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Reva Wolf and Alisa Luxenberg, eds., *Freemasonry and the Visual Arts from the Eighteenth Century Forward: Historical and Global Perspectives*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2019. xviii + 286 pp. Notes, bibliography, and index. \$160 U.S. (hb). ISBN 9781501337963. \$36.95 U.S. (pb). ISBN 9781501366925.

Review by Kenneth Loiselle, Trinity University.

If a French Freemason were to seek out the higher degree of Chevalier Élu in the years before 1789, his ritual journey would begin inside a dimly lit room of his masonic lodge. An imposing painting of a dark cave occupied an entire wall, allegorically depicting the moral progression of a Mason up to that point. Inside the cave a man is seated placidly on a rock, gazing intently upon yet another painting within this larger canvas. This painting within a painting illustrates the murder of Hiram Abiff, a fictional character introduced in the third degree of Mastership who represents the model Mason because of his absolute steadfastness in upholding secrecy—he refused to give up esoteric knowledge to his subordinates even in the face of certain death. Before continuing the ritual action, the candidate for the Chevalier Élu rank was to become part of the painting’s drama by simulating the contemplative stance of the man in the cave; his lodge master was to encourage him to meditate on Abiff’s demise. In this way, Freemasonry effectively mobilized the visual arts as a powerful vehicle to transmit the value systems and behavioral conventions of the fraternity.[1]

This opening sequence of the Chevalier Élu ceremony kept returning to the present reviewer’s mind while reading through the stimulating essay collection under review. Art historians Reva Wolf and Alisa Luxenberg have assembled a thought-provoking and wide-ranging collection of essays whose guiding thread is the exploration of the “centrality of the arts to the history of Freemasonry, and...Freemasonry’s significance for the history of art” (p. 1). Their helpful introduction highlights the importance Freemasonry placed on visualizing the symbolic objects of the organization since its founding in the early decades of the eighteenth century. The eleven authors investigate the intersection between the visual arts—including architecture, figurines, jewels, marginalia, masonic certificates, meeting invitations, ritual objects, paintings, photography, seals, and trade cards—and Freemasonry from the Enlightenment period to the early twenty-first century, and cover a very large geographic zone spanning from India to New England. Although most of the contributors hail from art history, voices from heritage professionals and performance studies are also included. Rather than simply reproduce the chronological structure of the volume, this review will proceed thematically by grouping disparate chapters under one of two general approaches to the topic of Freemasonry and the visual arts found within this collection: (1) architectural and symbolic affinities between

Freemasonry and broader artistic movements and (2) the use and function of visual mediums (painting, engravings, photography, etc.) within Freemasonry.

In the opening piece, David Martín López explores the connections between Freemasonry and the architectural projects of the Marquis of Pombal. Following the devastating 1755 earthquake in Portugal, Pombal supervised the architectural rebirth of Lisbon's ravaged city center where López finds potential masonic symbolism. López contends that the architects who worked under Pombal's administration admired the Palladian style, which emphasized perfectly proportioned symmetrical buildings, and this overlapped with the "architectural metaphors" (p. 26) present within the ur-text of British Freemasonry, James Anderson's *Constitutions* (1723). The connection between Anderson and Palladianism remains undeveloped, and there is no evidence to demonstrate definitively that the realization of the Royal Square of Commerce in the Baixa district was the consummation of masonic beliefs. It is not even clear if Pombal himself was a Freemason, as López points out at the beginning of his chapter. In more compelling fashion in chapter seven, Talinn Grigor likewise tackles the masonic role in shaping architectural forms, focusing on the Persian Revival from the early nineteenth through the mid-twentieth centuries in what is today India and Iran. Established in 1843, the Lodge Rising Star in Bombay welcomed Parsi notables who used Freemasonry as a key conduit where Persian revivalist and masonic symbolism overlapped considerably. One of the most convincing pieces of evidence Grigor marshals is the presence of a rising sun emerging from the sea that sat at the center of a pediment on the façade of a Zoroastrian fire temple constructed in 1891. This image undoubtedly was of masonic provenance as this temple received funds from individuals who were members of The Rising Star, and a similar symbol could be found on a masonic medallion a couple of years later. Furthermore, the triangular pediment structure that marked this and other fire temples was not indigenous to Persian architectural history, and yet was commonplace in masonic visual imagery. In Tehran, Grigor likewise identifies the pediment as a potential trace of "covert masonic symbolism" (p. 171).

Like the Marquis de Pombal, there is no record that Spanish artist Francisco de Goya joined Freemasonry. In chapter three, Reva Wolf nonetheless invites us to reconsider his masonic affiliation and, by extension, the possible masonic symbolism in his work. She closely examines some of his movements around the Mediterranean littoral and imagery uncovered within his private correspondence during the late eighteenth century. In 1771, Goya traveled to Italy as a young man and spent time with individuals in Marseille who were known Freemasons. Wolf implicitly recognizes that such hospitality was not unique to Freemasonry, and therefore only tentatively advances this evidence as an indication of Goya's masonic affiliation. Her following analysis of Goya's letters from the late 1770s to the early 1790s offers further proof that the artist was familiar with masonic symbolism, or at least the symbols available to Freemasons. One finds in his correspondence the all-seeing disembodied eye—a visual metaphor for God's omnipotence that was quite popular among Christian mystics throughout the early modern era—as well as certain hand gestures that resembled to some degree physical movements described in later masonic exposures. In addition, Goya adopted the custom found among Masons, as well as many clubs and para-masonic organizations in the eighteenth century, of using the language of fictive kinship in these letters, referring to friends as his *hermanos*.^[2] Goya also lived with a possible Freemason in Cadiz during an illness in 1793. Taken together, these strands of suggestive evidence appear compelling enough to revisit Goya's work through a masonic prism to assess the degree to which masonic symbolism intersected with his artistic production.

Though not a Freemason, John Singleton Copley painted a number of prominent brethren in and around Boston during the third quarter of the eighteenth century. The portraits David Bjelajac examines in chapter four are of men who joined lodges affiliated both with the Ancient and Modern modes of colonial Freemasonry: the physician Joseph Warren and the silversmiths Nathaniel Hurd and Paul Revere. In these works, Bjelajac uncovers intriguing visual parallels and affinities with the third degree of Mastership, the masonic emphasis on extra-linguistic communication to transcend national frontiers, and esoteric knowledge. Like Copley before him, the author Isidore-Justin-Séverin Taylor evoked masonic symbolism in the monumental *Voyages pittoresques et romantiques dans l'ancienne France* (1820-1878). Alisa Luxenberg brings Freemasonry and this work into proximity by showing how the latter used metaphors of architecture and travel, and lingered over the representation of passages through liminal spaces—a clear resonance with the masonic ritual process.

Katherine Smith's final chapter in the volume explores the affinities between contemporary Haitian Vodou and Freemasonry. Smith reminds us that Vodou remains a cultural form marked by an eclectic *bricolage* where adherents creatively draw from a variety of symbols in order to generate a coherent belief system. Smith draws our attention to the presence within Vodou practices of signs typically—though not exclusively—associated with Freemasonry, such as the disembodied eye, the square and compass, the capital G, as well as the veneration of St. John the Baptist. Smith shores up her argument that Vodou and Freemasonry are “complementary systems” (p. 251) in contemporary Haiti with insight from Vodou practitioners.

The second group of essays have a method and aim that are epistemologically more familiar to the historian in that demonstrable bonds of dependence between the visual arts and Freemasonry rather than iconographical affinity are the chief foci of inquiry. Cordula Bischoff's detailed investigation into the Order of the Pug in chapter two reminds us of the rich associational world that overlapped considerably with Enlightenment Freemasonry, both at the level of membership and formal structure. The Order of the Pug was a mixed-gender organization that emerged during the second quarter of the eighteenth century and poked fun at masonic ritual and ceremonial. Most historians of Freemasonry know about this group through the divulgatory tract, Gabriel Pérau's *L'Ordre des francs-maçons trahi et le secret des Mopses révélé* (1745). Bischoff skillfully uses the records of porcelain modeler Johann Joachim Kaendler from Meissen to demonstrate that during the first half of the 1740s customers ordered figurines that depicted Freemasons with pugs, a clear indication that individuals were becoming members of both groups no later than 1743. Bischoff confirms this trend with newly discovered Pug membership lists from the Saxon Central State Archive in Dresden which show that a clear majority of male members were also Freemasons. The Order of the Pug thus resembled other groups of the same period, such as the French *Ordre de la Félicité*, in that it functioned as a mixed-gender arena that emerged as a complementary mode of sociability alongside masonic lodges.[3]

Drawing from the rich materials of the American Antiquarian Society, Nan Wolverton explores in chapter five how Paul Revere (initiated into Boston's St. Andrew's lodge) created lodge meeting invitations for lodges in Boston and beyond, as well as trade cards with masonic iconography so that brethren could indicate to both the profane and masonic public that they were men of a certain moral caliber. Revere's influence on masonic iconography stretched from the 1760s until the final years of the century, when he served on a three-person central committee charged with deciding the format of masonic certificates for the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts.

In chapter eight, William D. Moore picks up the story of how American brethren used visual arts from the mid-nineteenth to early twentieth centuries, paying particular attention to the representation of Solomon's Temple in the fraternity; the building of this edifice receives extensive treatment beginning in the third degree of Mastership (which Moore erroneously identifies as the "initiation ceremony" (p. 181) of a Freemason). Along with John Martin's engravings and paintings, Christian Schussele's *King Solomon and the Iron Worker* (1863) and wood-engravings from Gustave Doré's illustrated Bible published that same decade were adopted and adapted by American Freemasons for use in their lodge furnishings, attire, and publications. Moore also suggests that Freemasons like the Ringling Brothers helped visually disseminate Solomon's Temple across wider American society through their circus spectacles. During his tenure as Mayor of Philadelphia during the 1920s, active Freemason W. Freeland Kendrick also sought to circulate Solomonic imagery through his enthusiastic support of the ultimately unrealized lavish reproduction of the Second Temple. In the following chapter, Martin Cherry retraces how Londonian artists of the same period created the Arts Lodge, which became a robust venue for members to showcase their artistry in the form of masonic jewels, tracing boards, and ornate banquet menus for special occasions. This lodge's membership also contributed to the design of major masonic architectural landmarks such as Freemasons' Hall (completed in 1933).

Chapter ten offers a sweeping narrative of the role of photography in constructing Black Freemasonic identity in the United States from the middle of the nineteenth to the late twentieth centuries. Cheryl Finley and Deborah Willis argue that photography not only served as a documentary trace of the African American experience within Freemasonry but also functioned as an active technological agent that enabled Blacks to express their fraternal pride to the wider masonic and non-masonic world. Although this chapter at times substitutes block quotes of secondary sources for original analysis, the presentation of masonic photographs from various occasions ranging from corner-stone laying ceremonies to banquets and individual portraits demonstrates effectively how Black brethren—mostly from Prince Hall Freemasonry—mobilized the photographic image as a "weapon of resistance" (p. 232) to solidify friendship, community, and perseverance in the face of systemic discrimination.

In the case of the first group of essays that seeks to connect masonic and non-masonic iconography, what is likely going on in many of these case studies is that Freemasonry and non-masonic groups were both drawing from a preexistent world of symbols, and the relationship between them thus was one of affinity rather than causality. Wolf and Luxenberg indeed invite readers to conceptualize the place of Freemasonry in this way when they explain at the outset that "in many situations it is difficult to determine whether a symbol or object has masonic significance, because Freemasonry drew upon a vast repertoire of existing images, which in turn came to be adapted to new contexts or as historical circumstances changed" (p. 13). Wolf's later suggestion that emblem books might have served as a symbolic repository for both Masons and non-Masons is worth pursuing, as research elsewhere has argued along similar lines.[4]

The great value of this diverse, wide-ranging and beautifully illustrated collection is that it turns a spotlight onto a central aspect of the masonic experience that previous scholars have too often overlooked. Future work will no longer be able to neglect how Freemasons utilized the visual medium to generate a novel field of social life and group identity.

LIST OF ESSAYS

Reva Wolf and Alisa Luxenberg, "Introduction: The Mystery of Masonry Brought to Light"

David Martín López, "Freemasonry in Eighteenth-Century Portugal and the Architectural Projects of the Marquis of Pombal"

Cordula Bischoff, "The Order of the Pug and Meissen Porcelain: Myth and History"

Reva Wolf, "Goya and Freemasonry: Travels, Letters, Friends"

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William D. Moore, "Solomon's Temple in America: Masonic Architecture, Biblical Imagery, and Popular Culture, 1865-1930"

Martin Cherry, "Freemasonry and the Art Workers' Guild: The Arts Lodge No. 2751, 1899-1935"

Cheryl Finley and Deborah Willis, "Picturing Black Freemasons from Emancipation to the 1990s"

Katherine Smith, "Saint Jean Baptiste, Haitian Vodou, and the Masonic Imaginary"

NOTES

[1] A 1774 version of the Chevalier Élu degree from Paris can be consulted at the Bibliothèque municipale d'Avignon, mss. 3080.

[2] The language of kinship among non-kin in clubs and social gatherings was widespread in the eighteenth century and not a uniquely masonic trait. See the helpful exchange between Christiane Berkvens-Stevelinck and Margaret Jacob over the masonic status of the Dutch Knights of Jubilation in Berkvens-Stevelinck, "Les Chevaliers de la Jubilation: Maçonnerie ou libertinage? A propos de quelques publications de Margaret C. Jacob," *Quaerendo* 13 (1983): 50-73, 124-148. Jacob's reply may be found in "The Knights of Jubilation--Masonic and Libertine. A Reply," *Quaerendo* 14 (1984): 63-75.

[3] Pierre-Yves Beaurepaire, "Officiers 'moyens', sociabilité et Franc-maçonnerie: Un chantier prometteur," *Histoire, économie et société* 23 (2004): 548.

[4] Kenneth Loiselle, "Freemasonry and the Catholic Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century France," *Journal of Modern History* 94 (2022): 518.

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