

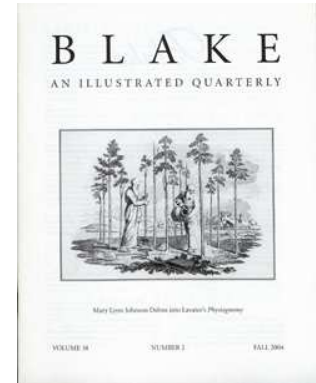
# AN ILLUSTRATED QUARTERLY BLAKE

R E V I E W

Sheila A. Spector, “Wonders Divine”: The Development of Blake’s Kabbalistic Myth

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Although Oothoon arcs over him, apparently imprisoned in one of his "black jealous" waves (5:4), the shape of her body is a half circle that never closes, and the wave itself tapers to the beginning of a dynamic S-curve at its tip. So Oothoon's persistence in her "discontent" and continued struggles to articulate it to herself and others lead her to new insights. As Essick notes earlier, Oothoon is changing. Her language reaches "a new level of critical consciousness" and is "moving toward ... a philosophy of mind" in the "They told me ..." speech that begins at 5:30 (48, 49); Oothoon learns from her own efforts, as the other characters apparently do not.

Readers may also find themselves taking the lines of Essick's argument beyond the commentary. He calls our attention to the way facing pages (Blake's arrangement) interact visually, for example, and deftly sets up the suggestions of "lesbian sexuality" and other "transgressive" elements in the text and design of plate 3, "The Argument." Noting a page later that the two prostrate figures at the bottom of plate 4 are hard to identify with certainty, Essick observes the way these two figures echo the woman in *The Nightmare* and Bottom in *The Awakening of Titania*, two famous paintings by Fuseli. If Essick's observations on plate 3 are still in mind, however, a reader might also see the paired figures on both plates as female. Each design contains one small and one large human figure (arranged large, small, small, large). The sex of the larger figure in plate 4 is not definite in this copy, and its position is a near mirror image of the woman on plate 6 whose flesh is being rent by an eagle (Oothoon, presumably).<sup>1</sup> Interestingly, the smaller female figure on plate 4 is attached to a vine-like curve that echoes the curve of the vine on plate 3 from which rise "Leutha's flower" and the nymph that Oothoon alternately sees (4:6).

So while any user of this edition might multiply disagreements with Essick's readings in the commentary, the point is that he is not performing the kind of close reading that simply substitutes a critic's text for the author's or for a reader/viewer's. This edition assembles so much for its audience to use, and the commentary leads them to hold so many things in consciousness at once, that multiple interpretations and ambiguities should inevitably arise, whether the commentary points them out or not. Whatever readers' critical assumptions are, Essick's "old-fashioned" method can be productive and even exhilarating, since it really aims to stimulate and support their independent observations and interpretations. Individuals can use all the parts of this edition to help them

1. There is ambiguity about the sex of both the larger figure on plate 4 and the figure on plate 6. The size of the body in the former plate and perhaps the muscle definition suggest masculinity, but the pectoral muscles are not unlike breasts. The figure on plate 6 obviously connects with Oothoon's call for Theotormon's eagles to rend her flesh in the text (5:13), but the allusion to Prometheus seems inescapable. This blurring of gender markers seems characteristic of Blake to me (McClenahan 301-04, 312-14 and *passim*).

experience this beautiful and provocative illuminated book in new ways that would be difficult or impossible without it. The Blake Archive is an invaluable resource for us now. At the same time, interacting with a work that can be held in the hands differs from interactions with a work online, whether sensually, aesthetically or intellectually. So given the relatively affordable price for one of Blake's works in illuminated printing, teachers may want to give their students this experience in a Blake course or one on British literature, Romanticism or poetry. If an instructor had to select just one work of illuminated printing to order, *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* could provide a valuable introduction to Blake's work, especially in the 1790s, but also to issues and problems of the revolutionary and counter-revolutionary period in England and Europe, or to trends and experiments in literature and the visual arts in the late eighteenth century. Others will want this edition for personal pleasure and use. Either way, it deserves a wide audience.

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Sheila A. Spector. "Wonders Divine": *The Development of Blake's Kabbalistic Myth*. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2001. 213 pp. \$59.50/£41.95 cloth.

Reviewed by DENA BAIN TAYLOR

In two companion volumes—"Wonders Divine": *The Development of Blake's Kabbalistic Myth* and "Glorious incomprehensible": *The Development of Blake's Kabbalistic Language*—Sheila A. Spector traces Blake's use of kabbalistic myth and language from his early prose tracts to his late prophecies. She argues that he gradually appropriated kabbalistic mythemes and linguistic manipulation, and that this is what enabled him to effect the transition from a conventional to a mystical mode of thought. Though the two books are structured in much the same way and advance the same overall argu-

ment, I intend to review them separately, for what is likely the same reason that Spector chose to divide them—the material is simply too complex to deal with all in one go.

Spector applies the principles of historical scholarship first developed by Gershom Scholem and others to her analysis of the kabbalistic texts and mythos. She has been doing solid work in this area for decades. Indeed, I wish her magisterial *Jewish Mysticism: An Annotated Bibliography on the Kabbalah in English* (New York: Garland Press, 1984) had been available when I wrote my dissertation on Blake and Kabbalah in the early '80s, and I have followed her subsequent publications with interest.

"*Wonders Divine*" pursues three goals: to explore the role of kabbalistic myth in Blake's work as the obverse of the Calvinist myth of Milton; to frame the discussion within a definition of myth as the precursor of intentionality; and to establish the kabbalistic context within which Blake worked. My feeling is that with respect to the first two goals, the book is beautifully argued and of major interest to Blake scholars. Its limits lie in the kabbalistic context it establishes.

In an early article in *Blake*,<sup>1</sup> Spector pointed out that "we cannot apply Jewish scholarship to Blake's Kabbalah" (90); and that "Blake ... had no access to anything other than the distorted interpretations of the Latin kabbalists; so it is to them, or English renditions of their works, that we must turn if we wish to determine the extent of kabbalistic influence on Blake" (96). I kept wishing she had followed her own advice more closely. The context of Kabbalah she establishes is primarily a Jewish one, whereas Blake's context is that of a dissenting Christian whose Christian sources mediated between him and the original texts.

For the Christian Kabbalah, Spector relies on Mercurius van Helmont's *Adumbratio Kabbalæ Christianæ*. I questioned why she would emphasize van Helmont, a Latin text scarcely available to Blake, when statements by Crabb Robinson and Tatham<sup>2</sup> suggest that he owned Law's translation of Boehme, with its glorious alchemical/kabbalistic designs after Freher. Certainly Blake knew it well and was influenced by it.<sup>3</sup> I also felt Spector should have placed more emphasis on the connection between the Kabbalah and the Druid revival, and more generally on what she calls the "English Esoterica" (25).

Following Scholem, Spector defines Kabbalism, in the most basic sense, "as a unique combination of three dis-

tinct elements: esotericism, mysticism, and theosophy ...[t]hematically associated with occult interpretations of Creation and Ezekiel's chariot vision" (11). In fact, Spector's primary focus is on the Creation myth rather than the Chariot visions. She begins by describing the role of kabbalistic esotericism within the Jewish context, as a study restricted by the Talmud to an intellectual elite of "those specially trained to delve into what were considered to be its perilous secrets" (11). She distinguishes Jewish Kabbalah from the "globalized form of esoterica" (11) in which earlier writers on Blake as a kabbalist, like Ellis and Yeats, placed it. It seems to me, though, that there are good reasons why Yeats and the other Golden Dawn writers responded so strongly to Blake—they recognized him as belonging to the same esoteric tradition they did, and correctly placed him within it.

Spector defines myth as "the structuring principle of intentionality" (19): "More than just a simplistic duality of right and wrong, myth is the vehicle through which the mind can organize the external world, a necessary prerequisite for any kind of thought or action" (56). She develops this definition deftly through the text, demonstrating how Blake, like the kabbalistic mystics, engaged in a "quest for a non-dual mode of existence [that] is structured by theosophical speculations about the secret life of the Godhead" (12).

The kabbalistic mythos is exceedingly complex, and it is greatly to Spector's credit that she explains its themes so clearly. She takes them from the writings of Isaac Luria, the sixteenth-century Jewish mystic. Luria consolidated the kabbalistic myth of Creation into a form that reached the Christian world through a compendious, two-volume Latin translation by Christian Knorr von Rosenroth (1636-89) entitled *Kabbala Denudata*.<sup>4</sup> Knorr's work, which contains van Helmont's *Adumbratio Kabbalæ Christianæ*, has served as the principal source for all non-Jewish literature on the Kabbalah until the present day. Spector describes the central elements of the Lurianic Creation myth in her second chapter (40-44), explains van Helmont's adaptation of them (44-46), and amplifies and applies them throughout the text:

1. *The Work of Creation*: In contrast to the Miltonic myth of Creation, Fall, and Redemption, the Lurianic myth revolves around the three basic concepts of contraction (Creation), the breaking of the vessels (the Fall), and restoration (Redemption). The Godhead, *Ein Soph*, existed in the form of limitless light, in a passive state of unrealized potential. Because the *Ein Soph* is without limit, when the volition to create grew within Him, He had to contract His Being in order to produce a space in which to effect Creation. Into the resulting vacu-

1. Sheila A. Spector, "Kabbalistic Sources: Blake's and His Critics," *Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly* 17,3 (winter 1983-84): 84-101.

2. Henry Crabb Robinson reports a conversation with Blake in his *Reminiscences* (1852) in which "Jacob Bohmen was placed among the divinely inspired men.—He praised also the designs to Law's translation of Bohmen" (G. E. Bentley, Jr., *Blake Records* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969] 541), and Frederick Tatham claimed in a letter to Francis Harvey, the book dealer, that Blake owned a "large collection of the works of the mystical writers" (*Blake Records* 41).

3. For Boehme's influence on Blake, see Bryan Aubrey, *Watchmen of Eternity: Blake's Debt to Jacob Boehme* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1986).

4. Christian Knorr von Rosenroth, *Kabbala Denudata Seu Doctrina Hebraeorum Transcendentalis Et Metaphysica Atque Theologica Opus Antiquissimae Philosophiae Barbaricae variis speciminibus refertissimum. In Quo Ante ipsam Translationem Libri difficillimi atq; in Literatura Hebraica Summi, Commentarii nempe in Pentateuchum, & quasi totam Scripturam V.T. Cabbalisticam, cui nomen SOHAR ...* [In 5 parts] (Frankfurt: Abraham Lichtenthaler, 1677-84).

um He emanated the ten *Sefirot*, divine lights or emanations, which He then used to create the external cosmos. Unlike the emanations of the Gnostic and Neo-Platonic systems, the *Sefirot* are not regarded as separate spheres interposing between God and the created universe. They are a dynamic part of the divine life, a process which takes place in God. To counter the natural tendency of the *Sefirot* to reunite with the Godhead, He placed them in vessels of dross. Unfortunately, the act of contraction created an imbalance between the sefirotic forces of judgment and love, causing the vessels to break and the shards to mix with the lights of purity. Restoration can occur only as a result of the actions of *Adam Kadmon* and *Adam Rishon*.

2. *The Cosmic Man*: As they were emanated, the *Sefirot* organized into several different configurations, the first of which was *Adam Kadmon* (primordial man). He was originally intended to serve as an intermediary between the Godhead and *Adam Rishon* (created man). But in the fallen universe, *Adam Kadmon* must "separate the shards" of the vessels so that the lights of purity can rise again back to the Godhead. *Adam Rishon* must, by performing the 613 commandments of the Hebrew Bible and by sexual love, purify the souls of the fallen world and end the exile of the *Shekhinah*.

3. *The Shekhinah*: Like Blake's Jerusalem, the *Shekhinah* is personified as the female manifestation of the Divine Presence. She is a part of the Godhead, but was separated from Him as a result of the Fall. At the final restoration, she will return from exile and the two will reunite.

4. *The Origin of Evil*: Where the exoteric Christian myth locates the source of the Fall in man's disobedience of God's law, the Kabbalists locate it within the Godhead Himself. Evil originated within the Godhead as the dark, wrathful principle of stern judgment which was tempered by the contrasting principle of love. Because of the Godhead's initial act of self-limitation, this dark principle broke away from its contrary and finally from God altogether. Adam's sin is believed to have extended history; that is, had he not eaten the forbidden fruit, the cosmos would have been restored immediately, without the necessity for a 6000-year cycle of material existence. Man's efforts are necessary, not only for individual salvation, but for cosmic restoration as well.

5. *The Four Worlds*: Kabbalistic cosmogony conceives of four distinct levels, or worlds: Emanation (Blake's Eden), Creation (Beulah), Formation (Generation), and Fact (Ulro). With the breaking of the vessels, the entire tenor of the four worlds was altered, and our world became corporeal.

6. *The Tree of Life*: After the Fall, the fragmented *Sefirot* were reconfigured into a dialectical format consisting of ten spheres arranged in three "columns." The masculine right side is characterized by the divine attributes of mercy or pity, and the feminine left side by the attributes of rigor or wrath. The central column provides the means by which the two extremes can achieve balance.

Spector's central argument is that Blake was able to liberate himself from the restrictions imposed by the exoteric myth

of Christianity only by adopting these kabbalistic modes of thought. She identifies his pattern of development in this way:

[I]n the early prophecies, Blake introduced kabbalistic archetypes to recontextualize particular aspects of Christianity. But then, as his intellect evolved, in the minor prophecies, he structured whole narratives around kabbalistic concepts, until by the major prophecies, he had completely marginalized the Christian myth, reducing what had once been the primary structuring principle of his thought to but a small phase in the larger cycle of existence. (36)

Spector first discusses the appearance of kabbalistic elements in Blake's early works, which she labels "pre-mythic": *All Religions are One*, *There is No Natural Religion* [a] and [b], *The Book of Thel*, *Tiriel*, and *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*. These, she says, are examples of Blake's early syncretism, and "overtly manifest influences as varied as the Greek classics and Ossian, the Bible and Neoplatonism, each of the texts reflecting a serious interest in the subject of myth" (47). His approach in the prose works is to argue "in favor of an ur-myth from which all extant myths purportedly derived" and, in the three poems, to create "mythic narratives that undermine the basic doctrines of Milton's theology as adumbrated in *Paradise Lost*" (47). Identifying Milton's Calvinist doctrines as Original Sin, Ransom, and Eternal Damnation, she shows how *The Book of Thel* subverts the doctrine of Original Sin; *Tiriel*, the Ransom Theory; and *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, Eternal Damnation (48-58). She concludes that the real lesson Blake learns from this sequence is that myth controls thought (59).

The second group Spector discusses consists of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, *America*, and *Europe*. Here, Blake "directly confronts the structural principle upon which the [Miltonic] myth had been predicated, attempting through his doctrine of contraries to transform Milton's debilitating duality into an energizing dialectic" (59). She argues that the *Marriage* is the most successful attempt to substitute contraries for the negations of Milton's system. It serves as the vehicle for articulating the theoretical base, where the other three works represent decreasingly successful attempts to apply the theory. Thus, in *Songs*, Blake uses the contraries as a means to supplant Milton's Original Sin with an esoteric "fortunate fall" into intellect. *America* introduces Orc, the "human form divine" supposed to convert the Miltonic Ransom Theory into a "liberation theology." But in *Europe*, the Christ-figure Orc is unable to replace the Calvinist concept of Eternal Damnation with Eternal Life, and Blake is forced to create Los to begin the search for a resolution to the problems with myth.

In her discussion of the *Marriage*, Spector quickly dismisses Swedenborg's role in Blake's satire, claiming that it functions only on the literal level (60), and she doesn't consider Boehme at all. I'd argue, however, that Blake engages with the Swedenborgian myth at more than superficial levels, and clearly

plays Boehme off against both Milton and Swedenborg, not, as Spector suggests, Luria against Milton.

Lurianic Kabbalah was enjoying widespread study among Christians in the religious and intellectual freedom encouraged in Germany and Bohemia during most of Boehme's lifetime, by world-shapers such as Rudolf II, Elizabeth of Bohemia, and Christian of Anhalt. Jews were able to study in relative peace, and to share their knowledge, most notably the Kabbalah of Isaac Luria and Moses Cordovero, with interested Christians. Boehme couched his theosophy in alchemical and kabbalistic symbolism derived from Paracelsus and a group of Paracelsist friends that included Balthasar Walther, personal physician to Christian of Anhalt. The link between alchemy and Kabbalah is a distinguishing feature of the *Marriage*. Boehme's alchemical vision touched Blake, the engraver working with his own corroding fires, and it was Boehme's kabbalistic contraries that gave Blake his energizing dialectic.

The relationship in the *Marriage* among Blake, Boehme, and Swedenborg is a complex one. Désirée Hirst amusingly described Swedenborg as being "like some strange spiritual red herring" for Blake and others.<sup>5</sup> In Swedenborg's heaven and hell, the societies, numbers and quarters correspond exactly. God's purpose in this is to have the spirits of hell and the spirits of heaven keep man in equilibrium by acting on either side of him. As long as the two sides are exactly matched in number, weight and measure, man has the freedom to choose between them, even though he is predestined to evil. Blake shatters this structure of negation, arguing instead for the Behmian quality of eternal unresolution that Blake associates with freedom.

Though I wished Spector had focused more on Boehme and Swedenborg, I was impressed by her argument that the contraries would prove inadequate for Blake as a structural principle. As she points out,

in the absence of a fully conceived dialectic, Blake has only been able to reverse the polarity, now identifying the erstwhile good angels as oppositional forces, and the presumptively evil Satan as the means of attaining the highest good, vision. His own thought processes still seem controlled by a duality of good and evil. (65)

Spector says that *Songs* fails to construct a new mythic structure that "rejects the anti-intellectualism of innocence in favor of the active intelligence required for survival in the world of experience" (65). I'm not convinced here that Blake doesn't in fact establish a kabbalistic understanding of the necessity for both states, an attitude which, for me, has always made "The Tyger" the most representative of the poems in Blake's developing mythic structure. Spector offers the conventional interpretation of this poem, that "one should recognize in the tiger the power of a Creator capable of creating both him and the

lamb" (72). Yet I've always read Blake's tiger as representing the essence of God—not as a creation separate from the Godhead but as a sefirotic power manifesting His dark nature. As Boehme said in the Law edition known to Blake, "The Darkness is the greatest *Enmity* of Light, and yet it is the Cause that the Light is manifest: For if there was no *Black*, then *White* could not be manifest to itself; and if there was no Sorrow, then Joy also would not be manifest to itself."<sup>6</sup> Boehme defines evil as the dark and negative principle of wrath in God, infinitely bound with the qualities of mercy and love. The tiger is a reminder that the contraries form a sacred whole as long as each maintains its proper relationship to the others—in other words, as long as the tiger kills individual lambs but doesn't try to exterminate all of them.

Spector's discussion of *America* begins from the idea that Blake had yet to develop a means of applying the theory of contraries developed in the *Marriage*. She links Urizen with the sefirotic archetype of judgment that has become occluded by the belief that it is supreme, but she feels that Orc fails to counteract the excesses of rigorous judgment: "Orc performs the negative function of eliminating the opposition ... but he does not postulate a positive outcome for the conflagration" (77). As a result, in *Europe* Blake seems to recognize that the exoteric Christian myth must be abandoned and begins to explore "obversive explanations for the relationship between reason and vision in the corporeal world" (78) based on the kabbalistic myth and, in particular, on the kabbalistic *Adam Kadmon*.

Spector shows how the next group of prophecies, *The Song of Los*, *The Book of Urizen*, *The Book of Ahania*, and *The Book of Los*, revolve around the relationships between the prophet and the fallen world. They question why the rational faculty has superseded the visionary, and how the visionary faculty can regain its proper level of importance. However, because Blake is using the kabbalistic archetypes to distinguish between the incarnate visionary faculty and the external savior, and to explore the full dimensions of the christological faculty, there is a profusion of Christ figures. The confusion that results, Spector suggests, was quite possibly a significant factor in the shift from *Vala* to *The Four Zoas*, and was not to be resolved until *Milton* and *Jerusalem*.

Without doubt, Spector's discussion of the major prophecies is the most rewarding section of the book. Here, she shows that

the various kabbalistic motifs Blake had been experimenting with evolve into a complex, multi-faceted myth whose archetypal structure provides the means of reconciling the two dilemmas he had been grappling with ...: the function

5. Désirée Hirst, *Hidden Riches: Traditional Symbolism from the Renaissance to Blake* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1964) 226.

6. Jacob Boehme, *The Mysterium Magnum; Or an Explanation of the first Book of Moses, called GENESIS*, in *The Works of Jacob Behmen, the Teutonic Theosopher*, [tr. J. Sparrow, J. Ellistone and H. Blunden, with minor alterations; ed. G. Ward and T. Langcake], *With Figures, illustrating his Principles* [by D. A. Freher] left by the Reverend William Law, M.A., III (London: G. Robinson, 1772) 22.

of Christ and the role of the prophet in the fallen world .... Blake finally generates a myth in which the two poles of duality share an obversive relationship with each other [and which is] used as the connecting link between an anagogical realm and the completely different everyday reality of South Molton Street. Through the myth, these two planes—along with ancient biblical and British history, as well as contemporary social and political events—merge into a universal vision of becoming. (107)

In *Vala/The Four Zoas*, Spector shows, Original Sin is transformed into the Fortunate Fall; in *Milton*, Ransom becomes self-annihilation; and in *Jerusalem*, Eternal Death is the passage towards Eternal Life (110).

Though Spector mentions the "quantum leap" (107) Blake makes into the realm of epic prophecy, and in the evolution of his kabbalistic system, she loses the opportunity to bring in the context that made the leap possible—his three-year sojourn in Felpham and access to the library of William Hayley, which contained a number of volumes of occult and kabbalistic interest. Hayley owned Dr. John Everard's *The Divine Pyramider of Hermes Trismegistus* (1650), the *Fourth Book of Occult Philosophy* (1665), which is attributed to Agrippa, and Albertus Magnus's *De Secretis Mulierum* (1669). He owned Drayton's *Poly-Olbion* (1622) and Evans's *Specimens of the Poetry of the Antient Welsh Bards* (1764), both of which speak of a Druidical Kabbalah. He owned two major kabbalistic source works, Guillaume Postel's *Alphabetum Variarum Linguarum: Postellus de origine Hebraicae Linguae* (1598) and Gaffarel's *Unheard-of Curiosities*, 2 vols. (1650). He owned Josephus's *Works* in two editions (1683, 1720); Lowth's *De Sacra Poesi Hebraeorum* (Oxford, 1763); his *Translation of Isaiah* (1778); and Parkhurst's *Hebrew-English Lexicon* (1799), which Blake certainly used to learn his Hebrew. Finally, Hayley owned Enfield's *History of Philosophy* (London: J. Johnson, 1791) and Maurice's seven volume *Indian Antiquities* (1793-1800),<sup>7</sup> both of which contain discourses on the Kabbalah, as well as the *History of Count Gabalis* (1714) by Montfaucon, a classic work on elementals and on the Kabbalah.<sup>8</sup> Also around this time, Francis Barrett, a leading figure in the London occult community, published *The Magus, or Celestial Intelligencer* (1801), which made easily available in English texts of occult and kabbalistic lore that either had never been translated into English or had been issued in the seventeenth century and were now rare.<sup>9</sup>

7. Maurice wrote *Indian Antiquities* in response to Wilkins's translation of the *Bhagavad-Gita* in 1785. Blake's *Descriptive Catalogue* describes a drawing of "The Brahmins," of which the subject is "Mr. Wilkin, translating the Geeta" (DC X [E 548]).

8. A. N. L. Munby, ed., *Sale Catalogues of Libraries of Eminent Persons*, Vol. II: Poets and Men of Letters (London: Mansell/Sotheby Parke-Bernet Publications/Scolar Press, 1971) 90, 113, 119, 120, 127, 129, 132, 136, 145, 153, 160. The sale catalogue necessarily lists the library's contents after Hayley's death; we do not know which books might have been added to it after Blake left Felpham.

9. Francis Barrett, *The Magus, or Celestial Intelligencer: Being a Complete System of Occult Philosophy*. In *Three Books* (London: Lacking-

Blake's heightened understanding, Spector shows, begins to bear fruit in *Vala/The Four Zoas*, in which he transforms Edward Young's rambling series of meditations on religious orthodoxies into a kabbalistic ascent through the nine *Nights* and the nine corresponding *Sefirot* (111-28). Spector explains how kabbalistic mystics elevate their consciousness through meditation on the *Sefirotic Tree*, beginning with the *Sefirah* of existence in the corporeal world and ascending sequentially until the soul/consciousness awakens to eternal life in the highest sphere (110). In the earlier versions of the poem, she argues, the emphasis on the four zoas doesn't allow Blake to resolve the conflicting archetypal patterns within the Christianized version of Lurianic Kabbalah; that is, the linear progress from Creation through Apocalypse conflicts with the kabbalistic cycle of exile and return focused on the individual's recognition of a past error. The introduction of Albion as the Christ-like symbol of humanity allows Blake to consolidate the zoas into a single figure, subordinating them to "the overall interaction between Los and Albion, *Adam Kadmon* and *Adam Rishon*, macrocosm and microcosm" (131), and enabling the final breakthroughs of *Milton* and *Jerusalem*.

In *Milton*, Blake consolidates the roles of "upper" and "lower" man: interlaced with Los's actions as *Adam Kadmon* are Milton's as *Adam Rishon*. Further, on the Lurianic base (the fall into division of *Adam Kadmon*/Albion and the eventual reunification with the *Shekhinah*/Ololon and Jerusalem)<sup>10</sup> he superimposes *Merkavah* mysticism (i.e., the descent of Ololon, Milton's emanation, that enables the poet's final ascent).

ton, Allen, and Co., 1801). The most interesting influence from Barrett, though, is his remarkable series of handcolored plates showing heads of daemons. The head of the evil demon Asmodeus, one of the Vessels of Wrath, is remarkably like Blake's *Ghost of a Flea* (1819), done for the occultist Varley.

10. Boehme's adaptation of the Lurianic base would have been worth Spector's attention in relation to Blake's development of *Adam Kadmon*/Albion. Volume 3 of Law's edition includes a set of engravings of human figures, which occur infrequently elsewhere in the books. These figures have a Michelangelesque quality of graceful muscularity; likely Blake had them in mind when he said of the figures to the Law edition that Michelangelo could not have done better. Like all of the figures in the *Works*, they were engraved by an unknown but accomplished engraver after J. C. Leuchter. Leuchter in turn had adapted them from diagrams by the German Behmenist Dionysius Andreas Freher, who lived in England the last thirty years of his life. The *Three Tables* use the human body as an expression of the original androgynous state of the primordial Adam and man's return to this state at the Redemption. Each of the Tables has a series of flaps or "Vails" that lift to unfold the development of man's spirit. The First Table begins with the World and the "First Adam's State of Integrity," by which Boehme means the androgynous union of the primordial man and the Virgin Sophia, his name for the *Shekhinah*. The Vails lift to show the Unfallen Man and finally the Creator, the *Mysterium Magnum* or kabbalistic *En Soph*. The Second Table reveals man in his Fallen state, in spiritual darkness, and the Third charts man's struggle to Redemption, revealing his gradual transformation into the Virgin Sophia and unity of body and spirit. On Freher and his designs to Boehme, see C. A. Muses, *Illumination on Jacob Boehme: The Work of Dionysius Andreas Freher* (New York: Columbia University Press/King's Crown Press, 1951).

Spector offers an interesting discussion of the illustration usually identified as "Milton's Track," in which a line represents the poet's descent through the vortices. She provides a context for Blake's design in van Helmont, with a mention of similar illustrations in Boehme and Thomas Burnet's [*Sacred*] *Theory of the Earth*, though I would argue that other sources, such as Basnage and Enfield, should also have been included.<sup>11</sup>

*Jerusalem* is, as Spector says, a perfect poem from the kabbalistic perspective. Its focal point is Jerusalem, the *Shekhinah*, symbolizing Divine immanence, whose position is usurped by Vala as the representation of spirituality in the fallen world (140). Vala prevents Albion from perceiving the Divine Vision, while Los, the active manifestation of *Adam Kadmon*, labors at his furnace, metaphorically separating the shards "to prepare a context in which Albion will be able to rise again" (141). The third male figure, the visionary *Blake*, not only frames the action but provides its locus: "the entire narrative [comprises] his fourfold vision of existence, combining biblical history and current events, along with kabbalistic and British myth" (142). Structurally, the poem adapts the four-part kabbalistic cosmogony into "a narrative form in which Los and Albion actualize the kabbalistic cycle of existence." Finally, Spector interprets *Jerusalem's* four chapters (143-68) according to van Helmont's four stages of the cosmic cycle (the Primordial Institution, the State of Destitution, the Modern Constitution, and the Supreme Restitution on the spiritual plane).

Spector ends her discussion with *Jerusalem*. In her summary of the book's argument, however, she concludes with the insightful observation that Blake seems to have strongly identified the pattern of his own life with that of Job. Like Job, Blake retained his faith in the face of trials and losses, and, having survived his Satanic test, he comes to praise God and all his works. She comments briefly on the last plate (plate 21)

11. Jacques Basnage's *History of the Jews, From Jesus Christ To The Present Time*, translated by Thomas Taylor the Cambridge Platonist (London: J. Beaver and B. Linton; R. Knapstock; J. Sprint; A. Bell, R. Smith, and J. Round, 1708), was the most complete and accurate eighteenth-century history and commentary on the Kabbalah. In describing *Merkavah* mysticism, Basnage gives an account of the descent of Souls through the Vortex of the four worlds:

All the Souls, without excepting the *Messiah's*, were created at the beginning of the World. The World in its original state was *Diaphanous*, and separated into many Vortices. . . . The World, or this great Vortex, was divided into unequal parts; whereof one is call'd *Aziluthical*, another *Briathical*, the third is the *Jesirathical* World, and the least of all is the *Asiathical*. All the Souls were at first included in the superior *Aziluthick* World, but they were clad with some kind of Body. These Souls were subject to various Revolutions, and were to pass into the four Vortices, or Worlds before mentioned. (187.2-188.1)

In addition, William Enfield's *The History of Philosophy, from the Earliest Periods: Drawn up from Brucker's Historia Critica Philosophiae* (London: J. Johnson, 1791), which is based on Basnage and which Blake would have seen in Hayley's library, provides an illustration similar to the one in van Helmont that Spector emphasizes. In Enfield, a line representing *Adam Kadmon* cuts through the ten sefirotic circles.

of the Linnell series of *Illustrations of the Book of Job* (1825) as a reflection of the balance restored to the cosmos, in which Job's happily restored family stands between the two extremes of judgment and mercy. Spector could have gone further with this, and looked at the ways in which Blake's mature visual art unself-consciously incorporates both Tree of Life and Chariot themes.<sup>12</sup>

The section on *Milton* provides the book's best discussion of Chariot mysticism as a theme in Blake's work. Other uses of Chariot mysticism that Spector could have focused on include the Dante drawings and his very late drawings for the Book of Genesis and *The Book of Enoch*.<sup>13</sup>

Spector also misses the chance to show us the poet in fruitfully kabbalistic exchange with the dissenting and Druid groups of his own acquaintance, those who formed what Spector calls the "English Esoterica" (25). In the seventeenth century, the Kabbalah had been an integral part of the occult/political Rosicrucian movement. In Blake's time, the old "sciences" in new guises were still attractive, and important in several circles with which Blake was connected: the English Behmenists and Swedenborgians;<sup>14</sup> occultists in secret societ-

12. In the *Job* series, for example, the more restful balance represented in the final plate is the obverse of the dynamic representation of the Tree of Life in plate 2. In that plate, two contrary pillars of cloud and fire frame the central scene, in which a pillar of figures spiraling upwards is flanked by two pillars of rising figures. God occupies the highest position in the middle pillar, with Satan in the center, and Job at the bottom. An open book of Laws lies on God's knees, and his right hand points downward to Job, who also holds a book of Laws. Satan's limbs extend at the diagonal, a spiral dynamic that links and vitalizes the upper and lower spheres.

13. *The Book of Enoch* was one of the most important of the early, apocalyptic *Merkavah* texts. Very little of the voluminous output of the *Merkavah* mystics was translated from the Hebrew or Aramaic and made available to Christian Europe, but in 1821 the first English translation of *The Book of Enoch* was published. The resurrection by Richard Laurence of what had been one of the most influential prophecies of the early Christian period created surprisingly little stir. Blake, however, responded to it with a series of vigorous preliminary pencil drawings, of which we have six. Even in their rough state, they show the enthusiasm he felt. The history of *The Book of Enoch* and the circumstances of its publication in 1821 are given in G. E. Bentley, Jr., "A Jewel in an Ethiop's Ear," *Blake in His Time*, ed. Robert N. Essick and Donald Pearce (London and Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978) 213-40; and Allan R. Brown, "Blake's Drawings for the *Book of Enoch*," *The Burlington Magazine* 77 (September 1940): 80-85; rpt. in *The Visionary Hand: Essays for the Study of William Blake's Art and Aesthetics*, ed. Robert N. Essick (Los Angeles: Hennessey & Ingalls, 1973) 105-16. For details of the meager response to Laurence's translation, see Bentley, "Jewel in an Ethiop's Ear" 216-17.

14. In addition to his direct involvement with the Swedenborgian Church, Blake likely had associations through his friend William Sharp with a considerable variety of Behmenists and Swedenborgians. The Reverend Richard Clarke (1719-1802), for example, was a Hebraist and a student of the Kabbalah, and in addition had some serious acquaintance with alchemy. Clarke engaged in public controversy with Joseph Priestley and Thomas Paine. He was a very colorful character, and his concern for social justice made him a well-known figure in London among people interested, like Blake, in Boehme, Law, and Swedenborg. See Hirst 246-63, 271-76; E. P. Thompson, *Witness Against the Beast: William Blake and the Moral Law* (New York: The New Press, 1993) 47-48.

ies like the Masons;<sup>15</sup> dissenting Christians who mingled the occult with religious and political radicalism;<sup>16</sup> and Druids.<sup>17</sup>

15. Though the areligious sociability and middle-class sensibilities of English Freemasonry would hardly have appealed to Blake, the remarkable surge in mystical Masonry of the late eighteenth century surely would. These groups sought a spiritual regeneration for the world through "true science and true reason," by which they meant alchemy, Kabbalah, mesmerism, Swedenborgian spiritualism, and the Bible. See Clarke Garrett, *Respectable Folly: Millenarians and the French Revolution in France and England* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975) 99. For example, the Avignon Society, an offshoot of mystical Masonry, supported Richard Brothers and believed in the regeneration of the world through revolution. They derived this belief from a system of kabbalistic numerology they called "the Holy Word" (Leslie Tannenbaum, *Biblical Tradition in Blake's Early Prophecies: The Great Code of Art* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982] 17). William Bryan, who published testimonies of his belief in Richard Brothers, was a leader of the Avignon Society and at one time or another was interested in practically every aspect of late eighteenth-century occult, mystical and pseudo-scientific enquiry. He was close friends with William Sharp, through whom Blake could have met him, and with their mutual friend Thomas Duché, a talented painter and son of the Rev. Jacob Duché (Garrett 176), whose sermons were influenced by both Boehme and Swedenborg, and whose *Discourses on Various Subjects* (1779) Blake owned (G. E. Bentley, Jr., *The Stranger from Paradise: A Biography of William Blake* [New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001] 126). Even if Blake did not come in contact with the Avignon Society through the tirelessly sociable Sharp, he could have read a denunciation of them in the Swedenborgian Church's *New Jerusalem Magazine* for April 1790, where they are decried as "the Antipodes of the New Church, erected on the very borders of Babylon."

16. Many groups of Dissenters mixed the same fervor for spiritual regeneration and belief in the esoteric with political radicalism, and Blake had definite affinities with antinomian millenialist groups. The Ancient Deists of Hoxton, for example, were actively involved with occult and mystical traditions, and spoke of conversations with angels and departed spirits (see William Hamilton Reid, *The Rise and Dissolution of the Infidel Societies in This Metropolis: Including The Origin of Modern Deism and Atheism; The Genius and Conduct of Those Associations; Their Lecture-Rooms, Field-Meetings, and Deputations; From the Publication of PAINE'S AGE OF REASON till the present Period* [London: J. Hatchard, 1800]). Like Blake, too, many of these new converts to the dissenting sects were London craftsmen, whose training in the sects, with their egalitarian and revivalist, Messianic rituals, led them to embrace Jacobin and radical political ideas at the outbreak of the French Revolution. See E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963; rpt. New York: Vintage-Random House, 1966) 51-53; and George Rudé, *History of London: Hanoverian London, 1714-1808* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1971) 114. On Blake's affinities with these groups, see M. H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1971) 51-55; Garrett 147; Christopher Hill, *Milton and the English Revolution* (New York: Viking, 1978) 467-69; A. L. Morton, *The Everlasting Gospel: A Study in the Sources of William Blake* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1958) *passim*; Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* 41, 50-52; Thompson, *Witness Against the Beast* *passim*.

17. Writers like Thomas Maurice or any of the writers on the Druids found a primordial Christian Kabbalah at the heart of all the religious mysteries of the world. Numerous antiquaries held that the deepest Druidic mysteries were really the secret Kabbalah given to Adam by God. The Reverend Evan Evans, for example, spoke about a "Druidical Cabbala," in his *Some Specimens of the Poetry of the Antient Welsh Bards* (London, 1764) 18, and there was a copy of Evans's work in Hayley's library (Munby 119).

In sum, "*Wonders Divine*" offers a brilliant explication of the kabbalistic pattern of Blake's development: from his early use of Kabbalah to liberate himself from the restrictions imposed by the exoteric myth of Christianity to his full retelling, in the major prophecies, of *Adam Kadmon*/Albion's fall into division and eventual reunification with the exiled *Shekhinah*/Jerusalem. More, the book firmly establishes the Kabbalah as the structuring principle of Blake's cosmogony and theosophy, in which the Christian myth is transformed into only part of a larger cycle of existence. I believe, though, that the next step is to link Blake's Kabbalah more firmly with the Christian esoteric tradition.

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There were several other antiquarian writers whose works on the Druids Blake would have known: Henry Rowlands, William Stukeley, Rowland Jones, Edward Williams, William Owen (Pughe), and Peter Roberts. Like Blake, they believed that the Druids and the Patriarchs shared a common kabbalistic religion and language.

From very similar designs in Rowlands (1723, 1766) and Stukeley (1740), Blake derived the visual context for his "Joseph of Arimathea among the Rocks of Albion," in which Blake made his Joseph into a Druid (see Dena Bain Taylor, "The Visual Context of 'Joseph of Arimathea among the Rocks of Albion,'" *Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly* 20.2 [fall 1986]: 47-48).

Edward Williams (Iolo Morganwg, 1747-1826), the indefatigable Welsh poet, lexicographer, and enthusiastic forger of both poetry and historical evidence, claimed to have documentary evidence of the original "Patriarchal Religion of ANCIENT BRITAIN." See Edward Williams, *Poems, Lyric and Pastoral* (London, 1794) II: 194; quoted in A. L. Owen, *The Famous Druids* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962) 73. Williams was a close friend of Blake's friend William Owen (Pughe), and Blake may have attended Druid rituals on Primrose Hill with them both. (See Dena Taylor, "A Note on William Blake and the Druids of Primrose Hill," *Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly* 17.3 [winter 1983-84]: 104.)

Nick Rawlinson. *William Blake's Comic Vision*. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. xiii + 292 pp. \$65.00/£42.50 cloth.

Reviewed by KATHLEEN LUNDEEN

Nick Rawlinson reveals the impetus for *William Blake's Comic Vision* to be "a simple hunch" that he and other readers enjoy Blake, in part, because he is a comic writer (vii). Notwithstanding E. D. Hirsh's long-ago observation that Blake is the most humorous of the romantics, classifying the man behind the searing eyes of the familiar portraits as a comic writer may seem a bit of a stretch. Rawlinson challenges any incredulity by showing the abundance of comedy in Blake and the significance of its function, and in so doing he allows us to hear Blake in a different key. His book proves to be more than an inventory of the comic elements in Blake,