UNIVERSIDAD DE MÁLAGA

GRADO EN ESTUDIOS INGLESES

ASIGNATURA TRABAJO FIN DE GRADO

An Analysis of the Presence of Literature in *The Simpsons*

Realizado por

LAURA CARMEN DÍAZ MORENO

Tutora

Dra. MARÍA DOLORES NARBONA CARRIÓN

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FACULTAD DE FILOSOFÍA Y LETRAS

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Fdo.: **Laura Carmen Díaz Moreno**	Fdo.: **María Dolores Narbona Carrión**

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TITLE: "An Analysis of the Presence of Literature in *The Simpsons*"

KEYWORDS: *The Simpsons*, literature, intertextuality, Mark Twain, William Shakespeare, Edgar Allan Poe, teaching literature.

SUMMARY: The highly-acclaimed American TV show known as *The Simpsons* has become a referent in the development of several studies related to a variety of disciplines. Notwithstanding, little attention has been devoted to the impact of literature on this program. The central issue addressed in this paper, then, is the way in which literature is frequently presented within these cartoons. Given this orientation, it will be convenient to explain the concept of *intertextuality* together with the different ways in which this notion normally operates within the series. Special attention will be paid to three canonical authors, namely Mark Twain, William Shakespeare and Edgar Allan Poe. A major trait will be given to the classic works *Hamlet* and "The Raven" by Shakespeare and Poe, respectively. The analysis will conclude with the assets and drawbacks that can be derived from the study of literature along with *The Simpsons*.

TÍTULO: Análisis de la presencia de la literatura en *Los Simpson*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Los Simpson*, literatura, intertextualidad, Mark Twain, William Shakespeare, Edgar Allan Poe, enseñanza de la literatura.

RESUMEN: La aclamada serie americana conocida como *Los Simpson* se ha convertido en un referente para la elaboración de numerosos estudios de diversa naturaleza. No obstante, cuando se trata de investigar el impacto de la literatura sobre este programa, los recursos son escasos. Por ello, este proyecto tiene como objeto el estudio de las formas más frecuentes en las que solemos encontrar la literatura en estos dibujos animados. En base a este enfoque, será conveniente explicar el concepto de *intertextualidad*, así como las distintas maneras en las que este suele operar. Se prestará mayor atención a los autores Mark Twain, William Shakespeare y Edgar Allan Poe –todos pertenecientes al canon– y a los textos clásicos de *Hamlet* y "El cuervo". Finalmente, el análisis dispondrá de una sección acerca de las ventajas y desventajas que puede aportar el estudio conjunto de la literatura con *Los Simpson*.

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To my dear family,

for their unconditional love and support.

And especially to my grandparents,

may this dedication make your days happier.

CONTENTS

1. Introduction

The multifunctional discipline of literature is mainly seen as a universal and timeless artistic field of study. It is also characterised by its capacity to update itself so as to suit modern society's needs. Its multifaceted nature allows this art to behave, besides, as a medium of entertainment, knowledge enhancement and social denouncement which attracts a wide scope of audience, irrespective of age, to become participants in its unceasing production. Aware of this, many specialities have borrowed some devices and works from literature with the purpose of achieving a similar effect in their artistic creations.

One of such domains is the well-known field of media, which, alike some branches of literature, depends on constant adaptation to the demands of popular culture. Within this field, cartoons are increasingly arousing interest among scholars and other professionals –e.g. teachers– due to their capacity of raising consciousness on some delicate issues in the guise of being exclusively for entertainment. An obvious example of this is the 21st century prime-time cartoons known as *The Simpsons*. Its worldwide popularity, together with its ability to appeal to audiences of all ages, provides sufficient motives for the choice of this series as the ground of this analysis.

Additionally, the plenitude of scientific disciplines with which this show interacts allows the implementation of a variety of critical approaches, among which literature is not left behind. The heterogenous library that this series has created offers the possibility of applying various focuses of analysis. Some notable examples are the study of literary devices (e.g. figures of speech), the discussion of literary theories (e.g. feminism or psychoanalysis, among others), the distinction of literary genres, and the

understanding of the dynamics of intertextuality. The latter will be of special interest for the current project.

The present study attempts to research on the presence of literature in the area of media by examining the intertextual references illustrated by *The Simpsons*. With this aim in mind, the notion of *intertextuality* warrants research attention for two main reasons. First, very frequently, this concept is employed by the program to allude to a literary element. And second, the different sublevels that constitute this broader category (*allusions*, *pastiche* and *parody*) contribute to the communication of diverse messages, which this paper aims to decode. In this respect, section 3.2 will be committed to provide definitions for these terms so as to guarantee the proper comprehension of the analysis developed in section 4. Equally important in the inference of the adaptation's purpose will be the notion of *satire*.

In a parallel way to literature, the humorous and, yet, satirical literary recreations presented by Matt Groaning's series can serve for many distinct purposes, among which entertainment and criticism prevail. In this regard, Mark Twain's literature, characterised by the use of humour and irony, has become a referent for the series, both in general and in particular. Hence, this classic author will precede the explanations of the literary works selected for the analysis (section 4.1). Special attention will be paid to the comparison and contrast of two literary reworkings –William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1603) and Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven" (1845)– with the objective of unearthing the writers' intended meaning (sections 4.2 and 4.3). The evidence found will confirm the predominance of society and literature as targets of criticism. Finally, the results of this study will help determine a series of advantages and drawbacks that may be obtained from the usage of a TV program like *The Simpsons* as a complementary tool for the study of literature (section 4.4).

2. Methodology

The design of this paper is mainly based on a qualitative methodology, which aims at analysing the different ways in which literature can be represented in other domains –particularly within media– and the purpose lying behind its implementation. For this task, I have particularly selected the highly influential cartoons known as *The Simpsons* (1989-). The reasons for this choice will be explained in greater detail in section 3, but for now, I will expose the genesis of this study and I will explain all the steps followed as well as the material required in order to carry out my research.

2.1. Origins and Objectives of the Project

After watching several TV literary adaptations of classic and contemporary works included in the curriculum of this Degree on English Studies (e.g. Cary Fukunaga's *Jane Eyre* (2011), Joe Wright's *Atonement* (2007) or Kenneth Branagh's countless literary recreations), my interest in how literature is present in other domains increased. Particularly appealing was the way in which artistic creators played with the different literary components found in the source text depending on the meaning they wanted to convey.

In the light of what has been stated, this analysis will be committed to the fulfilment of three functions. Firstly, the provision of enough evidence –e.g. examples of literary references– to prove literature's influence upon *The Simpsons*. Secondly, the comparison and contrast of two significant literary recreations with their respective source texts, namely *Hamlet* and "The Raven." And, thirdly, the inference of the purpose lying behind the literary adaptations. Equally important for this paper will be the audience response to these reworkings. All these tasks will lead to the observation

of a series of advantages and disadvantages regarding the study of literature with the aid of *The Simpsons* in section 4.4.

2.2. Theoretical Background

This research is interested in the investigation of the relation of literature with other fields of study. Consequently, section 3.1 will be devoted to examining the presence of literature in disciplines of diverse nature, such as arts, music or media. Given this orientation, I have selected a number of sources related to more general aspects of literature. Therefore, the analysis will follow a gradual structure that parts from the representation of literature in other creative forms of expression in general (3.1), to the specific presence of this artistic discipline in *The Simpsons* (3.3).

2.2.1. Sources

It is important to bear in mind that, despite the increasing sum of studies carried out in recent years about *The Simpsons* and its influence upon diverse academic subjects, the number of resources found with respect to literature cannot be considered particularly wide. Hence, this analysis will depend on both academic writings and non-academic websites, such as *Simpsons Wiki*. All these sources of information will be specified in section 6.

Additionally, audio-visual products –i.e. episodes from *The Simpsons*– will be necessary given the nature of the product of this analysis. These will be illustrated through an episode code consisting in the nomenclature "SxEy," where "S" and "E" mean season and episode, respectively, and "x" and "y" stand for the corresponding number.

2.2.2. Terminology

A variety of authors, including Waltonen and Du Vernay (2010), have pointed out the relevance of understanding the concepts of *satire*, *parody*, *pastiche* or *allusion* as a starting point for the analysis of literature in *The Simpsons*. With the exception of *satire*, all these terms constitute the paradigm of *intertextuality*. Accordingly, section 3.2 will be committed to the description of these akin notions. Given the affinity existing between *parody* and *satire*, as well as the great impact of the latter on *The Simpsons*, this section will also pay attention to its definition.

2.3. Episode Selection

The number of literary references that can be found in *The Simpsons* seems to be as endless as the show itself. As Heffernan points out, "the series itself, and each episode as a single text, are littered with references to popular culture, historical events, and literature throughout the ages" (4). We can find writers from diverse nationalities (British, American, Belgian, Russian…), belonging to a variety of periods of time (classic and contemporary), authors of different literary genres (fiction, poetry and theatre), and of various genders (Charles Dickens, Tom Wolfe, Emily Dickinson, or J. K. Rowling, among others).

As a result, many authors have been forced to choose a criterion that allows the grouping of the most suitable episodes for their analysis. For instance, authors like Marta-Lazo, Ruiz del Olmo and Tovar Lasheras focused on episodes from the first eight seasons, whereas others like Hellgren specified three criteria which prioritised the availability of the episodes in easily accessible sources, such as *The Simpsons Archive*. The criteria chosen for this analysis aims to:

- Be concise, avoiding a classification that may be excessive for this project.
- Prove the relevance of prior knowledge about literary concepts in the understanding of the literary references presented by the series.
- Guarantee the identification of both the authors and the literary works illustrated.

In accordance to these patterns, section 4 will classify the literary references found in *The Simpsons* into three groups which correspond with three of the most popular authors in the series, namely Mark Twain, William Shakespeare and Edgar Allan Poe. Particularly important will be Shakespeare and Poe, the authors of the works selected for the analysis in section 4. Notwithstanding, a more extended classification will be covered in section 7.1 as a proof of the varied catalogue of literary references offered by the cartoons.

These three authors meet the aforementioned requirements. To begin with, the fact that the series resorts to their literary works more than once allows grouping some of the countless literary references into a concise and coherent classification. Moreover, their adapted works present the notions explained in section 3.2.2 (i.e. *allusions*, *parody*, *pastiche* or *satire*), thus allowing to show the importance of having some previous literary knowledge when analysing literature in *The Simpsons*. And finally, the fact that these classical authors are usually studied in literature facilitates the recognition of their literary works.

2.4. Selection of Literary References

The core section of this paper will be divided into four sub-sections, three of which will be committed to the analysis of the literary references of the aforementioned classic

authors. Given the employment of Twain's literature both in the general articulation of the series and in the particular elaboration of certain episodes, this author will serve as a starting point to the section.

Regarding the two other authors, a section will be devoted both to provide a brief compendium of the most significant allusions to their works, and to analyse in greater detail the recreations of their literary texts *Hamlet* and "The Raven." I have selected these two reworkings in particular because their longer duration allows greater discussion on both the intertextual devices employed and the writers' intended meaning. Given the similarity between the recreation of "The Raven" and the source text, I have decided to include the original poem in section 7.2, so that the reader may resort to it during its study.

The last section will be reserved for the advantages and disadvantages already commented in section 2.1. Finally, the project will culminate in a section devoted to the conclusions that can be drawn from the analysis of literature and *The Simpsons* in general, and from the study of literature with the aid of this series in particular. According to what has been stated above, the following section will part from a more general study of literature and its connection with other disciplines.

3. Literature Review

3.1. Literature as a Referent for Other Cultural Products

The discipline of humanities has a long tradition as a medium of human expression with tendency to appeal to a very varied audience. A reason for this is that, behind the aesthetic function of its diverse artistic creations, there lie some emotions, ideas or thoughts related to their creators. Thereupon, combinations between various artistic domains –e.g. literature, arts, music, or even media– emerge with frequency. All these arts, Małgorzata Marciniak points out, "are interrelated because all seek to express the eternally valid truths of man's existence" (67). In consonance with section 2, this section will study such associations with respect to the influential domain of literature, and particularly in relation to the area of media, so as to present the subject of this analysis.

Some well-known paintings such as Sir John Everett Millais's *Ophelia* (1851-2) or John William Waterhouse's *The Lady of Shalott* (1888) were inspired by the literary works of William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1603) and Lord Tennyson's "The Lady of Shalott" (1833), respectively. Likewise, literature has exerted a high influence on multitude of songs such as Kate Bush's "Wuthering Heights" (1978), inspired by Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847), or David Bowie's "1984" (1974), from George Orwell's *1984* (1949). Ultimately, there is literature's influence upon media, a notion best understood as "an intervening agency, means, or instrument," usually linked to messages, and together presenting "new forms and ideas" (Chandler-Olcott). As evidenced by Jonathan Gray, "film, television, music, and other mass media frequently offer audiences ways to make sense of the world" ("Television" 224), either by visually recreating it or by presenting alternative views to current ideologies.

In this context, it is worthwhile to consider a link between media and literature, since, among the functions of the latter, there is the questioning of society. Besides, this relation can be helpful in the understanding of some literary aspects. Hence my choice of television as the medium for my analysis of literary references. Within this medium, the category of animated cartoons proves to be a rich source of education, criticism, information or simply entertainment for different kinds of audiences. To give a brief example, cartoons can be used with students "as stimuli to encourage to creating interest and developing critical thinking and reflective skills" (van Wyk 117). Moreover, their visual impact is immediate "and all students, irrespective of age or background, are able to respond in some way to the educational point being made" (117). These, together with other reasons stated in section 3.3.1, have founded the selection of *The Simpsons* as the referent for my analysis. As John Alberti examines,

> …this "cartoon for grown-ups" inhabits a cultural space between children's television and prime-time programming. This ambiguous cultural space allows producers and writers to take advantage of the resulting uncertainty regarding generic expectations from this mixing of the childlike and the adult, the supposedly trivial and the serious, by being able to treat serious and even controversial issues under the cover of being "just a cartoon." (xiii)

Finally, in all these cultural products, and particularly in media, the presence of literature can be noticed in different aspects, such as famous quotes from canonical pieces, characters based on known literary protagonists, or more extensive literary references. All these are instantiations of the category of *intertextuality*, a notion to be illustrated in more depth in the following section.

3.2. Intertextuality

3.2.1. Definition of Intertextuality

According to Gray, "any attempt to explain the theoretical, comic, or political powers of *The Simpsons* specifically, or of parody more generally, must be preceded by adequate theorization of how intertextuality works" (*Watching* 19). Marshall defines *intertextuality* as a reference to one or more literary texts, which involves the manipulation of these (qtd. in Waltonen 282). Its study requires the analysis of the previous literary works which are being referenced, otherwise the text to analyse would be meaningless (Marshall qtd. in Waltonen 282).

Within this category, literary references can be introduced through various techniques depending on the focus of the analysis. Some authors, like Björn E. Flóki, have observed how, in intertextuality, "works of art or literature" often refer to one another by means of such devices as parody or pastiche (5), as well as allusions. Very often, they are used to pay homage to the source text or to entertain the audience by inviting them to recognise the original work, but they can also appear as a means of criticism.

The following section aims at defining each of these notions in greater detail. Although *The Simpsons* will not be properly presented until section 3.3, section 3.2.2 will provide examples from the series for the definitions of the aforementioned concepts with the purpose of guaranteeing an easier understanding of these terms and the familiarisation with the program to analyse.

3.2.2. Types of Intertextual References

a. Allusions

The first and most common example of intertextuality is *allusion*. An *allusion*, according to Arthur A. Berger, is "a very common technique of humor" (7) which aims

at presenting known characters and events from other texts with some modifications or extra information in a new one, sometimes in a specific way so as to help the reader make a connection (Hellgren 11). Furthermore, they can be very enjoyable, since they provide the reader with the satisfaction of recognising a piece of literature (or whatever is referenced) that they already know (Leppihalme 40).

Allusions reflect the different ways in which literature can be present in other pieces of work, for they can be "a proper name, a famous quote, or only a single word" (Hellgren 9). They can even be a character representing a real-life person related to literature. For instance, in the episode from *The Simpsons* titled "The Regina Monologues" (S15E04), Lisa meets *Harry Potter*'s creator, J.K. Rowling, who is very realistically depicted in the cartoons. We will comment on some of the literary allusions found in the show in section 4.

b. Parody

Parody is a form of intertextuality which "aims to teach and to correct" and can serve, therefore, as a powerful tool to change society (Gray, "Television" 227). Due to the fact that this notion is usually mistaken for *allusions*, *pastiche*, and/or *satire*, it would be very practical to define it in relation to these three concepts:

- Differences between *parody* and *allusion*. The main contrast lies on the length of the reference. *Allusions* are "usually brief, sometimes fleeting" references (Waltonen 271). For instance, the title of one episode, "Much Apu about Nothing" (S07E23), merely refers to the title of Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* (1600), since the plot of the episode has nothing to do with the Bard's play. Conversely, *parodies* are characterised for being "more extended working-through [references] of the original text within the new text" (Waltonen 271). In addition,

while *parodies* may or may not include some piece of criticism, *allusions* are just used for the viewer's entertainment and satisfaction.

- Differences between *parody* and *pastiche*. According to Hutcheon, while *parody* focuses on the differences between the present text and the original one, *pastiche* seeks for the similarities between both (*Parody* 38). E.g.: *The Simpsons*' recreation of *Hamlet* presents several differences regarding Shakespeare's source text, whereas the series' reference to "The Raven" is almost identical to Edgar Allan Poe's poem and it could be taken as a visual representation of the same, though with the typical Simpsonian touch of humour. The latter could be seen as an example of *pastiche*. *Pastiche*, then, can be described as "a work that imitates the style of another work" (Waltonen 272). On this view, Waltonen continues, *pastiche* "is often used interchangeably with homage" (272). However, certain difficulties may arise when it comes the time to apply the label *pastiche* or *parody* to a given product because the same work can be seen as one or another depending on the viewer's perspective (Waltonen 272). This is the case of the aforementioned poem, "The Raven," as we will see in section 4.3. It may also happen that an episode might be clearly identified as a homage to another work from the very beginning (thus, being an example of *pastiche*) but it might later present a sudden critical ending which would make it be interpreted as a *parody* instead.

- Differences between *parody* and *satire*. A similar problem takes place between *satire* and *parody*. According to Hutcheon, both notions "imply critical distancing and therefore value judgements, but satire generally uses that distance to make a negative statement about that which is satirized" (*Parody* 43-44). Similarly, *parody* seeks for a change in the ideology of the spectators, but without being explicitly critical on the subject. That is, *parody* can be understood as an "imitation

> of form, style, content, or artistic conventions … [which] include[s] homage, imitations that make fun of other works and ideas, or satire" (Waltonen 274). In the same way that *parody* can sometimes use *satire* in order to be critical on some aspect, *satire* can also make use of *parody* as a tool (Waltonen 284). The notion of *satire*, however, deserves further treatment within this paper due to the powerful influence that it exerts upon the series and its usefulness in the inference of the intended meaning behind a literary reference. For this reason, and given its closely relation to the intertextual strategy of *parody*, section 3.2.2 will culminate with the additional description of this term.

Summarising, *parody* is different from *satire* in that, while the latter is only interested in introducing some piece of criticism, *parody*, whether satiric or not, is also concerned with imitating the source literary text in terms of form (that is, using the same grammar and syntax of the original text). Conversely, both *pastiche* and *parody* aim at reproducing the source text's form, but, in *pastiche*, there is no intention of challenging conventions, as there may in *parody* (Gray, *Watching* 47). Finally, despite the differences existing between these notions, the interpretation of a text as one or another will eventually depend on the viewer's or reader's viewpoint (Waltonen 273).

c. Satire

Satire can be called "corrective comedy" since, besides mocking something, it aims at showing a problem in society or in human condition to an audience in order to trigger some reaction on them towards that problem (Waltonen 284). For instance, when Bart goes to a new school for gifted children (S01E02), he is asked to choose from the books found in a shelf. Surprisingly for the teacher, he ignores all the classics –Shakespeare's collection, Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667), Dante's *Inferno* (1472), Melville's *Moby*

Dick (1851), among others– and chooses a comic instead, which, as the teacher points out, was used in a lesson to discuss illiteracy (Brenna Gray). This is an implicit criticism towards those teachers who do not leave room for pop culture and who consider the works of the canon as the only ones worthy of analysis in the classroom (Montironi, "*The Simpsons*" 6). But the figure of the teacher is just one of the numerous targets of criticism in *The Simpsons*. As Flóki highlights, "if a message is to be found buried underneath the highly satirical surface of *The Simpsons* it is opposition to authority, whether religious, political, academic or legal… The characters used to represent these [authoritative] figures in *The Simpsons* are depicted as either dangerously incompetent or criminally corrupt…" (14).

Paradoxically, the way in which these yellow, four-fingered animated characters are depicted is very realistic. This well-conveyed realism is a crucial element in satire, as Turner recognises when he asserts that "the rich characterisation of the family members and the lushness of their surroundings all enhance the notion … that this mess of a family and its degraded hometown are 'realistic'" (55). In other words, the setting, the characters, the relationships between these and the topics developed in the course of the show are all known to most human beings. However, more often than not, this familiarity is used in order to introduce some piece of criticism in a subtle way with the aim of causing an impact on the spectator. As Turner exemplifies, the very idea of having a low-skilled worker in a nuclear plant should raise consciousness among the audience (55). That is, professions such as nuclear-plant worker, police officer, mayor, teacher, or boss of a town's commerce should be carried out by true professionals who aim at guaranteeing the town's and citizens' safety and welfare. Nevertheless, the series presents these occupations embodied in such incompetent characters as Homer Simpson, Chief Wiggum, Joe Quimby, and Edna Krabappel, respectively, as well as

tyrants like Mr Burns (55-56). This is intentionally done so as to make people question whether their real-life authorities are apt to execute those high-level positions, since a worker like Homer Simpson could be responsible for a nuclear crisis. In fact, we have already seen scenes like this in the cartoons, for instance, in episodes like "Homer Defined" (S03E05). The reason why we laugh with these characters, Turner points out, is because "we are presented … with hard truths about the hideous mess of our own world" (56).

In conclusion, all these concepts are constantly used, interchanged (whenever it is possible) and combined (e.g.: *satiric parodies*) in *The Simpsons* with specific purposes such as criticising, making fun of something, or entertaining. Hence, a basic understanding of them is crucial in order to deeply comprehend the meanings lying behind the series, and particularly to analyse the literary references in section 4.

3.3. *The Simpsons*

In a parallel way to literature, *The Simpsons* has been approached from many different perspectives because of its wide relationship with other disciplines (see sections 3.1 and 3.3.1). The following sections reflect the high influence of literature on *The Simpsons* as well as the effects of its representation in such a popular TV series. But before we dive into our specific subject, and in order to understand this choice, a general introduction to *The Simpsons* is required.

3.3.1. History and Influence of *The Simpsons*

The worldwide known sitcom *The Simpsons* has reached fame in several ways and among different kinds of audiences, either in terms of age (young and adult audience) or

literacy (academic and non-academic audience). Although, apparently, it is a series about a traditional family in the USA, deep down, *The Simpsons* tackles many different aspects of society. This has awakened the interest of academic criticism, leading to such approaches as sociocultural, religious, feminist, linguistic, scientific, philosophic, or literary (Waltonen 4). Because of the countless literary references presented by the show as well as the high benefits it can offer both at an academic and critical level, this paper will particularly study *The Simpsons* from a literary point of view, paying special attention to how the show presents literature and the purpose lying behind particular references. Furthermore, the analysis will include a section with the advantages and disadvantages that teaching literature through a TV series like this one could bring in the classroom (see section 4.4).

The selection of *The Simpsons* as the referent for the development of this analysis is founded on two main reasons. Basically, its great influence and its diverse audience have transformed these cartoons into a cultural referent. As specialists such as Chris Turner recognises,

> *The Simpsons* has become the new repository of the West's common metaphors, the wellspring of its most resonant quotes, the progenitor of its default tone. In generations past, writers or politicians looking for rhetorical inspiration –a line or anecdote that a broad audience would easily recognize and immediately understand– might have looked to the Bible, or to Greek mythology, or to Shakespeare … In the years to come … they'll tend more and more to cite *The Simpsons*. (54-55)

To give an illustration, students may resort to Homer's "Every time I learn something new, it pushes some old stuff out of my brain" (S09E08) to express their frustration for so much studying. Likewise, a quote like this can be used by older generations to reflect

their concern for their inevitable tendency to lose memory with aging. This leads to the second reason why *The Simpsons* can serve as a rich product for analysis: the wide audience addressed. As Turner states "… *The Simpsons* is able to appeal to both adults *and* tykes –and to appeal cross geographic, ethnic and political divisions– because it never lets its brains completely overwhelm its gut" (59).

Both its influence and scope of audience allows the show to deal with important questions in everyday society, to present new ideologies or question the current ones, to convey a moral message, and to give visibility to unknown people. All these purposes are carried out whenever the show presents a literary reference (although probably not all at once). That is, the series has been on TV for so long that it has already become an unquestionable referent capable of changing society through the use of such techniques as parody or irony, as well as through the criticism of modern society (Marta-Lazo et al. 94).

Matt Groening's series is presently considered as "the longest running prime-time cartoon" (McAllister qtd. in Eikmeier 77) in history and as one of the most famous TV shows all over the world. As Turner states, *The Simpsons* has become "by far the most important cultural institution of its time" and it has grown "so monumental –so fixed on the cultural map– that it now seems impossible to imagine contemporary pop culture without it" (5). Ever since its release in 1989, it has produced a total of 684 episodes (31 seasons) and is still in production. Besides, it has been nominated 367 times with a number of 205 awards from diverse disciplines and categories such as the Annie (animation), BAFTA TV (television), Primetime EMMY, Genesis (animal care), EMA (environmental issues) or British Comedy Awards. Its popularity is such that the program has been broadcasted in more than 200 countries worldwide, and it has been dubbed and translated into more than 15 and 27 languages (Muñoz), respectively.

Despite the recent decline in viewership, the show has always enjoyed a high audience. The early seasons averaged over 20 million spectators per episode, including "the most-watched episode in the show's history," – "Bart Gets an 'F'" (S02E01)– which recorded an average of 33.6 million viewers (Schneider).

3.3.2. Literature and *The Simpsons*

Once understood the power of its influence and popularity, we can move a step further and start observing the presence of literature within the series. *The Simpsons* constitutes a very rich example of intertextual references within popular culture. As Flóki points out, in this show we find many works

> whose entire storylines have been compressed into 8 minutes and somehow superimposed onto the cartoon world of Springfield. The main characters are replaced by members of the Simpson family and details are altered for the sake of comedy, but the storyline in these short narratives basically remains the same … The endlessly mutable forms of animation allows *The Simpsons* to mimic particular settings, moods, lightning techniques and camera angles with accuracy, and incorporate it into their story in any way they please. (23)

The series constantly makes use of well-known literary works, either classic or contemporary, with the purpose of entertaining its audience or as an attempt to subvert some specific ideologies in modern society. And, in order to achieve this, this program borrows some commonly used literary devices, among which we find the already discussed intertextual techniques. On Waltonen's view, "the show's use of intertextuality and allusions to other texts enable it to be used even in traditional literature, film, and theater classes" (179). This will be interesting in the analysis of the advantages and disadvantages in section 4.4.

Besides those intertextual devices, the show also puts into practice other literary components usually employed by well-known authors in their literary works. This is the case of the figures of speech, which we can especially notice in many of Homer's pieces of talk. A list of examples is provided below:

- *Chiasmus*: "All right, brain, I don't like you and you don't like me – so let's just do this, and I'll get back to killing you with beer" (S04E19).
- *Oxymoron*: "Don't let Krusty's death get you down, boy. People die all the time, just like that. (snap) Why, you could wake up dead tomorrow" (S07E15).
- *Polyptoton*: "Marge, what's wrong? Are you hungry? Sleepy? Gassy? Gassy? Is it gas? It's gas, isn't it?" (S06E11).
- *Aposiopesis*: "I won't sleep in the same bed with a woman who thinks I'm lazy! I'm going right downstairs, unfold the couch, unroll the sleeping ba – uh, goodnight" (S04E07) (Nordquist).

All these examples seem to reflect the way in which literary techniques may be used in other domains (as we discussed in section 3.1). These are literary devices we may even find in our speech, but due to the frequency with which they are employed in the show, and because of the series' popularity, the study of these terms seems to get easier when examined through *The Simpsons*. The same logic applies to the analysis of literary references, as section 4 aims to demonstrate.

4. Field work

The core of this analysis intends to examine the presence of literature in *The Simpsons*. As has been noted, the literary works of Mark Twain, William Shakespeare and Edgar Allan Poe seem to be a source of inspiration for the show's writers. Accordingly, this section aims to explore the usefulness of literature in the development of some episodes from these cartoons, where, very often, its presence is required so as to introduce a piece of criticism.

4.1. Mark Twain: An Introduction to the Series' Literary References

Mark Twain (1835-1910) is considerably well-known as an American humourist (Hobbs 50). In his works, he articulated such devices as satire in order to criticise society, similarly to what *The Simpsons* does. Then, the very dynamic of the show can be said to follow his same humorous and critical style. Some of his targets of criticism were the injustices against women, the unfair jury system, and the racial discourse (Hobbs 50-51). The latter is best exemplified in his famous novel *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884), which, together with *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876-78), has served as inspiration for *The Simpsons*. For instance, the episode "Simpsons Tall Tales" (S12E21) is a parody of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* with allusions to some events in *Huckleberry Finn* (Waltonen 182). The main protagonists, Bart and Nelson, stand for Tom and Huck, respectively. The idea of Bart playing the part of Tom is very symbolic, since, as authors like Waltonen have examined, the character of Bart himself seems to embody Twain's "adventurous, troublemaking child" (182). In fact, the very creator of the series, Matt Groening, has asserted that "Bart is inspired in part by Tom [and] Huck" (182).

But these are not the only references to these two literary works found in the series. In the episode "The Boy Who Knew Too Much" (S05E20), Bart, who is absent from school, daydreams about being Huck (Waltonen 305), and in "How the Test Was Won" (S20E11), Skinner reads Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* to some of his problematic students, who pleasantly join the reading (305). These two cases can be considered as examples of allusions.

4.2. William Shakespeare in *The Simpsons*

At the core of the show's literary criticism lies the quintessential British author William Shakespeare (1564-1616). It is not surprising, then, to find a far exceeding number of references of all kinds to the Bard in the series. The extension of this analysis, however, demands concision. Then, this section will be structured in a first part, composed of a brief compendium of the series' most significant intertextual examples to the British classic author, and a second part, consisting in a deeper study of the cartoons' parodic adaptation of Shakespeare's masterpiece, *Hamlet*.

4.2.1. Literary References to William Shakespeare

The show's mockery of Shakespeare is constantly present, from the first seasons to the most recent ones. For instance, from seasons three to twenty-two, we find references to *Romeo and Juliet* (1597) (S03E23 and S09E02), *Othello* (1622) (S06E18), *Much Ado About Nothing* (1600) (S07E23), *King Lear* (1608) (S11E03 and S29E16), *Julius Caesar* (1623) (S14E06) and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1600) (S22E16), among others. Not to mention the episodes in which the very Bard himself is depicted as a character of the series, such as "Treehouse of Horror III" (S04E05), in which

Shakespeare appears as a zombie, or "Treehouse of Horror IX" (S20E04), where he makes a ghostly apparition.

All these are examples of allusions, since they merely refer to the Bard's works, name, or person through brief scenes and, very often, they are used in order to satirise the author's popularity or some other aspect related to him or to his works. Evidence of this can be found in episodes such as "A Star is Burns" (S06E18), in which a couple of lines from *Othello* are pronounced by the alcoholic character Barney. The writer, Ken Keller, uses the satiric element in order to criticise all those authors who take Shakespeare's words to improve the quality of their works (McDonald). Another episode, "The D'oh-cial Network" (S23E11), makes use of satire again in relation to the Bard, but, this time, the target of mockery is the author himself. In this episode, Homer says to Lisa: "Hey, why don't you make friends with my new computer? … Let me just finish downloading the complete works of Shakespeare (humming), (throws collection into computer bin), (sneaky chuckle) Now who's the greatest writer of all time? (kisses biceps)," thus laughing at Shakespeare's popularity by considering all his literary career a waste with such a gesture.

Conversely, the episodes "Tales from the Public Domain" (S13E14) and "Four Great Women and a Manicure" (S20E20) illustrate two parodic recreations of Shakespeare's tragedies *Hamlet* (1603) and *Macbeth* (1623), respectively. In "Four Great Women and a Manicure," Marge, or Lady Macbeth, wants her husband, Homer, to play the key role in the very play of *Macbeth* and, in her state of desperation, she convinces Homer to kill all the other actors so as to get the role (Waltonen 200). References to the "Macbeth Curse" can also be found in episodes such as "The Regina Monologues," in which Ian Mckellen suffers an accident each time Homer says Macbeth (200). The following section will focus on the analysis of *Hamlet*.

4.2.2. Simpsonian Adaptation of *Hamlet*

4.2.2.1. An Introduction to William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*

The Bard's great tragedy *Hamlet* is considered both one of his masterpieces and the longest play from all his literary production. It is thought to be "one of the most influential works in world literature" (Engel et al. 327). Therefore, the number of distinct adaptations we can find is not surprising, being Kenneth Branagh's adapted script one of the most faithful to the source text. But adaptations do not always seek for loyalty. Very often, literary reworkings introduce deliberate differences so as to let the audience infer an intended meaning. This is particularly the case with *The Simpsons*' recreation of *Hamlet*, as we will see in section 4.2.2.3.

Shakespeare's play revolves around Hamlet's revenge for his father's death at the hands of his uncle, Claudius, who wanted to steal his brother's throne and wife. In order for Hamlet to fulfil his father's wishes, he pretends to be mad, a strategy with such consequences as the breakup of his engagement to Ophelia. Vengeance is successful at the end, albeit at a high cost in lives. Particularly characteristic of this tragedy is the centrality of soliloquies. These are theatrical speeches in which an isolated character pronounces his or her ideas aloud ("Soliloquy"), and a notion to be satirised within the show's adaptation.

Hamlet has been subject to different critical approaches. For instance, the feminist theory may be implemented by paying special attention to the re-evaluation of the characters of Gertrude and Ophelia. Likewise, the play accepts a psychoanalytic perspective in relation to the character of Hamlet, with whom the Oedipus complex seems to suit. These two theories are relevant in order to comprehend the parodic adaptation from *The Simpsons* discussed in the following section.

4.2.2.2. A Contemporary *Hamlet*: *The Simpsons*' Adaptation

Season 13 from *The Simpsons* presents the Swan of Avon's most popular work in an episode entitled "Tales from the Public Domain" (S13E14). The episode was written by Andrew Kreisberg, Josh Lieb and Matt Warburton, and first aired in 2002. It all begins with Homer receiving a letter from the library for an overdue book. When he finds it, he decides to read it to his children. The book, entitled *Classics for Children*, is divided into three sections, each of which is devoted to a historical story and presented in the following order: Homer's *Odyssey* (subtitled "D'oh Brother, Where Art Thou?"), the story of Joan of Arc ("Hot Child in the City"), and William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* ("Do the Bard, Man"). The latter will be the subject of this analysis.

Both the title of the episode and the name of the particular segment are quite symbolic. The first one suggests that these tales belong to people, just as much as Shakespeare's *Hamlet* did. Evidence of this can be found in Maria E. Montironi's article, where Jan Kott considers that the title implies that the story is "both known by and belonging to the people, and thus to the masses too" (qtd. in "*The Simpsons*" 9). On the other hand, the subtitle is built up from a play of words –known in literature as *pun*– between the name of the character who plays the role of Hamlet in the parodic adaptation, Bart, and the label commonly used to refer to the source text's author, the Bard (Montironi, "Steven" 43). Right from the start, the show articulates the literary recreation employing the same tools that Shakespeare used to write his stories.

The Simpsons' literary reference to *Hamlet* can be described as a satiric parody. Despite the segment's short duration (5-6 minutes), the source text is presented through a selection of scenes, rather than through a brief quotation, a name or a single character's representation (as it would be the case had it been an allusion). Among these

scenes, we find the conversation of Hamlet with the ghost of his father (I.v), the famous scene of "the play within the play," also known as "the mousetrap scene" (III.ii), and a compilation of all the deaths that take place within the original text.

The characters selection is not arbitrary at all. The conflicting relationship between Bart –who plays the role of Hamlet– and Homer –the ghost– serves to highlight the oedipal reading of *Hamlet* (Montironi, "*The Simpsons*" 11) as well as to introduce humour within the parodic recreation (see section 4.2.2.3). Besides, the fact that Moe interprets Claudius is quite symbolic, since the series has more than once referred to Moe being in love with Marge, and even trying to steal her from Homer (e.g. "Secrets of a Successful Marriage," S05E22). On the other hand, the choice of Chief Wiggum and his son, Ralph, to perform the roles of Polonius and Laertes may have something to do with the original characters' personalities. In Shakespeare's tragedy, Polonius convinces king Claudius to allow him to spy Hamlet, thus becoming some sort of private detective, which connects with Chief Wiggum's profession. Moreover, instead of facing Hamlet, Polonius cowardly sent his daughter to break her engagement with him; a personal feature which seems to suit Clancy Wiggum. Similarly, the identification of Ralph with Laertes, Stone notices, "may be a way to recall the interpretations of Laertes as a weak soul, usually deduced from his crying words commenting his sister's death" (qtd. in Montironi, "*The Simpsons*" 13). Finally, the interpretation of Marge as Gertrude and Lisa as Ophelia fits in with the feminist approach that can be applied both to the series and to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. *The Simpsons*' representation of the female characters subverts their subordination to that 17th-century patriarchal society in order to clearly satirise women's unfair situation, as well as to adapt the source text to a contemporary audience (Montironi, "*The Simpsons*"

2). We may conclude, then, that all this characterisation contributes to the presentation of the parodic and satiric elements found within the literary reference.

4.2.2.3. *The Simpsons*' Satiric Parody: Contrasting Features

The segment "Do the Bard, Man" opens with Homer directly introducing the literary work to be parodied as "*Hamlet* by William Shakespeare." Immediately after, Bart replies: "Dad, these old stories can't compare with our modern super writers. Steven Bochco could kick Shakespeare's ass," thus presenting the first attack to the author. Bart's assertion completely mocks at the classic author's talent and popularity by comparing him with a contemporary television producer and writer. These comical words show how tastes change throughout generations, as we can see when Lisa tries to awaken her brother's interest in the classic book by telling him that the play opens with the murder of Hamlet's father, this way introducing the tragedy as some sort of thriller (Montironi, "Steven" 43). Besides, this satiric statement attacks the Shakespearean myth, which contemplates the Bard as an icon of highbrow culture (Montironi, "Steven" 42).

Right after learning about the murder of Hamlet's father, Bart asks Lisa if the protagonist gets to marry his mother, this way presenting the psychoanalytic approach of the play. That is to say, the reading of the play "in which Hamlet's rage at Claudius comes more from his own sense of incestuous cuckoldry than the crime of regicide" (Waltonen 199). Some scholars have argued that Hamlet's psychological conflict may be explained through Sigmund Freud's Oedipus complex, according to which children feel some sort of attraction for their opposite-sex parent, and develop a feeling of hatred against the other parental figure. In the light of this knowledge, *The Simpsons* presents some imagery in the literary adaptation –apart from Bart's enquiry– for the sake of

humour. For instance, in the opening scene of the parody, we are presented Hamlet's bedroom, where we can see a family portrait hanging from the wall. This consists in the wedding picture of Moe/Claudius and Marge/Gertrude, where Bart/Hamlet appears isolated and miserably looking at them. More symbolism can be found above the headboard, where a sign that reads "Danes Do It Melancholy" hangs from the wall. This, according to Montironi, refers, again, to "the sexual and psychological connotations of the story" ("*The Simpsons*" 10).

It is at this moment in Bart's bedroom that the ghost of his father appears. The original scene, however, does not illustrate the prince of Denmark's chamber. Instead, the phantom asks Hamlet to follow him into the darkness. All these differences remove doubts of this intertextual reference being an example of pastiche (section 3.2). Hence, the following subsections aim at comparing and, particularly, contrasting the scenes of *The Simpsons*' parody with those of Shakespeare's source text, as well as inferring the intended meaning of the show's writers.

a. Ghost of Hamlet's Father (I.v)

Originally, Hamlet's father comes from the afterlife to assign his son the task of avenging his death. At this point in Shakespeare's play, the ghost tells Hamlet a very visual story of how he was murdered by his own brother, Claudius. This moment, however, loses all its seriousness in *The Simpsons*. To begin with, the ghost is performed by the Simpson father, Homer, who is characterised by his gluttony. In fact, the series alludes, at the same time, to the greedy ghost of the film *Ghostbusters,* Slimer, as we can see when Homer crosses the wall and leaves a green viscous substance. According to Montironi, "this fact is used to make a parody of the

Shakespeare lines of the father's ghost" ("*The Simpsons*" 11), which are replaced by Bart and Homer's conversation:

HOMER. Yes, I have returned from the dead.

BART. Looks like you've returned from the buffet.

Humour continues later on, when Homer tells his son why Moe killed him so as to get married to Marge and become the King, and Bart replies: "Yeah, that was quite a weekend." This line seems to underline "the absurdity of the plot" and even to allude to "those who might find Shakespeare's narratives unbelievable and convoluted at times" (McDonald). The scene culminates in Homer's petition to be avenged and Bart plotting how he will catch his uncle, this way introducing the famous "mousetrap" scene.

b. The Mousetrap Scene (III.ii)

Hamlet's "play within the play" scene consists in the theatrical recreation of Claudius's murder to the King in order to find him guilty of the crime. In the case of *The Simpsons*, "the metatheatrical scene *par excellence* in the Shakespearean canon becomes … a way to criticize contemporary television" (Montironi, "*The Simpsons*" 11). This performance is led by Krusty the Clown, the series' conflictive comedian. As a humourist, he tells a joke before carrying out the interpretation of the King's death, this way "linking the courtly situation with the television entertainment today" (Montironi, "*The Simpsons*" 11). In the same way that Shakespeare explored "the nature and power of drama" in *Hamlet*, *The Simpsons*' *Hamlet* invites its audience to examine "the nature and power of television" (11).

Satiric elements continue with commentaries such as Marge's "I love these jesters. They're exactly what I need to forget about my first husband," or Krusty's anticipation of the performance's intended meaning by stating: "Now we would like to

warn you that our performances tend to make audience members blurt out hidden secrets," in a similar way to what contemporary media does before presenting sensitive contents. But, above all this satire, there is the obvious mock that the show makes at soliloquies, a very Shakespearean dramatic device. After Krusty's statement, Moe starts getting nervous. When Bart realises about this, he reads Hamlet's original soliloquy:

> BART. Methinks the play's the thing/Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King.
>
> MOE. Catch my conscience. What?
>
> BART. You're not supposed to hear me. That's a soliloquy.
>
> MOE. OK, well, I'll do a soliloquy, too. (Clears throat) Note to self, kill that kid.

This comic conversation can be taken as a criticism against the rareness of this theatrical device. However, this ironic representation is "not meant as much to ridicule this popular Elizabethan dramatic technique, but rather to deride the traditional way of performing it, which is obsolete by now (Montironi, "Steven" 43). All these elements, Montironi examines,

> provide a sharp satire of television, where programs are rarely made to rouse people's consciences, or to reflect upon reality, but are more commonly planned to provide a fruitless escape from reality … Instead, *The Simpsons* promote and are an example of a television whose task is, in the words of Hamlet, «to hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature» (II.ii.17-19) for an awakening of society. ("*The Simpsons*" 12)

The scene ends with Moe being unmasked, as he denies having used so much poison as illustrated within the performance (Waltonen 199), and with Lisa/Ophelia making a reference to Hamlet's madness. Unlike the source text, the "mousetrap" scene

directly connects with Ophelia's death, which takes us to the last subsection: the conclusion of the literary recreation.

c. Deaths in *Hamlet* (III-V)

Shakespeare's tragedy is dense with deaths, from Polonius's in act III, to Hamlet's in act V. All these deaths are presented differently both in terms of "manner and causes" (Montironi, "*The Simpsons*" 12) at the end of the parodic re-enactment of *The Simpsons*. These modifications mainly aim to subvert some predominant 17th-century ideologies (e.g. male chauvinism) or to ridicule the source text for what may be contemplated as an excessive number of deaths.

While, in the source text, Polonius's is the first declared death (III.iv), the series' parody places Ophelia's death ahead so as to give her the power that women did not have at the time. In Shakespeare's version, Ophelia commits suicide by drowning herself in the river after going mad over her love for Hamlet and her father's death. Conversely, in *The Simpsons*, she dies before receiving any commands from male authorities (Polonius and Hamlet) and "declares that nobody will drive her crazy" (Montironi, "*The Simpsons*" 12). Afterwards, she jumps out of the window and falls into a river, letting the audience infer that she drowned herself, as in Shakespeare's original text.

Next in dying in this parodic reworking is Chief Wiggum/Polonius. His death takes place in Getrude's bedroom as well, but in a more incoherent way. When Bart discovers someone moving behind the curtain, he directly stabs him, thus killing Clancy Wiggum in the belief that he was Moe. Wiggum's last words –"I hide behind the curtains 'cause I have a fear of getting stabbed"– reminds to the theatre of the absurd (Montironi, "*The Simpsons*" 13). Immediately before dying, he commends his son to

avenge his death, but Ralph is so clumsy that he kills himself while practising. In between these two deaths, there is the most nonsensical fatal accident within the parodic adaptation; the one concerning Guildenlenny (Guildenstern) and Rosencarl (Rosencrantz). Moe is so obsessed with killing Bart that he has poisoned everything and everybody in the banquet hall, including these two characters. Consequently, they die doing high five.

Finally, Moe dies being stabbed by Bart, and, before the latter can celebrate his revenge, he slips with Moe's blood and dies, being his last words "bloody floor!" The exaggeration of the illogical nature of these deaths highlights Shakespeare's convoluted bloodshed. Last in dying is Gertrude. Although, originally, she dies after drinking from the goblet poisoned by Claudius, in this case she commits suicide after declaring that she will not clean up the messy room. Again, the show tries to raise awareness of modern society by reflecting on female roles which, as Montironi states, "are usually still domestic" ("*The Simpsons*" 13). In fact, the question on whether Gertrude drank from the poison goblet consciously or not is still unclear, so that the recreation could be an invitation to the implementation of this alternative reading.

Overall, *The Simpsons* adaptation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is to be seen as a satiric parody, since it makes fun both of the author and of his literary creation from the very beginning, while being critical at the same time. All the distinguishing features analysed between the source text and the literary adaptation –i.e. Freudian symbolism, modern feminist perspective, meaningless deaths, and other humorous commentaries– seem to have been implemented with a particular purpose. On the one hand, its writers' intention may be that of making the audience aware of the injustices of women's situation and of questioning the morality of the Freudian reading of the play. On the

other hand, they seem to challenge Shakespeare's myth and popularity by comparing him with contemporary culture. In fact, the literary recreation ends, somehow, in a circular way, since it goes back to undervaluing the source text's author. Despite Lisa's attempt to arouse interest in classics as *Hamlet*, –according to her, "the greatest thing ever written!"– Bart insists on describing the play as boring. Eventually, Homer utters: "Son, it's not only a great play, but also became a great movie, called *Ghostbusters*." The series seems to suggest that a possible way for new generations to enjoy Shakespeare's plays is by rewriting them, translating them into modern daily language, transposing them into new media, and transforming them thoroughly so as to suit the needs of modern society (Montironi, "Steven" 43).

4.3. Edgar Allan Poe in *The Simpsons*

The second literary figure within this analysis is, as mentioned before, Edgar Allan Poe. The Gothic element is very present within the series, particularly in the so-called episodes "Treehouse of Horror" –distinguished by Roman numerals– that take place in each season in relation to Halloween. It is to be expected, then, that the series resorts more than once to the master of the Gothic, the well-known American author Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849).

4.3.1. Literary References to Edgar Allan Poe

One of his most famous short stories, "The Tell-Tale Heart" (1843), is referenced in two different episodes, namely "The Telltale Head" (S01E08) and "Lisa's Rival" (S06E02). In the first one, Bart decapitates the statue of the beloved founder of the town, Jebediah Springfield. Poe's story is alluded later on, when Bart, feeling guilty of his crime, cannot help hearing Jebediah's head talking to him (Waltonen 181). In "Lisa's Rival,"

on the other hand, two allusions can be found: a direct and indirect one. The direct allusion consists in a diorama made by Alison –Lisa's adversary– for a school's project. This recreates the moment when the main character of Poe's story, feeling guilty and pressed by the presence of the two police officers, starts hearing a heartbeat coming from under the floor. This very scene is represented later on in the indirect allusion. Lisa, driven by her envy, replaces Alison's design for a real cow's heart. When the teachers are scolding Alison, Lisa, unable to bear the feeling of guilt anymore, confesses and shows them where the real project is, that is, hidden under the floor, just like the victim in Poe's story. Comparing both episodes with Poe's text can be very useful in literature since, as Waltonen observes, it

> … allow[s] discussions of intertextuality and of character motivation. Poe's story hinges on the narrator's insistence that he is sane. His relationship to the murder victim is not explicated in the text, nor is any reason given for the murder. As Bart and Lisa's sanity are not the focus of these episodes, the stories necessitate clear motives for their actions. (181)

Additionally, *The Simpsons* alludes to Poe in many different ways throughout its episodes. Among these, we find "Bart vs. Thanksgiving" (S02E07), with a brief reference to Poe's poetry in Lisa's library; "Saturdays of Thunder" (S03E09), where we can see an image of his gravestone; "Homer's Triple Bypass" (S04E11), in which Poe's house is being driven by a truck; and "Lisa the Simpson" (S09E17), where the house from his novel *The Fall of the House of Usher* (1839) is demolished in a TV program. And, finally, there is Poe's masterpiece, "The Raven" (1845), to which the following section is completely devoted.

4.3.2. Simpsonian Adaptation of "The Raven"

4.3.2.1. An Introduction to Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven"

"The Raven" is one of the most famous poems in the history of literature, especially recognisable for its outstanding musicality. Ever since its publication, Poe's poem has been "continually read, anthologized, performed, filmed, illustrated and, of course, parodied (Doh!)" (Charles).

The poem tells the story of a man –the narrator– who is grief-stricken for his recently deceased wife, Lenore. From the very beginning, Poe sets the mood of the entire text by using a very melancholic tone and his characteristic Gothic atmosphere. The very third line of the poem already introduces suspense by describing a mysterious "tapping" coming from the door of the room where the narrator is. However, the main supernatural element, a talking Raven, does not appear until the seventh stanza.

Poe's story revolves around the decline of a man's mental stability. This is exemplified by the repetition of two lines in the course of the poem: "nothing more" and "nevermore." The first one is uttered by the narrator as a way of reasserting his rationality. Conversely, the Raven's "Nevermore" illustrates the gradual deterioration of the protagonist's mental health, since it eventually makes him lose his senses and hopes for good. Some of these elaborated aspects are altered within *The Simpsons*' adaptation with the purpose of providing the audience with both a comic and a critical recreation of this masterful poem.

4.3.2.2. *The Simpsons*' Recreation: between Parody and Pastiche

The series' adaptation of Poe's "The Raven" is, on Ryan Budke's view, "one of the most refined *Simpsons* pop references ever" (qtd. in Simpsons Wiki). A homage to the great Gothic author could not be expected in an episode other than the so-called

"Treehouse of Horror." More specifically, it constitutes the third and last segment of the first episode of this "terrifying" saga (S02E03), aired in 1990. In approximately six minutes, the writer, Sam Simon, references the whole poem, except for a few intentionally omitted stanzas, as we will see in the course of this section.

Section 3.2.2 stated the difficulties arising in the establishment of a literary reference as parody or pastiche. This problem is best exemplified through the analysis of *The Simpsons*' reworking of "The Raven." Although the whole poem seems to be identical to the source text –except for some omissions and interjections–, the series once again satirises certain aspects, in this case both of society and literature, through subtle details which make it seem a satiric parody instead. As Abhijit Mehta notices, the episode "often keeps exactly faithful to Poe's original text, creating a different meaning using only visual effects and varying voices" (2). In order to facilitate the understanding of this analysis, the series' recreation will be organised in the grouping of various stanzas.

a. *The Simpsons*' introduction to "The Raven"

On the occasion of Halloween, Lisa and Bart tell each other scary stories. One of them, "The Raven," is presented by Lisa, the intellectual sister, as "a classic tale of terror by Edgar Allan Poe." Bart, again representing the disinterested part of society (that is, people with no ambition to enhance their cultural knowledge), reacts by saying: "Wait a minute. That's a school book," to what Lisa satirically replies: "Don't worry, Bart, you won't learn anything." Alike the previous analysed reworking, *Hamlet*, the literary reference to Poe is introduced along with a piece of criticism. In a parallel way to the source text's author, who set the tone of his poem at its very beginning, *The Simpsons* somehow hints at the purpose of this recreation. In other words, the introduction

suggests that "this retelling of 'The Raven' will mock both the general public (as represented by Bart) and the often pompous, pseudo-intellectual attitude of poetry analysis in schools" (Mehta 1).

The distribution of roles is meant to replace the emotional mood in Poe's poem by *The Simpsons*' humorous touch (Mehta 2). To begin with, Poe's protagonist is interpreted by two contrasting characters in the recreation. There is the powerful voice of James Earl Jones reading the non-scripted lines, on the one hand, and the funny, high-pitched voice of Homer, on the other hand. This opposition highlights a transformation from Poe's grieving protagonist into *The Simpsons*' bumbling parental figure (Mehta 3). With Homer taking the leading role, Marge perfectly fits in the character of Lenore. The Simpsons' daughters, Lisa and Maggie, do also take a brief role as angels. Finally, the role of the antagonist –the Raven– is played by Bart, the troublemaker son. The identification of "the sarcastic, disrespectful Bart with the Raven … creates a hilarious antagonist for Homer" (Mehta 4). All these characters contribute to present humour along the adapted text, as it will be explained in the course of the analysis.

b. Stanzas I-IV: Establishing the mood

The poem opens with Lisa's voice blending with James Earl Jones's, as we gradually get a picture of the protagonist, Homer, reading a volume entitled "*Forgotten Lore: Vol. II*," in much the same way as the source text states in the first stanza. From the very beginning, humour is introduced through a ridiculous literal interpretation of the words found within the poem (Mehta 2). This recreation satirises those readers who, unconsciously mesmerised by the "sing-song" metre of the poem, forget to pay attention to the very words that compose it (Mehta 2). This way, *The Simpsons* subtly

criticises people who do not think twice about what they are reading, but rather take its comprehension for granted because the choice of words sounds inspiring.

At this moment, two allusions to the author of the text can be found within the recreation. First, as the camera moves downwards to focus on the protagonist, a statue of Edgar Allan Poe can be appreciated within the bookshelves. Second, once we get a medium shot of Homer, a barrel with the inscription "Cask of Amontillado" is perceptible next to him. On a superficial level, this refers to Edgar Allan Poe's short story entitled "Cask of Amontillado" (1846). Deep down, however, it seems to be a reference to the author's alcoholism. Evidence of this could be the fact that later allusions to his works are made in the form of books, rather than literally depicting what the title expresses.

The alternation of the two contrasting voices, together with the addition of some visual scenes which would not be expected from the source text, results in an uproarious adaptation. For instance, right after the sound of the "rapping" at the door, Homer screams and hides behind his armchair; a detail we would not expect from Poe's sophisticated and serious narrator, but that we would from a Simpson character. At this point, Bart interrupts the narration to say:

BART. Are we scared yet?

LISA. Bart, he's establishing mood.

This interjection mocks at the entire poem by questioning its terrifying effect. Lisa's reply reminds us of Poe's intention when writing these first lines. This is just the first of many pauses that Bart provokes in order to make fun of some targets. Bart's interruptions, then, are the strategy used by the adaptation's writer so as to introduce the satiric element. In this case, the object of criticism is the "pseudointellectual attitude that the stereotypical poetry analyst has" (Mehta 4).

Humour is constantly present, very often with the aid of visual effects. Some notable examples are the picture of Lenore, interpreted by Marge, which needs two frames in order to cover all her long hair, and the addition of Homer's lament for his lost which turns out to be amusing due to his characteristic voice (Mehta 2-3). Besides, when he is leaving the portrait of his beloved behind, the "purple curtain" touches his back and, consequently, he cries and hides –while chattering– behind the chair one more time.

The forth stanza, and the last one within this section, goes back to the "tapping" at the door. When the viewer thinks something scary is going to take place –including Bart, who adds "This better be good"– Homer opens the door and all he gets to see is –as in the poem– "Darkness there, and nothing more," to which Bart satirically replies:

BART. You know what would have been scarier than nothing?

LISA. What?

BART. Anything!

Bart's attitude mainly illustrates how tastes change throughout generations. This poem might have been very frightening when published, but perhaps not so much for modern society.

c. Stanzas VI, VII, VIII and XIV: Introducing the Raven

Following the source text's lines, the Raven gets in and places on a "bust of Pallas," a symbol of wisdom and, therefore, standing for the narrator's rationality. The Raven sitting at this very spot seems to threaten the protagonist's mental health. As we commented before, the arrival of the Raven frustrates so much the narrator that it eventually drives him mad. In the literary adaptation, this frustration is exacerbated by the relationship between Bart and Homer. Although, initially, the protagonist calms

down after finding out that it is just a bird, he begins to lose his patience as the Raven starts talking only to say "Nevermore." In addition, in *The Simpsons*, Bart interrupts the story again to replace the Raven's line for "eat my shorts!" These comic words play with viewers' expectations. Up to this moment, the recreation was being quite faithful, so that spectators were awaiting the source text's exact word. On Mehta's view, "using Bart as the Raven changes the repetition of the line 'Nevermore,' from melancholy and ominous to annoying and mocking" (4). Also, in the same way that Poe's protagonist gets irritated each time the Raven quotes "Nevermore," Bart's rude phrase contributes to Homer's exasperation (4). Lisa's reply to Bart's joke –i.e. "Bart, stop it. He says 'Nevermore' and that's all he'll ever say"– satirically clears up doubts for those who have not read the poem and may be expecting the Raven to say something shocking.

The adaptation skips a few lines from the poem until getting to stanza XIV. Here, the characters of Lisa and Maggie are amusingly introduced. They stand for the "Seraphim" literally swinging the "unseen censer." Accidentally, they hit Homer's head, to what he reacts saying: "D'oh! Stupid censer." This famous interjection –"D'oh!"– is repeated once again in the climax of the poem when the protagonist loses his rationality as shown below:

HOMER. Quaff, oh quaff this kind nepenthe, and forget this lost Lenore!

NARRATOR. Quoth the Raven.

BART. Nevermore.

HOMER. D'oh! Be that word our sign of parting, bird or fiend!

The exclamation aims at adjusting the source text to *The Simpsons*' recreation by making it both amusing and briefer, since it connects with the first line of stanza XVII. The omission of stanzas V, IX-XIII, XV and XVI is intentionally done because they "are not really important to the plot of the cartoon. Homer is not a very 'deep'

person, and the word 'D'oh' coming from him very adequately expresses the sorrow and anger that the speaker in the poem develops towards the Raven in the omitted stanzas …" (Mehta 6).

d. Conclusion: Stanzas XVII and XVIII

The last line quoted above reflects the protagonist's wrath and decline to irrationality quite well. At this point, Homer, completely deranged, shouts at the Raven to leave him alone. Particularly impressive is the line "Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off my door!" According to Waltonen, "this particular reading allows for a discussion of recitation, rhyme, mood, and meter" (190). Moreover, unlike in the source text, the line is repeated one more time after the Raven's "Nevermore," probably to emphasise what is to come. On this second occasion, Homer tries to control himself as a last attempt of preserving his rationality. However, the Raven, still looking at him from the bust of Pallas, repeats his line, thus leading the protagonist to complete madness:

> NARRATOR. Quoth the Raven.
>
> BART. Nevermore.
>
> HOMER. Why you little--
>
> BART. Uh-oh!

From this moment on, a persecution –created for the adaptation– takes place along the whole chamber. At one point, Homer throws a vase against the Raven, with such a bad luck that it falls into his own head. As a consequence, there is a chain of Ravens dancing and claiming "Nevermore" in unison above Homer's head in a parallel way to that in which cartoon characters "see stars" (Mehta 6); an event that would drive anyone crazy. This chase pays attention to every detail, from the purple curtains of the source text, to some additional allusions to Edgar Allan Poe. Among the books the Raven

throws to hit Homer's head, we find Poe's short stories entitled "The Pit and the Pendulum" (1842), "The Tell-Tale Heart" (1843), and "The Purloined Letter" (1844).

When the last book is thrown, the narrator starts reading the last stanza as written in the original text (see section 7.2). Simultaneously, the camera moves throughout the entire room in order to display all the mess resulted from the persecution. This scene conveys very well the idea of the protagonist's irrationality which the poem tries to show at its very end. Moreover, the last picture of Homer sitting on the floor and looking at the Raven with a lifeless gaze illustrates his complete devastation. This idea is reinforced by the picture of the Raven looking from a high position to the protagonist, now totally collapsing. *The Simpsons*' ending of the poem turns the sorrowful mood into a comical one. Actually, the last shot we get from the reworking is the Raven laughing, as the picture melds with the face of Bart. Back to the treehouse, Bart concludes:

> BART. Lisa, that wasn't scary. Not even for a poem.
>
> LISA. Well, it was written in 1845. Maybe people were easier to scare back then.
>
> BART. Oh, yeah. Like when you look at "Friday the 13th, Part One." It's pretty tame by today's standards.

This passage, Waltonen notices, "reminds us that societies evolve in what they find scary or shocking" (190). It may also be, as Mehta observes, a satiric commentary addressed towards a society in constant need of being overstimulated so as to become impressed. In other words, an audience "unable to appreciate [the] subtle humor" provided by literature and which needs the use of crudeness instead (5).

In general, the series' literary reference to Poe's "The Raven" may accept two possible interpretations. On the surface, it can be seen as an example of pastiche, since the whole segment of the episode reads the poem word for word as stated in Poe's source text. Only some lines and stanzas are omitted for the purpose of entertainment or brevity. The overall view of this visual narration of the poem suggests an act of homage to the source text, where humour cannot be left aside due to the show's nature. Deep down, the slight differences and the intended meaning these aim to convey gives the program's recreation the appearance of a satiric parody. In this case, as we have analysed, the intention of the writer is to mock both people's rejection to learning (illustrated by Bart) and those who feel to be entitled over the former due to their larger sum of academic knowledge. This idea is reinforced by Mehta, who says that "Sam Simon uses a cartoon that appeals to the general public and 'people of culture' alike to make fun of both groups of people." This adaptation, he concludes, is useful to provide people with both entertainment and critical thinking (7).

4.4. *The Simpsons* in the Syllabus: Benefits and Drawbacks

The analysis of *The Simpsons*' literary references carried out in the preceding section leads to question the fruitfulness of studying these cartoons as a complementary tool in the classroom. A number of teachers, Waltonen observes, already use this TV series as part of their lessons. She examines that, with the aid of this program, lessons become much more varied, since they offer many different topics for discussion (4). Consequently, the number of studies on *The Simpsons* as a learning tool is more and more frequent. These are usually articles written by teachers themselves. For instance, Stephen J. Scanlan and Seth L. Feinberg dealt with the teaching of sociology through

this series. John Rucynski Jr., on the other hand, wrote an article on *The Simpsons* and their usefulness in EFL classes.

Regarding literature, previous sections have presented the multitude of literary references and techniques that the series employs all throughout its seasons. This can result in a very helpful device for literature teachers. As Waltonen points out, "its layers of meaning and humor provide the opportunity to have our laugh and learn from it too" (179). But like many other innovative practices, it has its flaws. The aim of this section, then, is to show both the assets and hindrances that we can find when using *The Simpsons* as a teaching tool. Some of its advantages will be provided in the first place:

a. First: as Amanda Heffernan states, it can be used as a tool for students' engagement in the lesson before analysing a classic literary text (4). If a teacher presents a lesson on Edgar Allan Poe's "The Tell-tale Heart" by using the two references provided by *The Simpsons*, the probability that students pay attention to the explanation may be higher. Ginger M. Eikmeier, a literature teacher, has noticed that the program "can increase student motivation" (79), and it may even encourage the shiest students to participate.

b. Second: it can also be useful as a way of reinforcing already studied literary theoretical aspects. Studies have revealed that some high-school students tend to find it easier to identify notions like *irony* in classic literature such as Twain's after having analysed them in a contemporary show like *The Simpsons* (Heffernan 5). The series' recreation of such literary elements as dramatic soliloquies or poetic rhythms, together with the emphasis placed on alternative readings to works like *Hamlet* may have positive effects on students' comprehension.

c. Third: it seems that young generations are increasingly disinterested in reading and studying the classics due to the great influence that television, or pop culture in general, has exerted on them. This idea is best exemplified by Bart's attitude in the two literary recreations analysed. Hence, introducing literary works through media could result in the reawakening of young people's interest for the canonical works. Reworkings like these may contribute to the circulation of traditional works like Shakespeare's or Poe's within modern society (Montironi, "*The Simpsons*" 15).

d. Fourth: it has also proved to be a good method for the retention of information (Eikmeier 80). According to Waltonen, "pollsters consistently report that people can name the characters in *The Simpsons* more easily than they can remember aspects of politics and history" (4). One of the factors contributing to this is the visual aspect of these cartoons. Literary recreations "can enrich some of the verbally constructed concepts with fruitful visual associations and stimulate the hidden meanings of the words to emerge" (Marciniak 66-67). Visualisation, then, can unearth some meanings that we unconsciously bypass when reading a text. An obvious example of this is "The Raven" and its hypnotising musicality (see section 4.3). Both the series' image recreation and the emphasis on intonation may be particularly helpful to infer the meanings that the text aims to convey.

e. Finally, *The Simpsons* can be used to stimulate students' critical thinking. According to Eikmeier, by comparing and contrasting both the adaptation from *The Simpsons* and the original source text, students "can move into a deeper level of thinking and understanding" (78). For instance, by focusing on the contrasts between both versions, we may infer the intended meaning of those differences, which is usually, as we have already analysed, an implicit criticism towards some

aspects of society. On this view, students can learn to read between the lines either in literature, TV series or in real life speeches.

However, proposals like these are exposed to a number of objections, among which we find:

a. Parents' opposition. Many parents do not think the series to be serious enough for a lesson plan but, as Waltonen reminds us, "the show's writers are from the Ivy League" (6), so that each script is carefully and thoughtfully designed. Unsatisfied with this, some of them do not even allow their children to watch *The Simpsons*, since they think these cartoons could spoil their education. This is because, being addressed both to children and adults, the series may develop some topics considered as inadequate for juveniles. Some notable examples observed within this analysis are the sexual and violent connotations of *Hamlet* or the swearwords in "The Raven" ("Eat my shorts").

b. Students' attitude. It may also be the case that students disconnect from the lesson after learning that they are going to watch *The Simpsons*, since they mistakenly believe that the subject will be easy to pass (Waltonen 6). In these cases, it is important to remind them, Waltonen points out, that even "Shakespeare was once 'popular culture'" (6). It may also be the case that students prefer the adaptation to the original one on the premise that the former is "amusing." This would bring down all the hard work and coherence lying behind a piece of literature, which may be impossible to fully reproduce in any literary reworking.

c. Scholars' opposition. Despite the advantages provided by visualisation, some critics consider that this process leaves many nuances of the original source text behind. For instance, in the recreation of "The Raven," some stanzas related to

> the most critical point within the protagonist's mental stability are omitted, thus partly deleting Poe's characteristic dark and Gothic mood. These modifications are necessary for the show to avoid any kind of deviation from its typical humorous tone. But, for some critics, they result in the loss of the "spirit of the book" (Marciniak 60).

Altogether, the study of literature with the aid of *The Simpsons* may be advantageous in many senses, but the literary source texts should always be given prevalence. People ought to bear in mind that adaptations mainly aim to recreate the original source text – either to pay homage to it, to entertain the audience, or to show some problematic aspects of society– rather than to surpass it.

5. Conclusions

The analysis carried out within this paper has demonstrated the powerful influence that literature exerts upon such domains as media through the examination of some literary references provided by the TV cartoons named *The Simpsons*. This series is a proof of the unceasing presence of literature within popular culture as well as the great benefits that can be derived from the study of this combination. The current section aims to present the conclusions drawn from the elaboration of this project.

First, the present findings have confirmed the convenience of a previous understanding of the term *intertextuality*, coupled with the different sublevels at which this concept normally functions (*parody*, *allusion* and *pastiche*), for this research. Equally important has been the prior comprehension of the central notion within the series, namely *satire*. All these concepts have proved their fruitfulness in the inference of the show's intended meaning. As it has been noted, *allusions* and *pastiche* are usually meant to entertain and pay homage to the referenced literary work. By contrast, *parody* is often linked to some piece of criticism, hence its usual combination with *satire*. A comparison of the analyses carried out in sections 4.2 and 4.3 reveals the slight differences between these notions, especially betwixt *parody* and *pastiche*. These studies have led to the conclusion that *The Simpsons*' recreation of "The Raven" is primarily interpreted as an example of pastiche, whereas its reworking of *Hamlet* is an exemplary of a satiric parody. However, further evidence has suggested an alternative reading of "The Raven" as a parodic adaptation, given the presence of various critical remarks.

Second, the classification of the manifold literary references of the show into three of the series' most resorted authors –Mark Twain, William Shakespeare and Edgar Allan Poe– has allowed a concise and coherent association. The introductions to these

authors, together with the table illustrated in section 7.1, have confirmed the diverse catalogue of literary references provided by this TV sitcom, where allusions seem to prevail given their shorter extension. Besides, *The Simpsons*' literary reworkings of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Poe's "The Raven" have proved their usefulness in the display of some hidden, or simply hardly noticeable, meanings of the source text. To put some significant examples, the thorough analysis of *Hamlet* has unearthed two alternative readings to the original text, namely the feminist and the psychoanalytic ones. By exaggerating them, the series makes the audience consider Ophelia's reasons for committing suicide, the extent to which Gertrude's death was non-deliberate, or the morality of the Oedipus complex. Likewise, the deeper study of "The Raven" invites viewers to think critically on the possible meanings lying behind its musical metre, such as the mental deterioration of the protagonist.

Eventually, the results have led to contemplate the implementation of *The Simpsons* as a complementary tool in literature lessons. On many authors' view, the discussion of the dynamics of literature with the aid of this series can bring in manifold academic benefits, such as the comprehension of many literary works and devices, and the stimulation of critical thinking. These ideas are usually possible due to the visual and satiric aspects of the series. For instance, performances such as Bart's reading of Hamlet's soliloquy or Homer's recitation of some powerful lines from "The Raven" permit the discussion of both theatrical devices and poetic intonation. Besides, there is overwhelming evidence for the fact that the program utilises Bart to exhibit critical commentaries, which are usually, as we have previously discussed, directed to literature or society. This was particularly the case of Shakespeare's work, where Bart's comments defied the Bard's popularity, and Poe's source text, where his constant interruptions aimed at denouncing society both for the passive attitude of some people

with regards to culture and for the pretentious behaviour shown by the most educated spectators. This proposal, however, is not exempt from objections, among which we have highlighted students' attitude, as well as some parents' and some scholars' opposition, who question whether the cartoons are qualified enough to be used as a teaching tool.

All things considered, the popular series *The Simpsons* has resulted in a practical medium for the analysis of literature's impact on other cultural products, such as television. Furthermore, the observation of a superior number of advantages has suggested an alternative way of teaching this artistic field and discipline within the classroom. To conclude, investigations like this one allow to reflect upon the importance of rewriting literary texts so as to promote the reading of canonical works, whose status seems to be progressively more threatened by new generations. But viewers should always bear in mind the idea stated in section 3.2, according to which intertextual references are meaningless if prior information about the source text is not taken into consideration. To put it in another way, literary reworkings can result in a favourable strategy to awaken people's interest in particular literary works, but the source text should always be given prevalence.

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7. Appendixes

7.1. A Brief Compendium of *The Simpsons*' Literary References

Given the required extension of the paper at hand, an extra classification will be provided within this section with the aim of illustrating the wide variety of literary works referred to by *The Simpsons* that has been stated along the analysis. This will follow the criteria established by Waltonen and Du Vernay in their book *The Simpsons in the Classroom*, who arrange some of the many literary references into three groups corresponding with the literary genres of fiction, theatre and poetry.

Unlike theirs, however, this brief compilation will consist in a self-produced table made up of an arbitrary selection of varied literary references. Each genre will comprise four sections, namely "Literary Reference," "Episode Code," "Episode Title," and "Type of Reference".

FICTION			
Literary Reference	**Episode Code**	**Episode Title**	**Type of Reference**
Charles Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859)	S04E17	"Last Exit to Springfield"	Allusion: First lines.
Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* (1868)	S05E16	"Homer Loves Flanders"	Allusion: Picture of Moe with the book reading the last line.
Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* (1963)	S20E11	"How the Test Was Won"	Allusion: Picture of Lisa reading the book.
William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (1954)	S04E01/ S09E14	"Kamp Krusty" / "Das Bus"	Allusion: Plot.

THEATRE			
Literary Reference	**Episode Code**	**Episode Title**	**Type of Reference**
Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* (1949)	S16E12	"Goo Goo Gai Pan"	Allusion: It is played in a theatre in China.
George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion* (1913)	S11E16	"Pygmoelian"	Allusion: Pun with the title.
George Bernard Shaw's *Man and Superman* (1903)	S18E16	"Homerazzi"	Allusion: Picture of Lisa reading the book.
Tennessee William's *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947)	S04E02	"A Streetcar Named Marge"	Parodic adaptation.
POETRY			
Literary Reference	**Episode Code**	**Episode Title**	**Type of Reference**
Allen Ginsberg's "Howl" (1956)	S02E07	"Bart vs. Thanksgiving"	Allusion: Rewriting of the first lines of the poem.
Emily Dickinson	S28E15	"The Cad and the Hat"	Allusion: Bart gives Lisa *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*.
Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* (1855)	S21E19	"The Squirt and the Whale"	Allusion: Lisa reads the collection to a whale.
William Wordsworth's "Daffodils" (1807)	S11E02	"Brother's Little Helper"	Allusion: Title of the poem and first lines.

7.2. "The Raven" by Edgar Allan Poe

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary;

Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore–
While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,
As of some one gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.
"'Tis some visitor," I muttered, "tapping at my chamber door–
Only this and nothing more."

Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the bleak December;
And each separate dying ember wrought its ghost upon the floor.
Eagerly I wished the morrow; –vainly I had sought to borrow
From my books surcease of sorrow–sorrow for the lost Lenore–
For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore–
Nameless *here* for evermore.

And the silken, sad, uncertain rustling of each purple curtain
Thrilled me–filled me with fantastic terrors never felts before;
So that now, to still the beating of my heart, I stood repeating
"'Tis some visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door–
Some late visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door;–
This it is and nothing more."

Presently my soul grew stronger; hesitating then no longer,
"Sir," said I, "or Madam, truly your forgiveness I implore;
But the fact is I was napping, and so gently you came rapping,
And so faintly you came tapping, tapping at my chamber door,
That I scarce was sure I heard you" –here I opened wide the door;–

Darkness there and nothing more.

Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there wondering, fearing,
Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortal ever dared to dream before;
But the silence was unbroken, and the stillness gave no token,
And the only word there spoken was the whispered word, "Lenore?"
This I whispered, and an echo murmured back the word, "Lenore!"–
Merely this and nothing more.

Back into the chamber turning, all my soul within me burning,
Soon again I heard a tapping somewhat louder than before.
"Surely," said I, "surely that is something at my window lattice;
Let me see, then, what thereat is, and this mystery explore–
Let my heart be still a moment and this mystery explore;–
'Tis the wind and nothing more!"

Open here I flung the shutter, when, with many a flirt and flutter,
In there stepped a stately Raven of the saintly days of yore;
Not the least obeisance made he; not a minute stopped or stayed he;
But, with mien of lord or lady, perched above my chamber door–
Perched upon a bust of Pallas just above my chamber door–
Perched, and sat, and nothing more.

Then this ebony bird beguiling my sad fancy into smiling,
By the grave and stern decorum of the countenance it wore,

"Though thy crest be shorn and shaven, thou," I said, "art sure no craven,
Ghastly grim and ancient Raven wandering from the Nightly shore–
Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night's Plutonian shore!"
Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."

Much I marvelled this ungainly fowl to hear discourse so plainly,
Though its answer little meaning–little relevancy bore;
For we cannot help agreeing that no living human being
Ever yet was blessed with seeing bird above his camber door–
Bird or beast upon the sculptured bust above his chamber door,
With such name as "Nevermore."

But the Raven, sitting lonely on the placid bust, spoke only
That one word, as if his soul in that one word he did outpour.
Nothing farther then he uttered–not a feather then he fluttered–
Till I scarcely more than muttered "Other friends have flown before–
On the morrow *he* will leave me, as my Hopes have flown before."
Then the bird said "Nevermore."

Startled at the stillness broken by reply so aptly spoken,
"Doubtless," said I, "what it utters is its only stock and store
Caught from some unhappy master whom unmerciful Disaster
Followed fast and followed faster till his songs one burden bore–
Till the dirges of his Hope that melancholy burden bore
Of 'Never–nevermore'."

But the Raven still beguiling all my fancy into smiling,
Straight I wheeled a cushioned seat in front of bird, and bust and door;
Then, upon the velvet sinking, I betook myself to linking
Fancy unto fancy, thinking what this ominous bird of yore–
What this grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt, and ominous bird of yore
Meant in croaking "Nevermore."

This I sat engaged in guessing, but no syllable expressing
To the fowl whose fiery eyes now burned into my bosom's core;
This and more I sat divining, with my head at ease reclining
On the cushion's velvet lining that the lamp-light gloated o'er,
But whose velvet-violet lining with the lamp-light gloating o'er,
She shall press, ah, nevermore!

Then, methought, the air grew denser, perfumed from an unseen censer
Swung by Seraphim whose foot-falls tinkled on the tufted floor.
"Wretch," I cried, "thy God hath lent thee– by these angels he hath sent thee
Respite–respite and nepenthe from thy memories of Lenore;
Quaff, of quaff this kind nepenthe and forget this lost Lenore!"
Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."

"Prophet!" said I, "thing of evil! –prophet still, if bird or devil! –
Whether Tempter sent, or whether tempest tossed thee here ashore,
Desolate yet all undaunted, on this desert land enchanted–

On this home by Horror haunted–tell me truly, I implore–
Is there–*is* there balm in Gilead? –tell me– tell me, I implore!"
Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."

"Prophet!" said I, "thing of evil! –prophet still, if bird or devil!
By that Heaven that bends above us–by that God we both adore–
Tell this soul with sorrow laden if, within the distant Aidenn,
It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore–
Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore."
Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."

"Be that word our sign of parting, bird or fiend!" I shrieked, upstarting–
"Get thee back into the tempest and the Night's Plutonian shore!
Leave no black plume as a token of that lie thy soul hath spoken!
Leave my loneliness unbroken! –quit the bust above my door!
Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off my door!"
Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."

And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, *still* is sitting
On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door;
And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon's that is dreaming,
And the lamp-light o'er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor;
And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor
Shall be lifted–nevermore! (Poe qtd. in *Poetry Foundation*)

8. Conclusiones

En resumen, a través del análisis de algunas referencias literarias ofrecidas por los dibujos animados conocidos como *Los Simpson*, este estudio ha demostrado la gran influencia que tiene la literatura en disciplinas tales como los medios de comunicación. Esta serie, por tanto, es prueba de la presencia constante de la literatura en la cultura popular, así como de los numerosos beneficios que se pueden obtener del estudio de esta combinación. La sección en cuestión tiene como objeto presentar las conclusiones a las que se han llegado tras la elaboración de este proyecto.

En primer lugar, los resultados actuales reflejan la conveniencia de partir de unos conocimientos básicos, como la *intertextualidad* y las diferentes formas en las que esta puede manifestarse (véase la *parodia*, la *alusión* y el *pastiche*), en investigaciones como esta. De igual relevancia resulta la comprensión previa sobre la sátira, un concepto fundamental en la serie. Todos estos términos han demostrado ser de gran provecho a la hora de inferir el propósito de la adaptación. Tal y como se ha observado a lo largo del análisis, en el caso de alusiones y pastiche, la recreación literaria tiene como propósito entretener a la audiencia, así como homenajear al texto referenciado. La parodia, por otro lado, suele ir acompañada de algún comentario crítico; de ahí que se suela combinar con el término de la sátira. Los estudios realizados en las secciones 4.2 y 4.3 han revelado pequeños matices existentes entre estos conceptos, sobre todo entre la parodia y el pastiche. Así pues, se ha llegado a la conclusión de que la recreación literaria de "El cuervo" ofrecida por *Los Simpson* es, principalmente, un ejemplo de pastiche, mientras que la adaptación de *Hamlet* es un claro ejemplo de parodia satírica. No obstante, algunas pruebas, como la presencia de varios comentarios críticos, han sugerido la interpretación de "El cuervo" como una adaptación paródica.

En segundo lugar, la agrupación de las innumerables referencias literarias de la serie en tres de los autores más recurridos durante su producción –Mark Twain, William Shakespeare y Edgar Allan Poe– ha permitido establecer una clasificación breve y coherente. Tanto la introducción a estos autores como la tabla proporcionada en la sección 7.1 han servido para demostrar la variedad de referencias literarias ofrecidas por esta comedia televisiva, donde las alusiones parecen predominar debido a su breve extensión. Además, las versiones de *Hamlet* de Shakespeare y "El cuervo" de Poe han sido de gran ayuda para desvelar algunos mensajes ocultos, o difíciles de descifrar, del texto original. Por ejemplo, el análisis exhaustivo de *Hamlet* ha permitido destacar interpretaciones alternativas al texto original, como son la crítica feminista y la psicoanalítica. La enfatización de estas lecturas da lugar a que los espectadores se cuestionen las razones de Ofelia para suicidarse, el punto hasta el que la muerte de Gertrudis se puede considerar accidental, o la moralidad del complejo de Edipo. De igual manera, el análisis a fondo de "El cuervo" invita al pensamiento crítico de la audiencia al hacerles reflexionar sobre los posibles significados que tienden a pasar por desapercibidos debido a la musicalidad del poema, como, por ejemplo, el deterioro mental del protagonista.

Por último, las conclusiones han llevado a contemplar el uso de *Los Simpson* como complemento de enseñanza de la literatura. Desde el punto de vista de muchos autores, explicar la dinámica de la literatura con ayuda de esta serie puede traer numerosos beneficios académicos, como la comprensión de muchas obras y recursos literarios, o la estimulación del pensamiento crítico. A menudo, estas ideas son posibles gracias a los elementos visuales y satíricos de la serie. Por ejemplo, actuaciones tales como la lectura de los soliloquios de Bart o la recitación de algunas de las líneas más imponentes de "El cuervo" por Homer permiten debatir sobre los recursos dramáticos y

la entonación poética. Además, numerosas pruebas apuntan a Bart como el medio empleado por el programa para introducir comentarios satíricos. Tal y como se ha comentado previamente, estos ataques van normalmente dirigidos a la literatura o a la sociedad. Si tomamos la obra de Shakespeare como ejemplo, los comentarios de Bart tienen como propósito desafiar la popularidad del Bardo. De forma similar, sus interrupciones constantes durante la lectura del poema de Poe tratan de juzgar a la sociedad, tanto por la actitud pasiva de algunos de sus miembros ante la cultura, como por el comportamiento pedante exhibido por aquellos que se consideran más cultos. Sin embargo, propuestas como estas no están exentas de objeciones, entre las cuales cabe destacar la actitud de los estudiantes y la oposición de algunos padres y académicos, que cuestionan si estos dibujos están realmente cualificados para ser utilizados como complemento de enseñanza.

En definitiva, la famosa serie de *Los Simpson* ha demostrado ser un medio práctico para analizar el impacto de la literatura en otros productos culturales, como es la televisión. Asimismo, el número superior de ventajas observado sugiere que estos dibujos animados podrían ser un método alternativo para la enseñanza de esta rama artística y disciplina en el aula. Por último, investigaciones de este tipo permiten reflexionar sobre la importancia de reescribir los textos literarios con el fin de fomentar la lectura de las obras pertenecientes al canon, cuyo estatus es cada vez más cuestionado por las nuevas generaciones. Aún así, los espectadores no deberían olvidar que, tal y como se ha comentado en la sección 3.2, la correcta comprensión de las referencias intertextuales exige estar en posesión de unos conocimientos básicos acerca del texto original. Dicho de otro modo, aunque las adaptaciones literarias pueden ser útiles como estrategia para despertar el interés de las personas en ciertas obras literarias, el texto original debería prevalecer siempre.