ZOOM *into your* mental health

Life in lockdown...

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, many Australian families have been affected by the onset of changes initiated by new health and safety regulations. Focus has been cast upon annihilating the virus and recuperating the economy, with little to no attention on matters of mental health and emotional well being, which were only worsened with enforced lockdown measures. Acclimatising to life in lockdown has been a challenge for most, however it has hit Australia's youth the hardest.

Although this is our sixth lockdown, it does not mean that virtual learning is any less taxing on students, both mentally and academically. Whilst it may seem trivial in the context of a pandemic, continual cancellations and interruptions to school events, extracurricular activities, and contingency of the future, have had a detrimental effect on the mental wellbeing of students, as they begin to lose motivation and things to have to look forward to during the school year. For many, the loss of a simple daily routine with activities to help them relax outside of school work is the biggest contributor to this feeling of a repetitive and unproductive lifestyle in lockdown.

Furthermore, staying connected to friends and family appears to be more difficult than one might expect in a world where almost everything is done online. At school, social interaction is a given, whether that be between peers during class or our friends at lunch, however in lockdown, many find it difficult to reach out and stay connected without this environment. This is worsened with the fact that there is little to no interaction between students during class time, save for the awkward breakout rooms that, more often than not, foster an unwillingness to interact during virtual learning.

Through a light survey conducted within the Year 10 and 11 cohort of Presbyterian Ladies' College Melbourne, we found these trends to be heavily supported. We recovered the following data surrounding the impacts of lockdown and virtual learning on the mental health of Australian high school students.
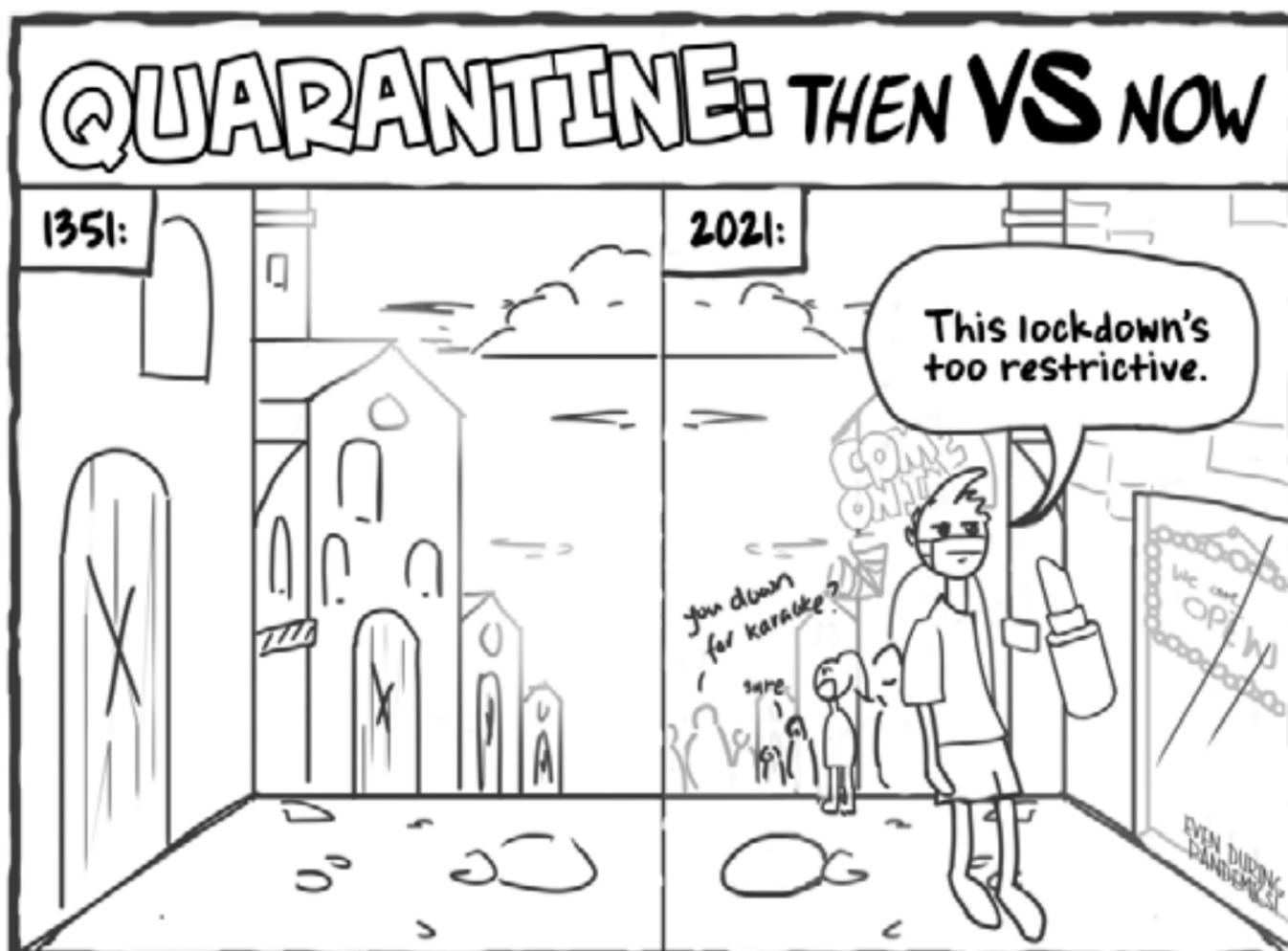
"After a full day of schooling online, I feel very drowsy and drained to do anything after school."

84.6% of students surveyed prefer face-to-face learning over virtual learning with 80-85% of participants saying they prefer it as they feel they can learn more, class is more interactive and enjoy being able to see their friends and peers everyday.

38% felt that lockdown definitely had a negative impact on their mental health, with 40% indicating that it had slightly impacted them.

95% said that the cause of this was lack of social interaction between friends and family, teachers and peers

BEATING THE LOCKDOWN BLUES

If you're feeling unmotivated, lonely, and perhaps a little scared to reach out to friends or peers, chances are they feel the same way too. Check in on the people closest to you, and when you can, initiate a friendly gesture through reassurance, and readily emotional support. You could arrange an online study date (this actually works!), watch a movie together, or maybe even cook a meal together over FaceTime. Staying connected during a time of harsh isolation and confinement is essential in sustaining a healthy mental state, and boosting overall happiness.

BOYS WILL BE ~~BOYS~~

WHO THEY ARE RAISED TO BE.

For some, hearing about Miss Universe Australia, Maria Thattil, being added into a boys group chat where derogatory and demeaning messages about girls were circulated, surprised and shocked them. Unfortunately for many, this is something that they hear about all the time. For far too many girls, this experience is normal.

While no woman ever deserves to be put in a position like Maria was, if she hadn't been, these boys would have probably continued this behaviour and objectification of women, simply because 'who cares?'. So it begs the question: are these boys sorry, or sorry they got caught? How many incidents like this have to happen before we hold boys and men accountable for the deep-rooted misogynistic culture that thrives and festers in these group chats?

What disappoints us the most is that there has been a continuation of this indecent behaviour, observed countless times amongst young men. In 2019, the ABC reported that St Kevin's College Year 10s and 11s chanted a grossly degrading and misogynistic song on a public train, I wish that all the ladies; these were 16-17 year olds believed it was acceptable to say such disgusting comments in public, emboldened by the security they felt in a group, and viewing women simply as sexual objects. Just this year, on a bus en route to the March4Justice protests, boys from Wesley College reportedly made degrading comments. According to a news source, a student who was on the bus said he heard a boy say that they 'should've bombed the women's march'. These repeated incidents only show that something else needs to change for boys and men to listen, to grow up and seriously reflect on the deep impact of their jokes.

But honestly, can the younger generation be fully blamed? We learn from observation, from our surroundings. In August last year, Victoria issued a 'gag law' which meant that sexual assault survivors lost their right to share their stories with their real names in cases where the accused was found guilty. Such blatant silencing of sexual assault survivors is something that should never have been tolerated in this country. And then, we saw the parliament's treatment of Higgins' rape allegations, showing their priority to protect the accused, not justice for the survivor. Youth learn from high-profile cases like this, and that's the problem. Boys think this behaviour won't have consequences, and girls see that justice will not be sought for them.

We've also seen in many instances, that when men vocally support women in these situations, it is often because they realise that women close to them could be subject to this same demeaning behaviour, rather than due to a proactive approach to tackling the issue. For instance, Prime Minister Scott Morrison only differed his response and showed empathy once he thought about 'what would [I] want to happen if it were our girls?', highlighting the saddening reality that often women's wellbeing is only brought to the spotlight by men when it hits close to home for them. When the people in power of our nation allow this to happen, it's not too surprising that this damaging culture pervades the younger generation.

This incident with the group chat illustrates the fact that currently, the problem is always pushed onto the victim, and not the offenders. The boys in this chat, allegedly former MHS and Nossal students aged 19-20, were sending around photos of girls, some of which were even strangers to them, and rating them based on their looks and bodies. Later, other girls shared stories and their own experiences in which some of these boys had participated in this behaviour before, throughout highschool.

What's most confronting and disappointing, is that these are boys and young men that we know.

They are boys we are friends with, related to, that we work with. Whilst it has been common knowledge, to young girls especially, that this behaviour is 'normal' amongst boys, this issue has demonstrated the substantial extent to which this is true.

In a generation heavily dependent on social media and the internet, comments made in group chats and DMs will inevitably get back to the victims. And when they do, the impacts can be detrimental. Seeing these comments can severely damage these young girls' self-confidence, body image, and overall mental health, something that is not easy to shake off and instead deeply affects their views of themselves for the long-term; in fact, women are 5 times more likely than men to suffer from clinical depression from the sexism they have faced. This is the consequence we as women have to face, for 'jokes' and 'just a bit of fun' for young men. For too long now have women had to survive and fight this culture alone. As Liberal MP Fiona Martin said in relation to parliament rape allegations, assault and sexism against women is "a problem for perpetrators, not victims". We must hold others accountable for their words and actions, but also ourselves, to call out this culture and kill it at the roots.

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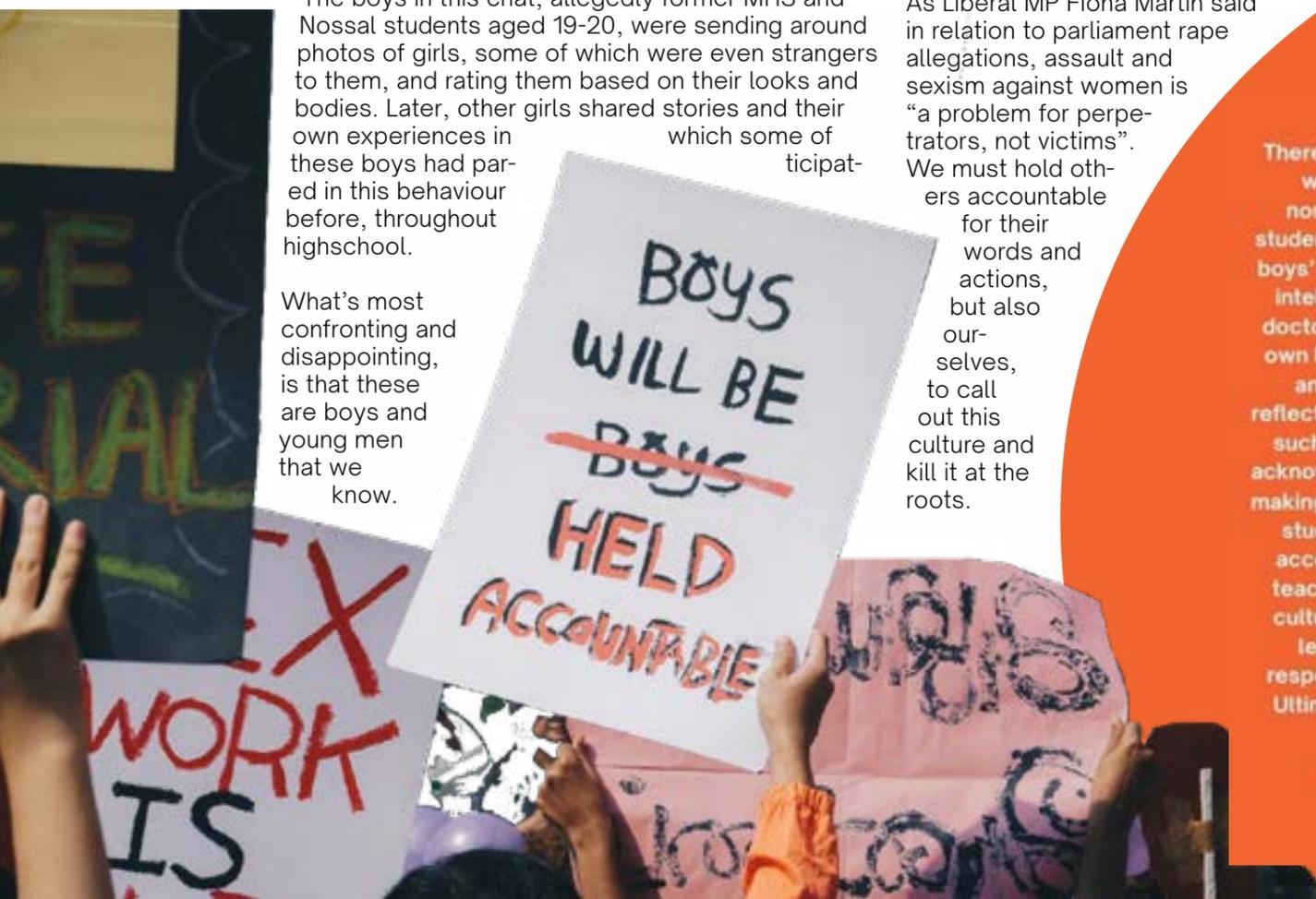
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BOYS WILL BE ~~BOYS~~ HELD ACCOUNTABLE

There's definitely a cultural aspect of [elite boys' school] which prevents self reflection. It's a culture which normalises misogynistic comments and allows many students to pawn it off as simply a 'joke'. Coming into [elite boys' school], we're always reminded about our academic intellect, how we're always going to be the next 'future doctors and lawyers' of our society. We're all put into our own little world where we feel invincible, like we can say anything, and do anything without any need for self reflection or accountability. Whenever there is exposure of such behaviours, I feel like the school doesn't focus on acknowledging the situation at hand, but rather escaping it, making something so relevant to each and every one of our students feel so distant to them. It is this approach to accountability which prevents progress, it leads to our teachers denying that [elite boys' school] misogynistic culture must be addressed, or that it even exists, and it leads to our students denying that they too have a responsibility to call out this behaviour when they see it. Ultimately there is not a short-term fix to misogyny, but change must start in education.

Student statement, Year 12, elite boys' school

THE PROBLEM WITH 'BOYS WILL BE BOYS'

We have all heard the saying "boys will be boys" one too many times. This notion that deplorable behaviour can simply be dismissed as part of the nature of young men is hurtful to everyone, regardless of gender. It renders inconsiderate, inappropriate and even violent behaviours excusable or less deserving of condemnation purely based on gender. This problematic idea so deeply ingrained in society also allows the perpetuation of toxic masculinity, reinforcing machismo and harmful aspects of gender roles.

By reinforcing outdated and damaging ideas of masculinity, we are raising generations of men to mask their insecurities with a macho facade; this will inevitably lead them to neglect to raise issues such as mental health, or speak up about inappropriate behaviours, in fear that they will be seen as inferior by others who deem them less masculine. This highlights how fragile traditional expectations of masculinity are beneath the tough exterior. Rather than papering over the cracks, shouldn't we be focusing on raising our boys to be secure in their masculinity and identity rather than disregarding signs of hurtful conduct and dictating that "boys will be boys"? As Maria Thattil puts it, "These boys in the group chats are the ones to go on to be policy makers, to become the men in the boardrooms"; this should be a wake-up call to all of us.

Further to this, a more insidious component of this culture is the saddening reality of internalised misogyny for women. From a young age, girls are being taught that boys displaying harmful behaviour or making inappropriate comments "just means he likes you!" Despite how demeaning and uncomfortable these experiences are, they are depicted as favourable as they demonstrate women's value through their desirability. Most women simply learn to put up with this. As a result, girls are often caught up in a conundrum: is being objectified and put in a degrading position okay since it signals that a woman is desired? And why do we see so much victim-blaming and even girls shaming other girls for the behaviour men show towards them? In a world where all of this is so normalised, sexism subverts our conversations so that we speak about these experiences with a sole focus on women as opposed to perpetrators. Girls are taught from a very young age the ways in which we should present ourselves to be desirable whilst also protecting ourselves from the actions of men. It has always been our responsibility to be safe, and this deeply affects our views of ourselves.

The victim-blaming rhetoric that we have seen countless times before, whether in instances like this among teenagers, or in high-profile cases, is an extremely dehumanising and stigmatizing narrative. In Australia, 1 in 5 girls will be sexually assaulted before 16, however 90% of victims will not speak out. Still, survivors are often harassed with questions regarding the time of their assault, their clothing choice, background history, and other irrelevant information. They've already had their personhood and autonomy violated, and in addition to all that, people add onto this trauma by drawing upon irrelevant details to pin the survivor as the cause of the crime. This only serves to further draw focus away from the perpetrators, what the foundation of this culture is and how to educate and hold people accountable.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN BOYS AREN'T HELD ACCOUNTABLE?

The notion, 'boys will be boys', is now often used to excuse and justify harmful behaviours, in which women are degraded and objectified. Now, we are seeing and living the consequences of allowing this idea to be spread to young generations as something normal for girls to be put through. Unfortunately, it has taken this group chat being exposed, where someone of status was involved, to raise awareness and call people to seriously reflect on how their active contribution or silence, has perpetuated this issue. Maria Thattil even commented that in response to her words, many 'questioned the validity of the conversation, denied that sexism exists in schools [and] speculated that this was a publicity stunt'; illustrating yet again the inherent instinct to question and invalidate experiences, implying that these behaviors should remain unchallenged. An anonymous statement from an elite boys' school student notes that these boys often feel like they are "put into our own little world where [they] feel invincible, like [they] can say anything, and do anything without any need for self reflection or accountability." (see full statement below)

Fortunately, as Thattil shared her story and experiences, many other girls and women were encouraged to share their own-- the sheer number of women who had experienced this kind of be-

haviour, been subject to these comments and/or experienced assault was confronting and saddening, but necessary to be aware of. Think of the countless other uncovered group chats and conversations like this, involving such degradation of women. These comments, when internalised, have detrimental long-term impacts; research shows that the hostile sexism fostered in these group chats or 'locker room talk', can lead to abusive behaviour in adult years and gender-based violence. These toxic male spaces and behaviours codify male power and dominance but also show how they serve to protect men from any consequences and lead to ingrained sexist attitudes.

Yes, it can be difficult to challenge these ideals, to call out family and friends. It requires a willingness to unlearn ideas that are instilled into us since childhood and to accept mistakes that we ourselves have made. This is exactly why it is the most effective and necessary way to break down this normalised culture.

It is also important to acknowledge that bystanders are not somehow more socially acceptable because they aren't actively contributing these comments or physical actions. In fact, they silently endorse the idea that this behaviour will not be reprimanded, whilst fully aware of its harm. This behaviour is involuntarily rewarded when unchallenged, and the perpetrators are reinforced in social circles for exhibiting 'funny' behaviour. Those who are choosing to call out friends, family, social circles demonstrate that change is entirely possible for all, though calling this culture out isn't something to be rewarded for, but a responsibility. It isn't solely about each boy as an individual, but the impact that their support and promoting awareness has on their peers and wider social circles. Actions that cost us nothing, but can make serious changes.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND COLLABORATION IS KEY

By this point, we have seen enough disappointing cases on both a global and local scale to know what the issue is, to know what the cause is, and to know that something must be done. So what is hindering change?

Chuck Derry, co-founder of the Gender Violence Institute, sheds light on the fact that "the first step is acknowledging these behaviours; next step is to reflect on how to make amends, how to mitigate harm, how to influence to create and support change". Possibly the most crucial tool for achieving this is open discourse between men and women, with a spirit of collaboration and understanding. With this sort of supportive space and a desire for change, we can encourage men who have been complacent to or participants of inappropriate behaviour to have the courage to acknowledge this and work towards change. In many ways, the basis for change must be internal; only through introspection, when both men and women unlearn problematic behaviours and beliefs, can we move forward as a collective.

We must also show our readiness to hold perpetrators accountable on all levels, whether that be students or staff in schools, people in the workplace, or those in higher institutional levels such as the government or religious orders. We need to voice our support for those affected and create transparency when it comes to dealing with these matters, refusing to shy away from anything that's hard to swallow. Discussions about these issues must be destigmatised in our communities as they apply to all demographics since, unfortunately, this is essentially a universal issue in a still extremely patriarchal world.

Education has such immense value and influence in this regard; it is not enough for students to be taught the bare minimum in years 10-12 in the hopes that our foundational problems will miraculously be solved. It is heartening to see that steps are being taken in schools to address this. In our own school, we've seen discussions surrounding how to maximise the quality of our respectful relationships and sex education programs through getting input from students. Many of the schools involved in some of these incidents have also released statements regarding changes they are aiming to make to their own programs to foster a more respectful environment within their schools, which will help to catalyse change in the wider community. Considering that problematic beliefs and behaviours are of instilled in all of us, regardless gender, since birth, it is all the more important to take early action in education and providing positive role models. Prevention is much better than reaction, and we must be proactive when dealing with these issues.

WE WILL NOT BE SILENCED

'THE POWER' A BOOK DISCUSSION

What would the world look like if it was a matriarchy?

I recently read a book called The Power by Naomi Alderman. It is a sci-fi dystopian, futuristic novel that asks the questions, what would the world look like if it was a matriarchy? The book was amazing. It used the perspectives of several characters to show the uprising and revolution of the female gender and how women were able to take power from society through different sectors of influence. Influenced by several texts by Margret Atwood like The Handmaid's Tale and The Penelopiad, Alderman's part allegory, part speculative fiction of a world where women are the dominant gender, is a story inside a story.

It tells the tale through some letters of an author, Neil Adam Armon, trying to convince his female publisher to consider his book - his work suggests a world where men were the most socially powerful gender. He tells her that in his story there will be male soldiers, male police men and male politicians. Naomi replies back to his letter saying that a "world run by men" seems like a more "kinder, caring and... sexier" world than the one they presently live in.

I have to say - reading this in the prologue absolutely hooked me on to this book. I was so blindsided by the way the male author was striving for attention. His excessive apologising and thanking sounded so weird coming from a male voice. The satirical and metafictional nature of the work seemed so starkly wrong, that it really opened my eyes to all the subtle misogynistic actions of our current society that have been normalized for different genders.

Something I really appreciated from this book was also Alderman's attention to detail. Even when writing the address for the letter, the reader may notice it says from the "Men's Writer's Association", quite similar to how in our world certain industries have to specify gender when it comes to female professions and men is seen as the 'default' option, for example, AFL (Australian Football League) and WLF (Women's Football League). It seems like where in this world, you're either a football player or a female football player, in their world, you're either a writer or a male writer.

And so then we get to read this book Neil Adam Armon has written, and it is written from the perspective of four people - three girls and one boy who all deeply influence how this new ideology is spread.

My favourite character to read from was a girl named Allie, who changes her name to Eve and rewrites religious literature to suit a narrative that enforces women as the dominant gender. She emphasises female religious figures and teaches to her followers that God is a woman.

The characters and how nature around them was changing displayed an excellent social commentary that really outlined the power imbalance between sexes we see all the time by reversing the roles.

So you must be thinking, how does this all happen? How do women radically change all previous gender roles and confines in this society? The sci-fi part of this story is that all over the world, seemingly overnight, girls and women simultaneously develop a strip of muscle in their collarbone which conducts electricity. Some girls have more power than others and they are able to wake up the force in older women too. The world changes beyond recognition. Women are elected as political leaders, the army is almost completely composed of women, God changes gender, sex-trafficked women break free from their bonds and it is a complete parallel to the real world.

This book is not a sweet, uplifting message about gender equality. It is a mirror of all the ignored and normalised horrors we see everyday.

This book made me feel empowered at first. It made me smile and laugh and feel oh so giddy that women were taking back power and exacting revenge on all of those who had wronged them. All the institutional prejudices that made them suffer were brought down and finally we had power. But as the narrative continued - it left only an uncomfortable taste in my mouth.

I would not call this book a feminist novel. The road to revolution and social change is violent and brutal. Naomi Alderman in her novel The Power, illustrates a world where women rise from oppression just to become the new oppressors themselves. She conveys that a world run by women would not be a "kinder, caring and... sexier" world - she tells us that power is power. And it is not gender that corrupts but power itself.

I think this note is so important for people everywhere around the world right now. I have noticed that increasingly, on social media apps, there is a greater divide amongst the different genders and trends like 'was I written by a man or a woman' only contribute to this. TikTok especially seems to be a breeding ground for the negative 'I hate all men' ideology that is roaming the internet currently, is incredibly dangerous to the social balance between boys, girls and non-binary people. Empowering women is not about tearing down men. Constantly comparing the sexes will only lead to resentment and hate on both sides about factors that should not affect anything.

For all these reasons and above, I deeply recommend The Power by Naomi Alderman for the next book on your bookshelf.

Rose Khurana

Hymn for the Untold Stories

Sing to me O Muse, of Circe
Of the scratch of her voice that angered the immortals
A bittersweet reminder that mortality is beauty, is
loveliness
That it gave her fortitude and strength

Sing of the fury that chorused beneath her skin,
a raging fire that Helios shall not be credited for
Tell me of her witchcraft, her metamorphosis
So striking and threatening that the gods
had to have her vanquished

Tell the lands of how they cowered at a woman
with power dripping from her fingertips like ichor
How she revealed man's true form;
after all, she did cast men into pigs
Sing it to me as if you are worshipping a god, poet
because this witch is worthy.

O Divine Poesy,
Skip the tales of Odysseus and his misfortunes
No one cares for a man who wallows in self-indulgence
Tell me the Odyssey from the eyes of sweet Penelope
Strong-willed and fierce, a master of deceit

Odysseus faced monsters and sirens each once
but Penelope deceived those suitors every day
Her intelligence carried her ten years without fail
Or did you forget that while the poets praise Odysseus
and his wiles,
It was Penelope who played the final trick on him,
Penelope
who held the weight of Ithaca's demise upon her gentle
fingertips

Do not tell me Odysseus cradled her delicate hands
when he returned home,
Her hands were the ones to mend him back to normal-
cy
Her palms carry a weight that his never will
These are the hands of a woman who sews worlds back
together
Hands that could weave stars into the night sky
Hands that have blood on them
Penelope's tale is far more interesting, trust me

O Goddess, will you not sing of Helen
whose kisses were stained with blood
Who is not Helen of Troy
but Helen of War, Helen of Death,
Helen of no one but herself

Remind these scholars of their foolish ways,
fearing god-born Achilles when here stood Helen
Daughter of two kings
Part god first, a woman second
Powerful because she was both
Remind them, Muse, of her cycle that bled two-
parts ichor
Do you not remember
that Helen began a war with
the way she whispered in a man's ear, with
a smile, a kiss, with just her divine face

They thought she could be tamed
Helen with the blood of Zeus thrumming in her
veins
Thought that she would be content
with a prison of silken sheets and wedding rings
What fools they were.
Sing to us Goddess, of Helen who chose freedom,
who
smiled as she watched Troy burn to ash
A price to pay for her imprisoning

O Muse, cry out of the tales of
Medea and her divine descent
who sowed dragon teeth into the Earth's soil
Whom without, Jason would never have succeeded
Why do you forget Antigone who had the courage
to challenge an evil man?
You brush over Atalanta, abandoned by a father
who wanted a son instead
Who still grew to be strong and beautiful,
and bested any man in a race

Why do you twist Medusa's tale?
Medusa, who held power that no man ever will
Stony, merciless eyes are not always evil
Sometimes, they are a woman's only defense
Tell us the truth, poet

Aarabi Kugathas

The
FAST FASHION FRENZY
is catching up to us.

In light of recent reports from the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) that limiting global warming to 1.5oC above pre-industrial levels are way beyond reach, focusing on our climate crisis and its condemning?? effects is now more important than ever. Put simply, Australia is out of options. Reports state that there is "high confidence" that our fire events will worsen, sea levels will continue to rise, wiping out beaches, and that our cities will continue getting hotter unless our greenhouse gas emissions are significantly reduced. What's even more worrying is that this is all human-induced; our actions have led to what has been deemed a "code red for humanity" by the UN chief, Antonio Guterres. Enter the Fast Fashion industry, an approach to meeting consumer demands by mass-producing popular styles of clothing at low costs, exploiting workers and taking the world by storm (literally). As one of the greatest polluters of the planet, this industry is damaging the environment at drastic rates with extreme use of resources and even more waste being discarded into our oceans.

drastically with cheap prices and styles sampled straight from the catwalk. These short term trend cycles have given rise to highly unsustainable brands that produce bad quality clothing under poor working conditions.

This introduces the ethical issues of the industry, concerning the women and children who work 14 to 16 hours per day in order to satisfy the supply chain. The increasing demand for affordable, on-trend clothing has led to the intentional exploitation of low-income Asian countries such as Bangladesh, India and Vietnam, with production sites constantly on the lookout for the cheapest labour costs they can find. The garment workers are placed in the worst of the worst conditions, that being buildings that are often unsafe, saturated with toxic substances and offering little ventilation. The collapse of the Rana Plaza, an eight-story building in Dhaka, Bangladesh, is one of the deadliest disasters connected to this industry, taking 1,134 lives (mostly young women) and injuring over 2,500 of the workers who were manufacturing clothes for major brands. This incident triggered collective action on factory and garment worker safety, but retailers have still continued to outsource materials and production to less economically developed sites where underpayment and poor working conditions are overlooked. In addition to their dangerous environments, garment workers are significantly underpaid, with less than 2% of them earning a living wage (the bare minimum that is required to fulfil their basic needs) meaning that 98% of them are unable to attain their basic necessities such as food security or sanitary and healthcare needs. This problem may seem as though it doesn't concern you, but by continually buying into disposable trends, you are perpetuating the slave labour of 40-75 million workers whose wages clearly do not reflect their effort and skill. What's more is that many big clothing companies draw on big issues in their production, such as feminism, in order to appeal to their increasingly progressive consumers; the irony of this is blatant — how is it that 80% of the garment workers behind these pieces promoting female empowerment are women themselves, yet still only pocket 40 cents out of every $10 T-shirt? This has been an ongoing problem surrounding fashion production for years, but with fast fashion taking over, issues regarding worker safety and equality are often disregarded.

THE FACTS

"The fashion industry is responsible for
8% of carbon emissions"
(UN Environment, 2019)

"Three out of five fast fashion items
end up in landfill."
(Clean Clothes Campaign, 2019)

"The apparel industry's global emissions output
is predicted to increase by 49% by 2030 if noth-
ing changes, meaning that fashion alone will emit
4.9 metric gigatons of CO2— nearly equal to to-
day's total annual US greenhouse gas emissions."
(Quantis)

"Fashion accounts for 20 to 35 percent
of microplastic flows into the ocean."
(McKinsey & Company 2020)

How did this all start?
Prior to the 1800s, the process of garment production was much slower than it is today, involving hand-sourced materials that needed to be spun and woven into fabrics before finally being made into clothing. With the Industrial Revolution came new technology that allowed for bulk production and the introduction of ready-made clothing; the production process became easier, faster and markedly cheaper. During the 19th and 20th centuries, more and more sweatshops started emerging, with the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire in New York, 1911 bringing light to the ethical issues surrounding the fashion industry that are still prevalent today. By the mid-20th century, trend cycles started picking up as fashion became a form of self-expression rather than simply garments to keep people warm; this is around the time when the term 'fast fashion' was coined. Fast forward to the present day where the industry's goal is to produce affordable, on-trend clothing to meet ever-changing consumer demands. These pieces are no longer made to be worn for years, but instead, to satisfy the rapidly changing trend cycles; clothes are now being bought, worn, and discarded in a span of months, further accelerating the already alarming waste production rate of the fashion industry.

How are we contributing?
With online shopping and social media being added to the mix, it's not hard to see how fast fashion has taken off in such a short span of time. The traditional trend cycle of popular styles would last around 10 to 20 years, with brands releasing new collections seasonally (4 times a year), however with the rise of fashion influencers on various social media platforms, specific styles of clothing are now being deemed 'in' one week and 'out' the next. The insanely fast turnover rate of this industry (ranges anywhere between 3-15 days) leads to overconsumption of poor quality clothes that will inevitably end up in landfills. Why is this a bad thing? Almost all of these garments are made with polyester fibre, a plastic-based material, which according to Forbes magazine, takes "nearly 70 million barrels of oil" to produce each year. Not only is this crude oil incredibly damaging to the environment, but the clothes that are made with polyester will take over 200 years to decompose. The media is oversaturated with micro-trends, characterised by their quick rise to popularity and even faster fall, promoting these unsustainable pieces and a 'throw away' culture that influences consumer behaviour

HOW TO HELP

This may be the point where you ask, "So what can I do?" Many retailers have begun their move towards sustainability by introducing bins for unwanted or unused items and utilising more environmentally friendly materials, however, it is up to all of us to make smarter purchasing decisions if we want to protect our planet. So what can we do to help? The main aim for consumers should be reducing the carbon footprint of the industry and there are several ways that this can be done:

1. In Vivienne Westwood's words, "buy less, choose well, make it last."
   Take care when selecting clothes to buy; think about versatility, quality, and the values of the companies you are supporting.
2. Buy locally
   By simply shopping secondhand, you are already contributing greatly to slowing the impacts of fast fashion by creating less waste and making the most of the energy and resources that enabled that piece of clothing to be made.
3. Wear your clothes until they are worn out and recycle them responsibly
   This is where the 'fast' from fast fashion comes into play; the world is currently unable to keep up with the amount of waste that we are producing, so by preventing our clothing from making its way into landfills, we are doing our environment a huge favour.
4. Move away from micro-trends: think long term
   Will you be wearing these garments in 5 years? How long will these clothes last? Is it worth buying into these trends?
5. Find more sustainable brands that support the environment and their workers
   There are many brands that are great alternatives to big retailers and advocate for the slower, more sustainable way of fashion; goodonyou.eco promotes a number of brands that support this model.

I SPY WITH MY LITTLE EYE:
Something Beginning with the Letter U

Just a month ago, explosive revelations from the Pegasus Project sent shockwaves throughout the world. The alleged magnitude of the Israeli company NSO's Pegasus spyware has led to a resurgence in the debate surrounding the use of spyware and other digital surveillance tools. Controversial NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden called for such companies to be "shut down" and for the "exploit trade" to be "banned". In response to the growing outcry, the NSO Group claimed that their software has "helped prevent terror attacks, gun violence, car explosions and suicide bombings". In the murky world of cybersurveillance, accountability and what is considered to be fair use is getting harder to define.

Spyware: What is It?

Spyware is software that can be covertly installed onto a user's device in order to gather information about the user's activities. In the case of Pegasus, it utilised a variety of security vulnerabilities in both iOS and Android systems to gain access to the user's GPS data, camera, microphone, contact data and more. Certain private companies such as the NSO Group and Trovicor sell this software to 'vetted customers' (mainly government bodies) to help them monitor and reveal potential criminal activity. The vetting process varies from company to company but it always includes checking that their potential customer is not blacklisted by any official body (like NATO). Furthermore, the company has to be convinced that their customer will use their software 'appropriately'. However, this process hasn't stopped certain countries with notorious human rights issues from buying such software, which has led to considerable concern about how spyware is being used to repress free speech.

How Has Spyware Been Used?

Digital surveillance is not something particularly new- the tools have existed since the 1990s- but it has become more sophisticated. The 2013 NSA Leaks by Snowden revealed the extent of the surveillance capabilities that the US government had access to. Spyware was designed to aid governments in monitoring potential criminal activity and it quickly became a profitable industry as digital technologies became increasingly abundant in modern society. Governments around the world also have their own agencies to develop spyware for their own means.

In the last decade, spyware has proven itself to be a useful tool for law enforcement bodies. Starting in 2018, the Australian Federal Police (AFP) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) worked together on a sting operation known as Operation Ironside. They created a secure messaging app called 'AN0M' and distributed custom phones with this app preloaded on it to known members of criminal gangs. These members would then recommend the custom phone to other colleagues, thus spreading AN0M with it. These phones had no other messaging capabilities except for this app and AN0M came with the caveat that the AFP and FBI could also decrypt and read any messages sent on this platform. AFP Commissioner Reece Kershaw described it as "being in the back pocket of organised crime". According to the AFP's website, Operation Ironside has led to nearly 300 offenders being charged with a total of 728 offences ranging from drug and weapon trafficking to planning murder as of August 1.

However, as useful as spyware is for law enforcement agencies, it is equally useful for autocratic states to crack down on dissidents and critics. In late 2013, the Ethiopian media outlet ESAT (Ethiopian Satellite Television Service), based in the US, was targeted by a spyware attack. An investigation by Citizen Lab revealed that the software was provided by an Italian cybersecurity company known as Hacking Team to the Ethiopian government. The government of Ethiopia has a known record of suppressing any press critical of it and at the time of the incident, was ranked 137 out of 180 in the World Press Freedom Index by Reporters Without Borders (RSF). Despite this, Eric Rabe, Hacking Team's Chief Marketing and Communications Officer claimed that Hacking Team saw no reason to prevent the sale of the software to Ethiopia. In an interview with Ben Makuch from VICE News, he claimed that it was a "legitimate sale to a customer who seemed to need it and seemed to be willing to use it in an appropriate way". He clarified that Hacking Team was told that the targeted individuals (in ESAT) were suspected to belong to a group who actively sought to overthrow the Ethiopian government. After they found out this was not the case, Hacking Team "suspended business" with Ethiopia, though not before receiving significant political and media backlash.

> *In the murky world of cybersurveillance, accountability and what is considered to be fair use is getting harder to define.*

What Options Do We Have?

The current debate surrounding spyware is mostly to do with whether or not software that can be used to spy on select targets should be commercially available. Some, like Snowden, believe that the commercial distribution of such software should be outright banned. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet said in a statement that cybersecurity companies need to be "much more transparent" and should "put in place more effective accountability mechanisms". Unfortunately, it isn't so simple. The banning of spyware, like anything else, would create a black market and given the pre-existing market for illegal software and exploits, it could pose potentially greater risks of misuse as it would be even harder to monitor. The introduction of more transparency would almost work against the spyware itself as it is meant to be discreet so that the target is unaware that their devices have been compromised. Accountability is likewise hard to implement as once a virus is released, it can become very difficult to trace it back to its origin.

In the end, spyware is a tool. A tool with the potential to save hundreds of lives but also the potential to breach the privacy of millions. Whether it is up to the ones who make it, sell it or use it to ensure that spyware is used ethically is also up for debate but there is one thing we know for certain: In this world where everyone and everything is connected, anyone can be watched - *INCLUDING YOU.*

The only question that remains is this:
What are you going to do about it?

If you have genuine concerns that you might be the target of a spyware attack, Malwarebytes has an article that can help you identify and remove spyware.