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## Cover

Cover by Kitty Gayer

I wanted to create an abstract expressionist monotype print with inspiration from the movement within the works of Francesca Woodman and the graphics created by Franz Klein.

# **About Skipping Out**

Skipping Out is a pupil-led magazine; it aims to give all students in the Senior School a voice and freedom to express their opinions, passions and interests. If you would like to write for future issues of Skipping Out, please get in touch with Ms S Beenstock.

# Health warning: do not read this book

Inés Oulevay has loved and loathed Ottessa Moshfegh's 'My Year of Rest and Relaxation'. Here, she describes why the book has ignited such feelings and why we should all read it. Or perhaps not.

Ottessa Moshfegh's 'My Year of Rest and Relaxation' is a horrific book; I love it almost as much as I hate it.

I've lent it to many friends, recommending it for its acidic truths and its warped main character. It is a novel of privilege, darkness and womanhood. Moshfegh is known for writing about the twisted and feminine, presenting the darkness which comes alongside coming-of-age.

Moshfegh follows an unnamed protagonist as she selfmedicates, sedating herself in an attempt to sleep through 2000-2001. Having recently graduated from Columbia University, our anti-heroine is struck by grief and dissatisfaction with her post-graduate life. She lives on sedatives and the Home Shopping Network, only leaving her apartment to trek to the bodega in her furs and enormous sunglasses. Moshfegh frames the novel with the oblivious optimism of New York before the events of 9/11, which she brutally undercuts in the final page of the novel. Our protagonist's hedonistic plan for self-improvement involves more wallowing than journeying, as she hopes to recover from trauma.

I am repulsed by the book itself, and the way I identify with it. The idea of spending a year in recovery at home is sickening to me now, post-Covid and post-quarantine. However, having read it in January 2020, I found myself yearning for the sanctuary of my bedroom, wishing to escape decisions and do very little. Both the protagonist and I were completely unaware of what lay in the future, in a prelapsarian era. She, oblivious to the resonating impacts of 9/11 and I, naive to the world of mask-wearing, isolation and Zoom.

The novel's protagonist seems to reject the inevitability of growing up. In this era, which preaches self-love and personal growth, her attitude was a contrast to the self-improvement TikToks that I consumed daily. The self-disgust the protagonist feels diverged from the way I had been told that one 'comes into their own' when growing up, finding and accepting oneself. My own journey from girlhood to womanhood (in process, of course, as I write this, aged 17) has felt uncomfortable, at times. It has felt as if I was walking a tightrope between acceptance and rejection, sometimes a girl and sometimes a woman. Moshfegh creates a blond and pretty facade for her main character to hide behind. Underneath this, lies a toxic and shallow personality. Moshfegh's rejection of depth and intellect in her portrayal of the character, liberates the

writer, allowing her to create a character who is awful in her superficiality and indulgence.

Our anti-heroine is useless and lazy, never feeling as if she has any obligations or responsibilities. Here is someone who rejects having to seem smart and presentable all of the time. At the time, I didn't know what I wanted to study or even who I wanted to be. Much like the protagonist, I was fine with some denial. Yet, when quarantine hit, I found myself yearning for routine and newness. I suppose both she and I were deceived, both by ourselves and our forgiving environments: me in a pre-Covid world and she in her Ivy League bubble. Whilst I am now repulsed by the absurdity of her delusions, then I was enticed by them. Moshfegh presents the idea that you could let yourself be sad, let yourself feel and think your way through your problems. But, by presenting this through a character who is repulsive, this idea becomes distasteful.

Moshfegh resists modern expectations with an overly relaxed and ignorant main character, one who is neither sympathetic nor politically correct. I have a hard time reading from this perspective and understanding or accepting this point of view, as I often find myself uncomfortable with immersing myself in views which so deeply contradict my own. Fatphobic, racist and unconscious of her entitled upbringing, it hurt to read this protagonist's inner thoughts.

Reading 'My Year of Rest and Relaxation' was painful. I almost didn't finish it, but a friend who had finished it urged me to pick it up again. I both regret reading it and was compelled to finish it. Am I as naive and delusional as the protagonist? Are you? There's only one way to find out: you too will have to read this awful book.



### 'I'm older and wiser as a Gen Z. What have I learnt?'

Maddie Barrass spills the beans



According to Statista, an online platform that specialises in data gathering and creating visuals, 94% of both Gen Z and Millennials have at least one social media account.

Though this is hardly surprising - I'd struggle to name someone who doesn't have a Snapchat or an Instagram - there is a significant variation in the way these two generations use their social media, from their mannerisms to the actual platforms they use. Recently, there has been tension between these two groups of users, in what some have dubbed the latest round of the Generation Wars. I believe that the ways in which the internet education of the two generations differ, is key in understanding why there seems to be such intergenerational conflict.

I was born in 2007, making me a firm member of Gen Z (1997-2012), but I'm young enough to remember when ombre hair and buzzfeed quizzes dominated the internet - something Millennials would also appreciate. Some of my first PSHE lessons were on the importance of internet safety, screen time and digital footprints, which is why it would perhaps be surprising that I and most people I know, use my real name on social media. There's an occasional middle name thrown in or a spam Instagram account but, for the most part, we're all one quick search away from one another.

This is all in a stark contrast to the internet that Millennials (1981-1996) grew up on. When you read any mystery novel from the early 2000s, there is always a social media alias to uncover, or a secret Myspace to find. The lessons I was taught of never using your full name online, anticipating life ahead and being 'employer friendly' and having all accounts on a privacy lock down, were the ones that younger Millennials had drilled into them, presumably learnt from the mistakes of the older ones. For many people in secondary school in the 2000s and early 2010s, the worst fate was to have an embarrassing photo posted online by someone else; I once thought that if there was even one photo of me at a party on anyone's Instagram, I would be labelled unemployable.

That perception of social media has mostly died out. In PSHE, we're taught more about the effects of social media on our mental health, rather than coached on how to portray ourselves online. However, there has been a lasting legacy of the fear there was once around how social media could affect your career.

Within the social media landscape today, there is a major difference between the way Millenials and Gen Z conduct themselves. It's important to distinguish between the apps that different age groups use: Instagram is a predominantly Millennial platform, whereas TikTok is more geared towards Gen Z. While there will be individuals who defy this pattern, these generational groups are useful for identifying general trends.

As it became the norm to have a public account, Instagram changed from a place where people kept a photo-diary of their lives, to a meticulously curated highlights reel. I think that this is the longer term effect of Millennials being told that their social media would have a large impact on their lives, that universities were continuously scouring these apps and employers would heavily scrutinise any public profile, so there is a pressure to always be presentable on their accounts. Millennials were also the first generation to grow up with social media in their adolescence, as a result, social media became a way to generate social currency and confidence.

With the introduction of TikTok, social media has become casual, a far cry from the highly edited nature Instagram of 2016. Scrolling on any For You Page will bring up countless videos filmed in cars, while eating breakfast or getting 'unready'. While the older generation has been relentlessly teased for the 'Millenial pause' (a pause at the start of a video to accommodate for any lags in audio) and their dramatic facial expressions; Gen Z are characteristically nonchalant, a perfectly practised camera shake at the start of any TikTok to signify the spontaneity of the video and a plethora of casual settings: bed, toilet or classroom. This reflects the wider acceptance of social media. Jobs like 'influencer' or 'YouTuber' have become viable careers, and brands put immense amounts of money into social media advertising and discourse.



However, I would argue that, like most social media, the perceived relaxed nature of Gen Z on social media is performative. The act of documenting yourself is inherently 'chalant' and posting that for others to consume, shows there is an importance placed on your presence on social media. While this media is performative, it doesn't mean that people aren't vulnerable online.

Covid had a major impact on the way Gen Z uses the internet. For two years, life was experienced through a digital world; the horrific murder of George Floyd and the BLM movement, the devastation of Covid, the depths of loneliness in isolation, were all shared through social media and for many was their coming of age. There were videos of people protesting, crying, dancing all over our screens and few people didn't join in some way. Gen Z gets to experience - to a certain extent - the comfort of anonymity online, not due to precautions taken, but due to the sheer number of people online. Perhaps this is why people feel more comfortable posting videos of personal moments, or stream of consciousness style clips.

With these differences established, it really isn't surprising that these two online generations are clashing. Millennials were the pioneers of using the internet as part of popular culture; really what we are seeing playing out is Millennials realising that they aren't trend-setters anymore and that the space they created is no longer theirs. I think that the attacks each side are launching at one another feel more mean-spirited, not because there is hatred between the two groups, but more because that is how people are on the internet - it's a lot easier to be cruel when you don't have to say it to someone's face. Plus, even if cruelty isn't the motive, online humour is often built on one person being the butt of millions of strangers' jokes. That is to say, this behaviour is seen across any type of online disagreement.

Ultimately, the way people use social media is always going to be changing. Gen Alpha, the successor to Gen Z, is already showing this: there is a trend of younger people having more privacy settings on their accounts, but it's too soon to tell if this will last into adulthood. The apps and even technology that we will have access to will also change, and soon TikTok will be a Myspace. While this is inevitable, I do hope that Gen Z users remember how it feels to have an older, seemingly more powerful person make fun of them and their community, and avoid the obvious pitfalls.



#### How the Soviet Union influenced cinema, and how Hollywood reacted

Summer Ginvert investigates

The Soviet Union had a significant influence on filmmaking and shaped the way we study, produce, and create films. The USSR had strict control over the film industry and they took an interest in promoting cinema because they recognised the power it held to mould people's views. Beyond the propaganda, filmmakers themselves began to look into film and analyse it - this way of studying films was a new pathway in filmmaking and, when people began to produce films again, the films were impressive and intricate.

The Bolshevik government took a strong interest in film because they recognised it for what it was: a powerful tool for social and political influence. In 1918, the government established The People's Commissariat for Education and, within this, they made one large, national film company: Narkompros. By doing so, they were able to monitor all film production and control what was distributed to the wider population. Films such as Silvery Dust (1953) and The Detached Mission (1985) placed the West in a negative spotlight whilst promoting the Soviet military - the Bolsheviks understood how to use film as a tactical weapon for propaganda. In the film Silvery Dust, an American scientist develops a weapon of mass destruction in order to become rich, and the Soviet military become the heroic protagonists as they defeat the scientist (a neat interpretation of Cold War behaviour, perhaps).

Beyond *all* the examples where the Bolsheviks produced films for political and social success, they also implemented institutions and ideas that helped the filmmakers themselves and boosted the industry. Some of these creations were intentional whereas others were consequences of their attempted control.

Due to the nationalisation of film companies, raw footage stock was sparse; filmmakers struggled to propose their own personal ideas initially, as the government had strict rules about what they wanted to distribute to the nation. Cinemas shut down and the ones that were open were only allowed to screen recycled films about the Russian empire. However, the persistence and passion of filmmakers meant that they were determined to continue evolving cinema. So, since they could not explore film externally by directing and producing, they began to look internally. Through this, film theory was introduced to the world. There are a variety of different film theorists that had significant impact over the way we study and create movies to this day. For example, Sergei Eisenstein was a Soviet filmmaker who had a great influence on editing. He devised the 'montage theory', which states that "each sequential element [should be] perceived not next to the other, but on top of the other." Whilst this initially makes little sense, what Eisenstein is saying is that editing in itself creates a story; editing can be used to increase tension (e.g, Hitchock's shower scene in Psycho), it can be used to create rhythm and movement (e.g, any trailer for an action film), and more. He organised the different purposes of editing into five categories: metric, rhythmic, tonic, overturnal, and intellectual. Eisenstein's forward thinking led him to influence the way editors manipulate footage across the world.

Here, the sequential shot to the close up of the man tells the audience the true meaning of that initial shot. This theory defined how film (and editing) can manipulate someone's perception, emotions, and reactions - this can explain why the Soviet Union began to recognise the power it held. Directors extracted this idea to create, hold and release suspense, as well as creating shock and comedy through subverting their expectations as to what the scene is actually about.



Film theorists like Eisensten and Kuleshov were unsurprisingly eager to get back into practical filmmaking and, with their newly equipped understanding and knowledge of cinema, they were able to produce highly successful films. In 1925, film organisations (including Narkompros) joined together to form Sovkino. Under this new company, the film industry was given tax-free benefits, generous funding and control over all the film exports and imports. Since film stock became more available, these same filmmakers were able to produce films again. Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* was released in that same year and, after wide success in the Soviet Union, he was able to input all his studies into an artistic form. Strike! was another full-length feature film Eisenstein directed which is now studied across the world (it was even one of the options to study for film A Leve!!).

The Soviet Union had an undeniable understanding and appreciation for film, which led to a continued amount of success throughout the 20th century. For example, the film *Ballad of a Soldier* (Chukhray, 1960) won the 'BAFTA Award for Best Film', a British-based awards ceremony, whilst in the midst of the Cold War.

In contrast with their own influence, it is interesting to compare how Hollywood was doing throughout the 20th century but particularly during the Cold War. In an interview from 2015, George Lucas (director of many of the Star Wars films and founder of Lucas Films) said:

#### 'I know a lot of Russian filmmakers, they have a lot more freedom than I have.'

The idea that the USSR had 'a lot more freedom' than the USA during the Cold War would seem ludicrous to many. However, this belief was surprisingly common amongst Western filmmakers during this era. After the rise of McCarthyism (or the second Red Scare) in the 1940s and 1950s, which was a campaign that spread fear amongst people and promoted public accusations of people in power being communist, there was a creation of the 'Hollywood Ten'. The Hollywood Ten was a group of (initially successful) filmmakers who had been blacklisted. Joris Ivens, a Dutch filmmaker who was deported from the US and Elia Kazan, a director who was connected to alleged Communist sympathisers and therefore 'boycotted' by people in the industry, are just two examples as to how fear had spread throughout Hollywood. Directors were desperate to prove their patriotism and loyalty - for example, Hitchcock's Rear Window (1954) can be loosely tied to the idea that accusing people of suspicious things (communism) is fair and justified. Whilst the Soviet Union saw the power of filmmaking as something beneficial, the USA seemed to want to control it and feared its possibility of creating anti-American propaganda. To continue the idea that Lucas had briefly said, the USSR's control over the film industry arguably led to them having more freedom; all a director had to do was adhere to the rules of promoting either anti-west or soviet propaganda - after that, it was their decision what they could do with it. However, in the USA, pressure from commercially powerful companies and society went beyond what even government tried to do.

It seems fascinating that the Soviet Union has imposed social controls in some ways and been relatively liberal on the silver screen.



Ballad of a Soldier (above), Strike! (below)

https://www.avclub.com/the-villain-gap-why-soviet-movies-rarely-had-american-1798245725

https://www.rogerebert.com/features/the-history-of-americaand-russias-cinematic-cold-war



#### 'But long it could not be Till that her garments, heavy with their drink, Pulled the poor wretch from her melodious lay To muddy death.'

Eliza Weston takes a long hard look at one of the most beautiful artistic interpretations of Ophelia, and explores the choices behind the artist's work



Last summer I read 'The Picture of Dorian Gray' by Oscar Wilde. After that, I started thinking about how literary characters were represented in artwork. As I began my research, I found that, for some reason, Ophelia, the spurned lover of Shakespeare's Hamlet, was one of the most popular characters of all time to be depicted in paintings. I wanted to find out the reason for this.

As is typical of a woman in the Elizabethan era and something that is common in many of Shakespeare's plays, Ophelia's identity as a character is dependent on the male figures in her life (her father, brother and potential fiancée, Hamlet). After being emotionally bullied by her father and brother and publicly humiliated by her potential fiancée, Ophelia's suicide appears the only way out for her. After the death of her father, after Hamlet breaks off their engagement, Ophelia is left stranded in a world designed by the patriarchy, a world in which women are defined almost exclusively by their male relations. With her father murdered by the man she loved, it makes sense that Ophelia is driven to madness and suicide. This was a world in which she had no place and as Hamlet says, her only foreseeable future might have been the 'nunnery', to live out the rest of her days cast out from society and isolated. This is why Ophelia's madness is also a fascinating paradox: in her madness, Ophelia wins a sort of autonomy and is able to do what she likes and say what she thinks. Is this mad version of Ophelia actually the real Ophelia?

This change or lack of identity is vital - she is an underdeveloped character, whose sense of self is tethered to her male relations. In my opinion, this is something that is reflected in John Everett Millais' painting of Ophelia. Millais was one of the founding members of the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood, formed in 1848. They were well known for their depictions of literary characters. This movement was founded by a collection of artists (and one writer) who were inspired predominantly by Ruskin's theories, urging artists to 'go to nature' and execute their work with 'maximum realism'. It is



typical of the Pre-Raphaelites, that Millais painted every leaf in precise detail, even in the background of his painting, leaving nothing to the imagination; the vibrant colours giving the painting a purposefully two-dimensional look.

We see Ophelia surrounded by flowers floating on the water, each of which represents something different. In the play, just before her death, Ophelia distributes flowers and herbs, specifying the different meanings of each.

> "But long it could not be Till that her garments, heavy with their drink, Pulled the poor wretch from her melodious lay To muddy death."

The imaginary rosemary Ophelia gives Hamlet, for example, is heavily ironic, as in Shakespeare's time the herb was used at both weddings and funerals, and its primary message was remembrance, perhaps foreshadowing her own impending death. Millais not only painted the flowers mentioned in the play, but he also painted in various other symbols, such as the red poppy you can see by her hand, often symbolising death, and the fritillary which stood for sorrow.

In his acute attention to detail, Millais seemed to remain as accurate to the play as possible when painting Ophelia and he specifically used a verse from the play (Act IV scene vii) as the inspiration for his painting:

"There is a willow grows aslant a brook, That shows his hoar leaves in the glassy stream; There, with fantastic garlands did she come Of crow-flowers, nettles, daisies and long purples..."

This is an extract from a scene near the end of the play, where Gertrude breaks the news of Ophelia's death, to both the characters on stage and the audience; it is Ophelia's only death scene. Thus, at one remove, Gertrude describes Ophelia's end. Yet she presents us with two versions. The first is that she was 'pulled ' to death and died unaware, mad and wretched. However, Gertrude also offers a second, arguably more interesting and romantic view of Ophelia's death: she describes her as, 'mermaid-like' and becoming 'a creature native and indued/ Unto that element'. Shakespeare suggests that Ophelia is in her natural habitat as the fantastical descriptions of her seem to allude to the fact that Ophelia was not suited to the world in which she lived. Instead, by depicting her as a mystical 'mermaid', Shakespeare emphasises her femininity and beauty in death, and it is perhaps due to this that she has become such a popular character in artwork.

The scattered flowers strewn over Ophelia's dress suggest nature accepts Ophelia. Millais is most likely emulating the extract which refers to her 'weedy trophies' and her 'clothes spread wide', and through this he suggests Ophelia has found a sort of sanctuary in death, with her body 'dressed' in flowers. Yet at the same time, her funeral rites are 'maimed' as they marked her death as a suicide, which would be a shameful thing - amounting to 'self-murder' and ordinarily, forbid her a Christian burial.

Interestingly, Ophelia is not only depicted as being both at peace and wretched in the play, but her presence in Millais' painting seems to be somewhat obstructive, as she obtrudes in the painting - the detail of her depiction fighting with the hyper detail of the background. Furthermore, Millais' choice to paint a fallen willow behind Ophelia, alludes to the pitiful song Ophelia sings just before her death, it might also represent the corruption and destruction of the court; perhaps Millais is reflecting on the fear people had at the end of Elizabeth's reign, on who would succeed.

Ultimately, Millais memorialises Ophelia's beauty in death his painting created a literal representation of her death and perhaps its beauty and romanticism have made it one of the most recognisable representations in literary history.

# 'Succession': the soundtrack that will blow you away!

Katherine Ruffhead explores her love and respect for the 'Succession' soundtrack



The soundtrack to 'Succession' is, to me, a massive part of what makes this such an addictive show. I'm not alone - the show has won many awards for its writing and acting with millions of people watching the final series. I'd probably heard the theme tune over 100 times before I had watched a single episode of the show. Now, knowing the context and themes of the show, the soundtrack seems even more powerful.

I'm not a script writer or a composer, but I've watched numerous acclaimed television series and my Spotify playlists are crammed with music from film and TV. The 'Succession' soundtrack stands out, not just because of the quality of the music, but its central role in the story telling and mood building.

The show centres round the media mogul, Logan Roy and his extended family's fight for succession. You won't be surprised to know that the Roys and their company, Waystar-Royco, are based on the Murdochs. Throughout the show, its British writer and creator, Jesse Armstrong, explores the complex interactions between the family members as business interests and family loyalty collide.

The music that introduces the show (Main Title Theme) is arguably the most important piece in the show and certainly the most well-known, with so many underscores and variations stemming from this central piece. The conflict between classical and Hip Hop genres is an unexpected combination and one that reflects some of the show's themes. During the title



sequences, the subject skips between the old and the new, both visually and musically. Whilst grainy sepia pictures of the Roy clan are shown, representing old money in their suits, ubiquitous cigars and social clubs, the bass of the Hip Hop constantly interrupts and pictures of New York skylines and flashing American Television Network (ATN) headlines jostle on screen. There is not only a clear conflict between the old and the new, in terms of ideology and values, but between the Roy's childhoods and their present selves, something which is explored extensively and skillfully in the show.

Nicholas Britell's process of writing the show's main theme is interesting. In interviews, he claims he asked himself a question: 'If the Roy family could imagine their own music, what music would that be?' Only then did he start to conceive the 'really dark, classical sound' that the Roys became associated with.



The classical theme tune helps to establish the Roys in the way they see themselves: infallible because of their wealth, power and influence. But increasingly, they are presented as not only deeply flawed, but also not as untouchable as they themselves have assumed.

Britell uses a variety of instruments to present different ideas and characters. Each instrument, like each genre, comes with its own associations that can be used to emphasise or exaggerate an idea used in the show. We can see this as Britell uses the same theme with different instruments, especially with the themes which end each episode and which therefore carry more weight.

The character of Greg Hirsch, is the comically inept Roy cousin, who is an outsider, neither part of the sibling clan nor as privileged as them, materially. Britell shows us how different instruments can be used to emphasise a character's traits. Far removed from the Roy family's wealth, Greg moves to New York in order to ingratiate himself with Logan Roy and get a job in the company. I'm sure that Greg, being the slightly ridiculous man he is, imagines a similar theme tune as the Roy's for himself, but sadly is set up as a less-than-serious character with his theme. Greg's theme Power - instrumental is different to the songs used for the Roys, reflecting Greg's role as the outsider. His theme lacks the richness or opulence of cellos, trumpets or piano and focuses on the modern and Hip Hop. The jaunty melodic line has a constant undertone of threat, which comes from the electric bass, undermining any feeling of security or lightheartedness and this reflects a conflict between Greg's comic character and the destabilising nature of his presence. The track's title, Power, can thus be interpreted as either an ironic comment on Greg's lack of power, or genuinely illustrating his potential threat. Despite the ambiguous comment on Greg's role in the show, it is undoubtable that Greg is not a Roy, lacking the power and status of Logan's children, and Power highlights this.

The guitar is used just once for the *Austerlitz* episodes and presents a stripped-back version of common themes prevalent throughout the show. This variation is unlike both the electronic Hip Hop of modern New York, and the exaggerated classical music of the Roy children. Perhaps the guitar is



representative of Logan, a man not born into the pomp and drama that he has bequeathed to his children, but clearly not a bastion of modern New York either. As the camera pans the Roy children, the simple guitar melody takes over emphasising the family dynamics, without any of the complex business rivalries, solely focusing on their connection with their father and with each other.

Britell isn't only reliant on changes in instrument but also skillfully uses a change in melody to show significance, most notably in *End Credits - Action That*. This piece, starting off with relatively familiar 'Succession' motifs then escalates into fastpaced cellos and layered harsh oboe. This takes the listener by surprise, with its abrupt harshness and immediately marks the episode out as the start of a wider conflict. The Succession theme, the core melody of which is rarely changed, moves into something more desperate and far-reaching, as the notes climb without a resolution. Here, multiple common motifs converge as the show reaches its climax.

Choirs are often used in the ending theme of each season finale to mark their importance. The religious associations of choirs, especially when chorusing repeated amens, as in *Andante Moderate - End Credits - Amen*, give this episode a ritualistic relevance. The final episode, 'With Open Eyes', ends with a choir's mournful rendition of the succession theme song. Britell's skill is in using and varying his theme, creating conflict, complexity, character and emotion: it is almost jarringly simple, and it works.

You can listen to all the tracks referenced here: http://tinyurl.com/mru585rf



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