

With ten published fiction novels, five non-fiction books, and numerous art installations under his belt, Douglas Coupland seems to be the busiest person in the literature/art world. His career seems to be one of a creative dynamo, him constantly enlarging the boundaries of the written word, all while finishing multiple projects that run the length of the mediums he actively pursues.

With his first book, he immediately coined the nickname that defined a generation, and he hasn't looked back. *Generation X* propelled Douglas Coupland into the stratosphere of popular culture, giving his name a legendary status and making him a voice of seemingly a whole age group of people. Starting a career off with such a bang would have done most writers in; either leading them to a quick pay-day of endorsements and movie deals, or scaring them into seclusion and the "where are they now" pile. Happily, he chose neither, instead opting for a life of writing for the sake of writing, and doing what he wanted to do for the sake of wanting to do it. And this attitude sounds very familiar. This do-it-yourself way of doing things mirrors the way people in the skate world have gone about their transformation from outsiders to the main attraction. Not a lot of people would see a similarity between a popular-culture author and the skate culture, but both mirror one another as they show the power of getting out there and trying one's hand in everything, and going for broke; why stay where one is comfortable, when you could be out somewhere else, pushing the boundaries of what you know and what you think you could do.

In the twilight of 2004, Douglas Coupland released his tenth piece of fiction: *Eleanor Rigby*. On the outside, it is a tale about someone (Liz Dunn) who suddenly finds themselves the center of attention, after a life of waiting in the wings. But as the reader moves through the pages, the theme of a profound loneliness and longing for something just out of reach becomes the bigger story. Recently, I was given the opportunity to ask Douglas some questions about his new book, skate-culture, and of life in general. And even though his answers were brief at times, looking at what he said does give an insight into his world of words, views and art.

*God and the afterlife play a large part in your stories, as your characters try to figure out their lives. In Eleanor Rigby, your main character and her son seem to be on the verge of finding something, even though they outwardly look to others like they're on the verge of losing it.*

I've never thought about it that way. I wish I'd put that on the jacket copy. It's really good.

*Do your personal beliefs play a large role in your stories?*

Only inasmuch as the stories act as a laboratory for pushing various strains in new directions.

*With Eleanor Rigby, your tradition of having a dysfunctional family as a center of your story continues.*

It's the most universal story of all.

*Do you truly believe that all families are psychotic, and why does the dysfunctional family fascinate you so much?*

All families are disasters. They just are. Nobody escapes.

*Lonely people like Liz Dunn are perhaps everywhere. Do you think that a lot of people out there in society today are like her?*

Far more than you think, and far less able to cope with it than Liz. It's sad.

*Is it easier to be a lonely person in this day and age of everything being available 24/7?*

Actually it is. All the new couples I know met online. Today at lunch I was in a cafe and these two people were having their first offline date. It was a disaster. People either make eye contact then rent a motel room, or they pack it in right there.

*In your books, you have always been able to describe fringe groups and counter cultures with accuracy. Over the years, what kinds of counter cultures have inspired you?*

I think what people perceive of as outsider culture is merely the fact that I live in Vancouver where a lot of new ideas get their start. And the fact that pretty much everybody I know is creative.

*Skateboarding has become huge in the last decade, going from being a fringe group of "outcasts" to a massively targeted group of consumers. Looking at the skateboard culture, what do you see?*

I got to be friends with Spike Jonze just after he emerged from BMX culture in 1992. He and Andy Jenkins and Mark Lewman started 'Dirt' magazine and I quickly learned that much of the verbal and visual vitality in our culture comes from bike and board culture, Skiing, too (the Vancouver connection.) I don't know why this is. Maybe an unwillingness to self censor and simply get things done. And now that energy is morphing into film and games. It's kind of wild and can't be denied.

*Recently, you have been publishing as many non-fiction books as fiction ones. Do you find writing non-fiction a release from writing fiction?*

Very much so. I came from art and magazine culture and really enjoy working with images and words together which you can't do in generic books.

*Which is easier for you?*

Neither. On a word-count-per-day basis they clock in at about the same.

*How do you prioritize your ideas?*

It's pretty much intuitive. I tried reading one of those "Successful Habits"-type books and it was really depressing.

*Do you rotate from fiction to art to non-fiction, or is it the best idea that is burning in your head the one that gets immediate attention?*

You have to work on each project at least once per day. A lot of it is simple discipline. Of all the people who've told me they're working on novels since 1990, maybe 50 people or so, only one has ever actually finished one. Novels don't happen without the application.

*Your early books were set in the United States, but now, the dominant location for your books is in Vancouver's Lower Mainland. Do you get flak from readers or publishers for setting your stories on the west coast?*

The opposite. People tell me that Super-Valu and Rogers DVD Rentalshops are exotic and weird.

*Does music influence your writing?*

With fiction. A sound track evolves along with the novel.

*You remain positive about the future in your writing, even though the world seems to be getting worse every day.*

It's always been getting worse. The 1970s were appalling. They make right now look like a birthday party.

*What keeps your writing positive and keeps you from being cynical?*

I think cynicism is lazy thinking posing as depth and coolness. How many times have you ever heard of a hot young cynical artist who flamed out and was never heard from again? All the time. Because there's no nutrition in cynicism. Not that you have to be a goody-two-shoes, but your ideas have to be coming from a real place