Rosicrucianism, visited the London Swedenborgians, he also called on Best, and was astonished at his youthfulness (he was seventy-seven

²⁸ G.P. Hills, "Notes on Some Masonic Personalities at the end of the Eighteenth Century," AQC, 25 (1912), p. 158.

²⁹ P.F. Gosse, Portfeuille d'un Ancien Typographe (La Haye, 1824), p. 5.

but looked forty-five), for he seemed to have mastered the Rosicrucian art of "rejuvenescence." His clairvoyant insight into St. Martin's character and his political prophecies also impressed his French visitor, and St. Martin noted that "he is quite a man of the people."³⁰ The influence of Grabianka on Best, and the "populist" prophet's involvement with European Illuminist circles, is significant, because it forms a parallel to Richard Brothers' career, which was also influenced by Grabianka and the Illuminés, and which had a major influence on William Blake. From 1795 to 1825, Best, like Brothers, called himself "the leader of the Children of Israel," and led a movement to rebuild the city of Jerusalem (DNB).

Another London Swedenborgian, Dr. Spence, described Best's peculiar methods of prophecy (Essays, p. 47). He gave his visitors an outline of their past lives, their present circumstances, and their future prospects in verses of Scripture, which he recited with astonishing fluency. He also undertook, by licking the hands of his patients, to discover the disease under which they labored. A fragile vegetarian, he found strength at night, not in sleep, but in converse with celestial powers. Best was consulted by many of the upper classes, and was called to Buckingham Palace to read the sick King's palms. Spence described Best's prescriptions and then added one of his own. He thought

³⁰ H.C. de Lafontaine, "The Unknown Philosopher," AQC, 37 (1924), p. 272.

the resumption of "conjugal love" would cure the King faster than "blisters"--"for I verily believe no bad spirits could bear the presence of so much virtue" when the Queen would be "allowed to resume lovemaking with him" (Essays, pp. 51-52).

Spence's interest in "conjugal love" as a Panacea points to another aspect of Grabianka's London visit, for there were rumors of "frivolous erotic practices" among his "Illuminated" London associates (Danilewicz, p. 59). Connected with Grabianka's sexual liberalism was his political radicalism, for he was a great believer in equality, with every individual as master of himself. The creed was echoed in his London activities, and though orthodox Swedenborgian historians--especially Hindmarsh and Odnner--have tried to minimize his impact, it is obvious that his call for sexual and political freedom, as well as his advocacy of magnetic trances and prophecy, won him awed respect from many Swedenborgians.

In late 1787, Grabianka received a cordial farewell from the London theosophists, who were gathered at Jacob Duché's home (Danilewicz, p. 63). Back in Avignon, Grabianka kept up a steady correspondence with Swedenborgian Freemasons in many countries. He wrote the London Swedenborgian Society "mysterious allusions to the formation of the society [Masonic Illuminés] abroad, as if by supernatural means" (Hindmarsh, p. 45). To P.F.Gosse at the Hague, an associate of the London group, Grabianka imparted "some of the pretended mysteries of the Avignon 'Illuminati,'" which were later published in Gosse's Portfeuille, pp. 2-4. But the fate of the Avignon

Illuminés was soon to be drastically changed by the French Revolution, and before dealing with the revolutionary decade from 1789 on, when Blake was definitely involved with the Swedenborgian group in London as it reacted to events in France, we must examine that "travelling adept" of occult Freemasonry who had more impact than any other. This was Count Cagliostro, who was praised and vilified to an extraordinary degree during that turbulent era, and whose experiences in London have never been analyzed in connection with his contemporary, William Blake.

In dealing with Cagliostro, a major unresolved difficulty immediately surfaces--whether he was really Joseph Balsamo, a Sicilian painter, engraver, and counterfeiter, who used Freemasonry as a racket, or whether he was a genuine theosophical reformer, motivated by the same ideals as the seventeenth-century Rosicrucians. Schnur has pointed out how difficult it is to render justice to a man when most of the historical material available has been supplied by his deadly enemies. The only full-length contemporary biography of Cagliostro was published by one of his Inquisition judges in 1791.³¹ Another partial biography was written by a notorious spy and blackmailer, in the pay of the French Court. To make it worse, his own description of his early life was a tissue of lies, "so fantastic that its aim appeared to be to entertain rather than to

³¹ See the Anonymous Vie de Joseph Balsamo connu sous le nom de Comte Cagliostro (Rome and Paris, 1791).

inspire conviction" (Schnur, p. 241). But Cagliostro, whatever his origin, exercised a fascination over many of the greatest minds of his age, including Goethe, Schiller, Lavater, Saint-Martin, Mirabeau, and Lafayette, and his access to all of them was through Masonic channels.

According to his enemies' version, Joseph Balsamo was from a poor Sicilian family and early learned enough chemistry and artistic techniques to become a skilled engraver and reproducer of old masters. Casanova mentioned in his Memoirs a meeting with Balsamo (who ten years later was called Cagliostro), in Aix in 1769. Casanova said Balsamo was remarkably gifted in the reproduction of paintings, engravings, and handwriting, and showed him a Rembrandt he had copied, which Casanova found more attractive than the original. But Casanova claimed to have been shocked at a demonstration of forgery skills and warned Balsamo of the criminal penalties. He also prophetically warned him to never set foot in Rome, and noted that Balsamo had the look of a gallows bird.³² Balsamo asked Casanova for a letter of introduction to the Avignon Masonic lodges. But Trask, the most recent editor of Casanova's Memoirs, points out many contradictions in his stories of Cagliostro, and Casanova's account may have been self-serving (Casanova, XI, 168, 350). In 1786 Casanova had written Soliloque d'un Penseur, as a polemic against adventurers in general, and Saint-Germain and Cagliostro in particular (Childs, p. 290).

³² J.R. Childs, Casanova (London: George Allen, 1961), p. 244.

But since Cagliostro, who was so similar in many ways to his fellow Cabalistic Freemason Casanova, was spending nine months in the Bastille in 1786, Casanova was probably covering his own suspicious tracks.

The real Joseph Balsamo, whether Cagliostro or not, came to England in 1771, where he lived in Soho among the artists, engravers, and foreigners who clustered there. He worked as a painter and decorator, and during this first London trip, apparently plied an honest trade. There is no record of occultist dabblings, but he left in 1772 for the Continent.

The years from 1773-1776 are the mystery years in Balsamo-Cagliostro's life. But Masonic annals imply that he travelled in Belgium and Germany, and probably met the Rosicrucian Saint-Germain in Holstein and Weisshaupt's Illuminati in Germany. One thing is clear; he left France a beggar in 1773 and re-emerged there in 1776 with enormous funds at his disposal. It was claimed that the Illuminati trained him as a travelling agent and generously subsidized him (Schnur, p. 254). By 1776, he was back in London with the title "Count Cagliostro," with his beautiful young wife Lorenza now called Seraphina. He lived on Whitcomb Street, a fashionable address, and devoted himself to chemical and mathematical studies. But his main aim was to join a London Masonic lodge, the Esperance, which was a high-degree, theosophical lodge with a large foreign membership. The lodge met at King's Head Tavern, kept by the Freemason Peter O'Reilly, in Gerrard Street, Soho. The oath Cagliostro took in April 1777 reveals the foreign nature of the rite, for it uses the "Unknown Superiors," associated with radical, occultist

French Freemasonry rather than with normal English practices:

I, Joseph Cagliostro, in the presence of the Grand Architect of the Universe, of my superiors, and before this respectable assembly, promise to do all I shall be ordered by my Superiors; to this end, I bind myself, under the penalties known to my superiors, to obey their orders blindly, without probing into their motives, and not to disclose, by word, sign, or in writing, the secret mysteries that will be disclosed to me. (Schnur, p. 257).

Several historians have speculated that Cagliostro was involved with the Cabalist Dr. Falk at this time and learned the rituals and arcana of his future Egyptian Rite of Freemasonry from Falk.³³ Cagliostro made no secret of his admiration for the Jews, though ostensibly a Catholic, and many claimed he was Jewish himself (Colson, p. 168). He claimed to have found the secret rituals in some unpublished manuscripts in London (belonging to the unknown "George Cofton"), though in his later fantastic autobiographical account, while on trial, he claimed to have received them from adepts during his sojourn in Egypt and the Near East.³⁴ Cagliostro soon became popular among the London Freemasons, but rumors of his wealth, his ability to transmute metals, and to predict winning lottery numbers by means of Cabalistic computations (talents shared by Falk) soon spread in London. In a sordid, complicated

³³ See Webster, p. 190, and Percy Colson, The Strange History of Lord George Gordon (London: Robert Hale, 1937), p. 169.

³⁴ W.R.H. Trowbridge, Cagliostro (1910; rpt. New York: Brentano's, 1926), p. 118.

affair, later called the "first affair of a necklace," Cagliostro was swindled by a London underground gang, who were after his alchemical secrets and lottery computations. He landed in King's Bench Prison for debt, but O'Reilly and the Esperance Lodge helped him find an honest lawyer. After six weeks in jail, he was finally released and left England bitterly in September 1777 (Schnur, pp. 257-258).

Caglisotro visited Brussels and Germany again, apparently to make contact with his Masonic "Superiors," and then at The Hague he introduced his Egyptian Rite of Freemasonry. He called himself the "Grand Cophta" of a primordial rite, originally established by the prophets Elias and Enoch. The top grade was called the "Master Egyptian," and initiates were called by the names of the Hebrew Prophets, while their female counterparts took those of the Sibyls. The ceremony of initiation included a spiritualistic séance, for which a child was chosen as the medium, whom the Grand Cophta rendered clairvoyant "by breathing on its face from brow to chin" (Trowbridge, pp. 120-121). That Cagliostro had genuinely effective hypnotic powers was denied by none of his critics, but the supernatural interpretation of them was typical of the age, as Mossiker's study brings out:

In his séances, he used techniques of applied psychology and of religious and optimistic auto-suggestion whose principles, unformulated in his day, would be developed by psychiatry . . . the "magic passes" of "animal magnetism," or mesmerism, that he resorted to in his healings would, thanks to Charcot and Freud, be defined and applied as hypnotism. . . .

Cagliostro was doubtlessly endowed with psychic powers which he was able to call into play in his

healings and séances but which in all probability were imperfectly understood by the man himself as well as by his audience, in that age preceding the definition of psychic research, parapsychology, ESP, clairvoyance, clairaudience . . . when all the super-normal, preternatural phenomena were yet to be dissociated from the supernatural. 35

In Cagliostro's day, such phenomena were ascribed to necromancy and exorcism, and he saw himself as Schiller saw him--a Geisterseher, or spirit-seer.

Using Mesmeric techniques with amazing success, Cagliostro gradually added other, more tawdry elements to his Masonic magic shows--including "transformations" of hemp into silk, pebbles into pearls, powder into roses, as well as "materializations" of the devil, Rosicrucian sylphs in satin-lined cases, Paracelsian homunculi in bottles, and even (pièce de résistance) a mandragore, one of those "little earthly creatures who cry at night out of the earth at the foot of trees . . . born of the voluptuous and ambiguous tears of a hanged man" (Mossiker, p. 83). At Courland, Cagliostro was a great success with his method of finding buried treasure, a Rosicrucian talent he may have learned from Falk, whose fame for this has been noted earlier. He also utilized his great skill in skrying, though he used a water-jug instead of a crystal for his speculum. Unlike John Dee, who worked with his adult collaborator, Kelley, Cagliostro used different children, called pupilles or colombes, who would gaze fixedly at the lighted water until they were

35 Francis Mossiker, The Queen's Necklace (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1961), p. 82.

led into a state of trance and became highly susceptible to spoken or telepathic suggestion (Schnur, p. 268).

The mumbo-jumbo of Cagliostro's Egyptian Rite was no more grotesque than the Swedenborgian, Rosicrucian, and other rites grafted onto high-degree Freemasonry. In fact, Cagliostro had a genuine humanitarian sense, which was acknowledged even by his enemy, the Abbé Georgel, who wrote in 1783:

Surprising cures of maladies considered fatal and incurable that he [Cagliostro] effected in Switzerland and Strasbourg have brought Cagliostro's name to everybody's lips, so that he is considered a miraculous healer. His interest in the poor and disdain for the powerful have lent him a prestige which amounts to enthusiasm. (Schnur, p. 243)

Like the Rosicrucians, Cagliostro made a point of collecting no fees for his medical and psychological services. The Baron von Gleichen, "whose integrity was as irreproachable as his experience was wide," discussed the Egyptian Rite in his Souvenirs: "Cagliostro's Egyptian Masonry was worth the lot of them, for he tried to render it not only more wonderful but more honorable than any other Masonic Order in Europe" (Trowbridge, p. 123).

From 1782 to 1786, Cagliostro travelled in Switzerland, Italy, Germany and France, spreading his new Egyptian Rite. He identified himself with secret signs familiar to the initiated, which included the drawing of a serpent biting its tail and the cipher L.P.D. (lilia pedibus destruo, or "trample the lilies underfoot"), associated with politically revolutionary

elements of Rosicrucianism and Freemasonry (Schnur, p.255). The Egyptian Rite was widely adopted, and Cagliostro gained powerful patrons, especially the bankers Sarasin of Basle and Sancotar of Lyons, who also subsidized the Illuminati, and the aristocratic Cardinal Rohan of Strasbourg. Jacob Sarasin (1742-1802), a wealthy Freemason, became a life-long supporter of Cagliostro after he cured Madame Sarasin of an excruciating, eight-year illness in 1781. Sarazin's young son Felix was used as a pupille by Cagliostro, but he later burned the voluminous correspondence between his father and the magician.³⁶ This was a great loss to scholarship, for Sarasin was also a friend of Lavater, Goethe, Jung-Stilling, Saint Martin, and many of the major writers and artists of Europe. The remains of Sarasin's correspondence with Nicolas Antoine Kirchberger (1739-1799), the Consul at Berne, provide a wealth of information on the personalities and milieu of the Masonic world from the 1770's until the end of the century.

Cardinal Rohan of Strasbourg was a brilliant and profligate prince, whose erudition and curiosity led him into many occult associations, including an early acquaintance with Swedenborg and Falk. He was disliked and distrusted by Marie-Antoinette, but he yearned for a position in her court. In 1784, after triumphs in Poland, Italy, Germany, and Switzerland, Cagliostro arrived in Strasbourg, where he won many of the Amis Réunis

³⁶ Antoine Faivre, Kirchberger et l'illuminisme due dix-huitième siècle (La Haye: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966), p. 79. This book supplies much rare information on Lavater's involvement with Illuminism. A useful comparative-chronological chart traces the interactions and developments in Freemasonry, occultism, arts, and politics from 1725-1824.

over to his Egyptian Rite. He also became a revered figure among the poor and oppressed of Strasbourg, as he dispensed lavish sums and worked his magnetic cures among them. It has been suggested that Cagliostro's mission, financed by the German Illuminati, was to unify the discordant lodges of French Freemasonry into one grand Egyptian Rite, which could be more efficiently used for political subversion. But Cardinal Rohan, who was initiated by Cagliostro in 1784, had no idea that he was joining a revolutionary movement. He even, naively, tried to gain Papal recognition for this "humanitarian" movement (Schnur, p. 276). Rohan was fascinated by alchemy and loaned his elaborate laboratory to Cagliostro; he was also encouraged by his trance-experiences to expect a reconciliation with the French King and Queen.

By the time Rohan and Cagliostro arrived in Paris in 1784, Cagliostro was riding a wave of popularity. Prints of him by the famed London engraver, Bartolozzi (an enthusiastic Freemason and artistic collaborator with Blake), circulated by the thousands in Europe, accompanied by eulogistic verses:

De L'Ami des Humains reconnaissez les traits
Tous ses jours sont marqués par de nouveaux bienfaits.
Il prolonge la Vie, il secourt l'indigence,
Le plaisir d'être util est sul sa recompense.
(Schnur, p. 277)

Cagliostro's remarkable prophecies, including the announcement of Maria Teresa's death at the very instant of its occurrence, his spectacular séances, miraculous cures, and generous work among the poor, took Paris by storm, for his feats soon outshone even Mesmer's.

Thus, when the Grand Orient called the Masonic Convent of 1784-85, Cagliostro was invited as an honored guest. He made so profound an impression on the Convention that a commission was sent to Lyons, to study the Egyptian Rite as practised in his major lodge, the Sagesse Triomphante. It returned with glowing reports, and members of the Isis Lodge in Paris, another of Cagliostro's creations, pressed for universal adoption of his Egyptian ritual. The Grand Orient of France was about to become a minority, but Cagliostro, with the magician's megalomania that Francis Bacon had long ago warned about, over-reached himself. He insisted that all Masonic groups adopt his rite, submit to his leadership, and burn their archives. His messages to the Convention were couched in his usual bombastic grandiloquence and read like royal fiats. Even those who had been genuinely impressed by his Masonic philosophy and rituals boggled at such immoderate demands. In the end, the congress remained inconclusive, and when it dispersed in 1785, the Grand Orient reasserted its dominant position (Schnur, p. 279).

Whether his failure to take over French Freemasonry led the Illuminati to betray him to the police or whether his own bad judgment led him into a trap, after the Masonic Convent, Cagliostro suddenly became a cause célèbre in 1785 in the "Diamond Necklace Affair," a ludicrous and complicated exposure of human greed and credulity which shook the throne of France. Briefly, in this complex scandal, Cardinal Rohan, Cagliostro's patron and would-be courtier to Marie-Antoinette, and a Jewish jeweller, Bohmer, were swindled by the adventuress, Countess Lamotte,

over a fabulous diamond necklace supposedly being brought by the French Queen. When Bohmer was not paid, he complained to the King, which infuriated Marie-Antoinette, who arbitrarily imprisoned Cardinal Rohan, Countess Lamotte, and Cagliostro and his wife in the Bastille (Trowbridge, p. 226). But Marie-Antoinette made a fatal mistake in allowing Parliament to handle the case, for the anti-royalist factions used the trial (which lasted nine months and was the talk of Europe) to expose the greed and arrogance of the royal family.

In the custom of the day, advance "memorials" could be published by the principals in the trial, and the Countess Lamotte, the sole author of a swindle of which Rohan had been the dupe and Cagliostro entirely innocent, heaped slanders on both of them. Cagliostro defended himself ably, and soon Paris was entertained by the fairy-story of his early life and incensed at the brutality with which his wife had been treated. Seraphina was soon released, but Cagliostro suffered the horrors of the Bastille for the whole nine months. When the Grand Cophta finally appeared at the trial, he was dressed fantastically in magician's costume and be-ribboned pigtails, and identified himself only as "a noble traveller" (Schnur, p. 280). His defense was so incredible and filled with magical jargon and mystification that the courtroom and judges were convulsed with laughter. He and Rohan were soon acquitted, and the Countess charged. It was a direct insult to the Queen and had serious reverberations.

Goethe, an Illuminatus, Rose-Croix Freemason himself, had followed the trial closely and noted: "The

affair is as horrifying to me as a sight of the Medusa's head. The intrigue was utterly destructive to royal dignity. The Necklace Case is the prelude to Revolution" (Mossiker, p. 554). He later added that "the trial gave a shock which laid the foundation of the State in ruins" (Colson, p. 174). The young Talleyrand wrote during the trial to a friend: "Attend narrowly to that miserable affair of the necklace; I should not be surprised if it overturned a throne" (Schnur, p. 281). Mirabeau, who had followed Cagliostro's career closely and was preparing to "Illuminize" the French lodges politically, called the trial "the prelude of Revolution" (Colson, p. 174).

The immediate result of the trial was to make Cagliostro a buffoon to many of the serious-minded but a popular hero to the Paris mob--"He was the peg on which they hung their dislike of the unpopular Queen" (Schnur, p. 281). But the joyful public celebrations for Cagliostro and Seraphina were rudely disturbed by a royal order of expulsion; Cagliostro was to leave Paris within a week and France within three. "You shall hear from me," he promised his still numerous Masonic admirers at Passy (home of Franklin's Neuf Soeurs lodge), and on 19 June 1786, he sailed for England.

France did hear from him. For after a week in London, Cagliostro launched his remarkable "Letter to the French People," which still amazes by the startling accuracies of its prophecies. After describing the horrors of the Bastille, where forgotten prisoners languish for years, he made a famous prediction:

Am I coming back to France? Only when the site of the Bastille has become an open square. . . . You have everything you need for your happiness, you French, except one little thing: the certainty that if you are innocent, you will sleep safely in your beds. Let your parliaments work for this happy resolution. Then will reign over you a prince who will seek his glory in abolishing the royal warrants, and in convening the States General. Realizing that abuse of power destroys, in the end, power itself, he will be the first among Frenchmen (Schnur, p. 282).

In France, Cagliostro's plight proved the catalytic agent that crystallized all the latent discontent with a despotic and inefficient regime. Mirabeau, who was quite cynical about Cagliostro's romantic origins, published a letter from Berlin in 1786 which praised the Cophta as "un homme prodigieux, un benefaiteur de l'humanité, un philosophe," and after critically discussing all the occultist Masonic groups in Europe, ended with the plea, "tolérez Cagliostro, tolérez Lavater, tolérez Sailer, etc."³⁷

While traveling in Italy, Goethe made a pilgrimage to Sicily in April 1787 to seek information on Cagliostro. He met the Balsamo family in Palermo and assured them that Cagliostro was now safely in London, "where he met with a good reception."³⁸ Goethe wrote a play about Cagliostro, Der Gross-Cophta, which he said delivered him from a state of mind that had become alarming to his friends, "so deep

³⁷H.G. Riqueti, "Lettre du Comte de Mirabeau . . . sur M.M. de Cagliostro et Lavater, avec un appendix . . . sur les theistes de Boheme. . . ." (Berlin: chez Francais de Lagarde, 1786), pp. 4, 48.

³⁸Thomas Carlyle, "Count Cagliostro," Critical and Miscellaneous Essays (London: Chapman and Hall, 1887), II, p. 528.

was the hold this business, at one of its epochs, had taken of him" (Carlyle, II, p. 483). Carlyle noted that Goethe based his "dramatic fiction" on the strictest possible historical study and inquiry. Carlyle also added that "the great Schiller . . . struck both with the poetic and scientific phases of the Cagliostro matter, admitted the influence of the former to shape themselves anew within him; and strove with his usual impetuosity to burst (since unlocking was impossible), the secrets of the latter; and so his unfinished novel, Die Geisterseher, saw the light" (Mossiker, p. 101).

But in 1786, it was in England that Cagliostro attempted to carry on his Masonic mission, and he immediately addressed a "Letter to the English People," which began: "Peuple Anglais! Daignez m'entendre. Je suis homme; j'ai le droit à votre justice. Je suis malheureux: j'ai droit à votre protection" (Colson, p. 185). Cagliostro stayed in London for over a year, and his activities there involved him with many associates of William Blake, thus raising intriguing questions about the possible relationships between Blake and Dr. Falk, Lord George Gordon, Grubianka, and the Duke of Orleans, and many occultist, radical, and artistic characters who have been little examined in the Masonic context of Anglo-French events of the 1780's and 1790's. Since the situation in London was extremely complex, and since the case for possible Masonic relationships between the principals still rests on a myriad of small details, coincidences, and probabilities, the next chapter will focus on Blake's life and examine the activities and

and contacts of personalities known to be his associates, as well as those who might have been by virtue of common meeting-places and interests. Since this Anglo-French Masonic approach to Blake and other literary figures, such as Southey and Coleridge, and to artists and political activists such as Cosway, Louthembourg, Sharp, Romney, Gordon, and Brothers, has not been pursued before, the investigation of Blake in the light of what has been presented so far in this study reveals many surprising and intriguing new elements in late eighteenth-century literary history.

Chapter VII: William Blake and the Swedenborgian,
Masonic Milieu in London in the 1780's
and 1790's

Among the sparse biographical information available on William Blake's early life, the signature of himself and his wife on a Swedenborgian manifesto on 13 April 1789 are of vital importance. William and Catherine Blake's names were apparently on the subscription list (unfortunately lost) of Robert Hindmarsh's Swedenborgian press, and they were among five hundred readers of Swedenborg who received invitations by circular letter (sent on 7 December 1788) to attend the First General Conference of the New Church to be held the following April at Great East Cheap.¹ The purpose of the Conference was to establish a Swedenborgian Church separate from the Established Anglican Church, and to issue a manifesto explaining their reasons. The Conference was attended by about eighty Swedenborgians, including many foreigners from Sweden, France, and the New World (Block, p. 67). The Separation manifesto, signed by the Blakes, included the signatures of Benedict Chastanier (the French Freemason and Avignon Illuminé), Charles Wadstrom (anti-slavery leader, Freemason, and important member of the Swedish Exegetic Society), and Augustus Nordenskjold (Swedish alchemist, Freemason, and political radical).

¹ Gerald E. Bentley, Blake Records (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), p. 35.

Though David Erdman, who has made the most thorough study to date of Blake's early biography, says that the conference "included no known acquaintance of Blake," (Prophet, p. 142), further identification and investigation of the foreign and Masonic members of the Swedenborgian theosophical group reveal that Blake probably had many acquaintances among the signees as well as other Swedenborgians, who like him eventually "adhered to no sect." That his acquaintance with these students of occultism and political radicalism possibly dates back to the late 1770's, and may have stimulated his satire An Island in the Moon, opens up a new field of inquiry in Blake studies and, most importantly, points to possible new sources of documentation for Blake's "lost years" from 1784 to 1789.

To begin to place Blake within this theosophical-Masonic context, we must re-trace his earliest contact with it. Blake was born in 1757 to a Protestant family, probably Moravians or Dissenters. Swedenborg's description of the London Moravians as an occultist secret society should be kept in mind, given Blake's lifelong interest in occultism. Two brothers, Robert and James, later became Swedenborgians also, but there is no evidence (despite many claims) that his father was a Swedenborgian (Erdman, "Blake's Swedenborgianism," p. 252). An imaginative and volatile child, Blake was not put in school but was apprenticed in 1772 to James Basire, engraver to the Society of Antiquaries, the Royal Society, and the Royal Academy of Artists. Since the apprentices "lived in," it is almost certain that Blake lived with Basire's family at 31 Great Queen Street, from 1772-1779. As Bentley notes, "Life in the engraver's shop must have

opened up many kinds of vistas to the young apprentice, with its direct contact with the literary and artistic world" (Bentley, Records, p. 13). But a point that has not been examined is that Basire's was directly opposite the imposing Freemasons Hall, on the other side of Great Queen Street.² The construction of the Masonic hall, which included Freemasons Tavern, took place between 1774 and 1776, and was "dedicated in solemn form to Masonry, Virtue, Universal Charity, and Benevolence" on 23 May 1776 (Gould, III, 225). At both the laying of the foundation-stone and the dedication of the finished building, full Masonic ceremonies were performed which could not have been missed by the engravers across the street.

The importance of Freemasons Hall to many of Blake's known associates reveals the major role it played in London political and artistic life. Thomas Paine, whom Blake knew personally in 1792, described Freemasons Hall as a "magnificent building, with a burnished gold roof of the sun and the zodiac," which he interpreted as Druidical emblems. Paine discussed the Masons' Druidic rites and theories, their magical practices, and their importance as a liberal, international social-political force.³ Another Masonic associate of Blake's, the engraver Bartolozzi, produced

² Alexander Gilchrist, Life of William Blake, rev. ed. Ruthven Todd, (1863; London: Everyman's Library, J.M. Dent, 1942), p. 18.

³ Thomas Paine, "The Origin of Freemasonry," Theological Works of Thomas Paine (Boston: Printed for the Advocates of Common Sense, 1834), pp. 278-84.

a famous engraving, "The Genius of Masonry," a picture of Freemasons Hall in 1786. "This exquisite plate" was the frontispiece to the Book of Constitutions, Grand Lodge of England, 1784.⁴ As noted earlier, Bartolozzi also engraved the famous portrait of the Egyptian Freemason Cagliostro. One of Bartolozzi's other Masonic engravings for Freemasons Hall was made from Thomas Stothard's painting; Stothard too was a Mason and an intimate friend of and collaborator with Blake.⁵ Another possible acquaintance of Blake's, General Rainsford, active member of the Society of Antiquaries and early Swedenborgian, negotiated at Freemasons Hall for the merger of French "Illuminated" lodges with other lodges in London in the early 1780's (Hills, "Rainsford," p. 97).

Many gatherings of artists took place at Freemasons Hall, including several that Blake or his friends are known to have attended. For example, on 23 December 1793, the Royal Academy Commemoration Dinner was held at Freemasons Tavern; there were one hundred seventy-five diners there, including Opie and Fuseli, both friends of Blake.⁶ In 1815 William Ensom was

⁴ H.L. Stillson, ed. History of the Ancient and Honorable Fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons (Boston: Fraternity Publishing Co., 1903), p. 686.

⁵ See Eric Ward, "William Hogarth and his Fraternity," AQC, 77 (1964), p. 14.

⁶ Joseph Farington, The Farington Diaries, ed. James Greig (London: Hutchinson, 1923), I, 31.

presented a medal at Freemasons Tavern for his drawing of William Blake. The award was granted by the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufacture, and Commerce at the Society's anniversary dinner in the Masonic hall (Bentley, Records, p. 239). In 1816 Blake himself attended the Artists Fund Dinner at Freemasons Tavern, where his attempt at reconciliation with "Brother" Stothard was rudely rejected (Bentley, Records, p. 466n.1.).

Thomas Paine's long essay on Masonic Druidism points to another area of experience and of possible friendships for Blake--his interest in and work for the Society of Antiquaries during his apprentice years. In 1718 William Stukeley had helped to found the Society of Antiquaries and served as Secretary until 1727. In 1720 he also joined the Freemasons, seeking for hidden knowledge of "the mysterys of the ancients." In 1740 Stukeley published Stonchenge, a Temple Restored to the British Druids, and in 1743, Abury, a Temple of the British Druids. The books demonstrated his theory that Druidism was "the aboriginal patriarchal religion," and stressed the role of the Tyrian Hercules, great grandson of Noah and builder of the serpent-temples. Blake knew and agreed with Stukeley's theories.⁷ As a beginner at Basire's in the 1770's, Blake engraved the original of "Joseph of Arimathea" from a drawing after Michelangelo (over twenty years later, he rubbed the surface down and

⁷ Ruthven Todd, Tracks in the Snow (New York: Scribners, 1947), p. 47.

re-engraved the plate). Blake's figure seems related to the Druid Priest-figure in the frontispiece of Stukeley's Stonehenge. Blake's brother, Robert, who studied drawing under Blake, sketched Druid ceremonies in 1784, indicating their mutual interest then, though Keynes thinks Blake's Druidic preoccupations go back as far as 1773.⁸ Blake later included a copy of Stukeley's reconstruction of the serpent-temple at Abury on the last page of Jerusalem. Stukeley, who was called the "Archdruid" of his age, was also interested in Hermetic philosophy, hieroglyphics, and emblems (which he called "hierograms"), and claimed in his autobiography that he had "traced the origin of astronomy from the first ages of the world," and "the origin of architecture, with many designs for the Mosaic Tabernacle."⁹ Stukeley's influence on the development of Druidic rites and theories within British Freemasonry, as well as in the Society of Antiquaries, is undeniable, and as Paine indicated, the lodges which met at Freemasons Hall, across the street from the engravers to the Society of Antiquaries, stressed Druidic lore.

That an occultist interest in Druidism existed much earlier within British Freemasonry has already been noted in connection with Jonathon Swift's alleged satire on the Cabala, Druids, and Freemasons in 1724. In

⁸ Geoffrey Keynes, Blake Studies, 2nd ed. (1949; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 28.

⁹ A.L. Ovon, The Famous Druids (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), pp. 120-22.

1766 John Cleland, who had gained much notoriety from his uninhibited novel, Fanny Hill (1750), published The Way to Things by Words . . . the Real Secret of the Freemasons. Cleland asserted that the Freemasons took their origin from the Druids and that the Saxon goddess Frea meant Liberty--"allusively to the shaking off of Druidism." One of Cleland's rival etymologists was Rowland Jones, who in 1764 published The Origin of Language and Nations, which proved that Druidism and Cabalism were the same; he attempted an analysis of the structure of English words in terms of Cabalistic teachings, claiming this would lead to the discovery of the secrets of the Druids. Owen points out how many of these Cabalistic-Druid ideas Blake adopted, for he claimed that in England Jerusalem is named Liberty, a regeneration from Druidism, and that the Jews learned Cabala from the Druids (Owen, pp. 182- 87).

Another antiquarian and probable Freemason, whom Blake possibly knew personally, was Jacob Bryant, whose massive Now System of . . . Ancient Mythology (London, 1774-1776) covered a wide range of Druidic, Hermetic, Cabalistic, and assorted antiquarian theories. Bryant (1715-1804) added a helio-arkite theory to the euhemerist mythology of the day, which was developed in Freemasonry as the "Noah's Ark Rite."¹⁰ General Rainsford and his good friends, the Swedenborgian occultists Ebenezer and Manoah Sibly, all belonged to

¹⁰ J.C. Brookhouse, "The Good Samaritans or Ark Masons in Politics," AQC, 24 (1911), pp. 81-106.

this Masonic rite (Hills, "Masonic Personalities," p. 158). As mentioned before, Mancoah Sibly was a friend of Blake, and both brothers attended the Swedenborgian meetings at the same time that Blake did.

There is much circumstantial evidence that Blake was involved in this Masonic Druidism, whether from early contacts with the works of Stukeloy and Bryant, from his work for the Society of Antiquaries, or from contacts made at Freemasons Hall. Todd reveals that a medal which belongs to the "Ancient Druids United Brotherhood" is supposed to have been designed by Blake. The medal has a circle resembling Stonehenge which closely resembles the imaginary circles engraved by him in Milton and Jerusalem, and which is sufficiently unlike either Stonehenge or Abury to make the attribution seem reasonable (Todd, p. 52). Bentley points out that when Blake moved to Poland Street from 1785 to 1790, the nearby pub, The Kings Arms, was a meeting place for foreigners and Celts, and housed the "Ancient Order of Druids" from 1781 on (Bentley, Records, p. 559). Both of these groups were probably Masonic lodges, as the titles are similar to many known "Druidic" lodges. And certainly, by the early nineteenth century, the occultist, Cabalistic, and Masonic interpretation of Druidism had so proliferated--especially in the works of Edward Williams, Edward Davies, William Owen Pughe (all known to Blake), and Godfrey Higgins--that a counter-attack was mounted by the Reverend Algernon Herbert. His Neodruidic Heresy in Brittannia (1838), attacked the "sinister conspiracy" of the modern neo-Druids, who changed the original Bardic war-whoop to babblings of peace and philanthropy--the "mongrel produce of Druidism,

Mithraic heresy, and modern Free-Masonry" (Owen, pp.218-219).

While at Basire's, Blake also developed his interest in Gothic art, as he was sent to make drawings in Westminster Abbey. Though his "Gothicized imagination" has been called incongruous in the neo-classical eighteenth century,¹¹ the revival of Gothic art and theories was a major Masonic concern. Goethe and Herder, both high-degree Freemasons, advocated Gothic art in Germany (Schneider, p. 129). Thomas Maurice, the famous Orientalist, Freemason, and friend of General Rainsford, (Hills, "Masenic Personalities," p. 141), wrote a poem, "Westminster Abbey" in 1784 to urge the suitability of Gothic architecture, especially Westminster Abbey, as poetic material. According to Tatham, Blake's later friend and biographer, Druidism and Gothicism were intermixed in Blake's mind during his apprentice years: "his imagination . . . dwelt among the Druid terrors. His mind being simplified by Gothic forms . . . it chose quaint company . . . sublime and antiquated objects" (Bentley, Records, p. 512).

Among other acquaintances Blake may have made by 1779, when he was engraving for the antiquaries, was the Reverend Jacob Duché, as Blake's name was included in the list of subscribers for Duché's Discourses on Various Subjects, published in 1779. Among the subscri-

¹¹ David Bindman, "Blake's 'Gothicized Imagination' and the History of England," William Blake: Essays in Honor of Sir Geoffrey Keynes, ed. M.D. Paley and Michael Phillips (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), p. 30.

bers were the antiquarian, Jacob Bryant; the radical, occultist Swedenborgian, William Sharp; and Swedenborg's personal friend, Dr. Thomas Hartley. The Discourses had been written earlier in America, and amidst rather bland Christian sermons, Duché recommended the sacred writings of the heathens as aids to Christian worship, including "thrice-great Hermes," Pythagoras, Socrates, Epictetes, Zoroaster, and Confucius, and concluded with the firm belief in the possibility of revelation in his own day.¹² Blake's name at this early date is important, for during the period from 1778 to 1792, Duché's home was the gathering place for a wide range of occultists, alchemists, theo-scientists, and Swedenborgians, and his connections with the Avignon Illuminés suggest that he was probably a Freemason himself.

Duché was the son of an emigré French Huguenot who became a potter at Lambeth before moving to Philadelphia. His son Jacob graduated from the College of Pennsylvania in 1754, and in 1756 had a poem, "Pennsylvania," printed by Benjamin Franklin, who also published some of his later sermons.¹³ Duché studied at Cambridge in 1757, then returned to America to pursue a literary and ministerial career. By 1764, he was immersed in the "mysticism of Jacob Behmen and William

¹² Jacob Duché, Discourses on Various Subjects, (London: J. Phillips, 1779), p. 285.

¹³ Charles Higham, "The Reverend Jacob Duché," New Church Review, 22 (1915), pp. 210-211.

Law," Boehme's eighteenth-century English disciple, and had become "enthusiastic and mystical himself." When the Revolution began, Duché showed such zeal for liberty that he was made Chaplain of the Continental Congress in 1774, and was highly praised by John Adams. Duché's brother-in-law, Francis Hopkinson, was a signer of the Declaration of Independence. But by 1777, when British troops took Philadelphia, Duché despaired of the Republican cause and wrote Washington, urging him to resume his allegiance to the Crown. Washington showed the letter to Congress, and when the matter became public, Duché's reputation as an American citizen was ruined. Washington himself was tolerant about Duché's action and later wrote, "I am still willing to suppose that it was rather dictated by his fears than by his real sentiments," and wished he had never opened it (Higham, pp. 214-22). But in December 1777, Duché's unpopularity forced him to leave for England.

Soon after arriving in London, Duché met Dr. Thomas Hartley and the Reverend John Clowes, who introduced him to Swedenborgianism. He also met William Sharp, the engraver, who must have already developed Swedenborgian interests, for his engraved frontispiece to Duché's Discourses caused much talk, through the "peculiar representation of a male and a female angel" (Higham, p. 405). Duché preached as a "casual minister" at many different churches, until he was appointed Chaplain to the Asylum for Female Orphans at Lambeth in 1782. "Every year he became more interested in the visions of Swedenborg," and exchanged visits with John Clowes of Manchester, where Swedenborgians were excited

about angel-visitations and automatic writing. Duché also met with the London Theosophical Society between 1783 and 1784, for Hindmarsh mentioned his activities then.

By 1785 the theosophists met regularly at Duché's Lambeth home; the gatherings included foreign Freemasons such as Thomé, Nordenskjold, and Chastanier. That Flaxman and Sharp, who knew Blake from as early as 1779, both attended these meetings, and that Blake subscribed before publication to Duché's Discourses, indicates Blake's probable association with this theosophical group from as early as 1779. What makes this possibility significant is that Duché's gatherings included an eclectic group, interested in Boehme and other occultists as much as Swedenborg, which developed increasing ties with French high-degree Freemasonry. The Swedenborgians at Duché's were visited by Grabianka in 1786, and by Cagliostro and Saint-Martin in 1787.

Though we have no dated signatures for when they became Swedenborgians, other evidence indicates that several of Blake's fellow artists were Freemasons and Swedenborgians during the 1780's and 1790's. When Blake finished his apprenticeship, he applied to the Royal Academy in 1779, studied in the Antique School for three months, and received a pass to Royal Academy lectures and exhibitions for the next six years (Bentley, Records, pp. 15-16). From 1779 to 1786, Blake occasionally exhibited at the Royal Academy shows, and spent a good deal of time with an active group of young artists, especially John Flaxman, Thomas Stothard, and George Cumberland. He also knew George Romney, and probably

Loutherbourg and Richard Cosway, both of whom became Swedenborgians and exhibited at the same Royal Academy shows as Blake did in the early 1780's (Gilchrist, p.48). An examination of the contacts of these artists with Duché's group and with Masonic Swedenborgianism sheds much light on Blake's milieu during these "lost years."

Blake's friendship with John Flaxman (1755-1826) proved life-long, though sometimes strained. As noted earlier, Flaxman was associated with Chastanier's and Hindmarsh's theosophical group from its beginnings, and therefore was acquainted with Thomé, Nordenskjold, Rainsford, and the other French and Swedish Illuminés who worked with the London group. He must have been kept informed of the participation of the London Swedenborgian delegates at the 1784-1785 Masonic Convent in Paris, for all accounts agree that Flaxman was an active member of the Swedenborgian group from its beginning to the end of his life. Flaxman's "timid mysticism, inspired by Swedenborg," has been glossed over by his biographers, who only note that it "included a belief in ghosts."¹⁴

Flaxman was at Freemasons Tavern when Thomas Taylor tried to demonstrate his Rosicrucian "perpetual lamp" in about 1783.¹⁵ The experiment failed and Taylor

¹⁴ W.G. Constable, John Flaxman, 1755-1826 (London Univ. Press, 1927), p. 57.

¹⁵ Frank B. Evans, "Thomas Taylor, Platonist of the Romantic Period," PMLA, 5 (1940), p. 1066.

nearly burned down the tavern, but in the process he became a friend of George Cumberland, who was there, and of Flaxman, who invited him to deliver a series of Platonic lectures at his house. Among those known to have attended the lectures were Blake's friends George Romney and Mrs. Richard Cosway. Whether the group at the Rosicrucian demonstration at Freemasons Tavern were Masons themselves is not certain, but several of Flaxman's wax portraits of eminent Masons are among the collections at Freemasons Hall today.¹⁶

There is no definite evidence that Blake attended Taylor's lectures, but recent findings prove that he did know Taylor, who tried to give Blake math lessons. They only got as far as Euclid's Fifth Proposition, however:

Taylor was going through the demonstration, but was interrupted by Blake, exclaiming, "Ah never mind that--what's the use of going to prove it. Why I see with my eyes that it is so, and do not require any proof to make it clearer."¹⁷

When the geometry lesson took place is not clear, but Blake engraved the title-page illustration for John Bonnycastle's Introduction to Mensuration and Practical Geometry in 1782, and there may be some connection.

¹⁶ Algernon Tudor-Craig, ed. Catalogue of Contents of the Museum at Freemasons Hall in the Possession of the United Grand Lodge (London, 1938), I, 26.

¹⁷ James King, "The Meredith Family, Thomas Taylor, and William Blake," Studies in Romanticism, 2 (1972), p. 157.

Despite the efforts of several scholars to give Taylor almost total credit for teaching Blake occultism and neo-Platonism,¹⁸ there is little in Taylor's work that was not available in the traditions of Freemasonry and in the studies of the London Theosophical Society. Thus Kathleen Raine's statement that Taylor's "translations represent a side of Greek thought that but for him would be unrepresented in English literature" (Raine and Harper, p. 48), is completely unfounded.

There was also much in Taylor's work, especially his dualism, asceticism, and anti-Christianity, and many personal qualities that would have been repugnant to Blake. As a nineteenth-century critic wrote, Taylor "seems to have been a man of little or no imagination":

It was no gorgeous pageantry of the old mythology, no poetical visions of the sun-born Apollo or golden-crested Venus that seduced Taylor from his Christian allegiance . . . Taylor's deity, like that of Democritus, was the geometrical master of a most geometrical universe. 19

George Cumberland, another lifelong friend of Blake's, who was also at Freemasons Hall and afterwards helped Taylor find literary work, was lectured by the priggish Taylor for "the lasciviousness of the conduct of his 'Sophians.'"

¹⁸ See Kathleen Raine and George Harper, eds. Thomas Taylor, the Platonist (Princeton Univ. Press 1968).

¹⁹ Anon. "The Survival of Paganism," Fraser's Magazine (November 1875), pp. 644-645.

Taylor boasted to Cumberland, "I am a professed Platonist, love is with me true only in proportion as it is pure," and that "love through the eyes is far superior to that arising from copulation."²⁰ Since both Cumberland and Blake were ardent advocates of "blissful copulation," the sermon must have seemed ludicrous. There is a possibility that Taylor's acquaintance with two later friends of Blake, Thomas Holcroft and Isaac Disraeli, both of whom disliked Taylor personally,²¹ may have been through Masonic channels, for all the aforementioned familiars had Masonic connections and were interested in the eclectic occultist and antiquarian lore studied at Freemasons Hall.

Though Taylor was an ascetic prude (Southey called him a "pagan Methodist"), and an anti-democrat who advocated a caste-system, he was acquainted with other Masonic revolutionary libertines, as demonstrated by the pilgrimage made to him in 1788 by the Marquis de Valady. Valady, a French Freemason and enthusiastic revolutionary, was converted to Pythagoreanism in 1786 by the Englishman Robert Pigott, who was an advocate of the bizarre Masonic Swedenborgianism of Dr. James Graham, whose ties with Blake's circle will be examined hereafter. Pigott led

²⁰ Geoffrey Keynes, Some Uncollected Authors, XLIV: George Cumberland, 1754-1848. (Reprint from the Book Collector, Spring 1970), p. 42

²¹ George Harper, The Neoplatonism of William Blake (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1961), p. 281. See also F.B. Evans, "Thomas Taylor," p. 1068.

Valady to Taylor's translation of Pythagoras' "Golden Verses," and Valady then wrote Taylor an effusive letter, addressing Taylor as the English counterpart of the French Illuminés (Raine and Harper, p. 127). Valady signed himself "Gracchus Crotoneios," an Illuminati tag ("Survival of Paganism," p. 64). Valady, dressed in white Platonic robes, moved in with Taylor in London for nearly four months and practised Pythagorean polytheism with him. But they quarreled over Valady's advocacy of a sharing of wives and possessions. Significantly, at this period, Blake also believed in a "community of wives." Valady's revolutionary career met the end of many other Illuminés when he was guillotined during the Reign of Terror in 1793. Given this suggestive evidence of Thomas Taylor's Masonic contacts, the whole area of his neo-Platonist and occultist interests needs to be re-examined in the light of a possible Masonic context.

Another early friend of Blake by 1780 was Thomas Stothard (1755-1834), a painter and bookseller. Flaxman recalled how he, Blake, and Stothard used to spend evenings "dreaming" and drawing together. Blake and Flaxman loved to "give shape and sometimes colour to those thick-coming fancies in which they both partook" (Bentley, Records, p. 480). Interestingly, an 1828 obituary for Flaxman added the names of George Cumberland and William Sharp to the group who spent their evenings dreaming and designing (Bentley, Records, p. 361). In a later period of strained relations with most of his old friends, Blake complained about Flaxman and Stothard, "I found them blind: I taught them how to see; And now they know neither themselves nor me" (Blake, CW, p. 543).

That these dreams and visions of the young "seers" may have been the result of trance-experiments practised by the Theosophical Society, as well as the "illuminated" Freemasons, is suggested by the excitement over Mesmer in the London Swedenborgian group, which reached new heights during Grubianka's and Cagliostro's visits in 1786-1787.

Though little is known of Stothard's activities, he was a fellow initiate with his friend Bartolozzi of the Masonic Lodge of the Nine Muses.²² This lodge included a large foreign membership, especially of artists, and was allied with French Freemasonry. Another member at this time was General Paoli, already noted as the friend of Dr. Falk and the Rosicrucians. As late as 1807-1809, Blake credited Stothard with magical powers. At that time, Blake was furious to the point of paranoia over Stothard's rival picture of the Canterbury pilgrims:

The completion of the Pilgrimage was attended by adverse influences of the supernatural kind . . . He (Blake) had hung his original design over a door in his sitting room, where for a year perhaps it remained. When, on the appearance of Stothard's picture, he went to take down his drawing, he found it nearly effaced: the result of some malignant spell of Stothard's, he would, in telling the story assure his friends. (Gilchrist, p. 241)

This "malignant spell" or long-distance magnetizing of even inanimate objects was part of the Mesmeric equipment of the 1780's.

²² See The Freemasons' Magazine (London: G. Cawthorn) for February 1798, p. 75.

Stothard was also an early friend of Joseph Ritson (1752-1803), antiquarian, vegetarian, ardent republican, public atheist, and "deranged Pythagorean," as Southey called him (DNB). Ritson was intimate with many of the political radicals--i.e., Godwin, Holcroft, and Thelwall--whom Blake also knew. He was a diligent student of English literature and poetry, and was a regular reader at the British Museum. Blake himself engraved Plate 2, after Stothard, for Ritson's Select Collection of English Songs in 1783.²³ Thus, Ritson should be considered as a possible new source for Blake's caricature of "Sipsop the Pythagorean" in An Island in the Moon, describing his friends of the early 1780's.

The third member of Blake's early trio of constant companions was George Cumberland (1754-1790), a painter and antiquarian who worked for an insurance company. Keynes' unfortunately brief account of the Cumberland Papers in the British Museum (MSS. 36491-36522) indicates that as a young man, Cumberland studied psychology, "the occult faculties," metaphysics, archaeology, and Egyptian antiquities and hieroglyphs (Cumberland, p. 36). That he may have indulged these interests through Freemasonry is a valid possibility, in view of his appearance at Freemasons Hall in 1783. From 1785 to 1790, Cumberland lived in Paris and Rome, where he pursued these studies, and became a champion

²³ Raymond Lister, William Blake (London: G. Bell, 1968), p. 22.

of the French Revolution. On his return, he often visited Blake in London from his own home in Bristol, and collaborated with him on Thoughts on Outline (1796), in which he joined Blake's "protests against the fig-leaf prudery of his time" (Keynes, Cumberland, p. 39). Cumberland's voluminous correspondence indicates his simultaneous friendships with Stothard, Taylor, Sir Frances Douce (expert on Egyptian hieroglyphs), Sir Joseph Banks (President of the Royal Society, Freemason, and cousin of General Rainsford), and--most significantly--Richard Cosway.²⁴

It is with Richard Cosway (1742-1821), an early friend and promoter of Blake, that the fantastic occultist circle that Blake and his known friends moved in becomes more fully documented. Cosway, a wealthy and eccentric miniature painter, was a Swedenborgian probably at the same time that Blake was, in the 1780's. He was almost certainly a high-degree Freemason, with important contacts in France, and was a staunch supporter of the French Revolution.²⁵ The Duke of Orleans, Grand Master of the Grand Orient and the most powerful Freemason in France, often stayed with Cosway when he was in London.²⁶

²⁴ Index to Cumberland Papers, British Museum Manuscript Room.

²⁵ George C. Williamson, Richard Cosway, R.A. (London: George Bell, 1927), p. 40.

²⁶ William T. Whitley, Artists and their Friends in England, 1700-1799 (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1928), p. 114.

The Cosway's musical evenings were so celebrated that "princes begged for invitations" to their strange house with its bizarre furnishings and profusion of occultist objets d'art.²⁷ The newspapers constantly referred to the secret magical rites and immorality going on, charging that Cosway was a "Pandarus," running a loose house for radical libertines like the Duke of Orleans and the Prince of Wales, who was Grand Master of English Freemasonry (Whitley, p. 114). Cosway kept a special room for magical ceremonies and owned many valuable occult manuscripts, talismans, and ritual objects.

That the Duke of Orleans used Cosway's house for a meeting-place is provocative, for the Duke was a patron of and collaborator with the Cabalist, Dr. Falk, who also visited Paris occasionally (Adler, Baal-Shem, p. 165). Falk's involvement with Masonic political radicals was extensive, as Savalette de Langes (head of the 1784 Masonic Convention) noted:

This Dr. Falk is known to many Germans. He is a very extraordinary man from every point of view. Some people believe him to be the chief of all the Jews and attribute to purely political schemes all that is marvelous and singular in his life and conduct. He is referred to in a very curious manner, and as a Rose-Croix, in the Memoirs of Chevalier de Rampow (i.e. Rentzov). He has had adventures with the Marechal de Richelieu, great seeker of the Philosopher's Stone. He had a strange

²⁷ Ada Earland, John Opie and his Circle (London: Hutchinson, 1911), p. 190.

history with the Prince de Rohan Guémeneé and the Chevalier de Luxembourg relating to Louis XV, whose death he foretold. (Webster, Secret Societies, p. 189).

The Prince de Rohan mentioned by Savalette had corresponded with Swedenborg in the 1770's and was the patron of Cagliostro in the 1780's. In London one of Falk's enemies complained that he was praised among wealthy Christians, so that they spent much money upon him, which he then spent on the "men of his Brotherhood, so that they may spread his fame" (Adler, Baal-Shem, p. 160). That this Brotherhood was a high-degree, Rose-Croix Masonic group seems certain, and the fantastic tale of Falk's political-occultist involvement with the Duke of Orleans reveals the power that the Cabalist had among Freemasons.

Falk, whose ties with Jewish Sabbataian revolutionaries led him to enthusiasm for the work of the Masonic Illuminati, tried to help Orleans gain power through magical means. In London he made and consecrated a talismanic ring of lapis lazuli for the Duke, which was to insure his elevation to the French throne. As Orleans successively became Phillipe Egalité, the hero of the Revolution, and then the "enemy of the people" during the Terror, he maintained his faith in the ring's power. In 1793, before mounting the scaffold for his execution, Orleans sent the talismanic ring to a Jewish friend, Juliet Godchaux, who passed it on to the Duke's son, who eventually became King Louis Phillipe in 1830 (Jewish Encyclopedic, "Falk"). The whole episode gives credence to the alleged connection between Falk and Cagliostro, for the Duke of Orleans must be the "great

prince" whom Cagliostro, in 1786, prophesied would soon institute a liberal reign in France.

Though W.B. Yeats claimed in 1893 that Blake probably studied Cabala in Falk's "Rosicrucian" school, no scholar has investigated the possibility, which is certainly a valid one. The Duke of Orleans, who had studied practical Cabala with Falk (Colson, p. 171), was one of Blake's heroes. In The French Revolution (1791), Blake described Orleans as "generous as mountains" and the bulwark of revolutionary hopes (l. 175). Blake depicted Orleans urging the French nobles to "Fear not dreams, fear not visions," and prophesying an earthly Paradise in which "Hands, head, bosom, and parts of love follow their high breathing joy" (l. 185). Blake may even have met Orleans when the Duke was the guest of the Prince of Wales at the Royal Academy's Annual Exhibition dinner in 1785 (Farington, I, 16), for Blake most likely attended the dinner since his work was included in the Exhibit (Bentley, Records, p. 30). Given Richard Cosway's intimate friendship with the Duke and with Blake, Blake must have known of Orleans' involvement in London with Falk. Another of Blake's artistic associates, though apparently not a friend, was John Singleton Copley, the Anglo-American painter, who exhibited with Blake at the 1785 Royal Academy Show. Copley painted a famous portrait of Falk, which was reproduced widely (Roth, Essays, p. 164), and which depicted him in Cabalistic regalia with the Masonic compass and quadrant in his hands.

The allure which Richard Cosway's house held for so many nobles of England and France was based on the

charms and talents of his wife Maria, also an artist,²⁸ on Cosway's own effervescent personality, and on the fantastic collection of magical objects that obsessed him. William Hazlitt described Cosway as "bright and joyous," and went on to describe his strange household:

Cosway . . . was Fancy's child. What a fairy palace, was his specimens of art, antiquarianism, and virtú, jumbled altogether in the richest disorder, dusty, shadowy, obscure, with much left to the imagination. . . . He was a wild and credulous collector, and believed he had a piece of Noah's ark, a feather of a phoenix, a lock of Eloisa's hair, etc. Were the articles authentic? What matter?--his faith in them was true. He was gifted with a second-sight in such matters; he believed whatever was incredible . . . he believed in Swedenborgianism--he believed in Animal Magnetism--he had conversed with more than one person of the Trinity--he could talk with his lady at Mantua through some fine vehicle of sense, as we speak to a servant downstairs through a conduit pipe. . . . According to his wife, he was "toujours riant, toujours gai". . . his soul appeared to possess the life of a bird. 29

It was through his Masonic and Swedenborgian contacts that Cosway studied Animal Magnetism, alchemy, spirit-evocation, and magical cures. In his Memoirs of the Royal Academy (London: 1796), John Williams described how the little painter was sometimes "mentally convulsed with the horrors of second sight":

²⁸ According to the recent biography, Thomas Jefferson: an Intimate History, by Fawn M. Brodie, Maria Cosway was the mistress of Jefferson during this period (Time, 29 April 1974, p. 105).

²⁹ William Hazlitt, "On the Old Age of Artists," Complete Works, ed. P.H. Howe (London: J.M. Dent, 1931), XII, pp. 95-96.

Then he delivered sermons weekly on chiromantical aphorisms, and delineated, with the accuracy of magic, the good and evil lines of humanity, and became an adept in the Orphean art. He was a bigot in the faith of Geoffrey Faustus and Margery Shipton. . . . The Orphean science enabled the philosopher to subject to his will the action of every animated organized being, as well as stones, minerals, etc. contributing to produce the most surprising phenomena: to lull to sleep the external senses; the patients acquire sentiments of prescience; discover the thoughts of those in contact with them; see transactions at a distance with them; and, in fact, become endowed with universal knowledge. (Williamson, p. 44)

Cosway's success in spirit-evocation led to fifteen years of visionary experiences, in which great men of the past constantly appeared to him, "making all sorts of civil and complimentary remarks about his painting" (Williamson, p. 40). He held long conversations on art with Dante, Praxiteles, and Apelles, and fascinated his fellow artists with accounts of these spirit-discourses at Royal Academy dinners (Earland, p. 192).

Cosway's simultaneous interest in the balloon trips of the 1780's illustrates the theosophic interpretation of scientific discoveries so prevalent in France, but still little examined in England. Vincent Lunardi, who made the first balloon ascent in England in 1784, was a friend of Cosway, who painted his portrait in miniature. The Orleans family was also fascinated by balloons from 1783 on, and the Duke actually flew with the Robert brothers in 1784.³⁰ Another Masonic occultist, Cagliostro, was also interested in ballooning. The

³⁰ L.T.C. Rolt, The Aeronauts: a History of Ballooning, 1783-1903 (London: Longman's, 1960), pp. 80, 48, 206.

connection of the English Rosicrucians Francis Barrett and George Graham with ballooning--and probably with Blake--in the early nineteenth century will be discussed later. Blake's caricature of Cosway as "Mr. Jacko" in An Island in the Moon indicates his attendance at the same gatherings that the Cosways attended, or possibly hosted, and his reference to the "balloon hats" of the ladies indicates his familiarity with the fashionable mania for ballooning that Cosway and Orleans shared in a first-hand way.

Maria Cosway, who was very much a "liberated woman," travelled in Italy in the late 1780's, sometimes accompanied by Flaxman and Bartolozzi. While there, she communicated with her husband in England "through some peculiar medium,"³¹ and the success of these "magnetic" telepathic experiments was also shared by Cosway at Royal Academy gatherings. The Cosways' interest in Animal Magnetism dated from the first wave in England in the early 1780's, for Cosway studied under De Mainaduc, whose portrait he painted.³² Since Benedict Chastanier worked under De Mainaduc at the same time, the possibility of these trance-experiments being shared with the theosophists and Swedenborgians who met at Duché's is a strong one. In fact, a nineteenth-century student of Mesmerism and of Blake implied that De Mainaduc himself was associated with Swedenborgianism. As W.C.Dendy noted: "Encouraged by the Swedenborgian tenets, this magic (magnetism) brought immense revenues into the

³¹ Richard Redgrave, A Century of British Painters, new ed. (1866; London: Phaidon, 1947), p. 172.

³² Robert Southey, Letters from England by Don M.A. Espriolla, 3rd. ed. (1807; London: Longmans, 1844), II, 336.

purses of Mainanduc in England."³³ Significantly, Dendy received much of his information about Blake and Mesmerism in the 1780's from John Varley, Blake's closest friend from 1818 to 1827.

Cosway apparently succeeded in magnetic practices to the point of reaching "somnambulistic lucidity," in which the subject can envision his own and another person's "internal composition" for medical diagnosis. An amusing anecdote arose from his somnambulistic talent, for Cosway told a certain Tresham, during an attempted cure, that he saw a hole in his liver. Later, Tresham was furious that Cosway had confided the magnetic diagnosis to the King, for on hearing Tresham's name recommended, the King said, "Oh, I know something about him . . . he has got a hole in his liver!" (Williamson, p. 45). Cosway worked too with William Sharp, the Swedenborgian engraver and important friend of Blake, who was also affected by the first wave of Mesmerism. Cosway and Sharp tried to achieve "magical cures," but Cosway's interest was even more stimulated by his contacts with two bizarre magnetizing Freemasons, Dr. James Graham and P.J. de Louthembourg.

Cosway acquired his own fantastic house from Dr. James Graham and, in effect, carried on the sensational occultist traditions of the previous owner. For Graham had made the house into a magical "Temple of Health," where he practiced magnetic and electrical

³³ Walter Cooper Dendy, The Philosophy of Mystery (New York: Harper, 1847), p. 404.

cures. Graham (1745-1794) had lived in Philadelphia from 1772 to 1774, where he studied Benjamin Franklin's theories of electricity. He met Franklin in Paris in 1779, probably through Masonic channels.³⁴ Graham's ardent Republicanism won him friends among the radical upper class, and he performed his magnetic cures upon many of them (DNB). In 1779 Graham settled in London in an elaborately decorated house in Adelphi, which he transformed into the "Temple of Health." In that year, he also wrote a pamphlet to the Prince of Wales to recommend a theosophical "marriage with the Wisdom of Solomon." Graham's advertising campaign for the wonders of his treatment is viewed as an important step in the history of advertising, for he flooded London with strikingly illustrated and "catchy" pamphlets in the early 1780's. In the Temple, Graham placed his patients on a "Magnetic Throne" or in a bath, into which electrical currents could be passed. He also employed Mesmeric techniques, and as Sichel points out, he was no common imposter--he united "pseudo-mysticism with real skill" and was a "sort of prayerful alchemist."³⁵ Graham was immediately successful with the fashionable classes in London, and by 1781, moved to even more sumptuous quarters in Schomberg House in Pall Mall (which Cosway afterwards took over).

³⁴ Graham's Masonic membership was obliquely referred to by Kenneth Mackenzie in the Masonic Cyclopaedia, p. 100.

³⁵ Waiter Sichel, Emma, Lady Hamilton (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1906), p. 48.

In Pall Mall, Graham employed a beautiful young woman, Emma Lyons, to pose as "Hygeia, Goddess of Health," and launched her on the sensational career which culminated in her affair, as Lady Hamilton, with Lord Nelson. In his new Temple, Graham utilized highly decorated electrical machines, an "electrical throne" insulated on glass pillars, and a profusion of chemical and alchemical apparatus. The treatments, like Mesmer's, had all the trappings of magical-religious ceremonies, with stained glass windows, music, sculpture, incense, and gigantic footmen among the attractions. Graham next added a new miracle cure, "earth-bathing," which was a sensation for obvious reasons. Emma, or "Hygeia-Vestina," would descend and ascend, half-naked but decked in pearls, in and out of the mudbath, while the public paid to watch her.³⁶ During this period, in 1782, George Romney, the painter and good friend of Blake, met Emma and began the lifelong obsessive painting of her charms which almost destroyed him emotionally but made his fame as an artist (Henderson, p. 58). Romney was also fascinated by alchemy at this time. By 1783 Emma was faring better as the mistress of Charles Greville, nephew of the elderly Sir William Hamilton and she left Graham's service. She later married Sir William.

To replace the sensational "Hygeia," Graham developed the "Celestial Bed," which stimulated potency

³⁶ B.L.K. Henderson, Romney (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1922), p. 22.

and fertility in any couple who paid a sizeable fee to spend a night of "magnetic love-making" in it. He employed "electrical ether" and "aetherial balsam" for his lovers, and also advertised in 1783 that he could reveal the secret of living up to one hundred and fifty years. Throughout this period, Graham was connected with Swedenborgianism and became increasingly "enthusiastic." By 1784 he styled himself "the Servant of the Lord O.W.L." ("Oh, Wonderful Love") and dated his publications "In the First Year of the New Jerusalem Church" (DNB). In 1786 Graham visited Paris again, and on his return to London found a competitive magnetiser trying to gain influence with the Freemasons and Swedenborgians. This was Cagliostro, whom Graham knew earlier, for in 1780 they were regarded as rivals (Colson, p. 186).

In 1786, after the Diamond Necklace Affair, Cagliostro arrived in London and tried to re-build his influence through the Masonic and Swedenborgian societies. But two of the London Freemasons, Morande and Swinton, were paid agents of the French crown and used their French language newspaper, the Courier de l'Europe, to heap scorn on Cagliostro. They were the first to accuse him of really being the lowly Joseph Balsamo, with a London police record. Goethe's account that Cagliostro was well received in London, though, indicates his initial success with the Freemasons, and his old friend O'Reilly, owner of a Masonic tavern, came to his aid (Schnur, pp. 283-284). At first it seemed as if Egyptian Freemasonry would flourish in London, for Cagliostro, assisted by a number of adepts from Paris and Lyons, soon attracted many people to his séances.

In an obscure incident, Cagliostro was apparently ridiculed in a London Lodge of the "Ancients." However, such rude behavior by his hosts would have violated all Masonic rules of hospitality to foreign brothers, and the accounts are highly suspect (Mackenzie, Masonic Cyclopaedia, pp. 93-100). On this occasion, "Brother Mash," an oculist, gave a burlesque imitation of the Grand Cophta as a quack-doctor vending a spurious balsam, and the insulted Cagliostro withdrew from the lodge, accompanied by howls of derision. The incident gained wide notoriety through a caricature by Gillray, entitled "A Masonic Anecdote," to which the following lines in English and French were attached:

Born, God knows where, God knows how.
 From whom descended--difficult to know.
 LORD CROP adopts him as a bosom friend,
 And madly dares his character defend.
 This self-dubb'd Count, some few years since became
 A Brother Mason in a borrowed name. . . .
 This cunning part the arch-imposter acts,
 And thus the weak and credulous attracts. . . .
 The brave Alsations he with ease cajol'd,
 By boasting of Egyptian forms of old. . . .
 But fate for BROTHER MASH reserv'd the task
 To strip the vile imposter of his Mask.
 May all true Masons his plain tale attend!
 And Satire's lash to fraud shall put an end.

William Blake, who followed Gillray's work closely and sometimes caricatured his caricatures, may have seen the Cagliostro lampoon. If not, he had other chances to hear of or meet him in the Swedenborgian theosophical group, for Cagliostro made a concerted

effort to win them over to his Egyptian form of Freemasonry. Faivre notes that Cagliostro was actively involved with the London Swedenborgians:

A Londres, il n'est pas resté inactif; il a dirigé une société theosophique répandant les enseignements de Swedenborg, expliquant l'Apocalypse et cherchant la Nouvelle Jerusalem. (Faivre, p. 80)

Morande accused Cagliostro of abusing the Swedenborgians, by teaching them how to raise "The Seven Celestial Angels." But the instructions were incomplete and, in the Grand Cophta's absence, the Swedenborgians raised evil spirits and "promiscuous orangutangs." But Photiades points out that Cagliostro was actually on very good terms with the Swedenborgians, despite Morande's slanders.³⁸

William Spence, the prominent Swedenborgian, noted that his friend Chastanier developed great scorn for "those grand institutors of these pretended Egyptian lodges" who try healing by laying on of hands (Spence, Essays, p. 59). Chastanier was apparently annoyed at Grabianka's Mesmeric proselytizing too in 1786, for he eventually broke with the Avignon Illuminés and concentrated on English Masonry and Swedenborgianism.³⁹

³⁸ Constantin Photiades, Count Cagliostro, trans. K.S. Shelvankar (London: Rider, 1932), p. 222.

³⁹ In his Masonic Cyclopedia, Mackenzie gave a strangely garbled account of Cagliostro and Grabianka in London. He claimed that Grabianka was really Cagliostro (both had used the pseudonym Sutkowski), and described in detail Cagliostro-Grabianka's visits with the London Swedenborgians in 1786, which matched in most details with Hindmarsh's account of Grabianka. However, scholarship on Gordon and Cagliostro points to the separate identities of the two Illuminés. As with Mackenzie's account of the Falk family, his version should not be ignored but should be checked out thoroughly in Masonic archives (see Mackenzie, pp. 185- 88).

Cagliostro capped his proselytizing efforts with an advertisement in the Morning Herald in which he invited "all true Masons, in the name of Jehovah, to assemble at O'Reilly's Hotel to form a plan for the reconstruction of the New Temple of Jerusalem" (Trowbridge, p. 278).

During his energetic efforts to merge the Swedenborgian Masonic groups into his Egyptian rite, Cagliostro temporarily lived with and received much support from the Swedenborgian painter, Phillippe J. de Louterbourg, another figure whose important relation to Blake has never been investigated. Louterbourg (1740-1812) was born in Strasbourg to a noble Polish family. As a youth in Paris, he studied art under the battle-painter Francois Casanova, the younger brother and close associate of the famous Cabalistic, Masonic lover, Jacques Casanova.⁴⁰ Diderot, a Freemason and guiding spirit of the Encyclopédie, was a champion of Louterbourg's work, and the painter gained a high reputation in France. After travelling all over Europe in the 1760's, he came to England in 1771, where he worked with Sheridan, the dramatist and Freemason, and designed spectacular stage effects for Garrick (Dobson, pp. 100-103). Louterbourg invented the "Eidophusikon," which utilized light and sound effects for dramatic displays. By 1781 he was elected to the Royal Academy and exhibited with Blake at several shows.

Significantly, in view of his European Illuminist contacts, Louterbourg had known Swedenborg personally in

⁴⁰ Austin Dobson, At Prior Park (1912; Oxford: Humphrey Milford, rpt. 1923), p. 96.

London, and painted his portrait from life.⁴¹ As noted earlier, Loutherbouurg attended the earliest meetings of the "Theosophical Society" in 1783-1784, along with Flaxman, Sharp, General Rainsford, and Chastanier, and he maintained his Swedenborgian enthusiasms throughout his life. Loutherbouurg followed Mesmer's career closely from 1778 on, and in 1783 he met Cagliostro in Strasbourg.⁴² That he was definitely a Freemason during this period, and met Cagliostro through the Amis Réunis lodge at Strasbourg, is significant in reinforcing the Masonic character of the early Swedenborgian study group in London. While Loutherbouurg was at Strasbourg, Cagliostro treated the historian Gibbon's friend, Deyverdun, who wrote Gibbon in June 1783:

On ne sait qui il est, d'où il est, d'où il tire son argent; il exerce gratis ses talens pour la médecine; il a fait des cures admirables; mais c'est d'ailleurs le composé le plus étrange. J'ai cessé de prenare ses remèdes qui m'échauffaient--l'homme d'ailleurs me gâtoit le médecin. (Dobson, p. 118)

Both Gibbon and Deyverdun were Masons and kept up with Masonic affairs in Europe.

When Loutherbouurg returned to England, he studied Animal Magnetism under Mainaduc (Irwin, p. 67), at the same time that Cosway and Chastanier did, and he began a prolonged search for the Philosopher's Stone. His

⁴¹ James Hyde, A Bibliography of the Works of Emanuel Swedenborg (London: Swedenborg Society, 1906), item 3404.

⁴² Donald Emmett Irwin, Phillipe Jacques de Loutherbouurg, M.A. Thesis, University of Texas at Austin (August 1955), p. 67.

alchemical career was apparently disrupted by his wife, however, "who was equally visionary and more spiritually inclined," and who "smashed his crucible in a fit of religious exaltation" (Trowbridge, p. 280). From 1783 on, he was "assiduous in attending Baptist chapels, revivalist meetings, and Swedenborgian services." Louthembourg, along with Dr. Graham, should be considered a possible source for "Inflammable Gass the Windfinder" in An Island in the Moon. "Inflammable Gass" is surrounded by experimental apparatus, possibly puppets, magic pictures, and an experiment which explodes (Blake, CW, p. 59). The burlesque possibly refers to Louthembourg's Eidophusikon and smashed alchemical contraption.

Cagliostro spent over a year in London working with Louthembourg, who joined his Egyptian rite of Masonry. Throughout this period of their mutual Masonic and Swedenborgian efforts, Cagliostro also had the constant support and friendship of another figure important to Blake's biography--Lord George Gordon, the "Lord Crop" of Gillray's anti-Cagliostro cartoon. As noted earlier, during the Gordon Riots in 1780, William Blake was in the forefront of the crowd that burned Newgate Prison. Though Gilchrist and most scholars after him have apologetically claimed that Blake was swept into the crowd against his will, several recent scholars have pointed out that Blake's life-long role as a radical Protestant dissenter was completely consistent with the motives and context of the Gordon protestors.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ See especially Bronowski, William Blake and the Age of Revolution, E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class, and Erdman, Prophet Against Empire.

That Blake's sympathy for Gordon may have extended into his later life has been pointed out by the Israeli scholar, Harold Frisch, who notes that in Blake's frontespiece to Jerusalem (1804-1820), the symbolic figure of Los bears an interesting resemblance to Gordon.⁴⁵ The figure is dressed like a Hasidic rabbi and carries a lantern into the "door of death." Gordon, who converted to Judaism sometime in the 1780's, died in Newgate Prison in 1793, a fate brought on by his public defense of Cagliostro in 1786. For a figure who played such a dramatic role in British history, Gordon's last years have been only superficially examined, but his activities from 1780 until his death take on new significance when examined within the Anglo-French revolutionary and Masonic context.

Lord Gordon (1751-1793) grew up in an aristocratic Scottish Presbyterian family, who placed him in the Royal Navy in the 1760's. While on duty, he visited America and became interested in theories of equality and democracy, which was reinforced by a six-month stay in Jamaica where he was appalled by the horrors of slavery. Gordon became a Lieutenant and was highly popular among the men; he carried the epithet "the Sailor's Friend" until the end of his life. In about 1776, he resigned his naval commission, "partly from a resolution never to imbrue his hands in the blood of men struggling for freedom." Gordon returned to Scotland

⁴⁵ Harold Frisch, "Blake," Encyclopedia Judaica.

where he studied local traditions and folklore, spoke Gaelic, wore the local costume, and excelled at Scottish dancing. He spent some time in the Hebrides, hoping "to study man in a simpler society."⁴⁶ In 1774, he became an M.P. and began his turbulent career in English politics.

Gordon soon became famous as the "third party" in Parliament, as the Tories, Whigs, and Gordon--"a minority of one"--were involved in constant debates. In his great sympathy for the American independence movement, Gordon felt neither major party was radical enough. Though he was intimate with Burke and Fox in their liberal days, he suspected even then that "they were no real friends to the people" (Watson, p. 8). Gordon was vehemently opposed to England's war with America, and compared his Majesty's Council to "Plague, Pestilence, and Starvation," words echoed by William Blake:

When the Sons of Liberty were an overmatch for mercenary soldiers, the government not from liberality of sentiment or a tolerating spirit . . . proposed to the leaders of the Catholics to repeal the statutes enacted against them; provided they would contribute to support the American War by entering into the fleets or armies. . . . The Army and Navy found new supplies, and the Cabinet new vigor for prosecuting an unhappy civil war. (Watson, pp. 9-10)

⁴⁶ Robert Watson, M.D., The Life of Lord George Gordon, with a Philosophical Review of his Political Conduct (London: H.D. Symonds, 1795), pp. 4-6.

At some point before 1780, Dr. Robert Watson became Secretary to Gordon, and reinforced his radically pro-American position. Watson was a mysterious and fascinating figure, who had been "intimate with Washington" and lamed by a wound while fighting on the American side. He returned as a "Colonel" from America to Scotland, graduated as an M.D., and settled in London (DNB). He was apparently a Freemason, and several allusions to the "grand fraternal union" working for international revolution, in his biography of Gordon, suggest that Gordon himself was probably a Mason (as was his friend, before the riots, Edmund Burke). Watson's account of Gordon's role in the anti-Catholic agitation from 1778-1780 presents him as a libertarian, concerned much more with helping America and preserving civil liberties for all English citizens, including Catholics, rather than as a Protestant fanatic, obsessed with a hatred against the Catholics (the point of view of most later historians). Watson said that it was Gordon's opinion "that religion when supported by the state is inconsistent with liberty":

. . . for turn a Christian society into an Established Church, and it is no longer a voluntary assembly for the worship of God; it is a powerful corporation full of such sentiments and passions as usually distinguish those bodies; a dread of innovation, an attachment to abuses, a propensity to tyranny and oppression. . . . Of all establishments none has been more fatal to the human species than the Church of Rome . . . a Church whose fundamental principles prepare and break the mind for political servitude--A religion whose very spirit, as well as practice, is persecuting, sanguinary, and encroaching.
(Watson, p. 10)

Scholars who have rather glibly written of Gordon's protests against the Catholic Relief Bill as the bigoted reaction of a Protestant fanatic seem to forget that in the eighteenth century, the Inquisition still maintained oppressive power in Catholic Europe, and inflicted torture and the death penalty for political and religious "heresy," a reality that Gordon's friend, Cagliostro, would tragically bear out in the 1790's.

When word of the proposed Catholic "relief" spread in England, Dissenters, Independents, and Presbyterians became generally alarmed. The same large segments of the middle-class and artisan population who took to the streets in support of John Wilkes (a liberal M.P. and Freemason,⁴⁷ who in 1774 ran on a platform of electoral reform and "No War!") now joined Protestant Associations all over England (Erdman, Prophet, p. 14). The Scottish Presbyterians eventually rioted after the Government refused to deal with their petitions, and the Government then acquiesced by promising that Catholic relief would not extend into North Britain (Watson, p.12). The Scottish success encouraged the English Dissenters, and in 1779 the London Protestant Association asked Gordon to be their President. Gordon's acceptance letter stressed his concern for civil liberty in England and America. He noted that it alarmed him exceedingly to see with "what eagerness and joy the Papists were willing

⁴⁷ Wilkes became a Freemason in 1769 (Gould, III, p. 232).

to contribute their mite in support of an unhappy civil war, against the Protectorate in America," but then added:

I trust that coolness and temper in the proceedings of the Association will soon demonstrate to the Roman Catholics that we are far from being possessed of a persecuting disposition; and I hope the attention of Parliament to the petitions of Englishmen will be so very respectful and prudent, as not to raise the apprehensions of the lower classes of the people. Had the addresses of the provincial Synods in Scotland been duly respected, and attended to, the houses and Chapels of the Scotch Papists would never have suffered by the resentment of an enraged populace.--The Roman Catholics must know as well as we do, that Popery when encouraged by Government, has always been dangerous to the liberties of the people.
(Watson, pp. 15-16)

As negotiations between the Protestant Associations and the Government over the Catholic bill broke down, Gordon severed his old friendship with Burke, and helped organize a public march to present a Petition to the House of Commons. On 29 May 1780, over sixty thousand men followed Gordon from Saint George Fields to the House of Commons. This was Dissenting London, Blake's world, and among them the historian Gibbon described some fanatical Puritans, "such as might be in the time of Cromwell . . . started out from their graves." The cry "No Popery!" had reverberated in the popular consciousness since the Commonwealth and 1688.⁴⁸ Just how close many of them were to the "wild bloodshot mysti-

⁴⁸ E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class (London: Gollancz, 1964), p. 71.

cism" of the English reform movements of the seventeenth century will become increasingly clear as the linkage of radical politics, occultism, and "illuminated" Freemasonry is further examined.

When the crowd, led by the "better sort of tradesmen . . . exceeding quiet and orderly and very civil," presented their petitions, the House of Commons refused to debate it (Thompson, p. 71). Lord Gordon passionately declaimed against the Government, while the crowd became more unruly. Watson claimed the petitioners remained orderly but that "vagabonds mingled themselves with the peaceable citizens," and began increasingly violent attacks upon Catholic houses and Chapels, and any other wealthy house that struck the mob's fancy. At the height of the mob violence, after several days, "all the prisons were pulled down and their inhabitants set at liberty" (Watson, p. 22). Gilchrist stated that "Blake long remembered" being in the front rank of the crowd that burned and opened the gates of Newgate Prison on 6 June 1780, but the biographer then apologetically claimed that Blake's participation was "involuntary," just as he tried to absolve Blake, incorrectly, of sympathy with the French Revolution after 1792 (Erdman, Prophet, p. 9). As Thomas Wright remarked, that Blake, who detested the government, ever regretted the experience is unlikely: "Indeed, these terrific scenes--the flaming houses and chapels and the occurrences at the jail--affected him extraordinarily, and gave him ideas for many a startling print in Europe, America, and the other Prophetic Books."⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Thomas Wright, Life of William Blake (London: Olney, Bucks, 1929), I, 8.

Erdman has proved that Blake's famous drawing, later tagged "Glad Day," actually expressed Blake's revolutionary fervor of 1780 (Prophet, p. 7), and Hirst has suggested that it may have been based on Agrippa's demonstration of a Vitruvian figure forming a pentangle (p. 51), which was a major Masonic symbol. In America (1793), Blake looked back to the Gordon Riots (without specifically naming them), and described the spirit of rebellion which crossed the Atlantic to Great Britain, inspiring open demonstrations against the War with America, which temporarily deranged the guardians of the status quo and hastened the coming of peace (Erdman, Prophet, pp. 7-9). Blake's generalized treatment of the riots was possibly influenced by the fate of Gordon, who died in prison in 1793 (the year in which Blake wrote), after five years of confinement. During the period of fierce governmental suppression of political radicals in the 1790's, Blake's own political prophecies became increasingly veiled, as many more of his Illuminist associates went to jail.

There is much controversy over the inaction of the city authorities, who in their own defiance of the Royal Government, let the riots get out of hand. When the Government troops were finally called in, their severe handling of the offenders was criticized by many anti-Gordonites--including Burke, who deplored the use of the military, and Fox, who declared that he would "much rather be governed by a mob than a standing army" (Thompson, p. 72). Many Conservatives thought Benjamin Franklin and his subversive American and French agents were instrumental in the riots (Colson, p. 105), but the radical Watson claimed that the "unprincipled lawless

banditti who commenced the riots, were miscreants set on foot by French agents, for at that time France was governed by a perfidious King" (Watson, p. 22). Interestingly, Charles Dickens, in Barnaby Rudge, his fictionalized account of the riots, accepted Watson's version, and he modelled the character "Gashford" on the radical doctor. Gordon, who had been carried triumphantly by the crowd after the burning of Newgate, was promptly arrested on charges of high treason, and spent eight long months in the Tower before his trial on 5 February 1781. His mail was opened, and some of his correspondents were arrested; for eight months his friends were persecuted and spied upon. But John Wesley publicly defended Gordon, and said he was "suffering in a good cause" (Colson, p. 69).

Watson's analysis of the revolutionary nature of the riots is provocative, for he seemed to have regarded "the terrible June 7 as a disappointingly abortive Day of Judgment" (Colson, p. 107). He claimed that Gordon "might have overturned the Government and founded a Constitution agreeable to the wishes and true instincts of the people--a hundred thousand men and women were ready to executive his orders and Ministers trembled" (Watson, p. 22). But Gordon himself was shocked by the ultimate plunder and destruction, and Watson concluded that the uncontrollable excesses of the mob ultimately saved the Government, "for the timorous, and those unaccustomed to revolutionary movements, withdrew, whilst the administration had time to recover from their panic, and to rally their desponding forces" (Watson, p. 22. *Italics mine*).

When Gordon was finally brought to trial, huge

crowds cheered him on his way. According to the admiring Watson,

The politics of both hemispheres depended on his acquittal, and Britain was more agitated about his fate, than regenerated France has lately been about the lives of his cruel persecutors, the perjured Louis, or the abandoned Antoinette. (p. 24)

Gordon was declared "Not Guilty" by the London jury. There were huge celebrations all over England, and even Dr. Samuel Johnson pronounced himself pleased with the verdict (Colson, p. 120). On 5 September 1781, Gordon was nominated as a candidate for Parliament by the City of London. But, for some strange reason, Gordon never ran in the election.

From this point on, Gordon's life became so shrouded in mystery that it still baffles scholars. Colson, his most thorough biographer, asserts that after his acquittal, Lord Gordon was involved with the Jewish Cabalist Dr. Falk, but the case is difficult to put together. Colson concludes that there is little reason to doubt that Falk "played no small part in the underground political activities of his day, and he clearly found England both a safe and profitable abode" (p. 172). Before Falk's death in 1782, Cagliostro had come to England, where he possibly received instruction from Falk in the formation of his Egyptian form of Freemasonry. After Falk's death, Gordon visited Paris in late 1782, possibly with Cagliostro. Gordon met Marie-Antoinette and all the fashionable circles of Paris, but "his imagination was not enraptured by Burke's Celestial Vision," for he was "sensibly struck with the effects of

despotism and the ravages of war." He returned to England more firmly resolved than ever "to prosecute the plan of general reform" (Watson, pp. 36-38). The possibility that this plan may have been a Masonic or Illuminati effort, connected with Falk and the Orleanist faction, has not received scholarly investigation. But there is evidence that Gordon converted to Judaism before his trip to Paris. Meyer Joseph, a Prussian Jew, who became poet-laureate of the London Jewish community, later acted as preceptor in Judaism to Gordon; Joseph dated Gordon's "initiation into the Abrahamic covenant" between 1781 and 1782.⁵⁰ Dickens, who was a Freemason himself, researched the case at length for his novel Barnaby Rudge, and suggested in Chapter 37 that Gordon was attracted to Judaism as early as 1780, during the riots. If the early date is accurate, it certainly suggests that Falk could have been instrumental in his conversion.

However, when Gordon returned to London, he made no public admission of his conversion, while he wrote pamphlets on every conceivable subject, and corresponded with "Friends of Freedom" in the various European capitals. He protested new taxes in letters to Pitt and George III. He also attended the lectures of a popular Dissenting minister, Mr. Wilson, and was the friend of several Quakers, whom he greatly admired even while disagreeing with their patient submission to arbitrary power.

⁵⁰ Israel Solomon, "Lord George Gordon's Conversion to Judaism," Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England, Sessions 1911-1914 (London, 1915), p. 238.

His Quaker associates never deserted him and visited him regularly in jail until his death. But his main preoccupation during the period from 1783 to 1786 was his effort to persuade the great Jewish bankers to refuse loans for war (Colson, p. 152). Gordon was a friend of Nathan Salomon, a well-known Jewish financier and lay-head of the New Synagogue. Salomon was deeply impressed with Gordon and introduced him to many London Jews. Most significantly, Salomon became a partner in the powerful Goldsmid banking house after 1783 (Colson, p. 162), for Aaron Goldsmid and his son George were the major patrons of Dr. Falk during his London career (Adler, Baal-Shem, p. 7).

Levy Alexander, in his Memoirs of the Life of Benjamin Goldsmid (London: 1808), described Dr. Falk as "a man of universal acquaintance, singular manners, and wonderful talents, that seemed bordering on the supernatural agency of spiritual life." (Adler, Baal-Shem, p. 162). At his death, Falk left Aaron Goldsmid a sealed packet and warned him not to open it. Goldsmid eventually succumbed to curiosity, opened it, and died the same day. The fatal paper was covered with Cabalistic figures and hieroglyphics. Alexander concluded that "many besides this family believe in such magical secrets, and the supernatural preparations of the adepts in the ancient Cabala of the Egyptians." The implication that Falk taught a Cabala received from the Egyptians strengthens the probability of his influence on Cagliostro, for that is the premise of his special Egyptian Rite in Freemasonry, begun in London during the last years of Falk's life.

In 1783 Gordon sent a broadside letter to the Jews of Portugal and Germany, calling for a Protestant-Jewish alliance "against the Jesuits."⁵¹ He also wrote the Emperor Joseph of Germany in 1782 and 1785, protesting his ordinance against the Jews, and predicting international resistance to tyranny and the Inquisition (Solomons, p. 230). In the 1785 letter, Gordon specifically railed against "the Empress of Russia's uncivilized deprivations in Turkey," which his friend Watson later seconded by acclaiming in 1795 that "the Empress Catherine . . . little knows that a grand fraternal union is already formed, which will eventually hurl her from her throne, and emancipate the world from bondage" (Watson, p. 129).⁵² That the prediction of Watson implied a Masonic "conspiracy" seems undeniable. In 1785, Gordon survived a "Papal-inspired" attempt to poison him, and on 28 August 1786, he inserted a notice in the Public Advertiser recounting the many powerful visitors he had received from all over Europe, including ambassadors from Germany, Genoa, Venice, Holland, and the Moslem courts of North Africa and the Middle East.

51

Cecil Roth, Anglo-Jewish Letters, 1158-1917 (London: Soncino Press, 1938), p. 186.

52

That Freemasonry in Russia indeed played a liberal, "revolutionary" role during the decades of French revolutionary turbulence, is vividly portrayed in Tolstoy's War and Peace, in which Pierre's association with a Martinist branch of Freemasonry regenerates him into a new social consciousness in 1805.

In 1786, when Cagliostro arrived in London, he was taken in for a while by the Loutherbours, and he found an immediate champion in Lord Gordon. For Gordon had followed the case of the Diamond Necklace with passionate interest, and rejoiced at the humiliation of the court faction. He immediately placed his coach at Cagliostro's disposal, visited him regularly, and accompanied him everywhere (Colson, p. 184). Since Cagliostro worked assiduously at building his influence with the Freemasons and Swedenborgians, we can assume that Gordon accompanied him in his proselytizing efforts. Perhaps Blake, who once marched with Gordon's mob-following, saw more of him during these Swedenborgian gatherings.

Meanwhile, Cagliostro's famous "Letter to the French People," which eloquently attacked the abuses of the royal authority, was published in London and circulated all over Europe. It was widely regarded as the confession of faith of an Illuminatus, and the Inquisition biographer later said it was so calculated to excite revolt that "it was with difficulty a printer could be found in England to print it" (Trowbridge, p. 250). Cagliostro himself admitted it was written with "a freedom rather republican," and the French government became so incensed that it planned to kidnap Cagliostro in London.

But when the French ambassador in London, Barthélemy, invited Cagliostro to call, the Grand Cophta prudently took along Lord Gordon and a Masonic disciple from France. Cagliostro refused the "invitation" to return to France, and 22 August 1786, Gordon published a

passionate defense of him in the Public Advertiser. Gordon noted that Cagliostro would not dispense with his presence at anytime, and distrusted the French "reprieve":

Will any friend to Liberty blame Comte de Cagliostro, after ten months imprisonment in a dungeon, for having his friend near him when insidious proposals are made to him by . . . the supporters of the Bastille? . . . The Queen's party is still violent against Comte de Cagliostro, the Friend of Mankind. . . The thousands of good citizens whose acclamations shook the Bastille upon the declaration of his innocence might very possibly give rise to his exile by increasing the jealousy and fear of an arbitrary government. . . .

Two days later, on 24 August 1786, Gordon wrote another letter to the Public Advertiser:

The gang of French spies in London . . . are trying the most insidious arts to entrap the Comte and Comtesse. The friendship and benevolence of Comte de Cagliostro in advising the poor Prince Louis de Rohan to be on his guard against the Comtesse Valois [Lamotte] and the intrigues of the Queen's faction--who still seek the destruction of that noble prince--has brought upon the Comte and his amiable Comtesse the hateful revenge and perfidious cruelties of a tyrannical government. The story of the diamonds has never been properly explained to the public in France. It would discover too much of the base arts practised to destroy Prince Louis [de Rohan], and involve in guilt persons not safe to name.

That Gordon was fully aware of the danger he ran in attacking Marie-Antoinette and the French royal government is shown by the letter he wrote to the editor of the Public Advertiser, Mr. H.S. Woodfall:

Dear Sir: I will pay the whole expense if any prosecution against you for articles of intelligence that come from me. We have sufficient proof of their lying spies--they dare not do anything. The time is very critical and I beg you will look over what is enclosed and give it publication on Monday. (Colson, p. 190. *Italics mine*)

The French government was not long in taking action. Louis XVI ordered his ambassador in London to bring an action against Gordon. The British government, which considered Gordon "as the soul of sedition . . . and one of the most notorious and violent revolutionists in Europe" (Trowbridge, p. 258), was only too glad of the opportunity afforded by the French to reduce him to silence. In January 1787, they indicted Gordon for the libel on Marie-Antoinette, as well as for a pamphlet protesting the banishment of prisoners to Botany Bay (Solomons, p. 232).⁵³ The pamphlet protested against the rigor of the penal laws, and was "interlarded with a great number of Scripture phrases." At his two trials in June 1787, Gordon's defense was called bold and manly; he again defended the prisoners' petition and riddled the prosecution's defense of the French Queen's virtue and chastity with witty asides to the courtroom. His serious request for a delay until the Duke of Dorset and Mrs. Fitzherbert (the Prince of Wales' mistress) could be present was arbitrarily denied by the court. Gordon swore that she had a letter which would show that he was

⁵³ See "The Prisoners' Petition to the Right Hon. Lord George Gordon, to preserve their Lives and Liberties, and prevent their banishment to Botany Bay" (London: Thomas Wilkins, 1786).

"under an indispensable obligation" to aid Cagliostro. He had been applied to by the Count and his wife to assist them by his advice. "These noble strangers had put themselves under his protection" (Colson, p. 195). Since Cagliostro always sought out Masonic aid, wherever he travelled, this strengthens the probability of Gordon himself being a Freemason.

At the same time, Gordon was also President of the "Society of Friends of Freedom," which met at the Britannia Tavern, Deptford, and was probably a Masonic group itself. The Society placed a witty ad in the Morning Post, 23 April 1787, informing the public that they were only waiting for Lord Gordon's release to commence their Anniversary Dinner. Gordon wrote to the Abbé Gregoire in France about these "dinner meetings" in a way which certainly implies that they were Masonic occasions, but that they were also typically low degree, English lodges and difficult to "illuminate":

You ask me, is true liberty near to begin her reign in the three realms? We have eating and drinking clubs, as Lord Fitzgibbon denominates them. A certain restless faction . . . are suspected to be the contrivers, promoters, and leaders of these eating and drinking societies, who are themselves ignorant of their master's design. . . . A toast from the Chair to the immortal and glorious memory of King William . . . and the nine huzzas that accompany it, promote such draft of political sentiment, and such a heavy charge of glasses, that all regeneration operations and reformation work is soon after drowned and overwhelmed in bawdy songs and noise, or evaporated in smoke and dullness .
(Watson, p. 119)

Interestingly, the bawdy cheers and heavy drinking are

the Masonic scene presented in Gillray's cartoon on Cagliostro's inhospitable reception in a London lodge, in which the satirist ridiculed Lord Gordon as "Lord Crop." The phrases I underlined in the passage above point to the occultist high degree initiations of "illuminized" Continental Freemasonry. Watson later described the fate of republicans in France in 1791, again suggesting Masonic involvement:

Though the republicans were cruelly butchered in the Champ de Mars, they neither forgot their rights nor their duty; they only retired to cement that fraternal union which had shaken superstition to its center, and threatens to level all the satellites of despotism with the dust. (Watson, p. 125)

Gordon received guilty verdicts for both libel charges--against English justice and "the moral and political conduct" of Marie-Antoinette. He was released for one day before sentencing, but he took the opportunity to flee to Holland. In Amsterdam, he stayed with a Jewish family and was in contact with many Continental revolutionaries. The French ambassador pressured the Burgomaster of Amsterdam into evicting him from the city, and he landed, under full Dutch guard, in England on 22 July 1787. Gordon said he returned to England "in obedience to the commands of the States-General, rather than involve his own country in the horrors of a general war" (Solomons, p. 234). He then hid out in the Birmingham ghetto, until his arrest on 7 December 1787, when he appeared in full Jewish garb and publicly announced his conversion. The cartoonists had a field day, and in the annual burlesque election for

the slum area of "Garrett," one Sir "Jeffrey Dunstan, M.P." pledged to work with Gordon:

. . . by a glorious scheme contrived by me and my friend Lord George Gordon, I shall by a philosophical, aristocratical thermometer, or such-like hydraulics, discover the longitude among the Jews of Duke's Place and the secret of Masonry. (Colson, p. 227. Italics mine)

The judge who sentenced Gordon to a long prison term advised him "to make a better use of your reading in the Bible and not use the Scripture style for the wicked purpose of promoting mutiny and sedition. If you read the Scriptures to good purpose, you would find that the one great aim of religion is to teach men submission to Government and obedience to the Law" (Colson, p. 205). When Gordon entered Newgate Prison, his one-time friend Edmund Burke, gloated that though the detested mob once burned the prison down, "We have rebuilt Newgate, and tenanted the mansions. We have prisons almost as strong as the Bastille, for those who dare to libel the queens of France" (Colson, p. 266). Though Gordon remained a prisoner until his death in 1793, he vowed never to cease from exposing the follies and crimes of persecuting kings and priests. He sent out a flood of handbills, filled with quotations from the Old Testament, and with scriptural texts so applied as to reflect on the King and government. He continued a massive correspondence and, after moving to better quarters in the prison, entertained important visitors from all over the world.

Watson, who visited him daily, said he never found out the full reason for Gordon's conversion, and felt it destroyed his political effectiveness. He noted that the richer Jews shunned him, though the poorer Jews looked upon him "as a second Moses, and fondly hoped that he was designed by Providence to lead them back to their fathers' land" (Roth, Essays, p. 193). Gordon rigorously adhered to Jewish ritual and dress, and continued to press for full civil liberties for Jews in all countries, especially those in Poland and France, whom he praised in 1791 for their service to the Revolution (Solomons, p. 256). Ozias Humphrey, a good friend of Blake, visited Gordon in jail and painted a famous portrait of his pretty Jewish servant, Polly Levi (Roth, Essays, p. 196).

Among Gordon's other visitors were many radicals and Freemasons. The Dukes of York, Clarence, and Sussex--the rebellious sons of George III and all three Freemasons--often dined with him; "all shared alike, liberty and equality were enjoyed in their full extent as far as Newgate would allow" (Roth, Essays, p. 94). All three of the royal sons were also intimate with the Goldsmid family, Falk's major patrons (Encyclopedia Judaica, "Goldsmid"). The Duke of Sussex, who became Grand Master of English Freemasonry and was a good friend of George Cumberland (Blake's lifelong friend), was even called the "Philo-Semite" for his devotion to Hebrew studies and political liberty. Sussex' beloved Hebrew tutor was the Reverend Samuel Lyon of Cambridge, whose wife brought Kosher food to Gordon in prison (Solomons, p. 256). The Duke of York's band sometimes played for dancing, and Gordon would sing the "Ça Ira" and the

"Marsellois Waltz." Many of the artistocrats came in disguise, to join in political discussions and diatribes against the present administration. Among the revolutionaries who gathered there were Horne Tooke (the shrewdest of the Wilkes agitators and an old-fashioned radical); Charles Pigott (ardent champion of the French Revolution, opponent of Burke, brother of the Pigott involved with Valady and Thomas Taylor); Joseph Gerrald (political reformer, transported in 1794 to Botany Bay for sedition); Daniel Isaac Eaton (bookseller, indicted for selling Paine's Rights of Man); John Frost (revolutionary, who attended the trial of Louis XVI as representative of the London Corresponding Society, and was denounced by Burke as "ambassador to the murderers"); and "Peter Pindar" (John Wolcot, who conferred with Gordon on his mordant satires on George III). There were also many eccentrics and "prophets," including a lady who had conceived by the Holy Ghost and prophesied a great revolution against Papal oppression, as well as the sober Methodist John Wesley (Roth, Essays, pp. 193-196; Colson, p. 240).

But Gordon's major interest was in France after the Revolution began in 1789. He was visited by members of the French National Assembly, whenever they were in London. On 23 July 1789, he petitioned the French National Assembly for help, asking Abbé Gregoire to put pressure on the English government for his release. He claimed that his "libelous" publication against Marie-Antoinette was made "with a view to succor the oppressed and from the best information, which he received from several of the nobility and gentlemen of France who were in London at the time of the publication, who requested

your petitioner's assistance in the cause of freedom." Though the French Assembly was afraid to antagonize the English government at the time, and did not help Gordon, Abbé Gregoire, President of the Assembly, continued to seek Gordon's advice and opinions, which he circulated among the Jacobin societies in France. Gordon warned about Lafayette's sympathy for the King and Queen long before anyone else suspected it (Colson, pp. 264-266). Interestingly, Blake echoed Gordon's radical sentiments about Lafayette when he wrote in 1793:

Fayette, Fayette, thou'rt bought and sold,
 For well I see thy tears
 Of pity are exchanged for those
 'Of selfish slavish fears . . .

(Blake, CW, 186)

Meanwhile, in London a series of copper coins was circulated, with one side showing Lord Gordon as a Jew, with beard and slouch hat, and the other various patriotic symbols and the triumph of Order and Liberty over Jacobinism:

The inference seems to have been that once Britons were seduced into following the seditious claptrap of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, imported from the Continent, they would end up as circumcized Jews. (Colson, p. 266)

The serious usage of revolutionary language and ideals in connection with "spiritual circumcision" would be repeated in the preaching of the Avignon Illuminé and London Swedenborgian, Richard Brothers, and in the poetry of his partial adherent, William Blake. Brothers, whose possible connection with Gordon has not been

examined, was in the Navy when Gordon was and maintained similar interests in naval reform. Whether he was involved in 1793 when a deputation of sailors came to visit Gordon in Newgate and vowed to bring thousands of sailors to liberate him, by force if necessary, is still not known. Gordon had known many of the sailors since the 1780 riots, and some had been in the American and French Revolutions. But Watson recorded that Gordon feared mass executions and reprisals if the plan miscarried. He resigned himself to prison and continued his "massive correspondence" (Colson, p. 273).

Gordon eventually caught jail fever, and despite the ministrations of his old friend, Dr. Lettson, a Quaker and Freemason, he was soon terminal (Hills, "Masonic Personalities, p. 150). On his deathbed on 1 November 1793, he kept murmuring sadly, "Oh Duke, Duke!" (Roth, Essays, p. 210). It is quite possible that he was referring to the Duke of Orleans, on whom had been pinned so many revolutionary hopes, for on 7 April 1793, Orleans had been arrested and was soon sentenced to death. On 6 November 1793, five days after Gordon's death, he was guillotined, having passed Dr. Falk's magical Masonic ring on to the next generation.

Throughout the 1780's and 1790's, Gordon's loyal friend and biographer Dr. Watson had continued his political work, though there is little evidence of his activities until 1792, when the London Corresponding Society was founded by Thomas Hardy. Watson became the "President of a revolutionary Corresponding Society" (DNB), that was probably the same or a related group, since several of the London members, such as Tooke and

Gerrald, accompanied Watson on visits to Gordon in prison. The London Corresponding Society grew from nine to two thousand members within six months, and worked towards an alliance between English and Scottish reformers with the United Irishmen (whose essentially Masonic organization was analyzed by Clifford in 1798, and more fully substantiated in E.P. Thompson's recent work). By May 1794, Pitt ordered the arrest of the L.C.S. leaders, and Hardy was charged with high treason. The trial excited great interest in England and France, and Blake's friend William Sharp, the Swedenborgian engraver, played a prominent role (which will be examined later).

After Hardy's acquittal, the London Corresponding Society was torn by dissension (Thompson, p. 137). In 1796 Dr. Watson was arrested for conspiracy and spent the next two years in Newgate, before he was finally tried at Old Bailey and acquitted. To escape the government's persecution, he lived in disguise "at a Lord's house in London" (DNB), until his escape to France in late 1798. During this period, especially in 1797, there is evidence that the L.C.S. had split into overt and covert sections, one attempting a quasi-legal existence, the other committed to illegal organization. Thompson sums up the research problem on this period:

Historians have scoffed at the evidence of underground activity, and yet in the circumstances of 1796-1801, it would be more surprising if this development had not taken place. . . . The Jacobin "underground" would lead us to the colony of English emigrés in Paris, to the insurrection of Scottish weavers, and especially to relations between English Jacobins and United Irishmen whose smoldering rebellion broke into open war in 1798. (Thompson, pp. 166- 67)

Dr. Watson, who was considered an English emigré in Paris,⁵⁴ was involved in the covert actions, and his contacts with French, Irish, and British naval rebels point to the complex underground activities of his "grand fraternal union." In the spring of 1797, the great naval mutinies at Spithead and Nore threatened the effectiveness of the British Fleet against French revolutionary expansion. Watson, who had been disappointed at Gordon's unwillingness in 1793 to use his popularity among the radical sailors to defy the government by force, was instrumental in stimulating the sailors to rebel in 1797. His utilization of underground London Corresponding Society channels to implement his revolutionary plans is shrouded in obscurity, because the official, "overt" level of the Society disowned him. Thompson points out that the more subversive, secret group was probably a center of the United Englishmen, an auxiliary of the United Irishmen, which made "communications by word of mouth, or by cipher; its emissaries had passwords and signs," and especially a complicated "Masonic grip" (Thompson, pp. 167- 69).

When Watson arrived in Paris, he issued an address to the British people, advocating a general rising and the reception of the French as deliverers (DNE). Thompson notes his address as "le Citoyen Watson" to the French Directory in 1799, in which he described himself as "President of the Executive Committee of the London

⁵⁴ See J.G. Algers, Englishmen in the French Revolution (London, 1889) pp. 271- 72.

Corresponding Society" (p. 173). Watson became English tutor to Napoleon, who planned a visit to England, and collaborated in his political plans. As "Chevalier" Watson, he directed a "Scots College" in Paris, which was possibly a Masonic branch of the Scottish Rite. His last years are not well-documented, but included work with radical Irish societies in Paris, residence in Greece and Rome, the collection of important documents on Jacobite rebellions (despite attempted confiscation by the Papacy), and the editing of memoirs of other political rebels. In March 1838 he returned to London, where he told the landlord of his seedy inn that he had been the friend and Secretary of Gordon, had known Washington and Napoleon, and that he thanked God he had lived to see America free. At age eighty-eight, he hanged himself, and the inquest revealed the scars of nineteen wounds (Colson, pp. 276-79). It is small wonder that Charles Dickens found Watson one of the most mysterious and intriguing characters of his age.

Erdman has documented Blake's involvement with many republican activists in the 1790's--including Sharp, Holcroft, Paine, Godwin, Benjamin Heath Malkin, and Joseph Johnson--who were associated with the London Corresponding Society, the related Society for Constitutional Information, and "the Friends of Freedom" (Prophet, pp. 154-62). That these radical associations also involved Blake in occultism, Animal Magnetism, Cabalism, and all the paraphernalia of high degree Freemasonry, becomes apparent when we re-trace the ramifications among the London Swedenborgians of the visits of Cagliostro and Grabianka in 1786-1787.

The biographers of Gordon and Cagliostro have mutually blamed the flamboyance and sedition of the other one for the "failure" of Cagliostro's reform efforts. There has been little examination of the possibility that both failures sprang from a common cause--the increasing governmental crack-down on a suspected Illuminatist conspiracy. That either Gordon ruined Cagliostro's chances in London (Trowbridge, p. 259) or that Cagliostro "fascinated" and manipulated Gordon (Schnur, p. 285) seems unlikely, for both were working for a common cause. Cagliostro's fate, after Gordon's arrest in 1787, has been more thoroughly researched and sheds new light on Gordon's own role in London politics and Blake's Illuminatist circles.

In late 1787, Cagliostro gave up his proselytizing efforts in London and left Seraphina with the Loutherbours, while he went on to Basle where the faithful Masonic banker Jacob Sarasin awaited him. According to Faivre, Cagliostro continued the merging of Swedenborgianism into his Egyptian rite, and "après trois semaines du préparatifs, on inaugure solennellement une superbe Loge Egyptienne dans la maison même de Sarasin, avec un buste de Cagliostro et de mystérieuses cérémonies" (p. 80). With his success established at Basle, Cagliostro sent for Seraphina, who had been pressured by Morande, the French editor and agent, into denouncing Cagliostro. Accompanied by the Loutherbours, she came to Switzerland, where she swore before a notary public that she had been tricked by Morande and affirmed her loyalty to Cagliostro (Schnur, p. 286). The Grand Cophta established such a good reputation in Basle that the Mayor made him a Freeman of the city, but he soon left this refuge, possibly because of a quarrel

with Louthembourg. Schnur claims that the partio carrée formed by the two couples drove Louthembourg into a fit of madness, in which he tried to assassinate Cagliostro. The scandal became public, the Masonic initiates formed two opposing factions, and once again the Cagliostros had to leave (p. 287).

Cagliostro's exit put an end to his renewed cooperation with the physiognomist Lavater, who was taken to task by his friend Goethe for his resumed interest in Cagliostro (Schnur, pp. 286-315). Goethe had just returned from Sicily where he had investigated Cagliostro's origins. Lavater had met Cagliostro three times previously through their mutual friend Sarasin, and remained fascinated by him. The complex relations of Lavater with Cagliostro and many other Rosicrucians, Freemasons, and Swedenborgians will be dealt with later in relation to Blake, for in 1788-89, when Blake was studying Swedenborg, he was also fascinated by Lavater. Both interests are reflected in his Marriage of Heaven and Hell (1790-93). Lavater's best friend was Henry Fuseli, who at the same time was Blake's best friend, and the mutual interest in and involvement with secret societies and occultism of all three will be analyzed, after tracing Cagliostro to his dismal end.

Cagliostro continued his nomadic existence, establishing Egyptian rites and practising Paracelsan and magnetic medicine in Austria and Northern Italy. In Roveretto, there is a record of his inviting a gentleman to join the Illuminati, but the man wrote that he "preferred his mental darkness to possibly blinding and

dangerous enlightenment" (Schnur, p. 29C). But the authorities were on Cagliostro's track and by 1789, he made the fateful decision to enter Rome on 27 May. Shortly before, Cagliostro had desperately renounced Freemasonry and claimed to be a Catholic, in order to gain favor with a high churchman who was curious about occultism. He warned his friends not to mention Freemasonry in their correspondence and was extremely careful about his Masonic activities in Rome, for the Papacy threatened excommunication and even the death penalty for Masonic membership. However, in Rome, a Masonic lodge of Vrais Amis operated in tight secrecy; its members corresponded with the Grand Orient in France, followed its high degree rituals, and were political Illuminati. Cagliostro did not join the Lodge but met regularly on a social basis with its members. In the meantime, the Inquisition efforts of blackmail and terror against Seraphina and her family finally led them to denounce Cagliostro to Papal spies. In financial desperation, Cagliostro finally acquiesced to the repeated requests for an Egyptian initiation of two supposed Freemasons, who were actually agents of the Inquisition. The Lodge received warnings from members abroad, but Sarasin wrote that no harm could come to "the great man in his present avatar" (Schnur, pp. 295- 98).

The Papal government was fearful of the rumblings of revolution, and the fulfillment of Cagliostro's prophecy about the razing of the Bastille on 17 June 1789 reinforced their suspicions. After Bastille Day, Cagliostro petitioned the States-General for permission to return to France, but was too poor to raise the travel money (Trowbridge, p. 290). The Inquisition was sure, however, that thousands of Illuminati would arise at

Cagliostro's command. As Schnur points out, it is ironic that at the nadir of his influence, "his powers faded, his prestige ruined, Calioistro assumed a new and utterly undeserved importance" (Schnur, p. 298). On 27 December 1789, the Inquisition struck and Cagliostro was imprisoned in the fortress of San Angelo. The Lodge of Vrais Amis, "in the house of a French painter," was searched, but the brothers had heeded the warnings and escaped. Cagliostro had not destroyed his papers and correspondence, and the manuscripts of the Egyptian ritual and much Masonic regalia were confiscated. Cagliostro was tortured and questioned for over fifteen months before his trial on 21 March 1791, when he was charged first with Freemasonry, secondly with heresy, and finally with a mass of unspecified common-law felonies. All the documents prove that it was a kangaroo court, and that it was Freemasonry itself which was on trial (Schnur, pp. 299-300). The official Inquisition biographer, Barbieri, claimed that Cagliostro revealed that in 1780 in Germany he heard the plans of twenty-thousand Illuminati in Europe to further a world revolution (Stauffer, p. 197). The Inquisition biographer also noted Louthembourg's involvement with Cagliostro's Egyptian Freemasonry, and described sessions of Cabalistic angel-magic between Cagliostro and Louthembourg recorded in Cagliostro's confiscated papers (Irwin, pp. 73-74). Cagliostro was sentenced to death, but the Pope "commuted" the sentence to life imprisonment (in solitary confinement in an Inquisition dungeon). The manuscripts on Egyptian Freemasonry and all his Masonic regalia were publicly burned, and the direst penalties were threatened against Freemasons, Illuminati, and other heretics.

With singular dispatch, the proceedings of the trial and Barbieri's biography⁵⁵ were published, denouncing Freemasonry and conjuring up almost ludicrous visions of the grand Illuminati conspiracy. The book provoked violent counterblasts from the Masonic press, and as Schnur notes, "the subsequent activities of the Carbonari were to prove . . . that ideas cannot be repressed by force" (Schnur, p. 304). The Inquisition was so fearful of Cagliostro's influence that he was moved to the isolated castle of San Leo, perched on a crag in the Appennines Mountains, where he was guarded with extra troops. Interestingly, the Inquisition feared an "aerial invasion," by which Cagliostro's adherents would liberate him with a balloon assault on the almost inaccessible castle. That this may not have been a paranoid fantasy is attested to by the interest and actual practice in ballooning of many Masonic figures, including Frances Barrett in England, who was possibly a student of Dr. Falk (see Chapter XII).

But rescue did not come, and Cagliostro covered the walls of his cell with fantastic paintings; after four years of torture and solitary confinement, he finally died of "apoplexy" on 26 August 1795. His death was not announced, however, and in 1797 when French forces invaded the Papal States, General Dombrowski's Polish Legion opened San Leo Prison and asked for Cagliostro. They planned to make him a hero, but were told he had "just" died. Another version claims the Polish

⁵⁵ See Barbieri, The Life and Adventures of Joseph Balsamo, commonly called Cagliostro. Trans. from Italian (London 1791).

"liberators" opened Cagliostro's grave, filled his skull with wine, and drank to the honor of the Revolution. In the 1890's, Madame Blavatsky contributed to the burgeoning legends about the Grand Cophta when she told Yeats's theosophical society that Cagliostro escaped, and long after 1795 he met various people in Russia, even residing for some time in her father's house, where he worked wonders (Trowbridge, pp. 294, 307, 306).

Cagliostro's trial and ultimate death in Rome bespoke an increasingly rigorous suppression of revolutionary groups all over Europe, especially in England, where growing fears of a French invasion generated great conflicts even among radicals between their nationalism and their theories of international "brotherhood." With Louthembourg's return to England after his involvement in Cagliostro's affairs, we get a glimpse into the complex and confusing state of radical politics and occultist millennialism from 1789 until 1800, which involved Blake and his friends as well as Southey and Coleridge, in a highly dangerous political situation but an even more stimulating milieu for visionary artists.

Chapter VIII: Cabalistic and Magnetic Visions among
the London Swedenborgians in the 1780's
and 1790's

Darnton points out that as the political turbulence of the Revolution intensified the apocalyptic sense of daily events, Animal Magnetisers and Cabalists in Europe became increasingly preoccupied with visions and prophecies rather than cures. In London, however, there was a fresh wave of magnetic healings among the Swedenborgians, Freemasons, and political radicals.

On his return to London from Basle, Louterbourg plunged into a frenzied career of magnetic healing, and carried out Cagliostro's lessons at his house in Hammer-smith Terrace. General Rainsford's son was cured by Louterbourg's treatment, and the General himself carried out experiments in Animal Magnetism (Hills, "Masonic Personalities," p. 112). In 1789 Mary Pratt published an account of Louterbourg's work in which she claimed that he "received divine Manaductions, which heavenly and divine Influx coming from the Radix God . . . gives him healing power."¹ The combination of the Swedenborgian "Influx" and the pun on the Mesmerist Mainaduc point to Louterbourg's continued interest in both phenomena. Mary Pratt's husband was a Swedenborgian,

¹ Mary Pratt, "A List of a Few Cures Performed by Mr. and Mrs. de Louterbourg . . . without Medicine" (London, 1789), p. 1.

though by 1792, she called him a persecutor and claimed that "that deluded society is spreading contagion in London" (Hirst, p. 260). Her defense of Loutherbou^{rg}, also a Swedenborgian, was published without his permission and he tried to suppress it.

Mrs. Pratt's claim that Loutherbou^{rg} sometimes had over three thousand patients waiting for admission on "Healing Days" reveals the phenomenal interest in magnetic healing in London from 1788 on. Horace Walpole, who confirmed the size of the crowd, described Loutherbou^{rg} as the "inspired physician," whose "sovereign panacea is barleywater. I believe it is as efficacious as mesmerism" (Irwin, p. 69). There were gossiping paragraphs in the newspapers about Loutherbou^{rg}'s work, and rumors that his "pious enthusiasm" led him to abandon art in order to work on the explication of Hebrew texts, which he had already brooded over for sixteen years. But he had not abandoned painting and gave up only his fashionable work in order to "illustrate Biblical passages that have never been illustrated before." Tales circulated about his "religious frensy," which included the "gifts of discerning spirits," sorcery, alchemy, and "healing with a few words" (Whitley, p. 354).

During this period, William Sharp and Richard Cosway both collaborated with Loutherbou^{rg}'s magnetic experiments. Sharp, who had followed Mesmer's career closely, had a "mystic reverence" for Loutherbou^{rg}, because of the latter's "half-physical, half-miraculous power of curing diseases, and imparting the thoughts and

sympathies of distant friends."² Cosway, who was also studying Hebrew, practised magnetic healing and trance-techniques with Loutherbouurg, and was at his house when the milling crowd outside Loutherbouurg's "surgery" got angry at delays and rumors of failed cures and tried to tear the house down (Irwin, p. 72). In late 1789, the Public Advertiser announced that the "magnetizing doctor of Hammersmith had given over practice" (Dobson, p. 120), but Loutherbouurg's private interest in Animal Magnetism continued. That Blake was definitely a member of the Swedenborgian group in 1788-89, at the same time that Sharp, Cosway, and Loutherbouurg were practising Animal Magnetism in the group, suggests his own interest and experimentation in it, for which there is definite evidence in his later work.

Another known acquaintance of Blake, Dr. John Hunter, was also involved with Sharp and Loutherbouurg (Farington, I, 165). In An Island in the Moon, Blake used Hunter's name in the first draft and then caricatured him as "Dr. Tearguts" in the printed version. That Hunter was probably a Freemason is suggested by the long eulogistic obituary to him, included in The Freemasons' Magazine (October 1793), p. 421. The inclusion of Hunter in the satire's social gathering reinforces the probability that Blake's work refers to a theosophical group, interested in Animal Magnetism, ballooning, pseudo-science, antiquarianism, and Freemasonry, that met at Jacob Duché's, Cosway's, or possibly even Hunter's,

² W.S. Baker, William Sharp, Engraver (Philadelphia: Gebbie and Barrie, 1875), p. 33.

though Blake's group may have been on the outside looking in. Hunter, who is still considered a brilliant anatomist and medical researcher in medical histories, was called the "Shakespeare of Medicine" by his contemporaries. His indefatigable curiosity led him to turn his house at Leicester Square into a museum, filled with stuffed giraffes, "pickled two-headed babies," bones and fossils, mummies and cadavers.³ Hunter used to attend Dr. Graham's Temple of Health in order to observe the eight-foot-two-inch Irish giant, Charles O'Byrne, whom Graham exhibited along with Emma, the Goddess of Health. Despite the giant's terror of the anatomist, Hunter, and the provision in his will that he would be secretly buried at sea in order to prevent dissection, Hunter managed to bribe the undertaker and add a spectacular new skeleton to his museum (Kobler, p. 241). Dr. Graham's and Hunter's paths also crossed several times in their medical practice.

At the same time that he visited Graham, Hunter was also friendly with William Sharp, apparently through a mutual interest in Mesmerism. In 1785 Sharp persuaded Hunter to let Joshua Reynolds paint his portrait, which Sharp would then engrave for large-scale circulation. When Hunter sat for the portrait, he went into a trance-state:

Suddenly, in spirit, John was no longer present. Head cocked as if hearkening to remote voices, his gaze fixed upon an inner image, he had sunk

³ John Kobler, The Reluctant Surgeon: A Biography of John Hunter (New York: Doubleday, 1960), p. 158.

deep into reverie, into that anesthetic state when, as he himself once described it, "the body loses consciousness of its own existence." (Kobler, p. 266)

The resulting portrait was considered a masterpiece, and Sharp's engraving sold by the hundreds.

The great excitement over Mesmerism and occultism stimulated by Grabianka's and Cagliostro's visits to the Swedenborgian group continued during Blake's documented association with the society from 1788 on. An examination of the preoccupations and practices of several of Blake's fellow members reveals important influences on his own thought and works. Robert Southey, whose letters on the "underground" theosophical groups in the 1780's and 1790's are full of surprising information, visited and studied Jewish, Mesmerist, and Swedenborgian groups in London. His descriptions of the Swedenborg Society, though never quoted in Blake criticism, are important, for he pointed out the heavy interest in Hermetic philosophy and discussed the influence of Mainaduc's religious Mesmerism on the Swedenborgians (Southey, Letters from England, III, 117).

According to Southey, Mainaduc stressed the concepts of the seventeenth century theosophists and Rosicrucians, such as Fludd, Greatrakes, and Kenelm Digby, but insisted on a purely psychic, Christian mode of Animal Magnetism. Mainaduc affirmed that Christ and his disciples were magnetic healers (Southey, II, pp. 333-335). The London Swedenborgians, influenced by Mainaduc, believed in a thin transparent vapor, which surrounds the angels like an atmosphere and enables them to sustain the

the influx of Deity. Furthermore, this atmosphere, as the "Sphere of Life," exhales from every man, spirit, and angel, and is the emanation of the vital affections and thoughts. In Heaven, it is "the volatile essence of Love." When the theories and practices of Animal Magnetism were applied to the Swedenborgian premises, the Swedenborgians soon experienced visions and psychic "celestial" journeys. Communication with angels was now confirmed by the "scientific" proof of Animal Magnetism, for in the expression or speech of angels, they could make thought visible by representing their ideas "in a thin undulating circumfluent fluid or ether" (Southey, III, pp. 123, 128).

Connected with the "materialization" of spirits and the "exalted somnambulistic" experiences (which involved "epigastric" as well as psychic thrills), was the emphasis on "conjugal love" as the nearest earthly approach to the divine state of ecstatic equilibrium. As Southey remarked:

On no subject does Swedenborg dilate with more pleasure than upon this. The sphere of Conjugal Love . . . is that which flows from the Creator into all things; from the Creator it is received by the female, and transferred through her to the male. It makes man more and more man; it is a progressive union of minds, forever rejuvenescent, continuing to old age and eternity; it is the foundation of all spiritual and all celestial love; it is in Heaven, and it is Heaven, yea even the inmost Heaven, the Heaven of Heavens. It dwells in the supreme region of the Mind . . . in the marriage chamber of the Understanding. (III, p. 129).

That these preoccupations with occultism, Hermeti-

cism, and trance-experiences, all connected with "conjugal love," stimulated much controversy in the Society while Blake was a member is demonstrated in the works and activities of several other members whom Blake must have known.

The first to be considered is Manoah Sibly (1757-1840), who attended the early meetings of the Theosophical Society in 1783-1784, and who played a prominent role in Swedenborgian activities throughout his life. Significantly, Manoah Sibly later worked with J.J. Garth Wilkinson on the first publication of Blake's Songs of Innocence and Experience in 1839, and then on Wilkinson's 1840 biography of Swedenborg. Manoah was originally a shoemaker, but studied Hebrew, Syriac, Latin, and Greek, as well as alchemy and astrology, until he became an erudite student of the occult traditions. He also became an accomplished shorthand writer, which was perhaps connected with his Hebrew studies, for shorthand was developed in the eighteenth century through a study of the vowel point problem in Hebrew. The connection between Hebrew, shorthand, and Freemasonry will be significant for another of Blake's probable acquaintances, Alexander Fraser, in the early 1800's. It was Manoah Sibly's record in shorthand of the "Genuine Trial of Thomas Hardy for High Treason" in 1795 which received wide circulation and created much popular sympathy for the London Corresponding Society radicals. While attending Swedenborgian meetings in the 1780's, Manoah published a book on astrology, The Quadripartite, or Four Books concerning the Influence of the Stars

(London, 1786), and in the 1790's he was apparently involved in the budding British-Israel movement and published "The Call of the Jews" in 1796 (DNB, British Museum Catalogue, and Biographical Dictionary of Living Authors, 1816).

Most importantly for Blake studies, Nanaoh later explained in 1839 a disturbance in Blake's Eastcheap Society in 1789 over "conjugal love." The records in the minute book from 4 May 1789 to 11 April 1790 have been torn out, apparently because of their exposure of heated arguments over Swedenborg's sexual theories. As Sibly remembered,

. . . in 1789, a very sorrowful occurrence befell the infant New Church, whereby the floodgates of immorality were in danger of being thrown open, to her inevitable destruction. The Church held many solemn meetings on the occasion, which ended with her withdrawing herself from six of her members. (Block, p. 68)

As noted earlier, Grabianka's visit in 1786 stimulated rumors of "frivolous erotic practices" among the London Swedenborgians, and the controversy over concubines and mistresses had apparently been brewing for several years. Interestingly, the only full record of the argument was published by the Masonic Swedenborgian, Augustus Nordenskjold, in Swedish. In The Form of Organization in the New Jerusalem (Copenhagen, n.d.), Nordenskjold argued for the right to mistresses and concubines, in strict accordance with Swedenborg's tenets in De Fornicatione et Concubinato. Nordenskjold was one of the six evicted members, who also included Henry Servanté (member since 1783 and founder of the first New Jerusalem Magazine), Charles Wadstrom (Swedish Freemason), and Robert Hindmarsh himself. Their suspension was only temporary, however, and "no imputation of evil was made against the excluded members"; Hindmarsh con-

tinued to act as Secretary and actual leader of the Society (Odhner, p. 147).

Significantly, Nordenskjold left London and moved to Paris in 1790, where his participation in revolutionary activities led to his immediate recall by the Swedish King. Meanwhile, in Sweden, Nordenskjold's alchemistic lab had been used by Count Munch to coin counterfeit money; the resulting scandal brought much disfavor on the Swedenborgians, despite the official verdict of their innocence. In 1792 Nordenskjold made a scientific journey into West Africa, seeking a possible site for an anti-slavery Swedenborgian colony, but he died alone in Sierra Leone (Odhner, pp. 152, 168).

The impact of the concubine quarrel on Blake is verified by Henry Crabb Robinson, who noted that Blake believed in a "community of women," which so embarrassed Robinson that he recorded it in his diary in German.⁴ Blake's related emphasis on the ecstatic and visionary possibilities of "conjugal love," whether with wife or concubine, in the Visions of the Daughters of Albion (1793) should be read in the context of the sexual-trances, psychic "celestial voyages, and other phenomenon of occultist Mesmerism which were being investigated and practised among many of his associates:

⁴ Henry Crabb Robinson, Diary, ed. and abridged by Derek Hudson (London: Oxford, 1967), p. 92.

Thou knowest that the ancient trees seen by thine eyes have fruit,
 But knowest thou that trees and fruits flourish upon the earth
 To gratify senses unknown? trees, beasts and birds unknown;
 Unknown, no unperciv'd, spread in the infinite microscope,
 In places yet unvisited by the voyager, and in worlds
 Over another kind of seas, and in atmospheres unknown: . . .

.....

But Oothoon is not so: a virgin fill'd with virgin fancies,
 Open to joy and to delight where ever beauty appears;
 If in the morning sun I find it, there my eyes are fixed
 In happy copulation; if in evening mild, wearied with work,
 Sit on a bank and draw the pleasures of this free born joy.

The moment of desire! the moment of desire! The virgin
 That pines for man shall awaken her womb to enormous joys
 In the secret shadows of her chamber: the youth shut up from
 The lustful joy shall forget to generate and create an amorous image
 In the shadows of his curtains and in the folds of his silent pillow.
 Are not these the places of religion, the rewards of continence,
 The self enjoyings of self denial? why dost you seek religion?

.....

I cry: Love! Love! Love! happy happy Love! free as the mountain wind!
 Can that be Love that drinks another as a sponge drinks water
 That clouds with jealousy his nights, with weepings all the day,
 To spin a web of age around him, grey and hoary, dark,
 Till his eyes sicken at the fruit that hangs before his sight?
 Such is self-love that envies all, a creeping skeleton
 With lamplike eyes watching around the frozen marriage bed.

But silken nets and traps of adamant will Oothoon spread,
 And catch for thee girls of mild silver, or of furious gold
 I'll lie beside thee on a bank and view their wanton play
 In lovely copulation, bliss on bliss, with Theotormon
 Red as the Rosy morning, lustful as the first born beam . . .

.....

(Blake, CW, pp. 192-195)

That Blake was describing ecstatic visions achieved through Cabalistic techniques of sexual-trances is further borne out by his reference to the uniquely Cabalistic concept of "adultery," or non-visionary sex, as represented by the binding, back to back, of the

"adulterate pair," who thus disrupt the equilibrium and unity of God's Sephirothic nature (Blake, CW, p.190). That Blake may have had other Jewish and Rosicrucian sources for these concepts, besides the definite Swedenborgian ones, will be discussed in a later chapter.

Manoah Sibly, who was so distressed over the concubine and sexual quarrels of the Swedenborg Society, was also involved in a schism in 1792 within the Society over the democratic procedures he favored as opposed to Hindmarsh's efforts at imposing an episcopal hierarchy on the Society. Sibly's democratic majority seceded, and left Hindmarsh and six followers to carry on. From 1793-96, the faction-ridden Swedenborgians met mainly in each other's homes, and "a state of general disunion, weakness, and inactivity " set in upon the New Church until 1807, when another General Conference was attempted" (Block, p. 70; Odhner, p. 174). This unorganized state of the Swedenborgians is important to remember when dealing with Blake's involvement, and explains much of his own ambivalent attitude to the Society and Swedenborg himself, as well as the lack of records on his possible membership in the later 1790's. That many of the Swedenborgians, especially those with Masonic connections, were involved in dangerous revolutionary and political activities also explains the exclusion of them from most official Swedenborgian histories. The simultaneous efforts made to unify through Masonic auspices the more serious Swedenborgian students of occultism, alchemy, and Mesmerism are demonstrated in the work of Manoah Sibly's brother, Ebenezer Sibly, in collaboration with General Rainsford.

Ebenezer Sibly (d. 1800) was a physician and Swedenborgian,⁵ though his name does not appear on any available lists. He was also a high degree Freemason, associated with General Rainsford in the "Noah's Ark" rite (Hills, "Masonic Personalities," p. 158). Ebenezer was an erudite student of the occult traditions and of contemporary theosophy. Like his brother, Manoah, Ebenezer was interested in astrology and in 1780 published Uranosopia, or the pure language of the stars unfolded. This was followed by a voluminous book on occultism, A New and Complete Illustration of the Celestial Science of Astrology, which included "the abstruse doctrine of the Stars, Magic, Divination, and Exorcism, and familiarity with spirits, vegetable, astral, and infernal . . ." first published in 1784. This work was originally dedicated to the "Ancient and Honorable Fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons," in the "Year of Masonry 5784." In the author's preface to the new edition of 1794, he claimed to feel "sheltered . . . under the wing of your fraternal regard, and patronized by every sober admirer of the secret works of nature," signed "Your Accepted Brother, Ebenezer Sibly." He added a note hoping that the Freemasons would train and help future astrologers, a point which will become important when we deal with Blake's later astrological friends from 1818 to 1827. Ebenezer's book provides an

⁵ Ebenezer Sibly, A New and Complete Illustration of the Celestial Science of Astrology, 12th ed. (1784; London, 1817), p. 1066.

encyclopedic account of the extent of occult interests among his Swedenborgian and Masonic associates. He knew Swedenborg's writings thoroughly and discussed his theories at length, and was acquainted with many people in England who had known Swedenborg personally. His sections on magic and necromancy had a great impact on nineteenth-century occultists, especially on W.B. Yeats, who carried out Sibly's instructions for various magical experiments (see Yeats, Memoirs, p. 23).

Most important for this study, though, is Ebenezer Sibly's account of Animal Magnetism, in which he claimed that Paracelsus was the first discoverer of its principles and that his method of Animal Magnetism "begins again, under the successful endeavors of a few persevering individuals, to convince mankind that the secret and occult properties of nature are not yet half known or understood" (pp. 1099-1101). He concluded by drawing the distinction between Natural Magic, "inherent in the occult properties of Nature," and Infernal Magic, "obnoxious and contrary to Nature" (p. 1117). Ebenezer published more works on Paracelsian "physic" and occultism, including A New and Complete Illustration of the Occult Sciences in 1788. This volume included the rare engravings of Dionysius Andreas Freher's "Four Figures of Man," brilliant emblematic interpretations of Boehme's work, which had a major influence on Blake.⁶

⁶ Charles A. Nuses, Illumination of Jacob Boehme: the Work of Dionysius Andreas Freher (New York: Columbia Univ., 1951), p. 69.

Of Freher's other unpublished Cabalistic drawings, Richard Cosway owned a manuscript of the "Serial Elucidations" (Hirst, p. 186). Cosway, who was a friend of General Rainsford and Blake at the same time, possibly shared his interest in Freher's illustrations with them, as well as with Ebenezer Sibly, for during the 1790's, Rainsford and Sibly worked together to establish an elite, secret branch of Freemasonry for higher study of Mesmerism and occultism than was possible in the regular lodges.

Rainsford had been trying since 1784 to establish a "Universal Society" in London, of which "the scheme had been communicated, and which apparently was to be the practical outcome of the Paris Convention" of 1784 (Hills, "Masonic Personalities," p. 107). Rainsford was instructed by Savalette de Langes and an English brother, Maubach, to enlist Paul Henry Maty's assistance in recruiting men of letters and to lose no time in approaching suitable candidates for membership. The Reverend Paul Henry Maty (1745-1787) was a former resident in Paris, librarian at the British Museum, and Secretary to the Royal Society from 1778-1784. In 1782 he began a literary review which continued until 1786. It is perhaps significant that Blake mentions an article which appeared in Maty's New Review in his satire, An Island in the Moon. This was George Cumberland's announcement in the October 1784 issue of a new method of printing, which would eliminate the setting of type (Erdman, Prophet, p. 100). Cumberland's collaboration with Blake's development of "illuminated" printing is well known, but the possible involvement of Blake or Cumberland with Maty, while the latter was being sought out by Savalette de Langes and

and General Rainsford is intriguing.

Sometime in 1786, Rainsford wrote to the Comte de Saint Bedan, referring to their joint study of the "writings of the great man Swedenborg in London some years since" (apparently through the 1783-84 theosophical study group), and to their mutual Rosicrucian membership in Paris. Rainsford also referred to his own study of "the Cabbalah of Fludd" and asked his friend's opinion on Animal Magnetism, "which is to this hour the subject of wonder and research of the whole world, here in our country as in the North, and in particular at Strasbourg where the results are so remarkable as to excite great astonishment and surprise." He added that he had studied Masonry in France, in the North, in Germany, and at Lyons, and added significantly:

I cannot say anything about the science of Cagliostro for I know nothing of its principles or its true aims, but I wish very much to establish here among the true seekers and advocates of the Sacred Science an Order which can do Honour to Humanity, uphold the Religion and Worship of the Lord, according to the Precepts which he has given us in the Holy Books, which emanate directly from Him. (Hills, "Masonic Personalities," p. 110)

Rainsford had received another enquiry about Cagliostro from the Duke of Northumberland, an ally of the Prince of Wales against Pitt, and a Freemason. Northumberland wrote the General in 1785:

I hope you know that the famous Count Cagliostro is at Paris, and that the manner in which he lives and the stories told of him are so wonderful, that I long much to know whether there is any truth in them . . . he is said to be three hundred

years old, and lives, without any visible means of acquiring such wealth, at a greater expense than the first nobility of Paris. (Hills, "Masonic Personalities," p. 112)

With his curiosity thus piqued by at least two high-ranking Masonic associates, Rainsford must have followed Cagliostro's London adventures in 1786.

Rainsford's difficulties in founding a special society in London are revealed in a letter to Savalette de Langes, apparently written after 1789 (he refers to the "recent troubles in France"):

I have applied myself to fathom the Mysteries of Masonry and to penetrate into the most sublime Degrees. The misfortune is that I find so few persons who are fit for this mysterious Science, but I console myself with the hope of coming by degrees to the end of my researches, and of establishing a Worshipful Lodge of Brethren worthy of the highest secrets. (Hills, "Masonic Personalities," p. 108)

That Rainsford was involved with the Swedenborgian Society throughout this period (from 1783-1789) is indicated by Hindmarsh's account that after hearing James Hindmarsh, his father, preach in 1788-1789, Rainsford affirmed that the "Doctrines of the New Jerusalem ought to be those of the Established Church." He added that he was in great hopes that they would one day become so generally approved of in England that "no rational man would be desirous of hearing any other" (Hindmarsh, p. 64).

In 1793 Rainsford was sent to Gibraltar as Commander of the Troops, and on his return to London in 1796, he continued his efforts to build a high-degree

Swedenborgian, Masonic study group. A letter to the Oriental scholar and Freemason, Thomas Maurice, noted Rainsford's efforts:

General Rainsford, who, though an odd man in some of his speculations, is an ingenious and worthy man, wishes to establish a Masonic Lodge, consisting wholly of men of literary attainments or literary propensities, for the express purpose of enquiry into the origin, etc. of the order; he has already been at pains tracing it through its various channels, and elucidating the symbolic part of it. Will you be one of the party? (From "Brother" George Downing, 2 May 1797. Hills, "Masonic Personalities," p. 142)

One Swedenborgian Freemason who may have joined Rainsford's group was Richard Cosway, as obscurely suggested in an 1802 letter from Benedict Chastanier, also possibly a member, to Rainsford. Chastanier complained that General Rainsford's name appears as introducing Cosway's translation of St. Martin's L'Amour Glorifié, whereas it was Chastanier who received copies of the work from Moscow in 1787 and gave one to General Rainsford (Hills, "Masonic Personalities," p. 111).

Throughout his association with the London Swedenborgians and high degree Freemasonry, Rainsford was in steady contact with the alchemist Peter Woulfe and the Swedenborgian "négociant" William Bousie, who were initiates of the Avignon Illuminés. Both men corresponded with Rainsford about the activities of the prophet Richard Brothers and several of his followers, especially as related to their connection with the Avignon Freemasons (Hills, "Masonic Personalities," pp. 108-09). Though

there is a recent study of Richard Brothers and his probable involvement with Blake,⁷ no investigation has yet been made of the Anglo-French Masonic context of the bizarre history of Brothers and his "Illuminized" followers, a context which had a definite influence on Blake's work in the early nineteenth century.

⁷ Morton D. Baley, "William Blake, the Prince of the Hebrews, and the Woman Clothed with the Sun," Essays in Honor of Sir Geoffrey Keynes (Oxford: Clarendon, 1973), pp. 260- 93.