ECSTASY OF INFLUENCE ASSIGNMENT (5%)

You will receive 5 marks if you submit this assignment in Blackboard before class begins on Sept 16 AND you are present in class on the 16th for our discussion of the essay.

Read “[The Ecstasy of Influence](http://harpers.org/archive/2007/02/the-ecstasy-of-influence/)” by Jonathan Lethem.

Choose a passage in the reading "The ecstasy of influence" that interests you. It could be a passage that you don't understand and would like to have clarified, or one that raises questions in your mind. It could be a passage that you find quite enjoyable, or congenial and interesting and that you would like to talk about. Or it could be one that brings to mind something in your own experience. It could be a passage you disagree with and would like to take exception to. Something you would like to discuss.

**Note: Do NOT use the following passage**, which I used for my sample post (you will find it in the forum), unless you want to enter into a dialogue with my post about it.

In a courtroom scene from The Simpsons that has since entered into the television canon, an argument over the ownership of the animated characters Itchy and Scratchy rapidly escalates into an existential debate on the very nature of cartoons. “Animation is built on plagiarism!” declares the show’s hot-tempered cartoon-producer-within-a-cartoon, Roger Meyers Jr. “You take away our right to steal ideas, where are they going to come from?” If nostalgic cartoonists had never borrowed from *Fritz the Cat*, there would be no *Ren & Stimpy Show*; without the Rankin/Bass and Charlie Brown Christmas specials, there would be no *South Park*; and without *The Flintstones* — more or less *The Honeymooners* in cartoon loincloths — *The Simpsons* would cease to exist. If those don’t strike you as essential losses, then consider the remarkable series of “plagiarisms” that links Ovid’s “Pyramus and Thisbe” with Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* and Leonard Bernstein’s *West Side Story*, or Shakespeare’s description of Cleopatra, copied nearly verbatim from Plutarch’s life of Mark Antony and also later nicked by T. S. Eliot for *The Waste Land*. If these are examples of plagiarism, then we want more plagiarism.

Paste the passage you have chosen into a Word doc (or whatever you use for Word processing).

Write a short paragraph or two explaining your thoughts on the passage below it. Now go to the Discussion Forum in Blackboard that has been created for this assignment, create a new thread, and paste your passage and your discussion into it. Feel free to comment on other people's posts and I will try to comment on some myself. Have fun!

**Due BEFORE CLASS BEGINS on Sept 16.**