

# The Autogenic Massacre

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# MULTIPLE HOMICIDE

Five or more victims, at least three of whom fatally injured.

1. Single incident occurring within 24 hour period (mass murder).
2. Multiple incidents over periods varying from days to years (serial killing).

Dietz (1986)

# TYOLOGY OF MASS MURDER (HOLMES & HOLMES, 1992)

- Family annihilators
- Disciple murders (Manson, Jones)
- Psuedocommandos (Huberty, Grey)
- Disgruntled employees
- Set and run killers (John Graham, Okalahoma bombings)

(Distinguishable on motivation; victim selection; relationship to victim; mobility of killing)

# A TYPOLOGY OF MASS MURDER

- Instrumental Killings
- Victim Specific Killings
- Massacres

# MASS MURDER

## I VICTIM SPECIFIC KILLINGS

The specific victim's deaths are the intended outcome. Eg.

- (a) family killings
- (b) lust killings
- (c) revenge killings
- (d) commercial/professional killings
- (e) cult killings

# MASS MURDER

## II INSTRUMENTAL KILLINGS

The victims deaths are a means to an end. Eg:

- (a) Intimidatory (exemplary) killings.
- (c) Killings to advance other criminal activities.
- (d) Hero killings

# MASS MURDER

## III MASSACRES

Indiscriminate killings where the victims are chosen by chance, situation or peripheral affiliation. Eg.

(a) Civil

(b) Military

(b) Autogenic

# THE CIVIL MASSACRE

- Arises out of historical and social tensions
- Involves one group of citizens attacking another distinguished on religious, racial, or political basis
- Involves a group who have overt, or covert, support from a significant number of sympathisers.

# The Autogenic (Self Generated) Massacre

- Carried out by an individual(s)
- Massacre serves the idiosyncratic purposes of the perpetrator
- The plan to massacre generated in isolation
- It is an attack on the whole society

(Mullen 2004)

Mass killings in which someone kills a number of people most of whom are strangers chosen apparently at random in a single extended episode is a relatively new phenomena in Western society

(Dawson and Sootill 1996)

# A PIECE OF EASTERN EXOTICA (AMOK)

There are some Javanese who go out into the streets and kill as many persons as they meet until they are also killed

(Barbosa 1594)

# Ernst Wagner



# Charles Whitman

1941-1966



College photo of Charles Whitman  
(University of Texas)

# AUTOGENIC MASSACRES

ERNST WAGNER 1913

CHARLES WHITMAN 1966

JAMES HUBERTY 1984

JULIAN KNIGHT --- MICHAEL RYAN---FRANK VITKOVIC 1987

MARC LEPINE 1989

DAVID GREY 1990

COLIN FERGUSON 1993

THOMAS HAMILTON 1996

MARTIN BRYANT 1996

# AUTOGENIC MASSACRES

## sources of knowledge

1. Psychological Autopsies (Cullen report Thomas Hamilton).
2. Those who succeeded and lived :-  
including:
  - Ernst Wagner 1913 (9.12)
  - Howard Unruh 1949 (13.3)
  - Richard Speck 1966 (8)
  - Julian Knight 1987 (7 20+)
  - Martin Bryant 1996 (36)
3. Those who failed and lived.

# **A CASE HISTORY**

# BACKGROUND

- Rigid distant father
- Mother – paranoid illness
- Home language not English
- Never close to older sister
- Bullied at school
- Overweight introverted child
- Underachiever

## ■ Economic Function

- Working in apprenticeship
- Applies to Police
- Applies to Army
- Casual employment
- Unemployed

## ■ Social Function

- Loses contact with only school friend
- Unsuccessful attempts at dating
- Increasingly isolated at home
- Withdraws to room

## ■ State of Mind

- Socially anxious but ambitious
- Rigid obsessive
- Sensitive self reference
- Increasingly resentful and angry
- Despondent, depressed and suicidal/homicidal

## ■ Militarism

- Hunts with father
- Military ambitions
- Begins collecting guns
- Authoritarian right wing views  
subscribes to survivalist & gun magazines

# MIMESIS

- Rambo and Tall Tower
- Fantasies based on stories of revenge and massacres
- A widely reported massacre 3 months prior to his killings

## ■ Fantasy

- Daydreamer
- Heroic fantasies
- Increasingly violent fantasies
- Fantasy of dying in a blaze of glory

## ■ Predispositions to Behave

- Considers and rejects a variety of scenarios for murder/suicide
- Decides on plan
- Acquires equipment
- Runs through plan in fantasy
- Walks through scenario
- Dress rehearsal
- Sets off to massacre and die

# A DECADE LATER

- Physically fit
- Mood stable
- Restricted but effective socialising
- Education progressing
- No longer suicidal
- No longer resentful
- Guilt and regret
- Improved family relationships

# U.S. Study of Adult Mass Murderers 1949-1998 (Hempel, Meloy & Richards 1999)

Using a firearm excluding explosives, arson, poison, cars, planes

30 cases (21 since 1985)

100% male 18-60 years (median 37 years)

94% "loners"

63% "preoccupied with weapons" plus 47% military background

# U.S. Study of Adult Mass Murderers 1949-1998 (Hempel, Meloy & Richards 1999)

43% violent conviction

50% clear psychiatric history, schizophrenia in 10%

40% psychotic at time of killing plus 27% possible psychotic

50% APD

40% narcissistic

17% schizoid

# U.S. Study of Adult Mass Murderers 1949-1998 (Hempel, Meloy & Richards 1999)

Threats – specific 33%, generalised or mixed 33%

Precipitating Event	Work Problems	50%
	Relationship Problems	23%

Killing	at work	37%
	weekday	90%
	daytime	93%
	intoxicated	10%
	planned predatory	100%
	number of weapons	1-11 mean 3.1
	victims	3-22 (median 6.0)
	perpetrators	54% suicide / 10 killed

# U.S. Study of Adult Mass Murderers 1949-1998 (Hempel, Meloy & Richards 1999)

Killers "devoid of any affectional bonds"

angry isolates

"paranoid schizoid position"

dysphoric

"warrior mentality" preoccupation with weapons

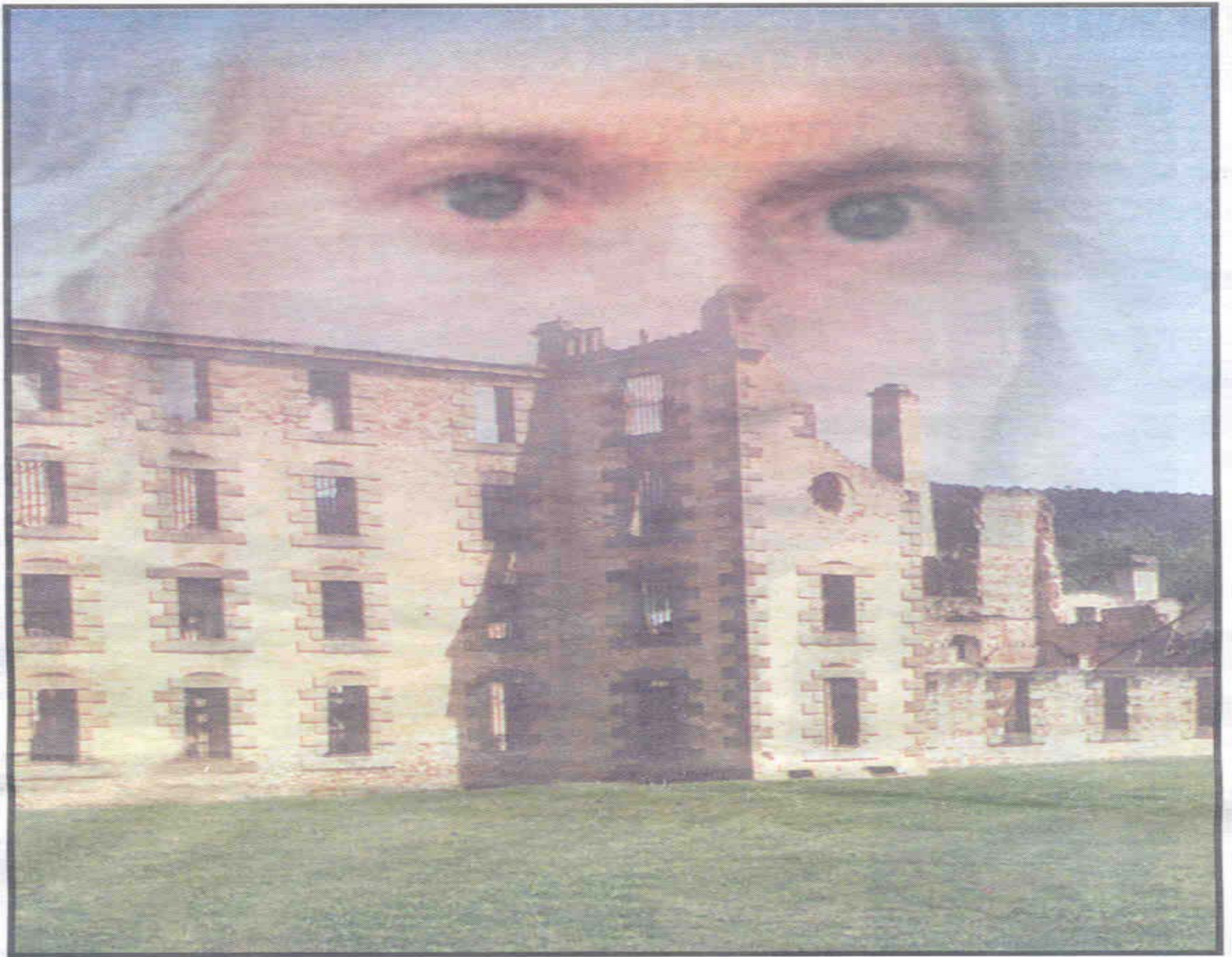
identification with aggression and authority

grandiosity

paranoid psychotics plus depressed non psychotics

# Julian Knight





**Characteristics commonly  
found in those who  
commit/attempt to commit  
autogenic massacres**

**(based on 10 cases personally  
assessed)**

# CHARACTERISTICS FREQUENTLY FOUND IN THE PERPETRATORS OF MASSACRES

1. MALE
2. YOUNG
3. LACKING INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS
4. ISOLATED AND BULLIED AS A CHILD
5. SOCIALLY ISOLATED AS AN ADULT
6. OUTSIDE OF THE WORKFORCE
7. RESENTMENT

# CHARACTERISTICS FREQUENTLY FOUND IN THE PERPETRATORS OF MASSACRES

8. INVOLVED WITH GUNS AND/OR MILITARY, SURVIVALIST INTERESTS
9. RIGIDITY AND/OR OBSESSIVE TRAITS.
10. SELF ABSORBED & SUSPICIOUS (PARANOIA)
11. FANTASIES OF KILLING
12. OWN DEATH INTENDED OUTCOME
13. MIMESIS

There was, in most, an absence of:

- A history of antisocial and specifically violent behaviour
- A history of contact with the mental health services
- A history of direct threats
- A history of substance abuse

The autogenic massacre is

- A planned project for murder suicide
- The adoption of an existing cultural script

# Why Obsessive ?

Obsession carries with it the atrophy and gradual death of all faculties not involved in whatever may be the obsessing (pre) occupation. to let an obsession take one over is therefore always to consent, in some degree, both to one's own death and to that of others.

Mary Midgley (1984)

**Why Suicidal ?**

# Suicidal motivation is compounded of three elements:

1. The wish to die (hopelessness)
2. The wish to kill (anger/hate)
3. The wish to be killed (guilt)

Menninger 1938

# **Why Resentment?**

# RESSENTIMENT

1. The feelings of rancour and suppressed hostility
2. The repeated experiencing and reliving of the emotional responses to failure, exclusion, humiliation

Not an emotion with a specific object (e.g. revenge and anger) but a pervasive attitude to the world.

# EXPERIENCE OF INJURY



CHECKING OF IMMEDIATE IMPULSE TO RETALIATE



PROJECT FOR LATER REVENGE



VENGEFULNESS



CONTINUED SUPPRESSION OF ACTION



RANCOUR AND SUPPRESSED HOSTILITY



SPITE MALICE AND DETRACTION



PROJECTION OF VINDICTIVENESS INTO OTHERS



**RESSENTMENT**

}

} INJURIES PERSONAL

} WITH SPECIFIC

} OBJECT OF

} ANIMUS

}

}

}

} INCREASINGLY

} ATTITUDINAL

} AND INJURIES ARE

} EXPERIENCED

} AS DESTINY

}

}

# RESSENTIMENT

**THE FACT AND QUALITY OF ONE'S  
EXISTENCE CALLS OUT FOR REVENGE**



**REPRESSION**



**FALSIFICATION OF WORLD VIEW**



**TRANSVALUATION**



**THE ENVIED IS VALUELESS  
THE FEARED BECOME POWERLESS  
THE INJURIES DID NOT EXIST**



**FAILURE OF  
REPRESSION**



**CHRONIC RUMINATION  
ON HUMILIATION,  
VICTIMIZATION AND  
MANIFEST DESTINY  
RHETORIC OF MURDER  
AND SUICIDE**

# AUTOGENIC MASSACRE

- Planned
- Act of non specific revenge directed at the uncaring world
- Often seeking infamy
- Intend their own death
- Victims are a means to their ends

- What distinguishes them from a multiplicity of angry, disappointed, isolated young men who think of suicide and mass murder?:
  - Has pre-existing preoccupation with, and access to, guns
  - Well organised – rigid adherence to commitments
  - Violent fantasies
  - Mimesis

- What distinguishes them from a multiplicity of angry, disappointed, isolated young men who think of suicide and mass murder?:
  - A poisonous self absorption that cannot tolerate 'loss of face'
  - Self referential
  - Unresolved resentment
  - Chance

- The best chance of reducing the frequency is to shift the script by shifting the identity it confers:
- From:
  - Horrifying, evil, infamous
- To:
  - Sad, sick, cowardly, silly

# CONCLUSIONS

- The autogenic massacre represents a new script for suicide/murder in Western Societies maintained by mimesis
- The massacre represents a concatenation of events: social; interpersonal; psychopathological; and practical
- Resentment and a poisonous self absorption feed an acidulated despair

- The ultimate expression of an empty individualism in a fragmenting society of strangers where fame is significance
- Guns mediate, authoritarian right wing views about survival of the fittest often justify
- Psychopathology involves sensitive self reference or frank paranoia



# Conclusions I

1. Massacres though rare are becoming more frequent.
2. There is a need to attempt to render such events meaningful and the label EVIL seems to work for some people.

# Conclusions II

3. Massacres usually result from a complex concatenation of personal, social, cultural and contextual issues influenced by the play of chance and coincidence.
  - Reducing this to the effects of some nebulous force named EVIL makes little contribution to clear thinking.

# Conclusions III

Evil is itself a Temptation

1. Transforming process into object.
2. Assuming the existence of some absolute set of shared values which impose themselves.
3. Seeing the evil as an effective force which really exists out there in the world moving people to action.

What in a secular society does it mean to say someone is evil?

# Evil

As an evaluative judgement:

“Everyman calleth that which pleaseth and is delightful to himself good; and evil that which displeaseth him”

(Hobbes 1650)

# Evil

As a causal explanation:

“Evil is a force, or forces, which are not merely contrary to all that it most praiseworthy and admirable...but is actively against these qualities

(Hampshire 1989)

# Evil

As a particular type of intention:

Evil as the choice to seriously harm others in the knowledge of the damage and distress which will result.

# EVIL

## AS A TEMPTATION

Compounded of:-

1. The desire for a forbidden good (the trivial)
2. The sacrifice of good in return for the desired (Faustian pact)
3. The attraction of the abhorred (the surviving mystery)

Something given as evil can 'tempt' us and work its charm on us even though there is no desire for it, even though willing resists its experienced efficacy.

Max Scheler 1996

# THE BANALITY OF EVIL (JASPERS AND ARENDT)

- Attempts to circumvent the glorification of human destructiveness (Hitler).
- Attempts to avoid need for intentionality of evil acts (Eichmann)

Are Mass Killers Evil and if so in what sense?

**Are Mass Killers Evil?**

# EVIL AND MASS HOMICIDE

As an expression of disapprobation:

The Mass Killer is someone for whom we wish to express disgust.

# EVIL AND MASS HOMICIDE

As temptation:

Despite its archaic associations may have the benefit of highlighting the meaningful connections between outlandish behaviour and mundane aspects of the killer's reality and personality.

# EVIL AND MASS HOMICIDE

As an explanatory force:-

- May produce short term satisfaction and comfort
- Long term tends to obscure contributory elements potentially both more informative and open to modification
- Demonisation flatters the killer and attracts imitators.

# EVIL AND MASS HOMICIDE

As an evil intention:

Autogenic massacres are committed usually by people who plan to kill in the knowledge of the damage and distress that will cause.

# Adolescent Mass Murderers

## Meloy et al 2001

63% depressed at time

48% preoccupied with weapons

58% direct or indirect threats

59% recent loss or disruption

85% used guns

126 killed (3-13) 84 wounded

# Adolescent Mass Murderers

## Meloy et al 2001

34 committed 27 mass murders 1958-1999  
(14 post 1995)

100% male 11-19 median 17 years

43% bullied

60% loners

44% fantasizers

42% prior violence

62% substance abuse

23% documented psychiatric history

RESSENTIMENT

# ABJECT HERO

Ressentiment feeds on memories that have become festering wounds.  
Constant comparison, self reference and self aggrandisement

The world is evil and oppressive.  
I am a misunderstood victim.



Bernstein 1990