

## **Researching, Writing and Publishing about Masonic Ritual Abuse – what are the issues?**

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### Slide 1: Intro

My focus as an art and literary historian is on the historical use of ritual abuse practices and the possibility that artists and writers, even famous ones, might have been grappling with the memories of these practices in their creative work. But my focus in this talk is also about a personal journey of how the training we get as ritual abuse survivors impacts our ability to talk or write about our experiences and how this restriction is mirrored in the social structures around us. My father was a Freemason and my own experience of Masonic abuse did not fully come to me consciously until my mid-40s. I get the sense that many ritual abuse survivors now are remembering their abuse earlier in life, thus giving them more time to work through the memories and come out the other side.

While this paper is about my story there will be the opportunity to reflect on your own story and the issues related to it. So, occasionally I will pause to allow you to write down your own responses, so that there we can have a discussion at the end of the paper.

### Slide 2: A 1950s family

I was a product of the baby-boom in the post WW2 period in Australia in what we were all led to believe was a time of prosperity. Everything was supposedly where it ought to be, at least in the dominant white middle class. It was clear to us all what the ideal family was supposed to look like: the mother was to be in the kitchen with all her new whitegoods, the father, the breadwinner, was the undisputed head of the family and the children were all nicely dressed; all of us would sit together at the dining table for a Sunday roast. Just like in the picture books. In America in the 1950s it was the same, with the artist Norman Rockwell capturing it in his paintings of perfect domestic harmony. My own family followed the pattern to a large extent. But my mother did work from home as a seamstress to supplement the income and my grandmother lived with us and helped out with the domestic chores.

My parents met in England during the war and married in June 1945, a few months before the end of the war. My father was an Australian pilot in the RAAF and my English mother had joined a women's army group called the ATS. They had both suffered great loss during the war: he had gone through the ordeal of his plane being shot down over Holland and being imprisoned in a POW camp and she had lost her first husband after only three short months of marriage. But she said she very happy with my father and described him as "the most loving and gentle man, for his very young age". He was only 21 and she was 24. She came out to Australia on a bride ship with all the other English women who had married Australian men in the heat of war. They lived in Sydney and in 1947 their first child, my sister, was born. I was born in 1953 and my father joined the Masons in 1954. He remained a dedicated and heavily involved member until he died in 2007.

In the decade after World War II Freemasonry saw unprecedented growth in its membership in Australia, peaking in 1958 and then slowly declining. This was primarily due to the initiation of a large cohort of ex-servicemen. The figures suggested a uniquely post-war phenomenon that was part of a global pattern. By 1967, there were 750,000 Freemasons in Britain, 4,000,000 in the U.S. and a million more in the rest of the world (MacKenzie, 1967, 152). A similar pattern of a post-war boom in membership of the Masonic Order also occurred in the United States after the American Civil War (Urban, 2001, 22). This suggests a close correlation between the needs of men who had undergone the traumatic effects of war and what Freemasonry must have provided.

### Slide 3: Don't talk about it – ever, ever, ever

But something else was going on in some of these perfect 1950s households that was never to be discussed, an inexplicable undercurrent that would not even begin to appear in survivor reports until thirty or forty years later. What was this hidden thing that no one wanted to talk about?

As many of you have probably experienced – the first lesson of ritual abuse is DON'T TALK ABOUT IT – EVER, EVER, EVER - How many ways are we taught as children not to talk about what happened to us? Time and time again within the context of the abuse itself – there are demonstrations of what will happen to us, we are threatened and tortured not to talk about it. Then, of course the abusers tell us no one will listen anyway.

But we do try, on occasion. I tried to talk to my mother, but she just got upset and angry. So, I tried to talk to Grandma. She said, “you'll upset your mother. You can see she gets migraines; she has to lie down in a dark room for the pain to go away. You don't want to make her have another headache, do you?” So, I tried to tell my older sister. She slept in the same room as me. Surely, she must know when Daddy comes in the room late at night. But she hides under the blankets. The next morning, I try to tell her. I'm too little to go to school but run after her when she's walking up the hill, dressed in her school uniform and carrying her brown school case. She won't listen to me and walks faster, then starts running away from me. I can't catch up. We learn very early that the abusers were right when they said there's no-one who wants to listen.

As a small child you knew what was happening, but as time goes on you are trained again and again not to remember. We know all the ways they can do this. So that eventually, you don't even *know* that you don't remember. Years pass – and then possibly decades where DON'T TALK and DON'T REMEMBER have become so embedded that even if you feel there's something wrong, you look for it in all the wrong places – in doing things against yourself for no reason, in dangerous choices, in relationships that go wrong.

So what made me create images such as these decades later? Images of utter destruction – so intense that only a wartime concept like Hiroshima would come close to the sense of annihilation within. What had my father passed on to me? How had I, and possibly many other children, been used in this postwar period?

### Slide 4: Feminism, Memory and Trauma

By my early 30s I was now divorced and a single mother with two young children. However, women in my position were being supported in Australia at this time, because we had an opportunity to study. In 1974 our Labor government, headed by Prime Minister Gough

Whitlam, was highly proactive and had made university education free for everyone. It also supported single parents with a living allowance that carried us through the years of study. Sadly, university education is not free in Australia any more, and the burden of student debt makes many decide not to pursue a tertiary education. I was lucky to be at this point in my life during that window of time and will forever be indebted to Gough Whitlam for a university education in allowing me to even know how to ask the right questions about my own life.

It was at uni that I had my first introduction to feminism and it seemed to hit the spot, so I embraced it from that point onward – it was certainly one of the tools that eventually enabled me to confront my own abuse history. A lot of feminist writing was very inspiring for me. “The personal is political” was one of the slogans that made a lot of sense. The American founder of Radical Feminism, Mary Daly, was insistent throughout her texts that women must remember. Remembering is the remedy, she says, stating:

She forgets the identity of her torturer – and often the fact that there was/is a torturer – who gave her the problem she now seeks to solve ... Women often deeply forget who they were before the destruction inflicted upon them in rapist society and they forget the destruction. This forgetting, interlaced with partial memory, debilitates, and it is rooted in fear ... For memories do come in ribbons/chains and, as we have seen, many of these – if a woman allows herself to really feel them – are excruciating (Daly, 1984, 170).

But Mary Daly’s solution of goddess spirituality didn’t seem to be fit somehow. It felt very escapist, in my opinion, and this didn’t seem to be what I was looking for.

#### Slide 5: Don’t remember

Nevertheless, I was creating these rather silly images of a fat lady figure, which some who saw my work did interpret as a type of goddess celebration. These two images were standing screens; the one on the left with the figure tied down over suburbia had my mother and grandmother’s feet supporting it; while the other one, floating like a balloon herself, had the ballet shoes that enabled me to have an artistic escape as a child. I later realised that the screen format was a reference to the Freudian concept of screen memories.

But I was always puzzled as to why my Christabella figure was so important to me as an artist as I created them on and off for seven years during the 1990s. This next image 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. She has wine glasses sitting on her head.

It wasn’t until 2002 that a memory emerged to explain her significance. This image appeared to be a reference to the last time I was involved in a situation of ritual abuse in the Lodge, at the age of fifteen. It occurred on Ladies’ Night, when the wives were invited to a dinner with their Masonic husbands. My mother was on the Ladies Auxiliary that prepared the meal. 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 the room where I was, leaving the rest of the men and the women chatting. In the room was a large, jovial woman. She was a 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 crotch 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. 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. By fifteen I was by now so implicated in their corruption that I had no fight left. As Judith Herman states, "in organized sexual exploitation, full initiation of the child into the cult or sex ring requires participation in the abuse of others."

Slide 6: Don't write about this – But you can make art

Interspersed with the Christabella images were a series of large charcoal 'bear' drawings created from 1995 to '96. They appeared to be a combination of both real bears and teddy bears and seemed to be referring to fear and childhood and the sense of being overpowered. At this point in the artistic process, I was becoming aware that some form of sexual abuse might have occurred in my childhood but had no memories and did not understand the significance of the bears and the fur.

In 2001 a memory returned which explained the meaning of these images. It was when I was four years old and set in the Lodge and 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 ever write about it.

This memory was particularly related to the writing of my PhD thesis on Masonic themes and trauma in contemporary art, which I had begun in the year 2000 (Brunet, 2007). Until the release of this memory I had literally felt that I would be killed if I wrote this material.

Their methods suggest that the Masons were very aware that their victims would need some way to release the inner tension created through the repeated traumatic ordeals, and they were specifically encouraging me towards an artistic form of expression to do this. This led me to asking whether the Masons, sometimes referred to as 'the cult of the Establishment', could be having an impact on cultural production in the West more broadly through their ritual abuse practices.

Slide 7: Don't remember – Don't talk – Don't write about it

So, this can be the first set of issues for a ritual abuse survivor who wants to try to understand these practices and write about them. Embedded so deeply into our psyches from early childhood is: DON'T REMEMBER – DON'T TALK – DON'T WRITE ABOUT IT.

It is these internal barriers that we must continually deal with. In my own case, while I can write about these issues relatively easily now, talking about them still affects me. I used to be able to deliver an art history lecture quite easily, if it wasn't dealing with these themes. But talking about ritual abuse is still difficult for me and this is why I often need to read my papers. I still cannot trust myself not to become tongue-tied or overly nervous. There were many ways in which they reinforced DON'T TALK on me. One of them was a so-called 'magic' torture of having a clamp placed on my tongue while watching a demonstration of an ox-tongue being sliced down the middle and then tied into a knot.

So, now I'm wondering whether you might want to think about your own experiences for a moment and perhaps see if any of these questions are relevant for you. And here I am thinking

of both survivors and therapists. So, I'll give you a minute or so to perhaps jot down some notes and we can refer back to them at question time.

If you were amnesic to your past, what made you begin to remember?

Did you try to tell someone before you stopped remembering?

Did anyone listen?

What things didn't you question?

Was there something that got you asking the right questions and that led you out of your amnesic state?

Was there anything that you were grateful for in this journey?

#### Slide 8: Neil Brick on ritual abuse and Freemasonry

By 1999 I had named my abusers, at least for myself, and was realising that Freemasonry as well as a church organisation were involved. During my research I came across a reference to the words of Neil Brick that were in a 1996 Australian journal for survivors of ritual abuse. Neil states:

I believe that many Masons perpetrate Occult Ritual Abuse. Their ties reach into government (federal and local), as well as some large 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. (Brick, 1996/2025).

Now I was beginning to realise that I had been one of these 'most people' who had no idea that they had been raised in a cult.

Many cults are more clearly defined as separate bodies or religious groups, often involving separate or completely different lifestyles to the norm. But in Freemasonry's case it is so much part of mainstream culture that you aren't even aware that you're in a cult. Outwardly, you live a 'normal' life as a child, you go to a normal school, do all the things that every other child in the community does, like sporting activities and dance classes, you go camping with your family every summer, like all the other families do; you go to Sunday school and learn about Jesus. I remember when I told one of my old school friends in more recent years about my history, she said "but you were just like everyone else." However, in some deep part of your psyche you are completely different.

#### Slide 9: The Mason's Daughter, 1999

In the mid-1990s I was now working as a lecturer in creative arts and continued to make art as part of my research. A solo exhibition I called *The Mason's Daughter* was shown in 1999. It was a series of collages depicting bird-headed figures in surreal settings. By now I was becoming conscious that Freemasonry was a key part of my story, but I was still not sure in what way. The work grew out of a bodily response during a university graduation ceremony, as a response to a fear of regalia and ceremony. I 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. 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 feels like I'm 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.

In the year 2000 I showed my father one or two of these artworks and his answer was that I must have reached some sort of spiritual stage. He likened it to the Second Degree in Freemasonry. I had no idea, at the time, what the Second Degree even was. In the next year a memory surfaced of a group of men in long robes and wearing bird-headed masks; a part of me could see that they were wearing black patent-leather shoes under their robes and so I knew that they were men dressed up, and not other-worldly figures.

In 2002, having uncovered memories of my father's sexual abuse and of Masonic abuse, I confronted my parents. I was fortunate in that my mother, now at this later stage in her life, accepted and believed what I was saying. She wrote me several letters of encouragement, including saying that she was going to help my father remember, as he was totally amnesic towards his actions. But he had long been trying to work out what was wrong with him – and was looking into all sorts of psychological and mystical concepts, including Carl Jung, to try to understand himself. In fact, he had spent ten years working with my mother on her dreams using Jungian dream analysis, and eventually she remembered her own sexual abuse as a child. He was hoping that she would be able to do the same for him, but she didn't feel competent to do that.

After confronting him, I felt an internal shift in a very visceral way, of my own personal power increasing as his power over me decreased. By 2004 he was in a nursing home with the onset of Alzheimer's disease. He was still very lucid and agile but was doing some strange things, drawing up some sort of military plan in spidery handwriting. One night he escaped from the nursing home over a high wall and climbed a tree in a park nearby, while police were searching for him below. They were picking up his beeper that he had around his neck, but they didn't think to look up, so didn't find him. The next morning, he was back in his room as if nothing had happened. I spoke to him that day and asked him what he was doing. He said "I'm working with the Chief of Police to get the children out of the cult." In the rest of our conversation, he told me about the group that he was in, including the names of some of the men. He was actually making a confession, but I think part of him was still seeing himself on the side of the police, the good guys. It wasn't until later, towards his death, that I could see the complete and utter anguish in his eyes as he seemed to have faced more of what he had actually done.

This part of my story raises another issue for the research – I am well-aware that most survivors do not get this sort of affirmation of their memories and struggle to believe if these things really happened. I was more than fortunate to have had my father's admission. So, whenever I wonder whether the work I'm doing is worthwhile or not, I remind myself of this.

Another question for the discussion later: Has anyone had their memories validated by people in their own life?

#### Slide 10: Incest and amnesia

This whole strange experience was making me wonder about Freemasonry. What power does it have to completely hoodwink a man like my father to do things so thoroughly against his own better nature? It propelled me into a focus on men's experiences of this form of abuse as well as the writing by men who knew something about secret societies and how they worked.

As we know from Freud in *Totem and Taboo* (1940, p. 52) he observed that the breaking of a taboo can be accompanied by amnesia.

Some of the French philosophers seemed to be useful and so I looked at examples of male writers, some of whom had belonged to secret societies, to see if they had any useful insights. Georges Bataille (1897–1962) was one such example. In a discussion of war and the sacred he 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’, of what can be a heightened, even mystical state brought about through shock. Bataille argued 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. 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 (Bataille, 1994, p. 121).

A story quoted by Jean Baudrillard (1929–2007), another French philosopher, 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” (Baudrillard, 1993, 22). As Baudrillard suggests, and depending on the makeup of the individuals concerned, this amnesia can be shared by both parties. For some men involved in these ritual orgies, these acts can constitute an unconscious attempt to expose their own traumatically repressed memories both to themselves and others. My own father was in this category as at one time he told me of his sexual abuse in childhood by a Catholic priest. But his shift to perpetrator status through the Masonic cult then acted as a barrier to further self-questioning.

#### Slide 11: Don’t name it – Don’t do this work

Another French philosopher who talked about these matters was Jean-François Lyotard (1924–1998), and I began my thesis on Masonic themes and trauma in contemporary art with a quote from him, saying: “We must examine the coexistence of state-regulated cults ... 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” (Lyotard, 1993, 92).

But even he did not name Freemasonry as the major state-regulated cult in France that he was clearly talking about. Freemasonry in France played a key role in the French Revolution and then was pivotal in the secularisation of France in the 1860s and 70s, particularly in the field of education, which had been dominated by Catholicism. But their history shows a very loose sense of organisational control over the rituals, such that a wide variety of practices, many considered immoral, were allowed to continue uncontested.

What was becoming clear to me was a taboo within academia in my own field of art history of naming these state-regulated cults. To actually focus on Freemasonry, a world-wide organisation, sanctioned by the state in many countries, was to cause a lot of resistance towards my work from within academia, even though I always emphasised that it was the *misuse* of the rituals that was the problem. Once I started to talk about my research amongst colleagues, it

was often met with an odd little laugh, and comments along the lines of how quaint these old men were, practising their strange little rituals. But I also discovered how many lecturers in the arts and humanities had Freemasons in their families – their fathers, grandfathers, uncles and so on. It was extraordinary. I also found this amongst some of my art students, a number of whom were making quite disturbing imagery and telling me that they had Masonic members in the family. Some of the older ones told me stories about their own abuse experiences. I was also starting to discover the extent that the universities I'd worked at were headed by Freemasons. My experiences within academia were showing me that the word 'secular' did not necessarily mean that there was no influence of a religious system on the academic world, but that it may have shifted to another ritual-based belief system of an occult nature – Freemasonry.

Funnily enough, though, when I first began my thesis at the university where I was working at the time, one member of the campus management came to see me and took me to a quiet place on the campus grounds. I knew he was a Freemason, because the secretaries knew the social calendars of upper management. However, he actually didn't seem to be surprised when I described the subject of my research and didn't deny my claim that it looked like ritual abuse was occurring in some Masonic lodges. But in an attempt to direct me away from the Masons, he told me to go and look at golf clubs; he was saying that this is another place where these practices occur.

When I completed my 100,000-word thesis I had three examiners read it. One of them took an extraordinarily long time to mark it and the university was sending her reminders to hurry up. I later discovered that her own father was a Mason and she was having a lot of trouble dealing with the content, but she did pass it. Another person's only response to it was one short paragraph; failing it and basically saying "You can't say this" and with no explanation as to why. Luckily, I was only required to have 2 out of 3 to pass it, to qualify for the degree.

At one university I worked at after gaining my PhD I was invited to put in a proposal for a research topic. So I devised a fairly simple proposal to interview a series of Australian artists whose work was clearly containing traumatic and ritualistic elements and to simply ask if they had any members of initiatory organisations in their family. The topic was approved by the ethics committee and I was allowed to get started on it. The very first artist I interviewed who was working on her Masters degree at the time was doing very traumatic performance work along with sexual abuse themes. She told me that her father and uncles were all Freemasons. I had only finished interviewing her when I was called to my supervisor's office and told that 'the university says you must stop doing this work'. When I shared this with my colleagues one of them laughed and said "don't you know they're all Masons at the top?"

As an academic in art history in Australia I began giving papers dealing with these themes in the artworld. But despite some of these papers being well-received by the audiences, none were ever accepted for publication in my discipline. I suppose I had naively assumed that university was where challenging the status quo was encouraged but I was now getting the same refrain as I'd had as a child – DON'T WRITE ABOUT IT. The definite message was that research into Freemasonry, especially from the perspective of critiquing it and exposing the misuse of the rituals, was strictly taboo.

Only one of my papers, on the American performance artist Matthew Barney, was published in a US journal and subsequently incorporated into reading lists at two US universities (Brunet, 2009, *Homage to Freemasonry*). Matthew Barney was overtly using Masonic references and dressing in his own version of Masonic regalia in work that showed at the Guggenheim in New



York in 2003. I was able to argue that there were many references to abuse themes in his work, but he was not willing to talk to me about his use of Masonic themes.

I have since discovered that some of my colleagues who have realised that the ritual abuse exists, but who want to pursue an academic career in Australia, are being encouraged to play down the ritual abuse aspects, to subsume them under the more general concept of child sexual abuse, which is now, of course, collectively acknowledged, and not to base their research primarily on ritual abuse themes. This is so contrary to the usual practice in academic research, where you're often expected to focus on a discrete area in order to really get in to the meat of the subject; in science, for example. I remember one senior academic saying just that to me – that I should just hide it under the broad umbrella of abuse, but I didn't agree. So, my focussed study into Masonic ritual abuse was even more likely to guarantee that my work would be quashed within my field in my country.

#### Slide 12: Francis Bacon – iconic British painter

At this point, realising all the problems of dealing with these issues amongst contemporary artists, I decided to turn to historical examples. The English artist Francis Bacon (1909–1992) with all of his agonised distorted figures and alcohol-ridden lifestyle was an obvious example (Brunet, 2009, *A Course of Severe and Arduous Trials*). He was raised in an English military family stationed in Ireland and lived through the Irish Civil War. He was also very open about the fact that he had been sexually abused as a boy by his father's stable hands. He hinted that his father, a retired British army officer, knew about this or even encouraged it, as he saw his son as a weakling and was adamant that his son needed to toughen up.

Many critics and commentators on Bacon's work have noted that his images are difficult to interpret. However, Bacon refused to interpret his paintings, claiming that there was no literal meaning to them. He always said, though, that they were patterns of his nervous system projected onto the canvas: "I'm just trying to make images as accurately off my nervous system as I can. I don't even know what half of them mean", he said. He claimed that he was lucky as a painter because he said, "images just drop in as if they were handed down to me." The possibility that these images might relate to childhood in some way may be reflected in his statement: "I think artists stay much closer to their childhood than other people ... they remain far more constant to those early sensations." Bacon's figures appear to be undergoing traumatic experiences, including a type of crucifixion, and his self-portraits show intense fracturing and angst-like expressions. His paintings often contain curtains and his famous series of screaming popes set against layers of curtains are regarded as some of the most powerful and disturbing images of the twentieth century.

Historically, a large number of secret societies have existed in Ireland. The English officer class stationed there in Bacon's youth were generally Freemasons, so while there were no surviving papers after the Irish Civil War, it is very likely that his father would have been a Mason. I was able to demonstrate that some of Bacon's paintings looked very much like illustrations of the bloodthirsty oaths taken by the Masonic candidates, while the screaming pope images and the curtains related to the Royal Arch degree, a ritual regarded as one of the most terrifying and elaborate. His many images of men in their dark suits, with their bowler hats and umbrellas suggested the Protestant-based Orange Order, otherwise known as the Men of No Popery, who adopted Masonic forms for their own rituals and regalia. Many of Bacon's paintings have stark orange backgrounds, although the artist could never explain why he used this colour so much. The Orange Order is well-known for its hatred of Catholicism and sideshows displaying a

mockery of the Pope go back to the Restoration period in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. So, it is possible that a screaming or raucously laughing pope could have been inserted as a final terrifying vision for the young Bacon in a Royal Arch ritual.

I was fortunate this time, in that this study was published in a series dedicated to Irish Studies and I presented the findings at a number of conferences, including one in Belfast. But when I gave a paper at an Australian conference on war in Europe, the organiser, a Professor of History, came up to me after my paper and said DON'T DO THIS WORK ON SECRET SOCIETIES and walked off. Shocked, I was suddenly thrust back into the childhood rules of DON'T TALK – DON'T WRITE about it.

### Slide 13: Samuel Beckett – iconic Irish playwright

Another French philosopher, Gilles Deleuze (1925–1995) observed something about the spaces that Francis Bacon and the Irish playwright Samuel Beckett represented in their work – they each created bleak, ritualistic spaces and the figures within them “trundling about fitfully” without ever leaving these spaces (2002, 40). But he made no attempt to uncover what these spaces actually were. Having discovered the links with Masonic themes in Bacon's work I wondered if something similar might be going on in Beckett's plays. His *Waiting for Godot* is often described as the most famous play of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In his young adulthood Beckett suffered from terrible depression, night terrors and anxiety attacks that led him, after leaving home, to undergo a two-year period of psychoanalysis in London. But the therapy proved largely ineffectual with the analyst finding no clear cause for his extreme level of anxiety and simply recommended that he write. The themes of mental distress, inner turmoil, and a sense of emotional void runs throughout his work. Beckett's father and grandfather were highly respected businessmen in the building trade in Dublin and both were Freemasons.

Like Bacon, Beckett did not know where his ideas had come from, saying “I don't know where the writing has come from and I am often quite surprised when I see what I have committed to paper” (Bair, 1990, 17). He also said: “I have always had the feeling that somebody inside me had been murdered. Murdered before I was born. I had to find that person and try to bring him back to life” (Juliet, 1995, 181). In a letter to a friend Beckett wrote: “The real consciousness is the chaos, the grey commotion of mind, with no premises or conclusions or problems or solutions or cases or judgements. I lie for days on the floor, or in the woods, accompanied and unaccompanied, in a coenaesthetic of mind, a fullness of mental self-aesthesia that is entirely useless” (Knowlson, 1996, 269).

I was able to demonstrate the multiple similarities between Beckett's plays and Masonic Royal Arch rites. *Waiting for Godot* was said to spring “full blown from Beckett's head in a very brief time” (Bair, 404), suggesting the presence of an intuitive force active in the work's creation. The aim of the Royal Arch degree, if practised legitimately, is meant to ‘exalt’ the initiate towards the experience of a mystical vision. However, in Beckett's play, the plot, its characters and the actions they take appear to be a mockery of this degree, suggesting that the author may have been exposed to a parodied version that also contained abusive elements. One of his novels called *The Unnamable*, written in a stream-of-consciousness style, portrays a long, introspective search into a series of vague, unnameable experiences. It was first written in French and he said: “in my last book *L'innommable*, there's complete disintegration. No ‘I’, no ‘have’, no ‘being’, no nominative, no accusative, no verb. There's no way to go on” (Junker,

1995, 97). The intensity of this inner excursion was to be such a test of nerves that he chose to break up the writing by working on his first play, *Waiting for Godot*. My study of this novel demonstrated traces of Masonic rites, Druidic practices and physical and psychological torture that aligned with present-day reports of ritual abuse.

The major issue in doing this work with iconic figures like these two men is that new approaches to their work are not necessarily welcome. I had no responses at all from the Bacon and Beckett scholars. Beckett was a Nobel laureate and there are annual festivals of his plays in Ireland. One response did come, though, from a Freemason in Ireland as there was a Beckett festival being held in a Masonic Lodge in Enniskillen. He cited my study in a local paper and didn't seem surprised by my conclusions, a little bit like my experience with the member of the campus management. But generally, the Masons say nothing about my work – silence in the face of criticism is their *modus operandi*.

By this stage I was realising that I could not do this work in the university sector, at least not in my own field. I'd written another full manuscript about the work of a famous Australian artist, Peter Booth, who had grown up in Sheffield in the UK where his father worked in the steel works. He had always said that his frightening images of figures in bizarre costumes and groups of naked men in the snow were based on his childhood dreams and nightmares. I had identified what looked like the practices of another fraternity, a working class group called the Oddfellows, in his work. I presented my research at Australian art history conferences, but despite positive audience responses, my papers were never published. I then presented at a conference in a university in Sheffield, but the audience was very angry with me, for suggesting that their fathers and grandfathers could have been involved in such practices. There was one Scotsman, though, who spoke up for me at question time, saying that these practices do happen. I tried every art publisher in Australia and some in England, with no luck.

#### Slide 14: Jung's *Red Book* and *Black Books*

I have already talked in depth about Jung's work at Survivorship so won't say too much about the content of my research here. Whereas both Bacon and Beckett were unable or unwilling to penetrate the deeper layers of their work, Jung's role as a psychiatrist allowed him to interrogate his fantasies in great depth. On my first read of *The Red Book* it looked very much like he was describing ritual abuse. His grandfather and namesake, Carl Gustav Jung (1794–1864), was a Grand Master of the Swiss Masonic Lodge Alpina, but as I discovered later, he also had an uncle, Ernst Karl Jung (1841–1920), who was a Grand Master.

With this next study of *The Red Book* I was fortunate when I approached Karnac, an English publisher that had been strongly supporting the research into ritual abuse and it was accepted straight away. This was so unexpected and I was shocked. However, at the time Karnac was being transitioned into the Routledge umbrella and it was sent, along with other manuscripts, to be published through Routledge. I certainly wasn't unhappy about that as Routledge is one of the leading academic publishers.

All through this Jung research I was wondering how the Jungians would react to it and, fortunately, I was given the opportunity to present a paper on it at the annual conference of the International Association for Jungian Studies. It was quite confronting for them, I think. Another scholar, Richard Noll, author of *The Jung Cult*, had already experienced what it was like to challenge the established Jungian community, and was treated very badly, even to the extent that he had one of his books blocked at the printing stage (personal correspondence).

While there has been some critiquing of Jung's work within the Jungian community, he is, of course another icon and his followers are, again, pretty entrenched in their views.

Jung's journals, known as the *Black Books*, were released in 2020. This presented an opportunity for me to test my thesis. But this time, going back to Routledge was not to be so fruitful. The commissioning editor was very supportive saying that it looked like a very interesting follow-up study, but it took the main editors nine months to make up their mind about it, finally telling me that it was too controversial. After this, I tried a whole raft of academic publishers over the next twelve months and had no success. I wondered if word had got around amongst the mainstream publishing sector and whether there might be a similar situation in the academic publishing world as I found in my years in the university system. So, I decided to try self-publishing. It wasn't easy for me, as a member of an older generation, and it was a huge learning curve, but it all came together eventually and it was published in 2024. Fortunately, I was given another opportunity to present my latest research at the International Association for Jungian Studies conference, and they were a little more open-minded than I had supposed.

The *Black Books* revealed that Jung *was* working out what his fantasies were about and where they might have come from. He first realised that they were describing mystery plays, that they were a form of ritual theatre, that they involved a lot of trickery and hypnosis, or creation of trance states through crystal-gazing. The trickery included being made to believe that he had eaten the liver of a dead child, but realised that it was a theatrical setup. "The curtain drops. What dreadful game has been played here?" he writes (*Black Book 3*, p. 136). When he describes an image of a prophet laying on a boy, he describes it as "that holy-evil pleasure of which you do not know whether it be a virtue or a vice, with that pleasure which is lusty repulsiveness, lecherous fear, sexual immaturity" (Jung, 2009, 368). Jung records extensive conversations with his soul in the journals and on October 9, 1916 he presses his soul to at least provide a glimpse into what these fantasies are about. She answers with a series of questions: "Temples in deserts? Secret societies? Ceremonies? Rituals? Colorful robes? Golden images of Gods of terrible aspect?" (*Black Book 6*, 268). Jung starts thinking conspiratorially, asking: "Have you heard of those dark ones who roamed incognito alongside those who ruled the day, conspiratorially causing unrest? Who devised cunning things and did not shrink from any crime to honor their God?" (Jung, 2009, 341). He also comments on the power structure behind this intention and mentions the Americans and the idea that there is a secret assembly of world delegates who play a role in this power structure (*Black Book 7*, 147, n. 1). But even though he may have privately come to realise some of this, Jung admits that he still carries the deep pain of his experiences and cannot speak about it to others. On September 5, 1921 he writes of the isolation and coldness that this private knowledge imposes, describing it as "a bottomless abyss, a silence, a wordless solitude for the rest of one's life" (*Black Book 7*, 205).

What was disappointing about Jung was that he effectively did what Freud did when he introduced the Oedipus complex to cover up the cases of incest that he saw, setting back the recognition of child sexual abuse by 100 years. In Jung's case, instead of using his influence and position to challenge the system that he had identified through his own fantasies, he brought in his theory of the Collective Unconscious. This theory has not been retained within mainstream psychology due to its unscientific basis, but it did aid to redirect the focus away from these ritual abuse practices by many decades, particularly among those who may have unknowingly been survivors.

My own desire to research into Jung was heavily influenced by the fact that my father spent ten years during the 1970s using a Jungian dream analysis method with my mother, as I mentioned earlier. She was struggling with her mental health at the time. Determined for her not to see a psychiatrist, he encouraged her to record her dreams during the week and they would analyse them together over the weekend. In the end she did remember her sexual abuse as a child and her mental health greatly improved. But I'm pretty sure that the Masons encouraged him to use Jung. It is very likely they would have known that Jung himself was a survivor and that he had never fully understood his own mental state or openly challenged the Freemasons. His journals where he did ask some of these questions were not to be published for another 50 years. The issue here is that someone who could have changed the course of history towards an earlier understanding of these practices, could not seem to break through his own programming and was overwhelmed by the social conventions of his time.

Question for the group: What has facing these experiences helped you to realise?

#### Slide 15: William Golding (1911–1993) – English novelist and playwright

My latest body of research is into the novels of the English author, William Golding, author of *Lord of the Flies*. He, like Beckett, received a Nobel prize in literature for his work. I remember reading *Lord of the Flies* at school. It was required reading in early high school and apparently it was studied at schools right throughout the British empire. He was a school teacher at a Church of England school and so had a lot of experience with boys. But he was also another author who struggled with terrifying but inexplicable childhood experiences, so much so that they haunted his dreams right throughout his life. He grew up in a house in Marlborough in Wiltshire that had dark, eerie cellars and he described some of his frightening experiences occurring there. The house also backed onto a church graveyard. His mother was from Cornwall and frightened him with ghost stories and strange beliefs, adding to his fears. His maternal grandfather was a Freemason and from all accounts, he was a wild and disreputable one, although he died before Golding was born. Like Bacon, Golding struggled with alcoholism. It is interesting that his house was a one-minute walk from the local Masonic hall.

Talking about his parents and all these fears when he was a boy, he wrote: "How could I talk to them about darkness and the irrational? They knew so much, had such certainties ... Then I found Edgar Allan Poe's *Tales of Mystery and Imagination*. I read them with a sort of shackled fascination and recognized their quality, knew they were reports, knew that he had been in the same place ... From such an impasse, we escape or die or go mad." (Golding, 2013, 192–193). He described climbing trees as an escape, something I used to do as a child. Children die in many of his novels and themes of terror, trauma, sacrifice and paedophilia run throughout them. His novels are very layered and complex, though far more structured than Jung's ramblings in his journals. Because there is something unfathomable about his work, Golding has frequently been portrayed by critics as an author who does not fully know what he is writing, as if he is struggling to understand it. But when interviewed about this question in 1959, he said: "I plan a novel from beginning to end – I work it out completely – then start writing. I'm against the picture of the artist as the starry-eyed visionary not really in control or knowing what he does. I think, I almost prefer the word craftsman ... like all the old shipbuilders."

In his novel *The Spire* (1964) I have found that this careful crafting is exactly what he was doing. It is set in the Middle Ages with the building of a new spire on a cathedral, but the foundations are completely inadequate to support it. Using a stream-of-consciousness technique, the novel shows the gradual psychological disintegration of the protagonist, the

Dean whose lofty project this is. It features the old building practices of the medieval stonemasons, but there is a subtext running through it that no scholars have yet examined. What I've found is that Golding has deliberately encoded multiple features of the Masonic Royal Arch rite throughout the novel, to such an extent that it looks like he may have been initiated into Freemasonry himself. This would have possibly occurred during World War 2 when he was a naval officer; I will have to check this out. Woven into this subtext is an angry critique of Freemasonry and its relationship to the Church of England. In 1952, while Golding was at Bishop Wordsworth's school, a book by Walton Hannah called *Darkness Visible* was published that challenged the Church of England for its close association with the Freemasons, as many Anglican ministers were, and still are, Masons. It led to a scandal as the King, George VI, and the Archbishop of Canterbury at the time were both Masons.

In the novel Golding appears to be making connections between the Royal Arch rite and the traumatic memories from his childhood; it looks like, at some point, he was put through a process aimed at achieving a mystical state, but through profound shock and terror. Throughout the novel Golding cites a whole raft of physiological and psychological symptoms that the protagonist experiences. These match, to the letter, a set of symptoms observed by a group of scientists working since the 1980s into what was termed the Physio-Kundalini Syndrome, described as "a mystical experience with psychotic features" (Bentov, 1988; Greyson, 1993, 56). These negative effects were due mainly to attempting the practice without the correct and often years-long preparation through meditation. What Golding seems to be talking about is its use on a child or youth and at a later point in the novel, he reveals that witchcraft has played a role alongside these Masonic elements. At one point in the novel Golding describes the spire as "this great finger sticking up" (101), a very clear image of disdain.

Having discovered so much about Golding's understanding of the abusive use of Freemasonry in this novel I am really looking forward to going carefully through his other novels to see where he goes with this. He is different, again, to Bacon and Beckett, who claimed not to know where their visionary themes came from, or even Jung, who eventually seemed to have worked some of it out. Golding seems to *know* the source, but he nevertheless struggled with how to write about it at a time where the whole concept of ritual abuse had never even been raised.

#### Slide 16: The public sharing of this work

I've been publicly sharing my work into the abusive use of Masonic rites on my academia.edu site for 6 years and my papers are now being accessed on a daily basis by people from all over the world. This is understandable, given that Freemasonry is an international organisation. The site is intended for academics of all kinds to share their work, along with students and interested laymen. By far the greatest interest, by a long shot, comes from the US. I now get about 300–400 new visitors a month with 90% of those from the US. Now and again, I get Masonic ritual abuse survivors thanking me and saying that my research has confirmed their own experiences. Since I posted my paper on Masonic Ritual Abuse from the Survivorship conference in May last year, this paper is the most frequently visited.

One of the responses I've had to this paper was from a member of the General Synod of the Church of England, who said he is using my research to introduce a Private Member's Motion for church ministers to have to register their membership of the Freemasons. He said that a report commissioned in 1987 by the General Synod recommended further consideration of this matter but mysteriously had never come back to Synod. The issue of whether members of the Anglican Church can also be Freemasons is not a new one. As I mentioned earlier, the book

*Darkness Visible*, by Walton Hannah published in 1952, has been continually republished since, and a series of critiques of Freemasonry by others have followed, such as Stephen Knight's *The Brotherhood* in 1983.

But there is a darker side to this increased interest in my work, as a cohort of those who are looking it up are citing their own interests as Francis Bacon, Samuel Beckett, Ritual abuse, mind control, and research into Freemasonry, the exact tags I use. There is no way that all of these people are researching these themes themselves. They are only ever looking at my work and not uploading papers of their own, that is, they are not scholars. Apart from a few, they have been mostly been from the US. They generally appear as women, sometimes with photos, and rarely state anything about themselves. I'm absolutely certain that they are Freemasons posing as women and using made-up names. In some cases, I've found that some of them are using real names and photos that may well be of their own wives or daughters. They probably think they're giving me a message, but what they're telling me is how widespread Masonic ritual abuse might be in the US, with many of the victims totally unaware that their relatives have such power over them.

I started to think of the practices of ritual abuse, and Masonic abuse in particular, as a sort of pyramid scheme. In my thesis I argued that some of the key Masonic rituals are allegorically representing an understanding of the way trauma works on the psyche and, specifically, how repeated experiences of near-death trauma have the capacity to create amnesia. This amnesia is often long-term, ensuring that the survivors remain amnesic into their own child-bearing years, thus enabling the chance for the perpetrating relatives to infect the next generation of children. And so it can go on, generation after generation, until the chain is broken through the active retrieval of the memories. But there is so much incredible work that has been done over the last thirty years and is being done now, and I am particularly in awe of those therapists who can sit so empathetically with the pain of others, over years in many cases. But sometimes it feels like we're only ever mopping up after the event, after the damage has been done. The further challenges, as many of you would have considered, is not only the exposure of these practices but how can we ever address their prevention.

I'll leave it there and we can now have some discussion. Some of the issues raised:

- The commands of don't talk and so on, enforced on the children
- The power of enforced amnesia that can last for years or even decades
- The collective inability to address the existence of ritual abuse
- The failure by key people who could have changed the course of history towards an earlier understanding of these practices
- The failure of members of secret societies, who know these practices exist, to speak out
- Prevention: how do we even begin to start?

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