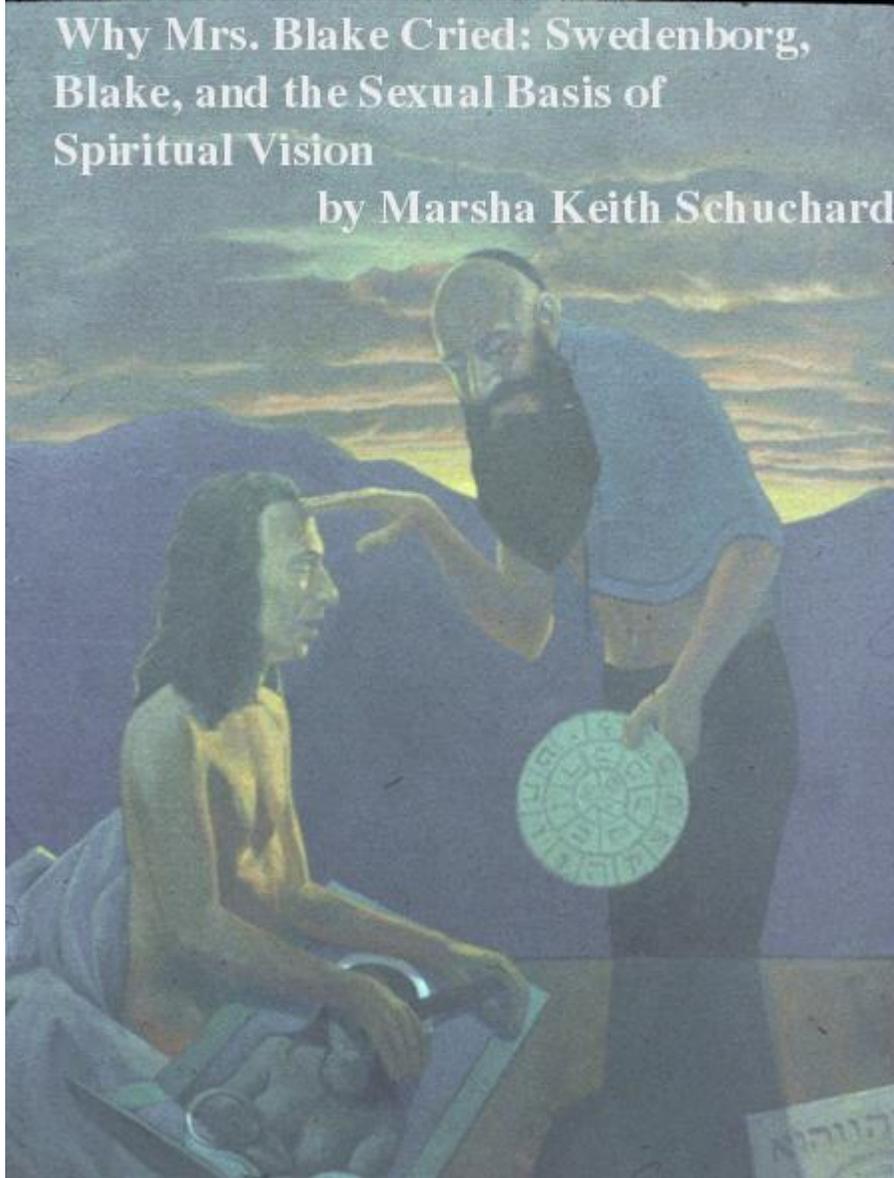


Why Mrs. Blake Cried: Swedenborg,
Blake, and the Sexual Basis of
Spiritual Vision
by Marsha Keith Schuchard



**WHY MRS. BLAKE CRIED:
SWEDENBORG, BLAKE, AND THE SEXUAL
BASIS OF SPIRITUAL VISION**

Marsha Keith Schuchard

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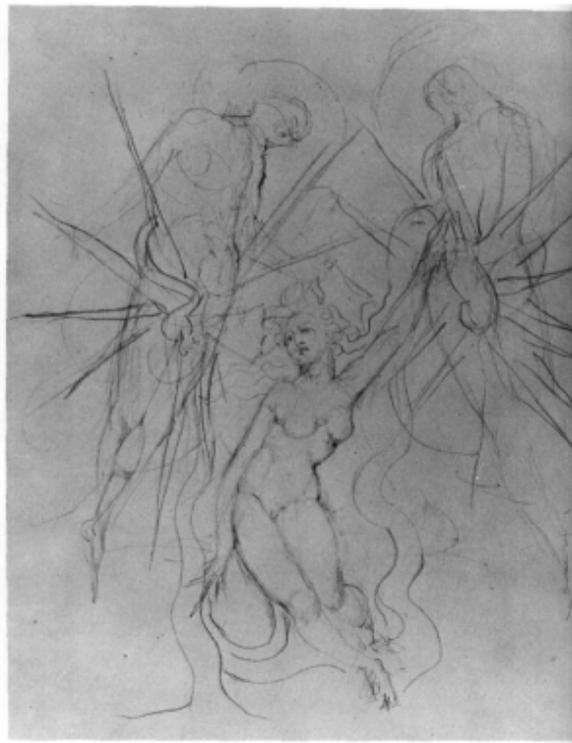
When I first Married you, I gave you all my whole Soul
I thought that you would love my loves & joy in my delights
Seeking for pleasures in my pleasures, O Daughter of Babylon
Then thou wast lovely, mild & gentle, now thou art terrible
In jealousy & unlovely in my sight, because thou hast cruelly
Cut off my loves in fury till I have no love left for thee.
Thy love depends on him thou lovest & on his dear loves
Depend thy pleasures which thou hast cut off by jealousy.

Milton (1804-10), plate 33.

In 1863 Alexander Gilchrist corrected the claim made by J.T. Smith, a friend of Blake, that the artist and "his beloved Kate" lived in "uninterrupted harmony":

Such harmony there really was; but...it had not always been unruffled. There *had* been stormy times in years long past, when both were young; discord by no means trifling while it lasted. But with the cause (jealousy on her side, not wholly unprovoked), the strife had ceased also [1].

Though Gilchrist provided no examples of Blake's provokings, he did report a conversation in which Blake asked, "Do you think if I came home and discovered my wife to be unfaithful, I should be so foolish as to take it ill?"



Blake, "Two Angels Descending," Pencil drawing, c. 1822 Note the serpentine phallus images.

[2] Gilchrist's reticence did not satisfy Algernon Swinburne, who commented in 1868:

Over the stormy or slippery passages in their earlier life Mr. Gilchrist has passed perhaps too lightly. No doubt Blake's aberrations were mainly matters of speech or writing; it is however said, truly or falsely, that once in a patriarchal mood he did propose to add a second wife to their small and shifting household, and was much perplexed at meeting on one hand with tears and on all hands with remonstrances [3].

In 1893 Edwin Ellis and William Butler Yeats repeated the rumor, noting that "It is said that Blake wished to add a concubine to his establishment in the Old Testament manner, but gave up the project because it made Mrs. Blake cry." [4] They then chided Michael Rossetti for accepting the hearsay and piously discounted its probability:

...there is the possibility that he entertained mentally some polygamous project, and justified it on some patriarchal theory. A project and a theory are one thing, however, and a woman is another; and though there is abundant suggestion of the project and theory, there is no evidence at all of the woman [5].

In 1907 Arthur Symons gleefully reported that he found corroboration for Blake's proposal in the unpublished part of Henry Crabb Robinson's diary a passage that the horrified diarist disguised in German. Noting that the sixty-nine year-old Blake was "as wild as ever," Robinson recorded that he had "learned from the Bible that wives should be in common." [6] Robinson called this "*practical* notion" palpably mischievous and immoral. Even worse, Blake argued that "What are called vices in the natural world, are the highest sublimities in the spiritual world." Symons, like his blushing predecessors, reassured his post-Victorian readers that Blake's assertions were undoubtedly a "mentally polygamous project" and that "a tear of Mrs. Blake (for 'a tear is an intellectual thing') was enough to wipe out project if not theory."



"An Angel Whispering," from the *Book of Enoch* drawings, c. 1822

However, in Blake's own, *pre*-Victorian milieu, his antinomian sexual theories would have found sympathetic readers and listeners among the motley crew of Moravians, Swedenborgians, Kabbalists, alchemists, and millenarians who populated the clandestine world of illuminist Freemasonry in London. From the evidence of his drawings, notebooks, and illuminated prophecies, it is clear that Blake maintained a life-long commitment to radical theories of sexuality. Indeed, Mrs. Blake had much to cry about, as she struggled first to comprehend and then to collaborate with his theory and praxis. Blake's own confidence in his sexual credo was possibly rooted in his early family life, for his father allegedly associated with Swedenborgians, Moravians, and other "irregular" Freemasons. From each of these societies, with their overlapping memberships, young Blake could have imbibed the theosophy of desire that fueled his visionary art and troubled his marriage.

Bogen notes the long-held tradition that "the teachings of Swedenborg had been imparted to Blake at his father's knee," but she also suggests that "Blake and his family were Anglicans and at the same time maintained a connection with the Moravian Church." [7] As we shall see, Swedenborgian, Moravian, and Anglican affiliations were not necessarily mutually exclusive. In 1743 the names "Mr. and Mrs. Blake" appeared on the register of the Fetter Lane Society, at a time when seventy-two members formed "The Congregation of the Lamb," a society "within the Church of England in union with the Moravian Brethren." [8] The Blake couple were perhaps William's grandparents, for James Blake (his father) married a widow, Catherine Armitage, in 1752 [9]. Catherine's maiden name was Wright, and a Mr. Wright (her father?) was included among the married men in the 1743 register. According to the early Blake facsimilist William Muir, who was "a near contemporary of several people who had been personally acquainted" with the artist, his parents "attended the Moravian Chapel in Fetter Lane." [10]

Of greatest relevance to Blake's radical sexual beliefs is the fact that his family was allegedly associated with the Moravians during the turbulent "Sifting Period" a series of experiments in social egalitarianism, magical practices, and sexual antinomianism. Count Nicolaus Ludwig Zinzendorf, the chief of the "United Brotherhood," was determined to act out the Kabbalistic theories of earthly and heavenly copulation that he had learned from Kabbalistic Christians and heterodox Jews [11]. When arguing for Blake's Moravian sympathies, Lindsay notes the sect's "veneration for the sexual organs" and rejection of "the works of the law," but he does not discuss their relevance to techniques of vision inducement [12].

According to the Kabbalistic theories adopted by Zinzendorf, God and the universe are composed of dynamic sexual potencies (the *sephiroth*) which interact with each other and produce orgasmic joy when in perfect equilibrium [13]. In the Holy of Holies of the Temple in Jerusalem, a golden sculpture of male and female cherubim guarded the Ark of the Covenant. The Kabbalists claimed that the cherubim were entwined in the act of marital intercourse, thus forming an emblem of God's joyful marriage with his female emanation, the *Shekhinah* (or Jerusalem). When the Temple was sacked by pagans, the erotic statuary was paraded through the streets in order to ridicule the Jews. That Blake

was aware of this tradition is suggested by his reference to the defilement of Jerusalem, "Thy Tabernacle taken down, thy secret Cherubim disclosed." [14]

After the destruction of the Temple, the re-joining of the cherubim (and thus the reintegration of the male and female within God) depends upon the reverent act of sacramental intercourse by the devout Kabbalist and his wife [15]. This reintegrative process can also take place within the adept's mind, while he meditates upon the male and female potencies of Hebrew letters and numbers until he reaches a state of visionary trance. God's androgynous essence is manifested in the microcosmic body of Adam Kadmon (the Grand Man), and the Kabbalists portray the divine processes within that body "in vividly sexual terms." [16] Blake's declarations to a confused Crabb Robinson that "we are all coexistent with God; members of the Divine Body, and Partakers of the Divine Nature," which was originally androgynous and manifested in "a union of sexes in man" reveal his familiarity with this Kabbalistic tradition [17].

In the 1740's and '50's, "Rabbi" Zinzendorf (as he was then called) directed a mission to the Jews in London, in which mutual Kabbalistic studies served as a bridge between religions. At the same time, he organized his followers into a hierarchical secret society that functioned as an offshoot of "irregular" or "illuminist" Freemasonry [18]. According to James Hutton, an English Moravian who became a lifelong friend of Richard Cosway, the public society held open meetings in the Fetter Lane Chapel, while the elite interior order (the "Pilgrim Church") met secretly, lived communally, and practised Kabbalistic rituals [19]. If Blake's parents attended the public services at Fetter Lane or were members of the "Congregation of the Lamb," it perhaps explains the similarities between Blake's poem "The Lamb" and a hymn by Hutton [20]. If they were aware of the interior "Pilgrim" order, it would explain Blake's own usage of Moravian-style sexual imagery.

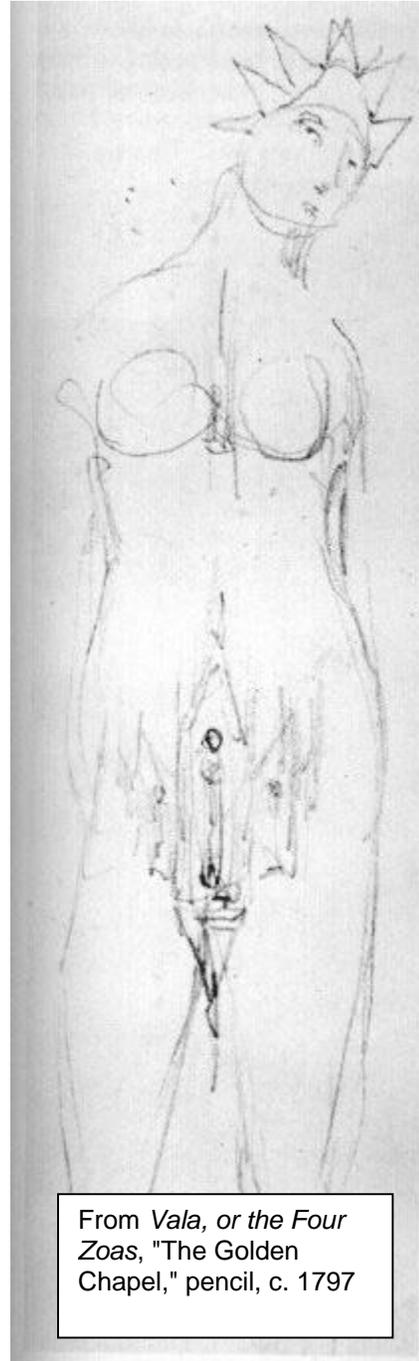
Hutton described the Pilgrims as the unknown superiors of the larger society, for their identity was not revealed to lower-ranking initiates:

...a congregation of labourers who go hither and thither; whom no one knows but he to whom it is revealed. Everyone who has a whole mind to our Saviour is a member of it. It is composed of persons who indissolubly cling together...and who labour for the good of others among all religions, but never form themselves into sect [21].

Henry Rimius, a Prussian visitor to the London Moravians, charged that their "clinging together" was a euphemism for communal sex. In a sensational exposé that received wide publicity in London, Rimius described the Moravians as a nonsectarian, subversive secret society, whose leaders "are gradually sapping the foundation of civil government in any country they settle in, and establishing an empire within an empire." [22] While the higher initiates practise "gnostic obscenities," the neophytes are left in ignorance of the ritualistic orgies. It is perhaps relevant that Crabb Robinson characterized Blake's philosophy as consistently Gnostic [23].

Attendants at the public services in Fetter Lane were certainly aware of the *theory*, if not the practice, of Zinzendorf's Kabbalistic sexual agenda. In public sermons, the Count affirmed that "a person regenerated enjoys a great Liberty," because "Christ can make the most villainous act to be a virtue and the most exalted moral virtue to be vice." [24] Though the depravation caused by the Fall gave the "hideous name *Pudendum*" to the genitals, the Saviour has changed it "into *Verendum*." [25] Moreover, "what was chastized by Circumcision in the Time of the Law, is restored again to its first Essence and flourishing State."

Because the genital organs of both sexes are "the most honourable of the whole body," he exhorted the wives, when they get sight of the male member to honour that "precious sign by which they resemble Christ." The female vulva is "that little Model of a Chapel of God," and husbands must daily worship there. When Blake later sketched "a naked woman whose genitals have been transformed into an altar or chapel, with an erect penis forming a kind of holy statue at the center," he seemed to give vivid expression to Zinzendorfan sexual religion [26]. The Count further chastised his fellow-males that they "do not perform and labour enough for their Wives, there is still too much remissness." He exalted marital intercourse as "the most perfect Copy of God," noting that "Our Sex is an Employment, an Office," with Jesus acting as the "Spouse of all the Sisters and the Husbands as his Procurators." Thus, even marital "procuring" within the society was a divine act. Though Hutton tried to defend the English Moravians from Rimius's charges, he admitted that the foreign members enticed the more radical locals into their erotic experiments.



From *Vala, or the Four Zoas*, "The Golden Chapel," pencil, c. 1797

Also attending the Fetter Lane services was Emanuel Swedenborg, who periodically lived in London while working as a secret intelligence agent for the pro-French, pro-Jacobite party in Sweden (called the "Hats") [27]. Since his student days, Swedenborg had access to rare instruction in heterodox Jewish mysticism, which included the more erotic and visionary theories of the Sabbatians, secret disciples of the seventeenth-century "false messiah," Sabbatai Zevi [28]. In his diaries, Swedenborg recorded many of the lurid sexual ceremonies of the Moravians, which initially attracted but later repelled him. Like Zinzendorf, Swedenborg sought out Jewish Kabbalists in the East End, and he

soon came under the spell of Dr. Samuel Jacob Falk, known as the "Baal Shem" of London (master of the magical names of God). Falk was a crypto-Sabbatian, who collaborated with a network of fellow "Zoharites" in England, Holland, Poland, and Germany. (It was W.B. Yeats who first argued that Falk had an influence on Blake's knowledge of Kabbala) [29]. Following the Sabbatians' advocacy of "holy sinning," some members of the network pretended conversion to Christianity and assimilated Kabbalistic notions of the *Shekhinah* into Christian notions of the Virgin Mary.

Among the more radical Sabbatians, such as the followers of Jacob Frank in Poland, there developed a "veritable mythology of nihilism," in which the new spiritual or messianic law "entailed a complete reversal of values, symbolized by the change of the thirty-six prohibitions of the Torah...into positive commands." [30] This included all the prohibited sexual unions and incest. Believing that the descent into evil is a condition of ascent towards good, the radicals "permitted the illicit things." When they outwardly converted to Christianity (Edom), the Sabbatians committed the holy sin that would liberate them from the repressions of Mosaic and Talmudic law.

In 1790, when Blake asserted in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* that "now is the dominion of Edom," he seemed to draw on this Frankist tradition, which was assimilated into certain Jewish-Christian rites of Freemasonry [31]. Scholem notes that among the disciples of Jacob Frank,

...Edom symbolizes the unbridled flow of life which liberates man because its force and power are not subject to any law... It was necessary to abolish and destroy the laws, teachings, and practices which constrict the power of life, but this must be done in secret; ...it was essential outwardly to assume the garb of the corporeal Edom, i.e., Christianity...[but] Jesus of Nazareth was no more than the husk preceding and concealing the fruit, who was Frank himself [the reincarnation of Sabbatai Zevi] [32].

Zinzendorf was so fascinated by Frank's pronouncements, after thousands of Frankists converted to Catholicism in Poland, that he sent emissaries (Jews converted to Moravianism) to meet with Frank's disciples [33].

At the same time, Swedenborg became suspicious of the sincerity of Dr. Falk, whose apparent Christian sympathies clothed his private Sabbatian beliefs. Some initiates of Frank's and Falk's inner circles encouraged antinomian sexual practices in the name of holy sinning, while forbidden magical practices were undertaken to hasten the messianic reversal of reality. In his journals, Swedenborg described the sexual rituals and magical practices of certain Jews in London, which both inspired and frightened him. According to oral tradition, Swedenborg kept a mistress in Sweden and, by his own admission, another one in Italy; moreover, his many descriptions of prostitutes and sirens and his advocacy of legal brothels make clear that he was widely experienced in earthly sexuality-despite his lifelong bachelorhood [34].

However, while associating with Moravian and Jewish mystics in London, the fifty-six year-old Swedenborg learned how to perform the mystical Kabbalistic marriage within his mind, through the sublimation of his sexual energy into visionary energy. By meditating on the male and female potencies concealed in the vessels of Hebrew letters, by visualizing these letters in the forms of human bodies, by regulating the inhalation and exhalation of breath, and by achieving an erection without progress to ejaculation, the reverent Kabbalist could achieve an orgasmic trance state that elevated him to the world of spirits and angels. Thus, Swedenborg became experienced in heavenly sexuality, which he—like the Kabbalists—believed to be the essence of the reintegrated God.

As a trained scientist and student of anatomy, Swedenborg recorded with rare objectivity the physiological processes of the erotic and visionary trance. Describing his own sensations in brain corticals, lung rhythms, abdominal muscles, and seminal duct, he provided a uniquely "scientific" record of paranormal states. Because his writings on these subjects were studied by Blake and his Swedenborgian friends, it will be useful to follow Swedenborg's hints at the how-to of visionary sex. In his *Journal of Dreams* (1744-45), Swedenborg described the difficult discipline required to control and manipulate the sexual energies. Despite the intensely erotic character of the images he visualized (while meditating upon the male and female Hebrew letters and *sephiroth*), he must not dissipate his sexual energies in masturbation, nocturnal emission, or premature ejaculation [35]. By maintaining the "pure intention" (*kawwanah*), he must resist the tempting visions produced by evil spirits: a female with teeth in her vagina, himself urinating in front of a woman, sirens displaying their vulvas to him, voyeurs watching him copulate, etc. During the early stages of his training, he noted that "I could not keep control of myself so as not to desire the sex, although not with the intention of proceeding to effect." [36] However, as he mastered the techniques of breath control, in which his respiratory rhythms matched those of the cosmic *sephiroth*, he began to achieve waking trances:

...the will [male *sephira*] influences the understanding [female *sephira*] most in inspiration [breathing in]. The thoughts then fly out of the body inward, and in expiration are as it were driven out, or carried straight forth; showing that the very thoughts have their alternate play like the respiration... therefore when evil thoughts entered, the only thing to do was to draw to oneself the breath; so the evil thoughts vanished. Hence one may also see the reason that during strong thought the lungs are held in equilibrium...and at this time the inspirations go quicker than the expirations... Also, of the fact that in ecstasy or trance, the man holds his breath [37].

Swedenborg also learned to control the cremaster muscle, which he had earlier studied when preparing a section on "The Generative Organs" for his treatise on *The Animal Kingdom* (1744). Drawing on Boerhaave and other anatomical authors, Swedenborg recorded:

The cremaster...is a thin muscle or fleshy plane, which runs down round the sheath of the spermatic cord, and terminates in the tunica vaginalis testis. It surrounds the whole bag,

and afterwards expands on the upper and outer part... it seems sometimes to arise from the spine of the os ilium. . . .

The testicles or didymi...their coats are three: the cremaster or elevator muscle of the testicle... The two epididymides...are oblong, almost cylindrical parts, lying on the upper border of the testicle, and each having somewhat the appearance of a caterpillar or silkworm. . . .

The cremaster muscle...draws up, sustains, compresses, and expresses* the tunica vaginalis and the testicle. *Trans. Note: *Expresses* in the sense of squeezes out the juices from [38].

He became so fascinated by his investigation that he proclaimed, "If the structure of the testicle be properly examined, it will be evident, that it is so wonderfully constructed on geometrical principles, that anything more perfect cannot be." [39] Reflecting his current studies in alchemy, he referred to "the alchemical preparation of the seed in the testicles." Swedenborg followed this section with extremely graphic descriptions of the erector muscles of the female clitoris (which is equivalent to the male penis), of the essentially hermaphroditic relation of male and female in coitus, of the composition of seminal and vaginal fluids, of the physiological and psychic sensations produced by intercourse and orgasm.

After completing this manuscript, Swedenborg learned from his London mentors how to merge his intense visualization of the genital organs (based on precisely detailed anatomical engravings) with his visualization of the sexual dynamics within the androgynous, microcosmic "Divine Human" (the Kabbalists' Adam Kadmon). His mastery of cremaster control, when combined with ritualized breathing, produced "genital respiration" and enabled him to achieve an altered state of consciousness in which spirits first spoke and then appeared to him [40]. When Blake later proclaimed that the bodily "parts of love follow their high breathing joy," he perhaps referred to genital respiration [41]. While Swedenborg struggled to maintain *kawwanah*, he was often distracted by lower spirits (grotesque images of perverted sexuality), and he sometimes feared that he would go mad from the psychic strain. During one period, he was found naked in the Fetter Lane Chapel and then delirious and naked in the street [42]. Blake's remark to Crabb Robinson that Swedenborg's "sexual religion is dangerous" suggests his awareness of the tremendous psychic strain of Kabbalistic meditation [43].

Idel explains that for the Kabbalist "the attainment of `prophecy'namely, of ecstatic experience is tantamount to the union of a bride and her bridegroom." [44] Moreover, "an actual experience of a sexual contact is not essential" for the ecstatic Kabbalist. As he struggled with the difficult process, Swedenborgwas eventually rewarded with a state of "indescribable bliss":

...in the spirit there was an inward and sensible gladness shed over the whole body... it was shown in a consummate manner how it all issued [from God] and ended [in the genitals]. It flew up (*abouterade*) in a manner, and hid itself in an infinitude, as a center. There was love itself. And it seems as though it extended around therefrom, and then

down again; thus, by an incomprehensible circle, from the center, which was love, around, and so thither again. This love, in a mortal body, whereof I then was full, was like the joy that a chaste man has at the very time when he is in actual love and in the very act with his mate; such extreme pleasantness was suffused over the whole of my body, and this for a long time [45].

Swedenborg's unusual use of the French word *abouterade* reinforces the psycho-erotic nature of this ecstatic state; the verb *aboutir* means "to lead to and end in," "to come to a head and burst," "to gather (as an abscess) and come to a head." At the supreme moment of this aroused state, the adept achieves not an ejaculation but the externalization of his internal man (in Hebrew, his *maggid*) [46]. This phenomenon perhaps explains Blake's later portrayal of Milton as a projection of himself, with whom he achieves an ecstatic reunification [47]. Swedenborg was initially confused by this visionary figure, who embraced him, but he eventually concluded that it was Jesus.

Over the next decade, Swedenborg charged Zinzendorf with increasing megalomania, and he turned away from the Moravians. At the same time, he maintained a love-hate relationship with the Jews who continued to instruct him in Kabbalistic techniques of meditation and Bible interpretation. Though his Swedish political colleagues labored for years to open Sweden to Jewish immigration, the prevailing anti-Semitism of the country led Swedenborg to distance his *published* writings from their Jewish sources. He gradually displaced his Kabbalistic theories from Israel to Asia, which was considered a more acceptable source of mysticism in contemporary Sweden. Ironically, this transference was made possible through his rejected Moravian brethren.

During Swedenborg's early Moravian participation, one of the missionaries to the Jews also recruited East Indians from Malabar who came to London. In his *Spiritual Diary*, he later described the deceased Zinzendorf conversing with "some of the gentiles in Western India," whom he had converted to Moravianism [48]. Swedenborg became intrigued by the similarity of Yogic techniques of meditation and sexual magic to Kabbalistic techniques, and he referred to Indian sorceresses and magicians, who were skilled in "abominable arts, from the influx of those who were from Eastern India." [49] He also acquired a bizarre book, La Crequinière's *Agreement of the Customs of East Indians with Those of the Jews* (1705), that claimed an Asian origin for the "priapic rites" of the Jews, which were represented by erotic sculptures of male and female fertility figures [50].

Swedenborg also learned about Tibetan and Chinese Yoga from Swedish soldier-scholars, who had been prisoners of war in the Siberian and Tartar areas of Russia and returned to Sweden in the 1720's. Hallengren argues that Swedenborg's "Great Tartary" was actually Tibet, and that he had access to rare Asiatic manuscripts and oral traditions brought back by returning relatives and colleagues [51]. In his *Spiritual Diary*, Swedenborg drew on the travel journal of Philip Strahlenberg, a Swedish officer and former prisoner, to describe the spiritual relation between the Tibetans, Tartars, Chinese, and Siberians [52].

In London, he received reinforcement for his Kabbalistic-Yogic interests from Dr. James Parsons, an Irish- and French-educated physician and Fellow of the Royal Society, who met Swedenborg when both attended meetings of the society in early 1745 [53]. Martin Folkes, the president, introduced Swedenborg to the Fellows and asked Parsons to study his treatise on *The Animal Kingdom* and present a report [54]. Parsons was a peculiarly appropriate evaluator of Swedenborg, for he was well versed in Hermetic, Talmudic, and Zoharic lore, and he was an expert on the physiology of the genital organs and the phenomenon of hermaphroditism, which he explored from an anatomical and Kabbalistic perspective [55]. Like Swedenborg, he studied the reports of Strahlenberg and earlier Swedo-Gothic scholars, which led him to perceive similarities between Kabbalistic, Tibetan, Nordic-Gaelic, and Christian beliefs in a triune godhead. After decades of exploration in this arcane field, he published his findings in *The Remains of Japhet* (1767) [56]. Swedenborg's *practical* access to Yogic techniques probably came from Moravian missionaries, who went beyond the East Indies and penetrated into central Russia, Tartary, and China. Shortly after Swedenborg's spirit-account of Zinzendorf and the Indians, he described his vision of Chinese Yogis, "sitting there, as the Indians are wont to do, with the feet crossed" and "in the tranquility of peace" (i.e., in the lotus position and state of nirvana) [57]. Taking advantage of the great interest in Asian culture generated by the Swedish East India Company (which secretly employed Swedenborg), he argued that the Yogis of Great Tartary discovered the secrets of Kabbalism long before the Jews. These notions of a preJudaic Chinese or Asiatic revelation were assimilated into some *Écossais* Masonic rites [58].

Many years later, Blake drew on Swedenborg's claims about Tartary, when he described in *Jerusalem* the "Masonic" construction of the material cosmos:

Urizen wrathful strode above directing the awful Building: As a mighty Temple; delivering form out of confusion. . . . Within is Asia & Greece, ornamented with exquisite art: Persia & Medea are his halls: his inmost hall is Great Tartary. China & India & Siberia are his temples for entertainment.A World of Generation continually Creating; out of the Hermaphroditic Satanic World of rocky destiny [59].

From his Yogic-Kabbalistic sources, Swedenborg learned the meditative practices shared by husband and wife, which raise the act of conjugal love to cosmic significance. In 1768 he was so inspired by these revelations that he broke his anonymity to publish, under his own name, *The Delights of Wisdom Concerning Conjugal Love*. The question of whether to translate the Latin original into English would later provoke bitter controversy in the Swedenborg society that the Blakes attended. W.B. Yeats, who came to believe that Blake practised these meditative techniques, gave a succinct description of the Tantric method:



Blake, Detail from *Jerusalem*, suppressed version, 1804-1820

An Indian devotee may recognise that he approaches the Self through a transfiguration of sexual desire; he repeats thousands of times a day words of adoration, calls before his eyes a thousand times the divine image. He is not always solitary, there is another method, that of the Tantric philosophy, where a man and woman, when in sexual union, transfigure each other's image into the masculine and feminine characters in God, but the man must not finish, vitality must not pass beyond his body, beyond his being. There are married people who, though they do not forbid the passage of seed, practise, not necessarily at the moment of union, a meditation, wherein the man seeks the divine Self as present in his wife, the wife the divine self as present in the man. There may be trance, and the presence of one with another though a great distance separates [60].

In his diary, Swedenborg hinted at similar achievement of conjugal union through mental telepathy:

...conjugal love, or that which exists between two conjugal partners who love one another...is the inmost of all loves, and such that partner sees partner in mind (*animus*) and mind (*mens*), so that each partner has the other in himself or herself, that is, that the image, nay, the likeness of the husband is in the mind of the wife and the image and likeness of the wife is in the mind of the husband, so that one sees the other in himself, and they thus cohabit in their inmosts [61].

Because the bachelor Swedenborg hoped to marry the wife of Count Frederick Gyllenborg in the spirit world, he perhaps attempted to achieve mental copulation with her by long-distance thought-transfer in the natural world.

Idel points out the similarities and differences between Kabbalistic and Tantric sexual mysticism: The [Jewish] husband has to elevate his thought to its source, to achieve an *unio mystica*, which will be followed by the descent of supernal spiritual forces on the

semen virile... It is worthwhile to compare this mystical conception of the sexual act to the tantric view. In both cases, the sexual act must be performed in a very mindful matter; a certain mystical consciousness is attained alongside the Corporeal act.

However, the usage of intercourse as a vehicle for spiritual experiences is evidently different. The mystical union of thought with its source is, in kabbalah, instrumental to the main goal—conception... In the tantric systems, the mystical consciousness, the *bodhicitta*, is an aim in itself whereas the perfect state is obtained by the immobilization of the flow of *semen virile*... The kabbalists put mystical union in the service of procreation; tantra put fruitless intercourse into the service of mystical consciousness [62]

As noted earlier, Idel also describes Jewish meditative practices in which sexual contact is not necessary, for magical-mystical experiences replace the conception of a child.

In his *Journal of Dreams* (1744), Swedenborg wrote a veiled description of his Kabbalistic-style ecstatic experience, which he achieved through meditation on the Hebrew letters;

...during the whole night something holy was dictated to me, which ended with "*sacrarium et sanctuarium*." I found myself lying in bed with a woman, and said, "Had you not used the word *sanctuarium*, we would have done it." I turned away from her. She with her hand touched my member, and it grew large, larger than it ever had been. I turned round and applied myself; it bent, yet it went in. She said it was long. I thought during the act that a child must come of it; and it succeeded *en merveille*... This denotes the uttermost love for the holy; for all love has its origin therefrom; is a series; in the body it consists in its actuality in the projection of the seed (*projectione semenis*) when the whole [left blank] is there, and is pure, it then means the love for wisdom [63].

Twenty-four years later, in *Conjugal Love*, his experience seemed to merge Yogic with Kabbalistic practice. Like Yeats, Swedenborg hinted at the control of seminal flow, when he stressed that the Lord provides "a hinged door, as it were," between earthly and heavenly sexuality, "which is opened by determination, care being taken that it does not stand open, lest the one should pass over into the other and they should commingle." [64] From his statement that the acquisition of Divine Wisdom consists in "*projectione semenis*" and his anatomical comments on the genital muscles, it seems that the "hinged door" was the seminal duct, which could be controlled by rigorous discipline. According to Tantric Yoga, some adepts achieve "that extraordinary mastery over non-striated muscles which normally cannot be controlled" that allows them to "arrest the semen" and "in-breathe" it back through the penis [65]. In Swedenborg, the cremaster muscle seemed to function like the Yogic "*yoni* place between the male organ and anus." [66]

In a decadent age of excess, Swedenborg argued the importance of moderation in order to maintain the male's general health, which will sustain sexual vigor: "His fibres, nerves, muscles, and cremasters do not become torpid, relaxed, or feeble, but continue in the strength of their powers." [67] The presence of "the virile powers" elevates the mind and "their absence depresses, this absence causing the mind to droop, collapse, and languish." [68] When sexual potency is properly infused into the devout mind, the meditator allegedly achieves supranormal powershe communicates with spirits, performs automatic writing, gains clairvoyance, and travels through the heavens. Adepts of Chinese and Tibetan Tantrism claim that repeated disciplined arousal, without emission ("physiological alchemy") empowers the mind, makes the body glow, increases longevity (to the point of immortality), and produces communication with the gods [69]. Swedenborg frequently recorded his personal achievement of these paranormal states, and the Yogic techniques were infused into some Kabbalistic-Rosicrucian rites of *Écossais* Freemasonry [70].

For the Jewish couple, the capacity to maintain high spiritualconsciousness while achieving mutual orgasm not only imitated the cosmic marriage but stimulated similar pleasures within the Divine Human (Adam Kadmon), who is the manifestation of God [71]. As Swedenborg hinted, the delights of true conjugal love "ascend and enter into heaven":

I have heard from angels, that when these delights ascend from chaste partners on earth, they perceive them to be exalted from themselves and infilled. Because some of the bystanders who were unchaste, to the question of whether this applied also to the ultimate delights [sexual intercourse], they nodded assent and said tacitly, "How can it be otherwise? Are not those delights the other delights in their fullness." [72]

Angelic love of the sex is "full of inmost delights," for it is "a pleasing expansion of all things of the mind." [73]

Through proper meditation, the regenerated man becomes angelized and achieves superhuman sexual pleasure [74].

"Eve Tempted by the Serpent," 1807"Embraces are comminglings from the Head even to the Foot," wrote Blake. Notice the figure's left toe.



Like the Sabbatians, Swedenborg elevated the sense of touch into the highest spiritual gift: "That the sense of touch is dedicated to conjugal love and is the sense proper thereto, is evident from its every sport and from the exaltation of its refinements to the supremely exquisite." [75] He also emphasized that physical sexuality is only an instrument of the mind, which receives influx from the spiritual world: "With those who are united in conjugal love, the forms of their minds terminate in these [sexual] organs." [76] For the male to maintain a prolonged erection, he must keep his thoughts "on high and hold them in the air, as it were, so that they do not descend and press on to that which makes that love." [77] Because virile potency is crucial to spiritual vision, Swedenborg argued that there were cases where an unmarried man could take a mistress and a husband could take a concubine.

However, emerging scandals among the Sabbatians—who were accused of practising cults of masturbation and group sex—and rival claimants to Swedenborg's role as a Masonic and Kabbalistic *guru* made him worry that his Temple of Love was being turned into a brothel (*lupinaria*) [78]. A passage in Dr. Falk's diary suggests that one of his Kabbalistic students engaged in bizarre phallic rituals [79]. Thus, Swedenborg and his Masonic colleagues in London assimilated their sexual theories into highly Christianized degrees within a special order of Freemasonry, the "Royal Order of Heredom of Kilwinning" or "Rite of Seven Degrees." The Kabbalistic belief that proper performance of the meditative-sexual act rebuilds the Temple and manifests the *Shekhinah* between the conjoined cherubim was especially attractive to the initiates of the Order of Heredom. One of the leaders of this rite, the French artist and engraver Lambert de Lintot, produced a series of hieroglyphic designs, which included phallic and vaginal symbolism as part of the process of regenerating the psyche and rebuilding the Temple of the New Jerusalem [80].

Swedenborg also described a secret mystical society, in which "spirits from Asia" teach initiates how to meditate on emblems of love "works of art and some small images as though cast in silver" that represent "the many qualities, attributes, and delights which belong to conjugal love." [81] Lintot's order had close ties with Swedish Masonry which were reinforced by the initiation of numbers of Swedish ship captains "in London lodges, including the Jewish." [82] These Kabbalistic rites were in turn exported to India and China by initiated captains sailing for the Swedish East India Company, who opened lodges in their ports of call [83]. The merging of Jewish and Asiatic rituals would thus have significant earthly as well as heavenly relevance. The Royal Order of Heredom survived through the 1790's, when Swedish and Swedenborgian Masons in London continued to join it. As I have argued elsewhere, Blake was possibly associated with Lintot's rite, which featured the word "Los" (the name of Blake's illuminated prophet) among its erotic emblems [84].

While Blake may have been initially exposed to these antinomian notions through his parents' religious associations, he also had access to them through Richard Cosway, who was an instructor at Pars's Drawing School when Blake studied there in 1767-72, and

who became a lifelong friend [85]. During the period of Moravian, Swedenborgian, and Falkian sexual experimentation, Cosway was familiar with all three groups [86]. As a student, he lived with Dr. Husband Messiter, who was friendly with Zinzendorf and moved in Moravian circles. Cosway subsequently developed lasting friendships with James Hutton and other Moravians. After Zinzendorf's death in 1760, Messiter became Swedenborg's personal physician and agent. Messiter was also connected with "irregular," Ancient Freemasonry, at a time when the name James Blake appeared in the register of an Ancient's lodge [87]. He was a close neighbor of Blake's family at 28 Broad Street, Golden Square, for he lived on Great Pulteney Street, Golden Square. It was probably through Messiter that Cosway acquired rare volumes of Swedenborg's early works, which inspired him to immerse himself in Jewish studies, magical experiments, and erotic art.

A student of the more bizarre offshoots of Freemasonry, Cosway was one of the earliest members of the Universal Society, organized by Messiter and other devotees of Swedenborg in 1776. While Blake served his apprenticeship, he had access to these Masonic developments, often centered at Freemasons' Hall and Tavern, which faced Basire's studio on Great Queen Street. The name William Blake appeared frequently in the 1780's and '90's in surviving lodge registers but, unfortunately, no further identification is given [88]. Both Cosway and Blake would have applauded the efforts of the radical Swedish Masons to publish Latin editions and English translations of Swedenborg's most erotic and occultist writings.

In 1779-80 and 1783-86, the Universal Society was visited by Augustus Nordenskjöld, a Swedish Mason and son of Moravian parents, who was an eager student of Kabbala and a practicing alchemist. During his first visit, Nordenskjöld met Dr. Messiter and then moved into the home of the latter's friend, Dr. Gumpertz Levison, a Jewish physician and alchemist [89]. Levison had been a youthful protégé of Rabbi Jonathon Eibeschutz, a crypto-Sabbatian, who perhaps informed him about the Kabbalistic and Masonic activities of Falk and Swedenborg in London [90]. After his arrival in London in 1770, when he undertook medical studies with the Hunter brothers, he became a Swedenborgian Mason. Like Zinzendorf's and Falk's disciples, Levison was accused of antinomian sexual and religious practices [91].

In 1780 Levison accompanied Nordenskjöld to Stockholm, where the "illuminist" king, Gustav III, employed him as court alchemist and physician. In 1789 another Jewish Swedenborgian named Samuel acted as a liaison between the London society and the illuminist lodge at Avignon, which was accused of "frivolous erotic practices." [92] Nordenskjöld fully supported the efforts of charismatic Masonic emissaries from France—Count Cagliostro, Count Grabianka, and Louis Claude de St. Martin—to radicalize the London Swedenborgians and to promote Kabbalistic theories of spirit communication and conjugal love [93]. From the early 1780's, Blake's drawings and writings reflected his interests in Swedenborg and other occultists, such as Paracelsus and Boehme.

In fact, it was through the Swedes' influence on the Swedenborg Society in 1788-90 that the first evidence of Mrs. Blake's difficulties with her husband's sexual theosophy begins to emerge. In March 1788 Charles Bernhard Wadström, a Swedish colleague of Nordenskjöld, arrived in London with the manuscript of Swedenborg's spiritual diary. Though Blake's friend John Augustus Tulk offered to subsidize the publication of these "memorabilia" from the spirit world, some of the English Swedenborgians were horrified at the erotic and magical scenes described in them [94]. In February 1789, when Augustus Nordenskjöld returned to London, his bold advocacy of Swedenborg's sexual and alchemical theories exacerbated an emerging liberal-conservative split in the society. Though the London society was linked with Swedenborgian Masonic lodges in Avignon, Paris, Berlin, and Stockholm, a minority of English members distrusted the revolutionary leanings of the foreigners, and they determined to establish a separate dissenting church at Great Eastcheap. When the Blakes attended the Great Eastcheap Conference in April 1789, the factions attempted to patch over their quarrel, and they issued a compromise manifesto (signed by William and Catherine Blake).

However, the Swedes were distressed at the reluctance of the conservatives to publish an English translation of *Conjugal Love*, which they considered Swedenborg's most inspired work. In a particularly provocative passage, Swedenborg stressed the importance of male sexual potency to the capacity to receive divine influx:

That conjugal love makes man more and more a male... That the ability and vigour called virile accompanies wisdom according as the latter is animated from the spiritual things of the Church; that it is then present in the conjugal love; and that wisdom opens the vein of that love from its fountain in the soul, and thus invigorates the intellectual life, which is masculine life itself, and blesses it with perpetuity... the angels in heaven are in this vigour to eternity... the most ancient peoples in the Golden and Silver Ages were in enduring efficacy because they loved the caresses of their wives and children and shuddered at the caresses of harlots. Moreover it was told me from heaven that with those who abominate adulteries as infernal, this spiritual sufficiency will not be lacking in the natural world also... [95]

When Blake annotated *The Wisdom of Angels Concerning Divine Love and Divine Wisdom*, he responded positively to Swedenborg's hint at the influx of spirit which produces the erotic trance (which Swedenborg called Wisdom). To Swedenborg's claim that "Man in whom the spiritual degree is open" can come into that Wisdom "by laying asleep the Sensations of the Body, and by Influx from above at the same time into the Spirituals of his Mind," Blake responded that "This is while in the Body. This is to be understood as unusual in our time, but common in ancient." [96] Blake also made clear that he participated in the discussions and arguments taking place in the Swedenborg Society, and he rejected the conservatives' argument that reason (the understanding) must mediate the influx into love. He applauded Swedenborg's statement that the "natural Man can elevate his Understanding to superior Light as far as he desires it," and he defied the rationalists who "dare to say after this that all elevation is of self & is Enthusiasm and Madness."

When the conservatives threatened to separate from the Universalists, Augustus Nordenskjöld appealed to the liberals to join a secret interior order that would implement the full revolutionary agenda of the radical Masons. On 4 May he presented his proposals for "The Form of Society in the New Jerusalem," which argued for the centrality of conjugal love to society and advocated a sexualized process of meditation upon Swedenborg's texts as well as the Bible. Because sexual energy is so important to spiritual energy, Swedenborg's theory of "permission" for concubinage should be implemented immediately:

As it will happen, of course, that for a long time to come there will be unmarried men in our Church who are not able to marry, and married men who have been received among us, but who have unchristian wives, rejecting the New Doctrine, and who thus must live in a disharmonious marriage, it follows that such men are driven so strongly by the inborn *amor sexus* that they cannot contain themselves, it is inevitable, for the sake of order, that they be permitted, the former to take a mistress and the latter a concubine [97].

Nordenskjöld's proposals set off a storm of controversy, and the minutes of the meeting were subsequently torn out.

On 26 May he issued an invitation to the liberal Swedenborgians to join his secret alchemical order, which would implement the master's philosophy of chemistry, economics, and sexuality. In the process, the initiate would "render the day of his Tabernacling in the Body a continual State of Bliss, correspondent with the spiritual State of Happiness, which was prepared in him before." [98] On 26 June Nordenskjöld issued another appeal in his *Plan for a Free Community Upon the Coast of Africa*, in which he stressed the importance of the "virile powers" to a healthy society:

...in regard to the permanent *Powers* of a Community, a knowledge of what constitutes the Foundation, is the great secret of all *true Policy*, which, however, at present, is intirely unknown. The ultimate Foundation of all kinds of *Powers*, as well in Individuals, I call *Virility* or *Conjugal Power*... Now the first elementary, powerful, and universal Union, or Bond of Society, is the *Love of the Sex*. If we deprive ourselves intirely of this, we shall never be able to become rich and great, because then we are incapable of any social Life. This *Love of the Sex* in every Male has two kinds of Eruption, or two channels of Ebullition; the one extends more and more towards various objects, and the other concentrates its force into one, and never strays beyond its proper circle. The former tends always to Impotency, and of course to Infelicity; the latter continually increases in *Virility*... It is not at present believed...that the true way of continually increasing the *Virile Powers*, is by concentrating that *Love* to *One Object*. but least of all can Men bepersuaded to think, that in every Male there is an inexhaustible source of the *Virile Power*, capable of being exercised and cultivated to a perpetual Increase. Nothing however is more true, than that the *Love of the Sex*, and the constant exercise thereof, which is the *Virile Potency*, is the very basis to the accession of all other kinds of *permanent Powers*. All activity and every executive impulse is in such complete conjunction with the *Virile Power*, that they all advance step by step, and can never be

separated. Who does not find, that in Activity lies the very foundation of all kinds of real happiness? It is then evident why a Man with the permanent *Power of Virility*, stands on the sure foundation of being exalted to every *Power of Wealth* and *Dignity* [99].

Nordenskjöld argued further that women are "designed by creation to constitute the felicity of Men"; thus, it is tragic that they are so repressed and poorly educated:

Marriages in their present state are but Seminaries for a corrupt Generation; instead of a sincere Friendship, which ought to subsist in the Union, we find nothing but Indifference, proceeding from dissimulation; instead of Liberty, constraint; instead of tender love, cold Disgust [100].

Since wives are so often dominated by the "Lust of Dominion" and the "Lust of Possession," which debilitate Virile Potency, concubinage "never ought to be forbidden in a Free State." [101]

That Blake responded enthusiastically to these proposals is suggested by his paean to sexual love in *Thel*, probably composed in summer or autumn 1789 [102]. At the same time, he lamented the prudish fears of some women—including his wife?—about open and ardent sexuality. When Thel "enter'd in & saw the secrets of the land unknown," she emitted "Dolours & Lamentations" hardly an inspiration to continual virile potency! [103] Echoing Swedenborg's doctrine of Use, in which the functions of bodily organs manifest spiritual essences, Blake warns that if Thel does not exercise her sexuality, "all shall say, 'Without a use this shining woman liv'd.'" [104] For the conservative Swedenborgians, who included attractive figures like the Anglican minister John Clowes, caution and discretion must veil the doctrine of conjugal love, which should be taught gradually, in a rational way, to members judged morally fit. While Nordenskjöld was accused of "opening the floodgates to immorality," those members who utilized animal magnetism to speed up the production of erotic trances were accused of producing "horrid enormities." Like the Moravians earlier, the Swedenborgians were vulnerable to becoming objects of public ridicule and scandal.

In early 1790, Nordenskjöld became so frustrated by the prudery of the Eastcheapers that he travelled to France, where he presented a French version of his "Form of a New Society" (*Tableau d'une Constitution incorruptible*) to the National Assembly in Paris [105]. In autumn of that year, Blake moved to Lambeth, where he became the close neighbor of several Swedenborgians who supported the radical agenda of Nordenskjöld and the illuminist Masons (J.A. Tulk, Frances Barthelemon, Jacob and Thomas Duché). Moreover, they were sympathetic to the even more radical sexual notions of the *frères* at Avignon, who featured ritual nudity, communal sex, and worship of the *Shekhinah* (a Kabbalistic version of the Virgin Mary) in their arcane ceremonies. [106]. A conservative critic would later charge that illuminist "clubs" in England sent to the French National Assembly a memorial, "in which the Assembly was requested to establish a community of wives, and to take children from their parents, and educate them for the nation." [107] Count Grabianka, chief of the Avignon *Illuminés*, had actually relinquished his small daughter to his Masonic superior, before he visited the

Swedenborgians in London in 1785-86 (and again in 1796) [108]. Accusations about erotic ceremonies at Avignon suggest that these revolutionary sexual theories were not only preached but practised.

Even Nordenskjöld was distressed when the Avignon society decided that Swedenborg's *Conjugal Love* was not divinely inspired and adopted instead the kind of free-love agenda promulgated by the "Asiatic Brethren," a Masonic rite developed by Sabbatian Jews and Cabbalistic Christians [109]. At this time, emissaries from the "Asiatics" were in London, and several Swedenborgians collected their writings [110]. When Blake declared that Swedenborg "is the Angel sitting at the tomb: his writings are the linen clothes folded up," he suggested his own movement towards the Sabbatian position—"Now is the dominion of Edom, & the return of Adam into Paradise." [111] If Mrs. Blake shared Thel's hesitations about the plunge into sexuality, she must have been even more distressed by her husband's increasing advocacy of free love.



Blake, Dragon forms, from
Vala circa 1797

In the powerful erotic paean of *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (1793), Blake targeted "the frozen marriage bed," which needed "wanton play" in "happy copulation" (preferably in groups) in order to thaw [112].

According to Swedenborg and the liberated J.A. Tulk (an admirer of Grabianka), the divine innocence of conjugal love is best expressed in daylight nakedness, rather than furtive couplings under the covers [113]. Thus, Tulk would not have been shocked to discover the Blakes naked in their garden, acting out "the return of Adam into Paradise." Thomas Butts, a new Swedenborgian friend who allegedly walked in upon them, was amused but not critical. That Mrs. Butts hoped for a romantic relationship with Blake is suggested by the poem, "The Phoenix," that Blake wrote for her [114]. When Mrs. Blake cried at her husband's proposal to bring a concubine into their home, she was perhaps influenced by those New Church preachers who warned about "opening the floodgate to immorality." Blake's poem, "The Garden of Love," makes clear that it was religious fears that made his wife resist his ardent overtures, and in his bitter notebook poems he described a jealous wife who "trembling cold, in ghastly fears" withdraws from his approach [115].

But "The Garden of Love" also implies that Blake himself had difficulty with the demanding techniques of Yogic-Kabbalistic sex. In the vaginal "chapel of gold," his phallic serpent forces the door until "the golden hinges tore" thus ruining his chance to open the hinged door to spiritual vision that Swedenborg described. Instead, he ejaculates prematurely, "Vomiting his poison out." No longer the vehicle of the divine, the wasted semen becomes perverted. In a sardonic notebook poem, Blake hinted at his wife's prudishness ("Love is a sin") and vaginal dryness ("her fusty old Nut"), which he blames for his own impotence (Long John Brown "grew thinner & thinner") and deficient semen ("the Devil enter'd into the Young Man's broth") [116]. In the Tantric sexual trance, the female's "ovarial fluids" play a crucial role, while Chinese Tantrists used the word "broth" to describe the proper relationship of male semen to female fluids [117].

Throughout *Vala, or the Four Zoas*, positive images of phallic and vaginal desire are mingled with negative images of perverted sexuality. Like Swedenborg, who feared for his sanity while being tormented by sexual images he could not control, Blake underwent severe mental and emotional strain that worried his wife and friends.

The Jealousy of Los 1797



Lincoln notes that some of the *Vala* drawings "suggest—often in startling terms—a relationship between repression and the fetishizing of sexuality," while other "partly obliterated" drawings present sexuality "in terms which suggest frenzied compulsion, an urge for domination, or voyeuristic fascination." [118] Thus, "sexuality becomes at once a torment and an obsession." Even more distressing for Catherine Blake, William seemed to project onto her his own sexual difficulties, making her the impediment to his visionary process.

That Blake attempted some of the more bizarre techniques of Kabbalistic Yoga is suggested by his odd description in *Milton* of the left foot as a vehicle of spiritual ascent [119]. He may have hinted at this phenomenon earlier when he sketched a great toe and drew a circle around an engraved toe on a page of *Vala, or the Four Zoas* [120]. He was probably aware of Richard Payne Knight's treatise on *The Worship of Priapus* (1786), in which the phallus was called the "Great Toe" in contemporary Neapolitan folk religion, which preserved the remains of "the mystic theology of the ancients." [121] Moreover, Knight discussed similar sexual notions in Jewish mysticism, Indian art and scriptures, and the Scandinavian *Eddas*. However, it is the merged Kabbalistic-Yogic theosophy of Swedenborg that sheds most light on Blake's description.

According to Wolfson, the foot functions in Kabbalistic literature as "a euphemism for the phallus, human and divine," while the toes represent the "ten demonic powers." [122] Swedenborg followed Kabbalistic teaching when he placed hell under the soles of the feet of the Grand Man and described the "vastation" that can purge the demonic evil from the feet and toes. In the hell of religious hypocrites, a spirit "is now vastated under the soles of both feet":

Pain was felt in the great toe of the left foot... that great toe communicates with the genitals; for the genitals correspond to the Word... It has been often granted to sensibly perceive that communication [123].

Reinforcing the sexual significance of foot and toe were certain Yogic rites, in which the great toe plays a crucial role in breath control. The initiate is taught to massage the ankle and great toe, opposite the side through which he wishes the breath to flow. The capacity to breathe on one side was connected with the precoital position of the Tantric couple:

Quite aside from using the great toe as a means for changing the breath flow, Tantrik aspirants are taught to massage this toe (on both feet) regularly. They are told that a nerve terminating in the large toe regulates all cyclic changes and rhythms in the entire body [124].

Blake may have been aware of another Yogic technique with the toe, for Edward Moor, a soldier in India and student of Hindu mythology, returned to London in 1791-96 with sketches of Indian Yogis, for which he sought engravers among Blake's colleagues. Among these was a drawing of Narayana "with his toe in his mouth, reposing on a lotus leaf." [125] Though Moor continued to collect pictures and carvings of Indian erotica, he was unwilling to publish unexpurgated versions. Thus, in his prudishly euphemistic account of "Linga.Yoni," he dismissed the "puerile conceit" of Narayana's "putting his toe in his mouth, symbolical of eternity," which was maintained by "mystical sectarists" in order to "furnish enthusiasts with fancies of a corresponding description." Having glossed over the role of the toe in the sexual ritual, Moor did not publish its Yogic purpose. According to Ghosh's *The Original Yoga*, "If one takes his big toe in to his mouth and holds it there, he can thereby stop the flow of psychic air within his body." This technique facilitates the control of seminal flow during the prolonged erection [126].

Blake's encircled toe appears with a passage depicting two joined cherubim hovering over the Fallen Man:

Two winged immortal shapes one standing at his feet
Toward the East one standing at his head toward the west
Their wings join'd in the Zenith over head
Such is the Vision of All Beulah hov'ring over the Sleeper.



Narayana Krihna

The limit of Contraction now was fixd & Man began To wake upon the Couch of Death...

. . . Then Los said I behold the Divine Vision thro the broken Gates Of thy poor broken heart astonishd melted into Compassion & Love And Enitharmon said I see the Lamb of God upon Mount Zion Wondring with love & Awe they felt the divine hand upon them [127].

Blake's "Vision of All Beulah" represented the Kabbalist's state of sexual equilibrium between male and female potencies and Swedenborg's state of conjugal love. Awakened from their stupor by sexual arousal and spiritual vision, Los-Enitharmon and William-Catherine transcend nature and gain a direct apprehension of God. Feeling "the divine hand upon them," they joined the Daughters of Beulah, who "worshipped / Astonish'd Comforted Delighted in notes of Rapturous Extacy." When Blake later re-drew the great toe, did he hope to clarify its relation to the conjoined cherubim and orgasmic vision of Beulah?

Spector argues that Blake also utilized Kabbalistic theories for the structure and themes of *Milton*, including the mystical purpose of sexual intercourse on earth and in heaven:

Simultaneously, man is expected to unite with his wife, each sexual act being said to assist the reunification of *Adam Kadmon* and his female counterpart. The macrocosmic union symbolizes the cosmic reunification, ultimately to be achieved through the sexual union of the Godhead and His Female Counterpart, the *Shekhinah* (Blake's Jerusalem) [128].

That there were parallels between Kabbalistic and Tantric traditions concerning the big toe sheds some light on two obscure passages in Swedenborg's diary and Blake's *Milton*. Moreover, while Blake was completing *Milton* (ca. 1809-10), he had also resumed his positive interest in Swedenborg, while practising Kabbalistic meditation and studying works on Hindu mythology and art [129].

According to Don Karr, certain Kabbalistic-Yogic methods connect the big toe with sexual and visionary functioning:

The seat of sexuality resides in the *ajna chakkra*, or the Kabbalistic *hiah*. It is at this level that *aba* and *aima* are conjoined. There are two aspects of this center, which correspond to the pituitary and pineal glands. In acupuncture and reflexology traditions, the big toe contains points to stimulate these two glands. The *ajna chakkra* is the "third eye," hence the visionary function, though these visions are thought by some only to originate there, to be "seen" by the *visudha*, or throat, *chakkra*; in Kabbalistic terms, this is the *neshama* [130].

When Blake portrayed Milton's spirit descending into "my left foot falling on the tarsus," he seemed to draw on one of Swedenborg's wierdest "Kabbalistic" scenes.

In a passage in the *Spiritual Diary*, which is always left in Latin by New Church scholars, Swedenborg described the secret sex rituals of a Moravian and/or Jewish group in London:

It was shown to me of what sort were the filthy loves of those [people], truly in the way they support (*confirmant*) such loves with filthy calculations (*spurcis ratiociniis*), by means of sensations induced into the area of the genital members, first into the little glands of the groin (*glandulas inquinales*), then through a certain sensible approach [touch, massage] from the area of the belly toward that area [the groin]; then through the induction of sensation into the genital member itself, successively in the direction of the scrotum (*bulbo*) and then at the same time into the big toe of left foot; and through a burning sensation under the sole of the left foot, especially into the nail of the big toe of the left foot, which at length co-responds with a fiery burning of such a kind in the scrotum (*bulbum*). It [scrotum] came to be fiery. By these things it was signified in what manner they will have progressively encouraged (*confirmarint*) and incited themselves with filthy calculations, indeed in those grossest of natural things which are made known through the burning of the nail of the big toe of the left foot; then in a sensation of those whose same burning [is felt] previously in the urethra, which things betoken that which pertains to the filthy bladder. Thus have their fetid loves proceeded, for they prize their partners the lowest and regard their spouses as urinary vessels [piss pots] into which each one it is permitted to pour his urine. To such an extent do they hate and abominate their partners, and conjugal love, indeed the whole female sex. In consequence, all loves are thence diverted into another channel, that thus their life may finally be a *hyemis* life, and filthy indeed [131].

The Latin scholar Shaw-Smith observes that the passage (with its repetition of *confirmant*) hints at a process of sexual healing or rejuvenation, though Swedenborg is sarcastic about the results. Despite the wierdness of his description, Swedenborg revealed clearly his access to the arcana of Judaized Yoga or Tantric Kabbala. According to Wolfson, the *Zohar* teaches that "He who knows and measures with measurements of the measuring line...the length of the extension from the thighs to the feet" will envision the messianic moment when the Jews will be released from their state of entrapment in the feet of the demonic power [132]. These "measurements" or "calculations" involve the psychosexual combination of Hebrew letters and numbers (*gematria*), which Swedenborg scorns as "*spurcis ratiociniis*" or filthy calculations.

As Swedenborg noted earlier, control of the semen is crucial to the erotic trance. According to Tantrists, ritualized touching of the area below the umbilicus awakens the serpent of wisdom (*kundalini*), which engenders a fiery sensation as it moves through the body [133]. Swedenborg similarly described the movement of respiration from the umbilicus to the abdomen, "pertaining to the region of the genital members and loins." [134] As arousal progresses, the Yogin changes the breath flow by massaging the great toe, where a nerve terminates that regulates all cyclic changes and rhythms in the entire body. At the moment of ejaculation, the adept applies pressure on the urethra in the perineal area, thus diverting the seminal secretion into the bladder. This diversion (the most important technique in "left-hand" Tantrism) is extremely difficult and requires disciplined "pumping and expulsion of liquids from the urethra" while the semen is arrested. Even among Tantric masters, success was rare [135]. No wonder the neophyte Moravians ended up using their wives as "urinary vessels"! However, if successful, these rituals were said to produce rejuvenation and long life.

When Swedenborg wrote this passage in October 1748, he was torn between his attraction to the Moravian and Jewish arcana of visionary sex and his guilt at its libertine ramifications. According to Idel, some Sabbatians (including the more radical disciples of Falk, Eibeschütz, and Frank) turned "orgiastic practices" into a "*via mystica* of the new aeon." [136] In another passage, Swedenborg used similar but inverted imagery to describe "the dregs of the people" who cannot achieve such mental and visionary feats: "I perceived for some time a cold considerably severe from the sole of the foot upwards through the foot itself to the knee, and even to the loins." [137] It is possible that these descriptions (and others since destroyed) were shown to Blake by the Swedes in London [138]. In 1790 Nordenskjöld gave J.A. Tulk, Blake's friend and neighbor, 180 pages of extracts from the unpublished spiritual diary. Their illuminist collaborator Benedict Chastanier, who hoped to heal the breach between the Eastcheapers and Universalists, copied passages from the diary throughout 1790-91.

While Blake vows to teach Milton the error of his puritanical misogyny, he knows that he must first absorb Milton's error before he can regenerate it. Though Swedenborg used traditional Kabbalistic symbolism on the association of the feet with the natural man in the natural world, he also argued that they can be reformed and regenerated through the processes of conjugal love [139]. Blake seemed to include these "contrary" dynamics in his description of the spirit of Milton entering Blake's foot:

...So Milton's shadow fell Precipitant, loud thund'ring into the Sea of Time and Space.
Then first I saw him in the Zenith as a falling star
Descending perpendicular, swift as the swallow or swift:
And on my left foot falling on the tarsus, enter'd there:



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An earlier version in which an erection can be seen slightly erased.

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Descending perpendicular, swift as the swallow or swift:
And on my left foot falling on the tarsus, enter'd there:

But from my left foot a black cloud redounding spread over Europe [140].

Spector observes that the entry of Milton's spirit into Blake's left foot is an act of sacrificial yet redemptive materialization that will allow psychic and cosmic sexual reunification [141].

Just as Swedenborg described the sexual energy progressing from the undersole to the toe of the left foot, Blake stressed that Milton's spirit entered at the tarsus, which is the space on the sole of the foot just before the "five long bones which sustain and are articulated with the toes." [142] In the *Zohar*, toes and feet are considered "lower crowns" from the left realm of evil; their male and female potencies often desire to entice Kabbalistic students, who "see in them an adumbration of the holy body" and seek to become included in it [143]. After Milton's spirit enters Blake's foot, "a black cloud redounding" from it "spread over Europe." The moment of entry, however, is one of abandonment to visionary and sexual ecstasy. In copy A, Blake portrayed himself nude, with a blackened or charred penis erect against his body [144]. One can only wonder if tarsus and toe stimulated a fiery burning in his *bulbum*! That Blake or his cautious executors added shorts (underpants) to subsequent copies suggests that the original plate was deemed offensive by some viewers.

Blake may have further drawn on Kabbalistic lore when he again described "Milton entering my Foot" and placed him within the mysteries of the Grand Man (Adam Kadmon). In this moment of mystical union,

...all this Vegetable World appeard on my left Foot,
As a bright sandal formd immortal of precious stones & gold:
I stooped down & bound it on to walk thro' Eternity [145].

Wolfson notes that in the *Zohar*,

...the sandal symbolizes the feminine and the foot the masculine, or, more specifically, the phallus. The symbols have a twofold connotation: they refer to mundane realities

and their correlates in the divine realm, the sandal symbolizing the *Shekhinah* and the foot *Yesod* [146].

Thus, when the feminine sandal is put on Blake-Milton's foot, the defective mundane marriage is rectified while the cosmic marriage is consummated. Such explication may seem far-fetched to most modern readers, but Blake had friends and associates—especially the Swedenborgian Masons—who were adept at Kabbalistic-Yogic interpretations and psycho-sexual techniques.

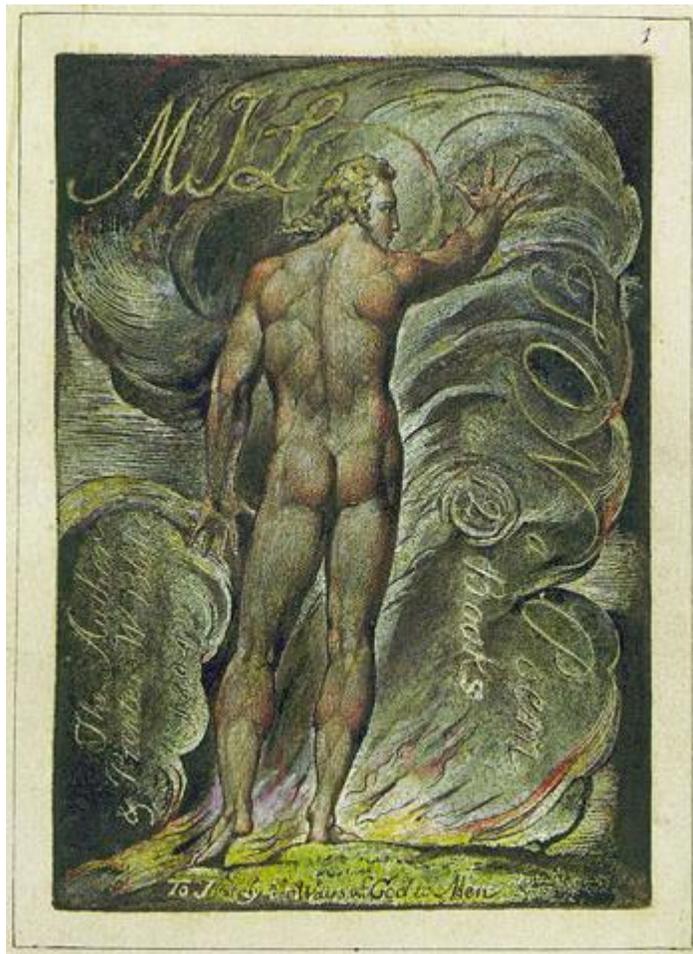
Though Blake lamented that "The look of love alarms/ Because tis filld with fire," he eventually learned to have compassion on his wife's "Poor pale pitiable form." [147] He also taught her to see visions and, in rare and treasured moments, they seemed to share a state of "sweet raptur'd trance," when "Embraces are Cominglings: from the Head even to the Feet;/ And not a pompous High Priest entering by a Secret Place." [148] As the

Kabbalists taught, "when the feet reach the feet," the union of the divine phallus (*Yesod*) with the feminine presence (*Shekhinah*) is consummated [149].

In poetic lines that would have pleased Zinzendorf, Swedenborg, and Falk, Blake also rends the veil over the ancient sexual mystery:

In Beulah the Female lets down her beautiful Tabernacle; Which the Male enters magnificent between her Cherubim: And becomes One with her.. [150].

No wonder Mrs. Blake cried, for the awesome responsibility of reuniting the cherubim and reintegrating God rested on her housewifely shoulders!



SELECTED DOCUMENTATION

¹ Alexander Gilchrist, *Life of William Blake*, ed. Ruthven Todd (1863; rev. ed. 1880; rpt. London: J.M. Dent, 1942), 314-15.

² *ibid.*, 127.

³ Algernon Charles Swinburne, *William Blake: A Critical Essay* (1868; rpt. New York: Benjamin Blom, 1967), 14.

⁴ Edwin Ellis and William Butler Yeats, eds., *The Works of William Blake* (London: Quaritch, 1893), I, 42.

⁵ *ibid.*, I, 43.

⁶ Arthur Symons, *William Blake* (London: Archibald Constable, 1907), 74-75. In an Appendix, Symons reprinted the Blakean extracts in Robinson's diary.

⁷ Nancy Bogen, "The Problem of Blake's Early Religion," *The Personalist*, 49 (1968), 509, 517. She refers to the doubts raised by David Erdman in "Blake's Early Swedenborgianism: A Twentieth-century Legend," *Comparative Literature*, V (1953), 247-57. However, subsequent discoveries of Blake's early drawings with Swedenborgian themes have reinforced the tradition.

⁸ See Abraham Reincke, *A Register of Members of the Moravian Church* (Bethlehem: H.T. Clauder, 1873), 11-12, 18.

⁹ Keri Davies, "William Blake's Mother: A New Identification," *Blake: An Illustrated Quarterly* (forthcoming). Davies convincingly disproves E.P. Thompson's claim of a Muggletonian connection. As he continues extensive archival research on Blake's family background, he notes that the Moravian association is more plausible, though not yet proven (personal communication). It is possible that the Mr. and Mrs. Parker on the 1743 list were the parents of Blake's later business partner James Parker.

¹⁰ Bogen, "Problem," 517. Muir was the source for Thomas Wright's Moravian argument in *Life of William Blake* (London: Olney Bucks, 1929), I, 2; see also Margaret Lowry, *Windows of the Morning* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1940), 14-15.

¹¹ Erich Beyreuther, "Zinzendorf und das Judentum," *Judaica*, 19 (1963), 193-246; Markus Schoop, "Zum Gespräch Zinzendorfs mit Israel," *Reformatio*, 16 (1967), 258-65.

¹² Jack Lindsay, *William Blake: His Life and Work* (London: Constable, 1978), 3-5.

- ¹³ See Raphael Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess* (New York: Ktav, 1967), 101-03, 120-22.
- ¹⁴ *Jerusalem*, plate 21, l. 21; in *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, rev. ed. by David Erdman and Harold Bloom (New York: Doubleday, 1988), 166. [Cited henceforth as Blake, *CPP*].
- ¹⁵ See chapter on "Sexuality and Spirituality in the Kabbalah" in David Biale, *Eros and the Jews* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 101-20.
- ¹⁶ Elliot Wolfson, "Images of God's Feet: Some Observations on the Divine Body in Judaism," in *People of the Body: Jews and Judaism from an Embodied Perspective*, ed. Howard Eilberg-Schwartz (Albany: State University of New York, 1992), 162.
- ¹⁷ For excerpts from Crabb Robinson's diary, see *Nineteenth-century Accounts of William Blake*, ed. J.A. Wittreich (Gainesville: Scholar's Facsimiles and Reprints, 1970), 65, 89, 296.
- ¹⁸ Arthur E. Waite, *A New Encyclopedia of Freemasonry* (London: William Ryder, 1921), 194. The collaboration of Zinzendorf and the German and Swedish Moravians with Jacobite Freemasons made them targets of surveillance by the British government in London and Hanover. For a lurid but inadequately documented account of Zinzendorf's sexual-Masonic rituals, see Tim O'Neill, "The Erotic Freemasonry of Count Nicholas von Zinzendorf," in *Secret and Suppressed: Banned Ideas and Hidden History*, ed. Jim Keith (Feral House, 1993), 103-08. I am grateful to Ron Heisler for sending me this article.
- ¹⁹ Daniel Benham, *Memoirs of James Hutton* (London: Hamilton, Adams, and Co., 1856), 118. On Zinzendorf's "règle du secret, *disciplini arcani*," see Pierre Deghaye, *La Doctrine Esotérique de Zinzendorf (1700-1760)* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1969).
- ²⁰ For the similarities, see Lowry, *Windows*, 14-15.
- ²¹ Benham, *Memoirs*, 118.
- ²² Henry Rimius, *A Candid Narrative of the Rise and Progress of the Herrnhutters* (London: A. Linde, 1753), I, 9-10; II, 3, 19-22, 36, 77, 80.
- ²³ Wittreich, *Nineteenth-Century Accounts*, 100.
- ²⁴ Rimius, *Candid Narrative*, II, 3, 60, 64.
- ²⁵ *ibid.*, II, 56-57, 63-65; Appendix, xix-xx.
- ²⁶ William Blake, *The Four Zoas*, eds. David Erdman and Cettina Magno (Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 1987), 158; description of sketch by Peter Ackroyd, *Blake: A Biography* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1996), 281.

²⁷ I am currently completing a political and Masonic biography of Swedenborg. In the meantime, information on his connections with Jacobites, Jews, Moravians, and Masons can be read in my articles, "Swedenborg, Jacobitism, and Freemasonry," in *Swedenborg and His Influence*, ed. Erland Brock (Bryn Athyn: Academy of New Church, 1988), 359-79; "Yeats and the Unknown Superiors: Swedenborg, Falk, and Cagliostro," in *Secret Texts: The Literature of Secret Societies*, eds. Marie Mulvey Roberts and Hugh Ormsby-Lennon (New York: AMS, 1995), 114-68; "Swedenborg's Travels: New Documents Raise New Questions," in *Swedenborg Society Annual Report* (London, 1998), 35-45; and "Emanuel Swedenborg: Deciphering the Codes of a Celestial and Terrestrial Intelligencer," in *Rending the Veil: Concealment and Secrecy in the History of Religions*, ed. Elliot Wolfson (New York: Seven Bridges, 1999), 177-208.

²⁸ On Rabbi Johan Kemper, Swedenborg's probable Hebrew instructor at Uppsala, see my article, "Leibniz, Benzelius, and Swedenborg: the Kabbalistic Roots of Swedish Illuminism," in *Leibniz, Mysticism, and Religion*, eds. A.P. Coudert, R.H. Popkin, and G.M. Weiner (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1998), 84-106. Also, Elliot Wolfson, "Messianism in the Christian Kabbalah of Johann Kemper," in *Jewish Messianism in the Early Modern Period*, eds. Matt Goldish and R.H. Popkin (Dordrecht: Kluwer, forthcoming).

²⁹ Wittreich, *Nineteenth-century Accounts*, 269-70.

³⁰ Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalah* (New York: Quadrangle/New York Times Book Co., 1974), 272-74.

³¹ *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, plate 3; in Blake, *CPP*, 34.

³² Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 204.

³³ Beyreuther, "Zinzendorf," 240.

³⁴ On the mistresses, see William White, *Emanuel Swedenborg: His Life and Writings*, 2nd. rev. ed. (London: Simpkin-Marshall, 1868), 53, 92. According to G.E. Klemming, who first published the *Journal of Dreams* in 1859, Swedenborg had led an "irregular life in respect to the other sex" from his young manhood through 1744: "This has not been known publicly until now, but the fact has been handed down, quietly, by tradition among the older and higher adepts in Sweden." Quoted in C.T. Odhner, "Swedenborg's Dreams or Diary of 1744," *New Church Life* (1914), 391.

³⁵ Swedenborg acquired various extremely graphic treatises on masturbation, conjugal sexuality, and venereal disease (such as the anonymous *Onania*, Venette's *The Pleasures of Conjugal Love Explained*, and Astruc's *A Treatise of the Venereal Disease*); see Emanuelis Swedenborgii, *Catalogus Bibliotheca*, ed. Alfred Stroh (Holmiae, 1907), 14-15.

³⁶ Emanuel Swedenborg, *Journal of Dreams*, trans. J.J.G. Wilkinson, ed. Guy Woofenden (New York: Swedenborg Foundation, 1986), #200.

³⁷ *ibid.*, #111-12.

³⁸ Emanuel Swedenborg, *The Generative Organs*, trans. J.J. Garth Wilkinson (London: W. Newberry, 1852), 20-21. He quotes Winslow, Heister, and Boerhaave. Though he had announced in *The Animal Kingdom* that he had completed this section, he inexplicably decided against publication. The manuscript was later studied by Blake's Swedenborgian associates.

³⁹ *ibid.*, 25, 28.

⁴⁰ On genital respiration, see Emanuel Swedenborg, *The Spiritual Diary*, trans. George Bush and James Buss (London: James Speirs, 1889), #3325. On the role of the cremaster in the sexual-visionary process, see Emanuel Swedenborg, *The Delights of Wisdom Concerning Conjugal Love*, trans. Alfred Acton (1768; London: Swedenborg Society, 1970), #107.

⁴¹ *The French Revolution* (1791), pl 10, l. 185; in Blake, *CPP*, 294. Blake portrays the Duke of Orleans, Grand Master of French Freemasonry and a student of Falk's and Swedenborg's techniques of genital respiration, as Orleans performs a Mesmeric-Masonic ritual.

⁴² Swedenborg, *Journal of Dreams*, #260; White, *Swedenborg*, 131-33.

⁴³ J. Wittreich, *Nineteenth-century Accounts*, 62.

⁴⁴] Moshe Idel, "Sexual Metaphors and Practice in the Kabbalah," in *The Jewish Family: Metaphor and Memory* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1989), 200.

⁴⁵ Swedenborg, *Journal of Dreams*, #87-88

⁴⁶ For the *maggid* as psychological projection, see Joseph Dan's article, "Maggid," in *Encyclopedia Judaica*; also, Elliot Wolfson, "Mystical Rationalization of the Commandments in the Prophetic Kabbalah of Abraham Abulafia," in *Perspectives on Jewish Thought and Mysticism*, ed. A.L. Ivry, E.R. Wolfson, A. Arkush (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic, 1998), 347-48.

⁴⁷ See, on Blake and Swedenborg in relation to Gnosticism, Jos van Meurs, "William Blake and His Gnostic Myths," in *Gnosis and Hermeticism*, R. van den Broek and W. Hanegraaff, eds., (SUNY: 1998), 269-310.

⁴⁸ Swedenborg, *Spiritual Diary*, #6061.

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, #4989-92. According to Scholem, Abraham Abulafia's Kabbalistic treatise, "The Light of the Intellect," gives the impression of "a Judaized treatise on *Yoga*"; see his *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken, 1954), 139.

⁵⁰ Swedenborg, *Catalogus*, 8; La Crequinière's work was translated from French into English by John Toland, whose associations with radical Rosicrucians and Freemasons created great interest in its theories among the secret fraternities.

⁵¹ See Anders Hallengren, "The Secret of Great Tartary," *Arcana*, I (1994), 35-54.

⁵² Swedenborg, *Spiritual Diary*, #6077; see Philip John Strahlenberg, *An Historical-Geographical Description of the North and Eastern Part of Europe and Asia* (London: W. Innis and R. Manby, 1736), 75-96.

⁵³ The Register Books of the Royal Society reveal Swedenborg's previously unknown attendance and contacts with the Masonic scientists J.T. Desaguliers, Martin Folkes, Hans Sloane, and Cromwell Mortimer in 1740 and 1744-45. In my biography of Swedenborg, I will document his association with a shadowy network of British scientists, physicians, and authors (Theobald, Stuart, Hampe, Smith, Marchant, Morton, Woulfe, etc.), who shared his interest in Hermetic, Rosicrucian, and Kabbalistic studies.

⁵⁴ Royal Society Journal Book, XVII, ff. 369, 374, 376 (February-March 1745).

⁵⁵ See James Parsons, *A Mechanical and Critical Enquiry into the Nature of Hermaphroditism* (London, 1741), xxiii, xlix; also his *Gynaicopathologicus* (1741) and *Description of the Human Urinary Bladder* (1741).

⁵⁶ James Parsons, *The Remains of Japhet; Being Historical Inquiries into the Affinity and Origins of European Languages* (1767; facs. rpt. Meston: Scolar Press, 1968), 184-218, 397-98. Parsons argued that the Gaelic and Scandinavian languages descended from the ancient Hebrew and Tartar tongues, and he was a great admirer of James Macpherson's Ossianic translations. He perhaps influenced Swedenborg's effort to meet Macpherson's French translator, the Marquis de St. Simon, in 1768.

⁵⁷ Swedenborg, *Spiritual Diary*, #6067. On the similarities of Swedenborg's meditative breath control and Asian Yoga, see the chapter, "Was Swedenborg a Yogi?" in D. Gopaul Chetty, *New Light upon Indian Philosophy, or Swedenborg and Saiva Siddhanta* (London: J.M. Dent, 1923), 125-46; also, Stephen Larsen, "Swedenborg and the Visionary Tradition," in *Swedenborg: The Continuing Vision*, ed. Robin Larsen (New York: Swedenborg Foundation, 1988), 192-206.

⁵⁸ The notion of a Chinese "pre-Kabbala" was especially promulgated by the Chevalier Andrew Michael Ramsay, who had a major influence on *Écossais* and Swedish Freemasonry; see [A.M. Ramsay], *The Philosophical Principles of Natural and Revealed Religion* (Glasgow: Robert Foulis, 1748-49), II, 173-85, 304, 356, 537-38. For a provocative comparison of eighteenth-century Tantric and Masonic esoteric practices, see Hugh Urban, "Elitism and Esotericism: Strategies of Secrecy and Power in South Indian Tantra and French Freemasonry," *Numen*, 44 (1997), 1-38.

⁵⁹ *Jerusalem*, plate 58; Blake, *CPP*, 207-208. Blake read the English translation of Swedenborg's *True Christian Religion* (London, 1781), his most openly Masonic work, which included a section (#278) on the pre-Judaic "Lost Word" preserved in Tartary. He may also have seen relevant extracts from the *Spiritual Diary*.

⁶⁰ W.B. Yeats, "The Mandukya Upanishad" (1935), *Essays and Introductions* (New York: Collier, 1968), 484.

⁶¹ Swedenborg, *Spiritual Diary*, #4408.

⁶² Idel, "Sexual Metaphors," 205-06.

⁶³ Swedenborg, *Journal of Dreams*, #171-72.

⁶⁴ Swedenborg, *Conjugal Love*, #146.

⁶⁵ See Michael Volin and Nancy Phelan, *Sex and Yoga* (London: Pelham Books, 1967), 63-64; George Feuerstein, *Tantra: The Path of Ecstasy* (Boston: Shambhala, 1998), 134-38, 232-49.

⁶⁶ According to the Chinese text, *The Manuals of the Immortals*, the adept can make the semen "nourish the brain" by applying the two middle fingers to "a spot behind the scrotum and in front of the anus, while at the same time the breath should be fully expelled through the mouth, none being retained (in the lungs)"; thus, the semen "will come back from the Stalk of Jade and mount upwards to enter the brain." See Fan Fu Ruan, *Sex in China* (New York: Plenum, 1991), 6263.

⁶⁷ Swedenborg, *Conjugal Love*, #108.

⁶⁸ *ibid.*, #374.

⁶⁹ Ruan, *Sex in China*, 60-68.

⁷⁰ Urban, "Elitism," 34n.22, refers to the legend that Martinez de Pasqually (a crypto-Jewish Mason, Kabbalist, and contemporary of Swedenborg) had journeyed to China to learn secret traditions, which were assimilated into certain *Écossais* lodges in France. See also Edmund Mazet, "Freemasonry and Esoterism," in *Modern Esoteric Spirituality*, ed. Antoine Faivre (New York: Crossroad, 1993), 256.

⁷¹ For the intense spirituality and sheer beauty of the earthly and heavenly sexual ritual, see Patai, *Hebrew Goddess*, 195, 268.

⁷² Swedenborg, *Conjugal Love*, #144

⁷³ *ibid.*, #44.

⁷⁴ For the Kabbalistic source of Swedenborg's angelized humans, see Moshe Idel, "The World of Angels in Human Form" [Hebrew], in *Studies in Jewish Mysticism Presented to Isaiah Tishby* (Jerusalem, 1984), 66n.251. On the angelization process, see Elliot Wolfson, "*Tiqqun ha-Shekhinah*: Redemption and the Overcoming of Gender Dimorphism in the Messianic Kabbalah of Moses Hayyim Luzzatto," *History of Religions* (forthcoming). I argue that Swedenborg was influenced by Luzzatto's Kabbalism in the early 1740's.

⁷⁵ Swedenborg, *Conjugial Love*, #210.

⁷⁶ *ibid.*, #310.

⁷⁷ *ibid.*, #55.

⁷⁸ Emanuel Swedenborg, *Letters and Memorials of Emanuel Swedenborg*, trans. Alfred Acton (Bryn Athyn: Swedenborgi Scientific Association, 1948), II, 715. See Karl Frick, *Die Erleuchteten* (Graz, 1975), 532-33, on the career of the cryptoJewish Rosicrucian, Martinez de Pasqually, and his disciples' practice of sexual magic. Some French Masonic historians claim that Swedenborg initiated Pasqually into his system of Masonry; see Reghellini de Scio, *La Maçonnerie considérée comme le resultat des Religions Egyptienne, Juive et Chrétien* (Paris, 1822-29), II, 436; Papus [Gerard Encausse], *Martinésisme, Willermosisme, Martinisme, et Franc-Maçonnerie* (Paris: Chamuel, 1899), 6. As noted earlier, Pasqually allegedly journeyed to China in search of esoteric arts.

⁷⁹ Michal Oron, "Dr. Samuel Jacob Falk and the Eibeschuetz-Emden Controversy," in *Mysticism, Magic and Kabbalah in Ashkenazic Judaism*, eds. Karl Grözinger and Joseph Dan (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1995), 243-56. Professor Oron, of Tel Aviv University, will publish Hebrew and English editions of the diaries of Falk and his factotum Hirsch Kalisch.

⁸⁰ Engraving reproduced in Erich Lindner, *The Royal Art Illustrated*, trans. Arthur Lindsay (Graz: Akademische Drück, 1976), 147. Original in Freemasons' Hall, London. The Royal Order of Heredom drew on Ramsay's theories of Chinese-Jewish Kabbalism

⁸¹ Swedenborg, *Conjugial Love*, #56, 76.

⁸² John Shaftesley, "Jews in English Regular Freemasonry, 1717-1860," *Transactions of Jewish Historical Society of England*, 15 (1973-75), 158.

⁸³ Christopher Haffner, "Eastern Masonic Frontiers Before the Union," *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum*, 104 (1991), 6-9.

⁸⁴ See my article, "The Secret Masonic History of Blake's Swedenborg Society," *Blake: An Illustrated Quarterly*, 26 (1992), 40-50.

⁸⁵ On Cosway, see Stephen Lloyd, "The Life and Art of Richard Cosway, R.A. (1742-1821) and Maria Cosway (1760-1838)," Ph.D. Thesis: Oxford University, 1995; and *Richard and Maria Cosway: Regency Artists of Taste and Fashion* (Edinburgh: Scottish National Portrait Gallery, 1995).

⁸⁶ The engraver James Gillray, whose work was followed closely by Cosway and Blake, also came from a Moravian background; after he became more politically conservative, he used his "Modern" Masonic affiliation to expose the "Ancient" Masons who were visited by Cagliostro and certain Swedenborgians. See *The Works of James Gillray*, ed. Thomas Wright (rpt. London, 1968), plate 37; also my, "William Blake and the Promiscuous Baboons: A Cagliostroan Séance Gone Awry," *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 18 (1995), 187.

⁸⁷ The Modern Grand Lodge condemned members of the Ancient (Scottish-rite) system as "irregular" Masons. The Ancient system was an outgrowth of Jacobite Freemasonry, and it attracted British and international members who opposed the Hanoverian court and the governments of Walpole and Pitt. In 1749 Blake's father voted for the anti-court, Tory candidate of the "Westminster Independents; see Davies, "William Blake's Mother." In *Jacobitism and the English People* (Cambridge UP, 1988), p. 230, Paul Monod argues that the Independent Electors of Westminster "may have become an exclusively Jacobite club" by 1749. Among their supporters were many whose disaffection went far beyond mere loyalty to the Stuarts. The name James Blake appears among Ancient Masons in the Atholl Register, lodge #38, in 1757 (Freemasons' Hall, London). This Masonic schism possibly inspired Blake and his later circle of artistic friends to call themselves "the Ancients."

⁸⁸ Registers in Freemasons' Hall, London.

⁸⁹ Jan Häll, *I Swedenborgs Labyrinth: Swedenborgarnas Liv och Tänkande* (Stockholm: Atlantis, 1995), 19-21, 87-88, 116-17.

⁹⁰ I give more details on Levison's Sabbatian and Swedenborgian associations in "Dr. Samuel Jacob Falk: A Sabbatian Adventurer in the Masonic Underground," in *Jewish Messianism in the Early Modern Period*, eds. Matt Goldish and Richard Popkin (Dordrecht: Kluwer, forthcoming).

⁹¹ For Levison's scientific and theological theories, see David Ruderman, *Jewish Thought and Scientific Discovery in Early Modern Europe* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1995), 344-70.

⁹² John Wright, *A Revealed Knowledge of Some Things that Will Speedily be Fulfilled in the World. Communicated to a Number of Christians, Brought together at Avignon* (London, 1794), 4; M.L. Danilewicz, "The King of the New Israel: Thaddeus Grabianka," *Oxford Slavonic Papers*, n.s. 1 (1968), 49-73.

⁹³ St. Martin was a disciple of Martinez de Pasqually.

⁹⁴ That Tulk's father was named James Stuart Tulk suggests his own family's "disaffected" Jacobite background.

⁹⁵ Swedenborg, *Conjugial Love*, #433.

⁹⁶ Blake, *CPP*, 606.

⁹⁷ Morton Paley, "A New Heaven is Begun: William Blake and Swedenborgianism," *Blake: An Illustrated Quarterly*, 12 (1979), 71-72

⁹⁸ Schuchard, "Secret Masonic History," 49-50.

⁹⁹ [Augustus Nordenskjöld], *Plan for a Free Community Upon the Coast of Africa, Under the Protection of great Britain; But Entirely Independent of All European Laws and Government* (London:

Robert Hindmarsh, 1789), 34-35.

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*, vi.

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*, x, 31.

¹⁰² Blake was probably aware of Martin Madan's treatise *Thelyphthora* (1780), in which the philo-Semitic Methodist preacher advocated polygamy and concubinage as a preventative against adultery and prostitution. Like Swedenborg and Nordenskjöld, Madan drew on Jewish and Kabbalistic sources for his argument. However, he did not link concubinage with visionary capacity or a theosophy of "Use," which suggests a greater influence from Swedenborg on Blake's *Thel*.

¹⁰³ *Thel*, plate 6, l.7; Blake, *CPP*, 6.

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.* plate 3, l. 22; *CPP*, 5.

¹⁰⁵ The *Tableau* was printed in London in early 1790 and then presented in Paris in the summer; see Ronny Ambjörnsson, *Det okända landet: Tre Studier om Svenska Utopister* (Gidlunds: Druckhaus Köthen, 1981), 87, 141n.8.

¹⁰⁶ Danilewicz, "King of New Israel," 49-73.

¹⁰⁷ John Robison, *Proofs of a Conspiracy against all the Religions and Governments of Europe, carried on in the Secret Meetings of the Freemasons, Illuminati, and Reading Societies*, 4th rev. ed. (London: Caldwell and Davis, 1798), 470. In this edition, Robison added a detailed exposé of the Swedenborgian Masons who allegedly contributed to the assassination of Gustav III. See my "Blake and the Grand Masters: Architects of Repression or Revolution?," in *Blake in the Nineties*, eds. Steve Clark and David Worrall, (London: Macmillan, 1999), 187-89, 192-93.

¹⁰⁸ Micheline Meillissoux-Le Cerf, *Dom Pernety et les Illuminés d'Avignon* (Milano: Arché, 1992), 99-101.

¹⁰⁹ Grabianka evidently learned of the "Asiatics" through his contacts with certain Polish Jews, whose Sabbatian beliefs fueled the Count's nationalistic and Zionistic fantasies.

¹¹⁰ For background on the "Asiatic Brethren," see Christopher McIntosh, *The Rose Cross and the Age of Reason* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992), 161-77; Gershom Scholem, *Du Frankism au Jacobinisme* (Paris: Le Seul, Gallimard, 1981). Lambert de Lintot, General Charles Rainsford, and Ebenezer Sibly (all Swedenborgian Masons) collected and translated publications about the "Asiatics," while Prince Carl of Hesse-Cassel (a Swedenborgian Mason and Danish chief of the "Asiatics") was in contact with the Swedenborg societies in London and Stockholm.

¹¹¹ *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, plate 3; Blake, *CPP*, 34.

¹¹² *Daughters of Albion*, plate 7, ll. 1, 22, 25; Blake, *CPP*, 50.

¹¹³ Denis Duckworth, late librarian of the Swedenborg Society in London, informed me about Tulk's collaboration with Grabianka, but he was unable to find the relevant documents which are now missing.

¹¹⁴ Geoffrey Keynes, "An Unpublished Poem by William Blake," *Times Literary Supplement* (14 September 1984), 1021-22; Robert Essick, "William Blake's 'The Phoenix': A Problem in Attribution," *Philological Quarterly*, 67 (1988), 365-84.

¹¹⁵ "Notebook" (ca. 1793); Blake, *CPP*, 467.

¹¹⁶ *ibid.*, 496.

¹¹⁷ Ruan, *Sex in China*, 64; Feuerstein, *Tantra*, 232-34, 248

¹¹⁸ Andrew Lincoln, *Spiritual History: A Reading of Blake's "Vala" or "The Four Zoas"* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), 57-58.

¹¹⁹ William Blake, *Milton: a Poem*, ed. Robert Essick and Joseph Viscomi (Blake Trust and Princeton UP, 1993), 27, plate 29.

¹²⁰ Blake, *Four Zoas*, 79.

¹²¹ See Richard Payne Knight, *An Account of the Remains of the Worship of Priapus* (London: T. Spilsbury, 1786), 18, 70, 73, 80, 100, 136, 148.

¹²² Wolfson, "Images," 163, 168.

¹²³ Swedenborg, *Spiritual Diary*, 5106-07.

¹²⁴ Omar Garrison, *Tantra: The Yoga of Sex* (London: Academy Editions, 1972), 23.

¹²⁵ Moor worked on his illustrations and explications throughout his English residency, and he eventually published them in *The Hindu Pantheon* (London: Joseph Johnson, 1810). For the Yogic toe and its relation to sexual-mystical rites, see pp. 103, 394, plate 20.

¹²⁶ S. Ghosh, *Original Yoga*, 101.

¹²⁷ Blake, *CPP*, 372.

¹²⁸ Sheila Spector, "Blake's *Milton* as Kabbalistic Vision," *Religion and Literature*, 25 (1993), 19-33.

¹²⁹ For the date 1809-10, see Blake, *CPP*, 806. For his current interest in Swedenborg, Hinduism, and Kabbalism, see *ibid.*, 117 (*Milton*); *ibid.*, 530-31, 546, 548 (*Descriptive Catalogue*, 1809; *ibid.*, 560 (*A Vision of the Last Judgment*, 1810-"If the Spectator could Enter into these Images in his Imagination approaching them on the Fiery Chariot of his Contemplative Thought" (reference to Merkabah meditation)

¹³⁰ Personal communication from the artist Don Karr (Ithaca, New York), who utilizes his knowledge of Yogic-Kabbalistic techniques in his visionary paintings (including one of "Dr. Falk Instructing Swedenborg"). An erudite student of Kabbala, Karr compiles an on-going bibliography of publications on the subject, which he distributes to interested students. See also Urban, "Elitism," 11-14, 2023, 34n.22, for suggestive parallels between Tantric, Kabbalistic, and Masonic symbols and rituals.

¹³¹ Swedenborg, *Spiritual Diary*, #3453. I am grateful to Professor John Bugge and Robert Shaw-Smith for translating the Latin original.

¹³² Wolfson, "Images," 171-72.

¹³³ For the following interpretation, I draw on Volin and Phelan, *Yoga and Sex*, 62-65; Ruan, *Sex in China*, 62-63; Garrison, *Tantra*, 23; Mircea Eliade, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*, trans. Willard Trask (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1969), 232-33, 246-49. This passage is also discussed in my "Swedenborg: Deciphering the Codes," 204-06.

¹³⁴ Swedenborg, *Spiritual Diary*, #3324-25.

¹³⁵ On the difficult technique of *Vajroli* or in-breathing of semen, see Ghosh, *Original Yoga*, 66-71; Feurstein, *Tantra*, 247-48; André Van Lysebeth, *Tantra: The Cult of the Feminine* (York Beach: Samuel Weiser, 1995), 326-27.

¹³⁶ Idel, "Sexual Metaphors," 213.

¹³⁷ Swedenborg, *Spiritual Diary*, #3550.

¹³⁸ On the fate of the unpublished diary in London, see James Hyde, *A Bibliography of the Works of Emanuel Swedenborg* (London: Swedenborg Society, 1900), #3500 and p. 119. The first 76 pages are missing and were perhaps destroyed by Swedenborg's heirs, who also removed the more erotic sections of his *Journal of Dreams*. On the flyleaf of the MS. "Exerpta ex Diario Spirituali" is written, "J.A. Tulk, 1790. The gift of Mr. Augustus Nordenskjold." Chastanier's MS. copies, from which he hoped to publish English translations, are in the Swedenborg Society, London.

¹³⁹ Emanuel Swedenborg, *Dictionary of Correspondences*, 3rd. ed. (Boston: Otis Clapp, 1860), 120, 130, 137, 387 ("great toe").

¹⁴⁰ *Milton*, plate 15; Blake, *CPP*, 110.

¹⁴¹ Spector, "Blake's *Milton*," 26.

¹⁴² According to eighteenth-century anatomical descriptions; see "Tarsus" in *OED*.

¹⁴³ Roy Rosenberg, *The Anatomy of God* (New York: Ktav, 1973), 122-23.

¹⁴⁴ David Erdman, *The Illuminated Blake* (London: Oxford UP, 1975), 248; Blake, *Milton*, 100.

¹⁴⁵ Blake, *CPP*, 115.

¹⁴⁶ Wolfson, "Images," 166-67.

¹⁴⁷ Notebook (ca. 1793, 1800-03); Blake, *CPP*, 474, 477.

¹⁴⁸ *Jerusalem*, plate 69, ll. 43-44; *ibid.*, 223.

¹⁴⁹ Wolfson, "Images," 171.

¹⁵⁰ *Jerusalem*, plate 43; Blake, *CPP*, 193.

