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A Grunge Philosophy, Or: How I Came to Speak a Sub-Cultural Vocabulary Negating Social Binaries

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A GRUNGE PHILOSOPHY, OR:
HOW I CAME TO SPEAK A SUB-CULTURAL VOCABULARY NEGATING
SOCIAL BINARIES

A thesis submitted to

Regis College
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in partial fulfillment of the requirements

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by

Anthony Lechuga

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Preface and Acknowledgments

A poem is a poet's melancholy at his lack of priority. The failure to have begotten oneself is not the cause of the poem, for poems arise out of the illusion of freedom, out of a sense of priority being possible. But the poem – unlike the mind in creation – is a made thing, and as such is an achieved anxiety.

How do we understand an anxiety? By ourselves being anxious. Every deep reader is an Idiot Questioner. He asks, 'Who wrote my poem?' Hence Emerson's insistence that: 'In every work of genius we recognize our own rejected thoughts – they come back to us with a certain alienated majesty.'

Criticism is the discourse of the deep tautology – of the solipsist who knows that what he means is right, and yet that what he says is wrong. Criticism is the art of knowing the hidden roads that go from poem to poem.

- Harold Bloom *The Anxiety of Influence* pp. 96

In the book *Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* literary critic and Marxist political theorist Fredric Jameson contends that nostalgia contained the ability to "restructure the whole issue of pastiche and project it onto a collective and social level, where the desperate attempt to appropriate a missing past is now refracted through the iron law of fashion change and the emergent ideology of the 'generation'" (66).

This paper is research into the "emergent ideology" of generation X.

Jameson also argues that "concepts such as anxiety and alienation are no longer appropriate in the world of the postmodern" (63).

He is wrong.

Jameson continues by saying that "as for expression and feelings or emotions, the liberation, in contemporary society, from the older *anomie* of the centered subject may also mean, not merely a liberation from anxiety, but a liberation from every other kind of feeling as well, since there is no longer a self present to do the feeling." (64).

He thinks this may be a possibility but no, it's not.

I do not mean to directly contradict such a profound and respected thinker and in no way am I qualified to make academic interpretations of social and historical theory. However I am a white, male, American in my twenties during a time that resembles that of the late eighties and early nineties in an oddly cyclical fashion. My generation will experience an economy far less prosperous than that of our parents while America experiences some of the highest unemployment rates since the early nineties. A social conservatism seems prevalent in the continued discourse concerning abortion, evolution, and the homophobic nature of our society as seen through the passing of Proposition 8 in California. The end of the conservative culture that has identified America for the past decade came to an end with the election of President Barak Obama. Similarly the oil crisis and failing economy both seem to resonate with the economic situation of the eighties.

However I am lucky enough to have taken four years of my life to live in leisure reading Fredric Jameson and Harold Bloom, thus eliminating my recognition of their economic woes, but I seem to live in a somewhat similar economic world as the eighties and early nineties. This does not qualify me to write as a rock critic or even a social critic, but then again if what Bloom says above about criticism rings true, then I am that solipsist with the right answers that probably are phrased and explicated in all the wrong ways. This paper is an attempt to understand the roads that connect the body of work known as grunge and its influence over generation X.

Although I am not a rock critic, an academic musicologist, or a member of generation X, I am a fan of the music. I was only four when Pearl Jam and Nirvana both came out with their breakthrough albums; however I think that Pearl Jam's "Black" may be one of the most beautiful love songs ever written. I have a profound respect for the musicianship and integrity the various grunge bands exemplified throughout the short lived grunge years. Mostly their music resonates something personal within me.

I attempt to understand their influence and their intention through my own feelings of anxiety and social understanding. Through their music I recognize my "own rejected thoughts" which speak with an "alienated majesty" that I seek to understand through my interpretations. I am reading their anxiety through my own lens of anxiety in an attempt to clear a path from their own thoughts to mine in some form of achieved apprehension.

I apologize for my lack of inclusion of certain bands that deserve recognition for their contributions to the grunge world and the phenomenal music they created over the years. Given the limited scope of this paper I could not include the works of all those who deserve to be mentioned. To those bands that are mentioned, no seventy pages of writing could ever do justice the extensive art they have created over the years.

I owe a great deal to the efforts and passion of Dr. Scott Dimovitz. I could not have found a more diligent task master who continually questioned my romanticized interpretations of such a complex topic. Additionally I must thank Dr. Abby Gosselin for

her love of the music and honesty in expressing her own experience with the music as well as her great philosophical advice.

I must thank my parents for generating a love for music in my life from an early age as well as enabling this entire experience.

Without question I owe the greatest gratitude to the bands themselves for providing me with the poetry of their lives, their distinct vocabulary, and their ability to just rock.

I.   Introduction

Enter the cultural identity of Generation X in the form of the band Nirvana and their soon to be iconic front man in the appearance of the video for their single "Smells Like Teen Spirit":

The video is a typical live session by the band while they play to a gym of teenage kids. Throughout the video implements distort the scene, including smoke and moving lights, which shine directly into the camera at times, a good visual representation of the music: a structurally typical pop song that is played with the heavy distortion of metal and sung with the quiet verse and loud chorus of a Pixies song by a man who screams with the anger and angst of a punk rocker. At the beginning of the video a group of cheerleaders wearing black uniforms with a red anarchy symbol stitched across their chest perform robotic movements in an attempt to entertain extremely still and disengaged youth. Throughout, the video contains closer and closer shots of the band, smoke billowing in front of them, hair hanging in front of their faces, constant head banging and throwing of their bodies combine to distort the image, the antithesis of disengagement. Through the song the kids become more involved; they come out of their sleep and enter into this distorted reality with a sense of clarity. They begin moving to the music, slowly rising to their feet and crowd surfing. By the end of the song the crowd has moved to the floor of the gym intermingling with the band in a mosh pit. Slowly, while the song builds to its almost violent end, the cameras come closer as the crowd and the band become one in their seeming anguish and anxiety. The video ends with the camera moving rapidly

between alternate shots of the youth and lead singer Kurt Cobain screaming in distress, "A Denial".

The video from beginning to end represents an absent and disaffected group who receive liberation from their reality through the music, the energy, and their new found icon, Kurt Cobain. The image of the band, especially front man Cobain, shows economic and social sentiments which are juxtaposed against the ideals their parents held as socially acceptable. Not only does the band initially appear emotionally and physically different from the youth, but in the end they have transformed the youth into an emotionally expressive unified group, at least on a physical level. The youth begin expressing themselves, at the very least, through forthcoming movements, such as playing the instruments and incorporating the band into their group, with the music as their communicative anthem. This song will be referenced again throughout this essay; but is foregrounded as the moment and song which ignited this sub-culture into the powerful blaze that swept across American youth culture during the early nineties.

In the late eighties and early nineties, a musically motivated subculture in Seattle arose that produced a musical style known as grunge. Kyle Anderson, an editor for *Spin* magazine, wrote a reflective history of grunge called *Accidental Revolution: The Story of Grunge*, in which he claims that grunge made it big because Axl Rose, lead singer for Guns N' Roses, flopped with the creation of their hyped to be epic double album *Use Your Illusion*. However, a culturally aware paradigm shift happened in the culture of Rock and Roll at the beginning of the nineties. Something compelled people to turn away from the metal and hair bands of the eighties and begin searching for something more

expressive of their cultural and social sentiments. In this turning, many people found grunge.

The definition of grunge has been debated continually throughout the past twenty years and will continue to be disputed for many years to come. However the term grunge, within the realm of this paper, refers to the subcultural musical paradigm which formed in the Washington state area, typically Seattle, in the mid eighties. This includes bands such as Nirvana, formed in Aberdeen in the late eighties, as well as Pearl Jam and Soundgarden, both formed in Seattle in the late eighties. Kim Thayil, guitarist for Soundgarden, described the music as "sloppy, smeary, staggering, drunken music" (Azerrad) which molded the classic rock style guitar riffs of the sixties and seventies with the distortion of punk in a miasma of loud white noise. These bands drew influence from the punk attitude of The Sex Pistols and The Stooges while playing music heavily influenced by Black Flag and the Dead Kennedys that created a musical fusion of punk, metal, and hard rock from the seventies that attracted a wide range of people simply on a musical level. These bands first began playing small local shows in the mid-eighties, but through a series of well planned marketing strategies they entered the mainstream musical world by 1991. Within a short period of time became a dominant musical culture.

The culture was far more than a musical world; it was a way of life. Many of the band members wore flannel shirts, dirty tattered jeans, boots, and had long hair, which all became stereotypes of the musical culture. Of course, before these became part of a wider cultural norm with the success of grunge, these guys simply dressed that way because it was practical for the cold weather of the Northwest; people from the area still dress that

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way. Beyond the dress, they were all fairly young college aged musicians in the mid to late eighties coming out of an economic recession and living in the Seattle area. With the poor weather and a passion for music they formed bands, played their music, and lived the fairly laid back lives of people in their twenties as portrayed in such movies as the 1991 Richard Linklater film *Slackers*. These musicians were playing music the world responded to as being accurate to their understanding of self and society.

The music's lyrical content, as a reflection of the vocabulary of this particular subculture of Generation X, is the primary focus of this paper. However, first I will outline the philosophical theories which I am using to outline my final argument. I am primarily referencing the philosophies of Richard Rorty and Harold Bloom, a pragmatic philosopher and literary theorist respectively. Through these two thinkers I outline the definitions of cultural vocabularies as well as their use, roles, and formation through social and historical influences. In the same section I will give a definition of Generation X, which will serve as the referential definition for the whole of this paper through the lens of grunge music.

To further illuminate the understanding of the formation of this subcultural vocabulary, I will then offer a history of the grunge movement. This will outline the beginnings of the cultural and musical movement through the mid-eighties until the cultural explosion of grunge as a mainstream musical influence. This chapter will give justification to some of the defining qualities of Generation X as well as explain the formation of the cultural vocabulary.

The heart of the paper explains the structural binaries present within grunge, showing the differing ideas the musicians wished to express through their music. This explains the binary between social criticism and sentiments of alienation as well as a second binary between apathy and desire for unity. This section will rely heavily on lyrical analysis coupled with historical references, showing how these binaries are structured as well justified through the socio-economic-political motivations of America through the creation of grunge. Beginning with a structural lens, this section evolves through a poststructuralist lens, which will show the blending of the structural binaries. Here I will elucidate the dialogue of the binaries by showing the ironization of conventional social structures through the grunge subculture. Through examination of this void, the space between social binaries, I will show the meaning and motivation of grunge.

However, I will then explain the halting end of this subcultural movement through the socialization of a vocabulary, which attempted to exist outside of classic binary systems. Through the success of the music and its incorporation into mainstream social networks, the music lost its own sentiments of authenticity as its social framework crumbled under socialization and subversion into a social arrangement it was never created to represent. However, I will then refer back to the initial philosophical points I made at the beginning of the essay to explain the eradication of this vocabulary as a necessary step in the creation of new vocabularies through social formations and historical influence.

Yet the concluding statements will elaborate my understanding of the creation of grunge within a social void. This will offer reasoning for the meaning and value to be found through the creation, existence, and death of grunge as a subcultural vocabulary and its introduction into the overarching social structures of mainstream society.

II. The Formation of a Generation and a Vocabulary

The grunge musical scene in Seattle crystallized a sub-cultural vocabulary of Generation X through its marketed fashion and musical influence. The bands Pearl Jam, Soundgarden, and Nirvana will serve as the primary examples of this sub-cultural vocabulary since they represent the polarity of lyrical sentiments expressed through grunge. Pearl Jam and Nirvana also created the albums which began the procession of grunge into mainstream culture and the two songs which serve as the archetypal anthems of Generation X within their particular sub-culture.

The philosopher Richard Rorty began writing in the late seventies and adheres to the philosophical traditions of Pragmatism. The basic tenants of the postmodern philosophy of Pragmatism are concerned with the rejection of absolute Truths and the classical division of the world into binaries. Through examining the grunge vocabulary as a sub-cultural movement of Generation X in this postmodern lens, the value of grunge becomes clear as a rejection of an American social structure founded and functioning within a dualistic framework. Through the postmodern lens of rejection of binaries and essential natures it becomes clear that the grunge movement is contiguous with twentieth century postmodernism through the creation of a vocabulary which exists within the void of dualistic conceptions.

In the philosophy of Richard Rorty a "vocabulary" is a set of descriptive factors ranging from dress to actual language through which any given culture or subculture describes themselves and others. The structures of a culture serve as a metaphorical vocabulary to express the identifying aspects of any particular ideology. According to

Rorty any new vocabulary "is a tool for doing something" such as the creation of a new musical paradigm "which could not have been envisaged prior to the development of a particular set of descriptions" (13). In the case of grunge the set of descriptions came to life through a set of coincidences, including the incestuous musical culture of Seattle, the commonality of musical interests, the uniform production procedures, and a public need. All the commonalities in the structuring and presentation of grunge are part of what Harold Bloom calls the "anxiety of influence".

Harold Bloom's theory is important to the understanding of grunge's value as a sub-cultural vocabulary because it stresses the importance of recognizing that any vocabulary is culturally situated. Part of understanding the conceptions grunge wishes to critique and negate is knowledge of the influences which converge to create the history from which this vocabulary emerges. Every paradigm shift must necessarily emerge from social contingencies which formulate its own postulations. Bloom's theory requires grunge to be viewed as a product of influence through which it gains meaning and value.

Bloom's theory contests that all writing, specifically poetry, cannot escape the notion of parentela, a line of relatives, which comes through influence. The original poets, such as Milton and Shakespeare, offered newly imaginative forms of expression, thus forcing every following poet who had read their work to find a newly imaginative form of expression. However as time goes on the number of poets increases and the forms of newly imaginative thought become harder and harder to formulate as each poet reflects upon the vast influences before them in an attempt to say something new or perhaps something old in a new way. Bloom claims that "the meaning of a poem can

only be another poem. This is not a tautology, not even a deep tautology, since the two poems are not the same poem, any more than two lives can be the same life. The issue is true history or rather the true use of it" (Bloom 94). A new poem, speaking a new vocabulary, in order to be imaginative must represent the current history and culture through which it will be filtered. Grunge and conventional poetry are not the same thing by definition but when viewed as a means of metaphorically describing existence, the two achieve similar ends: Wittgensteinian language games. Through the lens of Richard Rorty and his notion of a vocabulary, each attempts to describe some idea or image to people in a new vocabulary in an attempt to gain greater clarity of value and meaning. Thus the linguistic vocabulary comes out in the music and language of lifestyle in an attempt to better describe the ideas and influences of a new time and place.

Bloom writes some imperative words about poetic influence which carry over into the creation of new musical styles and vocabulary changes as a whole:

> Poetic Influence …always proceeds by a misreading of the prior poet, an act of creative correction that is actually and necessarily a misinterpretation. The history of fruitful poetic influence, which is to say the main tradition of Western poetry since the Renaissance, is a history of anxiety and self-saving caricature, of distortion, of perverse, willful revisionism without which modern poetry as such could not exist (30)

Grunge represents a strong "creative correction" to the vocabulary which society conventionally spoke throughout the eighties in a "self-saving" attempt at creating something which spoke in a new, more profound mode to society. The grunge musicians

and lyricists are Bloom's strong poet through their reading of past musical technique and style and a reappropriation of that vocabulary into something new, something inspired but not replicated because of the viewed faults of the previous vocabulary.

These new vocabularies enable a new group to create an identity motivated by social unity of ideals and intentions concerning the creation and enactment of value and moral systems. Since "what binds societies together are common vocabularies and common hopes" (Rorty 86) any particular "new vocabulary [should not be seen] as something which was supposed to replace all other vocabularies, something which claimed to represent reality, but simply as one more vocabulary, one more human project, one person's chosen metaphoric" (Rorty 39), and not as something intrinsically right or true. The grunge vocabulary as a musical movement was not created to be a musical end but rather a progression of musical influences which continue throughout history to adapt and change. The power of grunge simply came through the wide social acceptance and the creative marketing of a single vocabulary. I will illuminate later that grunge musicians did not speak a single message, but the musical influences were similar and the lyrical messages profound enough to be marketed as a single musical style which created a passionate unity amongst a subculture of Generation X.

Various books written in the early nineties attempt to define and redefine this almost nameless generation. In a self-reflective article, Martine Delvaux illustrates her generation being described as those who "live through talk-shows, sit-coms and email, condoms, and anti-depressants; that [they] are too aware and disillusioned, engaged in a profound disengagement" (171). This picture poses a view of a generation too self-aware

of their own anxiety and inabilities that they begin to resemble an intense state of nihilism. In the *GenX Reader* Douglas Rushkoff describes Generation X as "illiterate, unmotivated, and apathetic", they are the "despondent 'thirteenth' generation" who are "the hopeless mutant children of a society temporarily gone awry" (3). This generation was born of the successful boomer generation who led the way in war protests during the Vietnam War, the civil rights movement, and the sexual revolution. But where does justification for this sort of cultural psychoanalysis of a disengaged generation come from? How did the grunge movement happen?

In the early nineties, Generation X sought to establish itself as a substantial cultural group through a new vocabulary which expressed varying perceptions about the nature of self and community. Beginning in the early nineties the youth of Generation X established itself through dress, music, and a culture associated with apathy. The term Generation X was first coined in 1991 by Douglas Coupland's *Generation X: Tales for and Accelerated Culture* as well as the release and huge sales of the debut albums by both Nirvana and Pearl Jam, explaining a correlation between the music and stereotypes of the generation. The music industry represents the "ten billion dollar per year engine that drives the estimated $140 billion consumptive market represented by generation X" (Bell) which suggests a distinct connection between generational identity and the success of grunge albums.

Inheriting a world of economic problems generated by failed philosophies of the boomer generation which once seemed set in creating a new world free of capitalistic motivation and cultural repression ultimately enables disillusionment and disengagement.

This sixties and seventies culture of autonomous freedoms ultimately failed when entering into the eighties with a return to the conservatism of the fifties. The disillusionment comes from the void created between adherences to either binary and causes disengagement through dislike to live within either of the social binaries. As Martine Delvaux writes "it is in reaction to an 'inclination for paralyzing moral self-examination' that members of what is recognized as the thirteenth generation answer: 'whatever.' This X Generation doesn't signify the void of the X but the complexity of the lines that cross each other: the ambiguity of the 'what,' and the everlasting 'ever'" (179). This incredible generational willingness to refuse participation in intellectual social structuring reflects their immense disengagement with a world they don't want. Again this expresses intense nihilistic ideals in which desires are present but the will to act seems void of passion of belief in any outcome.

A collaborative subcultural group such as that of the grunge music scene grows from recognition of similarities which create group identifiers through a specific identity. These notions of "shared identit[ies] are alliances formed out of oppositional stances" (Kruse 34) which can potentially form outside of economic or political cohesion. As shown through examples of lyrical analysis Generation X seemed united behind a common enemy in the form of their parents' generation and the economic and political problems of the nation. The socio-economic-political situation in America was something which all people in their youth could see given the right view and a proper vocabulary to voice their anxiety and anger.

The power of the vocabulary of grunge came through the social appeal and support for the particular expressions they spoke or merely interpreted by the people. A culture adopts a new vocabulary when they feel alienated by the previous vocabulary; the alienated person of America turned out to be the youth, and their new vocabulary was grunge. The estranged people are those "who are protesting in the name of humanity against arbitrary and inhuman social restrictions" and strong musicians, "the poet and the revolutionary are protesting in the name of the society itself against those aspects of the society which are unfaithful to its own self-image" (Rorty 60). The adherents to the grunge vocabulary saw some fault in the "self-image" of America and some solution or solace in the new vocabulary which caused them to adopt it as their particular vocabulary in such strong numbers that it came to define a generation.

A new vocabulary creates more than just a new way of speaking about things but also coincides with a new lifestyle motivated by the social definitions. The process of creating a new vocabulary "is to redescribe [social practices, social roles, cultural identities] in new ways, until you have created a pattern of linguistic behavior which will tempt the rising generation to adopt it, thereby causing them to look for appropriate new forms of nonlinguistic behavior" (Rorty 9), which reflect the new vocabularies' ideology. This idea justifies the fashion and behavior changes which accompany new vocabularies. In the case of grunge, every follower began listening to a group of bands from Seattle, they wore flannel shirts and Doc Marten boots, they grew their hair long, and they found justification for their sort of slacker lifestyle their parent generation had employed to identify Generation X.

However a new vocabulary will never be accepted by all people; there will always be those who refuse participation for a number of varying reasons. Therefore the creation of a new vocabulary will allow and sometimes justify the use of an older or another new vocabulary to slander the particular vocabulary in question. Those who refuse to speak the new vocabulary, "those who speak the old language and have no wish to change, those who regard it as a hallmark of rationality or morality to speak just that language, will regard as altogether *ir*rational the appeal of the new metaphors – the new language game which the radicals, the youth, or the avant-garde are playing" (Rorty 48). As seen with the arrival of more liberal vocabularies in the sixties, "the question of why people speak this way will be treated as beneath the level of conversation – a matter to be turned over to psychologists or, if necessary, the police" (Rorty 48). Any new vocabulary has its antagonists who will use the language itself to justify its inability to speak anything more useful and thus propagate means to devalue the vocabulary and its adherents.

However the arrival and success of new vocabularies comes through a desire from some party to create a new way of speaking and new social definitions and determinations. The arrival of grunge reflects the abilities of Bloom's strong poet through a response to the anxieties of influence and the necessity to create and speak a new vocabulary which attempts at greater social understanding and a vocabulary which reflects more accurately the people's self-image. This new vocabulary did not seek to eliminate all other vocabularies but rather to allow for another vocabulary which spoke to a specific groups needs for definition and description. In the case of grunge that specific group turned out to be Generation X.

However this idea of creating new vocabularies calls into question the authenticity of vocabularies as being new and truly representative of the given ideas of a particular time. This is where Harold Bloom made a living writing about the struggles of the artist, seeing as artists create the physical representations that people will grasp as being identifiers of their generation, to create something newly and accurately representative of their time. Thus, Bloom argues there surfaces an anxiety about the inability for the artist to represent anything original. So as Rorty suggests the nature of communication and generations' desires to identify themselves as something separate requires artists and ultimately any form of cultural communication identifying with such ideas to create a new vocabulary. Thus the situated originality of grunge comes from the combination of previous influences while creating dialogue about issues relevant to the time in a language of the time.

The twentieth century saw music rise in importance as a communicative sub-cultural identifier. The music of sixties, exemplified in such events as Woodstock, represented cultural sentiments since both stylistically and lyrically it often reflected reactions about free love, the end of the Vietnam War, and extensive drug use. Music can only have life with an audience willing to accept it as an accurate vocabulary of cultural sentiments or have respect for a previous vocabularies' influence in the progression of new vocabularies. Music has adapted in an attempt to remain both progressive and culturally significant, otherwise people would not buy or promote the creation of music as it changes.

Linguistically songs contain moments which reflect the anxiety of influence Harold Bloom proposes. At times lyrical content reflects the ineffability of certain emotions and rather a simple mumble or lyrical rambling better suits the sentiments of both the generation and the musicians. Musically there are often times of unusual distortion and ambient noise which likewise reflect the latter half of the twentieth century's artistic inability to say anything distinctly new and these musical utterances reflect this attitude.

Simultaneously the lyrical and musical stylistics of grunge reflect the philosophy proposed by Rorty with reference to Bloom and other literary critics. Lyrically the musicians must find new ways to say something which people can relate to as a new situation and response to perhaps similar issues of old but with new conviction and ideas. I will explore how lyrically grunge bands articulate sentiments about individuality, love, hate, and ideas of social criticism about their time, their place, and their sentiments towards all of these ideas. Musically their style replicates the music they both heard and listened to as youth through the blending of older styles and techniques which allows them to create a new musical vocabulary in which they can communicate generational cultural sentiments in as original a mode as possible. This new vocabulary in which they speak blends older traditions in a way that all artistic representation must do in an attempt to create unique supposed representations of self as a larger whole. The struggle of Generation X was in trying to overcome the anxiety of influence while attempting to maintain the failed ideals of generations past through updated expressions which accurately represent their experience. Thus the importance of grunge is in seeing the

paradigm shift which occurs in social critique and personal identity in an attempt to

create a new social consciousness formed out of the conceptions of influence leading up

to the early nineties.

III. Seattle Rock City

Through the eighties into the nineties with technological advancements in the ease of radio broadcast the world of college music began its rise in popularity and influence as colleges began their own radio stations where students could play and promote their favorite bands. Thus in the eighties came the terms alternative and indie as descriptors for the music scene that college students and youth began to embrace. Through this new youth appreciation for the small local bands playing in college towns, city based music scenes arose supported by the college students and youth. The power of college radio and youth subculture created the music scenes of Athens, Georgia and Austin, Texas. Both cities are sites of major universities where local music was backed by substantial youth interest and support. Youth culture seeks to subvert the old ways of speaking and create both a literal and a metaphorical new language by which they will be distinguished because "the popularity of the new ways of speaking will be viewed as a matter of 'fashion' or 'the need to rebel' or 'decadence'" (Rorty 48). The college and youth atmosphere of the Seattle and Olympia area through the eighties allowed for these "new ways of speaking" to sprout in a unique regional fashion supported and expressed by the musical scene.

Economic failings and protest against government and social structures played into the punk movement in London in the seventies and the Hippie movement in the Haight-Ashbury district in San Francisco in the sixties. All of these subcultures contain many similarities in the form of simple fashion and lifestyle. However as Mark Mazullo claims in his essay "The Man Whom the World Sold: Kurt Cobain, Rock's Progressive

Aesthetic, and the Challenges of Authenticity", "the difference between the slacker image and that of the hippie is that the choice of lifestyle (most significantly, unemployment) on the part of the generation-X person is not so much chosen as enforced by the nation's economy" (733). The followers and participants of the grunge movement in its inception were not so much the product of a chosen lifestyle but a forced lifestyle due to a failing economy and a socially conservative society. This forced simplicity of lifestyle due to economic factors does give the grunge movement similarities with the London punk scene of the seventies, explaining why the bands now referred to as the earliest grunge bands all considered themselves punk bands with influence in the California punk scene.

The bands in Seattle saw themselves as punk or metal bands; they never saw what they were doing as anything new. The term "grunge" came about during this time as a descriptive term of the music but the musicians themselves did not see their music as creating this drastic paradigm shift which is now associated with grunge. This disassociation with anything new is because "grunge…shared an affinity with two larger popular-music streams, punk and metal - a relationship exemplified in such sonic attributes as heavy distortion and feedback and a relative simplicity of musical materials" (Mazullo 719). Similarities abound when its considered that "American Punk", in the same vein as grunge, "was generation driven and thus played more into the game of cultural (rather than class) politics" (Mazullo 732) which focuses more on social implications of the personal rather than the overtly political. Grunge would be marketed as a unique regional sound which embodied this generational attitude.

The Los Angeles and New York punk and indie bands were the greatest influence on the grunge musicians because of the compatibility they recognized in lifestyle and the "shared identity" they witnessed. They were growing up obviously listening to the music of their parents' generation, bands such as The Beatles, Led Zeppelin, and the local Seattle boy Jimi Hendrix. However as they grew older and gained their own musical tastes they gained influence through a number of punk and hardcore bands leading to their music sounding like a cross between The Stooges, Black Flag, and The Dead Kennedy's.

The California music scene and any bands touring through became incredibly important in 1985 when Seattle passed the Teen Dance Ordinance. During a slew of abuse, drug, and alcohol allegations against Seattle clubs hosting punk shows in the early eighties the TDO was enacted to alleviate what appeared to be a growing problem. The ordinance limited dances to anyone between the ages of fifteen and twenty. Any person under the age of fifteen would require a chaperone and any person over twenty would need to be accompanied by a person under the age of eighteen. Two off duty police officers were required inside and one outside of all clubs hosting dance events, costing club owners copious amounts of money in security. Likewise the ordinance required every club hosting a dance event to have a minimum one million dollars in liability insurance. Unfortunately for the Seattle music scene the new law defined a dance under incredibly loose terms including any event in which dancing was a potential act. The TDO and limited all-ages venues caused most music venues in Seattle to close in the eighties and limited the number of bands visiting the Northwest causing youth to travel

south to California to see almost any band. (All info about TDO found at: http://www.cityofseattle.net/council/licata/up/up92.htm, available 20 March 2009)

Despite the lack of major bands coming into the Seattle area, a major youth interest in music remained and allowed for a powerful and incestuous local scene to exist and grow throughout the eighties. The first album considered in hindsight as the first grunge album came out the same year the TDO was passed. The band Green River, named for a local famous serial killer, was comprised of Mark Arm, Stone Gossard, Steve Turner, Jeff Ament, and Alex Vincent. They would later separate to form the major grunge bands Mudhoney and Mother Love Bone as well as Temple of the Dog and later Pearl Jam but in 1984 and 1985 they created the EP *Come on Down* which saw limited commercial success but is today recognized as obviously influential as the earliest form a unique blend of metal and punk that would be called grunge.

Within six months of the release of *Come on Down* the Seattle record label C/Z Records was created in 1985. In 1986 C/Z label creators and producers Chris Hanzsek and Tina Casale released arguably their most famous record to date, *Deep Six*. This record was a compilation of local post-punk bands Green River, The Melvins, Malfunkshun, Skin Yard, Soundgarden, and The U-Men. This album was the first to promote a local scene through a single album dedicated to the idea of a unique Northwest sound. Influences and personal tastes create differences in the bands but ultimately their remains enough commonality to market the bands on a single album.

During the time where *Deep Six* was released and a number of Seattle bands were gaining local notoriety the economic and political problems of America were in full

swing alongside the coming of age of Generation X. Thus, Mazullo claims that, given "music played such an integral role in the mytholigization of their parents' generation"(Mazullo 733) and the fact that, as Kruse claims, "rock culture allows youths to enact ever-changing sexual and gendered identities in a space of radically conflicting social messages" (Kruse 39) the rise in musical expression and youth interest in that expression seems justified and almost necessary. Coming from a parent generation heavily defined in its youth through its use of music as a cultural identifier the Seattle youth in the eighties fell back upon the types of expression they knew and understood. Music, and specifically rock culture, allows for musical, lyrical, and fashion oriented statements as cultural identifiers.

However many of the cultural identifiers are determined from the geographical and social environment in which the music was created. In an article about the Seattle grunge music scene in the *Journal of Cultural Geography* Thomas Bell claims "the geographical 'scene' within which the genres of alternative music are formulated determines much of the overt content" (2). While being isolated socially through the cultural conservatism of the eighties and laws such as the TDO, Seattle is also isolated in the cold wet Northwest. Seattle has rainy days 50% of single year, through the eighties and nineties was the headquarters of Boeing, and seems to draw more serial killers than any other region of the United States. Michael Azerrad, Nirvana biographer and music journalist, quotes Duff McKagan, Guns 'N Roses bassist, as saying "'Seattle, it's grunge. People are into rock and roll and into noise, and they're building airplanes all the time and there's lots of noise, and there's rain and musty garages'". The climate and

atmosphere of the Seattle area created and allowed for the marketing of a unique and regional sound.

Alongside *Deep Six*, 1986 saw the formal creation of the music label which would pioneer the Seattle Sound and ultimately create the marketing label of grunge and a number of the famous bands to come. Bruce Pavitt started out writing a fanzine called *Subterranean Pop* as a student in Olympia in the early 80's before moving to Seattle and creating the label Sub Pop which had its first release in 1986 with *Sub Pop 100*. The record featured indie and punk bands from across America. The same year Sub Pop recorded Green River's second EP, *Dry as a Bone*. Perhaps this should better be called the first grunge album because it was recorded and released by Sub Pop and produced by local Skin Yard guitarist and well renowned producer Jack Endino at Reciprocal Records, the sight of the earliest grunge recordings.

The grunge sound was the bastard child of a number of coincidences which happened to collide in Seattle in the mid-eighties. Around 1987 Bruce Pavitt met and began working with local KCMU DJ Jonathan Poneman. Together the two men released Green River's *Dry as a Bone* as well as recorded Soundgarden's *Screaming Life* EP. In 1988 Sub Pop also recorded Mudhoney's *Superfuzz Bigmuff* EP along with the single "Touch me I'm Sick" as well as Nirvana's first album *Bleach* accompanied with the single "Love Buzz". All four of these early albums were recorded at Reciprocal Records and produced by Jack Endino and concert photos taken by Charles Peterson. Jonathan Poneman even recognized the luck and almost perfect marketing of the Sub Pop label as "a lucky set of coincidences. Charles Peterson was here to document the scene, Jack

Endino was here to record the scene. Bruce and I were here to exploit the scene" (Jelbert 1). The luck of the production abilities would ultimately have been nothing without the musicians and the similarities in their musical styles.

The bands perhaps made Seattle the most musically incestuous city in the United States. Bruce Pavitt claimed that "the isolation helped create a culture that didn't care about trends" and a small scene in which "people played for each other because they didn't expect to make a living" (Jelbert 1). Therefore the bands played shows for each other and often played in a number of different bands over the years. Throughout the eighties the local Seattle music scene consisted of bands that used members interchangeably and every few years members would shuffle around and create new bands. The early band Skin Yard consisted of producer Jack Endino but also had drummer Matt Cameron who would also drum for Soundgarden and Pearl Jam; Greg Gilmore played for Skin Yard as well as Mother Love Bone. Mother Love Bone was a combination of Green River and Malfunkshun. One of the most famous combinations was the group Temple of the Dog which consisted of the guys from Pearl Jam with Soundgarden front man Chris Cornell. They group gathered for a single album recording in honor of the death of Mother Love Bone and Malfunkshun singer Andrew Wood. This sort of incestuous sharing of members and a respect for each other's music created a strong regional sound based in mutual interest and resonance through distinct commonality based in a tight knit community.

However despite the local appeal and success, the Sub Pop label remained failing after these few years. Therefore in 1989 they paid for British writer Everett True of

Melody Maker to come and write a piece about the Northwest regional sound. His articles in early 1989 garnered many of these bands some recognition in the British music world. His time also gave him great personal relationships with many of the bands and he would continue to write for and remain friends with many of the bands. In 2007 he even released a monstrous 600 page book called *Nirvana: The Biography* focusing on the world of Nirvana but cataloguing much of his experience in the grunge world. For a good comprehensive history of the grunge world he remains perhaps the most experienced and accurate historian of this time period.

Around the time Everett True wrote his articles for *Melody Maker* some local Seattle bands were beginning to catch the attention of major labels and bands such as Soundgarden, Alice in Chains, and Mother Love Bone all gained major label deals by the end of 1989. Sub Pop's inability to fiscally produce a major album forced many of the loyal Seattle bands to sign with major labels outside of Seattle. However this did not stop Sub Pop's foundation of a regional sound from spreading as a marketing tool. By 1991 with the release of *Ten* and *Nevermind* major labels across the country began searching for the next big thing coming out of Seattle. The "Seattle Sound" was the big money maker and labels everywhere were looking for bands that could be marketed as grunge. There were many Seattle bands that finally made it big, but of course there were far more that were left behind remembering the few years where they were local heroes and part of a tight knit web of incestuous music production that was exploited by perfect marketing.

In this way marketing executives could show grunge as "not only a musical style, but a social pose or attitude" (Mazullo 718) which generates a collective group whom

"after the egocentric 1980s …became the voices of the '90s, introspective everymen who captured the mood of a generation with growling guitars and Doc Marten boots" (Paton 1). Therefore a generation of seemingly angry, depressed youth began wearing flannel shirts and Doc Marten boots while letting their hair grow out and listening to music that made their mothers cringe at the howling voice of Kurt Cobain screaming about suicide ("Milk It") or rape ("Rape Me"). However the problem remained that "in the ideology of grunge, the enemy turned out to be the self…grunge music subverted punk leftism with a peculiarly American ideology of the self" (Mazullo 732). The initial appeal to grunge was the way in which they spoke about punkish ideas of rebellion, unhappiness, and an overall stick-it-to-the-man attitude.

Underneath the amazing marketing of the music there remained something actually appealing to the masses of American youth that the labels needed to play off. Not to romanticize the world of grunge, but for a generation to respond to the music in such a fashion there must have been something true about the ideas they spoke and the ways in which they were spoken, or least some cultural ideal to exploit. Thomas Bell makes the elucidating point that "Seattle-based bands [wrote] such brutalizingly honest, if not always comprehensible, lyrics and play their music in a straight ahead manner without artifice, gimmickry, or showiness" which gives the bands a "musical honesty" that seems derived from "a collective sense of inferiority and isolation which, in a perverse, uniquely Northwest way, translates into artistic freedom". Given the cultural repression of the eighties and the disillusionment with the failed movements of the sixties, Generation X responded passionately towards something which came across as honest and free.

The moment "Smells like Teen Spirit" aired on MTV in late 1991 the style known as grunge became fully fledged and the "Seattle Sound" became highly marketable as an accurate representation of a Generation X subculture with its own ideals and form of expression. Seattle turned out to represent the ubiquitous nature of boredom, angst, rebellion, and skepticism apparent in the post-Reagan youth culture. The music became the new vocabulary through which a generation, repressed through the fears of their parents, could attempt to express their anxiety about a disastrous world and the failed ideals of their parents.

IV. Critique and Alienation, "I don't need what you have to give"

The lyrical content of grunge bands forms a structural binary between expressions of criticism and alienation. The bands Pearl Jam and Soundgarden represent the realm of social critique which elucidates this subculture's perceptions of problematic social structures and conventions. They disparage the militaristic and capitalistic motivations of America through the eighties and the associated social repercussions as well as the conformist nature of popular culture within mainstream America.

Soundgarden proffers critique of social constructs represented in America by bringing attention towards prostitution of the world at large through economic and militaristic force. The song "Hands All Over" critiques the cultural and environmental abuses of American culture.

> Hands all over the Eastern border
>
> You know what? I think we're falling
>
> From composure
>
> Hands all over Western culture
>
> Ruffling feathers and turning eagles into vultures
>
> Hands all over the coastal waters
>
> The crew men thank her
>
> Then lay down their oily blanket
>
> Hands all over the inland forest
>
> In a striking motion trees fall down
>
> Like dying soldiers

Chris Cornell's vision of America represents a parasitic creature set on destruction of culture and environment. The last few lines show the consequences of a careless and unbridled capitalism that endangers the environment through oil spills and deforestation. American culture lost its "composure" and seems to be changing from the majestic, the eagle, into scavengers, the vulture. Simultaneously the first few lines review the transformation of Western culture during the eighties into a militaristic state and a culturally repressive state. This reflects the fear tactics used by the government to spend large amounts of money on military spending and also the social conservatism that fear permeated through American culture. This song exists within a culture of militaristic critique that began in the sixties with poets such as Allen Ginsberg and musicians such as Bob Dylan. The most important line comes in the association of cleaving trees to falling soldiers. This creates a similitude between destruction of the natural world and the rise of America's militaristic attitude, both a source of annihilation.

The militaristic attitude of America became a constant presence in the conscience of America in the eighties with the escalation of the Cold War and America's military expansion. Throughout the 1980's when Generation X was coming into their teenage years the Reagan administration began a series of investments into the U.S. military to combat what the president commonly referred to as "Evil Empires". Reagan's administration was "determined to restore U.S. military power and to stand up against Communist power" (Jenkins 209) which explains why "the U.S. Defense Department budget rose from $136 billion in 1980 to $244 billion in 1985" (Jenkins 212) alongside the public deficit of nearly $200 billion throughout the eighties. This increased

government spending did little to help the rising employment problems in America while simultaneously spending money fighting a stagnant war.

To justify the expanding military spending, the government resorted to instilling fear in the American people as reflected in the Soundgarden song "Circle of Power". In the song Cornell accuses to the government of scare tactics, which are nothing new, just some of the same in a new name. Ultimately the American people live "To see their (the government's) fear and their trembling words" and Cornell jokes, "Ol' big bad ass circle of power's comin' to getcha!" in an attempt to subvert the fear of government power. This song directly responds to the successful government and social attempts at creating fear concerning Communism and cultural inadequacies including abuse, drugs, and music.

Cornell angrily attacks America's militaristic attitude in the song "Gun" where he encourages a social revolt against the government policy and outlook.

> I got an idea of something we can
>
> Do with a gun
>
> Sink load and fire till the empire
>
> reaps what they've sown
>
> Shoot shoot shoot till their minds
>
> Are open
>
> Hit hit hit till the
>
> Truth is spoken
>
> Hit hit till
>
> The truth is born

Cornell clearly sees the government as an "empire" which close mindedly lies to the American people. He clearly makes accusations that the government deceives the people to achieve some sort of militaristic and destructive militaristic end, which can be assumed through the usage reference to empires and guns. This song subverts the idea of a gun by turning it into a tool of birth rather than a weapon of destruction in an attempt to elucidate the hypocrisy of America.

The use of fear allowed the government to continue military spending for reasons which Cornell saw as lies to the American people. The rise in military spending meant cuts in other programs funded by the government and did little to aid the failing economy of the time. Economic recession created corporate cutback and layoffs which led to increased unemployment, reaching 10 percent in the early eighties, meaning nearly 12 million people, while the number of people living beneath the poverty line rose by twenty five percent from the late seventies to the mid-eighties (Jenkins 182). The one supposedly positive economic decision Reagan made was to cut taxes. However this was only made possible through substantial cuts in public spending including Medicaid, food stamps, and Aid to Families with Dependent Children (Jenkins 181). The youth culture of Generation X grew out of an America with intense economic woes and government lies as justification.

These economic problems fed into other systemic issues which grunge critiqued. In times of economic trouble all people are forced into financial prudence; however with a recession comes unemployment and for the poor of America, economic bankruptcy and homelessness. Corporate cutback and layoffs led to increased unemployment and the

number of people living beneath the poverty line, which rose by twenty five percent from the late seventies to the mid-eighties (Jenkins 182). The Pearl Jam song, "Even Flow", from *Ten* is about a homeless man by the name of Even Flow who suffers from mental illnesses. The song opening lines "Freezin', rests his head on a pillow made of concrete, again/Oh, Feelin' maybe he'll see a little better, set of days" show a simple and recurring image that all people in urban America have seen of a homeless man sleeping or sitting on the pavement of a city street. However Vedder takes the alienation to another level through psychological deterrents

> Even flow, thoughts arrive like butterflies
>
> Oh, he don't know, so he chases them away
>
> Someday yet, he'll begin his life again, yeah
>
> Oh, whispering hands, gently lead him away

The song addresses both the homeless problems in America but also how psychological setbacks alienate people in such a way that they cannot function in normal society and thus become homeless. The song simultaneously critiques government aid and social stigmas concerning the homeless through the realization of social inequalities and troubles with a social structure which allows any man, let alone a man with mental problems, to become homeless, simply sitting on the street, waiting for better days.

The economic woes of America alongside a militaristic mindset promote a sense of disparity along lines of economics and, oftentimes, race. Despite the civil rights movement of the sixties, issues of contrariety still existed within American cultures militaristic notion of the other. The systemic inequality of American social structure

became prevalent in the early nineties with the lyrics of rap artists such as NWA and Public Enemy. The song also speaks to the Los Angeles riots of 1992, when four white police officers were acquitted after being caught on videotape, beating Rodney King, a black man, following a high speed pursuit. Riots ensued for six days in which millions of people in dozens of cities participated showing strong cultural opposition to government permissible racism which represented a dark spot in the gleaming freedom that America so often espouses. The most obvious grunge response to racial issues comes through Pearl Jam's 1993 song "W.M.A." in which Vedder sings

> He won the lottery by being born
>
> Big hand slapped a White Male American
>
> Do no wrong, so clean cut
>
> Dirty his hands, it comes right off
>
> Police man

This song directly responds to police brutality and specifically the perception racial supremacy. Vedder points out the obvious cultural benefits of being born a white male in American while clearly echoing the sentiments of millions when he opposes racism and speaks with great self-awareness of the privileges of being a W.M.A.

The critique of governmental and social problems facing American's in the early 1990s elucidates circumstances for intense feelings of alienation. These sentiments were the repercussion of the failed ideals of the boomer generation. Through the 1960's, as America was immersed in the Vietnam War, people spoke out against the inequalities and governmental problems throughout the country. By 1968 more than 25,000 American

soldiers had died in Vietnam leading to mass protest against U.S. military policies

(Gilbert 470). Meanwhile the civil rights movement had established itself with great

support across the nation when in 1968 Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated and riots

ensued for a week across America in retaliation. The sixties were a time when youth

culture established itself as having potential and rights to change the world they lived in,

as students took the initiative such as this example given by Martin Gilbert:

> Two weeks of student violence at the University of California at
>
> Berkeley…led the Governor of California, Ronald Reagan, to declare 'a
>
> state of emergency'. At the University of Wisconsin, the refusal of the
>
> administration to establish a Black Studies programme led to protest
>
> demonstrations by white and black students marching arm in arm, and the
>
> calling out of the police and National Guard to curb their protest. Anti-war
>
> feeling at Harvard led hundreds of students to protest against the
>
> university's Reserve Officers' Training Programme. (Gilbert 476)

This time saw the rise and extreme use of youth culture in promoting and creating change

through expression of their ideals and the power of the people to impose change.

The eighties, however, transgressed feelings of expression away from a

militaristic attitude and reverted back to martial notions and consumerism. Along with

criticism of government came the criticism of the conformist nature to popular cultural as

a whole and false cultural perceptions. Pearl Jam again comes forward with strong social

commentary in their song "Glorified G" which satirizes issues of gun control and cultural

perceptions of what it means to be a man.

> Got a gun, fact I got two
>
> That's ok man, cuz I love god
>
> Glorified version of a pellet gun
>
> Feels so manly, when armed
>
> Kindred to be an American
>
> Life comes, I can feel your heart through your neck

The satirical nature comes through the reference to approval because of love for God. America has a clear history of manifest destiny where actions can be justified through God's Will and American faith. The song becomes scary when thinking about the final line above where life is paradoxically located through a gun. This reflects false perceptions about the use and cultural image of guns. The song shows social representations attached to the idea of masculinity in which the narrator of the song 'feels so manly" when in possession of a gun. The song reflects the social fallacies of cultural perceptions about weapons and masculinity.

Pearl Jam continued this expression of human conformity and social ineptness through their satirical song "Rats" which comically and subtly draws comparisons between humans and rats. The song lists things rats don't do including

> They don't push, don't crowd
>
> Congregate until they're much too loud
>
> Fuck to procreate till they are dead
>
> Drink the blood of their so called best friend
>
> They don't scurry when something bigger comes their way

> Don't pack themselves together and run as one
>
> Don't shit where they're not supposed to
>
> Don't take what's not theirs

After reviewing many of these things it becomes apparent that these are things that rats do. Then at the end of the song Vedder says multiple times "rats...they don't compare" which causes the listener to think about the things which rats definitely are and attempt to draw comparison. Everything Vedder lists in the song are all the things humans claim to not do but in actuality these things are a part of American's lives. American's and rats "congregate until they're much too loud" they do "drink the blood" of their friends (stabbing someone in the back), and both "run as one". This is a critique of almost every aspect of American society from the way that American's treat each other, to the social conventions they partake in, to the immoral nature of our lives.

Questions of morality became prevalent as Generation X came of age in the eighties, which marks a period of transition from the self-gratifying seventies because of the arrival of AIDS and question of sexual morality. Due to the devastating consequences accompanying sexual promiscuity AIDS marked the abrupt end to the sexual revolution of the boomers. Alongside the obvious physical consequences of this horrific disease came rather startling cultural implications which subverted much of the open-mindedness of the boomer youth ideals. The advances in gay rights which happened over the century were suddenly threatened by the diseases close linkage to homosexuality. Therefore this "gay cancer" forced the gay community to change "their political concerns from generalized activism on liberal and radical issues to a single-minded focus on the

question of survival". This supported conservative perspectives that "the disease substantiated their gravest warnings about homosexuality and sexual promiscuity" (Jenkins 206), and created a strong social conservatism dominated by caution and responsibility.

Social critique of casual sexuality became associated with criticism of popular culture as a whole, aimed at the music and conformist ideals of eighties rock culture. This music focused strongly on creating a glamorous life. These were ironically the stereotypical sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll bands; there was no great social commentary or passion. Grunge took a step in the opposite direction of guitar or hair rock of the eighties. The song "Big Dumb Sex" by Soundgarden could be seen musically as a fine eighties rock song, blending well with popular music of the time. However the satirical nature of the song comes out through the lyrical subversion of rock ideals.

> Don't you don't you want to thrill me
>
> Don't you be afraid to tell me
>
> Tell me if you think it's ugly
>
> But now don't you want to touch it anyway
>
> I've been looking for a reject
>
> And you ain't had nothing like me yet
>
> Don't you think it's time for motion
>
> I can take what you've been pushin'

This may appear as just an awkward song of sexual proposal, not necessarily satirical until the chorus, where Cornell says "Hey I know what to do/I'm gonna" and then

proceeds to repeat "Fuck" over and again until the end when he finishes it with "Fuck You". The song seems satirical when placed alongside Cornell's other work, since much of it is strong social commentary, and this seems just the opposite at first glance. However, the "Fuck You" at the end of the chorus is separated by enough lines of simply "Fuck" that it seems directed at an ambiguous listener, perhaps the creators of the music he is satirizing, those people who are nothing but "Big Dumb Sex". Given the sexual implications becoming prevalent in eighties with the arrival of AIDS this sort of mainstream cultural persuasion towards sex through music appears simply as dim-witted and thus satirized through grunge.

Grunge musicians, at least the lyricists, commonly expressed social criticism throughout levels of society and social institutions; however what remains constant in their passionate and humorous lyrics is a rejection of conventional cultural identifiers and desire for social reformation. This comes through in Pearl Jam's song "Garden" where Vedder initially quietly bemoans "I don't question/our existence/I just question/our modern needs" and then finally at the end screams "I don't show.../I don't share.../I don't need/what you have to give..." perfectly articulating the sentiments of this chapter.

There exudes a strong sense of cultural unhappiness and a desire for reform, a turning away from convention. Their criticism lies strongly in the realm of ostracism created on all social levels from government to popular culture through economic and military mindsets which represent a greater systemic problem. The lyrical extension of these sentiments shows the spectrum of governmental and social hindrances that this subculture of Generation X expressed. Their primary struggle aimed at exposing the

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fundamental problems within the American system which gained power through fear and oppression.

Despite the strong social critique of the time, the binary opposite aspect of Grunge neglects to acknowledge those sentiments, and focuses on feelings of alienation, anxiety and self-loathing. This creates a binary between the social vocalization of Pearl Jam and Soundgarden with the solipsistic indulgence of Nirvana. Kurt Cobain represented the personal elucidation of sentiments concerning youthful angst within Generation X. These sentiments of anxiety arose from the new socially conservative nature of American society at large due to the fear of the Cold War and the scare associated with AIDS. This new social conservatism created new laws to control the use and marketing of substances in an attempt to shelter children from the harm of the world. Philip Jenkins describes the late seventies and eighties as a clean and sober era in which public smoking was made illegal and tobacco companies were ridiculed for targeting children through marketing techniques (203). The eighties saw the formation of multiple parent organizations including the National Federation of Parents, who were very active in the anti-drug movement, and also Mothers against Drunk Driving, who sought harsher penalties and control of substance abuse. Government legislation responded emphatically to the demands of these organizations by "lowering blood alcohol limits, and ensuring de facto national minimum age for consuming alcohol" as well as offering "the harshest legislation aimed at the users and suppliers of alcohol" (Jenkins 204). A larger "War on Drugs" was also being waged by President Reagan in an attempt to alter the large drug culture which had taken over America in the hedonistic seventies. The eighties saw large

amounts of money going towards stifling drug importation and sale as well as Nancy

Reagan's clumsy "Just Say No" campaign and federal law mandating drug testing for

major corporations, especially those receiving federal contracts (Jenkins 250). The social

conservatism created a world of fear rhetoric about the sexual and drug related problems

in America and created cultural stigma and political legislation counter to what the sixties

boomers were fighting for and completely subverted their own youthful ideologies.

Thus the varying methods for protecting kids ended up only alienating them from

their parents because they merely felt repressed as a group. It caused a generation to

struggle in seeing their parents as people rather than as mere authority figures. Kurt

Cobain expressed this early on in their first album *Bleach* with the song "Paper Cuts"

which says,

> The lady whom I feel maternal love for
>
> Cannot look me in the eyes
>
> But I see hers and they are blue
>
> And they cock and twist and masturbate
>
> ….
>
> Black windows of paint
>
> I scratched with my nails
>
> I see others just like me
>
> Why do they not try to escape?

The extreme alienation from a parent comes through clearly in this song where a mother

cannot even look her son in the eye. All the kid sees in the mother's eyes is misuse, the

impractical self-indulgence of masturbation without thought to the child. The room the kid describes is one that is blacked out by paint obviously to disallow the child the ability to see the outside world. The black windows represent repression and isolation from the outside, and the kid clearly sees others. The appearance of others shows the universality of this situation of repression. The final line above shows apparent desire to break free, but confusion about motivations of value and meaning after escape.

This intense social conservatism created cultural repression and feelings of inadequacy when children failed to fulfill parental expectations. Attempts at self expression would often be seen as psychological problems created by the cultural influences of their time and "in order to counter the fears that this generation generates" the media and parents needed "to draw a psychological portrait and to establish diagnoses concerning what are presented as behavioral inadequacies" (Delvaux 173). The parent response to such inadequacies came in the form of more social and cultural repression. This parental suppression only furthered alienation from parents through widening the void of cultural and personal differences that exist from generation to generation.

The perception of inadequacy, whether personally perceived or socially branded created extreme feelings of self-hatred and depression. Strong social awareness about depression led to Elizabeth Wurtzel's 1994 memoir, *Prozac Nation*, which catalogued the author's experience with depression and struggle, in dealing with such a stigmatized illness. Similarly, Kurt Cobain sung about feelings of personal inadequacy, which could be related back to his parental perceptions and repression. In the song "Lithium" Cobain expresses sentiments of loneliness and self-loathing:

I'm so happy 'cause today

I've found my friends ...

They're in my head

I'm so ugly, but that's okay, 'cause so are you...

We've broken our mirrors

I'm so lonely but that's okay I shaved my head...

And I'm not sad

And just maybe I'm to blame for all I've heard...

But I'm not sure

I like it - I'm not gonna crack

I miss you - I'm not gonna crack

I love you - I'm not gonna crack

I kill you - I'm not gonna crack

Feelings of inadequacy and desire not to fall apart mentally, comes through with every line. The first few lines show social alienation and the almost narcissistic nature of self-hatred. The song is very much about the perception of self, and others only come into view through the lens of comparison or personal perception of the other. Cobain shows uncertainty in the actual person to blame for these feelings of alienation, taking personal blame but saying he's "not sure" whether his feelings are really his. The end of the song is about trying to remain mentally sane in the face of extreme alienation. When confronted with all the situations, loneliness, love, hatred, the most important thing on Cobain's mind is not cracking, not falling into mental instability.

Times of mental anguish which cannot seem to be satiated are expressed through grunge lyrics in which the subject is seen as symbiotic with cultural repression in creating depression and personal abhorrence. Cobain's suicidal lyrics are the product of the feelings of inadequacy. The song "Milk It" by Nirvana blends these feelings of inadequacy as leading to suicide.

> I am my own parasite
>
> I don't need a host to live
>
> We feed off of each other
>
> We can share our endorphins
>
> …
>
> Look on the bright side is suicide

The opening lines of the song show the personal view of insufficiency and the fact that it is the individual who is seemingly the problem. The parasite is he, and the feelings come from the repression of the culture, government, and parents. Thus why not look into suicide, "look on the bright side," there is always suicide as an escape from the insufficiency of life.

Some youth were limited in their motivation and potential mental health because their lives were so controlled by their parents. As well as the medical and substance problems troubling America the rise in physical abuses against others saw a drastic rise throughout the eighties. In 1986 the number of reports of child abuse and neglect rose to over two million and was often noted as a further epidemic plaguing America with numbers showing such staggering figures as twenty to thirty percent of children

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experiencing some form of abuse (Jenkins258). These sorts of numbers only helped to stoke the conservative fire and create more social repression for children who were the victims of a society gone wrong.

The feelings expressed through Nirvana's lyrics derive their meaning through the social conservatism of the time, which generated the repression of youth physically and psychologically. The structural binary, which juxtaposes the social against the personal, fractures in light of the necessity of each other for creating cultural value. The awareness of and illumination of the personal angst allows for speculation into the structural problems generating those sentiments. The criticism of governmental and social inadequacies allows for examination of the influence of those insufficiencies over the individual generating greater understanding of the bigger systemic problems within American culture and policy.

These following songs represent the band of a particular end of the false binary speaking about the opposing end of the binary. The song "Why Go" by Pearl Jam can be viewed through the lens of social criticism, but it tells the story of a young girls anguish showing both sentiments within a single lyrical focus, questioning the maltreatment of psychiatry for turning youth into the exact image their parents sought.

> Maybe someday
>
> Another child
>
> Won't feel as alone as she does
>
> …
>
> She's been diagnosed

By some stupid fuck

And mommy agrees

Why go home?

…

She could play pretend

She could join the game

She could be another clone

Why go home?

What you taught me

Put me here

Don't come visit

Mommy dear

The song tells the story of a girl who gets diagnosed and held in a psychiatric ward for an extended period of time. The narrator clearly sees the diagnoses as a misdiagnoses and a larger systemic problem at hand. The girl has the capability of being everything society wants her to be but it would require her reducing herself to a "clone"; it would require becoming everything the grunge musicians were critiquing earlier in their songs about social conformity. If she could only act like a "Rat" and follow the designated path they would find no fault in her character.

The final lines of the song change perspective and rather than some seeming omniscient third person narrator the song turns toward the perspective of the girl. The girl directly blames the parents influence for teaching her to be the type of person who would

end up in a psychiatric clinic and because of that feels alienated by her parents for their beliefs and attitudes. The parents see her fault to resemble the archetypical desired youth of the time as a psychological fault not perpetuated by social conditioning creating repressive, alienated reactions. This seems to continue the trend of critique against the swaying ideals of the boomer generation. The girl is in the psychiatric clinic for what her parent deems unusual behavior but really is just different. The line "what you taught me" points to the ultimately ideals of the boomer generation in their youth, free-thinking and motivated, because their child who lives a similar life becomes socially understood as psychotic.

Nirvana's song "In Bloom" places them on the opposite end of the binary through their critique of a social convention rather than displaying some personal anguish thus once continuing the subversion of a false binary. This song would later become incredibly ironic with the bands immense success as the song's chorus speaks directly to conformity without thought to interpretation of intention or meaning.

> He's the one
>
> Who likes all our pretty songs
>
> And he likes to sing along
>
> And he likes to shoot his gun
>
> But he knows not what it means

This chorus directly speaks to both the social ignorance of guns and the conformity that American culture embraces. The song directly mocks the sort of people who enjoys the music, shoots guns, but misunderstands the value or intentions. The songs calls to

question mass America's desire or ability to experience on a purely aesthetic level and not seek some deeper understanding of what they seem to adhere to whether in music or larger cultural expressions, such as ideas of masculinity.

The psychological alienation and subjugation of Generation X only created one more form of abuse against kids; however, this abuse was more than a scare, it was direct and from a source that claimed protection from the harmful world. Pearl Jam's song "Daughter" expresses one form of parental abuse through telling the story of a child, abused and misunderstood by her parents because of an unknown learning disability.

> Mother reads aloud, child tries to understand it
>
> tries to make her proud
>
> the shades go down, it's in her head
>
> painted room... can't deny there's something wrong...
>
> she holds the hand that holds her down
>
> she will... rise above...
>
> don't call me daughter, not fit to
>
> the picture kept will remind me
>
> don't call me daughter, not fit to be
>
> the picture kept will remind me
>
> don't call me...

The song brings psychological inadequacies and learning disabilities to the realm of social critique. The child cannot understand the words because she cannot follow along. However, although the mother holds the child down intellectually because of

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misunderstanding the child blames herself not finding herself fit to be called daughter. The lack of understanding and the seeming abuse of the parent lead to feelings of inadequacy.

This blurring of dualistic notions into a single larger cultural vision is contiguous with the transition into postmodernity in the twentieth century. Structurally, there exists a slight binary between the lyrical content of the particular bands placing Pearl Jam and Soundgarden against Nirvana and their respective expressive focuses. Some examples however, show this to be a false binary where the bands speak about more personal or social issues as a consequence of a systemic social inadequacy. Some songs have a particular focus on either of these ideas, but again that seems to associate them as two different conceptual notions with which their vocabulary derives meaning and value. Despite the focus of personal or social however, the lyrics point to a single purpose of elucidating the social problems associated with America after the swinging polarity of American ideology in the decades following the Second World War.

With this blurring of a false binary the question then becomes: to what end did they see this knowledge? The grunge musicians, in particular lyricist, seem to be aware of a greater social problem which could be viewed through the lenses of social critique, personal anguish, and a representation of both. Yet what hope and desire did they choose to pursue or express with this knowledge about their sub-cultural understanding of the systemic problems plaguing their generation?

V. Disillusionment and Unity, "Oh well, whatever, nevermind"

Generation X, specifically grunge as a sub-culture, is retrospectively notorious for their apathy concerning their approach to the world despite their knowledge about the fundamental issues of their society. Through lyrical analysis the accuracy of this stereotype seems difficult to refute. Throughout all of their awareness and vocalization of social problems, they offer no resolutions.

This indifference towards rendering a new social structure with fundamental changes finds support in the simple yet poignant song, "Flat Out Fucked" by the early grunge band Mudhoney. In six lines lead singer Mark Arm tells the story of a generation:

> I feel so stupid today
>
> Why ain't it any other way
>
> It's too late to complain
>
> Bad, bad timing
>
> Ugly saying
>
> Flat out fucked

The opening lines express alienation through desire to create some new way and the subsequent feelings of stupidity that could accompany that through seeming to differ from the larger community that embraces or at least adheres to the social norms. However apathy comes through in the third line's refusal to act upon that desire for "any other way" and the then simplistic view that the people are merely "flat out fucked". Arm has a self-awareness that ultimately becomes useless through the inability or lack of desire to create change, because the time is passed and society is beyond fixing.

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Despite their intense social criticism this sense of apathy comes through in Pearl Jam's 1992 album *Vs*, a clear sentiment of unnamed opposition, which closes with the song "Indifference" and the lines:

> I will hold the candle till it burns up my arm
>
> I'll keep takin' punches till their will grows tired
>
> I will stare the sun down until my eyes grow tired
>
> Hey I won't change direction, and I won't change my mind
>
> How much difference does it make

There is an obvious sense of purpose and desire but ultimately it concludes in a sense of lethargy where Vedder expresses a generation's sense of unconcern because of lack of affect. Ultimately this "'whatever' philosophy" reflects the generational "wisdom of the undecidable, the indecipherable, the disengaged" because it "is symptomatic of a refusal to question as a whole as it dismisses explanations, intellectual constructions and follow-ups" (Delvaux 179). Thus the X of their generation's title becomes extremely important because it represents the philosophical views of undesirability and indifference. Without choice there cannot be labeling and determination, thus the unlabeled but present X.

However to diminish their motivations to nothing and claim they resorted to complete indifference would be a severe injustice to the musicians and the generational ideals they reflected. Here we encounter another structural binary in which they propose sentiments of apathy and yet a desire for unification. Alongside apathy they also embraced a strong recognition of rebellion and sub-cultural generational community. The sense of unity, as Mazullo suggests, comes through the "uncontestable fact, [the]

sociological given, that Nirvana's fans understood the band's music as a form of resistance to American mainstream music culture, to American social norms, or at least to their parents" (Mazullo 717), which allows for a generational community to find broad resemblances and extend their sense of "we" to a larger population.

Seeing themselves as part of a larger cultural whole the grunge musicians invited their fans into union with them. In the song "Come as You Are" Cobain invites all to:

> Come as you are, as you were,
>
> As I want you to be
>
> As a friend, as a friend, as an old enemy
>
> Take your time, hurry up
>
> The choice is yours, don't be late
>
> …
>
> Come dowsed in mud, soaked in bleach
>
> As I want you to be
>
> As a trend, as a friend, as an old memoria

His invitation does not require anything of the listener, it is an open request to come with whatever motivations, intentions, preferences; he desires just "you", whatever that entails. The motivation behind "as I want you to be" does not insinuate conformity to the ideals or image of Cobain but rather reflects his desire for the listener to be "as you are". The invitation necessarily includes anyone because of the all inclusive binaries of "friend" and "enemy" or being "dowsed in mud" versus being "soaked in bleach". His invitation excludes nobody, really, as long as they are themselves. This means that the

invitation is not truly open-ended, as the musicians clearly saw a social issue with notions of conformity being prevalent. Thus the song speaks to the problem of conformity while creating a sub-cultural unification through awareness of a social problem and direct action in opposition to that issue.

Similarly Eddie Vedder in "Leash" invites what he sees as a collective group into union with himself singing:

> Troubled souls unite, we got ourselves tonight
>
> I am fuel, you are friends, we got the means to make amends
>
> I am lost, I'm no guide, but I'm by your side
>
> I am right by your side
>
> …
>
> Will myself to find a home, a home within myself
>
> We will find a way, we will find our place
>
> Drop the leash, drop the leash...
>
> Get outta' my fuckin' face
>
> …
>
> Delight, delight, delight in our youth...
>
> Get outta' my fuckin' face...

The self-awareness of seeing the community as a group of "troubled souls" reflects the examples from before about the difficulty of the economic, political, and social structures this generation lived through. He expresses the desire and need for the community to "find a way" and a "place" as a group, constantly referred to as "we". He also obviously

expresses the rejection of the repression modern society has attempted to put upon youth culture, comparing it to a "leash". The final lines show the recognition of difference in ideology and the desire for rebellion.

The rebellious desires of grunge, as representative of Generation X, are derived twofold from the polarity of political ideology following World War Two. Through the construction of a political binary the 1950s and 1980s represent two decades of conservative social motivation whereas the 1960s and 1970s represent two decades of liberal social motivations. This polarity of examples within the minds of Generation X can correspond to the overall feelings of criticism and alienation.

The boomers of the sixties who saw the power of youth culture and expressed ideas of change and equality, the generation who protested a militaristic state, promoted racial equality, promoted feminist rights, who created the sexual revolution, ultimately became the product of failed ideals when they reverted to extreme conservative and militaristic ideologies. Nirvana satirizes the ideals of the sixties in the intro to their song "Territorial Pissings" by quoting the chorus of the song "Get Together" by sixties folk band The Youhgbloods: "Come on people now, smile on your brother, everybody get together, try to love one another right now...". Sung in an ironic, scary clown-like voice, the intro to the song mocks the sixties' principles through sarcastic use of a popular song of the time. The rest of the song expresses feelings about a failing society, the society shaped by the people who created the song and world Nirvana is scornful towards.

Generation X received mixed messages about the desires of their parent generation through the drastic change in social perceptions between the boomers youth

and their adulthood. Soundgarden in their song "All Your Lies" calls to the government

and society at large that "All your fears are lies" which has created enormous social

alienation. The great pendulum swing of the boomer ideals created a generational

disillusionment with being able to alter American culture in any fashion since their

parents clearly failed seeing as they eventually succumbed to the same institution they

were fighting against.

The early grunge band Green River, who consisted of members of the later bands

Pearl Jam and Mudhoney released the song "Swallow my Pride" in 1985. The song

shows the perception of the failed ideals of sixties counter-culture throughout Generation

X's early years. The song tells the story of a young man's derision for the extreme

American patriotism his girlfriend expresses. The song opens with her saying

> There's something you got to see...
>
> If you know we're headed for war
>
> This country's prouder than ever before...
>
> Yes, there's a spirit in the air
>
> We're more American than anywhere...

This sort of strong nationalistic attitude permeated through America in the 1980's during

the cold war and the Reagan Administration's insistence on referring to the Soviet Union

as an "Evil Empire" and the U.S.' necessity to rid the world of the " 'most evil enemy

mankind has known in his long climb from the swamp to the stars' " (Jenkins 210). With

this sort of rhetoric the American people felt scared into patriotism and the boomers who

spoke out so intensely against the militaristic nature of America through the sixties and

early seventies now promoted the militaristic Reagan administration. The members of

Green River saw the logical fallacies to a militaristic state due to the historical

consequences the of such an administration and recognized that despite telling

> Her a hundred times
>
> This little girl didn't understand at all
>
> Pride comes before a fall...

The militaristic state of the sixties failed the American people and once again the

nationalistic pride of the eighties was creating a militaristic state which could produce the

same world the boomers were fighting against.

The tradition of satire which Nirvana would later pick up in "Territorial Pissings"

came through in the last stanza of "Swallow my Pride",

> Ain't the Garden of Eden
>
> Ain't no angels above
>
> Things ain't what they used to be
>
> This ain't the summer of love

This last line directly references the principles of the sixties culture and draws a

straight correlation between the world of the Gen Xer's and the youth culture of the

sixties. The reference to "the summer of love" calls out the boomers on their failed

intentions for the world by claiming this world is nothing great or special; the world has

not become anything beautiful as people dreamed it would be in "the summer of love".

This song is a direct criticism of the subversion of sixties ideas by the people who created

those ideas. The people who spoke out for non-military and free love became the people of the Reagan era who called for and supported the militaristic Reagan Administration.

With an awareness of the polarity in social motivations, grunge created an educated sub-culture which collapses the duality of the conservative and the liberal by creating a pragmatic social group motivated towards a unified sub-cultural generational society. Grunge approaches participation within the confines of a society motivated by this binary with apathy. However, they sought to subvert the classical dualistic notion through creating a sub-cultural vocabulary through which they brought structurally dichotomous conceptions into dialogue in which they become symbiotic in understanding the creation of a social reformation.

At this point two songs should be foregrounded as prototypically grunge as they are by bands placed on opposite ends of the false binary and the songs encompass the personal and social alienation and criticism through which grunge created a new social consciousness. The sense of presence alongside apathy determined by the social contingencies of early nineties youth culture permeates through the song "Smells like Teen Spirit", which brought grunge to mainstream culture. The song brings to light so many ideas not conventionally represented in popular society:

> Load up on guns and bring your friends
>
> It's fun to lose and to pretend
>
> She's over bored/board and self assured
>
> …
>
> And I forget just why I taste

Oh yeah, I guess it makes me smile

I found it hard, it was hard to find

Oh well, whatever, nevermind

…

With the lights out it's less dangerous

Here we are now, entertain us

I feel stupid and contagious

Here we are now, entertain us

The song continues themes of grunge which were discussed previously, including the mocking of mainstream society through the opening line about "load[ing] up on guns" to the simple request for entertainment value. The song also expresses social psyche and sentiments of alienation and apathy towards a social structure which held no positive practical value for this sub-culture. Cobain openly mocks his own sentiments of loss and false consciousness. Courtney Love, Cobain's wife, describes the lyrical motivation and power of the song came from the fact that:

> The hit "Smells like Teen Spirit" was an anthem of powerless rage and betrayal. It was a resounding fuck you to the Boomers and all the false expectations they saddled us with about the rock 'n' roll revolution. And it made psychological damage – with all its concurrent themes of child abuse, drug addiction, suicide, and neglect – a basis for social identity (Mazullo 732)

The issues of child abuse, neglect, and so on which Mazullo speaks of are nothing specifically new to Generation X. However they continue to be social problems which plagued a generation trapped in the void of social binaries.

The third line of the song as quoted above speaks volumes with this explanation. The term "over bored" contains a dual meaning when simply heard. The phrase can easily mean bored, as would seem logical in an impersonal capitalistically motivated society where a generation feels a strong detachment to their parent generation and popular culture. However the line could also be heard as "over board" and interpreted as psychological commentary in which the girl has fell from the metaphorical boat and is thus drowning in a sea outside the stability and safety of the boat. The line reflects the losing control over emotion which accompanies depression and other psychological inadequacies. Although this line can represent boredom or psychological depression either one ends with being "self assure". This shows the obvious self-awareness that the generation had concerning their psychological and ideological motivators and intentions.

The second section quoted from the song continues with the generational expressions. The idea of taste is a metaphor for partaking in society and sampling from what the world offers. However the reasoning for this seems easily forgotten and a reason, "it makes me smile", contains no absolute reasoning, it is a mere supposition. Following this line Cobain uses the rhetorical device of chiasmus to emphasize the difficulty in finding that "smile" and continuing to "taste" from the world. Cobain suddenly forgets again this difficulty and small potential happiness with "oh well, whatever, nevermind" in a sweeping line of indifference.

Pearl Jam's third single off of *Ten* accomplishes similar ends through expressing the range of troubles grunge sought to expose. The song "Jeremy" and its video express the range of grunge concerns and both were huge a huge commercial success for Pearl Jam. Pearl Jam tells the story of a student who kills himself in front of his class. In an interview with a Seattle radio station in 1993 and an interview with Vedder explained that the inspiration for the song came mostly from a true story about a fifteen year old boy who in 1991 killed himself in front of his classmates. Lyrically "Jeremy" speaks heavily to the parent role in alienation through peers, family, and feelings of inadequacy.

> At home
>
> Drawing pictures
>
> …
>
> Dead lay in pools of maroon below
>
> Daddy didn't give attention
>
> To the fact that mommy didn't care
>
> King Jeremy the wicked
>
> Ruled his world
>
> Daddy didn't give affection
>
> And the boy was something that mommy wouldn't wear
>
> …
>
> Jeremy spoke in class today
>
> Jeremy spoke in class today
>
> Try to forget this...

Try to erase this...

From the blackboard.

The song draws the picture of a child who does not receive parent attention and has images of himself killing and ruling the world. Ultimately the lines at the end "Jeremy spoke in class" tells about the powerful impact that suicide can have as a form of vocalizing feelings. Also the last few lines speak to history, that at the end of the day the things that people are taught can be merely wiped from the board, but something that impactful will be remembered no matter how people try.

The importance of the video comes through its ability to link so many of the motivating factors in creating feelings of alienation. The video begins with Jeremy drawing pictures as described in the lyrically in the song while surrounded by life-size images of a headless suit and dress; he has a representative idea of parents but not the actual thing. As the video progresses there are images of his actual parents and him sitting at the dinner table however as his parents talk he attempts to speak to them only to have them not acknowledge his presence. He continues to yell and eventually jump on the table only to have them continue as if he does not exist. This shows again the lack of parental acknowledgement of the individual within the youth. Throughout the video there are flashes to a school classroom where all the kids are disengaged and wearing the exact same clothes. At one point near the end alternating images flash between the kids standing with their hands over their hearts saying the pledge of allegiance and holding a single hand above their heads as if in Nazi Germany. The end of the video comes when Jeremy enters the classroom without a shirt on throws an apple towards the teacher smiles

and then the screen goes black only to come back to an image of the classroom all the kids in frozen screaming position covered in blood.

The video hits on the theme discussed earlier of America being a militaristic nation which is, in the video, directly compared to Nazi Germany. Also the video articulates the alienation the parent generation created through conformity and lack of acknowledgement of the individual. All the kids in the classroom are clones of one another in appearance while simultaneously even his parents, when present, do not acknowledge Jeremy's presence either. The song and video both reflect other kids being a source of alienation; however in both mediums great emphasis is placed on the role of the parents and greater society at large.

Grunge clearly expresses responses to cultural circumstances and responds to government, parental and social practices and determinations. However, to say that their music was mere rebellion and the product of parental control and social circumstance would be minimalizing and serve a severe injustice to the cultural movement known as grunge. What was grunge and what did grunge as a youth subculture signify as a generational identifier?

The conflicting notion of apathy and desire for a new way motivated by communion created an interesting sub cultural attitude. Ultimately the music represents the awareness of problems in American social structure but they offer no new ideas. The lyrics do nothing to subvert American conventions but they do strongly express a sense of unresponsiveness.

The apathy associated with grunge, however, is misplaced when viewed through a lens outside of cultural determinations. Their apathy was directed at the world focused on playing within the confines of false binaries which had proven to be non-pragmatic through its stagnation after forty years of engagement since World War Two. Their motivation towards their music and the creation of a Seattle sub-culture around the ideas expressed through the music shows their existence within the void of a dualistic society, by rejecting social norms through a creative affirmation of sub-cultural ideals. The two major anthems of the grunge era elucidate the systemic problems emerging from a society within the social binary and as such allow for the collapse of the binary perceptions of history. Thus grunge represents a social vocabulary within the postmodern movement which disavows the structural conception of binaries in an attempt to visualize a social reformation within a symbiotic recognition of differing ideologies.

VI. The Social Eradication of a Vocabulary

I feel this society somewhere has lost its sense of what art is, Art is expression. In expression you need 100% full freedom and our freedom to express our art is seriously being fucked with. Fuck, the word fuck has as many connotations as does the word Art and I'm far beyond the point of sitting down and casually complaining about this problem to the right wing control freaks who are the main offenders of destroying art. I won't calmly and literally complain to you! I'm going to fucking kill. I'm going to fucking destroy your macho, sadistic, sick, right wing, religiously abusive opinions on how we as a whole should operate according to your conditions. Before I die many will die with me and they will deserve it. See you hell. Love, Kurdt Cobain

- Kurt Cobain's Journals

Kurt Cobain remains undeniably the poster boy for grunge. "Smells Like Teen Spirit" struck a vein in the body of youth America and created a generational sub-cultural movement supported by the marketed Seattle musical world. Because of the freedom necessary to its creation, the marketing and exploitation of grunge led to its requisite end. The different bands all approached and handled their fame in different strokes but ultimately by the mid-nineties the grunge world saw its end. The socialization of their sub-cultural vocabulary into a social framework which they were seeking to subvert and renounce inevitably subverted their own vocabulary through its cultural appropriation. They came from a punk influence of counter-cultural sway but sought to speak to the masses. They continually found themselves trapped by their desire to escape the choir

and illuminate their ideas to a wider fan base that in turn misinterpreted or idealized their music making them rock gods and generational iconic figures. These bands wanted to be famous but they also wanted to maintain control over the use and to some extent meaning that their music had.

Most grunge bands saw their careers come to an end in the mid-nineties including Major grunge bands Alice in Chains and Soundgarden. Alice in Chains released their final studio album *Alice in Chains* in 1995 with great success despite the lack of touring but ultimately saw their end. Soundgarden also saw their end in the mid-nineties with their final album *Down on the Upside* which saw limited success in comparison to their 1994 release *Superunknown*. Both bands alongside a number of other less well known grunge bands came to an end with the extensive marketing of their musical style.

Two bands managed to come through the fray and continue to create music today. Mudhoney released their first album in 1988 on Sub Pop records and twenty years later has released nine studio albums including 2008's *The Lucky Ones*. During the major grunge years they signed with Reprise Records but otherwise have released all their albums with Sub Pop. They recognized the destructive power of the marketing world in destroying the integrity of their music. These sentiments are expressed in their song "Overblown":

> (OK, grunge-masters, here we go)
>
> Everybody loves us
>
> Everybody loves our town

That's why I'm thinking lately

The time for leaving is now

…

Everybody loves us

Man, they give me the creeps

And you're up there shaking and flexing

Display of a macho freak

Now you've got their attention

And you've got so very far

They gave your very own spotlight

Just like some real rock star

…

Overblown

It's all over and done

The song satirizes the rock star image that the marketing world has created for so many

of these bands who once played in garages and dive clubs for their friends. The sort of

recognition that "the time for leaving is now" shows intelligence and a strong reaction to

the marketing of Seattle and the musical world it produced. Mudhoney however did see

some success as a result of the grunge hype, they saw a cameo in the film *Black Sheep*,

this track was included on the soundtrack to the movie *Singles* as well as a record deal

with a major label. Yet the final line expresses awareness that what once existed and was

exploited has found its end, become "overblown". This allowed for Mudhoney to

continue on with some sort of artistic authenticity to their musical expression in light of the destructive marketing of grunge.

The other band to see incredible success despite the downfall of the grunge scene is Pearl Jam. Perhaps the most successful of all grunge bands, Pearl Jam has been creating music for seventeen years since the release of *Ten*. In the hype of the grunge scene Pearl Jam was perhaps the biggest band in the world given the extensive airplay of their video for "Jeremy" as well as claiming recognition for three of *Billboard's* top twenty albums in 1992. By the fall of 1992, *Ten*, the soundtrack to Cameron Crowes film *Singles*, and *Temple of the Dog* were all in the top twenty (Neely 163). Pearl Jam and Soundgarden were hesitantly booked for the '92 Lollapalooza which they feared seemed false to the intentions of their bands musical sincerity. The grunge scene gained its roots out of the seventies and eighties punk scene which represented the counter-cultural sentiments of particular subcultures which viewed corporate America as hindering musical sincerity through its capitalistic motivations. However Soundgarden guitarist Kim Thayil claimed, "'I'm tired of the lie that alternative music somehow offers something that's anticorporate'" (Neely 159) in discussion about the tour. When the bands were first booked they had not begun to dominate the charts and suddenly countercultural college radio acts were now mainstream and headlining a tour that supported the so-called alternative music scene.

Soundgarden and Pearl Jam display a social intelligence and concern which allows for their music to speak in a more universal language of personal disappointment coupled with cultural critique. This music contains a countercultural edge considering its

meager beginnings and their lyrical and stylistic content. However after the record setting

release of Pearl Jam's sophomore album *Vs.* in 1993, front man Eddie Vedder was

pictured on the cover of *Time* for an article discussing the alternative music scene and

Vedder's rejection of fame. Given the fame and controversy of the video for "Jeremy"

the band decided to forego the creation of music videos. In a 1993 *Rolling Stone* article

bassist Jeff Ament stated that "ten years from now I don't want people to remember our

songs as videos" (Crowe). Pearl Jam was given the cover shot of that same *Rolling Stone*

and the anguish of fame is clear on Vedder's face. On the same cover, he sits with his

head in his hand, eyes closed, brow furrowed, looking lost in his own disappointment or

anger. A read through Cameron Crowe's article reveals extensive sentiments about the

bands love for creating music and their incredible distaste for marketing exploitation.

Following the release of *Vs.* the band decided to do less interviews and television

appearances as well as set a cap on ticket prices all in an attempt to bring their music

directly to their fans. At this time the band also began their feud with Ticketmaster. The

band boycotted playing at venues that used Ticketmaster because they disagreed with the

service charges the company was adding onto ticket prices, causing them to cancel their

entire 1994 summer tour. Their battle with Ticketmaster would last for years to come and

effectively disallowed them from touring in the United States for three years.

That same year the band released their third studio album, *Vitalogy*. The album

contains the bands clearest rejection of their fame and condemnation of the marketing

world and the exploitation of their music. The song "Not for You" is an angry passionate

attack on the world that attempted to socialize and re-appropriate the musical intentions of Pearl Jam.

> Can't escape from the common rule
>
> If you hate something, don't you do it too...too...
>
> Small my table, a sits just two
>
> Got so crowded, I can't make room
>
> Oh, where did they come from? Stormed my room!
>
> And you dare say it belongs to you...to you...
>
> …
>
> All that's sacred comes from youth
>
> Dedication, naive and true
>
> With no power, nothing to do
>
> I still remember, why don't you...don't you...
>
> This is not for you
>
> …
>
> Oh, never was for you...fuck you...
>
> This is not for you...

The song makes very clear metaphorical claims about the world and Vedder's perceptions about his place and approach to the exploitation of Pearl Jam's music for a marketable profit. Thus the opening lines of "if you hate something" (being part of a musical world that prostitutes your band and music) then "don't you do it too" (refuse participation). This song seems to blatantly signify Pearl Jam's retreat from the

mainstream musical world. Pearl Jam became the largest band in the world within three years, taking Vedder away from being a gas station attendant to being a world famous rock star. Thus Vedder claims that the naivety and truth associated with youthful dedication allows for something beautiful or "sacred" and that is the sort of musical freedom Pearl Jam sought. This withdrawal from the mainstream and a self awareness creates the final lines of ownership and integrity by not allowing the marketing strategies of corporate America to alter or perhaps taint any aspect of the musical creation.

Pearl Jam maintained and maintains a level of sincerity through their continual creation of music which speaks openly with integrity about social issues and music with a progressive and complex nature. Through the late nineties they continued their feud with Ticketmaster and purposefully removed themselves from the limelight of mainstream music in an effort to maintain a level of personal respect for the music they make. Their fourth studio album *No Code* was seen as having an experimental edge which was not received well initially but has been included through the years as a testament of Pearl Jam's musical abilities. However their retreat from the mainstream musical world and Vedder's continual lyrical analysis of governmental and cultural politics has made him less iconic than Nirvana front man Kurt Cobain, but allowed for Pearl Jam to continue.

Despite whatever other moments signified the end of grunge bands or their retreat from the musical world, one single event ironically encapsulates the beginning of the end of grunge. On April 8, 1994 Kurt Cobain was found dead at his Seattle home from a shotgun wound to the head and almost three times the lethal dose of heroin in his body. There remains extensive controversy over the nature of Cobain's death but regardless his

death signified the end of Nirvana's career and along with it came the end of grunge as a cultural identity. The heroin overdose of Mother Love Bone singer Andrew Wood led to the beginning of Pearl Jam and the creation of the first major grunge album; the death of Kurt Cobain ended that era and the sorrow of drugs and death seem to almost bookend the grunge era in 1990-1994. The same mainstream socialization and the symbolization given to Cobain led to the end of Nirvana by means of his death.

Nirvana grew to be such an iconic band due to the success of *Nevermind* and the role of "Smells Like Teen Spirit" as a generational anthem. What made the album such a big hit was Nirvana's ability to "[dip] judiciously, and perhaps eclectically, from rock's historical reservoir of sounds, styles, and techniques" (Mazullo 713) while simultaneously "it is an incontestable fact, a sociological given, that Nirvana's fans understood the band's music as a form of resistance" (Mazullo 717). "Smells Like Teen Spirit" remains a classic song because of the hype it produced within a generation but the band remains a symbol of generational angst and a sound response to corporate America. *Nevermind* producer Butch Vig noticed an appeal to the album that made it huge because "'what the kids are attracted to in the music is that he's not necessarily a spokesman for a generation, but all that's in the music – the passion and [the fact that] he doesn't necessarily know what he wants but he's pissed'" (Selinger). Nirvana spoke in a vocabulary of music and lyrics which drew an entire generation.

What ultimately drew people towards Cobain as a spokesperson was his outright honesty with people and his extreme rebellious nature. Cobain represented and enacted the sentiments of an entire generation who was perhaps too afraid to be that honest with

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themselves and others. Cobain became the person who Generation X could vicariously

feel and live out that sort of anguish and candor. What made Cobain a perfect

generational spokesman seems obvious given that he was:

> Born into a generation that doesn't want heroes but simply someone who
> understands, Cobain understood. Even his suicide not ended with "Peace,
> love, empathy." Yes, he was a remarkably gifted songwriter and singer,
> but he was special not so much because he was unique but because he was
> one of many. Disenfranchised and cynical. Awkward and unsure. For an
> enormous collection of individuals, Cobain's passing is the equivalent of a
> death in the family. He wasn't a hero or a guru of any sort. He was simply
> of them, someone who grasped what they were going through, even
> though he was powerless to control these forces in his own life. (Mazullo
> 730-731)

Cobain expressed a seeming honesty, which enabled a generation to see themselves in his

tormented existence. The same ideas of alienation and anxiety which encompass the

grunge lyrical lexicon mirror nearly everything this one impassioned guy from Seattle

encompassed. The marketing of his image created a face for Cobain which was not

entirely his own and thus limits his own personal perception of self and worth. Thus their

incredible success and willingness to be mainstream bands creates a catch-22 within the

musical world of grunge.

However given the immediate success of Nirvana and "because of his massive

fame, Cobain had no chance at realizing authentic selfhood, and instead of being

proprietor of his own identity, Cobain was robbed of his 'real self,' and the fragments of his identity were in due course put to the service of a dehumanizing mass market" (Mazullo 738). Pearl Jam was seeking to avoid this same market and its dangerous power. This disallowed Cobain to realize a personal existence because ultimately his musical creation and personal identity became whatever mass cultured determined. These social determinations are the sort which kept Mudhoney from becoming a major label band, their the pressures which helped split other grunge bands, and they are the strains which caused Pearl Jam to remove themselves from the limelight for a few years. Personal integrity generated the music and paradoxically the response to the music destroyed the bands.

Cobain expressed sentiments of unhappiness towards the marketing of the band and their loss of identity as well as accusations made about his personal life. The opening song, "Serve the Servants" to their final studio album, *In Utero*, recorded in 1993 speaks volumes about his sentiments towards the world's response to *Nevermind*:

> Teenage angst has paid off well
>
> Now I'm bored and old
>
> Self-Appointed judges judge
>
> More than they have sold
>
> If she floats than she is not
>
> A witch like we had thought
>
> A down payment on another
>
> One at salem's lot

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Serve the servants - Oh no

That legendary divorce is such a bore

The opening line obviously points towards the response to *Nevermind* and the songs

about which held strong appeal to "teenage angst" and Cobain's boredom with the ideas

and music surrounding that culture. The song then makes reference to accusations

towards his wife and thus he calls her a "witch" to go in line with the stories circulating

about her. The line about divorce is in reference to his parents whose divorce was a topic

of many early Nirvana songs and his further boredom with that idea. The song shows

Cobain's advances and desire for a new vocabulary which would speak new important

ideas about his experience.

"Serve the Servants" and the final song, "All Apologies" on *In Utero* bracket the

album nicely in lines which explain Cobain and his desire for a new sound through

recognition that the old sound no longer serves his purposes and perhaps those of society:

What else should I be

All apologies

What else could I say

Everyone is gay

What else could I write

I don't have the right

What else should I be

All apologies

…

> I wish I was like you
>
> Easily amused
>
> …
>
> All in all is all we are

The song seems fitting to end the album considering his constant question of being and his apologetic answer. In the second set of lines he makes a rather derogatory statement about "everyone" which is not an attack on homosexuality but rather the social defined terminology. He calls into question the simplicity of others' simplicity through being amused easily as well as claims his inability to do anything different because the world has defined his character outside of his own will and thus he has no right to determine his thoughts and actions ("write"). The final line is repeated constantly as the band fades out. The line is as open ended and hopeless as the ambitions and intentions given to Generation X. It is intended to be a line of critique regarding the musical world and people's responses and exploitation to the grunge scene but instead becomes one more generational anthem which people can associate with in an attempt to disassociate with popular culture.

In an act of recognition concerning their fate as a band Nirvana recorded the album *MTV Unplugged in New York* for the television series *MTV Unplugged* which hosts bands playing live acoustic sets. The session allowed the band to experiment with their songs and show the world they could play a different style of music. During an interview before the sessions Cobain expressed an interest in taking the same path Pearl Jam took after their 1994 album *Vitalogy*:

I can't see this band lasting more than a couple more albums, unless we

work really hard on experimenting…I'm really interested in studying

different things, and I know Krist and Dave are as well. But I don't know

if we're capable of doing it together. I don't want to put out another record

that sounds like the last three records...Because we are stuck in such a rut.

We have been labeled…grunge is as potent a term as New Wave. You

can't get out of it. It's going to be passé. You have to take a chance and

hope that either a totally different audience accepts you or the same

audience grows with you. (Mazullo 722)

The band obviously had a desire to be recognized as multi-faceted or at the very least capable. Cobain saw his band for what it was: a group very good at playing a certain type of music that was perfect for the time, but as time continued they would need to learn to speak in new ways, either to keep fans or to preserve some appreciation for their own music. He also recognized the limited life of brands; he saw that the idea of grunge would become outdated and some new vocabulary would speak the social truths of an aging or new generation. Nirvana clearly saw the same problem as Pearl Jam or perhaps any other mainstream band that wishes to maintain some level of integrity.

It would be cliché to ponder the iconic nature of Nirvana had Kurt not died, but it remains a legitimate question. Perhaps Kurt Cobain had never died he would not be such an iconic figure, definitely a respected nineties rock musician, but just another forty something rocker. As it stands through Cobain died, Soundgarden split, Pearl Jam experimented, and Mudhoney rocked under the radar, but the hype, the generation of

slackers walking around in flannel and Doc Martens faded into a new generation with new ways of speaking.

The commercial success of the Seattle bands and their new sound became such a strong marketing identity that soon a series of bands were being formed and signed to major labels to be marketed under the auspices of grunge. Within five years of the release of both *Nevermind* and *Ten* a number of bands including Bush, Collective Soul, Marcy Playground, and Silverchair were all signed to major labels and began recording music that sounded very similar stylistically to grunge. Considering the sudden acquisition of these bands by major labels after the success of the Seattle bands and the marketing of them under the title of grunge, the integrity of the music began to decline. When the music is being fashioned to sound like a particular genre for the purpose of making money, the music loses the initial beauty found in the integrity of a new vocabulary created out of passion rather than monetary gain.

Given the extreme change from intensely isolated musical freedom and that necessity to continue creating music in that same fashion, it seems understandable and in hindsight even predictable that the extreme marketing of grunge and the "Seattle Sound" would end quickly. Thus the pomp and hype of grunge created through excessive production and marketing created the withdrawal of many of the bands and came to an abrupt end with the death of the generational grunge icon, Kurt Cobain.

The grunge scene, the "Seattle Sound, whatever it may be called undeniably came to life through a series of misinterpretations by artists and fans alike. The initial misconception occurred in the mid-eighties when the Seattle youth culture had no music

scene of its own and thus sought to replicate that of the music they heard coming from elsewhere. The isolation of the Seattle area created a sound that the musicians thought was metal or punk but in reality sounded like something uniquely different through its combination of punk and metal and sometimes a pop aesthetic. The second misinterpretation came from the fans of the music after its creation. At the point that the music became a unique scene with certain cultural followings it had begun to be re-appropriated by a new vocabulary of marketing, fashion, and cultural necessity.

Generation X's reading of the music came through a necessary need to take the music and make it socially and personally applicable despite any intentions of the bands. In this way the attempt at removing the world from the confines of a society formulated and motivated by dualistic interpretations deteriorated when their music was appropriated into the social conventions which it sought to recant.

VII.   Conclusion

The isolation and the misinterpretation allows for the creation of something new in Bloom's strong poetic sense. As explained in the first chapter the strong poet proceeds from "poetic Influence [that] – when it involves two strong, authentic poets, - always proceeds by a misreading of the prior poet, an act of creative correction that is actually and necessarily a misinterpretation" (Bloom 30). Thus the poetic creation of grunge as a musical and lyrical style derived from the poetic or musical influence of a previous vocabulary which is necessarily misinterpreted and recreated in a new vocabulary which the poet never attempted to create. The desire to create a new social vocabulary does not come solely through artistic desire but rather "poetic, artistic, philosophical, scientific, or political progress results from the accidental coincidence of a private obsession with a public need" (Rorty 37). Therefore the success of a given vocabulary as a cultural progression towards something not Truer, but better suited for cultural representation must have a social compulsion into existence not just an artistic desire.

The social contingency of a strong poetic creation allows for the social misinterpretation of an artistic vocabulary which garners expression through new forms of cultural life. This new expression in itself becomes a misinterpretation of the initial vocabulary. In the life of grunge this misunderstanding of the initial vocabulary happened when grunge became a fashion statement and the bands associated with the initial inception began to be associated with whatever social structures people managed to fit derived meaning. The social contingency of the vocabularies success and adoption allowed for the socialization of the lives of the musicians which ultimately creates a

circumstance where the creator of the vocabulary no longer exists except outside of social determination and perception.

The socialization of the artist and the social contingency becomes most obvious to the creator, the poet, the musician. According to philosopher Richard Rorty "Bloom and Nietzsche claim that the strong maker, the person who uses words as they have never before been used, is best able to appreciate her own contingency" (28). This thought elucidates the desire that bands had to change style and create something new outside of their previous artistic vocabulary. They began the process of recreating themselves because "when a potential poet first discovers (or is discovered by) the dialectic of influence, first discovers poetry as being both external and internal to himself, he begins a process that will end only when he has no more poetry within him, long after he has the power (or desire) to discover it outside himself again" (Bloom 25). This perhaps explains the ability of certain bands to continue while others simply needed to end their careers. Perhaps Soundgarden came to the realization that their music was no longer progressing as a band. This in no way diminishes the musical capabilities or influence of them as a band or as individual musicians but suggests that as a collective unit they had run the gamut of their potential. However a band such as Pearl Jam found some way to create expression outside of their socialized identity and thus lost the large scale cultural popularity they had in 1993 but have continued to discover the capable poetry within their band. The actions of Pearl Jam and the intentions of Nirvana represent "the conscious need of the strong poet to *demonstrate* that he is not a copy or replica as merely a special form of an unconscious need everyone has: the need to come to terms

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with the blind impress which chance has given him, to make a self for himself by redescribing that impress in terms which are, if only marginally, his own" (Rorty 43). The bands saw the necessity for recreation of self and therefore represent the strong poet. The end of grunge truly came through the existence of the musicians as strong poets in their ability to come to terms with the contingency of their vocabulary and seek new ways of representing and describing themselves in terms which they continually see as their own.

The power of grunge came not through its tapping into Truth, or its ability to explicate a generation, but rather through that generations need for the music to describe them. The music did speak some ideas which were necessarily important to the people of that time and represented a necessary step in the progression of poetic influence. However even the musicians recognized the contingency of their music as a cultural identifier and the contingency of their own socialized iconic image. Grunge represents one more step in the cyclical nature of poetic influence and cultural progression. The progression does not move towards a new Truth or end but rather towards a better way of describing the particular society.

The particular society the music was used to describe existed within the irony of the nineties expressed through apathy towards social institutions and roles which they attempted to negate through refusal to participate. However this struggle became paradoxical with the rise in fame and socialization of their musical form. Nevertheless the structural view of particular binaries allows the music to be viewed through a lens in which I have examined the polarity of concerns and perceptions apparent to the

communities and generation from which the music derived value and meaning. Yet when these binaries are put into dialogue with one another they blend in a seemingly hermeneutic fashion where certain songs stand as examples of the cultural importance of the musical movement as a whole.

In the postmodern sense that Richard Rorty speaks of creating new vocabularies, grunge represents an intermingling of the structural binaries which metaphorically correspond to the social structures of traditional America in the creation of a sub-cultural unification. Grunge and the nineties culture which gave value to the music and sub-culture recognized the sublime nature of the void created by traditional binaries which failed to produce greater clarity for questions of existence, self, and significance. Thus we saw the rejection and critique of conservative and liberal society as represented through the forty years following World War II. The acknowledgement of the social structures of those forty years was only in criticizing and ironizing them as motivation towards a social reformation establishing a society within the void. Their apathy was towards social institutions they had lost faith in and their motivation was towards the creation and existence within a social system which they viewed as pragmatically conscious.

The destruction of the grunge authenticity as expressed by the bands shows the inability to exist solely within the void of social binaries. The best hope for the future and the benefit of analyzing the acculturation of a sub-culture within the void is now twofold. We recognize that cultures seeking social reformation outside of the social are doomed to fail as they are always a product and participant in society. Kurt Cobain could be photographed on the cover of *Rolling Stone* wearing a shirt saying "Corporate Magazines

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Still Suck", but he remains actively engaged in the social realm he wishes to subvert. Secondly music will be a product of this cultural influence thus allowing the music of today and the future to represent more than the binaries and more than the void. Grunge allows for recognition of a necessary active role within society while putting social contingency into dialogue with human desire. They illuminate the necessity to place meaning in the fortuitousness of our lives within an ever changing and influencing societal configurations.

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