

Reply to Amanda Hess, "The Rise of the Ironic Man-Hater", Slate 8/8/14
http://www.slate.com/blogs/xx_factor/2014/08/08/ironic_misandry_why_feminists_joke_about_drinking_male_tears_and_banning.html

There is a vogue amongst feminists for wearing T-shirts with flagrantly misandrist slogans such as,



Amanda Hess's article presents the view that such slogans are ironically misandrist rather than genuinely misandrist. The ironic misandrist sips from a mug marked "MALE TEARS," frosts her cakes with the phrase "KILL ALL MEN," and affixes "MISANDRY" heart pins to her lapel. It is all meant ironically, we are told.

This view is by no means universal amongst the sisters who sport such items. Hayley Krischer in Salon on 27/1/013 (http://www.salon.com/2013/10/27/fighting_sexism_with_cross_stitch_the_rise_of_misandry_crafts/) noted that, "*There are women who unapologetically hate men. Scrolling through Instagram the other day, I noticed an author whose work I admire wearing a misandry t-shirt. She suggested it should be a 'staff uniform' for her magazine. When I asked her via email if the t-shirt was ironic, she wrote back saying, 'To me, there's nothing ironic about misandry. I really do hate men. A lot'.*"

So there is smell of back-peddling about Hess's article. Was she motivated, perhaps, by the embarrassment of knowing that many of her sisterhood mean it flat out straight? (And, no, Amanda, you don't have to explain that we need not be worried that "they actually want to milk us for our tears" - we may be dim men, but we clocked that this was a metaphor).

However, I digress. For the present purposes we shall assume that these misandrist slogans are indeed intended to be ironic. The question is whether this makes them acceptable.

The question is a simple one. MRAs claim that misandry is widespread and has serious implications in terms of disadvantaging men over a wide range of issues. The question of whether misandric slogans are acceptable, as irony, hinges upon whether this claim is true.

A illustration may help. Suppose someone told me that they had been abducted by aliens and undergone a painful operation to examine their internal anatomy. I might

reply, "well, heck, I expect they at least had good MRSA cross-infection control with their advanced technology". This would of course be meant as a joke - or irony, if you will. The reason why I would feel justified in joking is fundamentally because I do not believe a word of their story. In contrast, if I genuinely believed they had been kidnapped by parties unknown and forced to undergo a nasty surgical treatment against their wishes, then it would be appallingly heartless to make that same crack. The same words would be acceptable in the first instance but unacceptable in the second case.

The acceptability of a quip which might potentially be taken as ironic also depends upon who makes the remark. In the case that there is a victim and a perpetrator, what may be acceptable as irony if spoken by a victim could be grossly unacceptable if spoken by the perpetrator. Take for example a black man calling his black friend "nigger". This is meant ironically, and has been acceptable amongst blacks for decades on that basis. But a white person cannot call a black man "nigger". Such usage would not be regarded as acceptable. The history of racial oppression prohibits a white person from being eligible to deploy the word "nigger" as irony.

Now as far as feminists are concerned, the MRAs' claims of widespread and serious misandry are preposterous. They may (possibly) concede some minor disadvantages men face, but will certainly insist that these are very minor compared with those faced by women. And even those small male disadvantages, they would claim, would be set right if only men would embrace feminism. So they feel entitled to wear their misandric slogans, secure in their being ironic because the misandry is, in their view, preposterous. This is analogous to the alien abduction illustration.

MRAs, on the other hand, cannot interpret these slogans in this way because, to them, misandry is very real, pervasive and seriously damaging to men. The MRAs regard these slogans as a black man would regard being called "nigger" by a privileged white person. Worse - because the existence of widespread misandry is not generally accepted in our society, the analogy is with the plight of blacks before the civil rights movement. Being called "nigger" at that time had not even the trappings of irony, it was flat out oppression by a group powerful and arrogant enough to believe they could get away with it. This is the MRA position.

So, do not sneer when an MRA (who might be a man or a woman, remember) does not "get it", Amanda. The failure of blacks to find it amusing to be called "nigger" by white folk was never due to their poor sense of humour. It was because their disadvantage was real and unrecognised. It is you, Amanda, who does not get it. Because you refuse to recognise the widespread disadvantages men and boys face, you fail to realise that irony is not applicable. You are a stupid white person who thinks that it is acceptable to call black people "niggers".

At this point I could go into all the reasons for believing that misandry is indeed real, pervasive and serious. I could point out that men have reason to be offended by a slogan like KillAllMen because precisely that sentiment has been repeatedly expressed by authoritative representatives of feminism, as well as enthusiastically embraced by enormous numbers of women on Twitter. That would be a long digression indeed for it would take in the whole gamut of MRA issues - and for that I might just as well refer you to the whole of the rest of this site.

Here I take a simpler line. True equality must mean an atmosphere of equal respect. Surely this must include consideration for people's sensitivities. Even if you were

convinced that the other person's view was complete moonshine, a decent person would show consideration for their feelings. Thus, in my alien abduction analogy, after making my initial quip I would realise that the 'victim' is genuinely very distressed. At this point my joking would cease. Deluded this person may well be, but that is no reason for my persecuting the guy. That would be a decent person's response. But that's not what we get from feminists. Instead we get, "I enjoy that it bothers the men who don't get it" - and they go right on KillingAllMen and bathing in our tears. There is no excuse. You are so steeped in the myth of your own righteousness that you cannot see how hateful you are.

"Ironic misandry, then, allows feminists to contest the idea that they are radical man-haters", claims Hess. No, it doesn't. It proves it. It's very, very simple. You wouldn't do this to someone you liked.

