

CHAPTER TWO

THE MURDER

*“Men are afraid that women will laugh at them. Women are afraid that men will kill them”
- Margaret Atwood⁶⁹*

The day I decided my project would be on Feminism was the day I read about Elliot Rogers who killed six people and injured fourteen as retribution against all women for withholding his “*right*” to sex⁷⁰. Naturally this maddened me; however I was more so appalled upon realising my peers had generally accepted this as the inherent nature of society. “We’re the breeders for men”⁷¹ is our succinct role according to one Baby Boomer. Discovering this gender-based devaluation spoilt my idealistic perception of our ‘egalitarian’ society, thus now reading Feminism has ‘died’,⁷² I am baffled. For if ‘equality’ is the aphorismic definition that marks this movement, well then surely Feminism’s end should be brought about by some level of it? Through empirical research alone, I have observed patriarchal behaviour at every level of society - consciously and unconsciously. My tale is ubiquitous:⁷³ at fifteen I feared being catcalled, at sixteen I feared wearing ‘revealing’ clothes and now at seventeen I fear to walk home alone without keys tucked tightly between my fingers - a strategy generally accepted as a female ‘life hack’ more than an indication of the emotional subjugation of women, corroborated by Mia Morgan, “to eliminate misogynist stereotypes, we must unlearn to understand them... refuse to accept ‘It’s just how it is’ as an answer, until we forget what *‘it’* stands for.”⁷⁴ The ‘Everyday Sexism Project’ is a manifestation of the quotidian debasement and gender-based persecution of women keeping us collectively quelled, “two men approached me...complimented my legs and asked who was getting

⁶⁹ Anonymous. (unknown). Quotes about feminism. [Internet]. Good reads: Good reads Inc. Available from: <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/feminism> [Accessed 27/7/16].

⁷⁰ Matthew Keys Live. Unknown. [Full] Elliot Rodger video statements made day of shooting. (2014) YouTube, May 24, [video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mu6NKHtLzks>]

⁷¹ Focus Group A. Four participants, Baby Boomers (24th May 2016)

⁷² Questionnaire. 166 replies. (April 16th 2016)

⁷³ normaljean2. Unknown. Emma Watson UN speech. (2014). YouTube, 21 September, [video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p-iFl4qhBsE>]

⁷⁴ Morgan, M. (2016). I REFUSE! [Internet]. Facebook: Artidote. Available from: <https://www.facebook.com/the.artidote/photos/a.748110521972432.1073741827.742359879214163/956255501157932/?type=3&theater> [Accessed 27/7/16]

between them... [I] left feeling humiliated.”⁷⁵ Yet the assertion of already successfully establishing equality remains a leading cause of ‘False Feminist Death Syndrome’⁷⁶ according to my questionnaires, “it is currently equal... if it goes anymore toward the women then 'maleinism' will start to occur”⁷⁷ - in conjunction with anti-feminist author, Gary Snow “the patriarchy [is]... the incorporation of already existing [biological] gender roles.”⁷⁸ This personifies third-wave Feminism as a more subtle period of tackling unconscious prejudice and the subdued oppression implicitly embedded into everyday social interactions, contrasting the overt political changes explicitly fought in the 70’s.⁷⁹ It produces the illusion that the heyday of Feminism has surpassed and contemporary issues are irrelevant, “they grew up in a movement fighting political change; everyone was uniting because there was a necessity for it.”⁸⁰

Upon this argument of our ‘vain’ struggle for egalitarianism, legislative actions and laws are used as examples pertaining to our *already* successful liberal equality - an equipoise justifying the end of Feminism. The 1984 Sex Discrimination Act⁸¹ in Australia is emblematic of the so-called mutual and enforced respect for women used to demonstrate Feminism’s current ‘futility’. Yet ironically these movements were passed by the same parliament ruled up until 2015 by a man describing abortion as, “the easy way out”, ex-PM Tony Abbott.⁸² Marielle Smith concurs that the legitimacy of governmentally enforced equality does not always transcend into changed behaviour⁸³ -

⁷⁵ Anonymous (2016). The Everyday Sexism Project [Internet]. Everyday Sexism Project: unknown. Available from: <https://everydaysexism.com/> [Accessed 19/7/16]

⁷⁶ Anderson, Kristen J. (2015). Modern Misogyny: Anti-feminism in a Post-Feminist Era. Edition one, Oxford University Press, United States of America

⁷⁷ Questionnaire. 166 replies. (April 16th 2016)

⁷⁸ Snow, Gary. (2015). Anti-Feminism. Edition one, publisher unknown, United states of America

⁷⁹ Scholz, J Sally. (2010). Feminism: Beginners guide. Edition one, Oneworld Publications, Great Britain

⁸⁰ Focus Group B. Nine participants, Millennials (25th May 2016)

⁸¹ Scholz, J Sally. (2010). Feminism: Beginners guide. Edition one, Oneworld Publications, Great Britain

⁸² Channel ten. Unknown. Julia Gillard's misogyny speech. (2012) YouTube, October 10, [video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SOPsxpMzYw4>]

⁸³ Smith, M. Telephone interview. April 14, 2015.

reflected by the necessity of quotas despite the statistically higher levels of women graduating from university, the “staggering” gender pay wage gap and the disadvantage manifesting in “lost opportunities in the workforce.”⁸⁴ Baby Boomers were quick to pick up on preferential treatment “it is still so unfair”⁸⁵ contrasting Millennials “I haven’t experienced inequality”⁸⁶ in spite of the glass ceiling creating a structural inequality of unconscious male prioritisation over all women - past and present,⁸⁷ reflected by the over-value of men in traditionally female positions: the ‘glass elevator’.⁸⁸ This double standard apparent within my own school; despite the majority of female teachers, the principal and 75% of faculty head teachers are male.

Yet a prevailing 47% in my questionnaire described Feminism as synonymous with entitlement,⁸⁹ inspiring the caricature of feminists as “privileged brats.”⁹⁰ Hence women confronting the ideology that independent shortcomings are not the sole reason women suffer, but are collectively becoming disadvantaged through a holistic subtle oppression that inhibits our success⁹¹ is projected through the media as receiving biased treatment “I don’t need feminism because I don’t use my gender as an excuse for my failures”⁹². Anderson explains that this erroneous belief in meritocracy “the playing field is level” creates the appearance of levelling the field as discrimination against the dominant

⁸⁴ Anonymous. (2015). Gender Balance Male-Female ratios [internet]. Australian University Rankings: Australian Education Network. Available from: <http://www.universityrankings.com.au/gender-balance-ratio.html> [Accessed 19/7/16]

⁸⁵ Focus Group A. Four participants, Baby Boomers (24th May 2016)

⁸⁶ Focus Group B. Nine participants, Millennials (25th May 2016)

⁸⁷ Scholz, J Sally. (2010). Feminism: Beginners guide. Edition one, Oneworld Publications, Great Britain.

⁸⁸ Anderson, Kristen J. (2015). Modern Misogyny: Anti-feminism in a Post-Feminist Era. Edition one, Oxford University Press, United States of America

⁸⁹ Questionnaire. 166 replies. (April 16th 2016)

⁹⁰ Unknown. (2013). Woman against feminism [Internet]. Tumblr: Unknown. Available from: <http://womenagainstfeminism.tumblr.com/> [Accessed 24/7/16]

⁹¹ Anderson, Kristen J. (2015). Modern Misogyny: Anti-feminism in a Post-Feminist Era. Edition one, Oxford University Press, United States of America

⁹² Anonymous. (2015). Women Against Feminism [Internet]. Community: Facebook. Available from: <https://www.facebook.com/WomenAgainstFeminism> [Accessed November 4th].

group.⁹³ Feminism **is** about entitlement, but the beneficiaries are **not** women. Studies demonstrate that men unconsciously have a higher sense of entitlement than woman “They think they should be rewarded because of who they are, not ... how hard they have worked. The opposite is the pattern for women.”⁹⁴ Interestingly, the Baby Boomer⁹⁵ perspective on this social oppression diverges greatly from Millennial⁹⁶ understanding. Whilst the first focus group highlighted the importance of independence and the tragic prioritisation of men; the second group tended to empathise with the modern erasure of men’s issues and the advent of feminist supremacy “instead of saying we want equal rights; the FeminNazis just blame men, when it wasn’t their fault.”⁹⁷ This ‘centre-stage problem’ has manifested in *‘the boy-crisis’* in which any movement from the centre is interpreted as a threat to men.⁹⁸ The longevity of the gender hierarchy means the growing socio-economic integration of the ‘handicapped’ with the ‘privileged’ creates the expectation that this disparity is natural and action to change it is an act of feminist terrorism, “...the world itself, is the work of men; they describe it from their own point of view, which they confuse with absolute truth” explains Beauvoir.⁹⁹ My content analysis¹⁰⁰ of television advertisements played between 8:00-10:00am on Sunday morning reveal that 80% used male voice overs, women exploited only to promote specifically gendered products e.g. ‘L’Oreal root fixer’. The subliminal socialising influence of the media suggests these subtle reflections of male superiority are an indication of the unconscious cult of priority keeping women unknowingly

⁹³ Anderson, Kristen J. (2015). Modern Misogyny: Anti-feminism in a Post-Feminist Era. Edition one, Oxford University Press, United States of America

⁹⁴ Anderson, K. Email interview. June 28, 2016.

⁹⁵ Focus Group A. Four participants, Baby Boomers (24th May 2016)

⁹⁶ Focus Group B. Nine participants, Millennials (25th May 2016)

⁹⁷ Focus Group B. Nine participants, Millennials (25th May 2016)

⁹⁸ Anderson, Kristen J. (2015). Modern Misogyny: Anti-feminism in a Post-Feminist Era. Edition one, Oxford University Press, United States of America

⁹⁹ Scholz, J Sally. (2010). Feminism: Beginners guide. Edition one, Oneworld Publications, Great Britain

¹⁰⁰ Content Analysis. Television advertisements played between 8:00am-10:00am. Recorded 2/7/16

marginalised.¹⁰¹ By becoming privy to this climate of inequity, we expose the need for Feminism.

A further form of subtle oppression is benevolent sexism.¹⁰² Ambivalent sexism is the explicit down-grading of women, whilst benevolent is the low-key sexism masquerading as chivalry and endorsed as manners, such as paying for women, adopting the male last name and use of Miss/ Mrs characterising a woman's value in relation to men. Whilst it portrays the immediate illusion of benefiting women, the long-term effects of passive acceptance "insidiously" undermine a woman's self-worth.¹⁰³ I struggled with this concept, finding I would reject all male assistance even in times of clear desperation, labelling it as 'benevolent sexism'. I have since learned to distinguish it as chauvinism when help is given only in the belief that my gender requires special treatment. Baby Boomers were quick to associate this sexism with politeness, "it's just what you do",¹⁰⁴ however Millennials symbolically divided on the camouflaged connotations of such acts "first-world problem".¹⁰⁵ Though commonly viewed as feminist 'nit-picking' in the first focus group "they're going off on tangents"¹⁰⁶ contrasting the second "this needs to be tackled",¹⁰⁷ these issues distinguish modern feminism as an amalgamation of fights which should not be mutually diminishable. Upon realising this disfigurement of the right to be "born free and equal in dignity,"¹⁰⁸ it capsizes the misguided anti-feminist proclamation, "I don't need feminism because I am not a

¹⁰¹ Aune, Kristin. Redfern, Catherine. (2013). Reclaiming the F-Word: Feminism Today World. Edition one, Zed Books, London, Great Britain.

¹⁰² Anderson, Kristen J. (2015). Modern Misogyny: Anti-feminism in a Post-Feminist Era. Edition one, Oxford University Press, United States of America

¹⁰³ Anderson, K. Email interview. June 28, 2016.

¹⁰⁴ Focus Group A. Four participants, Baby Boomers (24th May 2016)

¹⁰⁵ Focus Group B. Nine participants, Millennial (25th May 2016)

¹⁰⁶ Focus Group A. Four participants, Baby Boomers (24th May 2016)

¹⁰⁷ Focus Group B. Nine participants, Millennial (25th May 2016)

¹⁰⁸ United Nations General Assembly. (1948). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights [Internet]. United Nations: Unknown. Available from: <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/> [Accessed 19/7/16]

victim.”¹⁰⁹ The core of the third-wave is not about blaming men for oppressing women, but exposing the secret weapons the media’s hidden prejudices use when bringing about the death of the modern feminist.¹¹⁰ We must be aware of the **choice** to pull out our own metaphorical chairs so that we can begin to fight the ‘fear of the kill’, as Margaret Atwood describes it.¹¹¹

If feminism has died, it is certainly not from natural causes.

¹⁰⁹ Anonymous. (2015). Women Against Feminism [Internet]. Community: Facebook. Available from: <https://www.facebook.com/WomenAgainstFeminism> [Accessed November 4th].

¹¹⁰ Aune, Kristin. Redfern, Catherine. (2013). Reclaiming the F-Word: Feminism Today World. Edition one, Zed Books, London, Great Britain.

¹¹¹ Anonymous. (unknown). Quotes about feminism. [Internet]. Good reads: Good reads Inc. Available from: <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/feminism> [Accessed 27/7/16].