



SPRING 2021
RESIDENCY ZINE



through the
Kaleidoscope

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MEET OUR SPRING RESIDENTS



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"If life were easy, it wouldn't be difficult."
- Kermit the Frog"



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"Waking up this time to smash the silence with the brick of self control"
- Green Day



Kennedy Brooks
Article Writing
"I'm just like other girls. At every capacity."



Abi Lee
Article Writing
"become my neofriend on neopets: floral_dreams"



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Article Writing
"I'm covered in green, they like, 'Look it's Shrek!'"
- CupcakKe



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"I wanna be the broken love song that feeds your misery"
-Phoebe Bridgers



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"SoRRY my prada's at the cleaners along with my hoodie & my f*ck-you flip-flops!"
- Andrew Garfield



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"we are community-made <3"



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"We're just a million little gods causing rainstorms"
- Arcade Fire



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sarah lamodi present-day trolls & the future of cancellation

* Content notice:
Use of slurs and derogatory language in song lyrics.

AT the risk of sounding like a documentary whose subject matter is “iPhone bad,” Gen Z has grown up with an ethernet cable in their veins like an IV. Whether you like it or not, this generation rules the internet because of its insanely tech-savvy nature. Millennials — especially those on the younger side — possess similar characteristics having grown up during the explosion of the internet in terms of ease of communication (e.g. AOL Instant Messenger). Times change, but the politics of online communication really don’t. The same “asl?” query once seen constantly on AOL was rebranded on Kik and similar apps, and reborn in perhaps its scariest form on Snapchat and Yubo. Speaking with other teens (and often predatory adults) is a rite of passage on the internet — everyone engages with it, and to say we all haven’t made mistakes online would be a complete lie. To say a great deal of us haven’t also engaged in trolling would also be disingenuous. It is for this reason (as well as because of the changes that internet humor undergoes over time) that I wonder how we will bring about the virtual trial, judgement and execution of each other online in the coming years when everyone who happens to achieve any sort of “fame” has had a history of screwing around online — if we even can do so. The internet has become the equivalent of the pre-21st century playground. In that regard, how do we rationalize penalizing young people for mere exploration, (sometimes misguided) self-expression and self-discovery in these spaces?

We’ve already begun to see examples of problems along these lines, each with their own complexities. From trying to reconcile the problematics of Tyler, the Creator’s early music, to the humor of Filthy Frank’s satire, to the confusing purpose of Doja Cat’s TinyChats, to understanding the importance of Lil Nas X’s alleged stan past. For Gen Z and Millennials, the internet is the place where you go to find out aspects of your personality, identity, humor, likes and dislikes — for better or worse.

Tyler, the Creator

Today’s Flowerboy hasn’t always been the pinnacle of softboy culture; horrorcore-esque and devilish are adjectives perhaps more apt to describe Tyler’s old work. Anyone who was at least in middle school in the early 2010s can attest to the impact of Odd Future Wolf Gang Kill Them All; the “OF” made of two pink-frosted donuts plastered on every white boy’s snapback is a symbol I’ll never forget. For those out of the loop, OFWGKTA (or simply Odd Future) was a musical collective started by Tyler, the Creator, Left Brain, Hodgy, Jasper Dolphin, Mat Martians and Pyramid Vritra in 2007. Other notable names joined the group several years later, including Earl Sweatshirt and Frank Ocean. The group and its members were a hit with young people across the globe for their contributions to streetwear and music, but perhaps most important was their attitude toward the world in general.

A trademark of Odd Future — and later Tyler specifically — was purposefully offensive and controversial lyrics. True of any troll on the internet, Tyler’s lyrics were meant to get people angry. In an interview with Stephen Smith of BBC Newsnight in 2012 where Odd Future was asked what their lyrics meant, Tyler responded, “Nothing. Shit to piss old white people off like you.” That’s exactly what they did, and things only escalated with Tyler’s solo albums. “Bastard,” “Goblin” and “Wolf” have been accused of it all: glorifying rape, supporting the devil, being homophobic, being misogynistic, the list goes on and on. “Yonkers” is probably the most recognizable example, with lines like, “I’ll crash that fucking airplane that that f**** n**** B.o.B is in / And stab Bruno Mars in his goddamn esophagus” and “Oh, not again! Another critic writing report / I’m stabbing any blogging f****t hipster with a Pitchfork” that caused a world of controversy (including a response diss track by B.o.B himself, titled “No Future”). The aforementioned albums are full of stuff like this, and while it’s entirely valid to feel uncomfortable with what Tyler says in these songs, it is crucial for us to understand the reasoning behind the words and assess how productive pushing the envelope can be.

“Bastard,” “Goblin” and “Wolf” all discuss Tyler’s mental state in one way or another, telling the story of an entirely lost young man who speaks to his therapist and vents about all of the demons within. The lyrics are violent and repulsive, but why wouldn’t they be when they’re coming from a place of trauma? The rawness of these emotions is to be expected given the subject matter and the culture (of both the music industry and wider society) being actively fought against by the albums. Tyler’s own sexuality is also important to recognize here: Though there hasn’t been a moment where he has directly “come out,” a few listens through “Flower Boy” and “IGOR” paint a pretty clear picture of a shift that has taken place; who’s to say these lyrics didn’t come from a place of self-hate and internalized homophobia? In addition to being an outlet for airing personal thoughts, the point of most of these songs is to viciously attack what’s palatable, so offending those who uphold norms is exactly the point. Swearing, generous use of slurs, vile imagery and everything else made Tyler and Odd Future who they were and facilitated the formation of identity for thousands of young people online.

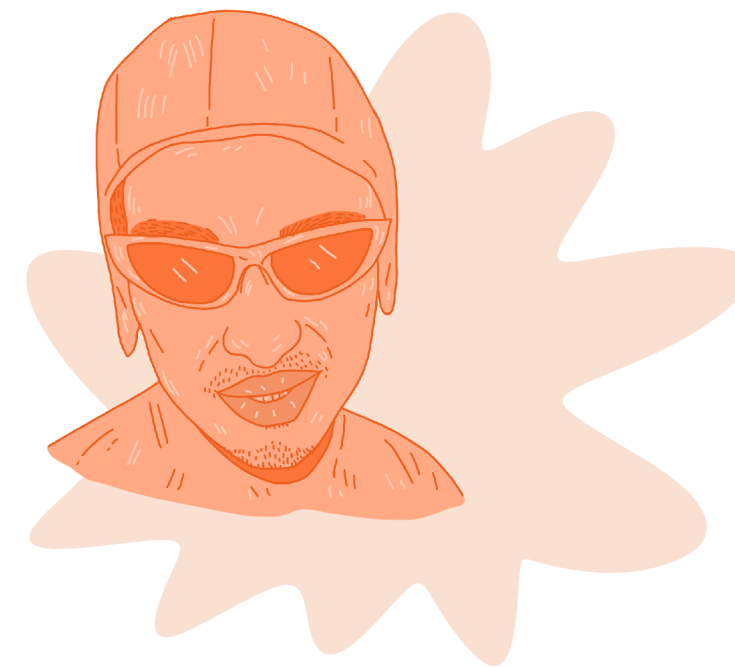
Filthy Frank

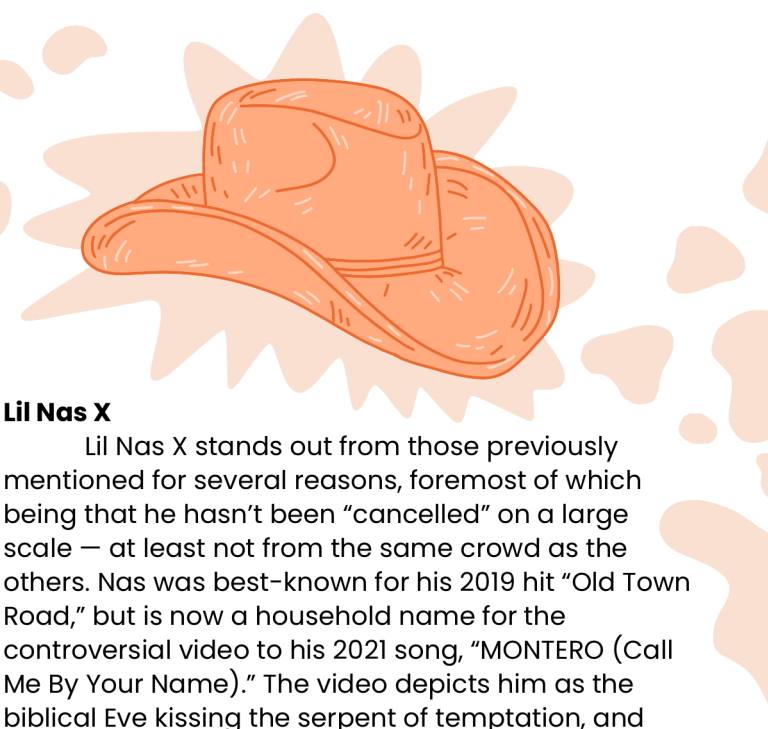
Much like Tyler, the Creator, Filthy Frank and all his friends and foes across the chromosomes were a staple of internet culture, but during a slightly different period of time. Filthy Frank, Pink Guy, Chin-Chin, Salamander Man and everyone else were the creation of George Miller, better known today as Joji. Running in circles with the likes of idubbbz, maxmoefoe, Anything4Views and H3H3, Frank and friends took part in such iconic videos as “Hair Cake,” “Vomit Cake” and “RAT CHEF,” not to mention the dozens of other skits, rants, cooking guides and Japanese lessons found on the channel. The humor is obnoxious, often (literally) vomit-inducing and absolutely not politically correct in any sense of the phrase. Racist, homophobic, transphobic, ableist and misogynistic slurs were commonplace in his videos; rape, murder, you name it, it was on the channel. Frank made fun of everyone in every possible way, but that was exactly the point. There is a line between someone online that fucks with the masses for their own enjoyment, and one who does it for a purpose — a purpose outlined in the “About” section of the channel TVFilthyFrank:

*“Filthy Frank is the embodiment of everything a person should not be. He is anti-PC, anti-social, and anti-couth. He behaves and reacts excessively to everything expressly to highlight the ridiculousness of racism, misogyny, legalism, injustice, ignorance and other social blights. He also sets an example to show how easy it is in the social media for any zany material to gain traction/followings by simply sharing unsavoury opinions and joking about topics many find offensive. There is no denying that the show is terribly offensive, but this terrible offensiveness is a deliberate and unapologetic parody of the whole social media machine and a reflection of the human microcosm that that social media is. OR MAYBE IM JUST FUCKING R*****D.” (emphasis added)*

Though we see George revert back into character at the end of the section, this context is crucial to understanding the beast that Frank is, however obvious it may seem. Though we should not ignore the effect the channel’s content had on edgelords too young to see George’s characters for what they were, throwing the baby out with the bathwater with attempts to “cancel” him is rather unproductive.

At the very end of 2017, George announced he’d be leaving YouTube, ending “The Filthy Frank Show.” A combination of serious medical problems and general disinterest in continuing the channel contributed to the end, but this marked a new beginning for Miller himself. Always interested in producing his own music, the world came to know him as Joji in 2018 with the release of songs like “SLOW DANCING IN THE DARK” and “YEAH RIGHT.” It was at this time that a rather surprising number of people recognized him and were disgusted by his past, but attempts to push movements like #JojisOverParty were unsuccessful. Aside from the fact that Frank was a character and didn’t reflect George’s true feelings, he had since grown out of the humor he’d used on the channel — the intended point had been made which was part of why he’d moved on in the first place. It was a personal decision to leave Frank behind, and though he and Pink Guy (and “Pink Season” for that matter) live on as memes, it is crucial to separate George from his incorrectly-dubbed “alter-egos.”





Doja Cat

When Doja stepped into the spotlight, she instantly became a meme. “Mooo!” was iconic for many reasons — aside from extremely catchy lyrics and gifs of bouncing tits, the song and Doja’s impromptu actions in the clearly homemade video were in line with the internet’s sense of humor in 2018. Putting the nepotism that plagues “DIY” artists aside, she was just like us, and that’s why we loved her. So when the problems of her past were revealed, from since-deleted homophobic tweets, to an allegedly racist song, to her behavior on TinyChat, the masses were disappointed. Each of these problematic actions are wrapped in confusion, starting with Doja’s use of the f-slur. Quite obviously, using a slur in the context that she claims she did is unacceptable, but sentiment appeared to shift when she revealed her bisexuality. This opens a much wider debate as to whether or not those who identify as bisexual can take the initiative to reclaim such a slur, but Doja’s coming out does point toward potential reasons for her use of the word past high-school humor: internalized homophobia.

Similarly, Doja was under scrutiny when the song “Dindu Nuffin” was released in 2015, and when its existence resurfaced almost five years later. The phrase is apparently used by alt-right individuals to mock those murdered as a result of police brutality, leading people to believe she had made the song to make fun of Sandra Bland specifically. Doja denied this, claiming on Instagram Live that it was a song fuelled by personal experience and self-hate. Doja’s race is also heavily considered when discussing her activities on TinyChat — she would allegedly strip and make sexual motions for others in the space, a space that happened to be one those in the alt-right frequent. Some call this behavior repulsive, pandering to racists and validating their bigoted ideologies, while others recognize this as an example of trolling, a staple of internet culture as previously discussed.

While Tyler and Filthy Frank’s cases are cut-and-dry examples of trolling with the purpose of social commentary, Doja Cat stands out as an instance where muddled meanings reveal the nuance that must be taken into consideration when reconciling with someone’s past, especially in online contexts. Like all of Gen Z and most Millennials, Doja Cat grew up on the internet; she is as much a product of viral videos as she is a producer of them. When existing in a space where every choice you make can be on display at any time, you will inevitably be forced to reckon with those past choices.

Lil Nas X

Lil Nas X stands out from those previously mentioned for several reasons, foremost of which being that he hasn’t been “cancelled” on a large scale — at least not from the same crowd as the others. Nas was best-known for his 2019 hit “Old Town Road,” but is now a household name for the controversial video to his 2021 song, “MONTERO (Call Me By Your Name).” The video depicts him as the biblical Eve kissing the serpent of temptation, and later a demon giving Satan a lapdance and stealing his crown. Conservatives and religious groups online alike have been staunchly opposed to the video, claiming it promotes devil worship, not to mention homosexuality. This controversy and attempted cancellation is not as interesting as the way Nas has been responding to those attacking him: through trolling and memes, making it incredibly clear how little he cares about hate. Understanding the importance of his responses means understanding his past online.

Only 22 years old, Nas is definitively within Gen Z, and like all other members of the generation, he lives his life online. Gen Z has birthed many influential online presences though its tech-savvy nature, the scariest of which may be stans. Stan culture is supremely specific to internet culture with its own jargon, and as a Nicki Minaj stan, Lil Nas X is fluent. Ownership of the since-deleted Twitter account @nasmaraj has been debated, but Nas has essentially confirmed his status as a Barb. This has tied him to several issues, specifically involving potentially Islamophobic tweets (#LilNasXisOverParty) as well as common yet somewhat problematic stan activity from the account’s owner. Problematics with stan culture presented in the case of Lil Nas X position us to think about the effects of both quick-to-judge stan behavior, as well as the vicious smears campaigns launched by certain stan accounts. Being a part of such communities in conjunction with living as an individual who is extremely knowledgeable of online culture has given Nas the ability to maneuver social media platforms in ways most of those seeking to cancel him are unable to, but this ability may come at a price in the future if we continue to see in the internet in the way we currently do.

Debate surrounding cancel culture isn’t new in any sense. Every day, it seems that a new celebrity or influencer is revealed to have a problematic past and is tossed to the side, stamped with [CANCELLED] in bold red lettering, and every day, there is a group of people fighting tooth and nail to uncanceled them. In many cases, said cancellation is undoubtedly warranted; groomers, abusers, rapists, racists, sexists, homophobes, transphobes and the like should not be allowed to spread their harmful ideals, especially not when they have access to young, impressionable audiences. But when looking at an individual’s past, how much nuance can a community of millions on Twitter and TikTok really show? The somewhat collective decision to cancel someone and move on discards any possibility that one may have learned and grown from their issue-ridden past, and often ignores the context the problematic person was once in. As we have seen with Tyler, the Creator and Filthy Frank, there may very well be cases where offensive behavior is purposeful and full of intent. In the case of Doja Cat, the resurfacing of problematic behavior from the past may once again ignore context as well as growth that has taken place since then. With Lil Nas X, we are given a mirror to look into as many of us use the internet in the same way he has; we can use Nas as a way to think about how our own troll-like behaviors online might be received in the future.

The thoughts presented above are admittedly preliminary, as is our understanding of how our actions online will truly affect us moving forward. My goal is to offer a new lens through which we can consider cancel culture: through the mirror. I am in no way suggesting that criminal actions and hate speech should be excused, doing so would be counterproductive and lead to more repulsive and uncorrected behavior. The four cases discussed here are not representative of all reasons for cancellation. Individuals like Shane Dawson, leafyishere and Onision offer examples of exactly who deserves to be deplatformed. I am suggesting that we take greater care to recognize the downfalls of cancel culture, specifically as we move into a future where a vast majority of individuals online have grown up with the internet and have made a whole slew of extremely common mistakes in the space. As a generation often defined by the way we conduct ourselves online, once we take one of our skeletons out of the closet, must we then take out everyone else’s?

The concept of cancelling is too unstable to accurately predict how it will manifest in the future, or if it will at all. However, considering what cancellation will look like may help us better understand our own current behavior and critique the standards to which we hold ourselves in the exploratory venue of the online playground.



Appreciation of One's Fruits

Appreciation of One's Fruits is a piece I created to comment on one of my insecurities: my breast size. I've never felt comfortable with them because of the sexualization of them along with the way I fit in clothing and feel weirdly out of proportion. As I've learned to love myself more, I've come to be a little more comfortable with my body, hence this appreciation piece! The composition and colors are supposed to create this whimsical feeling and the textures in the background are connected to the rest of my portfolio!





abi lee yearning, what's in a word?

When I was in the eighth grade, I was short-haired, ruthless, attempting androgyny and, according to my own declaration, “straight as a board.” My friends and I were the self-declared “anime” kids. We were all awkward, but we were free — in the way that only “queer-coded” kids who still thought they were completely straight could be. At this point in my life, my focus was Tumblr and grey face paint; my heart went to Eridan Ampora first, real boys second. Despite these barriers, I did have a seventh grade boyfriend. From an elementary school fling to lab partner lover, we “dated” for a few months, but ultimately I broke up with him while at the dentist. With a vague tiredness to my being, I apathetically typed out that I was “lithromantic” on my flip phone while the taste of rubber and mint lingered in my mouth. Overall, that was just the life I lived. Free. Inconsiderate. I was at the closest point to being a heartbreaker that I have ever reached in my life until one day, that changed.

In the summer before my freshman year, I was watching an episode of “Adventure Time.” Eyes wide, I gazed at an iconic cartoon vampire plucking an axe-shaped bass as she sang:

“I don't know what to do without you / I don't know where to put my hands / I've been trying to lay my head down / But I'm writing this at 3 a.m.”

This was new. Nothing like the other songs I had heard on the show before. It was aching

and wanting; lost, yet somehow settled in the lack of an answer. It was through that first taste of the declared “queen of longing” that I had felt fully seen.

Looking back now, even when I was fully straight, I loved men “queerly.” That being in the sense where I loved longing; I anticipated the chase of pining more than the reality of what it meant to be actually dating. If I wasn't craving love, then what I was craving was something else; love's masochist sibling, yearning. We exist in a world now where the word is ever-present — perhaps even overused — but I only have one question: Why has it become such a phenomenon with the LGBTQ+ youth of Gen-Z, and has it lost its meaning?

“What worser place can I beg in your love — / And yet a place of high respect with me — / Than to be used as you use your dog?”

— Helena in “A Midsummer Night's Dream”

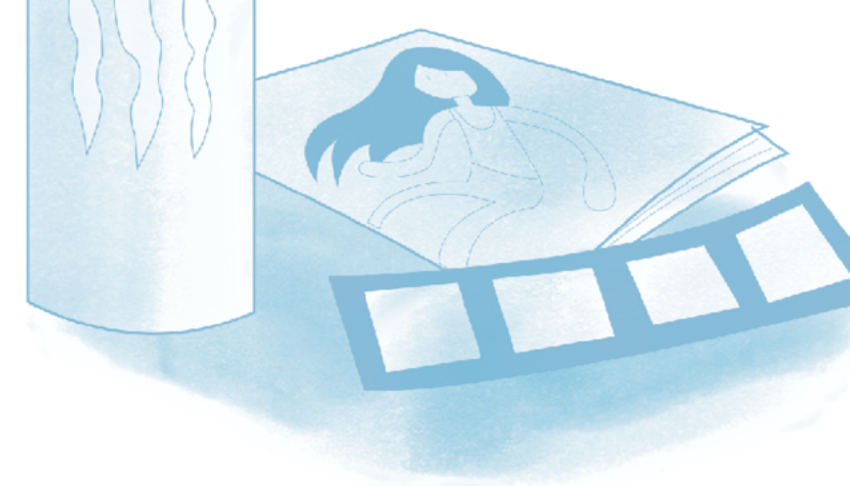
Within the Oxford English Dictionary, one can find many definitions for the word “yearn,” but I feel that “To feel strong desire or longing; to long for (also after, to) a place, person, thing, situation, etc.” is the most fitting. However, the modern use of the word has acquired a far wider meaning. There are TikTok compilations on YouTube titled, “tik toks for when you're gay and yearning | lgbtqia+ tik toks,” countless Tumblr posts tagged #yearning along with #mlm or #cottagecore, and an unending number of edits from gay to straight that are slapped with the label (some notable ones being “Little Women” (2019) and just Pedro Pascal for some reason?). The word is used interchangeably with anything remotely close to the following: “tender,” “light/dark academia,”

“cottagecore,” “soft,” while simultaneously being used as a sort of catch-all term for any form of queer love (which is understandable within a heteronormative society where love is more often described in the realm of straightness). While it is comforting to see that our generation has found a way to expand the collective vocabulary and revive a once-underutilized word, I believe that its sentiment and meaning has become far too expansive and nearly defunct. Like a wet rag, I tepidly must point my finger to the imaginary sign on the metaphorical wall with the age old adage: “WORDS HAVE MEANING.”

“Am I a masochist, resisting urges to punch you in the teeth / Call you a bitch and leave? / Why did I come here? / To sit and watch you stare at your feet? / What was the plan? Absolve your guilt and shake hands?”

— Lucy Dacus in “Night Shift”

It would be completely fair to label me as bitter. I'd prefer to not be the one to “gate-keep” a word, but when I see yearning get so carelessly thrown around I can't help but get defensive. Yearning is more than a set of pale “dark academia” hands nearly touching; it's not simply an aesthetic but something much stronger. After all, most art is about wanting. Whether it's the “I want” song in a musical, the subject of many poems or the ultimate goal of a protagonist in a story, there is an unending amount of media based around the feeling. However, the difference between wanting and yearning is the strength and saturation. These are traits that can only be built up when the source of desire is unreachable or at the very

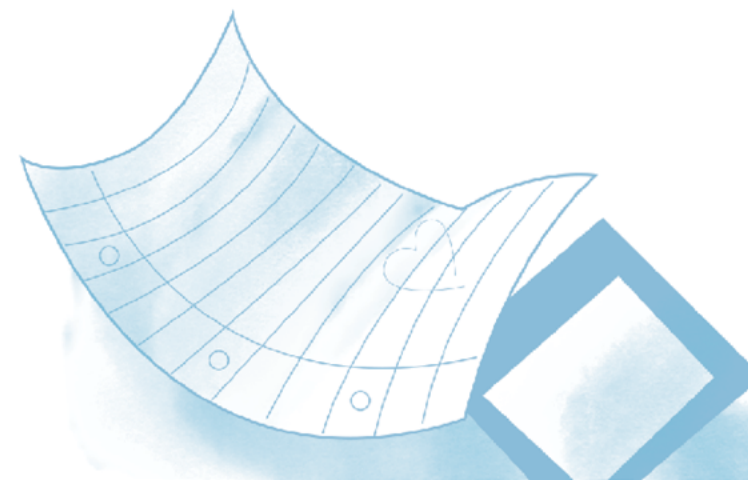


least, inaccessible. A story I think encompasses true yearning is “The Half of It.” Ellie Chu is a closeted Asian woman in a conservative environment, and her interest, Aster, is unattainable except through the guise of Paul. Every message and letter that she writes is charged with the loving language that Ellie could never tell Aster in person. Isn't there so much more beauty and depth evoked when yearning is used to describe something like that? Artists like Mitski, FKA Twigs, Japanese Breakfast and Hozier create songs which embody this similar deeper meaning — showing the full scale of what yearning is. As something that is often painful, but simultaneously beautiful and layered. While I appreciate Pedro Pascal, he doesn't touch the “wanting core” like some of the previous examples.

“Why not me / Why not me”

— Mitski in “Washing Machine Heart”

Is there really any conclusion that can be made about the use of the word? Ultimately, people can use language in any way that they want, and my own experience with the word cannot be forced onto others. Nevertheless, I plead; let yearning regain its meaning. I have faith in our generation that we will be able to pick our words more wisely, and find the precise synonyms to describe an aesthetic or a feeling. Whether we use craving for the carnal, or pining for a broken heart, let us enter a future where yearning does not act as the perpetual understudy in our vocabularies.





margot stonyte

he is my girlfriend is a zine/artist book that includes vulnerable poetry, cyanotypes and film photography as a way to document the act of existing as a mentally ill queer person. this piece is a reflection of both the artist themselves, as well as their reaction to their close friend's death, which happened in January 2021. he is my girlfriend is a form of grieving for someone close to you as well as a form of grieving for your old self. the themes that are prevalent in this work are rebirth, death of ego, grief, queerness, gender fluidity, sexuality and religious trauma.

He is my
girlfriend

to my babushka,
my younger self,
and the art of loving



am i still young enough for alliterations,
rhymes and girls that make my throat
hurt.

young enough for the sweet sentiment of falling apart
without feeling the dirt
under my nails.

young enough for the tales
of my dad'd friends if he had any.

young enough for the sweat and blood of the pavement
after my first kiss.

true love doesn't miss. but i do.

i miss being young if being young means
being young means being with you.

being a plant that grows
despite not being watered.

being loved (or at least feel like it)
by (at least) my mother.

feeling her pain drip on my chest like hot honey.

am i still you enough
to mourn my old
body







first kiss in the wet clothes unless,
burning bridges and songs
with blood coming out of my nose

how can i be fixed?
fixed on the ideas that body needs.

looking in my dad's eyes and the looking at her tits.

inner arm tattoo of some herbs in spite,
but even broke back hills still have eyes.

art school tropes.
doc martens, shaved heads and stereotypes.

my apartment is haunted by your ghosts.

be my fuel please

im in a closet and i just signed
a lease
for another month.



i can't wear shirts with no sleeves
for another month.

you know exactly what i mean , mom.

triple gemini,

copy

paste

reply

share with your family and friends



confessions of a dyke.







a letter to former lovers and exes.

generational trauma eats me up like a puffy cake
i had for my sixteenth birthday

my brain is rotting like peaches i left in your bed last
summer.

your cold hands on my warm body making me flinch

and reminding me to ware my plants.

high school sweetheards and broken glass of
college hall.

i am everything you've ever wanted, and you
are the most i'd ever settle for.

my body stayed with you and you stained

my favorite shirt with dollar tree bleach



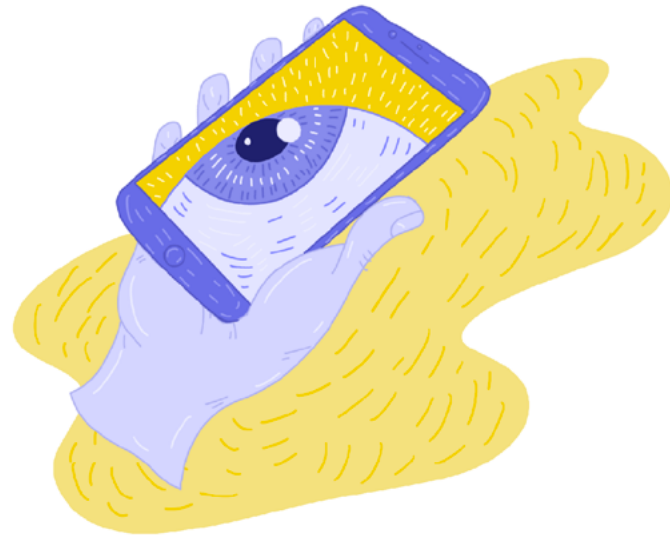








Kennedy Brooks Zhang Yiming Knows You're About to Text Your Ex



At the center of the documentary and all of my research, there was one very clear message: Technology is not neutral. Cell phones and social media apps were not created by deities from the otherworldly planet of Silicon Valley and then let loose into the world to be utilized as they please. Rather, technology is a product, and the main goal of a company when it releases a product is to make money and generate revenue. Companies like Apple and Google make an initial profit when they sell an individual their product, but the money doesn't stop there (because OF COURSE capitalism would be behind this). Advertisers utilize users' personal data — given to them by whichever tech company that they purchase advertising from — to fine-tune their content to maximize user engagement. There is little to no regulation of the way that companies harvest their users' data, and that is where the dystopian novel vibes that all of this gives off stem from.

In the game of marketing, there is an attention economy that utilizes the human attention span as a commodity. The attention economy predates the technological revolution. The phrase was coined in 1910 by Gerald Stanley Lee (who was a LITERAL economic paternalist and an all around not great guy) and was defined by him as "The art of making things happen, the control of business and affairs ... through the power of attracting, holding, and organizing the attention and the vision of men." Essentially, this means that since the dawn of mass communication, there has been a financial incentive to disrupt the attention of human beings. For example, Facebook utilizes a system of algorithms that schedule advertisements and different kinds of content based on cookies and your historical use of the application. The algorithm can then use your history on the website to time when your usership of the website will be the highest, and then show you a picture or video that they have specifically curated to prolong your engagement on the website. Facebook's programming laid the groundwork for what is arguably the biggest zap in Gen Z and Millennials' time: TikTok.

Though users are told by TikTok (which is owned by yours truly, Zhang Yiming) that the For You page shows content "personalized for you based on what you watch, like, and share," they are still able to recognize that there is something almost eerie about the specificity of their For You pages. I myself have commented my fair share of "Oh, so this is a FOR YOU for you page" and "My FBI agent knew what he was doing with this one." While it's funny to think that there is some random person out there who has the job of watching you and then showing you funny videos you might like (I had a particularly jarring experience with this after I killed my friend's pet snail by accident and the next day TikTok treated me to a series of videos about "Fun Snail Facts"), that is not that far from the truth. In its Terms of Service, TikTok asks users to give permission to the application to store data on what videos users have watched and commented on, instant messages sent within the application, the keystroke rhythms users use when they type, what kind of phone and system a user utilizes, and the user's location. Most people do not actively sift through Terms of Service pages with a fine-tooth comb, thus they often do not even realize what they are agreeing to when they hastily check the box that comes up between them and their use of the application.

I have seen firsthand people's reaction to learning just how much data TikTok mines from its users. For the most part, it is apathy. Teenagers often chalk up warnings about the dangers of social media as the run-of-the-mill "China is stealing our information and spying on us." When I told one of my friends about how devices store our data, she shrugged it off by saying, "I don't care if the Chinese government knows things about me, it's not like I have any secret government information that would make that a safety hazard." While for most people it's true that having TikTok or any other social media does not pose a threat to national safety, there is still a threat posed to personal safety. Too much use of anything can be bad for your health, but this is especially true with social media. In an interview, Chamath Palihapitiya (former Vice President of User Growth at Facebook) described social media as follows: "Platforms like Facebook, Snapchat, and Instagram leverage the very same neural circuitry used by slot machines and cocaine to keep us using their products as much as possible."

There is not anything about phones themselves that is addictive, but the way that social media apps on them are programmed causes behavioral addiction. Heavy technology use can cause eye strain and an inability to focus on anything for long periods of time (thank you Tik Tok's 15 second video format). Studies have also shown that increased usage of social media correlates to feelings of isolation which connects to feelings of "morbidity and mortality." While there are no studies that have found that technology and social media use cause depression, there is a definite correlation between the two. Smartphones were first introduced in 2007 and by 2015 ninety two percent of teenagers and young adults owned a smartphone, which is in part contributing to a study that found that individuals from the eighth grade to high school seniors had an increase of depressive symptoms from 2010 to 2015. These problems contribute to user's anxiety and disruptions to their sleep pattern, which has an overall negative effect on their health and safety.

Behavioral addictions do not cause physical dependence, but a device addiction can cause physical issues such as carpal tunnel or headaches from overuse (I have personally developed a very sexy hump in my neck from slouching to look at my phone). Every time that I (or anyone else for that matter) pick up my smartphone, neurotransmitters flood my brain with dopamine and other feel-good chemicals that keep me coming back to my device. In the days that I was trying to take myself off social media, I was feeling the withdrawals of a lack of those chemicals and that is what drew me to getting back on to my phone. My inability to put down my phone was not founded in personal weakness, but through the design method of creation that technology founds itself in.

Thus, I've created a new resolution: This year, I am going to stop feeling guilty for the hold that capitalism has on my life, and instead, keep myself conscious and informed about how the things that I do choose to bring into my life affect me.

I lasted four days. Four measly days of no social media before I caved and redownloaded Instagram and TikTok. Four days of picking up my phone and then putting it back down when I remembered that I was not supposed to be using it. Because I did not have any apps downloaded, I found myself obsessively checking my text messages and the weather app. It was almost like it didn't even matter what I was doing on my phone. I was addicted to the action of picking up my phone in itself — and that really scared me.

On September 9, 2020, Netflix came out with "The Social Dilemma." The release, which was part documentary and part scripted film, featured interviews from corporate whistleblowers from companies like Facebook and Google. In these interviews, the whistleblowers broke down the different algorithms that their companies programmed to keep users addicted to their devices. This kind of addiction, a behavioral addiction, is incredibly dangerous when it is being controlled by a small group of people who have no concept of the realities their actions instill in the people that are on the receiving end of their decisions.



THE OBITUARIES: CRINGE CULTURE

JUANA MOYA



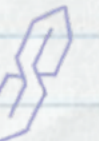
The long awaited day has finally arrived. With people across every online space finally declaring that the beast we call cringe culture is dead, I feel a collective sigh of relief shared between me and pretty much every other Gen Z'er. Our time has come: We can finally go back to listening to our Emo Trinity playlists from middle school and play Undertale and Five Nights At Freddy's to our hearts' content.



No one really mourns cringe culture, its death is more of a realization we've all landed at, which is, "Hey, maybe let's let people enjoy whatever they want." While that is seen as a ... *progressive* idea for the digital landscape as we know it, it feels to me that we don't really understand the implications of cringe culture ending. Believe me, I want it to be gone more than anyone. I'd love to be able to watch "Jojo's Bizarre Adventure" in peace without having *someone* comment on it (even if that someone is me). As idealistic it may be to think that cringe culture is finally coming to an end, chances are that it's far from going down in flames. Rather than sit quietly in a mausoleum, cringe culture rises and shows us exactly how deep it runs in our online

interactions, without a second thought to how harmful its practice can be. Cringe culture, in all its grimy, greasy stubbornness, is going to stick around for longer than we think.

To really understand why we're all elated at the prospect of cringe culture coming to an end, we first have to answer two main questions: What is cringe culture and, more specifically, what is cringe? Cringe is defined by Merriam Webster as feeling disgust or embarrassment and responding with a movement of the face or body, or more simply, "to recoil in distaste." You might've felt the traditional definition of cringe when calling your high school teacher mom by accident or by remembering how you acted in your first middle school relationships (middle school is a HUGE contributor to cringe). Whether it's an immediate response or a realization years down the line, when we cringe at ourselves, it usually teaches us one thing: *Don't do what you did again*. Internal cringe can be an incredibly useful tool in terms of self-reflection and learning how to behave in social environments. However, the cringe that we use online has taken on a different connotation entirely. The use of cringe as slang online popped up around 2016, and its rise to infamy is often credited to YouTuber LeafyIsHere. Essentially, he became the blueprint for what cringe compilations look like. His videos usually follow the same formula: finding someone or



something he finds cringe, absolutely tearing it to shreds and repeating this grisly process with other subjects until the video is over. The term "cringe" exploded and YouTube flooded with cringe compilations. In 2016, cringe became synonymous with contempt rather than embarrassment, and this is when the term became a social weapon online.

Now that we know the origins of cringe and how it came to be, what makes the things that we love and the things that other people love cringe? In researching this topic, I've tried pulling at a number of different leads as to what makes something cringe. Is it video games? Does age have an affect? How about the amount of times we see something on our timelines? Is it whatever is popular? What makes one cartoon show cringe and not the other? How is Shrek cringe to some but an absolute masterpiece to others?

WHAT IS THE FORMULA FOR CRINGE ???

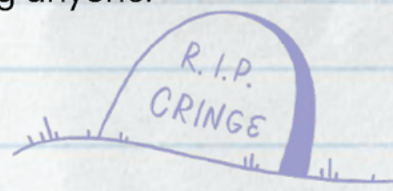
In all of this, in every lead I've found and every thread I've tried to pull, in a Shyamalan-esque twist of fate, I've discovered that there is no *one cringe factor*. To paraphrase the infamous Pepe Silvia meme from "It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia," "What do I find OUT? There is no [cringe factor], the [cringe] does not EXIST." It seems that *everything* is cringe, has been cringe or will

eventually be cringe. In other words, cringe is not an inherent trait, but something brought upon by individuals. In realizing this, the problem shifts from cringe culture to something even more menacing: *how people act online*.



I'm not revolutionizing anything when I say that people are shitty online. This is not some gripping realization that I'm announcing to the sheeple — this is a fact of our existence. Surprising no one, people find it a lot easier to act out of whack when they're only known as their usernames and gamer tags. Cringe online is a powerful way to shut down any discussion surrounding anything that you disagree with. It functions as a multi-purpose tool, not only putting down the media you're making fun of, but also putting yourself on a pedestal, all the while simultaneously shutting down any opportunity for discussion. So for people online who see something they think is cringe, the term becomes a catch-all, doing everything you need for it to do: Distance yourself from the material you dislike, bring yourself up as "better-than" and bring those

who enjoy that thing down. Cringe as we use it is nothing but a haughty tool to announce to our online audiences that you don't like *this one thing*. But we knew this, right? Cringe is for making fun of things, that's what it's about. When people talk about how cringe culture is dying, it's in reference to what I mentioned earlier in the article: letting people like what they want to like, and I love this idea. I think we all can agree that letting people do their own thing isn't hurting anyone.



Yet, we forget that cringe culture is not exclusive to the media we enjoy. Cringe culture is not limited by Undertale, "Star Wars" and "The Office." Cringe in its most unadulterated, contemptuous forms is found in the direct harassment of individuals whose only crime is to exist as they are. This might sound like a stretch, but bear with me — I'm not just talking about the SJW cringe compilations. There are countless videos and threads online titled "fat acceptance cringe" and "LGBT cringe" and this is where cringe reaches a new level entirely. In these instances, cringe isn't "I don't like this thing," it's "I don't like you." Here, cringe becomes pretty packaging for homophobia and fatphobia, a saccharine substitute disguising casual bigotry, if you will. Of course, cringe rooted in bigotry is

the worst end of the cringe spectrum, and it serves to show that cringe culture is a scapegoat. Cringe has just become an excuse for shitty behavior, yet we've blown it up to be bigger than what it actually is. We gave it a *culture*. We'd love to think that cringe is much deeper, but cringe is a symptom of online power dynamics and people wanting to get at the top of the online pecking order, not an imagined culture war.

The root behind cringe culture and the reason it's become so prominent is because we are both incredibly appalled and incredibly attracted by it. Cringe lets us be the judge and jury to whatever we deem contemptuous enough. It's honestly the perfect tool for the online landscape. Being online is still a complete free-for-all and as much as we'd like to think that we're moving past the need for cringe culture, this behavior of looking to punch down at others for enjoying certain media or even existing a certain way is not unique to cringe. Cringe culture is just a means to an end which, in terms of the Internet, just means being able to have the most "clout" or whatever you want to call it. On the bright side, with people recognizing that cringe culture is problematic and calling it quits, I hope that it'll help us realize that cringe was not the problem. In reality, it didn't even have to be "cringe." It could've been any other form of slang synonymous with contempt, and in one way or another, "cringe culture" would still

exist because of the fight for social power that comes from online interactions.

Now that we understand the use of cringe and the purpose it has in serving our online interactions, why has it stayed around for so long? Why are we only *now* deciding to wash our hands of this primitive form of online dialogue? Cringe culture, since it began, has gone after primarily whatever was trendy-est at the time. In 2016, it was stuff like Pokemon Go, "Yuri!!! on Ice" and Overwatch,

In getting caught up with tearing apart whatever was popular, cringe culture became the thing it set out to destroy: a trend. Take a scroll down the youtube trending tab and you'll see that cringe content really just *isn't it* anymore. Cringe culture became a sort of counterculture in the sense that yes, it goes against whatever is "mainstream," but unlike other countercultures, its identity is rooted in the distaste of whatever is trending instead of actually making a statement against the mainstream. And like all other trends, this one has a LONG awaited expiration date.

Ultimately, the question remains: Is cringe culture really ending? In short, yes. The term and idea of cringe culture is finally being put to rest after the long reign it had over our internet dialogue. But if we want the long answer, we'll see that the problem was never cringe culture, but rather this disgusting behavior that we have online where we attack and distance ourselves from the media and individuals that we dislike, often detrimentally. And lest we forget that anything and *everything* is cringe because, like in so many spaces online, we love to be the judge and jury for what is socially acceptable or not.

So now what? What's the next move in killing off the disease that is cringe culture? It's really simple, actually. Just *stay unbothered*. If you see people online harmlessly (key word: *harmlessly*) enjoying a show that you don't like, or

posting a picture of what you think is a half-assed cosplay, stay quiet about it because, ultimately, you might be the only one who cares. If cringe culture dying means us unapologetically getting back to enjoying what we love, then that means respecting individuals who are doing the same thing and not tearing them down for clout. And if you think that people trying to feel good in their own skin, especially if they're fat or part of the LGBTQ+ community, is cringe, then buddy, I'm gonna need you to reevaluate that blatant bigotry you got going on. Now, I'm going to go ahead and start listening to my playlist of songs by artists I was called cringe for listening to

(which you can find [here](#), btw).



So go forth and do your part to start killing off cringe culture. Listen to as much Fall Out Boy, One direction and Hatsune Miku as your heart desires. We made up cringe and gave it the power to wreck our interests. Now it's our turn to hammer in the last nail in its coffin.



and nowadays, it's "Riverdale," Fortnite and, most recently, Among Us.

