

= George Meyer =

George A. Meyer (born 1956) is an American producer and writer . Meyer is best known for his work on The Simpsons , where he led the group script rewrite sessions . He has been publicly credited with " thoroughly shap [ing] ... the comedic sensibility " of the show .

Raised in Tucson , Meyer attended Harvard University . There , after becoming president of the Harvard Lampoon , he graduated in 1978 with a degree in biochemistry . Abandoning plans to attend medical school , Meyer attempted to make money through dog racing but failed after two months . After a series of short @-@ term jobs he was hired in 1981 by David Letterman , on the advice of two of Meyer 's Harvard Lampoon cowriters , to join the writing team of his show Late Night with David Letterman .

Meyer left after two seasons and went on to write for The New Show , Not Necessarily the News and Saturday Night Live . Tired of life in New York , Meyer moved to Boulder , Colorado where he wrote a screenplay for a film for Letterman to star in . The project fell through and Meyer then founded the humor zine Army Man which garnered a strong following , although Meyer ended it after three issues . The producer Sam Simon was a fan and he hired Meyer to write for the animated sitcom The Simpsons in 1989 . He has held a number of positions on the show and also cowrote The Simpsons Movie . Meyer is in a relationship with the writer Maria Semple and the two have a daughter .

= = Early life and education = =

Born in Pennsylvania , United States in 1956 , Meyer grew up in Tucson , Arizona . He is the eldest of eight children in a Roman Catholic family of German ancestry . His parents both worked in the real estate business . Meyer has made jokes about his somewhat unhappy childhood , stating that one common argument in his household was " which family member ruined a holiday " , while his sister noted Meyer was frequently blamed for the family 's problems . Due to its size , family activities were limited so Meyer watched lots of television and read Mad magazine . He was an Eagle Scout and an altar boy and wrote for the student newspaper . He grew up hoping to one day become either a priest or ballplayer . He was disinterested in television , only finding humor in Get Smart and Batman , where he appreciated its " loopy , irreverent humor . "

Meyer attended Harvard University where he served as president of the Harvard Lampoon . The fact that people took humor " very seriously " at the Lampoon " changed [Meyer 's] life " . In 1977 , he and several other Lampoon staffers wrote The Harvard Lampoon Big Book of College Life (ISBN 0385134460) , a volume commissioned by Doubleday . Aside from the Lampoon , his grades at Harvard were average and he suffered several bouts of depression . He graduated in 1978 with a degree in biochemistry and was accepted into medical school , but decided not to enroll .

Meyer commented on his Roman Catholic upbringing in a 2000 New Yorker profile :

" People talk about how horrible it is to be brought up Catholic , and it 's all true . The main thing was that there was no sense of proportion . I would chew a piece of gum at school , and the nun would say , ' Jesus is very angry with you about that , ' and on the wall behind her would be a dying , bleeding guy on a cross . That 's a horrifying image to throw at a little kid . You really could almost think that your talking in line , say , was on a par with killing Jesus . "

= = Career = =

After college , Meyer moved to Denver , Colorado , planning to " scientifically " win a fortune through dog racing . However , he ran out of money after two weeks . He then worked in a variety of jobs including as a substitute teacher , and a salesman in a clothing store , and also won \$ 2 @, @ 000 on the game show Jeopardy ! . He at one point worked in a research lab as an assistant , studying glycoproteins " in the hope that they would prove the key to cell @-@ cell recognition . " Meanwhile , fellow Lampoon writers Tom Gammill and Max Pross suggested Meyer to comedian David Letterman who , along with head writer Merrill Markoe , hired him as a member of the writing

staff on Letterman 's new late night show . Letterman noted : " Everything in his submission , down to the last little detail , was so beautifully honed . " Meyer wrote several recurring gags for the show , including " Crushing Things With A Steamroller " . His ambitions for the show were grandiose ; " I wanted to challenge the audience every night , stagger them with brilliance , blast them into a higher plane of existence , " he later explained .

Meyer left to write for The New Show in late 1983 , a short @-@ lived variety series from Saturday Night Live creator Lorne Michaels . He shared an office with writer Jack Handey , who he credited with giving him comedy advice . Following this , he joined the writing teams at Not Necessarily the News , and Saturday Night Live beginning in 1985 . He later called working on SNL an " exhilarating , frustrating , stressful , and indelible experience . " Meyer 's work was not well regarded among the SNL writers and producers . He said : " My stuff wasn 't very popular at Saturday Night . It was regarded as really fringe , and a lot of times my sketches would get cut . Sometimes they would get cut after dress rehearsal , and I would have the horrible experience of looking out and seeing a painter carefully touching up my set and getting it all ready to be smashed to pieces and sent to a landfill in Brooklyn . It was just a mismatch , although I didn 't realize it at the time . " He left the show in 1987 .

Meyer moved to Boulder , Colorado because he " just wanted to get as far from the New York environment as [he] could . " There , he wrote a film script for Letterman ; the project was dropped due to the success of Letterman 's show , although several of its jokes were later used in The Simpsons when no other ideas could be found . He spent time " skiing , going to poetry readings , and trying to meet girls from the University of Colorado . " He founded the humor zine Army Man ; he wrote the eight @-@ page first issue almost wholly by himself , publishing just 200 copies which he gave to his friends . Meyer had been disappointed by the decline of the National Lampoon and felt that there was no longer a magazine which has the sole purpose of being funny . By starting Army Man he " tried to make something that had no agenda other than to make you laugh . " He claimed that " [he] didn 't know what [he] was doing , " and reprinted material without obtaining permission , including a review of Cannonball Run II . He added : " I like to think that Army Man was somewhere between a real publication and a very irresponsible , lawbreaking zine . " Army Man gained a strong following and was listed on Rolling Stone 's " Hot List " in 1989 . Meyer noted : " The only rule was that the stuff had to be funny and pretty short . To me , the quintessential Army Man joke was one of John Swartzwelder 's : ' They can kill the Kennedys . Why can 't they make a cup of coffee that tastes good ? ' It 's a horrifying idea juxtaposed with something really banal @-@ and yet there 's a kind of logic to it . It 's illuminating because it 's kind of how Americans see things : Life 's a big jumble , but somehow it leads to something I can consume . I love that . " Meyer suspended publication with the third issue , after offers to take the magazine national made him fear that it would lose its best qualities . According to The Believer : " In comedy circles , [Army Man has] taken on almost mythological proportions . " This was met with varying reactions from Meyer , who felt " embarrassed when people build it up as this monumental work of comedy . It was just a silly little escapade , never meant to be enshrined . "

One reader was Sam Simon , a producer of the animated sitcom The Simpsons . He sent Meyer a compilation reel of Simpsons shorts from Fox variety show The Tracey Ullman Show that preceded the development of the series . Meyer turned down the job initially , but was offered a second chance to work as a creative consultant in the fall of 1989 , which he accepted . Simon hired Meyer along with Army Man contributors Swartzwelder and Jon Vitti . Meyer often played an active role in the show 's extensive group script rewriting sessions in the " rewrite room " a role he performed more than solo script work ; indeed he has only been credited for writing twelve episodes . A. O. Scott described him as the " guru " of the room . In the room , according to Mike Reiss , writers would " involuntarily glance at Meyer for approval when they pitch lines of their own " . By 1995 , Meyer became tired of the show 's lengthy writing schedule and decided to leave after the sixth season to work on a film or TV pilot script . He soon returned , however , as a consultant and later as a part of the writing staff again and an executive producer . In 2004 he noted : " It 's hard to leave The Simpsons . Every once in a while I get romantic notions that I should be doing something much more subterranean . Something like Army Man , or maybe guerrilla filmmaking . " He has attempted

several TV projects that were not picked up . He left the show in 2006 , and received his final credits in season 17 . Meyer returned to co @-@ write the 2007 film adaptation of the show , The Simpsons Movie , which he later had mixed feelings about : " We worked so hard , and people liked it , but it still feels slapdash to me . ?

Meyer has been publicly credited with " thoroughly shap [ing] ... the comedic sensibility " of The Simpsons ; in 2000 , Mike Scully , the show runner for the series at the time , called him " the best comedy writer in Hollywood . " Scully said he was " the main reason " why The Simpsons [was] still so good after all these years . " Vitti has said Meyer 's " fingerprints are on nearly every script " and he " exerts as much influence on the show as anyone can without being one of the creators , " while recounting how " a show that you have the writer 's credit for will run , and the next day people will come up to you and tell you how great it was . Then they 'll mention their two favorite lines , and both of them will be George 's . " Bill Oakley noted Meyer has " he 's been there since the beginning adding thousands of jokes and plot twists , etc . , that everyone considers classic and brilliant .

Meyer has a " deep suspicion of social institutions and tradition in general , " which has affected the writing of his own episodes of The Simpsons such as " Homer the Heretic " , " Mr. Lisa Goes to Washington " and " Bart vs. Thanksgiving " . For his work on The Simpsons , Saturday Night Live and Late Night with David Letterman , Meyer has won and received multiple Primetime Emmy Award nominations , including the award for Outstanding Writing in a Variety Or Music Program in 1989 .

In addition to his work on The Simpsons , Meyer wrote , directed , and starred in his own play , Up Your Giggy , which ran for two weeks at a West Hollywood theater in 2002 . In 2005 , Meyer cowrote the TBS special Earth to America .

= = Personal life = =

Meyer is in a relationship with the writer Maria Semple . They lived together during the 1990s and broke up in 1999 , but later got back together . Their child , named Poppy Valentina after Valentina Tereshkova , was born in 2003 ; being a father gave Meyer a " sense of hopefulness " . They live in Seattle . Although raised a Catholic , Meyer hated it and later became agnostic . While working at The Simpsons he became an atheist , taking the advice of fellow writer Mike Reiss . He is a vegetarian , gambler , collector of space program memorabilia and practices yoga . Meyer is a fan of the Grateful Dead with Jerry Garcia being the " closest thing in Meyer 's life to a spiritual figure . " His sister Ann is married to Jon Vitti .

Meyer has a strong interest in the environment and notes that " the only organization that I really care about these days " is Conservation International . In 2005 , a newly discovered species of moss frogs from Sri Lanka was named *Philautus poppiae* after Meyer 's daughter Poppy , a tribute to Meyer 's and Semple 's dedication to the Global Amphibian Assessment .

In 2006 he wrote a comic , cautionary opinion piece about the environment for BBC News . It begins :

" Are you a hypocrite ? Because I certainly am . I 'm an animal lover who wears leather shoes ; a vegetarian who can 't resist smoked salmon . I badger my friends to see the Al Gore movie , but I also fly on fuel @-@ gulping jets . Great clouds of hypocrisy swirl around me . But even a fraud has feelings . And this summer , I 'm feeling uneasy ; I 'm starting to think that our culture 's frenzied and mindless assault on the last shreds of nature may not be the wisest course . "

= = Credits = =

Late Night with David Letterman (1982 ? 1984) ? writer

Not Necessarily the News (1983 ? 1986) ? writer

The New Show (1984) ? writer

Saturday Night Live (1985 ? 1987) ? writer

Vanishing America (1986) ? co @-@ writer (with Rich Hall)

The Simpsons (1989 ? 2006) ? writer and producer

" The Crepes of Wrath " (along with Sam Simon , John Swartzwelder and Jon Vitti)
" Bart vs. Thanksgiving "
" Blood Feud "
" Mr. Lisa Goes to Washington "
" Treehouse of Horror II " (contributor)
" Separate Vocations "
" Homer the Heretic "
" Bart 's Inner Child "
" Sunday , Cruddy Sunday " (along with Tom Martin , Brian Scully and Mike Scully)
" Brother 's Little Helper "
" Behind the Laughter " (along with Tim Long , Mike Scully , and Matt Selmán)
" The Parent Rap " (along with Mike Scully)
The Edge (1992 ? 1993) ? writer
A.U.S.A. (2003) ? consulting producer
Complete Savages (2004 ? 2005) ? producer
I ? Huckabees (2004) ? Credited (along with Maria Semple) as " Formal Couple " .
Earth To America (2005) ? cowriter
The Simpsons Movie (2007) ? cowriter