

Received: 03/07/2022 - Accepted: 03/10/2022 - Published: 02/01/2023

## SEMIOTIC AND COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF WORKER AND PARASITE (THE SIMPSONS)

### ANÁLISIS SEMIÓTICO Y COMPARATIVO DE PROLETARIO Y PARÁSITO (LOS SIMPSONS)

**Pedro Vázquez-Miraz**

Universidad Tecnológica de Bolívar. Colombia.

[pvasquez@utb.edu.co](mailto:pvasquez@utb.edu.co)

#### How to reference the article:

Vázquez-Miraz, P. (2023). Semiotic and comparative analysis of Worker and Parasite (The Simpsons). *Revista de Comunicación de la SECCI*, 56, 67-83. <http://doi.org/10.15198/seeci.2023.56.e802>

#### ABSTRACT

*Wo Worker and Parasite* is an animated scene of less than twenty seconds in length from the episode *Krusty Gets Kancelled* of *The Simpsons* (4<sup>th</sup> season/year 1993) that parodies the avant-garde cartoons of 20th century Eastern Europe, as well as being a contemporary critique of American capitalism towards the defeated communist model of the late 1990s. Using semiotics, the aim is to analyze and compare all the information that this popular "sketch" promotes to the audience through the introduction to the cartoon, the five scenes that make it up, and the outcome of its broadcast during the episode. The results indicate that *Worker and Parasite* can be fully identified with the so-called experimental animation, its great contrast with commercial animation being the key to the success of this iconic animated scene, although the scene would only reflect a preconceived idea that the American people have of Eastern European animation and not its enormous value. This stereotype would also spread to Spain due to the popularity of the TV series.

**Keywords:** Social sciences, Communication, Audiovisual communication, Cultural semiotics, Media, Cartoons, *The Simpsons*, *Worker and Parasite*.

#### RESUMEN

*Proletario y Parásito* es una escena animada de menos de veinte segundos de duración del capítulo *Krusty Gets Kancelled* de *Los Simpsons* (4<sup>a</sup> temporada / año 1993) que parodia a los dibujos vanguardistas de Europa oriental del siglo XX, además de ser una crítica contemporánea del capitalismo estadounidense hacia el derrotado modelo comunista de finales de los 90. Por medio de la semiótica se pretende analizar y comparar toda la información que promueve este popular «sketch» a la audiencia por medio de la introducción al dibujo, las cinco escenas que lo conforman y el desenlace a su emisión en el transcurso del capítulo. Los resultados indican que *Proletario y Parásito* se puede identificar plenamente a la denominada animación experimental, siendo su gran contraste con la animación comercial la clave del éxito de esta icónica

escena animada, si bien la escena reflejaría solo una idea preconcebida que tiene el pueblo estadounidense de la animación de Europa del Este y no su profunda riqueza. Estereotipo que se divulgaría también a España debido a la popularidad de la serie de televisión.

**Palabras clave:** Ciencias sociales, Comunicación, Comunicación audiovisual, Semiótica cultural, Medios de comunicación, Animación, Dibujos animados, Los Simpsons, Proletario y Parásito.

## **ANÁLISE SEMIÓTICA E COMPARATIVA DE PROLETÁRIO E PARASITA (OS SIMPSONS)**

### **RESUMO**

*Proletario e Parasita* é uma cena animada de menos de vinte segundos de duração do episódio *Krusty Gets Kancelled* dos Simpsons (4ª temporada/ano 1993) que parodia os desenhos animados de vanguarda do Leste Europeu do século XX, além de ser uma crítica contemporânea do capitalismo em relação ao modelo comunista derrotado do final dos anos 1990. Por meio da semiótica, pretende-se analisar e comparar todas as informações que esse popular "sketch" promove ao público por meio da introdução ao desenho, das cinco cenas que o compõem e do resultado da sua transmissão no decorrer do capítulo. Os resultados indicam que no *Proletário e Parasita* podem ser totalmente identificadas a chamada animação experimental, sendo o seu grande contraste com a animação comercial a chave para o sucesso desta icônica cena animada, embora a cena apenas refletisse uma ideia preconcebida que o povo americano tem da animação da Europa de Leste e não da sua profunda riqueza. Estereótipo que também se espalharia para a Espanha devido à popularidade da série de televisão.

**Palavras-chave:** Ciências Sociais, Comunicação, Comunicação Audiovisual, Semiótica Cultural, Mídia, Animação, Desenhos Animados, Os Simpsons, Proletário e Parasita.

Translation by **Paula González** (Universidad Católica Andrés Bello, Venezuela)

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The scientific analysis of popular cultural products such as the famous cartoon *The Simpsons*, created by Matt Groening in 1987, an audiovisual product that arrived in Spain in the early 90s in the late-night programming of the second network of public television to triumph in Antena 3 since 1994 (Marta and Tovar, 2011) is something relevant at the academic level since it would continue a fruitful line of work linked to these cartoons (Stabile and Harrison, 2003; Irwin et al, 2009; Pinsky, 2010; Delamorclaz, 2019). This is the case of *Worker and Parasite*, a very brief scene that parodies Eastern European animation, an element easily identifiable by generations of Spaniards who have grown up with this particular animated series and that still causes surprise and astonishment to the current audience due to the strong contrast existing in the episode since it was intended to capture the contrast of the two economic models confronted in the twentieth century and the differences between capitalist and socialist animation (Pikkov, 2018).

The understanding of The Simpsons as a successful worldwide cultural reference of the highest level (Westcott, 2011; Rodríguez-Arrieta, 2015), and particularly at the end of the 1990s, is undisputed in Spain (Marta and Tovar, 2011), although it should be mentioned that most research on this cartoon would be related to the negative influence on minors due to the constant presence of aggression within it (Reyes et al., 1999; Martínez, 2003; Morales et al., 2014), especially in the mid-1990s. A historical period in which the blame for youth violence was unfairly attributed to the consumption of audiovisual entertainment products such as cartoons or video games, particularly the famous Mortal Kombat (Dill and Dill, 1998). Regarding The Simpsons, this controversy would even involve US high politics during George H.W. Bush's term of office (1989-1993), when he affirmed that the popular yellow family was not a model for Americans to follow as it was a bad example (Woodcock, 2008) since "its dysfunctionality [in] itself represents a criticism of the conservative family model" (Rodríguez-Arrieta, 2015).

The main Spanish-language studies that reviewed the aforementioned cartoon through a cultural analysis focused primarily on the role of the family (Chacón and Sánchez-Ruiz, 2009; 2011), more specifically the role played by Marge Simpson (Tovar et al., 2020). In general terms, the weaknesses that, according to experts in social sciences, the series transmitted were 1. a continuous trivialization of violence, 2. the lack of consequences of the actions carried out, and 3. the perpetual stagnation of the characters in simple stereotypes (Grandío, 2008).

That is why in this research article we have tried to examine the first seasons of this cartoon by analyzing a very specific sequence of this series, moving away from the already hackneyed topic of roles, family, or violent behavior. Selecting the iconic Worker and Parasite and trying to understand their strong social impact, present in the episode *Krusty Gets Kancelled* (1993), was because this sketch is a well-known but little academically studied subject, being this a specific animation that would combine political criticism, the influence of the American cultural environment of the 90s (once the Cold War was over), and the inherent fight for the audience of the same entertainment television shows (Figure 1). Furthermore, the fragment satirized the style of some animations coming from the other side of the Iron Curtain, which were completely unknown to the Western heritage of the common citizen at that time. In particular, those currents further away from the pedagogical Russian realism (Pikkov, 2018), recognized for having a more experimental and artistic character, such as the Zagreb School or the animation from the Baltic republics of the USSR<sup>1</sup> (Pikkov, 2016; 2018).

---

<sup>1</sup> Note for example the renowned work of Priit Pärn *Eine Murul* and *Hotel*. In them, the relationship between the vital objectives of people, the existence (or not) of economic resources, and social equality-inequality is clearly identified as a criticism of capitalism and communism; something that would also reflect a more modern animated series such as American Dad! specifically in an episode of the fourth season (Red October Sky, year 2008). Differential components that would be reflected between capitalist and socialist animation (Pikkov, 2018).

**Figure 1**  
Concept map of the episode *Krusty Gets Kancelled*



**Source:** Own elaboration.

### 1.1. Brief synopsis of the episode *Krusty es cancelado* // *Krusty Gets Kancelled* // *El drama de Krusty*

The last episode of the fourth season of *The Simpsons* (1993), *Krusty es cancelado* (Spanish) // *Krusty Gets Kancelled* (English) // *El drama de Krusty* (Latin American Spanish) is about a massive advertising campaign in Springfield (the fictional city of *The Simpsons*, stereotype of the average American city) that initially causes strangeness in all the inhabitants and that soon would be revealed as a new children's television program that will compete with Krusty the clown, a recurring secondary character of this cartoon. The new program was an overwhelming success and Krusty will try to compete for the audience against this new adversary, although the public would turn its back on him except for Bart and Lisa Simpson.

*Worker and Parasite* (*Proletario y Parásito* in Spanish // *Obrero y Parásito* in Latin American Spanish) was an emergency animated content used by *The Krusty the Clown Show* for the continuity of its television program because the popular cartoons *Rasca y Pica*<sup>2</sup> (*Itchy and Scratchy* in English // *Tomy and Daly* in Latin American Spanish) previously broadcasted by that channel were acquired by its new opponent: the program of the puppet Gabbo and the ventriloquist Arthur Crandall. Thus, *Worker and Parasite* was broadcast live without even being reviewed by Krusty, not having any

<sup>2</sup> Cartoons that in turn parodied the famous cartoon *Tom and Jerry*. This product allowed *The Simpsons* to enter into plotlines and problems associated with the creation and design of a cartoon itself, such as the handling of violence in children's audiovisual products (Gómez-Morales, 2014).

acceptance from the public, as well as a previous attempt to do ventriloquism with little preparation and crudely, which would cause his program to be canceled by low ratings, thus this character falling into a self-destructive depression<sup>3</sup>.

This event would be the leitmotif of the chapter, as Bart and Lisa Simpson would help Krusty to return to the small screen, planning a special program with various guest stars (Johnny Carson, Hugh Hefner, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Bette Midler, Luke Perry<sup>4</sup>, and Elizabeth Taylor<sup>5</sup>), also looking for weaknesses of his competitor Gabbo to spread them and thus make him lose his popularity, something that Bart would accomplish by recording the ventriloquist and the puppet insulting children without them realizing they were on air.

Krusty's return would turn out to be a resounding success thanks to the gathering power of the aforementioned celebrities, thus beginning the decadence of Gabbo when he only had Ray Jay Johnson, the character of comedian Bill Saluga, in his show. Thus, the Simpsons episode would end as it began, in a self-conclusive way and without any relevant change in the plot of the whole series, explicitly evidencing at the end that Krusty's personality had not changed one iota by continuing to be the same selfish and tyrannical subject with his direct subordinates and forgetting (once again) about the help received. Regarding Gabbo and Arthur Crandall, these characters would make a brief cameo without relevance in other episodes of the series.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The audiovisual by-product under analysis has been studied based on three dubbings (Spanish, Latin American Spanish, and English), having structured this element in seven well-differentiated parts. Introduction and presentation of Worker and Parasite by Krusty, within his own television program (The Krusty the Clown Show) // 2. Opening titles of Worker and Parasite // 3. First animated scene of Worker and Parasite (Introduction) // 4. Second animated scene of Worker and Parasite (Plot) // 5. Third animated scene of Worker and Parasite (End of the episode) // 6. End credits of Worker and Parasite // 7. Consequences of the broadcasting of Worker and Parasite in Krusty's show.

Through the semiotic method<sup>6</sup> based on the cultural perspective of Smith-Shank (2004) we have tried to research, exhaustively, the cultural meanings of this particular

---

<sup>3</sup> Krusty's contrasting personality characteristics compared to the reality he should be is an ingenious inversion of social roles, this being "the critical reflection of the counter-values that are linked to the lack of quality in children's television, which would be a bad referent for children" (Marta et al., 2017, p. 107).

<sup>4</sup> Its presence made it possible to make a direct criticism of Fox, thus emphasizing the transgressive nature of the series since that channel was the one that broadcast The Simpsons in the U.S. (Henry, 2012).

<sup>5</sup> Unlike the other celebrities, Elizabeth Taylor also appeared in the episode, but from a negative valence since in the series the character was not interested in collaborating altruistically in Krusty's return to television.

<sup>6</sup> The basis of semiotics is the analysis of images, gestures, and objects (Karam, 2011, p. 2) being our working elements in a pseudo-drawing that would not present authentic verbal language.

animation scene to capture its value at the moment in which this product has been made and thus understand its current recognition; not being our objective to make a historical approach regarding the subjective western impressions towards the animation of Eastern Europe during the 20th century and its casuistry. Thus, in this study we have sought to identify as many objective signs as possible of this object of study (time, movement, sound, color, etc.), since as Chacón and Sánchez-Ruiz (2011, p. 21) would state "cultural meanings inevitably change over time, depending on the contexts and our own understanding".

### 3. RESULTS

In the introduction made by Krusty to the cartoons under discussion, approximately 15 seconds, the reason for the presence of Worker and Parasite would be made explicit, since the audience was informed that the broadcasting rights of Itchy and Scratchy were lost in favor of his rival Gabbo. Although the clown initially began his show with the typical joy of a children's program presented by a comedian without any anomaly (second 1"), this character's anger for no longer having these important cartoons in his show was instantly evident (second 3"); continuing to make a veiled criticism of this decision through his body language and gesturally branding his competitor as elitist and snobbish showing disgust (seconds 4"- 5") (Figure 2). Subsequently, Krusty would return to his original state of joy by effusively presenting the new cartoon, indicating that Worker and Parasite are "Eastern Europe's favorite cat and mouse team worker" (English), "el gato y el ratón más queridos de Europa del Este" (Spanish), or "los favoritos de Europa oriental (Latin American Spanish)" (seconds 7"- 11"), followed by loud guffaws of laughter (seconds 12"- 13").

#### Figure 2

*Krusty's different states of mind when presenting Worker and Parasite*



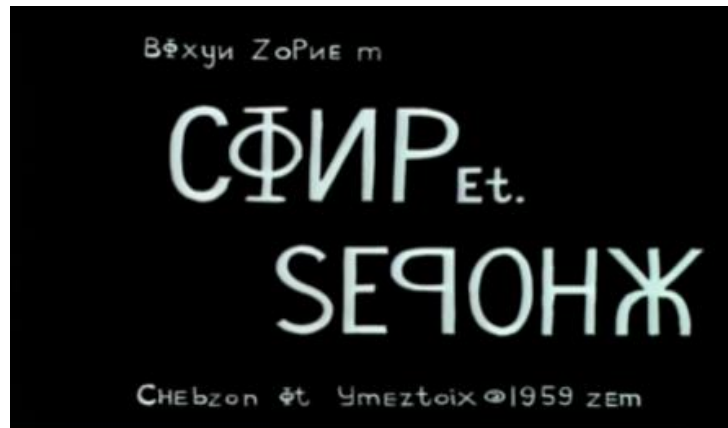
**Source:** Krusty Gets Cancelled (1993). The Simpsons, Season 4. Twentieth Century Fox.

The opening title scene of Worker and Parasite (Figure 3) would show the basic information of any cartoon (title, creator, and year of production) for two seconds (14"- 15" seconds) in simple white letters on a black background that would appear to be from the Cyrillic alphabet (base of languages such as Russian) but were a simple invention of the creators of this chapter, and therefore would be incomprehensible to anyone. The music of the show would start with a drumming sound that directly evoked a situation of tension and fear. This first scene would already allow us to intuit that the quality of the cartoon (and of the whole Krusty show by association) would be very poor, the date of creation of the new cartoon (the year 1959) reflecting that this audiovisual product was completely outdated temporally and culturally, a

fundamental divergence that would promote the playfulness of the whole sequence. This comparison would become clearer when recalling the beginning of Gabbo's show and its excessive display of means and its aggressive advertising campaign with which the episode began.

**Figure 3**

*Opening titles of Worker and Parasite*



**Source:** Krusty Gets Kancelled (1993). The Simpsons, Season 4. Twentieth Century Fox.

The next scene, which lasts from 16" to 20", is the supposed presentation of the characters and their abrupt introduction (Figure 4). By analogous thinking, one could assume that if in the original language Itchy was the mouse and Scratchy the cat<sup>7</sup>; Worker would be the rodent and Parasite the feline, but we must remember that Krusty when introducing the new characters, mentions first the feline and then the rodent. In short, the viewers could not even clearly identify the main characters of the animation, thus deepening the feeling of absolute incomprehension.

If the premise that Worker is the mouse and Parasite is the cat was to be accepted as true, this would continue the unnatural structure of animated series such as Tom and Jerry that would encourage the comical by having flipped the natural roles of predator and prey with this pair of species. This explanation would also be justified by the name of the second character, Parasite, since it would be intuited that this would be the animal that would suffer the violence of the cartoon for being the antagonist of the socialist society, while Worker would be assigned the role of protagonist and hero, as a semblance of the socialist society. In this way, it would be assumed that one of the objectives of the cartoon (as such) is political propaganda aimed at a child audience, something emphasized by the creators of The Simpsons in such a way that for Pikkov (2018) could be defined as anti-propaganda by not persuading but provoking rejection. A key component to understanding this sequence.

---

<sup>7</sup> In the fourteenth episode of the eighth season of The Simpsons (El show de Rasca, Pica y Poochie (Spanish) // The Itchy & Scratchy & Poochie Show (English) // El espectáculo de Tomy, Daly y Poochie (Latin American Spanish), it was clearly indicated in Spanish that Rasca / Tomy would be the cat and Pica / Daly the mouse, thus breaking the original structure of the series.

The characters are at the beginning in an industrial factory, a representative scenario of socialism and its folkloric proletarian image (Pikkov, 2018)<sup>8</sup>, as pipes and gears would be perfectly identified in the background. A representation of an oppressive urban environment, typical of Eastern European animation of the second half of the twentieth century (Rogoff, 2021), being the most relevant visual aspects of this first scene (besides the characters) two objects of intense red color located in the lower left (a wrench) and right (a sickle) corners, possible explicit representation of communist symbology. Something that we identify with the propagandistic function previously indicated, since it should be emphasized that these utensils have a specific color that first would not correspond to the usual materials with which they are made and secondly, these are the most striking signs of the context next to the protagonists of the cartoon.

The characters enter/exit the screen from the sides, and their footsteps can be heard, one of the few easily identifiable sounds. They are also shown interacting in a disorganized way and babbling at the same time (not being able to have a reasonable conversation for that reason) through guttural sounds that would resemble Slavic language. The animation of the characters is crude (the parts of their bodies are not always presented attached to the whole) and a very rudimentary vision of the whole, as well as the definition of their shapes and the handling of the chromatic tonality while the music would be heard with low tones, would prevail, reflecting a high sense of discomfort and continuous heaviness, typical in Eastern European animation (Bendazzi, 2015). It is striking the differential fact that, in contrast to Itchy and Scratchy, the characters in this animation did not behave violently, although their names would a priori evoke an instant fight based on the Marxist concept of class struggle.

**Figure 4**

*First animated scene of Worker and Parasite*



**Source:** Krusty Gets Kancelled (1993). The Simpsons, Season 4. Twentieth Century Fox.

The following scenario (Figure 5) would evoke in six seconds (20"- 26") a new environment with more identity elements than the previous painting, being this the

---

<sup>8</sup> It is worth remembering the popular Japanese video game of the same period, Street Fighter II: The World Warrior (1991) by Capcom. Not by chance, the character-fighter representing the Soviet Union, Zangief, was set in a factory full of workers, and on the floor was the coat of arms of the Soviet Union: the hammer and sickle.



space richest in details of the whole cartoon (something not very complex in itself due to the extreme simplicity of this parody) that would represent a supposed plot in a logical sequence if this were a normal animation and not an extreme exaggeration of Eastern European drawings. Besides the above, it should be emphasized that certain technical aspects of the pseudo-animation of *Worker and Parasite* resemble the *Tom and Jerry* series produced in the early sixties by Gene Deitch, a reference to the Prague School (Rogoff, 2021).

In the foreground, there would again be the characters interacting with limited movements in the same way as the previous scene (same exit included), but at the beginning, it is not the characters who move but the background as the camera moves from left to right, giving an unachieved sensation of movement of the whole drawing. In the background, we observe a food stand where an irascible-hysterical shopkeeper is supposed to deliver (or sell) cans of food to a line of afflicted and depressed shoppers who are all the same<sup>9</sup> and static. A pessimistic, bleak, and unhappy image that Bendazzi (2015) characterizes in post-Stalinist Eastern European animation; easily recognizable for being the reflection of the economic crisis, and shortages of food and other commodities in many communist countries of Europe in the last decades of the 20th century (Drakulic, 1987) as would be reflected in *Eine Murul*.

This situation would again contrast the two competing television shows: the decadent *Krusty show* (linked by *Worker and Parasite* to the defeated communism of the 1990s) against the great display of media, color, and capitalist fanfare of the (initially) successful *Gabbo show*, highlighting that in these first two scenarios of *Worker and Parasite* the gray and muted colors would stand out. An aspect that for Danesi (2002) would symbolize opacity, darkness, and mystery.

**Figure 5**

*Second animated scene of Worker and Parasite*



**Source:** *Krusty Gets Kancelled* (1993). *The Simpsons*, Season 4. Twentieth Century Fox.

The last scene (Figure 6) would last two seconds (26"- 28") and would be the most chaotic, intelligible, and anarchic of the whole animation, already abstract and devoid

<sup>9</sup> While one would assume that the authors aimed to parody the low-quality technical means of cartoons from socialist countries of past eras (Pikkov, 2018), one could very well associate this aspect with the characteristic recycling of images and sounds of Hanna and Barbera cartoons (Sullivan, 2021). We would also believe that there could be an intention to sarcastically reference the model of the new Soviet man (Soboleva, 2017).

of almost any sense. It is worth mentioning as a relevant differential aspect that in this part of the cartoon, linguistic signs could be identified as pseudo-words made up of syllables that would resemble the Russian language ("tomoskaia") unlike the other parts of the animation.

The final part of Worker and Parasite could be summarized in an orange background covered by black scribbles where the characters are placed and "talk" to each other with a higher tone and without any apparent order. In this final part, the drawings would represent absolute nonsense since they would not even maintain verticality, everything would be in movement (unlike the static nature of the previous scenes), and space-time would have completely disappeared, identifying only the characters themselves, who would no longer reflect any presumption of argumentative coherence (unlike the previous scenes).

**Figure 6**

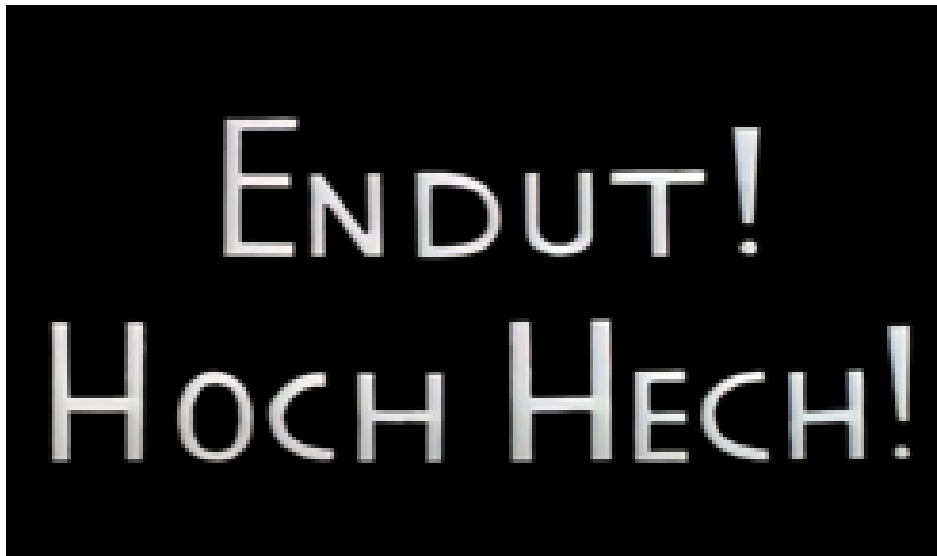
*Third animated scene of Worker and Parasite*



**Source:** Krusty Gets Kancelled (1993). The Simpsons, Season 4. Twentieth Century Fox.

Worker and Parasite would conclude with end credits (28"- 31") similar to those of the beginning of the cartoon (Figure 7) but the latter being even simpler, in which they would appear in white letters (all of them derived from the Latin alphabet, unlike the initial credits), occupying the entire screen (on a black background) a meaningless message trying to appear again in a foreign language, completely alien to the American viewer. The animated piano music would try to be a positive closing that when ending totally out of tune would be an undeniable sign of a resounding failure and lack of economic means.

**Figure 7**  
*End credits of Worker and Parasite*



**Source:** Krusty Gets Kancelled (1993). The Simpsons, Season 4. Twentieth Century Fox.

The consequence of the broadcast of the cartoons of Worker and Parasite (31"- 34") in Krusty's show and the subsequent emotional reaction of this character would reflect a massive rejection of this cartoon due to its total lack of sense. This would initially manifest itself in the surprised face of its own presenter at the end of the cartoon (Figure 8) to angrily ask himself "What the hell is that? [¿qué diantres es eso? (Spanish) // ¿Qué rayos es eso? (Latin American Spanish)]. The sense of improvisation on Krusty's part and the performance of his show would be emphasized by his smoking in a space with children in the audience (an aspect of tobacco addiction already satirized in other episodes of the series). Afterward, Krusty would turn to where the audience is seated and would observe in surprise that there are no longer any spectators. Thus, the scene of Worker and Parasite would end, allowing the viewer to accurately identify that Krusty's television show would be destined for its demise in contrast to the success of the puppet Gabbo.

**Figure 8**  
*Krusty's emotional reactions after the broadcast of Worker and Parasite*



**Source:** Krusty Gets Kancelled (1993). The Simpsons, Season 4. Twentieth Century Fox.

Based on all the information given, we can indicate that the strong differences between the containing animated series (The Simpsons), Itchy and Scratchy, and the post-Stalinist pseudo-animation analyzed (Worker and Parasite) were the characteristics that would generate this great confrontation of languages, which would generate the stupefaction and rejection of the public in The Krusty the Clown Show and amusement in the viewers of The Simpsons (Table 1).

**Table 1.** *Differences found between the cartoons under study*

<b>Orthodox and/or commercial cartoons (The Simpsons // Itchy and Scratchy)</b>	<b>Experimental Cartoon (Worker and Parasite)</b>
The characters are clearly configured physically and psychologically, besides being in an easily identifiable environment.	The characters are ambiguous and difficult to identify, and their environment is shown diffusely and abstractly.
The scenes are presented continuously, generally in chronological order.	The scenes of the animation are introduced abruptly and no clear link between them is identified.
Animation is introduced in a narrative form in which the viewer is told a story with a beginning and an end.	The drawing must be interpreted and searched for cryptic meanings, in this specific case, an aspect that is impossible to achieve because the work lacks meaning.
Priority is given to the content of the shows (the plot) to be able to observe the evolution of the characters in the storyline.	The series emphasizes the physical characteristics of the cartoon and its own materiality, not giving importance to the content of the material.
The physical characteristics of the cartoon remain constant as a unit during the broadcasting of the product.	The physical characteristics are not constant, particularly in the penultimate scene of the pseudo-animation <sup>10</sup> .
Animation is characterized by a commercial character that facilitates global understanding through humor.	It is intended to capture the subjective character of Eastern European animation based on the author's own inherent artistic innovation.
The development of the plot of the animation relies mainly on the verbal (The Simpsons) and non-verbal (Itchy and Scratchy) dialogue of the characters.	The element that determines the beginning and the end of the cartoon is the musical aspect, based on the negative emotionality that the pseudo-series evokes.

**Source:** Adaptation of Wells (1998, p. 36).

#### **4. CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION**

The episode Krusty Gets Cancelled (1993) presents us, in the sequence of Worker and Parasite, the generic capitalist vision of the American society compared to the communist enemy of the already-ended Cold War employing a brief animation within

<sup>10</sup> Unlike experimental animations such as Eine Murul, in Worker and Parasite the contrast between different animation techniques is not as pronounced.

the world of an already consecrated animated series such as The Simpsons: a foreign gibberish alien to the American acquis based on economic poverty, social regression (Bendazzi, 2015), and constant political propaganda (Pikkov, 2018) whose final result would be an absolute commercial failure devoid of any logic. On the contrary, the successful capitalist model in the episode would be reflected in Gabbo's Show and indirectly in Itchy and Scratchy (as the antagonist of Worker and Parasite): pure gimmicky spectacle (often based on absurd violence) whose only purpose is the economic success and the entertainment of the child viewer, in contrast to the pedagogical importance given to animation in the socialist bloc (Pikkov, 2018).

The latter does not mean that the creators of The Simpsons did not make biting criticisms against the capitalist system or hedonism based on the accumulation of wealth (in a similar way that Priit Pärn did in Hotel), since in itself the character of Krusty is the obvious reflection of an elitist, haughty, and inconsiderate being who works with sappy and vulgar humor accompanied in his labor journey with the insatiable mercantilist desire of large companies so that children buy the products that are advertised on television<sup>11</sup>.

In short, Worker and Parasite is a set of symbols and visual signs that have provided in a very short time one of the most popular and efficient anti-communist satires that could have been made in an American cartoon, also incorporating self-criticism of the very environment of children's television shows such as The Simpsons. The success of the parody was partly due to the great ignorance of the public regarding Eastern European animations, their languages, and their historical trajectory, representing with the presentation of Worker and Parasite the rigid idea that Western art is the authentic universal model (Pikkov, 2018). A belief strengthened with the collapse of the communist states of Europe in the early 1990s and the enormous power of production and influence of American corporations and the spread of their cultural values (Westcott, 2011), representing with Worker and Parasite the rigid and mistaken idea that Western art is the authentic universal model (Pikkov, 2018).

It is worth emphasizing in this scientific, exploratory article, the role of Eastern European cartoons outside the hackneyed American clichés, standing out for their worth the brilliant products of the Zagreb School or Priit Pärn (among other artists); highlighting, in any case, the quality of the scene of The Simpsons that was analyzed, in contrast to the current episodes of this long-lived cartoon series.

## 5. REFERENCES

Bendazzi, G. (2015). *Animation: A World History. Volume I: Foundations – The Golden Age*. CRC Press.

---

<sup>11</sup> A strong contrast in moral principles compared to one of the recurring villains of the series: the supporting actor, Bob. This interesting situation could already be seen in the episode Krusty Gets Busted (Krusty entra en chirona / Krusty va a la cárcel) of the first season (1990). In that episode, it is paradoxically observed that the show of supporting actor Bob had a greater cultural background and a higher quality than Krusty's; Bob's motivation was, besides the revenge against his superior, to create a successful show that treated children as intelligent people.

- Chacón, P. & Sánchez-Ruiz, J. (2009). La estructura familiar de Los Simpsons© a través del dibujo infantil. *Revista Mexicana de Investigación Educativa*, 14(43), 1129-1154.
- Chacón, P. & Sánchez-Ruiz, J. (2011). La familia en las series de televisión infantiles. Una perspectiva semiótica cultural. *Arte y movimiento*, 5, 19-25.
- Danesi, M. (2002). *Understanding media semiotics*. Oxford University Press.
- Delamorclaz, C. (2019). *Estudio sobre animación televisiva estadounidense (1960-2019): El poder de las sitcom. Claves sociales y culturales de su evolución* [Tesis inédita de doctorado, Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha].
- Dill, K. & Dill, J. (1998). Video game violence: a review of the empirical literature. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 3(4), 407-428. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s1359-1789\(97\)00001-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/s1359-1789(97)00001-3)
- Drakulic, S. (1987). *How we Survived Communism and Even Laughed*. Vintage.
- Gómez-Morales, B. (2014). Televisión «en abyme». La televisión estadounidense de «prime time» como espejo de sí misma. *Área Abierta*, 14(2), 53-71. [https://doi.org/10.5209/rev\\_ARAB.2014.v35.n2.45756](https://doi.org/10.5209/rev_ARAB.2014.v35.n2.45756)
- Grandío, M. (2008). Series para ¿menores? La realidad que transmite la ficción. Análisis de «Los Simpsons». *Sphera Pública*, 8, 157-172.
- Henry, M. (2012). *The Simpsons, Satire, and American Culture*. Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137027795>
- Irwin, W., Conard, M. & Skoble, A. (2009). *Los Simpson y la filosofía*. Blackie Books.
- Karam, T. (2011). *Introducción a la semiótica de la imagen*. Lecciones del portal. Portal de la Comunicación InCom-UAB.
- Marta, C., Ruiz, F. J. & Tovar, A. (2017). El periodismo informativo y la televisión infantil en las primeras temporadas de la serie de ficción televisiva Los Simpson. *Icono* 14, 15(2), 92-113. <https://doi.org/10.7195/ri14.v15i2.1057>
- Marta, C. & Tovar, A. (2011). Los Simpson, un fenómeno social con 20 años de permanencia en la programación televisiva. *Revista Mediterránea de Comunicación*, 2(1), 125-139.
- Martínez, S. (2003). Los niños ante la violencia televisiva. *Etic@net*, 1, 1-6.
- Morales, X., Chacón, P. & Soto, P. (2014). La presencia de la violencia en las series dirigidas a los niños/as de 5 y 6 años. Una perspectiva semiótico-cultural. *Escuela Abierta*, 17, 65-84.
- Pikkov, Ü. (2016). On the Topics and Style of Soviet Animated Films. *Baltic Screen Media Review*, 4, 16-37.

- Pikkov, Ü. (2018). *Anti-Animation: Textures of Eastern European Animated Film*. Cultural Endowment of Estonia y Estonian Film Institute.
- Pinsky, M. (2010). *El evangelio según Los Simpson*. Selector. Actualidad Editorial.
- Reyes, U., Sánchez, N. P., Carbajal, L., Barrios, R. & López, G. (1999). Violencia en las caricaturas: análisis de dos series de televisión. *Revista Mexicana de Puericultura y Pediatría*, 73(7), 22-28.
- Rodríguez-Arrieta, J. D. (2015). Los Simpson y la representación de la política. *Reflexiones*, 94(1), 109-121.
- Rogoff, J. (2021). Poetics of Seriality: Socialist Architecture in Eastern European Animation. *International Journal of Film and Media Arts*, 6(2), 95-106.
- Smith-Shank, D. (2004). *Semiotics and visual culture: Sights, signs, and significance*. National Art Education Association.
- Soboleva, M. (2017). The Concept of the «New Soviet Man» and Its Short History. *Canadian-American Slavic Studies*, 51(1), 64-85. <https://doi.org/10.1163/22102396-05101012>
- Stabile, C. & Harrison, M. (2003). *Prime Time Animation. Television animation and American culture*. Routledge.
- Sullivan, P. (2021). Hanna-Barbera's Cacophony: Sound Effects and the Production of Movement. *Animation*, 16(1-2), 21-35. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17468477211025660>
- Tovar, A., Marta, C. & Ruiz, F. J. (2020). De Marge a Lisa: El nuevo paradigma de la mujer en Los Simpson. *Revista de Ciencias Sociales (RCS)*, 26(2), 28-42.
- Wells, P. (1998). *Understanding Animation*. Routledge.
- Westcott, T. (2011). An overview of the global animation industry. *Creative Industries Journal*, 3(3), 253-259. [http://doi.org/10.1386/cij.3.3.253\\_1](http://doi.org/10.1386/cij.3.3.253_1)
- Woodcock, P. (2008). Gender, Politicians and Public Health: Using The Simpsons to Teach Politics. *European Political Science*, 7(2), 153-164. <https://doi.org/10.1057/eps.2008.5>
- 6. Related articles**
- Cerdán Martínez, V. y Villa Gracia, Daniel (2019). Creación de un formato de concienciación social para la televisión pública española: "Héroes Invisibles". *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, 74, 1565-1579. <http://doi.org/10.4185/RLCS-2019-1399>
- Fenoll, V. (2019). La representación de la dictadura en el cine de animación argentino. *Vivat Academia, Revista de Comunicación*, 149, 45-66.

Hidalgo-Marí, T., Tous Rovirosa, A. y Morales Morante, L. F. (2019). Los modelos familiares en la comedia televisiva española: (1990-2010). *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, 74, 01-11. <http://doi.org/10.4185/RLCS-2019-1318>

Marcos Ramos, M., González de Garay, B. y Portillo Delgado, C. (2019). La representación de la inmigración en la ficción serial española contemporánea de prime time. *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, 74, 285-307. <http://doi.org/10.4185/RLCS-2019-1331>

## **AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS, FUNDING, AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

### **Authors' contributions:**

**Conceptualization:** Vázquez-Miraz, Pedro. **Methodology:** Vázquez-Miraz, Pedro. **Validation:** Vázquez-Miraz, Pedro. **Formal analysis:** Vázquez-Miraz, Pedro. **Data curation:** Vázquez-Miraz, Pedro. **Writing-Preparation of the original draft:** Vázquez-Miraz, Pedro. **Writing-Revision and Editing:** Vázquez-Miraz, Pedro. **Visualization:** Vázquez-Miraz, Pedro. **Supervision:** Vázquez-Miraz, Pedro. **Project Management:** Vázquez-Miraz, Pedro. **The author has read and accepted the published version of the manuscript:** Vázquez-Miraz, Pedro.

**Funding:** This research did not receive external funding.

### **AUTHOR/S:**

#### **Pedro Vázquez-Miraz**

Ph.D. in Social and Behavioral Sciences from the Universidad de A Coruña and a degree in Social Psychology from the Universidad de Santiago de Compostela. He is currently a professor in the Psychology program at the Universidad Tecnológica de Bolívar (Cartagena, Colombia).

**Orcid ID:** <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5801-1728>

**Google Scholar:** <https://scholar.google.es/citations?user=N2rakz0AAAAJ&hl=es>

**ResearchGate:** <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Pedro-Vazquez-Miraz>

**Scopus:** <https://www.scopus.com/authid/detail.uri?authorId=57196040759>