

Nostalgic gestures on Brazilian television series: the case of *Samantha!*

Gestos nostálgicos en las series de televisión brasileñas: el caso de Samantha!

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Abstract

This paper intends to discuss the instrumentalization of nostalgias in contemporary audiovisual products, with a focus on Brazilian television series. For this purpose, we propose a content analysis of the first season of *Samantha!* (Netflix, 2018-2019), with the support of television and nostalgias studies. As a result, we consider that *Samantha!* addresses two perspectives on nostalgic gestures: one romanticized and the other critical, thus demonstrating the possibilities of working with nostalgic gestures on contemporary media production.

Keywords: Nostalgias, audiovisual, brazilian television series, *Samantha!*

Resumen

El propósito de este texto es discutir la instrumentalización de las nostalgias en los productos audiovisuales contemporáneos, con un enfoque en la ficción en serie brasileña. Para esto, en términos metodológicos, proponemos un análisis de contenido de la primera temporada de la serie *¡Samantha!* (Netflix, 2018-2019), a la luz de los estudios sobre ficciones en serie y nostalgias. Como resultado, consideramos que *¡Samantha!* aborda dos perspectivas sobre los gestos nostálgicos, uno idealizado y el otro crítico, demostrando así las posibilidades de trabajar con gestos nostálgicos en la producción mediática contemporánea.

Palabras clave: Nostalgias, audiovisual, series de ficción brasileñas, *¡Samantha!*

1. Introduction

The instrumentalization of nostalgia is a common phenomenon in the cultural industry, manifested in different ways over time (Castellano & Meimarids, 2017). Nowadays, it is usually explicit in different instances of consumption: brands take ownership of past successes to launch new products, labeling them as retro, vintage, old school, etc. Products that were no longer manufactured, such as vinyls, instant cameras and chocolate brands, suddenly return to shelves. Revivals, reboots and remakes proliferate in cinema and on TV – here, we can name shows like *Gilmore Girls: A Year in the Life* (Netflix, 2016), *Dracula* (BBC One, Netflix, 2020-Present), and the four movie remakes produced by Walt Disney Pictures in 2019 – *Dumbo*, *Aladdin*, *The Lion King* and *Lady and the Tramp* (*Mulan* was scheduled for 2020, but needed to be postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic).

The increase in the production, distribution and consumption of television series, defined by Silva (2014) as a TV Series Culture, cannot be disregarded in studies related to television, and although this culture progresses in a transnational manner, television also has a great national scope, notably forming a shared repertoire of meanings in our society, which is part of the representation of an imagined national community (Lopes, 2014). In this study, different nostalgias appear as symbolic pleasure in reference to past decades of this imagined community, such as in the Brazilian soap opera *Summer 90 (Verão 90)*, Rede Globo, 2019) or in the film *Bingo: The King of the Mornings (Bingo: O Rei das Manhãs*, Warner Bros, 2017). In this scenario, one of the international TV series that has stood out is *Stranger Things* (Netflix, 2016-Present), with allusions to films from the 1980s, bringing to the public the pleasure of unraveling references and finding recognition.

For the purposes of this paper, we use the term nostalgias with an “s” because we believe, as Santa Cruz and Ferraz (2018) point out, that it can encompass the plurality of meanings related to nostalgic experiences, for example: the narration of the past and its relations with the present; the feeling of loss and displacement; the intentional gestures of the media to attract fans, with critical or romanticized strategies. Thus, we agree with

Niemeyer (2018, p.29), who believes in different “forms, expressions and meanings” of nostalgias.

In this paper, we analyze *Samantha!* (Netflix, 2018-2019), Netflix's first Brazilian comedy series, created by Felipe Braga in partnership with the Los Bragas Production Company, directed by Luis Pinheiro, Felipe Braga and Julia Jordão and scripted by Roberto Vitorino, Patricia Corso, Rafael Lessa and Filipe Valerim. The show is relevant in this context because, in addition to being a national television production in a transnational environment, it presents two periods of Brazilian society and the intertwining of its major social and cultural issues: the story takes place in 2018 and constantly flashes back to the 1980s, thus addressing how nostalgias reverberate in contemporary times. In methodological terms, our analysis will focus on the first season, which has seven episodes of approximately 30 minutes each. The plot follows the story of Samantha (Emanuelle Araújo), a former child star who had her own television show and was the leader of a children's musical group (both called *Turminha Plimplom*). After a time out of television programming, Samantha needs to take care of her family and the issues of adult life, while she still seeks stardom back. With her career in decline and her manager now working with other artists, the protagonist has a chance to return to the news sites when her husband Dodói (Douglas Silva), a famous ex-soccer player, is released from prison and goes back to the family home. Through the adventures of Samantha to return to fame, we follow the story plot and its relations with the nostalgic experience of the characters.

In this context, it is important to point out that *Samantha!* stages nostalgic gestures that highlight not only the positive past (Machado, 2020), but ironic, critical and romanticized outlines. To analyze this phenomenon, thus, our guiding question is: how the Brazilian series *Samantha!* addresses nostalgic gestures in the development of its storyline? To do so, we start from a bibliographic review of nostalgia studies, especially those that refer to nostalgia in the field of media and communication, and after that we present a content analysis of the show's first season, articulating observation, empirical selection and finally inference, as suggested by Bardin (1988).

2. Theoretical possibilities for understanding nostalgia

The movement of constant return to other times using nostalgic appeals reveals a crisis with temporality (Niemeyer, 2014), a societal issue perceived by Huyssen (2000) as a consequence of the acceleration of the experience of time. According to Grainge (2000), this phenomenon happens with people who search for continuity in times of change and uncertainty, generating safer subjective engagements in the face of critical situations. Davis (2011), furthermore, defends that the increase in the production of nostalgic media is more common in times of discontinuities and social conflicts¹.

Etymologically, the word nostalgia can be divided into *nostos*, which means home, and *algos*, that is, pain or desire. Nostalgia, then, usually is related to melancholy and homesickness, the yearning for something or some place of the past that is now unreachable. Moreover, nostalgia used to be defined also as a disease. Until the 17th century, people who were diagnosed as nostalgic received medical reports as it threatened their work performance, especially during war times (França, 2018).

Over the ages, historical, anthropological, literary and communication studies began to approach the theme as a bittersweet emotion or a creative and curative practice (Niemeyer, 2018). For Boym (2001, p. xiii-xiv), nostalgia is “[...] a sentiment of loss and displacement, but it is also a romance with one’s own fantasy”. According to the author, the XXth century began with futuristic utopia and ended in nostalgia, due to the communal desire to access a collective memory, to live together in a fragmented world, to protect oneself in uncertain times and to reconstruct an ideal home from the past.

In *Retrotopia*, Bauman (2017) starts from Boym’s perspective to address the idea of a double denial of Thomas More’s (1999) concept of Utopia. The author traces back from Plato’s (1943) ideal *Republic*, made up of artisans (responsible for mechanical works), warriors (responsible for protection) and philosophers (the driving force of the city’s command), and goes to More’s concept of Utopia, a city that does not exist, but is perfect in matters of social equality, and that, despite being unreal, can also be achievable. According to Bauman, this utopian

place in More, where there is a community of mutual assistance, is now replaced by a process of privatization and individualization, sold to citizens under the idea of liberation, but actually brought by the fear of control and subordination. This fear, in modernity, is replaced by the dread of inadequacy, the basis for nostalgia. Thus, Bauman (2017, p.10) believes that Retrotopies, “[...] visions installed in a lost / stolen / abandoned past, but that did not die [...]”, are emerging today, as a return to More’s idea of Utopia.

However, unlike Utopia, which looks ahead, Retrotopia seeks in the past the hope of reconciling security and freedom. Furthermore, Bauman criticizes the fact that More’s utopian place does not open space for the possibility and desire for change. Huyssen (2014) states that nostalgias are always related to memory, even if they have not been experienced “physically”, since any symbolic exchange with music, films, series, books, that exposes an un-lived period is also important for the construction of the viewer. For this reason, nostalgia today can be understood not only as a subjective experience, but above all as a mediated practice.

This corroborates the effort to understand nostalgias, in the plural, as a dialectical process between media and spectators, through the induction of various nostalgic gestures and the affective interaction of the consuming public. The argument is based on the active character of mediated nostalgia or “the explicit communication of nostalgic feeling” (Niemeyer, 2018, p.18), and requires understanding nostalgia also as a verb, an action induced by the media in order to provoke sensations and affections (Wulf, Rieger & Schmitt, 2018). As Ferraz (2016) rightly points out, nostalgia works as a profitable expression of memory that mobilizes people, being therefore activated by the media in its dialectic relations with consumers and fans, in favor of a more legitimate version of the past and its affective engagements.

Given the above, in our complex television system (Orozco-Gómez, 2014), the media presents nostalgia in order to connect people through a sense of belonging, strengthening the aggregation of community and cultural ties. According to Leal, Borges and Lage (2018, p.50), it has the “[...] possibility of circulating narratives capable of connecting people from different generations, places and social clas-

ses"², which leads us to a better understanding of what Holdsworth (2011) coined as "collective nostalgia". The author suggests that the relationship between nostalgia and television is based on a perspective of safe return, because television is itself a nostalgic medium. The very cultural matrix of television, which has repetition as the organizational principle of its logic (Calabrese, 1987), contributes to long-term engagements and programmed retrospections that trigger affection with the past.

However, it is important to highlight that nostalgia is manifested through different nostalgic gestures, capable of being identified as categories and organized as analytical operators. Leal, Borges and Lage (2018) point to the nostalgic gestures present in *Stranger Things*, *Mad Men* (AMC, 2007-2015) and *Voices of Chernobyl* (Svetlana Alexievich, 1997), so that their uses can be observed in different works, genres and times. By nostalgic gestures, then, we understand the audiovisual strategies (whether stylistic, narrative, imagistic, advertising content, etc.) used to build references of the past in media products, which can be traced by the consumers and with which they can establish nostalgic feelings. In our case, the effort is to describe these nostalgic gestures in *Samantha!* and, through an analysis of the content of its first season, to categorize their uses and their effects.

3. Methodological path and description of the object

To understand the ways in which nostalgia is operationalized in television series, we propose here a methodological path that articulates, on the one hand, a description of the central dramatic arcs of the plot, following Newman's (2006) suggestions, and on the other hand, a content analysis (Fonseca, 2006; Bardin, 1988) that points out the nostalgic gestures present in the series and their functions within the narrative. For that, we follow the path suggested by Bardin (1988) in his description of the content analysis methods, in which the author establishes five major steps in the course of the research: organization of the material, codification, categorization, inference and data treatment. For organization and codification, we start with a

synthetic description of our object, contextualizing the particularities of its production and distribution process; then, for the categorization, we begin to organize the dramatic arcs, in order to systematize the main plots and stylistic imagery in the episodes of the first season; and, finally, for inference and data treatment, we observe these arcs to identify the main nostalgic gestures and its purposes to engage the series with its audience. As Bardin explains, the very intention of the content analysis methods is "the inference of knowledge related to the conditions of production (or, eventually, of reception), which resort to different indicators (quantitative or not)" (Bardin, 1988, p. 38)³.

Samantha! premiered in July 2018 and opts for the single camera style with closed shots, that is, a narrative focused on dialogues and conflicts that revolve around the family nucleus, reminiscent of the soap opera style and the traditional multicamera sitcom. The first season takes place in 2018 and flashes back to the 1980s, when the protagonist, Samantha, starred in a famous television show. The plot unfolds the comings and goings between Samantha's professional and personal life, tensioning her traumas and anxieties in her longing for returning to fame.

The first scene of the season sets the tone for the following: 1985, a long hall with striking colors, shiny costumes and a child Samantha in the foreground with the costume designer behind her testing new tiaras, because Samantha lost her own. The protagonist is demanding, and even late for the start of the show, but she does not seem to care. After all, she is the main star. Samantha walks around the studio looking for the lost tiara and comes across adults who pester her by calling her "Samonstra" (something like "Samonster"). She retaliates; there are insults, clumsy words, people kissing in the backstage and items that remember Brazilian television in the 1980s, such as a giant paycheck and a gift-wrapped Volkswagen Beetle. Samantha finds the tiara with one of the members of the crew and she is clearly upset. The climate is hostile and her only friend in that place is Zé Cigarrinho (something like Joe Cigarette), the show's mascot. He tries to calm her down by saying that she is the most loved child in Brazil. Everyone gets in position on stage, the scene director asks for a smile, and in that moment, when the lights come on and the show starts, what seemed unpleasant

is overshadowed by the shiny performance of the *Turminha Plimplom* singing a song. Suddenly, we jump to the present in 2018, when an adult Samantha sings and dances to the same song, *Abraço Infinito* (Infinite Hug), with Zé Cigarrinho by her side, but now in a decadent nightclub.

The Brazilian television during the 1980s was a place full of complex moral issues, such as: the sexualization of black and half-naked women, ideologically dubious propaganda appeals, idolatry of child stars, use of mascots with names that refer to some evil or misbehavior (Samantha's great friend in the series is Zé Cigarrinho, a reference to tobacco and smoking). Along with that, we also had famous urban legends such as music albums with "satanic messages" if heard in reverse, knives hidden inside dolls, and so on. *Samantha!* presents these elements and still makes playful and satirical mentions to famous TV stars of the 1980's, such as Xuxa, Angélica, Mara Maravilha and Simony. As if that weren't enough, it also brings the colors and sparkles of childish scenarios, in reference to four famous shows of Brazilian broadcast television: *Bozo* (TVS, TV Record, SBT, 1980-1991), *Balão Mágico* (Rede Globo, 1983-1986) and *Xou da Xuxa* (Rede Globo, 1986-1992).

For those who don't know, Bozo was a character created in the United States and had his first appearance on American television in 1949, but the show was so successful that it was produced in other countries. In Brazil, it had auditorium games, live calls, reading letters, dance and music, similar to what happens in the *Turminha Plimplom* show. One of the iconic scenes involving the Bozo clown was the *Festival 30 Years SBT*, in which Bozo called the singer Gretchen to the stage to dance in tight clothes, with camera zooms and close-ups⁴. *Balão Mágico*, similar to *Turminha Plimplom*, was a children's show presented by members of a children's musical trio, *Turma do Balão Mágico*, which had a mascot called Fofão, portrayed by the Brazilian actor and humorist Orival Pessini. Lastly, *Xou da Xuxa*, an auditorium TV show presented by Xuxa Meneghel, replaced *Balão Mágico* on Rede Globo in 1986. It had performances by singers, talent audiences with children and adults, letter readings, live calls, scavenger hunts, sexualized teenager dancers (called *Paquitas*), scenery with spaceships and sparkling smoke, as well as two mascots with names of diseases (*Peste* and *Dengue* - Plague and Dengue, in English).

Regarding the dramatic arcs, it is important to point out the eight characters that fuel the conflicts of the plot: Samantha, the protagonist (interpreted by Emanuelle Araújo and her child version by Duda Gonçalves); Dodói, Samantha's husband and famous soccer player of the 2000s (interpreted by Douglas Silva); Brandon and Cindy, son and daughter of Samantha and Dodói (interpreted by Cauã Gonçalves and Sabrina Nonato); Marcinho, Samantha's agent (interpreted by Daniel Furlan); Zé Cigarrinho, a man on his 50's, mascot of the program and Samantha's best friend (interpreted by Ary França); Alfonso (or Bolota, as Samantha called him) and Tico, members of *Turminha Plimplom* (interpreted by Maurício Xavier and Rodrigo Pandolfo; and their children versions, interpreted by Sidney Alexandre and Enzo Oviedo). In our analysis, the objective is to identify the nostalgic gestures that inhabit this fictional world, in order to understand their uses and effects on the audience.

Discussion and Conclusions

Samantha is a character in conflict with her past, who wants to be on television again. Above all, her objective is to be recognized and loved, despite all the time she has been away from the television system. At the same time, however, she has grown up, is now a mother, and sometimes needs to forget what she went through to deal with the problems of adulthood. Since she has been known all her life as the Samantha of the Plimplons, everything related to television passions her. Even the Internet is an issue for the character. In *Episode 01*, in *06'02"*, when Marcinho talks about the importance of the Internet and contemporary digital media, she says: "Look at my face, Marcinho. You will see me on television again"⁵. This implies a character's nostalgic position, which, after all, represents an ironic comment with the show's own production logic: although it builds a fictional world around broadcast television, *Samantha!* is an original Netflix production. Therefore, Samantha's speech contrary to the Internet reveals an important nostalgic gesture: the refusal of the present and the idealization of the past.

In fact, the protagonist lived her childhood and adolescence in the backstage of a broadcast television

production, with the illusion that that was the culmination of her existence. Because of it, the past seems much better than the present, when she is now distant from fame and success, and immersed in the amenities of everyday life. That is why the desire to return to television is so strong in her. Still in *Episode 01*, Zé Cigarrinho tells Samantha that she had better giving up having a television program, because broadcast television “died”, but she does not believe in it and continues with the idea of being “the most loved child in Brazil”. Even with her friend’s express warning, she repels the evidence of the changes in television and prefers existing in an inexorable engagement with the successful past.

Later in *Episode 01*, Dodói leaves jail and returns to the family home accompanied by reporters who want to cover the ex-soccer player’s release. When Samantha notices the television coverage outside her door, she goes to the bedroom, takes the accessories she used as a child and remembers the past desperately. Samantha’s dramatic arc is full of situations that make this nostalgic gesture evident: in *Episode 02*, in 01’49”, talking to Dodói, Samantha says that the advertisement they are going to do together is just a passage to the “prime time” of television. In *Episode 04*, the protagonist remembers how children flattered her when he was a star: they used to send her drawings and parts of their hair and teeth inside love letters. That is, the entire universe of television, which was the place of personal and professional fulfillment in the past, no longer belongs to Samantha, even though her subjectivity is crossed not only by the affective memory of these times, but for a desire to produce, in the present, conditions to return to it. This nostalgic desire of the protagonist is opposed to the transforming force of the present, generating the main conflict of the series’ story arc.

This... continues throughout the show. In *Episode 06*, Samantha, Alfonso and Tico need to fulfill the desire of Zé Cigarrinho, exposed in a video just before he passed away: having his ashes thrown at the Vassourão Theater. The three characters spend the episode discussing the traumas caused by the experiences of working in television as children in the 1980s, but when they realize that the place that Zé Cigarrinho asked for the ashes to be thrown is where the Plimplons made their first show, they begin to look longingly at that time, reframing the

past. Samantha says to Alfonso in 24’31”: “Don’t you miss that time, Alfonso? Bolota was loved. People wanted to catch you, smell you, hug you. It was real! Like your VCR tapes”⁶. And further on, Alfonso adds: “Nowadays, parents don’t let children come even close to me”⁷, and Tico ends: “We used to fight, fight, but it was a family, right?”⁸. In other words, all Plimplons romanticize the past, sweetening the feeling of remembrance with the disillusionment with the end of fame.

In parallel with the feeling of idealization, it is very common that the return to the past is also bitter and hurtful. In *Episode 02*, for example, Samantha remembers that on television she was called “Samonstra” and in *Episode 03* she remembers how people were thick and how they used to ask her for perfection. Alfonso, who currently owns an antique store (an irony with his attachment to the past), does not like changes and still blames Samantha for being bullied about his weight. Tico, for his part, blames Samantha for never having had a romantic relationship in his life. In other words, even though they are aware that their experiences during the television show were harmful and that it still resonates in their lives, they are unable to ignore the attachment with the past and the feeling that the 1980s was the best decade of their lives. In this sense, they perform the nostalgic gesture of romanticizing the past with a bittersweet feeling, imbued with enchantment as well as delusion.

5. Critical nostalgia in television referentiality

While idealizing childhood and the 1980s, *Samantha!* also incorporates elements of criticism and satire to represent the television of the decade and how it reverberates in contemporary life. This means a critical nostalgic gesture, which uses tragicomedy principles - imitation, parody and irony (Sousa, 2012) - to illustrate what happened - and still happens - on the backstage of a TV show.

Initially, some criticism about the cultural industry’s *modus operandi* in the 1980s is noticeable. The series uses humor to speak of famous Brazilian urban legends, such as the myth that the puppet of the character Fofão had a dagger inside⁹, or the story

that when playing an album of Xuxa Meneguel on reverse, it was possible to hear a “diabolical” or “subliminal message”¹⁰. On *Samantha!*, these stories also happens with the main character, connecting the real life myths with the protagonist’s journey.

Moreover, an important nostalgic gesture is the intertextual references to old television shows and its comparison to contemporary ones. In *Episode 02*, Samantha and Dodói are invited to advertise for a fictional beer brand (Cerveja Canoa) because, as Marcinho says in *Episode 01*, 15’48’’: “Couples sell, right, Samantha? The people want to believe in any shit”¹¹. Talking to family members, in *Episode 02*, 02’09’’, Samantha says proudly: “I practically invented the formula ‘young woman sells beer’”¹², and recalls that at nine she advertised for the same beer brand, with the following advertising text: “Every child wants happy parents. To open a smile on Daddy’s face and help Mom to sleep well: Canoa beer”¹³. Nowadays, Cindy, the couple’s daughter, says it inconceivable that this advertisement has ever been aired, but in a conversation with Marcinho and the beer sales team, we realize that the marketing logic remains the same, as Marcinho says in *Episode 01*, 20’05’’: “Advertising for beer? Of course they do. Beer, sausage, medicine, cigarettes [...] what matters is communicating with young people”¹⁴.

In the studio, Samantha and Dodói receive the script for the new advertisement: it tells the story of an unpleasant wife (called in the script “boring wife”¹⁵) who watches over her husband and does not let him stand next to an attractive woman (called in the script “hot woman”¹⁶). Cindy complains about the script, says it is outdated and misogynistic, but Samantha only worries about playing the boring wife, and then tries to get the other woman’s part. In the end, we see that Samantha took the place of the “hot woman” and now presents a new perspective for the advertising: she is an “empowered woman” that drinks beer with her husband.

Other intertextual references happen all over the series: during the years of *Turminha Plimplom*, black women used to dance wearing a swimsuit inside a cage (*Episode 01*, 03’27’’); Zé Cigarrinho appears in a photo session of Samantha with a sticker on the back saying “The Ministry of Health warns: smoking causes sexual impotence”¹⁷ [*Episode 01*,

20’46’’], when, in fact, Zé Cigarrinho wears a fantasy of a cigarette pack; later, Samantha is invited to be a judge on a talent show called *Enjaulados Kids*, in which children are treated harshly by the judges and the audience applauds – not the kids, but the judges (*Episode 03*, 01’53’’). All these examples can be traced back to Brazilian broadcast television in the 1980’s, when it was not unusual to show girls in swimsuits and merchandising in children’s programming. According to Sinval (2010), Xuxa Meneghel was one of the first TV hosts to make advertisements aimed at children, and even had one of these commercials prohibited by Conar (National Council for Advertising Self-Regulation) at the request of the parents.

In *Episode 07*, we have a special moment when the series operationalizes active nostalgia (Ferraz, 2016) and act through collective nostalgia (Holdsworth, 2011). In the plot, Samantha, Alfonso and Tico debut sort of a revival of *Turminha Plimplom*, where the three of them appear in typical 1980s shiny clothes, singing the group’s old music and receiving live calls. The characters try to sabotage each other until they receive two important calls. On the first one, a girl announces that she is on her honeymoon and Alfonso says that her husband has been cheating on her for six months. The moment is unusual and Samantha goes after Marcinho, as the dialogue follows in 04’30’’:

Samantha: You took the call hard, Marcinho. I don’t want the public to think that...

Marcinho: The public doesn’t think, Samantha. And nobody is watching this shit.

Samantha: What do you mean?

Marcinho: It is difficult to raise an audience. Fight on the gel you didn’t want to do, family fight you didn’t want to do, my idea of the corpse scene you didn’t even want to hear.

Samantha: The public wants Plimplons, Marcinho, and Plimplons are a message of love.

*Marcinho: Love my egg, Samantha. Do you know what raises the audience numbers? It’s blood.*¹⁸

Here, we perceive a critical commentary on the functioning of Brazilian broadcast television, and at the same time, the protagonist’s romanticized and idealized nostalgia remains strong in her subjective expectations.

On the second call, a viewer introduces herself as Menina Cogumelo, the 4th Plimplom, responsible for the original voice of the song, who left the group after an accident on the original show. Everyone is nervous about the call, and the commercial break is called. Samantha goes talk to Marcinho and we see the struggle of a critical nostalgic gesture versus a romanticized one. The dialogue in 06'44":

Samantha: Thank you for cutting to the commercials, that connection was a disaster.

Marcinho: Disaster? That call was the best! We are second in the audience. Second only behind that French soap opera.

Samantha: This is not the show I want, Marcinho.

Marcinho: It's much better, right? For you, the show was going to have a whipped cream pool, an old-lady makeover, desserts, and weather forecast...

Samantha: We were going to do a different show, a relevant show.

Marcinho: Relevant is sex, scandal, merchandising. In the 1980s, who do you think paid for your program? Berenice Ketchup! ¹⁹

Menina Cogumelo is invited by Marcinho to participate in the show and she blames Samantha, as well as the other Plimploms, for the bad things that happened in her life, but preserves an admiration for the protagonist. At the end, Marcinho keeps criticizing Samantha, revealing an aspect about the narrative style of the show, with its tragic and comical tones: "Samantha, nobody can live in the past. [...] My helpers and I will bring a little bit of joy to their homes, but only a little bit, because life is also made of disappointment, sadness and a scene with a corpse"²⁰ (17'27"). After that, the Plimploms start to argue and Samantha says that she is leaving: "[...] it's time to grow up"²¹ (20'53"). However, the character is unable to go further and as a hook for the next season, she thinks of seeking fame outside of television, in a political career.

6. Final thoughts

In a context where the Cultural Industry constantly evokes the past, authors such as Huyssen (2000), Grainge (2000) and Davis (2011) point out that this phenomenon occurs due to a societal is-

sue, in which people, in times of discontinuity and concerns, seek security and affection. The media then presents the past through different nostalgic gestures. Here, we understand that the nostalgias presented in television shows are built in a dialectic process between media and consumer, stimulating affective engagements.

Aiming to discuss how this has been operationalized in contemporary serial fictions, especially in the Brazilian scenario, we elected the first season of the series *Samantha!* as empirical object, and methodologically we described the main dramatic arcs and carried out a content analysis, which showed different nostalgic gestures and its functions in the narrative. The plot takes place in 2018, but by flashbacks, it brings stylistic elements, cultural products and social issues of the 1980's, especially around the Brazilian broadcast television landscape. Through ironic nuances, *Samantha!* works with different nostalgic gestures, which we call "romanticization of the past" and "critical nostalgia in television referentiality".

The first is operated mainly by Samantha and, sometimes, by Tico and Alfonso, her past fellows of the *Turminha Plimplom*. The protagonist grew up within the context of broadcast television production, so everything that refers to TV is romanticized, and even though she understands that in some aspects the experience has had a negative impact in her personal life, she idealizes that being famous will fulfill her again. The second nostalgic gesture is undertaken by the plot and uses reflexive criticism to question the functioning of television in the 1980s and its relation to contemporary times, specially in issues like race, gender and advertisement.

In this sense, the nostalgic return to Brazilian broadcast television in the 1980's function not only as a subjective yearning of the characters, but also as political criticism about the relation between media and childhood. *Samantha!* tries to articulate the unfulfilled experience of the protagonist with the changes in contemporary broadcast television, showing how, in the past, broadcast television helped build the cultural references of childhood in Brazil. Nowadays, however, these references are not on television, but on the Internet and the streaming services, such as Netflix²². The show, thus, works as a reflexive billboard of its own distribu-

tion service, stating symbolically that Netflix can satisfy our need for safety and security in the past, but presents it in a contemporary format. Nostalgia, then, is not only an evoked emotion or a com-

munal recapitulation, but also mediation between the past and the present, a rear-view mirror that shows what you left behind, but also where you are right now.

Notas

1. There is a close relationship between fictional nostalgia and dystopian works that deserves to be highlighted. For more information on the subject, see Machado (2020).
2. Original in portuguese. Our translation: “[...] possibilidade de fazer circular narrativas capazes de conectar pessoas de diferentes gerações, lugares e classes sociais”.
3. Original in portuguese. Our translation: “inferência de conhecimentos relativos às condições de produção (ou, eventualmente, de recepção), inferência esta que recorre a indicadores (quantitativos ou não)”.
4. Available in https://bit.ly/gretchen_bozo
5. Original in portuguese. Our translation: “Olha bem pra minha cara, Marcinho. Você ainda vai me ver na televisão”.
6. Original in portuguese. Our translation: “Você não sente saudade desse tempo não, Alfonso? O Boluta era amado. As pessoas queriam te pegar, cheirar, abraçar. Era real! Que nem suas fitas de vídeo cassete”.
7. Original in portuguese. Our translation: “Hoje em dias os pais não deixam as crianças chegarem nem perto de mim”.
8. Original in portuguese. Our translation: “A gente brigava, brigava, mas era uma família, né?”.
9. Available in <https://www.gazetaonline.com.br/noticias/brasil/2016/05/conhece-a-lenda-urbana-da-faca-do-fofao-boneco-e-relancado-no-brasil-1013941956.html>
10. Available in <https://musica.uol.com.br/noticias/redacao/2013/08/10/de-transparencia-a-ilarie-do-demonio-relembre-os-discos-da-xuxa.htm>
11. Original in portuguese. Our translation: “Casal vende, né, Samantha? O povo quer acreditar em qualquer merda”.
12. Original in portuguese. Our translation: “Eu praticamente inventei a fórmula ‘mulher jovem vende cerveja’”.
13. Original in portuguese. Our translation: “Toda criança quer os pais felizes. Para abrir um sorriso no rosto do papai e ajudar a mamãe a dormir de boa: Cervejas Canoa”.
14. Original in portuguese. Our translation: “Propaganda de cerveja? Claro que fazem. Cerveja, salsicha, remédio, cigarro... O importante é se comunicar com os jovens”.
15. Original in portuguese. Our translation: “Patroa”.
16. Original in portuguese. Our translation: “Gostosa”.
17. Original in portuguese. Our translation: “O Ministério da Saúde adverte: fumar causa impotência sexual”.
18. Original in portuguese. Our translation: Samantha: Você pegou pesado na ligação, Marcinho. Não quero que o público pense que... | Marcinho: O público não pensa, Samantha. E não tem ninguém assistindo essa merda. | Samantha: Como assim? | Marcinho: É difícil levantar audiência. Luta no gel você não quis fazer, briga de família você não quis fazer, minha ideia da cena do cadáver você não quis nem ouvir. | Samantha: O público quer os Plimplons, Marcinho, e os Plimplons são uma mensagem de amor. | Marcinho: Amor meu ovo, Samantha. Sabe o que dá audiência? É sangue.
19. Original in portuguese. Our translation: Samantha: Obrigada por ter chamado os comerciais, essa ligação foi um desastre. | Marcinho: Desastre? Essa ligação foi a melhor coisa! Estamos em segundo na audiência. Perdendo apenas para aquela novela francesa. | Samantha: Esse não é o programa que eu quero, Marcinho. | Marcinho: É muito melhor, né? Por você, o programa ia ter piscina de chantilly, makeover de uma velha, receita de pavê, previsão do tempo... | Samantha: A gente ia fazer um programa diferente, um programa relevante. | Marcinho: Relevante é sexo, escândalo, merchandising. Nos anos 80, quem você acha que pagava teu programa? O Ketchup Berenice.
20. Original in portuguese. Our translation: “Samantha, ninguém pode viver no passado. [...] Eu e os meus ajudantes vamos levar um pouquinho de alegria para sua casa, mas só um pouquinho, porque a vida também é feita de decepção, de tristezas e de cena com cadáver”.
21. Original in portuguese. Our translation: “[...] está na hora de crescer”.
22. For further information about Netflix and its commercial strategies in the licensing of produced work and the production of original series, specially those that deal with nostalgia (reboots, revivals, reruns, etc.), we recommend Bianchini (2018) and Jenner (2018)

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