The "Fantastic" (Re)Construction of the Past: An Analysis of Memory and Artificial Intelligence in the Series *Fantástico — 50 Anos*

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Abstract

This study analyses how artificial intelligence serves as a mediator in the reconstruction of historical narratives in television journalism and examines the symbolic and ethical impacts this use has on collective memory. To this end, the study analyses the first episode of the series *Fantástico — 50 Anos*, which uses artificial intelligence to reconstruct the inaugural programme lost in a fire in 1976. In addition to technological recreations, the episode's narrative incorporates memories and testimonials from people directly involved at the time, exploring the links between individual and collective memory. The overall objective is to understand how artificial intelligence serves as a mediator in the preservation and re-signification of historical narratives, assessing its relevance in terms of simplicity, practicality, and symbolic impact in the construction of collective memory. The methodology employed is content analysis, complemented by a theoretical approach based on authors such as Halbwachs, Pollak, Huyssen, Beiguelman, and Scolari, who discuss the dynamics of memory, forgetting, and digital technologies. The results indicate that, although artificial intelligence is a tool for simulating and recreating the past, its performance depends on a narrative structure that articulates human testimonies and historical contexts to resonate emotionally with the audience. In addition, we found that recreations promote both an affective reconnection with the past and a sense of strangeness resulting from the artificiality derived from simulations. This study contributes to the debate on the use of digital technologies in television journalism and their impacts on the preservation and re-signification of memory.

Keywords

memory, television, artificial intelligence, *Fantástico*

A "Fantástica" (Re)Construção do Passado: Uma Análise Sobre Memória e Inteligência Artificial na Série *Fantástico — 50 Anos*

Resumo

O estudo analisa como a inteligência artificial atua como mediadora na reconstrução de narrativas históricas no telejornalismo e quais impactos simbólicos e éticos esse uso provoca na memória coletiva. Para tanto, há como objeto de análise o primeiro episódio da série *Fantástico — 50 Anos*, que utiliza a inteligência artificial para reconstruir o programa inaugural perdido em um incêndio ocorrido em 1976. Além das recriações tecnológicas, a narrativa do episódio

incorpora lembranças e depoimentos das pessoas diretamente envolvidas na época, explorando os vínculos entre memória individual e coletiva. O objetivo geral consiste em compreender de que maneira a inteligência artificial atua como mediadora na preservação e ressignificação de narrativas históricas, avaliando sua relevância para a simplicidade, praticidade e impacto simbólico na construção da memória coletiva. A metodologia utilizada é a análise de conteúdo, complementada por uma abordagem teórica fundamentada em autores como Halbwachs, Pollak, Huyssen, Beiguelman e Scolari, que discutem as dinâmicas da memória, do esquecimento e das tecnologias digitais. Os resultados indicam que, embora a inteligência artificial seja uma ferramenta para simular e recriar o passado, sua atuação depende de uma estrutura narrativa que articula depoimentos humanos e contextos históricos para ressoar emocionalmente com o público. Além disso, constatamos que as recriações promovem tanto uma reconexão afetiva com o passado quanto um estranhamento, decorrente da artificialidade derivada das simulações. Este estudo contribui para o debate sobre o uso de tecnologias digitais no telejornalismo e seus impactos na preservação e ressignificação da memória.

Palavras-chave
memória, televisão, inteligência artificial, *Fantástico*

1. Introduction

The Sunday television news programme *Fantástico — O Show da Vida* (Fantastic — The Show of Life) has been broadcast on Brazilian open television by Rede Globo since August 5, 1973. Over half a century of uninterrupted weekly broadcasts, *Fantástico* has established itself as a widely recognised attraction in Brazil, marking the memories of several generations of viewers.

In celebration of its 50th anniversary, the programme presented the special series *Fantástico — 50 Anos* (Fantastic — 50 Years), which brought together testimonials from directors, producers, presenters, reporters, and other professionals involved in its history. Comprising five episodes broadcast on Sundays in August 2023, the series revisits historical moments and highlights the programme's impact on the history of Brazilian television.

This study focuses on the analysis of the first episode of the series, which stands out for its recreation of the inaugural programme, broadcast on August 5 1973, which was lost, along with part of the broadcaster's archive, in a fire at Rede Globo's studios in Rio de Janeiro in 1976. To recover and expose the images of this historic programme to the current audience, an approach was used that combines artificial intelligence (AI) resources and testimonials from people who participated in its conception and production.

This study begins with the following central question: what is the role of AI in the relationship between memory and television journalism, and how does this technology influence the formation and retrieval of memories? By analysing the use of AI in the reconstruction of audiovisual content, we aim to understand whether it serves as an effective mediator of collective memory or poses new challenges by transforming the past into a technical narrative that strains the criteria of authenticity and credibility.

The overall objective is to analyse how AI acts as a mediator in the reconstruction of historical narratives in television journalism, assessing its symbolic, ethical and communicational impacts on the formation of collective memory.

The importance of this research lies in its contribution to debates on the use of new technologies in preserving and maintaining audiovisual memory, as well as deepening our understanding of the relationship between media, memory, and forgetting in the contemporary context.

Theoretical support is drawn from key authors in the field of memory and media studies. Halbwachs (1992/2006) establishes that memory is socially constructed, organised from "social frameworks" that shape individual and collective memories. Pollak (1992) contributes with reflections on the dynamics of silencing and exclusion in the construction of collective narratives, highlighting how certain groups are marginalised in historical and mnemonic processes. Huyssen (2004) broadens the debate by discussing the museumisation of the past and the commodification of memory in contemporary times, while Wolton (1990/1996) emphasises the role of television as a mediator of social ties, connecting individuals through shared experiences. In this context, Scolari (2008) contributes by addressing the transformation of television in the age of hypertelevision, highlighting the expanded interaction between media and audiences, while Motta (2013) and Beiguelman (2021) explore the technological and cultural implications that reconfigure journalism and remembrance practices in the digital environment.

Based on this theoretical framework, this study examines the role of AI in historical and mnemonic (re)compositions, analysing its impact on the experience of the past and assessing its relevance in preserving and re-signifying historical and collective narratives. In addition, the research contributes to the field of AI by exploring its potential and limitations in constructing memory within a media context.

To support these analyses, the content analysis methodology proposed by Laurence Bardin (1977/2011) is applied as a framework for interpreting media and technological representations in the process of memory construction.

2. Television and Memory: Transformations and Social Contexts

Television dominated the second half of the 20th century, and according to Wolton (1990/1996), this generalist television became an important factor in the construction of social bonds. For the researcher who observes television in this mass context, its power came to occupy what had previously been filled by other social institutions, such as work and family.

In what way does television constitute a social bond? In the fact that the spectator, when watching TV, joins this potentially immense and anonymous audience that watches it simultaneously, thus establishing, like them, a kind of invisible bond. It is common knowledge that a double bond and a cross-anticipation are related. "I watch a programme, and I know that someone else is watching it too, and they also know that I am watching it" (Wolton, 1990/1996, p. 124).

Television, which occupied the centre of social life, driven by "watching together", by conversations sparked in the most diverse social groups, by the scheduling of viewers' social leisure time and by its ability to produce social memory, is changing day by day with new technological formats.

"Hyper-television", a term coined by Scolari (2008), more clearly indicates the new characteristics of television, which extend far beyond the concept of a mobile device that transmits programming. Scolari points to greater interaction between sender and receiver, articulation with other media, diversity of screen possibilities (computer, tablet, mobile phones), digital abundance, with thousands of channels available (including anonymous ones on servers such as YouTube), the possibility of on-demand programming, and also, what we are interested in analysing here, the introduction of new languages, customisations and digital tools for image production (Scolari, 2008).

Although memory appears to be an individual activity, it is intrinsically shaped by the interaction of the individual with the groups to which they belong, as argued by Halbwachs (1992/2006). This is because personal recordings are not independent; they are reported from vivid experiences in the context of the reference groups that shape each person's social and cultural interactions.

As previously discussed, Halbwachs (1992/2006) views memory as a social construction sustained by collective frames of reference, such as family, school, and the media, which shape individual memories. In the context of television, these frames acquire a particular narrative power by transforming shared experiences into affective media memories.

In this sense, Halbwachs (1992/2006) makes it clear that the subject is never completely isolated in the process of remembering. Even when memories relate to events experienced apparently individually, they are triggered and reconfigured according to social relationships and shared frames of reference. Thus, memory is essentially a collective construction, even if its manifestation appears personal and individualised.

According to Bressan Júnior (2019), television is one of the main reference groups that contributes to the formulation and triggering of collective memory. More than just a technological device, television is deeply embedded in everyday life, integrating moments when memories are constructed and later evoked. Like work, school, and other social groups, television plays a significant role in shaping collective memories, acting as a mediator of narratives that both reflect and shape the social imagination.

This medium not only records and transmits historical and cultural events but also re-signifies them, promoting emotional connections between individuals and groups. From this perspective, television takes on a central role in the articulation between individual and collective memory, reinforcing the idea that memories are continuously (re) constructed through social and media interactions.

Pollak (1992) also draws attention to this aspect of memory reconstruction based on personal and collective memories. The present is as important as the past because, according to Pollak (1992), memory is selective: "memory also undergoes fluctuations that are a function of the moment in which it is articulated, in which it is being expressed. The concerns of the moment constitute an element of memory structuring" (p. 204).

Beyond positivist factuality, oral history (both individual and collective) and the concept of "memory", as noted by Pollak (1992), involve perceptions of reality, events, and historical facts. Thus, when recounted, memory undergoes a process of "framing".

Individuals tend to define their social place and relationships with others, with some aspects being emphasised while others are forgotten or silenced.

For Pollak (1992), constructed memory serves the functions of maintenance, coherence, unity, and continuity. He indicates that, in addition to narrative coherence and ordering processes, the framing of memory is based on a certain "control of image" that also requires material records (monuments, museums, libraries, archives, films, books, etc.); actors, who are the "memory professionals", such as historians, researchers, and activists; and authorised witnesses, people who experienced the events and are chosen from among the diversity of witnesses to give their version of the facts.

Based on these theoretical discussions, it is possible to observe how the concepts of "collective memory", "media narratives", and "recreation technologies" are intertwined in contemporary journalism. The series *Fantástico — 50 Anos* offers a rich example for investigating these relationships, especially through the use of AI in the reconstruction of a lost episode — a technique that synthesises the encounter between memory, technology and spectacle.

To understand the contemporary motivation for *Fantástico*'s reliance on memory, we turn to the reflections of Huyssen (2004), who identifies a strong orientation in today's society towards what he calls the "culture of memory". According to the author, memory has become a contemporary obsession, especially in public debates, as a response to the constant threat of forgetting. This fear of forgetting drives strategies of preservation and remembrance, in which the media plays a central role, flooding our daily lives with references to the past. With the advent of media broadcasting, Huyssen argues that there has been a veritable "implosion" in the consumption of memory, transforming the past into a highly lucrative, commodified, and often spectacularised "commodity".

However, Huyssen (2004) goes beyond this observation by connecting the culture of memory with a deeper aspect. For him, the growing movement for the preservation of the past, often expressed through musealisation, reflects a manifestation of the anxiety generated by the rapid pace of contemporary change. The speed with which temporal and spatial horizons clash creates a sense of instability, stimulating a collective effort to anchor the present in memories of the past. In this context, memory becomes not only a mechanism for connecting with history but also an attempt to cope with the uncertainties of the contemporary world.

Disillusionment and a lack of perspective on the future, as well as the malaise caused by information overload on the psyche, are some of the reasons for a return to the past as a supposedly more stable place where we can reconnect with our emotions. "the faster we are pushed into a global future that does not inspire confidence, the stronger we feel the desire to slow down, the more we turn to memory for comfort" (Huyssen, 2004, p. 32).

The series *Fantástico — 50 Anos* places the contemporary production of the programme in dialogue with the former teams and those who "keep" the memories of the past in an attempt to transform these memories into a materialised product that rescues and reinterprets the memory of the programme. This initiative aims not only to preserve

the legacy of *Fantástico* but also to reconstruct the past from tangible traces, such as archives, and intangible ones, including personal narratives. Oral history, based on the testimonies of people who experienced *Fantástico* in the specific historical context of the early 1970s, emerges as a central element in this process of remembrance and reconfiguration of collective memory. Thus, the series not only revisits the past but rewrites it in the present, connecting generations through an effort of symbolic aid.

3. Journalism, Artificial Intelligence and Memory

To understand the use of AI in journalism, we first need to question the composition of journalistic narratives and the aspects involving AI in audiovisual reporting.

According to Motta (2013), journalistic narratives, no matter how spontaneous they may appear, are constructed through communicative strategies and linguistic and extralinguistic resources that involve, in addition to the use of technology, the political, emotional, and environmental context in the creation of meanings, senses, and the production of effects.

We understand that the journalistic narrative is a constant interplay between the effects of what is real and other impacts of meaning (emotion, pain, compassion, irony, laughter, etc.), more or less heightened by the dramatic language of news. It always seeks to link facts to the physical world but incessantly creates cathartic effects. It is a continuous interplay between the journalist's intentions and the receiver's interpretations. It is polysemic, intersubjective, and hybrid, navigating, often contradictorily, the boundaries between the objective and the subjective, denotation and connotation, factual description and metaphorical narration, realism and poetry (Motta, 2013).

According to the author, narrative resources are present in all genres and formats of news reporting. These resources, typical of traditional journalism, are necessary to contextualise events for the public. Motta (2013) suggests that understanding news as a holistic event necessitates the journalist to "explain what is happening" and recover prior fragments of meaning necessary for reconstructing the narrative.

On television, the narrative construction of journalistic material involves its own grammar. Audiovisual language features a variety of arrangements and elements — such as image, sound, and text — that unfold into framing, graphics, sound effects, and interviews, among others, woven together through the editing process. As Barbeiro and Lima (2002) state: "editing a TV news report is like telling a story, and like every story, the edit needs a logical sequence which, due to the nature of the medium, requires the combination of images and sounds" (p. 100).

When observing the transformations in the media, one notes that, over time, technical processes have been developed and a variety of resources added to the audiovisual experience, improving communicative interaction and sensoriality and making television productions increasingly realistic and immersive. However, AI goes beyond a mere resource; it is a more sophisticated process that not only responds to human intentions or performs tasks but is capable of making decisions.

Barbizan's (2021) doctoral research points out that the most common uses of AI in newsrooms are directed towards searching for and identifying data to support the creation of news agendas and reports, user data retrieval, comment moderation, publishing and targeting for customised distribution of informational material, strategies for attractiveness and audience engagement using systems that track the number of views for each piece of content, and fact-checking and combating fake news.

Among the various AI applications and techniques, machine learning and deep learning are sets of knowledge, methods, and processes that are frequent in communications. Barbizan (2021) succinctly explains both computational systems:

> ML [machine learning] is a technique that enables computational systems to identify, make decisions, and primarily, learn from data. What machine learning algorithms do is recognise patterns in one dataset and then recognise those same patterns in other data records. Deep learning is a technique within ML. In it, the software, also fed with a large amount of data, is able to make comparisons and thus classify information. In DL [deep learning], multiple layers of information are created, and from each of them, simple knowledge is extracted, resulting in complex data. This larger number of analytical layers allows work with more abstract concepts. It is even used in the field of arts, where algorithms already produce music, drawings, and images. (p. 28)

One combined application of AI that is of interest to us here is "style transfer". This technique, according to Beiguelman (Café Filosófico CPFL, 2024), involves removing layers from one image bank and transferring them to another, thereby generating new data from existing data. This technique has already made it possible, for instance, to "revive" the singer Elis Regina in a Volkswagen commercial in Brazil. The same technique is applied in the first episode of the series *Fantástico — 50 Anos* to recreate the first programme lost in a fire.

For Beiguelman (Café Filosófico CPFL, 2024), the 2000s present new challenges for thinking about memory and our relationship with the past as mediated by AI. In the author's view, with the boom of memory as a commodity, we have come to feel nostalgia for a past we never lived — or that may never have existed. She refers to this phenomenon as deep nostalgia, in which "fictional pasts" take over our present, merge with our future, and generate a void of invented nostalgia. Beiguelman questions the outcome of this "phantasmagoria of the present" through what she calls "algorithmic forgery" and the disturbance we feel when we see the dead coming to life from a sanitised past that begins to engage with the present "without the human".

In the 1970s, roboticist Masahiro Mori had already discussed these feelings of eeriness in his hypothesis, known as the "uncanny valley theory" or the "uncanny valley". When analysing people's emotional responses to humanoid robots, Mori (2012) found that the more human the robots appeared, the greater the familiarity and empathy they evoked. However, this emotional curve dropped when imperfections in the robots'

appearance were detected, making them unsettling and repulsive. This relationship with a reconstructed or imagined past, yet with the "presence of the living human", makes discussions about memory even more complex. Beiguelman (2021) stresses that in a context in which memory has become a commodity, we are constantly feeding this market with images and machine training via social networks and apps designed to recognise facial geometry and lines of expression/emotion.

> On the one hand, we live in a state of documentary overdose, compulsively recording our daily lives. On the other hand, we immerse ourselves in the impossibility of accessing memory, bound by the logic of timelines on social media, which are always ordered from most recent to oldest. I have said on several occasions that the camera phone has become a kind of third eye in the palm, scanning life on a daily basis. (Beiguelman, 2021, p. 140)

From Beiguelman's (2021) perspective, in this new context, the present is first experienced as an image and only then as an experience tied to timelines. The capture of the present and the compulsion to archive it in the anxious pursuit of producing memories — documenting everything all the time and freezing memory — is related to what Umberto Eco (1984) refers to as the "philosophy of immortality as duplication". Instead of keeping the past meaningfully alive, we tend to recreate it in superficial versions, as copies and representations, as if only reproduction could render it "immortal".

However, as AI becomes more integrated into the process of journalistic creation, significant ethical tensions arise regarding the reliability of images and narratives. The use of simulations, recreations, and deepfakes challenges the boundaries between reality and fiction, raising questions about the truthfulness of journalism. As Eugênio Bucci (2019) warns, there is a fine line between informing and staging, and journalism, by adopting technologies that dramatise or reconstruct events, runs the risk of compromising its critical and documentary function. This becomes even more complex when it comes to collective memory, as technology can recreate convincing versions of the past that do not necessarily correspond to authentic historical experiences.

4. Artificial Intelligence and Memory in the 50th Anniversary of *Fantástico*

When investigating the application of AI in the episode in question, it is necessary to go beyond observing the techniques employed. It is also important to consider the symbolic effects and ethical dilemmas of this practice: to what extent does the digital recreation of the past preserve memory or transform it into a spectacle? Can memory constructed through AI be considered authentic? These questions permeate the analysis, helping to understand the impacts of this technology on the media's representation of history.

This investigation adopted content analysis, as outlined by Bardin (1977/2011), due to its capacity to identify and interpret symbolic meanings in communicational and cultural manifestations, as is the case with the episode under study. The methodology was organised into three main stages: pre-analysis, categorisation, and data interpretation.

In the pre-analysis phase, a preliminary review of the five episodes of the series *Fantástico — 50 Anos*, available on the Globoplay platform, was conducted. The methodological choice for the first episode was motivated by its singular character: the AI-based recreation of the inaugural program, which was lost in a fire in 1976, making it an exemplary case to investigate the relationships between memory, technology, and narrative.

The *corpus* constitution involved structuring the episode into six segments, organised by broadcast time and narrative function, according to the following scheme: (a) opening; (b) thematic interviews; (c) interviews with specialists; (d) AI recreation screening; (e) technical explanation; and (f) closing.

The categorisation stage followed a semantic and thematic approach based on Bardin's (1977/2011) propositions. The three main categories were: (a) memory (individual, collective, affective and tele-affective); (b) visual elements (effects, recreations, behind-the-scenes scenes); (c) interviewees' words (testimonies, reactions, oral mediation).

These categories were deduced from the theoretical foundation: the category "memory" relates to the contributions of Halbwachs (1992/2006), Pollak (1992) and Huyssen (2004); the "visual elements" dialogue with Beiguelman (2021) and Scolari (2008); and the "words" refer to notions of testimony and narrative performance on screens (Bressan Júnior, 2019; Pollak, 1992).

Data collection was carried out through notes and manual transcription of the words, organisation into comparative tables, and temporal structuring of segments (timing). The data were analysed qualitatively, with an interpretative focus, seeking to articulate the categories in relation to observed scenes and central concepts discussed in the theoretical framework.

To clarify the articulation between the theoretical framework and the categories adopted in the analysis, we present below a table that summarises the main interpretative axes of the study. Table 1 organises the three central categories used — "memory, "visual elements", and "words" — along with their respective operative definitions and the authors who grounded each of them.

Category	Operative definition	Theoretical background
Memory	Presence of memories, affective evocations, connections between past and present	Halbwachs (1992/2006); Huyssen (2004); Pollak (1992)
Visual elements	Aesthetic resources (effects, reconstructions, documentary or simulated images)	Beiguelman (2021); Mori (2012); Scolari (2008)
Words	Testimonies, emotional reactions, narrative performances	Bressan Júnior (2019); Eco (1984); Pollak (1992)

Table 1. *Analytical categories and theoretical foundations*

Note. Prepared by the authors based on Bardin (1977/2011).

The first episode of the series (Figure 1), lasting 46 minutes, aired on August 6 2023 and aimed to tell the beginning of *Fantástico* and how it marked the 1970s generation. To this end, it was necessary to create a narrative explaining why Globo no longer had the first programmes and to organise a series of interviews to aid the reconstruction of the lost first programme.
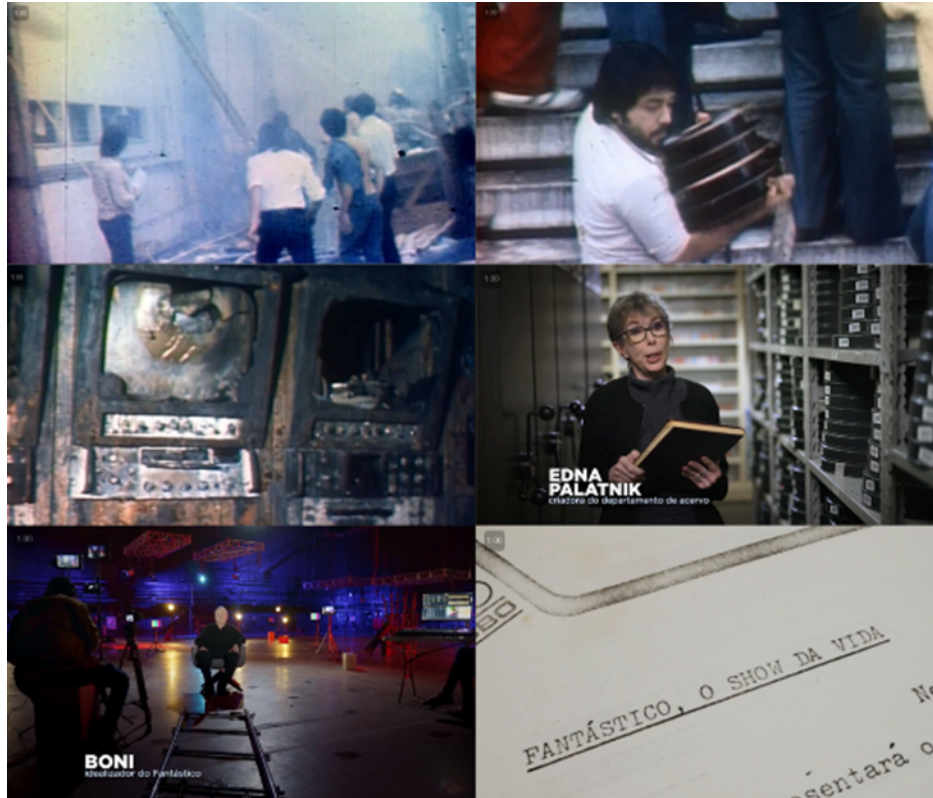
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Figure 1. *Scenes from the first segment of analysis, opening (00:00:00–00:04:05)*

Source. From *Fantástico*, Globoplay, 2023. (https://globoplay.globo.com/v/11843049/)

Note. The scenes contextualise the off-screen voices (background speech) of the interviews and the main theme of the opening: the fire in the TV Globo studios in Rio de Janeiro. The authors selected scenes.

The opening segment contextualises the viewer regarding the inaugural period of *Fantástico* and the fire incident, explaining why none of the programmes produced in the first six months of broadcasting exist anymore, nor are there any production traces from that period.

The episode begins with the words of Edna Palatnik, creator of Globo's Archive Department, regarding the fire incident, the unsuccessful search for evidence, and the absence of documents or images from the premiere. Images from other newspapers of the time are used to show what happened. The narrative seeks to maintain an emotional tone throughout the programme. Palatnik is the first person to suggest the recreation.

Following these words, still in the first segment, the narrative is interwoven with images of the construction and organisation of sets, documents and photographs from the Globo archive being leafed through, light operators working, and behind-the-scenes movement as "the show begins". Boni, creator and director of *Fantástico*, reinforces the idea of "remaking" the first programme.

Table 2 presents the transcribed words of the interviewees.

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Interviewees	Words
Edna Palatnik, creator of Globo's Archive Department	"We lost, like a memory lapse, like the loss of neurons, about six months of this electronic magazine that combined journalism, culture, and now, to recover this memory, these synapses, these audiovisual neurons, we would only have left if we had the magic of reconstruction"
Boni, the first director of *Fantástico*	"If you rebuild some things, you will give the audience an idea of what *Fantástico* really was, which many people watching TV today did not see — the development, the evolution of the programme"

Table 2. *Interviewees' words from the first segment of analysis (00:00:00–00:04:05)*

The fear of oblivion and monumentalisation of the past (Huyssen, 2004) highlights an attempt to stress the importance of the facts for the current audience — made up of viewers who were children or not even born at the time of *Fantástico*'s premiere. In this case, it is about accessing a type of "unlived" memory, one told by a previous generation, which, according to Halbwachs (1992/2006), embodies the spirit of its time. Narrativity overflows and intersects with spectacle, with meta-televisual scene games and editing that move between the boundaries separating the stage from the backstage, between what is in front and what is behind the cameras. The episode, as a product, does not seek to be a faithful reproduction of the first but rather a narrative reconstruction, contextualised and stitched together from possible documentary sources, affective memories extracted from oral interviews, technological resources, and also AI.

The second segment selected for analysis is the longest (00:04:05–00:26:24). In this segment, individuals who worked on the first *Fantástico* or were somehow involved were invited to give interviews, share memories, and collaborate in the reconstruction of the lost programme (Figure 2). Halbwachs (1992/2006) considers that this "recount" by societies has the potential to create new markings in collective memory.

The first highlighted segment, which celebrates humour, is "Chico City". It is recalled by Nizo Netto, son of the comedian Chico Anysio, who at the time was a child and made brief appearances on the programme. The second segment recollected is that of international journalism. The interviewee, Cidinha Campos, was the first reporter to cover, at the time, the crash of a plane in Paris, where the sole survivor was Brazilian. During the interview, Cidinha reads the original telegram with the agenda, which she still keeps, and narrates the backstage details of the report.

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Figure 2. *Scenes from the second segment of analysis evoking memories (00:04:05–00:26:24)*

Source. From *Fantástico*, Globoplay, 2023. (https://globoplay.globo.com/v/11843049/)

Note. Scenes of interviews and characters. The authors selected scenes.

The third testimony is from Guto Graça Mello, the music producer responsible for composing the programme's opening theme. He recalls that the composition was made in the maternity ward while his daughter was being born, adding a personal touch to the narrative. The fourth interviewee, Leo Batista, a former sports presenter, visits the current studio, showing emotion and curiosity. He reminisces about the story of the famous "zebrinha", a character created to announce match results.

Finally, the fifth testimony is preceded by the speech of a producer of the musical segment at the time, whose name is not mentioned. He explains that he chose the band Secos & Molhados for the programme's first edition driven solely by curiosity sparked by the originality of the album cover, without even having heard their music. Ney Matogrosso, the band's vocalist, recalls the day of the recording, which consisted of a kind of music video — an innovation for the period.

Affective elements permeate the interviews throughout. In the editorial choices of emotional music, the use of blur on the edges of some images (creating a dreamlike atmosphere), the use of old photographs, warm colouring, and especially in the selection of clips, always privileging the moments of greatest emotion, the pauses for tears, and the stories with poetic, nostalgic, and sentimental tones.

In this segment, it is noticeable that the selection of interviewees does not occur impartially; on the contrary, the testimonies presented are carefully selected to create

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a discursive coherence that sustains the romantic and heroic narrative constructed by the programme (Table 3). From Pollak's (1992) perspective, in oral history, "authorised witnesses" are those who confer revisions and incidents to the events recounted. In his studies with survivors of the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp, Pollak (1992) noted that associations and formal groups often selected specific witnesses capable of representing the image desired by the organisation and sustaining the narrative that justified its existence. In this process, he reveals that many voices considered undesirable — such as those of Roma, prostitutes, homosexuals, and other marginalised groups — were silenced or chose clandestinity, fearing reprisals due to their identities and experiences.

Interviewees	Words
Nizo Netto, Chico Anysio's son	Interviewer: "Would you be willing to imagine the birth of Azambuja alongside *Fantástico*?" Nizo Netto: "What are you talking about? Me doing Azambuja? Of course, I'm up for it. Us doing a recreation of these monologues? Wow... but of course... it will be a great pleasure and a great emotion"
Cidinha Campos, the first international reporter of *Fantástico*	Interviewer: "Are you willing to redo this interview?" Cidinha: "I'm willing, of course I'm willing"
Ney Matogrosso, singer	Interviewer: "Do you think it is possible to redo the first programme?" Ney Matogrosso: "No... to redo that, you would have to gather Secos & Molhados, and Secos & Molhados no longer exists"

Table 3. *Interviewees' words from the first segment of analysis (00:04:05–00:26:24)*

In this episode of the series, the interviewees not only shared their memories but also played an active role in the narrative, assuming the roles of characters. At the end of the interviews, they were invited to "recreate" the first programme.

This symbolic recreation marks the beginning of a new narrative cycle within the episode, in which the boundaries between lived memory and mediated memory become even more tenuous. In the following segments, the use of AI assumes visual and emotional protagonism, highlighting both the affective bonds with the past and the ethical concerns surrounding the authenticity of the reconstructed images.

The production invited a young actor, Renan Mattos, who portrays Ney Matogrosso in the theatre, to participate in the reconstruction of the programme using AI.

In the third analysed segment, between 00:26:24 and 00:33:39, the focus is on historical events from the early 1970s (Table 4). The episode enters a "retrospective" moment. It addresses historical memory, such as dictatorship, censorship, the anti-asylum movement, and feminism, separating personal stories from the focus on personalities and events, as told by a historian, archivist, and biographer, whom Pollak (1992) refers to as "actors or professionals of memory". For the author, these professionals also act in framing memory since they "write" history as specialised sources.

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Interviewees	Words
Carlos Fico, a historian at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro	"Brazil, in 1973, was living through the last year of the Medici Government, which was the harshest, most repressive government. And the very next year, the Geisel Government began, proposing the opening up of what would be a lengthy process for the country's return to democracy. Rede Globo, in its entertainment division, had many difficulties, many losses, a lot of material that could not be aired"

Table 4. *Words of an interviewee from the third segment of analysis, specialist interviews (00:26:24–00:33:39)*

In the fourth analysed segment (00:33:39–00:42:23), interviewees from the second segment are invited to watch the programme reconstructed using AI technology (Figure 3). The set is carefully arranged with multiple screens, visual effects, and lighting, evoking a spatial universe with a central armchair positioned in front of a television.

Figure 3. *Scenes from the third segment of analysis (00:26:24–00:33:39)*

Source. From *Fantástico*, Globoplay, 2023. (https://globoplay.globo.com/v/11843049/)

Note. Scenes feature interviews and 1970s retrospectives with "memory specialists". The authors selected scenes.

As the images begin to be displayed, starting with the programme's opening and then the "Chico City" segment, an initial mix of euphoria and strangeness is observed, as described by Mori (2012). These reactions are perceptible in gestures such as placing a hand in front of the mouth, frowning, adopting serious expressions, pursing lips, and moving the neck closer to the screen, seeking to observe details more closely.

Only with the appearance of more familiar elements, such as the reproduction of the old opening, do guests show signs of feeling more at ease: they smile, sing along,

and become emotional (Figure 4). Bressan Júnior (2017) conceptualises these emotional effects caused by the act of "re-watching" as "tele-affective memories". "This tele-affective memory is responsible for recovering and reformulating reminiscences reconstructed from images broadcast on television and the emotions surrounding the vibrations caused by it" (Bressan Júnior, 2017, p. 75).

Figure 4. *Scenes from the fourth segment of analysis, screening of the AI-reconstructed programme (00:33:39–00:43:23)*

Source. From *Fantástico*, Globoplay, 2023. (https://globoplay.globo.com/v/11843049/)

Note. Scenes from the moment interviewees watched the first *Fantástico* reconstructed by artificial intelligence. The authors selected scenes.

The presence of tele-affective memory becomes evident at this moment: interviewees not only recognise elements of the past but react emotionally to an artificial recreation of what was lived. It is a memory that pulses at the edges between the archive and enactment, between the lived and the relived. Evoking the concept of deep nostalgia (Beiguelman, 2021), we observe that the emotional impact lies not only in the memory itself but in the aesthetic mediation that AI offers — a recreated past that appears more emotional than the original.

At certain moments, interviewees express surprise at the visual fidelity of the image created by AI in relation to reality (Table 5), even considering it "magical".

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Interviewees	Words
Cidinha Campos	"Is that Nizo speaking? It can't be! What was done?" "Watching myself here, I feel part of television history. I hadn't felt that until today. I feel it now"
Leo Batista	"I'm emotional. Do you want me to speak or cry?"
Nizo Netto	"If my father were here, seeing this, he would certainly be very moved. Firstly, because time goes by so quickly, and it feels like it was just yesterday"
Ney Matogrosso	"The only difference is that this one is very joyful. Back in Secos e Molhados, I was more mysterious" "It's so perfect that it looks like it's really me!" "That was a different Brazil, completely different"

Table 5. *Words from interviewees in the fourth segment of analysis (00:33:39–00:43:23)*

Such reactions reveal not only the emotional impact of the recreated images but also the role of AI as a catalyst for tele-affective memories. While it brings the audience closer to a historical experience, it simultaneously introduces a sense of distance and artificiality, as warned by Mori (2012) in his uncanny valley hypothesis. This points to an essential ambivalence in technologically mediated memory: it moves and destabilises, reconnects and simulates.

In the fifth segment, in a brief interval between 00:43:23 and 00:44:28, the programme attempts to explain the "magic" attributed to AI to the viewing audience. Although brief, the extract was filmed in an editing suite and presents an interview with Bruno Sartori, an AI specialist (see Table 6). However, the topic is not explored in depth, and the visual approach suggests that it is merely an editing tool without clarifying how AI operates intelligently and autonomously.

Interviewees	Words
Bruno Sartori, artificial intelligence specialist	"We use a technology that uses artificial intelligence. With this technology, we assemble an image bank, and with that image bank, the computer learns to simulate people's faces and insert them into other videos"

Table 6. *Words from an interviewee in the fifth segment of analysis: how artificial intelligence is used (00:43:23–00:44:28)*

The brevity of the explanation and its superficial, technical presentation reinforces the perception of AI as a "magical" resource, detached from its internal processes and sociotechnical implications. This contributes to an aestheticisation of memory, where technology appears as a neutral solution, lacking the necessary critical contextualisation of its effects.

Beiguelman (2021) explains how the technology used by Sartori operates (see Figure 5). It involves a form of AI called "style transfer", a technique widely known as deepfakes (images produced using AI tools that synthesise sound and video), which creates fictitious images from real ones. Unlike a collage process, this technique does not depend on human mediation: the system is fed thousands of images supplied by databases to learn a person's facial movements, expressions, gestures, and voice modulations.

Figure 5. *Scenes from the fifth segment of analysis (00:43:23–00:44:28)*

Source. From *Fantástico*, Globoplay, 2023. (https://globoplay.globo.com/v/11843049/)

Note. Scenes illustrating how artificial intelligence operates. The authors selected scenes.

According to Beiguelman (2021), the functioning behind these deepfakes involves three main stages of information processing. To map out the procedure, the author draws on the contributions of researcher Kate Crawford and artist Trevor Paglen. The first stage is called "labelling": the system recognises differences between the images and conducts a statistical survey of the information. The second stage marks the beginning of deep learning — a stage in which the algorithm employs artificial neural networks structured in multiple layers, enabling the system to detect patterns, organize data hierarchically, classify inputs, and generate predictions, in a process loosely inspired by the architecture of the human brain.

In the field of images, a revolution is underway with the development of generative adversarial networks (GANs), which comprise the third stage of the process. According to Beiguelman (2021), "in this architecture, first introduced in 2014, two networks are placed against each other, acting respectively as generator and discriminator" (p. 121). The generator creates images, while the discriminator evaluates whether they are real or fake. The competition continues until the generator prevails over the discriminator and the generated image is perceived as genuine. The author argues that celebrities and public figures are more vulnerable to deepfakes precisely because of the large number of images available online, which feed the databases used to train their facial recognition systems.

The sixth and final segment (00:44:28–00:46:53) features Cid Moreira, the first presenter of *Fantástico*, delivering a closing message. By the director's and AI specialist's

decision, Cid Moreira was not digitally "rejuvenated" but was shown as he was at the time of filming — aged 96[1] (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. *Scenes from the sixth segment of analysis, closing (00:44:28–00:46:53)*

Source. From *Fantástico*, Globoplay, 2023. (https://globoplay.globo.com/v/11843049/)

Note. Scenes mark the end of the episode, with a message from Cid Moreira and the "reconstruction" of the tape lost in the fire. The authors selected scenes.

This narrative choice appears to engage directly with the idea proposed by Halbwachs (1992/2006), who argues that there is no universal or singular time but rather a multiplicity of coexisting temporalities represented by different social groups, each with its own duration. Keeping Cid Moreira in his current age, instead of digitally rejuvenating him, restores this "subsistence of memories" pointed out by Halbwachs, reinforcing the connection between the present and the collective memories he evokes — allowing different generations to recognise themselves in the figure of the presenter and in his narratives (see Table 7).

Interviewees	Words
Cid Moreira, the first presenter of *Fantástico*	"This is just the first of thousands of dreams we are going to dream together for a long time — for 50 years and much more. Because the show of life never ends... and it is fantastic!"

Table 7. *Words from an interviewee in the sixth segment of analysis (00:44:28–00:46:53)*

[1] Cid Moreira, who was 96 years old in August 2023, passed away on October 3 2024.

Following Cid Moreira's message, narrated over an emotive soundtrack that enhances the nostalgic tone, the scene of a burning videotape being reconstructed appears. The episode ends with the tape fully restored, displaying the original *Fantástico — O Show da Vida* logo. This final image seems to symbolise the fulfilment of the series' purpose: the mnemonic recovery of the first programme, reinforcing the connection between past and present through technology and memory.

5. Final Considerations

Considering how television journalism engages with television memory and how it leverages new AI technologies to do so, this study analyses an experiment conducted by *Fantástico*. As the *corpus* for this study, we selected the first episode of the series *Fantástico — 50 Anos*. Using Bardin's (1977/2011) methodological framework, we categorised and analysed excerpts chosen in detail.

We identified that, in order to analyse television memory, it is essential to understand the transformations in the ways people have watched television over the past 50 years. Television, which dominated the second half of the twentieth century and held a central role in social life, has had to adapt to new temporal and technological paradigms. The concept of hypertelevision, as described by Scolari (2008), highlights new characteristics of television in which technological tools and resources, such as AI, integrate and dynamise increasingly digital television content.

In this new context, memory itself has become a commodity for consumption. Memory theorists, particularly Huyssen (2004), suggest that we are living in a culture of memory and waging a crusade against forgetting. The proliferation of media and the desire to reconnect with the past are fuelling a "memory market". However, we observed that the possibilities for reconstructing the past are limited by the diversity of interpretations or even distorted by present-day interests or simply by the changes personal memories undergo over time.

In our analysis of the first episode of the series *Fantástico — 50 Anos*, we found that the reconstruction enabled by AI alone was not sufficient. To reconstruct television memory, it was necessary to create a narrative structure that offered contextualisation and drew on the oral history of interviewees, on memories constructed collectively, from a framework of references which, according to Pollak (1992), ensures coherence through the interlinked narratives of witnesses, actors, and the material and historical records of the period.

AI has enabled participants to access a site of memory — 1970s television — and to evoke tele-affective memories. However, it also provoked what Beiguelman (Café Filosófico CPFL, 2024) calls a "phantasmagoria of the present", evoking the feeling of estrangement theorised by Mori (2012), as occurs in the presence of humanoid robots or other "almost human" images.

The reconstruction promoted by AI, therefore, presents a central ambiguity: while it allows for the recovery of seemingly lost images and emotions, it can also lead to an

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artificialised memory shaped by editorial interests and limited by the available data. In this context, the credibility of journalism depends on the transparency with which such recreations are presented to the public. When the boundaries between fact and fiction are not clearly demarcated, there is a risk that journalism may reinforce aesthetically appealing but epistemologically fragile memories, thereby compromising its social role in preserving historical truth.

This study also opens perspectives for analysing memory in a context in which the "datafication of life" has been transforming perceptions not only of the past but also of the present and the future. The data mining made possible by the "scanning of everyday life" — through social media and digital platforms — the advances in machine learning and the various capabilities of computational systems are creating the conditions for the materialisation of "real" memory so identical that it appears to be a true copy of the past.

If it was possible to recreate parts of the first *Fantástico* with the relatively scarce data of the 1970s, then in the 2000s — with the archiving fever and the scanning of life described by Beiguelman (2021) — the possibilities become infinite. We are now faced with the possibility of memory not only persisting through time but also extending beyond it, not merely as recollection but as an image or, perhaps soon, as a "living personality". Current experiments with AI, such as those analysed in this study, allow us to envision a future in which the past may be reenacted, reimagined, and even fictionalised — which, according to Eco (1984), may become emptied of meaning and disconnected from lived experience.

This analysis has enabled the outlining of a new field of theoretical reflection that we refer to as "sensitive simulated memory": a memory constructed through AI technologies that simulate the past but are emotionally processed as authentic recollections. This proposal aligns with the concept of "tele-affective memory" (Bressan Júnior, 2019) but broadens its scope by considering the ethical and epistemological limitations of simulation within journalism. Thus, more than simply reconstructing the past, AI repositions the viewer's affective present in relation to a reconfigured memory.

In sum, the study reveals that the use of AI in journalism and in the construction of media memory is not neutral. It involves narrative, technical, and political choices that shape not only what is remembered but also how and by whom that memory is legitimised. Technology, therefore, does not replace the work of human memory but reconfigures it. It falls to communication professionals and researchers to ask critical questions: to what extent are we willing to entrust our memories to technology? And what kind of past are we authorising to endure?

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