

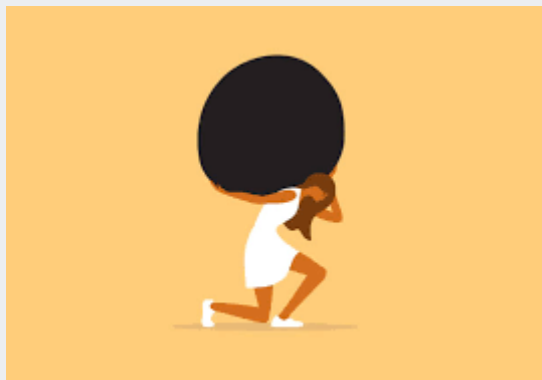
## With Eyes Wide Open

# The Student Newspaper

### **Consumerism and social media: How does it affect us?**

By Darcie James

With Christmas around the corner, the increasing surge to celebrate your loved ones through material gifts becomes a true reminder as to how consumerism has warped tradition. Social media continues to promote this idea through those who engage - forcing a widespread of like-minded people to need the next big thing, conform to the next big trend. From things like fidget spinners to more expensive goods like celebrity clothing brands, we can clearly see how quickly trends can shape our perceptions of ourselves. At heart to this cycle of fast changing trends is one key thing: insecurity.



At its core, consumerism follows one key belief: the longing for something more, something missing. To keep

people indulging in mainstream products, people must believe they need to fit into standards that they may never conform to. “Be thinner”, they say but not too thin that you’re practically bones. “Be more seductive” but not too seductive or else you’d be considered a sl\*t. These expectations, that no woman or man will ever live up to, continue to keep us in a forbidden cycle of shame and desire; trapped in our own minds like a prisoner. Every new item advertised to us holds a promise, a vow to transform a dull and sunken life into something more vibrant and meaningful. Wiley Library stated that the rise of technology and consumerism has done nothing but increase mental health issues amongst teenagers. There has been up to an 11% rise of depression in teens and children that have manifested through insecurity and never feeling good enough. When will enough be enough?

The worldwide decrease in self esteem has done nothing but continue to contribute to compulsive consumerism (retail therapy). Amplified by renowned social media influencers and trends, the need for a bigger, better lifestyle has encouraged the creation of “fast fashion”. Fast fashion is a business model where clothing brands produce



trendy, low-cost items to immediately reflect the ever changing trends. It may produce low-cost items but we, as a society, do pay a price - the loss of our humanity and morals. Once fashionable but now deemed out-dated, clothes continue to pollute our oceans, our air, our landfills. According to an analysis by Business Insider, fashion production comprises 10% of total global carbon emissions. Meaning that we are actively polluting the very air we breathe for the sake of fashionable, trendy clothing. Furthermore, brands use synthetic fibres like polyester, nylon and acrylic which take hundreds upon hundreds of years to biodegrade. In 2017, a report from the international union for conservation of nature predicted that around 37% of all microplastics that were discovered in the oceans originated from the laundering of synthetic materials like polyester. Will retail therapy be the end of us?



To conclude this, mainstream companies will forever continue to manipulate our perceptions of ourselves in order to gain the most revenue. So, it is important that we remain true to ourselves and embrace ourselves for who we are. Only through this discovery can our world begin to heal.

## Weird and wonderful legal cases

By Amelia Cornish

Lawyers over time have dealt with just about everything; from theft and murder to negligence and fraud. However, in amongst all those well-known crimes sit a few cases that don't quite fit into our common categories. I'm going to explore a couple of my favourites with you, how they came about and what came of them.



The first case took place two years ago in West Wales. A man named Stephen Samuel was arrested while out on a fishing trip on the River Teifi. But what was he arrested for? Stephen was brought to the Magistrate's Court for "handling salmon under suspicious circumstances". That's right. Another member of the fishing club had spotted a fish head poking out from the arm of Stephen's coat and reported it. He knew laws in Wales made it illegal to keep the salmon so he had hidden it 'suspiciously' and tried to escape with it. Unfortunately for Stephen, he ended up in the court and was fined under the cleverly named 'Salmon Act 1986'. He was ordered to pay £2580 for his crime



and pleaded guilty to suspicious salmon handling.

Have you ever wondered if you can sue yourself? Probably not, but in our next case we will meet someone who did just that. In 1995, Robert Lee Brock had found himself in jail for 23 years for breaking and entering while under the influence of alcohol. While in jail, he submitted a seven page handwritten lawsuit attempting to sue himself. He claimed that by drinking alcohol before committing his crime violated his personal religious beliefs and wanted to pay himself £5 million in compensation. However, he had the slight issue in that prisoners don't tend to have £5 million, so what did Robert do? He told the state they had to pay it, of course. £3 million for his wife and children's suffering and £2 million for him while he was in jail. His claim was brought to court in front of a very unimpressed judge who described him it as 'ludicrous' and 'frivolous'.



Our final case was raised by Cathie Kelly in May of 2014. Cathie lived in Greenock and was concerned that the building's owners had not taken sufficient care for her safety. One day, Cathie left her building to go to her local burger van for some lunch.

What a terrible mistake. As soon as she stepped out of the door, she encountered a "terrifying dive-bombing bird" attack. She lost her shoe in the commotion and was left "shaken" and "distressed", taking two weeks off work after the incident. Cathie brought the building owners to court for £7000 in damages however she was dismissed as the judge could not determine where the violent gull came from.

## **The Crucible and accountability**

By Naviska Kamalendrarah

Arthur Miller, during the winter of the early fifties, wrote the tragic play known as 'The Crucible'. The play was intended by Miller as not only informative but rather as a warning, given the time he was writing in.

The play itself is based solely in the sweet spring of the year 1692 in Salem, Massachusetts. Given the reputation of Salem, it may be of no surprise that the play focuses on the Salem witch trials, which had caused uproar during the times where theocracy ran rampant. While this play explores the tense accusations and trials between the characters, the main point that had stuck out to me while reading was the gripping theme of hysteria and its significance in the wider scope of society. The idea of scapegoating individuals, persecuting groups (whether for race or gender), and ignorance were key themes that prevailed. 'The Crucible' does not follow one set person within the cast, rather contrasts several characters who are each of different





statutes in the 1600s and allows for Miller to show his point of how, regardless of ranking or otherwise, one is still human and not necessarily as immune to hysteria as one would like to admit.



To explore the hysteria affects the setting and characters in 'The Crucible', our first instance of this frenzy occurring is in the end of Act one where the characters of Betty (a reverend's daughter, currently being considered to be afflicted by the Devil) and Abigail (an orphan described to have "...an endless capacity for dissembling", meaning she is known to lie often and is untrustworthy) are both listing out several female citizens in their community. The play describes for the length of just under a page how the two seem to have witnessed an endless amount of people with the Devil, which later is summed up to a total of thirty-two women. The two girls do this in a manner described with "...a great glee" and "ecstasity." Although, to show the consequences of the law failing and hysteria and ignorance plaguing the minds of most of the characters within 'The Crucible', the play ends with two confirmed deaths. These two deaths are of characters in the play who had not fit in with the widespread

misinformation spread through Salem, instead advocating for what they believed was right. One death was by a crushing of rocks after being advised to make a false account to agree that all that happened was in fact the work of the Devil poisoning the girls in the play, while the other death happens by hanging for the same reasons. Miller does this to not only highlight the extreme ineffectiveness of the theocratic system that riddled the 1600s with false speculation, but also to imply the similarities between the Salem witch trials and the Red Scare.



Miller shows off his distaste for the theocracy of Salem in the 1600s constantly throughout the play, mainly in the notes of his overture. Miller describes how the Salem witch trials provided an ample opportunity for, "Old scores...settled on a plane of heavenly combat between Lucifer and the Lord; suspicions and the envy of the miserable toward the happy could and did burst out in the general revenge."



This phrase perfectly summarises the basis behind not only the Salem witch trials but the trials in general. To have the ability to blame someone for something meaningless by saying it was the work of witchcraft, and to then have not only the Puritans (or the Church) on your side, but also for the whole of the community was an immense power. To build on, Miller conveys the idea of how Salem's theocracy was under such threat of the changing world (the idea that there are people who have contrasting beliefs to them - shocker!) that the witch trials sprouted forth as a result, the physical manifestation of the masses panic and inability to comprehend that their own bubble of shared oneness would burst. Miller describes the witch-hunt as: "...a perverse manifestation of the panic which set in among all classes when the balance began to turn toward greater individual freedom."



Yet, this scorn of theocracy may not have solely been focused on the 1600s alone.

The crux of 'The Crucible' is that it is a frustrated commentary on the state of America in the 1950s. Despite the many sub-themes and symbolism,

Miller based the play on his experience with the intolerance that had torn through America like a wildfire. In the 1950s, the growing ideology of McCarthyism was implemented into every American, resulting in the Red Scare. On a more general basis, America in the 1950s was undoubtedly anti-communist, and citizens had the idea that all immigrants were of communist countries or backgrounds which made them a poison to the righteous, law-abiding, God-loving states of America. Much like the hysteria that gripped Salem in the 1600s, Miller wrote in a time of hysteria that gripped the entirety of America in the 1950s, only 350 (approx) years apart. Therefore, Miller created 'The Crucible' to pose as a warning to his audience of the reality that man has never been or will be immune to the threat that is following the crowd, much like the sheep in the parable for good and evil, Miller states how even with several years separating the events, by having the simple components of a scapegoat and enough negative emotion, a whole group can be persecuted due to the sheep-like minds of the collective of those around them.

To conclude, Miller's 'The Crucible' truly is a timeless play in the sense that it retains its relevance with the changing times. Even if there may not be witch-trials happening in our world today, the key message of blindly following the crowd is still something to keep in mind, especially with how unsure the future seems currently.





## Untitled

By Sophie Randell

I Reach for thee  
An echo of a leaf  
Green and tender  
Just an inch from thy teeth

A frozen statue  
Full of love beyond  
The sky emerges  
With doves singing songs

How shall I find thee  
When I am too blind  
For the forest of nature  
Is to be heard from behind

But Now I must go  
And take my leave  
For the time it takes to throw  
Is shorter than the time to heave

So Goodbye, I sing  
Tomorrow's song  
A sweet and tender lullaby  
Of forests consumed by the secrets  
beyond