

The Freemasons' Magazine

1793–1798

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WHEN FREEMASONRY ENTERED THE WORLD OF EARLY ENLIGHTENMENT sociability, it immediately spread as one of the most popular features, one might almost say the matrix of associational life across Europe and the world. With its entrance into the eighteenth century Freemasonry transformed from its mediaeval guild context – regulating trade and training, preserving and communicating professional secrets, enacting cultural and religious traditions of a craft – into an association that absorbed the philosophical currents of the time. The new leadership of the brotherhood, closely associated to the Newtonian scientific movement, opened up Masonic lodges to new strata of membership. This new openness and the association with cultural practices in the nascent Republic of Letters, linking European intellectuals together in networks and communicating the results of their research openly, caused Freemasonry to become an integrated part of media coverage.¹ It was discussed and disputed in newspapers and journals and thus merged into the reading culture of coffee houses and private salons. From this general treatment in the eighteenth-century press there emerged at the end of the century the first Masonic periodicals aimed at a particular Masonic audience.

¹ A. Önnorfors, 'Périodiques Maçonniques' in P.-Y. Beaurepaire, *Dictionnaire de la Franc-Maçonnerie* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2014), 215–19.

These journals occupied a double function as internal information channels (reinforcing Masonic values to its readers) and external representations of Masonic ideology. To study both public press references and Masonic press more deeply promises to shed new light upon both internal developments and external perceptions of Freemasonry and their dynamic interplay.

This is forcefully demonstrated by the five-volume source collection *British Freemasonry 1717–1813* published in 2016. In his introduction to volume five dedicated entirely to press references Róbert Péter points out how studying the press ‘demonstrates the shifts and fluxes in public opinion as well as the self-perceptions of Freemasonry in the long eighteenth century.’² Masonic sociability was publicized in different ways and thus promoted the success of the fraternity as a visible feature of British mainstream culture. The press and associational life developed a mutual relationship, since circulation was enhanced and revenue from advertising expanded. The earliest references to Freemasonry with its specific signs and tokens in the British periodical press are to be found in the journal *The Tatler* (1709–11). Knoop, Jones, and Hamer, authors of *Early Masonic Pamphlets*, however point out that ‘the year 1721 or 1722 [mark] the beginning of a new era, characterized by a very substantial increase of the printed references to Freemasonry.’³ It is now we more frequently find notices about the initiation of new members, Masonic participation in theatre culture, summons to Masonic meetings, reports on the laying of foundation stones or Masonic funerals. Dynamic media treatment of Freemasonry predated the publication of the famous *Constitutions* of Anderson. Within a year, accusations and apologies were publicly exposed. Once the *Constitutions* were published this dichotomy deepened. The year 1723 also saw the first public exposure of parts of Masonic ritual when two versions of Masonic catechism were published. As we can see, media treatment of Freemasonry represents well the dynamic tension between opacity and transparency that characterizes self-images and external attributions alike. The 1730s witnessed a significant development in press reports relating to Freemasonry. The authors of *Early Masonic Pamphlets* quote from the *Daily Journal* of 5 September 1730 that ‘the subject of Free-Masonry has, in the Dearth of News, filled up many a paper.’⁴ Róbert Péter has created a database of almost 12, 000 Freemasonry-related articles between 1709 and 1813. He suggests that the quantity of press references is evidence of a larger visibility and publicity of Freemasonry during the period, which,

² R. Péter, ‘Introduction’ in *British Freemasonry, 1717–1813*, vol. 5, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), xiii.

³ D. Knoop, G. P. Jones and D. Hamer (eds), *Early Masonic Pamphlets* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1945), 2.

⁴ Knoop, Jones and Hamer, *Early Masonic Pamphlets*, 28.

considering this level of transparency can hardly be called secret. Péter also points out the tight links between Freemasonry, the world of Georgian publishers and politics.⁵

The first proper periodical carrying 'Freemason' in its title was a London-based newspaper entitled *The Free-Mason*, the first issue dated 13 November 1733 and appearing during a subsequent period of fifteen weeks.⁶ But despite the title, the content of the newspaper had little to do with Freemasonry, for it was just part of the pro-Walpole (i.e. pro-Hanoverian government) paper *The Hyp Doctor*, edited by John Henley (1692–1756). It was edited in opposition to a periodical entitled *The Craftsman* (critical of the government and hence of Freemasonry, that was targeted as part of the Hanoverian rule) and its title had been most likely chosen to mark the distinction between these two publications. Press coverage developed in scope especially after first governmental oppressions in European cities like Florence, The Hague, Bern, and Paris. The tension in media coverage culminated after the first papal condemnation of Freemasonry in 1738. The period immediately after the publication of the papal condemnation saw also a steady stream of vindications appear in print, ventilated in the press. One of the most prominent and obscure is *Relation Apologique et historique de la Société des Franc-Maçons*, published under a false imprint (Odonoko) claiming to have been produced in Dublin 1738. The *Relation Apologique* was put on the Index and burnt at the stake in Rome in February 1739, news that spread as far as Boston in America. By then significant parts of it had already been translated into German and even Swedish as a series of articles published in *Stockholms Post-Tidningar* during the summer of 1738. The dissemination of *Relation apologique* across cultural and linguistic borders demonstrates that Freemasonry by the end of the 1730s had emerged as a trans-national media-topic in the periodical press.⁷ Also in 1738 a short-lived periodical, *Der Freymäurer*, appeared in Leipzig (4 January – 27 December 1738), edited by Johann Joachim Schwabe (1714–84). A periodical with the word 'Freemason' in its title appeared a year later, also in Leipzig, *Der aufmerksame Freymaurer*. 'The Observant Freemason' was a political periodical that, despite its frontispiece displaying Masonic symbols, did not deal with Freemasonry at all.

As we can see, press coverage of Freemasonry as well as signs of the first periodicals referring to Freemasonry in their titles (and partly in their content) were well established during the first two decades of the existence of modern Freemasonry. This tendency intensified during subsequent decades. Another peak of trans-national media coverage occurred in the aftermath of the exposure *L'Ordre des Franc-maçons trahi et les Secrets des Mopses révélés* (Amsterdam 1745), which was immediately translated into

⁵ Péter, 'Introduction' in *British Freemasonry*, xv–xviii.

⁶ Péter, 'Introduction' in *British Freemasonry*, xiv and sources quoted therein.

⁷ A. Önnersfors, 'The Earliest Account of Swedish Freemasonry? Relation Apologique (1738) revisited', *AQC* 127 (2014), 1–34.

a number of languages. *L'Ordre* revealed not only details of the rituals of Freemasonry to the European readership, but more spectacularly those of the 'Order of Mopses' into which women were also admitted. It was now obvious that the new type of sociability, originating in London of the 1710s, had been transformed into an archetype of associational culture that also could embrace female participation. *L'Ordre* also marks the start of a dynamic period of print outlets such as handbooks, pocket companions, almanacs, anthologies of orations, songbooks, and the like, targeted at a Masonic audience. Even if a significant motif for these publications in many cases was to counterbalance false rumours and negative publicity, it is obvious that the growing membership in Masonic lodges across Europe created a demand for specialized reading and news coverage. From 1770 there appeared for example a Swedish print outlet titled *Frimurare-Nyheter* ('Masonic News') which was however soon discontinued.

It appears that the first steps toward entirely Masonic periodicals were taken in the 1780s, when the lodge *Zur Eintracht*, gathering outstanding intellectuals, academics and statesmen of its time in the Vienna of Joseph II, published *Journal für Freymaurer*, appearing in no fewer than twelve volumes between 1784 and 1786.⁸ Officially the *Journal*, issued in thousand copies and distributed across the vast territory of the Habsburg Empire, was restricted to members possessing the Master's Degree, but reprints of articles in other press outlets and the frequent use of the content for Masonic instructions and orations suggests that this rule mainly served the function of circumventing Austrian censorship. The establishment of the *Journal* must be understood against the backdrop of almost unprecedented news coverage in the German press during the 1780s and 1790s. More than a hundred articles containing more than twelve hundred pages appeared in German periodicals of the enlightenment period with a clear peak in the immediate pre-revolutionary era.⁹ The reasons for this vast coverage were manifold. First of all the Chivalric Masonic system of the Strict Observance ceased to exist in 1782, which caused a flood of accounts of this particular variety of Freemasonry that had dominated German associational life for almost three decades. The discussion of the mythology of the Strict Observance served as a screen to address larger tensions in the discourse of the enlightenment: religious esotericism, alchemy, Rosicrucianism, and Chivalric imagination (with a strong idealization of the Knights Templar) on the one

⁸ E. R. Königsberg, 'Ausstrahlungen des Journals für Freymaurer', in E. H. Balázs (ed), *Beförderer der Aufklärung in Mittel- und Osteuropa. Freimaurer, Gesellschaften, Clubs* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1979), 103–117 and A. Önnorfors, 'Freemasonry and Civil Society: reform of manners and the Journal für Freymaurer (1784–1786)' in I. Cerman, R. Krueger, S. Reynolds (eds), *The Enlightenment in Bohemia: religion, morality and multiculturalism* (Voltaire Foundation: Oxford, 2011), 111–128.

⁹ The figure is extracted from searching the database of German periodicals of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century gathered by Bielefeld university, Germany, "Zeitschriften der Aufklärung", www.ub.uni-bielefeld.de/diglib/aufklaerung/ [accessed 24 June 2016].

side and rational morality on the other. This debate intensified and was radicalized with the discovery of the alleged machinations of the Bavarian Order of Illuminati and of Cagliostro's esoteric practices that had enchanted representatives of the European elites. The involvement of prominent intellectuals in both types of organization captured the imagination of writers on all sides of the political spectrum. Lines of argument were formulated that during and immediately after the French revolution amalgamated with the first virulent counter-revolutionary and deeply conservative conspiracy theories and peaked with the anti-Masonic writings of Barruel and Robison.

The *Journal für Freymaurer* is hence fascinating to read. Its more than three thousand pages of content bear witness to the tensions within the European Masonic movement. On the one hand a significant part of the *Journal* is concerned with the relationship of Freemasonry to a number of religious initiatory practices in world history, gravitating around either myths of origin or analogies for the understanding of the position of Freemasonry in contemporary society. On the other hand a large number of articles deal with master topics of the enlightenment narrative: cosmopolitanism, science, welfare, and education; a further section is devoted to the communication of Masonic news from Europe (and North America), contributing to the impression of a shared global space of information. But the *Journal* also attacked and derided the fanatic persecution of the Bavarian Illuminati, possibly contributing to the discontinuation of the journal in 1786. In any case the stage was set for a further development of distinctly Masonic periodicals.

The Freemasons' Magazine

A new development in this regard is represented by the *Freemasons' Magazine*, a London-based monthly periodical appearing in eleven volumes between 1793 and 1798 (covering six months each, except vol. 1, totalling sixty-seven monthly issues), renamed in 1797 the *Scientific Magazine*.¹⁰ Róbert Péter certainly rightly assumes that the *Sentimental and Masonic Magazine*, published in Dublin between 1792 and 1795, acted as an important precursor to or even possibly inspiration for *The Freemasons' Magazine*.¹¹ However no direct links or references to the Irish publication can be established. A typical monthly issue of *The Freemasons' Magazine* would be composed of between thirty and forty entries spread over eighty to ninety pages, covering predominantly Masonic topics but also news from the world of metropolitan culture and entertainment, science,

¹⁰ A. Önnersfors, '“Perfection by progressive Excellence”: An initial analysis of *The Freemason's Magazine* 1793–1798' in A. Önnersfors, R. Péter (eds), *Researching British Freemasonry 1717–2017* (Sheffield: CRFF, 2010), 159–180, virtually the first treatment since 1929. The full run of *The Freemasons' Magazine* 1793–1798 has been made available for online-search in the database *Masonic Periodicals Online*, www.Masonicperiodicals.org/ [accessed 24 June 2016].

¹¹ Péter, 'Introduction' in *British Freemasonry*, xiv.

poems, curious anecdotes, a summary of domestic and international political or other functional and occasional news. The quarto pages of *The Freemasons' Magazine* are set in small roman type fonts in compact paragraphs of up to fifty lines. Every issue of the magazine was introduced by an engraved portrait or allegorical image, and there are also other illustrations in the eleven volumes produced with great diligence and clarity. Each volume contains on average 480 pages together with an alphabetical index. The December issues of 1797 and 1798 are in fact double-issues with a supplement of the same size. The approximately 5,300 pages of *The Freemasons' Magazine* have so far only been examined in one single published article of Masonic scholarship.¹² The author Elkington's overview of the eleven volumes is cursory at the best and ill-judged at the worst, and focuses upon Masonic news apparently chosen at random. His frequent comparisons with his own time demonstrate his inability to contextualize the content of the magazine properly in its time of publication. One example: Elkington writes that the 'menace and terrorism of the French revolution have their parallel in similar events in Soviet Russia', so he regards the scientific articles in the magazine as out of date and he judges the poetry inserted as 'wishy washy.'

That a completely different approach towards the poetry contributions in *The Freemasons' Magazine* can be taken is for instance demonstrated convincingly by a study carried out by Susan Snell.¹³ As a reference it can be mentioned that nine percent of the content of the *Vienna Journal für Freymaurer* (or almost 300 pages) consist of poetry. Cécile Révauger in her unpublished PhD thesis examined British Masonic magazines, and makes interesting comparisons between *The Freemasons' Magazine* and *The Sentimental and Masonic Magazine*.¹⁴ An unpublished MA thesis by Sabine Laurens treats *The Freemasons' Magazine* in the context of the reception of Barruel's and Robison's anti-Masonic writings in British press.¹⁵ Kristiane Hasselmann has analyzed a number of contributions to *The Freemasons' Magazine* within the general contemporary discourse on the 'reformation of manners'. She focused especially on a series of articles published during 1797 in a chapter of her PhD thesis (2009), 'The Masonic character and the mechanisms of its formation.'¹⁶ However a general and substantial analysis of the magazine is still a *desideratum*.

¹² G. Elkington, 'Some Notes on the 'Freemasons' Magazine or General and Complete Library' A Masonic periodical at the end of the eighteenth century', *AQC* 42 (1929), 140–63.

¹³ S. A. Snell, 'Poetry in motion: the role of verse contributions to Masonic periodicals during the long eighteenth century' in Önnerrfors and Péter, *Researching British Freemasonry 1717–2017*, 181–192.

¹⁴ C. Révauger, 'La Franc-maçonnerie en Grande-Bretagne et dans L'Amérique révolutionnaire: 1717–1813' (unpublished PhD thesis, Bordeaux, 1987), 661–74.

¹⁵ S. Laurens, 'Freemasonry and the French Revolution: A study of Augustin Barruel's and John Robison's reception in the British Press' (unpublished MA thesis, Paris 2006).

¹⁶ Footnote needed here giving details of Kristiane Hasselmann's thesis.

The main purpose of the outlet appears to have been to communicate Masonic news to a general audience, but it must also be read in the context of growing anti-Masonic sentiments even in Great-Britain. These sentiments originated in counter-revolutionary conspiracy theories that reached Britain and found its own agitator with John Robison, professor in Edinburgh. Influenced by the Irish rebellion the British parliament made a move to persecute 'unlawful societies' in 1799 and Freemasonry was only exempted at the last minute from this legislation curtailing free association (which remained in force until 1967). *The Freemasons' Magazine* can hence be read as an attempt to assure the general public of its impeccable morality and loyalty but also countering anti-Masonic rhetoric.

Content Analysis of the *Freemasons' Magazine*

Given the overwhelming amount of content in the eleven volumes of *The Freemasons' Magazine*, it is impossible to provide a complete overview here. Use of the digital *Masonic Periodicals Online* (MPO) database allows one to search for key terms and thus determine the amount of references to all volumes that contain a relevant search term, given it is identified by Optical Character Recognition (OCR). Multiple references per match are possible. Talking about 'articles' is precarious; some of the entries stretch across several issues of the journal whereas other references are only a few lines. The software used to present data displays not the original page number but the number of the scanned page in the digital format. This is why for accuracy it has to be collated with an original or the scanned original image. For instance searching the very specific intra-Masonic term 'Harodim' generates nine results, one of which refers to the index page of one of the volumes, whereas the broader term 'Masonry' generates 274 results. The general search term 'poem' generates 124 results, the narrower search for 'Wollstonecraft' references to two indexes and to two highly interesting reviews of her writings. Despite the imperfect OCR, it is thus still possible to use the MPO as a significant tool of tentative content analysis, even if it does not allow precise conclusions. Based upon a pilot study on volume 6 (1796) and work on the other volumes, I propose that the following overarching ten (arguably ambiguous) categories of entries constitute recurring features of *The Freemasons' Magazine*, some of them of course with considerable overlaps:

- 1) Biographical articles (Masonic/non-Masonic)
- 2) Freemasonry (three sub-types: on Masonic values, on Masonic history/contemporary occurrences and explicit apologies against anti-masonry)
- 3) Values, taste, aesthetics, manners and behaviour (non-Masonic)
- 4) Science (theoretical and applied), medicine and natural phenomena
- 5) History (non-Masonic)
- 6) Travel accounts, geographical descriptions and exoticism

- 7) Fiction and poetry (non-Masonic)
- 8) News content and contemporary issues (non-Masonic)
- 9) Reviews
- 10) Religion.

A further category could be called 'editorial', which to a certain degree is a meta-category, in which the publishers outline an editorial policy, address the readers, or provide them with general information about the publication. *The Freemasons' Magazine* also has a huge number of letters to the editor, but these frequently introduce certain topics within the different categories. Much of the content was provided by correspondents (for instance in Edinburgh or Boston, US). Some pieces were translated from German and French. Many articles ran as a series over several issues. Last, but not least, the illustrations of each volume (title plates and a number of illustrations inserted into the different volumes together with their descriptions) make out a separate category of visual content.

1. *Biographical Articles*

Possibly the largest category of all, huge amounts of biographical contributions are published in a variety of different formats, lengths, and sub-genres entitled (with explicit or ambiguous results from MPO in brackets) 'characters of' (298, more or less explicit), 'anecdotes' (250, ambiguous), 'memoirs' (187, ambiguous), 'sketches' (161, ambiguous), 'lives', 'particulars', 'accounts', 'singularities' or 'oddities.' Biographical information is also to be found in original letters, poems, moral anecdotes, or epitaphs and of course in or under engraved portraits. Sometimes explicit mention is made of Masonic membership, sometimes not, and that is why the category is a bit blurred. The category covers articles of a more neutral biographical character, but frequently personal actions are interpreted in moralizing terms and serve as a moral instruction of correct or incorrect manners.

Examples (original page numbers in brackets): 'Anecdotes of Moliere', September 1794 (213); 'Character of Frederick II', October 1795 (260); 'Memoir of the Right Honourable Richard Hely Hutchinson', November 1797 (291).

2. *Freemasonry*

Masonic content can be divided into three sub-categories:

a) Treatment of values and ideology of Freemasonry (in orations, sermons, charges, addresses, poems). Almost every volume starts with a Masonic oration or charge (the search terms generate ambiguous results in MPO).

b) The history of, or contemporary occurrences within, Freemasonry in general or of particular lodges, frequently under the heading 'Masonic Intelligence' (101 explicit results). The term 'lodge' alone generates 449 results in MPO (with multiple references

and overlaps) but refers of course also to multiple categories. To a certain extent also items under 2 a) are important sources for the history of lodges, since their names, dates and the name of the orator are mentioned and in some instances contemporary occurrences are interpreted against a wider, more ideological frame.

c) Apologies against anti-masonry. Many articles in *The Freemasons' Magazine* can be interpreted as indirect apologies, or rebuttals in defence of Freemasonry against external accusations, for instance secrecy. Addresses to the monarchy are phrased to demonstrate the loyalty of the fraternity. But starting with 1794 we can witness how Freemasons used the magazine to publish apologies against attacks in the press or in books aiming to blame Freemasonry for the French Revolution (which gives the discourse considerably more political edge). It is also possible to observe a growing internal debate between different forms of Freemasonry and the right understanding of French and continental varieties of it. In April 1797 an editorial statement was published asking for more quality in contrast to quantity related to Masonic submissions considering 'what already has appeared before the public', which indicated that growing anti-Masonic sentiment had affected the public perception of Freemasonry in Britain. In the earlier volumes almost every issue started with a Masonic subject. In later volumes biographies are placed at the beginning of each volume, and from May 1797 appeared under the heading 'The Freemasons' Repository' in each issue. From 1797 Masonic content decreased in quantity. In 1797 and 1798 a number of longer contributions against John Robison's book *Proofs of a conspiracy* were inserted (starting in October 1797).

Examples for category a) (original page numbers in brackets): 'A charge delivered at a Masters' meeting at Roman Eagle Lodge', November 1793 (452–8); 'An Address to the Mason Brethren', September 1795 (181–4); 'Extracts from a sermon preached before the Provincial Grand Lodge of Kent', September 1796 (154–9).

Examples for category b) (original page numbers in brackets): 'Masonic Intelligence' [on an emergency meeting in the PGL of Kent, the Order of Harodim, Cumberland Freemasons' School and a meeting of the PGL of Durham], July 1794 (73); 'The lodge of Biggar Free Operatives (No. 222) of the Grand Lodge of Scotland' [a historical account], May 1796 (301–8); 'Masonic Intelligence' [a lengthy report of a Masonic procession in Newcastle upon Tyne in June 1797 followed by extracts from the Quarterly Communications of Grand Lodge in London], June 1797 (183–4).

Examples for category c) (original page numbers in brackets): 'To the Editor', August 1794 (85–92); 'An impartial examination of a book' [Robison], October 1797 (242–9).

3. Values, Taste, Aesthetics, Manners, and Behaviour

Although specifically Masonic values and rules of behaviour were already covered across many articles in category 2 a), more general articles about morality, ethics, taste, aesthet-

ics and morally proper behaviour, and also education in general filled a huge number of pages. A significant number address female qualities, education, and participation in society, which suggests an ongoing re-negotiation of gender-roles. Discussions on moral or value issues are also buried in a number of other categories, particularly in many poems which are devoted to qualities like 'endurance', 'vanity', or 'envy'. 'Politeness', as one of the master values of the time, is referred to in 146 results (MPO). As with many articles it is difficult to make a consistent definition; an article on ancient architecture that falls under the category 5) of history may be full of aesthetic judgments. How difficult it is to categorize here is exemplified by a new section in the journal, inserted from 1797 onwards, 'The Collector', which consisted of a wide range of topics.

Examples (original page numbers in brackets): 'Of Man's Happiness', November 1793 (498); 'On Modesty as a masculine virtue', August 1795 (124-5); 'Essay on Politeness', June 1797 (385-7).

4. Science (*Theoretical and Applied*), *Medicine, and Natural Phenomena*

This category concerns articles treating scientific topics in a wide sense, both theoretical and applied. Under this category also observations of natural phenomena (thunderstorms, earthquakes, floods) are counted that not are mentioned in travel reports; a clear dividing line is however difficult to draw. In 1797 the journal was re-named *The Scientific Magazine and Free-Masons Repository*, which according to the editorial in January marked a significant programmatic shift towards the insertion of more scientific contributions. In practice this shift was not really observable (given that according to my estimates only about seven percent of the total number of items touched upon scientific subjects). In the editorial for July 1797 there was a promise to insert overviews on the history of science, and we find later longer sections entitled 'History of the arts and sciences.' In September 1797 there was even published a poem 'The progress of science.' In April 1798 the journal started a section with shorter pieces of 'Scientific intelligence.'

Examples (original page numbers in brackets): 'Experiments illustrating the properties of charcoal', December 1794 (412-6); 'Observations on the yellow fever' November 1797 (298-9); 'Comparisons between the Ancients and Moderns in Science and Literature', March 1798 (163-70).

5. History

This category concerns articles that falling outside the strictly Masonic category 2 b) deal with historical subjects. History has to be understood in a broad sense including recent events such as archaeological accounts or the history of economy, literature, and arts. In some cases this category overlaps with 3), since values of taste, ethics, and aesthetics frequently are buried in historical accounts.

Examples (original page numbers in brackets): 'Specimen of an intended history of England', May 1795 (313–7); 'Extracts from Mr. Oulton's "History of the theatres in London"', May 1796 (203–10); 'A historical and geographical account of Ireland', June 1798 (366–74).

6. *Travel Accounts, Geographical Descriptions, and Exoticism*

This subject is one of the most favourite in the eighteenth-century press and a lot of titles are treated in the review section as well that not have been counted in here. There is some overlap to category 4), science, since 'scientific travel' (as opposed to 'sentimental' or geographic) is both a travelogue and comprehends scientific discoveries. Exoticism refers to the fact that travel accounts not only narrated statistical or geographical news, but frequently were devoted to the adventurous (male, white) explorer and his encounters with foreign people and customs. The February and March issues of 1798 are filled with information on and references to China. The first instance of a travel account (Ireland) occurs in the May issue of 1794.

Examples (original page numbers in brackets): 'Remarks made by a late traveller in Spain', May 1797 (331–2); 'Additional account of the gypsies', July 1797 (20); 'Park's Travels in Africa', August 1798 (76–8).

7. *Fiction and Poetry*

As already mentioned fiction and poetry (124 references to 'poem') account for a considerable amount of the content in this category, particularly referring to non-Masonic fiction and poetry as covered by 2 a). The examples below refer rather to non-poetic pieces of fiction, since poetry has been treated in a valuable contribution by Susan Snell (referenced above). Many of the poems examine topics related to central moral concepts such as 'contentment' or 'courage', and thus overlap with category 3). Poems with specific Masonic content have been counted under category 2 a).

Examples (original page numbers in brackets): 'A Chinese tale', November 1795 (333–4); 'A Turkish story', March 1797 (156); 'Optimism, a dream', September 1798 (167–8).

8. *News Content, Contemporary Issues*

Surprisingly much of the content of *The Freemasons' Magazine* (around ten percent of the counted items) is made up out of ordinary short-term news content with a clear limited topicality. News of this kind was generally sorted under the heading 'Monthly chronicle' (125 explicit references). But also more lengthy accounts of contemporary events or occurrences were covered, such as victories in naval battles or criminal cases. Another important feature was news from the cultural life of London, mainly (under the heading 'Strictures of public amusements' or 'The fine arts', in the last issues of the journal entitled 'The mirror of Thespis'). In April 1796 a new heading 'From the Lon-

don gazettes' was introduced with a sort of press review, sometimes called 'Intelligence of importance' or the like. 'Contemporary issues' in this category are for instance 'On the prisons of the metropolis', September 1793 (299–301) or 'On African Slavery', March 1794 (198–201). 'Masonic intelligence' is also to be found in this part of the journal, but is more related to category 2 b). The insertion of 'Parliamentary proceedings' was discontinued only between November 1795 and April 1796, appearing under different headings. Accounts of the Parliament of Ireland were also inserted. Occasionally, annual chronological overviews were published.

Examples (original page numbers in brackets): 'Monthly chronicle' August 1794 (148–56) [in most instances subdivided into Parliamentary proceedings, Foreign intelligence, Home news, Promotions, Marriages, Deaths/Obituaries and Bankrupts]; 'Ceremonial of the execution of Richard Parker, for mutiny' July 1797 (21–4); 'Account of the late glorious naval victory' November 1798 (157–163).

9. Reviews

A relatively high number of book and journal titles are reviewed in *The Freemasons' Magazine*, generally under the heading 'Review of new publications' (77 references). This was announced as a new section in April 1795 but started a year later together with a 'List of new publications.' It was also in 1795 that the journal changed its subtitle from 'General and complete library' to 'Cabinet of universal literature.' Following the tradition of the time, reviews frequently quoted extensively from the original works rather than providing a critical judgement.

Examples (original page numbers in brackets): 'Academical Contributions of original and translated Poetry', April 1796 (265–6); 'Family Secrets, Literary and Domestic', June 1797 (413–6); 'Life of Burke', December 1798 (465–6).

10. Religion

I have been reluctant to include religion as a separate category, since the overlaps between Freemasonry and lay religiosity in the period are large. For instance Masonic sermons were delivered in churches across the country. However some of the significant articles touch upon religious phenomena that cannot be subsumed directly under Freemasonry, nor can they be sorted clearly within one of the other categories. For instance there are a number of references to druids and druidism or Knights Templar (also in connection with Freemasonry). Ancient and non-European religious traditions or Jewish cabala were also treated. These articles could be subsumed as a religious sub-category under 5) history above, but it makes sense to isolate them from that general category since they point at change or significant nuances in religiosity in British society at the time.

Examples (original page numbers in brackets): 'An account of druidism', March 1794 (177-82) [was published in several parts]; 'A brief history of the religious and military Order of the Knights Templars of St. John of Jerusalem', July 1794 (18-20) [was published in several parts]; 'Seiks or Siques', December 1798 (380).

Quantitative Approach

Based upon this division of ten distinguishable categories I counted the number of entries across the eleven volumes of the *Freemasons' Magazine* (however not the length in pages or lines) to be in total 2583. For instance category 8, 'news' has in a given volume the elements 'Parliamentary proceedings', 'Strictures on public amusement', 'Masonic intelligence', 'Monthly chronicle'. Counting Masonic intelligence as one entry under category 2, this would leave three types of entries for such a monthly issue. Hence this estimate only provides an indication of the prevalence or popularity of the given category per item (from a few lines to several pages) in each volume and in total. In order to produce a thorough survey, each entry needs to be counted in its real length of pages and lines in proportion to the total amount of pages in each month/volume.

Volume/category	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Vol. 1 (1793)*	46	44	43	16	31	-	42	24	-	2
Vol. 2 (1794)	33	35	30	10	5	7	28	26	-	5
Vol. 3 (1794)	21	44	37	6	8	11	35	37	-	7
Vol. 4 (1795)	14	32	36	6	14	7	30	19	-	6
Vol. 5 (1795)	27	36	51	10	15	7	57	16	-	2
Vol. 6 (1796)	42	31	42	1	6	11	42	39	30	-
Vol. 7 (1796)	26	18	31	6	13	10	40	15	47	7
Vol. 8 (1797)	20	27	18	5	16	11	47	17	32	-
Vol. 9 (1797)**	44	28	18	16	10	7	49	18	36	-
Vol. 10 (1798)	19	18	53	25	5	6	48	17	44	3
Vol. 11 (1798)***	25	25	18	59	7	15	40	16	45	1
TOTAL	317	338	377	160	130	92	458	244	234	33
<i>percentage of 2383 items</i>	13,3%	14,2%	15,8%	6,7%	5,5%	3,9%	19,2%	10,2%	9,8%	1,4%

1 = Biography, 2 = Freemasonry, 3 = Values, 4 = Science, 5 = History,

6 = Travels, 7 = Fiction, 8 = News, 9 = Reviews, 10 = Religion

* = Vol. 1 covers 7 months June-December 1794.

** = The December-issue of Vol. 9 has 160 pages since a supplement was added.

*** = A supplement to Vol. 11 appeared in February 1799, adding to a total page number of 186.

As we can see, the largest number of individual items is to be found under the category 'fiction', followed by 'values', 'Freemasonry' and 'biography'. Judging from my cursory analysis of the content of all eleven volumes it is however 'biography' that appears to fill proportionally most pages, followed by 'values', 'news' and 'Freemasonry'. As stated, a more definite answer will only be produced once all pages and lines are counted. Approximately 500 external press references to Freemasonry presented by Róbert Péter are thematically arranged around the topics of

- a) admissions and lodge meetings,
- b) theatre,
- c) processions,
- d) debates and conflicts,
- e) women,
- f) British fraternal societies, and
- g) response to Grand lodge Freemasonry.¹⁷

It would be worthwhile to study the overlaps between external press references and the items inserted in *The Freemasons' Magazine*. Péter highlights the importance of these press references to substitute the lack of other sources for lodge activities or membership records. Systematic analysis of the names of Freemasons in *The Freemasons' Magazine* would also contribute to such a task and it remains to be sorted out if the articles on Masonic activities were simply sourced from already published accounts (from the provincial press) or were independent contributions. The clear links between theatre and Freemasonry are also very visible, evidenced by accounts of theatre visits, prologues, and epilogues on the occasion of certain performances, and biographies of actors who were also Freemasons. Masonic processions and the inaugurations of public buildings are also extensively treated in *The Freemasons' Magazine*. Concerning conflicts and fault lines within the fraternity, the magazine did not cover such issues openly. Between the lines it is however possible to determine such tensions, as in the discussion of Robison's accusations against continental revolutionary Freemasonry. Furthermore Masonic orders such as the Order of Harodim, Knights Templar, and Royal Arch indicate a larger variety or possibly fractures within overall British Freemasonry in its relationship to official Grand lodge Freemasonry. The discussion of female participation is however virtually absent from the pages of *The Freemasons' Magazine* and only in a few instances other fraternal orders than Freemasonry are mentioned.

¹⁷ Péter, op cit., xviii–xxii.

Conclusion

The Freemasons' Magazine offered its readership a huge variety of subjects; central to the articles in general was the discussion of values, taste and behaviour, exemplified by the lives of a number of individuals. Freemasonry is treated as value-neutral regarding reports on Masonic events. But predominantly it represents positive values such as expressed in Masonic charges, poems, or songs, or through the biographies of prominent Freemasons. Masonic secrecy is explained as a necessary foundation of society, the universal ideas of Freemasonry are stressed and at the same time its particular loyalty to Britain, especially in the context of the French post-revolutionary threat. Readers were entertained by biographical anecdotes, news from the world of theatre and culture, extracts from travelogues (some of them conveying exoticism), and fiction, partly bordering on satirical social criticism. They also received updates on the most important domestic and foreign events.

The first seven volumes of *The Freemasons' Magazine* represent a forceful statement of British Freemasonry concerning its vigour, loyalty, and societal engagement. During 1794 the journal for the first time served as a platform to refute anti-Masonic writings that circulated in the public. Important apologies such as *Defence of masonry* (1730) or Cousto's spiced account of his treatment by the Portuguese inquisition were republished. Parts of Ramsay's 'Oration' were republished not just once but twice. We can also witness how the Knights Templar (called the 'sublime degree of masonry') entered the world of British Masonic imagination, long after the continental development. Nevertheless at the very same time Freemasonry in Britain was also celebrating technological progress in industry, agriculture, and science, which makes its relationship to modernity complex. *The Freemasons' Magazine* managed to attract correspondents in different parts of the empire and even the USA. A particularly strong link throughout the first seven volumes was Edinburgh. In the last four volumes we find more material inserted from Ireland, at exactly the time when political tensions there erupted into a full-scale rebellion. The political tense years of 1797 and 1798 offer an intriguing insight into the British psyche at the time. Under constant (real and imagined) threat of French invasion, internally shaken by the Irish rebellion, uprisings, and repeated mutinies, public opinion was fuelled with anti-Masonic ideas, not at least by Robison's book *Proofs of a conspiracy*. *The Freemasons' Magazine* unfortunately did not survive 1798. It was thus unable to report during summer and autumn 1799, when finally under the influence of virulent anti-masonry, the *Unlawful Societies Act* was passed in parliament.

It is difficult to speculate about the impact of *The Freemasons' Magazine*, which, apart from the specifically Masonic items, represented the typical mix of content in the contemporary weekly or monthly press (catering for the interests of a varied readership): biographies, moral pieces, science, history, travels, fiction and poetry, news items, and

reviews. Most importantly perhaps it can be regarded as the archetype of later Masonic periodicals, developing into a veritable Masonic press by the middle of the nineteenth century with titles such as *The Freemasons' Quarterly Magazine and Review* (1834–53), *The Masonic observer* (1856–9), *The Freemason's Magazine and Masonic mirror* (1856–71), *The Freemason* (1869–1951), some of them surviving well into the twentieth century. Whereas Masonic periodicals during the first century of their existence tied into the ongoing debates and controversies surrounding Freemasonry in culture and society, they developed more and more into purely internal membership magazines with little connection to the outside world.