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Cartoon Simpsons Parody Deemed Child Pornography

A NSW Supreme Court judge has ruled that an Internet parody involving look-alike child characters from The Simpsons engaged in sexual acts, as child pornography. Furthermore, a Sydney man has been convicted of possessing this “supposed” child pornography after police discovered samples of such cartoons on his computer. The implications of this ruling are far-reaching and ominous. It potentially means that retailers or readers in possession of “hentai” (Japanese sex comics), “yaoi” (“boy love” comics aimed at the teenage girl market), and erotic comics fiction featuring underage characters, could in theory be prosecuted.

UK writer Neil Gaiman weighed in on this case on his blog:

“I suspect the Judge might have just inadvertently granted human rights to cartoon characters... The idea that you could be arrested in the Western World for having that image in your computer is mind-boggling, let alone for owning *Lost Girls* [an erotic graphic novel], or for doodling members of the *Peanuts* gang doing things they tended not to do in the Schulz comics, or for reading *Harry Potter* slash, or owning the *Brass Eye* Paedophilia special... The ability to distinguish between fiction and reality is, I think, an important indicator of sanity, perhaps the most important. And it looks like the Australian legal system has failed on that score.”

The ASA and the Comics/Graphic Novels Portfolio will be following this issue closely. To read more about this case and other Australian censorship issues targeting comics, check out:

Neil Gaiman: <http://journal.neilgaiman.com/2008/12/word-person-included-fictional-or.html>

Black Mermaid Productions:

<http://blackmermaidproductions.blogspot.com/2008/12/simpsons-internet-cartoon-parody-judged.html>

ComicMix: <http://www.comicmix.com/news/2008/11/22/interview-tim-pilcher-talks-erotica-part-1/>

<http://www.comicmix.com/news/2008/11/23/interview-tim-pilcher-talks-erotica-part-2/>

~ *Julie Ditrich* 1