

## The Erotic Imaginary of Divine Realization in Kabbalistic and Tantric Metaphysics

In this paper I consider the way in which divinity is realized through an imaginary locus in the mystical thought of Jewish kabbalah and Hindu tantra. It demonstrates a *reflective* consciousness by the adept or master in understanding the place of God's being, as a supernal and mundane reality. For the comparative assessment of these two distinctive approaches I shall use as a point of departure the interpretative strategies employed by Elliot R. Wolfson in his detailed work on Jewish mysticism. He argues that there is an androcentric bias embedded in the speculative outlook of medieval kabbalah, as he reads the texts through a psychoanalytic lens. In a similar way, I will argue that there is an androcentric bias to the speculations presented in medieval Śaiva tantra, in particular that division known as the Trika. Overall, my aim is to suggest some functional and perhaps structural similarities to the characterization of divinity in these two traditions, through brief analyses of the erotic understanding of the nature of the Godhead.

### Introduction

In the Jewish view, the orthodox understanding of God is one of distant immutability and 'unmovedness'.<sup>1</sup> For their part, kabbalists follow this view of positing a God that is endlessly ultimate, as a void that is beyond conception, which they call Ein Sof, and which is apophatically dark; this means that Ein Sof is hidden from direct human perception.<sup>2</sup> In order to bridge the gulf between God and human beings kabbalists consequently elaborate the idea of a dynamic realization of divinity, an immanent fullness that is conceptualizable (to an extent at any rate). This is achieved through a manifold of potencies or powers, called *sefirot*, which are the means by which the human imaginary can visualize the otherwise concealed and transcendent God. They provide the bounded, cataphatic illumination for espying Ein Sof.<sup>3</sup> Realistically, they are objective aspects of God's being, and the sefirotic pleroma is depicted as an anthropomorphic figure—the 'divine (or primordial) man', *adam qadmon*.<sup>4</sup> Phenomenologically, they can be considered as qualified projections by the kabbalistic mind.<sup>5</sup> In that regard, these attributive forces represent 'the imaginal topography of kabbalistic symbolism'.<sup>6</sup> As a whole, the *sefirot* constitute, or sum up, God; and, moreover, they are the imaginary numbers with which the kabbalist computes divine consciousness.<sup>7</sup> A debatable issue for the authors and commentators of the kabbalah is whether God created or emanated the divine forces, as is the ontological association of Ein Sof and Keter. The movement of the *sefirot* highlights an interactive divinity—within the Godhead, and between God and Earth. In the divine realm forces can operate in union and disunion, which can be reflected at the mundane level of existence as man and woman operate conjunctively or disjunctively. Adam Qadmon exhibits an androgynous, or two-faced nature (*du-paršufin*), which appears in human beings as the bifurcated forms of male and female; in addition, each person also bears a sexual bipolarity, and this drives the desire for the other, which, according to Charles Mopsik, is no other than a drive to the self.<sup>8</sup> In contrast to the theism of Jewish orthodoxy, kabbalistic theology tends to be panentheistic, or even pantheistic, in its orientation.<sup>9</sup> There is often a ranging across these ideas. For the kabbalists the world is real, substantial, and valuable, and it pulsates with the life of God.<sup>10</sup>

In the general view of Hinduism the apex of divinity is known as *brahman*, which is developed in the Upaniṣads as the existential ground that cannot be seen, but yet as the

essence of truth that can be experienced,<sup>11</sup> which is then established in the Vedānta as *nirguṇa* and *saguna*, i.e., without qualities and with qualities, as abstract and personal.<sup>12</sup> The various sects and schools of the tantras reconceive this basic notion in particular ways, but my interest here lies in the teachings of the Śaiva tantras, namely those placed under the rubric of Kashmir Śaivism.<sup>13</sup> The renowned philosopher and sage Abhinavagupta (fl. ca. 975–1025) drew together a variety of tantric teachings to codify the division known as Trika, which sees itself as superior to other ways to Brahman.<sup>14</sup> There are two important schools of thought here, the *Pratyabhijñā*, or Doctrine of Recognition, and the *Spanda*, or Doctrine of Vibration.<sup>15</sup> In the Trika view, the pervasive God is the ultimate reality, referred to as *anuttara*, the ‘unsurpassed’,<sup>16</sup> or ‘that above which there is nothing’,<sup>17</sup> which broadly speaking corresponds to *brahman* of the Upaniṣads.<sup>18</sup> Anuttara appears in universal manifestation as a complementary, yet opposed pair, as Śiva and Śakti, and these binary aspects (which are effectively unitary) constitute the incipient nature of Reality.<sup>19</sup> Manifestation is traced out through various categories, known as *tattvas*, numbering thirty-six, from the abstraction of Śiva through to the concreteness of Earth (*prthivī*).<sup>20</sup> They represent the unconcealment and unveiling of the Absolute, which can be understood here as the supreme Śiva, that is, Paramaśiva.<sup>21</sup> At every level of reality Śiva is ensconced, so what appears as various manifestations is really one, being only an aspect of him.<sup>22</sup> As reified and personified, the divine duo of Śiva and Śakti is conventionally reflected at the mundane level by the two human sexes, male and female, who also in themselves are said to embody a polarity.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, tantric practice aims at reassimilating, reintegrating, or reunifying the normally dichotomized, or split, epistemological outlook that human beings hold; in other words, overcoming the subject-object distinction, which is achieved by recognizing that one’s own essential self (*ātman*) is really the same as Brahman (*Ātman*).<sup>24</sup> Philosophically, Kashmir Śaivism evinces a monistic (or non-dual) outlook as the whole universe lies within Śiva.<sup>25</sup> While Abhinavagupta accepts that ‘the evolution of the cosmos is a real transformation taking place within a single reality’, he nevertheless sees this transformative process as ‘a progressive decline in level of reality from the, as it were, most real to the least real’.<sup>26</sup> In short, manifested phenomena are indeed real, yet ultimately they are not, in the sense that they are but an attenuation of Śiva’s compact or dense consciousness, which is the final unit of existence.<sup>27</sup> The understanding of the roles played by Śiva and Śakti are metaphysically contrastive in Śaiva and Śākta systems: in the former, Śiva is the primary field in which *śakti* is constrained, and as his evident power on display, her functioning is his functioning; while in the latter, Śiva is considered to be thoroughly inactive without the operational presence of *śakti*, whose actioning becomes prominent, to the extent that she is even separable from or superordinate to him.<sup>28</sup>

Both kabbalah and tantra are symbolic systems, since that which is hidden or inexpressible, respectively Ein Sof and Anuttara (Paramaśiva), is represented or signalled by something that is known.<sup>29</sup> The proponents of these systems considered the problem of how multiplicity arises from unity. For the kabbalists, it is evidently through the ten *sefirot*, which unfold as manifest reality out of the nothingness of Ein Sof,<sup>30</sup> but it is also conceived through the operations of the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. In combination, they are the so-called thirty-two paths of wisdom, and it is said that the whole world is composed of these sapiential pathways.<sup>31</sup> According to the *Sefer ha-Bahir* (*Book of Brightness*), the heart of God contains these mystical windings,<sup>32</sup> and since *lev* (i.e., heart) has the same numerical value as *kavod* (i.e., glory),<sup>33</sup> it represents a feminine enlivening of divinity.<sup>34</sup> In the kabbalah, the heart is the locus of mystical imagination, and ‘is the throne upon which *Shekhinah* dwells’.<sup>35</sup> Equally, in tantra, when the mind is centred in the heart (*hrdaya*) a vision of divine consciousness is emplaced.<sup>36</sup> Creation, then, beats in time with the presence of God.<sup>37</sup> Ein

Sof generates creation through the *sefirot*, while Śiva effectuates creation through the *tattvas*, and this processual expansion amounts to an emanatory creation or creative emanation.<sup>38</sup> Just as the *sefirot* are the universal chain that links heaven and earth,<sup>39</sup> so the *tattvas* are the bridge spanning that which is above and that which is below. In the same way that the *sefirot* are not to be thought of as being separate from Ein Sof<sup>40</sup> so the *tattvas* are not to be thought of as being separate from Śiva.<sup>41</sup> As such, God is dynamically realized as being present—as it turns out, both psychologically and somatically. The imagination is the linchpin, the sure medium, for this presentation of divinity.<sup>42</sup> In the gathering of supreme reality, Abhinavagupta states that the ‘highest face’<sup>43</sup> of Maheśvara (i.e., Śiva), ‘as the seed of the universe . . . is called heart, vibration, knowledge (*dr̥k*), the highest [level of speech], essence, nameless, wave etc.’<sup>44</sup> The journey to awareness of Śiva is through the divine paradigm of Śakti, who is *parāvāc*, the supreme Word. This way is also Shekhinah, who is the heart of the divine Word, the Torah.<sup>45</sup> The goal of both kabbalistic and tantric thought is unity with God, although it is realized differently, since Jewish thought is theistic whereas tantric thought is monistic (in the case of non-dual Śaivism).<sup>46</sup> Having said that, kabbalah approaches the non-dual conception of Śaiva philosophy, in which the human soul is absorptively identical with God.<sup>47</sup> The soteriology is similar in respect to the need to realize and recognize that one is integrally related to the divine, by virtue at least of being captured by God.<sup>48</sup> For both traditions, the world is real and worthwhile, although with some qualifications for tantra.<sup>49</sup>

## The Erotic Nature of Divinity

### *Kabbalah*<sup>50</sup>

A characteristic of medieval kabbalah is that it portrays ‘religious experience in intensely charged erotic symbolism’.<sup>51</sup> As well, kabbalists are concerned with mapping spiritual reality onto mundane reality, and indeed vice versa. There is a sacred union, *hieros gamos*, which occurs between the sixth *sefirah*, Tif’eret, and the tenth *sefirah*, Malkhut, and which is referred to as the joining of king and queen (*malka* and *maṭronita*).<sup>52</sup> It is an event that occurs symbolically in the Temple space, the holy of holies, which figuratively speaking designates the vagina,<sup>53</sup> as that ‘secret space wherein the phallic foundation is laid’.<sup>54</sup> The sacred union on high typifies an intimate consciousness of divinity,<sup>55</sup> and is a concourse in which human beings can participate. The knowledge of God, in other words, as it is revealed through the sponsorship of Tif’eret, who is ‘the blessed Holy One’, can be attained by copulation, since ‘the Hebrew word *yedi’ah* can be used to denote both cognition and conjugal intimacy’.<sup>56</sup> As Wolfson explains, ‘[c]oitus is considered a form of *imitatio dei* insofar as the unity of the divine anthropos is imaged as the coupling of masculine and feminine’.<sup>57</sup> For as long as Tif’eret and Malkhut are disunited, there is an imbalance, but when brought together again by the sacramental coupling of husband and wife, Malkhut (Shekhinah) is redeemed from her exile. This notion of exile has both a cosmic dimension, in that it refers to the original sin of Adam, and an earthly dimension, in that the fall of Solomon’s Temple marked the separation of God’s Shekhinah (Presence) from Israel.<sup>58</sup> It just illustrates the theosophical–theurgical nature of kabbalah, where mundane activity affects, and even effects, divine activity.<sup>59</sup> By propitiously conjoining with his wife the kabbalist as master is exemplifying his integrity, and is a righteous man.<sup>60</sup> The kabbalah is a secret regime, and is characterized by a double capacity for revealing that which is hidden while at the same time concealing it.<sup>61</sup>

There is an element of satisfaction in the emanatory creativity of the divine nature, deriving from a mythic tradition in which God plays with his wisdom, and this betokens an ‘erotic engagement (*sha’ashu’a*) with the feminine Torah’.<sup>62</sup> It signifies moreover an eros of

self-contemplation. Wolfson argues that kabbalistic thought, which lies within a philosophical tradition of binary logic where difference is innately ascribed to notions of gender, demonstrates a ‘fearful asymmetry’ in that gender difference is elided, and realized parochially in the godhead.<sup>63</sup> This is to be seen as God experiences a delight with himself before creation, which is achieved before the female ‘other’ is engendered. He asserts that the ‘desire [to project] necessitates the othering of the one, a division of the male androgyne into the masculine potency to overflow and the feminine capacity to receive’.<sup>64</sup> This movement of divine light is homologized with the mundane discharge of the male seed, and relates to ‘the traditional notion of thought arising in the will of God’.<sup>65</sup> So the initial act of creation is tantamount to a mental copulation; however, given that the female is not yet revealed, it becomes a singular act, and ‘assume[s] the character of masturbation’.<sup>66</sup> This image of *sha’ashu’a*, Wolfson remarks, can be translated by the Lacanian expression *jouissance*, which refers to ‘the happiness that does not concern an other, the drive that has no other, the surplus enjoyment that defies signification’.<sup>67</sup> It follows that ‘*jouissance* is an expression of the phallic impulse for an other that is identically different in the identity of difference, an other that can be realized only in the fantasy-space of the (homo)erotic imagination of the male seeking himself in the mirror of the other’.<sup>68</sup> This act of self-contemplation is a self-reflexive enjoyment that ‘is poetically captured in the mythical image of the uroboros, the serpent biting its tail, consciousness contemplating the self as other in the unconscious prism of the other as self, parting of one in unity of two’.<sup>69</sup> The knowledge of the transcendent that is sought by the kabbalist comes to him mediated through the prism of desire.<sup>70</sup>

On the basis of the importance of the practice of circumcision, which is mandated upon Jewish males as a sign of the covenant between God and Israel (Gen. 17:13–14), the ninth *sefirah* of the divine anthropos—who, or which, is understood as an icon of the male body—occupies the site of the penis, and is projected as the Lacanian phallus. Indeed, for the kabbalist, Yesod is the focus of contemplative envisioning of God.<sup>71</sup> The phallus itself is of an androgynous nature, and as an object of veneration it forms an ‘imaginal body’, which is ‘the incarnate form of YHWH’.<sup>72</sup> This androgynous phallus stands metonymically for the body,<sup>73</sup> and is engendered as both male and female, with the shaft of the penis (*yesod*) symbolizing the male component, and the corona (*atarah*) symbolizing the female component.<sup>74</sup> Spiritual coupling is reflectively achieved by the mundane coupling, and hence by the kabbalist erecting his intention (*kawwanah*) to be with God.<sup>75</sup> By this means he reconnects with the divine man; but the result of this theosophical formula is that the female is *contained* in the male, is ontologically subsumed by the male. Effectively, the female is ‘restored’ to the male.<sup>76</sup> Wolfson argues furthermore that inasmuch as the godhead, epitomized as the ‘divine man’, shows no differentiation, it is predicated on what is in truth a male androgyne.<sup>77</sup> In medieval kabbalistic texts one gender is allocated, and this is the masculine, which is composed of both male and female: ‘Once the male androgyne splinters into binary opposition, we can speak—functionally and not ontically, correlatively and not substantially—of two disparate genders to which fixed characteristics are attributed’.<sup>78</sup> Wolfson does not ‘deny that gender dimorphism is a central component of the kabbalistic perspective’, but he does claim ‘that since the feminine is ontically derived from the masculine, in the unified ground of being there can be no real difference to speak of but the difference of indifference, wherein same and other are no longer distinguishable as contrary’.<sup>79</sup> It is the ‘difference of identity (A + B) as opposed to identity of difference (A = B)’.<sup>80</sup> From the standpoint of the kabbalist, ‘there is one gender with two sexuated instantiations’.<sup>81</sup> In this process, ‘the woman is accorded a critical, albeit instrumentalist, role in [the] drama as the vessel to receive the seminal fluid whence the new being will be engendered’.<sup>82</sup> The purported androgyny of the divine is actually skewed towards the male



pole; indeed, Wolfson reiterates that ‘androgyny in kabbalistic theosophy is primarily and essentially male, the female being a secondary entity with a lower ontological and axiological status’.<sup>83</sup> He concludes that ‘[t]he depiction of the male containing the female is obviously an androcentric inversion of the physiological fact that the male is contained in the female, in relation both to his mother at birth and to his partner in the act of intercourse’.<sup>84</sup> In general, kabbalistic ‘texts were [not] written by women and thus they do not convey the perspective of feminine experience’, and moreover they ‘do not self-consciously challenge the dominant patriarchy of rabbinic culture’.<sup>85</sup>

The act of conjugality on the eve of Sabbath (Friday night), whereupon the kabbalist inseminates his wife, corresponds analogically to the impregnation enacted by Tif’eret upon Malkhut (via the agency of Yesod).<sup>86</sup> In the ceremonial symbolism that is given here, Shekhinah, modelled as feminine, appears as a bride who comes to the master and crowns him as the bridegroom.<sup>87</sup> This then suggests a heterosexual dynamic.<sup>88</sup> However, Wolfson argues that it actually involves a homoerotic dynamic, on the basis that the crown refers to the corona of the circumcised penis, and so by ‘crowning’ him, Shekhinah is sacralizing the kabbalist as the mundane analogue of Tif’eret.<sup>89</sup> In short, ‘to be crowned’ means to have sexual intercourse, or its culminating union,<sup>90</sup> and ‘the peak mystical experience of coronation is to be understood in symbolic terms as cleaving to the corona of the male organ’.<sup>91</sup> This implies that ‘[t]he ontological problem of the feminine is resolved by locating the ultimate source for the female other in the phallic potency itself’.<sup>92</sup> As the female is ontically restored to the male androgyne, it indicates a ‘transmutation of the signified into a signifier’.<sup>93</sup> Consequently, the female is ‘transvalued’, both at the mundane and supernal levels, and this is achieved because she is rendered ontically as the corona of the phallus. It all serves to typify a ‘destabilization’ of the gender boundaries.<sup>94</sup> Another image of the transformative process involves the rainbow, which is biblically speaking a metaphor for the covenant between God and Israel.<sup>95</sup> It is a symbol of God’s redemptive presence, Shekhinah, who is the Angel of Covenant—the angel, that is, of Yesod, who is known as Covenant.<sup>96</sup> In the kabbalah, this return from the exiled state is portrayed in nuptial terms; and so she is characterized as ‘shin[ing] in bright colors like a bride adorned before the bridegroom’.<sup>97</sup> Reading this connubial allusion semiotically, Wolfson argues that Shekhinah is not ‘an autonomous female persona but [is] the diadem that encircles the head of the male’.<sup>98</sup> Since women have no penis they can only participate in kabbalistic praxis by virtue of being the revealed object of the male gaze. The male, in spectating the female, via a phallic gaze, projects his phallic desire on to the other, and his look ‘transforms the feminine to the point that she is reincorporated into the phallus in the form of the corona’.<sup>99</sup> The wreathing upliftment of Shekhinah signifies her gender transposition.<sup>100</sup> Essentially then, the omen of divine glory that is symbolized by the rainbow ‘signifies the restoration of the female to the male in the form of the corona of the phallus’.<sup>101</sup> The return to the cleft of Shekhinah is a perfect union for the kabbalist, an endearment he earnestly desires.<sup>102</sup>

In the usual understanding, the kabbalist engages with divinity in a heterosexual dynamic as he lies in relation to the feminine Malkhut (Shekhinah), who herself lies in relation to the masculine Tif’eret.<sup>103</sup> However, Wolfson argues for a more nuanced approach. So, although the divinizing erotic relationship is heterosexually gendered, with the reputedly female Shekhinah over against the male kabbalist, it is also indicative of a homoerotic bond. In the adamic state, the kabbalist penetratingly looks upon the face of Shekhinah, but to do so is only to adore the sign of the covenant, which is the crowning object of vision.<sup>104</sup> By dint of his elevated position, he sees the corona as the bright countenance of God. From a metaphorical angle, the kabbalist comes to know God (Tif’eret) through a mystical eclipse, as

he stands in the umbra of Shekhinah's shadow.<sup>105</sup> Put another way, the kabbalist is 'coronified' by his joining with Shekhinah, for at that moment he is facing the sun of Yesod, and taking up his phallic shield.<sup>106</sup> Shekhinah is 'constructed as masculine' in the sense that in abiding with those who study Torah she is referred to as *Kenesset Yisra'el*, 'Community of Israel', which is just made up of the kabbalistic fraternity; moreover, the 'face' of Shekhinah is taken on by the assembly of exegetes, as is her voice.<sup>107</sup> Heterosexual language such as speaking of king and queen is used to describe an actually 'homoerotic relationship between God and kabbalist'.<sup>108</sup> Wolfson concludes that nominally heterosexual images 'must be decoded as a veiled allusion to the homoerotic bond between the male mystic and the reconstituted male androgyne in the divine realm', and as such it shows the 'phallogenarcissistic vision that has informed kabbalistic ontology apparently from its inception'.<sup>109</sup> The somatic reflection by the human form of the divine anthropos, which is the 'imaginal shape of God', and which indicates the reunification of Tif'eret and Malkhut following the split of God's unity by the act of creation, is effected by a man's 'knowing' a woman, namely his wife; but it is also indicated by the kabbalist's devoting himself to studying Torah, for gazing at the latter is akin to gazing at one's beloved.<sup>110</sup> Adherence to living by the light of God's 'commandments facilitates the transformation of the carnal body into the textual body of Torah',<sup>111</sup> a focused achievement in which the 'state of spiritual perfection [is] predicated on renunciation of physical pleasure and sensual gratification'.<sup>112</sup> This 'cleaving to the supernal knowledge . . . is depicted as an augmented luminosity of the face and as being garbed in the Holy Spirit'; and hence the soul is lit by the triumphal rays of Shekhinah.<sup>113</sup> For the kabbalist, the lustrous knowledge of God is recognized through the argenteous fire of divine consciousness.<sup>114</sup>

## **Tantra**

There is, in the Trika an impetus to eroticism, and indeed it 'is thoroughly permeated with sexual symbolism'.<sup>115</sup> The cosmic union of Śiva and Śakti, which is the polarizing conjunction of the pure light of consciousness (*prakāśa*), and its own self-awareness (*vimarśa*), is directly reflected at the mundane level in the joining of male and female.<sup>116</sup> At the highest creative level Śiva is inseparably united with his *śakti*, as he proceeds to utter the emanation of the universe.<sup>117</sup> Śakti is said to rest, or repose (*viśrānti*), in Śiva, who qualifies as an effortless act of retirement.<sup>118</sup> This means that divinity is fundamentally known as the synthesis of Śiva and Śakti.<sup>119</sup> The *yogin* recognizes his substantial affinity with Śiva through knowing a woman—his consorting partner (*dūtī*)—and exercising his emissive power (*visargaśakti*), hence he is a creator, an expounder of life.<sup>120</sup> In cosmic terms, Śiva wilfully manifests himself, and in so doing he expresses his freedom, his sovereign power in the act of emission (*visarga*).<sup>121</sup> Although Śiva is considered to be inert he is none the less able to execute the process of reality, and to remain unaffected by that service.<sup>122</sup> His generativity is phenomenal, and it is a spontaneous flash of light, an 'efflorescence' of consciousness, which irradiates the universe.<sup>123</sup> The power of emission is a throbbing consciousness, an agitative vibration (*spanda*), and a palpitating radiance (*sphurattā*), which is the heart of Śiva.<sup>124</sup> This process of divine realization, as an explication into reality, merely shows that Śiva is engaging in an act of self-recognition, and that it is therefore a self-reflexive, or self-reflecting act of cognition.<sup>125</sup> Now the Śaiva adept, who identifies with Śiva, consequently has the same understanding as he recollects his self-same god-nature. Carnal knowledge is the way to God, and to recognize the synchronous nature of divinity entails the eradication of ignorance; in short, this realization gives an understanding that one is harmonized with Śiva. As Abhinavagupta explains: 'The act of bringing about recognition of the Lord, is not the act of [a] causal agent, nor that of one who makes things known. It is simply the removal of the

ignorance'.<sup>126</sup> This active recognition of unifying I-consciousness shows 'the state of *anuttara*, [and is] the very heart of the universe', he declares in the *Parātrīśikāvivaraṇa*.<sup>127</sup> Accordingly, the lack of 'recognitive judgement' means to be in exile from God, i.e. Paramaśiva.<sup>128</sup> The standard motif of tantra is that as a graphic effulgence of divine realization it is a secret gnosis.<sup>129</sup>

For the exponents of tantra, the universal reality is understood to be composed of the thirty-six *tattvas*, which unfold as manifest reality out of the absolute fullness (void) of Paramaśiva.<sup>130</sup> In this manner, Śiva is deploying his unbridled power, his *svātantrya-śakti*, which is responsible for differentiating his mass of light-consciousness into the (discrete) objects of manifestation.<sup>131</sup> The Godhead is dynamized by the productive energy of *śakti* (i.e., *kriyāśakti*), which revelates Śiva into manifestation as the intelligible reality. The velocity of convergence of Śiva and Śakti makes for a frictional union, a 'banging together' (*saṃghaṭṭa*).<sup>132</sup> Śiva takes joy in the contemplation of reality, as he savours the bliss of his creative emanation.<sup>133</sup> Abhinavagupta explains in the *Parātrīśikāvivaraṇa* that the highest reality, Bhairava, 'who is beyond all appellation or description, whose essence is supreme amazement of beatitude', brings himself into view by virtue of his excellent power, his *śakti*, which he possesses.<sup>134</sup> In this event, Śakti is the musing object of Śiva's desire to expand himself into manifestation, and as such she is the delightful play (*krīḍā*) of his consciousness in phenomenal reality.<sup>135</sup> Creative emanation occurs as the mantric knowledge classified by Śiva penetrates the circle of Śakti, and the 'many light-drops of great splendour' are 'churned' in her womb.<sup>136</sup> There is a homology between the supernal act and the mundane emission of semen.<sup>137</sup> The male adept is the one who can fully identify with God, i.e., Śiva,<sup>138</sup> since he envisages himself as emanating the seed that leads to new life, and as being the possessor of *śakti* (that emanatory power), whereas the female *yoginī* (*yoginī*) is the one who is possessed, the actuating mechanism.<sup>139</sup> The male practitioner (*sādhaka*) moreover participates in the cosmic delight when he recognizes the undivided consciousness of Maheśvara (i.e., Śiva) the fusion of 'I' and 'this' (*aham idam*).<sup>140</sup> The soteriological goal of divine recognition for the male practitioner just means that he is able to acknowledge himself as the all (*sarva*); and moreover, as the instantiation of divinity, he can truly announce that 'I am Śiva'.<sup>141</sup> It is said that for the *yoginī* the blissful state of awareness is characterized as one of fascinating wonder (*vismayo*) at the expansion of his complex of senses.<sup>142</sup> That the Universe appears diverse, or manifold, is due to the *tattva* of *māyā*, which is the innate power of Śiva, and which allows him to represent himself as plural while hiding his real nature as unity. *Māyā* is described as 'the receptacle of the universe' (*jagato nidhiḥ*),<sup>143</sup> since she is the form in which the divine light of consciousness is conceived.

It is arguable that there is (often enough) a defective understanding of the feminine evidenced in the tantras.<sup>144</sup> A central aspect of *maithuna* (sexual ritual) involves the use of sexo-yogic postures designed to arouse the *kuṇḍalinī*, which is the contracted form of *śakti*, and which is usually depicted as a coiled snake lying dormant at the base of the spine in the so-called etheric, or subtle, body. As *kuṇḍalinī-śakti* stirs and metaphorically slithers up the spinal canal vitalizing the various *cakras* (wheels of energy), she enables the realization of divine consciousness.<sup>145</sup> Accounts of this procedure are generally written from a male point of view.<sup>146</sup> The *sādhaka* wants to realize his identification with Śiva through the objective personification of Goddess Devī in human form, who appears mundanely as his female partner, his *śakti*.<sup>147</sup> The adept is to see her 'as a mental screen onto which is projected a series of personifications', write Mookerjee and Khanna, and this apparently has the effect of altering his view of her 'into a special kind of perception', namely Śakti.<sup>148</sup> He is to adore her specular form as a shaping of the formless Śiva, whose symbol (sign) is otherwise the

ithyphallic *liṅga*. Semiotically, it seems she is the material signifier to his conceptual signified. Furthermore, in Lacanian terms, for the *sādhaka* woman is the phallic other of the symbolic order, and a subjectless reification of male projective fantasy.<sup>149</sup> She is the access point to the *jouissance* of the divine Other, Śiva; the object *a*, ‘not a Real object, but the “presence of a hollow, a void, which can be occupied . . . by any object”’.<sup>150</sup> She, woman, is *that* inscrutable object of desire, and the imaginary instrument (*yantra*) of the male tantric’s narcissistic contemplation of the symbolic divine.<sup>151</sup> I emphasize the demonstrative ‘that’ because this empty and idealized conception of woman is the way in which the *sādhaka* points toward his absent, or made-to-be-present, God.<sup>152</sup> She is a matter of determination, who is held before the spirit of indetermination. In the epistemology of *Pratyabhijñā*, the ordinary perception, such as in ‘this is a jar’, is a determinate cognition (*adhyavasā*—a feminine word), and it refers to differentiated manifestation, which is nothing other than the realm of *śakti*.<sup>153</sup> By contrast, the divine perception, which acts to unify reality, is an intuitive insight (*pratibhā*), and as such is a non-dual consciousness. Abhinavagupta succinctly explains that ‘[d]eterminacy is the act of constructing many images (in consequence of contact with one object) and then differentiating the object of cognition from all else’.<sup>154</sup> This means that *śakti* operates as the cognitive rule by which the *sādhaka* is able to triangulate the infinite light of Śiva (more correctly Paramaśiva, or Brahman).<sup>155</sup> Like Śiva in his erotic dimension, the *sādhaka* aligns himself with the cosmos by using his measuring stick.

The idea that Paramaśiva, as the Absolute, is a concurrence of Śiva and Śakti—the god and his hypostatized energy—might suggest an equality; however, on a critical analysis, it is seen to be not so. In this juncture of opposites (*coincidentia oppositorum*), God is to be understood along androgynous lines, and Śaivaśakta theology provides a scheme by which to impute a(n) (un)balanced divinity.<sup>156</sup> Śakti is the utilitarian means by which Śiva as pure light-consciousness (*prakāśa*) reveals himself as the world of objective reality, and as such she merely constitutes his self-awareness (*vimarśa*). In effect, he contains within himself a feminine, ‘othering’, aspect, which is his power, his *śakti*, and which acts at his behest—it is a demonstration of his free will.<sup>157</sup> This means that Śakti is the self-disclosure of Śiva, and the apparent limitation of his perfectly full consciousness.<sup>158</sup> Śiva harnesses his power as a creative tool, and invests Śakti as the mother of the universe.<sup>159</sup> Actually, Śiva is himself the father and mother of the universe, given that by consorting with his own energy (*śakti*) he is propagating himself.<sup>160</sup> Śiva creatively, indeed magically, emanates the universal reality, and in this self-conscious experiment he is recognizing himself; or, put conversely, Śiva’s act of recognizing himself is what gives rise to the universal reality. As a recognitive apprehension it is one in which the tantric can participate by engaging in yogic practice (*sādhana*), and mindfully attending to that source of light, which is his own conscious nature, and which is the luminous seedbed of creation.<sup>161</sup> The enlightened *yogin*, with his expansive consciousness, is like the Lord (Sadāśiva), for whom the whole universe is his body.<sup>162</sup> The human body may only be a fragment, or shard, of divinity, but it wholly reflects the perceptible cosmos. Abhinavagupta praises the body as the supreme *liṅga* and *maṇḍala* within which there is the worship of both the god and the goddess.<sup>163</sup> Ultimately liberation is achieved by, or through, the grace (*anugraha*) of Śiva. The notion of divine grace, or the ‘descent of energy’, *śaktipāta*, assumes prominence in Śaiva schools of thought, and therefore in the Trika analytic.<sup>164</sup> It seems that the realization of divine consciousness is vouchsafed by the grace of Śiva, not achieved through personal effort.<sup>165</sup> The happy state of divine recognition can be attained in this life, and is called *jīvanmukti*, or liberation of the soul.<sup>166</sup>



According to the ideas of *Spanda*, the universe as a complexification of Śiva's unified being fundamentally involves a vibrational consciousness, a pulse of self-awareness. The universal reality alternately expands and contracts in line with the rhythm of Śiva and Śakti.<sup>167</sup> It is the perduring sound of energy in the field of light-consciousness.<sup>168</sup> In the *Kāmakalāvīlāsa (The Play of Passion and its Power)*,<sup>169</sup> creation is delineated as a phonic and semantic interaction of Śiva and Śakti. It is encapsulated in the 'two transdimensional points of absolute consciousness (*bindu*)... [where] Śiva is represented by a white point (*śuklabindu*) and Śakti by a red point (*śoṇitabindu*)'.<sup>170</sup> The *yogin* sets his mind towards divine knowledge, which is enshrined in the mantra, and which is 'the highest light (the light of Supreme I-consciousness)'.<sup>171</sup> As a drop of light-consciousness (*bindu-prakāśa*) it appears in human form as semen, and so it is masculine; but, because it is energetic—that is, has the flowing force of *śakti*—it is at the same time feminine.<sup>172</sup> The root of non-dual awareness is found in the secret of *mantra*, 'the being of the body of knowledge', which is the shimmering power of words.<sup>173</sup> Kṣemarāja alludes to the activation of *kuṇḍalinī* by the churning power of divinity, and he cites the *Śrītantrasadbhāva (Essence of the Tantras)*: 'O beloved, She is awakened by the resonance of supreme awareness and churned by the spontaneous rolling (*bhramavega*) of Śiva's seed (*bindu*) within Her. Pierced (in this way), that subtle power of *Kuṇḍalinī* is aroused, accompanied initially by brilliant sparks of light'.<sup>174</sup> Practically, sacred union is achieved by having *śakti* in the serpentine form of *kuṇḍalinī* 'proceed' to the ultimate knower, who is just the 'supreme male' without attributes.<sup>175</sup> The presence of Śakti allows the *sādhaka* to speak the nature of his reality, to enunciate his synoptic knowledge.<sup>176</sup> The switching of the electric power that is *kuṇḍalinī-śakti* 'always takes place at two levels simultaneously: cosmic and human',<sup>177</sup> and so the engagement above is reflected in the engagement below. Indeed, the unification of Śiva and Śakti is signalled by the conjoining of man and woman, as a deliberate act that brings about redemption, i.e., liberation, for the *sādhaka*, inasmuch as it collimates the power of *kuṇḍalinī*.<sup>178</sup> The metaphysical thought of Śaiva tantra is predicated on vanity, as Śiva interposes himself as the mirror of reflection, which is just the reductive process of creative emanation. He urges to see himself, in his own mirror, which is known as Śakti.<sup>179</sup> As the twelfth-century commentator Maheśvarānanda puts it: 'He (i.e., Śiva) Himself full of joy enhanced by the honey of the three corners of his heart, viz., *icchā* or Will, *jñāna* or Knowledge, *kriyā* or action, raising up His face to gaze at (His own splendour) is called Śakti'.<sup>180</sup> It appears that the feminine is valued to the extent that it is subordinately related to the masculine, although in Śākta tantra this subordination may not be immediately obvious.<sup>181</sup> Even when the force of *śakti* is reified as a hypostatic entity, as Goddess *Devī* (Śakti) she has an illusorily subjective nature, since she is only an expression of the *reflective* consciousness of Śiva, in his own paramount act of self-awareness. It is a narcissistic enterprise inasmuch as Śiva sees himself reflected in the *tāntrika* as the *tāntrika* sees himself reflected in Śiva, for they are after all identical.<sup>182</sup>

### Correlations

Both the kabbalist and tantric schemes employ the idea of sympathetic activity, with a parallel between the eroticized divinity and human reality. Each highlights a sexual hermeneutic, which underscores a recognition of the presence of God.<sup>183</sup> In the case of kabbalah the conjoining of the master and his wife replicates the conjunction of *Tiferet* and *Malkhut*, while in the case of tantra the conjoining of the adept and his female consort replicates the union of Śiva and Śakti.<sup>184</sup> There is a pronounced, theurgical sexual connotation to the creative process as the kabbalistic God shows his representative presence, his *shekhinah*, which corresponds to the way in which Śiva shows his representative power, his *śakti*. In the *Parātrīśikāvivarāṇa* Abhinavagupta correlates divine consciousness with

‘seminal energy’ (*vīrya*); but the orgasmic joy felt in sexuality only ‘serves as a token of remembrance of the inherent delight of the Divine Self’.<sup>185</sup> It is actually in the space between the potential energy of Śiva and its realization as the kinetic energy of Śakti where the point of I-consciousness lies.<sup>186</sup> For in that instant of equilibrium the *yogin* reposes in blissful awareness of his own divinity, in an astonished consciousness. In his commentarial gloss, Swami Lakshman Joo states that it is necessary to rest the mind ‘in between the energy of will and knowledge’, and he corresponds this to ‘the rise of sexual excitement and the appeased state of the act’.<sup>187</sup> So the height of divinity, the supreme I-consciousness, is found in the interregnum of being, a passing becoming.<sup>188</sup> Just as the *tāntrika* must remove the shroud of ignorance which is the covering of Śakti in order to acquire the bare recognition of Śiva, so the kabbalist must remove the garment of Shekhinah in order to reveal the consummate light of Tif’eret. The sexual act and its ritualization may be understood as a control process that supports divine recognition.<sup>189</sup> In other words, a manipulation of sexual energy will involve divinization of the self—or more accurately, it will do so directly for the male practitioner, as according to the bias of the literature. (If there is any divinization for the female it is surely only as a proxy.) Eroticism and asceticism are intertwined in the praxis of desire for God.<sup>190</sup> Sexual intercourse may involve the interruption of ejaculation to allow the reverse flow of semen to the brain, for in medieval society it was thought that seminal fluid originates in that organ.<sup>191</sup> Further on this point, Wolfson writes that the kabbalist in refraining from the act of sexual intercourse ‘at the precise moment that he contemplates the divine in his imagination’, intends to attain that ‘moment of mystical assimilation into the Godhead’.<sup>192</sup> He refers here to a certain practice in *haṭha yoga* meant to facilitate the reabsorption of the feminine *śakti* to the masculine Śiva.<sup>193</sup> There is clearly an emphasis on textual knowledge in kabbalah, where the written word traces the divine path; however, within a milieu of secrecy, oral teachings have some importance. The situation is reversed in tantra, where oral teaching, as mediated by the guru, has great importance, although that is not to say that the transmission of knowledge by textual means is inconsequential.<sup>194</sup> At the very least, it can be said that both traditions value wisdom, as the fountainhead of knowledge.<sup>195</sup>

As in kabbalah, tantra presents a divine androgyny, but it is one that is equally problematically realized. Even though the process is quite different, the result is the same, namely the transvaluation of the feminine into the masculine. Wolfson confidently ‘speak[s] about the male androgyne as the engendering symbol of kabbalistic theosophy’.<sup>196</sup> Overall, he is critical of the lack of appreciation of the symbolic issues associated with gender in the scholarly study of kabbalah, and the insufficient acknowledgement of the homoerotic orientation.<sup>197</sup> However, his particular approach to the issue of gender construction in this literature has been regarded with some scepticism by other scholars, not least on the basis that he employs a contemporary psychoanalytic understanding in critiquing medieval notions.<sup>198</sup> He robustly defends himself against charges of anachronism, and appeals for support from feminist analyses on gender.<sup>199</sup> I would argue that cross-cultural support for Wolfson’s position of the bent androgynous nature of the kabbalistic imaginary can readily be found in the tantras (and is otherwise a religiously widespread phenomenon). So when he writes that ‘[o]ntologically, the being of the female is constituted by the phallic energies derived from the male; [and that] indeed, the female comprises within herself the thirty-two paths of the masculine wisdom’,<sup>200</sup> it just parallels the way in which Śakti is constituted as the phallic energy of Śiva, as she pervades the thirty-six *tattvas* of existence, which are all situated (or enfolded) within Śiva.<sup>201</sup> If the status of Śiva is that of being undifferentiated, because fused with Śakti, it might suggest an androgynous nature, yet Paramaśiva—the nexus of Śiva and Śakti—is often rated as a male androgyne.<sup>202</sup> Furthermore, if the male androgyne is ‘the

engendering symbol of kabbalistic theosophy’, as Wolfson asseverates, then it can be said to be quite so in tantric theosophy. His stated aim ‘of deconstructing and destabilizing the gender categories that have dominated the worldview espoused by transmitters of the chain of kabbalah’,<sup>203</sup> can equally be applied to the need to deconstruct and destabilize the generally male-biased tantric worldview.

Although God is undivided in itself, this wholeness is lopsidedly imagined as the so-called male androgyne. A consequence of this is that in tantra, as in kabbalah, the feminine is open to derogation, and subordination, as the othering that is not othered. In the *Pratyabhijñā*, objects are ideally to be realized as not being separate from the cognizing subject, and this entails that the otherness of people as functionally separate is illusory: everyone is imbued with the same light.<sup>204</sup> However, agency is invariably accorded the male as the observer and possessor of Śakti, while non-agency is accorded the female as Śiva’s screen and container. The ultimate realization, which is to say *brahman*, is putatively understood as a neutral, non-polarized state, as a fusion of knower and known; but it is the male who is the knowing subject (*pramātr*) and the female who is the known object (*prameya*).<sup>205</sup> Put another way, Śakti and her localized presence in the human female is ‘this’ (or ‘that’), and moreover is the differentiated world of objects that can be pointed out; but this ostensibility just indicates an ignorance, a lack of recognition that the object is not really distinct from the subject, since both are encompassed by the light-consciousness (*cit*) of Śiva. In other words, to think differentially is to demonstrate a non-recognitional judgement, an ignorance, which equates to an ‘unknowledge’ (*ajñāna*). If then in the liberated state Śakti is negated, it means the feminine is being negated, because she is being assimilated to Śiva. Wolfson asserts that in kabbalistic thought the female is not independent of the male,<sup>206</sup> and he remarks that ‘[t]he principle of femininity relates to the quality of division, separation, distinction’.<sup>207</sup> Abhinavagupta accepts a phenomenological position that just as the experience of another becomes the object of one’s awareness, so this knowledge itself becomes an object.<sup>208</sup> Moreover, states like pleasure and pain shine as ‘this’ (*idam*), in distinction to ‘the light of consciousness, [which is] self-luminous, [and which] shines as ‘Aham’ (‘I’) only’.<sup>209</sup> In the case of the *sādhaka* the female consort shines as ‘that’ too, because she is the external object, but also as ‘this’, since she is the phenomenological object of his pleasure—or, more accurately, the means to his own deferred pleasurable realization.<sup>210</sup> If the Śaiva treatment of women is flawed then it can be asked if the Śākta treatment is more congenial, and the answer here is ambivalent.<sup>211</sup> There is it seems a certain ambiguity and qualification in this sect’s understanding of the supremacy of Śakti.<sup>212</sup> If Śiva as the ground of being (and thereby conflated with Brahman as Paramaśiva) is recognized as *prakāśa*, or pure light-consciousness, and is self-luminous, undifferentiated and unknowable, then Śakti, according to Jayaratha, is only supreme because she is accessible, perceptual and conceptualizable—‘it is the Śakti resplendent in the reflection that is supreme “I” who is to be desired’.<sup>213</sup> Overall, for the male tantric, and the male kabbalist, the ‘other’ in his consideration is not other than himself, writ large upon the universe.<sup>214</sup>

Both approaches evince a ‘phallo-narcissistic vision’, to use Wolfson’s term, since the kabbalist and the tantric gaze at the female as a transposition of their own desire for eternity. As he points out, kabbalistic lore is characterized by a fascination with the phallic import of divinity, as the husbandman for creation, where the focal point of contemplative visualizing is the potency of Yesod.<sup>215</sup> This obsession with a phallicized divinity is shown as well in the tantric tradition, with the adoration of the *liṅga*, and its complement, the *yoni*.<sup>216</sup> Here, Śiva is worshipped in the form of the *liṅga*, which is an iconic representation of the phallus, and the sign through which he bestows grace.<sup>217</sup> Although there is not a direct

correspondence in tantra to the corona of the *liṅga*, since circumcision is not generally practised in India (amongst the Hindu population), perhaps there is this analogy:<sup>218</sup> according to the mythological account in the *Kubjikāmatatantra*, the goddess Kubjikā empowers a sacred stone (*śilā*—a feminine word) on the Mountain of the Moon (*Candraparvata*), whereupon ‘the world is enveloped in her energy and merged into her as she assumes the form of a Liṅga (*liṅgarūpā*)’.<sup>219</sup> When the god Bhairava praises her, Kubjikā is roused ‘from the oblivion of her blissful introverted contemplation and she bursts apart the Liṅga to emerge from it in all the splendour of her powerful ambivalence’.<sup>220</sup> This is her androgynous form as the ‘Yoni-Liṅga’.<sup>221</sup> As for Shekhinah—a nominal, and nominated, goddess—she is symbolized as a ‘supernal stone’, upon which Tif’eret builds his house of creation, for ‘he raised Her as a supernal pillar, attributing to Her all the glory of *this*, since *this* sustains below only through the *house of Elohim*’.<sup>222</sup> This means that she is co-extensive with Yesod as the phallic foundation of the world. In her unmanifest form as the *liṅga*, the goddess is ‘round’, but in her manifest form as the *yonī*, she is triangular.<sup>223</sup> This configuration is represented iconographically in the *yantra*, as a point in the centre of a triangle, where the point corresponds to the phallus.<sup>224</sup> By way of comparison, Shekhinah—who is the mother of physical creation, and therefore by metonymic association a womb (*yonī*)—is depicted as ‘the point standing in the center’, in which rests YHVH.<sup>225</sup> This refers to her enclosure within a square within a circle, which is meant to designate a gender balance; moreover, ‘the point in the middle, the midpoint, the locus of the phallus in the womb yields the phallic womb, the extending line of engenderment’.<sup>226</sup> In these schemes the circular kind of representation is symbolically realized as a mouth, with its associated sensual and sexual connotations; for example, in tantra, the centre, or heart of consciousness, which is the Abode of the Absolute (*anuttara-dhāman*), is given as the ‘mouth of the *yoginī*’.<sup>227</sup> It is said that the *yoginī* aims at experiencing the nectar that flows from the ocean of consciousness, which is ‘savored by the inner mouth’, and which ‘bestows perfect bliss’.<sup>228</sup> Similarly, Malkhut is imaged as the mouth of the penis.<sup>229</sup> If Shekhinah as corona of the penis signifies an ontic dependence, I would suggest that a similar dependence obtains in respect to the correlation of *śakti* with *visarga* (emission), as *visargaśakti*—the emissive power.<sup>230</sup> The ascension of the feminine crown to the head of the kabbalist, and the semiotic interpretation Wolfson gives for this action, is analogous to the way in which *kuṇḍalinī*, as the feminine concatenation of vitality, ascends to the *sahasrāra*, the so-called ‘crown’ *cakra* above the head, which transforms the tantric into the phallic glory of Śiva.<sup>231</sup> Therefore, just as Shekhinah is the beautiful aureole of Tif’eret, so Śakti is the exalted halo of Śiva. As the snowy streaks of light in the soul, they are the diamond dust of divine consciousness.<sup>232</sup>

In both systems, neither Śakti nor Shekhinah is an irreducible other.<sup>233</sup> The belief that Śiva undergoes division and thereby presents his power before himself as his divine consort, with whom he sexually engages, is only to say, as in kabbalah, that the ‘androgynous’ divinity is androcentrically oriented and an identity of difference.<sup>234</sup> There appears to be in tantra a gender dimorphism, but it is a misleading one, since it all returns to the notion of Śiva embracing Śakti as his ownmost forceful energy, as the power by which he comes to know himself. This again is like kabbalah, where the feminine is, at the end, ontically incorporated in the masculine, as per Wolfson’s cogent arguments. To put it another way, from the tantric viewpoint everything ultimately devolves to the masculine, whether it be objects or persons, just because, according to the Śaiva Trika conception, the world externally and phenomenologically shines by virtue of being contained within the Lord Śiva.<sup>235</sup> Similarly, in kabbalah, the male is taken to be the basis of all, and just as the phallus is the consummation of the sefirotic body, so it is of the male body. In the creation, Tif’eret is the central pillar of light from whom the foundation of the world, Yesod, is extended. As the *Zohar* explains: ‘All



was united in the central pillar, generating the foundation of the world, who is therefore called כּל (*Kol*), All, for He embraces all in a radiance of desire'.<sup>236</sup> Similarly, Śiva is the architectonic light by, or in which, he erects his potent will (*icchāśakti*) to become the world of manifestation, and hence he can be doubly correlated, with Tif'eret, and with Yesod. In the worldview advocated by these male-based systems, both Śivaliṅga and Yesod represent the cosmic connection, the luminous column, between heaven and earth.<sup>237</sup> The recognition of divinity by the *yogin* is redolent of a glinting consciousness—'the fragrance of supreme glittering (*sphurana*)', as Swami Lakshman Joo puts it;<sup>238</sup> similarly, the kabbalist accepts the proverbial saying that the path of the righteous is like gleaming light.<sup>239</sup> In paradise, it is to wander in the leafy grove of holiness with the glancing light caressing one's soul.<sup>240</sup> The tantric can realize the indistinction of God through being with the present state of *śakti* (energy), for she is the way of entrance to Śiva (*śaivī-mukham*); literally, she is like Śiva's 'face'.<sup>241</sup> By comparison, the kabbalist acknowledges God through Shekhinah, the Divine Presence, who is known as 'the face of YHVH'.<sup>242</sup> As God is said to delight in his own image when it is reflected in the sheen of the kabbalist, so Śiva delights in his own image as it is reflected in the splendour of the tantric. Moreover, Shekhinah is the veil that beguazes the shining beauty of God (Tif'eret),<sup>243</sup> just as Śakti is the partition that bedims the shining perfection of God (Śiva).<sup>244</sup> In conclusion, what appears to be a favourable understanding for the feminine in the Godhead is on closer inspection problematic. The apparently positive, elaborated meanings and connotations given to personified Śakti and Shekhinah are only biased cultural constructions of a deliberative nature.

## Conclusion

In this paper I have argued, if only in a preliminary and tentative way, that there are some correspondences between medieval kabbalah and tantra in regard to the imaginary and phenomenological construction of divinity. That there may be such parallels has been noted by various scholars in kabbalah studies. The understanding of God, or the nature of the divine, is realized as a sexualized hermeneutic in both kabbalistic and tantric thought. Characteristically, God—that is, Ein Sof, and Anuttara (Paramaśiva)—is supremely obscure, but is made limitatingly clear through the categorizing forces of the *sefirot* and *tattvas*, which enable the invisible absolute to be conceptualized. They represent the alighting of the dark transcendence through the tracking of the conscious mind. There is an erotic dimension to this awareness, which is informed by the activity of human beings, and which is transposed to the divine realm; indeed, the sexual conjunction of male and female on Earth generates and signals the intimate conjunction of forces in the Godhead; equally, the movement on high is reflected below. Following the lead of Elliot Wolfson, who convincingly argues that the androgynous nature of divinity in the classical kabbalah is preferentially gendered as male, I have tried to show comparatively that the godhead of the non-dual Śaiva tantras is preferentially gendered as a male androgyne emanating the becoming of his own reality. The male practitioner takes on the mantle of his god, and likewise emanates his own reality. Consequently, the kabbalist master and tantric adept each approach divinity through a phallogocentric apperception. In other words, the creative power reduces to a phallic action, which then makes Shekhinah and Śakti the energetic or forceful presentations of inherent divine consciousness. They are both the algorithmic rendition of a penetrating gaze. I extrapolated Wolfson's argument, namely that the homoerotic bond between God and the kabbalist is expressed in heterosexual images, to that of the tantric orientation; for, just as the feminine is ontologically contained in the masculine in the thinking of the kabbalist so it is in tantra, where the divine power (*śakti*) is only a subsumption of Śiva's being. That the apparent autonomy of Shekhinah (who is nominally eulogized as the divine feminine) hides

an ontological dependence is an idea that is echoed—perhaps even more strongly—in the way in which Śakti (who is more or less eulogized as the divine feminine) is ontologically dependent on Śiva. In showing how gender types are imaginarily constructed, Wolfson’s analysis has proved invaluable for disclosing the engendering bias of tantric thought.

## Notes

1. Gershom Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead: Basic Concepts in Kabbalah*, trans. Joachim Neugroschel; ed. and rev. Jonathan Chipman (New York: Schocken, 1991), p. 158. In this paragraph, unless otherwise noted, I draw on Scholem's entry, 'Kabbalah', in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd ed. (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA; Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 2007), pp. 585–677 at 622–35. From the first edition, this was published separately as idem, *Kabbalah* (New York: Quadrangle/New York Times Book Co., 1974).
2. Speaking esoterically, this darkness is equivalent to absolute light, for it is everywhere pervasive, and is not concentrated at a point source. Nicholas of Cusa recognizes this when he says, apropos negative theology, that God 'is most simple and infinite light, in which darkness is infinite light' ('On Learned Ignorance', in *Nicholas of Cusa: Selected Spiritual Writings*, trans. and introd. H. Lawrence Bond [New York: Paulist Press, 1997], p. 125). He goes on to say that 'God is unknowable either in this world or in the world to come, for in this respect every creature is darkness, which cannot comprehend infinite light, but God is known to God alone' (127). This may be true in the metaphorical sense that the closed human imagination as being opaque to divinity—the 'sun of darkness'—casts a shadow upon the mind, but for the mystic observer whose imagination is open and transparent to divinity—the 'sky of light'—no shadow is cast upon the mind, and it is possible to realize, or even recognize, the omnipresent radiance of God.
3. The *sefirot* are generally understood as comprising the following: 'Keter ("crown"), the unknowable Godhead; Hokhmah ("wisdom"), the first stirring of creation, primal Torah; Binah ("understanding"), creation's first form; Hesed ("benevolence", "mercy", "loving-kindness"), divine love; Gevurah ("might"), the strength to control and punish; Tif'eret ("beauty"), the balance of opposites; Netzah ("victory"), God's loving action; Hod ("majesty"), God's judging action; Yesod ("foundation"), the divine principle within creation; and Malkhut ("sovereignty"), the link between God and creation that is also called Shekhinah ("presence")'. This is the enumeration as given by the editors, Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, of *The Jewish Study Bible, Jewish Publication Society TANAKH Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 1978. Isaiah Tishby writes that from the viewpoint of God 'there was no need to limit His attributes within the *sefirot*, which have, as it were, spatial boundaries. [God] designed the system of the *sefirot* only that mankind might use them in order to perceive Him' (*Wisdom of the Zohar: An Anthology of Texts*, trans. David Goldstein [Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1989], p. 268).
4. See Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, pp. 295–98.
5. In the view of the rabbi and scholar Alexander Altmann (1906–87) the kabbalists 'did not realize the character of the *sefirot* as a projection of self, but it is nevertheless feasible for scholars to speak of the matter in these terms' (Elliot R. Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being: Kabbalistic Hermeneutics and Poetic Imagination* [New York: Fordham University Press, 2005], pp. 479–80, n. 96).
6. Wolfson, *ibid.*, p. 276. Scholem similarly refers to the *sefirot* as 'provid[ing] the key for a kind of mystical topography of the Divine realm' (*Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* [New York: Schocken, 1995], p. 13).
7. In one stream of thought, 'the primary connotation of the term *sefirot* is mathematical' (Elliot R. Wolfson, *Abraham Abulafia – Kabbalist and Prophet: Hermeneutics, Theosophy, and Theurgy* [Los Angeles: Cherub Press, 2000], pp. 134–35).
8. See his *Sex of the Soul: The Vicissitudes of Sexual Difference in Kabbalah* (Los Angeles: Cherub Press, 2005), pp. 31–34. For an extensive analysis of the notion of *du-parşufin* see Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah and Eros* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), pp. 53–103.
9. Scholem, 'Kabbalah', *op. cit.* (note 1), pp. 648–51; idem, *Major Trends*, *op. cit.* (note 6), pp. 221–24. Elliot R. Wolfson, 'Beautiful Maiden without Eyes: *Peshat* and *Sod* in Zoharic Hermeneutics', in *Luminal Darkness: Imaginal Gleanings from Zoharic Literature* (Oxford: OneWorld, 2007), pp. 56–110 at 95; idem, 'Mirror of Nature Reflected in the Symbolism of Medieval Kabbalah', in *Judaism and Ecology: Created World and Revealed Word*, ed. Hava Tirosh-Samuels (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), pp. 305–31 at 309–10. Although Wolfson accepts 'that some kabbalists expressed a monistic orientation . . . those who did so were more inclined to an acosmism that denies the independence of the world vis-à-vis God, rather than to a pantheism that undermines the transcendence of God vis-à-vis the world' (*Alef, Mem, Tau: Kabbalistic Musings on Time, Truth, and Death* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006), p. 223, n. 191).
10. Scholem, *Major Trends*, *op. cit.* (note 6), pp. 208 and 230–31.
11. Gavin Flood, *An Introduction to Hinduism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 84–85.

12. Eliot Deutsch and Rohit Dalve, eds., *The Essential Vedānta: A New Source Book of Advaita Vedānta* (Bloomington, Indiana: World Wisdom, 2004), p. 104. The Vedānta is a philosophical and theological tradition (*darśana*) that expounds the Upaniṣads, and has three main schools, viz. Advaita ('Non-dualist') Vedānta, Viśiṣṭādvaita ('Qualified Non-Dualist') Vedānta, and Dvaita ('Dualist') Vedānta' (see Flood, *Introduction to Hinduism*, pp. 238–46).
13. Tantra, or tantrism, is an umbrella term covering the sects of Śaivism, Śāktism, and Vaiṣṇavism, in addition to those of Buddhism. For a developmental and analytical outline of this complex tradition see N.N. Bhattacharyya, *History of the Tantric Religion: An Historical, Ritualistic and Philosophical Study*, 2nd rev. ed. (New Delhi: Manohar, 1999).
14. In his weighty systematization, the *Tantrāloka* (*Light on the Tantras*), hereafter abbreviated TĀ, Abhinavagupta basically deals with the absolute reality called Brahman (Navjivan Rastogi, *Introduction to the Tantrāloka: A Study in Structure* [Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1987], p. 3). The Trika is marked by its use of metaphysical triads; e.g., the three goddesses Parā, Parāparā, and Aparā, as well as the central doctrine of 'Śiva, his Power (Śakti) and individualized consciousness (*narah, aṇuh*)' (Alexis Sanderson, 'The Visualization of the Deities of the Trika', in *L'Image Divine: Culte Et Méditation Dans L'Hindouisme*, ed. André Padoux [Paris: Éditions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1990], p. 56).
15. The Doctrine of Recognition derives from a philosophical work written by Somānanda (fl. ca. 900–50), namely the *Śivadr̥ṣṭi* (*Vision of Śiva*), for which his pupil Utpaladeva (fl. ca. 925–75) provided a concise interpretation with his own short commentary (*vṛtti*) in the *Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā*. See Raffaele Torella, *The Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā of Utpaladeva with the Author's Vṛtti. Critical edition and Annotated Translation* (Roma: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1994), hereafter cited as ĪPK, with section, chapter, and verse, plus page number. See also the useful translation and contemporary commentary by B.N. Pandit, *Īśvara Pratyabhijñā Kārikā: Verses on the Recognition of the Lord*, ed. Lise F. Vail (New Delhi: Muktabodha Indological Research Institute, 2004). Abhinavagupta provided an explication of this work in his *Īśvarapratyabhijñāvimarśinī* (*Critique of the Doctrine of Divine Recognition*). I have used the English translation by K.C. Pandey, *Īśvara-pratyabhijñā-vimarśinī of Abhinavagupta: Doctrine of Divine Recognition* (1954; repr., Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986), hereafter cited as ĪPV, with section, chapter, and verse, plus page number. The Doctrine of Vibration is traditionally considered to be derived from a revelation given by Śiva to the *siddha* (master or sage) Vasugupta (fl. ca. 875–925), who recorded it as the *Śiva Sūtras* (*Aphorisms of Śiva*). See *Śiva Sūtras: The Yoga of Supreme Identity. Text of the Sūtras and the Commentary Vimarśinī of Kṣemarāja. Translated into English with Introduction, Notes, Running exposition, Glossary and Index*, Jaideva Singh (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1979). An alternate commentary, by Bhāskara (fl. ca. 925–75), is available in translation and with exposition and notes by Mark S.G. Dyczkowski, *The Aphorisms of Śiva: The Śiva-Sūtra with Bhāskara's Commentary, the Vārttika* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992). Vasugupta, or his disciple Kallaṭa, succinctly glossed this teaching in the *Spandakārikās* (*Concise Verses on Vibration*), to which Kṣemarāja (fl. ca. 1000–50) wrote a commentary, the *Spanda-nirṇaya* (*Discernment of Vibration*). See *Spanda-Kārikās: The Divine Creative Pulsation. The Kārikās and the Spanda-nirṇaya Translated into English*, Jaideva Singh (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1980); also published as *The Yoga of Vibration and Divine Pulsation. A Translation of the Spanda Kārikās with Kṣemarāja's Commentary, the Spanda-Nirṇaya*, Jaideva Singh (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992). A number of other commentaries on this text are available in *The Stanzas on Vibration. The Spandakārikā with Four Commentaries. Translated with an Introduction and Exposition*, Mark S.G. Dyczkowski (Varanasi, India: Dilip Kumar Publishers, 1994; also published simultaneously by the State University of New York Press).
16. David Peter Lawrence, *Rediscovering God with Transcendental Argument: A Contemporary Interpretation of Monistic Śaiva Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), p. 37.
17. Alexis Sanderson, 'Śaivism and the Tantric Traditions', in *The World's Religions*, ed. Stewart Sutherland et al. (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 660–704 at p. 696.
18. According to Dyczkowski, the term *anuttara* is borrowed from tantric Buddhism (in *Stanzas on Vibration*, op. cit. [note 15], p. 189).
19. On the critical importance of the idea of the essential union of Śiva and Śakti, see for example the commentarial exposition by Abhinavagupta in his *Parātr̥ṣikā-vivarāṇa* (in Abhinavagupta, *A Trident of Wisdom. Translation of Parātr̥ṣikā-vivarāṇa*, Jaideva Singh [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989], pp. 204–7). The *Parātr̥ṣikā* is a thirty-six verse chapter of the *Rudrayāmala Tantra*, a now lost text. N.N. Bhattacharyya writes that the idea of Śakti as being non-different from Śiva, 'and that they present two aspects of the same reality', was solidly theorized in the south of India (*History of the Śākta*



*Religion*, 2nd rev. ed. [New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1996], p. 112; cf. 122). The notion of binarity is crucial to tantric thought, as the Goddess explains in the *Lakṣmī Tantra* (43.54–59):

All objects of this world invariably conceived in pairs—such as those associated with (the concepts of) cause and effect, with protection and that which is protected, with transparency and opaqueness, with existence and the essence of existence, with good and bad, with productivity and non-productivity, with quality and that which is qualified, with the container and that which is contained, with that which is pervaded by Śakti and the possessor of Śakti, with that which is enjoyed and the person enjoying, with man and woman, with action and its agent, with means and ends, with the inflectional forms denoting masculine and feminine (gender), sound and form—should be envisaged by the yogin as manifestations of Lakṣmī and Nārāyaṇa.

*Lakṣmī Tantra: A Pāñcarātra Text. Translation and Notes with Introduction*, Sanjukta Gupta (Netherlands, 1972; repr., Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2000), p. 291. See also below, note 116.

20. See Swami Lakshman Jee, *Kashmir Shaivism: The Secret Supreme* (Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1988), pp. 1–10; also Jaideva Singh's remarks in Kṣemarāja, *Pratyabhijñāhṛdayam: The Secret of Self-Recognition. Sanskrit text with English translation, notes and introduction by Jaideva Singh*, 4th rev. ed. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1982), pp. 6–16. The *Pratyabhijñāhṛdayam* (*Heart of Recognition*) is a digest of the *Pratyabhijñā* system that was prepared by Kṣemarāja, one of Abhinavagupta's pupils.
21. Singh explains that Paramaśiva has two aspects, viz. transcendental (*viśvottīrna*) and immanent or creative (*viśvamaya*). The creative aspect is called *Śiva tattva*, and 'is the initial creative movement (*prathama spanda*) of Parama Śiva'. He goes on to say: 'When Anuttara or The Absolute by His *Svātantrya* or Absolute Will feels like letting go the Universe contained in Him, the first vibration or throb of this Will is known as Śiva'. Intrinsically related to this creativity is the *Śakti tattva*, which 'is the Energy of Śiva' (in *Pratyabhijñāhṛdayam*, op. cit. [note 20], p. 8).
22. Utapaladeva writes: 'But when he is completely full of the infinite series of principles dissolved in him, he is Śiva, solely consciousness and bliss, having as his body the supreme syllable' (ĪPK 4.1.14; p. 217). See also below, note 41.
23. John Woodroffe notes that although the word *śakti* is a feminine noun, and consequently references to Śakti are gendered female, this does not mean that she is sexed, in theory at any rate; although, inevitably the concept is reified (*Śakti and Śakta: Essays and Addresses*, 3rd ed. [1927; repr., Madras: Ganesh & Company, 2001], p. 18).
24. The two schools of thought, *Pratyabhijñā* and *Spanda*, conceive the notion of the self in different ways, as Dyczkowski explains:

Although both agree that it is in fact Śiva Himself, and hence the totality of reality as pure acting and perceiving consciousness, the *Stanzas* [of the *Spanda* doctrine] understand it in substantially ontological terms as the 'own being' (*svabhāva*) of every single thing which is one's 'own own being' (*svasvabhāva*), that is at once every living being's identity as Śiva and as an individual soul (*jīva*). *Pratyabhijñā* phenomenology is concerned with the phenomenon of consciousness as that which is directly presented (manifest appearance) and with how it is represented, that is, determinately conceived in such a way that the specific phenomenal character of each manifestation can be known and understood. For this to be possible, the perceiver, like the object perceived, must be localized and finite without this affecting its transcendental universality which includes within itself all manifestation. (in *Stanzas on Vibration*, p. 38 [my interpolation])

The two approaches were reconciled by Abhinavagupta. See also below, note 244.
25. By contrast, the major sect of Śaiva Siddhānta advocated a dualistic outlook (K.C. Pandey, *An Outline of History of Śaiva Philosophy* [1954; repr., Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1999], pp. 15–24). The Śaiva Siddhānta sees itself as the culminating teaching of the Śaivāgama ('the end of knowledge of Śiva') and has its origins in central India in the seventh century, expanding into adjacent territories, and flourishing in southern India (see R.N. Misra, 'Beginning of Śaiva–Siddhānta and its Expanding Space in Central India', in *Sāmarasya: Studies in Indian Arts, Philosophy, and Interreligious Dialogue – in Honour of Bettina Bäumer*, ed. Sadananda Das and Ernst Furlinger [New Delhi: D.K. Printworld, 2005], pp. 275–306; and Karen Pechilis Prentiss, 'A Tamil Lineage for Śaiva Siddhānta Philosophy', *History of Religions* 35, no. 3 [Feb. 1996]: 231–57).
26. Harvey P. Alper, 'Śiva and the Ubiquity of Consciousness: The Spaciousness of an Artful Yogi', *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 7 (1979): 345–407 at 374. A contemporary commentator of *Pratyabhijñā* similarly observes that '[t]he universe, which appears objectively as "this", through the faculty of ideation alone, may neither be regarded as essentially real, nor as absolutely false. It is not as real as the *Ātman*, nor is it as false as the son of a barren woman. Being the reflection of the power of God, it is real in its being identical with Him. But its phenomenal manifestation, being a creation and a notion, is not absolutely real' (B.N. Pandit, *The Mirror of Self-Supremacy or Svātantrya-Darpaṇa* [New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1993], pp. 79–80). I see that according to Abhinavagupta, who is referring to Śiva in his frightening aspect as Bhairava: 'It has been declared by me many a time that there cannot be any change in Bhairava who is always integral, infinite, and autonomous, for there can never be any excess (or

- diminution) in consciousness (which is Bhairava)’ (*Trident of Wisdom*, op. cit. (note 19), p. 120). In the context of a monistic ontology, this undiminishment would seem to contradict Alper’s statement that Abhinavagupta saw the transformation into reality as a progressive decline.
27. Paul Eduardo Muller-Ortega, *The Triadic Heart of Śiva: Kaula Tantricism of Abhinavagupta in the Non-Dual Shaivism of Kashmir* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), p. 97. Alternatively, one could say that the divine realm is amorphous compared with the solid mundane realm, in which case one can accept Muller-Ortega’s allusive observation: ‘As the infinitely fast vibration of the *anuttara* systematically coalesces and condenses into progressively slower and thicker vibrations, tangible, perceptible forms emerge from the void and formlessness of the ultimate consciousness’ (Paul E. Muller-Ortega, ‘Becoming Bhairava: Meditative Vision in Abhinavagupta’s *Parātrīśikā-laghuvṛtti*’, in *The Roots of Tantra*, ed. Katherine Anne Harper and Robert L. Brown [Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002], p. 218).
  28. It is often said that ‘without Śakti Śiva is no better than a corpse (*śava*)’ (Bhattacharyya, *History of the Tantric Religion*, op. cit. [note 13], p. 296). The extolling of Śakti that is the special characteristic of Śākta tantras, and Śākta Purāṇas, is no more than a valorization of the kinetic aspect of divinity over the quiescent (or potential) aspect.
  29. See Scholem, *Major Trends*, op. cit. (note 6), p. 27, where he contrasts allegory and symbolism in regard to the outlook of the kabbalah. The former is ‘the expressible representation of an expressible something by another expressible something’, and the latter is ‘an expressible representation of something which lies beyond the sphere of expression and communication’. Cf. the comments by Moshe Halbertal: ‘The symbol does not hide contents that could otherwise be expressed directly through concepts, but points and directs us to what cannot be expressed directly’ (*Concealment and Revelation: Esotericism in Jewish Thought and its Philosophical Implications*, trans. Jackie Feldman [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007], p. 57).
  30. Scholem explains that while Ein Sof is an ‘inexpressible fullness’ its wilful light, Keter—the crowning *sefirah*—effectively transforms it into ‘nothingness’, *ayin* (*Major Trends*, op. cit. [note 6], p. 217). See also Tishby’s explication in *Wisdom of the Zohar*, op. cit. (note 3), pp. 279–81. In a sense, Ein Sof ‘disappears’ into the nothingness of Keter, yet none the less remains. It is a homeopathic transformation.
  31. This is originally set out in the *Sefer Yeširah*, a proto-kabbalistic work of uncertain provenance (see the translation by Aryeh Kaplan, *Sefer Yetzirah: The Book of Creation*, rev. ed. [Boston, MA/York Beach, ME: Weiser Books, 1997], pp. 5–13). There is also a linguistic mysticism operating in tantra, in that the fifty letters of the Sanskrit alphabet mark out the evolutionary reality.
  32. Sections 63 and 106 (*The Bahir*, translation, introduction, and commentary by Aryeh Kaplan [York Beach, ME: Red Wheel/Weiser, 1979], pp. 22–23 and 40). The *Bahir* is considered to be the first work of the kabbalah, and was redacted in Provence in the late twelfth century, although it is traditionally attributed to the second century teacher Rabbi Nehunyah ben ha-Kanah. Gershom Scholem bluntly states that Kaplan’s translation ‘is worthless and does not contribute anything to an understanding of the book’ (*Origins of the Kabbalah*, ed. R.J. Zwi Werblowsky; trans. Allan Arkush [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987], p. 51 note).
  33. Section 134 (*Bahir*, p. 49). See Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah* (op. cit.), p. 171.
  34. I am assuming the divine glory to be feminine, where it is conflated with the divine Presence, i.e., Shekhinah. Shekhinah is conventionally understood as feminine in the kabbalah; however, as will be seen below, it is Wolfson’s project to nuance this wholesale understanding.
  35. Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, op. cit. (note 5), p. 122. This means that she is the centre of consciousness.
  36. *Śivasūtra* 1.15 (*Śiva Sūtras*, op. cit. [note 15], p. 58; and Kṣemarāja explains that in this context *hr̥daya* ‘means the light of consciousness [*cit prakāśa*] inasmuch as it is the foundation of the entire universe’ [p. 59]). See also the exposition by Dyczkowski in *Aphorisms of Śiva*, op. cit. (note 15), pp. 43–46. I note that in the *Jayākhyā-saṃhitā* (a text of the Pāñcaratra Vaiṣṇava), a process of visualization is described ‘for establishing the supreme Lord within the heart envisaged as a throne (*antara-mānasa-yāga*)’ (Gavin Flood, *The Tantric Body: The Secret Tradition of Hindu Religion* [London: I.B. Tauris, 2006], p. 116).
  37. Gershom Scholem writes that creation is ‘the pulse beat of the hidden life of the divine’ (‘Colours and Their Symbolism in Jewish Tradition and Mysticism’, *Diogenes*, Vol. 27 [December 1979]: 84–111 at 100).
  38. Epistemologically, in the Trika view, the effect is held within the cause (see the fourth chapter of section two of *Īśvarapratyabhijñākarikā of Utpaladeva*, pp. 175–88). This is comparable to the medieval philosophical axiom which held ‘that the effect always shares a nature with its cause’ (Wolfson, *Language, Being, Eros*, op. cit. [note 5], p. 179).

39. On this linkage see Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, op. cit. (note 3), pp. 275–79. He remarks that ‘[t]he description of the sefirotic chain is one of the central themes in the Zohar’ (ibid., p. 275).
40. Gershom Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York: Schocken Books, 1996), p. 35.
41. As Muller-Ortega writes, ‘The entire play of manifestation occurs safely ensconced in the bosom of the Supreme’ (*Triadic Heart of Śiva*, op. cit. [note 27], p. 132).
42. Wolfson argues that the symbolic imagination of the kabbalist is productive of divine consciousness:  
As I have labored long in previous studies to articulate, kabbalists by and large presume that images produced by the imagination are symbolic representations through which the invisible becomes visible and the inaudible audible. The imaginal figuration of God in human consciousness is always embodied, and consequently the content of the symbol is experienced (and not merely described postexperientially) in terms of the body.... What is envisioned in mystical enlightenment is experienced and interpreted in symbols drawn from our shared phenomenological sensibilities, but what we experience in the everyday world alludes semiotically to the imaginal world of poetic prisms. (*Language, Eros, Being*, op. cit. [note 5], p. 127)
- If the *sefirot* are the phenomenological realizations of divinity, then so might it be said that the *tattvas* are psychological categories for the realization of divinity. Here I would note the remarks by Flood: ‘The *tattvas* are not in themselves sentient but are categories that comprise the bodies and coverings of souls, and are also levels of experience of those souls.... There are, therefore, a number of English renderings of the term *tattva* whose semantic field incorporates the notions of “reality”, “essence”, “principle” and “category”’ (*Tantric Body*, op. cit. [note 36], pp. 127–29).
43. Śiva has ‘five faces’, through which he ‘maintains the light [of consciousness]’ (see Verse 1 of the *Tantrasāra*; in Alexis Sanderson, ‘A Commentary on the Opening Verses of the Tantrasāra of Abhinavagupta’, in *Sāmarasya*, op. cit. [note 25], pp. 89–148 at 89). These faces represent Śiva’s five powers, namely consciousness, bliss, will, cognition, and action (ibid., 95). The *Tantrasāra* is a summary of the *Tantrāloka* (see Sanderson’s remarks at ibid., 103). The panoptical and sustaining status of the divine face is seen in the zoharic notion of *Ariḥ Anpin* (‘long countenance’), and *Ze’ir Anpin* (‘short countenance’), where the former symbolizes Keter, who is the supernal light of the godhead from which emanation begins, and the latter all the *sefirot* from Hokmah through to Malkhut (see Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, op. cit. [note 3], pp. 245–46).
44. *Mālinīśloka-vārttika* 1.19c–20b (in Jürgen Hanneder, *Abhinavagupta’s Philosophy of Revelation: An Edition and Annotated Translation of Mālinīśloka-vārttika I, 1–399* [Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1998], p. 61). The ‘highest face’, as ‘the abode from which emission flows’ (1.18cd) is the emanating articulation of the world. It stands transferrably for the phallus. In the *Śivadṛṣṭivṛtti*, Utpaladeva writes: ‘This urge [to create] is called a subtle swelling by Pradyumnabhaṭṭa in his *Tattvagarbhasotra* and “wave”, “flow” etc. by others’ (cited by Hanneder, *Abhinavagupta’s Philosophy*, p. 143). The *Mālinīśloka-vārttika*, or *Mālinīvijayavārttika*, is a commentary by Abhinavagupta on chapters 1–17 of the *Mālinīvijayottaratantra* (*The Tantra of Victory of the Garlanded Goddess*). Sanderson argues that this (sixth- or seventh-century) text, which Abhinavagupta used as the basis for his non-dual theology of the Trika, actually evidences a dualistic tendency (Alexis Sanderson, ‘The Doctrine of the Mālinīvijayottaratantra’, in *Ritual and Speculation in Early Tantrism: Studies in Honor of André Padoux*, ed. Teun Goudriaan [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992], pp. 281–312 at 291–306). The title translation above is provided by Kerry Martin Skora (‘The Pulsating Heart and Its Divine Energies: Body and Touch in Abhinavagupta’s Trika Śaivism’, *Numen* 54 [2007]: 420–58 at 431).
45. The author of the *Bahir* associates Shekhinah with Torah (Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, op. cit. [note 5], p. 155).
46. On the idea of unity in the godhead in kabbalah see Charles Mopsik, ‘Union and Unity in Kabbalah’, in *Between Jerusalem and Benares: Comparative Studies in Judaism and Hinduism*, ed. Hananya Goodman (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), pp. 223–42, and in that of Kashmir Śaivism see Elizabeth Chalier-Visuvalingam, ‘Union and Unity in Hindu Tantrism’, in ibid., pp. 195–222. Mopsik concludes that comparison between the two traditions is difficult, not least because kabbalah is an historical, while tantra is an ahistorical, realization: ‘It seems to me impossible, both in principle and in practice, to ignore or suspend the social and anthropological differences in order to somehow set free the concepts which could be compared’ (241; cf. his observation below, note 174). Conversely, Paul E. Muller-Ortega believes ‘that the tantric map may be fruitfully employed in a great variety of comparative enterprises in the History of Religions’ (see his ‘Aspects of *Jīvanmukti* in the Tantric Śaivism of Kashmir’, in *Living Liberation in Hindu Thought*, ed. Andrew O. Fort and Patricia Y. Mumme [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996], pp. 187–217 at 207).
47. According to the *Vijñānabhairava* (v. 109): “‘The Supreme Lord is omniscient, omnipotent and all-pervading; I myself am He’”. By such a firm meditation one becomes Śiva’ (*Vijñāna Bhairava: The*

- Practice of Centring Awareness. Commentary by Swami Lakshman Joo*, trans. Bettina Bäumer [Varanasi: Indica Books, 2002], p. 130). Scholem states that the notion of *unio mystica* is not generally admitted in Jewish mysticism, but rather that a sense of distance always remains between God and human beings, even in ecstatic realization (*Major Trends*, op. cit. [note 6], pp. 55–56, 122–23). Moshe Idel argues, apropos ecstatic kabbalah, that the transformation of the human intellect into the Active Intellect as the mode of God actually illustrates a unifying mysticism (*The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia*, trans. Jonathan Chipman [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988], pp. 124–34, esp. 130–32). On this point, see also Wolfson, *Abraham Abulafia*, op. cit. (note 7), pp. 147–48. It may be argued that the Śaiva tantras are panentheistic in orientation. Lawrence observes in regard to the transcendental and immanent nature of God as Śiva-Śakti (i.e., Paramaśiva), proposed by Abhinavagupta and Hindu tantra generally, that ‘these systems may be placed within the class of panentheism’ (*Rediscovering God*, op. cit. [note 16], p. 169).
48. The two types of mysticism, broadly communion and union with God, may be distinguished by adopting the chemical terms ‘adsorption’ and ‘absorption’. In the former, atoms or molecules attach themselves to the surface layer of a solid or liquid substance, but do not penetrate or permeate it, whereas in the latter, atoms or molecules are taken into the substance (*McGraw-Hill Encyclopedia of Science & Technology*, 10th ed., s.v. ‘Adsorption’).
49. In the case of tantra instances of ambivalence and disdain are not hard to find. Consider, for example, verse 102 of the *Vijñānabhairava* (as translated by Bettina Bäumer): ‘If one meditates on the universe as a magic show, or as a painting, or as a moving picture, contemplating on everything in this way, one experiences bliss’ (in *Vijñāna Bhairava*, op. cit. [note 47], p. 122; also see v. 133, p. 157). Swami Lakshman Joo (1907–91) boldly comments that ‘[t]his whole universe is nothing. You have to realize that this world is a magic show and is baseless. If you meditate on this, it will end in consciousness’ (ibid., 158). Such a view surely derogates the moral imperative. Cf. however Isabelle Ratié’s contention that although Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta advance a philosophy in which there is only a single all-encompassing Self with no room for the separate existence of another subject still this does not preclude ethical behaviour (‘Remarks on Compassion and Altruism in the Pratyabhijñā Philosophy’, *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 37 [2009]: 349–66). (Cf. below, note 214.) On the ambiguous view of the reality of the world in Kashmir Śaiva monisms see Dyczkowski’s expository remarks in *Stanzas on Vibration*, op. cit. [note 15], pp. 198–201. The *Mālinīvijayottaratantra* describes the practice of ‘yogic suicide’, employed by those who had reached a certain level of divine consciousness and had developed a repulsion of the world. Abhinavagupta sought to gnosticize such an understanding by relating it to the falling away of the limiting body-consciousness (see *The Yoga of the Mālinīvijayottaratantra. Chapters 1–4, 7, 11–17. Critical Edition, Translation & Notes*, Somadeva Vasudeva [Pondicherry: Institut Français de Pondichéry; Paris: Ecole Française d’Extrême Orient, 2004], pp. 437–45). For additional contextual information see *An Introduction to Tantric Philosophy. The Paramārthasāra of Abhinavagupta with the Commentary of Yogarāja*, trans. Lyne Bansat-Boudon and Kamaleshadatta Tripathi; Introduction, notes, critically revised Sanskrit text, appendix, indices by Lyne Bansat-Boudon (Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2011), pp. 227–28, n. 1031.
50. There is a degree of repetition in this sub-section, but it is useful in order to clarify the complicated ideas advanced by Wolfson.
51. Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, op. cit. (note 5), p. 261. Scholem remarks on the ‘extravagant’ propensity for sexual imagery in the classic text of the kabbalah, the *Zohar* (*On the Mystical Shape*, op. cit. [note 1], p. 170; also see 288, n. 52). This extraordinary book was mainly written in Castile in the late thirteenth century by Moses de León (ca. 1240–1305), but is traditionally attributed to a second century Palestinian teacher and mystic Rabbi Shimon bar Yoḥai. Daniel C. Matt has undertaken a critical translation of the main commentary on the Torah, *The Zohar: Pritzker Edition* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004–16). I have consulted this edition.
52. Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, op. cit. (note 5), p. 72.
53. Ibid., p. 134.
54. Ibid., p. 355.
55. Idel, *Kabbalah and Eros*, op. cit. (note 8), p. 138.
56. Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, p. 315; also see p. 269. It is noteworthy, comparatively speaking, that in the tantric sexual ritual (*maithuna*) the so-called ‘mouth of the śakti’ is the source for acquiring knowledge of divinity, since it is the medium by which the guru conveys his teachings to his disciples (TĀ 29.122–23, in John R. Dupuche, *Abhinavagupta: The Kula Ritual, As Elaborated in Chapter 29 of the Tantrāloka* [Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2003], pp. 264–65). The ‘mouth’ is a euphemism for the female sex organ (see below, note 227).
57. *Language, Eros, Being*, op. cit. (note 5), p. 312.



58. Scholem, 'Kabbalah', op. cit. (note 1), pp. 657–58; and idem, *Major Trends*, op. cit. (note 6), p. 182. As noted above (n. 3), Shekhinah is a synonym for Malkhut.
59. Idel, *Kabbalah and Eros*, op. cit. (note 8), pp. 214–17; Scholem, *Major Trends*, op. cit. (note 6), p. 233; idem, *On the Mystical Shape*, op. cit. (note 1), pp. 110–11. There is a general division of kabbalah into two streams, namely ecstatic and theosophical–theurgical, which was first mooted by Abraham Abulafia (1240–91). These historical categories have been expanded by Idel as 'two phenomenological trends in Jewish mysticism more generally', but Wolfson cautions that while this typology is useful, 'it is also necessary to avoid a rigid reification of these divisions' (*Abraham Abulafia*, op. cit. [note 7], p. 3; cf. pp. 94–96).
60. The model here is the biblical patriarch Joseph, who maintained his sexual purity despite the sexual advances of Potiphar's wife (Gen. 39:7–12), and in so doing he was crowned with the rung of Holy Covenant, that is, Yesod (*Zohar* 1:194b; Vol 3, p. 191, and see Matt's gloss there at note 79).
61. Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, op. cit. (note 5), p. 2, and references thereto at p. 399, n. 6. He refers to this in terms of a 'hermeneutical duplicity'.
62. *Ibid.*, p. 274.
63. *Ibid.*, pp. 177–89, where he elaborates on this point. He uses the term 'fearful asymmetry' at p. 177.
64. *Ibid.*, p. 183. Wolfson borrows the notion of the 'male androgyne' from the investigations by Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty into Hindu mythology (p. 448, n. 122).
65. *Ibid.*, p. 184.
66. *Ibid.*, p. 271.
67. *Ibid.*, p. 278.
68. *Ibid.*, p. 279.
69. *Ibid.* For a parallel in tantric thought see below, note 179.
70. *Ibid.*, p. 288. I have elsewhere considered more closely the prismatic function of imagination and understanding in kabbalah and tantra, 'On Discerning the Realm of God in the Thought of Kabbalah and Tantra' (working paper available at <http://espace.library.uq.edu.au/view/UQ:218277>).
71. See Wolfson's discussion on this issue in *Language, Eros, Being*, op. cit. (note 5), pp. 128–41.
72. *Ibid.*, p. 128. Wolfson notes that he has 'discussed the symbol of the androgynous phallus in a number of studies' (p. 567, n. 123).
73. *Ibid.*, p. 481, n. 117; also, p. 492, n. 39.
74. *Ibid.*, p. 133. See also below, note 218.
75. He thereby marks his covenantal association. In biblical terms, Noah embodied the covenant as he entered the ark, as according to Genesis 6:18, 'I will establish My covenant with you'. This is understood sexually in the *Zohar* as a symbolic reference to Yesod (Noah) entering Shekhinah (the ark) (1:59b; and Matt glosses: 'והקימותי' (*Va-haqimoti*), *I will establish*. Rabbi El'azar focuses on the literal meaning: "raise up, erect" [Vol. 1, p. 341, n. 14]). The *Zohar*, then, takes the view that the sanctifying act of sexual intercourse involves an intentional homology with the action of the divine couple (2:11b; and Matt adduces a telling passage by the Safedian Kabbalist Moshe Cordovero (1522–70), from his tract, *Or Yaqar*: 'Their desire, both his and hers, was to unite *Shekhinah*. He intended that he was in *Tif'eret* and his wife in *Malkhut* [*Shekhinah*], and his union was for the coupling of *Shekhinah*. She intended, corresponding perfectly, that she was *Shekhinah*, uniting with Her Husband, *Tif'eret*'. Matt notes in this regard that '[t]his matches the Tantric ritual of *maithuna*, in which the human couple focuses on identification with their divine models' [Vol. 4, pp. 51–52, n. 223]). An internalized parallel is given by Abinavagupta, as he refers to the practitioner worshipping the divine couple, Śiva and Śakti, and 'reposing in the bliss of [their] union' (TĀ 29.50). Jayaratha glosses this *śloka*:
- When śakti, facing Bhairava, pours forth and when Bhairava, for his part, faces śakti: at that point, [the practitioner] fully worships such a couple – ['such'] meaning that they are facing each other. [He does so] by reposing in the bliss, i.e. in the amazement at one's own self, which arises because of their union, i.e. their coming together. (in Dupuche, *Abhinavagupta*, op. cit. [note 56], p. 212)
- This is the touchstone for the *yogin's* self-awareness.
76. Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, op. cit. (note 5), p. 165.
77. Mopsik argues to the contrary that the *sefirot* are androgynously feminine or masculine depending on the way in which they receive and transmit the divine influx (*Sex of the Soul*, op. cit. [note 8], pp. 25–27). Wolfson notes and responds to this viewpoint (*Language, Eros, Being*, op. cit. [note 5], pp. 447–48, n. 122). Be that as it may, Mopsik interestingly suggests that '[t]he masculine/feminine difference is a question of rhythm' (*ibid.*, 26). In a way, the same idea might be applied to Śiva and Śakti, with Śiva as a periodic wave of the form  $y=\cos x$  and Śakti as a periodic wave of the form  $y=\sin x$ , who are in quadrature phase and mutually orthogonal; in other words, the phase angle between these two is 90 degrees, which indicates their polarity. At an earthly level, one might say that the feminine and masculine

- are parametrized by wavelike behaviour, as the functions of sine and cosine; from a mathematical point of view, the male and female are alternating together through space and time. This is in accord with Luce Irigaray's assertion that sexual difference is based on an ontological rather than biological reckoning, specifically that there are different rhythms of perceptual and passionate being in men and women (see Alison Stone, 'The Sex of Nature: A Reinterpretation of Irigaray's Metaphysics and Political Thought', *Hypatia* 18, no. 3 [Fall 2003]: 60–84).
78. Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, op. cit. (note 5), p. 94.
  79. *Ibid.*, p. 465, n. 327.
  80. *Ibid.*, p. 104.
  81. *Ibid.*, p. 146.
  82. *Ibid.*, p. 149. Wolfson observes that she constitutes the 'body of engenderment', which is a term employed by Mopsik to describe the imbricated cultural and religious factors that serve to frame the body (see *Sex of the Soul*, op. cit. [note 8], pp. 53–74); also idem, 'The Body of Engenderment in the Hebrew Bible, the Rabbinic Tradition and the Kabbalah', in *Fragments for a History of the Human Body*, Part One, ed. Michel Feher with Ramona Naddaff and Nadia Tazi (New York, NY: Zone Books, 1989), pp. 48–73.
  83. *Language, Eros, Being*, op. cit. (note 5), p. 176.
  84. *Ibid.*, p. 188.
  85. *Ibid.*, p. 87.
  86. *Ibid.*, pp. 314–15. That the phallic Yesod is agentive implies that the male phallus is agentive. Cf. Rab Judah's remark that '[t]here can be no compulsion in sexual intercourse since erection depends entirely on the will!' (*Yevamot* 53b; in *The Babylonian Talmud. Seder Nashim*, ed. I. Epstein, Vol. 1 [London: Soncino, 1936], p. 356).
  87. The kabbalists are known as the masters of the covenant, for they are the ones who may partner the Bride, Shekhinah, and so are fit to practise the secret kabbalah (see *Zohar* 1:8a, with Matt's gloss at Vol. 1, p. 53, n. 382). In a similar fashion the tantric adept (*siddha*) sees Śakti as his bride. Swami Lakshman Joo likens harmonizing with the divine breath (*prāṇaśakti*) to being 'married to the supreme Energy of Lord Śiva' (*Vijñāna Bhairava*, op. cit. [note 47], p. 180).
  88. Shekhinah is identified 'with the Queen of the Sabbath, and therefore with every Jewish housewife who celebrates the Sabbath' (Scholem, *On the Kabbalah*, op. cit. [note 40], 140–1). As a matter of course, in the Śakta Tantra perspective, '[a]ll women symbolize Śakti' (Bhattacharyya, *History of the Tantric Religion*, op. cit. [note 13], p. 297). Philosophically, it may be questioned what this symbolism means in regard to the (tantric) definition of female and woman. If a woman is defined in terms of her having a womb, and as capable of giving birth, what does that mean for a woman who cannot conceive, or who has had a hysterectomy (without having children). Does it mean she does not embody, or stops embodying, Śakti? What of transgender or transsexual women, or those born with ambiguous genitalia? If Śakti is a supernatural force, it is also surely a culturally and socially bound force.
  89. See Elliot R. Wolfson, *Through a Speculum that Shines: Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 357–68; idem, 'Coronation of the Sabbath Bride: Kabbalistic Myth and the Ritual of Androgyneisation', *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 6 (1997): 301–43; idem, *Language, Eros, Being*, op. cit. [note 5], pp. 376–77 and 389.
  90. Wolfson, 'Coronation of the Sabbath Bride', op. cit., p. 332, n. 82.
  91. Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, op. cit. (note 5), p. 388.
  92. *Ibid.*, p. 184.
  93. *Ibid.*, p. 186; cf. 128.
  94. See Elliot R. Wolfson, *Circle in the Square: Studies in the Use of Gender in Kabbalistic Symbolism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), pp. 80–110.
  95. According to the Bible God established a rainbow in the sky after the floodwaters had ceased, and promised it to Noah as a continuing sign that he would not again bring destruction on the earth in this way whenever rain clouds gathered (Gen. 9:12–16).
  96. *Zohar* 1:102b (and see Matt's gloss on this at Vol. 2, p. 129, n. 102). Elsewhere, Shekhinah is referred to as 'mystery of covenant' (1:200b), and Matt glosses that this is 'a designation usually applied to Her partner, *Yesod* (the divine phallus and site of the covenant of circumcision)' (Vol. 3, p. 229, n. 307).
  97. Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, op. cit. (note 5), p. 381.
  98. *Ibid.*, p. 375.
  99. *Ibid.*, p. 378.
  100. As Wolfson writes: 'The adornment of the rainbow as bride, which heralds the coming of messianic redemption, denotes the initial gesture that will culminate in the uplifting of *Shekhinah*, which signifies

- her gender transposition' (*Language, Eros, Being*, op. cit. [note 5], pp. 378–79). See also his 'Coronation of the Sabbath Bride', op. cit. [note 89], pp. 337–39.
101. Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, op. cit. (note 5), p. 382.
  102. According to the *Zohar*: 'When a soul is perfected in this world, when it ascends to that place to which is linked—then complete on all sides, from below and from above' (1:235a; and Matt glosses here that this 'refers to the soul's return to *Shekhinah* upon death, but it may also allude to the possibility of union during one's life' [Vol. 3, p. 425, n. 601]).
  103. In this manner, Tif'eret is wielding his royal authority, and extending his 'scepter of love' to *Shekhinah*. On these allusions see respectively *Zohar* 2:23a and 2:46a; in the former, it is said that Jacob, who symbolizes Tif'eret, intimately relates to *Shekhinah*, although 'he did not succeed in wielding it like Moses', and Matt glosses that "'in wielding" renders לישתמשא (*le-ishtammasha*), "to use, perform", and (based on rabbinic idiomatic usage) "to have sexual relations"' (Vol. 4, p. 78, n. 29); in the latter, Matt glosses that the "'scepter of חסד (*hesed*), love" apparently symbolizes *Yesod*, who conveys the emanation from *Hesed* to *Shekhinah*, and through Her to those who engaged in Torah from midnight' (Vol. 4, p. 217, n. 61).
  104. *Language, Eros, Being*, op. cit. (note 5), p. 137. Elsewhere, Wolfson explains that '[b]eholding the face of the *Shekhinah* becomes in the *Zohar* an actual embrace or penetration of the mystic into the divine feminine' (*Circle in the Square*, op. cit. [note 94], p. 30). Also, it is notable that in the phallic morphic oculo-centrism of various Jewish mystical traditions 'the eye itself corresponds to (or substitutes for) the penis' (Wolfson, *Through a Speculum*, op. cit. [note 89], p. 5; cf. p. 93, n. 85).
  105. According to the *Zohar*, the sun symbolizes Tif'eret, and the moon symbolizes *Shekhinah* (Vol. 4, p. 5, n. 20). When the divine couple pass into each other, as the kabbalist and his wife come together, the master in his oblique reductive (and reflective) mode is able to glimpse his God (Tif'eret). Astronomically, in a total solar eclipse, when the moon occults the sun's disk, the outer solar atmosphere, or corona, is seen as a crown of fiery light: the sun is hidden, but it is revealed to human eyes in its peripheral glory. On the various astronomical features of the sun's corona see Jay M. Pasachoff, 'Solar Eclipses as an Astrophysical Laboratory', *Nature* 459 (11 June 2009), pp. 789–95. In an obverse way, the tantric sees the reflected light of God, i.e., his Self (*Ātman*) by the shadow that the tellurian senses cast on the mind. Abhinavagupta writes: 'Just as the invisible Rāhu (the shadow of the earth), when appearing on the disc of the moon [at the time of a total lunar eclipse] becomes visible, in the same way, the Self though present everywhere becomes perceptible in the mirror of the intellect (*buddhi*) by [the perception of] sense objects' (*Paramārthasāra of Abhinavagupta: The Essence of the Supreme Truth, with the Commentary of Yogarāja*, translation & introduction by Deba Brata SenSharma [New Delhi, India and Emeryville, U.S.A.: Muktabodha Indological Research Institute, 2007], verse 8; p. 23).
  106. The *Zohar* exegetes some biblical passages: 'Rabbi Abba said, "What is meant by *facing the sun* [Numbers 25:4]? Facing the covenant, called *sun*. Concerning this is said: *For YHVH of Hosts is sun and shield* (Psalms 84:12)—*sun and shield* is holy covenant. Just as the *sun* shines and illumines the world, so holy covenant shines and illumines the human body' (2:3b; and see Matt's gloss at Vol. 4, pp. 10–11, n. 41).
  107. Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, op. cit. (note 5), pp. 329–30. According to Ezra of Gerona (d. 1238 or 1245), the kabbalists generally as a group receives the presence, which alludes to the rabbinic idiom: 'to receive the face of the presence' (*ibid.*, 389).
  108. *Ibid.*, p. 331.
  109. *Ibid.*, pp. 366–67.
  110. *Ibid.*, pp. 274, 312–14.
  111. *Ibid.*, p. 250.
  112. *Ibid.*, p. 252.
  113. *Ibid.*, p. 253. Wolfson actually writes here in reference to Nahmanides' understanding that eating the manna of heaven is 'an act that occasions (concretely and not figuratively) the unitive experience of the soul and the light that streams from *Shekhinah*'.
  114. Rabbi Hiyya proclaims in a vision of Ezekiel: 'From my Lord's luster the field glows!' (*Zohar* 1:151a; and Matt glosses that the translation of קסטטירה (*Qastutira*) as lustre apparently derives from the Aramaic קסטרה (*qasitra*) and the Greek *kassiteros*, 'tin' [Vol. 2, p. 343, n. 195]). Also compare the proclamation of Rabbi Yeisa: 'I have heard that whoever sees Jacob in a dream, scintillating in silver, will be granted prolonged life' (*Zohar* 1:168a; and Matt glosses that the translation of 'scintillating in silver' is a rendering of 'בקוספוי מקסטר' (*meqaster be-quspoi*), a neologistic phrase incorporating the *Zohar*'s favourite letters: ר, ק, פ, ט, ט. The first word may derive from Aramaic קסטרה (*qasitra*) and Greek *kassiteros*, "tin"... The second word is perhaps an intentional misspelling of Aramaic כספא (*kaspa*), "silver"' [Vol. 3, p. 17, n. 121]). The *sefirah* known as *Hesed* is symbolized by silver (Vol. 4, p. 86, n.

- 59), and is also identified as the first light of creation, which is overwhelmingly brilliant (*Zohar* 1:31b; and Matt's gloss at Vol. 1, p. 192, n. 687).
115. André Padoux, *Vāc, the Concept of the Word in Selected Hindu Tantras* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), p. 263. For a detailed examination of the erotic nature of divine consciousness as it is realized in the Trika Śaivism of Abhinavagupta, see Kerry Martin Skora, 'Consciousness of Consciousness: Reflexive Awareness in the Trika Śaivism of Abhinavagupta' (PhD diss., University of Virginia, 2001).
116. Skora, 'Consciousness of Consciousness', op. cit., pp. 281–82. As he points out, there is a raft of polarities associated with the fundamental polarity of Śiva and Śakti: 'male practitioner and female partner; penis (*liṅga*) and vulva (*yoni, kuṇḍa*); outward and inward notions of lovemaking; male and female sexual emissions (or white semen (*śukra, retas, bindu*) and red blood (*rakta, śonita*); white yogic drop and red yogic drop; emergent (*udita*) and quiescent (*śānta*) aspects of universe and of consciousness; *bindu* and *visarga* as visual representations, or the two dots of the *visarga*; phoneme A and phoneme H as sounds; and right and left yogic energy channels (*nāḍis*)' (ibid.).
117. As Abhinavagupta writes in the *Parātrīśikāvivaraṇa*:  
 Śiva intent on creativity in the form of expansion by means of the energy of the great *mantra* of the Supreme primal word, viz. the perfect I, in union with Śakti, in whom the urge for expansion is implicit, and in whom abounds the bloom of the compactness of their energy, becomes engaged in the act of creative expansion. (*Trident of Wisdom*, op. cit. [note 19], p. 42)  
 He writes later that '[t]he Lord (always coupled with His emanatory Energy) emanates the universe' (ibid., 174).
118. Dupuche, *Abhinavagupta*, op. cit. (note 56), p. 39. The tantric practitioner (*sādhaka*) aims at achieving the state of equilibrium in blissful meditative absorption, in the heart of consciousness (Muller-Ortega, *Triadic Heart of Śiva*, op. cit. [note 27], pp. 137–38).
119. It is the name of God (Paramaśiva). In his commentary to the *Tantrāloka*, Jayaratha (fl. ca. 1125–75) explains that '[k]nowledge, according to the Kula tradition, consists of the perfect fusion of Śiva and śakti' (Dupuche, *Abhinavagupta*, op. cit. [note 56], p. 184). The known God in kabbalah is designated as the essential union of Tif'eret and Shekhinah, and is a composite of the two divine names, יהוה (*YHVH*) and האלהים (*ha-Elohim*) (*Zohar* 1:91a; and Matt's gloss at Vol. 2, p. 73, n. 564).
120. On the nature of the *visarga* (emission) see Muller-Ortega, *Triadic Heart of Śiva*, op. cit. (note 27), pp. 124–41; and Padoux, *Vāc*, op. cit. (note 115), pp. 277–86.
121. As Utpaladeva glosses: 'The knowing subject, that is essentially consciousness, having infinite power, the Lord, by means of his volition makes those entities manifest in this way. And it is precisely in this power of volition (*icchāśaktiḥ*) that his activity, that is, his being creator, consists' (ĪPK *vṛtti* 2.4.1; p. 175). By comparison, Scholem adduces Cordovero who understood that the decision of Ein Sof to appear in manifestation 'is a free decision which remains a constant and impenetrable mystery' ('Kabbalah', op. cit. [note 1], p. 625).
122. Śiva is not actually completely still, for all the while he experiences a subtle resonance (*nāda*). An analogy from subatomic physics would be that if the ordinary state of atomic motion in matter represents *śakti*, then the quantum state of matter as it is cooled to near absolute zero, when 'virtual' fluctuations of energy occur, is akin to Śiva.
123. *Śivasūtra* 1.5 and comm. (*Śiva Sūtras*, op. cit. [note 15], pp. 29–30).
124. See Padoux, *Vāc*, op. cit. (note 115), p. 290.
125. See Lawrence, *Rediscovering God*, op. cit. (note 16), pp. 20, 85, and 95.
126. ĪPV 1.1.2; p. 13.
127. *Trident of Wisdom*, op. cit. [note 19], p. 211. On the central place of the heart in Abhinavagupta's extensive works see Muller-Ortega, *Triadic Heart of Śiva*, op. cit. (note 27).
128. On the term 'recognitive judgement' (and 'recognitive apprehension'), see David Peter Lawrence, *The Teachings of the Odd-Eyed One: A Study and Translation of the Virūpākṣapañcāśikā with the Commentary of Vidyācakravartin* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008), p. 137, n. 42.
129. This undoubtedly is the case with the original forms of tantric praxis (see David Gordon White, 'Tantric Sects and Tantric Sex: The Flow of Secret Tantric Gnosis', in *Rending the Veil: Concealment and Secrecy in the History of Religions*, ed. Elliot R. Wolfson (New York: Seven Bridges Press, 1999), pp. 249–70. In his book, *Kiss of the Yoginī: "Tantric Sex" in its South Asian Context* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), White examines the specific approach of the Kaula, as a heavily ritualized and sexualized tantric orientation. He argues that the tantric tradition has undergone an historical development involving an aestheticization, an internalization, and a semanticization, resulting in an apparent subordination of the feminine (pp. 7–17, 219–257). While early practices involved virile male practitioners who were 'heroically' intent on controlling female divinities (*yoginīs*) and attaining



- supernatural abilities through the means of arcane sexual rituals, including the consumption of sexual fluids, a subsequent (tenth century onwards) tradition of commentary sought aesthetically to transform these sexual practices for an audience of high-caste Kashmiri householders and Smārta Brahmins in Tamil Nadu. This ‘high Hindu’ tantric mysticism, so called, has so far been studied only cursorily by Western scholars, according to White, and represents ‘a secondary development, a hermeneutical transformation of an earlier body of practice into a mystical metaphysics, which often systematically distorts the meaning of the original practice itself’ (16).
130. Paramaśiva has been reckoned as the thirty-seventh *tattva*, and as the ‘transcendent absolute’ (Padoux, *Vāc*, op. cit. [note 115], p. 81, n. 140; see also p. 91). Bettina Bäumer states that ‘the thirty-seventh level is *anuttara*, the “unsurpassable”’ (‘The Lord of the Heart: Abhinavagupta’s Aesthetics and Kashmir Śaivism’, *Religion and the Arts* 12 [2008]: 214–29 at 216). He (or It) is the beyond of the beyond, which makes Śiva as the thirty-sixth *tattva* the initial (spiritualizing) visibilizing factor of that beyond beyond. The appeal to a supernumerary is also seen in kabbalah, in a thirteenth century kabbalistic tract, *Sefer ha-Temunah*, which postulates that the original divine alphabet had 23 letters, one of which is invisible in this aeon (Scholem, *Major Trends*, op. cit. [note 6], p. 179; idem, *On the Kabbalah*, op. cit. [note 40], p. 81).
131. As Abhinavagupta explains: ‘This activity of manifesting [objects] is called “power of action” in the Śāstras. It is responsible for the self-differentiation (*kalanā*) [of light] into various *tattvas* etc. How could this manifestation possibly take place in something unmanifested (*anavabhāte*)? Therefore the inner appearance of it is the “power of knowledge”, which is called “I”’ (*Mālinīśloka-vārttika* 1.90–91; in Hanneder, *Abhinavagupta’s Philosophy*, op. cit. [note 44], p. 73; the bracketed interpolations in the translation are by Hanneder).
132. Skora explains that the term *samghaṭṭa* literally means ‘rubbing or clashing together’, ‘friction’, ‘collision’, or ‘union’, but he employs the translation ‘banging together’ in order, he says, ‘to emphasize the sexual connotations of the term: with each usage of the term [Abhinavagupta] wants to evoke the image of sexual intercourse’ (‘Consciousness of Consciousness’, op. cit. [note 115], p. 68). He asserts in this respect that ‘[t]here is no such thing for [Abhinavagupta] as a merely cognitive experience of God’ (ibid., 72).
133. As Abhinavagupta puts it in the *Mālinīśloka-vārttika* (1.42–44):  
As soon as Bhairava who is knowledge becomes entirely identified with the flood of waves of objects (*tat*), but [remains] beautified by universal bliss, [when he] as the proprietor of his power is satisfied with no less than the plenitude of things, when this state of having a power is subordinated by means of his full, own power alone, then such a stream of knowledge consisting of articulation (*vimarśa*), in which an extraordinary bliss (*hlāda*) appears through instruction in enjoyment (*bhoga*), pervades [everything]. (in Hanneder, *Abhinavagupta’s Philosophy*, op. cit. [note 44], p. 67)  
See Hanneder’s pertinent commentary at p. 152.
134. *Trident of Wisdom*, op. cit. (note 19), p. 164. Śiva is known as *Śaktimān*, that is, ‘possessor of *śakti*’, and therefore she bears his attributes (*Vijñānabhairava*, verse 18; *The Yoga of Delight, Wonder, and Astonishment. A Translation of the Vijñāna-bhairava with an Introduction and Notes*, Jaideva Singh [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991], p. 16). Dupuche explains that ‘[t]he term *śaktimān*, means, literally, “the person (masculine gender) who possesses energy”’ (*Abhinavagupta*, op. cit. [note 56], p. 37). In a similar vein, Shekhinah is ‘owned’ by Tif’eret, and is the final outcome of divine realization. Cordovero refers to the union of Tif’eret and Malkut by the locution ‘the Holy One, blessed be He, and His Shekhinah’ (Ira Robinson, trans., *Moses Cordovero’s Introduction to Kabbalah: An Annotated Translation of His Or Ne’erav* [New York: The Michael Scharf Publication Trust of the Yeshiva University Press, 1994], p. 42). This is equivalent to saying ‘the Great Lord (Maheśvara) and his *śakti*’, for both—Shekhinah and *Śakti*—are merely inherent aspects of the male God.
135. Verse 1 of *Vijñānabhairava* (*Yoga of Delight*, op. cit. [note 134], p. 1). This performative interpretation is acknowledged by the tantric adept, for as Vasugupta (or Kallaṭa) puts it, the one ‘who has this realization (viz. identity of his Self with the whole universe), being constantly united with the Divine, views the entire world as the play (of the Self identical with Śiva), and is liberated while alive’ (*Spanda Kārikā* 2.5; *Yoga of Vibration*, op. cit. [note 15], p. 119). The *Vijñānabhairava* is a basic ‘āgama’, or revealed text, of Kashmir Śaivism.
136. Kṣemarāja is here adducing a passage from the *Tantrasadbhāva*, in the context of his commentary to *Śivasūtra* 2.3 (*Śiva Sūtras*, op. cit. [note 15], pp. 91–92). Singh translates this *sūtra* as, ‘The luminous being of the perfect I-consciousness inherent in the multitude of words whose essence consists in the knowledge of the highest non-dualism is the secret of *mantra*’ (ibid., 88). For a corresponding notion in kabbalah see below, note 174.

137. Muller-Ortega cautions that although Abhinavagupta's use of the term *visarga* may allow it to be translated as 'ejaculation' simply in relation to sexual orgasm, to do so elides the cosmic meaning (*Triadic Heart of Śiva*, op. cit. [note 27], p. 127).
138. When the *yogin* achieves transcendental consciousness he 'becomes like *Śiva*' (*Śivasūtra* 3.25 [*Śiva Sūtras*, p. 185]). Kṣemarāja glosses that 'So long as the body-aspect does not vanish, he is like *Śiva*. When the body perishes, he is veritable *Śiva*' (ibid., 186).
139. Lawrence, *Rediscovering God*, op. cit. (note 16), pp. 53–54. The male is the agitator and the female is that which is agitated. Abhinavagupta writes: 'Being a seed [seminality] is being an agitator; being a yoni [matrix] is being a bearer of agitation. Consciousness has the form of an agitator; it is agitated and it also agitates. Agitation would be the inherent [intrinsic] nature of knowable objects; the process of agitating is the removal [extrincization/extracting] of that [inherent/intrinsic nature]' (TĀ 3.82a–83a; in Skora, 'Consciousness of Consciousness', op. cit. [note 115], p. 132 [the bracketed interpolations are his]).
140. See ĪPK 4.1.1; p. 210. Utpala opines here that '[t]he one, full of the "savouring" (*camatkāra*) of the undivided perceiving subject, of the undivided perceptible object and of the fusion of the two, in the fourth state which is to be sought first, the Self common to all living things, whose form is all, is Maheśvara'. In the School of Pratyabhijñā, the term *camatkāra* is an important keyword, implying as it does the astounding sense of divine consciousness (see Torella, *Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā*, op. cit. [note 15], pp. 118–19, n. 23).
141. David Peter Lawrence, 'Remarks on Abhinavagupta's Use of the Analogy of Reflection', *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 33 (2005): 583–99 at 588.
142. *Śivasūtra* 1.12 and comm. (*Śiva Sūtras*, op. cit. [note 15], pp. 51–52). Abhinavagupta refers in the *Tantrāloka* to the way in which the *yogin* meditatively desires the fruit of divine realization, as he finally 'stands in the Embodied Cosmos, quivering and vibrating because of an abundance of the highest juice [*parāsava*] of Bhairava' (cited by Muller-Ortega, *Triadic Heart of Śiva*, op. cit. [note 27], p. 196; with his following comments at pp. 196–97). In a metaphorical sense, for the *yogin* who is delighting in his awareness of divinity he is being squeezed by God; and his orange soul releases a flowing consciousness. I note that Lilian Silburn translates *Kālasamkarṣiṇī*—the goddess Kālī in her function as the time differentiator—as 'the one who squeezes time' (cited by Ernst Furlinger, *The Touch of Śakti: A Study in Non-dualistic Trika Śaivism of Kashmir* [New Delhi: D.K. Printworld, 2009], p. 153, n. 159).
143. *Mālinīvijayottaratantra* 1.26, cited by Sanderson, 'Doctrine of the Mālinīvijayottaratantra', op. cit. (note 44), p. 301.
144. As Loriliai Biernacki points out though, it is unwise to treat tantra as a monolithic category, and given its diverse nature there is room for varying representations of women (*Renowned Goddess of Desire: Women, Sex, and Speech in Tantra* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2007], pp. 24, 30, 70, 144).
145. See Lillian Silburn, *Kuṇḍalinī: The Energy of the Depths, A Comprehensive Study Based on the Scriptures of Nondualistic Kaśmir Śaivism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988). The role of *kuṇḍalinī* in powering divine consciousness lends itself to many contemporary understandings; for example, its action is like a supernova and pulsating neutron star. Astronomically speaking, a supernova (of Type II and Ib/c) occurs when a massive star exhausts its nuclear fuel and the iron core undergoes gravitational collapse; the catastrophic release of kinetic energy leads to the expulsion of a substantial fraction of the star's mass into the circumstellar medium, which produces radio synchrotron and x-ray emission (see James B. Kaler, *Extreme Stars: At the Edge of Creation* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001], pp. 138–44; A.M. Soderberg, et al., 'An extremely luminous X-ray outburst at the birth of a supernova', *Nature* 453 [22 May 2008]: 469–74). The remnant compact core is a superdense field of neutron rich matter, which rapidly spins on its axis; and when the magnetic and rotation axes are misaligned, the magnetic poles will sweep around at the star's rotation period, giving rise to precisely regular pulses of radio frequencies (Kaler, *Extreme Stars*, pp. 162–64; Malcolm S. Longair, *Our Evolving Universe* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996], p. 73). Correspondingly, if our soul is like a stellar body, then intense spiritual practice can lead to the death of the bloated self, in an 'explosion' of bliss, which leaves the core of the unlimited self spinning with God; and the rotational energy of *kuṇḍalinī* powers the cyclic pulse of energy that beams out to the universe. In truth, the call to God is a synchrotronic realization, and a beacon of divine recognition.
146. David Gordon White confirms that 'the prime Tantric actors in South Asia have always been male, and the historical record of Tantric practice, in literature, architecture, and the arts, has always been told through the eyes of a male protagonist, who sought or claimed for himself the status of Virile Hero or Perfected Being' (*Kiss of the Yoginī*, op. cit. [note 129], p. 160).
147. See for example the discussion by Ajit Mookerjee and Madhu Khanna, *The Tantric Way: Art, Science, Ritual* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1977), pp. 163–84.

148. Ibid., p. 175. (I have previously referred to this statement in my master's thesis, 'The Dynamic of Sexuality in the Mystic Way: A Comparative Investigation into the Divine Imagery in the Texts *The Flowing Light of the Godhead* and *Saundaryalaharī*' [University of South Australia, 2000], p. 127.) In this process the adept is acting like Śiva, who projects the cosmic order on the screen of his own nature (see Dyczkowski's comments in *Stanzas on Vibration*, op. cit. [note 15], pp. 229–30). As Kṣemarāja remarks: '[Śiva] adorned with the Highest Power (*parāśakti*) endowed with universal energy, desires to display manifestation in different forms, on the screen of His own Self' (*Spanda Kārikā* 3.13; *Yoga of Vibration*, op. cit. [note 15], p. 155). See also Kṣemarāja's commentary to *Śivasūtra* 1.6 (*Śiva Sūtras*, op. cit. [note 15], p. 33), and the remarks by an anonymous commentator to *Śivasūtra* 1.20 (*Aphorisms of Śiva*, op. cit. [note 15], p. 51). Essentially then, *śakti* just is that screen, and the male tantric is running the film of his own desires upon her blank space.
149. Wolfson adduces Judith Butler in relation to 'the feminine [as] a projection of the masculine insofar as the other is demarcated as lack or absence, the space wherein the phallus thrusts its presence' (*Language, Eros, Being*, op. cit. [note 5], p. 482, n. 125).
150. Elizabeth Grosz, *Jacques Lacan: A Feminist Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 78, citing Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1977), p. 180.
151. The *yantra* is a diagrammatic representation of the deity that instrumentalizes the presence of God (see Gudrun Bühnemann, 'Maṇḍala, Yantra and Cakra: Some Observations', in *Maṇḍala and Yantras in the Hindu Traditions*, ed. Gudrun Bühnemann [Leiden: Brill, 2003], pp. 13–56, esp. 28–49. Probably the most famous example of the kind is the Śrī Yantra (or *śrīcakra*), which is made of a combined square, circular and triangular arrangement, and is designed to incorporate an androgynous consciousness (see André Padoux, 'The Śrīcakra According to the First Chapter of the Yoginīhrdaya', in *ibid.*, pp. 239–50).
152. I have elsewhere considered in more detail the demonstrative placement and specularity that obtains in the ideology of kabbalistic and tantric thought, 'The Place of Speculation in Kabbalah and Tantra' (working paper available at <http://espace.library.uq.edu.au/view/UQ:218279>).
153. ĪPK 1.4.7; p. 110.
154. ĪPV 1.6.1; p. 87. This is a gloss on ĪPK 1.6.1, which says: 'The (universal) I-consciousness, though it is the very life of the light of consciousness and is embodied in the transcendental speech, is not determinancy, because determinancy is certainty, which implies two' (translation by Pandey, in *Īśvara-Pratyabhijñā-Vimarsinī*, op. cit. [note 15], p. 86; cf. Torella's translation: 'The reflective awareness "I", which is the very essence of light, is not a mental construct (*vikalpaḥ*), although it is informed by the word (*vāgvapuḥ*). For a *vikalpa* is an act of ascertainment (*vinīścayāḥ*) presenting a duality (*dvayākṣepī*)' (in *Īśvarapratyabhijñā-kārikā of Utpaladeva*, op. cit. [note 15], p. 128).
155. Kṣemarāja writes in his opening benediction of the commentary on the first verse of the *Spandakārikā*: 'Śiva, whose glory is unmeasured (*akalita*), measures out (*kalayati*) in His Heart, the universe from Earth to Sadāśiva and, variously conjoining (aspects of His nature), He emanates the wonderful play of emission and withdrawal. He, the One, pulsating and established in Himself, is victorious' (*Stanzas on Vibration*, op. cit. [note 15], p. 61). There is an old esoteric Jewish doctrine, known as *Shi'ur Komah*, which sought to measure the body of God, or his appearance on the divine throne as the 'body of the Shekhinah', *guf ha-Shekhinah*. Alternatively, it was understood to be a description of the angel Metatron, or the primeval Adam (Adam Qadmon) (Gershom Scholem, *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, op. cit. [note 1], s.v. 'Shi'ur Komah'; Vol. 18, p. 491).
156. For a recent study of the evidently masculine bias in the androgynous divinity *Ardhanārīśvara*, i.e., Śiva–Śakti, see Ellen Goldberg, *The Lord Who Is Half Woman: Ardhanārīśvara in Indian and Feminist Perspective* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), esp. pp. 87–90, 113–32.
157. Abhinavagupta explains in the *Mālinīśloka-vārttika* (1.69b–70ab) that '[t]he highest Śiva alone . . . shines with inconceivable power and moves around without restraint because of his autonomy. In this way he is not impaired by the various forms in which he appears' (in Hanneder, *Abhinavagupta's Philosophy*, op. cit. [note 44], p. 71).
158. Skora, 'Consciousness of Consciousness', op. cit. (note 115), pp. 177–79.
159. *Śivasūtra* 3.18, which says: '(Śiva) fashions the world by means of His mother' (in *Aphorisms of Śiva*, op. cit. [note 15], pp. 125–26; and see Bhāskara's commentary thereto).
160. Padoux, *Vāc*, op. cit. (note 115), pp. 285–86. Abhinavagupta writes: 'In this way, by the penetrating of Sound (*nāda*), having reflexive awareness as his own nature, Śiva, being the Mother and the Father, abides always and everywhere as the creator' (TĀ 3.200b–201a [in Skora, 'Consciousness of Consciousness', op. cit. {note 115}, p. 152]). This creative capacity of Śiva is called *jñānaśakti*—the power of knowledge, and is fully grasped by the *sādhaka*. A corresponding pair in kabbalah would be Hokhmah and Binah as divine father and mother, where the latter is subsumed by Hokhmah.

161. *Śivasūtra* 3.15 (*Śiva Sūtras*, op. cit. [note 15], pp. 161–62). Bhāskara’s gloss on this *sūtra* (sc. *bījāvadhānam*, ‘Constant attention to the seed’) is explanatory: ‘The supreme seed of all the universe is said to be the conscious nature (*cidātman*). The attention (the yogi) pays to it with an alert mind is the reflective awareness (inherent in it). The clutches of delusion and the rest destroyed, it is the attainment of the plane of eternity’ (*Aphorisms of Śiva*, op. cit. [note 15], p. 122). Dyczkowski exposit that ‘[a]ccording to Kṣemarāja the “seed” is “the supreme power (*parāśakti*) which is the pulsing radiance (of the light of consciousness) and the cause of all things”’ (in *ibid.*, 123). Cf. the way in which the primordial point of Ḥokhmah is likened ‘to the mystical seed which is sown into Creation’ (Scholem, *Major Trends*, op. cit. [note 6], p. 219). In addition, I note the sexual connotation that is given to the verb ‘attend’, *קָדַד* (*qad*), by the author of Genesis 21:1 (see Matt, *Zohar*, Vol. 2, p. 391, n. 585), which the zoharic author utilizes for discoursing on how God remembers his covenant with the children of Israel even when they are exiled (1:159b–160a; it is summed up by the following pronouncement: ‘All, supernal mysteries. All of these remembering and attendings for good are well-known rungs, mystery of faith, male and female, a single mystery: remembering and attending’, which, according to Matt, ‘[c]orrespond[s] to the male and female couple in the sefirotic realm, mystery of faith: *Tiferet* (or *Yesod*) and *Shekhinah*’ [Vol. 2, p. 394, n. 601]).
162. *Śivasūtra* 1.14 (*Śiva Sūtras*, op. cit. [note 15], pp. 56–58). As Lawrence observes, ‘[t]he monistic Śaivas thus employ various tantric techniques for what may be described equally as the “universalization” of the human body and the “corporification” of the universe...’ (in Lawrence, *Teachings of the Odd-Eyed One*, op. cit. [note 128], p. 16).
163. TĀ 29.170–76 (in Dupuche, *Abhinavagupta*, op. cit. [note 56], pp. 295–97).
164. The graceful descent may be intense or not, as Abhinavagupta states in his *Paramārthasāra* (vv. 96 and 97):  
When [the yogin] accedes to this way of ultimate reality immediately, [upon instruction] form the mouth of the preceptor [himself], then he becomes Śiva without further obstacle, in virtue of a grace that is extremely forceful. (*Introduction to Tantric Philosophy*, op. cit. [note 49], p. 299)  
Identification with Śiva is his [also] who accedes to the utterly transcendent state in graduated steps, finally gaining familiarity with the ultimate principle. (*ibid.*, p. 301)  
On the issue of grace as realizing divine illumination see Paul E. Murphy, *Triadic Mysticism: The Mystical Theology of the Śaivism of Kashmir* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986). Murphy seeks to draw parallels between the theologizing of Trika and Catholic commentators, arguing that Triadic ‘mystical realization’ is the same as Catholic ‘infused contemplation’.
165. As Abhinavagupta writes: ‘The All-Inclusive Universal Consciousness is spontaneously realised by him, on whom the higher Grace of God has fallen, and personal effort plays no part in it’ (ĪPV 1.1.1; p. 2). Although grace may be requisite it does not mean that work is not required; for, as the contemporary exegete Jaideva Singh has observed, ‘grace is not the outcome of caprice. It has to be earned by moral and spiritual discipline’ (in *Pratyabhijñāhṛdayam*, op. cit. [note 20], p. 28). In short, one has to do the work before one can receive the grace—actually to move into the sunlight, or moonlight—for otherwise if one is touched by God one might be destroyed, or mentally disrupted, so to speak.
166. According to Utpaladeva, ‘This cognizer blinded by *māyā*, bound by the karma, is immersed in the *saṃsāra*; but once Science (*vidyā*) has made him recognize his own nature as Lord, then, his essence being solely consciousness, he is called “liberated”’ (ĪPK 3.2.2; p. 197; cf. his final declarations at 4.1.12–16, pp. 217–18). This state of liberatory being (*mokṣa*, *mukti*) just means freedom from the round of rebirths (*saṃsāra*), or the cessation of wandering through the world unaware of one’s intimate and vital connection with God (*Śivasūtra* 3.18 and comm. [*Śiva Sūtras*, op. cit. [note 15], pp. 168–70]). For a useful examination of this concept in Kashmir Śaivism see Muller-Ortega, ‘Aspects of *Jīvanmukti*’, op. cit. (note 46). It might be said that for the kabbalist who delights in the study of Torah, and ‘shares constantly in the world that is coming’, he has achieved a state of *jīvanmukti* (see *Zohar* 1:92a–b; and Matt’s gloss: *עלמא דאתי* (*Alma de-atei*), the Aramaic equivalent of the rabbinic Hebrew *הבא העולם* (*ha-olam ha-ba*), “the world that is coming”, is often understood as referring to the hereafter and is usually translated as “the world to come”. From another point of view, however, “the world that is coming” already exists, occupying another dimension’ [Vol. 2, p. 81, n. 629]).
167. See Mark S.G. Dyczkowski, *The Doctrine of Vibration: An Analysis of the Doctrines and Practices of Kashmir Shaivism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), pp. 99–101.
168. The nature of Śiva is his encompassing of light and sound. Abhinavagupta writes: ‘Śiva, who consists of *bindu* and *nāda*, is called sixfold: He is of the nature of the world (*bhuvana*), the body (*vigraha*), the light ( *jyoti*), the void (*kha*), the sound (*śabda*) and the mantra’ (TĀ 1.63; cited by Fūrlinger, *Touch of Śakti*, op. cit. [note 142], p. 231). Metaphorically, it might be said that Śiva and Śakti are a sonoluminescent divinity. Sonoluminescence is a physical phenomenon that is observed as high-intensity ultrasonic waves irradiate a liquid, causing the formation, oscillation, and collapse of bubbles (a process known as acoustic



- cavitation). As an imploding shock wave compresses the gas inside the bubble it generates extreme pressures and temperatures, which results in the emission of brief flashes of light (see Kenneth S. Suslick and David J. Flannigan, ‘Inside a Collapsing Bubble: Sonoluminescence and the Conditions during Cavitation’, *Annual Review of Physical Chemistry* 59 [2008]: 659–83).
169. This is an important text of the Śākta Śrīvidyā tradition, which appeared around the twelfth to thirteenth century. Dyczkowski provides the translated title (*Doctrine of Vibration*, op. cit. [note 167], p. 102), although I note that Skora translates it as the ‘*Play of the Power of Love*’ (‘Consciousness of Consciousness’, op. cit. [note 115], p. 416).
170. Dyczkowski, *Doctrine of Vibration*, op. cit. (note 167), p. 102; Padoux, *Vāc*, op. cit. [note 115], pp. 112–13. This is explained in verses 6 and 7: ‘The two Bindus, white and red, are Śīva and Śakti, who, in their secret mutual enjoyment, are now expanding and now contracting. They are the Cause of the creation of Word (*Vāk*) and Meaning (*Artha*), now entering and now separating from one another. Bindu, which is *Ahaṁkāra* (*Ahaṁkāratmā*) is the Sun which is the union of these two (white and red *Bindus*)...’ (in *Kāmakalāvīlāsa of Śrīmanmāheśvara Puṇyānanda Nātha along with ‘Cidvallī’ Sanskrit Commentary of Śrī Naṭanānanda Nātha and English Translation*, ed. and trans. Ramayana Prasad Dwivedi and Sudhakar Malaviya [Delhi: Chaukhamba Sanskrit Pratishthan, 2004], p. 28). In his commentary on this passage, *Puṇyānanda* remarks, *inter alia*, that the interpenetration of the white and red *bindus*, Śīva and Śakti—who are the ‘divine Husband and Wife’—produces a ‘mixed form’, *Miśra-rūpa* (ibid., 34–35). Dyczkowski, in his analysis of this text, comments on this symbolic ‘mixed point’ (*miśrabindu*), namely that ‘[i]t represents both the integral unity of the absolute and the fertile potential of consciousness which, like a seed, is swollen (*ucchūna*) ready to germinate into cosmic manifestation’ (*Doctrine of Vibration*, p. 102). Skora cites Dyczkowski’s analysis here, noting that ‘Śīva and Śakti in nondual union are symbolized by the “drop of mingling” (*miśrabindu*), represented by the Sanskrit *bindu*, described as pure potential, ready to shoot forth like a fertilized swollen (*ucchūna*) seed’ (‘Consciousness of Consciousness’, op. cit. [note 115], pp. 418–19; cf. his earlier observation ‘that [Jayaratha] glosses the term emission (*sr̥ṣṭi*) as “bursting forth” (*ullasita*), a term with obvious sexual connotations’ [p. 286]). It is interesting that the *Zohar* alludes to the observation by Rabbi Shim’on of ‘men drawing the bow taut with the shaft of a centaur’ (1:57b), which Matt explains is ‘[a] cryptic reference to masturbation’, citing for comparison a rabbinic saying: ‘Shemu’el said, “Any emission of semen that does not shoot forth like an arrow does not fructify”’ (Vol. 1, p. 328, n. 1610). One wonders if Skora was familiar with this saying from the Babylonian Talmud when he wrote his gloss on Dyczkowski’s remarks.
171. *Śīvasūtra* 2.2, *vīmarśinī* (*Śīva Sūtras*, op. cit. [note 15], p. 87). On this issue see Padoux, *Vāc*, op. cit. (note 115), p. 110.
172. Wolfson notes, without elaboration, but in the context of the feminine *kuṇḍalinī-śakti* being associated with the male tantric’s endeavour to redraw his semen and thereby reintegrate the feminine and masculine: ‘Similarly, in *Zohar*, the vital energy is depicted as a coiled snake that is feminine in nature yet incarnate in the male’s semen’ (*Language, Eros, Being*, op. cit. [note 5], p. 572, n. 205).
173. See *Śīvasūtra* 2.3, and the commentaries (*Aphorisms of Śīva*, op. cit. [note 15], pp. 69–70).
174. Dyczkowski provides this translation as part of his exposition of *Śīvasūtra* 2.3 (in *Aphorisms of Śīva*, op. cit., p. 73). According to kabbalah, the divine man, *adam qadmon*, emits the ‘supernal drops’ (Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape*, op. cit. [note 1], p. 221). This is said in relation to the ordinarily mentioned ‘sparks of light’. Mopsik discusses the particular kabbalistic and tantric viewpoints on sexual union in his chapter, ‘Union and Unity in Kabbalah’, op. cit. (note 46), pp. 237–40, where he opines that ‘the cultural and ethical horizon [may be] extremely different, but very many structural homologies remain intriguing’ (238). There is a longstanding correlation between semen and light (see Mircea Eliade, ‘Spirit, Light, and Seed’, *History of Religions* 11, no. 1 [1971]: 1–30). See further below, note 191.
175. *Nityāśoḍaśikārṇava*, comm. to 4.14 (*The Kulacūḍāmaṇi Tantra and the Vāmakeśvara Tantra with the Jayaratha Commentary*, introduced, translated, and annotated by Louise M. Finn [Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1986], p. 331). The *Nityāśoḍaśikārṇava*, literally, ‘The Ocean of the sixteen *nityās*’, is a major text of the Śrīvidyā tradition, and probably dates from before the tenth century (Douglas Renfrew Brooks, *Auspicious Wisdom: The Texts and Traditions of Śrīvidyā Śākta Tantrism in South India* [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992], pp. 38–40).
176. At the divine level *kuṇḍalinī* is identified with *parāvāc*, supreme speech, and so the expressive materialization of *śakti* means that it is evocative of a discursive reality. For an informative analysis on the linguistic aspect of *kuṇḍalinī* see Padoux, *Vāc*, op. cit. [note 115], pp. 124–46.
177. Padoux, *Vāc*, op. cit., p. 125. Needless to say, Padoux is not adverting here to *kuṇḍalinī-śakti* as an electric power; but I feel it is a profound analogy, one that I have utilized in an unpublished paper, ‘The Feminine in the Making of God: Highlighting the Sensible Topography of Divinity’, available at <http://espace.library.uq.edu.au/view/UQ:240190>.

178. As a coherent focus of mindfulness, liberatory consciousness (*mukti*) is akin to a laser beam, with the *kuṇḍalinī* as a directed flux of energy that intensifies the *cakras* and burns up the limited ego. (I have previously remarked on the laser-like action of *kuṇḍalinī* in my master's thesis 'Dynamic of Sexuality', op. cit. [note 148], pp. 113–14.)
179. As Skora writes: 'In terms of Śiva alone that urge is simply the urge to come out of one's self and turn back to look at oneself. This urge is known as "Śakti", and in particular the "Śakti" or "Power" that is Reflexive Awareness' (Skora, 'Consciousness of Consciousness', op. cit. [note 115], p. 50; see also below, note 208). Following Wolfson's allusions, it is meaningful to say that it is a uroboric consciousness.
180. Cited by Singh, in *Pratyabhijñāhṛdayam*, op. cit. (note 20), p. 9.
181. Even if the Goddess is granted independence in her role as mother figure, she can be held tight 'in her roles as dutiful daughter and wife'. Socio-religiously, 'women as representations of Śakti are powerful but potentially dangerous unless they are controlled by males' (see Douglas Brooks, *The Secret of the Three Cities: An Introduction to Hindu Śākta Tantrism* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990], where I respectively quote him from pp. 73 and 74). Śakti is often still subordinate to the control of Śiva, for whom she is *his* energy, *his* creative and emanatory appearance in the world.
182. The term *tāntrika* means a follower of the Tantras (*Pratyabhijñāhṛdayam*, op. cit. [note 20], p. 136, n. 79; and Flood, *Tantric Body*, op. cit. [note 36], p. 8).
183. In the *Parātriśikavivarāṇa* Abhinavagupta describes four levels of sexual intercourse: that which does not require contact with a female, because of the free-flowing delightful movement of *kuṇḍalinī*; that which involves physical union (*saṃghaṭṭa*) and sexual stimulation, involving orgasm but not ejaculation; that which involves a single person concentrating on the 'essential delight of the Self'; and that which involves run-of-the-mill sexual intercourse (*Trident of Wisdom*, op. cit. [note 19], p. 206).
184. In the early period of tantra (from around the 6th century), the consort was not usually the tantric's wife, but in later 'domesticated' versions it may have been. Biernacki argues that the transgressive practices of the sexual rite involving a woman other than one's wife gain their efficacy, or 'sexiness' because the goddess 'is more like an "other" woman, elusive and distant' (*Renowned Goddess of Desire*, op. cit. [note 144], p. 104). In the particular texts that she examines the tantric's wife is accepted as a valid participant in the sexual rite (see 93–109).
185. *Trident of Wisdom*, op. cit. (note 19), p. 44. Abhinavagupta routinely describes the nature of reality—that is, consciousness and language—in spermatic and orgasmic terms (Skora, 'Consciousness of Consciousness', op. cit. [note 115], pp. 66 and 224–25; see also 395–400).
186. The *Vijñānabhairava* advises that spiritual realization, or god-consciousness, is to be found by centring one's awareness, apprehending the in-between of perceptual knowledge (verses 61 and 62; *Yoga of Delight*, op. cit. [note 134], pp. 57–60). Elsewhere, in his elucidation of Stanza 1 of the *Spandakārikā*, Kṣemarāja states that unified consciousness is found in the 'juncture (between cognitions)' (*Stanzas on Vibration*, op. cit. [note 15], p. 63).
187. *Vijñāna Bhairava*, op. cit. (note 47), pp. 75–76. Similarly elsewhere he opines that the way of *cit-kuṇḍalinī* involves 'concentrating on the center between any two breaths, two thoughts, or two actions', and maintaining this medial state, which will initiate the action of *kuṇḍalinī* in the *mūlādhāra cakra*, the sensation of which is akin to that just before sexual climax (*Kashmir Shaivism*, op. cit. [note 20], pp. 120–1; the quoted passage appears on p. 120). Writing in another context, but of relevance to this present idea, Padoux says that 'Abhinavagupta's mention of worldly pleasures alludes to that brief moment of standstill in the spasm preceding the creative emission, a moment of utmost pleasure' (*Vāc*, op. cit. [note 115], p. 259). Idel refers to a 'complex theory' developed by Cordovero in regard to the functioning of the supernal realm, which 'deal[s] with the divine delight, *sha'ashu'a*, [and] which describes the joy the highest aspects of the world of the divinity feel as part of the pre-emanational events. Thus, some form of preliminary joy was understood to precede a sexual act, understood as related to the process of emanation' (*Kabbalah and Eros*, op. cit. [note 8], p. 207).
188. It is a Deleuzian moment, one that is energetically embodied by the presentative consciousness of Śakti–Shekhinah. I have explored this sensibility at length in the aforementioned paper 'The Feminine in the Making of God' (see note 177).
189. In the rendering of the *kulayāga* ritual outlined in the twenty-ninth chapter of the *Tantrāloka*, the bonding of the *sādhaka* with his sexual partner (*dūtī*) is not meant to excite lust, but rather is to be done without pleasure, so as to demonstrate a steady state of mind, a non-fluctuating awareness (see Dupuche, *Abhinavagupta*, op. cit. [note 56], pp. 249–51). As Skora writes in this context: 'The purpose of the sacrifice is to test the *sādhaka* to see if he is able to control the mind during enjoyment' ('Consciousness of Consciousness', op. cit. [note 115], p. 268).

190. Wolfson argues that medieval kabbalists employed an ascetic lifestyle, which was aimed at sublating fleshly passion into a spiritual copulation (*ziwwug ruḥani*), and which was linked to a particular understanding of the biblical Song of Songs. In the end, they could not escape completely the divine injunction to procreate (see *Language, Eros, Being*, op. cit. [note 5], pp. 265 and 267). He further argues that while there is a mystical tradition in which the soul's yearning for God takes the place of carnal eros, '[i]n the writings of kabbalists, the convergence of the mystical and erotic renders it necessary to speak of the symbolic transformation of sexual energy in place of the displacement of eros' (ibid., 298; and he notes that '[t]he nexus between eroticism and asceticism is an integral aspect of Tantrism, which bears interesting comparisons to kabbalistic spirituality' [p. 559, n. 17]).
191. Wolfson remarks on the correlative ideas of the 'sexual arousal of a contemplative sort, [and] the rising of phallic energy/light to the brain' (*Language, Eros, Being*, op. cit. [note 5], p. 275, and in this respect he notes that there is 'here a resonance of Tantra' [p. 551, n. 84]). He refers to the Galenic view that seminal fluid originates in the brain and that it was employed in the *Sefer ha-Bahir* (ibid., 269 and 271). On the vital connection between intellectual and sexual seed, see Moshe Idel, *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia*, trans. Jonathan Chipman (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), pp. 190–91. He notes here that this affinity between seed and light occurs in both the *Zohar* and Tantra (215, n. 82).
192. *Language, Eros, Being*, op. cit. (note 5), p. 322.
193. Ibid., pp. 322–23. On this esoteric practice of '*vajrolī mudrā*', as it is called, which involves redrawing the ejaculate admixture from the vulva, see David Gordon White, *The Alchemical Body: Siddha Traditions in Medieval India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 198–201; and idem, *Kiss of the Yoginī*, where he writes that in this technique of 'urethral suction', 'the Tantric yogin, having ejaculated into his partner, draws his semen together with her sexual emission back into his penis' (op. cit. [note 129], p. 82). In this context, Wolfson writes of 'reintegrating the feminine power of *śakti* and the masculine power of *siva*' (*Language, Eros, Being*, op. cit. [note 5], p. 323), but it is not clear to me what he means by this, since the power of Śiva is just that which is called *śakti*. Perhaps, however, this relationship can be understood mathematically. Power is the rate at which work is done,  $P=W/\Delta t$ , but at the darkest level of Śiva there is no time—understood as a succession of moments—and so Śiva has no 'power'; here, Śakti is silent, or silently running. According to Utpaladeva: 'Sequentiality (*sa-kramatvam*) in a mundane action is worked out by that divine power of the Lord that manifests time sequence; but, as it is not the character of the Lord, so it is not that of His eternal activity' (ĪPK 2.1.2; in *Īśvara Pratyabhijñā Kārikā*, op. cit. [note 15], p. 107). When Śiva chooses to exert his creative will (his will-to-power), *icchāśakti*, it acts as an interactive force within his own field of consciousness; and the displacement of this force in the becoming of the universe is just the work that is done,  $W=F\Delta x$ . Thus Śiva only has power where his desire, or wish (*icchā*), for movement into manifestation is realized as a dynamic force, *śakti*: this is the manifest work of creative emanation; hence his power is given by  $P = F\Delta x/\Delta t$ .
194. Gavin Flood argues that 'the act of reading is of central importance in the tantric traditions. The fact that the texts were *written* is important and has sometimes been underestimated in focusing on orality/aurality in the transmission of texts' (*Tantric Body*, op. cit. [note 36], p. 13).
195. The kabbalist draws on the biblical and apocryphal Wisdom traditions in his metaphysical elaborations. In tantra, the state of spiritual realization is described as a blissful flood of divine consciousness (*Vijñānabhairava*, v. 83; *Yoga of Delight*, op. cit. [note 134], p. 77, where Singh glosses that in a yogic context this refers to a 'continuous tradition of wisdom'). This is especially evident in the Śākta text, *The Saundaryalaharī*, of which the first 41 stanzas are a eulogy on the cosmic flow of Śakti and Śiva, and is therefore known as *Anandalaharī*, 'Flood of Bliss' (see *The Saundaryalaharī or Flood of Beauty*, ed. and trans. W. Norman Brown [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958]).
196. *Language, Eros, Being*, op. cit. (note 5), p. 110.
197. Ibid., p. 324. At the same time, he does not deny that a heterosexual element is present (p. 585, n. 135).
198. He retorts, validly it seems to me, that 'the study of religions (from a variety of methodological perspectives) cannot be treated in isolation from the psychological' (ibid., p. 125). He notes that in fact Lacan himself adduces the kabbalah (p. 482, n. 119). For further responses see pp. 136, 486 n. 191, 487 n. 194, and 591–92 n. 16.
199. Ibid., pp. 447–48, n. 122 (cf. pp. 493–94, n. 47). He has sought to counter the criticism of anachronism by positing a 'hermeneutic of time reversibility' (ibid., pp. xv–xxxi). Idel pursues his own criticisms of Wolfson's position in his book *Kabbalah and Eros*, op. cit. (note 8), pp. 22, 141, 147–48, 255 n. 16, 269 n. 2, and 273 n. 33. Wolfson responds furthermore in his recent book, *A Dream Interpreted Within a Dream: Oneiropoiesis and the Prism of Imagination* (New York: Zone Books, 2011), pp. 434–35, n. 27, and pp. 439–42, n. 65.

200. Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, op. cit. (note 5), p. 161.
201. A differing view may be found in that of Pradyumnabhaṭṭa (850–900), the author of the Śākta-inspired work, *Tattvagarbhasotra (Hymn to the Womb of Reality)*, who held that Śakti is the Divine Mother and Śiva is an appellative expression of her supreme nature (see Navjivan Rastogi, *The Krama Tantricism of Kashmir: Historical and General Sources, Volume 1* [1979; repr., Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1996], pp. 124–27). Rastogi comments here that according to Pradyumnabhaṭṭa ‘the entire stretch of the category kingdom encompassing the thirty-six categories is, in essence, an unfoldment of the Śakti’ (ibid., 126).
202. As Lawrence observes, Somānanda emphasizes the ultimate identity of Śiva and Śakti in his *Śivadr̥ṣṭi*, although he none the less argues ‘that it is more correct to speak of the highest deity as the former rather than the latter’ (*Rediscovering God*, op. cit. [note 16], p. 210, n. 15).
203. *Language, Eros, Being*, op. cit. (note 5), p. 86.
204. As Dyczkowski points out, ‘[t]he world of people and things is the concrete projection of an idea or intention within consciousness that assumes objective form as consciousness perceives itself in the form of the objective world through the activity of the senses’ (in *Stanzas on Vibration*, op. cit. [note 15], p. 38). Cf. the scriptural verse below at note 235.
205. Abhinavagupta ‘defines *Brahman* as *anuttara*, as a fusion of knower and known’ (Padoux, *Vāc*, op. cit. [note 115], p. 238). Singh notes that the term *pramātr̥* literally means ‘measurer’, while *prameya* literally means ‘to be measured, measurable’ (in *Pratyabhijñāhṛdayam*, op. cit. [note 20], p. 126, nn. 23 and 25).
206. *Language, Eros, Being*, op. cit. (note 5), p. 154. Whereas Moshe Idel accepts the feminine as an independent entity (*Kabbalah and Eros*, op. cit. [note 8], p. 144), Wolfson is doubtful about her independent nature, and I find his position to be directly paralleled in the Śaiva metaphysic.
207. *Language, Eros, Being*, op. cit. (note 5), p. 76.
208. ĪPV 1.4.4; pp. 45–47. As Skora explains, in the context of the realization of the practitioner’s own authentic nature as the back-story to divinity: ‘One applies reflexive awareness to consciousness itself; in other words consciousness becomes an object to itself, or, again, consciousness turns back on itself’ (‘Consciousness of Consciousness’, op. cit. [note 115], p. 176).
209. ĪPV 1.4.5; pp. 47–48.
210. Cf. *Vijñānabhairava* (v. 69): ‘At the time of sexual intercourse with a woman, an absorption into her is brought about by excitement, and the final delight that ensues at orgasm betokens the delight of Brahman. This delight is (in reality) that of one’s own Self’. In other words, as Singh glosses, ‘[t]he woman is only an occasion for the manifestation of that delight’ (*Yoga of Delight*, op. cit. [note 134], p. 67).
211. Brooks, *Secret of the Three Cities*, p. 75 (see above, note 181).
212. This is hardly surprising, given that the Śākta tantras are influenced by Śaiva thought. Padoux refers to this derivativeness in *Vāc*, op. cit. (note 115), pp. 249 and 278. Hindu thought in general is characterized by ambivalent and contradictory images of women; on the one hand they can be idealized to the point of deification and on the other they often live in a state of subjugation (see Mandakranta Bose, *Women in the Hindu Tradition: Rules, Roles and Exceptions* [London and New York: Routledge, 2010]).
213. *Nityāśoḍaśikārṇava*, comm. to 4.8 (in *Kulacūḍāmaṇi Tantra*, op. cit. [note 175], p. 325).
214. Nagel argues that there is no room for an Other in terms of ethical appeal, apropos Levinas: ‘One must admit that this [sc. *Pratyabhijñā*] is not a philosophy of intersubjectivity in the strict sense. And the other as other is considered here only as a limitation of the identity of the Self’ (Bruno M.J. Nagel, ‘Unity and Contradiction: Some Arguments in Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta for the Evidence of the Self as Śiva’, *Philosophy East & West* 45, no. 4 [1995]: 517–18). A more generous reading of *Pratyabhijñā* philosophy would admit that the existence of another is a self-shining consciousness committing to actions, and one is aware of this because one experiences oneself as ‘a free self-luminous entity’ that is not a mere object (see Isabelle Ratié, ‘Otherness in the Pratyabhijñā Philosophy’, *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 35 [2007]: 313–70 at 354–64). It is worth quoting her remarks more fully in this regard:
- My recognition of others is always a partial or relative recognition, as opposed to the absolute recognition in which I acknowledge the whole of objectivity, including the objective features that distinguish me and the others as limited selves, to be identical with the unique universal self. Still, it is a kind of recognition, for in it I don’t make manifest for myself, by using an instrument of knowledge such as perception or inference, an entity that would passively wait for me to be manifested; I encounter an entity capable of action (*kriyā*), that is to say free (*svatantra*), and I recognize in this freedom the self-luminosity (*svaprakāśatva*) that characterizes my own consciousness. Insofar as I recognize it in an entity which exists beyond the bounds—such as my body—of what I ordinarily assume to be ‘myself’, the others’ recognition, although still stained by objectivity, already constitutes a partial recognition of the universal Self. (ibid., 364)
- Lorilai Bierncki argues that an ethical framework can be validated within a non-dualist tantric philosophy if an appeal is made to the universality of savouring aesthetic experience. The consciousness



- of delight (*ānanda*) and wonder (*camatkāra*) can transcend the petty ego as it ‘opens the heart to a powerful awareness of self and other’ (‘Towards a Tantric Nondualist Ethics through Abhinavagupata’s Notion of Rasa’, *The Journal of Hindu Studies* 4 [2011]: 258–73).
215. According to the *Zohar* Noah was born already circumcised and thus ‘inscribed with the sign of *Shekhinah*; he saw *Shekhinah* cleaving to him’; and then, following Genesis 9:20, where Noah is called ‘אִישׁ הָאָדָמָה (*ish ha-adamah*), *man of the soil*’, Rabbi Yehudah refers to him as *Husband of the soil* (see 1:58b; and Matt glosses that ‘Noah was not simply *man of the soil*, but *husband of Shekhinah*, who is symbolized by earth’; moreover, Noah ‘fulfilled the role of *Yesod*, known as Righteous, uniting with the divine feminine’ [Vol. 1, p. 332, n. 1635]).
216. This alignment is ‘the most common conjunctio in India’, writes Mark S.G. Dyczkowski (*Journey in the World of the Tantras* [Varanasi: Indica Books, 2004], p. 186). The association of vulvar and phallic representations is an ancient one – see Paul Mellars, ‘Origins of the Female Image’, *Nature* 459 (14 May 2009): 176–77. This report is in the context of the recent discovery of a sexually explicit figurine 36,000 years old, ‘where the vulva with pronounced labia majora is visible between the open legs’ (Nicholas J. Conard, ‘A Female Figurine from the Basal Aurignacian of Hohle Fels Cave in Southwestern Germany’, *Nature*, *ibid.*, 248–52 at 250). Such a sexualized interpretation is disputed by Anna McDonnell, who suggests that it is more likely to be a depiction of late-stage pregnancy, and hence ‘the figurine speaks across the ages of fertility, not sexuality’ (‘Ancient Ivory Figurine Deserves a more Thoughtful Label’, *Nature* 459 [18 June 2009]: 909).
217. D. Dennis Hudson, ‘A Hindu Response to the Written Torah’, in *Between Jerusalem and Benares*, *op. cit.* (note 46), pp. 61, 63–64.
218. For his part, Wolfson sees ‘an interesting phenomenological parallel’ between the kabbalistic idea of the androgynous phallus—where ‘the organ itself corresponds to the male and the corona to the female’—and ‘the symbol of the androgynous *linga* in tantric doctrine’ (*Language, Eros, Being*, *op. cit.* [note 5], p. 323).
219. See Dyczkowski, *Journey in the World*, *op. cit.* (note 216), pp. 177–78; the quoted passage is on p. 178. Kubjikā is a ‘crooked’ or ‘humpbacked’ form of Śakti, in the so-called Western (*paścima*) tradition, which is now found only in Nepal. Dyczkowski devotes a perspicacious chapter to her at pp. 175–92.
220. *Ibid.*, p. 179.
221. *Ibid.*, p. 183.
222. *Zohar* 1:151a; Vol. 2, p. 342. The reference of ‘this’ (*zeh*) is Yesod, who is the gate of the sefirotic body, specifically of Tif’eret (*ibid.*, 1:150b, and Matt’s gloss at Vol. 2, p. 338, n. 150).
223. Dyczkowski, *Journey in the World*, *op. cit.* (note 216), p. 179.
224. Dyczkowski cites Daniélou to this effect (*ibid.*, n. 10).
225. See *Zohar* 1:6a; Vol. 1, p. 35. YHVH is the sacred name of God, and is symbolized by Tif’eret (see below, note 243).
226. Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, *op. cit.* (note 5), p. 188. In both kabbalah and tantra, the construction of divinity is marked by a geometrical consciousness. Consider that the *sefirot* might be configured as a *yantra*, inasmuch as the kabbalist registers the universe in the same way that the tantric represents the Universe in the *śrīyantra*. I am not suggesting that there is a direct analogy, but rather that the understanding of reality fostered by kabbalists and tantrics is that of a mathematical figuration, a scoping visualization of God. It seems fair to say that Śakti–Shekhinah is the articulated diagram on which Śiva–Tif’eret is installed, or that Śakti–Shekhinah is the diagrammatic enunciation in which Śiva–Tif’eret is imprinted.
227. Dyczkowski, in *Stanzas on Vibration*, *op. cit.* (note 15), pp. 331–32, n. 9. This ‘is identified with the highest form of Śiva’s phallic symbol known as the Unmanifest (*avyakta*) *Linga*’ (*ibid.*; see also Furlinger, *Touch of Śakti*, *op. cit.* [note 142], pp. 161–62). In the *Tantrāloka*, Abhinavagupata identifies the female sexual organ as *yoginīvaktra*, the ‘mouth of the yoginī’, the place from which knowledge comes (see 29.124; in Dupuche, *Abhinavagupta*, *op. cit.* [note 56], p. 266).
228. From the opening benedictory verses by Kṣemarāja in his commentary on the first stanza of vibration (*Stanzas on Vibration*, *op. cit.* [note 15], p. 61). This ‘inner mouth’ is the so-called Heart of the Yoginī, which is, as Dyczkowski notes, the ‘power of awareness’ correlated with the act of sexual union, in which the triangular vulva is penetrated by the straight *liṅga* (*ibid.*, 331–32, n. 9). This equates with ‘the extending line of engenderment’, mentioned above. In erotic terms, the nectar refers to the sexual fluids (Skora, ‘Consciousness of Consciousness’, *op. cit.* [note 115], p. 210).
229. According to the anonymous author of *Sifra di-Tsni’uta* (*The Book of Concealment*), God (Ein Sof) made the divine human, or supernal Adam, ‘with a complete name’, which is YHVH Elohim, and which here signifies the Holy Ancient One (Keter) and *Ze’eir Anpin*, the Short-Tempered One (the sefirot from Ḥokhmah through to Yesod). The male and female potentialities are actuated: ‘The male extended and

- was arrayed with His enhancements, with the phallus, with the mouth of the phallus’ (See *Zohar* 2:178a; Vol. 5, pp. 567–68, and Matt’s explanatory glosses at nn. 56–57). In his analysis of this passage, Wolfson draws our attention to this particular wording, when he writes: ‘I suggest that embedded in this passage is the idea that the primordial anthropomorphic form was male, the female element being found in the image of the mouth of the penis, that is, the corona’ (*Language, Eros, Being*, op. cit. [note 5], p. 180). The *Bahir* makes plain the association: ‘The covenant of circumcision and man’s mate are considered as one’ (section 82; *Bahir*, op. cit. [note 32], p. 30).
230. In short, there is an emissively ontic dependence of Śakti on the phallic Śiva, which is implied in the comments by Jayaratha, who states that ‘the emitting reality . . . consists of the uniting of [Śiva and śakti]’, which connotes that ‘those who are aware that the whole world is just the outflow of the pulsation of [Śiva and śakti] . . . are firmly established at the undivided level’ (Dupuche, *Abhinavagupta*, op. cit. [note 56], p. 268). Sanderson notes that ‘[t]he common sense of the term *visargaḥ* is “emission” meaning either “the action of emitting” or “that which is emitted”’ (‘Commentary on the Opening Verses’, op. cit. [note 43], p. 98, n. 28).
231. In reference to a passage in the *Bahir*, Wolfson states ‘that the technical term for the divine glory, *kavod*, itself has a phallic connotation’ (*Language, Eros, Being*, op. cit. [note 5], p. 163). He writes:  
[T]he ascetic practice of retaining the discharge of semen from the corona of the penis (*aferet berit*) and elevating the sexual energy to the top of the head, whence it is transformed into the crown of royalty (*keter malkhut*), [is] at once the crowning object of visualization, the subject who is crowned and thereby empowered to see, and the medium by which the former is envisioned and the latter envisions, an aspect of kabbalah that bears close phenomenological resemblance to Tantric practice. (ibid., 271)
232. The smallest snow crystals, which are common in high-altitude cirrus clouds, are ‘known in the aggregate as *diamond dust*’; and the sparkling reflection and refraction of these ‘hexagonal ice prisms . . . produces an *atmospheric halo*’ (Kenneth Libbrecht, *The Snowflake: Winter’s Secret Beauty* [St. Paul, MN: Voyageur Press, 2003], p. 68).
233. Lawrence remarks that ‘[i]n monistic Śaivism, Otherness is itself ultimately subsumed within Śakti’ (*Teachings of the Odd-Eyed One*, op. cit. [note 128], p. 40). Wolfson concludes that ‘the alterity of the feminine in relation to the masculine is not an irreducible otherness’ (*Language, Eros, Being*, op. cit. [note 5], p. 176).
234. Skora revealingly writes that in Abhinavagupta’s understanding, ‘[w]hen Bhairava and his consort are “sweet talking”, it is true, logically speaking, that it is really Bhairava “talking to himself”, that is, the one Pure Consciousness turning back on itself’ (‘Consciousness of Consciousness’, op. cit. [note 115], p. 183).
235. See ĪPK 1.5.1, p. 111; and ĪPV 1.5.1, p. 55. Pandit translates the verse: ‘The external manifestation of entities (objects) currently appearing [in one’s perception] actually becomes possible just because they are already present internally [as “I”]’ (*Īśvara Pratyabhijñā Kārikā*, op. cit. [note 15], p. 49).
236. 1:17a; Vol. 1, p. 126. The word *kol* can also signify the tenth *sefirah*, Malkhut (Wolfson, *Abraham Abulafia*, op. cit. [note 7], p. 130).
237. As the *Zohar* states, Yesod is ‘the nexus of all’ (1:150b; and Matt glosses that ‘*Yesod* is the cosmic link, joining all the higher *sefirot* together and uniting them with *Shekhinah*’ [Vol. 2, p. 340, n. 164]).
238. Commentary to Śivasūtra 3.22 (in *Śiva Sūtras: The Supreme Awakening; with the commentary of Kshemaraja, revealed by Swami Lakshmanjoo*; ed. John Hughes [New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 2007], p. 184).
239. Proverbs 4:18, as cited in the *Zohar* 1:84a (Vol. 2, p. 36), 179a (Vol. 3, p. 84), and 2:214b (Vol. 6, p. 224). Adducing Isaiah 58:11, the zoharic author promises that the righteous soul will be satisfied in the terrestrial Garden of Eden, ‘amid aromas of spices’, ‘saturated and nourished by precious lusters’ (1:224b; and Matt glosses that in the biblical phrase, ‘*He will satisfy נפשך (nafshekha), your thirst* [or: *soul*] בצהצחות (*be-tsaḥtsaḥot*), in parched regions’, ‘Rabbi Yehudah understands the rare word *tsaḥtsaḥot* to mean “with radiancies”, based on the root צהח (*tshḥ*), “to gleam”’ [Vol. 3, p. 349, n. 258; and 352, n. 268]).
240. The *Zohar* states that the union of Hokhmah and Binah ‘generat[ed] trees, supernal, grand cedars, from the light, that supernal luster’ (*Zohar* 1:29a; and Matt’s gloss at Vol. 1, p. 172, n. 510). Singh writes that for the mind of the liberated *yogin*, the world ‘appears as a gleam of Śiva-consciousness or an expression of the wondrous delight of self-consciousness’ (in his introduction to *Pratyabhijñāḥṛdayam*, op. cit. [note 20], p. 24).
241. *Vijñānabhairava*, v. 20 (*Yoga of Delight*, op. cit. [note 134], p. 17). See also the translation provided by Bäumer: ‘When one who enters the state of Energy realizes the non-distinction (from it), then he becomes one with Śiva. Śakti (Energy) is called the entrance (leading) to Śiva’ (*Vijñāna Bhairava*, op. cit. [note 47], p. 18); and see the comments by Swami Lakshman Joo: ‘*Śaivī* mean Śakti [and this very]

- Energy is *mukham* [the mouth of or the entrance to Śiva]’ (ibid., 18–19). Singh explains elsewhere that ‘Śakti is said to be the entrance door in Śaiva philosophy’ because she ‘is the medium through which Śiva passes into phenomena’ and ‘through which manifestation is absorbed into Śiva’ (*Trident of Wisdom*, op. cit. [note 19], pp. 13–14, n.3).
242. *Zohar* 1:150a; and Matt’s gloss at Vol. 2, p. 337, n. 137. In kabbalistic texts the face functions ‘as a euphemism or symbolic displacement for the phallus’ (Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, op. cit. [note 5], p. 136). Shekhinah ‘is called “gate” or “door” to indicate its role as the entrance to the divine domain’ (Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, op. cit. [note 3], p. 955).
243. Tiferet symbolizes the sacred name of God, the Tetragrammaton, YHVH, which is ineffable and can only be pronounced as *Adonai* (Lord). This epithet is ascribed to Shekhinah when ‘she receives the overflow from the masculine potency, *Yesod*, designated *adon*’ (Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, op. cit. [note 5], p. 71). As Wolfson explains: ‘the prohibition of pronouncing the name as it is written secures the fact that the epithet preserves the ineffability of the name just as the veil conceals the face it reveals by revealing the face it conceals’ (ibid., p. 291).
244. It is important to note that according to *Pratyabhijñā* philosophy the aim is not to destroy the ego, but rather to exhilarate it; which is to say, the ‘fettered soul’ (*paśu*) is to be delivered into absolute egoity, ‘perfect I-hood’ (*pūrṇāhamtā*) (see Dyczkowski’s remarks in *Stanzas on Vibration*, op. cit. [note 15], pp. 39–44; and Lawrence’s in *Teachings of the Odd-Eyed One*, op. cit. [note 128], pp. 11–13). Lawrence writes: ‘For this mode of thinking, the human ego is an immanent expression of God’s identity *that must be universalized and transfigured into its essential nature as perfect I-hood*’ (ibid., 12). According to one scholar, ‘Pratyabhijñā etymologically means “Perfect cognition”’ (B. Bhattacharya, *Śaivism and the Phallic World* [New Delhi: Oxford & IBH Publishing Co., 1975], p. 664).