



BRILL

Elitism and Esotericism: Strategies of Secrecy and Power in South Indian Tantra and French Freemasonry

Author(s): Hugh B. Urban

Source: *Numen*, Vol. 44, No. 1 (Jan., 1997), pp. 1-38

Published by: [BRILL](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3270380>

Accessed: 27-07-2015 14:53 UTC

REFERENCES

Linked references are available on JSTOR for this article:

http://www.jstor.org/stable/3270380?seq=1&cid=pdf-reference#references_tab_contents

You may need to log in to JSTOR to access the linked references.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



BRILL is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Numen*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

ELITISM AND ESOTERICISM: STRATEGIES OF SECRECY AND POWER IN SOUTH INDIAN TANTRA AND FRENCH FREEMASONRY

HUGH B. URBAN

Summary

Despite the proliferation of interest in the subjects of secrecy and esotericism throughout popular culture, media and entertainment, these phenomena have only recently begun to be treated seriously by historians of religions. In this essay, I suggest a new way of looking at esotericism by engaging in a comparative, cross-cultural analysis, and by looking in particular at its social and political implications. Specifically, I compare two traditions—the Śrividya school of Indian Tantra, and the Rectified Scottish Rite of French Freemasonry—juxtaposing and analogically relating them in order to shed new light on both. Contrary to many popular conceptions, I argue that *esotericism is by no means primarily a “counter-cultural” or “subversive” phenomenon; rather, it is very often an elitist phenomenon*, the province of highly educated, affluent and powerful intellectuals, who wish, not to undermine existing social structures, but rather subtly to reinforce them, or else to bend and reshape them according to their own interests. This essay examines three primary strategies employed by the Tantrics and Masons: 1) the creation of a new social space or private sphere, which promises “equality” and liberation for all classes, while at the same time constructing new and more rigid hierarchies; 2) a hermeneutical strategy, which appropriates the authority of traditional scriptures, while at the same time asserting the superiority of esoteric exegesis; 3) a ritual strategy, which creates a homology between the body of the initiate, the hierarchy of the cosmos and the hierarchy of the esoteric sect, inscribing the individual into the body of the order, and inscribing the order onto the human body.

It is perhaps only fitting that the phenomenon of “esotericism” should remain one of the most-persistent and pervasive, and yet also most poorly understood and most frequently distorted, aspects of the history of religions. Derived from the Greek term *esoterós*, esotericism refers to what is “inner” or hidden, what is known only to the initiated few, and closed to the majority of mankind in the exoteric world.¹ In the past several years, there appears to have been a grow-

ing fascination with the tantalizing regions of the unknown and the occult—not only in academic disciplines, but also in popular entertainment, media or novels such as *Foucault's Pendulum*. Yet despite this growing interest, the subject of esotericism remains poorly understood and theoretically confused within the academic community.

There are, of course, many fine studies on specific esoteric traditions, such as the work of Gershom Scholem, Frances Yates, Antoine Faivre, André Padoux, and many others on the traditions of Kabbalah, Gnosticism, Hermeticism, Tantra, Sufism, and various pre-modern “secret societies.” Yet what is still lacking, I believe, is any broader cross-cultural and comparative framework; nor has there been adequate attention given to the concrete social and political role of the esoteric traditions within their historical context.² Among the few historians of religions to examine the subject of esotericism cross-culturally are Mircea Eliade and Kees Bolle; but on the whole, the remarks of both Eliade and Bolle remain disappointingly general, universalistic, and largely divorced from social and historical context.³ Even Antoine Faivre’s extensive work on the subject, while probably the best that is presently available, takes virtually no account of the very real social and political contexts in which esoteric traditions emerge, and with which they are inextricably intertwined.⁴

In this essay, I wish to suggest a new approach to the phenomenon of esotericism by placing it within a cross-cultural framework, and by focusing specifically on its socio-political implications. In so doing, I am by no means suggesting a kind of heavy-handed Marxist interpretation; rather, I am simply arguing that, by definition, “secrecy” and “esotericism,” have very real and very direct social and political implications (i.e., the distinction between those who know and those who do not⁵), and that if we ignore these dimensions, we are overlooking an extremely significant aspect of this complex phenomenon. Specifically, I wish to compare two of the world’s most sophisticated esoteric traditions: the Śrīvidyā school of South India Tantra, specifically the school of the 18th century south Indian Brahman, Bhāskararāya, and the Rectified Scottish Rite of French Freemasonry, founded in Lyons in the 1770s. I have chosen these

two examples, first of all, for the pragmatic reason that they are among the few esoteric traditions about which we have a reasonable amount of reliable primary and secondary textual material. Second, they are especially clear illustrations of the esoteric/exoteric dichotomy and the Janus-faced attitude which I wish to examine here.

Most importantly, I will argue against many popular interpretations—such as that of Edward Tiryakian and others—which regard esotericism as a “counter-cultural,” subversive or revolutionary phenomenon.⁶ I wish to show on the contrary that esotericism is very often an *elitist* phenomenon: it is the province of highly educated, affluent and powerful intellectuals, who do not wish to over-throw the existing religious and political structures, but rather, either to *reinforce* them or else to *bend and reshape them* to suit their own private interests. As distinguished from the more general category of “secret societies,” the esoteric tradition is based on a central Janus-faced identity or a clear split between the esoteric and exoteric realms: it allows the individual to live a seemingly orthodox, traditional, conservative life in the outer social world, while at the same time, leading a secret inner life, often involving powerful heterodox or even antinomian esoteric practices.⁷

Before examining these traditions in detail, I would like first to address two basic methodological issues. First, there is the fundamental problem involved in attempting to study a *secret* organization, a tradition which practices *active dissimulation* and intentionally lies to outsiders. Here I wish to employ some of the insights of Beryl Bellman, who has criticized most past theories of “secrecy” like that of Georg Simmel or Edward Shils.⁸ Following Bellman, I suggest that we shift the focus of our analysis away from the “content” or “substance” of secrets (which is ultimately unknowable, if indeed, there even *is* one); instead we should turn to the more fruitful question of the *forms* through which they are exchanged—that is, the *strategies and tactics* (to use the terms of Pierre Bourdieu) through which secrets are concealed and revealed, to whom, in what contexts and through what relations of power they are exchanged.⁹ Lamont Lindstrom, in his work on the Tanna peoples of the south Pacific, takes

this argument yet a step further: using Bourdieu's economic language, he suggests that what is important about "secrets" is not the hidden meanings they profess to contain, but rather, the complex "economy of exchanges" or the "marketable value" which secrets have as a commodity of knowledge and power within a given community.¹⁰

The second methodological question is, why do a comparison? Following J.Z. Smith, I suggest that the value of such a comparison is much the same value that we gain from a good metaphor, in Max Black's sense of the term: by bringing together and juxtaposing two different, previously unrelated things, we can gain new insights into both.¹¹ I am by no means searching for some universal archetype or deeper identity; rather, I am simply employing comparison as a pragmatic tool or heuristic device, which can help us to see new things that would otherwise go unnoticed. Nor will I be engaging in a simplistic point-for-point comparison of similar doctrine and content; again, I wish to shift the basis of comparison away from the level of content and instead to that of *strategy*, or the tactics for manipulating these doctrines and practices in relation to specific social or political interests.

This paper will be organized around three primary strategies employed by the Śrīvidyā Tantrics and the Scottish Rite Masons. First, the creation of a new, esoteric social space; second, a hermeneutical strategy or a style of reading sacred texts; and third a ritual strategy, which is enacted through secret initiation.

I. Constructing a New Private Sphere: Strategies of "Egalitarianism" and Re-Hierarchialization

The first strategy I will examine here is the creation of an alternative social sphere: this is a double-edged strategy, which, on the one hand, offers the vision of an egalitarian social order, free from all hierarchical divisions of class and sex, while on the other hand, it also establishes new, more complex and at times more rigid hierarchies of authority.¹²

Among the many schools of Indian Tantra, the Śrīvidyā or "Auspicious Wisdom" is one of the best known and most powerful.¹³ This

tradition, which emerged during the 7th century in South India, spread as far as Kashmir and came to full flowering in the 18th century, is distinguished by its specifically orthodox or Vedic (Vaidika) brand of Tantrism. It respects the outward, public side of the mainstream Brahminical tradition, while at the same time asserting the superiority of its secret tradition. In fact, as Douglas Brooks has suggested in his study of the Śrīvidyā tradition, many South Indian Brahmins became especially interested in the rituals of Tantra precisely at a time when Brahminical power was being threatened by the rise of bhakti and Śāṅkara Vedānta. For Tantra opened up a secret realm in which Brahmins could retain their traditional power and privilege, yet without losing their orthodox authority in the exoteric social sphere. Hence it not only “reinforces the Vedic hierarchy of privilege” but also “reorders it to suit the changing situation of classical Hinduism;”

Tantric ritual and ideology continues to provide a means by which brahman society perpetuates the perception of itself as privileged in the midst of radical social and economic changes that do not always privilege brahmins.¹⁴

Perhaps the greatest name in South Indian Tantra was Bhāskararāya, a highly respected, wealthy Brahmin of the mid 18th century, and the son of a minister at the court of Bijapur. After studying both the Vedas and the Tantras in Varanasi, Bhāskara returned to the South, where he was favored by the Maratha King, Seforji of Tañjavūr, and granted authority over a large village.¹⁵ A prolific writer, he was famed for his great knowledge of the Vedas and enjoyed a large and wealthy patronage. Yet simultaneously, Bhāskararāya also believed that the true essence and inner core of the Vedas was not orthodox tradition, but rather a body of secret Tantric texts; and he developed an ingenious method of esoteric hermeneutical strategies, which serve to appropriate the legitimating authority of the Vedas, while at the same time, asserting the ultimate superiority of his own Tantric teachings. Bhāskararāya himself was an active Tantric practitioner, who engaged in secret rituals involving forbidden substances, such as meat, wine and sexual intercourse with low class women.

On the surface, Śrīvidyā Tantra might appear to offer a new kind of egalitarian, antihierarchical social ideal: it opens its rituals to women,

sudras and non twice-born castes, in some cases allowing them to read even the most sacred texts of the Veda. Within the secret space of the Tantric ritual, there is no distinction of caste or sex, for here all divisions are transcended in absolute unity: In Bhāskararāya's words: "A slave, a fisherman, a cheat, every living being is the Self of all. . . . One who has done what is to be done in all respects, if he leaves his body in the house of a butcher or in the holy city of Kāśī, there is no difference: he is liberated while yet living."¹⁶

But paradoxically, despite this apparent ideal of 'equality,' Bhāskararāya was by no means a revolutionary or a subversive. On the contrary, not only was he a high-class brahman, but he was also very much interested in preserving the traditional privileges of brahminical religion. If caste hierarchies can be transcended in secret ritual, they are enforced and even reinforced on the exoteric level of social interaction. Moreover, even though the Tantras proclaim that women as well as men have the authority to practice their esoteric rituals, this gender equality is actually rather superficial: Idealized in secret ritual, women continue to remain subservient and powerless in the rest of social life: As Brooks comments, "Women . . . are made subordinate to males, and their ritual role is . . . limited to . . . being a partner for male adepts."¹⁷ Much the same may be said for the professed equality of castes, and the seeming liberation of low classes: they are used primarily as *tools* to enhance the power of high class tantric practitioners in esoteric rites, and rarely find any real equality in the world of social interaction. "This egalitarianism does not . . . extend to the social field," Padoux comments, "Even though Tantrism is . . . notable for transgressive practices in violation of caste . . . it does not appear at all socially egalitarian, and still less revolutionary."¹⁸ The Tantric initiate, in short, seeks to maintain a delicate and ingenious double-norm. By means of this "dual edged strategy for living in both Tantric and Vedic worlds" he can retain his authority and legitimacy in the outer social world, while at the same time cultivating a supremely powerful and liberated esoteric identity.

Despite the obviously vast difference in social and historical context, I wish to suggest that a very similar strategy is at work in

the Rectified Scottish Rite of French Masonry. Although there is enormous debate over the origins of Freemasonry, most scholars agree that it grew out of the guilds of “operative” stone masons in 17th century Europe. As Frances Yates and David Stevenson have shown, sometime in late 17th century England and Scotland, the Masonic lodges began to be infiltrated by non-practicing or speculative masons—largely aristocrats and high bourgeoisie, who sought, and often purchased, the prestige that came with being a member of the brotherhood. Having bought their way into the older guild structure, this socially ambitious group of Enlightenment gentry and wealthy bourgeoisie transformed it according to their own interests.¹⁹ In her study of Masonry and European politics, Margaret Jacob follows the lead of Jürgen Habermas, arguing that the lodge became one of the most powerful new “social spaces” of the Enlightenment: it opened up a new social sphere, beyond the bounds of ordinary society, for the free interaction of learned and wealthy men. But the new speculative lodges, Jacob concludes, were inherently Janus-faced: on one hand, they were a primary vehicle for the rising new intellectuals of the Enlightenment in their quest for social power; they helped to cultivate the values of the Enlightenment, “to civilize, to teach manners, to augment the harmony of civil society.” But on the other hand, they were also a means of reinforcing the traditional privileges of wealthy aristocrats of the Ancien Régime—privileges which were being threatened more and more toward the end of the 18th century.²⁰

In the late 18th century, particularly in France, the speculative lodges began to incorporate an increasing amount of magical and occult symbolism, drawn from the esoteric traditions of Kabbalah, Hermeticism, Templar lore, alchemy and Rosicrucianism. The full flowering of this mystical-magical side occurred in the highly ornate, ritualized orders of The Grand Lodge of France, The Grand Orient and above all the various Scottish Rites.²¹ Among the many Scottish Rites—which have little whatever to do with Scotland—one of the most sophisticated was the Rectified Scottish Rite. As Faivre and Le Forestier have shown, the Rectified Scottish Rite was founded in the 1760’s by a group of high bourgeoisie and aristocrats in Lyons, and

inspired by a mysterious Jewish convert to Catholicism named Martinez de Pasqually (b. 1727?). With his complex mixture of Jewish Kabbalah, alchemy and Masonic lore, Pasqually professed to reveal the true inner secret of the Christian tradition, which had been covered over and distorted by the priesthood of the Catholic Church; he then created his own esoteric brotherhood, known as the *Élus Coens* (from the Hebrew, *cohen*, or priest).²² Pasqually's teachings were later continued by his greatest disciples, Louis-Claude de Saint Martin and Jean Baptist Willermoz, the founder of the rectified Scottish Rite, which flourished in Lyons, Bourdeaux, and Marseilles. Disgusted with the frivolity and lack of discipline in the lodges of his day, Willermoz set out to construct a reformed, re-organized Order—*le Rite Écossais Rectifié*—which would convey the “rare and important truths” and esoteric doctrines” veiled behind Masonic symbols.²³

The following of the Rectified Rite was primarily a mixture of upper middle class and aristocratic members—an exclusive circle of “nobles, officers, clergy and prosperous bourgeoisie,” who formed an “elite religion reserved for aristocrats” distinguished from the “religion of the masses.”²⁴ Saint-Martin, for example, came from a very wealthy aristocratic family, and had enjoyed a prestigious career in the military.²⁵ Willermoz, on the other hand, was born a petit bourgeois merchant, with little social status; however as his biographer Alice Joly points out, he found in the esoteric world of Masonry and secret initiation an immense new source of status and prestige. For he was now the possessor of an ancient and priceless body of secret knowledge, which was in fact very highly esteemed in the eyes of the French upper classes and aristocracy of his time. “A very powerful idea had captured him: *the prestige of Masonic secrecy*. The silence that guarded each of its institutions seemed to conceal a *deposit of important, and therefore desirable, knowledge*.”²⁶ Not only was he patronized by Charles of Hesse, Ferdinand of Brunswick and other powerful European princes; but more importantly, after the French Revolution had destroyed his previous wealth, it was largely his esoteric knowledge and Masonic prestige which allowed Willermoz to

rebuild his status in Lyonnais society. By the end of his life, Willermoz was one of the most respected figures in Lyons.

It is surprising that this . . . merchant in silks . . . was not distinguished by his importance in industry or by his social activities, but by his knowledge of occult doctrines and by the important role he would play in the Masonic secret societies of the 18th century.²⁷

As Le Forestier suggests, Willermoz, like other members of esoteric circles of his day, was thus able to live a kind of “double life”—on the one hand, a prosperous merchant and a devout Christian, well-respected in his community, and on the other hand, a master of arcane and occult knowledge, highly respected within a hidden, esoteric and elite brotherhood:

Willermoz was a curious person because of a double nature which he had assumed since youth. . . This merchant of silk garments was to most citizens a well known businessman, upright in his affairs, handsomely enriched by his commerce, an excellent Christian. . . But there were also . . . Masons who knew him to be a very learned Brother, the chief of a group which was important because of the mysterious knowledge it cultivated.²⁸

The writings and rituals of the Scottish Rite, like most Masonic literature, are filled with the rhetoric of equality, universal brotherhood, and liberty from all class distinctions. This is one reason that Freemasonry has often been accused—generally falsely—of collaboration in the French Revolution and other subversive activities. “Cosmopolitanism and natural equality are the obligatory themes of all the harangues of the lodges.”²⁹ Willermoz, in particular, wished to restore the true “Masonic humanitarianism, mystical fraternity, and charity,” which he believed was at the heart of the Scottish Rite. In Masonic rhetoric, the lodge brings together the most noble and the most humble, the highest class and the lowest, uniting social extremes.

Freemasonry . . . is a universal alliance of enlightened men, united to work for the perfection of humanity. . . It is not a religion in the strict sense of the word. But more than any other institution its effect is to unite men.³⁰

(Indeed, we may note that some of the French orders of the late 18th century even began to allow women to join their ranks, proclaiming the equality of both sexes within the sacred space of the lodge).³¹

However, despite this rhetoric of harmony and unity, the lodges were usually far from egalitarian. The members of the Rectified Scottish Rite were in fact quite conservative in their political views, and many of them, like Saint-Martin, openly opposed the French Revolution, which destroyed their elite social and financial status. Willermoz himself suffered terribly from the horrors of the Revolution, which destroyed both his material prosperity and much of the esoteric tradition he had sought to construct: “the Revolution overturned his life, destroyed the lodges, decimated the Masons;” indeed, “he had suffered enough during the Terror to remain a faithful member of the *Ancien Régime* under the Restoration.”³²

Contrary to any sort of democratic ideal, the Scottish Rite is a clear illustration of a theme common to all the lodges: the love of hierarchy, reverence for superior authority and elaborate systems of promotions and advancements. As Le Forestier remarks, there is little basis for the idea that the French lodges promoted a revolutionary spirit in politics or an abolition of social barriers; “on the contrary, the French lodges were—in the full sense of the word—conservative both politically and religiously.”³³ Far from being on the forefront of liberal democratic politics, they were on the contrary much more commonly rooted in the hierarchies of the *Ancien Régime*. “French freemasonry reveals a movement dominated by aristocrats. . . . The French aristocracy had more privileges to protect, more at stake in any reformist vision of a new social order than almost any other elite in western Europe.”³⁴ The Masonic writings are filled, moreover, with disdain for the ignorant masses outside of their elite brotherhood—called “the profane” or the vile common populace. (Indeed, it appears that even those lodges which included women within their ranks did so only in order to refute the charges of homosexuality which were frequently aimed at them by their critics.) As Jacob concludes, “Although they spoke of all brothers as equal this did not obviate the role the lodges played as places that replicated hierarchy;”

Fraternal binding obscured the social divisions and the inequities of rank and degree endemic to the lives of men who embraced 'equality' and 'liberty.' In making social divisions less obvious the idealism of freemasonry ironically served to reinforce them . . . they obfuscated the real divisions of wealth, education and social practice.³⁵

II. Stolen Lightning: Esoteric Hermeneutical Strategies and Occult Exegesis

The second strategy employed by the esoteric sect is a hermeneutical one, a tactic of self-legitimation by way of scriptural hermeneutics: their goal is to re-interpret the traditional texts and meta-narratives, in order to prove that they contain a secret kernel which has been hidden throughout history, but which has been passed on to a select group of esoteric initiates. This is a strategy of legitimation by appeal to ancient authority, what Daniel O'Keefe has called a strategy for "stealing the lightning" of sacred texts:³⁶ it is an ingenious double-edged strategy which, on the one hand, appropriates the authority of the revealed scriptures, while, on the other hand, asserting a deeper esoteric teaching, which transcends the outward 'letter' or 'husk' of those same scriptures. Hence, it is also a formidable source of symbolic power. As Lamont Lindstrom has argued, the possession of "secret knowledge" represents an important kind of "symbolic capital," in Bourdieu's terms; to hold the secret of authoritative texts and traditions is to hold the key to a network of power relations, defining the status of those who possess secret knowledge and those to whom secrets may be revealed.³⁷

Bhāskararāya, as we have seen, was very learned in the Vedic traditions, and highly respected as an authority on the orthodox interpretation of the Vedas. But at the same time, unbeknown to most of his contemporaries, he also believed that the true essence of the Vedas is not the orthodox teaching, but is rather the secret doctrine of the Tantras. He even suggests that some Tantric wisdom is already hidden within the Vedas—though concealed at a purely esoteric level: "This has not been expressly stated in Vedic passages, as it is naturally understood. Still it has been shown in Tantric lore."³⁸ Such

implicit meanings are in need of a special interpretation, which can only be done through initiatic gnosis; for “one needs the interpretive insight of the initiated . . . adept to reveal the Veda’s deeply secret intended meaning. . . Tantric wisdom . . . is encoded within esoteric Vedic sources.”³⁹

Not only did he re-interpret the Vedic texts, however, but Bhāskara-rāya also defended certain Tantric texts—above all, an esoteric work known as the *Tripurā Upaniṣad*—as being revealed scripture (*śruti*), having the same origin and the same inherent authority as the Veda itself. The *Tripurā Upaniṣad* was claimed to be part of both the *R̥g* and *Atharva Vedas*, while at the same time having the sacred efficacy of both a Tantric and a Vedic text. However, only one who has been initiated and instructed in the esoteric knowledge of the Tantras can discern the pure kernel of the scriptures from the mundane, worldly chaff; and only he can rank them according to a graded hierarchy of truth, extending from the ultimate level of Tantric empowerment to the relative levels of orthodoxy and ritual purity.

The Vaidika Tantric legitimizes Tantric practice by establishing continuity with the Veda. . . Tantrics create several interpretive strategies to relate Tantric and Vedic traditions. . . Their overall strategy is to rank . . . the contents of Vedic texts. . . They then distinguish the esoteric elements that deal with liberation and worldly empowerment, . . . from those rituals that are meant for the less qualified.⁴⁰

Now, the key to all these esoteric hermeneutical strategies is a new interpretation of the “metanarrative” of sacred history itself. For it is because of these degenerate, degraded times in which we live that it has now become necessary to reveal the most rapid and expedient—but therefore also the most dangerous—path to salvation, which is contained in the Tantras. Previously the Tantric teachings had been hidden implicitly within the Vedas, but now, because human beings have sunken to such a bestial level, it is necessary to proclaim them explicitly. Here, the Tantrics are exploiting a very ancient Indian theory of history: the descending cycles of the Yugas, which finally sink to the worst, most chaotic age of the Kali Yuga. However, the Tantrics have also very skillfully reinterpreted this traditional meta-

narrative and turned it to their own advantage, to justify their own unorthodox practices: “non-Tantric Hindu interpretations of the Veda . . . fail to meet the needs of the degenerate Kali age. . . As a remedy Tantrics teach the necessity of . . . esoteric (*rahasya*) forms of knowledge.” And precisely because they are so rapid, so dangerous and potentially destructive, these teachings must be revealed only in the carefully controlled ritual environs of the Tantric hierarchy.⁴¹

Perhaps the very heart of this esoteric re-interpretation of the sacred Scriptures is a re-telling of the creation narrative itself. The esoteric initiate knows the secret meaning of the creation of the world, which is contained in only a veiled and obscure form in the Vedas. In the Śrīvidyā school, which is closely related, philosophically, to the highly sophisticated metaphysics of Kashmir Śaivism, the Ultimate Deity from which all things have been created is the female Goddess—Śakti, Devī, Śrī or Tripurā, the Goddess of the three Cities or Worlds, who pervade the gross, subtle and supreme planes of existence. Out of the primordial unity of the Great Goddess, which is Pure Undifferentiated Consciousness (*Samvit*), two basic principles devolve: the female and the male, the active and the passive, called Śakti and Śiva, who embody the two basic aspects of Consciousness: Pure Light or Awareness (*Prakāśa*) and its reflection or self-awareness (*Vimarśa*).⁴² The erotic union and dialectical interplay of these two principles gives birth to the illusion of the created world (*Māyā*, *Prakṛti*), with its myriad dream-like forms. It is within this world of illusion and multiplicity that we finite human beings are also enmeshed; however, because all things have been generated out of the supreme energy of Śakti, which derives from the Great Goddess herself, we still contain within ourselves a hidden spark of this Absolute power and freedom of Pure Consciousness (*Samvit*):

Śiva and Śakti . . . stand in relation of *Prakāśa* and *Vimarśa*. . . *Vimarśa* [is] the spontaneous vibration of *prakāśa*, which gives rise to the world of distinctions. . . Prakṛti or Māyā is . . . the substance of Śakti under whose direction it evolves into the material elements. . . The individual, under the influence of Māyā, looks upon himself as a free agent, and it is only the knowledge of Śakti that leads him to liberation.⁴³

Now, the strategic function of this kind of esoteric exegesis is twofold: first, by reserving its contents solely for the initiated few, it serves to construct a body of rare, exclusive and therefore extremely valuable, knowledge, a very precious “commodity” of information—the possession of which bestows enormous prestige and “symbolic capital” upon the initiate. Second, it then legitimates this knowledge by presenting it as the deeper, hidden and true core of the exoteric Scripture, at once connected to, yet more profound than, the outer revelation.

Like the Tantras, the Masonic texts unanimously assert that they represent a secret and profound teaching, passed down from initiate to initiate from the most ancient times; and much like the Tantrics, many Masons also claim to know the innermost secret of the Holy Scriptures themselves. In their highly imaginative attempts to “establish a pedigree,” the Masonic historians trace the tradition back to certain legendary or Scriptural events, such as the building of the Temple of Jerusalem, the Pyramids in Egypt, the Knights Templars or the schools of Pythagoras and Hermes. Some take this still further and proclaim that Masonry represents the universal, common essence of all religions—Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, alike. In the “Mystico-Masonic legend of the occult tradition,” elaborated in the Rectified Scottish Rite, this secret history is traced back to the Temple of Solomon, recounting its original construction by the architect Hiram in 960, its destruction in 587 by Babylonians, its reconstruction by Zorobabel, and finally, the transmission of its esoteric secrets through the later traditions of the Templars.⁴⁴

Within the present-day Masonic tradition, God has now seen fit to reveal this universal religion, which has been hidden since the beginning of the world, but which now must be made known due to the extreme circumstances of the present age. According to Saint-Martin, “The Catholic Church has completed its mission; its time is over,” and the time has come for “the revelation of an ideal Christianity.” Because the exoteric Church has grown corrupt and full of sin, it is necessary to restore the true teaching of Christ through esoteric initiation: “The Church now only possesses a degenerate religion. It

has placed an idol on the throne of God . . . the theosopher must not reveal the great secret. . . He must halt the fool at the threshold of the temple and retire with his initiates behind the veil of the sanctuary.”⁴⁵ True knowledge is both easily profaned and potentially destructive; thus, it must be the secret possession of a select few. It must be made deliberately hard to find, a scarce and precious commodity, which can be attained only through the proper hierarchies and initiatory grades:

Paradoxically, secrecy and obscurity become an essential part of the struggle to unlock secrets. Simple literal language is too . . . vulgar to convey great truths. . . Alchemical, Rosicrucian and astrological literature . . . is incomprehensible not through the inability of the authors to express their meaning . . . but through their desire . . . to make them hard to find, only discernible to the adept prepared to struggle to comprehend them.⁴⁶

Within the Rectified Scottish Rite, the most profound secret, and heart of this occult hermeneutics lies a new interpretation of the cosmogony and the structure of the universe. Martinez de Pasqually (whose teachings were later passed on and elaborated by Willermoz and his disciples), claimed to have learned through direct personal experience the true secret of the Book of Genesis and the innermost meaning of the Creation narrative itself. His most important treatise, the *Traité de la Réintégration*, “seeks to be, in the manner of the Zohar, an esoteric commentary and a pseudo-historical complement to the Pentateuch,” which retells the story of the creation of the world and the fall of man from a theosophical point of view.⁴⁷ Indeed, not only did Pasqually assert that he knew the true meaning of the Bible, but he also claimed to hold the secret of the true nature of God and the creation. Borrowing heavily from Kabbalistic tradition, mixed with Gnostic and Hermetic elements, Pasqually tells us that God is not simply a Trinity of Person who created the universe out of nothing. Rather, the universe has emanated out of the Godhead in a descending scale or progression, a grand hierarchy which is constructed on the model of the Temple of Solomon. Like the ten Kabbalistic Sephiroth and the tenfold Pythagorean Tetraktys, this great cosmic Temple is composed of ten “Spirits” or cosmic energies, arranged in a four-tiered, hierarchical pyramid (1 + 2 + 3 + 4 = 10). These four

tiers, in turn, correspond to the four levels of Solomon's Temple: the Divine Immensity above the Temple, the Supercelestial Immensity (the Sanctuary), the Celestial Immensity (the Interior Temple) and the Terrestrial Universe (the Porch). Contrary to the "limited" and "simplistic" Catholic view of the Deity, the Masonic view suggests a dynamic and dialectical Godhead, which does not transcend the cosmos in some other world, but rather pervades the entire hierarchical body of the cosmos, manifesting itself in the structure of the great cosmic Temple. The Divinity emanates the universe out of itself in a dialectical expansion, and ultimately re-absorbs all things back into itself through the work of reintegration. In the well-known Masonic symbols, these two movements of descent and return are represented by the downward pointing triangular Compass and the upwardly pointing Square—and together, the two form the central symbol of the Solomon's Seal, or the Star of David (see fig. 3).⁴⁸

Having revealed the true Nature of the Godhead, Pasqually and Willermoz then proceed to explain the real meaning of the creation and fall of mankind. Borrowing heavily from Gnostic and Kabbalistic cosmogonies, Pasqually tells us that the world of Terrestrial Nature was originally created as a pure and translucent "spiritual matter;" the hard and corruptible world of matter that we now call earth was created only after the Fall of Lucifer and his fellow rebel-angels. When they attempted to defy God and assert themselves in His place, the angels were cast out of heaven and imprisoned within the heavy, gross real of physical matter. Adam, then, was created as the perfect image and agent of God, whose task was to guard over the world of matter and the evil spirits, to prevent them from escaping. In his primordial state, in fact, Adam was still a divine androgyne, a hermaphrodite who contained male and female within himself. Created at the center of the universe, as the quintessence of all things, he had no ordinary body of flesh and blood, but rather a divine, astral or spiritual body, a body of glory and light. "The form in which Adam was placed was purely spiritual and glorious, so that it could dominate all creation, and exercise the power which he had been given by the Creator over all beings." However, because of his own pride and lust, Adam

was tempted by the evil spirits and so fell away from God into the dark realm of matter. "In place of a glorious form he only received a shadowy form of matter. This was Eve or woman."⁴⁹ Yet despite this fall into corruption, every human being still contains within the depths of his soul the remembrance of his primordial androgyny and spiritual body, and every man still has the possibility of recovering this pristine state of unity.

Now, despite the complexity of these elaborate metaphysical systems and esoteric interpretations, I would suggest that the strategy behind both the Tantric and Masonic approaches is similar: first, it provides an "orthodox" Scriptural legitimation for an esoteric and rather unorthodox secret society; and second, by surrounding a certain body of knowledge with prohibitions, mystery and veils of symbolism, *it serves to create a body of rare and valuable information: it transforms ordinary knowledge into a precious commodity, the possession of which confers a new kind of status, power and prestige—and new symbolic capital—upon the one who has been initiated into these mysteries.* Finally, it also provides the foundation for the rituals and initiations which will be the central operations of the secret society. As we will now see, the Tantric and Masonic initiations are intended precisely to un-do or reverse the cosmogonic unfolding, to return man to his God-like state of unity.

III. The New Man: the Deconstruction of the Individual Body and the Birth of the New Esoteric Identity, Inscribed within the Hierarchical Body of the Society

The esoteric initiate claims to hold the secret key, not only to the true sacred tradition and the true meaning of the Scriptures, but also to a new esoteric Identity, a supreme Self which lies hidden behind the outward illusion of his social ego. The third strategy I wish to examine is one that must be enacted ritually, through secret initiation. As he ascends the grades of knowledge, the adept's own exoteric self is destroyed and put to death; symbolically, his ordinary physical body is dissolved, while at the same time, the ordinary boundaries of the "social body" are also transgressed. In its place, the initiate then

receives a new esoteric 'I' and a new "spiritual body," which is now *inscribed* by the hierarchy of initiations and grades, and at the same time *inscribed within* the hierarchical structure of the secret society.⁵⁰

For the Tantric practitioner, the prerequisite for all higher forms of ritual is the initiation (*dīkṣā*) at the hands of an experienced guru. Through initiation, the adept passes from his mundane worldly, exoteric identity into a new, esoteric identity, shifting from the world of established social structures, into a new role within the secret society (the *kula*, "family" and *paramparā*, "lineage"). This can only occur, however, through the most radical experience of death and dissolution (*laya*) of his old, outward identity, which is the core of initiation.⁵¹ This is achieved through ritual meditation, by visualizing the power (*Śakti*) of the great Goddess as a raging fire, which blazes up within the initiate and consumes his entire body. As the fire of the Goddess rises upward through the adept, it progressively devours and dissolves each of the 36 elements (*tattvas*) which comprise all existing things. Initiation, as Sanderson points out, represents the destruction of the exoteric, social identity of the initiate, which will prepare him to be reborn with a new esoteric, supremely powerful identity within the hierarchy of the Tantric lineage.⁵²

Now, if the Tantric initiation dissolves the ordinary body and identity of the adept, the more advanced Tantric practices aim to dissolve—albeit temporarily and within the confines of ritual—all ordinary social boundaries. As Louis Dumont has shown, the orthodox Hindu religious and social order, is based largely on a complex classification and hierarchical structuring of the world and society: all things may be categorized according to a hierarchy of relative purity and impurity, with Brahmins at the top and Untouchables at the bottom.⁵³ The aim of Tantric ritual, however, is nothing other than to manipulate precisely those substances which are considered most impure and polluting in the eyes of orthodox Hindu society. As Sanderson comments, even the high class Brahmin Tantrics like Abhinavagupta and Bhāskararāya engaged in an "occult manipulation of impurity" in order to release the dangerous, wild and chaotic power of what is forbidden and unclean. The secret initiation unleashes

the awesome power of ritual impurity, sexuality and violence; it infuses the initiate with a supreme esoteric power, and reveals to him a supreme, divinized Selfhood, transcending all the laws of the outward social order.⁵⁴

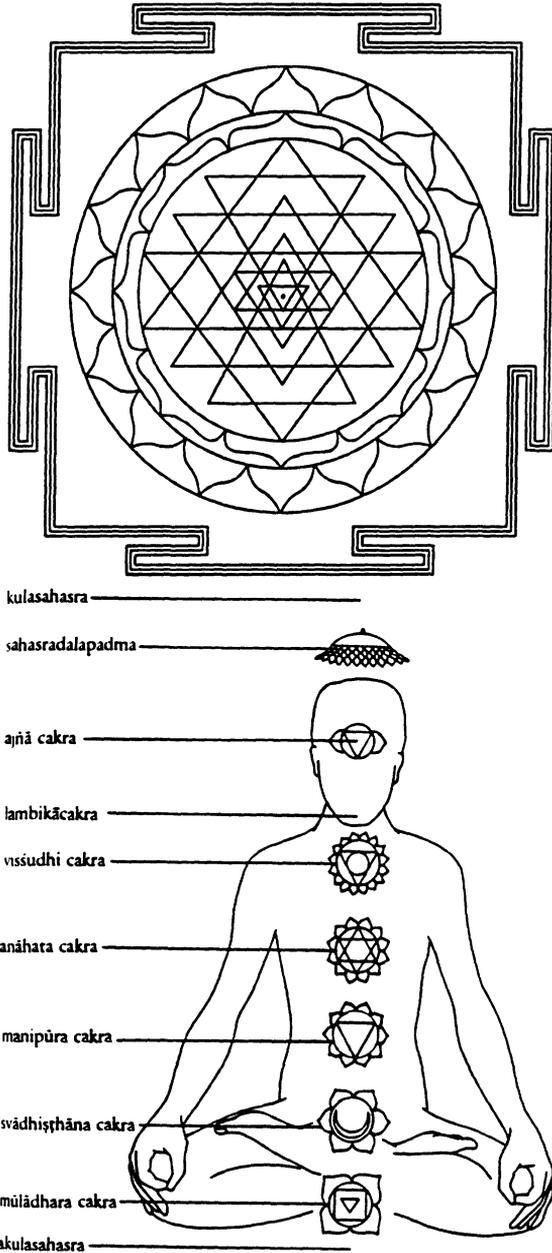
Yet ultimately, the aim behind the transgression of orthodox laws of purity is by no means a matter of antinomianism. Rather, this represents an explicit and calculated manipulation of the boundaries of the social order, of purity and impurity, in order to attain a radical form of power which transcends the dualities of the mundane world. In the course of Tantric ritual, the initiate will manipulate substances which are normally considered polluting in the orthodox Hindu tradition—namely, the well-known five Ms of Tantric practice: meat, fish, wine, parched grain and sexual intercourse. However, as André Padoux points out, if it is true that the Tantric manipulates impure substances as a source of ritual power, these substances only have such power because they are normally regulated by strict laws of purity. The Tantric does not simply abolish the duality of purity and impurity, but on the contrary *exploits* this duality by first *intensifying* and then *transgressing* it. Thus it becomes a “new mechanism for assuring the privilege of Tantrics over non-Tantrics,” of proving that he transcends the ordinary *pasus*, who are still bound by the conventional world of dualities and exoteric laws: “The dichotomies of impure/pure are . . . mechanisms for episodic forms of power. The Tantric’s deliberate reversal of brahmanic values through . . . meat, liquor and sex presents an opportunity to exploit the distinction between pure and impure.”⁵⁵

Indeed, far from obliterating all social structures in antinomian ecstasy, the Śrīvidyā Tantric creates a new esoteric social structure (the *kula* or family and *paramparā* or lineage of the Tantric sect) with an even more elaborate hierarchical order. This hierarchy is based on the graded structure of the universe, and is embodied in the famous Tantric diagram, the Śrī Cakra (see fig. 1). As Bhāskaraṛāya explains in his commentary on the *Tripurā Upaniṣad*, the Śrī Cakra is composed of a series of nine interpenetrating triangles, surrounded by an outer circle, which represent the nine stages of the unfolding of the cosmos. At the center of the diagram is the bindu or seed point, which

is the symbol of the Absolute unity of the Goddess Śakti or Tripurā and her consort Śiva. United in this central point, Śiva and Śakti symbolize the original nonduality of masculine and feminine, the eternal source and the power of creation, the illumination (*prakāśa*) of pure consciousness and its reflection (*vimarśa*) as self-awareness. And the nine interpenetrating triangles which emanate from this central point represent the progressive stages of creation as it radiates from this supreme unity into the multiplicity of the universe. In the process of Tantric meditation and the practice of Kuṇḍalinī yoga, the initiate will then discover this same ninefold hierarchy within his own body, in the nine energy centers or *cakras* which run along the spine from the genitals to the top of the head (the *mūlādhāra* [groin], the *svādhiṣṭhāna* [genitals], the *maṇipūra* [navel], the *anāhata* [stomach], the *viśuddhi* [neck], the *lambikā* [mouth], the *ajñā* [eye brows], the *sahasrāra* [the crown] and the *kulasahara* [above the head]) (see fig. 2).⁵⁶

However, more than just a cosmogram and psychogram, the Śrī Cakra is also a kind of *cult-o-gram* or sociogram—an emblem of the divine power of the Guru and the hierarchy of the Tantric sect. As Bhāskaraṛāya states in his commentary on the *Bhavana Upanisad*, the nine levels of the Śrī Cakra also correspond to the nine apertures of the body of the Guru and to the nine forms through which he manifests his teaching to his disciples: “The master is the primordial power. The ninefold character of his body is revealed by the nine apertures of his body.”⁵⁷ Still further, the nine levels are then identified with the nine primary gurus of the Tantric lineage. The Gurus exist at three spiritual levels—the divine, human and intermediary forms—and at each level there are three different Gurus—the immediate master, his master and his master’s master. When the adept is initiated into this system, and when he passes through this hierarchy in ritual or meditation, he is simultaneously *inscribing* the hierarchy of the Tantric lineage upon his own body and consciousness. And in turn, he himself is inscribed within the hierarchical body of the lineage.

By ascending the hierarchy of initiations, and by ascending the series of *cakras* within his body, the Tantrika hopes to realize his own true Self—his own pure awareness which is identical with the



Figures 1 and 2. The Śrī Cakra diagram and the cakras of the human body (from Brooks, *The Secret of the Three Cities*).

supreme consciousness of the Goddess Śakti. In the Śrī Cakra diagram, this is represented by the meditative journey from the periphery to the center of the diagram, which moves through the nine-fold hierarchy of triangles to the ultimate divine point at center: “The path leads to the unity of undifferentiated divine being . . . the One without a second . . . the totality of pure Being.”⁵⁸

At the highest stages of Tantric practice, the adept discovers that this divine process of the creation and re-absorption of the universe is in fact going on within his own body and his own consciousness—he discovers, in other words, the fact of his own identity with the Goddess, his own Godhood. “Śrī Cakra is in the form of nine Cakras . . . it is the body. One’s own body is not different from the Śrī Cakra which has as its form the collection of cakras.”⁵⁹ Hence, the great reintegration of the male and female halves of the universe can be accomplished in no better way than through actual sexual yoga or *maithuna*, which obliterates the illusory duality of the material world by an actual union of opposites—male and female, high and low caste, pure and impure—in secret ritual. The most important means for this radical return to unity is the yogic technique known as Laya yoga (the process of “dissolution”) or Kuṇḍalinī yoga, the arousal of the inner spiritual energy of the body through sexual intercourse. By engaging in ritual intercourse, the adept hopes to arouse and “ignite” the divine energy (the goddess Kuṇḍalinī, representing the microcosmic form of the Goddess) which lies coiled within his own body, slumbering like a serpent at the base of the spine. Once awakened by means of physical intercourse, this inner serpent-fire is then caused to ascend through the body in a kind of “internalized sexual intercourse.” The female energy of Kuṇḍalinī rises through the hierarchy of cakras within the body, until it comes to ecstatic union with the divine male principle, the God Śiva, at the top of the head. As the divine energy of Śakti ascends through the body, passing through the hierarchical levels of the microcosm, it simultaneously brings about the reversal and reabsorption of the entire cosmos, re-integrating the hierarchical levels of the macrocosm itself. It represents nothing less than the

reversion of both the world and the body back into divine unity and Pure, Undifferentiated Consciousness (*Samvit*).⁶⁰

At this stage, the *sādhaka* realizes his own deepest identity with the Goddess herself, and thus with all of her creative and destructive powers: “the goal of the practice is not only to identify one’s innermost soul with the divine Goddess, it is to participate in all her powers . . . including the creation and dissolution of the universe.”⁶¹

In the center of the *cakras* made up of human limbs and sensory organs stands the Goddess; her shape is Self-Knowledge (*saṁvid*) for the sake of universal perfection let him worship her with all the flowers of his consciousness of Self. The Goddess Tripurā is his own knowledge of himself; her crimson colored body signifies his Comprehension.⁶²

Such a man has now realized within himself a supremely powerful and liberated Self, which radically transcends the laws of the exoteric social order. He who has “attained Brahman’s form,” Bhāskararāya states, may leave behind rules and “do as he likes.”⁶³

This does not, however, mean a subversion or revolt against the social order; on the contrary, it gives the initiate a dual or Janus-faced identity, a heterodox “occult Self,” which is encoded within and behind the illusion of the outer social self. Outwardly, the initiate follows the traditional laws and restrictions of orthodox religion and social structure; but inwardly he possesses a “superhuman power,” the ability “to do things that others cannot or come into contact with things that are routinely dangerous or polluting.”⁶⁴ In the words of a contemporary Śrīvidyā adept,

we should remain like Vaiṣṇavas for worldly purposes, like Śaivas in outward appearance and like Śāktas inwardly. . . We should keep our Śākta *sādhanā* to ourselves. . . Everyone knows that Śāktas have great power.⁶⁵

In short, the Tantric seeks to maintain an ingenious kind of ‘double-norm,’ a dual-edged strategy for living in both Tantric and Vedic worlds. On the exoteric level a moral paragon, and on the esoteric level an antinomian, the Tantrika does not seek to subvert or undermine the orthodox social order, but in fact subtly *re-negotiates* it to suit his own interests. As Brooks concludes, the Śrīvidyā tradition

thereby helped to reinforce Brahminical power and authority when it was being threatened by other movements such as bhakti or Vedānta. By no means “an egalitarian agenda open to all,” Śrīvidyā “assumes the conservative agenda of Brahmanism:” “Those possessed traditionally of such privileges, namely Brahmins, become deeply interested in Tantrism as an alternative to other ideologies that demand a diminution of specialized knowledge.”⁶⁶

That the Masonic initiations and secret practices are quite profoundly different from those of the Indian Tantrics should go without saying. However, that the *underlying logic* of the Masonic rites might be remarkably similar to that of the Śrīvidyā adepts is less obvious and worth exploring in more detail. The precise order and names of the degrees in the diverse Masonic traditions vary tremendously. Virtually all lodges accept three basic lower grades (the “blue” grades): Apprentice, Companion, and Master. However, the more esoteric orders such as the Élus-Coens and the Scottish Rites added a series of additional, progressively more secret degrees beyond these first three (a total of 33 in the *Rite Écossais Ancien et Accepté*).

According to Pasqually’s Élus Coens, there are 10 degrees, corresponding to the Pythagorean tetraktys of the decad, and to the tenfold hierarchy of the universe. In the Rectified Scottish Rite, Willermoz tried to harmonize the Masonic initiations with Pasqually’s system: the result was a system of three Blue grades, two Grades of the “Interior”—*Mâitre Écossais réputé rectifié*, and *Chevalier Bienfaisant de la Cité Sainte*—and finally, the two most esoteric, grades called *la Profession* and *Grand Profession*, in which the initiate was instructed in the most secret mysteries of creation (based on Pasqually’s cosmogonic system).⁶⁷

However, virtually all Masonic initiations involve an initial process of ritual death and rebirth. Among the most common ways of depicting this death and rebirth is the legend of Hiram—one of the favorite themes in Masonic lore. (According to the tradition, Hiram had been the mason who helped Solomon build the Temple, and who therefore held the secret knowledge of its construction. Because of his knowledge, however, he was murdered, and his body was then torn apart

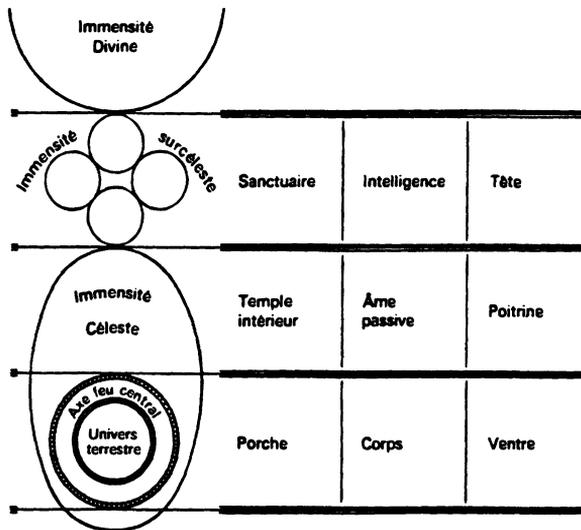
and searched by thieves, who hoped to find the key to Solomon's craft. In many schools of Masonry, this legend is then symbolically re-enacted, as the initiate is locked in a coffin-shaped chamber representing Hiram's grave.)⁶⁸ In any case, however, initiation into the Lodge signifies that he has "died" to the ordinary hierarchy of society and been reborn into a new esoteric hierarchy: "When one entered the Temple, one relinquished one's identity, becoming subsumed by the Order."⁶⁹ And as he then rises through the levels of initiation, he will not only progress through hierarchical order of lodge, but also through the hierarchical structure of the human being and the cosmos, reversing the downward movement of creation, and returning to the One.

The deeper strategy behind these elaborate esoteric initiations is much the same as we have seen in the Tantric tradition: namely, *to inscribe the initiate into the hierarchical order of the esoteric group, while at the same time inscribing this same hierarchy upon his own body and consciousness*. The hierarchy of the universe is homologized with the hierarchy of wardens and masters in the lodge, and these are in turn homologized with the *body*, consciousness and the psycho-physical hierarchy of the initiate himself. According to the ritual of the Rectified Rite, the three primary levels of the Temple of Solomon are correlated with the body, soul, and spirit of the initiate; and these three parts of the human being are then identified respectively with the first three Grades. During the initiation ceremony, the Master strikes the body of the initiate three times with a sword—one blow to the stomach, one to the heart, and one to the head—symbolizing his entry into and ascent of the hierarchical body of the Lodge.⁷⁰ In short, through an elaborate network of secret correspondences, symbolic codes and esoteric interpretations, all levels of reality are brought together and interwoven: the Temple is the divine paradigm of the cosmos, the body and Masonic brotherhood alike. As we saw above, the esoteric re-interpretation of the cosmogony views the entire universe as a grand temple, which has been created in a descending hierarchy by the Grand Architect, God Himself. It is constructed from the top down, as it were, from the Divine Immen-

sity, to the Supercelestial Immensity (identified with the Sanctuary of the Temple), to the Celestial Immensity or Astral Plane (the Interior Temple) down to the Terrestrial world (the Porch of the Temple). These three levels of the cosmos/Temple are then homologized with the three primary parts of the human microcosm—the Intelligence, the Soul, and the Body—and finally with the three main parts of the human body itself—the Head, the Breast, and the Breath. “The three blows signify the inconceivable union within you, of the spirit, the soul and the body, which is the great mystery of Man and of the Mason.”⁷¹ These homologies may be schematically arranged as follows (see fig. 4):

Divine Immensity			
Supercelestial Immensity	Sanctuary	Intelligence	Head
Celestial Immensity	Interior Temple	Passive Soul	Breast/Heart
Terrestrial Universe	Porch	Body	Breath

The progressive ritual grades of the Masonic initiations are intended to “re-build” this cosmic Temple of Solomon, which has been dis-integrated and dis-jointed by the Fall. As the adept ascends through the degrees, he is gradually restored to the original role of the first Man, Adam, whose purpose was to unite and govern the cosmic Temple. This is achieved precisely through the human body and Intellect themselves, which are homologues of the cosmos and of the Divine Nature. For “the construction of this Temple truly represents the emanation of the First Man,” and this same primordial Man is the essential archetype and true nature of every man. “The intelligence of man resides in his head, as in the sanctuary of his individual Temple,” Pasqually proclaims; “man must be purified to enter into his true sanctuary, in which he renders homage to the divinity. Head, heart, breath, sanctuary, interior temple, porch; supercelestial, celestial, terrestrial; everything ‘corresponds.’ ”⁷² Initiation marks the passage of the novice from the outer porch to the inner sanctuary. Its goal is nothing less than to bring about the re-union of the higher world with



Figures 3 and 4. The Square and Compass, which form the Seal of Solomon, and the hierarchal Temple of Cosmos, homologized with the parts of the human being (from Hutin, *Les Franc-Maçons* and Faivre, *Accès de l'esoterisme occidental*).

the lower world, the earth with the Supercelestial Immensity, matter with Spirit.

This re-integration of above and below is symbolized in a variety of ways in the Masonic tradition: for Pasqually, and for Willermoz in his earlier writings, this is conceived as a work of Divine or spiritual “alchemy” (though Willermoz would eventually reject the alchemical motif in his later works). Through the process of Masonic initiation, the individual is progressively “dissolved” and “transmuted” into a new spiritual being; symbolically, his own physical body (his gross, leaden state) is alchemically broken down into its prima materia, only to be purified and reintegrated as a new spiritual corpus. The Masonic quest is the search for the fabled “Philosopher’s Stone,” the key to hidden wisdom, which represents this mysterious transformation of a rough imperfect stone into a priceless treasure.⁷³

More commonly this divine union is symbolized by the traditional Masonic images such as the pillars Joachim and Boas and the Seal of Solomon. The two pillars which stand outside the Temple, called by the Biblical names of Joachim and Boas, symbolize the two divine principles of sun and moon, male and female. Secondly, this is symbolized by the union of the Compass and the Square, whose two interlocking triangles form the Seal of Solomon and represent the perfect union of heaven and earth, spirit and flesh, rejoining of the world of creation with its Eternal Creator. By uniting these opposites, by wedding the Sun and the Moon, above and below, male and female, the true Mason “transports heaven to earth.”⁷⁴

Ultimately, by rebuilding the Great Cosmic Temple of Jerusalem, by reintegrating the cosmic hierarchy, the initiate can ascend to the highest stage of gnosis and union with the Deity—the stage in which he recovers the primordial condition of Adam, representing the perfection and culmination of God’s creation. In this exalted state, he regains the original freedom, divinity and androgynic perfection originally enjoyed by Adam in Paradise; and because Adam is himself the image of the entire created universe, to reintegrate and restore the primordial condition of Man is also to reintegrate and restore the entire cosmos to its original, pre-fallen state of perfection.

The Rectified Scottish Rite reactualizes the Temple. . . The Mason reconstructs the primordial Temple, after the Fall, to allow God to enter again, and to allow human beings themselves to return as prodigal sons, leading all of nature in this assumption.⁷⁵

Yet ultimately, the final goal of the Masonic initiations is to return to the world, to reenter the realm of social action, and to infuse it with the esoteric power achieved through initiation. The Mason does not intend to revolutionize society directly, but rather to transform it *from within*—that is, to create a new society within the space of the lodge, and then to send members back into the external world, to spread the effects of this New Order in the rest of society: “Building the Temple,” writes Stevenson, “was a synonym for building the New Jerusalem, the true godly community . . . the secret ritual of the lodge was parallel to the public role of the church on earth.”⁷⁶ In fact, throughout the French aristocracy, merchant community and military, the Masonic Lodges served as a powerful infra-structure or “old-boys” network of promotions and advancements, which allowed the Mason to ascend both the spiritual and the socio-economic hierarchy. “Membership carried tangible benefits,” As Mark Carnes observes, “Businessmen made contacts, cultivated credit sources, and gained access to a nationwide network of lodges.”⁷⁷ Willermoz himself, as we have seen, found in the elaborate, esoteric initiations of Masonry a means of greatly improving his own symbolic capital and social status. Though born a petit bourgeois silk maker, he became an extremely wealthy merchant and a highly respected member of Lyonais society, one of the leading officials in the city, and patronized by Charles of Hesse, Ferdinand of Brunswick and other European nobles.

Conclusions and Comparative Comments

In sum, both the Śrīvidyā Tantrics and the French Freemasons represent largely upper class, highly affluent élites, who were faced with a changing social system and who sought to reinforce their own traditional power and privileges. To do so, both groups employed a

common set of strategies: First, a promise of liberation and equality within the secret domain of ritual, accompanied by a recoding and re-affirmation of hierarchical power; second, a hermeneutical strategy which serves to create a secret, “rare” and highly valuable body of esoteric knowledge; and third, the creation of an initiatic hierarchy, which is inscribed upon the individual body, and which the initiate ascends as he rises in status and prestige. In both cases, these double edged strategies allowed the individual to preserve and in fact reinforce his place within the outward social order, while at the same time cultivating a secret esoteric identity, which is utterly freed from laws of the conventional world.

Of course, we must also acknowledge the many fundamental differences between these two traditions. First of all, the Tantric path is based on a very explicit manipulation of the traditional Hindu categories of purity and impurity, by use of sexual practices and forbidden substances. Although there were many accusations of such transgressive activities among the lodges this has little parallel in the Masonic tradition. A more important difference, however, is the sociopolitical impact of these two traditions. Vaidika Tantriks like Bhāskararāya were deeply committed to preserving the traditional social structures and maintaining power amidst a changing social order. They were only interested in transgressing the social order insofar as it suited their own private interests. The French Masons were also very much concerned with preserving their own power and privileges; however, as Jacob has shown, the lodges were inherently *Janus-faced*. Even through they preserved the hierarchies of the old order and the Ancien Régime, they also opened up a new civic space, which made possible the discussion of new ideals like those of democracy and social reform. The lodges were therefore not directly responsible for the great political changes of the 18th century, such as the French and American Revolutions, but they were part of the changing public sphere which made the conception of such changes possible.⁷⁸

In this paper I have suggested a new approach to the phenomenon of esotericism, by placing it in a cross-cultural perspective and by looking specifically at its socio-political implications. By no means

solely a counter-cultural, subversive phenomenon, esotericism is very often a highly conservative, elitist phenomenon, which functions, not to overthrow existing hierarchies, but rather to *reinforce, recode, or reshape* them to suit the interests of a select minority.

Obviously, this paper only scratches the surface of a vast and relatively unexplored mine of esoteric traditions which it is my hope historians of religions will soon begin to explore. Is it possible to extend these conclusions to other esoteric traditions, such as Kabbalah, Gnosticism, Sufism, pre-modern secret societies, or the recent proliferation of new religious movements? Personally, I believe that it is, but I will leave this question for other more knowledgeable scholars to debate.

Chicago Theological Seminary
Davis Hall
1164 E. 58th Street
Chicago, IL 60637, USA

HUGH B. URBAN

¹ The term “esotericism” was first coined by Jacques Matter in 1828, *Histoire critique du gnosticisme et de son influence* (Paris: Levraut, 1828). See Antoine Faivre, “Introduction I” to *Modern Esoteric Spirituality* (New York: Crossroad, 1992); “Esotericism,” *The MacMillan Encyclopedia of Religion*. M. Eliade, ed. (New York: MacMillan, 1986), v. 5; and *Accès de l’ésoterisme occidental* (Paris, 1986). See also Edward Tiryakian, “Toward the Sociology of Esoteric Culture,” *American Journal of Sociology*, 78 (1952), pp. 498-499.

² For example, at the 1994 meeting of the American Academy of Religions, there was a very fine panel held on the topic of “Secrecy in South Asian Religions;” however among all the papers presented, there was virtually no mention either of the social and political implications of secrecy, or of the cross-cultural and comparative implications of the topic.

³ Eliade, *Occultism, Witchcraft and Cultural Fashions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), pp. 47ff; Kees Bolle, ed., *Secrecy in Religions*, (New York: E.J. Brill, 1987). Secrecy, Bolle concludes, “lies near the heart of every religion, its most profound mysterium magnum,” and is identified with “the Way of Tao, God’s Love in the Bhagavadgita, the secret rebirth of Christian mystics” (p. xiii). For the perennialist view see René Guénon, *Aperçus sur l’initiation* (Paris, 1946); Frithjof Schuon, *Esoterism as Principle and as Way* (Bloomington, 1986).

⁴ See, for example, Antoine Faivre and Karen-Claire Voss, "Western Esotericism and the Science of Religions," *Numen* v. 42 (1995), pp. 48-77.

⁵ See *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, K. Wolff, trans. (New York: Free Press, 1950), p. 345; Stanton Tefft, "Secrecy, Disclosure and Social Theory," *Secrecy: A Cross-Cultural Perspective* (New York: Human Sciences Press, 1980), p. 35.

⁶ See Tiryakian, "Toward the Sociology of Esoteric Culture;" Theodore Roszak (*The Making of a Counter-Culture* [New York, 1969]); as Tiryakian comments, "As a spiritual reaction against the rationalistic-industrial-bureaucratic ethos of modern society, it is part of the counter-culture" (p. 496). See also E.J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1959).

⁷ This point has also been made by Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1965), p. 21. As Simmel comments "The secret gives one a position of exception: it operates as a socially determined attraction . . . all superior persons . . . have something mysterious" (*The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, pp. 332-333).

On the general concept of "elitism," see G. Marcus, ed., *Elites, Ethnographic Issues* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983). Following Marcus, I shall be using the term "elites" in the most general sense, to designate "the rich, powerful and privileged in any society" who represent "a tiny minority with inordinately large amounts of influence in relation to the population" (p. 3).

There are, of course, many "non-elitist" secret societies: in many pre-modern tribal cultures, secret societies are open to all adult members of the community (cf. Barth, *Ritual and Knowledge*). And there are many secret societies which appeal specifically to lower classes, the oppressed, the marginalized or the dissident members of society (cf. I.M. Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion: A Study of Shamanism and Spirit Possession* [London, 1989]); On revolutionary secret societies like the Mau Mau in Kenya or the White Lotus in China, see Carl Rosberg and John Nottingham, *The Myth of the 'Mau Mau': Nationalism in Kenya* (Stanford, 1966); Susan Naquin, *Millenarian Rebellion in China* (New Haven, 1976).

⁸ Beryl Bellman, *The Language of Secrecy: Symbols and Metaphors in Poro Ritual* [New Brunswick, 1984], p. 3. The classic sociological work is that of Simmel, "The Sociology of Secrecy and Secret Societies," *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, K. Wolff, ed., (New York: 1950). See also Tefft, *Secrecy: A Cross-Cultural Perspective*, (New York: 1980); Mak Lou Fong, *The Sociology of Secret Societies: A Chinese Secret Society in Singapore and Peninsular Malaysia* (New York, 1981); Franz Boas, "The Social Organization and the Secret Societies of the Kwakiutl Indians," *35th Annual Report of the American Bureau of Ethnography* (Washington, 1921); Fredrik Barth, *Ritual and Knowledge among the Baktaman of New Guinea* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), pp. 47-104. Norman MacKenzie, *Secret Societies* (New York, 1967).

⁹ Cf. Bellman, *The Language of Secrecy*, p. 3ff. Here I am using the terms “strategies” and “tactics” in the sense that Pierre Bourdieu and Michel de Certeau have used them (see *The Logic of Practice* [Cambridge, 1990] and *The Practice of Everyday Life* [Berkeley, 1984]).

¹⁰ *Knowledge and Power in a South Pacific Society* (Washington, 1990), pp. 119ff. See Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power* (Cambridge, 1991).

¹¹ “Comparison does not tell us how things ‘are’ . . . like models and metaphors, comparison tells us how things might be . . . ‘redescribed,’ in Max Black’s term . . . comparison provides the means by which we ‘re-vision’ phenomena to solve our theoretical problems” (Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990], p. 52). Cf. Max Black, “Metaphor,” *On Metaphor*, S. Sacks, ed. (Chicago, 1986); Fitz John Porter Poole, “Metaphors and Maps: Towards Comparison in the Anthropology of Religion,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, v. LIV, no. 3 (1986); Lee Yerley, *Mencius and Aquinas Theories of Virtue and Conceptions of Courage* (Albany, SUNY, 1990), p. 188.

¹² Cf. Bruce Lincoln, *Discourse and the Construction of Society: Comparative Studies in Myth, Ritual and Classification* (New York: Oxford, 1989), p. 85; *Emerging from the Chrysalis: Rituals of Women’s Initiations* (New York, 1991).

¹³ For a general definition of “Tantra,” see Paul Muller-Ortega, *The Triadic Heart of Śiva: The Kaula Tantra of Abhinavagupta and the Non-Dual Śaivism of Kashmir* (Albany: SUNY, 1989), who identifies 7 characteristics: 1) a text which presents itself as revealed, but without dependence on the Vedas; 2) reaction against Upaniṣadic asceticism; 3) correlations between man, God and the cosmos; 4) the role of sakti, the cosmic creative force; 5) initiation and esoteric ritual; 6) the power of mantra; 7) the symbolism of body (p. 49-51). On the Śrīvidyā school, see Douglas Brooks, *Auspicious Wisdom: The Texts and Traditions of Śrīvidyā Śākta Tantrism in South India* (Albany: SUNY, 1992) p. 188; cf. Narendra Nath Bhattacharyya, *History of the Śākta Religion* (New Delhi, 1975).

¹⁴ Brooks, *Auspicious Wisdom*, p. 188.

¹⁵ For biographical information on Bhāskara, see his introduction to the *Varivasyārahasya* by Bhāskararāya with the Autocommentary entitled *Prakāśa*. S. Subrahmanya Sastri (Madras: Adyar Library, 1968), p. xxi. His primary Tantric works are: *Lalitāsahasranāma*, (*stotra*) with the *Saubhāgyabhāskarabhāṣya* of Bhāskararāya, ed. Śrī Pithāmarapitha (Nagpur, 1982); *Nityāṣoḍaśikārnava* (*tantra*), ed. V.V. Dwiveda (Varanāsi, 1968), ed. in Poona, 1908, with the commentary, *Setubandha* of Bhāskararāya; *The Kaula and Other Upaniṣads with Commentary* by Bhāskararāya, ed. Sītarama Shastri (Calcutta: Luzac, 1922); *Bhāvanopaniṣad*, in *Kaula and other Upaniṣads*; and *Tripurā Upaniṣad* in *Kaula and Other Upaniṣads*, translated by Douglas Brooks, *The Secret of the Three Cities: An Introduction to Hindu Śākta Tantrism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), pp. 149-190.

¹⁶ *Tripurā Upaniṣad Bhāṣya*, v. 15.

¹⁷ *The Secret of the Three Cities*, p. 25-6.

¹⁸ *Vāc: The Concept of the Word in Selected Hindu Tantras* (Albany: SUNY, 1990), pp. 35-6n.

¹⁹ Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (London: Routledge, 1972), p. 209. “[Masonic history] is the happiest of all hunting grounds for . . . the fanciful, the unscholarly and the lunatic fringe of the British Museum Reading Room” (D. Knoop and G.P. Jones, *The Genesis of Freemasonry* [Manchester, 1947], p. 5). Yates believes that the first speculative Masons were Elias Ashmole—a known Hermeticist, who had copied out Rosicrucian Manifestos by hand and who was admitted into Masonic lodge in 1646, and Robert Moray, who was admitted into lodge in Edinburgh in 1641. Both Moray and Ashmole later became members of the Royal Society. David Stevenson locates its origins much earlier, around 1600 in Scotland, with the admission of Robert Schaw into an operative lodge (*The Origins of Freemasonry: Scotland's Century, 1590-1710* [Cambridge, 1988], pp. 232-233). Yates suggests a link between the Rosicrucians and Freemasons, through which the mysteries of mathematics, architecture and the arts of memory were transmitted. The Rosicrucian influence seems to have entered Masonry through Elias Ashmole, while the Templar legend was adopted through André Michel Ramsey (1686-1743), who brought this lore within him from Scotland.

²⁰ *Living the Enlightenment: Freemasonry and Politics in Eighteenth Century Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); cf. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989), pp. 50-52; William Weisberger, *Speculative Freemasonry and the Enlightenment: A Study of the Craft in London, Paris, Prague and Vienna* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993). “The Enlightenment provided the rudiments of a new Western identity. . . Only the literate and educated could be trusted to act ethically and think disinterestedly in the interests of society” (Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment*, pp. 21-22).

²¹ The so-called “Scottish” Rites emerged in France in the mid 18th century as a reformist movement, which attempted to restore the original spirit of Masonry, including a more elaborate hierarchy and ritual, and more magical elements. Some believe this movement was begun by Chevalier Ramsay, who introduced the Templar mythology and other occult elements to France in 1736. See Paul Naudon, *Histoire et Rituels des Hauts Grades Maçonniques: Le Rite Écossais Ancien et Accepté* (Paris, 1966); Albert Lantoiné, *Le Rite Écossais Ancien et Accepté* (Paris, 1930).

²² Pasqually, “a man of rather mysterious origin,” was probably born a Spanish Jew, and converted to Catholicism. He apparently knew something of the Kabbalah, and legend has it that he had journeyed to China to learn secret traditions (Edmund Mazet, “Freemasonry and Esoterism,” *Modern Esoteric Spirituality*, A. Faivre, ed. [New York: Crossroad, 1993], p. 256; cf. Gérard van Rijnberk, *Martinès de*

Pasqually: Un thaumaturge au XVIIIe siècle (Hildesheim, 1982), pp. 11-17). The primary work of Pasqually are the *Traité de la Réintégration des êtres dans leurs premières propriétés, vertus et puissances, spirituelles et divines* (1771), R. Amadou, ed. (Paris, 1974); *Conférences des Élus Cohens de Lyons* (1774), A. Faivre, ed. (Editions du Baucens, 1974).

²³ Mazet, "Freemasonry and Esotericism," p. 264. The primary works of Willermoz are *Instructions Secrètes aux Grands Profès*; Appendix to René le Forestier, *La Franc-Maçonnerie Templière et Occultiste au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1970); and letters concerning the organization of the Lodge, published in Steel-Maret, *Archives Secrètes de la Franc-Maçonnerie* (Lyons, 1893). The primary writings of Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin are *Des Erreurs et de la Verité; Tableau Naturel; L'Homme de Désir and Lettre sur la Révolution* in *Oeuvres Majeurs*. R. Amadou, ed. (Hildesheim, 1975).

²⁴ Le Forestier, *La Franc-Maçonnerie Templière et Occultiste*, p. 288.

²⁵ Alice Joly, *Un Mystique Lyonnais et les Secrètes de la Franc-Maçonnerie, 1730-1824* (Macon, 1938), p. 102.

²⁶ Joly, *Un Mystique Lyonnais*, p. 3.

²⁷ Joly, *Un Mystique Lyonnais*, p. 2. On the background of Saint-Martin and Willermoz, and their appeal to the wealthy classes, see Serge Hutin, *Les Franc-Maçons* (Paris, 1960), p. 89.

²⁸ Le Forestier, *La Franc-Maçonnerie Templière et Occultiste*, p. 276.

²⁹ Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment*, p. 207-208. The role of the Masons in the French (and American) revolution is a matter of great debate. Some, like Serbonesco and many anti-Masonic Catholic historians attribute an important role to the Masons (cf. *Histoire de la Franc-Maçonnerie universelle*, v. II, pp. 495ff). More reliable scholars suggest that the Masons were usually very conservative and anti-revolutionary.

³⁰ Quoted in D. Serbonesco, *Histoire de la Franc-Maçonnerie universelle* (Paris, 1963), v. II, pp. 158-159; cf. Le Forestier, *La Franc-Maçonnerie Templière et Occultiste*, p. 440.

³¹ On the role of women in French lodges in the mid 1700s see Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment*, pp. 21, 121ff. The first lodge to do so appears to have been La Loge de Juste in 1751.

³² Joly, *Un Mystique Lyonnais*, pp. 305, 306.

³³ *La Franc-Maçonnerie Templière et Occultiste*, pp. 49-50. "This baroque freemasonry, so popular . . . among the aristocracy and high bourgeoisie . . . could reinforce a sense of hierarchy" (Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment*, p. 208). "The mysticism of the masonic degrees combined the mystique of ultimate social ascendancy, the dedication to order, hierarchy and perfectibility with the masonic ideology of merit" (ibid.).

³⁴ Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment*, p. 207.

³⁵ Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment*, p. 45.

³⁶ Daniel O'Keefe, *Stolen Lightning: The Social Theory of Magic* (New York, 1982). See also Lincoln, *Discourse and the Construction of Society*, pp. 3-11. For similar strategies of legitimation of esoteric texts see Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 200f.

³⁷ Lindstrom, *Knowledge and Power in a South Pacific Society*, pp. 119ff. See Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power* (Cambridge, 1991).

³⁸ *Commentary on the Bhāvanopaniṣad*, p. 13.

³⁹ *ibid.*, p. 23; cf. *Tripurā Upaniṣad Bhāṣya*, v. 15.

⁴⁰ Brooks, *The Secret of the Three Cities*, p. 19. See *Commentary on the Bhāvanopaniṣad*, p. 33.

⁴¹ Brooks, *The Secret of the Three Cities*, p. 17. (Cf. Goudriaan, *Hindu Tantrism*, p. 32). On the potential danger of Tantric teachings, see *Tripurā Upaniṣad Bhāṣya*, v. 13.

⁴² *Tripurā Upaniṣad Bhāṣya*, vv. 1-3.

⁴³ Bhattacharya, *History of the Śākta Religion*, p. 154; cf. Bhāskara's *Commentary on the Nityāśoḍaśikārṇava*, I, 32ff; Zimmer, *Artistic Form and Yoga*, pp. 160-165.

⁴⁴ Faivre, *Accès*, pp. 177ff; Le Forestier, *La Franc-Maçonnerie Templière et Occultiste*, p. 439f.

⁴⁵ E.M. Caro, *Du Mysticisme au XVIIIe Siècle: essai sur la vie et la doctrine de Saint Martin* (Geneve, 1975), pp. 185, 108.

⁴⁶ Stevenson, *The Origins of Freemasonry*, pp. 81-82.

⁴⁷ van Rijnberk, *Martinès de Pasqually*, v. I, pp. 42-46. For a thorough discussion of Martinez's cosmology, see Edmond Mazet, "La Conception de la Matière chez Martinez de Pasqually et dans le Régime Écossais Rectifié," *Epochen der Naturmystik*, A. Faivre, ed. (Berlin, 1979), pp. 278-313.

⁴⁸ See Faivre, *Accès*, pp. 174ff; Le Forestier, *La Franc-Maçonnerie Templière et Occultiste*, p. 453; Nicole Jaques-Chaquin, "La Philosophie de la Nature chez Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin," *Epochen der Naturmystik*, A. Faivre, ed. (Berlin, 1979), p. 316.

⁴⁹ *Traité de la Réintégration*, p. 180; in Mazet, "La Conception de la Matière chez Martinez de Pasqually," p. 30, Le Forestier, *La Franc-Maçonnerie*, pp. 453ff.

⁵⁰ Cf. Pierre Bourdieu, "Rites of Institution," *Language and Symbolic Power*, pp. 117-127, and *The Logic of Practice* (Stanford, 1977): "All the symbolic manipulations of bodily experience, starting with . . . a symbolically structured space, tend to impose the integration of body space with cosmic space and social space, by applying the same categories . . . to the relationship between man and the natural world" (p. 77). On the "inscription" of the social law upon the human body, see de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, pp. 139ff; Jean Comaroff, *Body of Power, Spirit of Revolution: The History and Culture of a South African People* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), pp. 9ff.

- ⁵¹ Brooks, *The Secret of the Three Cities*, p. 110; see *Tripurā Upaniṣad Bhāṣya*, v. 2.
- ⁵² “Maṇḍala and Āgamic Identity in the Trika of Kāśmir,” *Mantras et Diagrammes Rituels dans l’Hindouisme*, A. Padoux, ed. (Paris, 1984), pp. 170-172.
- ⁵³ Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and its Implications* (Chicago, 1980). Cf. K. Smith, *Reflections on Resemblance, Ritual and Religion* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 48ff.
- ⁵⁴ “Purity and Power among the Brahmins of Kashmir,” p. 191.
- ⁵⁵ Brooks, *Auspicious Wisdom*, p. 149-150.
- ⁵⁶ Bhāvanopaniṣad; in Rao, *The Tantra of Śrī-Chakra*, pp. 55ff.
- ⁵⁷ *Commentary on the Tantra-rāja Tantra*, in *The Tantra of Śrī-Chakra*, p. 38.
- ⁵⁸ Zimmer, *Artistic Form and Yoga*, p. 166. Cf. *Tripurā Upaniṣad Bhāṣya*, v. 15.
- ⁵⁹ *Commentary on the Bhāvanopaniṣad*, p. 8.
- ⁶⁰ *Gherandasamhitā*, in Bhattacharyya, *History of the Tantric Religion*, pp. 336-337; cf. Lilian Silburn, *Kuṇḍalinī: Energy of the Depths* (Albany: SUNY, 1991).
- ⁶¹ Brooks, *The Secret of the Three Cities*, p. 109.
- ⁶² *Commentary on the Nityāṣoḍaśikārnava*; in Zimmer, *Artistic Form and Yoga*, p. 179.
- ⁶³ *Tripurā Upaniṣad Bhāṣya*, v. 15.
- ⁶⁴ Brooks, *Auspicious Wisdom*, p. 158-159.
- ⁶⁵ Brooks, *The Secret of the Three Cities*, p. 90.
- ⁶⁶ *Auspicious Wisdom*, p. 182.
- ⁶⁷ Le Forestier, *La Franc-Maçonnerie Templière et Occultiste*, p. 436; cf. Pasqually’s *Conférences des Élus-Coens de Lyons*; see also Faivre, *Accès*, pp. 176ff.
- ⁶⁸ Cf. Wiesberger, *Speculative Freemasonry*, pp. 34f; Joly, *Un Mystique Lyonnais*, p. 3f.
- ⁶⁹ Michael Baignet and Richard Leigh, *The Temple and the Lodge* (New York, 1989), p. 7. See Stevenson, *The Origins of Freemasonry*, pp. 144-145, 160-161.
- ⁷⁰ Faivre, *Accès*, p. 187ff.
- ⁷¹ Willermoz, *L’instruction morale du grade d’apprenti*; in Mazet, “La Conception de la Matière,” p. 310; cf. Faivre, *Accès*, p. 174ff.
- ⁷² *Traité de la Réintégration*, p. 25; Faivre, *Accès*, p. 187. (Cf. Willermoz, *Instructions secrètes aux Grands Profès*, p. 1044). “The Body of Man and the Temple are the repetition of the creation and the image of the Great Temple of the universe” (*Conférences de Lyon*, p. 87).
- ⁷³ Cf. Mazet, “La Conception de la Matière chez Martinez de Pasqually,” p. 310. As Willermoz wrote in a letter to Prince Charles of Hesse, the highest stage of Masonic initiation is hermetic and alchemical mystery of Great Work of spiritual regeneration: “Mystical alchemy is the supreme goal of Freemasonry. By the conjunction of the sun and the moon, and by practicing . . . the three symbolic grades,

it will produce a philosophical Child, by which the possessor will prolong his life . . . and thus spiritualize the body" (cited by Joly, *Un Mystique Lyonnais*, p. 158; cf. Naudon, *Les Hautes Grades*, p. 39).

⁷⁴ *Instructions Secret de Grands Profès*, p. 1045f; Faivre, *Accès*, p. 190; cf. Mazet, "La Conception de la Matière chez Martinez de Pasqually," p. 309. On the symbolism of the Square and Compass, and the columns Joachim and Boas which represent the masculine, active Sun and the passive, feminine Moon see Hutin, *Les Franc-Maçons*, p. 166.

⁷⁵ Faivre, *Accès*, p. 192; *Traité de la Réintégration*, p. 180; in Mazet, "La Conception de la Matière chez Martinez de Pasqually," p. 30. On the recovery of the androgynous state of Adam, see Willermoz, *Instruction Secrète des Grands Profès*.

⁷⁶ *The Origins of Freemasonry*, p. 29f.

⁷⁷ *Secret Ritual and Manhood in Victorian America* (Yale University Press, 1989), p. 2.

⁷⁸ *Living the Enlightenment*, p. 21-22; see also Weisberger, *Speculative Freemasonry and the Enlightenment*, pp. 1-2.