

University of Tasmania Open Access Repository

Cover sheet

Title

Masculine madness: The normality of evil in the Western cultural imaginary

Author

Honeywill, RA

Bibliographic citation

Honeywill, RA (2014). Masculine madness: The normality of evil in the Western cultural imaginary. University Of Tasmania. Thesis. <https://doi.org/10.25959/23240936.v1>

Is published in:

Copyright information

This version of work is made accessible in the repository with the permission of the copyright holder/s under the following,

Licence.

Rights statement: Copyright 2014 the Author

If you believe that this work infringes copyright, please email details to: oa.repository@utas.edu.au

Downloaded from [University of Tasmania Open Access Repository](#)

Please do not remove this coversheet as it contains citation and copyright information.

University of Tasmania Open Access Repository

Library and Cultural Collections

University of Tasmania

Private Bag 3

Hobart, TAS 7005 Australia

E oa.repository@utas.edu.au

CRICOS Provider Code 00586B | ABN 30 764 374 782

utas.edu.au

Masculine Madness

The normality of evil in the Western cultural
imaginary

Ross Honeywill



Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
of

Doctor of Philosophy

September 2014

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for a degree or diploma by the University or any other institution, except by way of background information and duly acknowledged in the thesis, and to the best of my knowledge and belief no material previously published or written by another person except where due acknowledgement is made in the text of the thesis, nor to the best of my knowledge does the thesis contain any material that infringes copyright.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ross Honeywill', with a long horizontal stroke underneath.

Signed: Ross Honeywill

Date: 30 September 2014

AUTHORITY OF ACCESS

This thesis is not to be made available for loan or copying for two years following the date this statement was signed. Following that time the thesis may be made available for loan and limited copying and communication in accordance with the Copyright Act 1968.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ross Honeywill', with a long horizontal stroke underneath.

Signed: Ross Honeywill

Date: 30 September 2014

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to Dr Greer Honeywill whom I married in 1977. Since that time, on every day, she inspires me and reminds me how a fully agentic woman gives hope and optimism not only to other women, but also to men who are prepared to recognise and acknowledge the unearned privilege they enjoy. She teaches me constantly to see and hear the world in new ways. Given that it is important for men to feel unimportant – in her presence that is a blessed and welcome condition.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am deeply grateful to Dr Lucy Tatman whose guidance and inspiration have in challenging my thinking, taken me down rich paths that would otherwise have remained empty country lanes. The process of undertaking a doctoral thesis by research is rightly filled with anxieties and uncertainties, but Lucy made this project a rewarding pleasure, a self-discovering, self-defining experience. I am now a different person, dare I say, a better person, and I have Lucy Tatman to thank for that.

Thanks also to Dr Richard Corry who provided sage advice along the way.

ABSTRACT

All men – ordinary and exceptional men – have a potential for evil. What is it? Where does it originate? How does it impact society? Can it be overcome? This thesis explores the masculine potential for evil, and traces its various manifestations in cultural texts, social systems and everyday life practices, from the birth of modernity to the present. ‘Masculine madness’ is shown to be, not a pathological or psychiatric condition, but a potential for evil in the normality of the everyday, a potential inherent to all men. Combining psychic mechanisms with critical theory, and using an interdisciplinary or bricolage research framework, the thesis examines the origins and impacts of masculine madness from the Enlightenment and modernity, through postmodernity, and into the present; and exposes the violent suppression of Woman and women in the creative and symbolic dimension of the social that forms the Western cultural imaginary. Modernity is shown to be an epoch of institutionalised androcentrism, in which the Enlightenment narrative of plurality was rejected in favour of the script of male mastery, control and domination. A major effect of this was the incorporation of ‘madness’ as a feature of ‘ordinary’ masculinity and the ensuing normalisation of evil. Referencing the work of critical theorists, philosophers, feminists and scientists, the thesis describes how the ‘banality’ and ‘ordinariness’ of evil points to the Second World War, the Holocaust and the social death of Woman, as explicit outcomes of masculine madness. It reveals an ‘Oedipal schism’ as the origin of masculine madness, a rupture that negotiates between the extremes of social constructionism and biological determinism, and draws analogies between individual lives and social processes. Masculine madness in postmodernity is shown to be a period of rebellion against the constraints and certitudes of modernity, and an attempt to continue the liberal and pluralising legacy of the Enlightenment. The thesis shows, however, that postmodernity failed to reverse the genocide of Woman or to renounce the self-deception of masculine madness. A continuing process of re-masculinisation after the end of postmodernity is exposed, in a period which, referencing Bauman, is called the ‘liquid present’: a time in which masculine madness lives on, as evidenced by inequality in the workplace, growing gender conservatism, and constant eruptions of male violence. The consumer culture of the liquid present is identified as a culture in the making, where the shallow consumer monoculture exists alongside the deep knowledge culture. While the consumer monoculture melancholically nurtures masculine madness, the knowledge culture embodies the conditions for surpassing it by, for example, individualised choices by men. This thesis not only diagnoses masculine madness, but also identifies a possible, and feasible, way forward – a prognosis for society to surpass the annihilative potential of masculine madness.

Abstract classification: ANZRC 220319 (Social Philosophy)

Table of Contents

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY	II
AUTHORITY OF ACCESS	III
DEDICATION	IV
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	V
ABSTRACT.....	VI
INTRODUCTION	1
SECTION ONE: MODERNITY: the birth and death	7
1:0 INTRODUCTION	7
1:1 THE POLITICS OF EXCLUSION: Enlightenment masculinity.....	10
1:2 GOD DOES NOT PLAY DICE WITH THE WORLD: modernity, a masculine enterprise	25
1:3 TYRANT OR HANGMAN: the evil of ordinary men	33
1:4 TWO GENOCIDES: the sins of modernity.....	43
1:5 FLIP OF A COIN: the radical dimension of normality.....	55
SECTION TWO: OEDIPAL SCHISM: the rise and rise of masculine madness	61
2:0 INTRODUCTION	61
2:1 HUMAN ONTOLOGY: biological determinism	63
2:2 GENDER ONTOLOGY: sex and gender...and the psyche	72
2:3 DIFFERENCE AND DISCRIMINATION: subjugating women.....	83
2:4 SAVAGE TORPOR: moral blindness	92
2:5 OEDIPAL SCHISM: the origin of masculine madness.....	99
2:6 RAPE: men making a choice.....	109
SECTION THREE: POSTMODERNITY: birth and death	117
3:0 INTRODUCTION	117
3:1 CERTITUDE and CONTINGENCY: from modernity to postmodernity.....	119
3:2 DENIAL OF LEGITIMACY: masculine madness in postmodernity	128
3:3 ENABLING FICTIONS: postmodernism thrives as postmodernity falters	137
3:4 THE END OF POSTMODERNITY.....	145
SECTION FOUR: THE ETERNAL SEA OF THE PRESENT	149
4:0 INTRODUCTION	149
4:1 AFTER POSTMODERNITY: the liquid present	151
4:2 KNOWLEDGE CULTURE + MONOCULTURE: a new epistemology.....	164
4:3 THE ONE-GENDERED STATE: women reinvent themselves	175
4:4 MASCULINITIES: beyond men, beyond help?	183
4:5 THE MORAL PHENE: not the selfish gene.....	194
4:6 NOW I AM BECOME DEATH: masculine madness in conclusion.....	207
LIST OF REFERENCES.....	217