Marsha Keith Schuchard. *Restoring the Temple of Vision: Cabalistic Freemasonry and Stuart Culture.* Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2002. Studies in Intellectual History, vol. 110. xiii + 845 pp. $281. Review by DONALD R. DICKSON, TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY.

Restoring the Temple of Vision paints a fascinating sketch of the early history of Freemasonry that flourished in lodges in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by tracing its roots to medieval Jewish sources and Scottish sources of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Schuchard details "the flights of visionary Temple building" that are described in the rituals and symbolism of "high-degree" Masonry to various architectural and religious documents. Academic historians have shied away from this subject–with the exception of David Stevenson's *The Origins of Freemasonry: Scotland's Century, 1590-1710* (Cambridge, 1988)–because there are so few facts. Masonic histories are plentiful but these are seldom taken seriously since they can offer little in the way of credible, textual evidence to buttress most of their claims. Such is the case here. Schuchard, in a manner reminiscent of Dame Frances Yates, does an able job of stitching together a readable and often highly detailed story (the text runs to nearly 800 pages); finally, though, *Restoring the Temple of Vision* must be accounted as a possible representation–rather than a definitive one–due to the lack of hard evidence.

The reach of *Restoring the Temple of Vision* is impressive, for Schuchard begins her story, as most Masonic versions do, with the legends surrounding the building of the temples in ancient Israel, beginning with Solomon's master-mason, Hiram Abif, continuing through the founding of Jewish building guilds led by priest-masons overseeing the renovation of the Herodian temple that was destroyed in A.D. 70. She also links Jewish mystical traditions of the Middle Ages with its emphasis on architectural symbolism featuring the craftsman with a hammer to show how ancient temple mysticism took on an "operative significance" (42). She emphasizes, for example, the role of Abraham Abulafia (1240-1292) whose practices led to discoveries in "visionary Cabala" in the *Sepher*

Yetzirah (49), especially its erotic symbolism. Thus the ancient sources for this secret brotherhood run from the earliest temple through these Cabalistic treatises with their architectonic visions of the creation of the cosmos, to the legendary Knights Templar, Jewish artisan guilds, and into Renaissance memory systems that were predicated on "memory palaces."

In subsequent chapters she constructs a foundation myth for Scottish Masonry, using such figures as Michael Scot, whom she regards a conduit for Arab theosophical methods to the West, Roger Bacon, Duns Scotus, and Ramon Llull. In an effort to firm up the tenuous links between Scottish operative masons and the Knights Templar, she cites an unpublished article by Ron Heisler who argues that a payment in Edward I's accounts for 1278 for the employment of one "Brother John of the Order of St. Thomas of Acre" (83) proves that architectural knowledge from the east found its way into Scotland. Then using Masonic histories she asserts that with this powerful Masonic presence in Scotland, Masonic kings rebuild the "Temple in the North," especially during the reign of James I. Schuchard takes as fact what only Masonic historians accept as settled, i.e., James Stuart's association with cabalistic figures from his youth. In a note on page 237, she observes that Stevenson himself is skeptical of the claim about James I's initiation, but she sees no reason to reject the claims of the Masonic lodge involved. This is the heart of the matter: she does not discriminate in her use of sources and relies heavily on Masonic historians who have no credible documentation before the seventeenth century, so legend passes into fact too readily at times. In her analysis, every building becomes an emblem of the temple; every reference to a lamp or a building tool serves as further proof; every reference to the words "essay" or "apprentice" prefigures the initiatory rituals of Freemasonry (200). While the temple-building metaphor has undeniable power, not all references to the temple mean Masons are near: witness George Herbert's *The Temple: Sacred Poems and Private Ejaculations.*

Still *Restoring the Temple of Vision* offers a compelling case for some kind of esoteric subculture in Scotland and to a lesser degree

the Stuart court in Whitehall based on the sheer volume of circum-
stantial evidence she adduces. As Stevenson shows in his more
circumspect account, *The Origins of Freemasonry,* Masonry emerged
in Scotland in the seventeenth century, with its social and ritual
elements originating in the stonemason's guilds of the Middle Ages.
While copies of the so-called "Old Charges"–the legendary history
of the craft recited at guild meetings that traced masonry back to
the sons of Lamech in Genesis who founded geometry and the
masons who built the temple of Solomon–can be found in England
as early as 1400, there is simply no hard evidence that "specula-
tive" Masonry existed at that time. Not until about 1600 would
the distinctive organization that continues to this day, based on the
lodge system–i.e., elaborate, symbolic rituals and secrets involving
the "Mason Word"–emerge in Scotland and begin to attract the
devotion of those who were not practicing stonemasons. While
many claims are pressed by partisan historians who wish to trace
their ancestry back to the pillars on which the ancient wisdom
were carved and that were found after the Great Flood, the first
hard evidence, as Stevenson shows, dates to the seventeenth cen-
tury and the career of William Schaw, Master of Works for James
VI of Scotland. At this time modern Freemasonry can be said to
have originated.

Schuchard, too, regards Schaw as central in establishing the
lodge system, though she argues that the motive force was pro-
vided by King James VI of Scotland, who made Schaw his General
Warden of the Craft, and instructed him to revamp the entire struc-
ture of Freemasonry into what it became today. She cites Stevenson
on the significance of the records in 1619 for the Masons' Com-
pany of London, which are "the best early evidence of institution-
alized Masonic initiation of some sort in England" (332) but she
supposes an extraordinary range of Masonic activities in the per-
son of the king whom she believes to have been initiated into Free-
masonry at the Lodge of Scoon and Perth in 1601 at the age of 35.

To this nascent Masonic revival, Schuchard connects the specu-
lations of Yates' *Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (1972), who finds evi-
dence of the political reach of this secret fraternity everywhere in

Central Europe, in much the same way that Freemasons or Illuminati were seen as the secret hands behind later events in European history. My own views of Yates are a matter of record (see "Johann Valentin Andreae's Utopian Brotherhoods," *Renaissance Quarterly* 49 [1996]: 860-902). Suffice it to say, that Yates offers little to substantiate her claims, which Schuchard largely accepts, save for Yates's assumptions about Johann Valentin Andreae's opposition to James's peace-making efforts (343). While many in the early seventeenth century step forward to claim membership in the mystical brotherhood described in the so-called Rosicrucian pamphlets that were written in the century's first decade, no one has offered any credible evidence of an actual Rosicrucian society involved in any political initiatives in Central Europe during the Thirty Years' War.

In a book of this scope–and my review only focuses on a portion of its many subjects due to the limitations of space–there is ample room for error, and this author is not immune. These range from small spelling errors (such as "cousel" for counsel on 78, "staes" for states on 209, or "Nüremberg" for either Nürnberg or Nuremberg on 380) to minor factual errors (such as "1617" instead of 1517 on 132 or attributing the translation of the Rosicrucian tracts to Thomas Vaughan on 287, when he was the publisher). The index is lengthy (eighteen pages) but restricted to references in the text, which limits its utility since so much discussion is carried out in the voluminous notes. Yet despite my reservations about many of the bold claims made in *Restoring the Temple of Vision*, the story told over "grows to something of great constancy." She offers a view of Stuart intellectual circles that emphasizes mystical male bonding and spiritual *amicitia* that rings true. Readers will find much of interest in the connections made with Freemasonry and Solomonic architecture, Hermetic masques, and early modern science. They will gain insight into the reigns of the Stuart monarchs, and new areas for future research will be opened.