

Douglas Coupland's *Generation X* Neo-logisms

Ever since reading *Generation X* for the first time a few years ago, I've often wished I could have a quick reference to all the great little neo-logisms printed in the margins of the pages. So finally I sat down and put them all in alphabetical order with page number references... and here it is. Btw, I'm sure this violates some sort of copyright laws, but I won't tell anyone if you won't.

101-ism: (page 85)

The tendency to pick apart, often in minute detail, all aspects of life using half-understood pop psychology as a tool.

2 + 2 = 5-ism: (page 139)

Caving in to a target marketing strategy aimed at oneself after holding out for a long period of time. *"Oh, all right, I'll buy your stupid cola. Now just leave me alone."*

Air Family: (page 111)

Describes the false sense of community experienced among coworkers in an office environment.

Anti-Sabbatical: (page 35)

A job take with the sole intention of staying only for a limited period of time (often one year). The intention is usually to raise enough funds to partake in another, more personally meaningful activity such as watercolor sketching in Crete or designing computer knit sweaters in Hong Kong. Employers are rarely informed of intention.

Anti-Victim Device (AVD): (page 114)

A small fashion accessory worn on an otherwise conservative outfit which announces to the world that one still has a spark of individuality burning inside: *1940s retro ties and earrings (on men), feminist buttons, noserings (women), and the now almost completely extinct teeny weeny "rattail" haircut (both sexes).*

Architectural Indigestion: (page 75)

The almost obsessive need to live in a 'cool' architectural environment. Frequent related objects of fetish include framed black-and-white art photography (Diane Arbus is a favorite); simplistic

pine furniture; matte black high-tech items such as TVs, stereos, and telephones; low-wattage ambient lighting; a lamp, chair, or table that alludes to the 1950s; cut flowers with complex name.

Armanism: (page 82)

After Giorgio Armani: an obsession with mimicking the seamless and (more importantly) *controlled* ethos of Italian culture. Like [Japanese Minimalism](#), *Armanism* reflects a profound inner need for control.

Bambification: (page 48)

The mental conversion of flesh and blood living creatures into cartoon creatures possessing bourgeois Judeo-Christian attitudes and morals.

Black Dens: (page 135)

Where [Black Holes](#) live; often unheated warehouses with Day-Glo spray paint, mutilated mannequins, Elvis references, dozens of overflowing ashtrays, broken mirror sculptures, and Velvet Underground music playing in background.

Black Holes: (page 135)

An X generation subgroup best known for their possession of almost entirely black wardrobes.

Bleeding Ponytail: (page 21)

An elderly sold-out baby boomer who for hippie or pre-sellout days.

Boomer Envy: (page 21)

Envy of material wealth and long-range material security accrued by older members of the baby boom generation by virtue of fortunate births.

Bradyism: (page 134)

A multisibling sensibility derived from having grown up in large families. A rarity in those born after approximately 1965, symptoms of *Bradyism* include a facility for mind games, emotional withdrawal in situations of overcrowding, and a deeply felt need for well-defined personal space.

Brazilification: (page 11)

The widening gulf between the rich and the poor and the accompanying disappearance of the middle classes.

Bread and Circuits: (page 80)

The electronic era tendency to view party politics as corny -- no longer relevant or meaningful or useful to modern societal issues, and in many cases dangerous.

Café Minimalism: (page 107)

To espouse a philosophy of minimalism without actually putting into practice any of its tenets.

Celebrity Schadenfreude: (page 70)

Lurid thrills derived from talking about celebrity deaths.

Chryptotechnophobia: (page 172)

The secret belief that technology is more of a menace than a boon.

Clique Management: (page 21)

The need of one generation to see the generation following it as deficient so as to bolster its own collective ego: *"Kids today do nothing. They're so apathetic. We used to go out and protest. All they do is shop and complain."*

Consensus Terrorism: (page 21)

The process that decides in-office attitudes and behavior.

Conspicuous Minimalism: (page 107)

A life-style tactic similar to [Status Substitution](#). The nonownership of goods flaunted as a token of moral and intellectual superiority.

Conversational slumming: (page 113)

The self-conscious enjoyment of a given conversation precisely for its lack of intellectual rigor. A major spin-off activity of [Recreational Slumming](#).

Cult of Aloneness: (page 69)

The need for autonomy at all costs, usually at the expense of long-term relationships. Often brought about by overly high expectations of others.

Decade Blending: (page 15)

In clothing: the indiscriminate combination of two or more items from various decades to create a personal mood: *Sheila = Mary*

Quant earrings (1960s) + cork wedgie platform shoes (1970s) + black leather jacket (1950s and 1980s).

Derision Preemption: (page 150)

A life-style tactic; the refusal to go out on any sort of emotional limb so as to avoid mockery from peers. *Derision Preemption* is the main goal of [Knee-Jerk Irony](#).

Diseases for Kisses (Hyperkarma): (page 48)

A deeply rooted belief that punishment will somehow always be far greater than the crime: ozone holes for littering.

Divorce Assumption: (page 34)

A form of [Safety Net-ism](#), the belief that if marriage doesn't work out, then there is no problem because partners can simply seek a divorce.

Dorian Graying: (page 164)

The unwillingness to gracefully allow one's body to show the signs of aging.

Down-Nesting: (page 144)

The tendency of parent to move to smaller, guest-room-free houses after their children have moved away so as to avoid children aged 20 to 30 who have boomeranged home.

Dumpster Clocking: (page 162)

The tendency when looking at objects to guesstimate the amount of time they will take to eventually decompose: *"Ski boots are the worst. Solid plastic. They'll be around till the sun goes supernova."*

Earth Tones: (page 26)

A youthful subgroup interested in vegetarianism, tie-dyed outfits, mild recreational drugs, and good stereo equipment. Earnest, frequently lacking in humor.

Emallgration: (page 173)

Migration toward lower-tech, lower-information environments containing lessened emphasis on consumerism.

Emotional Ketchup Burst: (page 21)

The Bottling up opinions and emotions inside oneself so that they explosively burst forth all at once, shocking and confusing

employers and friends -- most of whom thought things were fine.

The Emperor's New Mall: (page 71)

The popular notion that shopping malls exist on the insides only and have no exterior. The suspension of visual belief engendered by this notion allows shoppers to pretend that the large, cement blocks thrust into their environment do not, in fact, exist.

Ethnomagnetism: (page 26)

The tendency of young people to live in emotionally demonstrative, more unrestrained ethnic neighborhoods: *"You wouldn't understand it there, mother -- they hug where I live now."*

Expatriate Solipsism: (page 172)

When arriving in a foreign travel destination one had hoped was undiscovered, only to find many people just like oneself; the peeved refusal to talk to said people because they had ruined one's elitist travel fantasy.

Fame-Induced Apathy: (page 150)

The attitude that no activity is worth pursuing unless one can become very famous pursuing it. *Fame-Induced Apathy* mimics laziness, but its roots are much deeper.

Green Division: (page 150)

To know the difference between envy and jealousy.

Historical Overdosing: (page 8)

To live in a period of time when too much seems to happen. Major symptoms include addiction to newspapers, magazines and TV news broadcasts.

Historical Slumming: (page 11)

The act of visiting locations such as diners, smokestack industrial sites, rural villages -- locations where time has been frozen many years back -- so as to experience relief when one returns back to "the present."

Historical Underdosing: (page 7)

To live in a period of time when nothing seems to happen. Major symptoms include addiction to newspapers, magazines and TV news broadcasts.

Homeowner Envy: (page 144)

Feelings of jealousy generated by the young and the disenfranchised when faced with gruesome housing statistics.

Jack-and-Jill Party: (page 143)

A *Squire* tradition; baby showers to which both men and women friends are invited as opposed to only women. Doubled purchasing power of bisexual attendance brings gift values up to Eisenhower-era standards.

Japanese Minimalism: (page 75)

The most frequently offered interior design aesthetic used by rootless career-hopping young people.

Knee-Jerk Irony: (page 150)

The tendency to make flippant ironic comments as a reflexive matter of course in everyday conversation.

Legislated Nostalgia: (page 41)

To force a body of people to have memories that do not actually possess: *"How can I be a part of the 1960s generation when I don't even remember any of it?"*

Lessness: (page 54)

A philosophy whereby one reconciles oneself with diminishing expectations of material wealth: *"I've given up wanting to make a killing or be a bigshot. I just want to find happiness and maybe open up a little roadside cafe in Idaho."*

McJob: (page 5)

A low-pay, low-prestige, low-dignity, low-benefit, no-future job in the service sector. Frequently considered a satisfying career choice by people who have never held one.

Me-ism: (page 126)

A search by an individual, in the absence of training or traditional religious tenets, to formulate a personally tailored religion by himself. Most frequently a mishmash of reincarnation, personal dialogue with a nebulously defined god figure, naturalism, and karmic eye-for-eye attitudes.

Mental Ground Zero: (page 63)

The location where one visualizes oneself during the dropping of the atomic bomb; frequently, a shopping mall.

Metaphasia: (page 164)

An inability to perceive metaphor.

Mid-Twenties Breakdown: (page 27)

A period of mental collapse occurring in one's twenties, often caused by an inability to function outside of school or structured environments coupled with a realization of one's aloneness in the world. Often marks the induction into the ritual of pharmaceutical usage.

Musical Hairsplitting: (page 85)

The act of classifying music and musicians into pathologically picayune categories: *"The Vienna Franks are a good example of urban white acid folk revivalism crossed with ska."*

Native Aping: (page 172)

Pretending to be a native when visiting a foreign destination.

Now Denial: (page 41)

To tell oneself that the only time worth living in is the past and that the only time that may ever be interesting again is the future.

Nutritional Slumming: (page 120)

Food whose enjoyment stems not from flavor but from a complex mixture of class connotations, nostalgia signals, and packaging semiotics: *"Katie and I bought this tub of Multi-Whip instead of real whip cream because thought petroleum distillate whip topping seemed like the sort of food that air force wives stationed in Pensacola back in the early sixties would feed their husband to celebrate a career promotion."*

Obscurism: (page 165)

The practice of peppering daily life with obscure references (forgotten films, dead TV stars, unpopular book, defunct countries, etc.) as a subliminal means of showcasing one's education and one's wish to disassociate from the world of mass culture.

Occupational Slumming: (page 113)

Taking a job beneath one's skills or education level as a means of retreat from adult responsibilities and/or avoiding possible failure in one's true occupation.

O'Propriation: (page 107)

The inclusion of advertising, packaging, and entertainment jargon from earlier eras in everyday speech for ironic and/or comic effect: *"Kathleen's Favorite dead Celebrity party was tons o' fun"* or *"Dave really think s of himself as a zany, nutty, wacky, and madcap guy, doesn't he?"*

Option Paralysis: (page 139)

The tendency, when given unlimited choices, to make none.

Overboarding: (page 26)

Overcompensating for fears about the future by plunging headlong into a job or life-style seemingly unrelated to one's previous interests; i.e., Amway sales, aerobics, the Republican Party, a career in law, cults, McJobs....

Ozmosis: (page 25)

The inability of one's job to live up to one's self-image.

Paper Rabies: (page 127)

Hypersensitivity to littering.

Personal Tabu: (page 74)

A small rule for living, bordering on superstition, that allows one to cope with everyday life in the absence of cultural or religious dictums.

Personality Tithe: (page 143)

A price paid for becoming a couple; previously amusing human beings become boring: *"Thanks for inviting us, but Noreen and I are going to look at flatware catalogs tonight. Afterward we're going to watch the travel channel."*

Platonic Shadow: (page 62)

A nonsexual friendship with a member of the opposite sex.

Poor Buoyancy: (page 82)

The realization that one was a better person when one had less money.

Poorochondria: (page 74)

Hypochondria derived from not having medical insurance.

Poverty Jet Set: (page 6)

A group of people given to chronic traveling at the expense of long-term job stability or a permanent residence. Tend to have doomed and extremely expensive phone call relationships with people names Serge or Ilyana. Tend to discuss frequent-flyer programs at parties.

Poverty Lurks: (137)

Financial paranoia instilled in offspring by depression-era parents.

Power Mist: (page 25)

The tendency of hierarchies in office environments to be diffuse and preclude crisp articulation.

Pull-the-Plug, Slice the Pie: (page 137)

A fantasy in which an offspring mentally tallies up the net worth of his parents.

QFD: (page 120)

Quelle fucking drag. *"Jamie got stuck in the Rome airport for thirty-six hours and it was, like, QFD."*

QFM: (page 120)

Quelle fashion mistake. *"It was really QFM. I mean, painter pants? That's 1979 beyond belief."*

Rebellion Postponement: (page 106)

The tendency in one's youth to avoid traditionally youthful activities and artistic experiences in order to obtain serious career goals. Sometimes results in the mourning for lost youth at about age thirty, followed by silly haircuts and joke-inducing wardrobes.

Recreational Slumming: (page 113)

The practice of participating in recreational activities of a class one perceives as lower than one's own: *"Karen! Donald! Let's go bowling tonight! An don't worry about shoes... apparently you can rent them."*

Recurving: (page 24)

Leaving one job to take another that pays less but places one back on the learning curve.

Safety Net-ism: (page 34)

The belief that there will always be a financial and emotional safety net to buffer life's hurts. Usually parents.

Sick Building Migration: (page 24)

The tendency of younger workers to leave or avoid jobs in unhealthy office environments or workplaces affected by Sick Building Syndrome.

Spectacularism: (page 50)

A fascination with extreme situations.

Squires: (page 135)

The most common *X* generation subgroup and the only subgroup given to breeding. *Squires* exist almost exclusively in couples and are recognizable by their frantic attempts to recreate a semblance of Eisenhower-era plenitude and their daily lives in the face of exorbitant housing prices and two-job life-styles. *Squires* tend to be continually exhausted from voraciously acquisitive pursuit of furniture and knickknacks.

Squirming: (page 112)

Discomfort inflicted upon young people by old people who see no irony in their gestures. *Karen died a thousand deaths as her father made a big show of tasting a recently manufactured bottle of wine before allowing it to be poured as the family sat in Steak Hut.*

Status Substitution: (page 54)

Using an object with intellectual or fashionable cachet to substitute for an object that is merely pricey: *"Brian, you left your copy of Camus in your brother's BMW."*

Strangelove Reproduction: (page 135)

Having children to make up for the fact that one no longer believes in the future.

Successophobia: (page 30)

The fear that if one is successful, then one's personal needs will be forgotten and one will no longer have one's childish needs catered to.

Survivulousness: (page 62)

The tendency to visualize oneself enjoying being the last person on earth. *"I'd take a helicopter up and throw microwave ovens down on the Taco Bell."*

Tele-Parablizing: (page 120)

Morals used in everyday life that derive from TV sitcom plots:
"That's just like the episode where Jan lost her glasses."

Terminal Wanderlust: (page 171)

A condition common to people of transient middle-class upbringings. Unable to feel rooted in any one environment, the move continually in hopes of finding an idealized sense of community in the next location.

Ultra Short Term Nostalgia: (page 96)

Homesickness for the extremely recent past: *"God, things seemed so much better in the world last week."*

Underdogging: (page 137)

The tendency to almost invariably side with the underdog in a given situation. The consumer expression of the this trait is the purchasing of less successful, "sad," or failing products: *"I know these Vienna franks are heart failure in a stick, but they were so sad looking up against all the other yuppie food items that I just had to buy them."*

Vaccinated Time Travel: (page 11)

To fantasize about traveling backward in time, but only with proper vaccinations.

Veal-Fattening Pen: (page 20)

Small, cramped office workstations built of fabric-covered disassemblable wall partitions and inhabited by junior staff members. Named for the pre-slaughter cubicles used by the cattle industry.

Virgin Runway: (page 172)

A travel destination chosen in the hopes that no one else has ever chosen it.

Voter's Block: (page 80)

The attempt, however futile, to register dissent with the current political system by simply not voting.

Yuppie Wannabe's: (page 91)

An X generation subgroup that believes the myth of a yuppie life-style being both satisfying and viable. Tend to be high in debt, involved in some form of substance abuse, and show a willingness to talk about Armageddon after three dr inks.