GENESIS
Emily Simpson

When I looked up the term 'genesis' on the internet – yes, that's right, I had to Google it- I was given a hopscotch list of all things supposedly genesis: fitness centres, rock bands, facial artistry centres, and relationship consultancy businesses. Only a couple of the results actually met my vague expectations of what genesis meant, although I had to consult other sources to make fully sure I had the right definition. Traditionally (yes, you are probably screaming at me now) *Genesis* refers to the first book of the Christian bible – a text (can I call it that?) that I am embarrassed to say I am not entirely familiar with.

I suppose this shouldn't be so shameful for someone my age, though, considering our lives seem to be guided more by the internet than a 60-odd page scripture. The internet, and its various spawn, may even be the modern-day bible. We consult it for everything – from life advice to how to cook carrots (*Genesis* didn't teach us that did it?). The fact that I had to search for the term Genesis on the internet says a lot, too. With such a fast, mostly-reliable tool at our disposal, why lead the comparatively slower lives that our predecessors did? Why read books to learn when you can simply 'Google' something? "Just google it" is an expression we've all warmly welcomed into our vernacular. This is not necessarily a bad thing – the swathes of data and advice folded into the big bad web are largely useful and make for great efficiency. It's more the offshoots of the internet – social media outlets such as the ever-powerful Facebook and the narcissists' playground Instagram – that I am wary of.

These expansive online social networks are sending us the wrong message. Talking to people via a computer or smartphone is removing authenticity in social interaction; we see words, not gestures and mannerisms, and they might be instilling a false sense of connection in their users. Too much time is spent grooming our online profiles, through which the truth can be seriously altered. It is so easy for us to seek the refuge of a computer screen, behind which we can be confident and daring even if our real-life alter egos are timid and aloof. I've been criticised before for not building much of an 'image' via my Facebook and Instagram pages, as though this is just as important as developing my real life persona. Isn't it demanding enough having to maintain one version of ourselves?

A typical scene of any public domain these days includes some piece of technology, whether it is a phone, computer or camera. We are beginning to see the world through screens and lenses rather than through our own eyes. This is concerning to say the least, and leads to anti-social behaviour, contrary to the 'social media' label encompassing online mediums such as 'Twitter', 'Facebook' and 'Instagram'. Not to mention, also, the narcissistic behaviour bred by the likes of Facebook and Instagram, epitomised in such trends as 'selfies'. While it has become somewhat endearing, and it may almost have shaken its conceited foundations, the 'selfie' is more often than not a form of shameless self-promotion. Smart or vain, the jury is still out, but maybe we should aspire to be more like Jacob, for instance, who made it into *Genesis* without having to photograph himself using his most flattering angle in the most flattering light.

The question is, though, do we fight it or do we adapt? A growing reliance on the internet and technology is abhorrent to some. Those who detest it might belong in an earlier era: an era where

your groceries couldn't be purchased online, where your life couldn't be surveilled through the internet (where things might be deleted but not lost), or an era where 'Genesis' was known only to be the first book of the bible. Adapting to the alternate world created by the internet and new technology, though, seems to be the path taken by most. This might stem from a fear of being left behind or excluded - a veritable likelihood when so much of what we receive these days is from the internet.

Don't get me wrong, the extensive use of this amenity certainly makes sense; the expanses of information it harbours means we can find out about almost anything, such as the official definition of 'Genesis' (not that it was made fully clear after my Google search). But such profound accessibility could be increasing our laziness and impatience rather than the size of our brains. The lengthy process of scouring through books and encyclopaedias has been replaced by the mere task of typing a few words into a search engine and, more often than not, settling for the first result that appears a few seconds later…and that's why I wondered for a moment whether Genesis simply referred to a rock band from the '60s. The easier it gets, the less need there is to exert ourselves and that can't lead to a favourable outcome.

In this world, learning to separate the real from the fantasy is more important than ever. While a fantasy world itself, the internet can assist us to delineate between fact and fiction. For instance, the book *Genesis*: factual or fictional? You have the power to decide. The internet even grants us the liberty to decide what Genesis is. To most it will probably be the first chapter of the bible, but to some it will be the band or the fitness centre. While it might sometimes liberate us, the internet can also suffocate us - just like any bible.