James E. Metzger
Graduate Liberal Studies Symposium
Simon Fraser University
Vancouver, British Columbia
Presentation on June 25, 2011

Watching Postmodernism Watch Itself: TV on TV on *The Simpsons* on TV

The funny thing about television is that there is hardly ever any television on television. This is not a point lost to critics of *The Simpsons* who value the program's "vaunted realism" with "the simple fact that the Simpsons, like practically everyone in the Western world but *unlike* the characters who populate the vast majority of TV-land, spend enormous amounts of time watching television" (Turner 283). This, along with countless other ironies, compels many Postmodern scholars to investigate the deeper presence of *The Simpsons* in relation to popular culture, the media landscape and the world. Broadcast in multiple translations and marketed globally in various forms since the late 1980s, this animated sitcom has established itself as the longest running entertainment program the medium has ever known (Ortved 187; 282-3). However, creator Matt Groening suggests that the show is simply a program about a family who watches television. Yet, the extensive audience/program-dynamic of *The Simpsons* suggests a far more complex relationship between the viewer, the viewed and television. In fact, during the show's evolution into the cultural landscape of the 1990s, the television *set*, as both a product and experience, establishes a far more cognizant role within *The Simpsons* text. For example, in episode 2F14, "Homer Vs. Patty and Selma," the perplexed father Homer searches for a second job. Sharing his struggles with his middle child, the precocious and value-laden Lisa, the television "Announcer" interjects:

> Announcer: Need money fast? Got no experience? Step up...to elegance! Become a limo driver at Classy Joe's.
>
> Homer: That's it! I'll make money with a chauffeur job. Good thing you turned on that TV, Lisa.
>
> Lisa: I didn't turn it on, I thought _you_ turned it on.
>
> Homer: No. Well, anyway, turn it off.
>
> Lisa: It _is_ off.
>
> -- Enter "Twilight Zone" theme ("Homer Vs. Patty and Selma")

While the television is rarely so vigorous a force within the program, Homer does take employment at Classy Joe's, thereby demonstrating the TV as a valued character in the house with sway to the decision-making process. In fact, throughout the program the TV is frequently referenced, many times catapulting itself influentially into the narrative. Within this capacity, *The Simpsons* represents an awareness of television viewing, its particular emphasis within the experience of media, and its value throughout the cultural spectrum. Existing as both a product and a process within Postmodernism, *The Simpsons* constructs a relationship with the character of TV that validates the multiplicities defining the medium and its practice.

Analysis of a non-human form as an exacting character in *The Simpsons*, even if the standard "human" is yellow with only four fingers, is not unprecedented. In order to qualify a working definition of modernization and urbanity, Andrew Wood and Anne Marie Todd personalize the Simpsons' hometown of Springfield as a responsible character in the program (207). Moreover, in an article about media literacy, Jonathan Gray states how "television is almost a sixth family member" on the show ("Television Teaching" 229). Consistent within these articles, and much of the contemporary discourse on the program, is the basic

understanding of "*The Simpsons*' complicity with rampant consumerism, in that it is a product of commercial television, its characters are featured in numerous 'real world' ads, and its army of merchandising numbers over 1000 products" (232). However, there is another side to this reality, for the program is thoroughly aware of the general onslaught of capitalism in contemporary society. Throughout every episode "*The Simpsons* illustrates the effects of capitalism on the cultural geography of Springfield" (Wood Todd 218). Moreover, this analysis of physical setting can provide "a lens on the world inhabited by [the shows'] viewers" (220). Gray weaves these two conceptions of *The Simpsons* together, claiming that the program's self-generative "criticism of American culture goes beyond home and suburb to the very nature of consumerist capitalism" ("Imagining America" 137).

Living laden in the media landscape is both a blessing and a curse for the program. As a space of communication in the postmodern playground, where layers of intention and value interrelate, TV exists both commercially and artistically, defined by the parameters of both process and product. Within these levels, *The Simpsons* capably invents, modifies and reconstructs itself. However, it is best to begin at the opening sequence of *The Simpsons*, in order to develop a representational vocabulary on which to layer the fragments of media and postmodern thought, both specifically and generically, into a more successfully articulated framework of the Simpson family and their TV.

The Simpsons opening sequence is significant because it changes each week, and to any seasoned viewer it is an essential component of the program. Moreover, it introduces the critical dynamic of the program's relationship to television, both within the Simpson family and within the viewer's experience. Clouds part, "The Simpsons" floats forward, voices harmonize these same words and the screen sweeps into an elementary school classroom where Bart Simpson, the

10 year old counter-cultural underachiever, writes a different "sentencing" on the chalkboard each week. The school bell rings, orchestration brightly clips forward, and Bart weaves through the town on his skateboard, heading home. Lisa is presented, belting forth an ever-changing riff on her saxophone, Marge and Maggie, mother and baby, check out from the grocery store and Homer graciously leaves his job at the nuclear power plant. This "American" family gravitates home into the closing scene known as the "couch gag," a comical sequence that sets the family down in front of the TV in myriad choreographies. The last image is a close-up of their television, framed by the viewer's own TV at home, on which glows the names of the shows creators and producers. It is this engagement, the "TV within the TV," which best introduces the critical interplay of *The Simpsons*, for the persons responsible for the creation of the program are observed by the very same family they have created. In turn, the viewer is watching the television set of the TV family they will be watching on their own television for the next half-hour. Simplistic yet exhausted, to the same accord, it is almost as if the Simpson family is watching the viewer in a role reversal. As Simone Knox relates in her essay about the show's multiple potentialities, this expression of intertextuality is "working from inside the program" (80). This introduction serves to reinforce the shows sense of self-awareness, "the fact that *The Simpsons* analyzes itself first," before the viewer or critic observes the program (80).[1] Gray supports this channel of thinking as well, by "reflecting upon the huge cultural cache that The *Simpsons* carries amongst not only twenty- and thirtysomethings, but amongst many in academia: it is generally and widely regarded as a media literate, astutely critical text" ("Imagining America" 142). Yet, he expands upon the relationship of the program and its

---

[1] The program thrives with multiple examples of this awareness. Episodes "Bart Gets Famous" and "Behind the Laughter" are totally about television. Even more supplemental to this argument, and a part of Knox's, Ott's, Mittell's and Henry's works, are *Krusty the Klown* and *The Itchy & Scratchy Show*. Both are "shows within the show" and used in on *The Simpsons* in extensive textual discourse on TV, media, society, etc…

audience, claiming the two work "together to stand back from and dissect American society" (142). This capacity for self-reflection is resonantly noted by many thinkers who consistently value *The Simpsons* utility as a guide for postmodern discussion about the product and practice of television.

Long before *The Simpsons*, Frederick Jameson introduced Postmodernism as a theory to reinforce and describe the overarching qualities and effects of late capitalism. He discusses the intersection of creativity and commodity, art and economics, medium and practice, in an increasingly fragmented and self-invented landscape. The beginning chapters in *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* present the theory and its historical predecessors. Jameson then discusses the newest creative convention of the changing artistic landscape: video. Because these two concepts share concurrent advent, Jameson seems to suggest that the practice of video is the most proper representational form of Postmodernism. Jameson explains that video exists in one of two ways, either as a product of commercial television or within the process of experimental video (70). In later analysis of *The Simpsons*, it becomes apparent that the program exists in both capacities. Above all, *The Simpsons* is "vehicle for bringing consumers to advertisers in the marketplace" on the Fox network (Henry 266), and while the show is not particularly "experimental," it often plays within Jameson's rules of postmodern production in the creation of its narrative "text."

Jameson concludes that both instances of video utilize "pure and random play of signifiers" for the "flow" of TV "ceaselessly reshuffles the fragment of preexistent text, the building blocks of older cultural and social production" (96). Andrew Crisell supports this qualification of the TV product in his discussion on the relationship of postmodernism with television's practice of "self preoccupation" (126). The medium "draws much of its subject

matter from TV itself," and within this interplay, "much of our knowledge of the cultural and political worlds is itself mediated by TV" (126). As a product of TV, on TV, and often about TV, *The Simpsons* readily supports this theory. Because it exists within multiple values, commercially, critically and experimentally, the show's vein of artifice and self-awareness often partitions its narrative around pre-designated "symbolic resources," a common dynamic within postmodernism's (re)construction of fragmented identity (Ott 58). Therefore, by living under these multiple values, the program is of increased value as a text of Postmodernism. Moreover, by dissecting the text, the show works to generate a better understanding of Postmodernism itself.

In episode AABF05, "Mayored to the Mob," the practice of "reshuffling" pre-existent texts is astutely presented. Mark Hamill is a guest voice for his animated self. As the episode proceeds with its typical referential irreverence, Hamill is asked to reprise his role of Luke Skywalker who is then cast as Nathan Detroit in a dinner theater production of *Guys and Dolls*, because, as the pastry chef explains, Mark is more memorable as his famed *Star Wars* character than he is as himself. The scene includes a reconstructed rendition of the *Guys and Dolls*' "Luck Be a Lady," but with the lyrics rewritten to "Luke Be a Jedi" and light sabers as dance props. This array of components splayed within the text clearly supports the fragmented grammar of postmodernism; however, this process of storytelling is often described in literary terms as satire, or within a more critical channel of social and cultural consequence, the show embraces parody.

The intended use of these particular devices in the program is varied. Jason Mittell explains that the parodic realism of the program "enables a critical take on the sitcom genre" and television, and as a result "works to elevate the position of *The Simpsons* within cultural hierarchies" (25). However, he finds oppositional value because "the show contains the same

level of sentimentality and 'family values' of the shows it allegedly satires" (25). Gray confirms this "intertextual attack on American family sitcoms," but foresees a larger intention of criticism of America "that honestly accepts [that the country] is not the pinnacle of all greatness, enlightenment, and progress" (142; 144). Creator Groening enforces these interpretations, saying the show "has the feel of an early sixties sitcom. And that's as it should be. What is *The Simpsons* but a hallucination of the sitcom? And that has to be the ultimate American nightmare" (qtd. in Ortved 79). However, the use of animation allows this "nightmare" to "pose problems, more akin to those of real life, that simply cannot be solved within a half-hour…demonstrating both the artificiality of the sitcom tradition and the power of animation to represent 'realities' that cannot be captured in a three-camera studio" (Mittell 23). Or, as Matthew Henry fares, the show was able to "incorporate real world problems into [its] stories, thereby problematizing the traditionally hermetic nature of family sitcoms" (266). Regardless of these parodic intentions, and in whatever instance of thoughtful discourse *The Simpsons* is framed, the process of parody holds tremendous value to the invigoration of dialogue surrounding creative practices of television, be it specifically about the medium or as an overlay onto cultural representations beyond "the box." Moreover, parody is necessary for creativity to thrive within the commercial constructions of today's market.

In contemporary art there is an increased challenge towards generating originality within the flow of creative communication. This particular problem is often a driving force behind the value of satire and parody, both within *The Simpsons* and throughout popular culture. In *Reality Hunger*, David Shields shuffles together multiple fragments of thought to construct a general framework defining how future relationships may be established across the creative fields. The rules within contemporary capitalism are clarion, as he explains how "the evolution of copyright

law has effectively stunted the natural evolution of human creativity, which has always possessed cannibalistic tendencies… All of culture is an appropriation game" (100). Because trademarks, patents and various other rights of ownership exist, creating honest responses to previous artistic representations becomes increasingly challenged. As a program, *The Simpsons* constantly replicates various cultural artifacts for a wide array of needs. A most strident example is episode 3G0G, "Simpsoncalifragilisticexpiala(Annoyed Grunt)cious," a blatant reconfiguration of Disney's *Mary Poppins*. Upon meeting his new nanny, Bart questions her uniqueness. Shary Bobbins defends her individuality, stating definitively, "I'm an original creation, like Rickey Rouse and Monald Muck" (Simpson…cious). Once again, *The Simpsons* exposits Postmodern self-reflection and its place within the larger compound of a commercialized medium. The integration of multiple fragments could be of legal consequence, but the blatant re-appropriation of cultural symbolism saves the program from copyright infringement and elevates the narrative's clever reevaluation of its own media awareness and placement.

However, *The Simpons* is not simply an intellectualized text trapped in the realm of Postmodernism. Even Moe Szyslak, owner of the local dive bar on the program, has a stark definition of "po-mo" as "weird for the sake of being weird" ("Homer the Moe"). And while much of the critical discourse about *The Simpson* rouses Postmodernism as the grammar for contextual presentation, there is an opportunity to shore *The Simpsons* from this conscripted reality into a more descriptive practice concerning the characteristics of television in modern society. More specifically, the program supports a discussion on the process used to create both television as a technology, and the products broadcast throughout the medium.

Theodor Adorno peers at television through his lens in *The Culture Industry*, and while his participation in the dissection of the medium comes from a place of postmodernism, he does attempt to deconstruct the practices of television production and programming within the contexts of psychology and mass media theory. His evaluation of these important and powerful forces shapes his central desire to generate consumer awareness of TV's "psychological mechanism operating on various levels" so they do not "become blind and passive victims" of circumstances such as "conformity and conventionalism" (176; 160). As representatives of the television viewing public, *The Simpsons* often creates jocular consequences for the Simpson family as a way to expand the family's television viewing habits into parallel relation to the observers of their program. In episode 2F03, the annual Halloween episode "Treehouse of Horror V," the Simpson family finds themselves frozen outside, sitting in front of a handheld television, only their eyes showing movement. Paralyzed to their own devices, and not unlike the captive viewer of the past 30 minutes who has been watching the program, the family is reduced to nothing more than a basic television consumer, incapable of anything but watching whatever the "flow" delivers.

Still, Adorno's primary role is as a constituent within the "vestiges of the aesthetic" and he readily places the mass culture, as precipitated most frequently by TV, in a timeline as devolved from "serious" art (159). In defining popular culture through a lens of the marketplace, he suggests that "the more the system of 'merchandising' culture is expanded, the more it tends also to assimilate the 'serious' art of the past by adapting this art to the system's own requirements" (160). While this reinforces Shield's idea about the reinvention of creativity due to the demands of copyrights and trademarks, it is designed to diminish the creative capital and

respectability of the products generated within the medium.[2] For a show such as *The Simpsons,* argued by some as the "age's greatest pop institution" (Turner 429), such a reduction of quality is a confrontational reality. However, in his article "The Triumph of Popular Culture," Matthew Henry presents the artistic value of *The Simpsons* so adeptly that Adorno's arrogant propensities may be stifled. Henry summarizes the censorship battles once facing the program by drawing parallels to the episode "Itchy, Scratchy and Marge." Marge Simpson, the family matriarch, is disgusted by the violence in the cartoon *Itchy and Scratchy* and seeks to censor the program. Her endeavor proves successful, but as the episode ends, her "watchdog group now wants to ban the appearance of Michelangelo's *David*. Marge is opposed to this idea and thus realizes that if "great art" is to be protected from censorship, popular art must be as well" (273). *The Simpsons* is proven as popular art, but the reception of Henry's article has proven to be the seminal discourse about *The Simpsons* within the postmodern construction. In addressing the intellectual underpinnings necessitated by the value-laden theory, and drawing parallels of the program to creative movements outside of popular culture, Henry confirms the discovery of a valid art product within TV. That product is *The Simpsons.*

Mary Sirridge supports the inquisition for creative cultural capital in TV as well. By interpreting television under Leo Tolstoy's theory of art, Sirridge locates artistic merit in the mass medium. Primarily, because the technology broadcasts "common cultural property" accessible to anyone, it maintains Tolstoy's expectation that art shares a universal quality (110). Secondly, since popular programming stimulates social reflection, community dialogue and expresses "feelings that a large number of people want to feel and feel they ought to feel," Tolstoy's requirement for art to support brotherhood and challenge injustices is sustained, as well (110). Because *The Simpsons* executes these two considerations, the program is valuable to

---

[2] Adorno fails to cite any particular television programs that he uses to "support" his essay.

Tolstoy's theory. Broadcast on FOX, and extensively syndicated, *The Simpsons* is accessible to a large audience. Moreover, in spite of its qualification as an animated program, the audience crosses into every generation. Groening addresses this phenomenon, saying "I like to think it's something that's going to be family entertainment in a new sense. It's going to offer something for every member of the family, depending upon whatever level they're going to meet the show" (qtd. in Mittell 21). *The Simpsons* is also utilized frequently in the generation of myriad academic discussions, in America and abroad. Conversations of philosophy, colonial theory, media, religion, feminist theory and sexuality, music, psychology, cultural imperialism and urbanity have all found inspiration from *The Simpsons* text (Knox; Cherniavsky; Gray; Pinsky; Neuhaus; Kutnowski; Wood & Todd; et. al.). With this valued multiplicity, the program is a worldwide inspiration. Therefore, in spite of the detrimental perceptions of early postmodern thinkers, the general medium of TV and *The Simpsons*, more specifically, generates legitimate constructions with artistic quality and the productive capacity of television can be included in the dialogues of creativity.

However, because TV is a newer medium, the artistic requirements of producing a television program should not be overlooked. In fact, the creative processes generating weekly programs such as *The Simpsons* integrates far more layers of art than many of the creative products preceding the electronic age. In May of 1958, Russell Brain lectured on *The Nature of Experience* and the processes of abstraction within the general practice of art. In his third lecture, "Symbol and Image," he discusses the neurological necessities in creating and perceiving art and defines all creativities as "the communication of feelings" (68). Moreover, he divides art into three distinguishable categories: visual, musical and poetic (55; 57; 58). However, within the practice of television these categories are not distinctive, but rather fully integrated. Programs

such as *The Simpsons* resonate complexity within all three fields of creative practice, existing as a visual creation (animation) that is sound supportive (voiceover dialogue and musical orchestration) and wanes poetic (storytelling narratives with character development). With this realization, the postmodern definition of TV "text" is better defined as a multiplicity of creative forces synthesizing at once.

Within a technological definition, television is a synthesis of multiple creative forces, as well. In fact, it could be described as a (re)construction of multiple fragments; however, the inception of TV definitely precedes postmodern theory. Nevertheless, to support a total examination of the character of television in *The Simpsons*, it is important to understand this medium as a technology. Raymond Williams describes television as coalescence of multiple technologies from various intentions. An integration of electricity, telegraphy, photography, moving pictures, and radio with industrial production models and increased capitalization "created new needs but also new possibilities, and the communications systems, down to television, were their intrinsic outcome" (42). Therefore, TV became a valuable tool with social, economic and political components, thereby allowing a simplification of multiple, once disparate, capacities. Though TV quickly became a "new technology of social communication," Williams warns against the initial postmodern suspicion that "broadcasting can be diagnosed as a… form of social integration" by emphasizing that "unlike all previous communications technologies, radio and television were systems primarily devised for transmission and reception as abstract process, with little or no definition of preceding content" (43; 45; 46). Television simply evolved from older technologies into new form with no direct ideation for the outcome. However, Williams does place importance on the recent practice of increased investment in TV's model for social communications, a decision which results in a "restraining complex of financial

institutions, of cultural expectations…as the effect of a technology [that] is in fact a social complex of a new and central kind" (46; 50; 50). As David Marc corroborates, the thinking man may now legitimately fear "the threat of a total corporate takeover of culture" through the "cultural delivery system" of TV (160; 158). Therefore, even at its technological level, the intention of television is as a forum for communication, thereby expanding the artistic possibilities of the medium under Brain's basic definition of art's communicative capacity.

The Simpsons consistently engages itself in the heated dialogue concerning the potential psychological manipulations of television, for no one is more influenced by TV than Homer Simpson. In Brian Ott's postmodern "(re)construction" of Homer's identity, he argues that the television father is so susceptible to onslaught and influence of "anything and everything churned out by the culture industries" that he actually becomes the media landscape (66). Any number of textual examples could reinforce Ott's theory, but one episode powerfully illustrates this truth. In Episode 2F06, "Homer Bad Man", the series' classic practice in weaving seemingly random narrative events together leaves Homer accused of sexual harassment. As the viewer knows, he is innocent. He was simply peeling the most rare gummi candy known to man, the Gummi Venus di Milo, from a woman's butt. However, society's political correctness vilifies Homer and he becomes a scourge. In desperation, a shantytown of protestors on his front lawn, Homer falls to his knees and seeks salvation through prayer. The phone rings and Homer finds rescue… through television. " 'Hello, Homer. This is God...frey Jones from the TV magazine show 'Rock Bottom'" ("Homer Bad Man"). Unfortunately, his is a dark journey to redemption because this tabloid program edits Homer's interview so egregiously that his guilt seems even more preponderant.[3] As the media circus grows, the Simpson family is trapped inside their home.

---

[3] This episode is steeped with media criticism. It is difficult to select particular examples for reason of brevity. Furthermore, copyright issues challenge the ease of imbedding clips from the show to a website, even though the

The TV becomes their only connection to the outside world. The media landscape becomes littered with various clips indirectly related to the alleged harassment: talk shows about families reunited over their hatred of Homer Simpson; 24/7 news feeds from "outside the Simpson estate" (a clear jab at the OJ Simpson media coverage); a made-for-TV movie on the Fox network, *The Simpsons* own broadcaster, titled *Homer S.: Portrait of an Ass Grabber*. With such reiterative messaging infiltrating his home, and mind, even Homer and his family begin to question his innocence. Bart articulates this conflicted psychology the best, saying "It's just hard not to listen to TV: it's spent so much more time raising us than you have." Finally, because of "the cyclical nature of [TV's] narrative" that requires the "character's entrapment in their circumstances" in order to support a consistent, reliable environment for the television audience (Crisell 123), Homer's innocence is returned by the end of the episode. In the final scene, the family's dialogue begins suggesting amnesia of the episode's events, and as they head to bed, Homer is shown hugging the TV set, whispering, "Let's never fight again." Fade.

This extensive interplay of social and media criticisms within "Homer Bad Man" supports multiple discussions of media's influence on society. For example, the various "programs-within-the-program" confirm Barbara Lee's contention about " the role of television in providing the 'gossip' of society," Ott's notion that "television is a powerful socializing agent in contemporary culture," and Adorno's observation that TV's "rigid institutionalization transforms modern mass culture into a medium of undreamed of psychological control" (152; 60; 160). Because Homer, his family and society become so enthralled and consumed by the presentational value in TV during the events of the episode, their "amusement tends to set patterns for the members of the audience without their being aware of it" (Adorno 167). As this

---

multiplicity of descriptive forms in the "interview" is hilarious. The clock behind Homer acts as a tell of the editing process, for the hands are in constant motion from various incongruous times while Homer seems to be speaking in one narrative flow.

media apparatus goes horribly awry, Homer begins to doubt his own clear understanding of the truth. And perhaps this runs parallel to the viewing audience at home, as well. Crisell defines this consequence of viewing within the postmodern context and explains that TV programs are "a stream of disparate yet vivid pictures… in which factual and fictional images seem to be indistinguishable [and] of equal truth-status" (131). Like the "flow" shaping Jameson's postmodern theory, the onslaught of textual information can only be filtered by the viewer, who might be a person "easily deceived by style over substance" (Lee 152)

However, the influence of television is not all of negative value. In spite of its tendency towards challenging "truth-status," the medium is a powerful tool of communication, generates an intersection of "global cultural traffic," and, as some scholars explain, "becomes part of the 'social cement' that maintains family relationships" (Crisell 170; Lee 153). It is therefore not surprising that *The Simpsons* often uses the power of family during its program and represents the importance of television within the contemporary familial dynamic.[4] The most relevant example in *The Simpsons* is the consistent imagery of the family gravitating home to sit together (in front of the television) at the beginning of each episode.

In 1992, *The Simpsons* writer/producer Al Jean divulged that "some of the most creative stuff we write comes from just having the Simpsons watch TV" (qtd. in Ortved 110). Only in its third season at this time, this admission suggests how writers kept the TV set in mind when developing narrative and text. As this character became more important to the show, *The Simpsons* propensity towards satirical representation of TV and society became more common. Since TV exists within the interplay of multiple artistic junctions, and because the technology

[4] Discussion on the value of family could go much deeper. Furthermore, as mentioned, the program serves generous parody upon the sitcom ideology of the family while reinforces important lessons on family values. The episode "Missionary: Impossible" is a solid example of this. Furthermore, the episode layer deeper value to the character analysis of the TV set in the program, for the first act of this episode revolves around PBS afflicting Homer Simpson's reality due to unpaid telethon donations. However, this expansion must be saved for another time.

itself is a powerful tool of communication, the medium is able to transcend the limitations of art. Shows such as *The Simpsons* fall into a realm of critical social discourse because they use an array of artistic elements in representational multitudes in order to communicate the huge variety of perceptions littering media production, and the world beyond. Moreover, the program is fully aware of its place as a cultural commodity. Even Homer Simpson, the most media afflicted member of the family knows that as "a white male, age 18 to 49. Everyone listens to me, no matter how dumb my suggestions are" ("Lisa Vs. Malibu Stacy").[5] It is such striking dialogue, so grounded in honest acceptance of the entire landscape of what television is, in which it exists, both as a process and a product, that impels such confident discourse on *The Simpsons*.

Regardless, the complexities of Postmodernism's intertextuality, self-reflection and parody, overlaid upon the multiple artistic potentials of the "video flow," broadcast from an integrative technology of impressive consequence for both social communication and the "culture industry," is a heavy reality. And yet, as a viewer of *The Simpsons* finds himself watching the television set of the very family he is watching on his own television set, image and reality blurring, this extensive interplay may be apparent or completely overlooked, wholly insignificant or impressively valid. However, in this process of viewing a product, it does not matter from what perception the viewer gazes. Instead, it is far simpler to hearken back to the world of Henry David Thoreau. "But lo! men have become the tools of their tools." (30) And in this other time and other place, please be advised. Do not bring up Walt Whitman in front of Homer.

---

[5] His suggestion was "Nuts and Gum: Together at last!"

Works Cited

Adorno, Theodor. "How to Look at Television." *The Culture Industry: Selected essays on mass culture.* New York: Routledge Classics, 2001. 158-77.

Brain, W. Russell. "Symbol and Image." *The Nature of Experience*. London: Oxford University Press, 1959. 48-69.

Cherniavsky, Eva. " 'Karmic Realignment': Transnationalism and Trauma in *The Simpsons*." *Cultural Critique* 41 (1999): 139-57.

Crisell, Andrew. *A Study of Modern Television: Thinking inside the Box*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

Gray, Jonathan. "Imagining America: *The Simpsons* Go Global." *Popular Communication*, 5.2 (2007): 129-148.

Gray, Jonathan. "Television Teaching: Parody, *The Simpsons*, and Media Literacy Education." *Critical Studies in Media Communication,* 22.3 (2005): 223-38.

Henry, Matthew. "The Triumph of Popular Culture: Situation Comedy, Postmodernism and *The Simpsons*." *Critiquing the Sitcom,* ed. Joanne Morreale. New York: Syracuse University Press, 2003. 262-73.

Jameson, Frederic. *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1991.

Knox, Simone. "Reading the Ungraspable Double-Codedness of *The Simpsons*." *Journal of Popular Film & Television* 34.2 (2006): 72-81.

Kutnowski, Martin. "Trope and Irony in *The Simspons' Overture*." *Popular Music and Society* 31.5 (2008): 599-616.

Lee, Barbara. "Taking Television Too Seriously-and Not Seriously Enough." *Meanings of the Medium: Perspectives on the Art of Television,* eds. Katherine Usher Henderson and Joseph Anthony Mazzeo. New York: Praeger, 1990. 145-56.

March, David. "The Emergence of Television Criticism, 1920-1988." *Meanings of the Medium: Perspectives on the Art of Television,* eds. Katherine Usher Henderson and Joseph Anthony Mazzeo. New York: Praeger, 1990.

Mittell, Jason. "Cartoon Realism: Genre Mixing and the Cultural Life of *The Simpsons*." *Velvet Light Trap*, 47 (2001): 15-28.

Neuhaus, Jessamyn. "Marge Simpson, Blue-Haired Housewife: Defining Domesticity on *The Simpsons*." *The Journal of Popular Culture* 43.4 (2010): 761-81.

Ortved, John. *I Will Not Write an Uncensored, Unauthorized History of the Simpsons*. New York: Faber and Faber, Inc., 2009.

Ott, Brian L. "'I'm Bart Simpson, who the hell are you?': A Study in Postmodern Identity (Re)Construction." *The Journal of Popular Culture* 37.1 (2003): 56-82.

Pinsky, Mark I. *The Gospel according to* The Simpsons. Louisville KY: Westminster, 2007.

Shields, David. *Reality Hunger: A Manifesto*. New York: Borzoi Books, 2010.

The Simpsons. Created by Matt Groening. FOX Television Network, 1989 – 2010. Personal DVD collection.

_____. "Homer Badman." *The Simpsons: The Complete Sixth Season*. Writ. Greg Daniels. Dir. Jeffrey Lynch. FOX, 2005. DVD.

_____. "Homer the Moe." *The Simpsons: The Complete Thirteenth Season*. Writ. Dana Gould. Dir.Jen Kamerman. FOX, 2010. DVD.

_____. "Homer Vs. Patty & Selma." *The Simpsons: The Complete Sixth Season*. Writ. Brent Forrestor. Dir. Mark Kirkland. FOX, 2005. DVD.

_____. "Lisa V. Malibu Stacy." *The Simpsons: The Complete Fifth Season*. Writ. Bill Oakley and Josh Weinstein. Dir. Jeffrey Lynch. FOX, 2004. DVD.

_____. "Mayored to the Mob." *The Simpsons: The Complete Tenth Season*. Writ. Ron Hauge. Dir. Swinton O. Scott III. FOX, 2007. DVD.

_____. "Missionary: Impossible." *The Simpsons: The Complete Eleventh Season*. Writ. Ron Hauge. Dir. Steven Dean Moore. FOX, 2008. DVD.

_____. "Simpsoncalifragilisticexpiala-(ANNOYED GRUNT)cious." *The Simpsons: The Complete Eighth Season*. Writ. Al Jean and Mike Reiss. Dir. Chuck Sheetz. FOX, 2006. DVD.

_____. "Treehouse of Horror V." *The Simpsons: The Complete Sixth Season*. Writ. Count Greg Danula and Dearly Daparted Dan McGrath, David Cohen's Severed Hand, Blob Kushell. Dir. Jaundiced Jim Reardon. FOX, 2005. DVD.

Sirridge, Mary. "The Good, the Bad, and the Counterfeit: A Tolstoyan Theory of Narrative." *Meanings of the Medium: Perspectives on the Art of Television,* eds. Katherine Usher Henderson and Joseph Anthony Mazzeo. New York: Praeger, 1990. 103-28.

Spigel, Lynn. “The Suburban Home Companion: Television and the neighborhood ideal in postwar America.” *The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader*, ed. Amelia Jones. New York: Routledge, 2003. 329-36.

Thoreau, Henry David. *Walden and Other Writings*. New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1993.

Turner, Chris. *Planet Simpson: How a cartoon masterpiece defined a generation*. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2004.

Williams, Raymond. “The Technology and the Society.” *Electronic Media and Technoculture*, ed. John Thorton Caldwell. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2000. 35-50.

Wood, Andrew & Todd, Anne Marie. “ ‘Are We There Yet?’: Searching for Springfield and *The Simpsons’* Rhetoric of Omnitopia.” *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 22.3 (2005): 207-22.