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

Lynn Brunet *MA (Hons)*
Doctor of Philosophy
November 2007

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being made available for loan and photocopying subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

I hereby certify that the work embodied in this Thesis is the result of original research, which was completed subsequent to admission to candidature for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Signature: …… *Date:* ……..

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project has been generously supported, in terms of supervision, teaching relief and financial backing by the University of Newcastle. Amongst the individuals concerned I would like to thank Dr Caroline Webb, my principal supervisor, for her consistent dedication to a close reading of the many drafts and excellent advice over the years of the thesis writing process. Her sharp eye for detail and professional approach has been invaluable as the thesis moved from the amorphous, confusing and sometimes emotional early stages into a polished end product. I would also like to thank Dr Jean Harkins, my co-supervisor, for her support and feminist perspective throughout the process and for providing an accepting framework in which to discuss the difficult material that formed the subject matter of the thesis. Many thanks are also due to Professor Lyndall Ryan, Director of Research in the School of Humanities, who has cast her feminist and historian's eye over the later drafts, for providing many useful insights and enthusiastically encouraging the furtherance of this research.

Many thanks are also due to friends and colleagues, amongst them, Maureen Clack, a fellow artist, who has listened patiently through all the stages of the research, reflecting on its applications to the art process, and has always been encouraging and supportive; Sharon Walsh, whose professional understanding of the impact of ritual abuse in contemporary Australian society has sustained my belief in the thesis at times when I held doubts about its value; Julia St George, a colleague and friend who has provided me with ongoing support and the chance to share related ideas over the years; and the poet Deborah Westbury who generously shared her thoughts and feelings on being a Mason's daughter. I would also like to thank my students, some who found the subject matter too difficult to embrace, but others who were more open to some of the questions that have been raised in this thesis. Thanks are also due to the artists Matthew Barney, Bruce Nauman, Paul McCarthy, Mark Ryden and Ken Unsworth, whose dedication to pursuing their own truth has provided much valuable material for the discussion of this topic.

Lastly, I need to thank my family, for whom this research has been the most uncomfortable: my daughter Alice, whose own pain was the original prompt towards investigating the impact of irregular Masonic practices on the children of Freemasons; my son Daniel, who has been a calm and supportive influence despite the theme of damaged masculinity that forms the basis of the research; and my parents Monica and Kevin, whose own repressed histories lie buried in the subject under discussion.

CONTENTS

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. Powner 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 Enyclopedia 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 parallelled 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. Traumatised 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 today[62] 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.