

**TERROR, TRAUMA AND THE EYE IN THE TRIANGLE:
THE MASONIC PRESENCE IN CONTEMPORARY ART
AND CULTURE**



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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the coexistence of traumatic themes and Masonic content in the work of contemporary visual artists. The project originated with a discovery of the depiction in my own artwork, produced in the context of a professional art career, of traces of terrifying early initiatory experiences in the context of a Masonic Lodge and using Masonic ritual and regalia. A number of key Masonic authors suggest that the Order draws on a mixed ancestry that contains not only the orderly and sombre rituals based on the practices of the early cathedral builders, but also initiatory rites from various cult groups of the Classical world that involve a course of severe and arduous trials. Recent research by scholars examining cult practices has indicated the existence of Masonic ritual abuse of children, based on the reports of a substantial number of survivors in western countries.

Premised on this discovery, the thesis constitutes a feminist and interdisciplinary investigation into the impact of hidden fraternal initiation practices on the production of contemporary art. Examining Masonic themes, symbols and allegories in the context of the contemporary debates about trauma, the thesis initially argues that the concepts used to describe the impact of trauma on the individual psyche may be observed in symbolic form in the rites and practices of the Masonic tradition. This leads into an exploration of the work of five high profile international contemporary artists – the American artists Matthew Barney, Bruce Nauman and Paul McCarthy, an early career painter Mark Ryden, and the Australian artist Ken Unsworth – as case studies, arguing that similar traces of initiatory trauma, along with Masonic references, may be identified in their work. Incorporating insights from trauma theory, scholarly discussions of initiation rites and ritual abuse, combined with knowledge of Masonic practices, this groundbreaking study sheds new light on these artists' work, in particular, on those aspects of the work that have hitherto remained obscure and perplexing for critics. The thesis also includes an examination of my own artwork in this light.

INTRODUCTION

We must examine the coexistence of state-regulated cults ... what Marcus Terentius Varro called a theatrical theology – an inventiveness in parodies and merry, immoral and cruel games where desires unleash their power of metamorphosis in order to nourish the erotic and death-dealing imagination attributed to the gods.

Jean-François Lyotard, *Toward the Postmodern*¹

Freemasonry, as the latest version of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* describes it, is a secret fraternal order, the largest worldwide secret society, spread by the advance of the British Empire and remaining most popular in the British Isles and other countries originally within the empire.² Amongst Freemasons themselves it is known as a “science of morality, veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols”³ and its motto is *audi, vide, tace* – hear, see and be silent.⁴ (*Fig. 1*)

This thesis will argue that the symbolism of Freemasonry, as initiatory practice, has encoded within it an understanding of the impact of trauma on the psyche, and its mystical, psychological and physiological significance. By introducing Masonic themes, symbols and allegories into the contemporary debates about trauma it will offer an interpretation of these themes that suggests that the terminology used to describe the impact of trauma on the individual psyche can be found in symbolic form in the rites and practices of the Masonic tradition. This knowledge can be used in one of two ways: either as a legitimate spiritual and moral path for the individual member, or for the purpose of power over others. The

¹ Jean-François Lyotard, *Toward the Postmodern*, edited by Robert Harvey and Mark S. Roberts (New Jersey, London: Humanities Press, 1993) 92.

² *The New Encyclopædia Britannica*, Vol. 4, 15th edition (London: Encyclopædia Britannica Inc., 2003) 966.

³ Albert G. Mackey, *The Symbolism of Freemasonry: Illustrating and Explaining its Science and Philosophy, its Legends, Myths and Symbols* (Chicago: Charles T. Pownor Co, 1955) 10.

⁴ John T. Lawrence, *Sidelights on Freemasonry. Craft and Royal Arch* (London: A. Lewis, 1924) 214. This is the motto used particularly in Craft Freemasonry.

corrupt use of this knowledge has been debated since Freemasonry's inception in the eighteenth century.

The discussion will then suggest that traces of Masonic themes, accompanied by themes of trauma, may be found within contemporary art and culture. In the wake of society's acknowledgement of the widespread practice of sexual abuse, as well as theoretical attempts to understand the impact of memory, trauma and the Holocaust in the last two decades, this discussion will suggest that there may be a deeper layer of trauma that has been woven into the project of empire-building, both British and American, that assists in the maintenance of social control. This deeper layer of trauma, acknowledged since the 1980s as ritual abuse, has led to the development of scholarly investigation into cult practices of all types. However, until now, research into Masonic ritual abuse, apart from an acknowledgement by some scholars that it exists, has been minimal, possibly due to its association with the Establishment. This thesis will suggest that artists may be illustrating its presence, both consciously and unconsciously, in the latter half of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. The case studies examined include a selection of key contemporary artists whose work has intrigued the critics, namely Matthew Barney, Bruce Nauman, Paul McCarthy and Ken Unsworth, as well as an early-career artist, Mark Ryden, and an examination of my own work.

The parameters of the study are confined to the presence of Masonic references in art in connection with signifiers of a traumatic experience, as the title would suggest. The study does not attempt to examine the broader presence of Masonic themes such as the use of Masonic symbols to acknowledge fraternity between one brother and another, or as a signifier of Freemasonry's role within art that is produced on behalf of the state, or within art that officially represents the Order itself.

The examination of the theme is approached from a feminist perspective, that is, with a desire to expose the mechanisms underlying patriarchal control. In the context of research into the abusive use of ritual practices, the feminist authors Joanne Courtney and Lisa Williams have argued that feminist research in this field needs to take into account a

research methodology that rejects the distinction between ‘subjective’ and ‘objective’ research, that aims towards the production of emancipatory knowledge and empowerment of those who are being researched, and contributes towards consciousness raising and transformative social action.⁵ The research for this thesis has embraced these tenets of feminist research methodology in the following ways: it was originally based on and includes an extensive analysis of my own art practice that could be regarded in traditional terms as the ‘subjective’ aspect of the research process; the research identifies a set of characteristics that suggest the presence of Masonic themes along with themes of trauma in visual texts and in so doing can be classed as emancipatory and empowering knowledge; the resulting thesis aims towards consciousness raising by developing an understanding of the impact of irregular Masonic practices on individuals, particularly children, in contemporary western society. It will hopefully contribute, in future, towards transformative social action in this area of cultural practice.

As a product of the eighteenth century, Masonic ritual is an eclectic mix of mythological symbolism from both classical and biblical sources as well as from the operative practices of the medieval cathedral builders.⁶ Despite the fact that the Masonic system does cater for the wives and daughters of its men in affiliated organizations, the Order’s central values primarily cater for the psycho-spiritual needs of men. As Alan Axelrod discusses in his encyclopaedia of secret societies, the whole concept of a secret society is a male institution.⁷ As an initiation society Freemasonry has its roots in the primordial practice of

⁵ Joanne Courtney & Lisa Williams, Many Paths for Healing. The counselling and support needs of women who have experienced childhood sexual abuse or ritual abuse (Canberra Women’s Health Centre, 1995) 7.

⁶ See Chapter Two for a fuller discussion of this theme.

⁷ See Alan Axelrod, The International Encyclopedia of Secret Societies and Fraternal Orders (New York: Facts on File, 1997). The British Masonic system is still entirely a male organization and the Lodges based on this tradition in Australia remain all male institutions. However, the 18th century saw the rise of Lodges of Adoption on the Continent that included women. The Continental tradition was passed to the Americas and today Masonic women’s organizations including the Order of the Eastern Star, Job’s Daughters

initiation rites found in many cultures and utilizes the themes of birth, death and rebirth common to most initiation practices worldwide. These initiatory rites, as anthropologists note, typically express a fear of female power and an appropriation of women's power to give birth.⁸ Writing on Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, the most notable artistic expression of Masonic themes to date, Paul Nettl has summarised the relationship between Freemasonry and these primordial rites in the following terms:

[t]he puberty rites of primitives were paralleled in higher civilizations by the association of men of similar outlook which, ultimately, led to Freemasonry. Some writers have interpreted this as a sign of the change from a matriarchal to a patriarchal society, while others see in it a protest by men against the rule of women.⁹

In the context of the ritual practices sanctioned by Grand Lodge, that is, those practices regarded by Masons as 'regular' or 'true' Freemasonry, the rituals are intended to symbolically express the soul's journey from birth to death, and initiates are taught various spiritual, philosophical and moral principles to enable them on their journey through life.¹⁰ Masons are fond of citing the highest ideals of their Order and quotations by famous Masons are frequent in the literature. General Macarthur, for example, is quoted as saying,

and the Rainbow Girls exist in many countries. See Margaret C. Jacob, Living the Enlightenment. Freemasonry and Politics in Eighteenth-Century Europe (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) for an account of their formation.

As Axelrod notes in his discussion of the Order of the Eastern Star, for example, the position of women in the Order is regarded as inferior to men, and powerful patriarchal values are reinforced in the rituals by symbolic characters such as Adah, who was slaughtered by her father as an example of human sacrifice. Axelrod 69.

⁸ See, for example, Mitsuki Shiota, "Reunited with Anima: The Female Spirit Cult Reconsidered" in Katsuhiko Yamaji (editor), Gender and Fertility in Melanesia (Nishinomiya: Kwansei Gakuin University, 1994) 132. Shiota cites the prominent ritual expert, Mogoi Yakili, who stated: "[t]hough men monopolise the magic and rituals, women by nature have more power than men. For, women give birth to men (and women) while men cannot give birth to women (or men). This is the biggest miracle surpassing any artificial (man-made) magic or any ritual men preside over."

⁹ Paul Nettl, Mozart and Masonry (1957; New York: Dorset Press, 1987) 93.

¹⁰ Mackey 4-16. Mackey argues that there is a pure form of Freemasonry and a spurious form. This theme will be addressed in Chapter Two.

“Masonry embraces the highest moral laws and will bear the test of any system of ethics or philosophy ever promulgated for the uplift of Man”.¹¹ In fact much attention is paid in handbooks for the use of Masons to the importance of moral principles, proper behaviour, the restraint of the passions and duties to God and neighbour.¹² As Alan Axelrod observes, ‘irregular’ Lodges, existing outside of the rules, may be considered by Grand Lodge as sites of immoral behaviour.¹³ This concept of ‘irregular’ practice, a common term used in the Order, acknowledges that initiatory knowledge can be used in corrupt ways for debased purposes and for the use of power over others. A number of key Masonic authors, as will be discussed in Chapter Two, suggest that such corruption has been woven into the Order since its inception and is present amongst the vast array of loosely related variations of the basic Craft degrees.¹⁴ In its irregular usage the boundaries between the symbolic spiritual practices of the men in the Lodge and the older more primordial expression of initiation practices appear to have become blurred. This thesis will examine the traces of such irregular practices as they appear in contemporary art.

The tradition of initiation practice has, since classical times, been subject to codes of secrecy. However, for Freemasonry this has contributed greatly to its negative reputation

¹¹ M.H. Kellerman, From Diamond Jubilee to Centenary. History of Forty Years of the United Grand Lodge of Freemasonry in New South Wales 1948 – 1988. Vol IV (Sydney, United Grand Lodge of New South Wales of Ancient Free and Accepted Masons, 1990) 492.

¹² Many Masonic handbooks treat this aspect as paramount. See, for example, William Harvey Drew, The Freemason’s Hand-Book. Containing the Ritual of Freemasonry as Practiced in the Lodges of the United States (New York: MaCoy & Sickels, 1864) 80 – 81.

¹³ Axelrod notes of the Shriners (formed in the US in 1871 and called The Ancient Arabic Order of the Nobles of the Mystic Shrine) that “the Grand Lodge of England has in the past threatened English Masons with expulsion if they join the organization, believing that the Shrine brings Freemasonry into disrepute with childish antics, funny clothes, and ritual some find offensive ...” Axelrod states that “the Shriners traditionally revelled in various pranks and ritualistic shenanigans, together with a great deal of drinking ... Yet, because the hooligans were well-to-do citizens, the police routinely turned a blind eye to what was deemed harmless fun.” US presidents who were Shriners were Harding, Roosevelt, Truman and Hoover. Axelrod 224 – 225.

¹⁴ The Craft degrees or Blue Masonry are comprised of the first degree, or Entered Apprentice, the second or Fellow Craft and the third or Master Mason degree. These three degrees form the basis of the Masonic system of knowledge. All ‘higher’ degrees are a development of these three original degrees. C.W. Leadbeater, Ancient Mystic Rites (1926; Madras, London: Theosophical Publishing House, 1986) 3.

and is anachronistic in today's climate. For this reason I will begin the thesis from the opposite position and declare my personal motivation for the subject of this research openly. Precedents have already been set within feminist theory for the author to expose her own bias in order to contextualize the discussion and to create a sense of transparency so that the reader can better judge the rest of the text.¹⁵ Griselda Pollock addresses this form of feminist challenge to a patriarchal reading of art history when she says:

If we introduce into our readings in art history too much either about the personal life of the artist – traumas or specifically feminine experience for instance – or if we are to draw on our own life experiences to help understand what we are looking at we might be dismissed for offering over-subjective readings that are insufficiently curbed by necessary objectivity of rational historical distance. On the other hand, feminism can literally claim these Freudian insights to support the theorised attempt to balance historical scholarship with carefully presented insights developed from our lived histories about the significance of the psycho-symbolic in the making and reading of cultural texts.¹⁶

In a comment on the work of the art historian Mieke Bal, Pollock describes this form of reading as an “hysterical reading” describing “a feminist poetics that conjoins semiotics and psychoanalysis” leading the reader to “identify imaginatively with the victim rather than see the event through the eyes of the usually male protagonist.”¹⁷ The following brief personal account will hopefully provide a context for the rest of the thesis and a means of evaluating its legitimacy.

I am a practising artist and academic, and have been creating artwork all my adult life, aware that art making for me has been profoundly important. To put it bluntly I would say

¹⁵ See, for example, Kali Tal, Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 4.

¹⁶ Griselda Pollock, Differencing the Canon. Feminist Desire and the Writing of Art's Histories (London & New York: Routledge, 1999) 16.

¹⁷ Pollock xv.

that if it weren't for art, I probably would have lost my mind. Making art has been an obsessive occupation and in my early thirties I began to see a pattern in the work that spoke of trauma. Remembering acts of incest and discovering its culture within the family across generations enabled me to understand in part what the work was about, but the release of these memories did not erase the obsessive need to create, the drive that seemed to hold my sanity precariously together. In 1999 I created a body of textile/collage images that were quite surreal; they all included bird-headed figures that appeared to be in some form of ritual space. A series of embroidered *vesica piscis* shapes accompanied the larger images. I called the series *The Mason's Daughter*. (Fig. 2) While the work was on exhibition ABC television screened a documentary on Freemasonry, which took the viewer inside Sydney Grand Lodge to watch one of the rituals.¹⁸ This was a first for Australian Freemasonry, the first time the general public had been allowed access *via* television to the ritual space within the Lodge. As a response to seeing this documentary I decided to visit Grand Lodge and wandered through its museum display. The shock I experienced there was enormous. Amongst the display were many of the forms I had been creating obsessively, unconscious of their meaning, for the last fifteen years. In nearly every solo exhibition I had held I had included variations of a large plywood form that I had never understood. It had always seemed like a vaulting horse and appeared in each exhibition as a prop rather than an artwork in its own right. There it stood in the museum display, virtually the same dimensions as the one I had always created, a form in the shape of a keystone, and one of the central motifs I was later to discover, of Royal Arch Freemasonry. The satin, braiding and beading that I had been methodically sewing, the padded 'stumpwork' *vesica piscis* shapes, were all there on the Grand Masters' aprons. The elaborate embroidered forms contained knotted patterns similar to those I had carefully created with beading in my embroideries. Clearly, the work I had been doing for many years had belonged to some long forgotten experience, perhaps from early childhood, of an intimate and tactile knowledge of Masonic objects and symbols.

¹⁸ Kerrie Hannan (producer), "Freemasons Today," Compass, ABC Television, 7th November, 1999.

The impact of this discovery was profound and during the next few years a series of bizarre and terrifying memories emerged that seemed to make no sense at all and yet at the same time explained much of my personal subjective state. As the terror subsided so did the need to express it in visual form. The drive to make visual art began to transform into an equally obsessive intellectual need to understand the nature of this organization and why it had impacted so thoroughly on my psyche. This shift from the visual to the linguistic paralleled the nature of recovery from trauma, as the first two chapters of the thesis will outline.

Growing up in a post World War Two Masonic family in Sydney, my conscious memories of this institution had been so insignificant that even until my late forties I had barely counted it as an influence. Seeing my father in a dinner suit with briefcase in hand once or twice a week, going to his lodge meetings was familiar enough. The occasional Ladies' Nights, with Scotsmen piping in the Haggis, and where the women ended up doing the washing up afterwards, didn't seem particularly out of order. The regular Christmas parties and debutante balls were all part of a post-war experience that seemed, in retrospect, extraordinarily well ordered. Everyone knew his or her place. This awareness included knowing what not to ask, in particular, about what father did at those regular lodge meetings. In my conscious memory my limited experience of the Order did not explain the immensity of the terror I was experiencing much later in my adult life. The hornet's nest of memories that now surfaced seemed totally unbelievable and certainly unprovable. However, they had the effect of radically altering my understanding of my own reality and that of the suburban Australian culture in which I grew up.

The resulting study is an attempt to understand the nature of this organization that I had once regarded as irrelevant to my life. One of the by-products of the work has been the realization of the importance of Freemasonry within Australian culture, and yet also an awareness of its failure to attract academic scholarship about its historical and cultural role, a failure that seemed to parallel my own dismissive attitude towards it prior to 1999. In a discussion of the relationship between contemporary art and postcolonial issues in 2001 the Australian art historian Rex Butler had asked the question "[h]ow does the West think its

blind spots?”¹⁹ I would suggest that in Australia, at least, Freemasonry and all that is associated with it, constitutes a significant ‘blind spot’ in academic research. One of the consistent responses I have had when announcing the subject of Freemasonry as my research has been a particular laugh, as if the whole topic is some sort of joke, a curious anachronism that bears little relevance to our contemporary experience. What is also peculiar is that many people have Masonic stories to tell, of their fathers, grandfathers or uncles who belonged to this or that related fraternity and tell these stories either with a sense of pride or with bemused puzzlement at the quirkiness of Masonic behaviour.

However, the research led to the discovery that I was not alone in my recent reaction to this organization. In the United States, Canada and Britain in particular there have been multiple reports of Masonic ritual abuse. It also led to the realisation that I had now been plunged into the mire of conspiracy theories that sees Freemasonry responsible for many of the woes of the world. The resulting study, looking at the presence of its influence in the work of contemporary artists, has been an attempt to wade through this mire, to sort the rubbish from the facts and to try to understand the principles behind this institution. The underlying intention, I believe, has not only been a cathartic one, but has gone a long way towards allowing me to be able to forgive my father, to understand the ways in which he was a product of his time and the intense demands on the men who had come back from war. Traumatized themselves by the near-death experiences they were forced to endure, many men must have found that Freemasonry could offer a salve: it embodied a ritualised performance of what they had gone through, offering them the Masons Grip and the Five Points of Fellowship as symbols of brotherly love, to pull them out of the liminal space of war in which they could have so easily lost their own sanity. Sadly, though, this ritual enactment did not seem to be enough to purge their pain, and, as my own experience and that of others seems to suggest, the burden appears to have been passed on to the children.

¹⁹ Rex Butler, “Augustus Earle’s Blind Spot” in Postcolonial + Art. Where Now? (Sydney: Artspace Visual Art Centre, 2001).

I am therefore coming to this research as both an outsider, in Masonic terms a *cowan*, but also in some sense as an insider.²⁰ A *cowan* is anyone who has not been formally initiated into Freemasonry and is sometimes referred to as a “sneak or prying person, the uninitiated, the outsider, the profane.”²¹ The Masonic author John T. Lawrence argues that by the eighteenth century the term came to delineate any man (or woman) who was not a Mason and was often used with disdain. It then came to imply an eavesdropper, that is, an outsider who was intent on discovering Masonic secrets.²² Any handbook of Freemasonry will have a similar explanation. Some refer to a *cowan* as a woman, and at other times as a dog. The concept of eavesdropper is one of Freemasonry’s highest insults, second only to that of traitor. As a feminist then, a prying woman, I would ideally fit this description.

However, as a Mason’s daughter, sometimes called *lewisa*, the feminine form of *lewis*, the Mason’s son, my position is more complex. The term *lewis* has a double meaning. Derived from operative Masonry it is the tool, a type of bolt, which attaches the heavy stone to the pulley to allow the stone to be raised and set in place. It carries the weight of the stone. It is a key Masonic symbol and is central to the ritual of Laying the Foundation Stone, Freemasonry’s foremost civic duty. The relationship between the Mason and the *lewis* is therefore of major significance with regard to the symbolic role of Freemasonry within civic society. Alexander Piatigorsky, an academic scholar and non-Mason who has recently addressed the global phenomenon of Freemasonry, notes that the term *lewis* is a modern corruption of Eleusis, referring to the Greek mystery cult from which some Freemasons argue that the Order was derived. He also notes that it is a term that means ‘strength’.²³ A

²⁰ The term *cowan* had its roots in the operative Masonry of the masons’ guilds of Medieval Europe and the building of the great cathedrals. Because of the high demand for skilled work these guilds became powerful groups and guarded the secrets of their craft in a system of bodily sign language used to communicate information between their largely illiterate members. These signs also indicated whether a builder was a fully accredited member of the guild or was in fact, a *cowan*, or one of the workers who did much of the less skilled work than the masons. See Bernard E. Jones, Freemasons’ Guide and Compendium (London: George G. Harrap & CO, 1952) for a discussion of the evolution of the term.

²¹ See James Stevens Curl, The Art and Architecture of Freemasonry (London: B.T. Batsford, 1991) 20.

²² Lawrence 207.

²³ Alexander Piatigorsky, Who’s Afraid of Freemasons? The Phenomenon of Freemasonry (London: The Harvill Press, 1997) 290.

Masonic author, Roy Wells, states that sometimes the term ‘MacBannai’ or ‘my poor son’ is used instead and a similar word ‘Makbenak’, a Hebrew password used in the Masonic rituals, means “he lives within the son”.²⁴ All of these terms suggest the centrality of the relationship between the Masonic father and his child, with some form of transference taking place between them. Piatigorsky also notes that a widely used nickname for a Freemason is ‘the son of a widow’ and he argues that this status likens the Mason, as a child who does not know his own father, to that of orphans and bastards, “a contingent of possible candidates for victimhood and thereby for the role of the mythological hero.”²⁵ The relationship between the Mason and his son or daughter thus appears to be marked by a complex relationship to traumatic experience that nevertheless plays some important role within the functioning of an ordered society. Like the tool that carries the weight of the stone, the *lewis*, as the Mason’s child, has to carry the weight of his or her father’s pain. The following thesis will expound this relationship in more detail.

This initial personal perspective has, during the course of the investigation, broadened to examine the relationship between traumatic experience, feelings of terror and the secret or occult tradition that is Freemasonry, in particular, in its dissident or irregular forms. The questions that have arisen include, for instance: How do the occult principles that govern the Masonic system relate to contemporary psychological discussions of trauma? In what ways may contemporary artists be representing the blend of Freemasonry, the occult and trauma within their work? [and] Is there something important that can be learned through an examination of works that might depict Masonic symbols and themes?

Methodology

The preliminary stages of the research involved the ‘subjective’ processes that Courtney and Williams argue need to be accommodated within feminist research into ritual abuse.²⁶

²⁴ Roy A. Wells, Some Royal Arch Terms Explained (Shepperton, Middlesex: A. Lewis, 1978) 19. This and other ‘Mac’ words were introduced by the Stuarts. Nettl 80.

²⁵ Piatigorsky 329.

²⁶ Courtney and Williams 7.

The analysis of my own artwork entailed a lengthy process of memory retrieval beginning in 1999 when a series of disturbing memories began to emerge after the production of *The Mason's Daughter* and my visit to the Masonic museum. Thrust into a series of painful flashbacks and states of panic I met with a therapist in order to understand the nature of the memories that were surfacing. The therapeutic process accompanying the retrieval of these memories will be discussed in Chapter Six. Set in broadly historical terms this chapter constitutes a form of testimony, a feminist life narrative that Suzette Henke notes is frequently a product of “the unexpected eruption of repressed tales of traumatic experience.”²⁷

The aim of the ‘objective’ aspect of the research was to analyse the role of Freemasonry and its psycho-cultural impact and to do so the range of subjects and disciplines it crosses is broad. The discussion follows the postmodern practice within the analysis of contemporary art, of drawing on a range of disciplines rather than confining itself to the field of art and aesthetics. The discussion begins in the field of psychology to examine the role of trauma theory and its application in the cultural realm. It then moves to the role of brain physiology during trauma and relates this to the symbolism used in Masonic ritual practices. The study then focuses on a number of case studies in the realm of contemporary art drawing on Masonic themes, anthropology, magic and history to suggest that a Masonic presence, experienced traumatically, may be a significant, though previously unexplored component of contemporary cultural practice.

The investigation is driven from a feminist perspective, that is, with the intent to expose the mechanisms underlying patriarchal control. As some early feminists have argued, the gender inequality that is reinforced in the patriarchal family through acts of sexual violence, and that are subsequently internalised through a form of interior colonization, can appear very early in a child's life.²⁸ In those cultures that are created within highly misogynistic

²⁷ Suzette A. Henke, *Shattered Subjects. Trauma and Testimony in Women's Life Writing* (London: MacMillan, 1998) xiii.

²⁸ Virginia Woolf, for example, argues that the inequality demonstrated through gendered violence in the patriarchal family is the basis for political structures such as fascism. See

and clannish groups such as the Freemasons, the secret meetings that are held in community-based halls and Masonic Lodges may arguably be perceived as an extension of the private realms of the family. Here, the stark realities of patriarchal power can appear in a very basic form that Kate Millett describes as a twofold principle in which “male shall dominate female, elder male shall dominate younger.”²⁹ As the following discussion will outline, in the context of Masonic ritual abuse it is the older men, who utilise their hierarchical or ‘priestly’ power over the children as well as over the younger men in the group, who control both the type and degree of violence that is used.³⁰

Such simple rendering of the stark realities of patriarchal power as first-wave and radical feminists have proposed have come under fire in more recent feminist critiques with some arguing that radical feminism had, due to its essentialism and emphasis on the binary opposition of male ‘badness’ and to female ‘goodness’, entered so far into the personal and into a woman-centred approach to the extent that it reduced its political relevance.³¹ Valerie Bryson, in summing up the situation for feminism in the 21st century, suggests that feminism’s current state of crisis or decline has been due to the in-fighting amongst feminists and a perception that the rights for which the earlier feminists have fought are now old-fashioned concerns. She argues that feminism, nevertheless, still has relevance in a variety of contexts, especially in terms of ‘real world’ situations of oppression.³² As Caroline Ramazanoglu and Janet Holland point out, “[t]here is a danger ... that as feminists become more sensitive to the conceptual difficulties of the issues they have raised, they risk losing sight of feminism’s ‘original goals’.”³³ Alison Jagger has also suggested that, if used in very specific and concrete terms, the reality of male dominance can be viably addressed

Maggie Hum (editor), Feminisms. A Reader (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992) 21, 61.

²⁹ Kate Millett, “Sexual Politics” in Hum (editor), Feminisms. A Reader 64.

³⁰ See Chapter Six for examples of this type of control in the context of my own experience.

³¹ See, amongst others, Rosemary Tong, Feminist Thought. A Comprehensive Introduction (1989; London: Routledge, 1993) 127 – 138 for a discussion of various critiques of radical feminism.

³² Valerie Bryson, Feminist Political Theory. An Introduction (1992; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) 243.

³³ Caroline Ramazanoglu and Janet Holland, “Still telling it like it is? Problems of feminist truth claims” in Transformations. Thinking Through Feminism edited by Sara Ahmed, Jane Kilby, Celia Lury, Maureen McNeil, Beverley Skeggs (London: Routledge, 2000) 207.

in more contemporary feminist discussions.³⁴ The case examined here, of clandestine fraternal ritual practices that incorporate the sexual, physical and psychological abuse of children is one specific and ‘real world’ case where these stark realities are all too obvious, and stand as a human rights issue that need not be subsumed under arguments as to what type of feminism is at stake. The theme of ritual abuse may, in fact, prove to be a significant case where the concerns of modern and postmodern feminism could be brought together to bear on a particularly raw expression of patriarchal power.³⁵

Thus, while a feminist agenda is at the core of the investigation, feminist theory does not play a major part in the discussion. Instead the role of trauma theory is central. Feminism’s involvement with psychoanalysis and testimony, as well as the shift away from the internal disputes amongst feminists, has led many women to the realms of Trauma Theory where, along with their male colleagues, they pursue answers to the continuing question of violence and its impact on individual identity and cultural production.³⁶ In the field of art history the theme of trauma, as Chapter One will examine, has become a dominant theme in

³⁴ Tong 129.

³⁵ The use of extreme language, binary thinking and fixed views of was one of the reasons for the rejection of radical feminism by liberal and postmodern feminists, who sought for a more nuanced perspective. It is possible, however, that a number of radical feminists may be a product of the very conditioning being discussed here, and are therefore extreme in their views due to the extreme nature of the conditioning. The language of Mary Daly, for example, whose work emphasises the relationship between religion and patriarchy, is filled with references to spinning, journeying and flying into cosmic realms. I have recently written a paper on her work entitled, “Spinning Deeper into the Background: Traces of Western Practices of Ritual Abuse in Mary Daly’s *Gyn/Ecology* and Other Texts”. The article locates Daly’s writing within the Gnostic and Druidic initiatory traditions and relates many of her comments to the practice of spin programming, a torturous practice used in ritual abuse and discussed in Chapters Three to Six.

³⁶ In Australia, for example, women stand at the frontline of defence against the practices of ritual abuse, incorporating Trauma Theory into their arsenal of theoretical tools, but do not necessarily promote themselves in terms of a feminist agenda. See, for example, Naomi Halpern and Susan Henry, founders of the Delphi Centre in Melbourne, which caters for victims of extreme abuse. Due to the debates over ritual abuse this organization has eschewed the use of the term ‘ritual abuse’ in favour of terms like severe or extreme trauma or sadistic abuse.

The Delphi Centre

<http://www.delphicentre.com.au/>

Accessed 20th August 2006.

the analysis of contemporary art bridging both feminist and non-feminist viewpoints. However, despite the investigations becoming more and more refined, the patriarchal structure, as Griselda Pollock argues, has remained firmly entrenched and its values continue to pervade art practice in multiple ways. She states, “the real history of art remains fundamentally unaffected because its mythological and psychic centre is fundamentally or exclusively to do not with art and its histories but with the Western masculine subject, its mythic supports and psychic needs.”³⁷ By examining the impact of Freemasonry on the production of contemporary art this study aims to address one of the key underlying structures that supports masculinity and patriarchal control in western culture and to examine its possible impact on the subjectivity and identity of a range of artists.

Chapter One will summarise the current debates about trauma and the application of trauma theory in the analysis of cultural material. It will include discussion of the current state of research into ritual abuse, a field still in its infancy. It will also examine the various approaches critics have taken towards the use of psychoanalytic explanations in the analysis of art and the degree of emphasis placed on the relationship between the artist’s experience of trauma and the resulting aesthetic product. As Stephen Newton suggests, “[p]sychoanalytic theory provides excellent models and analogies to support a method of analysis and interpretation, which can be a very subtle instrument in explicating the mysteries of the creative process and of aesthetics.”³⁸ For an artist who is responding to trauma, the artistic process can be an attempt to make sense of repressed material. It may involve a continual process where fragments of memory are pieced together in multiple permutations of the original experience. As Kristine Stiles states,

[e]very example of violence or destruction in art, especially when it is related directly to the artist’s body, contains a lingering trauma still present from the past. An absent presence animates the unorganised

³⁷ Pollock 23.

³⁸ Stephen James Newton, Painting, Psychoanalysis and Spirituality (Cambridge University Press, 2001) xv.

psychic experiences of the artist either unconsciously or consciously and drives the production of the work.³⁹

Chapter One will address this position and will suggest that the current trends in cultural theory since the 1980s, that is, into memory, trauma, the Holocaust and more recently into the preoccupations of the Enlightenment, could in fact be a series of threads that are all drawn together in the study of Masonic abuses.

In Chapter Two a connection will be made between trauma theory and Masonic symbolism. As James Stevens Curl notes, “[c]entral to any basic understanding of Freemasonry is the role of memory, for the Lodge itself was a mnemonic of the Temple, of a lost ideal, and much else.”⁴⁰ Daniel Lawrence O’Keefe supports this in a broader comment about magic and the occult and its traditional association with memory and the mnemonic arts.⁴¹ Drawing on these observations Chapter Two will use current scientific knowledge of brain physiology to make connections between Masonic rituals and symbols and the structures and processes of the brain in the context of traumatic experience. Then it will look to the work of a number of key Masonic authors who suggest that the Masonic system, despite its high ideals and legitimate spiritual aspirations, has been open to corruption. The formation of ‘irregular’ Lodges, that is those that are not sanctioned by Grand Lodge, is openly acknowledged by these authors and by the fraternity in general. These ‘irregular’ Lodges may still use Masonic ritual but with variations that have not been approved by Grand Lodge. Many of these variations belong to the broader realms of the occult. This chapter will cite Masonic authors who take various positions on how and when these variations have occurred. Through the analysis of the relationship between Masonic symbolism and the role of trauma this chapter will establish a working methodology for the rest of the thesis.

³⁹ Kristine Stiles, “Uncorrupted Joy: International Art Actions” in Paul Schimmel (editor), Out of Actions: between performance and the object, 1949 – 1979 (Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art: Thames & Hudson, 1998) 241.

⁴⁰ Curl 44.

⁴¹ Daniel Lawrence O’Keefe, Stolen Lightning. The Social Theory of Magic (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1982) 67.

The discussion, overall, draws on anthropological theories of ritual and initiation and the anthropology and sociology of magic. Here the work of Victor Turner is central, with the work of Mircea Eliade, Arnold van Gennep and Marcel Mauss providing additional material. The advantage that anthropology has for a study of contemporary art is that it is based on interpretations of the 'other' and therefore has a clarity gained through distance that is not always present in the examination of one's own culture. Turner's explanation of the 'liminal' forms a key concept and he has briefly mentioned Freemasonry amongst other organizations as a site of the liminal.⁴² Turner's elaboration of ritual initiation processes will form the underlying theoretical context for the examination of Ken Unsworth's work in particular, but will be used where applicable throughout the thesis.

Masonic material forms the core of the subject matter. Despite its claims to be a secret society (although some members would deny this), material on Freemasonry, from both inside the Lodge and from without is abundant, and therefore there is no real obstacle to finding enough material to support an investigation of this type. The focus, as was stated earlier, is on Freemasonry's psycho-cultural significance rather than on its history, although historical elements that could be seen to emerge in the artists' work will be addressed where appropriate. In the discussion the terms 'Masonic Order' or 'Freemasonry' will be used as umbrella terms to apply to the collective of fraternal groups that have developed since the eighteenth century from the one central core. These groups include Royal Arch Freemasonry, the Scottish Rite or Rose Croix, the Knights Templar, the Ancient Arabic Order of the Nobles of the Mystic Shrine (Shriners) and so on. They have many commonalities, particularly in terms of their structure. They all include ritual initiation processes, have a carefully structured system of progress through degrees and share many common symbolic elements.

There are a number of different fields of investigation into Freemasonry, some from within the Lodge, the rest from without. Because of these different grades of investigation the thesis will use a system to denote the different levels of authorship. There are many

⁴² Victor Turner, *Blazing the Trail. Way Marks in the Exploration of Symbols*, edited by Edith Turner (Tucson & London: The University of Arizona Press, 1992) 58.

published studies by well-respected members of Freemasonry readily available in libraries. These will be termed ‘Masonic authors’ and include works by Arthur Edward Waite, Albert Mackey, J.N. Casavis, Eliphas Lévi, J.D. Buck, Robert Freke Gould and others. The thesis has drawn most heavily on these writers, given that they are presenting knowledge of the Order’s symbolism from within the context of the Lodge itself. There are also Masonic journals by Freemasons themselves that vary widely in the quality of their research. The British journal *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* is probably the most scholarly of these.⁴³ Also, within the Lodge, ordinary Masons have published books that have been of some use in the discussion. Another level of Masonic publication includes the many websites dedicated to specific Lodges. Occasionally these have been of use, though more in terms of gaining a general understanding of the sociological context in which fraternities function, rather than to supply particularly insightful material. There are also a number of websites that have published details of degrees used in the Order, either historically or in the present.⁴⁴

Masonic research from outside the Order also varies widely. Studies that could be classed as ‘neutral’ and generally undertaken by scholars who are outside the Order (although not all state their relationship to the Order) include the work by those who will be termed ‘Masonic scholars’ in the thesis. These include studies by women such as Marie Mulvey Roberts, Mary Ann Clawson, Margaret Jacob and Loretta Williams. Feminist investigation, at this stage, has been largely about historical aspects of the organization, focussing mostly on the eighteenth century, with an investigation into its literary expression led by Marie

⁴³ The Masonic journal, *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* is the publication associated with the Quatuor Coronati Lodge, the premier lodge of Masonic research founded in 1884 and endorsed by United Grand Lodge of England. A range of its papers can be found at: Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon website <http://freemasonry.bcy.ca/aqc/index.html>
Accessed 25th March 2004.

⁴⁴ For example, an archive of Masonic degrees, used historically in British Freemasonry, is held in the archives of the University of Bradford and is published on the web by Dr Robert Lomas from the university’s School of Management. Lomas states that the rituals and statutes represented are not in current usage.
Robert Lomas, “The Web of Hiram”, University of Bradford.
<http://www.bradford.ac.uk/webofhiram/>

Mulvey Roberts.⁴⁵ Loretta Williams acknowledges that the historical importance of Freemasonry has been neglected, but I have yet to discover scholarly women who have analysed its impact on contemporary culture.⁴⁶ Margaret Jacob, though, does make a brief remark about its presence in Northern Ireland and “[t]he curiously anachronistic and even sinister role of Freemasonry in the contemporary religious conflicts.”⁴⁷ Given that Freemasonry is such an obvious target for a patriarchal critique it seems strange that feminism has shown so little interest in it. A comment on this very point was made in one of the major journalistic investigations into contemporary British Freemasonry, *Inside the Brotherhood* by Martin Short.⁴⁸ Other popular writers such as Stephen Knight have examined the present-day British institution and a range of other journalist/scholars such as Michael Baigent and Richard Leigh, Jasper Ridley and others keep the bookshops filled with updated discussions of Freemasonry’s general history and their claims of its role in global politics and intrigue.⁴⁹ These will be termed ‘popular Masonic authors’. Most claim some sort of neutrality, but another class of investigation by openly anti-Masonic writers tends to be abundant on the worldwide web. These include Christian diatribes, along with conspiracy theories, that do little to elucidate the subject.

One suggestion made by J.M. Roberts, an academic who calls himself a historian of modern politics, in discussing the ritual and symbolic elements of Freemasonry, is that a medievalist, an anthropologist or a historian of art may be better equipped to assess the

⁴⁵ Mary Mulvey Roberts and Hugh Ormsby-Lennon, Secret Texts. The Literature of Secret Societies (New York: Ams Press, 1995).

Accessed 21st January 2005.

⁴⁶ Loretta J. Williams, Black Freemasonry and Middle-Class Realities (Columbia, London: University of Missouri Press, 1980) 47.

⁴⁷ Margaret C. Jacob, The Radical Enlightenment: Pantheists, Freemasons and Republicans (London: George Allen & Unwin 1981) 26.

⁴⁸ Martin Short, Inside the Brotherhood (London: Grafton Books, 1989) 482.

⁴⁹ Stephen Knight, The Brotherhood. The Secret World of the Freemasons (London: HarperCollins, 1983).

Michael Baigent and Richard Leigh, The Temple and the Lodge (London: Jonathan Cape, 1989).

Jasper Ridley, The Freemasons. A History of the World’s Most Powerful Secret Society (1999; New York: Arcade Publishing, 2001).

importance of the symbolic elements than himself.⁵⁰ The symbolism appearing in the Masonic tradition has possibly been woven into western art traditions both overtly and in disguised forms ever since the eighteenth century. But whereas the field of musicology delves at length into the role of Freemasonry, particularly in relation to the music of Mozart, there are very few open examinations of the influence of Masonic themes within the visual arts. The few notable exceptions, whose concepts have provided some of the material in this argument, include a text by James Stevens Curl, a study of eighteenth century art and architecture, and a study by David Hopkins of the art of Marcel Duchamp and Max Ernst and their active involvement with Masonic organizations.⁵¹ Hopkins demonstrates that, despite their overt anti-establishment approaches, the artists' work demonstrates strong connections with their Catholic backgrounds as well as their involvement in the Masonic Order's clubbish masculinity, misogyny and fear of female power.⁵² Ernst and Duchamp were part of the circle influenced by Joséphin Péladan, a critic and occultist, who established artistic Rosicrucianism, set up the Salon de la Rose + Croix in Paris from 1892 and introduced Rosicrucian degrees into Freemasonry at the end of the 18th century.⁵³ Péladan's directive for Rosicrucian artists stated: "[i]n accordance with magical law no work by a woman will ever be exhibited or executed by the Order."⁵⁴ Hopkins examines the link between Surrealism and Masonic themes in depth and notes André Breton's allusion to Surrealism as a secret society and his references to Freemasonry and the role of memory.⁵⁵

While many artists' works are discussed in various texts in relation to mysticism, shamanism, spirituality and hermeticism, the open discussion of their involvement in fraternal organizations is very rare. Apart from the above two texts there are only occasional references to Freemasonry in discussions of contemporary artists' work.

⁵⁰ J.M. Roberts, The Mythology of the Secret Societies (Frogmore, St. Albans: Paladin, 1974) 27.

⁵¹ David Hopkins, Marcel Duchamp and Max Ernst. The Bride Shared (Oxford: Clarendon Studies in the History of Art, 1998).

⁵² Hopkins 18.

⁵³ Hopkins 50.

⁵⁴ Hopkins 90.

⁵⁵ Hopkins 122.

Nicholas Mirzoeff, for example, in his discussion of Jean Michel Basquiat, mentions briefly the themes of Freemasonry, the all-seeing eye, the Ark and Haitian voodoo in the context of Basquiat's paranoid schizophrenia and borderline psychotic behaviour, but does not offer any explanatory links.⁵⁶ Matthew Barney, as will be discussed in Chapter Three, provides a perfect opportunity for critics to tackle this subject more openly.

The distilled product that appears here now includes case studies that are drawn from both American and Australian sources. The first is an analysis of Matthew Barney's film series *The Cremaster Cycle*. The second is an excursion through the work of three American artists, Bruce Nauman, Paul McCarthy and Mark Ryden, whose work could be seen to contain references to the disturbing elements of the mystic tradition and to fraternal initiation practice. This is followed by an analysis of the work of the Australian sculptor and performance artist Ken Unsworth and lastly, an analysis of my own artistic work.

The analysis of the work of the artists listed and that of my own work is inevitably of a different nature. As explained earlier, the discovery of these themes in my own work was the initial impetus towards a broader investigation of the artistic expression of ritual trauma and incorporates personal history and subjective experiences in a way that the analysis of the other artists' work cannot. The extremely intense and painful process of facing the trauma of ritual abuse in one's own life is not something that can be easily accommodated, but once it is can provide valuable insights that are generally unavailable to those who have not undergone such a process. As Chapter Two will address, the memories of such profoundly disturbing initiatory experiences can remain buried indefinitely while still finding their expression in creative work. For this reason, it is possible that artists who may be expressing similar concerns may not necessarily be aware of the source of some of their imagery other than a generalised notion that it springs in some way from the unconscious. The interpretation of the work of the other artists in the thesis is therefore based on a textual reading of their imagery informed by all of the concerns already cited along with the insights gained through a direct and personal confrontation with the impact of traumatic

⁵⁶ Nicholas Mirzoeff, *Bodyscape: Art, Modernity and the Ideal Figure* (London, New York: Routledge, 1995) 176 – 185.

ritual practices on the individual psyche. My own experience reflects the irregular use of Masonic principles in an Australian context in the period after World War Two.

In contemporary North America Freemasonry and other fraternal organizations are widely acknowledged aspects of cultural life. As Ridley notes, by the middle of the twentieth century Freemasonry was more firmly established in the United States than in any other country and contained over half the number of Freemasons in the world.⁵⁷ The fraternal system is an integral aspect of the American college system and in popular discussion, particularly on the web, many aspects of Masonic involvement in a range of cultural activities are acknowledged. Historically, the scandal of the Morgan Affair in 1844 publicly highlighted the connection between Freemasonry and Mormonism and led to a period of anti-Masonic tensions that have left their mark in divided attitudes towards the Craft.⁵⁸ The continuing presence of the Order in the United States, however, has meant that it has maintained its public profile in a way that isn't so apparent in the Australian context. In Australia, while many individuals may have anecdotal connections to the Craft, there is a considerable lack of public knowledge of the Order or scholarly investigation into its role in our broader history or in our public institutions.⁵⁹ One of the secondary goals of this thesis

⁵⁷ Ridley 264.

⁵⁸ William Morgan, a Mason and member of the Royal Arch, published an exposé of Freemasonry in New York in 1826, a period of anti-Masonic tension. Morgan's subsequent disappearance and possible murder further exacerbated this tension. In this climate Joseph Smith, the leader of the Mormon Church and also a high-level Freemason, was at considerable risk when he ran as a candidate for the U.S. Presidency. On June 27, 1844 an angry anti-Masonic mob attacked and killed both him and his brother Hyrum who were being held in a Carthage jail for their protection. There are a number of discussions of these events on the web.

See Reed C. Durham, Jr., Is there no help for the widow's son? Presidential Address Delivered At The Mormon History Association Convention, April 20, 1974.

<http://www.xmission.com/~country/reason/widowson.htm>

Accessed 30th May, 2004.

⁵⁹ There are, however, some studies done by Australian Freemasons that fill in some of the historical details of the Order and its impact on Australian culture. See, for example, the work of Grahame H. Cumming who has published amongst other historical accounts, Freemasonry and Federation (Sydney: The United Grand Lodge of New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory, 2001). See also older publications such as Henry Peach's Rose Croix Masonry in New South Wales (Sydney: Issued by the Authority of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, 1936).

is to allow the case studies to act as a vehicle for the expression of some of this historical material.

An awareness of the importance of Freemasonry in the American context suggested a need to focus on the work of American artists. The discovery in early 2003 that Matthew Barney's latest work in his solo Guggenheim exhibition appeared to contain overt and critical references to Freemasonry sent me immediately to book a ticket to New York. Upon seeing the work, and with the accrued knowledge of Freemasonry and trauma theory, I was able to interpret the work with an understanding of many of the allusions he was making, as Chapter Three will demonstrate. His apparent conscious use of Masonic themes appears in veiled form in his earlier videos but in *Cremaster 3* he appears to be openly critical of the Order. When I was there I inquired as to whether I would be able to interview him. However, I was told that he had left the country indefinitely and did not wish to be interviewed. Subsequent attempts to interview Matthew Barney produced a neutral response from the artist.⁶⁰ The chapter on Barney's work has become pivotal to the study and forms the longest of the case studies. Barney's work is very recent; however his comments on the Order do take the reader through various historical and cultural contexts, as Chapter Three will discuss.

Throughout the research process it became apparent that little was to be gained on this topic through direct interviews of the artists concerned, because the artists either could not or chose not to pursue this line of investigation themselves, but that an exclusively interpretive approach on my part was to be more useful. For many artists, the conscious pursuit of repressed psychic material and themes of trauma within their own work can be perceived as directly inhibiting towards their creativity and, in the case of those artists who have founded their careers on an avant garde approach, may be seen as counterproductive towards the development of their careers.

The fourth chapter traces the presence of similar themes in the work of three American artists: Bruce Nauman, Paul McCarthy and Mark Ryden. Nauman and McCarthy are both

⁶⁰ See Chapter Three.

precursors to Barney who have been deemed by critics to be pivotal to the development of contemporary American art. They both pursue performance and installation art that examines the role of confused bodily experience. Until now, despite extensive discussion of their work, critics have been unclear as to what each of these artists is trying to represent. This chapter will argue that the confused bodily responses they have been articulating could indicate traces of initiatory practice and the dissident use of the mystical tradition. Throughout their work there are occasional references to Freemasonry although these references appear to be less obvious than in Barney's work. Mark Ryden is an early career painter from California and his bizarre images reflect a fascination for magic and the occult. The inclusion of stylised images of children in the context of occult environments and references to Freemasonry as well as child abuse position his work directly within the scope of the thesis. However, Ryden has not responded to my emails and therefore I have not been able to discuss these observations with him. Ryden includes text, both letters and individual words, in his images, which are haphazard and confusing, which could be a reference to the confusing nature of the experience of trauma within the occult realms. The concerns presented in the images appear to be directly related to some of the most recent fears within contemporary American culture, that of the ritual, sexual and medical abuse of children.

The next chapter turns to the work of the Australian artist Ken Unsworth. It argues that much of Unsworth's work appears to reveal traces of initiatory practice, some of it directly reflecting Masonic themes, but the series of work that appears to be most clearly initiatory is his 1983/84 set of drawings *The Mirror and Other Fables*. The analysis relates Victor Turner's anthropological discussion of initiation practices to the works in this series. The chapter interprets Unsworth's images as a depiction of a series of classic initiation rites that involve Masonic symbols along with occasional images of Aboriginal figures in positions of torture, raising the question of dissident Masonic practice. Unsworth also writes poetry, which has assisted in providing further insight into the possible meaning of the images.

The final case study involves an analysis of my own artistic work from the viewpoint of being a Mason's daughter in the context of post-war Freemasonry in the Sydney region. It

facilitates a discussion of the role of secret societies in the post World War II context. The chapter addresses the themes of incest and ritual abuse, two forms of abuse that, according to the literature, commonly exist together.⁶¹ The chapter endorses the argument that these practices can be traced to ethnic magical practices from the Scottish and Irish Druidic tradition and are clannish in nature. Eighteenth century Freemasonry, with its multiple sources of mythology from the classical past, the Jewish tradition and Celtic sources, appears to have been a vehicle that has carried these practices through to the latter half of the twentieth century. This chapter follows the model of analysis outlined in the previous chapters, where the imagery is examined in terms of the way in which it reveals elements of the initiatory tradition and Masonic symbolism in particular, as well as features of the aesthetic negotiation of traumatic experience. However, it inevitably has a more personal character than the other chapters and contains examples of memories that, if not understood in the context of current research into ritual abuse, could be read as fantastic and unbelievable. The purpose of this chapter is to ‘ground’ the study and to provide an insight into the reason for some of my interpretations of artists’ work in previous chapters. We know that paedophile rings exist today⁶² and as much as we would like not to know, the analysis of my own work could be seen to reveal some of the things that are done to children in such contexts. The viewpoint of an artist who has been able to emerge from that once nameless space may offer insights that cannot always be found through more distanced research. The thesis, therefore, honours the feminist tradition of validating both subjective as well as objective perspectives within scholarly research, as both can provide valuable insights.

The list of artists to be discussed is predominantly male: there are five men to one woman. From a feminist perspective this may seem odd, and a reinforcement of the proportions of

⁶¹ James Randall Noblitt and Pamela Sue Perskin, Cult and Ritual Abuse. Its History, Anthropology, and Recent Discovery in America (Westport, London: Praeger, 1995) 82.

⁶² In a study of ritual abuse in European countries Hart, Boon and Jansen note that in recent years Dutch clinicians have suggested that many Satanic Ritual Abuse groups are linked with syndicated child-sex rings and other forms of organized crime. Onno van der Hart, Suzette Boon & Olga Heijtmajer Jansen, “Ritual Abuse in European Countries: A Clinician’s Perspective” in The Dilemma of Ritual Abuse. Cautions and Guides for Therapists edited by George A. Fraser (Washington, London: American Psychiatric Press, 1997) 153.

male to female in the canon. However, the reason for this balance is based on the subject matter under discussion. When I was investigating artists who appeared to demonstrate a combination of Masonic themes and trauma in their work, it became apparent that those male artists whose work appeared to exhibit both aspects did so with a level of anger that allowed them to articulate the subject in distinctive ways. Matthew Barney, for example, has been very clear in his critique of this organization and articulates his anger openly. The extensive references to Freemasonry in his work suggest that he is intent on revealing its impact on contemporary society. The examples of women artists that I did look at did not appear to be as clear in their articulation of the theme. After an examination of my own work I began research into the work of other women artists such as Cindy Sherman and Barbara Kruger. However, despite the presence of abuse themes in Sherman's work and mention of fraternal groups in Kruger's works, it was more difficult to establish clear links to Masonic themes.⁶³ At this stage, apart from the analysis of my own work, the choice of artists is limited to those who have a high profile. It focuses on artists who appear to be in touch with something dark, confusing and 'nameless' in the postmodern context and asks whether these artists may be reflecting hidden social practices in their work.

The following discussion brings together material that has been present within contemporary art discourse in a variety of forms but adds another factor, Freemasonry, which has not previously been deemed relevant. This thesis suggests that an examination of its corrupted usage can provide missing pieces to the puzzle that postmodern scholars are trying to resolve. It may be possible that a proportion of the angst and pain that has marked the art of the twentieth century is located within the context of the abuses being discussed here. In a climate where the concept of terror pervades the media and is often depicted as the product of exotic racial and religious contexts, it is time to bring it back to examine

⁶³ Throughout the research process I did, however, examine the work of a number of Australian women novelists and poets, which will form the basis of a future study. The works examined were Joan Lindsay's *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, Carmel Bird's latest novel, *Cape Grimm* and the poetry of Dorothy Porter, in particular the book length poem *Akhenaten*. A preliminary analysis of these works reveals multiple references to Freemasonry and many attributes of ritual abuse that have been uncovered in the present study.

some of the ways in which terror functions to maintain order *within* the everyday realms of Western culture.

CHAPTER ONE

TRAUMA IN CONTEMPORARY ART AND CULTURE – A SUMMARY OF THE LITERATURE

“For the most important shift in contemporary art, let alone in contemporary theory, is the following: a shift in conception from the real understood in poststructuralist terms as an effect of representation, to the real understood in psychoanalytic terms as an event of trauma ...”

Hal Foster, *Cindy Sherman*.¹

Before turning to the role of Freemasonry and its presence within contemporary culture, this chapter will outline the debates associated with the themes of trauma and memory and examine the current status of the application of these debates to contemporary cultural material. It will introduce the theme of ritual abuse as the latest, most disturbing and unresolved development in discussions of trauma. The chapter will focus firstly on the theme of memory and trauma as it appears in the clinical domain of psychology and the field of cultural studies, defining key terms and summarising the major arguments, and then progress to the ways in which these arguments have bled into the analysis of contemporary art.

In both the field of psychology and of cultural studies the contribution of Freud to arguments about trauma and memory have been profound and have been addressed in great depth, with much debate about the retraction of his preliminary findings splitting the field into factions.² Current theories of trauma have added the work of Pierre Janet, a contemporary of Freud. Judith Lewis Herman’s summary of the early history of the field in her landmark work provides a clear outline of the relationship between the three key

¹ Hal Foster, “Disgust Pictures. The Real Thing,” *Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Cindy Sherman* (Rotterdam, 1996) 75.

² See, for example, Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson, *Freud. The Assault on Truth: Freud’s Suppression of the Seduction Theory* (London, Boston: Faber and Faber, 1984).

figures, Freud, Charcot and Janet, and the ramifications of their different perspectives.³ Her colleague, the American psychiatrist Bessel A. Van der Kolk, demonstrates the current clinical application of the theories in his comprehensive study of the theme.⁴ The research that he outlines shows that dissociation, memory loss and identity fragmentation are common responses to the experience of trauma. In psychoanalytic terms dissociation refers to "... a compartmentalization of experience ... [in which] traumatic memories are characteristically stored separately from other memories, in discrete personality states".⁵ They result from an experience of overwhelming threat in which the totality of the experience is not accommodated within ordinary memory.

Dissociative memories have been the subject of discussion in the field of psychoanalysis for the last hundred years. Contemporary discussions of trauma, Van der Kolk argues, have shifted away from Freud's later preoccupation with fantasy, hysteria and the Oedipal struggle, that is with developmental psychology, and are based more on the work of Janet, who placed the responsibility for personality disturbances squarely in the social sphere, blaming human cruelty for the results. In a contemporary interpretation of Janet's key findings Van der Kolk states:

... traumatic memories consist of images, sensations, affective states, and behaviours that are invariable and do not change over time. [Janet] suggested that these memories are highly state-dependent and cannot be evoked at will. They are also not condensed in order to fit social expectations. In contrast, narrative (explicit) memory is semantic and symbolic; it is social and adapted to the needs of both the narrator and the listener; and it can be expanded and contracted according to social demands.⁶

³ Judith Lewis Herman, Trauma and Recovery. From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror (1992: London: Pandora, 1994).

⁴ Bessel A. Van der Kolk, ed., Traumatic Stress. The Effects of Overwhelming Experience on Mind, Body and Society (New York: Guilford Press, c1996).

⁵ Van der Kolk 306.

⁶ Van der Kolk 296.

Janet coined the term ‘dissociation’ to refer to the ‘dis-association’ of the mental processes, the ‘splitting apart of psychological functions that normally go together’.⁷ Contemporary categorization of dissociative states include fugue states, absences, amnesia, somnambulism, depersonalization (the feeling of looking at one’s own body from a distance), derealization (the feeling that real life has no more substance than a television program), being immune to the pain of an injury when the mind is otherwise occupied, the feelings of *déjà vu* and *jamaïs vu*, not recognising oneself within the mirror, not being able to remember significant chunks of one’s life, waves of inexplicable emotion, hypnoid states and dreaming, but also more rarely experienced states such as near death experiences and being ‘at one with the universe’.⁸

Biological research into brain activity during the provocation of traumatic memories suggests that the intense emotions experienced in relation to these memories are not stored normally, to be verbalized according to a narrative structure, but as disconnected states that include bodily reactions, feelings, somatic states and images. They are literally experienced as ‘unspeakable’ acts. The salient characteristics of these bodily memories are that they frequently recur as if still in the present and that their potency does not diminish over time. They are often accompanied by personality fragmentation, which functions as a survival strategy, but which can become a barrier to interpersonal communication.⁹

In a more recent publication on the evolving developments in the psychobiology of post traumatic stress Van der Kolk notes the “intensity and timelessness with which traumatic memories continue to affect current experience”.¹⁰ He discusses the role of imagery to trigger stress responses, the ‘associative networks’ set up in the brain to cater for the

⁷ David Healey, Images of Trauma. From Hysteria to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (London: Faber & Faber, 1993) 66.

⁸ Healey 66.

⁹ Van der Kolk 286 – 306.

¹⁰ Bessel A. Van der Kolk, “The Body Keeps the Score. Memory and the Evolving Psychobiology of Post Traumatic Stress”, David Baldwin's Trauma Information Pages <http://www.trauma-pages.com/> Accessed 12th October 2003.

information from the traumatic experience, and the capacity of the brain to produce opiates to numb the experience. He relates this analgesic response to the need to ignore pain while in a situation requiring defence, concluding, “strong emotions can block pain.”

Further research shows that traumatised due to childhood sexual abuse is typically accompanied by amnesia towards the event. This amnesia often manifests as a central and profound absence that is felt as a deep and pervasive sense of confusion. Freudian explanations of this amnesia are that it is “a defensive process ... in which the memory of the trauma is incompatible with the subject’s other conscious ideas.”¹¹ Contemporary neurological research demonstrates brain damage due to such traumas. R. Joseph, in a literature review discussing the neurology of traumatic dissociative amnesia, discusses the damaging effect of severe emotional trauma on the hippocampus of the brain. The author notes that, “[h]ippocampal atrophy and memory disturbances have been documented among those sexually abused as children ... and adults traumatized in front line combat.”¹² In this thesis, particularly in chapter two, these and other clinical observations of the impact of trauma will form the framework through which to examine the subject of Masonic ritual.

In 1992 Judith Lewis Herman’s classic study of trauma, based on twenty years of clinical research, had linked clinical practice with wider social considerations. A number of the themes that she raises are central to the subject being discussed here. Herman’s study addresses the relationship between the trauma of rape experienced by women and combat trauma in men, suggesting that the two gendered versions of the trauma experience are implicitly related. Psychiatric investigation in the military context had demonstrated that even men of unquestioning bravery could succumb to the effects of combat-induced trauma.¹³ Citing military research she states that one of the discoveries in the field was that the strongest protection against psychological breakdown in the combat arena was the role

¹¹ Elizabeth Grosz, Jacques Lacan. A Feminist Introduction (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1990) 52.

¹² R. Joseph, “The neurology of traumatic ‘dissociative’ amnesia: commentary and literature review,” Child Abuse & Neglect 23 (1999): 716 - 717.

¹³ Herman 22.

of the love of soldiers for one another.¹⁴ ‘Brotherly love’ is one of the central principles of the Masonic Order and is pivotal to an understanding of the ritual practices discussed in this thesis. Lewis Herman’s study also addresses the need to identify complex post-traumatic stress disorder that is a result of extreme and prolonged abuse in such contexts as organised sexual exploitation and cult abuse. Here the role of guilt induced through exposure to violence, the witnessing of grotesque death and enforced complicity in the abuse of others, applies directly to the subject of ritual abuse being addressed here.¹⁵ Incest, addressed in this and in her later study, is also a key theme, and is incorporated into the chapter on my own work.¹⁶

By the mid 1990s the issues being raised had created debates over the role of repressed memories. The many court cases, particularly in the United States, produced individual responses from those accused such as parents and relatives and a reaction in popular media.¹⁷ In response to these court cases a number of investigations into the theme of repressed memory by professional organizations in the United States, Australia and the United Kingdom produced varying attitudes towards the significance of recovered memories of trauma. Two American studies by professional organizations in 1993 and 1994 and a further study in Australia in 1994 argued that recovered memory therapy was unreliable and urged caution in dealing with patients’ memories, whereas the British Psychological Society’s 1995 study argued that memories of trauma, particularly those of sexual abuse, could be lost and recovered after a long period.¹⁸ In 1996 a major international conference addressed the theme of repressed memories in an attempt to

¹⁴ Herman 22.

¹⁵ Herman 34, 104.

¹⁶ Judith Lewis Herman, Father-Daughter Incest (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981).

¹⁷ For an accused parent’s response see, for example, Terence W. Campbell, Smoke and Mirrors. The Devastating Effect of False Sexual Abuse Claims (New York, London: Insight Books, 1998).

¹⁸ These organizations were the American Medical Association, the American Psychiatric Association and the Australian Psychological Society. See John F. Kihlstrom, “The Trauma-Memory Argument and Recovered Memory Therapy” in Kathy Pezdek and William P. Banks (editors), The Recovered Memory/ False Memory Debate (San Diego, London: Academic Press, 1996) 305. See also “Recovered Memories. The Report of the Working Party of the British Psychological Society” in the same volume.

dissolve the binary opposition that had developed around it by addressing the wide range of perspectives held by psychologists over the way in which memory functions.¹⁹ In the popular realms, however, and in a climate that had already acknowledged the social reality of child sexual abuse, one of the features of the debate became a categorisation of different levels of victimisation based on the way in which the events were remembered. Those victims who had always remembered their abuse were sometimes classed as more reliable and even morally superior to those who had forgotten and then remembered the abuse years later.²⁰ In the context of the discussion here, Masonic initiation practices have been interpreted by a number of Masonic authors to be based on the concept of memory, lost and found.²¹ As the following chapter will suggest, the third degree and a number of the higher degrees appear to symbolically re-enact the psychological processes involved in memory loss and retrieval.

Amongst those who insisted on the value of recovered memories, the work of the feminist theorist Jennifer Freyd formed a key focus. Freyd's scientific attempts were to explore a theory of 'betrayal trauma' in which "the traumas which are most likely to be forgotten are not necessarily the most painful, terrifying, or overwhelming ones (although they may have those qualities), but the traumas in which betrayal is a fundamental component."²² Her research contributed to a break with her own parents, who became the founders of the False Memory Syndrome Foundation, testifying to the intense emotions and cross-generational conflict implicit in the exposure of family trauma. In a discussion of the rift between Jennifer Freyd and her parents, Janice Haaken likens the situation to "a feminine version of Abraham and Isaac, where the daughter's memories are offered up as sacrifice in a

¹⁹ J. Don Read & D. Stephen Lindsay (editors), Recollections of Trauma. Scientific Evidence and Clinical Practice. Proceedings of a NATO Advanced Studies Institute Conference on Recollections of Trauma, held 1996 (New York, London: Plenum Press, 1997). 95 psychologists presented their research at this conference.

²⁰ Mark Pendergrast, Victims of Memory. Incest Accusations and Shattered Lives (Hinesburg, Vermont: Upper Access Inc, 1995).

²¹ See, for example, A.E. Waite, Emblematic Freemasonry and the Evolution of its Deeper Issues (London: William Rider & Son, 1925)15.

²² Jennifer J. Freyd, Betrayal Trauma. The Logic of Forgetting Childhood Abuse (Cambridge, Mass., London: Harvard University Press, 1996) 62.

demonstration of fidelity and obedience to the higher Law of the Father.”²³ Betrayal is the central theme of the legend of Hiram Abif on which Freemasonry’s Third Degree is based and will be discussed in depth in Chapter Two.

By this same period the discussion of related themes of memory and trauma in the cultural sphere such as meditations on the Holocaust, the creation of the term ‘multiple personality disorder’ and the rising problem of ritual abuse, had created a scenario which Richard Terdiman termed the ‘memory crisis’, an anxiety about the implications of this research.²⁴ In 1996 Paul Antze and Michael Lambek argued that, “increasingly, memory worth talking about – worth remembering – is memory of trauma.”²⁵ In an edited collection they confront the controversy over recovered memories through the work of a range of writers. Acknowledging the mentoring work of Ian Hacking and his suggestion “that there is an underlying knowledge or truth waiting to be discovered”, they imply that the collective investigations of theorists in this area may be leading towards something profound but possibly of frightening significance.²⁶ David Healey, in his argument that psychoanalysis today is as much “a theory that attempts to account for culture as one that accounts for neurosis: a theory that offers answers on the nature of religion [and] the origins of creativity”, implies that something repressed and forgotten may lie at the core of these two significant cultural domains.²⁷ The study here, of the relationship between art, trauma and Freemasonry is an example that brings together the themes being addressed in these statements.

²³ Janice Haaken, Pillar of Salt. Gender, Memory, and the Perils of Looking Back (London: Free Association Books, 1998) 19 – 38.

²⁴ Richard Terdiman, Present Past: Modernity and the Memory Crisis (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1993) 3.

²⁵ Paul Antze and Michael Lambek (editors), Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory (New York: Routledge, 1996) xii.

²⁶ Antze & Lambek xiv.

²⁷ Healey 45.

Currently, the most problematic area in the memory debate appears to be the question of ritual abuse. A definition of ritual abuse derived in 1988 at the University of New Hampshire is described as follows:

[a]buse that occurs in a context linked to some symbols or group activity that have a religious, magical, or supernatural connotation, and where the invocation of these symbols or activities, repeated over time, is used to frighten or intimidate the children.²⁸

The late 1980s saw the beginnings of disturbing reports that gradually escalated, from both adult ‘survivors’ and child ‘victims’ of ritual abuse with many correlations between the details of the practices.²⁹ Following this, the early and mid 1990s saw responses within both the clinical field and in the cultural arena, some quite heated. In the field of psychology a concerted effort was made by a few researchers to investigate the nature of satanic practices, their history and current expression. By 1995 James Noblitt and Pamela Perskin were able to provide a comprehensive summary of the data using an anthropological and historical methodology that attempted to put the material into context.³⁰ They examined the broad range of accounts of “religions, cults, and fraternal organizations [that] were found which ostensibly used traumatic rituals for the purpose of creating altered states of consciousness.”³¹ These mental states, they argue, have sometimes been viewed as sacred, but can also be used for psychological control. Their conclusion, like that of others who have explored this field, is that the practices have been going on in

²⁸ Finkelhor, Williams and Burns (1988, p. 59) quoted in Tim Tate, Children for the Devil. Ritual Abuse and Satanic Crime (London: Methuen, 1991) 3.

²⁹ Eithne O’Donovan, in a New South Wales government publication on the topic, refers to two categories of reports, with ‘victims’ referring to children or adults who are still being abused and ‘survivors’ referring to children or adults who were abused but for whom the abuse has stopped. Ritual Abuse. Information for Health and Welfare Professionals (N.S.W. Sexual Assault Committee, 1994) iii.

³⁰ James Randall Noblitt and Pamela Sue Perskin, Cult and Ritual Abuse. Its History, Anthropology, and Recent Discovery in Contemporary America (Westport, London: Praeger, 1995).

³¹ Noblitt & Perskin xiii, xiv.

an underground form perhaps for centuries. They argue that the current psychoanalytic terms of Multiple Personality Disorder and Dissociative Identity Disorder are contemporary Western terms for what has been known historically and anthropologically as ‘possession’, and ask whether such possession is the result of similar abuses to that being observed in contemporary western cases of ritual abuse.³² They also note the role of multigenerational practices and the frequent association between ritual abuse and incest.³³

As David Sakheim and Susan Devine argue, ritual abuse is rarely enacted as a single episode, but is usually repeated over an extended period of time and can begin in early childhood.³⁴ As the psychologist Lenore Terr notes, children who go through repeated trauma, as opposed to those who only experience a traumatic event once, learn to protect themselves by the use of repression as a defence against remembering.³⁵ In the calculated application of ritual terror to children this phenomenon appears to be well understood by perpetrators, and may be one of the reasons for the relative invisibility of such abuses in the culture. Martin Katchen and David Sakheim suggest that the forms of brainwashing involved can be likened to those used in the ‘thought reform’ programmes of totalitarian regimes that are aimed at the psychological destruction of the old self and the creation of a new indoctrinated self.³⁶ They argue that, in the American context, the Calvinist background of many religious organizations and the doctrine of predestination have marginalised some groups, particularly those in a low socio-economic category, so that these groups perceive that they are automatically damned to hell. Embracing Satanism can thus be seen a form of empowerment.³⁷ Masonic abuses, while belonging to a similar category of abuse, are not to be confused with Satanism, as the practices, purpose and class considerations are different. A fuller discussion of Masonic abuses will be the subject of the latter half of Chapter Two.

³² Noblitt & Perskin xiv, 38.

³³ Noblitt & Perskin 82.

³⁴ David K. Sakheim and Susan E. Devine, Out of Darkness. Exploring Satanism and Ritual Abuse (New York: Lexington Books, 1992) xii.

³⁵ Lenore Terr, Unchained Memories. True Stories of Traumatic Memories, Lost and Found (New York: Basic Books, 1994) 11.

³⁶ Martin H. Katchen and David K. Sakheim, “Chapter 2. Satanic Beliefs and Practices” in Sakheim & Devine, 30.

³⁷ Katchen & Sakheim 24.

By the late 1990s, as J.S. La Fontaine suggests, there were two opposing and firmly entrenched camps that had developed around the theme of ritual abuse, which she names 'believers' and 'sceptics'.³⁸ In the believers' camp, a field of study known as 'cultic studies' arose initially in the United States in response to the many claims and the growing number of court cases. The psychologist Margaret Thaler Singer led the way in examining the role of thought reform in the context of contemporary cults and New Age groups.³⁹ Currently, the field tends to be dominated by a group called The American Family Foundation that runs conferences and workshops for both researchers and survivors.⁴⁰ They produce a journal of research called the *Cultic Studies Review*. The focus appears to be on the wide range of satanic groups, anti-establishment cults and various New Age organizations that are prolific in American society. The journal has not as yet included material discussing Establishment fraternal groups such as Freemasonry.

As the survivors' reports escalated the most heat that was generated was around the repressed memories of ritual trauma. Many attempts at legal retribution foundered on the instability of memory, leading the general community against the concept of ritual abuse and demonising those therapists perceived as implanting false memories.⁴¹ Sceptics likened the 'moral panic' resulting from these reports to patterns of witch-hunting at times of social

³⁸ J.S. La Fontaine, Speak of the Devil. Tales of Satanic Abuse in Contemporary England (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) 5 - 7.

³⁹ Margaret T. Singer and Janja Lalich, Cults in Our Midst (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995). For a summary of Singer's approach see Margaret Thaler Singer, "Thought Reform Today" Trauma and Self, eds. Charles B. Strozier and Michael Flynn (Lanham, Maryland; London: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996) 69 - 79.

⁴⁰ According to its website, the "AFF (American Family Foundation) is a non-profit, tax-exempt research centre and educational organization founded in 1979. AFF's mission is to study psychological manipulation, especially as it manifests in cultic and related groups. The decision to use the term 'psychologically abusive group' rather than 'cult' was made prior to the website's update on 1st February, 2004.

See http://www.cultinfobooks.com/infoserv_aff/aff_about.htm

also http://www.cultinfobooks.com/infoserv_aff/aff_researchplan1.htm

Date accessed 3rd February 2004.

⁴¹ James Noblitt cites his own case where the media edited a lengthy interview with him in such a way as to suggest that he was brainwashing his patients. Noblitt & Perskin 138.

unrest and shifts in belief structures.⁴² The more fantastic the reports became the more the concept of ritual abuse was perceived as belonging to the realms of science fiction, aligned with alien abduction and crop circles, rather than to the realm of child abuse. The resulting collective ambivalence once more emulated the original quandary posed by Freud's exposure of the reports by his Viennese female patients, where rejection of the possibility of such abuses became the fallback position. At the end of the twentieth century, while child sexual abuse had now been established as a firm reality, and even incest was acknowledged as much more prevalent in contemporary western culture than it was once thought, the possibility of ritual abuse as a social reality appeared to remain problematic. Amongst those who have maintained its reality James Noblitt asks whether some of Freud's patients may have been survivors of ritual abuse and whether Freud's abandonment of his seduction theory may have been a reaction to the frightening possibility of its existence in middle class Vienna.⁴³

A recent Australian survey of the literature of ritual abuse by Kay McLeod and Chris Goddard has noted the progression of the debate from the question of credibility to the silencing of the theme, but also acknowledges the developing knowledge base, the ongoing research amongst professional bodies and evidence for the presence of organised ritual abuse. It suggests that cultural differences can produce varying reactions to the belief in the existence of ritual abuse: for example, current popular disbelief in countries like Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States is not matched in non-western countries such as South Africa where special police units are assigned to address the problem.⁴⁴ McLeod and

⁴² Michael Shermer, Why People Believe Weird Things. Pseudoscience, superstition and other confusions of our time (New York: W.H. Freeman & Co., 1997) 106. See Chapter 7 for a summary of the various arguments against the existence of ritual abuse and against the recovered memory movement.

⁴³ Noblitt & Perskin 89. The authors cite the case of Emma Epstein, one of Freud's patients, "who described a mental image in which the Devil sticks pins into her finger and puts a piece of candy on each drop of blood." See also Masson 103. An earlier study by Marianne Krüll (1986) suggests that Freud's retraction may have been related to his personal experience of incest with his father. Cited in Ian Hacking, Rewriting the Soul. Multiple Personality and the Sciences of Memory (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995) 122.

⁴⁴ Kay McLeod & Chris Goddard, "The Ritual Abuse of Children", Children Australia, vol. 30, no. 1, 2005: 27.

Goddard also suggest that, despite popular opinion, amongst professional groups internationally the existence of organised child abuse that incorporates ritual processes has become more and more apparent.⁴⁵ In 2002, for example, the United Nations Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery has noted ‘the misuse of ritual practice’ as being involved in patterns of sexual slavery.⁴⁶ Information about ritual abuse is now available in government publications and professionals in this area now face a choice of whether or not to take on these cases within their own practice. However, in certain academic realms, largely amongst cultural historians, the ambivalence remains. An initial openness to the possibility of such abuses in the 1990s was replaced by a more hostile climate later in the decade, with the result that in recent literature the subject has disappeared from view.

In the mid 1990s a few key cultural historians incorporated the subject of ritual abuse into their publications. In 1995 the philosopher Ian Hacking, claiming to take a distanced view of child abuse, traced the evolution of the concept of multiple personality as a social construct.⁴⁷ The theme of ritual abuse, however, comes under fire in his discussion as the extreme end of the multiple personality movement, one that has called into question the credibility of the movement altogether.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, some of his material, particularly his discussion of Enlightenment concepts of the soul, is useful for this thesis. Francis Bacon, he states, discussed the concept of multiple personality and used the term *experimentum lucifera*, suggesting that there were some experimental processes involved.⁴⁹ The concept of Lucifer (the bringer of light) is a feature of the Gnostic tradition to which

⁴⁵ McLeod and Goddard also point out that, despite general disbelief in the UK, Scotland Yard does not dismiss the phenomenon. McLeod & Goddard 29.

⁴⁶ Cited in Ritual Abuse and Torture in Australia by Advocates of Survivors of Child Abuse, April 2006, with a forward by Freda Briggs, Emeritus Professor of Child Development, University of South Australia. The funding for this project was granted by the NSW Department of Corrective Services.
http://66.249.93.104/search?q=cache:sqd1nYbzNPgJ:asca.org.au/pdf_public/brochure_ritualabuse_2006.pdf+Child+Australia+ritual+abuse&hl=en&gl=au&ct=clnk&cd=2&ie=UTF-8
 Date accessed 1st July 2006.

⁴⁷ Hacking 67.

⁴⁸ Hacking 14, 114, 115.

⁴⁹ Hacking 226. Some Freemasons argue that Sir Francis Bacon established his own Order. See George V. Tudhope, Bacon Masonry (Berkeley, California: Howell-North Press, 1954).

the Masonic Order is indebted.⁵⁰ Quoting John Locke's concept of the splitting of the personality and its relevance to the split behaviour of both perpetrators and victims in abuse, Hacking suggests that knowledge of ways in which to manipulate the psyche was available in the context of the Enlightenment.⁵¹

A similar ambivalence permeates the work of other cultural historians. Marina Warner, in 1998, compared the concept of child abuse in the 18th century, where children were in mortal danger from child-stealers and cradle-snatchers, to the contemporary concept of child abuse as paedophilia.⁵² While addressing the history of pagan practices in Europe, she errs towards an interpretation of ritual abuse as a metaphor for power issues rather than a credible contemporary phenomenon. However, while not conceding the existence of horrifying ritual practices in the Anglo-American context, she nevertheless locates such practices elsewhere. In Portugal, for example, she cites the hazing practices used on children of the elite when they are bound with fireworks that are then set alight.⁵³ Janice Haaken raises the subject tentatively but appears uncomfortable with the concept. Nevertheless, she captures the state-of-play around the debates at the end of the millennium, making some insightful comments on contemporary culture's distrust of the Establishment. She says, "[t]here is some basis to this claim of socially orchestrated evil, particularly if we consider the role of both the church and the state in protecting powerful interests and in concealing their own role in human villainy".⁵⁴ Haaken echoes a concern expressed by those working in the clinical arena that had seen a wide pattern emerging. Leonard Shengold, for example, over a decade earlier, had stated, "[t]his is a century ... of a

⁵⁰ See Kurt Randolph, Gnosis, the Nature and History of an Ancient Religion (1977; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1983).

⁵¹ Ian Hacking, "Memory Sciences, Memory Politics" in Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory, edited by Paul Antze and Michael Lambek (New York: Routledge, 1996) 83.

⁵² Marina Warner, No Go the Bogeyman: Scaring, Lulling and Making Mock (London: Chatto & Windus, 1998) 24 – 38.

⁵³ Warner 120 – 122.

⁵⁴ Haaken 228.

centralised power so monolithic and intrusive that it has been aimed at mastery over the individual's mind as well as body.”⁵⁵

An even more hostile response to the concept of ritual abuse comes from Elaine Showalter, a noted radical feminist. Showalter places ritual abuse in the context of an hysterical epidemic that has swept first-world countries, with the United States leading the world in a search for conspiracies.⁵⁶ Showalter's position shares many of the common elements outlined by other sceptics: the question of the rapid expansion of the numbers of these stories that have proliferated since the mid 1980s, the seeming lack of tangible evidence, the conspiratorial elements and its accompanying paranoia, and so on. All are valid and necessary points that need to be taken into account in the context of research into this theme. But Showalter's language is itself not always immune to generalisation and adds to the controversy surrounding the field. Her thesis has been singled out for its scholarly inadequacies, despite her earlier reputation as a prominent literary feminist, and those who criticise her arguments suggest that, by taking on so many subjects (Alien Abduction, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, Satanic Ritual Abuse, Recovered Memory, Gulf War Syndrome and Multiple Personality Syndrome) under the one umbrella of 'hystories' she has, in fact made many sweeping statements that do not stand up to scrutiny within research in the various fields she examines.⁵⁷ Showalter's statement that she 'deplores' those

⁵⁵ Leonard Shengold, Soul Murder. The Effects of Childhood Abuse and Deprivation (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1989) 4.

⁵⁶ Elaine Showalter, Hystories. Hysterical Epidemics and Modern Media (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997) 171 – 188.

⁵⁷ Showalter's thesis produced a controversy in itself, both amongst feminists and also those identifying with the various groups she addressed. Researchers in the field of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome were particularly incensed by her lack of scholarship in this field. See, for example, Mary Schweitzer's review, which states that Showalter is presenting what the public wants to hear about a very difficult but real disease.

“Schweitzer on Showalter's _Hystories_ Discussion/Review (April 1997)”

Epics and Modern Media: Parts I and II

<http://www.h-net.org/~women/threads/discrev-showalter.html>

Accessed 15th July 2006.

For a feminist discussion at the time of the book's release see Showalter and "Hystories" Discussion (Feb/March 1997).

<http://www.h-net.org/~women/threads/disc-showalter.html>

Accessed 15th July 2006.

‘credulous feminists’ who have endorsed recovered memory and satanic abuse places her thesis in direct opposition to the one offered here: that the question of ritual abuse is a far more complex and layered phenomenon that needs to be examined more carefully before it can be so hastily dismissed.⁵⁸

It appears that since the late 1990s the ‘memory crisis’ that Richard Terdiman had noted, as a gradual unfolding of trauma material across disciplines and subject areas, has directed the arena of cultural criticism into a contemporary issue that few are prepared to address.⁵⁹ There have been a number of different responses to what is perceived as the failure of criticism in the light of such debates. In a recent discussion of critical responses to art based on AIDS themes, Suzanne Perling Hudson argues that there has been a new and evasive return to beauty in art criticism. Her acerbic comment about the state of current criticism conveys the notion that critics are not fulfilling their role adequately. She says:

... we are now witnessing the waning of a historical moment in which criticism might have had real social and political purchase. Instead of entering a public sphere of discourse, artistic production, and institutionalisation, most critics of late have chosen to retreat into academic solipsism and abstruse theoretical models, further marginalizing their attempts at appraisal in favour of jargon-laden theoretical gymnastics, or, alternately, offering the market congratulatory and blithely affirmative pieces.⁶⁰

Another of the recent responses more relevant to this thesis has been a return to the safer domain of history with a notable rise of interest in the Enlightenment appearing in recent journals and monographs. This interest has been sparked, however, by contemporary questions. James Schmidt, for example, addresses the relationship between the

⁵⁸ Showalter 11.

⁵⁹ Terdiman 3.

⁶⁰ Suzanne Perling Hudson, “Beauty and the Status of Contemporary Criticism”, October Vol.104, Spring 2003 (New York: MIT Press) 117.

Enlightenment and today's concerns.⁶¹ Schmidt argues that the consensus amongst critics of the Enlightenment is "that there is something sinister about the light it casts".⁶² According to Horkheimer and Adorno the Enlightenment's paradox is that its preoccupation with reason unleashed terrifying powers, "[r]adiating disaster triumphant."⁶³ The feminist historian Robin Schott argues that it was a return of the repressed, and Berel Lang argues that it led directly to the Holocaust.⁶⁴

The present study is a direct response to this gradual movement from questions of memory, trauma and Holocaust to the role of Enlightenment practices. The fact that the Enlightenment was also the hey-day of Freemasonry and that Masonic practices (and their abuse) forms the central subject of this thesis places the argument directly in the trajectory of this line of questioning.⁶⁵

Terror, trauma and contemporary art and culture

Since the 1990s, discussions of contemporary art have embraced the concept of trauma as an identifying component of recent postmodern trends. This theme has been woven into discussions in art and aesthetics of fractured subjectivity and the loss of the unified subject, integral components of late twentieth century art theory.⁶⁶ Hal Foster's observation in 1996 (cited above) that trauma may form the central focus of contemporary art was to have major reverberations within the field of art criticism.⁶⁷

⁶¹ James Schmidt (editor), What is Enlightenment? Eighteenth-Century Answers and Twentieth-Century Questions (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1996).

⁶² Schmidt 1996: 27.

⁶³ Schmidt 1996: 21.

⁶⁴ Robin May Schott, "The Gender of Enlightenment" in What is Enlightenment? Eighteenth-Century Answers and Twentieth-Century Questions (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1996) 471.

⁶⁵ The subject of Masonic ritual abuse will be discussed in chapter 2.

⁶⁶ Chris Jencks, Visual Culture (London, New York: Routledge, 1995).

⁶⁷ Kristine Stiles points out that her essay "Shaved Heads and Marked Bodies: Representations from Cultures of Trauma", first published in 1993, was read by Hal Foster prior to his own writing on trauma in art and he publicly praised her work. This article was

The subject of trauma in art has emerged from two important streams of critical art theory that have accompanied the production of art since the Enlightenment. One stream involves discussions around the role of terror, the wound and the void, products of the eighteenth century philosophical concept of the Sublime and the aesthetics of Romanticism. The other stream draws on notions of subjectivity, which traces its roots as far back as the Renaissance is woven into philosophical discussions derived from the Enlightenment, and then appears in Freud's psychoanalysis of Leonardo da Vinci. The rejection of the life of the artist as relevant to the analysis of the work, which found its apogee in post-structural analysis of the text, has, however, returned to concerns involving the artist's life, but not without its difficulties for critics. The following discussion will trace these streams as they impinge on the subject at hand.

The theme of terror is central to the Enlightenment philosophy of the Sublime and a return to its examination has appeared strongly in criticism of the visual arts in the last decade. In the early 1990s, in a discussion of the avant-garde, Jean-François Lyotard had turned to a re-examination of Edmund Burke's famous treatise on the Sublime and the Beautiful.⁶⁸ Burke had argued that the experience of terror had the capacity to produce a set of responses that place the individual in a unique state. This state he called Astonishment, "that state of the soul in which all its motions are suspended," producing "the effect of the Sublime in its highest degree."⁶⁹ Terror, he argues, is the ruling principle of the Sublime, and involves the impulse for self-preservation. What is important for this study is that Burke mentions the Druids and their rituals enacted in the obscurity of the dark woods and

republished on several occasions. See an online version at www.duke.edu/~awe/publications/shaved_heads.html

⁶⁸ Jean-François Lyotard, "Chapter 7: The Sublime and the Avant Garde", The Inhuman. Reflections on Time, translated by Geoffrey Bennington & Rachel Bowlley (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991).

⁶⁹ Edmund Burke, A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful, edited by James T. Boulton (1958; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967) 57.

under the oldest and most spreading oaks. “To make everything very terrible,” he says, “obscurity seems in general to be necessary.”⁷⁰

Mark Taylor, in his study of the relationship between art, architecture and religion, has returned to the work of Immanuel Kant and his responses to the notion of the Sublime.⁷¹ Kant reaffirmed Burke’s thesis, stating that there were two alternative aesthetic positions. One involved a response to beauty and was directly related to the feeling of the furtherance of life.⁷² The other was that engendered by the experience of the Sublime, induced through the experience of being overwhelmed through terror, a state in which the individual’s imagination fails to comprehend what is occurring.⁷³ “The sublime moves, the beautiful charms,” Kant had said.⁷⁴ Kant argues that the wound that is created through this experience of the Sublime can be healed through symbolism.⁷⁵ Schiller had made a similar remark, “[t]he hand that inflicts the wound holds the cure,” and added, “[c]ulture not only fragments and divides but, in the form of art, also integrates and unites.”⁷⁶ Taylor also cites Hegel and others on similar themes.⁷⁷ It is interesting for the purpose of this study that Burke, Kant, Hegel and Schiller were all Freemasons, and therefore may have derived their position from knowledge of initiation practices, though Taylor does not state this.⁷⁸

⁷⁰ Burke 58.

⁷¹ Mark Taylor, Disfiguring. Art, Architecture, Religion (Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

⁷² Taylor 30.

⁷³ Taylor 29.

⁷⁴ Immanuel Kant, Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime, translated by John T. Goldthwaite (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1960) 47.

⁷⁵ Taylor 29.

⁷⁶ Taylor 32.

⁷⁷ Taylor 31.

⁷⁸ From a feminist perspective it becomes highly significant that key philosophers like Kant, Nietzsche, Lessing, Goethe, Hobbes, Bacon, Rousseau, Hugo, Locke, Pope, Swift, Walpole and so on (the list is extensive) were all Freemasons. See Margaret Jacob, The Radical Enlightenment: Pantheists, Freemasons and Republicans (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981) 156.

The above list is derived from a variety of sources. They include: Margaret C. Jacob, Living the Enlightenment. Freemasonry and Politics in Eighteenth Century Europe (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991) 156.

Schiller's aphorism locates the aesthetics of the Sublime within the tradition of Gnosticism in which the problem of good and evil is addressed through a homeopathic solution: a little 'evil' is perceived as an inoculation against graver dangers. As Kurt Randolph notes, the Gnostic religion of early Christianity was a syncretic blend of Greek and Oriental traditions and contained a wide variety of teachings.⁷⁹ In the eighteenth century it was re-established in France and contained magic elements derived from Egyptian sources.⁸⁰ Speculative Freemasonry borrowed some of its tenets such as the dualistic notion of 'light' and 'dark' symbolised by the tessellated pavement within the Lodge, as well as some of its Egyptian and Greek influences. As Noblitt and Perskin observe, the Gnostic tradition also plays a major role in the history of Satanism and ritual abuse.⁸¹ Andrew Bowie notes that the renewed interest in the myth of Dionysus, and the orgies associated with a revival of the Eleusinian mysteries that developed in the second half of the eighteenth century, gave rise to concepts of the fragmented subject that reappeared in post-structuralism. He quotes a directive from Hamann in 1762: "[d]o not dare enter the metaphysics of the arts without being versed in the orgies and Eleusinian mysteries."⁸² The Eleusinian mysteries, according to a number of Masonic authors, underpin the philosophy of Freemasonry.⁸³

The work of the French Surrealist writer Georges Bataille has featured strongly in late twentieth century art scholarship. Bataille draws heavily on the aesthetic philosophy of the Enlightenment and his preoccupations are also related to his participation in fraternal secret

John T. Lawrence, Sidelights on Freemasonry (London: A. Lewis, 1924).

Bernard E. Jones, The Freemason's Guide and Compendium (London: George G. Harrap & Company Ltd. 1952).

Arthur Edward Waite, Emblematic Freemasonry. And the Evolution of its Deeper Issues (London: William Rider & Son, 1925).

Michael Baigent and Richard Leigh, The Temple and the Lodge (London: Jonathan Cape, 1989).

⁷⁹ Randolph 53.

⁸⁰ Randolph 173.

⁸¹ Noblitt & Perskin 95 – 97.

⁸² Andrew Bowie, Aesthetics and Subjectivity: from Kant to Nietzsche (1990; Manchester, New York: Manchester University Press, 2003) 65.

⁸³ See for example, J.N. Casavis, The Greek Origin of Freemasonry (New York: D.C. Drury, 1955) 60.

societies. Denis Hollier has traced this involvement and in particular, Bataille's formation of *The College of Sociology*, a secret intellectual society that embraced attitudes towards women, sexuality and the arcane that reflect brotherhood sentiments.⁸⁴ Bataille's 'economic' study *The Accursed Share* includes such brotherhood themes as Aztec sacrifice, sun worship, the ritual orgy and incest, the sacred and profane, war and sacrifice and the role of art as sacrifice.⁸⁵ One of Bataille's central arguments concerns the role of the ritual orgy. In *The Absence of Myth* he relates the breaking of the taboo on murder during wartime with the breaking of the incest taboo during ritual orgy.⁸⁶ In both, Bataille says there is the thrill of a connection with the divine, sacred or sovereign nature of man, suggesting that the returned warrior can only experience a similar ecstasy within peacetime in the context of the breaking of another taboo, that of incest.

Critical discussion of the Enlightenment's influence is found in other scholars' discussions. The Californian journal *Representations*, for example, which includes a blend of visual and literary subjects, has been alternating themes of trauma, war, memory and Holocaust topics, with a new interest in the values and themes of the Enlightenment since the late 1990s.⁸⁷ Nicholas Mirzoeff's study of the body in contemporary art centralizes the role of the Enlightenment as well as the role of the French Revolution.⁸⁸ Some Masonic authors, as

⁸⁴ Denis Hollier (editor), *The College of Sociology*, translated by Betsy Wing. Theory and History of Literature, Volume 41 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988) xv.

⁸⁵ Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Share. An Essay on General Economy*, Volumes 1, 2 & 3, translated by Robert Hurley (New York: Zone Books, 1988-1991).

⁸⁶ Georges Bataille, *The Absence of Myth. Writings on Surrealism*, edited, translated, and introduced by Michael Richardson (London, New York: Verso, c1994) 121.

⁸⁷ The special issue of *Representations*, "Practices of Enlightenment" (Winter 1998, No. 61) deals entirely with the theme including one article by Rolf Reichardt "Light against Darkness" which deals specifically with Masonic themes. The special issue "Grounds for Remembering" (Winter 2000, No. 69) positions the post-Napoleonic theme of memory and Waterloo next to a study of Holocaust photography. In issue number 72 (Fall 2000) there is an article on Hogarth. In issue number 73 (Winter 2001) there are four out of five articles dedicated to Enlightenment themes. In issue number 74 (Spring 2001) Alexander Nehemas publishes an article about Goya. In issue number 76 (Fall 2001) there is an article on Balzac and the Napoleonic Code.

⁸⁸ Nicholas Mirzoeff, *Bodyscape. Art, Modernity and the Ideal Figure* (London, New York: Routledge, 1995).

the next chapter will suggest, place Freemasonry and its continental offshoots at the centre of this revolutionary period. Andrew Bowie's study of aesthetics and subjectivity begins its account with a reference to the role of the eighteenth century in relation to contemporary debates.⁸⁹ In Stephen Eisenman's edited study of nineteenth century art history the Enlightenment and Goya receive a dedicated chapter in which Goya is depicted as the "archetypal artist of his age" whose career is analysed in relation to the "Janus-face of Enlightenment."⁹⁰

Goya, in fact, has featured in many recent discussions of contemporary art. Cindy Sherman's work, for example, has been examined in the light of Goya's preoccupation with horror.⁹¹ As Matthew Collings was to comment in 1999, Goya could rightly be called the first artist of shock and therefore the first 'modern' artist.⁹² The artist's emphasis on the experience of the victim as well as the triumphs of the victor, particularly in his series of etchings *The Disasters of War*, appears to align him with postmodern concerns about the atrocities of war and the Holocaust. His depictions of satanic revelries, magic practices and the abuse of children in this series may also connect it to contemporary concerns about ritual abuse. The contemporary British artists, Jake and Dinos Chapman, who clearly continue this tradition of shock, have been focussing on themes of child abuse with their provocative mannequins of sexually abused children and genetically mutant figures. Their homage to Goya in their 1993 diorama *Great Deeds Against the Dead* drew the two themes of war and child abuse together within their art practice. However, in contrast to Georges Bataille, the Chapman brothers appear to be focussing on the pain of the victims rather than

See also Barbara Maria Stafford's study of Enlightenment art and the body, Body Criticism. Imaging the Unseen in Enlightenment Art and Medicine (1991; Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1993).

⁸⁹ Bowie 1.

⁹⁰ Thomas Crow, "The Tensions of Enlightenment: Goya" in Nineteenth Century Art: A Critical History, edited by Stephen F. Eisenman (London: Thames & Hudson, 1994) 78-97.

⁹¹ Elizabeth A. J. Smith, "The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters" in Cindy Sherman Retrospective, exhibition catalogue (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2000).

⁹² Matthew Collings (writer and presenter), This is Modern Art, Part 2: "Shock! Horror!" BBC Television, 1999. Screened ABC Big Picture, 30th March 2000.

the thrill for the perpetrators.⁹³ The question that arises with artists who repeatedly use such shock tactics is whether the work is not only a fashionable ploy to impress the viewer, but also may be a reaction to their own possible experience of profound shock and an attempt to confront and deal with amnesia.

It seems that in contemporary art scholarship there is a current trend to search for explanations within the historical context of the eighteenth century. As Margaret Jacob notes, this period was the hey-day of fraternalism, with the Church's power being undermined by a renewed interest in pagan practices and a massive shift towards the formation of secret societies. She states, "[i]t now seems increasingly clear that from its earliest formations as an international culture, the social world of the radical Enlightenment, although not necessarily all of its adherents, was Masonic."⁹⁴ The fact that the founding fathers of modern thought were men who participated in the ritual practices of a particular fraternal society must have some bearing on the nature of this thought and is a question that could withstand extensive analysis. In the field of art, Denis Diderot is commonly regarded as the pioneer of modern aesthetics and art criticism. His famous *Encyclopédie* was based on the philosophies of Francis Bacon and John Locke.⁹⁵ Although not a Mason himself, Diderot was closely linked with the Masons of Europe, and his associate Abbé Claude Yvon, a leader in an Amsterdam lodge, wrote many of the articles for the work. Jacob claims that Yvon was the metaphysician of Diderot's *Encyclopédie*.⁹⁶ Francis Bacon was the founder of his own Masonic Order, and in Locke's case, there is some debate as to whether he was or was not initiated, but many lodges claim his ideas and

⁹³ In interview, the brothers' response to their obsession with making obscene looking figures of children is that they "are only doing what has always been required of us" and that their creative process is "structured through antagonism and hostility." This response suggests that their work may be derived from a trauma position rather than a purely critical stance. Lara Grieve, "Jake and Dinos Chapman" BBC-Arts-News and Reviews. Artists in Profile

http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/news_comment/artistsinprofile/chapman.shtml

Accessed 5th April 2002.

⁹⁴ Margaret Jacob, The Radical Enlightenment: Pantheists, Freemasons and Republicans (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981) 156.

⁹⁵ John W. Yolton, Roy Porter, Pat Rogers and Barbara Maria Stafford (editors), The Blackwell Companion to the Enlightenment (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991) 145.

⁹⁶ Jacob 1981: 158.

the belief that he had been a Masonic brother.⁹⁷ The idea of terror and its relationship to the sacred is one of the key ideas expressed here.⁹⁸ *Chambers Cyclopedia*, which appeared a little earlier in 1728, had also been closely linked to Grand Lodge. James Curl argues that the entire project of encyclopaedism had close connections with the Craft.⁹⁹

The central paradox of the Enlightenment, as a range of contemporary scholars have argued, was that its emphasis on the superiority of reason unleashed a counter-impulse towards the unrestrained expression of the passions in a range of libertarian, pantheistic and pagan experiments. As Lyotard notes, the anti-Christian responses that appeared in France during the late eighteenth century aimed at critiquing the overriding power of the Catholic Church, and took the form of parodies of Christian ritual. Quoting Donnaget he cites the “childish pranks, ironic saturnalia, masquerades [and] violent, yet puerile demonstrations” that were a feature of this time.¹⁰⁰ Curl notes that the replacement of Christian doctrine with rational beliefs left a void that was filled by an increased preoccupation with the irrational, the mysterious and the sensational that the secret societies provided.¹⁰¹ Freemasonry, as the following chapters will explore, found its expression in both ordered and sombre rituals as well as in unrestrained and threatening pranks.

The other stream of art theory relevant to this study involves the relationship between art, psychoanalysis and subjectivity. Ever since Giorgio Vasari’s *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors and Architects* the intermingling of the life and work of the artist, for better or worse, has formed a body of theoretical debate within the field of art criticism.¹⁰² Then, when Freud analysed the work of Leonardo da Vinci and argued that one sentence

⁹⁷ Tudhope 4. Jacob 1981: 63-64, 222.

⁹⁸ John Hope Mason, *The Irresistible Diderot* (London: Quartet Books, 1982) 182.

⁹⁹ James Stevens Curl, *The Art and Architecture of Freemasonry* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1991). Curl 1991) 116.

¹⁰⁰ Jean-François Lyotard, *Toward the Postmodern*, (New Jersey, London: Humanities Press, 1993) 103.

¹⁰¹ Curl 134.

¹⁰² Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors and Architects* (1912; London: Macmillan, 1976).

in Leonardo's notes, combined with an analysis of *The Holy Family* and the *Mona Lisa*, demonstrated an erotic attachment the artist had to his mother and answered questions about his sexuality, the analysis created a precedent for future applications of psychoanalysis to the examination of visual art.¹⁰³

In the field of contemporary art criticism the use of psychoanalytic theory has persisted in the work of a number of critics. Jean-François Lyotard, drawing heavily on Freud and Nietzsche, argues that a psychoanalytic approach to the interpretation of art must take into account that the primary motivation for the artist is a search for 'truth'. He says, "[t]he purpose of art is neither knowledge nor beauty, but truth."¹⁰⁴ In the context of the argument here it is relevant to note that in the same text Lyotard devotes a chapter to the discussion of the French Revolution, the concept of terror, the role of fraternities such as the Jacobins, and the use of pagan games.¹⁰⁵ The grouping of the themes of art, psychoanalysis, fraternity and terror in the work of this pre-eminent philosopher are reflected in the study being undertaken here.

Rosalind Krauss cites a raft of themes related to the psychoanalytic reading of art in a range of studies, one of the most useful in relation to themes of trauma being *The Optical Unconscious*.¹⁰⁶ Beginning with the work of the nineteenth century art critic John Ruskin, Krauss identifies themes of trauma in relation to Modernism and Postmodernism and cites the influence of Freud as well as that of the twentieth century philosophers Jacques Lacan, Jean-François Lyotard, Georges Bataille and Roger Caillois on the reading of art. She also examines the role of repetition in art, concepts of the uncanny, and mentions neurophysiologic principles and their relation to image making. The range of themes she explores connects some of the themes being addressed here. Bataille, as already noted, was involved with secret societies and discussed them in his work. Roger Caillois, too, wrote on

¹⁰³ Sigmund Freud, *Leonardo da Vinci: A Study in Psychosexuality* (New York: Random House, 1947).

¹⁰⁴ Lyotard 6. See chapter 1, "The Psychoanalytic Approach to Artistic and Literary Expression."

¹⁰⁵ Lyotard 103. See chapter 7, "Futility in Revolution".

¹⁰⁶ Rosalind Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994).

secret societies and commented on the role of Eleusinian and Dionysiac brotherhoods and the role of incest in the context of ritual excesses.¹⁰⁷

Donald Kuspit argues that avant-garde art in particular concerns the role of trauma, and his approach to artistic work in terms of what it reveals about the artist's psyche places his approach as central to the subject of this thesis.¹⁰⁸ Looking at the work of modern and contemporary artists such as Max Beckmann, Joseph Beuys, Louise Bourgeois, Bill Viola, and others, Kuspit locates the motivations for each artist's work in the realms of traumatic experience. He makes observations that will become very relevant to the role of initiation explored in this thesis. Relating the schizophrenic experience as R.D. Laing describes it, as a journey from outer to inner and back out again, to the deliberate strategies used by avant-garde artists to induce hallucinatory states, Kuspit adds that "[a]vant-garde hallucinatory artists seem unable to make the return voyage. As so much of their art suggests, they seem to have become stuck in the inner world".¹⁰⁹ He comments on the number of artists who "have become shipwrecked on these reefs so long," citing Francis Bacon and Jean Dubuffet, who "have hallucinated psychotic and insane figures, suggesting how much they themselves have sacrificed their sanity and lives to their art."¹¹⁰ Rather acerbically, Kuspit suggests that avant-garde artists deliberately induce such states for career motives, and equivocates as to whether this internal journey is spontaneous or manufactured.¹¹¹ His excessive use of the term 'hallucination', however, seems to be a comment on his belief that there is a deep-seated disturbance at the heart of the avant-garde movement.

While the artists Kuspit discusses may prioritise career motive over a search for personal truth, as an artist myself I would endorse Lyotard's perspective rather than Kuspit's view.

¹⁰⁷ See Roger Caillois, "Brotherhoods, Orders, Secret Societies, Churches" and "Festival" in Dennis Hollier (editor), The College of Sociology, translated by Betsy Wing (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988) 145 – 156, 294 – 296.

¹⁰⁸ Donald Kuspit, The New Subjectivism. Art in the 1980s (Ann Arbor, London: UMI Research Press, 1988) xi. See also Kuspit's Idiosyncratic Identities (Cambridge University Press, 1996) and The Cult of the Avant-Garde Artist (Cambridge University Press, 1993).

¹⁰⁹ Donald Kuspit, Psychostrategies of Avant-Garde Art (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) 174.

¹¹⁰ Kuspit (2000) 175.

¹¹¹ Kuspit (2000) 267.

While the artistic process may seem self-indulgent it may not necessarily be driven by purely opportunistic career motives, but in fact for some may be an attempt at healing. While artists may not have to be schizophrenic in the clinical sense, the experience of trauma, which is shared by many, has very similar attributes. In fact it would seem that schizophrenia, the process of working through extreme trauma, initiation (as the next chapter will outline) and the avant-garde artistic process, appear to share a large number of characteristics. Getting 'lost' in the inner world, for some artists, may be a necessary part of the healing journey. It is true, though, as my own experience suggests, that if the artistic process is primarily regarded as a healing process, then once that is complete, that is as memories are retrieved and reincorporated, the 'drive' and the need to produce artwork may be very much reduced. It is possible then that some artists would choose not to face the psychological content of their own work for fear of losing the impulse to create.¹¹²

Kuspit's work on the hallucinatory aspects of the artistic process has claimed some dedicated followers, among them artists themselves who write in order to understand aspects of their own practice. One example is Stephen James Newton, a painter and educator whose text *Painting, Psychoanalysis and Spirituality* explores themes that endorse the perspective of this thesis.¹¹³ Drawing on the work of Anton Ehrenzweig, Newton argues that the experience of painting immerses the artist into a deep, manic-oceanic level of creative ability, often involving a loss of temporary consciousness, which can mimic mystical and deeply religious experiences.¹¹⁴ Newton relates the inner core of the painting process to ancient initiation rituals and the process of death and rebirth, suggesting that these ancient religions were cults of the psyche.¹¹⁵ He argues that the healing process involved in this deep artistic practice involves a homeopathic element, stating "[t]he artist deliberately introduces the poisonous projections of inarticulate form and, by so doing, increases levels of toleration of ego strength ... the basis of the ancient notion of 'he who

¹¹² I recently had a conversation on this theme with an Australian poet, Deb Westbury, who is currently negotiating her own memories of sexual and Masonic ritual abuse. Her greatest fear, she said, was that she would lose the creative impulse to write.

¹¹³ Stephen James Newton, *Painting, Psychoanalysis and Spirituality* (Cambridge University Press, 2001).

¹¹⁴ Newton xiv.

¹¹⁵ Newton 191.

wounds also heals.”¹¹⁶ Arguing for the use of psychoanalytic method in the analysis of art, Newton notes the resistance artists can have towards acknowledging the therapeutic aspects of their own art and observes a recent trend amongst artists where many choose “to distance themselves from what is often perceived as the limiting, reductive, and descriptive pronouncements of psychoanalysis.”¹¹⁷ This denial of the therapeutic aspects of creativity, coupled with post-structural preoccupations with the text and the ‘death’ or irrelevance of the author, has led to what Newton sees as a period in which the spiritual dimension of painting is repressed and denied.¹¹⁸ He suggests that the coupling of recent psychoanalytic practice with postmodern concerns has led to a kind of art theory that is devoid of an imperative towards improving the human condition.¹¹⁹

In the case of this project, it is important to reiterate the fact that the thesis here is written, as is Newton’s work, from the perspective of an artist. Perhaps in a reinforcement of Kuspit’s belief that artists are narcissistic, I know that my work is always about myself, my history and my experience, even if I don’t understand in what ways it is at the time of production. Often I will only understand years later the ways in which the artwork expresses aspects of my psyche: this can be embarrassing as I realise the extent to which my inner feelings have been so clearly exposed. Acknowledging this uncomfortable position, though, the thesis deploys Newton’s argument to demonstrate the usefulness of a psychoanalytic interpretation when applied to contemporary art.

While the psychoanalytic approach has been utilised by some critics it is important to acknowledge the stream of art criticism that has embraced post-structuralism and questions the boundary between the analysis of the work and the psychoanalysis of the artist. The concept of the fragmented subject is ideally applicable to this discussion. As the following chapters will demonstrate, the notion of fragmentation in the context of terror is central to the initiation process and its expression in artistic form. In the process of fragmentation due to trauma it appears that elements of the psyche can appear to become located within the

¹¹⁶ Newton 193.

¹¹⁷ Newton 1.

¹¹⁸ Newton xiv.

¹¹⁹ Newton 186.

objects present in the traumatising environment as the individual suffering the trauma dissociates from the terror and pain. Objects that are later artistically created become themselves the site of memory and need to be decoded as a memorial to the traumatic moment. This transference of information to the object has arguably led to the warning by Jill Bennett that it may be more useful to emphasise the object the artist produces, rather than the life of the artist, interpreting the work as material traces of trauma within the world.¹²⁰ In the case of hidden practices that are rarely brought to light, as in the case of ritual abuse, more may be learned from the objects the artist produces than from anything he or she can say about their life experience. The argument here, though, does suggest that the information stored in the art object produced, in order to complete the cycle of investigation, needs to be recognised in relation to the individual who produced it and the social forces surrounding it, in order to make a valid social critique.

Donald Kuspit's arguments also embrace the concept of the fragmented subject. Examining Analytic Cubism he argues that its form represents the divided self, "in which every attempt at self-unification leads to further self-splitting."¹²¹ However, rather than perceiving fragmentation as problematic, he argues that it is a fundamental process in the psyche enabling the ego to emerge out of chaos and to order its experience. He aligns the affective splitting between good and bad with the perceptual splitting of figure and ground and argues that the purpose of splitting is to set up "the boundaries necessary for psychic and social survival".¹²² The role of fragmentation, as the following chapters will outline, is fundamental to the myths and rituals of Freemasonry. It is also a prominent feature in the discussions about ritual abuse.

The following chapter will relate Masonic themes to the physiology of the brain, but it is relevant here to note that discussions of the role of figure and ground have been included in the medical analysis of trauma. Scientific experiments into the brain's record of visual elements during a terrifying episode suggest that the individual becomes hyper-alert to all

¹²⁰ Jill Bennett, "Material Encounters Approaching the Trauma of Others Through the Visual Arts," Postcolonial + Art. Where Now? (Sydney: Artspace Visual Art Centre, 2001).

¹²¹ Kuspit 44.

¹²² Kuspit 82.

sensory stimuli. The place in the brain regarded as responsible for this activity is the *locus coeruleus*.

Current views are that the LC (*locus coeruleus*) comprises part of a vigilance system involved in sensory biasing and feature extraction. When novel or fearful things appear in the environment this system switches on and orients the animal/man to what is going on. Orientation involves a heightening of figure-ground discrimination.¹²³

In other words art that is made in response to trauma involves the recalling of visual information that is impressed on the brain with greater intensity than the material associated with everyday experience. Colours can become brighter, shapes clearer and lines sharper in an overall response to the context of the event and the exaggeration of the total environment. It is interesting to note that Pierre Janet recommended treatment processes that incorporated activities similar to those used in contemporary art and occupational therapy for his traumatized patients.¹²⁴ During the artistic process, as I have noticed over the years of my own art practice, the creation of the forms and shapes in response to trauma does not necessarily produce the emotions of fear or anguish involved in the original experience. Instead, there is another mechanism that comes into play. Stephen Newton, analysing this process from a painter's perspective, argues that it is experienced by the artist as a state of 'envelopment' or an 'oceanic' feeling in which "all accidents seem to come right; all fragmentation is resolved" and there is an elimination of guilt and anxiety.¹²⁵ From my own perspective as an artist, the very act of making the forms appears to be a process of agency in which the artist has control, perhaps in contrast to the loss of control involved in the original experience. What can be experienced, in fact, is a sense of delight and of concentrated aesthetic purpose. The focus becomes, 'how do I resolve this image aesthetically?' rather than, 'what am I trying to remember?' In my experience, after the production of the work, the fear can arise again as the memories, in their narrative form,

¹²³ Healey 124.

¹²⁴ Phil Mollon, Multiple Selves, Multiple Voices. Working with Trauma, Violation and Dissociation (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1996).

¹²⁵ Newton 85.

push closer to the surface, and are only allayed as the memory is released and viewed from a contemporary perspective. The compulsion to repeat the forms appears to be only necessary as long as the original event is not remembered. This process corresponds with the notion of 'transference' of emotional states to the image, noted particularly by art therapists.¹²⁶

Bodily memories, or the condition that the body remembers what the mind forgets, become central to this process, and amongst them the sense of touch is primary. This sense appears to be integral to our ability to understand experience and is illustrated in the number of words associated with intellectual processes that utilise tactile imagery.¹²⁷ Rosalind Krauss alluded to the role of touch in her use of the Lacanian term 'tuché' for the concept of 'the missed encounter'. She argues that the sense of loss associated with a traumatic event produces a sense of excitement associated with self-mutilation as "something fallen from the body."¹²⁸ The attempt to find these lost memories becomes the perpetual preoccupation of the trauma-driven artist.

Scientific experiments into the role of touch and trauma appear to be associated with the difference between left and right-brain functions:

According to Risse and Gazzaniga (1979), although the memory of touching and palpating the object was not accessible to the verbal (left hemisphere) memory system, which in all regards was completely amnesic, this data was encoded in a non-verbal form within the right hemisphere when normal functions returned. The left (speaking) hemisphere was unable to gain access

¹²⁶ See, for example, Joy Schaverien, "Analytical Art Psychotherapy: Further Reflections on Theory and Practice", Inscape, vol. 2, 1994: 41 - 51.

¹²⁷ Constance Classen, Worlds of Sense. Exploring the Senses in History and Across Cultures (London: Routledge, 1993) 58. Examples are words such as grasp, conceive, apprehend, weigh up and so on.

¹²⁸ Rosalind E. Krauss, The Optical Unconscious (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994) 71.

to the information and memories stored in the right hemisphere even after transfer capabilities were re-established.¹²⁹

The fact that artists heavily utilise sensory information associated with right-brain functions suggests that they may be able to illustrate traumatic material without necessarily understanding it in logical or linguistic terms. Further, as Joy Schaverien notes, the use of words in the artist's relationship to his or her own images can be experienced by the artist as intrusive, both during the creation of the work and during the various stages of identification with the image after it is produced.¹³⁰

Another feature of the artistic representation of trauma in the contemporary period is that of repetition. Many critics have emphasised this aspect, among them, Susan Stewart who stresses the contemporary need to artistically probe the wound to explore the effects of the repetition of trauma.¹³¹ Richard Kuhns accounts for the repetition of iconographic elements in the lifelong career of an artist as the traces of a primal repression of traumatic material in the psyche.¹³² Using a similar logic, Donald Kuspit examines Matisse's depiction of the female form in terms of traumatic repetition: "[i]t is as though he had to repeat it over and over to prove to himself that he did indeed have mastery over his own subjectivity, and thus his response to woman. He had to repeat his escape from her, as though it was not real."¹³³ Rosalind Krauss discusses this feature of repetition and Kristine Stiles notes it in the work of Paul McCarthy, one of the artists featured below as a case study.¹³⁴ This repetitive artistic return to the site of the trauma can be likened to the myth of Sisyphus. In Albert Camus' interpretation of this myth he argues that while the hero's punishment was tragic,

¹²⁹ R. Joseph, "The Neurology of Traumatic 'Dissociative' Amnesia: commentary and literature review," Child Abuse & Neglect 23 (1999) 720.

¹³⁰ Schaverien 43 - 45.

¹³¹ Susan Stewart, Crimes of Writing (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991) 280. Quoted in Mark Seltzer, "Wound Culture: Trauma in the Pathological Public Sphere," October 80 Spring (1997) 4.

¹³² Richard Kuhns, Psychoanalytic Theory of Art. A Philosophy of Art on Developmental Principles (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983) 26 - 27.

¹³³ Kuspit (1993) 29.

¹³⁴ Krauss 58. "Kristine Stiles in Conversation with Paul McCarthy" in Paul McCarthy, exhibition catalogue (London: Phaidon Press, 1996) 16.

in one respect it still afforded him fulfilment. After examining the hero's plight he concluded, "one must imagine Sisyphus happy."¹³⁵ The artist, too, derives a great sense of pleasure from repeatedly turning to familiar forms, shapes and textures even if they were once derived from painful experiences.

A number of critics note that body and performance art, as well as installation art, is particularly concerned with themes of trauma. In a summary of international trends in performance art between 1949 and 1979 Kristine Stiles comments that "[e]very example of violence or destruction in art, especially when it is related directly to the artist's body, contains a lingering trauma still present from the past."¹³⁶ Ralph Rugoff, basing his claim on 35 years of observing American West Coast art, suggests that it may be useful to examine certain types of contemporary art from a forensic perspective, that is, as evidence and traces of a crime.¹³⁷ Lea Vergine's comments on 1970s performance art in *Body Art and Performance: The Body as Language* also raise a number of themes relevant to this thesis.¹³⁸ In her introduction, written in 1974, she draws on psychoanalysis to respond to the bizarre enactments of performance artists, and while not using the term 'trauma' (a term that was to become fashionable later) noted the "compulsive repetitions of acts of reparation" in much of the work.¹³⁹ More importantly, for this thesis, she tendered the possibility that these compulsive acts were in some way related to religious themes or cult practices. She also notes the 'ferocious misogyny' in the work and the presence of scatological acts, "where the ingestion of urine, feces and other products of elimination stands as a symbol for an envy of the womb and functions as a local kind of exorcism of the terror of openly competing with the female genitals."¹⁴⁰ These traits parallel those found in the context of ritual abuse, as the thesis will discuss. In her conclusion, written in 2000, she

¹³⁵ Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1955) 99.

¹³⁶ Kristine Stiles, "Uncorrupted Joy: International Art Actions" in *Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object 1949 – 1979*, exhibition catalogue, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1998) 241.

¹³⁷ Ralph Rugoff, *Scene of the Crime*, exhibition catalogue (Cambridge, Mass., London: MIT Press, 1997) 17.

¹³⁸ Lea Vergine, *Body Art and Performance: The Body as Language* (Milano, Italy: Skira, 2000).

¹³⁹ Vergine 19.

¹⁴⁰ Vergine 20.

updates the body art of the 1970s with examples of performance art from the late 1990s and incorporates a brief discussion of fractured subjectivity and the notion of the divided self.¹⁴¹ However, despite her earlier intimations about religious intentions and cult associations she does not expand on these themes.

As the critics discussed above have demonstrated, amongst contemporary artists are many who display the characteristics of deep trauma within their work, reinforcing Hal Foster's claim that trauma is one of contemporary art's key signifiers. The question here is: is it possible that many artists who have been selected by critics to illustrate a contemporary international *zeitgeist* could in fact be demonstrating something more specific than the general malaise of postmodernism? The following analysis will draw together all of the above concerns to examine whether a certain category of artists are, in fact, recording traces of crimes enacted in the context of cult practices, as Vergine first implied in 1974. It will argue that there is a silence at the heart of contemporary art that replicates the silence at the heart of trauma, something unspoken and unspeakable, something never stated. This unspeakable material, it will claim, in some cases relates to the role of 'brotherhood', specifically to the role of the Masonic Order, which has been an integral part of the western intellectual tradition since the eighteenth century.

¹⁴¹ Vergine 280.

CHAPTER TWO

TERROR, TRAUMA AND THE MASONIC TRADITION

“... one of the ‘rules’ of the logic of science is called parsimony. In science we are required to explain phenomenon in the simplest terms necessary to account fully for them. In other words, if we can explain these events in purely naturalistic (rather than supernatural) terms, we are obligated to do so.”

James Randall Noblitt and Pamela Sue Perskin,
*Cult and Ritual Abuse. Its History, Anthropology,
and Recent Discovery in America.*¹

Prior to the investigation of the relationship between Masonic themes and examples of contemporary art this chapter will examine the role of Masonic initiation rituals, myths and symbols in the context of theories of psychological trauma. It will propose that embedded within the initiatory tradition of the Masonic Order may be an understanding of the nature of physiological experiences that can produce mystical states, that is, experiences that take the individual into a state of heightened awareness, described by some as a state of ‘oneness with the universe’. This state can be arrived at in a number of ways, either through progressive training and ‘attunement’ through meditative spiritual practices, through chemical intervention or through shock. This chapter will suggest that there may be a similarity between the symbolic expressions of Freemasonry and the psychology and physiology of trauma as expressed in current debates, outlined in the previous chapter. It will argue that contained within the fraternal tradition of initiation lodges may be an understanding of the workings of the mind in the context of terrifying experience.

Male initiation processes in general appear to demonstrate the ever-present threat that men can impose on each other and the close proximity of death in all relations between men, whether in the field of battle or in the boardroom. The terror experienced by the novitiate is the central ingredient of the initiation process and his vulnerability throughout the experience marks the power of the group over the individual. Once safely through this

¹ James Randall Noblitt and Pamela Sue Perskin, Cult and Ritual Abuse. Its History, Anthropology, and Recent Discovery in America (Westport, London: Praeger, 1995) 51.

process he is then protected by the group provided he adheres to the strict requirements of secrecy. The cementing of male relations through implied terror – we could kill you but we have chosen not to – is the hallmark of all fraternal initiatory structures. This chapter will offer an interpretation of Masonic myths, rituals and symbols that draws on current theories of psychological trauma and brain physiology. It will suggest that parallels may be drawn between the ritual processes and theories of brain function that may illuminate the significance of initiation practices in the context of a search for the mystical experience. It will also discuss the misuse of Masonic principles in the context of what Masons themselves define as ‘spurious’ Freemasonry and the theme of ritual abuse within Masonic practice.

A Psycho-Physiological Interpretation of Masonic Symbolism

A widely circulated definition of Freemasonry, as already stated, is that it is a “science of morality, veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols” and its intention is to teach its members knowledge of themselves and of the soul’s journey through life.² According to Albert Mackey, the two doctrines that constitute the philosophy of Freemasonry are the unity of God and the immortality of the soul.³ Masonic ritual, developed largely since the eighteenth century, is an eclectic mix of mythological symbolism from a range of sources: the Old Testament, Greek and Egyptian mythology and the Jewish Kabala as well as from the operative practice of the builder’s craft, a remnant of Freemasonry’s roots in the construction of the great cathedrals.⁴ The Order has many degrees consisting of the three Craft degrees plus a whole range of ‘higher’ degrees. All degrees are aimed at edifying the initiate through a series of allegorical and cautionary tales and mythological enactments. The higher degrees often embellish various aspects of the stories enacted in the basic Craft degrees as well as providing additional material from other sources. Using the hermetic

² Albert G. Mackey, The Symbolism of Freemasonry: Illustrating and Explaining its Science and Philosophy, its Legends, Myths and Symbols (Chicago: Charles T. Pownor Co, 1955) 10.

³ Mackey 11.

⁴ Many Masonic scholars comment on the eclectic nature of Masonic ritual practice. See, for example, Mary Mulvey Roberts and Hugh Ormsby-Lennon, Secret Texts. The Literature of Secret Societies (New York: Ams Press, 1995) 108. “[R]eference is made to cabalism, druidism, Egyptian wisdom and the transmission of various occult teachings such as Renaissance Neoplatonism into its arcana.”

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axiom, 'as above, so below', the following discussion will suggest that a number of the key myths and symbols that have been chosen by Freemasonry to be used in the various initiation processes may bear some relationship to the previous discussion on the nature of trauma and to some extent may represent an understanding of brain function.

Some scholars have argued that the emergence of symbols is closely linked to our relationship to the body. For example, the anthropologist Victor Turner states:

... the human body is the source of symbols and systems of symbols, which are extended outward to organize and understand the social world. Among the most basic human symbols is the set of three colours composed of white, red and black, representing the products of the human body: milk or semen, blood, and faeces or decayed matter. Those situations in which these products are spilled from the body are ones of heightened emotion.⁵

The practice of linking mysticism and magic to physiological explanations can therefore be found in a range of scholarly discussions. In the realm of art and mysticism Kay and Roger Easson's excellent commentary on William Blake's illustrated poem *Milton* is an example of such an association. The authors argue that the poem can better be understood by relating Blake's symbolism to the anatomy and physiology of the eye.⁶ Their argument suggests that the body may in fact be a lens between the cosmos in its external representation and the mystical realms of the cosmos within, with physiology providing a structure for its comprehension. In more recent times scientists have become involved in the discussion. John Horgan summarises late twentieth and early twenty first-century attempts by a range of scientists who use neurological approaches to pinpoint 'god consciousness' and other metaphysical functions within the structure of the brain and the nervous system.⁷ Amongst the Masonic fraternity C.W. Leadbeater, in a discussion of magic symbolism, has argued that the caduceus, the magical rod of power with its twisting serpents and pine cone top,

⁵ Cited in Catherine Bell, *Ritual. Perspectives and Dimensions* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) 41.

may be a representation of the spinal column ending in the medulla and drawn from Indian concepts of kundalini.⁸

The ritualistic space within the Lodge simulates key aspects of the layout of Solomon's Temple. Derived from the building practices of the medieval stonemasons, architectural symbolism forms the basis of the Order and it is argued by Masonic writers to be an allegorical expression of the spiritual life.⁹ Solomon's Temple has frequently been interpreted as a metaphor for the body and the Masonic writer Albert Mackey reinforces such an idea from a Masonic perspective, describing "the ceremonies of the third degree ... in which a dilapidated building is metaphorically made to represent the decays and infirmities of old age in the human body."¹⁰ The two pillars, Jachin and Boaz, form one of the key motifs and represent the entrance to the Temple. (*Fig. 3*) In Cabbalistic literature the two pillars relate to the right and left sides of the body and their mirror impression.¹¹ They were important structures that were said to have preserved the clay tablets of sacred knowledge from destruction by fire and water. James Curl describes them as a sort of primitive library.¹² Here the relationship to the left and right functions of the brain and their

⁶ Kay Parkhurst Easson and Roger R. Easson (editors), Milton. A Poem by William Blake (London: Thames & Hudson, 1978).

⁷ John Horgan, Rational Mysticism. Dispatches from the Border between Science and Spirituality (Boston, New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2003).

⁸ C.W. Leadbeater, Ancient Mystic Rites (1926; Madras, London: Theosophical Publishing House, 1986) 93.

⁹ A.E. Waite, Emblematic Freemasonry and the Evolution of its Deeper Issues (London: William Rider & Son, 1925) 20. Waite describes the role of Emblematic Freemasonry as 'spiritual architecture'. Waite was a student of Martinism, the teachings of the French mystic Louis Claude de Saint-Martin, a major force in the occult and esoteric movement of the last three centuries. See also Bernard E. Jones, Freemason's Guide and Compendium (London: George G. Harrap & Co, 1952) 312. Jones talks about speculative Masons using the symbolism in terms of building a 'Temple of Living Stones'. On page 427 Jones also refers to John Bunyan's Solomon's Temple Spiritualised, published in 1688.

¹⁰ Mackey 82.

¹¹ Israel Regardie, The Golden Dawn (St. Paul, Minnesota: Llewellyn Publications, 1978) 122, 161. The importance of the role of right and left and its mirroring is also noted by W. Bro. J.T. Thorp in The Two Pillars (Wallesey: Wallesey Printers, 1924) 8.

¹² James Curl, The Art and Architecture of Freemasonry (London: B.T. Batsford, 1991) 28.

Deleted: However, as the authors argue, the assumptions of western psychology, that consciousness is identical with the activity of the brain, needs to be treated with caution. (p. 138) What I have drawn from their discussion, however, is that the body may in fact be a lens between the cosmos in its external representation and the mystical realms of the cosmos within, with physiology providing a structure for its comprehension.

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control of the opposite sides of the body, known as contralaterality, may be relevant.¹³ These two pillars can also represent qualities such as severity and mercy, the concept of white and black, Adam and Eve, male and female and so on.¹⁴

The construction of Solomon's Temple was to provide a permanent residence for the Ark of the Covenant, which from the time of Moses had been housed in a tent. In Royal Arch ritual Moses is stated to be one of the first three Grand Masters of Freemasonry.¹⁵ In a plan of Solomon's Temple depicted in the Masonic pamphlet, *The Two Pillars*, the Ark of the Covenant resides in the Holy of Holies and directly outside in the Holy Place is the altar of incense.¹⁶ In brain physiology the word thalamus is derived from the Greek word meaning an inner room, commonly applied to a bridal chamber or bridal couch.¹⁷ The thalamus resides in the centre of the brain; it is covered completely by the cortical hemisphere and "is sometimes called the gateway to the cortex, because the main inputs to the cortex have to pass through it."¹⁸ As Crick notes, "[t]he idea that the thalamus is a key player in consciousness is not a new one."¹⁹ Its role is to "keep the somatosensory, mental, and emotional activity of a living individual in harmony..."²⁰ He also observes that, "a large part of the visual thalamus is called the 'pulvinar'" and adds, "the word originally meant a pillow!"²¹ In recent research the pulvinar has been related to the visual system and the

¹³ Robert L. Solso, *Cognition and the Visual Arts* (Cambridge, London: MIT Press, 1994) 34.

¹⁴ Regardie's interpretation of the significance of left and right, male and female is as follows. He aligns the right hand white pillar with the male, Adam, the biblical pillar of light and fire, and mercy, whereas the left hand black pillar is aligned with the female, Eve, the pillar of cloud and severity. Regardie 161.

¹⁵ Robert Lomas, *Invisible College: The Royal Society, Freemasonry and the Birth of Modern Science* (London: Headline, 2002) 76.

¹⁶ Thorp, opposite page 5.

¹⁷ [Francis Crick, The Astonishing Hypothesis. The Scientific Search for the Soul \(New York: Touchstone, 1994\) 84.](#) [Chihiro Ohye](#) notes that the French equivalent is 'couch optique' emphasising "the optic tract that can be traced by gross anatomy to the thalamus." [Chihiro Ohye](#), "Thalamus and Thalamic Damage", V.S. Ramachandran, ed., *Encyclopaedia of the Human Brain*, Vol. 4 (Amsterdam, etc.: Academic Press, 2002) 575.

¹⁸ Crick 84.

¹⁹ Crick 249. Note that Aleister Crowley termed his own ritual, a distorted version of Masonic practices, the Order of Thelema. Is this a corruption of the term 'thalamus'?

²⁰ [Ohye 575.](#)

²¹ Crick 84.

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higher cognitive functions such as symbolic expression.²² According to my Latin dictionary, the second declension noun, pulvinus/-i means cushion or pillow, but the third declension, pulvinar/-aris means sacred couch or seat of honour.²³ Could this choice of terminology reflect a reference to the ‘mercy seat’ of the Ark of the Covenant, housed within the inner sanctum, the Holy of Holies? If so, the positioning of the altar of incense immediately outside the Holy of Holies may be a symbolic reference to the fact that smell is the only sense that does not involve a crossover of neural pathways between the brain and the body: the right side of the nose, connects to the right side of the brain.²⁴ Its close relationship to memory is well known. A biblical description of the Ark reads:

And the Lord spake unto Moses saying: And thou shalt make a mercy seat of pure gold ... and thou shalt make two cherubims of gold ... in the two ends of the mercy seat ... and the cherubims shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces shall look one to another ... and thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee. And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony...²⁵

When Solomon recreated a ‘house’ for the Ark he set the cherubim with their wings touching the sides of each wall.²⁶ Read in physiological terms, the wings of the cherubim may symbolically represent the two sides of the cerebral cortex, which touch the inner walls of the skull and meet ‘face to face’ in an inner room where consciousness resides. Read in these terms, the ‘mercy seat’ could then represent the brain’s capacity to organise

²² [Ohye](#) 589.

²³ D.A. Kidd, [Collins Latin Gem Dictionary](#) (1957; London, Glasgow: Collins, 1966) 271.

²⁴ Crick 87. [Paul Valéry notes that, “\[s\]mell is an all-powerful *revealer* ... of all the sensations, smell is the one able to act most forcefully *alongside* consciousness.” Quoted in \[The Sublime Void. On the Memory of the Imagination. Exhibition catalogue. Museum voor Schone Kunsten. \\(Antwerp: Ludion, 1993\\) 122.\]\(#\)](#)

²⁵ Exodus 25, 17 – 22.

²⁶ I Kings 6, 27.

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the chaos, that is, the continual mass of sensory information being inputted. Blake attributes this capacity to the body's sense of time, in other words 'memory', saying, "Time is the mercy of Eternity; without Time's swiftness/ Which is the swiftest of all things, all were eternal torment."²⁷

In the Second Degree called Fellow Craft, based on I Kings, chapter 6, the building of Solomon's Temple forms the context of the enactment.²⁸ The Middle Chamber and the Winding Stairs are two important Masonic symbols. (*Fig. 4*) As the Biblical verse states: "[t]he door for the middle chamber was in the right side of the house; and they went up with winding stairs into the middle chamber, and out of the middle into the third."²⁹ Mackey notes that Fellow Crafts, the workers on the temple, ascended the winding stairs to the Middle Chamber to receive their wages.³⁰ He interprets this Middle Chamber as the place where Truth is received and the winding stairs as a symbol of spiritual progress.³¹ Research into the thalamus has exposed a number of different centres of activity, known as nuclei. The main nucleus is called the Ventral Caudal Nucleus. As Chihiro Ohye notes, "[r]ostral to the VC nucleus ... there is a wedge-shaped zone named the ventral intermediate (Vim) nucleus that contains clusters of large cells, scattered throughout."³² Electrical stimulation of the medial part of the Vim nucleus, "induces a turning sensation or elevator feeling."³³ The wedge appears in Freemasonry as the symbol of the keystone, one of its central motifs. The psychologist Susan Blackmore has suggested that certain hallucinogenic experiences can impact on nerve cells in the brain to produce the visual

²⁷ Easson & Easson 144. [The opposite position can also be taken, where a sense of timelessness can be seen as a merciful release from the problem of memory, even a sense of eternal bliss. Nietzsche's observations of a herd of animals living 'unhistorically' and oblivious to the sense of yesterday, is in marked contrast to the human experience in which "the ever-growing burden of the past" can be problematic. As Nietzsche suggests, such a capacity to live perpetually in the present, which the animal herd seems to represent can be perceived as a lost paradise. Friedrich Nietzsche, "Unmodern Observations", quoted in *The Sublime Void. On the Memory of the Imagination* 65.](#)

²⁸ Mackey 215.

²⁹ Mackey 226. I Kings 6, 8.

³⁰ Mackey 210.

³¹ [Mackey 226, 216.](#)

³² Ohye 580, 585.

³³ Ohye 586.

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appearance of spiralling stripes that can appear like a tunnel on the visual cortex.³⁴ Read in physiological terms the symbol of the winding stairs may therefore be a means of illustrating this physical feeling and hallucinatory visual effect. As a space where ‘truth’ is received it is possible that the Middle Chamber may mark a space familiar to those who study meditation, a place in the brain that is neither right nor left, a state of centralised stillness where the individual can receive a sense of connection to the divine, in yogic terms “a condition called the ‘clear light’ of the mind.”³⁵ Enacted somewhere in the thalamus, the inner room or bridal chamber, this may suggest another way of representing the familiar mystical concept of the alchemical wedding, represented as the concept of the hermaphrodite, and in Jungian terms, a condition whereby the male and female aspects of the psyche are in complete harmony.³⁶

By celebrating the process of building Solomon’s Temple, the Second Degree appears to be emphasising the rewards of patient spiritual development, that is, the experience of divine connection that mystics know as an experience of cosmic consciousness and immortality. Quoting the writings of St John of the Cross, one of the patron saints of Freemasonry, William James notes the effect of mystical experiences on the quality of life: “[t]hey enrich it marvellously. A single one of them may be sufficient to abolish at a stroke certain imperfections of which the soul during its whole life had vainly tried to rid itself, and to leave it adorned with virtues and loaded with supernatural gifts. A single one of these intoxicating consolations may reward it for all the labours undergone in its life ...”³⁷

The Third Degree, however, may be suggesting the dangers that can accompany any attempt to shortcut this gradual process. It is represented through the legend of Hiram Abif, one of the main myths celebrated in the Masonic tradition, also called the ‘golden

³⁴ Cited in Michael Shermer, Why People Believe Weird Things. Pseudoscience, superstition, and other confusions of our time (New York: W.H. Freeman and Company, 1997) 80.

³⁵ See John Crook, “The Nature of Conscious Awareness” in, Mindwaves edited by Colin Blakemore and Susan Greenfield (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987) 392, for a discussion relating yoga practice to brain physiology.

³⁶ Carl Jung, Man and His Symbols (1964; New York: Doubleday, 1976) 30.

³⁷ William James, The Varieties of Religious Experience (1902; Cambridge, London: Harvard University Press, 1985) 328.

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legend'.³⁸ It is the story of the murder of Solomon's master builder, Hiram Abif by the three traitors, his brother builders.³⁹ This degree represents the 'raising' of the Master Mason.⁴⁰ But as Mackey notes, "[t]he legend has been considered of so much importance that it has been preserved in the symbolism of every Masonic rite."⁴¹

A member of the Order, Conrad Hahn, discusses the legend of Hiram Abif and its importance.⁴² Though the tale is derived from a biblical source (1 Kings Chapter 7 and 11 Chronicles Chapter 2) Hahn notes that as a legend it is only loosely historical, and does not adhere strictly to biblical accounts. Briefly, the story goes as follows: in order to build his Temple in Jerusalem King Solomon sent to Hiram, King of Tyre, for materials and assistance. A highly skilled artisan named Hiram, the son of a widow of the tribe of Naphtali, was appointed a Master of Works, a superintending architect. In the Masonic version he is named Hiram Abif (Abif meaning father, a term of respect). The building of the temple took seven years to complete with more than 85,000 workers.⁴³ The workers were promised that they would be elevated in status to Master Mason if they completed the work faithfully. However, some workers became dissatisfied and conspired to extort these privileges and the accompanying higher wages from Hiram Abif before its completion, using violent threats. Hiram steadfastly refused to yield to their threats and they murdered him. As Hahn notes, the symbolism of the drama can be read on a number of levels: as

³⁸ Mackey 17.

³⁹ The spelling of Hiram Abif varies. Sometimes it is spelled with one 'f', at other times it contains two.

⁴⁰ Bernard E. Jones, Freemason's Guide and Compendium (London: George G. Harrap & Co., 1952) 303 – 322. Chapter 18 "The Hiram Legend of the Third Degree."

⁴¹ Mackey 228.

⁴² See Conrad Hahn, P.C.M. The Importance of the Legend of Hiram Abiff, <http://mastermason.info/education/files/apr02/include/importance.htm>, Accessed 2nd April 2004.

While this explanation is an interpretation by an ordinary member of the Order, and not an official Masonic interpretation, it does, I feel, relate the story in terms of a contemporary understanding of worker's rights. It is an interpretation that offers an explanation of why the fellow craft workers plotted to attack Hiram Abif, which is often not present in other renditions of the story.

⁴³ Facts about the building of the Temple vary widely amongst Freemasons. Another Masonic writer, W. Bro. J.T. Thorp, claims the number of workers associated with the building was no less than 183,000 persons. J.T. Thorp, The Two Pillars at the Porchway-entrance of King Solomon's Temple (Wallasey: Wallasey Printers, 1924) 5.

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conflict between men, an individual against evil forces or, in the soul of the individual, the conflicts, lusts and passions that make war on an individual's character and spiritual aspirations.⁴⁴

The enactment of the Third Degree Ritual, according to various sources, goes roughly as follows. (*Fig. 5*) The central figure Hiram Abif goes at noon (in Masonic parlance High Twelve) into Solomon's Temple to pray.⁴⁵ Three Fellow Craftsmen follow him and wait for him to come out when they individually approach him to give them the secret word.⁴⁶ The murder is enacted in three phases at different points in the Lodge. The first traitor approaches Hiram Abif, asks him for the secret Word but is refused, then attacks the Master with a blow to the left temple. Hiram falls to his right knee. The second traitor attacks the Master at his right temple and he falls to his left knee. The third blow from the last traitor is in the centre of the Master's forehead and he collapses to the ground, dead. The traitors then take his body and bury it unceremoniously in a shallow grave, marking it with a sprig of cassia (or acacia). Upon hearing of the crime King Solomon orders a search for the body. After a number of days the body is found when one of the Masons pulls at the sprig of cassia. The body has already begun to decay and when the Masons pull at the corpse's hand it slips. The Masons try three times, and on the third attempt embrace the body in the Five Points of Fellowship, a symbol of brotherly love and support.⁴⁷ Retrieving it, they then return it to the King for decent burial.

The story is a variation on the theme of death and resurrection and, in an Order that holds the concept of brotherhood in the highest esteem, the murder of Hiram by three 'brothers' amounts to an act of betrayal, regarded as the greatest crime in Freemasonry. As a conflict

⁴⁴ The contents of this paragraph are taken in abbreviated form from Conrad Hahn's web page.

⁴⁵ Alan Axelrod, The International Encyclopedia of Secret Societies and Fraternal Orders (New York: Facts on File, 1997) 124.

⁴⁶ Axelrod 12.

⁴⁷ The Five Points of Fellowship is an embrace between two Masonic brothers and is described as 'foot to foot, knee to knee, breast to breast, hand to back, and cheek to cheek or mouth to ear.' Ex-Masons for Jesus, Masonic Rituals for the Blue Lodge
<http://www.ephesians5-11.org/masonicritual/>
Accessed 24th May 2003.

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between brothers, it obeys the pattern of mythological representation where the opposition between good and evil is represented as fraternal rivalry. As Alan Watts observes, such a representation suggests the impossibility of disowning one's own blood completely.⁴⁸ As Albert Mackey notes, there are many interpretations of the murder of Hiram Abif: the death and resurrection of the Christ, the death of the Templars, the murder of Abel by Cain, the cycle of the seasons and so on. Mackey argues that from a Masonic viewpoint it demonstrates the immortality of the soul: "[t]he living soul, with the lifeless body which has encased it, has disappeared, and can nowhere be found".⁴⁹ As an example of initiatory practice it adheres to the pattern of torture, death and resurrection and the retention of ordeals, special teaching and secrecy as noted by Mircea Eliade, found in both ancient and contemporary initiation practices.⁵⁰ The successive blows to Hiram's head emulate the series of shocks applied to the initiate, as observed by Arnold Van Gennep and Victor Turner, which lead the initiate into the liminal state. The period of time in the makeshift grave marks this liminal period and the rescue of the corpse, the process of reaggregation or incorporation.⁵¹

The initiatory pattern of the Third Degree, as the following argument suggests, may be interpreted as an allegorical description of the effect of trauma on the psyche and may be seen as a representation of brain processes. In much Masonic ritual there is a strong emphasis on the role of right and left. Victor Turner has suggested a link between the limbic system, as controller of the emotions, and the left and right hemispheres of the brain, with ritual practice.⁵² In the Hiram legend this is demonstrated through the blows to the sides of the head, which cause the victim to collapse to the opposite knee, illustrating the

⁴⁸ Alan Watts, The Two Hands of God. The Myth of Polarity (London: Rider & Co., 1963) 115.

⁴⁹ Mackey 233.

⁵⁰ Mircea Eliade, Rites and Symbols of Initiation. The Mysteries of Birth and Rebirth (Woodstock, Connecticut: Spring Publications, 1995) 123.

⁵¹ Cited by Victor Turner in various texts such as in Blazing the Trail. Way Marks in the Exploration of Symbols (Tucson, London: The University of Arizona Press, 1992) 133 and From Ritual to Theatre. The Human Seriousness of Play (New York: PAJ Publications, 1982) 42, 46.

⁵² Victor Turner, "Body, Brain, and Culture", Zygon, 18, no. 3 (September 1983) 243, quoted in Catherine Bell, Ritual. Perspectives and Dimensions (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) 277.

phenomenon of crossed neural control of the brain hemispheres on the body. The Masonic symbol of the skull and crossbones, a widely used symbol of death, may also be a reference to this crossover effect. The ritual murder of Hiram Abif may be interpreted as a symbolic representation of betrayal trauma - as Jennifer Freyd suggests, one of the forms of trauma that is the most difficult to accommodate and therefore the most associated with repression.⁵³ The three physical blows can thus be seen to represent a series of psychic shocks, which plunge the victim into a morbid psychological condition, which Leonard Shengold describes as 'soul murder', a condition felt as a void or loss of soul.⁵⁴ This also corresponds with the descent into Hades or the Underworld in the initiatory stories of classical mythology and notions of the return to the womb or the sea monster's belly.⁵⁵ As Eliade suggests, "[f]or although originally the Other World is the world after death, it finally comes to mean any transcendent state ..." ⁵⁶ Hiram's body is roughly buried with a sprig of cassia planted to mark the site of the grave.⁵⁷ Cassia or acacia is linked in magic lore with the role of memory, lost and found.⁵⁸ A.E. Waite, discussing the Eighteenth Degree, which is an elaboration on the Hiramic theme of the Third Degree, describes it as a

⁵³ Jennifer J. Freyd, Betrayal Trauma. The Logic of Forgetting Childhood Abuse (Cambridge, Mass., London: Harvard University Press, 1996) 62.

⁵⁴ Leonard Shengold, Soul Murder. The Effects of Childhood Abuse and Deprivation (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1989). It is interesting to note that an Australian anti-Masonic writer, Kevin Ekert, formerly a 32nd degree Mason and member for the Order for 25 years, in renouncing the Order as demonic, offers former Masons a series of renunciations to eradicate the 'curses' of Freemasonry. He cites one to do with death through brain damage: "I renounce and forsake 'the three death blows', the enactment of death and the Masonic teaching of how to die. I proclaim I shall not die through blows to the head, the head stroke, or brain haemorrhage, in the name of Jesus Christ." From his account it appears that Masons may be taught that the three blows represent ways to die physically. Kevin Ekert, The Curses and Bondages of Freemasonry (1985; Ettalong Beach: Australian Christian Ministries, 1996) 45.

⁵⁵ Eliade 58, 64.

⁵⁶ Eliade 65.

⁵⁷ According to J.N. Casavis, "cassia was used, as an old custom of those Eastern countries, when embalming the dead, especially in preparing the head, and drying up the brain." J.N. Casavis, The Greek Origin of Freemasonry (New York: D.C. Drury, 1955) 176.

⁵⁸ The Masonic writer John T. Lawrence states, "[t]he acacia alluded to in the same part of our ceremonies is a tropical plant, from which is extracted the drug called catechu, and also gum arabic." John T. Lawrence, Sidelights on Freemasonry: Craft and Royal Arch (London: A. Lewis, 1924) 214.

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The Masonic writer John T. Lawrence states, "[t]he acacia alluded to in the same part of our ceremonies is a tropical plant, from which is extracted the drug called catechu, and also gum arabic." John T. Lawrence, Sidelights on Freemasonry: Craft and Royal Arch (London: A. Lewis, 1924) 214.

memorial of loss and recovery.⁵⁹ Traumatic shock immerses the individual into a state that can be felt as a state of soul loss. This state is also described as “a phylogenetically older psychological mechanism - to freeze or play dead, or ... psychic numbing.”⁶⁰ The ‘rough burial’ in the Hiram legend can then be regarded as symbolic of the role of repression that pushes the experience just below the surface of consciousness. The retrieval of these memories can be painful but once perceived in their totality, can be decently buried, that is, finally put to rest, as is the body of Hiram Abif once it is discovered.

The initiation process, as Turner argues, amounts to a controlled application of shock to immerse the initiate into the liminal state and then carefully return them to their normal state as a completion of the process. In the Third Degree, the latter part of the ritual restores the victim in a reversal of the murder. Three Masons sent by the King to find the body discover the grave, as already described. The first part of the body that they see is the hand, which they attempt to grasp, but it slips. Viewed in the light of trauma theory, this focus on the hand suggests a reference to the sense of touch and the role of bodily memories previously discussed. The retrieval of repressed memory is a difficult process and memories too painful for the conscious ego to address can firstly be felt bodily, with no conscious explanation as to their cause. As these memories come to the surface they can slip away from consciousness as one attempts to grasp them. The Five Points of Fellowship, while a symbol of ‘brotherly love’, that is, the nurturing process necessary to gently bring the initiate back into the group, is also the creation of a type of mirror image, between the ‘corpse’ of Hiram and the faithful Mason who represents King Solomon. The image suggests the act of confronting death ‘face-to-face’. Something that has ‘died’ in the initiation process can now be reincorporated, both in a psychic and a social sense. In trauma terms the retrieval of repressed memories of terrifying or life-threatening experience allows them to be confronted and re-evaluated in the light of present experience. The Five Points of Fellowship may also be a reference to the five senses, as the restoration of repressed memories can help restore a more balanced relationship between the physical and the

⁵⁹ A.E. Waite, [Emblematic Freemasonry and the Evolution of its Deeper Issues](#) (London: William Rider & Son, 1925) 15.

⁶⁰ Noel Walsh, “Life in Death”, [Trauma and Self](#), edited by Charles B. Strozier and Michael Flynn (Lanham, Maryland; London: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996) 252.

psychic body. The retrieval of the body in the Hiramic ritual is achieved through a hold known as the Lion's Grip, in which the two Masons grip each other's wrists, suggesting the need for strength and, in trauma terms, a powerful determination to reconnect with the source of painful memories.

When the body is retrieved the Mason whispers the lost Word into the initiate's ear. In an explanation of Royal Arch terms Roy Wells discusses this word: "[t]he Master's Word is Mahhabone. This signifies rotten, or decayed almost to the bone. It is the word that is whispered in your ear at the raising of your master, and is never to be spoke out, for they receive it as solemn as the Name of God."⁶¹ Wells suggests it is derived from the words Magboe and Boe "[signifying] Marrow in the Bone, so is our secret to be concealed."⁶² Mackey argues that the lost Word and the process of loss, substitution and recovery, are symbols of Divine Truth and its search.⁶³ The burying of the secrets 'like marrow in the bone' may be a way of describing the profound nature of repression associated with traumatic memory and the rotting or decay, the accompanying experience of psychic breakdown. In contemporary trauma terms the restoration of repressed memory is marked by the ability to put into words what has previously been unavailable to verbal language, suggesting that there has been some crossing over of information from the non-verbal areas of the brain in which the traumatic memories are stored, for them to be translated into narrative and spoken memory.

In trauma terms, then, the Hiramic Legend may arguably be seen as a metaphorical enactment of what is occurring physiologically when terror is used to produce the experience of inner light, that is, a similar sense of cosmic consciousness or immortality that is gained through the slow pursuit of spiritual growth demonstrated in the Second Degree. As was stated in the previous chapter, Freemasonry belongs to the Gnostic tradition. The figure of Lucifer, the 'bringer of light', that is, the light of the mystic

⁶¹ Roy A. Wells, Some Royal Arch Terms Explained (Shepperton, Middlesex: A. Lewis (Masonic Publishers) 1978) 15.

⁶² Wells 11. Eliade notes the use of bone in initiations in hunting cultures, as opposed to the use of the seed in agrarian contexts. Eliade 92.

⁶³ Mackey 303.

experience, is central to this tradition. The relationship between Lucifer and the psychology of trauma is demonstrated in a nineteenth century play called *The Tragedy of Man* by the Hungarian Imre Madach, discussed by the anthropologist Géza Róheim.⁶⁴ Lucifer is the central character in the play and is called 'The Spirit of Denial'. In the play Lucifer invites Adam to fly into space (that is, to dissociate) to escape the dross of earthly life: "[t]he pain will cease when the last bond we break that ties us to our vanished Mother Earth."⁶⁵ This human capacity to escape terror or intense emotional or physical pain through denial and dissociation may have been harnessed by the Masonic tradition in pursuit of the mystic experience. By interfering with the brain's process of organising information, that is through a physical or psychic blow (shock, terror or hypnosis) the mind can be coerced out of its normal process of ordering information based on the concept of time, to experiencing a sense of timelessness. As William James notes such experiences can produce the feeling of invincible courage.⁶⁶ The sense of invincibility it produces is clearly of use in warrior cultures (note the belief in immortality amongst suicide bombers in today's climate of terrorism). Jones and Pennick argue that the rise of Freemasonry was connected with the earlier role of Druidism and its relationship to battle, sacrifice and hunting magic.⁶⁷ Orders were frequently established to commemorate famous battles. This could suggest that Masonic rituals, by demonstrating a knowledge of the functioning of the psyche in the context of terror, may have also been important for the processing of war trauma and may contribute to explanations of why Freemasonry has been popular amongst returned soldiers after periods of war, in recent times for example, after World War Two.⁶⁸ Ultimately, though, the pursuit of inner light through the experience of terror can amount to a

⁶⁴ Géza Róheim, *Psychoanalysis and Anthropology* (New York: International Universities Press, 1968) 461 – 469.

⁶⁵ [Róheim 467.](#)

⁶⁶ James 328.

⁶⁷ Prudence Jones & Nigel Pennick, *A History of Pagan Europe* (London: Routledge, 1995) 211.

⁶⁸ See M.H. Kellerman, *From Diamond Jubilee to Centenary. History of Forty Years of the United Grand Lodge of Freemasonry in New South Wales 1948 – 1988* vol. 4 (Sydney, United Grand Lodge of New South Wales of Ancient Free and Accepted Masons, 1990). [The need to grieve, once the trauma is released, may also be represented in the Masonic context. In a number of eighteenth century prints depicting the interior of the Lodges tears are illustrated covering the walls and floor design.](#)

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celebration of death as release, in Freudian terms, the death instinct, and corresponds with the ubiquity of death related symbolism throughout the Masonic Order.

The myth of Isis and Osiris, used throughout the Scottish Rite, may be another version of the trauma process illustrated in metaphorical terms.⁶⁹ Mackey states of Osiris, “[h]aving been slain by Typhon, his body was cut into pieces, and the mangled remains cast upon the wastes of the Nile, to be dispersed by the four winds of heaven. His wife, Isis, mourning for the death and the mutilation of her husband, for many days searched diligently with her companions for the portions of the body, and having at length found them, united them together, and bestowed upon them decent interment – while Osiris, thus restored, became the chief deity of his subjects, and his worship was united with that of Isis, as the fecundating and fertilizing powers of nature.”⁷⁰ The myth has similar philosophical ramifications to the Hiram legend. As Mackey suggests, it teaches that life comes after death and also relates to natural rhythms – the fourteen days that it takes for Osiris to be reconstituted marks the cycle of the half moon.⁷¹

But, if the characters of Isis and Osiris are interpreted again in terms of brain structure, that is, Isis representing the right-brain, intuitive attributes and Osiris representing the left-brain, logical and linguistic attributes, then the damage associated with trauma can result in damage to the logical recording of memory in the left hemisphere and can affect the individual’s ability to speak of the events, resulting in the transference of the ‘mangled’ or fragmented details to the right hemisphere, so that the individual must search long and hard to reassemble the pieces that are now like fragments of a jig-saw puzzle.⁷² These gods

⁶⁹ See Jasper Ridley, [The Freemasons. A History of the World’s Most Powerful Secret Society](#) (1999; New York: Arcade, 2001) for one of the most recent historical accounts of the Order. The Scottish Rite (*Rite Ecossais*) originated in France, but was never practiced in Scotland. It was developed by the Scotsman, Chevalier Ramsey, and this apparently was why it was given its name. Scottish Freemasonry as well as Irish developed alongside British Freemasonry and was led by high-ranking members of the aristocracy (p. 72).

⁷⁰ Mackey 39.

⁷¹ Mackey 40.

⁷² As Francis Crick notes, the capacity for language is generally located on the left side of the brain for virtually all right-handed people and most left-handed. Damage to the left side

could be interpreted as embodying the phenomenon of the mind fragmenting information in the context of traumatic experience, rather than putting the information together, if the outcome is to be devastating for the individual. Such an interpretation would further suggest a choice made by the individual to ‘not see’ rather than face the reality of the circumstances, as the tradition of psychology has so clearly pointed out. As Budge notes, references to mutilations of the gods by each other and of the gods on themselves are plentiful in the magical and religious literature of ancient Egypt. Those that the good gods inflict on themselves, he says, are generally due to the stress of emotions of various kinds.⁷³ Budge also notes that in further elaborations of the theme of death and resurrection in the Osirian myths Horus, the son of Isis and Osiris, takes on the role of bringing Osiris to life in an embrace that is reminiscent of the Masonic Five Points of Fellowship. He says: “Horus first came to Osiris, who was in the state of a dead man, and embraced him. By this embrace he transferred to him either his own KA (double), or a portion of the power which dwelt in it; the embrace was, in fact, an act whereby something of the vital energy of the embracer was transferred to the embraced.”⁷⁴ Budge’s observation may also be read metaphorically as a restoration of information to the left-brain linguistic centre for the purpose of psychic healing after major trauma. Alan Watts, tracing the theme of dismemberment in the Osirian and other ancient myths, argues that the sacrificial dismemberment of a divine being is a voluntary process, that of self-sacrifice. He says, “[i]t follows quite logically, then, that where there is dismemberment in the beginning there is remembrance at the end – that the fulfilment or consummation of the cosmic game is the discovery of what was covered and the recollection of what was scattered.”⁷⁵ Watts’ conclusion relates to a general notion of memory in spiritual processes and to the role of concentration to reduce scattered thoughts.⁷⁶ I would suggest that this myth may be even

of the brain can result not only in paralysis to the right side of the body but can also interfere with speech. Crick 88.

⁷³ E.A. Wallis Budge, Osiris and the Egyptian Resurrection (London: Philip Lee Warner, 1936) 62.

⁷⁴ [Budge 86.](#)

⁷⁵ [Alan Watts, The Two Hands of God. The Myth of Polarity \(London: Rider & Co., 1963\) 192.](#)

⁷⁶ Watts 192.

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more appropriate when applied to the nature of traumatic memory, its repression and recollection.

The Theosophical author C.W. Leadbeater argues that the Egyptian Mysteries of Osiris are equivalent to the Masonic Master Mason degree and, used throughout the Scottish Rite, again demonstrate the principles of suffering, death and resurrection.⁷⁷ He argues that, “Osiris is Light; He came forth from the Light, he dwells in the Light. He is the Light.”⁷⁸ He says, “Osiris is in the heavens, but Osiris is also in the heart of men. When Osiris in the heart knows Osiris in the heavens, then man becomes God, and Osiris, once rent into fragments, again becomes one.”⁷⁹ Leadbeater is suggesting that initiation in its purest form involves some sort of connection with the Divine and that the Masonic degrees are representing an understanding of this principle. The ‘rending into fragments’ suggests that, contained within the practice of initiation is an understanding of the principle of using shock to produce a state of mind that, if rightly managed, can produce a sensation of being ‘at one with the universe’. As is noted in the previous discussion of trauma, such a state of mind is currently regarded in the medical sphere as an example of dissociation.⁸⁰ Casavis, in analysis of the Greek origin of Freemasonry, also notes the role of splitting in the Osirian Mysteries. He observes that the sacred plant of the Osirian Mysteries was Erica, “[coming] from the Greek language eriko, meaning to break in pieces, to mangle.”⁸¹

Mackey discusses further Egyptian symbolism that is relevant to Freemasonry, the all-seeing eye, interpreted on a mystical level as the eye of God and, “the symbol of divine watchfulness and the care of the universe”⁸² and the adoption of the equilateral triangle as a symbol of the Deity across cultures.⁸³ He states:

⁷⁷ Leadbeater 34.

⁷⁸ Leadbeater 17.

⁷⁹ Leadbeater 17.

⁸⁰ See note 5.

⁸¹ Casavis 13.

⁸² Mackey 190.

⁸³ Mackey 192.

Among the Egyptians, the hare was the hieroglyphic of eyes that are wide open; and it was adopted because that timid animal was supposed never to close his organs of vision, being always on the watch for his enemies. The hare was afterwards adopted by the priests as a symbol for the mental illumination or mystic light which was revealed to the neophytes, in the contemplation of divine truth, during the progress of their initiation; and hence, according to Champollion, the hare was also the symbol of Osiris, their chief god; thus showing the intimate connection between the process of initiation into their sacred rites and the contemplation of divine nature.⁸⁴

One of the consequences of severe trauma is a state known as ‘hypervigilance’ an ever-present and exhausting sense of fear, in which the victim, like the rabbit or hare, is constantly on the alert for danger. When Osiris was resurrected he possessed the ‘all-seeing eye’. If Osiris’s reintegration can be read as a mark of recovery of terrifying memories, then the ability to ‘see all’ can be translated as the ability to face death, or evil, or one’s sense of betrayal squarely. The notion that facing death and the idea of journey, trials and rebirth, which Curl notes in Masonic texts, thus takes on a significance relevant to contemporary discussions of memory and trauma.⁸⁵ From a physiological point of view it is interesting to note that the neurons that appear to be most associated with consciousness, that is, with the higher functions of the neocortex, are large neurons, described as ‘pyramidal’ cells.⁸⁶ Here the symbolism of Isaac Newton’s discovery of the splitting of white light into the colours of the rainbow through a triangular glass prism is also apt. The eye in the triangle embodies Newton’s physics in a way that suggests a visual representation of the ‘split’ ego (eye/I), that is, a reference to dissociation.⁸⁷ Janet describes

⁸⁴ Mackey 150.

⁸⁵ James Stevens Curl, The Art and Architecture of Freemasonry (London: B.J. Batsford, 1991) 9.

⁸⁶ Crick 251.

⁸⁷ Besides his key role in the science of physics Sir Isaac Newton is also highly regarded as a student of the occult and counted as one of Freemasonry’s inspirations. According to Ridley his study of Solomon’s Temple had helped him formulate his law of gravity. Ridley 20.

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the internal act of policing or self-surveillance as one of the outcomes of trauma.⁸⁸ Such surveillance can also be turned outwardly. The individual, aware that some sort of crime has been committed, but unaware of its true nature, can turn to the problem of crime and surveillance in the broader community more generally. It is interesting to note Stephen Knight's observations of the heavy involvement of British members of Freemasonry in the police, the legal and judicial structure, the public service and the prison system.⁸⁹

William James argues that classical mystical states and delusional insanity are two ends of the same continuum. He calls paranoia "diabolical mysticism turned upside down" and argues that both states spring from the same mental level.⁹⁰ "That region," he states, "contains every kind of matter: 'seraph and snake' abide there side by side."⁹¹ The chief symbol used for Grand Lodge in Britain is an image of the Ark of the Covenant being carried by two creatures, which are a variation on the biblical concept of the cherubim. The creatures have human bodies and heads, angel's wings, but the legs of goats. They appear to be a blend of a satyr and an angel. Satyrs were traditionally mythological devotees of Dionysus and therefore a representation of sensuality and the demonic. As Pearson states, "[d]evoted to sensual pleasures, the satyrs sometimes fought with and were greatly feared by mortal beings."⁹² This may be a metaphorical acknowledgement of the close proximity of these two aspects of the same experience: the mystic's rapture, a mark of consolation, as James suggests, and the traumatized victim's terror, a mark of desolation, particularly if the victim has been subject to the uncontrolled passions of others.⁹³ Here the Enlightenment philosophy of the relationship of terror and the Sublime, proposed by Edmund Burke, is apposite. All things that convey terror, he says, are a "source of the Sublime, that is, it is

⁸⁸ Quoted in Ruth Leys, "Traumatic Cures. Shell Shock, Janet, and the Question of Memory" in Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory, edited by Paul Antze and Michael Lambek, (New York: Routledge, 1996), 125.

⁸⁹ Stephen Knight, The Brotherhood. The Secret World of the Freemasons (London: HarperCollins, 1983).

⁹⁰ James, 337.

⁹¹ James 337.

⁹² Roger Pearson, Anthropological Glossary (Malabar, Florida: Robert E. Krieger Publishing, 1985) 226.

⁹³ James 337.

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productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling”.⁹⁴ This notion may be echoed in neurological research. The site where all of these functions seem to be occurring is broadly termed the limbic system and comprises the relationship between the thalamus, amygdala, hippocampus and other structures. As Pierre-Marie Lledo says, “[I]like the limbo of Christian mythology, the limbic system is the intermediary between the neomammalian brain heaven (represented by the neocortex) and the reptilian brain hell.”⁹⁵

Another set of rituals, the Noachite degrees, draws on the biblical story of Noah and his sons, the Flood and the building of the Tower of Babel. The Masonic author Jim Tresner notes that in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries there was a strong Masonic tradition that placed Noah as one of the major patrons of Freemasonry; Freemasons were sometimes called sons of Noah. On the apron for the 21st Degree, the Noachite or Prussian Degree, is a winged human figure, who holds the forefinger of his right hand on his lips and a key in his left hand. He is known as the Egyptian figure of Silence.⁹⁶ The dove that flew from the ark is commemorated in a degree of its own and is also a symbol used by the Knights Templar.⁹⁷ The rainbow in Masonic and biblical language is a sign of hope.⁹⁸ The Tower of Babel was built by Noah’s sons and in the Masonic system is an image of remembering and forgetting linked with confusion and the loss of language. According to the Masons, “passing in front of the tower makes you forget all you know”.⁹⁹ Deep, hypnotic sleep is symbolised in the prolific Masonic use of the term Bethel, which was originally the place where Jacob slept and dreamt of the ladder to heaven.¹⁰⁰ Today, this term is used to

⁹⁴ Cited in E.J. Clery “The Pleasures of Terror: Paradox in Edmund Burke’s Theory of the Sublime” in Pleasure in the Eighteenth Century edited by Roy Porter and Marie Mulvey Roberts (New York: New York University Press, 1996) 166.

⁹⁵ Pierre-Marie Lledo, “Homeostatic Mechanisms” in Encyclopaedia of the Human Brain, Vol. 2, 494.

⁹⁶ Jim Tresner, Twenty-first Degree, Noachite, or Prussian Knight <http://www.srmason-sj.org/council/journal/nov00/apron21.html> Accessed 21st January 2005.

⁹⁷ Jones 317.

⁹⁸ H.C. Robbins Landon, Mozart and the Masons. New Light on the Lodge ‘Crowned Hope’ (Galborne: Thames & Hudson, 1982) 31.

⁹⁹ This inscription was under a print of the Tower of Babel in the Sydney Grand Lodge, late 1999.

¹⁰⁰ Genesis 28, 10 – 22.

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represent the meeting places for the girls who belong to the Masonic organization, Job's Daughters.¹⁰¹ There is also a Masonic organization called the International Order of the Rainbow for Girls.¹⁰² Mackey argues that the truths that were handed down through the race of Seth, descendants of Noah, after the Flood, were lost and corrupted. The Tower of Babel, he states, is a symbol of how "language was corrupted and Masonry lost."¹⁰³

The combined stories of the Flood and the Tower of Babel may, however, also be interpreted as another metaphor for brain functioning during trauma. In much writing about trauma the experience described as 'leaving the body' is regarded as part of the dissociation process. A sense of peace is felt as the individual disconnects psychically from the terror, thus finding a natural means of escape. The flight of the 'soul' from the body in situations of terror is therefore aptly represented by the dove's release from the Ark and symbolises, in physiological terms, the effect of the opioid mechanism released in the brain when terror 'floods' the body.¹⁰⁴ The winged figure of Silence on the Masonic apron for the 21st Degree may also represent this process of dissociation. The inability to speak of traumatic experience is indicated by the right finger held to the mouth: the right hand is controlled by the left side of the brain, the side of the brain that affects language. The left hand

¹⁰¹ [Job's Daughters International.](http://www.iojd.org/)

Website: <http://www.iojd.org/>
Accessed 2nd April 2004.

¹⁰² [International Order of the Rainbow for Girls.](http://www.iorg.org/)

Website: <http://www.iorg.org/>
Accessed 2nd April 2004.

¹⁰³ Mackey 28.

¹⁰⁴ In a related discussion of the role of the limbic system and schizophrenic breakdown, Gordon Claridge states that early schizophrenics described their experience as a "flooding" of the mind with thoughts and sensations." Gordon Claridge, "Schizophrenia and Human Individuality," in Blakemore & Greenfield 37. As quoted in Kuspit, R.D. Laing's discussion of the schizophrenic experience is almost identical to the initiation experience: "[a]ccording to Laing, the schizophrenic experience involves: i) a voyage from outer to inner, ii) from life to a kind of death, iii) from going forward to going back, iv) from temporal movement to temporal standstill, v) from mundane time to eonic time, vi) from the ego to the self, vii) from outside (post-birth) back to the womb of all things (pre-birth), and then subsequently a return voyage from 1) inner to outer, 2) from death to life, 3) from a movement back to once more forward, 4) from immortality back to mortality, 5) from eternity back to time, 6) from self to a new ego, 7) from a cosmic fertilization to an existential rebirth." Donald Kuspit, *The Psychostrategies of Avant-Garde Art* (Cambridge University Press, 2000) 174.

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(symbolising access to the right side of the brain where dissociated memories are stored) holds the 'key' to accessing these memories.¹⁰⁵ After the flood, the rainbow (the dissociated identity) then becomes a symbol of hope because the flood of terror is forgotten and the individual can survive, having cordoned off from consciousness the memories of the terror. The individual lives, though psychologically 'split', after having experienced something that may well have killed them. The rainbow is also linked in Cabbalistic texts with the Path of the Chameleon, the animal that changes its colour according to its context.¹⁰⁶ This relates to contemporary notions of multiple personality in which the individual is capable of adapting to various contexts with separate personalities (alters) or personality fragments.¹⁰⁷ That this whole experience is symbolised within the ark, gives rise to the possibility that the Noah's Ark story, like the Ark of the Covenant already discussed, may be another metaphor for brain processes: the human skull or the brain itself, filled with the two-by-two groups of animals (the various brain functions and their relationship to the symmetrical structure of the body).¹⁰⁸ Eliphas Lévi notes that the Zohar treats the Ark of the Covenant and Noah's Ark as one and the same symbol.¹⁰⁹ The Tower of Babel, built by Noah's sons, and its destruction, then becomes a symbol of the brain's inability to make narrative sense of the traumatic experience and the resulting confusion.¹¹⁰ The entire Noah's Ark story, besides its historical and religious associations, can thus also

¹⁰⁵ One of the techniques for accessing repressed memories, which was recommended to me by a counsellor, was writing or drawing with the left (or non-dominant) hand, so as to reduce the controlling aspect of the conscious mind. It proved to be a highly successful process through which I was able to retrieve many lost memories of abuse.

¹⁰⁶ Regardie 191.

¹⁰⁷ It is interesting here that the term 'alter' has become quite fashionable. As a homophone of 'altar' this fashion links contemporary psychoanalysis with the ritual space. In accounts of ritual abuse, the 'altar' is a site of sacrifice and danger and therefore the excessive use of the term 'alter' is undoubtedly going to have some triggering potential for victims.

¹⁰⁸ The skull and its relationship to death features prolifically in Masonic symbolism and will be dealt with more fully in later chapters.

¹⁰⁹ Eliphas Levi, The History of Magic, translated by A.E. Waite (London: Rider & Co, 1982) 56.

¹¹⁰ Umberto Eco, in his tracing of the evolution of language, draws initially on the Tower of Babel theme and refers to the notion of the confusion of languages that it implied as a 'wound' but does not pursue this as a psychoanalytic discussion. Umberto Eco, The Search for the Perfect Language (London: Fontana Press, 1997) 10, 17, 337–344.

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be read as a symbol of human adaptation and survival after an experience of overwhelming terror.

Davidson and Baum note that, “[d]uring trauma, information overloads the cortical neuronal barrier ... Kolb (1987) hypothesized that the affected structures are in the temporal – amygdaloid complex.”¹¹¹ Research has suggested that this structure, “plays a critical role in the elaboration of anxiety, panic, and related symptoms of arousal and fearful avoidance”¹¹² and, “[e]lectrical stimulation of the amygdala in animals typically results in a constellation of aggressive and fear-related responses.”¹¹³ On the Grand Masters’ aprons is a commonly repeated form, the *vesica piscis*, often beautifully embroidered in a raised eighteenth century form of embroidery called ‘stumpwork’. Read in concave terms, it is commonly interpreted as a female symbol and an emblem of birth denoting initiation as a birth process.¹¹⁴ However, the Latin term ‘vesica/-ae’ means bladder, purse or football, therefore suggesting that the *vesica piscis* is a convex form in the shape of a fish.¹¹⁵ Both the thalamus and the amygdala are described in convex terms, the thalamus, as “ellipsoid, like a rugby ball;”¹¹⁶ the term ‘amygdala’ comes from the Latin amygdalum/-i meaning ‘almond’.¹¹⁷ The amygdala is present in two sites, in the temporal region on either side of the forehead and the thalamus, a single ellipsoid shape, is in the centre of the brain. The blows to Hiram’s head were firstly to each side of the forehead and

¹¹¹ Laura M. Davidson and Andrew Baum, “Psychophysiological aspects of chronic stress following trauma” in Individual and Community Responses to Trauma and Disaster: the Structure of Human Chaos edited by Robert J. Ursano, Brian G. McCaughey and Carol S. Fullerton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 365.

¹¹² Eric Vermetten, Denis S. Charney, J. Douglas Bremner, “Anxiety” in Encyclopaedia of the Human Brain, edited by V.S. Ramachandran, Vol. 1, 162.

¹¹³ John A. Lucas, “Memory Overview” in Encyclopaedia of the Human Brain, edited by V.S. Ramachandran, Vol. 2, 827.

¹¹⁴ See Martin Short, Inside the Brotherhood (London: Grafton Books, 1989) 100 – 101.

Read as a concave structure it can suggest the Jungian notion of the marriage of male/female characteristics in the fully individuated male, as suggested in the concept of the Master Mason. Note that Easson and Easson’s discussion of Blake’s metaphysics deals with the notion that the mystical state itself is a perception of the world as a concave form rather than a convex one. That is, that it involves penetrating inside the cosmic egg, rather than looking at reality as if from the outside.

¹¹⁵ Collins Latin Gem Dictionary 356.

¹¹⁶ Ohye, 575.

¹¹⁷ Collins Latin Gem Dictionary 20.

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then to the centre. Damage to both the amygdala and the thalamus as well as the neo-cortex in the frontal area of the brain can result in amnesia, linking the blows to Hiram's head in the 'golden legend' with Waite's concept of a memorial of loss and recovery. The patriarchal 'birthing' process, symbolically represented on the Grand Master's apron, thus can be interpreted as a psychological and physiological brain process involving memory loss and retrieval.

Closely associated with the amygdala, on both sides of the brain, is the hippocampus. Its shape is like a seahorse or a snake arching its neck. The term 'hippocampus' is from the Latin for seahorse. It is sometimes called the Archicortex.¹¹⁸ It is also associated with memory and damage results in amnesia, particularly of individual episodic events.¹¹⁹ The securing clasp of the Masonic apron takes the form of a serpent.¹²⁰ While the symbolism of the serpent is wide ranging, its presence here suggests a reinforcement of this physiological explanation. Crick also notes that the hippocampus involves an elaborate one-way pathway that is re-entrant, "that is, it returns very close to where it started."¹²¹ This aligns with explanations of initiation as a journey that requires the initiate to return to the place where he began, a metaphor for the reflective capacity of human consciousness.

As well as architecture, the central role of geometry in Freemasonry represented by the letter 'G' on various insignia, may also be relevant if understood from the perspective of brain physiology. The right hemisphere that houses the liminal sphere of initiation (or the repressed memories of trauma) is also the site where the brain processes the experience of spatial direction. Functions like the sense of direction, the recognition of geometric patterns as well as the mental rotation of geometrical forms and spatial pattern movements are processed in the same sphere where non-verbal memory and tactile recognition are contained.¹²² The centrality of the black and white tessellated floor within the Lodge seems to indicate that the primary focus of Masonic ritual is on the various functions of the psyche

¹¹⁸ Crick 274.

¹¹⁹ Crick 168.

¹²⁰ Ron Chudley, The Masonic Apron: Its Origin and Symbolism (Devon, 1988) 21.

¹²¹ Crick 173.

¹²² [Solso 42.](#)

within the right hemisphere. The role of precisely ordered movements in the ritual process and of touch in the Mason's grip, coupled with the myths that enact processes of memory loss and retrieval, suggest that many if not all of the symbolic elements of Freemasonry may represent aspects of the unconscious that are highly structured. Anton Ehrenzweig has suggested that the unconscious may be a highly structured system, not just a formless mass of uncontrollable impulses.¹²³

Relating the concept of geometry to the work of modernist artists Donald Kuspit has suggested that "geometry is knowledge of the eternally existent" and as such contains within it a therapeutic aspect, healing psychic wounds.¹²⁴ He argues that in Mondrian's painting geometry, "comes to the therapeutic rescue: it initiates one into interiority and affords redemptive understanding of the 'union of mind and the whole of nature' ... it is a method of introspection, and ultimately of intuition."¹²⁵ In the Masonic context it could be suggested, then, that geometry provides the comfort that within the experience of confusion and loss that marks the liminal space there is some primal order. In gendered terms the realm that the initiate enters, overseen by Isis as a space of feminine intuition, or what Freemasons call the 'Mother Lodge', is thus protected 'magically' by the constant reminder that there is structure here. Geometry becomes the anchor for the men who voluntarily immerse themselves into this overwhelming and possibly dangerous space. As Kuspit suggests, geometry "becomes the magical touchstone of existence."¹²⁶ This concept of geometry seems to me a very male perspective, possibly because it does suggest a discomfort with the intuitive realms, which for women may not necessarily be so threatening. The idea of divine geometry, of God represented as a triangle, which follows from the privileging of the geometrical sense as the most important amongst a number of the right-brain functions, may again suggest a need for order in what may otherwise be perceived as a chaotic maternal space.

¹²³ [Cited in Stephen James Newton, *Painting, Psychoanalysis, and Spirituality* \(Cambridge University Press, 2001\) 12.](#)

¹²⁴ [Donald Kuspit, *The Cult of the Avant-Garde Artist* \(Cambridge University Press, 1993\) 41.](#)

¹²⁵ [Kuspit 48.](#)

¹²⁶ [Kuspit 41.](#)

In conclusion, the various symbols and rituals of Freemasonry appear to be illustrating different approaches to achieving 'enlightenment'. The Second Degree seems to be suggesting a careful building up of the nervous system (the spiritual building of the Temple) as a means to this end, whereas the Third Degree, along with the Noachite and the Scottish Rite degrees, illustrates its achievement through a process of shock or terror. These two approaches correlate with the two different functions of the autonomic nervous system as noted by scientists.¹²⁷ Horgan calls the first, the 'top down' method which includes meditation, prayer and relaxation, which exploits the quiescent component of the autonomic nervous system, whereas the 'bottom up' methods, such as dancing, hyperventilation, excitation and other processes, arouse the 'fight or flight' response to exploit the arousal component of the autonomic system. "If either the arousal or the quiescent component is pushed far enough," he says, "the one activates the other through a 'spillover effect', producing a paradoxical state of ecstatic serenity."¹²⁸ In relation to trauma, the physiological process of dissociation and its accompanying 'serenity' clearly has a protective function. The question arises as to whether this function, by resorting to an older system that may be present as an evolutionary aspect of the human brain, requires that a process of 'humanisation' must take place at some point. That is, whether painful material must be brought to consciousness for the individual to regain their full human potential. The uncomfortable state of post-traumatic stress may be a reminder that this still needs to be done.

These and other Masonic myths, symbols and rituals and their relationship to trauma will be explored throughout the rest of the thesis. While the above discussion is a theoretical one and by no means conclusive, and would need extensive research to establish a precise link between the myths and brain physiology, the broad hypothesis being suggested here is that within Freemasonry a knowledge of brain function in the context of traumatic experience and of the processes involved with the repression of memory may have been encoded into the myths, rituals and symbols employed in the initiations, and that initiation practice may involve an acknowledgement of these principles. The fact that Freemasonry has been the

¹²⁷ Horgan 74.

¹²⁸ Horgan 74.

source of controversy since its inception in the eighteenth century may be partly due to the fact that the knowledge it contains can clearly be utilised in one of two ways: either, in its orthodox form, as a symbolic enactment of the process of initiation as a signifier of an internal spiritual process, that is, to represent a legitimate mystical path; or as knowledge that can be used to manipulate others, for the sake of power. Progression through the Order is marked by a series of initiation processes, known as degrees, which can involve elaborate ritual processes and sometimes frightening practices through which the candidate must pass as a test of his sincerity and dedication to the Masonic path. As a number of Masonic authors note, the various degrees contain cautionary tales for the initiates, among them the caution that they use the knowledge they have gained wisely.¹²⁹ The following discussion will look at the ways in which such initiatory knowledge can be abused and the arguments within Freemasonry about the corruption of Masonic knowledge.

'True' and 'spurious' Freemasonry

An ongoing debate within Masonic circles concerns the nature of 'true' and 'spurious' Freemasonry, with lodges being denoted 'regular', that is those sanctioned by Grand Lodge, residing alongside those regarded as 'irregular'. The debate is long and much argued and involves various schools within the Masonic fraternity. The following will outline the basic arguments summarised in the work of a number of key Masonic authors who address this debate and its relation to the abusive use of Masonic knowledge.

The Masonic author Robert Freke Gould, writing in the late nineteenth century, notes the development of operative Freemasonry in the trade unions of medieval building practices, but comments on the rise of speculative Freemasonry as a product of the character of the eighteenth century itself, in particular in response to the disruption caused during the prior period of the Reformation. He claims that, despite the rhetoric of Enlightenment, speculative Freemasonry was the product of a world "full of all kinds of strange and disordered fancies, the work of disordered imagination, to an extent probably never known

¹²⁹ See, for example, Tresner website.

before ...”¹³⁰ A number of Masonic authors claim that the difference in ‘true’ and ‘spurious’ Freemasonry reflected geographical boundaries, with Britain and Grand Lodge the site of the genuine Order. The Continent, and France in particular, was depicted as the site of all manner of distorted versions. John T. Lawrence, a Masonic author of this persuasion, commenting on the rise of Freemasonry in France, states: “spurious rites, with attractive names and fearsome but still attractive ritual, sprang into being, nominally allied with the genuine Order.”¹³¹ J.M. Roberts, writing in the 1970s, endorses this geographical difference attributing the many spurious variations in the eighteenth century to the absence of firm guidance from Grand Lodge on the Continent.¹³² He cites the many versions of the Scottish Rite that appeared in France (which came to be known as ‘red’ Masonry as opposed to the British ‘blue’ Masonry) and claims that the appearance of fringe groups, both bogus and frivolous, as well as crypto-Masonic lodges added to the confusion and distrust of the Order.¹³³ “Across the Rhine,” he says, “deviant and degenerate Freemasonry was to flourish as nowhere else.”¹³⁴ Recently, the Masonic scholar James Stevens Curl has commented on French Masonic stage designs in the eighteenth century. Noting the designs by Jean-Jacques Lequeu, depicting trials by fire, water and air, he argues that they were clearly drawings of torture and lascivious themes. “With Lequeu”, he says, “we enter a deeply disturbing world.”¹³⁵

A number of Masonic writers associate the schism between orthodox and dissident Masonry with the calamities of the French Revolution and debated whether or not Freemasonry played a key role within this context. Eliphas Lévi is one such author who argues that there was a link between the corruption of the Order and the debasement of the degrees with the rise of the revolution. He attributes to Count Cagliostro, who established

¹³⁰ Robert Freke Gould, The History of Freemasonry. Its Antiquities, Symbols, Constitutions, Customs, Etc. Volume 2, 3 (London: Thomas C. Jack, 1883, 1884) 60.

¹³¹ John T. Lawrence, Sidelights on Freemasonry: Craft and Royal Arch (London: A. Lewis, 1924) 190.

¹³² J.M. Roberts, The Mythology of the Secret Societies, (Frogmore, St. Albans: Paladin, 1974), 28.

¹³³ Roberts 28, 55, 110, 120.

¹³⁴ Roberts 1974:112.

¹³⁵ James Stevens Curl, The Art and Architecture of Freemasonry, (London: B.T. Batsford, 1991), 158, 168.

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Egyptian Masonry on the Continent, the Order's debasement, claiming that Cagliostro used black magic for the worship of Isis, hypnotising young girls to be his priestesses.¹³⁶ A number of Masonic authors, who C.W. Leadbeater terms 'the authentic school', argue that all other degrees other than the three degrees of Craft Masonry, such as the Continental degrees, are spurious.¹³⁷ These include the higher degrees such as the Scottish Rite, the Ancient Arabic Nobles of the Mystic Shrine and others, which have flourished particularly in the American system.

While, according to the above accounts, the Continent appeared to be the site of corruption, other Masonic authors perceived a similar situation within the British context. An early account made by the distinguished Australian Sir Henry Melville suggests that the British Lodges were equally susceptible to corruption. Melville visited London as a high-ranking member of the Order in the 1870s and there found the Masonic Order divided into two factions, with "the Zetland beefeaters triumph[ing] over their more intelligent brethren."¹³⁸ He states:

Indeed, did I find English masonry 'rotten to the bone'; the brethren, like their Grand Secretary, using and abusing it merely to further their own pecuniary interests ... When the puppets behind the throne have more influence than the throne itself – when Worshipful Masters can be thus compelled to sacrifice friendship and succumb to an ignorant faction, it is quite time either that Freemasonry should be raised from its degraded state, or that it should be altogether expunged from the face of the earth.¹³⁹

Masonic authors who connect Freemasonry to a more ancient lineage argue that the 'pure' and 'spurious' forms were present in its earlier incarnations. The Masonic (and Theosophical) author C.W. Leadbeater in 1986 stated, "Masonry, as we have it today, is the

¹³⁶ Eliphas Lévi, The History of Magic, translated by A.E. Waite (London: Rider, 1982) 301.

¹³⁷ Leadbeater 3.

¹³⁸ [Henry Melville, The Lost Mysteries of Freemasonry \(Sydney: Sands & Kenny, 1874\)](#)

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¹³⁹ [Melville ix, xiv.](#)

only true relic of the faith of the patriarchs before the flood, while the ancient Mysteries of Egypt and other countries, which so closely resemble it, were but human corruptions of the one primitive and pure tradition.”¹⁴⁰ The Masonic author Albert Mackey, looking at the philosophical roots of Freemasonry in biblical times, argues that the pure form was that practised by the Israelites (he also terms them the Noachites) and involved a belief in the unity of God and the immortality of the soul.¹⁴¹ The ‘spurious’ form, he argues, was that set of initiatory rites practised by the pagans (including all of the different cult groups of the classical world) and in particular the Dionysiac practices of the Tyrians who worked together with the Israelites on the building of Solomon’s Temple. These pagan versions, he suggests, were based on “a course of severe and arduous trials ... a long and painful initiation, and ... a formal series of gradual preparations.”¹⁴² These two forms, he argues, merged during the building of Solomon’s Temple to produce an immediate prototype of the modern institution. Writing in 1955 he says:

Taking these characteristics as the exponents of what Freemasonry is, we cannot help arriving at the conclusion that the speculative Masonry of the present day exhibits abundant evidence of the identity of its origin with the spurious Freemasonry of the ante-Solomonic period, both systems coming from the same pure source, but the one always preserving, and the other continually corrupting, the purity of the common fountain.¹⁴³

Mackey thus identifies the presence of a corrupt form of Freemasonry sitting alongside a pure form right from its earliest beginnings, producing both a light and a dark side to this institution. He locates the spurious form in terms of its use of terrifying initiation practices and the use of “a scenic representation of the mythic descent into Hades, or the grave, and the return from thence to the light of day.”¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁰ Leadbeater 1.

¹⁴¹ Mackey 16.

¹⁴² Mackey 34.

¹⁴³ Mackey 19.

¹⁴⁴ Mackey 38.

Another Masonic writer who addresses this argument is J.D. Buck.¹⁴⁵ Buck does not decry the pagan forms, but argues that even within these there is a pure form of mystic Masonry and a corrupt version. He describes the pure form, as it aligns with the broader tradition of mysticism: “[t]here is a Grand Science known as Magic, and every real Master is a Magician ... Masonry in its deeper meaning and recondite mysteries constitutes and possesses this science, and all genuine Initiation consists in an orderly unfolding of the natural powers of the neophyte ...”¹⁴⁶ Buck argues that “[a]ll real initiation is an internal, not an external process”, that it is a daily spiritual process of man “working out his own salvation.”¹⁴⁷ However, he refers to the misuse of initiatory knowledge as ‘black magic’ and aligns this with the use of hypnosis for cruel purposes. He acknowledges that within the fraternity there has been abuse of this knowledge and says, “[t]he Hypnotist can not reduce the mind of a trusting but ignorant brother to the condition of imbecility without facing the law that counts such a crime as no less than murder.”¹⁴⁸ As James observes, mystical experiences are often accompanied by a sense that the will is being superseded by some superior power.¹⁴⁹ Hypnotism clearly involves a loss of will and may suggest a related physiological process. Anton Mesmer first demonstrated the practice throughout the Masonic Lodges of Europe. Buck’s position aligns with the previous argument about Masonic ritual and the role of the psychology and physiology of trauma. From this perspective, the period that Hiram Abif spends in the shallow grave (the liminal period) could be interpreted as a metaphor for what occurs in a process of hypnosis and brainwashing, with the acacia plant acting as a signifier of this practice.

More recent Masonic authors such as Fred Pick and Norman Knight have commented on the presence of both ‘pure’ and ‘spurious’ forms of the Scottish Rite in its European history

¹⁴⁵ J.D. Buck, Symbolism of Freemasonry or Mystic Masonry and the Greater Mysteries of Antiquity (Chicago: Charles T. Pownier Co., 1967).

¹⁴⁶ Buck 34.

¹⁴⁷ Buck 86.

¹⁴⁸ Buck 51. One of my own memories involves seeing my father humiliated by other Masons in the Lodge, where he was hypnotised in front of me and made to act as if he were some cave man performing humiliating acts, designed to terrify me and alter my relationship to him. The laughter of the other Masons was most disturbing. I was seven years old.

¹⁴⁹ James 302.

and included comments on the presence of both forms in the Australian context. They note that the Scottish Rite is to be found “working regularly and irregularly, in virtually every country in which the Craft operates.”¹⁵⁰ They also comment that after the Reign of Terror of 1793-4, “[t]here were many troubles ahead, not the least of which stemmed from the operations of the Scottish Rite.”¹⁵¹ A.C.F. Jackson notes that there are ‘true’ and ‘false’ versions of Rose-Croix. The ‘false’ system he regards as the Vengeance School.¹⁵² Of the vengeance group of degrees, which involves the finding and punishing of the assassins of Hiram Abif, he says, “[it] requires considerable imagination to invoke anything but a negative symbolism from these degrees...”¹⁵³ Jackson also notes various degrees that were given negative criticism by the Council of Knights in 1766. Of the Kadosh degrees, amongst the higher Rose Croix degrees, the Council accused it of being ‘false, fanatical, detestable, not only because it is contrary to the principles of Freemasonry but also because it is contrary to the principles and duties of the State and Religion.’¹⁵⁴ Writing in 1980 Jackson stated, “[t]he rapid expansion of the [Rose Croix] Rite in Australia has posed special problems of control and supervision.”¹⁵⁵ While these Masonic authors are open as to their sentiments about Rose Croix, they remain true to their pledge of secrecy by not stating what is meant by these contraventions of morality.

However, an early example of a Masonic author providing details of corruption within the Scottish Rite appears in a pamphlet published in 1870 in Victoria.¹⁵⁶ The pamphlet is attributed to an anonymous author, a ‘brother’ of the Melbourne-based Lodge of Judy, but a number of the letters it contains are signed Abercrombie Strober. The term used for the high degrees in this pamphlet is ‘Ultra-Freemasonry’. The author states that he will

¹⁵⁰ [Fred L. Pick and G. Norman Knight, *The Pocket History of Freemasonry* \(1955; London: Muller, 1991\) 104.](#)

¹⁵¹ Pick and Knight 125.

¹⁵² [A.C.F. Jackson, *Rose Croix. A History of the Ancient and Accepted Rite for England and Wales* \(London: Lewis Masonic, 1980\) 35.](#)

¹⁵³ Jackson 22.

¹⁵⁴ Jackson 38.

¹⁵⁵ Jackson 207.

¹⁵⁶ Anonymous (‘a brother’), [The Privileges of Ultra-Freemasonry. A Mystery! Or Pictures of Particular Parvenus and Sketches of Other Things, Arising out of the Subject, Which Should Make Some ‘Moral Men’ Blush](#) (Melbourne: Clarson Messina and Co, 1870).

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“[reveal] the great Mystery of Melbourne Freemasonry, under the Scottish Constitution,” and relates a scathing account of his treatment by fellow brothers in what he describes as a ‘rowdy Lodge’. Amongst charges of bullying, dirty tricks, insults and lies he describes being treated medically for two years as insane, “till nearly dead”, claiming that it was for the entertainment of his brothers. An accompanying sketch depicts a dining room full of these men, noting “their wide-mouthed guffaws”. (*Fig. 6*) His criticism describes the inordinate power held by members of the Victorian Masonic elite over the lives and sanity of young people. He sums up their practical joking in the following terms:

When some of our ancestors – especially the Puritans – wanted a little excitement, they drowned or burned an old woman to death speedily, for ‘witchcraft’. Funny old jokers our ancestors were, especially the Puritans! With the advance of civilisation folks have improved on ‘witchcraft’ for old women, and substituted ‘madness’ for younger men and women, and a more lingering death than drowning and burning when some of them wanted a little sensational excitement. It is the best practical joke out to treat a sane young man for insanity for a year or two; except you treat a sane young woman so, for she is more likely to die of ‘consumption’ before the joke gets stale. That is better. There is no fear of a Nemesis, or any other avenging retribution, now-a-days ... If you say they have treated me Masonically, I may truly say the terms Freemason and devil are synonymous in Melbourne under the Scottish Constitution ... that the whole of Freemasonry in Victoria, under the Scottish Constitution, is something better than a system of insult at the will of a few course-minded upstarts.¹⁵⁷

A study written in the 1950s by the historian Reinhart Koselleck attempts to explain this disturbing phenomenon of corruption within the Lodges. Koselleck had turned to eighteenth century Europe and the emergence of dissident Masonry in search of an

¹⁵⁷ Anonymous (‘a brother’). The Privileges of Ultra-Freemasonry. A Mystery! Or Pictures of Particular Parvenus and Sketches of Other Things, Arising out of the Subject, Which Should Make Some ‘Moral Men’ Blush. Melbourne: Clarson Messina and Co, 1870.

explanation for the unprecedented crimes of Nazi Germany.¹⁵⁸ He placed the Lodges and the Republic of Letters at the heart of a moral/political shift – a shift of conscience. In the pre-revolutionary world, he argues, the king’s absolute responsibility towards his subjects demanded that his decision-making powers were not impeded by the function of conscience. Absolute power demanded that the king stand above the law and outside of the normal moral order, while simultaneously embodying the law. But as sovereignty shifted from the king to the people it was necessary that the ability to suspend conscience be taken up in some way by the people. In an examination of the writing of Thomas Hobbes Koselleck argues that the bourgeois morality that emerges from this conflict existed tacitly and secretly within the clubs that met in the Masonic Lodges, the coffee houses and the academies. In these bourgeois clubs “the citizens themselves do what Hobbes reserved for the sovereign.”¹⁵⁹ John Locke terms the new morality the ‘law of private censure’ in which, Koselleck argues, “[d]epending on time, place and circumstance, they may declare a virtue to be a vice, and a vice to be a virtue”. To Locke’s critics this “seemed to open every door to licence.”¹⁶⁰ The Masonic Lodges, with their commitment to secrecy and the ‘mystery’ thus drew to its fold a body of initiates who saw themselves as a new elite separated and protected from profane society and existing outside the established moral boundaries.¹⁶¹ But the price for this special treatment was the continual awareness of being the object of surveillance. Adam Weishaupt, the founder of the secret society, the Illuminati, discusses both the sense of exaltation experienced by the members who perceive that they have access to something “excellent and great, something that not everybody knows” as well as the sense of being watched from an invisible source: “I believed that I was under the strictest observation of many persons not known to me ... none of my actions went unnoticed.”¹⁶² In summary, Koselleck argues that the Masonic Order emerged during the

¹⁵⁸ Reinhart Koselleck, *Critique and Crisis. Enlightenment and the Pathogenesis of Modern Society*, (1959; Oxford: Berg, 1988).

Marie Mulvey Roberts also argues: “[c]lubs were at the forefront of the transition from an aristocratic to a bourgeois society.” See *Pleasure in the Eighteenth Century* edited by Roy Porter and Marie Mulvey Roberts, (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 52.

¹⁵⁹ Koselleck 1988: 55.

¹⁶⁰ Koselleck 1988: 56.

¹⁶¹ Koselleck 1988: 77.

¹⁶² Koselleck 1988: 78.

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Enlightenment as a defining force that existed alongside the State, that ostensibly claimed to be apolitical but nonetheless held a powerful indirect control over the State.

Criticism of Freemasonry, both from within the Lodge and without, amongst anti-Masonic writers, tends to arise out of this difference between the ‘pure’ and the ‘spurious’ forms. The Masonic author A.E. Waite agrees that there are puerile elements within the degrees. The ‘Vengeance Grades’, he states, can appear quite brutal and can be seen as ‘puerile make-believe and nonsense’ if not understood in their symbolic context.¹⁶³ Comments along these lines have been aired since the eighteenth century, with one famous one by Leader Scott (Mrs Baxter) often quoted by Masons and non-Masons alike. She describes Freemasonry as “the greatest tissue of medieval superstition, child’s play, blood-curdling oaths and mysterious secrecy ... that can be imagined.”¹⁶⁴ A member of the Order in the United States, Ullis Buckley, in a rather jaded discussion of his Masonic experience, confirms this puerile aspect: “Masons are just like men, like the rest of the men around them – more appropriately I think, ‘Little Boys’ having fun and feeling important in their own private hideouts and special secluded ‘treehouses’.”¹⁶⁵ Writing in 1993 he notes that the Scottish Rite, of which he is a member, has been showing signs of ‘creeping moral decay’ due to too much affluence, in his experience, for several decades.¹⁶⁶ Martin Short’s discussion of the Order in Britain argues that, “there are elements in Freemasonry that bring out the worst in some men.”¹⁶⁷ Based on discussions with some of the families of Freemasons he asks why the Masonic symbols, oaths and rituals “can so prey upon a Freemason’s brain that he feels compelled to commit the most appalling acts, even against his own family”.¹⁶⁸ These comments confirm Mackey’s argument that the nature of these fraternal organizations involves both a pure intention and a corrupting tendency.

¹⁶³ Waite, Chapter X “The Development of Vengeance Grades.”

¹⁶⁴ Quoted in Waite 23.

¹⁶⁵ Ullis M. Buckley, Masonic Story. The Hidden Side (New York: Rivercross Publishing, 1993) 11.

¹⁶⁶ Buckley 61.

¹⁶⁷ Short, 104.

¹⁶⁸ Short 103. [Alan Axelrod notes of the Shriners \(formed in the US in 1871\) that “the Grand Lodge of England has in the past threatened English Masons with expulsion if they join the organization, believing that the Shrine brings Freemasonry into disrepute with childish antics, funny clothes, and ritual some find offensive ...” Axelrod states that “the](#)

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One of the characteristics of Freemasonry since its inception in the eighteenth century has been its ‘conviviality’; it has long been known as a drinking club.¹⁶⁹ As William James suggests, in an argument that could be deduced as support for the practice of drinking, “the sway of alcohol over mankind is unquestionably due to its power to stimulate the mystical faculties of human nature, usually crushed to earth by the cold facts and dry criticisms of the solar hour.”¹⁷⁰ As an institution that has grown out of eighteenth century standards of behaviour it is relevant to note that the concept of behaviour was based on a gentlemanly code in which men were judged not by their private behaviour after hours but by their performance in the public sphere.¹⁷¹ In other words a worthy gentleman could be drunk all night long so long as he performed well in his chosen profession the next day. This eighteenth century code of behaviour, combined with the secrecy of activities within the Lodge and the huge range of degrees on offer appears to have created contexts in which, according to the Masonic authors cited, corrupt and debased practices have occurred.

Masonic ritual is characterised by its elaborate and pompous ceremonial practices. These pompous practices may play a role in helping to mask any debasement that is present. Rosamunde Dalziell’s study of the role of shame in autobiography reveals that there are two responses to shame, one self-deprecation, the other its opposite, the tendency to grandiosity, swaggering and strutting, based on an anxiety in the psyche.¹⁷² In the Masonic

Shriners traditionally revelled in various pranks and ritualistic shenanigans, together with a great deal of drinking ... Yet, because the hooligans were well-to-do citizens, the police routinely turned a blind eye to what was deemed harmless fun.” US presidents who were Shriners were Warren Harding, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Harry S. Truman and Herbert Hoover. Axelrod 224 – 225.

¹⁶⁹ See Porter & Mulvey Roberts, 1996, for a discussion of the homosociality of men’s clubs, the role of drinking and its relationship to violence and terror in London in the 18th century.

¹⁷⁰ James 307.

¹⁷¹ John Barrell, “Coffee House Politicians,” conference paper presented at Spies and Surveillance in the 18th Century Conference. November 2001. Humanities Research Centre, ANU Canberra.

¹⁷² Rosamunde Dalziell, Shameful Autobiographies. Shame in Contemporary Australian Autobiographies and Culture (Melbourne University Press, 1999) 5. In his analysis of the role of the hierarchies of titles and functions within the Ku Klux Klan, David Annan also argues that they are a form of compensation for the anonymity of the individual. David

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~~Deleted:~~ Pleasure in the Eighteenth Century (New York: New York University Press, 1996)

Order secrecy, silence and concealment are the *modus operandi* and one would wonder whether the tendency to grandiose ceremonials and pompous titles might not be a response to the anxiety associated with shame.¹⁷³ If shame is extreme, it can have similar effects to that of terror on the psyche. Evidence suggests that if the behaviour of the individual goes markedly against his or her own moral standards, then the result can also be amnesia and dissociation.¹⁷⁴ Shame, combined with alcohol, can lead to repression of memories too horrible to contemplate.

Given the protection that secrecy affords in the Masonic Order, the sanction of its status within the Establishment, the development of a massive range of degrees, many regarded as corrupt or spurious versions, and the loosening of moral responsibility in the group context that alcohol provides, it is not surprising that Freemasonry has been one of the targets of criticism in the ritual abuse debate, which arose in Britain, the Continent and the United States in the mid 1980s. In 1991 Margaret Jacob commented on the scarcity of papers on Freemasonry, suggesting “[i]t was as if the topic had ceased to be important or, worse still, was allowed to stand indicted of tendencies dark and forbidding, and hence best left to others.”¹⁷⁵ While scholars have tackled the prickly subject of ritual abuse in general terms, very little dedicated scholarly attention has been paid to the role of Freemasonry in this regard. Occasionally there are references to it in broader studies. Martin Katchen, for example, notes that allegations of Masonic ritual abuse in the United States go back as far

Annan, “The Ku Klux Klan,” in Secret Societies edited by Norman MacKenzie (London: Aldus Books, 1967) 300.

¹⁷³ Exaggerated titles such as those used in degrees in Royal Arch Masonry include Grand Pontiff, the Sovereign Prince Rose Croix of Heredom, Grand Elected Knight Kadosh, Grand Inspector Inquisitor Commander, and Sublime Prince of the Royal Secret and so on. Mervyn Jones, “Freemasonry,” in MacKenzie 155.

¹⁷⁴ This is apparent particularly in discussions of combat trauma. See, for example, Kalí Tal, Worlds of Hurt. Reading the Literatures of Trauma (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996). Tal quotes Vietnam veteran Al Hubbard who describes the process as: “[s]acrificing a portion of your consciousness so you won’t have to deal with being there and building mental blocks so you won’t have to deal with having been there.” (p. 129).

¹⁷⁵ Margaret C. Jacob, Living the Enlightenment. Freemasonry and Politics in Eighteenth-Century Europe (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) 17.

as the 1830s.¹⁷⁶ Noblitt also notes that many of his patients have reported abuse in the context of Masonic ceremonies and using Masonic regalia. In a similar argument to the one discussed by Masonic authors above Noblitt and Perskin state: "... it is also possible that such cultists operate within Freemasonry without the knowledge or consent of the majority of its membership ... (and) ... it is also possible that some cultists imitate Masonic rituals during their abusive ceremonies."¹⁷⁷

Stephen Kent is a sociologist whose field of research is focussed on deviant religious cults and has specialised in groups such as Scientology, being invited as an expert witness in a number of legal trials.¹⁷⁸ In his research Kent has had many cases of individuals disclosing ritual abuse to him, among them reports of Masonic ritual abuse by those whose fathers were Freemasons. He says:

What I found is that related to Freemasonry are countless splinter groups involving just men, sometimes women get involved, in traditions involving high ceremonialism, elaborate ritualism and so on ... Once I got challenged on the Masonic issue, I started finding out there are people right around North America who have also made allegations that they have been ritually abused by Freemasons.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁶ Martin H. Katchen, "The History of Satanic Religions" in Out of Darkness. Exploring Satanism and Ritual Abuse edited by David K. Sakheim and Susan E. Devine (New York: Lexington Books, 1992) 10.

¹⁷⁷ Noblitt & Perskin 101. My own memories would validate this point. They were occasionally held within the Lodge but the men behaved in a much more perverse manner, with raucous laughter and puerile behaviour, than the normally solemn and restrained manner that appears to be the accepted practice of the orthodox rituals. The Masonic furniture such as the keystone and the foundation stone as well as the wearing of Masonic regalia and a circular ritual arrangement of the men were used in the abusive context.

¹⁷⁸ Stephen Kent, sociologist, University of Alberta. Home page
<http://www.arts.ualberta.ca/~skent/>

Accessed 2nd April 2004.

¹⁷⁹ Wayne Morris, "Interview with Dr Stephen Kent", CKLN-FM Mind Control Series, Part 13.

<http://www.freemasonrywatch.org/drstephenkent.html>
Accessed 2nd April 2004.

On the worldwide web the subject has had considerable airing, though it is often bound up with complex conspiracy theories or Christian diatribes. The phenomenon is broadly associated with the rise of a concern about mind control experiments on children in the military context in the United States, particularly since the Korean War. Amongst current literature on contemporary ritual abuse, directed towards 'victims' of ritual abuse, are reports by those who claim that they have been abused by members of Masonic organizations. Neil Brick, one such survivor who has written about the experience states, "I believe the Masons are one of the largest groups of perpetrators of Satanic Ritual Abuse in the world. Their ties reach into government (federal and local), as well as some of the largest economic institutions in the country (USA) ... I was born into the Masons. A cult so insidious that most people do not even know they are a member."¹⁸⁰ Among advocates for the rights of survivors of Masonic ritual abuse, Lynne Moss-Sharman, the Canadian founder of an advocacy group called The Stone Angels Support Group, notes the relationship between reports by survivors, military contexts and the role of Freemasonry.¹⁸¹ A chilling observation by Moss-Sharman is that Scottish Rite funding frequently supports research into schizophrenia, which has similar attributes to the diagnosis of Multiple Personality Disorder or Dissociative Identity Disorder in a large majority of survivors of ritual abuse and other victims of mind control experimentation. In the European context Jacques Derrida, in a discussion of the role of secrecy and the demonic, has alluded to the phenomenon being discussed here. Noting the role of genealogy, he mentions "the current

This interview series on Mind Control on the Canadian radio station, CKLN-FM, is sponsored by the organization known as *FreemasonryWatch*. It invites people who have suffered abuse in the Masonic context to email their confidential information.

¹⁸⁰ Neil Brick, "Surviving Masonic Ritual Abuse" in *Beyond Survival. A magazine on ritual abuse, trauma and dissociation*. Issue Eighteen. Annandale: Phoenix Van Dyke, July 1996: 23 – 24.

¹⁸¹ Wayne Morris, "Interview with Lynne Moss-Sharman", CKLN-FM Mind Control Series, Part 6.

<http://www.raven1.net/fremason.htm>

Accessed 3rd February 2004

European return of mystery and orgiastic mystification” and advocates denouncing, deploring and combating it.¹⁸²

Clearly there is reason to believe that the phenomenon of Masonic ritual abuse exists, but until there is a concerted effort to examine it intellectually and in the context of historical trends as well as at the coalface, little may be done to alter the social structure that supports this form of abuse. This is where the role of artists, as the following chapters will explore, can be pivotal. If their work is interpreted with an understanding of the considerations discussed here then it may be that a number of the artists, and possibly many of those considered representative of an inexplicable postmodern *zeitgeist*, may be shown to be illustrating repressed experiences of ritual abuse.

¹⁸² Jacques Derrida, The Gift of Death, translated by David Wills (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1995) 135.

CHAPTER THREE
TERROR, TRAUMA AND *THE CREMASTER CYCLE*:
WHERE THE CORPORATE MEETS THE MASONIC IN THE ART OF
MATTHEW BARNEY

The most significant artist who examines the theme of Freemasonry today is Matthew Barney. His major work, *The Cremaster Cycle*, is comprised of five films produced between 1994 and 2002 and was shown at the Guggenheim Museum in New York from February to June 2003. A magnificent body of work, the series breaks new ground in the visual arts both in its use of a big budget production and in its subject matter, and, as many critics have suggested, is a project of major significance. As the following chapter will discuss, in *The Cremaster Cycle* Barney utilises themes from Freemasonry in both disguised and overt ways to examine the relationship between the Order, the corporate world, the medical sphere, religion and sport. While the films appear enigmatic and idiosyncratic, this chapter will demonstrate that the theme of initiation, in both its traditional and contemporary forms, is a major current that runs throughout *The Cremaster Cycle*.¹

James Lingwood suggests that Barney “[journeys] alone in his efforts to build a parallel mythological world that probes deeply the dilemmas and traumas that shape our time.”² This chapter will examine *The Cremaster Cycle*, using trauma theory as an interpretive model, in order to tease out the nature of the dilemmas and traumas that appear to be being depicted in this work. It will firstly identify some of the likely indicators of trauma within Barney’s oeuvre and then will trace the ways in which traumatic themes can be seen to be depicted through a detailed chronological examination of the *Cremaster* films. It will discuss the theme of initiation and demonstrate the extent to which the artist appears to

¹ I visited the work between April 13 and 23, 2003 and requested an interview with the artist through the Barbara Gladstone Gallery. However, he was unavailable for interview at the time.

² See James Lingwood, “Artist Project Matthew Barney”, *TATE Magazine*, issue 2. <http://www.tate.org.uk/magazine/issue2/barney.htm>
Accessed June 1, 2003.

have drawn on Masonic material, both historical and symbolic, most explicitly in *Cremaster 3*, to produce a major work that could be seen to articulate one of the recent concerns about the institution of Freemasonry. It will put forward the argument that Barney's deep probing could, in fact, be illustrating the aesthetic negotiation of a particular trauma, that of Masonic ritual abuse, and the dilemma of psychological confusion resulting from such practices. As Chapter One has explained, ritual abuse practices can leave the individual amnesic towards the original experiences, but driven towards the resolution of some deeply buried pain. In the case of an artist, this buried material can become a fruitful source of inspiration leading to the production of complex, layered and obscure artistic imagery, and yet the artist may be unaware of the traumatic source of his imagery and may focus totally on aesthetic concerns. A number of attempts were made to discuss this theme with Matthew Barney; however, the artist has chosen to remain neutral, neither confirming nor denying my interpretation.³

There is a considerable body of criticism about Barney's work since 1991 when, after abandoning a career in medicine, he burst onto the art scene as a performance artist and sculptor.⁴ However, to date, no clear explanations have emerged about the work. Most articles suggest that the work is difficult if not impossible to decipher so that much of the emphasis is placed on its production, since the films involve a large production team and extensive use of prosthetics and special effects. *The Cremaster Cycle* launched Barney as a blockbuster artist, with the Guggenheim exhibition of his work "on record as the best attended single-artist show ever held at that venue".⁵ His supporters, like Arthur Danto, consider he could be the Picasso or Leonardo of our time.⁶ His detractors complain of art film tedium and mind-numbing banality.⁷ Jed Perl, for example, complains of "phoney-

³ Having made a number of attempts to contact the artist since 2003, including sending him drafts of a proposed journal article on his work, I received a response from his gallery on May 7, 2006 saying that, while the artist had received my drafts, he was not prepared to comment at this time.

⁴ He was a pre-Med student at Yale. See Lingwood website.

⁵ Stephanie Cash and David Ebony, "*Cremaster*, a blockbuster", *Art in America*, July 2003, vol. 91: 112.

⁶ Arthur C. Danto, "The Anatomy Lesson (Matthew Barney's *Cremaster*)", *The Nation*, May 5, 2003, vol. 276: 25.

⁷ Roger Kimball, "Pretentious and Perverted", *Spectator*, March 15, 2003, vol. 291: 60.

baloney mythopoetic movies, accompanied by dumpster loads of junk from some godforsaken gymnasium of the imagination.”⁸ The work clearly bothers critics. In 1998, for example, when Barney’s *Cremaster* films were first emerging, Mark Sladen noted that there was a “hefty Barney publicity machine [propagating] a certain authorized view” and backing from powerful galleries, collectors and museums, linking the work with large economic concerns.⁹ He added that the work “might just represent something emergent, something big, something from the future.”¹⁰ The following discussion will endorse this comment and suggest ways in which the artistic journey that Barney enacts could be seen as a critique of irregular Masonic practice in the American context.

The massive catalogue accompanying the Guggenheim exhibition promises an insight into the work’s meaning. A glossary of terms compiled by Neville Wakefield supplies many useful elements to explain the myriad allusions in this dense body of work. The catalogue essay by Nancy Spector, entitled “Only the Perverse Fantasy Can Still Save Us”, draws on Barney’s medical training and his interest in the process of sexual differentiation in the early stages of foetal development. Spector’s eloquent and thorough discussion of the work exposes many of the symbolic elements, including descriptions of Masonic ritual elements incorporated into *Cremaster 3*. She concludes with a Freudian interpretation of the work that stresses perversion due to a failed Oedipal stage of development. She states:

... a rejection of the Oedipal complex constitutes a refusal to move beyond the state of primary infantile narcissism in which the subject remains fixed in pregenital unity ... The antithesis of Oedipal development is perversion which is marked by the regressive compulsion to eschew normative sexual maturation by privileging the anal stage over the genital. Abandoning Oedipus

⁸ Jed Perl, “On Art – Oh, Cool (*The Cremaster Cycle*)”, The New Republic, Sept 1, 2003: 23.

⁹ Mark Sladen, “Unspeakably Beautiful,” Art Monthly, 127 (1998) 1-4.

¹⁰ Sladen 4.

means embracing the anal-sadistic universe: the delirious realm of undifferentiation imagined by *The Cremaster Cycle*.¹¹

What she doesn't discuss, however, is what might have caused this apparent rejection. An Oedipal explanation is very often used to reinforce the *status quo* and here we have to recall Freud's about-turn after presenting *The Aetiology of Hysteria* to the Viennese medical fraternity.¹² The ramifications of his paper were an indictment of the middle class Viennese men who appeared to be sexually abusing their daughters. For many decades afterwards, amongst the psychology profession, Freud's Oedipal Theory effectively closed the door to the possibility of incest amongst the middle classes. By avoiding discussion of Barney's open criticism of the fraternity of Freemasonry in *Cremaster 3* and focussing solely on the artist's Oedipal struggle Spector follows this more conservative line.¹³ A traditional psychoanalytic reading such as this, by turning the emphasis back on the individual's personal psychic development, fails to explain causal connections. By contrast, a reading focussing on themes of trauma, when taken to its endpoint, can have a vastly different outcome, with the potential to expose the underlying social fabric and offer a critique of the culture that spawns such bizarre and highly relevant work.

Barney appears to respond with enormous passion and intensity to his social environment, in particular, to social injustices. But, like many artists, he sometimes appears to find it difficult to put what he is saying into words. *The Cremaster Cycle*, while based on narrative structures, contains very few spoken words. As Calvin Tomkins notes, interviews with him can be marked by long awkward pauses, suggesting the difficulty he has of putting aspects of the work into a verbal form.¹⁴ One possible reason for this struggle with words could be that the work relates to traumatic experience, for the struggle to articulate the experience

¹¹ Nancy Spector, "Only the Perverse Fantasy Can Still Save Us", Matthew Barney. The Cremaster Cycle, exhibition catalogue (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 2002) 80.

¹² See, for example, Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson, Freud. The Assault on Truth: Freud's Suppression of the Seduction Theory (London, Boston: Faber and Faber, 1984).

¹³ A number of researchers suggest that Freud may have been referring to ritual abuse in the case studies of a few of his patients discussed in the Etiology of Hysteria. See, for example, Tim Tate, Children for the Devil. Ritual Abuse and Satanic Crime (London: Methuen, 1991) 345.

¹⁴ Calvin Tomkins, "His Body, Himself," The New Yorker, January 27, 2003, vol. 73: 50.

verbally is a typical symptom of psychological trauma. Another possible reason, as the following critique will suggest, is that the subject matter may be dealing with experiences that the society as a whole is still incapable of understanding. As an artist who ‘thinks through his body’ Barney follows a trajectory in contemporary art of performance-based enactments that involve the artist’s own body in space and include acts of extreme physicality.¹⁵ The influence of American artists such as Bruce Nauman, Paul McCarthy, and Cindy Sherman, amongst others, is clearly perceptible within the work. The role of some of his predecessors and contemporaries will be addressed in the next chapter.

As the following discussion will suggest, by following a trauma reading to its logical end *The Cremaster Cycle* could be seen to be a description of hidden, cruel and dangerous social practices. Reading his films as social commentary, this chapter will attempt to articulate what these practices could be and how there could be a sense of “something emergent, something big, something from the future” in Matthew Barney’s work.

A Trauma Reading of *The Cremaster Cycle*

Trauma theory places the experience of real terror in social situations and the capacity for human cruelty at the centre of psycho/spiritual disturbance. As trauma theorists argue, the traumatic event is literally experienced as an ‘unspeakable act’.¹⁶ When artists produce work dealing with trauma there are often identifiable characteristics within the work, many of which, as the following discussion will suggest, appear in the work of Matthew Barney. As Kuspit and others suggest, the drive behind the work becomes an insatiable need to make sense of this jigsaw puzzle that is often manifest in confusing responses to the world. The artist, generally at first unaware of the cause, is driven by a sense of tension that nothing other than the creative act can seem to appease. But the void that trauma creates can never be filled and the artist is driven ceaselessly to keep repeating himself. Central to the work is the body and the sensations that were originally part of the forgotten experience.

¹⁵ The comment that Barney ‘thinks through his body’ was one made by his mother. See Tomkins 50.

¹⁶ See discussion in Chapter One.

One of the primary reactions to extreme terror is the sense of ‘depersonalisation’, that is, the feeling that one is looking at one’s own body from a distance. The state of shock induced in the experience often creates the feeling of ‘leaving the body’, very often of looking down on it from a great height, or of floating, numbed to the pain of what appears to be happening below.¹⁷ In Barney’s work it could be argued that there are many examples of such depersonalisation: blimps float, aerial views look down on the scene below, he himself climbs incessantly throughout all of his work as if to gain a better perspective. But at the same time that there is an apparent desire to escape from the body there are also conflicting and painful reminders of the body’s presence. In his earlier performance works, for example, *BLIND PERINEUM* (1991) and *Mile High Threshold: FLIGHT with the ANAL SADISTIC WARRIOR* (1991) he traverses the ceiling with ice screws penetrating his anus.¹⁸ (Fig. 7)

In his early work the anus is frequently identified as a significant bodily site and in his choice of title for the film series the Cremaster muscle (which raises and lowers the testicles) identifies a related site. From the perspective of trauma theory the repeated emphasis on this part of the anatomy, from the beginning of his artistic career until 2002, suggests that it could be a key site of trauma. In all of his work the artist struggles against great odds to attempt to grasp something that is forever just outside of his reach, implying something ‘slipping’ away from the conscious mind.¹⁹ Memories of trauma are stored, however, in bodily sensations and it is through the body that the individual can finally retrieve the experience. The sense of touch plays an important role. Barney’s signature medium is Vaseline and he uses it obsessively throughout the work. It oozes from every orifice, he becomes entirely coated with it in *Cremaster 4*, and in *Cremaster 3* the artist

¹⁷ David Healey, Images of Trauma. From Hysteria to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (London: Faber & Faber, 1993) 66.

¹⁸ Spector 8.

¹⁹ The term ‘slippage’ popularised in 1980s Postmodern discussions is relevant to the discussion of trauma and memory here. The concept of repressed memories slipping away as one tries to grasp them may also be incorporated into Masonic symbolism. In the ritual of the Third Degree the hand of the corpse of Hiram Abif ‘slips’ when the Masons try to pull at it.

Richard Serra aggressively flings it against the wall of the Guggenheim Museum. These signature elements, repeated throughout all of his work, are enough on their own, and without any of the other attributes of the work, to suggest that the theme of rape could be the trauma being referred to here. Indeed, the artist's obsessive use of Vaseline, a popular medium for penile lubrication, suggests that it could be a tactile reminder of a repressed traumatic memory. (Fig. 8)

A work he created just prior to the *Cremaster* films could be interpreted as an endorsement of this reading of rape as the subject matter of the work. In the video, entitled *Drawing Restraint 7*, Barney plays a young satyr, as Spector notes, a “yet-to-be-gendered ‘kid’ caught in a furious tailspin”.²⁰ (Fig. 9) In the video “the action is compressed into the gorgeous, Aegean-blue interior of a limousine, which is driving at night across and through the bridges and tunnels connecting Manhattan to the islands surrounding it ... A porous, liminal space, the city-island of Manhattan appears as a fluid region between the terrestrial world and the domain of the gods.”²¹ Barney had commented on his interest in the relationship between the Classical figure of Pan and the word ‘panic’.²² In the Roman tradition the role of Pan was identified with Faunus and was enacted by youths who clothed themselves in goatskins as a symbol of sacrifice. As a satyr, Pan’s role was related to sexually transgressive behaviour such as rape, and myths of bestial rape were associated with the initiation rites of boys.²³ Barney enacts a scene in which a young satyr is struggling with an older one in the rear of a limousine and the body of the younger satyr is left naked and exposed after the struggle.²⁴ This scene could be suggesting the rape of a ‘kid’ set in a context of great affluence.

²⁰ Spector 22.

²¹ Spector 23.

²² Spector 22-23.

²³ This was enacted during the ancient Roman festival of Lupercalia, the day of the wolf, held on February 15th. Paul Harvey, *The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature* (1937; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969) 250. See also J.E. Robson, “Bestiality and Bestial Rape in Greek Myth”, *Rape in Antiquity* (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co, 1997) 66 - 70.

²⁴ Spector 23.

In *The Cremaster Cycle* the seductive surface of a creamy-white ‘self-lubricating’ plastic pervades the exhibition, connecting the field of medicine with the artistic one. In the Guggenheim the frequency of its use connotes a similar visual effect to the array of classical white marble sculptures scattered throughout the many New York art museums. Medical instruments and medical surfaces, accompanied by photographic references to glaciers and ice flows, convey a chilling sensation. With the medical surfaces both alluring and repulsive, one wonders whether medical abuses are also being suggested here. Spector alludes to this link when she states, “[i]n some of his objects Barney even included speculums and sternal retractors ... the body is so expanded that it becomes the playing field itself.”²⁵

The focus also oscillates between the medical and the sporting arena. The medium of high intensity sport can be an outlet for the release of repressed emotions and in Barney’s sculptures sporting equipment and medical apparatus merge. Many of the objects suggest the bodily position of medical procedures: a mirror-coated saddle, for example, is displayed upside down one stirrup in the air, while various encased sculptures simulate the body in a prone position legs spread apart. In *Cremaster 3* the suggestion of abuse is much more explicit with the dentist chair being used for a form of medical torture.

In the process of dissociation during trauma the victim’s attention can remain as far away as possible from the bodily experience so that effectively his psyche becomes embedded in the surrounds, his mind involuntarily recording each minute detail. The surrounds where the trauma takes place can then form part of his identity.²⁶ In Barney’s work the interiors of cars become significant sites, repeated on many occasions, suggesting the possibility that they could be sites of trauma. The process of dissociation then produces identity fragmentation in order to accommodate the powerful but repressed emotions produced by the ordeal. The fact that Barney plays many roles in his films suggests that this could be a way of acting out the compartmentalisation of these emotional responses. The Loughton

²⁵ Spector 8.

²⁶ See Jill Bennett, “Material Encounters Approaching the Trauma of Others Through the Visual Arts,” *Postcolonial + Art. Where Now?* (Sydney: Artspace Visual Art Centre, 2001).

Candidate, Gary Gilmore, Harry Houdini, the Highland Piper and others may all have significance, as the following discussion will explain, in acting out the various responses.

The Artistic Process

While Barney named his films according to a numerical system he did not produce them in numerical sequence. He discusses his reasons for producing the films out of numerical order as being associated with a fractured narrative that did necessarily “fall together in a linear fashion. So I decided at that point to start with *Cremaster 4* and establish a kind of boundary, and then go back to *Cremaster 1*. I felt pretty certain that ending in the middle would be the way to finish.”²⁷ The artist’s realisation that he needed to tell stories, but that these stories expressed some sense of dislocation, suggests that he may be attempting to piece together material that may not be easily articulated. The urge to create a narrative where the information is confused can be a drive towards remembrance and healing. As T.J. Sheff notes, the aesthetic process of ritual catharsis involves the release of repressed emotion from a past traumatic experience, so that through ‘aesthetic distancing’ the artist may simultaneously participate in and observe this re-enacted trauma.²⁸

The analysis of the films here will take a chronological perspective in order to elucidate the ways in which the artist appears to be negotiating traumatic material. The discussion will suggest that *The Cremaster Cycle* could be an example of the artistic negotiation of trauma through a conscious process of ‘self-initiation’. It will also demonstrate that the artist inserts multiple references to the theme of initiation and the role of the Masonic Order and its history throughout the Cycle, becoming most explicit in *Cremaster 3*, signifying the impact on the individual of the complex and powerful role of initiatory practices in

²⁷ James Lingwood, “Artist Project Matthew Barney” Tate Magazine Issue 2.

<http://www.tate.org.uk/magazine/issue2/barney.htm>

Accessed 1st June 2003.

²⁸ T.J. Scheff, Catharsis in Healing, Ritual and Drama (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979) 61. See also a summary of these concepts in Gina Andrea Fatone, The Parade of Mischief

http://www.humnet.ucla.edu/echo/volume3_issue/fatone/fatone2.html

Accessed 7th May 2004.

American and European traditions. Imagery that could seem multivalent in the earlier works in the Cycle can be identified as specifically Masonic references in the light of the later works, as the following interpretation will demonstrate.

Cremaster 4 (1994)

Cremaster 4 is set on the Isle of Man. Woven throughout the film are many elements drawn from Celtic lore and the initiatory tradition of the region. Here the artist appears to employ this framework of traditional elements, endowing them with his own interpretation, in order to conduct a process of self-initiation *via* a torturous physical task. This discussion will argue that the artist's voluntary immersion into a liminal experience could be an attempt to connect with repressed material through an intense bodily engagement and will put forward a suggestion as to the possible nature of this material, based on recent research into ritual abuse.

The Isle of Man is famous for its history of pagan and Druidic practices, and for the strong and continuing presence of ancient Celtic beliefs. The artist's choice of this location, geographically remote from the urban context of his American upbringing, may reflect one of the characteristics of the initiatory process. As Victor Turner notes, initiation commonly employs a long exacting pilgrimage, "a parallel passage in space, a geographical movement from one place to another."²⁹ Half of the film's focus deals with contemporary concerns: it is a depiction of two motorcycles with riders and passengers speeding in opposite directions around the island, a comment on the Tourist Trophy motorcycle race for which the island is also noted. The juxtaposition of ancient beliefs with contemporary sports provides an opportunity for both artist and audience to reflect on the relationship between ancient practices and contemporary experience. (*Fig. 10*)

The film begins with the sound of bagpipes and the black and white check of racing flags, accompanied by Barney's signature field emblem (a personalised design or logo that appears in all the *Cremaster* films), as well as the spinning form of the Triskelion or Three

²⁹ Victor Turner, From Ritual to Theatre. The Human Seriousness of Play (New York: PAJ, 1982) 25.

Legs of Man. This symbol is included in the official crest for the Isle of Man and depicts the warrior principle of ‘wherever I fall, I stand’.³⁰ The black and white check of the racing flags links the history of Freemasonry to the racing industry. The circular racing form known as the ‘derby’ evolved on the Isle of Man under the Earls of Derby, who were the ruling elite. A number of Earls of Derby have been noted in Masonic records as having honorary positions in English Masonic Lodges.³¹ On the Isle of Man Freemasonry and another initiatory organization, the Independent Order of Oddfellows, have been closely associated with the development of the tourist and racing industries.³²

Barney depicts the Triskelion as a spinning wheel throughout the film. (*Fig. 11*) The combination of the spinning symbol and the motorcyclists racing round the island may reflect magical themes found in Celtic mythology. The Island of the Wondrous Beast, described in *The Book of the Dun Cow*, talks of a huge beast that raced round and round a magical island. When it reached the top of the island it performed a marvellous feat, spinning its body around inside its skin, then revolving its skin around its body.³³ Such spinning feats also appear in the tales of Celtic warriors. In the Irish epic poem, the *Táin Bó Cúalnge*, the warrior hero Cuchulain magically spins round inside his skin in preparation for battle.³⁴

³⁰ Neville Wakefield, “The Cremaster Glossary”, Matthew Barney. The Cremaster Cycle, 104.

³¹ In a History of University Lodge of Liverpool No. 4274, 1921 – 2001 Kai Hughes (Worshipful Master 2000-2001) notes the role of the 17th and 18th Earls of Derby in this Lodge. http://www.universitylodge-liverpool.org.uk/history_files/historyMainFrame.htm Accessed 28th May 2003.

³² The Manx Notebook has a site called The Independent Order of Oddfellows that traces the historical relationship between the two societies on the island. It discusses the overlap of membership between the two societies and the involvement of Masonic and Oddfellow entrepreneurs in the development of the tourist industry. <http://www.isle-of-man.com/manxnotebook/history/socs/oddfllws.htm> Accessed 7th May 2004.

³³ T.W. Rolleston, Myths and Legends of the Celtic Race (1911; London, Calcutta, Sydney: George G. Harrap & Co, 1922) 315.

³⁴ Cecile O’Rahilly (editor), Táin Bó Cúalnge from the Book of Leinster (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1967) 201-202.

Druidic initiation rites, which incorporated a series of painful and terrifying practices designed to toughen the initiates, were closely associated with the preparation of warriors for battle.³⁵ Such practices aimed to produce ecstatic mystical or ‘out of body’ experiences that were designed to demonstrate the transmigration of the soul that encouraged warriors to sacrifice themselves in battle.³⁶ The practice of bodily spinning, when pushed to extremes, has long been associated with the mystical tradition, as in, for example, the practices of the Whirling Dervishes. In Celtic lore, a mythical spinning wheel associated with the Druids, known as Roth Fail or Fail’s Wheel, and Roth Ramach or wheel with paddles, may also have been associated with the mystical role of spinning.³⁷ Such spinning practices have particular relevance to the trauma of ritual abuse, as will be discussed shortly.

Interspersed between the racing segments, the film focuses on a torturous journey that takes the artist into a surreal underwater space. As Victor Turner argues, the liminal stage of initiation is often accompanied by surreal contexts, birth symbolism, animal/human hybrids and gender confusion.³⁸ These elements all appear in *Cremaster 4*. Barney enters the scene as the Loughton Candidate, a white-suited animal/human hybrid with the face of the Loughton Ram, a species of sheep unique to the Isle of Man.³⁹ (*Fig. 12*) The artist’s use of the term ‘candidate’ reinforces the concept of initiation as the central theme of the film. The audience is led to the end of Queen’s Pier where the Loughton Candidate begins by combing his hair, revealing four ‘valves’ that mark the place of the Loughton Ram’s four horns. A close-up shot reveals the Loughton Candidate’s greasy hair and dirty fingernails, implying that the subject under discussion may be somewhat grubby and that the

³⁵ O’Rahilly xi and Leslie Ellen Jones, Druid, Shaman, Priest. Metaphors of Celtic Paganism (Enfield Lock, Middlesex: Hisarlick Press, 1998) 7.

³⁶ Miranda J. Green, Dictionary of Celtic Myth and Legend (London: Thames & Hudson, 1992) 86.

³⁷ Dudley Wright, Druidism. The Ancient Faith of Britain (London: Ed. J. Burrow & Co, 1924) 93 and Dáithí ‘O h’Ogáin, The Sacred Isle. Belief and Religion in Pre-Christian Ireland (Cork: Collins Press, 1999) 209.

³⁸ Victor Turner, “Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites of Passage” in Betwixt and Between: Patterns of Masculine and Feminine Initiation edited by Louise Caruth Mahdi *et al.* (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1987) 5, 6.

³⁹ Neville Wakefield, “The Cremaster Glossary”, Matthew Barney. The Cremaster Cycle, exhibition catalogue (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 2002) 104.

‘grooming’ of the artist may be tainted. The valves suggest a need to relieve pressure. As Turner notes, ‘letting off steam’ is one of the characteristics of the liminal phase of ritual.⁴⁰

Three attendant ‘faeries’ accompany the Loughton Candidate.⁴¹ (*Fig. 13*) The Isle of Man is said to be the home of the Faeries, known locally as "the quaer fellas" or "themselves".⁴² Barney’s muscle-bound, trans-gendered faeries are a contemporary play on this theme, appealing to the popularity of homosexual themes in a contemporary audience.⁴³ The gender confusion these faeries display attests to their liminal status and again reinforces the initiatory theme of the film. As Turner suggests, the initiate’s status is ‘betwixt and between’ established roles.⁴⁴ In Celtic lore, the term ‘the Faeries’ was the name given to the pagans, known also as *sidhaighi* or ‘mound-dwellers’, who were regarded as tricksters who performed initiatory rites.⁴⁵ They belonged to an ancient race of people called the Tuatha de Danaan and their magic was principally based on skills in hypnotism.⁴⁶ The odd appearance of Barney’s faeries could also be a play on the Independent Order of Oddfellows, a fraternal order that has a strong presence on the Isle of Man. If this is the case, the three feminised characters become a contemporary embodiment of Faith, Hope and Charity, the emblem on the flag of the Manx Order of Oddfellows.⁴⁷

⁴⁰ Turner (Ritual 32) cited in The Parade of Mischief, a discussion of Turner’s ideas. http://www.humnet.ucla.edu/echo/volume3_issue1/fatone/fatone2.html Accessed 17th May 2004.

⁴¹ The use of the spelling ‘faeries’ in this section is based on Barney’s spelling of the term in his installation *Field of the Descending Faerie* (1995).

⁴² Isle of Man. From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isle_of_Man Accessed 5th January 2007.

⁴³ When I was viewing this film in the theatre of the Guggenheim Museum in New York in 2003 a group of gay men in the audience cheered loudly when these characters appeared.

⁴⁴ Turner, Blazing the Trail 49.

⁴⁵ ‘O h’Ogáin 213.

⁴⁶ James Bonwick, Irish Druids and the Old Irish Religions (London: Griffith, Farran & Co., 1894) 104 -107. On the Isle of Man there is still some fear associated with the Fairies and some people continue to carry out propitiation rites to ward them away. See W.Y Evans Wentz (ed.), Fairy Faith in Celtic Countries, Ch. 4 “In the Isle of Man”. <http://www.manannan.net/library/manxnotebook/Fairyfaith%20on%20Isle%20of%20Man.html> Accessed 5th January 2007.

⁴⁷ See The Independent Order of Oddfellows. The Manx Notebook.

The Loughton Candidate begins the initiatory process by tap-dancing his way through the floor of the pier and falling into the cold water below. (*Fig. 14*) There, in a liminal space he begins his journey of rebirth through white birth passages or tunnels. (*Fig. 15*) As Turner notes, the limen of initiation is often represented by a long threshold, a corridor or a tunnel.⁴⁸ Here the artist puts himself through an excruciating and demanding process and emerges covered in a thick layer of Vaseline. (*Fig. 16*) Barney's use of his own body and torturous physical processes emulates an ancient tradition of initiation found in Celtic societies where the candidates crawled through long tunnels or were sealed into caves or tombs for long periods, in order to achieve a state of mystical illumination.⁴⁹

Barney's version of initiation is similar to these traditional practices, but is endowed with a more personal iconography. The Loughton Candidate's struggle towards the light at the end of the initiatory tunnel does not appear to lead him to a luminous and elevating mystical experience, as is the intention of the traditional rites, but, as the abject Vaseline-covered figure suggests, to a more wretched state. The Vaseline, as stated earlier, could be associated with the trauma of rape, and the artist's torturous struggle through this medium could be an attempt to connect with a powerful 'body memory' associated with this substance. As a ram with undeveloped horns the artist appears to be suggesting that part of this process may be about attaining adulthood, but under these circumstances the experience seems bizarre as the individual is led sheepishly into manhood. Attaining adulthood through the experience of rape can leave a young male uncertain of his gender, since his powerless body has been feminised in the act. This gender uncertainty is

<http://www.isle-of-man.com/manxnotebook/history/socs/oddflys.htm>
 Accessed 7th May 2004.

⁴⁸ Victor Turner, *Blazing the Trail. Way Marks in the Exploration of Symbols*, edited by Edith Turner (Tucson & London: The University of Arizona Press, 1992) 49.

⁴⁹ See Dudley Wright, *Druidism: The Ancient Faith of Britain* (London: J. Burrow & Co, 1924) 61 – 64. In Ireland these initiatory practices took on Christian significance when St Patrick introduced Gnostic initiation practices. St Patrick's Purgatory was a practice whereby a priest would be locked up for long periods in a cave, known as the Cave of Death. The pilgrim would proceed through the cave and experience a series of frightening trials incorporating terrifying sounds, visions of fiery punishments and an encounter with demons, in order to test his faith. Michael Dames, *Ireland. A Sacred Journey* (Shaftesbury, Dorset: Element Books, 2000) 15 – 39.

highlighted when the focus shifts to the motorcycle riders. While the Candidate is negotiating his underworld journey, the racing driver's gonads, covered in Vaseline, move hesitantly either up or down the body. This process, as Barney has pointed out, emulates the stage of early foetal development where the future sexual organs migrate up or down determining male or female development, a theme drawn from the artist's medical training.⁵⁰ The image of migrating testicles can similarly function as a visual metaphor for the sense of gender indecision that pervades the film.

Fear and cold also have the effect of raising the testicles, while warmth and relaxation lower them. Out on a chilly knoll the faeries enact a scene on a blue picnic blanket where a choice is made to embrace the fully descended position, a position signifying both masculinity and a state of relaxation. (*Fig. 17*) A tyre-changing demonstration made during the motorcycle race may also emphasise this choice. (*Fig. 18*) The new tyre supports two inflated gonads in their fully descended state, suggesting a decision to embrace full manhood and eschew the more feminised position. This tyre-changing demonstration also reflects Masonic themes. It could be read as a clever visual pun on the Legend of Hiram Abif, enacted in the Third Degree of Freemasonry. Hiram Abif, the master builder employed by King Solomon to build his temple, was, according to biblical references, the son of "a man of Tyre."⁵¹ At one point in the film one of the drivers holds this tyre against his body with the attached gonads positioned directly in front of his groin. Such a display fits the concept of performative or mimed 'exhibitions' and crude gestures that, as Turner notes, can accompany the initiatory process.⁵²

⁵⁰ Spector 33.

⁵¹ Conrad Hahn, The Importance of the Legend of Hiram Abiff
http://www.thefreemason.com/library/general/The_Importance_Of_The_Legend_Of_Hiram_Abiff.asp
 Accessed 24th May 2003.

While the Masonic ritual employs the biblical characters concerned with the building of King Solomon's temple, Hahn notes that the ritual murder that the Third Degree enacts is not based on biblical sources but was introduced in the eighteenth century.

See The Holy Bible 1 Kings, Ch. 7 and 11 Chronicles, Ch. 2.

⁵² Turner, Blazing the Trail 152.

It seems that Barney is making some sort of comment, relating a deep sense of gender indecision and confusion, along with some sort of repressed material, to the initiatory tradition within the Celtic context. An accompanying installation, entitled *Field of the Descending Faerie* (1995), implies more disturbing elements. A picnic blanket is depicted with the bodies of the three faeries indicated lying on it in the form of the Manx crest. (Fig. 19) However, the bodies are signified only through white plastic leg forms that are filled with beads, implying a state of dissociation or fragmentation. In the centre of the blanket is a hydraulic jack with a blue tartan design. The installation is accompanied by a very disturbing sculpture, a layered dripping form of pink melted plastic falling from a white table, one strap around its middle with a 'ribcage' made from the faeries' hooped skirts. (Fig. 20) It suggests a body in a state of total physical collapse and dissolution.

The arrangement of these objects in *Field of the Descending Faerie* appears initially obscure, but here a practice that has emerged in the research into ritual abuse may be relevant. As noted in Chapter Two, Freemasonry has been indicted as one of the groups that practise ritual abuse.⁵³ Along with the sexual abuse of children, other forms of terrifying and painful experiences have allegedly been created in which the children are involved, including formal rituals in Lodge settings.⁵⁴ A form of treatment, termed 'spin programming', has been reported as a feature of ritual abuse. According to the reports, this is where a child is strapped to a device that spins him around at high speed until he falls unconscious and effectively forgets the experience that has just taken place.⁵⁵ Spin

⁵³ There are now a number of websites for victims of Masonic ritual abuse. *S.M.A.R.T. or Stop Masonic Ritual Abuse Today* is one such site. It was established by Neil Brick, himself an alleged victim of Masonic abuse.
<http://members.aol.com/smartnews/n02.html>

Accessed 26th May 2003.

⁵⁴ Noblitt and Perskin state: "[m]any patients making such allegations have specifically reported abuse where Masonic regalia, ceremonies, or members were present." James Randall Noblitt & Pamela Sue Perskin, *Cult and Ritual Abuse. Its History, Anthropology, and Recent Discovery in Contemporary America*. (Westport, London: Praeger, 1995) 101.

⁵⁵ See John D. Lovern, *Spin Programming: A Newly Uncovered Technique of Systematic Mind Control*, presented at The Sixth Western Clinical Conference on Multiple Personality and Dissociation, Irvine, CA, 1993.

<http://home.mchsi.com/~ftio/mc-spin-prog.htm>

Accessed 3rd May 2004.

programming is often combined with other traumatising experiences, such as rape, in order to scramble the victim's memories even further. As yet, the reports have only been discussed in counselling circles dealing with ritual abuse and amongst alleged victims and have not been subjected to wider scholarly scrutiny. John D. Lovern, an American counsellor with PhD qualifications, is the primary source of information on this practice. He notes:

... spin training relies in part on conditioning the patient to connect, through cognition and imagery, the experience of spinning with internal buildup of centrifugal force. When spin programs are active, the affected alters subjectively experience high levels of force or pressure, as if they were sitting at the outside edge of a rapidly rotating disc. They feel overwhelmed by this pressure, finding it impossible to resist ...⁵⁶

As Lovern points out, there are various forms of spinning, including horizontal spinning on a table, similar to a record player; horizontal spinning about an axis, similar to being turned on a spit; vertical, "wheel-of-fortune" type spinning; and vertical spinning about an axis, on a pole, hanging upside down by the feet, or inside of a cylinder. Hydraulic mechanisms may form part of the equipment for such practices.

Amongst those who have recalled the practice of spin programming, an artist named Lynn (no connection to the author of this thesis) includes a journal drawing on her web page of "a cult programming or indoctrination device, the spin table" to which a child's body is strapped around its waist, legs and arms. Accompanying this drawing is a painting representing what appears to be a rape scene, set against black and white squares, a possible

In 1989 Thomas Gordon published a non-academic text that dealt with the theme of spinning and brainwashing. Gordon argues that in the 1950s a leading Scottish psychiatrist, Dr Cameron, was employed by the CIA to investigate the brainwashing of American soldiers during the Korean War. According to Gordon he developed a 'spinning chair' that he demonstrated was very effective as a brainwashing device. See Thomas Gordon, Journey into Madness: the true story of secret CIA mind control and medical abuse (New York: Bantam Books, 1989).

⁵⁶ Lovern website.

reference to the floor of a Masonic lodge.⁵⁷ Lynn's images suggest that the practices of rape and spin programming may be used in combination by perpetrators of ritual abuse in order to promote memory loss and confusion. However, her clear descriptive drawings suggest that she has been able to break through the confusion and to confront the horror of her experiences.

In the installation *Field of the Descending Faerie* the arrangement of the plastic legs in the form of the Triskelion recalls the spinning action represented in the film, while the collapsed form of the accompanying sculpture implies a reference to disturbing bodily sensations, suggesting the possibility that the artist may be referring to the practice of spin programming. Stylised white wedge forms, used as chocks, accompany the hydraulic jack in this piece. Artistically, they recall the metal wedge created by Bruce Nauman (*Device to Stand In* 1966). In *Cremaster 3*, to be discussed later, Barney relates the wedge to Masonic practice. In Operative Freemasonry the wedge refers to the tool used by the masons to split the large building stones and is used as a symbol to represent the need for the candidate to gradually refine his nature to become like the perfect cube, a 'square man'.⁵⁸ However, accompanying the more sinister spinning process they could imply a 'splitting' of the psyche. The terror and physical stress that can be produced by spin programming can be more than an individual can bear and dissociation and amnesia can be the only possible means of escape.

The installation *Field of the Descending Faerie* conveys an uneasy tension. The above suggests that it could be drawing on a combination of confused and repressed elements associated with extreme trauma and of the sense of being strapped to some sort of restraining device. Such an interpretation may be supported by a comment made by a reviewer of one of Barney's more recent films, *Drawing Restraint 9* (2006). Matthew Walker states, "[a]t least this film explains that icon shape that Barney uses constantly: the

⁵⁷ See Lynn's Page, journal drawings. The author has requested that her images not be reproduced.

<http://www.lynnart.net/journal1.htm>

Accessed 1st July 2006.

⁵⁸ J.D. Buck, Symbolism of Freemasonry or Mystic Masonry and the Greater Mysteries of Antiquity (Chicago: Charles T. Pownier, 1967) 28.

oval crossed by an oblong. It represents a body and restraints ... like a person strapped down to a table.”⁵⁹ A drawing accompanying *Cremaster 4* shows a diagram of this shape alongside the Three Legs of Man and the word ‘inmate’, again implying the sense of being trapped or imprisoned. (*Fig. 21*)

In *Cremaster 4* Barney has drawn on an ancient Celtic practice of initiation in what appears to be an initial attempt at ‘rebirth’, that is, an attempt to gain a shift in consciousness through an intense and challenging bodily process. If this attempt is based on either a conscious or unconscious drive to face a repressed trauma, then the artist has, through a work of daring originality and sheer physicality, gone part way towards its realization: the involvement of the body is bound to bring at least some of this material to the surface. However, the process is not necessarily achieved so readily and the artist must work at it again and again, coming at the problem from a range of different perspectives.

Cremaster 1 (1995)

Cremaster 1 is the next film that Barney produced for *The Cremaster Cycle*. It is set in the Bronco stadium of Boise State University in Idaho, in Barney’s hometown, and relates to his college football career. It is a dreamlike sequence that can be interpreted as embodying the state of euphoria that can accompany escape from trauma through the process of dissociation. According to Turner, sport is one of the liminoid metagenres of our society.⁶⁰ In sport players learn to focus so intently as to narrow and intensify consciousness in order to allow the merging necessary for what Turner calls a state of ‘flow’. This state involves a complete identification with the process and a loss of ego consciousness, similar to that experienced in the artistic process. It enables the artist/sportsperson to voluntarily enter the liminal space (right-brain territory) in which trauma material can be stored. The intensity of focus in the sports arena could suggest that Barney has been ideally trained for entering this liminal region.

⁵⁹ Matthew Walker, “Matthew Barney: No Restraint”, The Weblog of Matthew Walker. 6th August 2006.

MatthewWalker.net.nz

Accessed 15th January 2007.

⁶⁰ Turner, From Ritual to Theatre 56.

Two Goodyear blimps float throughout the film above the stadium while a choreographed display of dancing girls is enacted in Busby Berkeley style on the ground below. (*Fig. 22*) The blimps are in a state of full ascension, and according to Barney's use of the medical explanation of foetal gender differentiation, they describe the development of the female organs.⁶¹ The chorus line below depicts the structure of these organs. However, the reference to ovaries and ovulation is not the only symbolism being used by the artist here. The Goodyear logo, used in modified form in *Cremaster 1*, is the familiar image of the winged foot of Mercury or Hermes. Hermes was the guide of souls and in trauma terms represents the capacity for the soul to take flight in order to escape terror.⁶² Hermes, according to Turner, is also a 'trickster' identity associated with the tricks used on the initiates during the initiation process.⁶³

Inside one of the blimps a pre-birth scene is enacted where several airhostesses wait in a white room around a table covered with a large pile of grapes. In initiatory terms, grapes are often associated with the cult of Dionysus, in which wine was used to produce ecstatic states and mystical experiences. In one version of the myth Dionysus is descended from Agenor, also a king of Tyre.⁶⁴ However, in relation to the history of medical abuse, the grapes on the operating table also recall one of the most horrendous forms of ritual dissection, the case of Jack the Ripper. Forensic evidence showed that the murderer offered his victims grapes (an expensive commodity in 1888 London) to entice them to trust him. One theory proposes that the murders were associated with Freemasonry.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Spector 33.

⁶² In Barney's Goodyear logo he has added a form attached to the sole of the shoe. This form is discussed in the section on *Cremaster 3* where Aimée Mullins wears a sandal of this shape.

⁶³ Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre* 40.

⁶⁴ Paul Harvey (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature* (1937; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969) 147.

⁶⁵ See Stephen Knight, *Jack the Ripper: The Final Solution* (London: Harrap, 1976). A film made in 2001, *From Hell*, starring Johnny Depp, is based partly on Knight's theories and includes a reference to the grapes that were supposedly found with some of the bodies.

Like the beads in *Cremaster 4* the pile of grapes could also be interpreted as a representation of the dissociated body, but can similarly suggest that something is about to come to fruition. Underneath the table a woman awkwardly crouches and probes the grapes above her. (Fig. 23) As she does so her fingers become coated with Vaseline, the artist's familiar *leitmotiv*. She forms the pattern of Barney's 'field emblem', the lozenge shape crossed by a dissecting bar, with the grapes on the floor between her legs and pauses as if puzzled by the meaning of this pattern. The long drawn out action of this scene, along with the impression that the woman is partially recollecting something, could imply the slow dawning of memory. The scene anticipates a birth and again conveys the liminal space of initiation, but in contrast to *Cremaster 4*, is a less dynamic and even frustratingly slow process. While *Cremaster 4* enacts a decidedly masculine and active approach to the birth process, this film portrays a passive and more feminised position.

Each time the film focuses on the action within the blimp there is the sound of a rush of air, the sound associated with the dirigible's engine. But it is also similar to the sound experienced when the individual is thrust into a state of shock prior to fainting. The Masonic scholar J.D. Buck discusses this sound in relation to the Voice of the Silence, a mystical state. He says that the rushing sound heard in the ears prior to fainting or taking anaesthetic is the 'key to Samadhi' and says, "[i]f he can produce the same condition in himself without fainting or chloroform, for example, but by a knowledge of the law of vibration, then he is an Adept, and has, and knows how to pronounce the Master's Word."⁶⁶ The sound used in this sequence, combined with the slow drawn-out action, may therefore be another reference to the role of the mystical experience. In Masonic terms, this patient build-up of spiritual knowledge is the subject of the Second or Fellow Craft Degree.

The table setting is ritualistic and suggests not only a table ready for a meal, but given the suggestion of birth, an operating table. The hostesses, perfectly groomed and not a hair out of place, wait patiently for something to happen. Very, very slowly the woman under the table pulls several grapes through a hole in the tablecloth. In Barney's exhibition at the

⁶⁶ J.D. Buck, *Symbolism of Freemasonry or Mystic Masonry and the Greater Mysteries of Antiquity* (Chicago: Charles T. Pownor, 1967) 73.

Guggenheim in 2003 the setting inside the blimp took up the middle of the ground floor and could be seen from all the levels above, again implying the concept of dissociation during trauma, where the individual has the sensation of floating away from their body. (Fig. 24) Looking down on the installation below the white oblong table is now composed of two tables shifted a little apart. There are two small medical instruments on the operating table. This arrangement implies some form of medical procedure producing a split and a sense of something being out of alignment. Around the table is a pattern of white headpieces worn by the dancers, but here they are filled with white beads. They suggest the sense of having the mind ‘scrambled’. From a distance the pattern takes on a different appearance, like white-gloved arms reaching towards the central operating table. In the ritualistic performances of Freemasonry the men wear white gloves and from a distance this image takes on the look of a group of their arms reaching towards a central platform. Given this perspective the figure under the table is a subversive one. While the pile of grapes on the table can represent the fully dissociated individual in a state of shock, the woman below, although terribly restricted, is steadily but slowly having an impact on the situation. ‘Under the table’ things are beginning to change.

In *Cremaster 1* Barney’s ‘field emblem’, or logo, is based on an arch form rounded at both ends, rather like an Egyptian cartouche, and includes a bisecting horizontal bar. Its form is repeated throughout the *Cremaster Cycle* in various contexts. In the catalogue it is related to the shape of the ‘O’ in Bronco, emblazoned on the football field.⁶⁷ Barney’s drawings involving both this form and that of the goal posts, overlaid with physiological imagery of female sexual organs, suggest the ‘goal’ of youthful initiation, that is, sexual intercourse with women. In *Cremaster 1* it contains the winged foot of Mercury, an initiatory symbol already discussed. But the emblem is a shape that has many other connotations. Spector suggests that this shape signifies “the orifice and its closure, the hermetic body, an arena of possibility,” thus aligning it with the initiatory interpretation here.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Matthew Barney. *The Cremaster Cycle*, exhibition catalogue 120 – 123.

⁶⁸ Spector 7.

The atmosphere of *Cremaster 1*, while strange and disturbing, is nevertheless one of promise and hope. The ‘good year’ that Barney refers to can be related to the year of his birth (in *Cremaster 3* this year is alluded to with the use of the 1967 Cadillac) or perhaps to good times in his own college days. The child’s birthright, a promising future of order, happiness and, in a boy’s fantasy, of being surrounded by beautiful women, is displayed in all its football stadium glory. It captures a decidedly American dream. The college footballer’s lifestyle, complete with glamorous spectacle and hero status, can be an alluring escape from the niggling feeling that something is amiss. Barney symbolises this escape into fantasy by the winged foot of Mercury, the familiar Goodyear logo embellished with his own alterations. His choice to name this the first film of the sequence relates to its location in his hometown, that is, it acknowledges his personal history. However, the slow drawn-out action perhaps reflects the artist’s awareness that it represents a passive (or feminine) solution to the initiatory puzzle and therefore a painfully slow means of coming to terms with a more disturbing reality.

Cremaster 5 (1997)

Cremaster 5 shifts away from the present day to a romanticised historical context. Set in the sumptuous locale of the Hungarian State Opera House in Budapest it depicts a tragic love story and introduces a range of characters who appear to enact different elements of the artist’s internal experience: the Queen of Chain, played by Ursula Andress, and her Diva, Magician and Giant, all played by Barney. The character of Harry Houdini is first referenced here and acts as an overriding presence. The simple plot sees the Magician on horseback crossing the Lánchíd Bridge in Budapest towards the Queen of Chain’s residence. (Fig. 25) The camera takes the viewer through tunnels and passages, again referencing the effect of birth processes and initiatory spaces. The Queen also proceeds through long passages to the meeting point. (Fig. 26) As Her Diva, Barney performs a difficult physical feat scaling the proscenium arch in a pink-ribboned costume as if to gain the attention of the Queen. (Fig. 27) His contortions, however, prove unsuccessful, as she is unable to respond and help him: she appears to be restricted and trapped in the elaborate regalia of her royal position. Later, the Queen’s memory of her meeting with the Magician sees her sadly “fitting a stirrup onto his boot before he embarks on a journey to perform a

death-defying feat”.⁶⁹ Then, in a simulation of the performances by Harry Houdini, where the magician jumped near-naked and enchained into icy rivers in the United States, Barney as the Magician appears to jump shackled with large white plastic chains and white spherical weights between his toes into the freezing Danube. (*Fig. 28*) The plot then shifts to the thermal Gellért Baths where the Queen is filmed watching the scene below where Barney acts as Her Giant amongst sea sprites in the baths. (*Fig. 29*) The camera traces the view under the Queen’s skirts and through an orifice, again referring to the theme of birth. Adolescent hermaphroditic water sprites play in the water below. Her Giant, as fragile as a delicate flower signified by his veined and mottled complexion and lily shaped legs, awkwardly steps into the bath. (*Fig. 31*) While he is standing in the warm waters up to his hips a flock of Jacobin pigeons is attached to his retracted scrotum and fly upward as if to draw out the testicles. The Queen swoons in shock as she seems to understand the horror of the Magician’s ordeal and the scene returns to the Opera House where the Diva’s daring climb sees him crashing to the floor, ending his life. The Giant submerges underwater and the sprites insert a black pearl into his mouth, also signifying death, while the swooning Queen dribbles into the baths below.

By this stage in the artistic process it seems as if Barney is making a solid connection to the role of Freemasonry as many Masonic allusions appear throughout the film and appear to be consciously contrived. *Cremaster 5* combines a number of historical references that are significant to this reading. The first and most obvious reference is to Mozart’s Masonic opera *The Magic Flute*. The Hungarian State Opera House is a site of many productions of the opera and, as Neville Wakefield points out, Masonic symbolism is incorporated into its interior design.⁷⁰ In the history of Freemasonry in Europe an edict by Joseph II in 1785 allowed Masonic lodges to be re-established after a period of their prohibition. He stipulated that one lodge could be held in each city and in Budapest, Vienna and Prague three lodges were to be established.⁷¹ Here Barney’s Queen of Chain, embodied in many of his sculptures in tones of black, alludes to the role of the Queen of the Night. The use of the Jacobin pigeons also relates to Freemasonry. In Revolutionary France the Parisian Jacobins,

⁶⁹ Spector 68.

⁷⁰ Wakefield 102.

⁷¹ Ridley 117.

regarded as extremists, were led by the Freemason, François Joseph Westerman.⁷² The character of Harry Houdini, a brilliant escape artist, also has Masonic connections. Houdini was from Hungary and is counted amongst America's most famous Freemasons.⁷³ The artist also draws on the traumatic history of the site. The Lánchíd Bridge, or the Chain Bridge, in the opening scene, is an historical site of Nazi atrocities: it was where many Jewish victims were shot by the Hungarian Nazi SS and fell or were forced to jump into the freezing Danube.⁷⁴

In *Cremaster 5*, Barney weaves together these historical elements with the continuing psychological drama being enacted throughout the series. Here he appears to be drawing a parallel between large historically traumatic events and torturous feelings and bodily sensations. The role of Houdini here could be a representation of the power of the psyche to escape such feelings through the 'magic' of dissociation. The references to freezing rivers and then warm, comforting baths recalls the medical experiments performed by Nazi doctors in World War Two, of placing individuals in freezing cold and then in a warm bath

⁷² Ridley 134.

⁷³ Library of Congress, Houdini: A Biographical Chronology
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/vshtml/vshchn.html>
 Accessed 26th April 2003.

There are many websites that list Houdini as one of America's famous Freemasons.

⁷⁴ Barney, as a number of critics note, draws a lot of his material from film and popular culture, as well as from art sources. See, for example, Henry Jenkins, "Monstrous Beauty and Mutant Aesthetics: Rethinking Matthew Barney's Relationship to the Horror Genre" Publications Henry Jenkins. <http://web.mit.edu/cms/People/henry3/horror.html>
 Accessed 22nd May 2006.

The film, *Music Box*, starring Jessica Lange, appears to be relevant here. A courtroom drama, it traces the history of the murder of Jews at the site of the Lánchíd Bridge in Budapest, through the prosecution of a Nazi war criminal who had shot, raped and tortured Jews at the site. The drama deals with the moral struggle for the daughter as she defends her father, eventually having to concede to his guilt. This struggle with the father's guilt seems to be part of the struggle Barney is portraying in his films. *Music Box*. Directed by Costa-Gravas, 1989. Freemasonry was also one of the targets of Hitler's regime, with Masonic practices being banned as well as much its material culture being confiscated or destroyed. Ulrich Wolfgang, "The Material Losses of the German Freemasons". Pietre-Stones Quarterly Newsletter. A Review about Freemasonry made by Freemasons for Freemasons.

<http://www.freemasons-freemasonry.com/nazigerm.html>
 Accessed 20th May 2006.

full of naked women.⁷⁵ The use of the bath in the religious rite of lustration is also practised in some of the higher degrees of Freemasonry and reflects the methods used in the Ancient Mysteries.⁷⁶ In ritual abuse, children are subjected to a range of tortures that Katchen and Sakheim suggest, are equivalent to the ‘thought reform’ programmes of totalitarian regimes.⁷⁷ In such abuses warm baths are sometimes used to adjust the child’s body after the dangerous processes that have been applied. In this swooning state the child is limp and eminently suggestible and his imagination as to the cause of his experience can be virtually manufactured at this point. As he emerges from the ordeal the warmth and a nurturing environment can relax the child and in a boy this is apparent in the relaxation of the testicles. In such circumstances the child may feel unsteady on his feet. The Giant’s unsteady legs and the Magician’s weighted feet could here be interpreted according to trauma theory as a ‘body memory’ of this sense of instability and of having the legs pinned or weighted down.

Such deliberate techniques of psychological manipulation imply eugenic intentions, that is, the attempt to manufacture ‘perfect’ citizens through brainwashing techniques. In *Cremaster 5* the Giant and the water sprites all sport elaborate ear formations, implying the sense of being ‘earmarked’ for some purpose, and the many references to orchids and fancy pigeons suggest the deliberate application of breeding techniques and a hothouse environment. The proliferation of flowers in this scene also recalls the classical story of the Rape of Persephone and the Eleusinian Mysteries. The young maiden Persephone was picking flowers when she was snatched, raped and taken to the Underworld. The flowers

⁷⁵ See various websites dedicated to Nazi medical experiments. [Resources on Human Experimentation by Nazi Doctors](http://www.gpc.peachnet.edu/~shale/humanities/composition/assignments/experiment/nazi.html) lists a range of sources.
<http://www.gpc.peachnet.edu/~shale/humanities/composition/assignments/experiment/nazi.html>

Accessed 7th May 2004.

⁷⁶ According to Albert Mackey, “[s]o strong was the idea of a connection between lustration and initiation, that in the low Latin of the Middle Ages lustrare meant to initiate.”
[Mackey’s Encyclopedia of Freemasonry](http://www.phoenixmasonry.org/mackey encyclopedia/1.htm)
<http://www.phoenixmasonry.org/mackey encyclopedia/1.htm>

Accessed 29th May 2006.

⁷⁷ Martin H. Katchen and David K. Sakheim, “Chapter 2. Satanic Beliefs and Practices”, David K. Sakheim and Susan E. Devine, [Out of Darkness. Exploring Satanism and Ritual Abuse](#) (New York: Lexington Books, 1992) 30.

were “sent forth as bait for the blushing maiden” and the Greeks metaphorically referred to rape as a ‘deflowering’.⁷⁸ Upon her return, her mother, Demeter handed over the secret of her initiation to the city fathers and order arose from chaos. The rites became the Eleusinian Mysteries that were re-enacted annually to preserve the social order that was to enable the creation of the city-state.⁷⁹ In this film Barney appears to be re-enacting these mysteries from the perspective of the victim.

Implicit in the whole experience is the sense of betrayal, particularly by those assumed to be trusted adults, and feelings of grief beset the individual who has gone through such a horrendous ordeal.⁸⁰ The Queen of Chain is an obvious mother symbol and Her Giant a symbol of her son’s importance to her. His figure portrays enormous sadness identified by the grief stricken expression and the exaggerated tears on his face. In the scene where the Queen puts Barney’s foot into the stirrup (stirrups abound in Barney’s work and seem to be related to medical procedures) it seems as if he is perceiving Queen or mother figure as inadvertently complicit in the demise of the other characters. Barney portrays the Queen of Chain as unaware of what is really happening until the end of the narrative where, to her great horror, she realises the significance of her Diva’s ordeal. As research has suggested, ritual abuse tends to take place over generations and often the parents have also gone through similar experiences.⁸¹ Unless they have attempted the painful process of remembering their own trauma they invariably allow situations to develop which can place

⁷⁸ Bruce Lincoln, *Emerging from the Chrysalis. Studies in Rituals of Women’s Initiation* (London: Harvard, 1981) 74. Chapter 6 deals with The Rape of Persephone and Lincoln argues that Persephone “has in fact been initiated by rape, a pattern found in a number of male-centred, misogynistically inclined cultures, and strongly suggested in numerous Greek myths.” Lincoln 78. Persephone’s entry to the Underworld through this traumatic experience would correlate with Turner’s argument that initiation marks the entry into the ‘liminal’ state.

⁷⁹ Lincoln 71 – 90. Lincoln’s discussion of the Rape of Persephone argues that the concept of rape as initiation in the patriarchal context of Ancient Greece is the foundation of the city-state. Persephone’s mother Demeter handed over the secrets of Persephone’s initiation rites to the leaders of the city and as a result order was formed out of chaos, agriculture was established and the people became organised socially. Such initiatory processes thus form the basis of ‘civilisation’.

⁸⁰ In relation to Persephone, these trusted ‘adults’ were her parents Zeus and Demeter.

⁸¹ Noblitt and Perskin state: “[i]n the United States, the incidence of ritual abuse is also frequently associated with multigenerational practices.” Noblitt and Perskin 82.

the children in vulnerable contexts. The glass headpiece the Queen of Chain wears may be drawing attention to the concept of the two sides of the brain and the tube shape between the two baubles, the need to connect these two sides, bringing literal meaning to intuitive knowledge. (Fig. 32)

Enacted in this historically and geographically distant context it could be that the artist is able to maintain an aesthetic distance while processing cathartic material that may, as yet, be too difficult to contemplate. However, the viewer is still left with the question: why does this Hungarian context relate to the experience of an Irish/American boy? Here, it is important to look for associations within the American context. Barney had spent a proportion of his childhood in New York, where he first encountered art when visiting his mother.⁸² In New York there are a number of architectural contexts that display the sort of grandeur depicted in *Cremaster 5*. The Frick Collection, a museum held in the former residence of Henry Clay Frick (1849-1919) the Pittsburgh coke and steel industrialist and a key figure in the industrial transformation of America, is one such context and is situated on the corner of 5th Avenue and 70th Street, along the Museum Mile. The source of many of Barney's artistic and thematic references in *Cremaster 5* can be found here. Frick was of Hungarian origins and was a member of Freemasonry.⁸³ He was also known as the most hated man in America at one point.⁸⁴ Today, black stretch limousines with blackened

⁸² Lingwood webpage. Matthew Barney's mother, Marsha Gibney, was an artist who moved to New York after her divorce, when her son was twelve. Matthew was exposed to contemporary art on his frequent visits to see her.

"Matthew Barney Biography", [Cremaster Fanatic.com](http://www.cremasterfanatic.com/Biography.html)
<http://www.cremasterfanatic.com/Biography.html>

Accessed 29th May 2006.

⁸³ The Frick Collection is littered with works relevant to the history of Freemasonry and would make an interesting study in itself. The author visited the Frick Collection on 22nd April 2003.

⁸⁴ See Martha Frick Symington, [Henry Clay Frick: An Intimate Portrait](#) (New York: Abbeville Press, 1998). The author, the subject's great-granddaughter, depicts her ancestor as one of the great robber barons of the nineteenth century. According to one reviewer, she admits that her dark portrait of her forebear was prompted by her own years undergoing psychotherapy, implying that she has perceived the cause of her suffering in these ancestral ties.

http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidas/ASIN/0789205009/ref=pd_sim_art_elt/102-8115362-1253702

windows gather outside the stately mansion and inside is a collection of classical masterpieces amongst which are works that bear a strong resemblance to the style and concepts within Barney's oeuvre. The frieze above the entrance door contains the familiar compass and square identifying the museum as a Masonic institution. The style of lettering used on the cover of the Frick Collection catalogue is remarkably similar to the thin-lined florid style of Barney's logos. Outside in the courtyard next to Fifth Avenue is a sculpted goat or ram's head, not unlike Barney's self portrait as the Loughton Ram, carved into the keystone of a stone archway. (Fig. 33) There are also many small bronze sculptures of satyrs, Tritons and demonic sea creatures in the collection.⁸⁵ A Netherlandish bronze of *Triton and Nereid* (second half of 16th century) depicts a Triton astride a large conch shell and recalls the form of the legs in Barney's *Her Giant*. Baroque floral designs cover every surface of this overly decorative mansion, much like the visual excesses in *Cremaster 5*.

A portrait by Van Dyck, of *James, Seventh Earl of Derby, His Lady and Child* (1632/41) in the East Gallery makes the connection with the Isle of Man, the site of *Cremaster 4*. As the audiotope to the Frick Collection reveals, the Earls of Derby had long ruled over this island. In the Fragonard Room is a small ceramic sculpture of *Zephyrus and Flora* by Claude Michel Clodion (1799) in an embrace not dissimilar to the embrace carefully enacted in the Guggenheim by Barney and Aimee Mullins. In *Cremaster 3*, this embrace represents the Masonic Five Points of Fellowship. In the courtyard is a black bronze bust of Antonio Galli (c.1560) by Federico Brandani that depicts a bearded male in a high collared black vest not dissimilar to the outfit worn by Barney as he rides across the Láncid Bridge. In the West Gallery is Rembrandt's *The Polish Rider* (c.1655), described as one of the most famous and beloved paintings in the Frick collection. Here the audio discussion tells of the mystery that surrounds this painting and the fact that horse and rider paintings of that era generally described a well-bred rider "astride a well-bred horse, not a skeleton wreck like this one."⁸⁶ The concept of skeleton horses plays a significant part in *Cremaster 3*.

⁸⁵ A number of these are held in the West gallery, but are also spread around the collection. They are generally 15th and 16th century sculptures, many of them in the 'style of Riccio', an Italian artist. See The Frick Collection. A Guide to Works of Art on Exhibition (New York: The Frick Collection, 2002).

⁸⁶ This information is from the audiotope accompanying the tour of the Frick Collection.

The garden court, like a number of courtyards in the museums and other great buildings in New York, has a pool in the style of an ancient Roman bath and in shape is similar to that of Barney's field emblem. Where Barney's emblem has rectangular protuberances on either side, the plan of the Roman bath in the Frick Collection has rounded sections. However, in *Cremaster 2* the moment of conception of the murderer, Gary Gilmore, is depicted in a sexual act in which Frank Gilmore's body swells with protuberances on either side, emulating the shape of those in the Roman bath in the Frick Museum.⁸⁷ (Fig. 34) Visual memories associated with repressed trauma can often be restimulated when viewing similar shapes as those occurring in the context of the abuse. In Barney's work the repetition of the elongated 'O' shape throughout his films and the various puzzling contexts in which it is located suggests that the shape may be a reminder of a traumatic situation.

The Frick Collection captures all the fascination for the trappings of European royalty that besotted the patrician rulers of the new empire that was to be the United States. Like empires before it, the United States has had its trajectory of power and recently its economic debts are being interpreted as signs of its decline.⁸⁸ The work of Matthew Barney, in particular *Cremaster 5*, may offer a temporary salve. With the production of *Cremaster 5* the amount of corporate funding that was being poured into his films seems to be justified by the product at this stage. The works so far are daringly original and difficult to interpret but contain many references to Freemasonry that would seem to gratify the penchant of this secret society for hidden Masonic meanings. Ursula Andress was to state in an interview for the catalogue:

I am always a little sceptical about taking new roles, but Matthew was so persistent. He came to Rome once, twice, three times. The cultural minister of Switzerland called to say that I should work with him. And a man from Swiss

⁸⁷ See image in Wakefield, "The Cremaster Glossary", Matthew Barney. The Cremaster Cycle, 105.

⁸⁸ Such fears have been aired by a range of economic doomsayers. Emmanuel Todd, for example, an historian who predicted the downfall of the USSR, has recently made a similar prediction for the United States of America. See Emmanuel Todd, After the Empire – The Breakdown of the American Order (London: Constable, 2004).

television told me that Matthew Barney is the genius of our time and that I had to do the film.⁸⁹

Such a comment suggests extremely high levels of investment in what the work represents. At this stage the work appears to flatter the role of the Masonic Order and the references to Mozart, from the perspective of the Order, honour the strength of the tradition. However, Barney's position is not necessarily so clear. The extensive use of material from the Frick Collection suggests that he may have deliberately studied the collection for artistic inspiration, but given the nature of the previous discussion, there may be more sinister links. In the Classical world, elder patricians maintained a paedophilic relationship with selected boys in order to produce a class of specifically educated elite. Could Barney be talking of a situation in the contemporary world in which selected children may be similarly 'educated' in order to create the persona of the contemporary artist? Through the exposure to famous works of art, as part of a possibly traumatic and ritualistic process of initiation, could selected individuals be in fact 'earmarked' for an artistic career? If this were to be the case, the outcome of such practices could be the production of work that is complex, layered and obscure due to the fragmentation of memory caused by trauma reactions, but also dense with symbolism due to the ritual processes.

Matthew Barney is not the only contemporary artist who is making an association between strange ritual experiences and the exposure to famous works of art in opulent settings. The contemporary Russian filmmaker, Alexander Sokurov, appears to be putting forward a similar concept in his 2002 film *Russian Ark*.⁹⁰ In Sokurov's film a disembodied character (we only ever hear his voice) is led on a dreamlike tour of the Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg, another important Masonic centre in Europe. That the protagonist may be a candidate for initiation is implied in a number of ways. An antiquated guide leads him through the various rooms, some of which appear frightening such as a room where there is a large spinning wheel and another in which coffins are kept, while elegantly dressed anonymous men in white gloves perform strange ritual movements. A blind woman

⁸⁹ Barney, *Matthew Barney. The Cremaster Cycle*, 482.

⁹⁰ Alexander Sokurov (director) *Russian Ark* (Hermitage Bridge Studio, 2002).

accompanying the tour suggests the concept of the blindfolded candidate in Masonic initiations. The term 'Ark' in the title could be a reference to the Ark of the Covenant, the central theme of Royal Arch Masonry. Taken together, the themes of confusion, dissociation, spinning, death and elaborate ritual suggest a similar concept to the one being discussed here. Both Barney and Sakurov, by positioning their artistic enactments within elite settings and depicting confusing ritualised journeys in these spaces, may be commenting on what Michel Foucault terms "the materiality of power operating on the very bodies of individuals."⁹¹

Cremaster 2: (1999)

The subject of this film, a strange psychological interpretation of the life and death of the murderer Gary Gilmore, raises further aspects of the theme of trauma and dissociation. Barney plays the part of Gilmore. The film is set in the Great Salt Lake district of Utah and recalls Barney's own years growing up in Idaho, the state just north of Utah. Images of glaciers relate the surrounding landscape to the former discussion of mind-altering processes but also to the concept of emotional coldness or frozen feelings. As Spector notes, the conversion of the glacial images into Rorschach forms sets the context in terms of its psychological dimensions.⁹² Through the life of Gary Gilmore and the inclusion of a scene depicting a Mormon Tabernacle, Barney raises the theme of Mormonism, a religion that grew out of Masonic practices in the United States. Joseph Smith, a Freemason of a high order, along with his brother, founded the Mormon faith and incorporated many Masonic elements, in particular the Lodge structure for the men.⁹³ Mormonism's symbol and the symbol for Utah, the bee colony, permeates the film. Given the previous discussion it is relevant to note the number of cases of sexual abuse by Mormon doctors in Utah and Idaho that have recently come to light.⁹⁴

⁹¹ Michel Foucault, Power, Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings 1972 – 1977 edited by Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980) 55.

⁹² Spector 35.

⁹³ Joseph Smith was inducted into the Masonic fraternity on March 15, 1842. Spector 54.

⁹⁴ See Gustav Niebuhr, "Sex Abuse Lawsuit Is Settled By Mormons for \$3 Million", New York Times, Sep. 5, 2001, A-14. It states:

"The following article from the New York Times clearly illustrates a recurring problem within the Mormon Church—child abuse. Child abuse is consistently higher in Utah than in

The film reintroduces the character of Houdini who was rumoured to be Gary Gilmore's grandfather.⁹⁵ However, the lineage suggested is not just biological but psychological. Houdini's physical chains become Gilmore's physical and psychological imprisonment. Barney's notes for the production and his studies are based on Norman Mailer's *The Executioner's Song*, which plots the life of Gilmore. Connecting Gilmore's life with the life of Houdini, Barney depicts Gilmore's inception at a séance. The invocation at the séance embodies as much a plea from the artist as from his characters:

ECTOPLASM. Let every bond be loosed, every force fail, let all iron be broken, every rope or strap, let every knot, every chain be opened, and let no one compel me for I am:

Fay Gilmore

Frank Gilmore

Bessie Gilmore⁹⁶ (*Fig. 35*)

The sculptures accompanying this segment of the *Cremaster Cycle* provide many indicators of further aspects of the dissociation process. There are several forms that are methodically repeated. The shape of the corset features throughout this segment. (*Fig. 36*) The nineteenth century female characters as well as one of the men, all wear tight corsets, the shape connecting the two cars at the gas station where Gilmore murders the attendant is a corset form, corset shapes appear in the cabinet sculptures, there are contemporary images of women in tight corsets in the catalogue and the bee itself is a tight-waisted form. The

the nation as a whole. It is a blight on Mormonism. Utah social workers have been quoted as being "blackly pessimistic" about the problem in their state."

Child Abuse in Mormonism

<http://www.mazeministry.com/mormonism/women/mormonsex3.htm?FACTNet>

Accessed 19th May 2003.

See also Jerald & Sandra Tanner, Mormonism's Problem with Child Sexual Abuse that originally appeared in The Salt Lake City Messenger, 91, November 1996 for comments on the medical abuses by Mormon doctors.

http://www.xmission.com/~country/reason/nov96_2.htm?FACTNet

Accessed 19th May 2003.

⁹⁵ Spector 35.

⁹⁶ Barney, Matthew Barney. The Cremaster Cycle, 184-185.

corset, through its associations with nineteenth century middle class women, represents an extreme form of bodily manipulation and social control. In Barney's work, it draws attention to the waist as a possible site of trauma, and could be associated with the 'strap' that appears around the sculpted form in the installation *Field of the Descending Faerie* (1995) in *Cremaster 4*. Here it can be another reminder of feelings of great tension, panic and terror. In Masonic terms, the corset also implies the shape of the hourglass, which is one of a set of key Masonic symbols.⁹⁷

Many of the sculptures are moulded in salt, a reference to Barney's years in Idaho and also, perhaps, to the fact that the work he is doing is 'rubbing salt into the wound'. A moulded plastic cabinet displays a repeated form, the weight lifter's bar bell created in salt with many of them arranged to produce a honeycomb effect. Each bar bell has an exploded end linking the repetitious activity of weight lifting to the need for release from tension. (*Fig. 35*) The use of the bar bell here may also be associated with physics principles. Newton's laws and explanations of angular momentum and perpetual motion often involve the use of a spinning barbell to demonstrate the principles.⁹⁸ This may be another reference to the theme of spin programming. The concept of the beehive can be applied to the social organization of the Mormon community and is a symbol used in Freemasonry to symbolise the value of organised industry. (*Fig. 37*) But it can also represent an aspect of the dissociation process. In relatively recent psychoanalytic terms the separate psychic states produced by trauma are referred to as 'alters' and represent aspects of the personality that have become cordoned off from consciousness.⁹⁹

In these terms the character of Gary Gilmore becomes a type of 'alter' for Barney and his enactment of the Gilmore role suggests an attempt to understand and even identify with the murderer's state of mind prior to the murder. (*Fig. 38*) Despite his awful story Gilmore had artistic leanings but seemed to be driven by terrible demons, which are noted in Mailer's

⁹⁷ Many Masonic texts include images of tracing boards or Lodge Cloths that contain the various emblems or symbols used in rituals. See for example, Colin Dyer, Symbolism in Craft Freemasonry (Shepperton: Lewis Masonic, 1976).

⁹⁸ There are a number of websites dedicated to such physics principles, which mention the role of the spinning barbell to demonstrate Newton's laws.

⁹⁹ Noblitt & Perskin 8.

novel and commented on in Barney's notes.¹⁰⁰ Barney portrays Gilmore as being conceived psychologically in connection with the role of Houdini. If Houdini is to represent the escape mechanism of dissociation, that is the ability to move into a state of fantasy away from the trauma, then what is simultaneously produced are parts of the psyche that become cordoned off in the process. The character of Gilmore appears to represent repressed murderous instincts, but may also represent the aspect of the psyche that feels responsible for murder. In ritual abuse it is not uncommon that the children are tricked into believing that they are responsible for a real murder and so carry the persona of the murderer somewhere deeply buried in their psyches.¹⁰¹

Many of the sculptures are created as seductive forms suggesting the complex feelings of attraction and repulsion that can be produced as a result of such experiences. The mirrored saddle spinning slowly upside down in the exhibition is one, and again connotes the splayed body, one stirrup in the air, a reminder of the medical examination position. Looking down on the object one can see one's own fractured body in the reflection. (*Fig. 39*) *The Cabinet of Baby Fay la Foe* (2000) is extraordinarily seductive, containing a 'cradle' made of black honeycomb and creamy white plastic wedges with stainless steel legs. The cradle it contains represents the place of conception of the murderer and is a contraption reminiscent again of some strange medical apparatus. It suggests the vice-like grip of some form of expensive and highly technological equipment. The wedges, again, may suggest a splitting of the psyche. *The Cabinet of Bessie Gilmore* (1999) in which an image of a small body is created with a clear plastic corset and feet formed with desk calendars implies the repetition of traumatic experience, one of the characteristics of the ritual abuse of children.¹⁰² (*Fig. 40*)

At the moment of conception a bee flies from a hive at the end of Frank Gilmore's penis, Gary's father. This sequence incorporates the sound of a swarming bee colony with the

¹⁰⁰ Barney, Matthew Barney. *The Cremaster Cycle*, 206.

¹⁰¹ Eithne O'Donovan, *Ritual Abuse. Information for Health and Welfare Professionals* (Sydney: NSW Sexual Assault Committee 1994) 8.

¹⁰² David K. Sakheim and Susan E. Devine, *Out of Darkness. Exploring Satanism and Ritual Abuse* (New York: Lexington Books, 1992) xii.

dark sound of heavy metal music. Here it is implied that Gary Gilmore is to be born a useless 'drone' and homonymically connects the term with the sound of the bagpipes. The scene where the murder takes place is depicted. It is a gas station with black and white checks on the wall, which can be read as another reminder of Freemasonry. There are two 1966 Mustangs parked in reverse directions in the driveway connected by a tunnel moulded in the shape of the corset; the two cars connected now imply a similar form to the barbells and the spinning. The tunnel between them again situates the action within the initiatory birth context, in which the artist appears to be attempting to make sense of bodily memories. The two linked cars can also represent the physiological process involved that enables the memories to move from the right side of the brain, the intuitive side, to the logical and verbal left-brain. Gary Gilmore is sitting in eerie silence within, seemingly contemplating the murder while the Mormon attendant sees to the mechanics of the car. Gilmore's pathetically small penis is exposed. He begins to tie a piece of string to two wire forms attached to the inside of the car. These two wires are shaped like the medical stirrups and he begins to cover the string with Vaseline. It appears that Barney may now be acknowledging a connection between two sites of trauma: one, as previously argued, that could be taking place in the rear seat of a car and the other in a medical context.

A number of the sculptures in this section contain a rope running through them suggesting a metaphorical 'thread' between these themes. "The Cabinet of Gary Gilmore and Nicole Baker" (1999 – 2000) is a double cabinet that encases the back seats of the two cars that were originally connected. (*Fig. 41*) A loose piece of rope connected to a silver bell lies on the floor between them. Overtly, it refers to the split in the relationship between Gilmore and his girlfriend, but it can also suggest that other connections have been broken. The chord between them has been cut and the bell is filled with salt, making the bell useless, particularly as a warning. In Masonic Royal Arch rites a piece of rope lies on the floor of the Chapter room to signify the rope worn by the priests of Levi in the biblical story of the exodus of the Israelites and their perambulations across the Sinai desert. The high priest wore a gown whose hem was decorated with bells so that when he entered the inner sanctum of the Ark of the Covenant alone he could be heard performing the rites. The rope

was used to pull the priest from the inner sanctum if he collapsed inside.¹⁰³ In mystical terms, Barney appears to be suggesting that Gary Gilmore has entered some sort of profound inner state, but his safe return has not been guaranteed.

Royal Arch rites used ‘irregularly’ may be one of the Masonic rituals that are used for the ritual abuse of children.¹⁰⁴ If this is the case then Barney’s exploration of the inner life of the serial killer, along with the depiction of elements from Royal Arch rituals, may be a way of implying that Gary Gilmore has been a victim of such abuse. The size of his penis, while depicting his failed sexuality, may also be an indicator of the age of this abuse. By murdering the attendant, the ‘worker’ bee, he also tragically enacts one of the aspects of the dissociation process. In many cases of such abuse the split elements of the psyche desire to murder the other parts of the personality that for various reasons can appear to be a threat. But the murder is a psychological one that is only ultimately tragic if it is acted out in reality.

In the following scene the Mormon Tabernacle Choir proclaims Gilmore’s guilt and the execution is enacted as a ritualised rodeo scene in an arena of salt, recalling the field emblem, built on the flooded Bonneville Salt Flats.¹⁰⁵ The final segment of the film returns to the Houdini theme where a transformation takes place. Houdini changes places with his wife in a magical act and Gilmore is transformed into a Queen, appearing in the next film as a female corpse.¹⁰⁶ In Barney’s diagram of this metamorphosis he demonstrates the relationship between the parental figures and the son. The father, Frank, gives rise to both Houdini and Baby Fay. The mother figure, Bessie Gilmore, is simply called the worker. The accompanying drawing of a bee depicts it with a ghostly Gemini copy shifted slightly

¹⁰³ Neville Barker Cryer, What Do You Know About the Royal Arch? (2002; Hersham, Surrey: Lewis Masonic, 2004) 23. Exodus 28: 33 – 35. “And it shall be upon Aaron to minister: and his sound shall be heard when he goeth in unto the holy place before the Lord, and when he cometh out, that he die not.” (Verse 35). In the biblical version the bells are of gold, not of silver as in Barney’s work.

¹⁰⁴ My own research suggests this may be the case. During research in Ireland in 2005 I examined the traces of Royal Arch rites in the work of the artist Francis Bacon and the author Samuel Beckett. See Appendix.

¹⁰⁵ Spector 40.

¹⁰⁶ Specor 45.

apart, perhaps as a symbol of the splitting of the personality.¹⁰⁷ In “The Cabinet of Frank Gilmore” (1999) the beehive is in the centre of the form, that is the centre of the body, and can imply not only the central position of the Mormon religion in this argument but also the profound sense of physical and psychological disturbance that can be felt by a victim of extreme abuse.

It is the patriarchal context of both the Mormon and the Masonic institutions that Barney has discussed in his films to this point that is responsible for the treatment being described here. Through a complex system of initiation, that can involve extreme practices, this patriarchal system may be being passed down through the generations in a hidden form. However, until this point in *The Cremaster Cycle* the references to Freemasonry are coded and ambiguous, perhaps reflecting some sort of reluctance on behalf of the artist to make a solid connection between Freemasonry and his aesthetic ideas. In *Cremaster 3*, however, he makes the Masonic connections absolutely clear through the use of Masonic regalia and rituals and can be seen to be making direct critical comments about corruption within the Order.

Cremaster 3: (2002)

Set during the final construction of the Chrysler building in 1930 this film draws on the historical moment in Manhattan’s history in which Prohibition, organised crime and the role of the Irish labour unions coalesced.¹⁰⁸ (Fig. 42) As Spector notes, the orange and green of the two Irish sectors are represented throughout the film. The theme of Freemasonry appears openly for the first time and Barney’s opinion as to its corruption comes through in many forms. Chrysler was also a Freemason and the motor vehicle sector that he represents means that Barney’s use of Vaseline as ‘petroleum jelly’ takes on further significance. The form of Freemasonry Barney focuses on is the Scottish Rite, symbolised by the Order’s emblem of the double-headed eagle, which he uses in the *Cremaster 3* logo. The term Cremaster now resonates with that of Grand Master. In the exhibition there is a display of five cabinets each signifying one of the films. The cabinet for *Cremaster 3* shows

¹⁰⁷ Barney, Matthew Barney. The Cremaster Cycle, 240-241.

¹⁰⁸ Spector 44 – 45.

the field emblem now split in half to reveal the silver tools of the Masonic Order underneath. (*Fig. 43*) It seems now that Barney may be indicating the underlying structure beneath the puzzle he is attempting to solve.

Cremaster 3 begins and ends with Barney's version of the myth surrounding the geological formation of the volcanic Isle of Staffa, off the coast of Scotland. The giant Fingal has defeated all the other giants but the Irish giant Fionn MacCumhail manages to cleverly outwit the monster Fingal. Fionn's wife, Oonagh, devises a trick whereby she dresses her husband as a baby to suggest to Fingal that the giants on Staffa are enormous. Given the subject matter so far discussed the choice of a volcanic island is not surprising: the work is dealing with social and psychological subject matter of potentially catastrophic impact. Barney's use of this myth suggests that he may be alluding to his own Celtic background. Again there are elements that link the distant Scottish context to the contemporary America one. The hexagonal and pentagonal shapes of the basalt formation on the island recalls the honeycomb pattern in *Cremaster 2* but also, to bring it into the context of art in America, relates to the pathway next to Central Park along the 'Museum Mile' of Fifth Avenue, which is constructed from grey hexagonal pavers.

The body of the film then begins with a scene set in a goat burial ground where a rotting female corpse is working her way to the surface and now as a zombie enters the plot. (*Fig. 44*) As a Masonic reference it re-enacts the scene in the Third Degree where the corpse of Hiram Abif is disinterred from its makeshift grave. In anthropological terms the initiate is traditionally associated with the dead. Artistically, it recalls the images by Cindy Sherman where she portrays herself as a corpse. Barney's corpse is described as a putrefying incarnation of Gary Gilmore.¹⁰⁹ The goat burial ground can be interpreted as a reference to pagan practices. Unstable on her feet, the corpse is then carried up several staircases and placed in the back seat of a 1930 New Yorker limousine by five boys ranging in ages from about six or seven to about fifteen or sixteen.¹¹⁰ In the catalogue Barney places photographs of the actress who plays the part, a severely anorexic woman, and couples these images

¹⁰⁹ Spector 45.

¹¹⁰ Spector 46.

with a photograph of a small boy in leg braces.¹¹¹ The limousine is elegantly lined in plush velvet with braiding commonly used on the Masonic Order's regalia and plastic covered seats.

In trauma terms the female corpse may represent another aspect of rape, discussed earlier. The rape of a young boy can make him feel as if he is female, that is, totally dominated and destroyed in the act. But the scene can indicate even more disturbing elements of ritual abuse. The various ages of the boys imply the repetition of initiatory practices at regular intervals during childhood. This is a noted aspect of such abuse. Amongst those experiences can be the enforced exposure to seeing or even handling corpses to make the children feel as if they are complicit in some terrible crime, even made to feel responsible for murder. These corpses may or may not be real, they may have been theatrically contrived, but the children are led to believe that they have been responsible for terrible acts themselves.¹¹²

At this point the character of the Entered Apprentice, played again by Barney, is introduced. He is trowelling cement over the fuel tanks of five 1967 Chrysler Crown Imperials in order to make battering rams for a demolition derby. After the corpse is loaded into the New Yorker there is a scene conducted in the lobby of the Chrysler building in which the five Imperials ritualistically demolish the other car. (*Fig. 45*) As Spector notes the ages of the cars is significant. 1930 was the birth year of Barney's father and 1967 his own birth year, suggesting that it may be illustrating father/son conflict.¹¹³ The cement used by Barney, particularly in the way it is aggressively applied to the shining duco of these classic vehicles, the intensity of the demolition scene and the annihilation of the pristine Art Deco lobby all suggest an underlying rage being enacted, not only towards

¹¹¹ Barney, Matthew Barney. The Cremaster Cycle, 262-263. There is a photograph of this actress that shows her as a model posing in front of a rotating door. In this image she does not appear anorexic. Barney's placement, in the context of spin programming, may be asking whether there is an association between anorexia and this form of conditioning. This segment also recalls the statement about the Polish Rider's horse "not a skeleton wreck like this one" and connects to the later sequence of the dead horses.

¹¹² George A. Fraser (ed.), The Dilemma of Ritual Abuse. Cautions and Guides for Therapists (Washington D.C., London: American Psychiatric Press, 1997) 189, 191.

¹¹³ Spector 46, note 82.

familial relations but also, as the rest of the film implies, towards the corporate/Masonic world. The sculptures accompanying this sequence are moulded in plastic and Vaseline, and convey the back seats of cars converted into beds, again another possible reference to rape. The rage in this sequence can be interpreted as embodying the massive emotional intensity experienced by victims of abusive practices.

The Entered Apprentice's next act, another expression of artistic rage and disgust, is where he fills the immaculate Art Deco lift with cement. (*Fig. 46*) Here he roughly makes a mould of the Perfect Ashlar, the foundation stone that in the Masonic Order represents a process of patient spiritual progress. Barney poses with a silver trowel, the symbol of the master builder who applies the cement "which unites the building in one common mass".¹¹⁴ The Entered Apprentice has tried to shortcut this process and has deceived his superiors. As a consequence, in the Cloud Club above there is a meeting by three Master Masons to decide his fate. Barney's destructive act expresses a disdain for the Masonic spiritual system, which in its ideal form can be as meaningful as any other spiritual path. By filling the lift he effectively disables the building and signifies his disdain for the type of social and spiritual 'elevation' practiced in Masonic circles.

Ascending the lift shaft the Apprentice takes us to the Cloud Club, another reference to the ascension linked to the escape into fantasy that the mechanism of dissociation can produce. (*Fig. 47*) Barney creates a harp out of the chords attached to the lift and the Maitre d', played by the Irish tenor Paul Brady, sings a ballad in Gaelic about the erection of the building.¹¹⁵ It begins "[o]n dried skull and thigh bones" referring to the Laying of the Foundation Stone, which in early times was laid on the site of a human sacrifice in order to protect the building against evil. The sacrifice in Barney's version appears to be associated with childhood innocence. The ballad recounts Barney's reflection on the nature of this organization and his depiction of it as 'unsquare' with "one narcissus bloom[ing] in this untruthful tower." The references to flowers mark the traditional celebratory aspects of the

¹¹⁴ Albert G. Mackey, The Symbolism of Freemasonry: Illustrating and Explaining its Science and Philosophy, its Legends, Myths and Symbols (Chicago: Charles T. Pownner, 1955) 97.

¹¹⁵ Spector 47.

initiation and link to his earlier films, *Cremaster 5*, where orchids and lilies were prolific, and *Cremaster 4* where the prickly Manx gorse recalls the Isle of Man. Here in the Cloud Club the Apprentice pauses for a period of reflection, an important part of the process required of the Masonic initiate before entering the Lodge for his initiation.¹¹⁶

The Cloud Club is where the elite Masons gather. (*Fig. 48*) They are attired in Masonic aprons designed by Barney himself that include the double-headed eagle, a symbol of the Scottish Rite. Barney portrays them as a group of thugs, the ‘Syndicate’ of organised crime that operated during the Depression years. An aerial view of the bar in the club reveals it to be moulded in the shape of a urinal, a reference to the history of drinking amongst Freemasons, but also to Marcel Duchamp’s disdain for the art world of his time.¹¹⁷ The Apprentice appears in his worker’s outfit and there are stones in his pockets. (*Fig. 49*) Stones and straw are sometimes placed in the Masonic initiate’s pockets to signify that he is like a rough uncut stone that is to be gradually hewn into a Perfect Ashlar.¹¹⁸ In Barney’s case these marble stones are tapered pentagonal shapes, that is, perfectly hewn. Along with the wedges they form the tools that the early masons used to split the stone. As the Master Masons ponder the Apprentice’s fate another scene is occurring in an adjacent room. The character of the Moll, played by Aimee Mullins, a high profile disabled athlete and model, slowly and painfully cuts potato ‘wedges’ with a modified shoe, linking *Cremaster 3* to the emblem of *Cremaster 1*, the winged foot of Mercury. (*Fig. 50*) The wedge shapes are in the form of the keystone, the central stone used in the construction of the archway that became the means of creating the cathedral masterpieces and a central symbol of Royal Arch rituals. The mound of potatoes recalls the Idaho theme. Idaho is the ‘potato state’ and also

¹¹⁶ This period of reflection is symbolically enacted in a room called The Chamber of Reflection. As the Masonic author Norman Peterson notes, this room is “roughly furnished with a plain wood table and chair, below ground level” in the manner of a cave where the initiate is warned, “[i]f mere curiosity brings you hither, turn back, begone.” Norman D. Peterson, “Analytical Grids as Tools of Masonic Research with Applications to the Apprentices of the Swedish and ‘Scottish’ Rites”, *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum*, volume 109, 1996: 84.

¹¹⁷ Duchamp also joined Freemasonry. See David Hopkins, *Marcel Duchamp and Max Ernst. The Bride Shared* (Oxford: Clarendon Studies in the History of Art, 1998).

¹¹⁸ Jasper Ridley, *The Freemasons. A History of the World’s Most Powerful Secret Society* (1999; New York: Arcade Publishing, 2001) 288.

part of the Mormon belt. The foundation of Idaho's potato industry was in part due to the migration of Mormon pioneers in 1860 from Salt Lake City northward across the border to the rich volcanic soil there.¹¹⁹ In this scene the cutting of the potatoes could signify the moulding of the individual Mormon souls along the lines already discussed. In the exhibition are a number of Barney's small drawings indicating the theme of the Lost Tribes, a Mormon preoccupation. Read along the previous lines the Lost Tribes become a symbol of a community of people 'dissociated' through trauma.

Aimee Mullins' lack of control over her false legs agains connote the sensation of being unstable on the feet. The sandal she wears is of an interesting construction. In the Metropolitan Museum in New York are early Byzantine lamps in the shape of a sandaled foot. The angled cup that contains the oil and wick is positioned between the big and second toes and the lamp is presumably a metaphor for 'lighting the way'. The accompanying blurb reads: "[o]ne of the classical protective images adapted by Christians was the foot, a symbol of good health and healing. These lamps were lit by an oil-soaked wick, inserted through the hole beside the foot's big toe."¹²⁰ In Barney's version the 'cup' has been inverted and placed under the sole of the shoe, of no use as an illumination and therefore possibly a comment on the darkening role of Mormonism. Later in the film the artist, as the Scottish Piper, wears bandages around his feet, a further emphasis on the themes of damage and healing and perhaps an indicator of the feet as another site of bodily trauma. Royal Arch rituals, practised 'irregularly', can sometimes incorporate a practice called The Rugged Road where the legs of the blindfolded candidate are whipped or kicked while they negotiate a path strewn with rocks, blocks of wood, or other obstructions.¹²¹

¹¹⁹ James W. Davis, "A History of the Potato in Idaho", Idaho Potato Industry
<http://www.potatoexpo.com/history.htm>
 Accessed 5th May 2004.

¹²⁰ *Two Hanging Lamps in the Form of a Sandaled Right Foot*. Byzantine. Made 400 – 500, perhaps Syria. Early Byzantium. Mary & Michael Jaharis Gallery. The Metropolitan Museum, New York, sighted 19th April 2003.

¹²¹ W.P. Malcolmson, Behind Closed Doors. The hidden structure within the Orange Camp [the Royal Arch Purple Order] examined from an evangelical perspective (Banbridge: Evangelical Truth, 1999) 55.

Also, as ritual abuse survivors note, children can have their legs or feet strapped or confined while they are being submitted to various procedures.¹²²

As the Moll cuts the potatoes she places them through a hole in the wall in the shape of Barney's field emblem. This hole connects to the bar of the Cloud Club. (*Fig. 51*) As more and more are produced and the wedges are forced under the bar, the bar slowly tips. A slapstick routine ensues in which the barman serving has more and more trouble maintaining the balance of the beer glasses. Eventually he collapses in the spilt beer as the bar has become completely useless. The tipped bar could be seen to represent the Masonic Order as no longer 'on the level'. The Entered Apprentice sits in unruffled silence watching the entire performance. In the exhibition is a sculpture, *The Cloud Club* (2002), created from a grand piano that was part of the Maitre de's scene. A "Mason and Hamlyn" brand and "Symmetrigrand" model, it is a fine musical instrument.¹²³ However, Barney has formed it into a revealing piece of sculpture. He has had the lid inlaid with his own design in an array of expensive materials, but the lid is open and the interior is filled with cement, which could be interpreted as another reference to his anger and disdain for the Order. The keyboard is inaccessible with a big sheet of self-lubricating plastic and stainless steel blocking any access. The stool is made of the same plastic. A pile of potatoes lies under one of its legs and the instrument is tipped on an angle. Silver plated Masonic tools such as the plumb line and level indicate that the instrument is also not 'on the level'. Here Barney appears to be making another rage-filled response to the Masonic Order. This immensely sad artwork, a beautiful instrument that can no longer be played, conveys a profound sense of spiritual damage. It draws on a similar concept in the work of other contemporary artists such as Raphael Montañez Ortiz's *Piano Destruction Concert* 1966 and Bruce Nauman's 1969 work entitled *Violin Tuned D E A D*.

¹²² See [Lynn's Page](#) website.

¹²³ *The Cloud Club* (2002). Mason & Hamlyn 'Symmetrigrand' piano inlaid with white mother of pearl, gold lip mother of pearl, black lip mother of pearl, green abalone, quarterbred Honduras mahogany, lacewood, walnut, ash burl, redwood burl, madrone burl and Chilean laurel marquetry. Internally lubricated plastic, potatoes, concrete and sterling silver.

The following scene is set at the Saratoga Races, noted as a popular site for the Syndicate to escape the police.¹²⁴ As Ridley notes, despite the Order's claims of moral superiority, Masonic membership does not necessarily guarantee the moral behaviour of its members. He states: "[h]oodlums and petty local bosses in the small towns of up-state New York happened in many cases to be Freemasons, but they continued to act like hoodlums and petty local bosses in the small towns of up-state New York."¹²⁵ The sequence portrays 'skeleton horses' competing in a trotting race. (Fig. 52) Here Barney may be employing the strategy used by Anna Sewell in *Black Beauty* in which the writer used the horse's story as a metaphor for the plight of women. The skeletal horses also recall the comment made on the horse in the painting *The Polish Rider*, noted in the discussion on *Cremaster 5*. The sequence connects to the earlier scene of the girl's corpse and suggests the damage done to young people such as those in the modelling industry or the sporting arena, who are beautifully bred in a physical sense but destroyed spiritually, perhaps through similar methods. The race they are forced to run is thoroughly inhumane. At the end of the race is a guillotine with the word 'Enquiry' written on it, linking the history of Order with current fears about the organization.¹²⁶ For his crimes of revelation the Apprentice is now pursued and is put through the agonising torture of having his teeth knocked out in an image that can also be read as one of castration.

In the Chrysler building the Entered Apprentice is led to his initiation. Dressed in dishevelled clothing, a symbol of the 'sacred poverty' discussed by Turner, and with one trouser leg rolled and a side of his chest exposed (a means to prevent women entering the Masonic proceedings in disguise) he is led to a dentist's chair. (Fig. 53) The female observer (the mother figure) has brought the crumpled remains of the battered New Yorker to the Architect, played by the artist Richard Serra, an artistic father figure for Barney replacing the failed father who has been crushed by the son's revenge. The Architect is contemplating the phallic shape of the Chrysler tower and reproducing it in oilstick

¹²⁴ Spector 48, note 87.

¹²⁵ Jasper Ridley, *The Freemasons. A History of the World's Most Powerful Secret Society* (New York: Arcade, 2001) 176.

¹²⁶ The guillotine was invented by a French Freemason, Joseph Ignace Guillotin, noted in many accounts of famous Freemasons.

drawings. For Barney the act of drawing, from his *Drawing Restraint* series to the tiny drawings displayed throughout the *Cremaster* exhibition, seems to express moments of connection and clarity in which the artist grasps segments of understanding. The intense process of drawing thus represents the transference of intuitively felt material to the visual sphere to be contemplated then by the rational mind. For Barney it is central to the artistic process.¹²⁷

The Architect descends through a spiral staircase, a reference to Solomon's Temple, to the dental lab where the Apprentice is lying in the chair in the prone position referred to in many of the sculptures. The Apprentice is now forced to ingest the metal along with his teeth, symbolically swallowing his rage. The teeth are then excreted and morph into a smooth phallic shape depicting what was to be the successful socialisation of the boy to the man (or the Apprentice to the Master). This metaphor presumes that the boy was to forget how his socialisation took place and therefore the cause of his rage. In this way it parallels Persephone's socialisation in that she was to forget that her rape was due to the machinations of her own father Zeus. Barney, however, seems to be artistically suggesting some connection between objects, shapes and traumatic events. In his first film, *Cremaster 4*, he constructed the motorcycles in a particular shape. An image of a dentist's chair accompanying the production of *Cremaster 3* appears to be the prototype for the yellow motorcycle, suggesting links between traumatic experience, perhaps at the hands of a dentist, and the sensation of being driven relentlessly onward.¹²⁸ (Fig. 54) In the dental scene the Mason's apron becomes a flap of skin representing his initiation as more than a symbolic process and that it has permeated his flesh, his very being. In Royal Arch initiations, the initiate's receipt of the French or 'skin' apron, the 'cotte', is regarded as a "badge more ancient than the Golden Fleece."¹²⁹ This apron covers a device that replaces

¹²⁷ In a recent interview with Dave Kehr Barney states about his filmmaking process that "it grows out of drawing ... but not storyboard drawing." Dave Kehr, "Cremaster is a Wrap" The New York Times on the Web May 10, 2003.

<http://www.filmforum.com/cremaster/cre3nytimesb.html>

Accessed 1st June 2003.

¹²⁸ Barney, Matthew Barney. The Cremaster Cycle, 292.

¹²⁹ Henry Melville, Initiation, Passing, Raising and Exaltation, demonstrated by the Median and Persian Laws on the Original Tracing Board (Hobart Town: H & C Best, 1864) 5.

his sexual organs. The form of this device appears to be based on the photograph of a drop of milk, *Coronet*, by Harold Edgerton, another famous Freemason.¹³⁰ The teeth are excreted along with a portion of the intestines, an image of disembowelment, representing the oaths sworn by the Masons to submit themselves to such tortures if they betray the secrets. While the oaths are generally taken only as a symbolic expression of the initiate's seriousness, Barney has expressed a deeper concern here. His literal interpretation conveys the artist's impression that there may be some truth in the Masonic threats and that some Freemasons may indeed be dangerous thugs. By literally portraying the punishment he is also openly stating his culpability in exposing some of the ancient secrets of initiation. The association between milk and teeth could also be a reference to early childhood, when initiatory abuses can begin.

The Apprentice's ability to dissociate from the pain is mirrored in the cool responses of his torturers (with the exception of one less experienced Master who flinches) and demonstrates the intention of this process, to produce a warrior mentality that can shut off from pain and emotion. Dissociation can be perceived as a useful practice and the processing of children through the experience of rape and torture, a means of ensuring race superiority across generations. The Eleusinian Mysteries are here re-enacted in the modern city with the Freemasons of New York equating with the city fathers of ancient Greece. (Fig. 55) The peaked mask on the Apprentice's face can be a reminder of the Order's association with the Ku Klux Klan and the white-supremacist values that this organization represents. However, when discussing the Twenty First Degree, called the Noachite or Prussian Knight degree, one Mason notes the puzzling practice of wearing hoods while working some of the higher degrees.¹³¹ It is interesting to observe that Barney's work only deals with Anglo-Celtic experience and there are no references to races other than the white race in this work. The values being inculcated through the process he elucidates are those of privilege, entitlement and the drive to excel, that is, values of racial superiority.

¹³⁰ *Coronet* (1957) by Harold Eugene Edgerton, an electrical engineer and photographer and another famous Freemason.

Tracing Board.com. Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons

http://tracingboard.com/famous_masons.htm

Accessed 5th May 2004.

¹³¹ Ullis M. Buckley, Masonic Story. The Hidden Side (New York: Rivercross, 1993) 90.

Here the focus returns to the character of the Architect and shows him building two towers, representing the columns Jachin and Boaz that adorned the front of Solomon's Temple. (Fig. 56) Barney has made them out of a stack of two flat shapes, a pentagon and his field emblem cut in half. The two columns, as discussed in chapter two, were originally hollow and were said to have been built to accommodate the library of written knowledge that had accumulated by the time of Solomon's reign. Their significance in the context of trauma may be associated with left and right brain functions. In *Jachin and Boaz* (2002) Barney has placed a black plastic 'tassel' on the top of a tall pentagonal column, making a visual reference to a type of scholar's mortarboard and therefore to the function of the left brain. The other column is half of his field emblem, and represents the role of intuition and the shape he has intuitively repeated throughout the series, therefore representing the role of the right brain. In the exhibition is a display case to represent *Cremaster 3* that shows the field emblem cut in half to reveal the Masonic tools beneath, signifying the fact that the artist may have worked out the puzzle and named the perpetrators.

To build these towers the Architect has had to straddle them to reach the top of the building. As Spector notes, the space he enters "is redolent of omnipotence; it is the all-seeing eye on top of the Masonic pyramid, the central point of a panopticon from which to observe and control the metropolis below."¹³² The high point is a signifier of the power and hubris of the city's elite, the city fathers embodied here as the Freemasons, and their capacity to control the psyches of the citizens. But it may also represent the realization of the artist's efforts to bring painful repressed memories to consciousness through the many birth processes undergone throughout the cycle. In *Jachin and Boaz* (2002) the columns overlap each other like two geared machines and where they meet are two salt encrusted gonads, which could be crushed at any moment, suggesting the danger of this process to his manhood. Garlands of flowers mark the final passage of the initiate, as well as referencing the role of the Maypole in the tradition of May Day, a day of both celebration and sacrifice. As the Maypole is woven around the Architect Hiram Abif the anthem sung announces the

¹³² Spector 51.

degradation of the Order, “[n]o longer square, nor level to the plumb line to the sea.”¹³³ (Fig. 57)

The film now turns to a performance called *The Order* carried out by Barney and his team in the Guggenheim Museum. Built by Frank Lloyd Wright, the Guggenheim is modelled on the shape of the spiral, a reference to the ancient symbol for initiation.¹³⁴ Spector also notes the museum’s similarity to the shape of the beehive and its significance in Barney’s work.¹³⁵ Here Barney scales the levels of the gallery dressed as a Scottish Piper in a kilt made in the colours of the flesh, arteries and veins and wearing a woolly red Busby and with bloody mouth and bandaged feet, the signs of his damage.¹³⁶ (Fig. 58) On the first level there is a chorus line of tap dancers from the Order of the Rainbow, a Masonic girls’ group. All are wearing black and white, the colours of the Masonic paving, with little white lamb outfits. He portrays them as sacrificial lambs, suggesting that they too may have been ‘processed’. Barney as the Piper passes through their legs, another birth passage and when he emerges is presented with a complete lambskin to form the Mason’s apron, the head of which he presses to his heart, signifying his sacrificial status.¹³⁷ (Figs. 59)

The next level incorporates the discordant sounds of *Agnostic Front* and *Murphy’s Law* and a mosh-pit where punk fans jostle the figure of the Piper as he struggles to make sense of the Masonic puzzle. One section of the Masonic Royal Arch ritual involves the blindfolded initiate proceeding to the sound of a terrific din created through a variety means. In the tradition of initiation these tumultuous sounds were partly aimed at intimidating the

¹³³ See Spector 52 for the whole poem.

¹³⁴ I have not found evidence to suggest that Frank Lloyd Wright was a Freemason, although the design of the Guggenheim suggests similar preoccupations with the spiral form and the bee symbolism.

¹³⁵ Spector 54.

¹³⁶ See the discussion with Barney’s costume designer, Linda LaBelle, who notes Barney’s request for a tartan based on the colours of the flesh. Matthew Barney. The Cremaster Cycle 489.

¹³⁷ Ron Chudley, The Masonic Apron. Its Origin and Symbolism (Devon, 1988) 21.

“The flap emanates from the very earliest times when the skin of the lamb’s head was left on the apron to give the wearer greater protection especially when handling heavy stones which could be carried more easily when held close to the body.”

candidate and were partly to ward off intruders during the rituals.¹³⁸ In Barney's version the Piper must place the Masonic tools in the constellation of the cross and form the whole into a cube, the Perfect Ashlar, signifying the Second Degree of Freemasonry and perhaps one of its loftier aims. The Masonic author J.D. Buck describes the symbolism of this process. He says, "[a]s the measure of man, that is, a perfect man, or 'angel', we have the cube as a symbol of perfect proportion. Hence a Square Man. The Temple of Sol-om-on; the Cubical City – which unfolded becomes a cross, and hence the 'measure of man' – all these refer to the work of regeneration, or initiation."¹³⁹ The Piper struggles to do this while the heavy metal fans jostle him, but only roughly completes the puzzle before moving to the next level. On level three he meets the Entered Novitiate played by Aimee Mullins - as Spector notes, Barney's mirror image - and pursues her at different stages of the game.¹⁴⁰ (*Fig. 60*) She stands on the Masonic coffin, the signifier of initiation as psychic death. Her physical disability mirrors his spiritual damage when they meet in a Masonic embrace, the Five Points of Fellowship.¹⁴¹ She teeters awkwardly on her glass legs and cannot run. They both wear long white aprons and 'napkins' pierced with Masonic tools on their heads. In Royal Arch initiations the candidate wears a napkin on his head, neatly folded, which is unfolded and wrapped around his head as a blindfold.¹⁴² Then it is removed and "he rises in light." In Barney's re-enactment a knowing look shared between the two candidates signifies their mutual inability to escape this plot. The attempt to share their pain is flawed and she turns into a cheetah and claws him, perhaps suggesting the typical relationship difficulties between two abuse survivors. In the Masonic ritual the raising of Hiram's body is achieved with the Lion's Grip. In Barney's version the use of the cheetah may imply that there has been some 'cheating' involved.

Level Four sees the Piper surrounded by many large cast bagpipe drones. His performance here is to throw the drones in a caber toss to the anus, belly and mouth of a splayed Loughton Ram, which is cast in white plastic. In an earlier performance piece *OTTOshaft*

¹³⁸ J.N. Casavis, The Greek Origin of Freemasonry (New York: D.C. Drury, 1955) 94, 111.

¹³⁹ Buck 28.

¹⁴⁰ Spector 56.

¹⁴¹ This position as noted previously, also refers to one of the baroque sculptures in the Frick Collection, Clodion's *Zephyrus and Flora* 1799.

¹⁴² Melville 5.

(1992) Barney had enacted a scene with Scottish pipers and bagpipes. In this performance the bagpipes played *Amazing Grace*.¹⁴³ At one stage he is naked with a bagpipe drone in his anus. (Fig. 61) He performs a role called the Character of Positive Restraint. Both of these performances simulate a ritualised rape in which the bagpipes form a central role. In this particular form of Masonic ritual abuse, as I know from my own experience, the child can be placed at the centre of a mock rape.¹⁴⁴ The Masons are warned by the Grand Master not to leave any mark on the child, but to act out the rape symbolically. Their humiliating actions and obscene expressions are aimed to intimidate the child and demonstrate his or her position in the social order. The aim is to psychologically imprint this knowledge through terror, rather than leave any physical trace. The sound of the bagpipes, however, becomes the substitute for the act of rape, leaving the child's psyche embedded with this sound, accompanied by the attendant sense of fear, humiliation and sadness. In this regard the Masons have acted under the Grand Master's directions with 'positive restraint' by not actually raping the child when the opportunity was available.

On Level Five Barney has choreographed a performance for the artist Richard Serra to be enacted throughout the rest of the performance. Serra repetitively flings warm Vaseline at the gallery wall, emulating his 1968 performance *Splashing* in which he threw molten lead against the angle between the floorboard and the wall moulding.¹⁴⁵ Serra's gesture here appears to suggest Barney's anger towards the system that keeps this abuse in place and seems to be also directed at the higher levels of the art world that, on some level, may seem to be complicit.

The final act in the Guggenheim performance is a murder, the murder of the Entered Novitiate now altered into the hybrid human/cheetah, the character played by Aimee Mullins. (Fig. 62) The murder is done according to Masonic ritual. The blow to the left

¹⁴³ As Spector notes, the composer of *Amazing Grace* (circa 1760) was John Newton, an ex-libertine and slave trader who became a minister in the Anglican Church. Spector 17. I have not found evidence that he was a Freemason.

¹⁴⁴ See Chapter Six.

¹⁴⁵ Kristine Stiles, "Process" in *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art. A Sourcebook of Artist's Writings* edited by Kristine Stiles and Peter Selz (Berkeley: Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1996) 579.

temple causes the victim to fall to the right knee, then to the right temple, to the left knee. The final blow is to the centre of the forehead and this kills the victim. Much of the symbolism associated with Freemasonry deals with the concept of left and right. If the rituals are to do with brain function then this ritual makes it very clear: damage to the right side of the brain causes effects on the left side of the body and *vice versa*. In order to produce personality alteration through trauma, that is to produce the effect of 'soul murder', the psychic blows must be repeated more than once. Ritual abuse is typically enacted on the victim systematically over a number of years. The final image of the novitiate, now turned initiate, shows her blindfolded, with the 'cable tau' around her neck and seated on a sleigh drawn by five lambs. Portraying her as the initiate but also 'a lamb to the slaughter', blind to her own condition and in a noose that can be tightened at will, Barney quotes the Masonic tradition in an unorthodox interpretation that is bound to cause ripples of disapproval amongst the fraternity.

Having passed through the five levels Barney finishes his passionate athletic performance amid a rising cacophony of sound and plunges into the bubble bath below together with four near naked young women. The shape of the bath approximates the *vesica piscis* shape, one of the Masonic symbols for initiation. The bath, as was noted in the discussion of *Cremaster 5*, becomes a soothing experience after the terrors of the initiatory ordeal. It also marks the tradition of 'lustration' or 'purification' in the pagan mysteries in which the ritual bath precedes the initiation process. Almost immediately Barney rises out of the bath the film splices into a repeat performance and he is shown undergoing the process on the video monitors again and again. In this recycling of the sequence the bath thus marks both the beginning and ending of the initiation.

The film now turns back to the Chrysler building and the ritual of Hiram Abif. The traditional ritual enacts the story of the murder of Hiram Abif, the master builder of Solomon's Temple by the three traitors who wished to ascertain the divine secrets. However, Hiram Abif remains true to his pledge and dies without revealing them. He is knocked on the head with three blows as in the novitiate's enactment and the body is buried in a shallow grave marked by an acacia bush, in the magic tradition, a symbol of memory.

As was previously discussed, this part of the ritual could be a representation of the process of ‘soul murder’, that is, the way in which the psyche can be damaged by successive psychic blows. In Barney’s version the story concludes when both the Architect and the Apprentice are murdered at the top of the Chrysler building, the first with the traditional blows to the forehead and the Apprentice as the spire of the building pierces his head. (Fig. 63) Barney thus portrays himself, as well as his artistic father figure, destroyed due to his revelation of the Masonic secrets. As Spector notes, in Masonic lore the murder delayed the completion of the Temple indefinitely.¹⁴⁶ In relation to the process of initiation this point represents only the first part of the process. In the case of ritual abuse it represents the abandonment of individuals who have been shocked in these horrific ways to remain perpetually in the liminal state, a state of confusion and dissociation.

But in the Masonic tradition the ritual goes further than this and describes the way that the psyche can be restored, as discussed in Chapter Two. In the tradition of initiation as Van Gennep notes, there are three stages of initiation.¹⁴⁷ The mechanism involves firstly removing the initiate from society, submitting them to a liminal period where they are treated as if dead in order to allow the process of psychic change, but then returning them to the community. The retrieval of Hiram Abif’s body in the Masonic ritual marks the return stage. The role of the hand or the sense of touch is a significant aspect of the return process, for it is firstly through the sense of touch that psychic restoration can begin. While Barney does not depict this last stage of the ritual explicitly in *Cremaster 3* it could be argued that his entire artistic process, based on the sense of touch and the role of bodily movement, is one in which the return and reincorporation process has been partially achieved. Through his own torturous journey Barney has made a significant comment on the corruption of Masonic principles by a powerful elite in a drama that symbolically exposes the demonic use of initiatory principles. Such processes can maintain individuals permanently in the confusion of the liminal state and subject to a range of inexplicable disorders and tensions.

¹⁴⁶ Spector 58.

¹⁴⁷ Cited by Victor Turner in various texts such as in Blazing the Trail. Way Marks in the Exploration of Symbols (Tucson, London: The University of Arizona Press, 1992) 133.

However, Barney finishes *Cremaster 3* on a positive note with the completion of the Celtic tale. (Fig. 64) The final scene is where the giant Fingal enters MacCumhail's thatched hut and there sees Fionn, dressed as a baby, eating a loaf of bread. Inside the bread are plastic wedges filled with Vaseline. Fionn bites into them, suggesting that the artist may now have digested the meaning of his signature medium. Fingal bites into one and is horrified when he tastes the Vaseline. Fionn bites off the brass finger of Fingal and thus takes away the power of the giant. In Celtic lore the brass finger would have signified the power of the Scottish warriors who had developed weaponry superior to that of their enemies. For Barney, given the previous discussion, the brass finger may signify the combined power of the Masonic Order and the corporate world in contemporary society. The conclusion of the film suggests a psychological return to a 'newborn' state, the outcome of initiatory practices that are conducted correctly. By forcing himself through a gruelling process of 'self-initiation' the artist now suggests a state of release from the power and corruption of a more callous initiatory system that leaves the individual stranded in the liminal realms. A child's musical voice concludes the film, emphasising a state of newborn innocence, hope and renewal.

Conclusion: "Something emergent, something big, something from the future"

In *The Cremaster Cycle* the corporate and the Masonic are merged so that one is an expression of the other, reflecting the historical and contemporary significance of the Order in American economic life. As Ridley noted in 1999, the Masons in America, self-made businessmen, entrepreneurs and their descendants, are as much an organization of the Establishment as their British counterparts. They are still more numerous, wealthy and more secure than in any other country and constitute over half the Freemasons in the world.¹⁴⁸ Barney's artistic enactment of his own psychic processes and their relationship to traumatic themes in the context of irregular Masonic practice could be seen as constituting an artistic portrayal of an implicit corruption at the heart of this economic relationship. His enactment, however, reflects the principle behind some of the foundation myths of culture, such as the Myth of Persephone, where contrary to principles of social justice, traumatic

¹⁴⁸ Ridley 274, 276.

initiatory rites such as rape and other humiliations constitute the basis for ‘civilisation’ and preserve the social order.

In the Celtic tradition the god Lugh was regarded as equivalent to the Roman god Mercury, and the Greek Hermes, the trickster gods of initiation practices. Like these classical gods, Lugh was regarded as the patron of commerce, invention and art, suggesting a relationship between initiatory practices and cultural and economic concerns.¹⁴⁹ As Dudley Wright suggests, Druidic initiatory practices were also similar to the Egyptian rites of Osiris.¹⁵⁰ The American nation models itself on past empires and its choice of the pyramid for its Great Seal, represented on the American dollar bill, testifies to its admiration for the Egyptian system. In the American version the pyramid is incomplete, save for the symbol of the all-seeing eye. In Masonic lore Solomon’s Temple was left unfinished as long as the initiatory process was not taken to its formal conclusion. *The Cremaster Cycle* could be seen as reflecting this relationship between initiation, commerce and art, suggesting that initiatory practices, used in an incomplete form, and relying on the transference of pain from one generation to the next, may constitute an attribute of empire building processes. In such processes each generation, attempting to fill an inexplicable spiritual void, consumes relentlessly all that society can offer in an endless religious zeal towards trying to heal.

Taken to its logical end the argument outlined in this chapter suggests that Barney’s *Cremaster Cycle* portrays the artist as a tragic victim of such a cruel system, his persona a manufactured product of a series of terrifying initiatory experiences. As a consequence the artist appears to live perennially within the confused realms of the liminal state, ceaselessly driven to try to resolve his inner chaos. In Barney’s case, the artistic resolution of these struggles have taken on more and more flamboyant expression as he appears to be supported by the very system that seems to have created him, a system that has declared him a genius, in other words a fitting expression of its own power. Nevertheless, through an exquisite and torturous process of self-initiation it could be argued that Barney may have exposed the mechanisms of such a system. The principle behind this system is patriarchy,

¹⁴⁹ Ward Rutherford, Celtic Lore. The History of the Druids and their Timeless Traditions (1993; London: Thorsons, 1995) 59.

¹⁵⁰ Wright 65.

which as Barney has so eloquently expounded, can have as detrimental effect on young men as it does on women, and on those in the privileged classes as well as the downtrodden. In fact, he appears to be suggesting that the seemingly privileged such as the young fashion models, athletes, artists and performers, that is the white children of the bourgeoisie, could be the sacrificial lambs of our culture, rather like the firstborn sons of ancient Egypt. It may be that the children of Freemasons and other related groups are especially vulnerable.

However, following this line of thought, *The Cremaster Cycle* is also a very clear example of the miraculous way in which the creative mind can turn the site of horrendous experience into a playground of the imagination. If the artist has been manipulated as much as the previous interpretation suggests, then underlying the creative spirit is a desperate plea for healing that becomes an obsessive drive. Perhaps, for those who are behind such manipulation, there could be the belief that ‘culture’ is created through such means; that it is only through the experience of terror and the confrontation with death that the highest art emerges. If this is so, then it is a sad indictment of our culture. For every so-called genius that may be produced through these methods then how many may emerge from such treatment broken, and become, as Barney suggests in *Cremaster 2*, the mentally ill, the addicts or the criminals of our society, or in *Cremaster 3*, the future thugs who will reproduce such a system?

The Cremaster Cycle is a truly magnificent artistic beginning to the new century. Besides its political content it is a work of art that sustains an aesthetic integrity throughout with every detail and every visual element having some bearing on the artist’s overall argument. It is also an immensely courageous body of work. By squarely facing what appears to be his own pain Barney may have exposed a frightening practice that, as research suggests, could have been happening over many generations, but that has only very recently been brought to light amongst a largely incredulous society. *The Cremaster Cycle* forces us to face the darkest aspects of a culture of our own making; for it is the capacity to close our eyes to what is really happening around us, the ability to escape to our own fantasy world, that allows such abuses to continue.

CHAPTER FOUR
A CANKER IN THE MYSTIC TRADITION:
SPINNING, TRAUMA AND THE OCCULT IN THE WORK OF
CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

As the previous chapter has suggested, Matthew Barney may have articulated an important shift in terms of an understanding of the artist's interior journey into the surreal realms of the unconscious by relating it to the initiatory practices of corrupt fraternal groups in contemporary culture. In the spirit of *j'accuse* it could be argued that he has pointed a finger at versions of Freemasonry that misuse initiatory principles for the purpose of power over others. Barney's work, however, has not appeared in a vacuum, disconnected from the work of other artists. As this chapter will demonstrate, a number of contemporary artists have been expressing the existence of something sinister, confusing and inexplicable that can be interpreted as the traces of initiatory practice that are in accord with explanations of initiation as described by anthropologists like Victor Turner. Accompanying these confusing subjective experiences are occasional Masonic references scattered throughout the artists' work, suggesting the possibility that we may be looking at other examples of the effects of irregular Masonic practice. This chapter will suggest that, revealed in the work of the contemporary American artists Bruce Nauman, Paul McCarthy, and Mark Ryden, are references to the abuse of children in accord with magical beliefs and occult practices that involve the use of terrifying practices, including spin programming. The expression of these elements is often framed within the broader context of a subjective self-analysis and search for 'truth' that the artist undergoes as part of the artistic process. The discussion will examine their work in relation to the role of fraternal orders and the use of magic and occult practices within them.

Both Nauman and McCarthy have been recognised as major identities in the development of contemporary art internationally. Their work has intrigued critics who suspect that what they are saying may be of pivotal importance to an understanding of the role of contemporary art and its relationship to important cultural concerns. They were both born

in the period of the Second World War and grew up in the prosperous environment of American suburbia and the realisation of the American dream. Both artists express the dark underside of that dream in graphic and terrifying detail. Mark Ryden is a lesser-known artist of a younger generation (born 1963) who expresses the fears and phobias associated with the experience of the child in contemporary Californian culture. His paintings are informed by a social awareness of child abuse in the context of the occult that has emerged in discussions since the 1980s. The discussion here will examine the ways in which each of these artists articulates the relationship between bodily memories, trauma and the occult and how their work demonstrates aspects of the distortion of the mystic tradition within contemporary culture.

Bruce Nauman was born in 1941 in Fort Wayne, Indiana. His father was an engineer and worked for General Electric. He studied for his MA in California and set up his artistic practice there, where he also taught.¹ Widely regarded as an artistic descendant of Marcel Duchamp, Nauman's performance work, neon signs, installation and video art has become central to the development of contemporary North American art. However, despite Nauman's 35 year career and extensive influence on other artists, Robert Morgan was to state as recently as 2004 that many critics still wonder what he is trying to say.² On various occasions his work has been compared to the theatrical work of Samuel Beckett and Antonin Artaud.³ His artistic method is based on an intense process of what Susan Ferleger Brades calls "existential self-scrutiny" which involves acute attention to his own body in space and is driven, as he himself says, by anger and frustration.⁴ "My work," he says, "is basically an outgrowth of the anger I feel about the human condition. The aspects of it that

¹ See Michele de Angelus, "Interview with Bruce Nauman, May 27 and 30, 1980" in Bruce Nauman, Please Pay Attention Please: Bruce Nauman's Words edited by Janet Kraynak (Cambridge, London: MIT Press, 2003) 197 – 296 for an extensive discussion of Nauman's early years.

² Robert C. Morgan, "Bruce Nauman. Where is the real Bruce Nauman in all of this?" Art & Australia, vol. 41, no. 4, winter 2004: 569, 572.

³ See for example, Neal Benezra, "Surveying Nauman" in Bruce Nauman, exhibition catalogue (Minneapolis: Walker Art Centre, 1994) 25.

⁴ Susan Ferleger Brades, "Preface", Bruce Nauman, exhibition catalogue (London: Hayward Gallery, 1998) 9.

make me angry are our capacity for cruelty and the ability people have to ignore situations they don't like.”⁵

In 1967 he created a neon sign entitled *The True Artist Helps the World by Revealing Mystic Truths (Window or Wall Sign)* that he subsequently used at the entrance to all of his later retrospective exhibitions.⁶ (Fig. 65) The words are set within a spiral format, a traditional symbol of initiation. It reads as an ‘illuminated text’. By declaring this as his artistic dictum, lying at the core of his practice, Nauman appears to be positioning his work within the realms of the mystic tradition. And yet, as much of his work demonstrates, this is not the realm of peaceful meditation and a purist devotion to the experience of the divine, but a world of disorientation, torture and abuse, of references to cruelty, clowns, spinning and nonsense rhymes, loaded with intense anger and frustration. Nauman’s work has been noted as being based on a sense of ‘body awareness’ originally derived from pacing the studio in search of ideas.⁷ It is based on articulating bodily knowledge as if the artist is in search of something unspeakable and confusing and is driven by the need to investigate subjectively felt experience.

This discussion will suggest that, in the context of the rest of his work, the state of mystical enlightenment Nauman is revealing appears to be that derived from “a course of severe and arduous trials”, akin to the pagan initiatory practices discussed in chapter two.⁸ It will suggest that the disorienting and confusing behaviours he is articulating, taken collectively, lie within the realms of initiatory experience, and that his performances and videos may be an attempt to bring to consciousness the bodily remembrance of such experiences and to communicate them to an audience. While Masonic themes are not as clearly articulated in

⁵ Cited in Christine van Assche, “People Die of Exposure,” Bruce Nauman, exhibition catalogue (London: Hayward Gallery, 1998) 15.

⁶ Vincent Labaume, “Bruce Nauman. Are you Roman or Italic?” in Bruce Nauman, exhibition catalogue (London: Hayward Gallery, 1998) 40.

⁷ Kathy Halbreich, “Social Life” in Bruce Nauman, exhibition catalogue (Minneapolis: Walker Art Centre, 1994) 101.

⁸ Albert G. Mackey, The Symbolism of Freemasonry: Illustrating and Explaining its Science and Philosophy, its Legends, Myths and Symbols (Chicago: Charles T. Pownner Co., 1955) 32.

Nauman's work, as in Barney's, the work nevertheless can be located within the general realm of fraternal initiation practices.

Nauman's 1992 *Documenta* video installation entitled *Anthro/Socio (Rinde Facing Camera)* invites the viewer to approach his work from an anthropological and sociological perspective. (Fig. 66) In this piece a bald-headed man, Rinde Eckhart, loudly chants at the audience from three walls and six monitors. He shouts "Feed Me/Eat Me/Anthropology ... Help Me/Hurt Me/Sociology" over and over while his head spins round and round, as Robert Storr notes "like someone trying to shout from a merry-go-round even as the centripetal motion isolates him from those around him."⁹ This installation was based on a tape made in 1990 in which Nauman himself spun around, eyes closed, while humming. Storr observes that the artist appeared to be "in a state halfway between that of someone meditating and someone drunk trying to achieve equilibrium in a whirling room".¹⁰ Disturbing spinning machines had formed the basis of his works in the late 1980s. In *Carousel* (1988) a set of cast animals are strung from a spinning machine that looks like a rotary clothesline. (Fig. 67) Far from connoting the pleasant experience of childhood merry-go-rounds these animals drag across the ground, reminding the viewer, as Benezra suggests, of a slaughterhouse.¹¹ A drawing entitled *Spinning Cat with Stick Up its Ass* (1989) illustrates the use of a mechanical device to inflict torture on a helpless animal. (Fig. 68) In *Shadow Puppets and Instructed Mime* (1990) a set of cast wax heads are rotating and are being beaten while a mime sadly performs to a set of shouted instructions. (Fig. 69) The atmosphere conveyed, according to Benezra, is bleak, profound and foreboding.¹² The spinning actions in all of these works, as in many other examples of Nauman's work, appears to convey a foreboding atmosphere in which the process of spinning is associated with torture, cruelty, humiliation and anger, which is far from the elevated mystical experiences of the whirling Dervishes, for example. These examples could indicate a much

⁹ Robert Storr, "Beyond Words" in *Bruce Nauman*, exhibition catalogue (Minneapolis: Walker Art Centre, 1994) 65, note 17.

¹⁰ Storr 65.

¹¹ Benezra 39.

¹² Benezra 42 – 43.

darker version of this mystical practice and suggest that we may be looking at the traces of ritual abuse, torture and brainwashing.

A number of Nauman's texts explore bodily sensations associated with the spinning process. An early installation in 1973 entitled *Flayed Earth/Flayed Self (Skin/Sink)* consisted of a radiating spiral of masking tape affixed to the floor and included the following text:

... your skin peeling off
stretching and expanding to cover the surface
of the earth indicated by the spiraling
waves generated by the spiraling twisting
screwing descent and investiture (investment
or investing) of the earth by your swelling body.
Spiraling twisting ascent descent screwing in
screwing out screwing driving diving
invest invert convert relent relax control
release, give in, given. Twisting driving down.
Spiraling up screwing up screwed up screwed
twisted mind, twist and turn, twist and shout.¹³

This spiralling produces a dissociative effect on the psyche. He continues:

Standing above and to one side of your-
self – schizoid – not a dislocation, but a
bend or brake (as at the surface of water or a
clear liquid – quartz or a transparent crystal)
(transparent crying)¹⁴

¹³ Bruce Nauman, Please Pay Attention Please: Bruce Nauman's Words, edited by Janet Kraynak (Cambridge, London: MIT Press, 2003) 67 - 68.

There is a 'rushing' and he states: I AM AN IMPLoding LIGHT BULB.¹⁵ As noted in Barney's *Cremaster I*, a rushing sound can be associated with the mystical Voice of Silence. As this implosion occurs there is a gap 'in space' that opens up to allow the psyche to escape:

A kind of vertical compression of space or do you
see it as a lightening or expanding opening in
space – just enough to barely let you in – not
so you could just step into it but so that you might
be able to crawl into it to lie in it to bask in it
to bathe in it.¹⁶

Nauman's visual and verbal descriptions of the experience of spinning suggest that the artist has been experimenting with this ancient meditative practice in order to arrive at some understanding of mystical truths. The 'opening in space' that he describes may be a means of representing, in spatial terms, the brain/body shift that occurs at the moment when the physical experience becomes too overwhelming for the individual to sustain consciousness. A shift away from the body *via* the opioid mechanism in the brain creates an escape, a space to bask and bathe in. A state of numbness ensues and the text concludes:

This is more than one should require of another
person. THIS IS FAR TOO PRIVATE AND DANGEROUS
BECAUSE THERE IS NO ELATION NO PAIN NO KNOWLEDGE
AN INCREDIBLE RISK WITH (BECAUSE) NOTHING IS
LOST OR GAINED NOTHING TO CATCH OUT OF THE
CORNER OF YOUR EYE – YOU MAY THINK YOU FELT SOME-
THING BUT THAT'S NOT IT THAT'S NOT ANYTHING
YOU'RE ONLY HERE IN THE ROOM:

¹⁴ Nauman 69.

¹⁵ Nauman 70.

¹⁶ Nauman 71.

MY SECRET IS THAT I STAYED THE SAME FOR A SHORT TIME.¹⁷

If this is purely a self-imposed experiment, then the sentence, “[t]his is more than one should require of another person” introduces a discordant element that suggests another reading. Applied to another person the practice amounts to one of torture, so that the sensations of the swelling body, the feeling that the skin is peeling off, the splitting of the psyche and the ensuing numbness, depict the body’s desperate attempt to flee this torture. This sentence alerts us at once to the possibility that the artist may be attempting to articulate the distressing experience of spin programming, either through experimenting with spinning as an adult, or through a poetic re-creation of the body’s memories. The sentence cited becomes an understated critique of this practice and the rest of the poem expresses an absence of emotional content – “no elation no pain no knowledge”. This implies a state of dissociation in which the individual is aware of a traumatic experience at one level, but that the full impact of the ordeal is (mercifully) held at a distance. This darker reading of the work correlates with the more disturbing atmosphere of the spinning machines in the works cited earlier.

Nauman’s attempt to reconnect with bodily memories, if such it is, would have been made more difficult by the fact that there was no public knowledge of the practice of spin programming in 1973 and therefore no context into which the artist’s bodily knowledge could be located. Even today, the knowledge of the existence of such tortures in western society is closely guarded and therefore debated, because it is only revealed through the reports of victims. Nauman’s poetic recreation of the sensations involved has produced an insight into the victim’s experience of this cruel initiatory practice. By listening closely and remaining true to an intuitive knowledge of his own body Nauman has ‘helped the world by revealing a mystic truth’, that is, he has described a practice of torture that Lovern suggests has been incorporated into the dissident use of the mystical tradition in contemporary culture.¹⁸

¹⁷ Nauman 74.

¹⁸ John D. Lovern, Spin Programming: A Newly Uncovered Technique of Systematic Mind Control, presented at The Sixth Western Clinical Conference on Multiple Personality and Dissociation, Irvine, CA, 1993.

Anthropological discussions of initiation practices describe a liminal realm where the norms of social behaviour are turned upside-down and the laws of morality that hold good in everyday life are flaunted as the object of derision. As Turner notes, “[l]iminal gnosis ... abounds in direct or figurative transgressions of the moral order which rules secular life.”¹⁹ The sacred or esoteric knowledge being conveyed to the initiates, as Jane Harrison argues, include ‘exhibitions’, ‘actions’ and ‘instructions’ and the use of crude gestures is common.²⁰ The characters that present these sacred instructions are generally termed trickster figures and are “an incarnation of the chaos principle, the principle of disorder, the force careless of taboos and shattering bounds.”²¹ As Schechter notes the function of the trickster is to ritually enact different forms of bestial behaviour in order to depict what is morally unacceptable. In certain puberty rites the elders perform ‘pantomimic representations’ that are “intended to teach the novices in vivid fashion what things they must in future avoid. Various offences against morality are exhibited, and the guardians warn the novices of their death or of violence should they attempt to repeat the actions they have witnessed.”²² In order to impress these messages on the initiate simple magic tricks are employed, which deceive the initiates, in their particularly vulnerable condition, into believing they are subject to powerful forces over which they have no control. As Marcel Mauss notes, the roles of men’s voluntary secret societies and the magical tradition have heavily overlapped throughout history.²³

<http://home.mchsi.com/~ftio/mc-spin-prog.htm>

Accessed 3rd May 2004.

¹⁹ Turner, Blazing the Trail. Way Marks in the Exploration of Symbols, edited by Edith Turner (Tucson & London: The University of Arizona Press, 1992) 152.

²⁰ Cited in Turner, Blazing the Trail, 152.

²¹ Joseph Campbell’s wording quoted in Harold Schechter, “Symbols of Initiation in ‘Adventures of Huckleberry Finn’” in Betwixt and Between. Patterns of Masculine and Feminine Initiation edited by Louise Carus Mahdi *et al* (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1987) 75

²² Schechter 75.

²³ Marcel Mauss, A General Theory of Magic, translated by Robert Brain (London, Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972) 43, 26.

Daniel O’Keefe discusses the work of Granet, Needham and others who “have developed complete theoretical scenarios for a magical revolution issuing out of the initiation lodges ... The initiation lodges reek of magic in (Lionel Tiger’s) descriptions. Initiation itself is

In many of Nauman's works the objects or the video monitors are turned upside-down, reflecting this liminal realm. Trickster figures in his work are represented as a range of traditional clowns: cruel, brash and disturbing, and grating on the viewer's sensibilities. In *Clown Torture* (1987) five videoed clowns repeat a range of gestures conveying a cacophony of senseless and absurd situations. (Fig. 70) One repeats a silly childhood word game, "Pete and Repeat", in which the object of the game is nonsensical repetition that can go on endlessly. This interminable word game is a linguistic equivalent to the physical spinning in his other installations; it goes on and on. These word games form the content of another clown piece, *Clown Torture: Dark and Stormy Night with Laughter* (1987), in which a campfire story is endlessly repeated. (Fig. 71) Clowns use crude hand signals representing intercourse in a series of lithographs entitled *Fingers and Holes* (1994). In *Shit in Your Hat – Head on a Chair* (1990) a mime follows a set of crude instructions that include, "[s]it on your hat, your hands on your head. Shit in your hat. Show me your hat. Put your hat on your head."²⁴ (Fig. 72) In his neon image *Mean Clown Welcome* (1985) the sadism takes on sexual overtones. (Fig. 73) As the exaggerated gloved hands rise to shake in greeting, the clowns' exaggerated penises stand erect. The 'humour' in this piece reflects an earlier neon text *Run From Fear Fun From Rear* (1972) that suggests frightening homosexual experience. (Fig. 74) The video installation *Falls, Pratfalls and Sleights of Hand* (1993) enters the world of practical jokes, sleights of hand and simple magic tricks, the *modus operandi* of initiation practice.

While clowns can appear in a variety of contexts and the association between clowns and cruelty is certainly not a new one, the collection of bizarre and offensive behaviour Nauman depicts, as well as the other elements such as the anger, the spinning and the dark, foreboding atmosphere, situates the subject of his work within the realms of initiation rather than entertainment. In the American context there are fraternal initiatory organizations that incorporate 'clowning' into their humanitarian efforts. The Shriners, for example, formally

always anti-family, he claims..." Daniel Lawrence O'Keefe, *Stolen Lightning. The Social Theory of Magic* (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1982) 361.

²⁴ Jean-Charles Masséra, "Dance with the Law" in *Bruce Nauman*, exhibition catalogue (London: Hayward Gallery, 1998) 21.

called The Ancient Arabic Order of the Nobles of the Mystic Shrine, are known for their “colorful parades, circuses and clowns” as well as for their chain of children’s hospitals. In North America there are currently 500,000 men involved in the Shrine and it has been operating for 75 years.²⁵ The Shriners are a group that has evolved from Freemasonry, but is regarded by Freemasons as ‘irregular’, bringing Freemasonry into disrepute with its silly antics and puerile behaviour. As Alan Axelrod notes, “[t]he Shriners traditionally revelled in various pranks and ritualistic shenanigans, together with a great deal of drinking.”²⁶ The silly antics the Shriners employ, however, position them within the tradition of initiation practices as outlined by anthropologists. In contemporary reports of ritual abuse the children frequently refer to adults being dressed up as clowns.²⁷

At least one of Nauman’s childhood occupations brought him into contact with Freemasonry. He was in the Boy Scouts, one of the main youth organizations under the Masonic umbrella.²⁸ The campfire story in *Clown Torture: Dark and Stormy Night with Laughter* alludes to his years of going to summer camp and the games that may have been used in this group context. In the group behaviour of boys, the tortured cat in *Spinning Cat with Stick Up its Ass* suggests a level of cruelty that, while abominable, is not unusual. However, the intensity of the image does not appear to be a concern solely for animal rights but rather conveys the sense that the artist is struggling with the sensations himself. The legs, for example, are depicted in the wrong places suggesting a sense of bodily confusion. The sculpture, *Untitled (Three Small Animals)*, also in 1989, depicts animals undergoing similar tortures. (Fig. 75) Displayed visually, this sense of bodily confusion is much like the descriptions in the text piece *Flayed Earth/Flayed Self (Skin/Sink)*. In the context of

²⁵ See The Shrine of North America website. The Shriner’s children’s hospitals treat children up to the age of 18 free of charge.

<http://www.shrinershq.org/shrine/welcome.html>

Accessed 8th October 2004.

²⁶ Alan Axelrod, The International Encyclopedia of Secret Societies and Fraternal Orders (New York: Facts on File, 1997) 224 - 225. See Introduction, note 7.

²⁷ Tim Tate, Children for the Devil. Ritual Abuse and Satanic Crime (London: Methuen, 1991) 235.

²⁸ Michele de Angelus, “Interview with Bruce Nauman” in Please Pay Attention Please: Bruce Nauman’s Words edited by Janet Kraynak (Cambridge, London: MIT Press, 2003) 204.

ritual abuse, the torture of animals in front of children serves the purpose of shocking them into a state of dissociation and denial. It also demonstrates the power the ‘trickster’ elders have over the children, and their capacity to inflict similar tortures on the children.

The concept of torture occupies much of Nauman’s attention and he tries to articulate it from a subjective position. For the creation of *South American Triangle* in 1981 the artist admits to reading on the theme of political torture.²⁹ (Fig. 76) This minimalist work depicts a chair hanging upside down inside a floating steel triangle. As Benezra notes, the inverted chairs in this and other related works act as “explicit surrogates for human victims”.³⁰ The combination of the chair and the surrounding geometric form conveys an intensity similar to that conveyed in Francis Bacon’s screaming *Pope* of 1955. Nauman states that, after finishing this piece, and due to its intensity, he stopped work for a long time.³¹ This suggests that, for the artist, the piece was more than a representation of political torture in some context outside of himself, but that it had a deeper emotional impact. Like Barney’s use of the car, the chair inside the geometric frame may be indicating a site of trauma. Being tied to chairs to witness outrageous acts or being hung upside down are two strategies used within the context of ritual abuse.³² Among Nauman’s inspirations for this piece were Merce Cunningham’s performances in which the dancer was tied to a chair, a performance that may have triggered memories of abuse.³³

Regardless of whether it is relayed in serious or flippant terms the topsy-turvy world of the initiatory experience can have profound effects on the initiate. It is the ingredient of terror that is woven into the ‘magic’ that turns silly fun into a psychologically destructive force. Marcel Mauss associates the role of magic with the separation of the soul from the body.³⁴ This separation, as discussed earlier, is akin to the concept of dissociation and ‘soul

²⁹ Bob Smith, “Bruce Nauman Interview, 1982” in Please Pay Attention Please: Bruce Nauman’s Words (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2003) 299.

³⁰ Benezra 36.

³¹ Smith 300.

³² Eithne O’Donovan, Ritual Abuse. Information for Health and Welfare Professionals (NSW Sexual Assault Committee, 1994) 3.

³³ Merce Cunningham performing *Antic Meet* (1958) in Bruce Nauman, exhibition catalogue (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 1993) 100.

³⁴ Mauss 41.

murder', leaving a permanent psychic void until the information is retrieved in memory. In 1984 Nauman created a maquette entitled *Model for Room with My Soul Left Out, Room That Does Not Care* and then installed the larger version in the Leo Castelli Gallery in New York.³⁵ (Fig. 77) The maquette was comprised of six long passages leading to a central room with a chequered floor and lit by a yellow light. Nauman had used a yellow light, described by one critic as "nausea-inducing", in a number of installations.³⁶ In the mystical context a yellow, sulphurous light is associated with the Luciferian tradition.³⁷ The chequered floor in this piece, while not an obvious black and white check, may, however, be a reminder of the tessellated pavement of the Masonic Lodge. Nauman's model suggests that the individual, having lost their 'soul' in some torturous experience, must search in all directions as well as high and low, for its return. The sense of 'soul murder' in this work is reflected by the critic Robert Storr who noted that this work of Nauman's summarised the final 'empty category', like the centre inside a nest of Russian dolls that the artist captures in all of his work.³⁸

Nauman had made a series of models that included tunnels and passages in the late 1970s and early 1980s. *Model for Trench and Four Buried Passages* (1977) is a circular form, *Model for Underground Tunnel* (1981) involves a semi-circle or arch shape and angled straight sides and *Model for Tunnel Made up of Leftover Parts of Other Projects* (1979-80) utilises curved forms. (Fig. 78) The models all appear tentative and groping, as if the artist is searching for a form that makes some kind of sense. There appears to be no real logic to these tunnels but they convey an attempt to interpret some deeply buried body knowledge that cannot be clearly articulated. They convey a sense that some form of 'birth' is required, but one that is ominous and foreboding. One art critic, William Wilson, described the effects of walking through *Surveillance – Performance Corridor* (1969) as producing feelings of dread and invisibility as well as a prickling sensation at the back of the neck.³⁹

³⁵ Bruce Nauman, exhibition catalogue (Minneapolis: Walker Art Centre, 1994) 48.

³⁶ Kraynak 33.

³⁷ Max Heindel (1865 – 1919) Freemasonry and Catholicism 1918.

http://www.rosicrucian.com/frc/frceng01.htm#Part_1

Accessed 8th October 2004.

³⁸ Storr 64.

³⁹ Benezra 28.

In the context of initiation, the term ‘surveillance’ suggests the all-seeing power of the ritual elders. With these tentative passages and tunnels it could be argued that Nauman is Barney’s natural predecessor, generating the concept of initiatory birth passages in contemporary artistic terms, that Barney has been able to complete. In the higher grades of Freemasonry there are ‘cryptic’ degrees that involve the concept of underground tunnels and vaults, another representation of the descent of the initiate into the grave.⁴⁰ Mozart’s *Magic Flute* illustrates this concept as a subterranean labyrinth constructed as series of archways and paths, with some that go in semi-circles, through which the initiate is guided.⁴¹ Nauman’s attempts at tunnel constructions may be an attempt to articulate the bodily knowledge of this initiatory experience.⁴²

The impact of these initiations on the individual is conveyed through a range of Nauman’s works. Disorientation and the doubling or splitting of the psyche is conveyed in *Ten Heads*

⁴⁰ The Masonic author Arthur Edward Waite describes a Royal Arch rite being carried out in “a subterranean arcade formed of nine arches. It is reached by raising a large square stone on the northern side of the Temple and thereafter by a descent of nine steps. There is the usual spectacular business of thunder, the sun shining suddenly into the crypt, being obscured afterwards by clouds and then again shining.” Arthur Edward Waite, Emblematic Freemasonry and the Evolution of its Deeper Issues (London: William Rider & Son, 1925) 131.

⁴¹ See the discussion of Emanuel Schikaneder’s libretto for *The Magic Flute* in Paul Nettl, Mozart and Masonry (1957; New York: Dorset Press, 1987) 75 – 78.

In the recent history of the ritual abuse of children in the United States the McMartin Pre-school case in 1983 – 84 involved children reporting being taken through underground tunnels. The lengthy trial did not produce much tangible evidence of tunnels, however, the parents of the children later organised an archaeological search that proved that there had been a tunnel that had been back-filled. C. Lockwood, Other Altars: Roots and Realities of Cultic and Satanic Ritual Abuse and MPD (USA: Compcare Publishers, 1993) 8.

⁴² The concept of underground tunnels or caves as a site of initiation occurs across cultures. The Australian clergyman/anthropologist, A.P. Elkin, in his observations of a range of Australian Aboriginal cultures, describes the initiation of a tribal ‘doctor’ in a chapter entitled “Mystic Experience: Essential Qualifications for Men of High Degree”. He states, “(the initiate) faints and is led by Unggud to a cool, dry part of a subterranean cave, where his transformation into a banman takes place. Unggud gives him a new brain, puts in his body white quartz crystals, which give secret strength, and reveals to him his future duties. He may remain unconscious for some time, but when he wakes he has a great feeling of inner light.” Elkin then notes that, “the inspiration to become a ‘doctor’ is derived from this initiation”. A.P. Elkin, Aboriginal Men of High Degree. Initiation and Sorcery in the World’s Oldest Tradition (1977; Rochester, Vermont: Inner Traditions, 1994) 147 - 148.

Circle/Up and Down (1990) in which pairs of hanging heads moulded in coloured wax perch on top of each other. (Fig. 79) The different colours can allude to the separating of the psyche into multiple personality fragments. The practices also inculcate an enormous weight of guilt into the initiate by making the initiates believe that they are responsible for various crimes. In 1968 Nauman had written a set of instructions for a work entitled *French Piece*, a steel plate four inches wide by seven foot long and weighing 380 pounds, which was to be gold plated and engraved with the word 'guilt'.⁴³ The conditioning and control created through these practices is related in a 1988 work entitled *Learned Helplessness in Rats (Rock and Roll Drummer)*. (Fig. 80) Here a video of a teenage boy furiously playing drums is set against an experimental rat maze implying the boy's helplessness and rage in the context of this extreme form of social conditioning.⁴⁴ In another early work, *A Rose Has No Teeth (Lead Tree Plaque)* (1966) a plaque is attached to a young tree whose bark then grows around it, eventually concealing the lead object within. (Fig. 81) As a number of critics note, *A Rose Has No Teeth* is a response Nauman made to the treatises of Ludwig Wittgenstein.⁴⁵ Read in terms of ritual abuse, the embedded lead implies the poisonous weight of guilt and pain implanted in childhood that remains buried within the psyche of the emerging adult. Nauman's plea expressed in a 1973 sign *Please/Pay/Attention/Please* asks us to look closely at what these works represent. (Fig. 82)

The references to Freemasonry in Nauman's work are minimal in comparison to those in Barney's work. What is clear, though, is the presence of torture, cruelty and other initiatory strategies that reflect "a course of severe and arduous trials", the *modus operandi* of cultic initiatory practice. Nauman's intense interest in the theme of torture as well as his attempts to articulate confusing body memories suggests that his concern may well be derived from some repressed initiatory experience that, as argued in this and other chapters, forms an aspect of the irregular use of fraternal practices in the contemporary North American context. The critical importance of Nauman's work, and its centrality in the interpretation

⁴³ Kristine Stiles & Peter Selz (editors), *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1996) 604.

⁴⁴ *On the Edge. Contemporary Art from the Werner and Elaine Dannheisser Collection*, exhibition catalogue (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1998) 94.

⁴⁵ See, for example, Storr 57.

of contemporary American art, also suggests that it represents something just below the surface of collective memory that intrigues and fascinates the critics. As the above discussion suggests, the pattern of initiatory elements and torturous practices that Nauman's work depicts may well be reflective of a submerged social reality that has only recently come to light in the American context. The work of other American artists may provide further support for this conclusion.

The Californian artist Paul McCarthy creates performance work based on intuitive bodily expression and installation with found objects that parallels the work of Bruce Nauman but takes it further into the realm of the grotesque. His work has also been related to the theatrical explorations of Beckett and Artaud as well as to the concept of Grand Guignol and he has been claimed a one of the most significant performance artists of his time.⁴⁶ Dan Cameron describes McCarthy's artistic role as 'semi-mystical' and comments on his "acute grasp of psychic trauma which few if any of his contemporaries can match."⁴⁷ McCarthy was born in Salt Lake City, Utah in 1945. He studied at the University of Utah in the late 1960s and moved to California to further his studies and begin his practice.⁴⁸ Torturous and grotesque initiatory practices, damaged childhood and images of sexual dysfunction feature in most of his works along with Disney characters, toys, masks and popular culture themes from the 1950s. As for Barney and Nauman the theme of spinning is a key component of the work. In 1996 McCarthy had stated:

I was interested in spinning, and I would often spin in front of the camera. I got to a point where I could spin for 30 – 40 minutes. I would bang my outstretched hands against the wall, that helped me from getting disoriented

⁴⁶ "Kristine Stiles in Conversation with Paul McCarthy" in Paul McCarthy, exhibition catalogue (London: Phaidon Press, 1996) 17.

⁴⁷ Dan Cameron, "The Mirror Stage" in Paul McCarthy, exhibition catalogue (New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art, 2000) 58, 63.

⁴⁸ Paul McCarthy (London: Phaidon Press, 1996) 146, 37.

and dizzy. The intuitive action that I kept returning to became an involvement. I still make actions and sculpture that relate to spinning.⁴⁹

(Fig. 83)

In 1999 he constructed *Picabia Love Bed/Picabia Dream Bed*, an elaborate circular bed driven by mechanical means to spin one or two individuals around while an attached camera filmed the process. (Fig. 84) This preoccupation with the process of spinning suggests that he, too, may be recreating sensations associated with torturous processes. As noted earlier, children who have been subjected to spin programming often spin around in an attempt to relieve the internal build-up of stress related to the original experience. For an artist, this physical re-enactment may be an attempt to reconnect with the forgotten experience in order to understand current fears or phobias. In interviews about his work McCarthy has been open about the possibility that the work is a response to trauma and repressed memory, but is unclear as to its meaning. In an interview with Kristine Stiles he admits:

I think that in part my work does refer to my own private, forgotten or repressed memories and that I seem to play them out unconsciously in my actions. It is from those repetitions that I recognise them as existing, but I am not sure how they relate to me. Are they specifically my traumas, or someone else's that I have witnessed either directly or through the media?⁵⁰

Such confusion as to whether the traumas are his own or someone else's conveys the effectiveness of the dissociation process, even more so if it has been reinforced by spin programming. The body's ability to distance itself from the pain of the initial experience leaves the individual vaguely aware that something has happened but they don't necessarily perceive it as belonging to their own body. And yet the obsession to recreate similar situations in an artistic context, and in particular, to keep repeating these situations,

⁴⁹ Stiles 8.

⁵⁰ Stiles 14.

represents the psychic need for an abreactive release of memory. As Stiles notes, the role of repetition and the presence of inaccessible spaces in his work are both classic signs of trauma as it manifests in art.⁵¹ Swayed by her explanation, McCarthy agrees with her observation and states, “I think my work deals with trauma, my experiences of trauma, physical/mental trauma/abuse. I act as a clown stuffing and feeding orifices, enacting body hallucination.”⁵²

Disturbing clowns and the concept of underground spaces feature in early performance works such as *Basement B/W Videotapes* (1974). The use of disturbing masks appears throughout his career accompanied by performances of debased behaviour that position the work within the context of the ritualised fraternal initiation practices discussed above. Thomas McEvelley has already suggested that McCarthy’s work, along with the work of other performance artists since the 1960s, follows patterns of archaic initiation rites found in ancient Greek sources and primitive religious practices across cultures.⁵³ McCarthy’s performances and videos in the 1970s and 1980s create a darkly sadistic and topsy-turvy world in which he acts out absurd situations, positioning himself as the buffoon.⁵⁴ The grotesque use of ketchup and mayonnaise as well as the clowning locates the work in the realm of trickster behaviour, displaying offences against conventional morality in the manner outlined by anthropologists. In *Contemporary Cure All* (1979) he lies naked, covered in ketchup and with large female genitalia and a mask, to give birth to besmirched dolls and raw meat in a grotesque parody of the birthing process.⁵⁵ (Fig. 85) Rebirth into

⁵¹ Stiles 16.

⁵² Stiles 26.

⁵³ Thomas McEvelley, “Art in the Dark”, *Artforum* (New York, June 1983) 66.

⁵⁴ Marc Selwyn, “There’s a Big Difference Between Ketchup and Blood.” Interview with Marc Selwyn (extract) 1993 in *Paul McCarthy* (London: Phaidon Press, 1996) 134.

⁵⁵ This type of performance art, in which the artist’s body is besmirched with fluids such as paint, blood or clay, was enacted by the Viennese Actionists Otto Muehl, Herman Nitsch and Günter Brus in the 1960s. See Paul Schimmel (editor), *Out of Actions: between performance and the object, 1949 – 1979* (Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art: Thames & Hudson, 1998) 107, 176 – 184.

See also the work of André Stitt, born in Belfast in 1958. Stitt’s performance work closely resembles McCarthy’s in its depiction of manic performative states, trickster behaviours and use of substances like ketchup. Stitt produces imagery that includes references to Freemasonry. *Kincora (Violations by God’s Bankers)* depicts two figures wearing Masonic

the patriarchy, as McCarthy describes, is profoundly disturbing. His use of ketchup and mayonnaise covering his body and forced into the body orifices in a number of performances and his process of “crawling, squeezing and slithering through narrow passageways”, as Lisa Phillips notes, have clearly influenced the performance work of Matthew Barney.⁵⁶ As in Barney’s case, these performance motifs have a direct symbolic link to the notion of initiatory birth passages, and may be an attempt to recall traumatic ritual experience by physically and metaphorically enacting the process of moving repressed information from right brain to left. In *Shit Face Painting* (1974) McCarthy besmirches his body and face with his own excrement, reflecting one of the practices involved in ritual abuse, and in *Death Ship* (1981) he enacts his own version of the extremes of military hazing that can occur in navy contexts.

The realm of childhood and the popular culture of the 1950s provide the subject matter for this re-birthing process. Pinocchio, the perfect expression of the constructed puppet/child, that is the child re-worked and controlled through patriarchal initiation, features in the performance piece *Pinocchio Pipenose Household dilemma* in 1994. (Fig. 86) The story of Pinocchio was written by the Italian Freemason Carlo Collodi.⁵⁷ Pinocchio (acted by McCarthy) performs sexual actions with an identical Pinocchio twin in a theatre set that turns itself on its head. Partially aware of the significance of this inversion, McCarthy states:

“the house inverts, the building actually turns upside down. I get turned upside down. It was videotaped to create an illusion of no gravity, almost like a space capsule. There are tunnels that I crawl through, and the tunnels

regalia along with sado-masochistic objects. See Simon Herbert, “Akshun Man, The Performance Art of Andre Stitt” in *Rapid Eye* edited by Simon Dwyer (London: Creation Books, 1995) 187 – 196.

⁵⁶ Lisa Phillips, “McCarthy’s Theatre of the Body” in *Paul McCarthy*, exhibition catalogue (New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art, 2000) 4.

⁵⁷ John Hamill & Robert Gilbert (eds.), *Freemasonry. A Celebration of the Craft* (1993; London: Angus, 2004) 230.

represent some sort of furnace, vent or a hallway. The architecture of the body – or the body as architecture ...”⁵⁸

Initiation turns the child’s known world of the home, that is, the domestic and protected world governed by the mother, upside-down. Re-made in patriarchal terms, that is, in terms that are opposite to the mother’s nurturing, the child must guard against telling what adults perceive as ‘lies’, that is, speaking of these strange, unbelievable occurrences, lest his nose grows too long. McCarthy’s *Pinocchio* has a lengthy nose, as do the members of the audience who don the same costume. (Fig. 87) Here McCarthy enforces the audience’s complicity in the seemingly exaggerated stories that an initiated child may describe, the theme that underscores all of his performances – that behaviour as bizarre and strange and immoral as this does happen secretly in contemporary western society, and is not just a figment of the child’s or the artist’s imagination. As Mircea Eliade points out, “[t]he foolish dramas of fraternity and military hazings increasingly miss and obscure the actual need to experience ‘spiritual hazards’. Unguided by ritual elders and genuine spiritual aims, all groups become simple ‘gangs’.”⁵⁹ This behaviour is the dark underside of terror and confusion that enforces the moral order of profane society illustrated in the ‘squeaky-clean’ terms of 1950s television sit-coms and the *Sound of Music* family values that McCarthy so despises.

By re-enacting the child’s trauma the artist regains the sensations experienced by the child, among them, the sense that the initiate must crawl through tunnels, hallways and vents as well as through a furnace to find a space of safety. Here McCarthy describes a similar concept to Nauman’s gap in space that he must crawl into, that is, a mystical concept. In mystical terms, the concept of the fiery furnace implies the state through which the brain passes in order to experience a sense of divine bliss, as an escape from indescribable torture or profound confusion. William James describes it in terms of a flame-coloured cloud, or an

⁵⁸ Stiles 24.

⁵⁹ Mircea Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation. The Mysteries of Birth and Rebirth*, translated by Willard R. Trask (Woodstock, Connecticut: Spring Publications, 1995) xxii.

immense conflagration accompanied by a sense of illumination.⁶⁰ In Masonic terms, Mozart's *Magic Flute* again provides useful information. The tunnels and paths of the initiate's journey are also accompanied by a trial by fire that the initiate must undergo. In the opera it is represented as "a vaulted chamber in which two huge fires are burning ... giving the room the appearance of a red-hot oven" that the initiate must pass through in order to reach a state of illumination.⁶¹ The behaviours that produce these mystical experiences occur secretly within the realms of a number of patriarchal religions.⁶² McCarthy comments that his work critiques such religious practices, stating, "[t]he work can be seen as a condemnation or suspicion of organised religion or the idea of male patriarchs."⁶³ McCarthy's upbringing was in Utah and one wonders if he is referring to Mormonism here.

As with Nauman's work, while there appear to be clear indicators of ritual abuse practices within the work, references to Freemasonry, while not altogether absent, are less obvious than in Barney's work. Two sculptures in a 2002 exhibition entitled *Shit Face* and *Dick Eye* appear to allude to dissident Masonic themes. Described by one reviewer as the portraits of "butt ugly buccaneers" two pirates' faces are mutilated with "dismembered male genitals sprouting from empty eye sockets" and "turds tumbled from a gaping maw".⁶⁴ The theme of the pirate suggests theft and brutality. Read in psychological terms it suggests some form of brutal damage to the psyche. The skull and crossbones, a common symbol of piracy, is also a key symbol used in Freemasonry. The practice of eating faeces is recognised as one of a range of magical practices associated with initiation and children who have been

⁶⁰ William James, The Varieties of Religious Experience (1902 Cambridge, London: Harvard University Press, 1985) 316.

⁶¹ These words are taken from the libretto of The Magic Flute. See Nettl 76.

⁶² Freemasons relate the mystical concept of trial by fire to the biblical story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego "the 'Three Holy Children' and friends of Daniel, who were delivered from the trial of the 'burning fiery furnace.'" See E.E. Olgilvie and H.A. Thompson, Freemasons' Royal Arch Guide (London: Lewis Masonic, 1988) 71.

⁶³ Marc Selwyn, "There's a Big Difference Between Ketchup and Blood." Interview with Marc Selwyn (extract) 1993 in Paul McCarthy (London: Phaidon Press, 1996) 134.

⁶⁴ Jan Avgikos, "Paul McCarthy. Luhring Augustine Gallery" in Artforum International, vol 41, no. 5, Jan 2003: 137 - 138.

ritually abused report this as one of the aberrant behaviours they were forced to endure.⁶⁵ McCarthy's aggressive attack on these pirate busts implies a deep rage against what they represent and suggests that at least part of the artist's psyche is completely attuned to the corruption and sexual exploitation that fraternal practices can assume in a patriarchal religious context. A photographic work, entitled *Fear of Reflections, Hollywood Boulevard* (1971) depicts a reflection in a shop window. (Fig. 88) The window of this hairdresser's shop reveals impressions of cars and a movie theatre, a seemingly benign image. However, the presence of a black and white chequered floor appears to be a reminder of the Masonic tessellated pavement, the central motif used in the Lodge. Interspersed and overlapping with everyday reality as the black and white tiles do in these images, a simple reflection such as this, for a victim of Masonic ritual abuse, becomes a vaguely liminal reminder of early terrifying experiences. As McCarthy's title suggests, even fleeting everyday images can have a frightening power if they are associated with the visual memory of trauma.

Ralph Rugoff has contested McEvelley's claim that McCarthy is portraying ancient initiatory practices on the basis that so much of his work incorporates popular culture and is a critique of its values.⁶⁶ McCarthy argues that his work critiques patriarchal religion and Stiles and Cameron demonstrate that it is trauma-based. The explanation offered here, that is, that it is an aesthetic recall of initiatory experiences in childhood located within the context of patriarchal religions that are influenced by irregular Masonic practices, accounts for all of these factors. The initiated child from the 1950s would have undoubtedly been looking at the world around him with suspicious eyes. The family values presented in post-war American popular culture would have seemed so false and hypocritical as to have aroused intense anger and confusion in the child, but due to the fact that these initiatory practices were so hidden and secret, any protests he could have made would have seemed like preposterous lies. McCarthy, acting in his performances like a disturbed child, may be interpreted as having been protesting against this massive cultural deception in his artistic practice ever since.

⁶⁵ Mauss 47. Fraser 218.

⁶⁶ Rugoff 43, 44.

In 2003 McCarthy installed two huge inflatable sculptures outside the Tate Modern in London.⁶⁷ One, a thirty-five metre high piece entitled *Blockhead*, depicted Pinocchio with a huge cube for a head that the audience could walk through, accompanied by a long phallic nose. (Fig. 89) Inside the sculpture the audience could buy Blockhead candy, a phallic shaped black rock candy. The other sculpture, sixteen metres high, called *Daddies Big Head*, depicted a bottle of *Daddies* brand tomato ketchup with an inflated head that McCarthy described as “the head of the patriarchal tower, a penis tower bottle.”⁶⁸ As James Rondeau notes, the two sculptures represent a conversation between father and son.⁶⁹ The concept of the cube, as Frances Morris and Sarah Glennie suggest, links McCarthy’s work with the “high-minded metaphysical concerns of Minimalism.”⁷⁰ The combination of all the elements of the sculptures, that is Pinocchio (as the initiated child) along with references to abusive sexuality through the penis tower bottle and the phallic rock candy; the cube or rock, in metaphysical terms a reference to the foundation stone of Freemasonry and of patriarchal Christian religions; the sense of a void within the mind produced by the abuse, and the insult implied by the term ‘blockhead’, unites many of the themes of McCarthy’s work with the concept of ritual abuse. The inflatable form of the sculptures suggests the difficulties for the artist in making a solid claim as to whether these feelings are real or imagined, the classic position in which victims of ritual abuse find themselves. Collectively, the themes suggest the corruption of the mystical tradition through the abusive initiation of the child. The immense size of the works implies the immensity of the issues at stake here. Like Nauman’s *Please/Pay/Attention/Please*, they demand attention.

⁶⁷ See Paul McCarthy at Tate Modern, exhibition catalogue (London: Tate, 2003).

⁶⁸ Frances Morris and Sarah Glennie, “Hollow Dreams” in Paul McCarthy at Tate Modern 179.

⁶⁹ “Paul McCarthy in Conversation with James Rondeau” in Paul McCarthy at Tate Modern 186.

⁷⁰ Frances Morris and Sarah Glennie, “Hollow Dreams” in Paul McCarthy at Tate Modern 179.

Mark Ryden (born 1963) has been exhibiting as a painter since 1994 and is situated amongst a group of early career Californian artists who work in a form of contemporary surrealism that utilizes popular imagery.⁷¹ Ryden's work is littered with symbols from Masonic and other occult sources along with depictions of children in abusive contexts that points directly to the topic under discussion. While McCarthy besmirches the cutesy depiction of childhood in popular culture with his vile mixtures of ketchup and mayonnaise, Ryden embraces sentimentalised childhood in his bizarre and sinister/sweet images of mysticism and magic that appeal to a popular audience.⁷² He is from the same generation as Barney and, as the discussion will suggest, his work depicts a clearer association between Freemasonry, the occult and child abuse, than the more confused, subjective and bodily struggles associated with Nauman and McCarthy's work. However, the use of the symbolism in his images does not mean that the artist is fully cognisant of its significance. Ryden claims that his inspiration is from intuitive sources (he states that he is visited at night by a 'magic monkey'), a comment that may imply concealment, but may also suggest a degree of unconsciousness about the work and the possibility that he, too, may be drawing on repressed memory.⁷³ In the catalogue for his 2002 exhibition *Bunnies and Bees*, for example, he makes brief attempts to explain some of the symbolism in the work, but says almost nothing about the context in which this symbolism is located, ignoring the work's most salient aspect, the relationship between childhood and the arcane.⁷⁴ This mixed level

⁷¹ See Ryden's own links for other Californian artists who work in this genre. Rob and Christian Clayton, for example, also produce surreal images which incorporate Masonic, satanic and religious themes as well as themes of childhood. Their website is <http://www.claytonbrothers.com/> Accessed 29th December 2002.

⁷² Mark Ryden, Bunnies and Bees: Paintings Created to Illustrate Divine Truth in Accordance with the Secret Principles of Science and Soul, exhibition catalogue (Porterhouse Fine Art Editions, 2002). Mark Ryden's work is collected widely. Among the collectors are Hollywood celebrities, pop stars and writers like Steven King.

⁷³ See Ryden's website for a spoken account of the story of the magic monkey. Mark Ryden. Home page. <http://www.markryden.com/> Accessed 29th December 2002.

⁷⁴ See Mark Ryden's work displayed on his website: <http://www.markryden.com/info/index.html> Accessed 7th August 2002.

of explicitness in Ryden's work appears to emulate the current social climate in relation to this theme, that is, a partial awareness of the existence of ritual abuse, but a poor understanding of its prevalence and mechanisms.

A number of references to mystical themes occur in the painting *The Magic Circus* (2001) in which the child is caught in a confusing web of arcane symbolism. (Fig. 90) In a carnival atmosphere, many toys are depicted alongside occult symbols, numerological puzzles and ancient sea forms, a reference to primordial experience. In the foreground a sad, red-eyed child stands in a box marked 'Meat Show' carrying a candy in her left hand and a puzzle under her other arm. The implication is that the child is surrounded by the presence of a confusing type of magic that holds no innocent pleasure, but rather poses a sad and difficult puzzle for the child. The composition, as Ryden notes, is based on Miro's *The Harlequin's Carnival* of 1924, but has none of the whimsical looseness of Miro's work, achieved through abstract representation. Instead Ryden's image conveys a more sinister impression, arrived at through the disjunction between the precisely rendered symbols of childhood and the arcane references. His aim for this work was, he says, "to allude to the secret and profound truths about life, that, if known, would cause insanity and death."⁷⁵ In the case of ritual abuse, a dawning awareness that one has been subject to cult brainwashing and ritual torture as a child, can lead an individual into dangerous and confusing territory where the threat of insanity can be very real.

As Marcel Mauss argues, this sense of confusion is central to the way magic works.⁷⁶ He cites mythical spells, the invocation of gods, demons, onomatopoeic muttering of a phrase, prayers, meaningless ritual words, and so on, as well as Latin texts such as 'arcanum

See also a commentary on his work in more recent times where he is quoted as mentioning his attraction to "things that evoke memories from childhood" but again, the artist makes no mention of the relationship between childhood and the arcane.

Wondertooneel. Paintings by Mark Ryden. Notes for exhibition November 19, 2004 – February 13, 2005, Roq la Rue Gallery.

<http://www.fryeart.org/pages/wondertooneel.htm>

Accessed 1st December, 2004.

⁷⁵ See Ryden's website.

⁷⁶ Mauss 62.

arcanorum’ as the traditional elements of magic rituals.⁷⁷ The bizarre relationship between children and the ‘mysteries’ are represented here by various placements. A little boy bending over to examine a foetus suggests the mystery of birth. As Eliade notes, “images and symbols of ritual death are inextricably connected with germination, with embryology ... [however] the initiatory new birth is not natural, though it is sometimes expressed in obstetric symbols.”⁷⁸ Mauss also notes the use of foetuses in magic spells, along with other abject bodily elements such as nail-parings, hair-leavings, excrement and other household detritus.⁷⁹ The bee (discussed in the chapter on Barney’s work) appears in *The Magic Circus* as a jack-in-the-box, alluding to the experience of sudden fright, accompanied by the symbol of the all-seeing eye. A snake approaches a skull and three dice, a reference to fate and death and two twin girls walk across the canvas; in a trauma reading, a reference to the splitting of the personality. A figure of Christ holds a Jewish text, perhaps the Kabala, referring to the background of Jewish mysticism that informs the practical application of magic as well as Masonic symbolism.

Ryden’s images acknowledge the relationship between speculative Freemasonry and Cabbalistic thought, as well as the similarities with other mystical traditions. This association between magic and Freemasonry is openly acknowledged and historically traced in the work of key Masonic authors such as A.E. Waite and Robert Freke Gould.⁸⁰ Waite’s account reveals extensive links between Freemasonry, Cabbalistic lore, Hermetic mysticism and the Tarot. In Ryden’s work references to all of these traditions appear as interchangeable elements. However, the inclusion of the children, surrounded by all the paraphernalia of innocence, creates a dissonance that suggests a fear of the inherent dangers

⁷⁷ Mauss 56.

⁷⁸ Eliade xiv, xii.

⁷⁹ Mauss 47.

⁸⁰ A.E. Waite discusses this relationship in A New Encyclopedia of Freemasonry (London: Rider & Co., 1920) 416 – 427. Waite’s connection with the magical order, the Golden Dawn, is cited throughout Ellic Howe’s The Magicians of the Golden Dawn. A Documentary History of a Magical Order 1887 – 1923 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972).

See also Robert Freke Gould who discusses the relationship between the Kabala, its Egyptian sources and the evolution of Freemasonry. Robert Freke Gould, The History of Freemasonry. Its Antiquities, Symbols, Constitutions, Customs, Etc, Volume II, III (London: Thomas C. Jack, 1883, 1884) 63 – 74.

within these traditions. The work thus conveys conflicting messages, suggesting both fear and fascination with the arcane, conflated with concerns for the welfare of the child. In Ryden's image it appears that the presence of Christ has no power to remove the pain from the children, and far from being a place of entertainment and delight Ryden's *Magic Circus* is one of terror, trauma, sadness and grief.

Further references to Freemasonry and trauma appear in *The Ringmaster* (2001). (Fig. 91) Here, on a theatrical stage, a bodiless Abraham Lincoln juggles meat alongside a drugged ballet girl and a bunny holding a Masonic square and compass. While many of the American presidents were Freemasons, Lincoln was not, but his appearance here seems to be a comment on slavery. In this image he is rendered as defective: his arms, which juggle the meat, project from his ears, implying deafness, perhaps to the plight of children, who in Ryden's work are counted amongst a new class of psychological slaves. The image is set in an elaborately carved proscenium arch that contains symbolic references to the All-seeing Eye and the bee. The text 'Physika Kai Mystika' and 'No. 32' is carved into the frame. It is the custom in Speculative Freemasonry for every Lodge to have a name and number.⁸¹ In Cabbalistic lore the number 32 refers to the thirty-two paths through which Jehovah engraved his name.⁸² In the tradition of the occult the theatricality of ritual is a central focus with the Scottish Rite probably the most theatrical of all the Masonic variations. The Order currently has learning centres for children all throughout the United States.⁸³ In the context of this image and the rest of Ryden's work this fact is worrying. The Masonic writer A.E. Waite was to say of the Scottish Rite in the United States that it had become "a familiar example to be quoted as illustrating Masonic teachings of an advanced antisocial and destructive character."⁸⁴ Further references to the occult in *The Ringmaster* are the barber pole stripes that form the supports for a high wire. As Crick notes, the barber's pole

⁸¹ James Curl, *The Art and Architecture of Freemasonry* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1991) 54.

⁸² Charles Poncé, *Kabbalah. An Introduction and Illumination for the World Today* (London: Garnstone Press, 1974) 106, 114.

⁸³ An American journal *Education* published an entire volume dedicated to the role of Freemasonry, and the Scottish Rite in particular, in its work with children with language disorders in 1989. *Education* Vol. 109, Summer 1989.

⁸⁴ A.E. Waite, *Emblematic Freemasonry and the Evolution of its Deeper Issues* (London: William Rider & Son, 1925) 230.

illusion is a familiar example of the way in which the brain can misinterpret information.⁸⁵ Such knowledge of simple brain mechanisms forms the basis of magic illusion.

In *The Meat Magi* Lincoln appears again diminished as a hand puppet enticing a small boy to a meat truck that looks like a toy version of an ice-cream van. (Fig. 92) The driver is a skeleton with the All-Seeing Eye on his triangular shaped cap, a further reference to the use of the skull and bones in Masonic and other fraternal organizations. Again the lure of magic entices the unwary child into some dangerous territory. The fear that adult Satanists lure children into contexts where abuse occurs received special attention in Britain in the late 1980s where “some twenty horrific cases were reported in 1988 and believed to be only the tip of the iceberg.”⁸⁶ In *Uncle Black*, the reference to black magic and the satanic is clear. The singularly evil character of Uncle Black calls up the darkest aspects of the occult and alludes to ancient Egyptian associations with Seth, “the murderer and dismemberer of Osiris ... given to lechery [and] earthiness.”⁸⁷ The use of the term ‘uncle’ suggests that this lechery may be incestuous in nature. With western concerns about the prevalence of sexual abuse the rise of concern about its satanic use is just one further element in the extension of this social fear. As O’Keefe suggests, the rise of black magic can act as a ‘social strain gauge’ reflecting social tensions and pressures on the individual.⁸⁸

Trauma-induced childhood guilt is represented in a number of Ryden’s images. The sacrifice of pets, a commonly used strategy in ritual abuse, is alluded to in *Corkey Ascending to the Heavens* (1994), in which a young girl is praying over her dead pet in the street. (Fig. 93) A demon is on the ground while images of Christ and the saints appear in the heavens. A policeman directs traffic in the rear. In the context of the occult, the animal’s death can be read as sinister. The rendition of the dog’s spirit ascending

⁸⁵ Francis Crick, *The Astonishing Hypothesis. The Scientific Search for the Soul* (New York: Touchstone, 1994) 153.

⁸⁶ Leslie A. Shepherd (editor), *Encyclopedia of Occultism and Parapsychology*, vol 1 (Detroit, Michigan: Gale Research, 1984) 1454.

⁸⁷ See James Curl’s discussion of Monostatos, one of the villains in Mozart’s Masonic opera, *The Magic Flute*, for a discussion of the traditional rendition of these qualities. Curl 141.

⁸⁸ O’Keefe 414.

heavenward is disturbing while the turned back of the policeman suggests that the law may not be fulfilling its duty; perhaps the adults have turned their backs and while appearing to direct the community have in fact neglected the serious implications of such a crime.

Childhood guilt is represented in another image, *Nazi Boy* (2001) in which Ryden depicts a small boy dressed in a Nazi costume, riding a tricycle. (Fig. 94) The costume and the child's sinister expression suggest that the child may be responsible for some atrocity, or at least carries some heavy psychological burden. In the background is an idyllic street scene. Ryden contrasts this image with a page of old photographs and illustrations of boys on tricycles in the catalogue. In these images the delight in this first important toy is readily apparent on the children's faces. In the painting, however, the boy's sinister eyes suggest another possibility. Perhaps the toy was attained through less innocent means, possibly as a form of booty or bribe. In the common practice of child sexual abuse the perpetrator's use of gift giving is well known. In *Nazi Boy* the child's identification with a tyrannical regime repeats a common aspect of the experience, the identification of the abused child with the abuser. As Shengold suggests, "[b]ecause he or she cannot escape from the tyrant-torturer the child must submit to and identify with the abuser."⁸⁹

In *The Birth* (1994) Ryden takes the realm of magic into the medical arena. (Fig. 95) A very bizarre image, it shows a Mandrake root undergoing a Caesarean section with a doctor and nurse at the bedside. A tube from a toy bunny is being inserted into the belly of the mandrake root. The nurse, with a sinister smile on her face, holds an electric motor, a reference to shock treatment in the history of mental illness. The Mandrake root has ancient connections to anaesthesia but also, in large doses, to delirium and madness. In medieval times it was accorded powers against demonic possession and was used to cure mania. Its appearance resembles the carrot or parsnip but was also thought to resemble the form of the human body; dressed as a 'puppette' it was used for magic purposes.⁹⁰ *The Birth* invites an

⁸⁹ Leonard Shengold, Soul Murder. The Effects of Childhood Abuse and Deprivation. (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1989) 2.

⁹⁰ Botanical.com – Electronic version of A Modern Herbal by Maud Grieve.
www.botanical.com/botanical/mgmh/m/mandra10.html
Accessed 13th May 2004.

investigation into the relationship between magic and the study of mental illness and, in the context of the rest of Ryden's work, the role of secret societies.

Ryden's images are all iced with a sugar coating of sweetness and nostalgia but the result is hardly a portrayal of innocence. Instead they explore the dangerous ground where children have been exposed to knowledge way beyond their years. These children have undergone some sort of initiation, either sexual, magical, or both, into a system far beyond their comprehension. Like the spiral candy forms that proliferate in the images the children spin within a confusing melee of imagery and symbols. Ryden's images question the realm of magic and its present-day use through the various forms of the occult available in America today. In his images the Masonic Order stands as one system among many that is dabbling in dangerous territory, once its traditional knowledge is distorted and applied for demonic purposes.

Ryden's images convey a different slant on the theme compared to the avant-garde performance work of Nauman and McCarthy. The two older artists appear enraged by a system that could be interpreted as producing such aberrations as the torture and abuse of either children or adults. Their anger is palpable as they focus on subjective bodily experience, and they display a capacity to confront torturous sensations and a degree of emotional honesty that is uncommon, even if the explanation for these experiences is sometimes out of reach of both the artists and their audience. Ryden's response, while clearly depicting the dangerous relationship between childhood and the arcane, is less overtly angry, and instead, he appears to be fascinated by the paraphernalia of the occult. This may suggest a partially dissociated position where the artist has failed to fully attune himself to the plea that the children in his images imply. Despite the awareness of ritual abuse that exists in today's society, the will to enter the dark, experiential space associated with these practices in order to understand them is not what every artist is capable of achieving. Ryden has, however, illustrated a range of issues around the theme of ritual abuse that, coupled with the issues raised by other artists, demand further investigation.

Nauman, McCarthy and Ryden are three artists who explore the dark underside of American culture that, as this argument is suggesting, are linked with fraternal practices that support patriarchal religious beliefs that span the western world. The bizarre behaviour they re-enact in performances or portray in their images may function as a form of cathartic release, but may also reflect the activities of fraternal groups that use the secrecy of the Lodge environment to enact behaviours that would otherwise be regarded as debased and immoral. The secret societies provide a framework in which individuals, if they so wish, can vent repressed behaviours in structured and protected ways that incorporate a traditional understanding of the role of mysticism as a form of release from the drudgery of ordinary working life. As Bataille notes, these orgiastic activities or “rites of contagious magic” fulfil the workingman’s need for contact with the sacred.⁹¹ The canker in this tradition, however, emerges when children are used in these contexts as readily available vessels in which to deposit the collective weight of repressed emotion that contemporary society generates. This aberration distorts the mystical tradition from a mechanism that helps to relieve social strains into one which multiplies the pain experienced by its citizens generation after generation.

⁹¹ Bataille (1991) 76.

CHAPTER FIVE
STONES, SKULLS AND SAYING ‘SORRY’:
INITIATORY RITES IN THE ART OF KEN UNSWORTH

The previous two chapters have suggested that Masonic elements and traces of dissident initiation rites appear in the work of several key contemporary American artists, suggesting the possibility of a connection between contemporary art practice, particularly in the area of performance art, and the clandestine practices of fraternal groups. This chapter will argue that similar traces appear in the work of contemporary Australian artists. It will examine the work of the Australian artist Ken Unsworth (born Melbourne 1931) and suggest that Masonic elements appear in his sculpture, drawing, installation and performance work and that his work testifies to initiatory practices and to some of the methods of memory scrambling referred to in the previous chapter. However, while Barney appears to be making overt connections between art, trauma and Masonic ritual and Ryden appears to be deliberately manipulating Masonic and other occult symbols and relating them to disturbing childhood scenes, some artists may be including Masonic themes and traumatic content in their work without consciously contextualising their source. It could be argued that Ken Unsworth belongs to this latter category.

In a brief interview with him in 2003 I presented the subject of my research but was careful about saying too much about how I perceived his work.¹ However, when I raised the question of whether his work was relevant to this theme he couldn't see much of a connection. He claimed that he was an intuitive artist and that he was not consciously basing his ideas on researched material or deliberately employing Masonic themes. At a particular point in the discussion I felt him close down and he stated he didn't think there was more we could discuss. However, before the discussion ended he cited a particular set design that he had recently constructed for the Sydney Dance Company. It involved a hanging Foundation Stone for the dancer's body to lie underneath. Such an admission

¹ The interview was conducted in the artist's Sydney studio on 25 October 2003.

suggests at least some acknowledgement by the artist of the presence of Masonic imagery in his work, but from his response it appears he had never previously considered these connections. Despite the artist's reservations, the following discussion will proceed with an interpretation of Unsworth's work in the light of Masonic themes in order to demonstrate the many references to Masonic material as well as the multiple references to initiatory themes that exist within his oeuvre. The fact that he does not research this material and that he claims to be working entirely intuitively may indicate the presence of repressed traumatic experience.

There is a common set of descriptors used by the critics of Unsworth's work. Anthony Bond, senior curator of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, notes of Unsworth's most recent exhibition that the work is 'dark', 'disturbing' and 'intense'.² In 1998 Bond had used the terms 'trapped', 'pinioned', 'bound', 'violent' and 'claustrophobic' implying, but not directly acknowledging, that the work may contain a traumatic content.³ In 2000, for the Biennale of Sydney, the critic Glennis Israel had commented on the sense of fear, sombre tragedy and air of disquiet in the work as well as a 'druidic spiritual presence', suggesting the presence of ritual elements.⁴ This ritual element of the work had been noted in 1993 by Anne Marsh in her study of Australian performance art, where she described Unsworth's

² Ken Unsworth, The Art of Flowers. Survey 1973 – 2003. Drawings, scale models, sculptures, exhibition catalogue (Sydney: Boutwell Draper Gallery, 2003) 2.

³ Anthony Bond, "The Phenomenon of Unsworth", Ken Unsworth, exhibition catalogue (Sydney: Art Gallery of NSW, 1998: 11).

See also the comments on Unsworth's work in 1984 by Daniel Thomas, the then senior curator of Australian art at the Australian National Gallery. Thomas notes that the work was "controlled yet euphoric, decorous yet dark and ... a powerful sculptural narrative of the journey of life: birth, suffering, crucifixion, death and resurrection." An Australian Accent. Three Artists. Mike Parr, Imants Tillers, Ken Unsworth, exhibition catalogue, John Kaldor Art Project 7 (New York: P.S.I, 1984) 20.

⁴ Glennis Israel, "Ken Unsworth. Artist Commentary", Biennale of Sydney 2000 www.biennaleofsydney.com.au/pdf/kenunsworth.PDF
Accessed 14th July 2003.

work as ‘ritualised mourning’.⁵ However, despite the acknowledgement of ritual elements, the only comment to associate Unsworth’s work with themes that could be defined as Masonic was made in 1988 in an educational video of Australian art designed for high school students. Here the narrator, appearing to be reading from a script, describes Unsworth’s work in two sentences. In response to the 1975 performance piece *Five Secular Settings for Sculpture as Ritual* the narrator states: “[t]he artist becomes the living keystone to the arch. There’s an element of self-sacrifice, a burial ritual in this part of the work.”⁶

All of these descriptions suggest the presence of trauma in some form, but few critics have addressed the work from this perspective.⁷ While many comment on the work’s atmosphere, there have been no significant attempts to penetrate what this ‘dark atmosphere’ actually derives from and there is a significant lack of analysis of the work’s content. Felicity Fenner in 1998 probably came closest to giving this atmosphere a name when she talked of social isolation, helplessness, despair and humour and also cited memory, imagination and regret. She then stated:

The large bitumen drawings from 1984 depict black figures that are both literal representations of indigenous Australians and metaphorical evocations of the psyche ... [and] draw on filmic notions of horror and the

⁵ Anne Marsh, *Body and Self. Performance Art in Australia, 1969 – 92* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) 139. See also Felicity Fenner’s comments in 2003, where she captured the poetic and psychological atmosphere of the work noting the dark, gothic land and dreamscapes and that “Unsworth’s practice [has] a natural affinity with European cultural manifestations of melancholy ...” Felicity Fenner, “The Art of Flowers”, *Ken Unsworth*, exhibition catalogue (2003) 4.

⁶ Educational Media Australia, *A History of Australian Art*, “Part 5: The Contemporary Scene 1970 – 1981”. South Melbourne: Educational Media Australia, 1988. As a video aimed primarily towards a high school audience the commentaries on each of the artists’ work are equally as brief.

⁷ Unsworth’s work was included in an exhibition in 1998, *Telling Tales*, curated by Jill Bennett and Jackie Dunn, which was based around the theme of trauma and memory, however in the catalogue there were only two short paragraphs dealing specifically with his work. See Jackie Dunn, “Telling Tales”, *Telling Tales*, exhibition catalogue (Sydney: University of NSW, College of Fine Arts, 1998) 12.

sublime, visualising the Australian landscape as a lyrical yet harrowing site of dark seduction and lurking menace.⁸

But these terms are still highly generalised, leaving the viewer none the wiser as to the explicit content of the work. What this chapter will do is explore the parameters of the 'dark' in Unsworth's work and give it a name.

Recent research into contemporary discussions of trauma in the visual arts by Susan Sontag and Jill Bennett suggests that there may be value in examining what is happening when an individual witnesses another's pain.⁹ Unsworth's figurative work, in particular, depicts figures contorted in various bodily positions of pain and terror. The images connote highly traumatic scenarios that have, as yet, failed to elicit satisfying interpretations from critics. This chapter will argue that Ken Unsworth's imagery, installation and performance work contains traces of initiatory practices that suggest some form of exposure to the pain of others. The images relate to some of the darkest aspects of Australian history, in particular to race relations between whites and Aboriginals. The discussion will suggest that Masonic and initiatory themes are implicit within his work and that one body of his work in particular, *The Mirror and Other Fables* (1983-84), fills virtually all the criteria of ritual initiation expounded by the anthropologist Victor Turner. While the major trauma represented in Barney's work appears to be a response to rape, this chapter will suggest the possibility that Ken Unsworth's work seems to be more to do with witnessing harrowing scenes, one of the methods used to place the initiate into the liminal state in ritual initiations. This argument will be based firstly on a broad analysis of his themes, the use of materials and their symbolism, and then on a specific analysis of the series *The Mirror and*

⁸ Felicity Fenner, "Vernacular Vagaries", *Ken Unsworth*, exhibition catalogue (1998) 21.

⁹ See Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2003) and Jill Bennett, "Material Encounters Approaching the Trauma of Others Through the Visual Arts," *Critical Issues Series 5. Postcolonial + Art. Where Now?* (Sydney: Artspace Visual Art Centre, 2001). Also Jill Bennett, "Tenebrae after September 11: Art, Empathy, and the Global Politics of Belonging" in *World Memory. Personal Trajectories in Global Time*, eds. Jill Bennett and Rosanne Kennedy (Basingstoke, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

Other Fables. Finally, it will look at the role of the body as a symbol of atonement in his performance work. The role of ritual in Unsworth's work will be addressed largely through the anthropological studies of the ritual initiation process in the work of Victor Turner, Mircea Eliade and others.

Trauma and Tension

It would be difficult to argue that there is not some sense of trauma in Unsworth's work. His installations, for example, are full of foreboding and panic, threat and danger. The threatening blade of a circular saw pierces a piano while a piano chair is covered with dangerous spikes in *In Concert* (1983). Small white female figures have their heads squashed in vices in *Rapture* (1992), suggesting some form of mental torture. In *Go and Don't Look Back* (1982) there is a clear sense of panic. A chair rattles as if in fear while 'watching' the image of another chair burning in front of it. Tilted pianos are strung up like helpless victims and have their 'entrails' beaten.¹⁰ In *A Different Drummer* (1976) a mechanised doll crawls along a beam to the drumbeat created by a toy drummer and then falls off and hits the floor to the sound of a baby crying, only to be reinstated by the artist to repeat the process.¹¹ In *Rhythms of Childhood* (1982) the artist sits motionless in a corner while a doll is cast aside to the rhythm of a bouncing ball under a large black cone and the continuous and unnerving sound of a laughing child. A child's coffin is the centrepiece for his 2002 exhibition *Distracted*.¹² This sense of trauma in his work was to prompt the curators of an exhibition in 1998, dealing with issues of trauma and memory in the work of Australian artists, to include him in their selection.¹³

Stones in multiple arrangements depict levitation, tension and balance, eliciting, as Anthony Bond acknowledges, "the world ... held in place by gigantic forces obeying

¹⁰ Recorded in the ABC television documentary Ken Unsworth. All Fired Up! Produced and directed by Richard Moore, ABCTV Arts, 2001. Broadcast 15th June 2003.

¹¹ Felicity Fenner, "Vernacular Vagaries", Ken Unsworth (1998) 21. This piece was re-exhibited in the Telling Tales exhibition.

¹² Ken Unsworth, Distracted, exhibition held at Boutwell Draper Gallery, Sydney, 2002.

¹³ Jill Bennett and Jackie Dunn, curators, Telling Tales, exhibition held at Ivan Dougherty Gallery, Sydney 1998.

fundamental laws...”¹⁴ These broad themes in his work are well-known in Australia and his sculptures and installations display high levels of ingenuity, delighting many, both art lovers and the lay public alike. But underpinning these highly satisfying and ‘still’ solutions there are disturbing undercurrents. Acknowledging his own concern Unsworth, in 1981 had asked, “what are these levitating galaxies of stone? circles, wells, platforms commemorating forgotten cruelties? triggers for spiritual regeneration? or mirrors for darkest introspection?”¹⁵ (Fig. 96) Like McCarthy’s acknowledgement of the possibility of traumatic causes, Unsworth’s mention of ‘forgotten cruelties’ implies a partial awareness of the presence of trauma. His regular use of childhood themes, as well as rural preoccupations, position this trauma in the context of a childhood spent in regional Victoria.¹⁶

From a trauma perspective the ubiquitous theme of levitation in the work is an immediate reminder of the role of dissociation. The act of ‘leaving the body’ during experiences of trauma functions as a survival mechanism creating, under extreme duress, a means of immediate emotional escape. His 2003 retrospective of maquettes and drawings, *Art of Flowers*, may be interpreted in these terms and may provide an insight into the process whereby the psyche accommodates trauma.¹⁷ In a maquette entitled *Temple of Peace* (1985), a marble block, like a body suspended over water, creates a meditative calm and appears to be a benign response to the sense of escape from the body that meditation can bring. (Fig. 97) The many formations of suspended stones convey an obsessive preoccupation and suggest the enormous effort needed to maintain the artist’s psychic balance. *Stone Cloud* (1985) elicits the expression ‘having your head in the clouds’ but could also suggest a threatening storm with the potential of fatal damage if the stones were to fall; in other words, ‘coming down to earth’ could be catastrophic. (Fig. 98) As Bond notes, *Suspended Stone Circle* (1985) has been greatly admired, but the danger it poses,

¹⁴ Unsworth, *The Art of Flowers* 3.

¹⁵ *An Australian Accent* 22.

¹⁶ From the age of eight Unsworth lived on farms around the area of Bendigo and Hamilton. *An Australian Accent* 22, 61.

¹⁷ Unsworth, *The Art of Flowers*.

particularly to small children who want to investigate it from underneath,¹⁸ is perhaps an apt metaphor for the powerful but brittle nature of repression of traumatic material. The massive tension in the work thus emulates the degree of psychic tension necessary for survival and the physical act of creating each work becomes an act of reinforcement, maintaining the psyche's precarious balance.

In a number of the maquettes the round river stones transform into various shapes. One of these is the keystone, possibly the most significant invention in the history of architecture and holding a symbolic role in Christianity. It is also one of the central symbols of Freemasonry, used particularly in Royal Arch rituals, and is a reminder of the Order's roots in the practice of stone masonry and the role of the early cathedral builders. Along with the foundation stone it holds a special place in the layout of the Masonic Lodge.¹⁹ Unsworth plays with this form in a number of works. In *Shaped Sandstone – Tension* (1974) he creates an inverted arch with the keystones locked together with wires in a state of perfect tension. (Fig. 99) In *Sandstone Arch* (1976) the arch is formed between two wooden pillars. (Fig. 100) In *Tank Trap* (1979) and *Suspended Stone Series Circle II* of the same year the keystones are held together in a circular formation, each stone having a steel pole through its centre.

These formal solutions may simply imply their architectural significance, but in his installation *Calivil Daze* (2002) in the *Distracted* exhibition the keystone takes on a spiritual role. Calivil is a town north of Bendigo where Unsworth lived as a child.²⁰ The installation is based on a church interior with rows of wooden pews and conjures a stark Protestant atmosphere. In the centre is an altar supporting a child's coffin surrounded by four 'candlesticks'. In the pews sit a number of figures created out of transparent Perspex

¹⁸ Anthony Bond, "Ken Unsworth. Possible objects and impossible acts", Unsworth, The Art of Flowers 3.

¹⁹ As Neville Barker Cryer states, operative masons were divided into two groups: straight or arch masons. Those masons who produced the keystone were regarded as more skilled than those who produced the cube or perfect Ashlar and were consequently paid higher wages. Royal Arch Masonry is thus considered an advance on the Masonry of the first three degrees. Revd Neville Barker Cryer, What Do You Know About the Royal Arch? Ten Lectures (2002; Hersham, Surrey: Lewis Masonic, 2004) 38.

²⁰ An Australian Accent 61.

boxes filled with straw. These boxes are in the shape of a coffin formed out of two keystone shapes joined in the middle to represent seated figures. On the front wall is a cross, made of five Perspex boxes also filled with straw. On the sidewall is a series of Perspex boxes containing child figures up to their heads in water, entitled *Rest Easy*. The installation as a whole depicts some sort of death of childhood as well as a sense of blocked spirituality. The coffin figures filled with straw appear to be ‘distracted’ from the spiritual significance of the cross, that is, the notion of redemption; the term ‘daze’ in the title implies a sense of dissociation and confusion. As in the work of Paul McCarthy the focus of the installation appears to be a critical look at the role of religion in the context of childhood.

In Australia in the first half of the twentieth century the Masonic tradition was strongly associated with Protestantism, with clergymen as well as lay churchgoers belonging to the Order.²¹ From the late 1920s to the late 1940s the Masonic Order also had considerable purchase in secular society with the appointment of senior Freemasons as state governors of the various states as well as governors general. In Victoria during the years of Unsworth’s childhood Masonic Grand Masters held the position of state governor.²² Regional Victoria throughout the 1930s would therefore have been overseen by Freemasonry’s watchful eye.

The use of keystones in *Calivil Daze* arguably comments on the Masonic presence in the context of Protestant religious practices. The keystone is a central symbol used in Masonic Royal Arch rituals. In these rituals the blindfolded or bound candidate is placed in a coffin to represent ritual death prior to spiritual rebirth.²³ These actions are intended as a symbolic representation of the initiate’s desire to be reborn through a mystical or ‘sublime’ experience of union with the divine, or in Masonic terms, the Grand Architect of the Universe. But the practice also acknowledges that such mystical states may not be achieved instantly and that the initiate must patiently evolve his spiritual life. This is signified by the

²¹ See Kent Henderson, The Masonic Grand Masters of Australia (Bayswater: Ian Drakeford Publishing, 1988) for examples of clergymen who took high office in the Order.

²² Arthur Cocks was Governor of Victoria from 1926 to 1931 and was Grand Master of Victoria from 1927 to 1932. From 1934 to 1939 William Vanneck was Governor of Victoria and Grand Master of Victoria from 1935 to 1939. See Henderson 180, 184.

²³ Henry Melville, Initiation, Passing, Raising and Exaltation, demonstrated by the Median and Persian Laws on the Original Tracing Board (Hobart Town: H & C Best, 1864) 7.

placement of stones and straw in the initiate's pockets, to suggest that he is like a rough uncut stone that is gradually to be hewn into a 'Perfect Ashlar', the perfect stone cube prepared for use as the foundation stone.²⁴ Here Masonic beliefs and the concept of being 'reborn' of the spirit in Christianity are closely paralleled. In Masonic ritual abuse, however, these symbolic actions are interpreted literally and are used as devices to shock and terrify children. Amongst the reports are accounts of children being placed into coffins.²⁵ The shock produced in the child creates a dissociated state in the psyche and then the child is gently brought back to normal consciousness, sometimes, as is discussed in Barney's work, with the use of a ritual bath. In Unsworth's *Distracted* exhibition the initiatory death of the child is implied with the presence of the child's coffin, and the pieces on the wall, entitled *Rest Easy*, recall the notion of the bath in which the child is placed after such a process. The long-term sense of confusion and dissociation produced by these practices then 'distracts' the individual from any sense of inner harmony usually attained *via* traditional religious observance throughout adulthood. The straw in the Perspex figures, while a possible reference to the Masonic initiate, also functions as a signifier of the confused and fragmented psyche, as in Barney's use of beads.

Straw is also used in other works and may also recall Celtic sacrificial practices. As Jones and Pennick note, in Druidic practice the custom of human sacrifice through burning was created "in a colossus of straw and wood".²⁶ In Unsworth's *Rapture* (1994), an artwork dedicated to his pianist wife, straw fills the belly of a grand piano elevated on stilts, with stairs of multiple keyboards. The sheet music is burnt and two rubber mice play in the straw. Read as a self-portrait, *Rapture* is similar to Barney's grand piano filled with cement, conveying frustration, inner confusion and a sense of inner harmony that has somehow been thwarted. The implied threat of fire suggests the possibility of complete annihilation.

²⁴ Jasper Ridley, The Freemasons. A History of the World's Most Powerful Secret Society (1999; New York: Arcade Publishing, 2001) 285 – 289.

²⁵ Eithne O'Donovan, Ritual Abuse. Information for Health and Welfare Professionals (New South Wales Sexual Assault Committee, 1994) 3.

²⁶ Prudence Jones and Nigel Pennick, A History of Pagan Europe (London: Routledge, 1995) 84.

As noted in the discussion of Barney, Nauman and McCarthy's work, further dissociation can result from spin programming, another practice used in ritual abuse. Unsworth's work contains a lot of references to spinning and circling motions in such works as *Rhythms of Childhood*, *Skidderump* (2000), *Happy Days*, *In Concert* and *Horseplay* (1990) in which a child's toy horse sits inside a concrete pipe. In *Skidderump*, for example, two motorised trolleys, on a circular track and in a darkened room, slowly progress around a cone of bricks on which images are cast. One of the images is an upside down male body, the other a portrait. *Skidderump* is German for a cart to carry the dead.²⁷ The installation is accompanied by the sound of a song by Mahler. The atmosphere of the installation is dark and disturbing, with the artist's choice of title reflecting the theme of the Holocaust. In a number of Unsworth's formal sculptures an image of spinning is created with keystones. *Suspended Shaped Sandstone* (1977) depicts a cone sandstone centre with a suspended ring made of keystones. A drawing of a similar form two years later suggests a spinning motion, rather like the roundabouts that used to be found in children's playgrounds. (Fig. 101)

That something has definitely happened to produce these melancholy meditations is a conviction that Unsworth acknowledges in a statement made for his 1998 exhibition. In *Pages From The Gap*, he says:

Falling in that street yet to be named and probably never will be, for acknowledgement of its existence never came up, as from the very outset it was denied the very attributes of fulfilment, by which it could be described and recognised, though it must be admitted that's not where it began. The fall was in a strict sense undetectable, it could be argued no such event occurred because of the absence of any discernable agents or signs against which the shape of its path, its rapidity, its evolving nature could be empirically observed. However, that it did occur, is based on that utter certainty of inner conviction.²⁸

²⁷ Cited in Biennale of Sydney June-August 2004 website.
<http://www.biennaleofsydney.com.au/biennale2002/education.asp#8>
 Accessed 3rd May 2004.

²⁸ Ken Unsworth (1998) 34.

Whatever it is, there is no name for it, for no-one knows that anything has happened; but the artist himself knows with utter certainty that it has. 'Where it began' may have been a reference to an earlier trauma: Unsworth was an adopted child.²⁹ But for the 'fall' he cites, there has been no name. As such the artist's experience belongs to the category defined by Jean-François Lyotard as the *differend*, which Lyotard describes as:

the unstable state and instant of language wherein something which must be able to be put into phrases cannot yet be ...The *differend* is signalled by this inability to prove. The one who lodges a complaint is heard, but the one who is a victim, and who is perhaps the same one, is reduced to silence.³⁰

As the analysis is already suggesting, Unsworth's work appears to be depicting some form of ritualised trauma, not unlike that discussed in previous chapters. His 1983/84 series of drawings, *The Mirror and Other Fables*, as the rest of the chapter will argue, contains many more elements that can support this interpretation of his work.

Initiation Rites in *The Mirror and Other Fables* (1983-84)

The Mirror and Other Fables is a series of large drawings on paper shown in New York in 1984.³¹ Black and white figures, black birds, rectangular forms and images of female faces are caught in violent poses and suggest a world turned upside down through a stormy series of shocks, torture and acts of humiliation. As the following discussion will suggest, each of these shocks may be alluding to a process of initiation in which, in traditional puberty rites, the boy is wrenched from the maternal environment and exposed to a series of cruel realities in preparation for his admission into the patriarchy. When anthropological theories

²⁹ An Australian Accent 22.

³⁰ Jean-François Lyotard, *The Differend. Phrases in Dispute*, translated by Georges Van Den Abeele. *Theory and History of Literature*. 46. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988) 13, 10.

³¹ An Australian Accent (1984).

of initiation are applied to this series, each of the images can be seen to mark a significant stage within the tradition of initiation rites and to allude to the sense of confusion and anxiety suffered by the initiate in the context of the initiatory experience.

As the anthropologist Arnold Van Gennep notes, the tradition of initiation involves three stages: separation, the liminal state and reaggregation or incorporation.³² The initiate is taken from his familiar environment and exposed to a series of shocks. As Victor Turner notes “[the] novices are taught that they did not know what they thought they knew. Beneath the surface structure of custom was a deep structure, whose rules they had to learn, through paradox and shock.”³³ Initiatory rites, he notes, ‘put people down’, humbling them before permanently elevating them.³⁴ Turner describes the liminal state as the domain of chaos and disorder, represented by ‘extreme’ situations such as torture, murder, war, suicide and execution, and that liminality is both more creative and destructive than the structural norm.³⁵ In discussing the role of initiation in contemporary form Mircea Eliade notes the retention of ordeals, special teaching and secrecy. Commenting on ancient practices he observes the pattern of initiatory torture, death and resurrection.³⁶ *The Mirror and Other Fables* contains all of these attributes and more.

The drawings are made with a combination of bitumen and a silver-coloured aluminium-based paint on paper. As Turner and others note, symbols of initiation are largely drawn from the biology of death and decay and initiates are often identified with the concept of pollution. Turner observed that the colour symbolism used in initiation rites often referred to bodily processes.³⁷ Black was identified with faeces and bodily decay. The use of

³² Cited by Victor Turner in various texts such as in Blazing the Trail. Way Marks in the Exploration of Symbols (Tucson, London: The University of Arizona Press, 1992) 133.

³³ Victor Turner, From Ritual to Theatre. The Human Seriousness of Play (New York: PAJ, 1982) 24, 42.

³⁴ Turner, From Ritual to Theatre, 25.

³⁵ Turner, From Ritual to Theatre, 46.

³⁶ Mircea Eliade, Rites and Symbols of Initiation. The Mysteries of Birth and Rebirth, (Woodstock, Connecticut: Spring Publications, 1995) 123.

³⁷ Victor Turner, “Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites of Passage” in Betwixt and Between: Patterns of Masculine and Feminine Initiation, edited by Louise Carus Mahdi, Steven Foster and Meredith Little (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1987) 16.

bitumen here closely approximates this concept of pollution. On the other hand, the silvery effect of the aluminium paint can connote the traditional magical role of Mercury, a symbol of fluidity and flux. The combination of these two materials seems an apt medium for the expression of the psychic and social processes of initiation.

The ubiquitous symbol of the black bird throughout the series may be particularly relevant to the initiation process. Typically a symbol of death, black birds such as ravens and crows became incorporated into Celtic magic practices due to their presence on the battlefield, where they consumed the corpses.³⁸ In Celtic lore the raven is associated with the god Lugh, especially with initiatory practice in which it represents the role of the trickster. A highly intelligent bird, it is known to sometimes play tricks on humans.³⁹ In tribal terms the bird is frequently a symbol of the shamanic role; often an elder dresses in a bird costume. As Eliade notes, “[b]ird symbolism is always connected with an ascension”.⁴⁰ In ritual imagery such ascension may be associated with the process of dissociation or ‘flight of the psyche’ brought about through the traumatic experience that the initiate undergoes.

The first or separation phase of traditional initiation processes entails wrenching the initiate from his familiar environment, in the case of the young boy, from the care and protection of the mother and the domestic environment. This is done both in physical and psychological terms. The custom of taking the children into the woods, to a ‘sacred grove’, often at night is a common practice across cultures. In a study of Australian Aboriginal puberty initiations Mircea Eliade cites the role of the elders whose faces are smeared with white clay to represent the spirits of the dead, spiriting the boys from the maternal sphere to the forest for their initiations.⁴¹ In the performance piece *Rhythms of Childhood* Unsworth had worn a

³⁸ Brian Bates, The Real Middle Earth. Magic and Mystery in the Dark Ages (London: Pan Books, 2002) 145. See also Simon James, Exploring the World of the Celts (London: Thames & Hudson, 1993) 89.

³⁹ James 88. Raven is also the totem of the pan-Celtic goddess Morgan le Fay, the Queen of the *Dubh Sidhe*, or Dark Faeries, a race of tricksters. See Susa Morgan Black, Raven <http://www.druidry.org/obod/lore/animal/raven.html> Accessed 11th May 2006.

⁴⁰ Eliade 70.

⁴¹ Cited in Harold Schechter, “Symbols of Initiation in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*” in Betwixt and Between 72.

white cast of his own face while he sat in a corner observing the rest of the installation, creating a similar visual effect to that used in Aboriginal initiations.⁴² In the sacred grove the young initiates are exposed to terrifying scenes aimed at disrupting their sense of reality and to place them into the liminal state. A number of the titles in this series, such as *The Night Visit* (1984) (Fig. 102), *Evening Pastoral* (1984) (Fig. 103) and *Night Rituals* (1984) suggest these nocturnal rituals, although in some of the images these rituals appear to be taking place in an interior setting. In many of the drawings a house, perhaps representing the maternal sphere, is being uprooted along with the figures, thrust into the air in a stormy environment, much like Dorothy's house in *The Wizard of Oz*.

Accompanying the uprooted house in a number of images is an oval frame or 'mirror' containing an image of a benign female face, suggesting the gentleness and care associated with the maternal sphere. The oval shape, as Eliade notes, symbolic of the cosmic egg, is an ancient symbol of initiation.⁴³ As Eliade argues, male secret societies have traditionally envied women's capacity to give birth and that they have used birth symbolism in their initiations for this reason.⁴⁴ In order to 'rebirth' the initiate into the world of men, the mother's power over the young candidate must be destroyed. As Turner notes, this is customarily brought about through a denigration of the mother, in which she is mocked, criticised or otherwise presented in unfamiliar terms.⁴⁵ In *The Night Visit* the maternal portrait and the uprooted house are positioned alongside a naked female figure lying upside down in a box or coffin, implying the death of this female influence. In *Pages from the Gap* the artist suggests that the face in the 'mirror' is related to his natural mother when he says, "it's her face reflecting in the mirror of your own, her image before conception, before she took it off when about to give you birth."⁴⁶

⁴² Marsh 139.

⁴³ Eliade 54.

⁴⁴ Eliade 80.

⁴⁵ Turner, *Blazing the Trail*, 147.

Géza Róheim notes that in Aboriginal Australia, the Aranda culture calls the separation from the mother *erakintjilama* meaning 'to make ashamed'. Géza Róheim, *Psychoanalysis and Anthropology* (New York: International Universities Press, 1968) 75.

⁴⁶ Ken Unsworth (1998) 34.

The sacred instructions that are imparted during the initiation are usually to do with social obligations, though they do not necessarily correlate with the rules of morality observed in everyday life. Turner states:

... the esoteric knowledge often seems to transgress the moral interdictions and commandments that are supposed to hold good in everyday life and are accepted there by the initiated as well as uninitiated. Liminal gnosis, as presented in myths and other symbolic modes, abounds in direct or figurative transgressions of the moral order which rules secular life, such as human sacrifice, cannibalism, parricide, and incestuous unions of brother-sister, mother-son, or father-daughter deities.⁴⁷

The two images *Night Whispers* (1983) and *The Flight of Dreams* (1983) could be representing one of these transgressions of the moral order, the breaking of the incest taboo. As Eliade notes, the return to the womb is sometimes presented in the form of incest with the mother and signifies the novice's return to the embryonic situation.⁴⁸ In *Night Whispers* (Fig. 104) the artist's use of black and white male and female figures enclosed in an embrace in a womb-like shape could be depicting such an Oedipal situation. The female figure is black and has the same face as that in the oval portrait, perhaps implying a reference to the birth mother. At this stage the house is still in place in the distance, a symbol of order, but ominous clouds loom and black birds menace the couple. In *The Flight of Dreams* (Fig. 105) the male figure is now black and the house has been uprooted. Here the male rejects a female figure and tosses her off her chair, while holding the oval portrait in his right hand. By becoming 'black', that is, contaminated through the incestuous act, or at least through yearnings for it, the initiate's guilt ensures his deserving punishment. Whether the bounds have been shattered in reality or whether they are still framed as 'temptation', the initiate is further convinced of the central role of the mother as the cause of his distress.

⁴⁷ Turner, *Blazing the Trail*, 152.

⁴⁸ Eliade 58.

As Jane Harrison argues, the sacred instructions being imparted during the initiation include ‘exhibitions’, ‘actions’ and ‘instructions’, and the use of crude gestures is common.⁴⁹ *The Chance to Recant* (1983) may illustrate a further attempt to distance the child from his mother. (Fig. 106) Here a dark figure is looming from the top of the canvas with a child’s body desperately clutching at a box, perhaps the uprooted house, the symbol for the mother’s domain. The figure is holding up the mother’s portrait towards the central figure’s buttocks. In this image the central figure’s bottom is being accentuated, and is surrounded by a glow of light. In crude terms it seems to be suggesting the phrase ‘your mother thinks the sun shines out of your arse’. The ‘chance to recant’ here implies that the initiate now has the opportunity to renounce his earlier attachment to the mother, illustrated through the child clinging desperately to the upturned house.

Further sacred instructions may include references to other sexual relations that are deemed transgressive. Unsworth depicts many black figures in his images, some appear to represent a psychological reality, but others, such as those in *Charon with Dillybag* (1983) and *The Body as Object* (1984) have a clearly Aboriginal appearance. These Aboriginal references suggest that the traumas depicted by Unsworth may not only relate to familial ties, but may also reflect racial attitudes of the day.

In the 1930s race relations in Australia were at their lowest ebb. As Richard Broome points out, by the 1930s white Australians, regardless of their ideological position, all agreed that Aboriginal people as a race were doomed to extinction.⁵⁰ However, demographic indicators suggested that throughout the 1920s and 1930s miscegenation, largely between white men and Aboriginal women, was rapidly increasing, potentially outstripping the birth rate of the white population. Government policies evolved in the early 1930s to “protect the purity of

⁴⁹ Cited in Turner, *Blazing the Trail*, 152.

⁵⁰ Richard Broome, *Aboriginal Australians. Black Responses to White Dominance 1788 - 2001*, 3rd edition (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2001)164.

See also Adam Shoemaker, *From Depression to War*. ANU E Press 2004: 3.

http://64.233.187.104/search?q=cache:zb6S54AA0M0J:epress.anu.edu.au/bwwp/BWWP_01.pdf+Cummeragunga+mission&hl=en&ie=UTF-8

Accessed 28th January 2005.

both races” and to prevent further mixing of the population. By 1937 the first policy of assimilation was articulated by the Commonwealth and State Authorities Conference in Canberra.⁵¹ As Broome is clear to point out, though, the official assimilation policy did nothing to undermine the unofficial discrimination against Aboriginals and the existence of a caste system that divided the races in rural situations.⁵² A quotation by William Lane from 1888 embodies, in crude form, the racist attitudes that extended to the 1930s and beyond. Lane had written that he would rather see his daughter “dead in her coffin than kissing a black man on the mouth or nursing a little coffee-coloured brat that she was mother to.”⁵³ During the 1930s mission life for Aboriginals was harsh with limited rations and cruel treatment. From some of the Aboriginal missions came reports of sexual relations between white clergymen and their charges as well as violent corporal punishment including chainings and floggings.⁵⁴ In 1939 at Cummaragunja, just over 100 kilometres north-east of Calivil on the New South Wales side of the Murray River, the first mass strike of Aboriginal people occurred, known as the *Cummeragunja Walk-off*, in protest over this cruel treatment.⁵⁵

The Temptation of Desire (1983) depicts a distraught figure entangled in the bars of a cage while lovers embrace in the upper right-hand corner and a demonic looking figure gestures towards the inmate in the bottom right-hand corner. (*Fig. 107*) The position of the demonic

⁵¹ Broome notes that A.P. Elkin, an Anglican clergyman and anthropologist, exerted a significant influence on the formation of policy in regard to Aboriginal affairs at this time. Broome 167. It is also relevant to this thesis that Elkin had an extensive knowledge of the role of initiation and magic practices as carried out by Aboriginal elders. See A.P. Elkin, Aboriginal Men of High Degree. Initiation and Sorcery in the World's Oldest Tradition (1977; Rochester, Vermont: Inner Traditions, 1994). Elkin comments on Freemasonry (without using its name) in The Australian Aborigines (1938; Angus & Robertson, 1979) 217 - 218. When discussing *The Secret Life and Missionary Endeavour* he notes the parallels with “our principal and most widespread secret society” and states, “we are reminded that we have a secret life for the men”. The language Elkin uses to describe initiation rites suggests that he may have been a Freemason.

⁵² Broome 148.

⁵³ Cited in Broome 97.

⁵⁴ Shoemaker 5 – 12.

⁵⁵ Struggle for Justice. Koori Heritage Trust.

http://abc.net.au/missionvoices/struggle_for_justice/default.htm
Accessed 28th January 2005.

figure's hand suggests that this could be a 'demonstration' aimed to impress certain values on the initiate. The figure in the cage embodies the type of treatment accorded to some Aboriginals on government reserves at the time, as that of prisoners or inmates of mental institutions.⁵⁶ Unsworth's image raises the question of whether he may have witnessed examples of such cruel treatment. Is the figure in the cage an Aboriginal woman in a crazed state as a result of cruel practices? And, as the title *The Temptation of Desire* implies, could this image represent a demonstration aimed towards frightening a white boy away from any desire for 'black velvet', as it was known, as he neared puberty? It is relevant to note that in Victoria at the time, Aboriginal children went to state schools, unlike in New South Wales where they were segregated, which meant that for a schoolboy in rural Victoria white children were potentially mixing with Aboriginal children on a daily basis.⁵⁷ Given the overall attitude towards racial purity at the time there undoubtedly would have been community concern that as the children neared puberty 'unsuitable' relationships could develop.

'Instructions' include the results of what will happen if the rules are broken. In the context of transgressive sexual behaviour *The Pursuit of Love* (1982) depicts a figure strung up by his genitals from the pivotal point of an archway and between two pillars. (Fig. 108) Five heads or skulls lie beneath him and an ominous black cloud containing an 'all-seeing eye' hangs in the top right hand corner. Here the Masonic concept of the twin pillars are used in a menacing way to suggest the crude instruction, 'we're watching you ... if we catch you in the act you'll be strung up by the balls'. *The Ecstasy of Dreams* (1982) also depicts another potential fate in which a figure appears to have a skewer passed through the centre of his body. (Fig. 109) Again a black cloud with one 'all-seeing eye' hovers over the figure. *The Passage* (1983) could be depicting the initiate's psychological state due to these disturbing initiatory processes. (Fig. 110) In this image the initiate's world is now turned upside-down as he tumbles through a stormy sky with one black bird indicating the presence of ominous forces. The mother's face is contained in the maternal realm, suggested by the box in the

⁵⁶ Broome 103.

⁵⁷ Broome 148.

upper left-hand corner. The image appears to imply the separation from the mother and the confusion of the liminal state that traditionally accompanies initiation.

Another of the key purposes of initiatory rites is to introduce the candidates to the reality of death. The representation of heads and skulls is pervasive throughout Unsworth's images. According to Mircea Eliade, in archaic hunting cultures initiation is represented through the medium of the skeleton: "bone symbolizes the final root of animal life, the mould from which the flesh continually arises."⁵⁸ In regular Masonic initiations the image of the skeleton is used on tracing boards and sometimes real human bones are utilised within the rituals to represent the ever-present reality of death. The skulls or heads on the ground in *The Pursuit of Love* may signify the use of such props for initiatory purposes. It is not uncommon for fraternal initiations to go to extreme lengths to trick the initiate into believing that they are literally confronting death face-to-face.⁵⁹

Another initiatory shock may be being conveyed in *Go and Don't Look Back* (1982), an installation that had the figure of a pebble wall-shadow fleeing from a video eye that was blinking in the centre of a whirlpool "to a smoking charnel house from which flowed a river of bitumen containing skulls."⁶⁰ The whirlpool or spiral shape is one of the traditional

⁵⁸ Eliade 92.

⁵⁹ A recent case in a Masonic Lodge in the United States in which an initiate was mistakenly murdered demonstrates the extent to which Masonic theatrics can be taken. In Patchogue, New York, a man was shot in the face and killed during a Masonic initiation ceremony by a fellow member who mistakenly pulled out a real pistol instead of a blank gun. The initiation rite was aimed at scaring a new member. According to Fitzgerald, the Masons sat James in a chair and placed cans on a platform around his head. Eid, standing about 20 feet away, was supposed to fire a blank gun, and a man holding a stick was supposed to knock the cans over to make James think they had been hit by bullets. The 76 year-old Eid was charged with manslaughter.
North County Times.com Sunday May 2nd 2004.

http://www.nctimes.com/articles/2004/03/10/backpage/3_9_0421_23_49.txt
Accessed 2nd May 2004.

⁶⁰ Daniel Thomas, "The Artists and Their Australian Context", *An Australian Accent* (1984) 23.

symbols for initiation across cultures.⁶¹ The all-seeing eye is present here again, the inference being that the observer is forced to run in fear from the scene while being watched by these all-powerful elders who have control over life and death.

Skulls and heads are depicted in *Charon with Dillybag* (1983). (Fig. 111) In this image an Aboriginal figure acting as the ferryman, the carrier of souls from Greek mythology, holds a skull in his left hand and two other heads float around him. This image suggests a view from the dark interior of a cave or a tent-like space: the light central triangular form, a sunny exterior world. Another Aboriginal figure leans through the opening, as if looking on at the scene within. The image implies some form of ritualistic activity associated with an enclosed liminal space, with the floating heads suggesting death and dissociation, and alludes to the initiation rites of Aboriginal communities. As A.P. Elkin notes, in Australian Aboriginal initiation rites where circumcision takes place, the concept of initiation is equated with killing and in some regions, caves are utilised for initiatory processes.⁶² By merging a concept from ancient Greek culture with Aboriginal initiation practices, the artist appears to be making a correlation between indigenous initiatory practices and the western tradition, implying that western practices may not be so far removed from indigenous traditions as we are led to believe. This image suggests that the white boy's initiatory experience (signified by the white hand on the left holding the mother's portrait) could be equivalent to that undergone by Aboriginal boys in traditional indigenous society.⁶³

⁶¹ In Greek legend, for example, the whirlpool, Charybdis, was one of the dangers associated with the journey of the Argonauts. Paul Harvey, The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature (1937; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969) 98.

⁶² Elkin 27, 147.

⁶³ In the North American context, parallels between Masonic initiation practices and the Native American tradition have been the subject of a new Masonic book by Richard E. Fletcher, entitled A Shared Spirit. Freemasonry and The Native American Tradition. Described as a major work on a subject, it describes the performances of the Oklahoma Masonic Indian Degree Team, which has performed before Freemasons all across the country in Native American dress. The topics include analogies between Freemasonry and Indian societies, the Medicine Man and the Senior Deacon, the development of Freemasonry and Masonic Lodges in the original Grand Lodge of Indian Territory, and a comparison between American Indian ideals and the tenets of Freemasonry. <http://www.srmason-sj.org/council/journal/jun01/fletcher.html>
Accessed 2nd May 2004.

The ancient pattern of initiatory torture, death and resurrection that Eliade notes appears in more of Unsworth's images as the demonstrations become more terrifying and affirms the observation by René Girard that violence, in every cultural order is always the true subject of every ritual or institutional structure.⁶⁴ In a number of the triptychs the violence is openly sacrificial. As Dumézil has observed, the triad plays an important role in sacrificial ritual.⁶⁵ *Night Rituals* seems to be enacted in an interior setting. (Fig. 112) A black figure is hanging by a rope around his waist with a black bird ready to peck at his body in the left panel. A rectangular block appears in the three frames. In the central frame an electric light illuminates the scene of a black figure being attacked by another with a knife. In the right panel a black bound figure is hanging by his feet from a ceiling hook while a mirror portraying the uprooted house reflects on the scene. In Royal Arch rites the candidate enters the initiatory space wearing the Cable Tow, a noose-like rope, around his waist, signifying his previous initiation into the three degrees of Craft Masonry.⁶⁶ In some of the more elaborate versions of the rites the candidate is lowered by this rope around his waist into a vault or crypt.⁶⁷ The image in the left panel of *Night Rituals* suggests such an action. The rectangular block appearing in each of the images in *Night Rituals* may be a reference to the double cube altar that is present in the vaulted space, as it appears to be of similar dimensions to that used in Royal Arch rites.⁶⁸ The image appears to represent a scene of ritual torture.

While 'regular' Royal Arch rituals are solemn affairs aimed at representing the exaltation of the individual through an experience of mystical union with the Grand Architect of the Universe, the 'irregular' use of initiation practice, such as these images suggest, recalls the

⁶⁴ Eliade 123. See also René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred* (1972: Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1977) for a full discussion of this theme.

⁶⁵ Turner, *Blazing the Trail*, 107.

⁶⁶ Royal Arch rites are based on the sojourns of the Israelites across the Sinai desert from Babylon to Jerusalem, accompanied by the Ark of the Covenant. The rope is a reference to the rope worn by the priests of the house of Levi who could be pulled from the Holy of Holies if they should collapse inside the inner sanctum. Cryer 23.

⁶⁷ Some versions make use of a trapdoor through which the candidate must jump backwards to be lowered into the vault. Neville Barker Cryer, *What Do You Know About The Royal Arch? Ten Lectures* (2002. Hersham, Surrey: Lewis Masonic, 2004) 48, 49.

⁶⁸ Cryer 40, 49.

ordeals of the ancient mystery cults. Witnessing scenes of murder or torture can be one of the methods employed in these irregular versions. The scenes are theatrically staged, but to the initiate can appear authentic, thereby creating another means of placing the candidate into a liminal state of shock and dissociation. An example of such irregular Masonic rites from the eighteenth century is depicted in a series of images by Philippe de Loutherbourg, and shows the initiation of a young woman into Cagliostro's Egyptian Masonry and her exposure to a series of murderous scenes.⁶⁹ (*Fig. 113*) Another of de Loutherbourg's images, 'Cagliostro as a fairground mountebank' is a satirical comment on the popularity of initiation amongst the aristocracy of the time and indicates some of its attributes and effects. (*Fig. 114*) It includes a number of flying figures, amongst them figures attired in cloaks with beak-like hoods, not unlike birds' heads in appearance, and an artist's palette and brushes flying through the air with a set of wings, suggesting that one of the outcomes of the shock induced in the initiatory process can be the production of the 'dissociated' artist.

In *Evening Pastoral*, another triptych depicting a similar scene of sacrifice, Unsworth depicts a silhouette of his own adult profile on a child-size body. (*Fig. 103*) This image implies that the child may have been thrust into early adulthood by being exposed to these frightening scenes, as well as suggesting that it could be the artist who is contemplating these scenes from an adult vantage point. The gentle figure of the mother looks protectively down on the boy/man as if supplying some form of psychological comfort throughout both the original ordeal and its artistic reconstruction. The use of the term 'pastoral' in the title makes an ironic comment on the concept of 'peaceful' rural life in Victoria in the artist's early years, as well as on the role of religious care-givers.

Fire is a prominent feature in Unsworth's work and appears in the three images *Playing with Fire* (1981). (*Fig. 115*) "Trial by fire" is one of the final stages of initiation practices

⁶⁹ Iain McCalman, The Seven Ordeals of Count Cagliostro. The Greatest Enchanter of the Eighteenth Century (2003; Harper Perennial, 2004) Figure 9. Alternatively, these figures may be self-representations, either depicting what would be done to the initiate, or what was actually done. In recent times children who have been ritually abused have reported being hung upside by the feet, amongst other punishments. See O'Donovan 3. The author states, "[r]itual abuse victims are physically abused to the point of torture."

across cultures.⁷⁰ Here, a sense of unspeakable torture is enacted as black figures on fire run in front of a rectangular block, again possibly a representation of the foundation stone. The horrific experience of seeing another human being on fire is implied in these images and, as in Nauman's use of the chair to depict human torture, could explain Unsworth's later work of a chair watching the videoed enactment of another chair on fire. Such torturous displays, as we know through stunt work in movies and television, can be staged theatrically, but used in initiatory processes are intended to convey a scene of abject horror.⁷¹ Children who have been subjected to such horrors can be programmed to return to the emotional impact of the original initiatory experiences periodically. Birthdays are frequently invoked as dates in which to 'return' to the cult.⁷² Unsworth's sense of disturbance surrounding birthdays, which may allude to his experience of being an adopted child, is conveyed in a performance that he called 'humorous' in the documentary *All Fired Up*. Here he performs a little piece with three birthday cards. The cards all have musical chimes that begin as the card is opened. Unsworth lines the three cards up on a table and then sets them on fire. The pathos of this performance piece is tangible.

The horrifying experiences of witnessing what appears to be the torture of others, used in a number of ritual cults, achieve the desired results: a form of brainwashing so profound as to be almost incomprehensible. Such a reduction to a state of bewilderment is suggested in Unsworth's work. In many of the images the figures portrayed as the subject of these torturous processes are black figures. As stated earlier, it appears that sometimes these black figures function as a representation of psychological states, but at other times are intended to represent Aboriginal victims. *The Spoils of Love* (1983) is an image that clearly depicts an act of white triumph, as if a representation of the British colonial attitude. (*Fig. 116*) Here a white male (in the style of William Blake) holds up two forlorn black bodies

⁷⁰ In Aboriginal initiation rituals, the fire ceremony is practised almost universally in tribal cultures in which the initiates sit and stare at a raging fire and then are sometimes "dropped on to thick smoke fires, coals may be thrown on them or they and all the men may finally trample the fires out with their feet." Elkin, *The Australian Aborigines* 206.

⁷¹ Walter C. Young & Linda J. Young, "Recognition and Special Treatment Issues in Patients Reporting Childhood Sadistic Ritual Abuse" in *The Dilemma of Ritual Abuse: Cautions and Guides for Therapists* edited by George A. Fraser (Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Press, 1997)127.

⁷² Young & Young 81.

by the neck. In the upper portion of the picture a child swims in an oval bath, another reminder of the fluid 'associative' mode, a state where anything is possible.⁷³ The child's face is an image of pure terror. To the onlooking child, the sum total of these various demonstrations that appear to involve the torture of others, is a horrifying warning, implanted indelibly in his psyche, to keep well away from Aboriginal people. This strategy, though hidden, appears to endorse the underlying eugenic intentions of the public policy of the day. Unsworth's choice of title for this work is an ironic comment. The word 'hate' in the title may be a more accurate substitute.

Many of Unsworth's formal public sculptures have an arboreal theme. Many contain stones held up in artistic interpretations of tree forms. As Turner notes, the teaching involved in the initiation makes use of 'symbol-vehicles', "sensorily perceptible forms such as trees, images, paintings, dance forms, etc., that are each susceptible not of a single meaning but of many meanings. Then the factors or elements of culture may be recombined in numerous, often grotesque ways."⁷⁴ In a drawing from 1990, *Morning Pastoral*, there are what appear to be white female figures tied up in three trees in a pose reminiscent of the crucifixion. (Fig. 117) Then, in the same year Unsworth drew *Stones Against the Sky*, in which stones were sitting up in the trees. In 2001 he drew a similar tree embedded in what appears to be a glasshouse where the stones in the trees clearly form body shapes with the branches.⁷⁵ Given that Unsworth began his oeuvre in the context of the performance art of the 1960s and '70s, when misogynistic tendencies appeared in the work of performance artists like the Viennese Actionists, for example, the misogynistic theme of 'crucified' women in *Morning*

⁷³ According to Yeats, Blake was possibly initiated into an Order of Christian Kabbalists in London known as "The Hermetic Students of the Golden Dawn" where he learned to practice magic. See Marsha Keith Schuchard, "Yeats and the 'Unknown Superiors'". Swedenborg, Falk and Cagliostro" in Secret Texts. The Literature of Secret Societies edited by Marie Mulvey Roberts and Hugh Ormsby-Lennon (New York: Ams Press, 1995) 114.

Elkin notes that in Aboriginal culture, the ritual washing of the initiate is "to clean off all traces of the sacred world ... before coming in contact with the uninitiated." Elkin, The Australian Aborigines 207.

⁷⁴ Turner, From Ritual to Theatre 27.

⁷⁵ National Sculpture Prize and Exhibition 2001, exhibition catalogue (Canberra: National Gallery of Australia, 2001) 89.

Pastoral is not unusual.⁷⁶ In Unsworth's drawing the figures appear clearly tied to the trees, conveying a grotesque and bizarre scenario. Given the indicators of initiation throughout *The Mirror and Other Fables*, Turner's interpretation that the arboreal theme may be an element of the initiatory process is quite applicable here.

The concept of stones being held up in various structures has permeated Unsworth's entire *oeuvre*. As the theme has developed the stones have been getting larger and larger. In his Kings Cross sculpture, *Stones Against the Sky* (1998) for example, the stone objects have become extremely large and more and more precarious. The 'weight' of repressed knowledge can become a heavier and heavier burden as the years progress and the effort to maintain this repression appears to be more and more strained. In *Song for Henning* (1989) a large pile of stones is placed next to a fireplace with birdcages, each containing a stone, hanging above the stone mound. As Paul Elliott notes, the use of cruel and inhuman practices in Druidic rites involved the incarceration of prisoners of war in huge wicker cages that were set alight, as well as human sacrifices hanging from trees.⁷⁷ Unsworth's *Morning Pastoral* makes a direct reference to these Druidic practices, while *Song for Henning* implies a more fragmented and 'artistic' representation of some of the elements involved, suggesting that it could be a dissociative response to repressed material.

The atavistic nature of these rituals is so much beyond comprehension in our contemporary 'civilised' society that it is difficult to imagine that such practices could have existed within living memory. And yet, as Susan Sontag points out, the photographs of black victims of lynchings in small American towns between the 1890s and 1930s suggest the persistence of these Druid-like practices:

The lynching pictures tell us about human wickedness. About humanity.
They force us to think about the extent of the evil unleashed specifically by

⁷⁶ The Viennese Actionists may well provide another site of analysis for this theme. Viennese society has long been heavily influenced by Masonic practices. Other performance artists in Australia, such as Jill Orr, who also creates highly ritualistic performances, may provide other opportunities for analysis.

⁷⁷ Elliott 38.

racism. Intrinsic to the perpetration of this evil is the shamelessness of photographing it. The pictures were taken as souvenirs and made, some of them, into postcards; more than a few show grinning spectators, good churchgoing citizens as most of them had to be, posing for a camera with the backdrop of a naked, charred, mutilated body hanging from a tree.⁷⁸

Unsworth's arboreal imagery questions whether similar, though more hidden scenarios may have existed within the Australian context during the racial tensions of the 1930s.

In discussions of ritual abuse, as was noted in the analysis of Barney's work, the initiatory process is not completed in one session, but is often woven into the child's life at various points. Over the years the child is put through a range of torturous experiences. As the subject emerges in an artist's work these separate experiences can be combined in the artworks as a representation of an overall liminal experience. *The Night Visit* appears to bring together the various images that Unsworth has described as belonging to the initiation process so far. (*Fig. 102*) Another triptych, it again uses the image of the uprooted house, birds and the image of the mother's face. A female figure lies upside down in a box, as if in a coffin, and a black figure sits with pleading hands on top of a block shaped like a keystone. A horned head sits atop a human form. In Celtic lore Cernunnos, 'the horned one', was known as the lord of animals.⁷⁹ Here again, the imagery appears to be related to the death of the mother/child relationship and the means by which the boy must enter the patriarchal order by becoming a witness to torture and death. The figure in the pool may again signify the bathing that occurs after the shock of initiation. The title suggests that the 'elders' come to the house at night to take the children for an evening initiation, when they should be sleeping. Initiatory processes are often passed down through generations. The mothers, if they have been put through similar processes in their own childhood, can be incapable of resisting. In *Night Visit*, the dark female figure appears to be dead and is therefore an unlikely source of comfort.

⁷⁸ Sontag 82.

⁷⁹ James 89.

A further element of the process is depicted in five images of *The Gaki* (1983). (Fig. 118) “The *gaki* come from Japanese folklore; they are lost souls with despicable habits.”⁸⁰ As classical trickster figures they are “an incarnation of the chaos principle, the principle of disorder, the force careless of taboos and shattering bounds.”⁸¹ As Schechter notes, the function of the trickster is to ritually enact different forms of bestial behaviour in order to depict what is morally unacceptable. In certain puberty rites the elders perform ‘pantomimic representations’ that are “intended to teach the novices in vivid fashion what things they must in future avoid. Various offences against morality are exhibited, and the guardians warn the novices of their death or of violence should they attempt to repeat the actions they have witnessed.”⁸² In *The Gaki* various bestial acts, such as defecating or vomiting into the mouths of other figures, are portrayed. Intended as a lesson in reverse psychology the witnessing of debauchery is supposed to impress moral values on the initiate. The trickster element of the initiation also involves the use of theatrical techniques, that is ‘smoke and mirrors’, to create frightening scenes. In *The Gaki* 3, 4, and 5 black figures are being attacked and black rectangular forms are leaning as if to fall on their bodies, suggesting the concept of the body under the foundation stone that Unsworth was to mention in my interview with him. (Fig. 119) A black circular form in the upper left hand corner suggests an eclipsed sun or moon, signifying the presence of demonic forces. The artist’s use of the Japanese term in the titles of these images implies that he is aware of the role of the trickster in an exotic culture. However, his comments in his interview with me suggest that, as yet, he has been unable to consciously connect this theme to an Australian context. Such distancing is similar to Barney’s use of distant locations and suggests a state of dissociation and repression.⁸³

⁸⁰ Jonathon Fineberg, “A critical Examination of the Artists’ Current Work from an International Perspective”, *An Australian Accent* 30.

⁸¹ Joseph Campbell’s wording quoted in Harold Schechter, “Symbols of Initiation in ‘Adventures of Huckleberry Finn’”, *Betwixt and Between* 75.

⁸² Schechter 75.

⁸³ It is perhaps interesting that Barney’s most recent film, *Drawing Restraint 9*, is set on a Japanese whaling ship and involves a very elaborate Shinto wedding and bizarre enactments.

The previous material suggests that Unsworth may be visually recalling a set of initiatory trials undergone during childhood. If this were the case, then it would be appropriate to ask how this had occurred and why the caring adults around the child were unaware of these events. Unsworth appears to raise a similar issue himself both in his artwork and writing. In *Pages from the Gap* he says, “[t]hen there is that other matter; not even the quietest breath can slip past unnoticed in that sullen, heavily motionless atmosphere – windows turning opaque to thwart the eye and don’t open and radio’s voice lost just cms from its speaker ...”⁸⁴ This suggests some form of lack of communication, in which any mention of repressed experiences are refused acknowledgment. His use of loud speakers in a number of his installations creates a similar sentiment. The memories may become locked inside as the child moves into adulthood. He goes on:

So all these dark, unutterable things that could never be shared even with the closest of lovers are still there, eternally wailing and wafting crazily into themselves on cold, cold breezes that don’t even disturb the shereest of curtains, they permeate the walls like rising damp, they snuffle their smells in every carpet layering, cloth and velvet hanging, they settle like crystallising dust on every surface, crying into their own emptiness, their soundless lamentations accompanying the hoarse breathing of the house through the sinuses of its chimneys.⁸⁵

The memories, captured as smells and silent lamentations, seem to be trapped inside the artist’s psyche with no mechanism for permanent release. Continuing, he says, “mysterious sounds reverberate in unfathomable stillness, pierce the senses, like a silent scream, more terrible, more eloquent, more seductive than any siren voices, like the unrelenting static from the birthing of the universe; ceaselessly assails our waking and sleepless sleeping.”⁸⁶

As Turner notes, “[t]he subject of passage ritual is, in the liminal period, structurally, if not physically ‘invisible’. As members of society, most of us see only what we expect to see,

⁸⁴ Ken Unsworth (1998) 34.

⁸⁵ Ken Unsworth (1998) 50.

⁸⁶ Ken Unsworth (1998) 64.

and what we expect to see is what we are conditioned to see when we have learned the definitions and classifications of our culture.”⁸⁷ If our culture says that these things don’t happen here, or that these practices are only performed in less ‘civilised’ societies than our own, or in the distant past, then the child’s protests are not understood and the artist’s depictions are read as imaginative portrayals of some generalised ‘archetypal’ unconscious. The mechanism that keeps the resistance to acknowledging these practices in place is very powerful. The threatening presence of the ‘all-seeing eye’, that is, the power of the elders who seem to have complete control over the universe, indeed over its very ‘birthing’, is one part of this mechanism. Grounded in the child’s imagination and embedded into the core psychic structure of the individual, this internalised threat can be carried from one generation to the next and becomes the foundation upon which to base each new generation’s initiatory experience. In *The Pursuit of Love* this principle is demonstrated clearly. The figure hangs in the middle of the arch, that is, from the keystone. This can be interpreted as a demonstration of how the initiate would be threatened with mortal punishment if he errs in relation to the required social behaviour. His manhood is at risk and, so too, is the structure upon which the society is based. The language of threat then becomes the ‘key’ not only to the psychology of the initiate himself, but also to the very structure of such a society. The threatened individual thus becomes the ‘living keystone to the arch’ of this society. Without the capacity for threat the structure collapses.

The previous argument suggests that Unsworth’s artwork represents an intimate knowledge of the processes associated with initiation that today would be categorised as ritual abuse. The indicators, such as the keystone, foundation stone and bones in his images, suggest the irregular use of Masonic practices and an incorporation of Druidic elements applied in the context of the sacred grove. For the initiatory process to be complete the psyche must ‘return’ to the body in a process of incorporation, just as the initiate must be reincorporated into the social body. This final stage of the initiation, Van Gennep’s ‘incorporation’ stage, is the context in which answers are given to the riddles in a form of de-briefing. However, in Unsworth’s art this final stage is missing and the artist appears to be left permanently in

⁸⁷ Victor Turner, “Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites of Passage”, *Betwixt and Between* 6.

the liminal state where the confusion is never resolved; Solomon's Temple is left unfinished. The artist thus continues to re-enact the initiatory drama in multiple forms throughout his artistic career.

Turner's distinction between liminal and liminoid is relevant here. Turner argues that liminoid phenomena, such as those activities acted out by artists, actors and so on, are a product of complex large-scale societies and are still highly visible in the capitalist world since World War 2. And yet the liminal, he says, is "found in the activities of churches, sects, and movements, in the initiation rites of clubs, fraternities, Masonic orders, and other secret societies ..."⁸⁸ The liminoid, he suggests, is entered *via* the liminal, implying that some artistic activity may be a product of hidden initiatory experience. The missing segment in contemporary society is this: if these practices are being enacted, but there is no context in which the initiate can place his experience, that is, because these practices are kept completely secret and unacknowledged in the culture, then the initiate effectively is left in the liminal state indefinitely.⁸⁹ Turner had suggested that liminoid phenomena began to appear on the scene in city-states on their way to becoming empires.⁹⁰ This could suggest that one of the strategies of empire building is the intentional maintenance of the secrecy of this tradition.

It appears from the above analysis that in *The Mirror and Other Fables* we could be seeing traditional puberty rites, a core practice of archaic societies, being harnessed in modified form in what today we would call a case of ritual abuse. The process can produce a splitting of the psyche so that, if the individual is never reincorporated as Van Gennep suggests, the individual's normal everyday consciousness remains unaware of the initiation. For the artist who works intuitively, however, it emerges in the work in a surreal and unintelligible form. Geza Róheim notes that in Aranda culture the young man is given the mark of his *tjoa* or 'twin' and that in the process he goes "into the stomach of the sky."⁹¹ In psychoanalytic terms this 'twinning' correlates with the splitting of the psyche and the allocation of the

⁸⁸ Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre*, 53, 55.

⁸⁹ Turner, *Blazing the Trail*, 50.

⁹⁰ Turner, *Blazing the Trail*, 50.

⁹¹ Róheim 75.

memories of the experience to the right brain in a dissociated form. In his study of Moroccan circumcision rites Vincent Crapanzano argues that puberty rituals are meant to instil anxiety, not resolve identity and to induce “profound feelings of inadequacy, inferiority and worthlessness that demand constant compensation. The ritual takes the great timeless Oedipal anxiety of separation from the mother and fear of the father and inscribes them into a single event that ‘grounds the individual’ in civilisation and history.”⁹² While Unsworth’s depiction may not suggest the type of physical violation of the initiate such as the Moroccan rites employ, the exposure to the pain of others can serve a similar purpose. Through intensely shocking scenes and demonstrations of the supreme power of the elders the initiate’s psyche is indelibly impressed with the core societal values being imparted here. The resulting anxiety that Crapanzano observes, as this chapter suggests, appears to be expressed throughout Unsworth’s work.

The body of atonement and the role of the ludic

Daniel Thomas had noted that Unsworth’s performances *Five Secular Settings for Sculpture as Ritual, and Burial Piece* (1975), in which the artist places his body in positions that suggest torture, had been prompted by the terminal illness of his wife’s son.⁹³ The confrontation with death in later life is a time when repressed memories of death, such as those previously discussed, are likely to surface. Based on the previous discussion of *The Mirror and Other Fables* it is possible to suggest that the poses he enacts constitute some form of atonement for the crimes portrayed in the images. In many of the performances he is near naked only wearing a pair of underpants. Given the previous discussion, the pathos is deeply disturbing: it conveys a little boy’s complete vulnerability and exposure in such shaming circumstances, perhaps in an even more poignant way than if the artist had been completely naked. Turner argues that there is compensation for the initiate for such

⁹² Quoted in Catherine Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) 57 – 58.

⁹³ Daniel Thomas, “The Artists and their Australian Context”, *An Australian Accent* 22.

shameful treatment in that they “acquire a special kind of freedom, a ‘sacred power’ of the meek, weak and humble.”⁹⁴

Unsworth’s most famous performance image, the photograph that has been reproduced most often, is the *Fifth Setting* from his 1975 series in which he hangs by his neck between two posts. (Fig. 120) It is one of the most significant images that emerged during the hey-day of performance art in Australia in the 1970s. The accompanying drawing, completed nine years later, is an explicit depiction of a black body in a similar position. The face has a definite Aboriginal appearance. By producing this drawing much later and allocating a specific racial identity to the figure Unsworth appears to be making a connection between his own bodily enactment and the plight of an Aboriginal man. The performance seems to be an act of atonement for the violent attitudes of racism that prevailed in the years of his childhood. By placing his body in the position of a tortured Aboriginal man Unsworth may not only be bodily identifying with the victim but also testing the level of pain associated with such a position. Whether this semi-conscious depiction in the *Fifth Setting* constitutes saying ‘sorry’ is unclear. However, it does suggest that the artist could be carrying such a deeply embedded sense of guilt that he feels responsible for another’s suffering and may be carrying the burden typically retained by witnesses of torture. If, as a child, he was deliberately made to feel responsible for another’s pain, even made to think that he was personally required to condemn an Aboriginal person (as will be discussed in the following chapter) then the burden is even greater. Here then, both the artist and the Aboriginal person depicted form the ‘living’ keystone, as the 1988 educational video suggests, that maintains the order of civilisation, and the violence in these images once again confirms René Girard’s thesis that violence is the true subject of the sacred.

In *The Body as Object* (1983) Unsworth enacts a drawing produced a year earlier, *The Ecstasy of Dreams*. (Fig. 121) The drawing suggests that the body has been skewered and that the ‘ecstasy’ in the title relates to the body’s natural defence mechanism of an ecstatic dissociated state when the pain of torture is overwhelming. Here we are reminded of Georges Bataille’s photographic essay *The Tears of Eros* in which tortured victims are

⁹⁴ Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre*, 26.

displayed with ecstatic expressions on their faces.⁹⁵ As discussed earlier, it is likely that this image represents an ‘instruction’ of what will happen to the initiate if he transgresses any of the rules being imparted. As Turner notes the subjunctive mood is one of the noted features of initiation. The initiate is exposed to the realm of possibility, the ‘as if’ state where anything can happen.⁹⁶ Based on witnessing tortures which may or may not have been theatrically staged (and as far as the initiate is concerned their truth or trickery is irrelevant) the young initiate is fully indoctrinated through abject fear into compliance.

Unsworth’s performances appear to depict his attempt to get inside the experience of victims of torture. By using his body to depict these atrocities the gesture can become both a means of connecting with repressed material as well as an act of atonement. However, because the subject, it seems, is never brought to full consciousness the artist cannot complete the gesture and therefore has to endlessly re-enact it, either in performance or in installation. As discussed in Chapter One, repetition is one of the key attributes associated with repressed traumatic experience. Thus, while the subject remains repressed redemption is not an option. The process thus becomes one of endless mourning. In 2001 Unsworth’s artist’s statement spoke of ‘unfruitful melancholy’ and ‘guilt’:

The nervousness and temperature of the encryptor of the message is palpable. Inside the straw-deserted domicile of glass, unfruitful melancholy grinds down every particle of thought, once pulsing columns of bodily fluid glaciare in the grip of wintered guilt, floras bound limbs already turning ashen into dusty moondust, the sun-bursted yearning fruit overtaken by rank malady yields fruit of sullen leaden stone, whilst Sammael, in his tabernacle in-between time, dreams down into eternal dream.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Georges Bataille, The Tears of Eros, translated by Peter Connor (1961; San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1989) 204 – 205.

⁹⁶ Turner, Blazing the Trail. Turner discusses this in depth in chapter seven, “Morality and Liminality”.

⁹⁷ National Sculpture Prize and Exhibition 2001, exhibition catalogue (Canberra: National Gallery of Australia, 2001) 89.

Unsworth's 'in-between time' seems to correlate with Turner's liminal period. For an individual who has not been properly released from an initiation ritual this state is always present, never-ending, producing a state of 'nervousness and temperature' similar to that experienced by those diagnosed with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Eternally present is the guilt that the initiate was made to feel, that in some way he was responsible for the sacrifice of others.

Most of Unsworth's performances tend to be angst-ridden and dark. However, his sculptural installations, disregarding the deeply embedded subject matter just discussed, can be playful, ingenious, and even humorous. Unsworth comments on this element himself in the artist's statement for his 1998 exhibition. "Welcome ... Welcome ... to the 'Zoozany' intermittently revolving travelling theatre of life. Roar with merriment at its improbabilities, its haphazard conundrums."⁹⁸ Many aspects of initiation can be perceived as 'humorous', a trick or a joke. In Masonic terms the initiate is 'hoodwinked'. Such 'practical joking', the trickster's role, is at the heart of traditional rites and at some later point the elements of the trick are revealed, allowing a resettling of information in the mind of the now entered apprentice. As Turner suggests, one of the by-products of the liminal state is the ludic, in which the mind is thrust into a state of associative thinking. "Liminality is the realm of primitive hypothesis, where there is a certain freedom to juggle with the factors of existence," he says.⁹⁹ This playful, free-association can lead to the capacity for ingenuity, novelty, and fresh ways of seeing the world. The absurd also falls into this category. Unsworth's work is filled with many examples of playful thinking. The relationship between the dark process of initiation and the light of imagination are clearly demonstrated in Unsworth's life-long artistic career. One of his artist statements confirms this perspective:

The artist, and I am thinking about the true artist, by which I mean, one whose imprint with the passage of time, is as clearly relevant as it ever was, accommodates insight, wit, magic, humanity, humour, and the use of

⁹⁸ Ken Unsworth (1998) 23.

⁹⁹ Turner, *Betwixt and Between* 15.

invention in novel, clarifying and unsettling ways consistent with and responsive to the illnesses, the issues and the imperatives of the times. The artist is both shaped by, and shapes the cultural and political landscape that we inhabit.¹⁰⁰

The Freemasons, amongst other fraternal organizations, have remained the guardians of an ancient practice of initiation that may have once provided one of the most important survival mechanisms for the human race. Human beings have no natural defence mechanisms. It is only the capacity for imagination that has enabled humans to survive and flourish. By promoting a state of mind through the process of initiation, that is, through experiences of profound shock and terror, a liminal state is produced which, as Turner argues, is a state of free association, a 'ludic' state of free play. It is arguably this state that has enabled humans to make new and previously unimaginable connections promoting survival and progress. Birth in itself is a shock that, according to this logic, creates a period of rapid learning. 'Rebirth' and an equivalent shock may also produce rapid learning and the ability to see newly and freshly. The artist/inventor is thus the symbol of a culture in renewal. However, in the light of contemporary moral values, this process raises many ethical questions, not the least the 'collateral damage' done to those who cannot cope with the side effects of the massive trauma, guilt and melancholy produced.

In the realm of contemporary art the traces of similarly brutal initiatory practices may well be ubiquitous. Shock, after all, has become the hallmark of modern and contemporary art and may suggest that some artists shock because they have themselves been shocked. It may be that they are attempting to wake themselves up from their dream as well as to awaken their audience. The abuse of the ritual process, not only the nature of the shocks, but the fact that the initiates are not properly re-incorporated, creates a vastly different result to the shared experience of *communitas* that Turner discusses. Instead, for the artist who has lived through such an experience there can be a profound level of isolation,

¹⁰⁰ Unsworth, artist statement, Biennale of Sydney June-August 2004
<http://www.biennaleofsydney.com.au/biennale2002/education.asp#8>
Accessed 3rd May 2004.

perhaps the sense of isolation that Unsworth refers to when he talks of not being able to share these dark, unutterable things with even the closest of lovers.

Conclusion

The above analysis of Ken Unsworth's work suggests that, through an application of anthropological theories to the analysis of contemporary art, we may begin to see the inner workings of our own culture more clearly. In the light of the initiatory tradition, Unsworth's work reveals many traces that suggest that the artist may have been exposed to abusive initiation rites in childhood. The Masonic Order has been a part of the Establishment in Australia since its early days. As an expression of the deepest values of a patriarchal, indeed a warrior society, its secret initiatory rites conducted in regular practices on willing members may possibly have a constructive role in society. However, if they are conducted irregularly as "a course of severe and arduous trials" for children their role becomes much more sinister.¹⁰¹ Such initiatory indoctrination, as the previous discussion has discussed, can include powerful messages concerning gender roles and codes of behaviour, a characteristic of the initiatory tradition across cultures. In the context of the racial tensions and parochialism of rural Victoria in the 1930s and '40s such cult-like practices may have also been directed towards the indoctrination of white children, ensuring that they maintain a distance from Aboriginal people in order to prevent future racial 'impurity'.

In tribal societies, Turner argued, the humbling and submission to the ordeal of initiation goes with the entrance into elitehood.¹⁰² Through the consistent pursuit of his artistic vision Ken Unsworth has attained an elite status in contemporary Australian art. He was the first artist to receive an Australian Creative Fellowship and in the same year to become a Member of the Order of Australia.¹⁰³ Such official acknowledgement, along with the broader popularity and appeal of his work, suggests a collective response to the work's

¹⁰¹ Albert G Mackey, The Symbolism of Freemasonry: Illustrating and Explaining its Science and Philosophy, its Legends, Myths and Symbols (Chicago: Charles T. Pownor Co, 1955) 34.

¹⁰² Turner, Blazing the Trail, 51.

¹⁰³ Michael Wardell, "Ken Unsworth. Biographical Notes", Ken Unsworth (1998) 9.

capacity to express meaningful, though not necessarily easily articulated, aspects of Australian culture. The above discussion, however, suggests that some of these aspects, once articulated, may be dark indeed. It suggests that what we may be seeing in Ken Unsworth's work may be evidence of one of the more brutal aspects of the Western patriarchal tradition, the 'theatrical theology' to which Lyotard refers, that seems to have remained largely covert for centuries.¹⁰⁴

The fact that Unsworth has spent his career repeating what appears to be a set of terrifying scenarios suggests the profound impact such cruel practices can have on an individual's inner life. However, by making art, rather than tormenting others, he seems to have leapt far beyond the immoral and cruel cult-based games to which Lyotard refers, that appear to have been conducted by much more brutal individuals than himself. The toll on him, though, seems to have been enormous. In a poem written in 1997 he says:

Eyes forever inwardly turning
never see so much of what was dreamt
in hard-cold reality.
This room, this station with no present
and a nameless past,
its voice too forever stilled
has given up waiting
to join in once ceaseless games.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Jean-François Lyotard, Toward the Postmodern edited by Robert Harvey and Mark S. Roberts (New Jersey, London: Humanities Press, 1993) 92.

¹⁰⁵ Ken Unsworth (1998) 41. Poem by Unsworth, 1997.

CHAPTER SIX

INCEST AND INITIATION. POST-WAR FREEMASONRY AND THE PLIGHT OF THE MASON'S DAUGHTER

Adam and Methuselah lived so many centuries. At that time it was the custom to marry in the family, as close as possible, so that the tie of blood could be as strong as possible. Then the blood that coursed through the veins of the people in that family contained the pictures of all that had happened to the different ancestors; these were stored in the mind which is now subconscious. They were then consciously and constantly before the inner vision of all people, and each family was united by this common blood wherein the pictures of their ancestors lived. The sons saw the life of their fathers, and thus the fathers lived in the sons; and since the consciousness of Adam and Methuselah and the other patriarchs lived for centuries in their descendents, they were said to live personally ... It was then a great crime to marry outside the family as it is now to marry within.

Max Heindel, *Freemasonry and Catholicism*, 1918.¹

This chapter will address the particular experience of the Mason's daughter *via* a self-reflective analysis of my own artwork and artistic practice. It will provide an insight into the ways in which traumatic material can be expressed in artwork from the point of view of an artist who has been able to make conscious connections through the recall of memories of trauma associated with incest and ritual abuse and having these memories validated by close family members. It will demonstrate that a body of artwork produced throughout an artistic career can reveal many elements associated with repressed experience and that these elements, taken together, can act as evidence or traces of psychic trauma. I shall begin by contextualising the discussion in historical terms in relation to the presence of Freemasonry in Australia in the period after World War II and the experience of being raised in a Masonic family in Sydney, drawing on publicly available material. I shall then move to a more subjectively informed account of my art and the relationship I have discovered between my art and my personal experiences of childhood as a Mason's daughter.

¹ Max Heindel, Freemasonry and Catholicism, 1918. The Rosicrucian Fellowship, California.
http://www.rosicrucian.com/frc/frceng01.htm#Part_1

Much of the artwork I have made over my artistic career has been accompanied, during its production, by intense emotional states. Recently, these intense states have opened up into a range of painful childhood memories that involve a combination of both private incestuous experiences and those of frightening rituals amongst small groups of adults inside a Masonic Lodge and within other contexts. The analysis of the images, along with their accompanying memories, will reveal evidence of behaviours that are typically clannish in nature. This chapter will argue that, in the context of irregular Masonic practice, the continuance of ethnic magic traditions from Scottish, Irish and English roots have been maintained and passed on, embedded deeply into the psyches of Masonic children through pseudo-religious rituals and military-style hazing techniques. Despite outward laws and societal taboos, incest and the accompanying ritual practices discussed here mark the liminal region that Victor Turner describes as that deep structure beneath the surface structure of custom.² As Noblitt and Perskin argue, the association between multigenerational practices of an occult nature with incest and other behaviours typically taboo is noted in many societies.³ That the individuals concerned, both perpetrators and victims, tend to maintain a 'split' relationship to these practices and remain largely unconscious of them is one of the most fascinating but perhaps understandable aspects of this subject.

Freemasonry in post-war Australia

In the decade after World War II Freemasonry saw unprecedented growth in its membership in Australia, matching this growth in other western nations, primarily due to the initiation of a large cohort of ex-servicemen.⁴ In 1947 the population of New South

² Victor Turner, From Ritual to Theatre. The Human Seriousness of Play (New York: PAJ Publications, 1982) 42.

³ James Randall Noblitt and Pamela Sue Perskin, Cult and Ritual Abuse. Its History, Anthropology, and Recent Discovery in America (Westport, London: Praeger, 1995) 82.

⁴ M.H. Kellerman, From Diamond Jubilee to Centenary. History of Forty Years of the United Grand Lodge of Freemasonry in New South Wales, Volume IV. (Sydney: The United Grand Lodge of New South Wales of Ancient Free and Accepted Masons, 1990) 242.

Wales was approximately three million and according to census figures 99.5% were British.⁵ The United Grand Lodge of Freemasonry was an entirely British institution. During the war, in 1943, its New South Wales membership was around 63,000 but had jumped to 100,000 by 1948, and peaked in 1958 at 135,000. From there, there was a steady decline to around 50,000 in 1988.⁶ The figures suggested a uniquely post-war phenomenon that was part of a global pattern.⁷

Freemasonry had also played a significant role in Australian civil society prior to World War II, as the chapter on Ken Unsworth has mentioned. Although the membership was not nearly so high, its members were often leading figures within the community. Kent Henderson's history of Australian Grand Masters suggests that there has been a custom of appointing Governors and Governors-General who were simultaneously Grand Masters of one or other of the state Grand Lodges. This history reveals that High Court judges, key members of the medical and legal fraternity, bankers and high level businessmen were simultaneously Masonic leaders.⁸ For ex-servicemen returning from the front, the high status of the organization, coupled with the rituals that offered a deeply spiritual acknowledgement of their ordeal, as well as generous and practical fraternal support for their new lives, must have been one of the more positive aspects of their home-coming. In their solemn pledge towards this organization many men must have felt a deep sense of gratitude for its practical assistance towards their social and psychological survival, which the morbid oaths they repeated appeared to embody.

⁵ K, Davison, Deputy Commonwealth Statistician, Official Yearbook of New South Wales No. 56, 1959: 55, 93.

⁶ Kellerman 241 - 248.

⁷ According to Mervyn Jones, who wrote in 1967, the most remarkable fact about Freemasonry was that it continued to flourish where other secret societies had disappeared. He quoted statistics of the time as 750,000 Freemasons in Britain, 4,000,000 in the U.S. and a million more in the rest of the world. Quoted in Secret Societies, edited by Norman MacKenzie (London: Aldus Books, 1967) 152. A similar pattern of a post-war boom in membership of Masonic Orders also occurred in the United States after the American Civil War. See Hugh B. Urban, "The Adornment of Silence, Secrecy and Symbolic Power in American Freemasonry", Journal of Religion and Society, Vol. 3 (2001): 22.
<http://moses.creighton.edu/JRS/2001/2001-2.html>
Accessed 25th January 2005.

⁸ Kent Henderson, The Masonic Grand Masters of Australia (Bayswater: Ian Drakeford Publishing, 1988).

The growth of Freemasonry after the war was interpreted by its members to signify order reinstated after a period of massive disorder. From the organisers' perspective it reflected a post-war spirit of idealism and the concept of the Brotherhood of Man.⁹ M.H. Kellerman, a member of the Royal Australian Historical Society and Past Deputy Grand Master of the Sydney Lodge has written an account of the Order's history in New South Wales in the forty year period from 1948 and asserts the high principles of the Order: "[t]he spirit of masonry has inspired men in all ages in their struggle against the forces of evil. Freemasonry seeks the attainment of one of its aims, the Brotherhood of Men, by breaking down the barriers of intolerance, hatred, prejudice and self-interest, by the application of Masonic ideals and practices, the application in daily life of Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth."¹⁰

In an era of high church attendance the Masonic Order was perceived as providing a socially sanctioned male-only environment in which husbands could enjoy evenings away from their wives. However, unlike the more transparent workings of the Church, the Masonic Order existed in many families as a mysterious presence about which questions should never be asked. For the men who had returned from war it provided a secluded environment in which to re-enact the mateship bond and a network of associates in the burgeoning post-war business world. It also provided a context for the traditional enactment of initiation practices that were similar in form to those of male-only secret societies in many archaic warrior cultures. These practices affirmed the experience of the sacred as the group's engagement with the reality of death and arguably, in the post-war era, provided a symbolic context through which members could channel some of the more emotionally traumatic effects of the experience of war.

The pomp and ceremony of Freemasonry's public rituals signified a return to the 'natural' order in which husbands were clearly in charge and superior in status to their wives. However, the values it embodied were those that by today's standards would not been

⁹ Kellerman 243.

¹⁰ Kellerman xxiv.

perceived as particularly honourable. Misogyny was, and still is, a central feature of this organization, particularly in the British institution that to this day is a men-only organization. As long as the wives knew their place and did not interfere or pry into their husbands' 'doings' all was well. Mircea Eliade observes that misogynistic attitudes are fundamental to traditional patriarchal initiation practices where denigration of the mother plays a key part in the initiation ordeal.¹¹ These attitudes reflect the reciprocal envy by men of women's mysteries and *vice versa* that is a common pattern in archaic societies. In male secret societies, he argues, the birth symbolism, such as the *vesica piscis* worn on the Grand Masters' aprons, is an example of the appropriation of female symbolism in response to this envy. It denotes the Grand Master's capacity to 'rebirth' the initiates into the patriarchal context where toughness, the ability to dissociate from pain and the capacity to suffer humiliation are the marks of survival in a warrior culture. That the men were enacting these 'mysteries' behind the closed walls of the Lodge would have been unknown to the majority of the families concerned, due to the extreme secrecy maintained within the Order at this time.

The inherent secrecy surrounding the Lodge and its activities meant that it was a site that could be vulnerable to abuse. As Chapter Two has discussed, 'irregular' practices of Masonic ritual, where the rituals do not follow the strict guidelines imposed by Grand Lodge, while not appearing in any official histories of the Order, have been recorded as appearing in Australian culture. One such example is the occult variation Ordo Templi Orientis, still under the Masonic historical umbrella and based on the Continental variations, but not sanctioned by Grand Lodge.¹² In 1915, Ernest W.T. Dunn was appointed as Acting Viceroy for the Australian branch.¹³ The OTO hardly fitted the ideal of

¹¹ Mircea Eliade, Rites and Symbols of Initiation: The Mysteries of Birth and Rebirth (Woodstock, Connecticut: Spring Publications, 1995) 80.

¹² Martin P. Starr, "Aleister Crowley: Freemason!" Ars Quatuor Coronatorum, Vol. 108, 1995: 150. Starr, a member of Freemasonry, denies that Crowley was ever associated with the Masonic Order, but only with unrecognised and irregular bodies. The OTO, he says, is a non-Masonic esoteric society now largely identified with Crowley's work.

¹³ The Order was first discussed as a concept in 1895 by Carl Kellner and was to be organized along Masonic lines, based on the Memphis and Mizraim Rites. Both men and women were to be admitted but possession of the various degrees of Craft and High-Grade Freemasonry would be a prerequisite for admission to the Inner Circle of the OTO. Clearly,

brotherhood outlined by Kellerman. It was founded in Britain by Aleister Crowley, who named himself Baphomet, the epitome of evil.¹⁴ Theodor Reuss, a German Freemason, had appointed Crowley to this role. As Tim Tate suggests, “[i]t was a fateful decision: the OTO is today the most widely spread of all international satanic organizations.”¹⁵ The OTO’s rites include bizarre sexual practices developed by Crowley and incorporate references to child sacrifice.¹⁶ The Order is still operative in New South Wales as its website attests and is comprised of the Oceana Lodge at Enmore, the Serpente et Astrum Oasis in Toongabbie and Darkwood Oasis in Bellingen.¹⁷ The rites involve drug use and are attended not only by men but also women and children.¹⁸ The reason that this material is mentioned is that some of the artworks I have produced bear a striking resemblance to the descriptions in these rites, suggesting that the organization to which my father belonged may have been incorporating these rites into their covert ritual practices. As there is apparently no formal link between the OTO and the Freemasons, it was likely that there was a pool of standard occult ritual, loosely interpreted, that bled from one institution to another.

there is a perceptual difference between members of the OTO and traditional Freemasons as to how ‘Masonic’ the OTO was.

Sabazius X° and AMT IX°, History of the Ordo Templi Orientis

<http://www.otoaustralia.org.au/library.php?docid=38>

Accessed 8th April 2004

¹⁴ Colin Wilson, Aleister Crowley. The Nature of the Beast (London: Aquarian/ Thorsons, 1987). Crowley was involved in literary and artistic circles in Europe as well as occult groups like the Golden Dawn and Masonic groups. He became friends with W.B. Yeats who also belonged to the Golden Dawn and with the artists Auguste Rodin and Gerald Kelly, a painter who became the president of the Royal Academy. Crowley made ‘Elixir of Life’ pills, the chief ingredient of which was his own semen.

¹⁵ Tim Tate, Children for the Devil: Ritual Abuse and Satanic Crime (London: Methuen, 1991) 96.

¹⁶ Wilson 147.

¹⁷ OTO Australia Homepage

<http://www.otoaustralia.org.au/>

Accessed 8th April 2004

¹⁸ Crowley’s attitude to women was certainly not democratic, however. He regarded the female only as a necessary receptacle, the temple for the man’s path to enlightenment, and practised hypnotism on women. Wilson 158.

Incest and the Mason's Daughter

While the men's war trauma may have been partly accommodated through Masonic rituals, repressed trauma can be a powerful force that formal rituals do not necessarily resolve. One of the ways in which trauma can be re-enacted across generations is through incest. While there are few figures on incest, one study had suggested that it had declined during the war years, but increased within the post-war period.¹⁹ This may be simply due to the subject of access, but it may also have relevance to this discussion.

The oral rape of a child, for example, conducted quietly in the family home, can take place in a matter of minutes leaving no external scars, but changing the inner life of the child completely. In such an act the child, through shock and trauma, confronts his or her own death and through dissociation may totally forget the experience until much later in her adult years. If the perpetrator is her father, the consequences, as we know, are massive; many women have carried the burden of their father's pain in their psyches for most of their lives. But what is different if her father is an initiated man? The concept of taboo, as Mary Hamer notes, is not that a practice is outlawed altogether, but that it is "set apart for or consecrated to a special use or purpose; restricted to the use of a god, a king, priests or chiefs, while forbidden to general use ..."²⁰ The initiated man who has entered the realm of the sacred through war may well be categorised as similarly 'set apart'.

In a discussion of war and the sacred Georges Bataille had equated the breaking of the taboo on killing in wartime with the breaking of the taboo on incest during ritual orgy in peacetime: both provide an entrance into the 'sacred', that is, the liminal state.²¹ Bataille

¹⁹ Mardie O'Sullivan, "The Historiography of Incest" in Incest and the Community: Australian Perspectives, edited by Penelope Hetherington (Perth: Optima Press, 1991) 3, 6.

²⁰ Mary Hamer, Incest: A New Perspective (Cambridge: Polity, 2002) 31.

²¹ Georges Bataille, The Absence of Myth: Writings on Surrealism edited, translated, and introduced by Michael Richardson (London, New York: Verso, c1994) 121. Georges Bataille was part of a group of scholars, including Michel Leiris, Roger Caillois and Pierre Klossowski, who formed the College of Sociology. At the time Georges Bataille also formed a secret society which Leiris and Caillois declined to join. The theme of secret societies permeates the discussions held by the College. See Michel Leiris, "The Sacred in Everyday Life" in The College of Sociology 1937 – 1939 edited by Denis Hollier (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988) 25 – 26.

argues that marriage encourages “suffocating sexual anguish” that needs to be released by orgies as “rites of contagious magic aimed at fertilizing the ground” and endorses the workingman’s need for contact with the sacred through these primitive rituals.²² He adds:

The rules were dissolved in a vast movement of animal fury; the prohibitions that one ordinarily respected in terror were suddenly ineffectual. Monstrous couplings were formed, and there was no longer anything that wasn’t an occasion for offensive behaviour. These hyper-agitated men panted after the very things that usually terrified them. They revelled in a fear whose object was their dreadful license, a license that fear made exhilarating.²³

A story quoted by Baudrillard depicts the act of incest as an entry into the liminal state that is shared by both the father and daughter. The process includes a mutual ‘splitting’ or dissociation process in which father and daughter “are levitated in the bedchamber ... fly out through a window and proceed to float above the surrounding countryside, petrified in their never-ending embrace.”²⁴ The breaking of a taboo, as Freud notes, can be accompanied by amnesia.²⁵ As Baudrillard suggests, and depending on the makeup of the individuals concerned, this amnesia can be shared by both parties.²⁶ Feminists have long argued that rape is a form of initiation into the patriarchy. In the act of incest, in particular a brutal form such as the oral rape of a small child, the child is exposed to all the same principles: the confrontation with death, the experience of complete dissociation and fragmentation, the humiliation, the sense that the familiar world of the home, that is the maternal realm, is not to be trusted and so on. In other words, the child is taught the classic

²² Bataille (1991) 76.

²³ Bataille (1991) 129.

²⁴ Jean Baudrillard, The Transparency of Evil. Essays on Extreme Phenomena, translated by James Benedict (London, New York: Verso, 1993) 22.

²⁵ Sigmund Freud, Totem and Taboo (New York: Penguin, 1940) 52.

²⁶ As Jill Bennett notes, perpetrators who have themselves been abused in childhood often identify as passive victims along with the children they abuse, and their acts of abuse are partly intended to draw attention to their own victimhood. For a perpetrator who has remained amnesic to his own experience of child sexual abuse, then the act of incest may be an unconscious attempt to expose his own memories both to himself and others. Jill Bennett, Dennis Del Favero. Fantasm (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2004) 80.

lessons of initiation in one simple act: that there is a deeper structure that contradicts the accepted moral order of the profane world.

Veronica Brady has suggested that there may be an economic value in incest.²⁷ In the post-war context this may be the case. The transaction between the child's innocence and the parent's knowledge of death becomes an exchange, in which the child becomes a reservoir for the adult's repressed pain, in return for his temporary relief from traumatic stress. For the Masonic father it could be seen as a privately enacted ritual. As Turner notes, even meek, law-abiding people are obliged to act in a disorderly manner in key tribal rituals, regardless of their temperament and character.²⁸ This repression of collective grief into the liminal space *via* the bodies and psyches of the children then becomes a social enactment of the rite of Saturn, where the child's more resilient psyche can accommodate the pain of their fathers, thus freeing the adults to go about the tasks of rebuilding the society through work and other orderly processes.

If the father is a Masonic initiate the symbolism of this act can be accommodated within the mythology of the Order. The tradition of the Laying of the Foundation Stone, for example, was once the site of a barbaric practice in which the architect, apprentice, or even a child, was crushed under the stone to ensure the magical protection of the building. In the act of rape a small child is placed in a similar context under the body of an adult male. The complex relationship that occurs in this shared liminal space involves an exchange between the 'carnal' knowledge of the adult, that is the knowledge not only of sexuality but also of the reality of death, and the innocence of the child. The child, through this near-death experience, thus takes on the role, in Bataille's terms, of the 'accursed share' and the adult in this ritual is placed in a state mimicking that of spiritual elevation. The child retains this role forever afterwards. As the Lewis, she becomes the tool by which the adult enters the realms of the sacred, the whole process reenacting the ancient foundation sacrifice in sexual, cross-generational and familial terms. Such bonding, on a psychic level, may

²⁷ Veronica Brady, "The Men Who Loved Children" in Incest and Community: Australian Perspectives edited by Penelope Hetherington (University of Western Australia, 1991) 94.

²⁸ Victor Turner, From Ritual to Theatre. The Human Seriousness of Play (New York: PAJ Publications, 1982) 43.

arguably provide the sort of group cohesion that Max Heindel's comment at the beginning of this chapter suggests.

My own Masonic Background

My father was not atypical of the men who returned from World War Two to start families and small businesses in the newly prosperous suburban climate of Sydney in the late 1940s. He returned from service a war hero, having joined (under age) the Royal Australian Air Force. He had become a pilot of a Lancashire Bomber and was shot down over Holland where he was taken to a prisoner of war camp. He escaped through the Underground and eventually returned to Britain where he met the woman who was to be my mother, one of the wives of his crew. As captain, he had to inform her of her husband's death. Within a short period of time they were married; he returned to Australia and she followed him on a bride ship several months later.²⁹ The stories passed down to the children were quite charming, but concealed much hidden pain. In 1993 I tried to illustrate this pain as well as an eerie sense of foreboding in an exhibition of work entitled *Reflections of a Baby Boomer*, in which the figures of my family are formed into furniture.³⁰

Very soon after establishing the family my father joined the Masonic Lodge. He was a toolmaker and set about establishing a small business with his brothers. The Masonic Order was, and still is renowned for its support for its members in the business realm.³¹ As a toolmaker his occupation fitted neatly within the mythological framework of the Masonic

²⁹ My mother had always told me that the courtship was a whirlwind affair, and I had assumed this was a matter of months or even weeks. But in January 2005 they both admitted that it was even shorter. It was, in fact, one week. They went on one date to the movies and then my father proposed. It was just after the war had ended and my father was told that he would have to return to Australia and decided he didn't want to leave without this young woman. She accepted, "after thinking about it for ten minutes". They have been together for nearly sixty years.

³⁰ Lynn Brunet, Reflections of a Baby Boomer, Long Gallery, University of Wollongong, 1993.

³¹ In the 1980s Martin Short had investigated the Order in London from a journalistic perspective. He told of its tight grip on business there and added "[t]he Masonic hold on Australia is far worse than here – no lodge, no business." Martin Short, Inside the Brotherhood (London: Grafton Books, 1989) 20.

Order. Tubal-Cain is one of the key biblical figures of the Order and as “an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron” was known in the Lodge as the father of tool engineers and tool engineering education.³² My father’s involvement with Freemasonry led him over the years to join both the Blue Lodge and the Red Lodge in our local area. This meant weekly or sometimes twice weekly attendances at Lodge as well as Lodge dinners, Christmas parties and other events that included the families. Now in his early eighties he still attends regularly.

By the time I was a teenager my father had also joined the Rosicrucian Order and when my elder sister became an adult she joined as well.³³ The family became a centre for discussions of matters ‘mystical’, experiments in group hypnosis, of soirées with other Rosicrucians, and a general interest in ‘enlightened’ pursuits of this kind. My father made much of ‘seeing the light’ through a single transformational mystical experience and spent many years trying to regain the sensation by all manner of means including building a lead-lined flotation tank in our backyard. He also preached his beliefs to us on a regular basis, but nevertheless held to a secret that we could never know. These one-sided discussions of mystical truth were always delivered to us individually and were accompanied by the exhortation to regard solitude as one of the most important values. This tantalising display of secret knowledge is discussed by Martin Short as one of the characteristic behaviours of Masons towards their families.³⁴

My own response was one of deep resentment for the superiority of his enlightenment, but as a young person I was never able to explain to myself why I felt this. He had always seemed a gentle man, but I always felt, vaguely and inexplicably, that he had used me for his own spiritual gain. The result was a resistance to joining the Rosicrucians until I was in my late twenties, when I joined as a correspondence student. The first time I visited the

³² Kellerman xcii, Appendix VII. Genesis 4:22. “Tubal Cain was the son of Lamech, the son of Methuselah, his mother was Zillah and half brothers were Jubal and Jabal.”

³³ Rosicrucian Order AMORC homepage

Ancient Mystical Order Rosae Crucis

<http://www.amorc.org/>

Accessed: 8th April 2004

³⁴ Short 88.

Temple in Redfern, however, I had a terrifying sense of foreboding and withdrew from the Order. As the years passed and I recalled my father's sexual abuse of me as a young child, the feelings seemed to be explained.

As I was to discover, sexual abuse and incest were woven through the family history for at least three generations. My mother's childhood years were spent in the military context of the British Army as her musical father held the position of concertmaster for his regiment. Early abuse experiences occurred for her while she was in Ceylon, which remained repressed until she was in her forties. My father too, had experienced childhood sexual abuse when he was raped by a Catholic priest at the age of eight. There were also incestuous relationships within his family. His embrace of Freemasonry may have partly represented a rejection of the Catholic Church. Given the animosity between Freemasonry and Catholicism at the time, his shift in allegiances, he said, would have horrified his father.

However, the freedom of thought that accompanied his Masonic and Rosicrucian involvement allowed an intellectual development that had not been available to him as a workingman whose education had been cut short by the Depression. Part of this development involved a keen interest in Jungian dream analysis which he was to apply to my mother over a ten-year period to enable her to face the sources of her own depression. I always felt extraordinarily proud of this courageous act, a dedication on both sides that gradually drew the two together after many years of increasing isolation. Once my mother's health had improved though, he was unable to apply the approach to his own needs and struggled for years trying to connect to the source of his own inner turmoil. From the outside the family appeared like any other, but the accrued weight of this inner family history, of trauma and its accompanying tension, was a heavy burden for each generation to carry. My father would be the first to attempt to uncover at least one of its layers. His involvement in the Masonic Order, however, while certainly catering for some of this pain, may instead have added even more to the burden for the following generations.

In recent years, as the riddles of my own experience have been answered, I attempted to talk to them both about what I was remembering. Thankfully, for my sake, my mother was able to remember the night when my father had raped me at the age of four and acknowledged, finally, her daughter's experience. The ritual abuse, however, was beyond the comprehension of them both, which is in many ways understandable. However, in mid 2004 my father became ill with the onset of Alzheimer's disease. In the initial crisis period, and in an altered state of consciousness, he began to talk to me about the dark side of his Masonic involvement and confessed that he was aware of a range of cults that used Masonic ritual in abusive contexts to initiate children. He stated that, "there are many of these groups. A lot of people know about them, but don't speak about it because it is embarrassing." He alternated between coherent discussions with me of his and other men's involvement with these groups and nightly 'escapes' from the nursing home where he would climb trees in a military-style mission in order, he believed, to observe the cult activities so as to "get the children out of the cult". This strategically organized mission lasted for about two weeks until he believed he had retrieved every one of the children, after which he appeared to be very satisfied with his accomplishment and all signs of his turmoil abated. One of the nurses reported that in one of his 'escapes' she had never seen a man run so fast.³⁵ The memories of these irregular Masonic practices had clearly been allocated to another part of his psyche not normally available to consciousness and had perhaps become interwoven with his war experiences. It is possible, that by raising the issue I had plunged my father into an internal conflict, as his mental demise did seem to begin after the date of my confrontation with him. However, his brief period of honesty with me has undoubtedly contributed towards a mutual healing process. This confession,

³⁵ As John Matthews notes, the Druids were dreaded for their necromantic powers, in particular, their capacity to induce fits of madness, called *baile* or *buile*. He states "... there was a most curious belief that during paroxysms a madman's body became as light as air, so that, as he ran distractedly, he scarcely touched the ground, or he rose into the air, still speeding on with a sort of fluttering motion. This was especially the case when madness was produced by the rage of battle ..." Matthews comments that these accounts are recorded in nearly all of the great battles fought in Ireland and were known as 'Sweeney's frenzy or madness' after a particular young warrior, Suibne or Sweeney. My father's name is McSweeney and the clan was famous for its gallowglasses or mercenaries. John Matthews (ed.), The Druid's Source Book. From Earliest Times to the Present Day (London: Bladford, 1996) 45 – 46.

combined with the accrued knowledge I have gained of the Order, have redirected my focus so that it is no longer based on anger towards the man himself. Instead, I am driven now to understand the principles behind these age-old ‘magical’ practices, which split the psyches of individual men in two: on the one hand, dutiful citizens and family men, and on the other puerile, senseless and cruel creatures at the baser end of the human spectrum.

The confrontation with my parents was only one part of the overall therapeutic process. As stated in the Introduction, this process began soon after I had experienced the shock of realization that my artwork was based on Masonic themes. I began to see a therapist in the year 2000 who worked with victims of ritual abuse. Perhaps due to my own lack of trust and a desire to maintain control, I visited this therapist only on three occasions where she gave me a set of very useful strategies to deal with these frightening impressions. One year prior to *The Mason’s Daughter* exhibition the memory of my father raping me appeared to open the floodgates to the others; the rest of the memories followed after 1999 with the greatest number surfacing throughout 2001 and then occasionally appearing until 2006. As I was to discover the ritual abuse experiences happened on the average once a year throughout my entire childhood up until the age of fifteen. Some years there were two or three events.

The process of anamnesis involved an active visualisation method accompanied by a specific technique of writing with the non-dominant hand. When disturbing bodily sensations and states of fear would arise, I would visualise myself as a child and ‘answer’ the questions I had posed by writing with my left hand. It also involved drawing sketches with my left hand. This method of using the non-dominant hand for memory retrieval developed in the United States in the context of ‘inner child’ psychology and Transactional Analysis in the 1960s and then Recovered Memory work in the 1980s.³⁶ The use of the non-dominant hand is regarded as a means of accessing childhood emotional states and material that has been cordoned off from adult consciousness. Such strategies also fall into the category of what Suzette Henke terms ‘scriptotherapy’ or ‘testimonial life writing’ that

³⁶ See for example, Lucia Capacchione, Recovery of Your Inner Child: The Highly Acclaimed Method for Liberating Your Inner Self (Fireside Books, 1991).

have been utilised by therapists, mental health workers and narratologists since the early 1990s.³⁷

While the therapist I had engaged was entirely supportive, I chose not to draw out the professional therapeutic process. While each memory involved very painful bodily sensations and acute feelings of terror, I became more and more confident, as I became familiar with the process, that I could access independently what had been repressed for so many decades. As such, the writing process on its own became the therapeutic vehicle allowing the transference of the painful memories to the page, a method that Henke regards as particularly relevant to women's experience.³⁸ This rather idiosyncratic method of self-analysis perhaps mitigated against claims by sceptics that those who have 'recovered memories' of ritual abuse have been brainwashed by therapists, although that was not my primary aim in maintaining a distance from therapy.³⁹ Initially this need for distance may have been due to the profound nature of the threats used to intimidate me as a child into silence. I was sometimes incapable of speaking of the trauma in anything other than a completely trusted environment (generally the supportive ear of a close female friend) and sometimes when I attempted to do so in other environments my speech was audibly affected and I appeared 'tongue-tied'.⁴⁰ I have maintained this practice of 'scriptotherapy' since the year 2000. The following material that emerged in relation to the interpretation of my artwork is only a minor proportion of the overall material recovered over the years.

In many respects the analysis of my artwork and its meaning is partly indebted to my father, despite his role as a perpetrator, for his determined attempts to try to unravel the confusion implanted in his own psyche. While the material may be deeply disturbing and

³⁷ Suzette Henke, *Shattered Subjects. Trauma and Testimony in Women's Life Writing* (London: MacMillan, 1998) xiii.

³⁸ Henke asks whether the analyst is really necessary and whether the therapeutic power of psychoanalysis may reside more within the experience of 'rememory' and reenactment rather than in the relationship between analyst and analysand. Henke xi.

³⁹ See Chapter One for a discussion of the Repressed Memory Debate.

⁴⁰ This sense of being tongue-tied improved once I had fully recovered a memory of having my tongue held in a clamp at the age of six while in front of me an ox tongue was cut into strips and then tied in a knot to impress upon me what would happen to my tongue if I spoke of the events.

shameful, the aim here is to expose it as a representation of a broader social practice that must be brought to light, if only to add something that may assist those who are still experiencing such horrors.

Art and Memories of Trauma

The memories that have surfaced since 1999 have completely altered the ways in which I have understood the artwork I have produced over the course of an artistic career. Until 1999, while producing the work, I was vaguely aware that traumatic themes were at the basis of my imagery but I was unaware of any details or explanations of specific traumas. For much of my career I would have described myself as an ‘intuitive’ artist, meaning that I was responding to drives from the unconscious and following its direction, rather than researching material and then producing artwork in response to this research. As the memories gradually surfaced I was to discover that some of the images I had produced were quite literal in their depiction of episodes, scenes, objects or people associated with the ritual abuse I later recalled, while others were based on bodily responses to traumatic physical sensations. The following analysis will explore the relationship between the work and my memories and demonstrate some of the ways in which my artwork reveals traces of trauma coupled with Masonic themes and elements associated with irregular Masonic practice.

The first hint that there was a strong Masonic presence in my own work did not emerge until 1999, as stated earlier, with a solo exhibition called *The Mason’s Daughter*. I had begun my art practice over twenty years earlier when I first studied at Julian Ashton’s art school in Sydney. As with most developing artists a meaningful personal style can take years as one learns the craft and it was not until 1989, when I had nearly completed an undergraduate degree that the first sense of a personal direction became clear. It began with what could be described as an artist’s block where, suddenly, after having made art consistently for over ten years I ‘forgot’ how to mix colours, and could not make a mark on the canvas. After several weeks the block was broken when in frustration I pretended that I was a child again and, using a pencil and chalk in my left hand and seated on the floor, I began to scribble. What emerged was a series of abstracted mouth forms: of mouths being

pushed and poked and vomiting, that became firstly a set of drawings and then monoprints and paintings. (*Fig. 122*) I had no idea what they meant, but the relief was enormous and I realized then that they were speaking of some trauma, of which I was then unaware. In terms of artistic practice, one of the most significant aspects of the process was to become a preoccupation with the aesthetic expression of 'bodily' memories. Realising the importance of the work as therapy and as a cathartic release for tension, I decided then to allow the work to follow its own inner directive, rather than harness it to the need for income. It was not for another decade before I was finally able to allow the associated memories to emerge in full. During that time the art had explored many subconscious images but their meaning was still largely inaccessible; that is, I was still not ready to let them speak to me.

The act of childhood oral rape, in itself, is enough to explain these first images of abstracted mouth forms, as well as the sense of betrayal that would lead to the dissociation and amnesia described by Jennifer Freyd. But in my own work there were many other images that did not seem to correlate with this form of traumatic experience. A pattern of working developed over the years where a body of work that was dark and disturbing was often followed by one that was more playful. From 1990 through to 1997 a series of playful images of large sculptural *papier maché* forms developed that underneath their surface frivolity embodied more serious concerns. (*Fig. 123*) I called this my *Christabella* series and it was figurative work depicting a jolly looking 'fat lady' in various poses, many of them floating. In many of the images she appears weightless, despite her size, like a floating balloon. Her hollow blown up form suggested a mask and substitute for real feeling. She came and went over a seven-year period.

Given the period when these images of Christabella were produced, that is, during the 1990s, it could be argued these jolly fat ladies were some form of essentialist feminist response to the ideal female figure or even a quirky 'goddess' figure celebrating female fecundity and a certain *joie de vivre*. However, at the time I was uneasy with such interpretations and preferred to make no commitment in this direction. In fact, I was always puzzled as to why this figure was so important to me as an artist for so many years, as my own feminist politics had never been associated with themes of body image or the

commercial representation of women's bodies and I had always felt uncomfortable with concepts of 'goddess' spirituality that had accompanied radical feminist politics. It wasn't until 2002 that a memory emerged to explain her significance.

One of the Christabella images depicts her standing on a plinth, wearing thongs on her feet, and with two small figures that she is pushing together in front of her crotch. (*Fig. 124*) She has wine glasses sitting on her head. This image appeared to be a reference to the last time I was involved in a situation of ritual abuse, at the age of fifteen. It was set at the Lodge on Ladies' Night. My task was to babysit a few children who were brought along by their parents. I was to keep them occupied in another part of the Lodge while the adults had their dinner. Later in the evening some of the men retired to one of the rooms leaving the rest of the men and the women chatting. In the room was a large, jovial, naked stripper and my job was to undress the children and to take them to her one by one. In front of the men she performed her silly act, rubbing the children's faces into her fanny to the great delight of the men. There was a lot of alcohol. The children were aged three to five and shivering, cold and frightened. I was clothed and apparently of no interest to the men now.

As Judith Herman argues, "[i]n organized sexual exploitation, full initiation of the child into the cult or sex ring requires participation in the abuse of others."⁴¹ Thus, like the children who carried the corpse in Barney's *Cremaster 3*, I was by now so implicated in their corruption (as the rest of the discussion will demonstrate) that I had no fight left. The many floating versions of Christabella I did during this period indicated the extent of my dissociation from and amnesia towards this event in my teenage years, an event that took thirty-four years to recall. Given the drunken laughter of the men and the stripper's apparent enjoyment of the situation, it seemed to have been imprinted onto my psyche in terms of its humour. However, the sense of shame associated with it and my complicity in other children's abuse had clearly contributed towards the unease I had felt in relation to these images of fat ladies I was obsessively producing.

⁴¹ Judith Lewis Herman, *Trauma and Recovery. From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (1992; London: Pandora, 1994) 104.

An exhibition entitled *Oh My God* in 1994 was comprised entirely of images of Christabella but it was also the first exhibition in which another strange form appeared.⁴² It was a three-dimensional plywood form built on a wooden frame in the shape that reminded me of a vaulting horse in a gym. It was a tapered form approximately one metre long and seventy-five centimetres wide at the bottom, and the same distance in height. It was painted to look like marble, like a prop in a theatre rather than an artwork in its own right.⁴³ It stood in the middle of the gallery with a gold ring attached to the top of the ‘stone’ and attached to this was a golden silk cord tied to the big toe of Christabella’s large sculpted foot placed in the ceiling of the gallery. It gave the impression that the heavy stone was an anchor preventing Christabella from completely floating away. I remember deriving great pleasure from being able to lift this ‘stone’ lightly along the corridor to the gallery. A two dimensional version had lilies, a symbol of death, emerging from it.

In November 2000 I was to discover a similar shape, of almost exactly the same proportions, in the museum in Sydney Grand Lodge.⁴⁴ It was a keystone, a central symbol in Royal Arch Masonry, known as the “root, heart, and marrow of Masonry”.⁴⁵ The keystone was present in the Masonic museum in a range of guises, in medallions and badges, images on floorcloths and, in roughly the same proportions as my own, but covered with felt, as a pin board for medals in a display case. It would appear that my interpretation of the stone as a plywood prop was probably a literal rendition of the original form I had seen. Given the need to use the suburban Lodges for a range of purposes, movable furniture, rather than heavy immovable fixtures, was more practical and plywood keystones would have been a convenient form in which to represent this central symbolic object.⁴⁶ The gold ring that I had attached to the top of the stone corresponded to the role of the *lewis*

⁴² Lynn Brunet, *Oh My God*, Long Gallery, University of Wollongong, 1994.

⁴³ It is interesting to note that I never bothered to photograph these forms that appeared in many of my exhibitions. At the time, they didn’t seem important, and I didn’t think of them as artworks.

⁴⁴ See the *Encyclopedia of Occultism and Parapsychology*, vol. 1, edited by Leslie A. Shepard (Detroit: Gale Research, 1984) 239 for a visual description of its shape.

⁴⁵ James Stevens Curl, *The Art and Architecture of Freemasonry* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1991) 244.

⁴⁶ This need to be able to pack up the ritual furniture was one of the original reasons for the development of floorcloths in the eighteenth century.

that appeared on the top of all the Masonic keystones.⁴⁷ I produced such a prop for several of my exhibitions. It is possible I was re-enacting the humour of a Freemason carrying this heavy ‘stone’ into the temple, which I may have seen, when I repeatedly carried it in and out of the gallery for these exhibitions. Such re-enactments suggest the repetitive bodily behaviours that can accompany repressed experience.

One of my sculptures of Christabella, created in 1994, depicted her in red negligée reclining on a red velvet lounge. (*Fig. 125*) In Aleister Crowley’s Rite of Saturn used in the OTO there is a passage referring to the Scarlet woman, possibly a reference to the Whore of Babylon. It states: “[l]et the Scarlet woman beware! – If she weakens and becomes compassionate – I will slay her child. I will alienate her heart. Let her be wicked, kill her heart, be loud and adulterous, let her be covered with jewels and shameless before all men.” She is called, “O azure-lidded woman.” Instructions are given about the colours and textures of the robes to be used in the ritual: “the cap of the crown should match the scarlet of the Robe, its texture should be velvet.”⁴⁸ My Christabella was a comical version of a ‘scarlet woman’ lying on a red velvet couch. I had painted her eyes as if with makeup to be ‘azure-lidded’ with particular pleasure. (*Fig. 126*) This image suggests that I was literally illustrating some of the elements from Crowley’s Rite of Saturn, which seemed to have been woven into this episode with the stripper, but was doing so unconsciously or ‘intuitively’ and did not discover this reference until ten years after I had created the image.

The method of creating all the work in the *Christabella* series and then in later two-dimensional work was based on a process of gluing hundreds of small pieces of torn paper methodically onto the paper maché and cut-out plywood shapes to build up a surface on which to paint the imagery. After gluing the paper with Aquadhere to the forms I then would paint it firstly in a watery acrylic wash that would leave an aged and cracked effect.

⁴⁷ The humour in this work and its relationship with the keystone brought to mind the old Hollywood comedy of the Keystone Cops, in hindsight, an obvious reference to Masonic humour or humour about Freemasons.

⁴⁸ Aleister Crowley, “The Book of the Law, Liber 220, Part III” Real Magick. The Occult Library. Part III 43, 44.

<http://realmagick.com/articles/16/1316.html>

Site accessed: 9th April 2004.

The broken surface it produced became the support for the imagery and suggested an underlying state of psychic fragmentation. This method was to continue for many years, until 1999. In Crowley's Rite of Saturn there is a strange command: "[p]aste the sheets from right to left and from top to bottom: then behold!"⁴⁹ The technical process I had been using and continued to use for the better part of my artistic career appeared to be a response to such a command. When working on a rectangular object I had always methodically pasted the sheets from top to bottom, but instead of right to left had reversed this, as in the process of writing. These connections were beginning to suggest that, as a victim of ritual practices, I was responding artistically to a series of internalised commands.

Late in the research I had made renewed contact with a colleague from Wollongong University, the poet Deborah Westbury, born in Wollongong in 1954. A mutual friend had suggested we meet, given that Deborah was having similar flashbacks to horrifying practices. Her father and grandfather were both Freemasons. Westbury also makes sculpture and revealed that her sculptures were of 'fat ladies' based on ceramic forms seen on a trip to New Mexico. Her fat ladies were also 'hollow' and she describes a persistent feeling accompanying their creation. She says: "I've always been appalled/revolted by obesity despite knowing it's not really justifiable in rational terms."⁵⁰ As my own memories were released and research progressed I began to understand that the processing of the children appeared to be quite systematic. This final experience with the fat stripper and involving the older children in the abuse of the younger ones recalled the old adage 'it's not all over 'til the fat lady sings'. The memory suggested that within the context of regular Lodge social meetings, that is 'Ladies' Night', irregular practices based on variations of Crowley's *Book of the Law* were being practiced behind closed doors with the ladies in another part of the Lodge. Titillation was the obvious motive for such bold behaviour, with the joke being on the ladies themselves and the efforts to mother their children protectively being thwarted by the men.

⁴⁹ Crowley, "The Book of the Law", Part III, 73.

⁵⁰ Westbury, correspondence April 2004.

In 1993 my work had diverted for a while from *Christabella* and a body of life-size cut-out figures emerged based on family memories of the more positive and outwardly acknowledged form. This series was entitled *Reflections of a Baby Boomer* and depicted each of the family characters as they pertained to the various stories passed down about war and post-war life.⁵¹ The figures were all depicted as objects of furniture. In a glass cabinet I had included some paraphernalia from the 1950s including *Women's Weeklies* and a blue and white Masonic apron. At that stage the Masonic theme had no more relevance to me than that it was part of the historical period being depicted. The cut-outs were painted in a realistic manner, but had an ugliness to them that betrayed my deeper feelings. My mother was depicted in front of an old refrigerator, called *Silent Night*, which was associated with a comical story of her first cooking experience in Australia. (Fig. 127) My father was depicted in air force uniform and was made into a cabinet for drinks. (Fig. 128) Two chairs depicted my paternal grandfather and my maternal grandmother. (Fig. 129) The grandfather chair was the chair I didn't want to sit on. When making these works I had become quite conscious of memories of grandfather's lewd and paedophilic behaviour.⁵² However, since 2000 I have realised that there were aspects of this exhibition that had a more sinister dimension. As a child I had always had a dreadful fear that furniture could come alive and that living within them were people. As an artist later chairs always held a fascination for me. A number of the memories that emerged involved being physically strapped to a chair within the Lodge to watch frightening proceedings. As part of Barney's psyche appears to have been embedded in cars, so part of my own psyche had been locked into chairs, personifying them.

In *Reflections of a Baby Boomer* I had also depicted myself as a small girl in Girls Brigade uniform holding a rifle, which became an umbrella stand. (Fig. 130) As children, following

⁵¹ Lynn Brunet, Reflections of a Baby Boomer, Long Gallery, University of Wollongong, 1993.

⁵² In fact for many years my understanding of all of this work was associated with the memories I had of grandfather and his incestuous tendencies. He was also a practical joker, deriving great pleasure from others' humiliation. It was to take me until I was forty-five before I could acknowledge my father's contribution. A much gentler man, it took me much longer to acknowledge that under enough fraternal pressure even 'good' men could behave against their innate nature.

the rural traditions my father had been raised with we were all taught how to shoot. However, in 2002 I recalled the details of a terrifying ordeal associated with Girls Brigade from the age of eight. An older woman, a Scottish spinster in her fifties, ran the Girls Brigade at the local Congregational Church in a suburb of Sydney, and I used to stay with her after school on Friday afternoons before the meetings. She was a gentle person, someone I loved dearly. One time three men from the Church, including the minister, drove us both to a local house where we were taken to a basement at the back of the house. Inside there was a wooden frame with leather straps on it, like an enlarged barbeque spit. It had a handle to rotate it. The men shouted at the woman to take her clothes off; then she had to take my clothes off. She was cowering and ashamed and I felt sorry for her. Then I was tied to the wooden frame. One man controlled the spinning machine with the handle while the other two were masturbating and urinating over the back of the woman; she was cowering on the floor and crying. I was spun around until I fell unconscious. This woman was timid and possibly had been intimidated by these men for years. Perhaps many girls had been exposed to such behaviour.⁵³ The use of the spinning machine, as the earlier discussion of this ritual abuse technique suggests, was intended to annihilate any memory of this episode. Depicting myself in Girls Brigade uniform, holding a rifle had clearly been a reference to the feeling of wanting revenge for being subjected to such a brutal practice.

The form of the cut-out figures in *Reflections of a Baby Boomer* was similar to that of advertising images in the 1950s and still used today in which lifelike images stand next to their products. In 2001 another memory emerged. At the age of six, I was one of a number of children gathered in a 'class' at the Lodge. The memory emerged accompanied by incredible anger towards my mother. The children were all sitting on the mat and the fathers were around the edge of the room. The class was taken by a man who looked and acted like an army officer. He was strict and shouted at us, cracking a whip.⁵⁴ We had to all

⁵³ This woman died when I was in my teens in a freak accident in which a car parked on a slope had been left without its handbrake on and rolled into her. Since remembering this incident I have wondered whether she may have been building up the courage to speak up.

⁵⁴ A recent television documentary on Haitian voodoo depicted a village voodoo priest taking a group of children to the cemetery to carry out a ritual associated with the dead. The priest was known as The Colonel and carried a whip. *Global Village*, SBS Television, 28th June 2004.

stand to attention and were told that we were worms and the slimy product of our mothers who were really monsters. He said the only way we could prove to him that we weren't just worms was to show that we could kill our mothers if they or anyone ever wanted to know about these classes. A cut-out figure that looked like a mother was brought out and we were shown what to do. One little boy was chosen and he was given a weapon like a small mace that he was shown how to swing again and again at the figure. The man was saying that women were slimy slugs, that your mother only ever wants to keep you to herself, that she won't let you go and be free, that she's stupid, that she cries a lot and so on. She was the problem. We all had a turn with the heavy mace and we had to try to mangle the dummy. He was saying over and over again you will kill her, you will smash her, you will crush her. Such intense misogyny, as Eliade suggests, is a key part of the patriarchal initiation ordeal.⁵⁵ An earlier series called *Abreast of the Times: A Feminist History* conveyed an image of a mother/nurse figure being attacked by piranha-like children in a war against the mother, a self-portrait with worms and various images that included entrances to temples and representations of the goddess Nut, also referred to in Crowley's rites.⁵⁶ (Figs. 131 – 133) At the time of their creation I had no conscious awareness of the source of these images.

The next significant series that contained Masonic material was a series of large charcoal 'bear' drawings created from 1995 to '96 that appeared to be a combination of both real bears and teddy bears and seemed to be referring to fear and childhood.⁵⁷ At the time I had linked them to the feeling of being overpowered by a large figure. I thought even at the time that this may have been how I felt as a child as a result of sexual abuse, but did not clearly understand why the need to use the symbol of fur. The images conveyed the bears in various poses and predicaments, including ones that were attacking children's bodies. (Fig.

⁵⁵ It is interesting that, when I interviewed Ken Unsworth, I noticed that he had a sculpture of an object in his studio that looked very similar to a small mace. It is possible, if my discussion of the denigration of the mother in his work is correct, that the mace may be used as one of the objects incorporated into the Masonic ritual abuse of children.

⁵⁶ Lynn Brunet, *Abreast of the Times: A Feminist History*, Honours exhibition, University of Wollongong, 1990.

⁵⁷ Lynn Brunet, *Properties of Secrets Laid Bear*, Project Gallery, Wollongong, 1995. *Tooth & Claw*, Long Gallery, University of Wollongong, 1996.

134) Accompanying these drawings was a cupboard that was 'bear'. (Fig. 135) The bear was blindfolded and looking down in pain towards its own claws, seemingly appalled as if saying 'what have I done?' It had a door to its stomach. It was exhibited on Open Day at Wollongong University. A journalist of the local newspaper took a photograph of it with two children inside and their heads looking through its stomach door. The blindfold and the concept of being blinded are central to the Masonic initiation process. In these works the relationship between the drawings and the sculptures point to the emotional implications of recognising one's own guilt and complicity in the abuse of other children.

There were two bodies of work in this series. The second, *Tooth and Claw*, involved large charcoal drawings on paper that focussed on the fur itself, along with the presence of claws, and were more minimalist in form. (Fig. 136) In several of the images in this series I was conscious, during the drawing process, of coming closer and closer to the fear, by enlarging the image of the fur to such an extent that I felt that I was walking through it, almost like a flea in a forest of fur. The process of drawing involved positioning the paper at one end of the large studio in which I was working and walking rhythmically back and forth to the image so as to allow both a visual and emotional distance from the work. This acclimatization to the fear through aesthetic means approximated deliberate techniques developed for use in the psychotherapeutic context, although I was unaware of this at the time. The theme of wounding appeared in a number of images and in some images there was a clear connection between the claws and the sexualised bodies of young children. At this point in the artistic process I was well aware of some form of sexual abuse in my childhood but did not understand the significance of the bears.

In 2001 a couple of memories returned which explained the meaning of these images. Both were set in the Lodge. The first was when I was four years old. The custom of using animal suits to frighten children in ritual abuse is commonly acknowledged in the literature.⁵⁸ As Eliade notes, the masters of initiation dressed in animal skins structurally marks the ritual

⁵⁸ Tim Tate, *Children for the Devil. Ritual Abuse and Satanic Crime* (London: Methuen, 1991) 38.

as belonging to an archaic hunter culture.⁵⁹ In this memory I was being held by a gorilla and a bear, two men in animal suits. This was the age when I would soon begin to learn to write and the animals were frightening me with the intention of preventing me from ever writing these experiences down. They were angrily pushing my head into a lot of papers on the black and white tiled floor. This was interspersed with a period of relaxation where I was being shown a painting of a lovely scene of the bush. I am told to look out there, and that I could make pretty pictures, but I am not to look back in the Lodge or to write about it. I think now of Arthur Streeton's pink painting *Still Glides the Stream and Shall Forever Glide* embodying peaceful longings towards the bush. It appears that the organization was well aware of the need for some release from the tension that this processing would create. The tactic described here was clearly intended to provide such an outlet through art. In the suburban context of the time such an exposure to art would have undoubtedly been through prints rather than original images. As noted previously, Turner has pointed out that paintings can be one of a number of 'symbol-vehicles' containing multiple associations that are used in the initiatory process. Each of the memories being released brought with them feelings of extraordinary tension and fear. This one was particularly related to the writing of the thesis. Until the release of this memory I had literally felt that I would be killed if I wrote this material.⁶⁰

The fear elicited while I was drawing the fur in these images, in hindsight, must have been tapping into these experiences where fur signaled a state of terror and humiliation. The need to connect more fully to these bodily memories prompted me to begin making collages using fake fur in the next body of work. *Screen Memories*, a body of work produced in 1998, played with Freud's terminology in a series of images based on stills

⁵⁹ Mircea Eliade, Rites and Symbols of Initiation. The Mysteries of Birth and Rebirth (Woodstock, Connecticut: Spring Publications, 1995) 23.

⁶⁰ It is interesting, though, when at about the age of nine I remember my first school project where we were able to choose our own topic. I chose to investigate the Aztecs and the Incas and these cultures as well as that of the Masai became my favourite themes. The Egyptian themes were fascinating too but I was more afraid of them. These cultures are all favourites of Masonic writers for the obvious reasons of their focus on sacrifice, the sun god and secret initiation rites. The many project books I did over my primary school years would have been invaluable for this research now, but of course they have long disappeared. What did teachers make of children who developed such morbid fascinations?

from old horror movies.⁶¹ (*Figs. 137, 138*) It again was playful after the more serious charcoal drawings. The process of the work involved cutting an image in plywood based on one from a movie still and then cutting this image into pieces like a jigsaw puzzle. The collection included various images of King-Kong and Golem holding fainting women. Parts of the jigsaw that made up the monster were wrapped in fur or velvet and in some of the collages I used fake fur with a leopard skin pattern. The images of the women were painted two dimensionally. At the time I was aware of the sense of 'flatness' of my sense of self, whereas the fear invoked by the monsters was more real and tactile. The previous work had involved drawing the fur. Now it was important to feel the fur. Such tactile involvement was clearly an important stage in the eventual retrieval of the memories.

A further memory involved another event in the Lodge when I was five years old. Some of the Freemasons would dress in their Scottish kilts, and in front of their kilts would wear their familiar sporrans, a signifier of their hunting and warrior status as well as a mark of their sexual prowess. This time the men were arranged in a ring; some were wearing leopard skin aprons over their kilts. My tactile memory of these textures clearly had influenced the choice of fake fur and leopard skin in my collages. I remember being held upside down by my feet and passed around between the men to have my head pushed into their sporrans. I had no underpants on and the men made sexual gestures towards me. The room was filled with raucous laughter. My father was present but he appeared to be the butt of the joke. He was standing in the middle of the circle looking very small and timid, but allowed the taunting to proceed. Their humiliation of me was aimed at humiliating him. I was simply the tool, a limp and helpless body used to elicit a sense of shame, to humiliate him into breaking the normal protective bond of a parent for their child. I remember looking at him, to appeal to him for help but he betrayed me again. I represented his shame.

The artistic process I was undergoing appeared to simulate the psychological one in which the memories were gradually being pieced together, if not in a completely conscious form, at least in terms of their textures and subject matter, that is, as 'touch memories'. Many of the torture processes are aimed at putting the child into a state of shock, that is, to make the

⁶¹ Lynn Brunet, Screen Memories, Gallery Equinox, Austinmer, 1998.

child faint in a complete state of terror. As the mind and body goes into such a state the memories fragment and are stored, as the earlier chapters discussed, in an inaccessible form. Each experience of shock fragments the psyche one more time, so that many layers are formed and the memories can become hopelessly lost. This sense of hopelessness was reinforced by another horrific experience recalled in late 2001. A couple of memories were set in a different context, this time in what seemed to be in some sort of laboratory. The spinning machine in the Girls Brigade memory had been a home-made variety, whereas this time it was a much more sophisticated version operated by a man in a white coat. This was at nine years of age. There had also been an earlier experience of spinning head over heels on a wooden frame in some sort of doctor's surgery at the age of two.

In this experience, at nine, my head, legs and arms were strapped with metal straps and the machine spun my body rhythmically head over heels, though not as fast as the earlier experience and in a more irregular pattern. The machine must have had some sort of cam arrangement to alter its movement. There was a song being played over and over again. "There's a hole in the bucket, dear Liza, dear Liza." The spinning was in rhythm with the song. The message was clear – there is no solution. While recalling the torture my body still felt as sick as if it was happening all over again. When researching these memories later I discovered the recent research into spin programming discussed in the chapter on Barney's work. This practice, however, was not new. The tradition of 'barrelling' that is being rolled in a beer barrel, had been part of hazing practices that had persisted in the British public school system. Thrill seekers at funfairs also voluntarily experience having the body spun around like this. In my experience, though, it was just another part of the torture process that put yet another wedge between my psyche and my body, creating multiple fragments in the personality.

The following and last body of work to be discussed here is *The Mason's Daughter*, which, as the explanations were coming closer and closer to the surface, contained more useful information.⁶² (*Fig. 139*) This was the first body of work in which surrealism had played a

⁶² Lynn Brunet, *The Mason's Daughter*, School of Fine Art Gallery, University of Newcastle, 1999.

part. It used surreal settings, human/bird figures and keystones as well as embroidered forms that depict *vesica piscis* shapes as touch memories of the embroidered aprons worn by the Lodge Grand Masters. The work was constructed in response to a fear of regalia and ceremony, elicited as a bodily response during a particular experience of a university graduation ceremony. I had always managed to avoid being part of the procession, even though it was expected of me as an academic, because it had a very upsetting effect on me. As I later discovered, the gowns worn by members of Royal Arch rites, that I have since discovered may be commonly used for the purposes of ritual abuse, closely resembled those worn by academics in their processions and my painful memories were clearly being restimulated at such events.

The exhibition was comprised of a series of collages using textiles, paper and embroidery under glass of bird-like creatures in ritual gowns and regalia. They stood in surreal contexts containing obelisks and other stone shapes and were described by one reviewer as embodying “hieratic male power”.⁶³ (Figs. 140, 141) There were ten vertical images, three larger horizontal ones and ten small embroidered pieces as well as a keystone shape with an embroidered satin banner across it. The banner had stated in French, *je vois plus clairement*, “I see more clearly now”, although I had covered the text with a gauze material, suggesting that this statement wasn’t yet completely true. The colours used were quite sombre, although there was a use of tonal contrasts in the designs, and each of the larger works were framed within a dark brown arch, conveying a medieval, religious atmosphere. The collage process used is one in which I surround myself with all sorts of materials, making for a very messy space, and then I proceed to find the ‘right’ materials for the purpose. It is similar to the process involved in solving a jig-saw puzzle and involves much handling of the textures and materials, in order to solicit a ‘touch-memory’, as well as to find the right visual effects. At the time I was becoming conscious of the Masonic character of the work and deliberately employed textiles such as silk cords and satin used in Masonic regalia as well as fur and leopard skin fabric found in the Scotsman’s dress. I was still unaware, though, of what this meant.

⁶³ Jill Stowell, “Weekend Art”, The Newcastle Herald, (October 16, 1999) 6.

I have previously used animal forms in my work, but this was the first time I had used birds. I was aware of creating the sense of a temple space in which the birds were entering and of some sort of fearful experience within. (Fig. 142) The images seemed to imply a narrative, but it was a story that I could not readily explain. They also seemed to be like a children's storybook, with one bird reminding me of Lewis Carroll's Jub-Jub bird. (Fig. 143) Included was an image of a 'debutante' bird and a married couple, which reminded me of the role of the Masonic wives, diminutive by comparison with their pompous and grandly dressed husbands. The result, I felt, was a moving and mysterious body of work, more sophisticated than any of my previous work, but largely inexplicable, both to myself and others. However, when I showed them to my father he saw them as encapsulating the second degree of Masonry, a ritual of which I had no conscious knowledge at the time. Seeing it from a Jungian perspective his brief comment was that I had 'evolved' to this spiritual state and had intuitively represented these forms.

The last section of the work to be produced, and the first I will address, was a series of ten embroidered vaginal shapes. (Fig. 144) The primary emotional response I felt during the production of these works was one of celebration. These padded sexual forms were triumphantly female despite the overarching control of the patriarchal context. The process of inserting the needle and then calmly drawing the thread in a repetitive motion was experienced as a sensation of tension and release. The tiny beads, ribbons and threads, stitched meditatively into place also provided a sense of comfort and closure to the body of work.

After the series was produced, when I visited the Masonic museum, the first objects to catch my attention were the embroidered *vesica piscis* shapes on the Grand Masters' aprons. To my conscious knowledge I had not seen these objects previously; although I had seen old black and white photographs of the aprons the photography had not been clear enough to reveal the details. On close view the style of embroidery was remarkably similar to my own. In the Masonic forms the oval form of the *vesica piscis* was raised and padded. The artwork also had this section padded; the padding of the shape was, in fact, the initial part of the process. Then, in my own work, the shape was decorated with beading and small

pieces of ribbon and other textiles, some inside the *vesica piscis* and some on the outside. The Masonic embroidery had what looked like beading in the middle, however, on close inspection I saw that it was actually created with many small knots, the size and texture of the beads I had chosen for my work. There were also a number of variations of the beading used in the Masonic aprons. In one, the knotting had been formed in little wriggly rows, like worm shapes. I had used a similar pattern in one of the pieces with wriggly rows of four or five beads sewn together. The last part of the artistic process involved adding pieces of fur and then pressing the whole under glass and into a small frame. The visual effect of the satin being pressed around the beads and the fur squashed into wavy shapes was sensually appealing. From a conceptual perspective it signified a ‘freezing’ or ‘trapping’ of the textures, suggesting that the sensations accompanying them had in some way been trapped in memory also.

The simple explanation for these works is that at some point in my early childhood I have sat on a Grand Master’s lap and traced my little fingers around the forms of the embroidery. The fact that I experienced comfort while making these objects suggests that there must have been some pleasant experiences woven through the pain, and that the materials themselves gave me great sensual delight, enough for me to want to retrace them in my own embroidery over forty years later. It also suggests that I may have had access to several different versions of these aprons in order to recall the different styles so clearly. The fact that I produced these embroideries last was perhaps a signifier of hope, of the possibility that a sense of beauty and pleasure would finally win over the fear and pain.

Another part of the exhibition involved a series of ten horizontal bird images and three larger horizontal images constructed in narrative form. Incorporated into the images were many keystone shapes. Arthur Waite discusses the rituals in Royal Arch Masonry in which a series of nine arches leads the initiate to a vault where there lies a triangular stone “bearing in its centre the name of God in Hebrew and one of the three following letters at the three angles, I : B : M, said to be the initials of the True Name borne by our Grand

Master.”⁶⁴ The truncated version of this pyramid shape is what was used on the American dollar bill. In the exhibition this stone shape was present both in the two-dimensional images and as a large three-dimensional form in similar dimensions to versions in previous exhibitions.

In one key image a small bird is caught in a traumatic encounter. (*Fig. 140*) It is positioned over the top of a keystone, its head is thrust back, as if squawking and its heart is being plucked from its chest by a large beak or claw. There are six inverted v-shaped forms on the top of the stone and v-shaped patterns running down the side of the form. There is also a geometric structure formed in chequered ribbon leading from the bird’s chest to the heart. In Freemasonry the Worshipful Master wears an inverted ‘v’ shape and the Senior Deacon is symbolised by a bird form. In the temple the stone sits on the black and white chequered floor and over the stone is a rectangular frame, symbolising the scaffolding used in Operative Masonry for the raising of the stone. The bird theme connects to shamanic practices where one or some of the elders are dressed in a bird costume, symbolising the capacity of the psyche to ‘fly’. While the birdman form was used in many ancient ritual practices, notably Egyptian and Assyrian cultures, in Celtic lore the island of Lewis in the Scottish Outer Hebrides was also a site where the priests wore robes of bird skins and feathers.⁶⁵ Another type of stone that appears throughout Masonic symbolism is that of the obelisk, in Masonry it is termed a ‘ben-ben’ stone.⁶⁶ Obelisks appeared throughout *The Mason’s Daughter*, some with flattened tops and others sharply pointed like stalagmites or dangerous phallic shapes. (*Fig. 140*) The memory that emerged associated with the stone was of a mock rape in which my body was placed faced down on the keystone and the men masturbated over it. The mock rape was the result of a command spoken by the Grand Master to leave no mark on the child’s body.

⁶⁴ Arthur Edward Waite, Emblematic Freemasonry and the Evolution of its Deeper Issues (London: William Rider & Son Ltd, 1925) 131.

⁶⁵ Janet and Colin Bord, Mysterious Britain: Ancient Secrets of Britain and Ireland, (1992: London: Thorsons, 1995) 27.

⁶⁶ Short 81.

One of the images was titled *Beware the Jub-Jub Bird* as it had reminded me of Lewis Carroll's Jabberwocky character.⁶⁷ (Fig. 143) It is an image of a large ominous looking bird leaning over the figure of a small girl who is standing on an obelisk, looking up to him. It has one mean looking claw reaching towards her. Its body is made of brown fur brushed in the direction towards her. The whole atmosphere of the image is threatening, but the child appears naively curious. While creating this and other images using brown fur I had been thinking at the time of my mother's fox fur. It had always inspired feelings of discomfort, fear and sadness and I had associated this with another fox skin that hung in my father's office, a trophy from a hunting trip. However, as the previous discussion has outlined, the fur had far more sinister meaning, suggesting that the memory of the fox fur was a screen memory.

In *Beware the Jub-Jub Bird* the Masonic links are interesting. There are a number of sacred words within Masonry. Jahbulon is one and it has several variations within the rites. The names of the three assassins of Hiram Abiff in the American version of Third Degree ritual were Jubela, Jubelo and Jubelum.⁶⁸ Jubal and Jabal were the half brothers of Tubal-Cain.⁶⁹ "Jubela" is also taken to mean "oh that my throat had been cut across, my tongue torn out, and my body buried in the rough sands of the sea". "Jubelo" means "Oh that my left breast had been torn open and my heart and vitals taken from thence and thrown over my left shoulder, carried to the valley of Jehosophat", while "Jubelum" means, "O that my body had been severed in two".⁷⁰ The root for the words 'jubilee' and 'jubilation' have a Hebrew origin denoting the year of emancipation and time of remission from penal consequences of sin.⁷¹ From a Masonic perspective this root takes on quite altered meanings. One set of memories involving sexual abuse by my father at home had involved the sound of his voice reciting this gibberish.

⁶⁷ Lewis Carroll's (Charles Dodgson's) writing is possibly intimately interwoven with this subject. It would be interesting now to analyse the writing in terms of Masonic symbolism.

⁶⁸ Bernard E. Jones, Freemason's Guide and Compendium (London: George G. Harrap & Son, 1952) 312.

⁶⁹ Genesis 4, 22.

⁷⁰ Short 81.

⁷¹ F.G. Fowler and H.W. Fowler, The Pocket Oxford Dictionary (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969) 434.

In another image using the brown fur, *The Debutante's Ball*, (Fig. 145) the bird is in a ball gown of brown velvet and fur, and is placed centrally between two dead chickens hanging upside down. A fur-lined *vesica piscis* is centrally located like a jewel on her chest. A sharply pointed pyramid shape is projecting into the *vesica piscis*; it is scarlet or ruby coloured using a piece of embroidery from an earlier work. A medieval castle is located in the distance on the right-hand side of the picture.

My family had always raised chickens in the backyard. When the chickens ceased laying their fate had been the cooking pot and the process had always been a ritual affair involving the whole family. My father would kill them in the backyard by strangling them and then hanging them upside down to drain the blood. Then he would gut them, with the dog and cat waiting patiently for the offal. My mother and grandmother would be in the kitchen, to finish the gutting and to immerse the chickens in boiling water long enough for the feathers to loosen. The children's job, one that I admit I enjoyed, was to pluck the loosened feathers. The chickens hanging upside-down were clearly a reference to the sensation of being hung upside down at the age of five. Like the chickens I was slaughtered and devoured, but emotionally rather than literally. The scenario seems to suggest some sort of rite of Saturn (for the Greeks the figure was Cronos) in which ritual cannibalism of the child symbolized a forestalling of the child's potential to castrate the father. In Greek myth the sky god Ouranus was castrated with a sickle by his youngest son, Cronos. To prevent the same fate occurring to Cronos he swallowed his own children at birth.⁷² The ruby, a symbol of ardent love, was linked to Cronos, who controlled passion.⁷³ In the center of the debutante's cape is a ruby-coloured insert in the fur-lined *vesica piscis* shape, a reference to the power of the Grand Master whose presence had controlled the men's passion.⁷⁴

Another image depicts two hawk-like birds, with very stern countenances, on either side of the picture plane. (Fig. 141) The birds are both draped in long capes, like priests. In the

⁷² Jack Tressidar, Dictionary of Symbols. An illustrated guide to traditional images, icons and emblems (London: Duncan Baird Publishers, 1999) 38.

⁷³ Tressidar 173.

⁷⁴ Note Matthew Barney's 'Character of Positive Restraint'.

centre is a large egg hovering over a keystone shape. Tiny birds are flying out of an opening in the egg. The small birds exiting from the egg suggested that the secrets were coming out little by little. In Assyrian mythology, the twin protectors of the city are two hawk-headed creatures known as *apkallu*.⁷⁵ The similarity between this image and the description in Crowley's 'Rite of Saturn' is too close for comfort. The description states:

I am the Hawk-headed Lord of Silence and Strength
Hail ye! Twin warriors about the pillars of the world.
I am the Lord of the Double wand of Power.⁷⁶

An intriguing image of a bird's head with a phallic beak was positioned in a prism over a keystone. (*Fig. 146*) The keystone had sharp stake-like forms underneath it. This image was to elicit the most horrific memory which emerged in part in 2001 with details added more recently: while meditating I had the urge to stand in a votive position with my arms outstretched. The memory went as follows. At the age of seven I was again summoned to the temple. This time, amid raucous laughter, I was loosely and quickly wrapped in wide strips of bandaging and told to stand in votive position, arms outstretched, like an Egyptian.⁷⁷ My father was in the dimly lit temple, along with other men, but he seemed to be in some sort of hypnotic trance. Then what appeared to be a roasted baby was placed in my arms to the raucous laughter of the men who joked that I was its 'mummy'. My father was forced to eat some of it to the great entertainment of the men. He was grovelling like some inhuman creature. The baby's head was put on a stake in the centre of the scaffolding structure. In this memory they were trying to force me to eat too, but instead I must have

⁷⁵ In 2003 I saw a frieze containing these *apkallu* in New York, at the Brooklyn Museum of Art.

⁷⁶ Crowley, "The Book of the Law" Part III, 70 – 73.

⁷⁷ Henry Melville, in a description of Royal Arch initiation states a section in the ritual where the initiate is wrapped in mummy cloths: "The aspirant at this time receives a blow on his forehead, and is suddenly wrapped in a winding sheet, like an Egyptian mummy, and sinks backwards into a sarcophagus or coffin." Henry Melville, Initiation, Passing, Raising and exaltation, demonstrated by the Median and Persian Laws on the Original Tracing Board (Hobart Town: H & C Best, 1864) 7.

fainted or dissociated, creating another level of fragmentation.⁷⁸ As Buck admits, such hypnotic practices have been used in irregular Masonic practices for the purpose of humiliating a brother in the context of black magic and warns, “[t]he hypnotist can not reduce the mind of a trusting but ignorant brother to the condition of imbecility without facing the law that counts such a crime as no less than murder.”⁷⁹

The extreme terror and the sense of shared culpability instilled in me at that moment were to push my silence to an even deeper level. Much earlier in my artistic career I had made a self-portrait of myself as an Egyptian, and one as a primitive with bloodied mouth. (*Fig. 147*) I had also created two images based on Hiroshima and the terrible sense of panic I had imagined that was felt by the residents. (*Fig. 148*) The female figure used in the image felt like a self-portrait but I had not known why. Even though I had recalled the memory, the image of the phoenix-like bird was to intrigue me for some years until, in 2004 I purchased a copy of Iain McCalman’s study of Count Cagliostro. In a series of lithographs by Philippe de Loutherbourg, depicting the initiation of a young woman in accordance with Cagliostro’s rites, is a phoenix depicted rising from the ashes alongside keystone forms and men with swords committing what appears to be murderous acts.⁸⁰ (*Fig. 113*) Clearly I had seen these images or something like them at some stage in my youth, perhaps during or after the initiation and the artwork produced many years later had combined a number of the elements contained in these images.

⁷⁸ While producing the series *Screen Memories* I had been particularly concerned to find images of fainting women, albeit from popular culture, in the arms of monsters. Accounts of ritual abuse suggest that the terrifying procedures are intended to induce dissociation in the child, a state in which the child’s body becomes limp as if in a trance state and open to suggestion and the formation of a new ‘alter’ personality. See George A. Fraser, The Dilemma of Ritual Abuse. Cautions and Guides for Therapists (Washington, D.C., London: American psychiatric Press, 1997) 193 – 195. Fraser describes one of his patient’s revelations about the torture of a child through placing her in a coffin full of worms, bugs and snakes. When the child finally stops screaming she can be removed. “You then check the muscle tone of the child. If the tone is relaxed you have caused a dissociated switch, and you can now train this personality to be who you want and to do what you want. The child will obey without question.”

⁷⁹ J.D. Buck, Symbolism of Freemasonry or Mystic Masonry and the Greater Mysteries of Antiquity (Chicago: Charles T. Powner Co., 1967) 51.

⁸⁰ Iain McCalman, The Seven Ordeals of Count Cagliostro (2003; New York: HarperCollins, 2004) Fig. 9.

Whether the memory of the scorched baby in my arms was a real baby or just another Masonic trick I have no means of knowing now. However, the possibility that it was a trick appears to correlate with anthropologists' discussions of initiation practice. Either way, the cruelty of such horrendous experience and its effect on the psyche is monumental. In a discussion of children's memories of sacrifice Tim Tate cites the Honourable Judge Thomas Beckett who argued that it was irrelevant "whether the children actually saw murder, cannibalism and cult atrocities, or whether they interpreted, thought or believed their experiences to be as they described", and that the damage done to the child was equivalent.⁸¹ Undoubtedly the experience was to affect my ability to mother my own children, thus confirming Masonic belief in the failure of the mother to adequately prepare her children for their future. I remember, when my first child was a small baby and very distressed with colic my aunt showed me how to wrap her firmly so that she was then able to settle. However, even though I was shown how to do this, for some reason I always wrapped her too loosely at this important early stage of her growth. This would correspond to the feeling of being myself wrapped loosely in the 'mummy cloths'. This sense of not being able to firmly protect my children was to govern my whole mothering experience and, combined with the predatory behaviour of the men in my family, put my own children at risk.

Cannibalism, the most extreme act of atavistic behaviour, is frequently cited by victims of ritual abuse. Whether simulated or real, and occurring in front of the child at the age of seven, it mocks the Catholic symbolism of the child's first holy communion. Magic traditions and initiation practices are derived from earlier traditions than those of religion, which converted the older practices into symbolic form.⁸² Such older practices may have been based on animal behaviour and may represent an early form of social organization. In their study of the relationship between human violence and that of the great apes Wrangham

⁸¹ Tate 44.

⁸² Georges Bataille, using the pseudonym Lord Auch, explores this reversal in his rather perverse and self-indulgent short story, The Story of the Eye. Georges Bataille (pseudonym Lord Auch), The Story of the Eye, translated by Joachim Neugroschel (Hammondsworth: Penguin, 1982).

and Peterson argue that gorillas, one of the closest relatives to humans and normally gentle fathers, periodically cannibalise a baby gorilla in order to establish their authority over the females and demonstrate their sexual prowess.⁸³ It seems that the rationale behind such a display to a human female child in the latter half of the twentieth century was to embed a similar fear of male authority deeply into the psyche to govern her deepest responses to men in the future, that is, an attitude of complete submission.⁸⁴

Three more sacrificial experiences were to emerge in memory. The first was set at the age of eight, recalled in 2001, and was a ‘sacrifice’ of another little girl of the same age. I had always felt an incredible sadness whenever I had heard the sound of bagpipes or saw the pipers on display. The memory came up as two fragments. The girl was wearing a tartan skirt and a white blouse with a lacy collar under a velvet vest. The two of us had been playing as friends but then we were made to have a physical fight in front of the men. She had been crying and was on the floor and I was deemed the winner and made to stand with my foot on her chest. As a result she was to be sacrificed. She was paraded in the centre of a group of Scottish bagpipers and drummers. However, she didn’t seem particularly upset and smiled and gave me a little wave. I was crying and very distressed because it seemed that she was going to be sacrificed because of me. She was marched up to the altar where she was placed on the altar and a knife was put in to her chest. There was blood spurting over the altar. I was so distressed that, again, I must have fainted or dissociated. But a second visit to the memory revealed that the body of the child in the tartan skirt, when it went onto the altar, was not real but a dummy. The legs were really made of a flesh coloured jersey material. The whole thing was a fake and she must have run under the altar when they lifted the dummy up. It was an enactment calculated to terrify me into thinking I

⁸³ Richard Wranghan and Dale Peterson, Demonic Males: Apes and the Origins of Human Violence (London: Bloomsbury, 1997) 147 - 150. The authors note that the predominant impression of gorilla society is one of peacefulness, but that periodic infanticide means that the average female experiences infanticide at least once in her lifetime. The authors argue that the act of infanticide in which the silverback kills the competitor’s offspring makes the killer attractive to the female, guaranteeing the protection of her future offspring. As the authors note “females are trapped in a vortex of male-initiated violence” (p. 150).

⁸⁴ In my discussions with Stefan Laug, a visiting artist from Germany and specialist in the occult, we discussed the role of cannibalism in ritual abuse. He mentioned that in Germany there are elite restaurants, known amongst occult circles, in which human meat is served.

had caused my friend's death. She probably scuttled out from behind the altar afterwards. The shock, though, was as real as if it were an actual sacrifice; at the time my child psyche was shattered once more.

Eliade notes the use of such trickery in Australian Aboriginal initiation rituals. Discussing the pre-initiated boys he states: "[t]hey had perhaps seen dead people, but it did not occur to them that death was something that concerned themselves. For them, it was an exterior 'thing', a mysterious event that happened to other people, especially to the old. Now, suddenly, they are told that they are to die, that they will be killed by the divinity."⁸⁵ As a daughter of a Mason who was not high up in the Order my own experience was certainly horrific. However, for those Masonic children who were trained to act the part of the victim, perhaps children of the Grand Masters, the burden of conscience must be even greater. While they would have been told that this was all good fun and just theatre, if they realised that they were betraying their friends so horrendously, such training could have left awful scars. Repression would be the only way to cope with such a burden.

Only once did I attempt to make an artwork that incorporated Aboriginal themes. It was during the first year of my undergraduate degree at university and I made a triptych that I did not record photographically. Given the politics of Aboriginal art at the time I was warned that it could have constituted a form of appropriation and so destroyed it. It may have been useful as another aesthetic rendition of the abuse as a couple of the memories dealt specifically with Aboriginal themes. One memory was of a little Aboriginal girl, again at age eight, and was set in the bush. Nearly every year for many years of my adult life I had experienced the desire to go to Morton National Park in the Southern Highlands in wintertime. The memory was one of the most terrifying. It was at night and there were cars and trucks gathered in a clearing near a large tree. The memory involved a collection of people wearing robes and pointed hoods around an altar made of stones. A fire was made on the top of the altar. There were other children present. We had been driven to the site in a tabletop truck. A little Aboriginal girl about the same age as myself was hanged on a tree,

⁸⁵ Mircea Eliade, Rites and Symbols of Initiation. The Mysteries of Birth and Rebirth (Woodstock, Connecticut: Spring Publications, 1995) 9.

a bag over her head, and then her body burned over an altar made of many rounded stones. The experience closely mimics the practices of the Ku Klux Klan, an offshoot of Scottish Rite Freemasonry in the Southern Jurisdiction in the United States. As Marvin and Ingle point out: “[i]n totem-mimetic fashion the Klan alternated beatings, lynchings, and night-riding vigilantism with community picnics, barbeques, fish-fries, school reform, and hospital-building.”⁸⁶ Whether the scene with the Aboriginal child was real or not can never be proven, but given the history of race relations and practices of genocide in Australia, the power the Masonic Order would have had in relation to the Aboriginal missions, and the problem of tracing individual Aboriginal children in the context of the Stolen Generation, it is not beyond the realms of probability.

A further memory was of an experience at the age of eleven and seemed to be expressed in my artwork as an obsession with creating a range of artistic chairs over the years as well as the incorporation of images of eggs in some artworks and furniture that I have not photographed. The memory involved being strapped to a chair in the Lodge with white bandages around my wrists to watch the proceedings. There were many eggs all sitting in a space on the ground. A young adolescent Aboriginal boy was brought into the temple space. He was being held by his arms and legs and was kicking and pulling to try to get away from the men. They laid him on top of the eggs. The test seemed to be that if he broke the eggs then this would be a demonstration of what he would do to me. All the men laughed their sickening laughter when the eggs all crush underneath him. He was naked and his genitals were small. I have only recently remembered more of the memory. For some reason it was up to me to make some sort of life or death decision about this boy. Tremendous shame accompanied this memory. A grey blanket was placed over him and suddenly it appeared that his head was sliced off. However, as the memory was revisited I could see that, again, this was another trick and the head was a theatrical prop. As in the discussion of Unsworth’s work, it seems that the aim of the exercise was to prevent me, through a deeply embedded sense of shame and guilt, from ever having anything to do with Aboriginal people, and in particular from forming any romantic attachments to an

⁸⁶ Carolyn Marvin and David W. Ingle, Blood Sacrifice and the Nation: Totem Rituals and the American Flag (Cambridge University Press, 1999) 202.

Aboriginal boy. According to Mircea Eliade, the initiatory symbolism of the egg is an ancient one and 'breaking the eggshell' is a symbol of rebirth.⁸⁷

The weight of such hidden memories can be enormous and I wonder how some of us survive such horrors. For the victim of such horrifying practices the feeling that there is no solution, other than a move towards a state of complete spiritual disintegration, can be profound. It seems impossible to put the fragments back together again. Nevertheless, as the previous analysis would suggest, this is possible, and, for an artist, a close and attentive dialogue with one's own artwork can be a valuable key. Another of the keys to the process is the psyche's need to find a narrative where it seems to have been irrevocably lost. This appears to be an attempt to reinsert the principle of time back into an experience that was lost to time, but therefore also ever-present in the psyche. *The Mason's Daughter* series had the look of a child's picture book though the plot was inexplicable at the time. In order for the symbols to be expelled from the subconscious mind to be made available to conscious memory it appears they must be 'carried' in terms of a narrative, even if it is only present in the form and not the overt content of the work. The amorphous feelings that emerge do so as a type of jigsaw puzzle of related images, patterns and textures that are slowly pieced together. Once these feelings have been retrieved and translated into a linear narrative they can then be accepted in all their horror, but then let go. It is not an immediate process though, as each episode has many aspects that can come to the surface in a piecemeal fashion over time.

From the above account it would appear that the practices I have recalled bear witness to the contemporary application of initiation practices on the young that, until recently, have not been acknowledged as occurring in mainstream and middle class western society. While the rationale for such practices may be a belief in their 'toughening' role for the children's future as citizens, the men's attitude as I recall displayed utter disregard for the children and even a sense of loathing, rather than concern for their development. This behaviour probably originated in self-loathing. The fundamental driving force behind the

⁸⁷ Mircea Eliade, Rites and Symbols of Initiation. The Mysteries of Birth and Rebirth (Woodstock, Connecticut: Spring Publications, 1995) 54.

practices appears to be a deep sense of distrust and fear of others and their potential to do harm. Even children are perceived as a threat. The bond that these practices were intended to overthrow was the normal protective bond between the parent and child, whether the mother or father. With those deep connections so severely damaged each individual in the family becomes isolated from one another and thus more easily controlled through the messages implanted by the cult.

Throughout the recall of these memories the experience of shock was profound. All of a sudden my perception of the world I lived in was altered radically. It felt like a version of Nazi Germany. I questioned why I had ever imagined that such practices would only be confined to totalitarian states.⁸⁸ Many of the memories carry with them a particular atmosphere, not only of horror but also of a sickening display of male humour of the basest kind. Raucous laughter accompanied many of the experiences and the presence of Scottish bagpipes, drums and kilts created a defining cultural atmosphere. The context of suburbia also gave the rituals a particular flavour. While the use of satin, braid and regalia supplied the look of high ritual, the use of faux-marble plywood keystones instead of the real thing, the rather drab halls where the activities took place and the use of prints of famous Australian paintings in tatty, fake gold frames, to impress upon the initiate the importance of art, combined to render the experience rather second-rate.

Since 1999 when I first started glimpsing a sense of something deeply buried I also had the terrifying feeling that I had forgotten something profoundly important. As the confusing memories surfaced it seems I had found an answer. The answer, however, has been of the most harrowing type, but as the previous chapters have suggested, may provide many answers to current concerns in the Humanities. The question is whether many Masonic

⁸⁸ As Suzette Henke notes, it is not uncommon for incest survivors, who were children of the post-war period, to report their sense of terror in terms of Nazi aggression. Henke 128. Given the group assault on the child that ritual abuse entails such a parallel may be even more pertinent. It may also be relevant that one of the symbols used in Masonic Royal Arch rites is the ancient symbol of the swastika, the symbol that the Celts called 'fylfot'. See Gilles C.H. Nullins, Official History of Freemasonry <http://www.nullens.org/content/view/174/51/> Accessed 20th April 2005. See also Tadhg MacCrossan, The Sacred Cauldron. Secrets of the Druids (St. Paul, Minnesota: Llewellyn, 1991) 137.

children, among them some of our most significant artists and writers, are a product of a similar terrifying initiation process.

CONCLUSION

“How much truth can a spirit bear, how much truth can a spirit dare?”

Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*.¹

In his study of religious experience and the notion of the ‘sick soul’ William James made the distinction between the ‘once-born’ and the ‘twice-born’. The ‘twice-born’ he saw as those who were the product of groups that practised initiation rites. John Smith’s introduction to his work summarises the attitude of the twice-born. It states, “the twice-born are acutely aware of the darker aspects of the universe, the evil it contains, and the human propensities that contribute to sorrow, suffering, sin, and corruption.”² The contemporary artists represented in this thesis appear to have been similarly ‘twice-born’ and seem to be representing a liminal experience of a very specific nature. The thesis has suggested that the dreamlike reality that these artists represent in their images, objects, films and performance works depicts themes of trauma coupled with Masonic elements that could be representing traces of confusing memories of childhood initiation in irregular Masonic contexts. By penetrating the veneer of the social order to the chaos of the liminal space beneath, these artists may be attempting to awaken themselves to their own memories and consequently to shake the rest of us out of our collective amnesia. The drive within the psyche of such artists, I would argue, is associated with a search for personal truth, which can involve repressed experiences that are too painful for conscious recognition. The material artefacts they produce will therefore contain evidence of this dark truth, whether the artist is consciously aware of it or not. It is in the creative act that such artists depict the unspeakable and confront it daily in their work.

Based on the groundwork of a range of scholars who have pieced together the many elements involved in the discourse of trauma and memory, the thesis has moved through a

¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo. How one becomes what one is*, translated and introduced by R.J. Hollingdale (Harmondsworth, New York: Penguin, 1979) 34.

² John E. Smith, introduction to William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (Cambridge, London: Harvard University Press, 1985) xxiv.

series of arguments in order to connect the practices of irregular Masonry to the field of contemporary cultural practice. The argument presented in Chapter Two has suggested that the principles behind the impact of trauma on the psyche have been present in ritual form in the Masonic context since the eighteenth century, and that Freemasonry has drawn on myths from earlier sources that reinforce such an understanding. These earlier myths, while having other religious and cultural implications, suggest that such understanding of the psyche and its protective responses to the experience of overwhelming terror have long been acknowledged and may have arisen in the context of warrior practices. The chapter also points out that eminent Masonic authors have admitted that this knowledge can be misapplied and used for cruel purposes by corrupted members, and have acknowledged the role of dissident Freemasonry and its dangers. Present-day accounts of Masonic ritual abuse correspond with their warnings.

The case studies reveal different aspects of the impact of Freemasonry on the development of work by contemporary artists. Matthew Barney gives us an elaborate rendition of Masonic themes, and combines them with a virtuoso performance, rendered as an athletic struggle to represent the desire of the artist to free himself from the terrible burden that a child of Eleusis carries. His tour through several different cultural and historical contexts and his many references to Masonic history facilitate a preliminary discussion of many of the ways in which Masonic culture has impinged on contemporary experience.

The analysis of the work of Bruce Nauman and Paul McCarthy demonstrates that evidence of fraternal initiation practices may be present in the work of American artists born since World War II. Both Nauman and McCarthy's work allow a discussion of the role of torture in initiation practices, and in particular, the role of spin programming, one of the practices associated with ritual abuse. The work of Mark Ryden draws our attention to the relationship between Freemasonry and more broadly based occult practices in the Californian context in more recent times and their effect on childhood. His images provide the basis for a discussion of the relationship between Masonic symbolism, the field of magic and the abuse of children in contemporary North American society.

The comparison of Ken Unsworth's work with anthropological theories of initiation suggests that *The Mirror and Other Fables* and Unsworth's other work may be depicting a classic study of patriarchal initiation rites that are traditionally performed on children in a range of cultures, commonly as a set of puberty rites. In such initiations the denigration of the mother and the witnessing of scenes of death and torture can deeply and indelibly embed cultural values into the psyche of the individual. This chapter suggests that such themes permeate much of Ken Unsworth's artistic oeuvre.

The more personal nature of the analysis of my own work and its incorporation of historical material on Freemasonry, combined with elements of family history and personal memories, has provided an alternative perspective that can be useful as a contrast to the more 'objective' analysis of the work of the other artists. The combination of the two approaches, one subjective and the other more distanced, suggests the possibility that such processes of indoctrination may be woven into the training of children from Masonic backgrounds in both the United States and Australia.

In all of the studies the theme of Masonic abuse, illustrated artistically, draws together the concerns expressed by cultural theorists that something dark lies behind a Postmodern *zeitgeist* expressed by contemporary artists. When viewed through the lens of the cruel practice of ritual abuse, the artists' acute focus on their own internal experience becomes an acerbic political comment on the corrupt nature of a society that maintains its power through the denigration of its own children. Here the feminist principle that the personal is political is sharply demonstrated. Based on my own experience, as much as the analysis of the work of other artists here, it would appear that the artists are perhaps at the risk of becoming the 'dupes' in this power structure, and that as they thrash about trying to understand themselves, the cultural artefacts they produce become further validation of the system that has moulded them.

The case studies have revealed a set of visual and narrative clues as evidence of the presence of trauma combined with Masonic initiation themes in the work of a small number of contemporary artists. Enough of these clues, found together in a range of combinations,

can indicate that the artist may be dealing with the psychological impact of initiation practices applied throughout childhood. As the thesis has demonstrated, a useful test for whether the elements present are related to initiation is to weigh the work up against anthropological discussions of initiation practices. The following list of these clues are drawn from the case studies and may provide a basis for the analysis of a range of visual texts from either contemporary or historical sources, and from high or popular culture.

Firstly, such works display visual evidence of trauma, generally referring to themes of damaged childhood and sexual abuse. As critics have noted, evidence of this level of trauma appears frequently in contemporary art, expressed through the use of damaged or defiled toys, puppets or dolls, disturbing sexual references, bodily trauma, abject themes and a sense of dirtiness or grubbiness. Here McCarthy's work is a clear example.³ Other evidence of trauma includes the theme of repetition and the presence of impenetrable spaces, or a sense of a 'void', noted by many critics to pervade contemporary art. Accompanying the role of repetition is often an obsessive and intense drive in the artist to produce work that attempts to penetrate this void. Here Matthew Barney is a perfect example. Frequently, this is accompanied by the artist's inability to verbally articulate the content of the work, as the subject matter is often 'unspeakable' until the memories are retrieved. Anger and frustration generally accompany this aspect of the work and are conveyed through a range of visual signifiers, and in the work of performance artists, an identifiable use of body language. Dissociation is indicated through the theme of floating, separation from the body, or in Barney's case, incessant climbing. Being turned upside-down, as in Nauman and McCarthy's work, is also common. Fragmentation, indicated by an obsessive need to put together pieces of an endless puzzle, as indicated in the years of my own work, is another identifiable characteristic. This first category of evidence is, however, not enough to point to ritual abuse, but may refer to a whole range of traumatic

³ Kristine Stiles draws up a similar set of criteria when she discusses McCarthy's work, and adds other characteristics such as self-abnegating images, whimpering, sobbing and other sounds of distress, irrational laughter and so on. Kristine Stiles, "Uncorrupted Joy: International Art Actions" in Out of Actions: between performance and the object, 1949 – 1979 edited by Paul Schimmel (Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art: Thames & Hudson, 1998) 243.

causes that otherwise constitute diverse forms of ‘initiation’ into the social order. This level of ‘initiation’ is now very well understood by cultural critics.

Ritual initiation processes, however, draw on religious motifs and here anthropologists’ observations as to the role of the liminal state in archaic initiation practices are useful. The following attributes can suggest evidence of abusive initiation rites that may or may not be Masonic. The theme of birth, death and rebirth, a common theme of religious practice, is often present, but as McCarthy’s work indicates, the rebirthing process is often grotesque and disturbing. Ritualistic settings such as circle formations, defined bodily movements or performance actions can often accompany the work. As Turner suggests, surreal contexts, animal/human hybrids and gender confusion also mark the liminal stage of initiation. The representation of confusing bodily states in performance work such as crawling through tunnels and hallways, as in Nauman and Barney’s work, is another indicator. Magic themes and the presence of images or concepts of doubling, splitting or twinning, as well as spiral forms are common. A narrative that represents a long drawn out search for something that is lost is another indicator. The presence of clowns, as a representation of trickster behaviour, along with grotesque and puerile humour, rude behaviour, crude gestures, and absurd or shocking situations tend to identify abusive fraternal initiation practices. The use of masks and animal costumes is common to ritual abuse processes in both Masonic and non-Masonic contexts. Here Nauman, McCarthy and Ryden’s work, as well as my own work, provide examples of the above attributes.

The most extreme forms of ritual abuse, both Masonic and non-Masonic, contain elements of torture. Artists who represent the theme of torture, either of animals, humans or both, along with other indicators of trauma, in particular a sense of bodily and psychological confusion, are possibly demonstrating its presence. Nauman and Unsworth are the clearest examples here. The role of memory scrambling using spinning techniques is represented in the work of all of the artists discussed. The artists represent this theme either through spinning imagery, objects that are constructed to spin around, or through the artists themselves practising spinning as a subject of performance. Associated with this spinning process is a range of bodily sensations such as a sense of splitting, dislocation and psychic

or physical collapse, accompanied by a ‘rushing’ sound that Nauman has spoken of in his poetry and Barney represents in his films and sculptures.

All of the above are indicators of ritual abuse, but clearly not all ritual abuse is Masonic. For an artist’s work to be categorised as potentially representing Masonic ritual abuse, it would need to contain many of the above indicators, plus any number of the following: the symbolism of the square and compass, the keystone, foundation stone, the all-seeing eye, the presence of black and white squares, archways, spiral staircases, the hourglass, the *vesica piscis*, bagpipes and Scottish themes, bees, double-headed eagles representing the Scottish Rite, skeletons, the skull and crossbones and other symbols, as well as classical mythological themes or ancient Egyptian themes, if accompanied by other indicators. All of the artists discussed employ some Masonic symbols, with Matthew Barney incorporating by far the most examples. Obviously, not all art that contains Masonic symbolism is a reference to Masonic ritual abuse. However, if accompanied by a range of signifiers of abuse, as listed above, and if the artist appears to be struggling with something dark, impenetrable and terrifying, then the work may be indicating such abuses.

A discussion of this type leads implicitly to many questions as to the nature of institutions that are supported by Masonic structures. Koselleck has argued that since the eighteenth century dissident Freemasonry has played a key role in managing the shift of power from the monarchy to the republic, through the recourse to an ‘adaptable’ morality where black can be argued to be white and *vice versa*. This thesis has attempted to explore one aspect of this adaptable morality, that is, the deliberate and systematic manipulation of children’s psyches through a series of terrifying initiatory experiences. Future research needs to address whether such practices reflect broad power shifts such as Koselleck describes and whether such practices replace the Church’s threat of damnation on a public now more educated and intelligent since the instigation of universal education. With intense, irrational fears sown early enough in the developing psyche, even highly educated people can be manipulated.

For the future of the research, a concerted and multi-disciplinary investigation of this area would be an ambitious but rewarding project for the new millennium. Such research has its obvious dangers but my feeling is that there are many indicators that people as a whole are challenging the *status quo* from many perspectives. Some cultural researchers, as Suzanne Perling Hudson points out, need to withdraw from their self-protective intellectual obfuscation to face their own dark reality; but many are also already poised to make these broader connections.⁴ Once it is recognised that a significant number of artists may be expressing or depicting actual experiences of torture, albeit in a jumbled form, as real to the initiated individual as Goya's depictions of abuses in war, and not just fanciful imaginative states, then perhaps this resistance will alter.

This study appears to reveal a hidden form of social control that has a far wider application than present studies of aberrant and anti-establishment cults have so far revealed. Just as the sexual abuse of children is now recognised as a common practice across all social strata in the West, so it may be that the practices being discussed here, of initiatory abuses accompanying various religious institutions, cult groups and secret societies, may be more prevalent than we collectively would have wished. The discussion suggests that these practices may have been handed down from a much earlier system of social organization, that is, the warrior clan system, the tribal basis behind the proliferation of western communities across the globe. The mental shift required now is to recognise how closely our own practices match those of so-called 'primitive' societies, and how deeply embedded these tribal patterns may be within contemporary western culture.

It would appear that the implications of a study of this sort are massive, confirming Hacking's statement that at the basis of memoro-politics is something monumental. This study has only touched the tip of what appears to be a vast subject. Many questions are still to be answered. The future of this line of enquiry will entail a consciousness shift that has already begun with the reports at the coalface by those who have recalled their own abuse, and by artists like Matthew Barney who are asking very confronting questions about the

⁴ Suzanne Perling Hudson, "Beauty and the Status of Contemporary Criticism" October 104 Spring 2003 (New York: MIT Press) 117.

Masonic Order. As Sladen predicted of Barney's work, and as this thesis has attempted to demonstrate, the topic is indeed something emergent and big and its confrontation will be of pivotal significance to our future. Let us hope, as Nietzsche reminds us, we have the spirit to bear it.

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