

**Carte Semiotiche 2023**

## **Scene della nostalgia**



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Carte Semiotiche  
*Annali 9*

# Carte Semiotiche

Rivista Internazionale di Semiotica e Teoria dell'Immagine  
Annali 9 - Giugno 2023

## Scene della nostalgia

A cura di  
Mario Panico

SCRITTI DI  
BOERO, BUSI RIZZI, DE LUCA,  
LOBACCARO, MORENO, PEZZINI, PILUSO, POLIDORO,  
PONZO, PORTELLO, POZZATO

la casa  
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«Carte Semiotiche», fin dalla sua nascita nel 1984 per iniziativa di Omar Calabrese, si propone di gettare uno sguardo, il più possibile coerente e coeso, su ciò che avviene nella realtà contemporanea, traguardandone gli aspetti più originali e innovativi, senza dimenticare il necessario confronto con il nostro passato prossimo e remoto. È con lo stesso spirito che ne prendo ora la direzione, nella consapevolezza che la semiotica continui a rappresentare un banco di prova indispensabile per meglio vedere e comprendere ciò che si muove intorno a noi e per mantenere vivo e vivace un dialogo fra studiosi di ambiti disciplinari anche diversi.

Nello spirito del suo fondatore, al fianco del quale ho lungamente collaborato, ritengo un mio preciso dovere garantire la continuità e il rigore scientifico di una rivista che si può considerare, a pieno titolo, ormai storicamente consolidata nel campo degli studi semiotici. La rivista, inoltre, è l'organo di riferimento del CROSS, il centro di ricerca interuniversitario intitolato a Omar Calabrese.

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*a cura di*  
*Mario Panico*

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## **Scene della nostalgia**

# Nostalgic Advertising: Exploring the Dialogue Between Semiotics and Nostalgia Marketing

*Marianna Boero*

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## *1. Introduction*

Nostalgia is a sentimental longing or wistful affection for a period in the past (cf. Pearsall 1998). It is the desire for something that is now part of the past and gone times, a “yearning for yesterday” as stated by Davis in 1979. Originally, this term referred to a serious psychological disease, a pathological longing for a distant homeland when it entered various European languages. Over time, it was rearticulated to refer to a lost era that one longs for as one’s home and slowly became a sentiment that inspired philosophers, literate men, and writers. Today nostalgia is a part of our reality; it is something that is strongly connected to our cultural and social habits. Nostalgia is an impetuous passion that, by recalling pieces of information from our personal and collective memory, gives us the possibility to build the future in the present time, by giving it a sense and value that have their roots in the past (Meo 2010: 13). Nostalgia is deeply connected to one’s identity, as everyone has a past from which memories arise. In the academic field, nostalgia has been widely studied and referred to as a fondness for possessions and activities associated with days of yore, a positive disposition towards places or things that we used to have times before (Holbrook 1993: 245).

In semiotics, nostalgia is defined as one of the main real passions, as described by Greimas in his semantic analysis of 1986. Greimas identifies the origin of the mechanism of nostalgia in the disjunction from an object of value. This disjunction causes a pathemic state, that of regret (obsessive or not), which, in turn, causes another pathemic state (waste, languor, melancholy). It is a feeling of pain for the loss of something, in this specific case, for the loss of the times gone that cannot be relived. Semantically speaking, nostalgia is pathemic: this means that it is a fully developed passion that has reached the peak of intensity. It is well-defined and, for this reason, also easily identifiable. Nostalgia is not simply a passive sentiment, but an active force that shapes the way we perceive and act in the world. The nostalgic text inscribes within it a specific profile of the public and establishes with it a communicative pact in which the past is evoked as an element of connection. Semiotics allows us to grasp these aspects and analyze their implications. Moving from Greimas’s key study about the topic, the purpose of this paper is to explain the phenomenon of nostalgia in the field of the semiotics of advertising and consumption by stating the differences and similarities between nostalgia and

the vintage mood. It examines the different feelings which drive both of them, how nostalgia works, and who are the people that represent the perfect target for nostalgia marketing strategies. If we pay attention to the world around us, we will easily understand that there is a massive use of nostalgia marketing techniques. These allow many companies to sell their product or brand to a specific target by catching people's attention and stimulating the rise of a nostalgic feeling. In almost every context of everyday life, many and different discursive styles and aesthetics that remember the past are used. Almost every creative and productive area has been touched by this increasingly widespread phenomenon: the use of nostalgic tools and tricks to boost sales and brand image. It can be used as a tool for social and political mobilization, as well as for commercial purposes. In this sense, nostalgia is a powerful semiotic resource that can be mobilized in various communicative contexts, from advertising to literature, from politics to popular culture.

The first paragraph of this paper explores the phenomenon of nostalgia, providing a definition of the term and comparing it to the vintage mood. The focus is on the emotions that nostalgia and the vintage mood evoke. Following this theoretical framework, the second paragraph examines how nostalgia is manifested in consumer products and their marketing strategies. The discussion includes examples from various industries, such as advertising, fashion, tourism, food and beverages, and technology, and how they target specific audiences. The final section of the paper analyzes the expression of nostalgia during the Covid-19 pandemic, using an Italian television advertisement from 2020 as a case study. The aim is to analyze the different manifestations of nostalgia in advertising, highlighting how semiotics can help us understand the values and meanings behind the advertising messages.

## *2. Nostalgia, Nostalgia Marketing, Vintage Mood*

Nostalgia is an increasingly significant and debated emotion in modern culture (cf. Jacobsen 2020), capable of generating a strong sense of remembrance for something that was once good but no longer exists. In this era of uncertainty and loss of control due to the fast pace of modern life, the past has become an idealized place, offering comfort and safety compared to the present and future instability, including international security issues and economic crises.

The term "nostalgia marketing" originates from nostalgia, and it's a technique used by companies to launch new products or promotional campaigns that stimulate memories and generate an emotional bond with the past. This is achieved through music, words, pictures, and advertisements that trigger memories of times gone by. In contemporary society, there is an increasing growth of things, practices, and sectors that somehow remember the past. The past has become an intangible place where people find memories and symbols that marketers can use as a tool in the present time (cf. Boero 2019).

However, it is not pure nostalgia that drives customers to purchase "old-fashioned" things over contemporary ones, but rather a "vintage mood". Both nostalgia and vintage mood are passions that drive individuals to feel and act, but they are two different passions with varying intensity and extension. Nostalgia is defined as a feeling of pain for the loss of something, in this case, for the times gone by that cannot be lived again (cf. Brown 2001). It is an intense feeling felt by

a relatively small number of people, and their identity and personality are often marked by it. Nostalgic subjects are defined as a category of people, like collectors and enthusiasts, who reject the present and idealize the past. They often follow similar narrative schemes and reject interference or co-existence between the past and present.

While nostalgia is a strong and well-defined emotion, the vintage mood is something less intense. It is more of a disposition, a way of living and behaving in a certain manner. It is not rigidly defined or limited by strict rules and actions, and can extend to a larger number of people, who interpret this mood in their own way. In semiotics, it is a passion that is not fully developed and has not gone beyond the status of a disposition (cf. Greimas and Fontanille 1991). From a tensive point of view, it is not strongly perceived and is more accessible to most people. Those who feel the vintage mood do not perceive the past as a loss, but rather as a source of elements that can be mixed with elements of the present. In fact, because of its low tensive feature, this “semi-passion” does not fully involve and overwhelm the subject, who remains instead open towards other passions and feels free and encouraged to try and combine them, to obtain something surprising and new.

The vintage mood combines in many different forms and cannot be easily categorized. It is highly dependent on the cultural background and personal experiences of the subject that lives the mood, as each case is unique and different (cf. Panosetti 2013). This is in contrast to nostalgia, which is well-defined and can be easily categorized. People who experience the vintage mood are very different from one another and are not part of a defined and closed circle. Their identities and personalities are less rigid and they are always willing to try and feel something new and unexpected. In semiotics we can say that vintage mood has got a low pathemic intensity, which makes it qualitatively weak but quantitatively very large. In other words, the most rarefied is the passion, the most it can be felt from the largest number of subjects. People who feel a total rejection for the present are very few. On the contrary, people who love to remember old times and that feel at ease remembering the past are many more. Almost all of us like to think about past time and mixing features typical of old objects with new ones.

When in a vintage mood, individuals feel disconnected from the present and the past, and like to feel out of time for a while. This can be explained socio-culturally as a need to feel disconnected from a world that is constantly connected, where simultaneity brings individuals under pressure and always fully immersed in the communicative flow. The vintage mood allows individuals to feel comfortable out of time, in a non-present/non-past dimension (Panosetti and Pozzato 2013a: 30). This mechanism is at the basis of nostalgia marketing and its success. The dysphoric aspect of nostalgia is toned down by the advertising discourse, in favor of the positive sensations connected to the past. The next paragraph will focus on some manifestations of the nostalgia trend in advertising, with the aim of exploring the dialogue between semiotics of passions and nostalgia marketing.

### *3. Manifestations of Nostalgia in Advertising*

Advertising is often used by nostalgia marketing to evoke a vintage mood and appeal to consumers' positive emotions towards the past<sup>1</sup>. Advertisements that depict families are a good example of how nostalgia can be infused into storytelling to engage customers. The happy atmospheres of childhood and family reunions

are commonly used to evoke the feeling of nostalgia, especially in the food sector. This trend is evident in numerous advertising campaigns by Mulino Bianco and the Nutella brand, where the family gathered around the table is a narrative situation that refers to the past and positive sensations linked to consumers' childhood. Advertisements that depict families gathering at Christmas time are particularly effective at evoking the sense of nostalgia. Christmas is a period when the hectic pace of life is interrupted to rediscover the joy of family union. Well-known soundtracks help to evoke positive feelings associated with the past. Advertising has recently started to depict unconventional families (cf. Boero 2017). Initially, when these advertisements were the exception, the strategy used was mainly ironic, as in the case of Oliviero Toscani's Ra.Re campaign, or serious and realistic, as in the Ikea advertisement depicting a family with separated parents<sup>2</sup>.

Interestingly, in the past year, nostalgia has also begun to be used in the representation of unconventional families. For example, the Amazon advertisement broadcast during the 2022 Christmas period focuses on the father-daughter relationship in which the mother's absence is inserted<sup>3</sup>. The table is set for three, even though the mother is absent, and the nostalgia effect is obtained through the absence/presence opposition. The void left by the maternal absence is filled by the presence of a strong feeling of love, expressed through the inventive spirit of a loving father who creates a special and thoughtful experience for his daughter, proving that joy is something we make.

Another element through which advertising creates the effect of nostalgia is the rediscovery of traditions from past times, especially in the food sector (cf. Marrone 2019). Advertisements for Star sauces, for example, focus on authenticity and traditional flavors, like "grandmother's recipes". The same reference to the past is also found in the advertising for "Tagliatelle Emiliane" by Barilla, with a rough sheet that recalls homemade pasta, as required by Italian tradition<sup>4</sup>. Nostalgic atmospheres are the basis of the recent spot for Cornetto Algida (2020), which takes up the famous claim "heart of cream" as well as the same jingle from the 80s. The reference to the past is evident not only through sound and verbal elements but also through the juxtaposition of images from different periods: the 80s, in which the first audiovisual was set, and the present. The connection between the "before" and "after" is obtained through the emotions inscribed in the text and felt by the young protagonist couple. In all these cases, nostalgia is an effect of sense obtained through the reference to customs, practices, and habits of a happy time. Nostalgia marketing tools can also be used for beverages. Advertising for Polara beverages, for instance, recalls, both for their essence and for the new design, the soft drinks that were purchased in Italy in the 1950s. These soft drinks were almost homemade and had many beneficial properties. They were obtained by mixing only a few genuine ingredients, like water, sugar, and juice obtained directly from the fruit, as a very ancient and secret recipe teaches. The old recipe has been kept and adapted to new techniques to create a new but authentic product. All this makes the soft drinks very symbolic of the Sicilian lifestyle, without considering the label. The product itself recalls tastes, smells, and old habits of a past society that are capable of stimulating the memories of people and letting the nostalgia feeling arise. The product line is precisely called *Antica Ricetta Siciliana* by Polara. In order to evoke tradition and the years when the product was originally launched, they chose a vintage label that follows the typical style of the 1950s.

Another sector where nostalgia marketing is used is the technological field. We

are currently witnessing a kind of hybridization known as technologic revival, where new and high-tech elements are blended with old and vintage designs in the same device. Marketers draw more inspiration from vintage design than from technology to evoke images of the past in the minds of consumers and create emotional experiences. One prominent trend that has emerged in recent years is the Polaroid camera. The new Polaroid camera is part of the retro-technologies group, and the significant growth in sales for this type of product indicates that it is not just a result of nostalgia but also a new way of innovation. By incorporating old technologies of the past with digital features, these products have become relevant in modern lifestyle and culture. The Polaroid commercial *Real Connection*<sup>5</sup> expresses the dialogue between art and science by drawing a parallel between human chemistry and the chemical processes that take place inside a Polaroid camera when a photo is taken. Light plays a fundamental role in the narrative, creating a sense of intimacy between the subjects. Through the act of taking a photo, emotions can be preserved in printed photographic images. Vintage shapes and colors evoke pleasant memories of the past and help modern consumers understand and accept these new products and technologies.

Nostalgia marketing techniques are also widely used in the fashion industry, where the past is frequently revisited, with different periods being recalled over time. For instance, Louis Vuitton's press campaign recalls the bon ton style of the 1950s (cf. Boero 2019). The three models in the campaign wear clothing clearly inspired by the fifties, such as dresses with very narrow waists, wide and seductive flared skirts, and bodices created to highlight the breasts. The lines and curves of these garments recall the women's silhouette of the fifties, and even the hairstyles of the models are typical of that era. The pathemic roles played by the three women are also accentuated, with an attitude of austere elegance as if they were ancestral divas of the cinema from a bygone era, waiting to enter the scene in a luxurious dressing room. The reference to the 1950s, an era characterized by the rediscovery of women's bodies and femininity, is not accidental, but aimed at stimulating consumers' imagination and evoking public or private memories of that period. In this way, the targeted audience, women over 30 belonging to a medium-high social class, will associate the clothes and accessories advertised with an era characterized by the rediscovery of femininity, mainly embodied by cinema or song divas such as Brigitte Bardot, Sofia Loren, Marilyn Monroe, who are still considered icons of sensuality, beauty, and elegance.

Nostalgia is also expressed in tourism advertising. The rediscovery of the past is linked to the enhancement of places, through the rediscovery of traditions, uses, and customs in which tourists can identify. Authenticity is the central value, together with the security that comes from the past. Advertising begins to represent these trends in the tourism sector by focusing on practices and experiences that refer to the past. Numerous examples come from the advertising of Italian regions, where the rediscovery of small villages and past traditions is proposed. Nostalgia becomes the predominant passion, capable of activating desire and action by the target audience. The pandemic's mobility restrictions have further enhanced the nostalgic feeling.

The Covid-19 pandemic has heightened the nostalgia many people feel for places and habits that were once a part of their everyday lives. Mobility restrictions implemented to contain the spread of the virus have left people yearning for the things they used to do. In response, they try to recreate those experiences and at-

mospheres in whatever way they can. However, with isolation and limited mobility, this feeling of nostalgia has spread widely. Tourism advertising has captured this sentiment by showcasing a nostalgic “before” (a past that was once euphoric) and a dysphoric present reality (that has transformed that past into a consumable object). The text’s effectiveness comes from the nostalgia it evokes, which motivates tourists to visit certain places and rediscover the sensations associated with their important past experiences.

Moving from this *excursus* in the field of nostalgic advertising, the next paragraph will delve deeper into nostalgic advertising, exploring the representation of nostalgic places and the habits of daily life during the pandemic.

#### 4. *Nostalgia and Covid-19: the Case of Barilla TV Commercial*

During times of crisis, advertising has the potential to address social and ethical issues by providing hope and nostalgia for a recent past that has been lost. This is particularly relevant during traumatic events, such as natural disasters, economic issues, geopolitical issues, and pandemics. For example, the pandemic forced people to stay at home and disrupted their everyday routines, making them long for the recent past when things were more predictable and stable. The sudden and unprecedented changes caused by the pandemic led people to feel a sense of loss and longing for the past. Nostalgia for the recent past became a way for people to cope with the stress and uncertainty of the present, providing a sense of comfort and familiarity (cf. Meo 2010). This nostalgia was not related to distant memories of the past, but to recent experiences that were suddenly disrupted by the pandemic. In the case of the Covid-19 pandemic, the sudden shift from a “before” to an “after” marked a clear caesura that triggered a new sense of nostalgia for the everyday habits that were abruptly interrupted. Nostalgia is infused in advertising texts to repair negative moods and boost current and future-oriented positive affect, thereby strengthening psychological resilience.

The pandemic caused a lot of disruptions in people’s daily lives, and the sudden changes and uncertainty about the future caused feelings of sadness and psychological exhaustion. Nostalgia for the past offered a way to escape these negative feelings and find some sense of serenity. By reminiscing about the everyday habits and routines that were suddenly interrupted, people were able to feel more hopeful and optimistic about the future. Nostalgia can serve as a coping mechanism during times of crisis, helping people to feel more grounded and connected to something familiar and comforting. The advertisement focuses its discourse on these positive characteristics of nostalgia, removing the aspect of languor and pathological suffering connected to its primary definition. In particular, during the first wave of the pandemic, advertising evoked the recent (and lost) past, portrayed as a poignant memory infused with desire and nostalgia. The nostalgic tone aimed to repair negative moods by boosting current and future-oriented positive affect, thereby enhancing psychological resilience.

A recent analysis has identified some emerging trends in pandemic-era advertising (cf. Lorusso et al. 2020)<sup>6</sup>. The first trend is the representation of scenes of daily life within the home environment, depicted in a euphoric sense, as seen, for example, in the Eni campaign. The house is not portrayed as a prison but as a place where one can regain a sense of self. Hence, there is a focus on self-care, including physical exercise and the rediscovery of passions and activities previously

neglected due to a lack of time. The second trend involves the depiction of activities outside the domestic sphere, where workers who cannot work from home operate, such as general practitioners, employees in the food or pharmaceutical industry, newsagents, shop assistants, and cashiers. The tone of communication in this trend is more intense and dramatic, using realistic narratives to encourage reflection on the risks and difficulties faced by these workers. The third trend is the reference to a sense of national belonging, appealing for unity of purpose and portraying Italy as anthropomorphized, suffering but resilient. This is exemplified in the Barilla commercial *L'Italia che resiste* (2020)<sup>7</sup>, where the product takes a back seat to a common sentiment amplified by the famous jingle Hymne, emphasizing the pathos. Finally, a fourth trend involves the incorporation of social distancing practices in the text. This is conveyed through dialogues between characters in the narrative who are in different locations due to travel limitations, such as distant couples or families who remain united thanks to video calls, as in the case of Bauli's commercial (2020). Graphic elements are also employed to distance the initials of brand names, as seen in the cases of McDonald's or Coca-Cola. Overall, advertising during times of crisis can be a powerful tool to address social and ethical issues, provide hope, and express nostalgia for a recent past that has been lost. These emerging trends in pandemic advertising show how advertisers are using various strategies to appeal to audiences and help them navigate through difficult times.

Exploring the dialogue between semiotics and nostalgia marketing, it is interesting to delve into Barilla's aforementioned commercial. The advertisement narrates Italy's difficult period by combining various languages: verbal, visual, and sound. These three elements are connected and intertwined in the narrative. As for the verbal aspect, the story is told by a voice-over. The text highlights some contrasts to describe the lives of Italian citizens during the pandemic. The subject of the narrative is the entire Italian people, who were forced to stay at home during the toughest period of the pandemic. The macro-story can be divided into several micro-stories: the one where the protagonists are the doctors and nurses who try to save lives, the narrative program of volunteers who assist people in need by bringing food and medicines, the narrative program of other workers such as cashiers who continue to work despite the pandemic, and the narrative program of citizens who are locked up at home to contain the spread of the virus. All these subjects share the same value object, which is the will to resist.

The micro-stories blend into the overarching narrative of Italy that resists, anthropomorphized as a suffering entity that manages to overcome challenges once again. The use of "we" conveys a sense of belonging and closeness, while the verb "to resist" invokes Italy's past history of facing difficulties, such as the resistance during the fascist period. The final written message, «L'Italia che ancora una volta resiste», encapsulates the advertisement's meaning, emphasizing that although Italy has changed during the pandemic, fundamental values like unity, love for art and beauty, family, resilience, and the need to share feelings with others in crisis remain intact. The brand establishes an emotional connection with customers, positioning itself as a witness of the past.

The visual language in the advertisement reinforces the verbal narration of the story. The visual contrasts highlight the verbal ones. The iconic places of Italian beauty, usually crowded with tourists before the Covid-19 pandemic, are now empty, revealing an unprecedented beauty. Meanwhile, citizens sing from their



balconies in the places of daily life, expressing their determination to overcome the difficult period they are experiencing. The closure of shop shutters also helps to portray the economic difficulties of the period for traders, who are forced to temporarily close their businesses. While the enunciative *débrayage* predominates from the verbal perspective, the brand reveals its identity visually. The brand appears visually in three places in the story (Barilla pasta's package at the supermarket checkout, Mulino Bianco's products distributed by the volunteers, Barilla's pasta in the place of production), and finally through the Barilla logo. However, viewers immediately recognize that it is a Barilla commercial thanks to the soundtrack, the historical jingle of Barilla advertising (a piece by Vangelis entitled *Hymne*), which creates a sense of loyalty by evoking the past and triggering nostalgic memories. Barilla advertisements are strongly linked to collective memory, narrating Italian society of the 1980s and 1990s. This is the element that creates connection and continuity in the story because, despite the rapidly changing scenes, settings, actors, and colors, the music is the only element that always remains the same, creating coherence. Another element from the sound perspective is the narrative voice of Sophia Loren, an icon of Italian beauty who was also featured in a previous commercial by the brand.

The text is cohesive because the central theme of resilience is evident in every part of the narrative. The storyline is well-constructed and follows a clear trajectory, which is easily understandable thanks to the verbal explanations and visual cues, such as the masks. The ad aims to evoke a sense of nostalgia for a "lost present", for the normal everyday life before the pandemic. It is not just a commercial, but also a social advertisement with an indirect commercial purpose. Verbal and visual contrasts contribute to creating a sense of nostalgia, highlighting the difference between the "before" and "after" of the pandemic, when being together with loved ones was still possible versus when loneliness and separation became more prevalent. Everyday routines and habits are imbued with new meaning through nostalgia and memory. The soundtrack, which features the iconic Barilla advertising jingle by Vangelis titled *Hymne*, reinforces the sense of nostalgia, evoking the emotions associated with the brand's previous campaigns, which often depicted scenes of reunited families. Nostalgia is tied to the memory of the past, when socializing with friends and family was commonplace, and enjoying a plate of pasta together was a shared joy. The commercial conveys the idea of a large Italian family, not just confined to individual homes but one that is united, even if only virtually, to face the challenges posed by the pandemic.

This analysis shows that nostalgia is a complex phenomenon that involves three different levels: the individual, the collective, and the cultural. At the individual level, nostalgia is seen as a personal emotion, a longing for a lost past that is intimately linked to one's own life history. The micro-stories inserted in the commercial are an example of it. At the collective level, nostalgia is a shared sentiment among forms of life who share a common identity, such as a nation, a community, or a generation. This is the case of the big Italian family described in the text. Finally, at the cultural level, nostalgia is a cultural product, a set of images, symbols, and narratives that are used by various agents in society to shape people's perceptions of the past. In the text there is a clear reference to the Italian culture of the 80s and the 90s, and to the positive emotions expressed by the Barilla campaigns of the period. Greimas's structural semiotics sheds light on the complex interplay between memory, passions, and culture, and provides valuable insights into the ways in which the analy-

sis of a text can contribute to our understanding of this phenomenon.

## 5. Conclusions

«The phenomenon of the vintage mood is transmedial» (Panosetti and Pozzato, 2013a: 31), expressed through various tools, symbols, and stylistic configurations. As previously described, nostalgia can be an effect of sense, achieved through the discourse of the text, or a device that drives consumer action, as Polidoro (2017) noted with reference to television series. Advertising can appeal to nostalgia in different ways, such as evoking past atmospheres and sensations through the use of music, symbols, and styles or by offering products with a modern twist. Inter-textual references to past films, characters, objects, or events in advertising can also achieve the nostalgic effect. According to Floch's studies on consumption (1990), nostalgic advertising falls under the "mythical philosophy" that creates atmospheres and emotions around the product. Nostalgia is linked to existential values such as individual identity, love for the past, and love for life, while pleasant memories associated with the past can be crucial to overall communication. In this paper, we have examined various expressions of nostalgia in advertising and consumption, highlighting the different areas in which nostalgia can be used to evoke consumer engagement. Media and marketing work together to stimulate new or old feelings of nostalgia, selecting from the past what is worth recovering (Fabris 2003: 276-277). Nostalgic ads trigger memories from our past, enveloping our everyday lives and continually influencing our practices and choices as consumers (cf. Leone 2015). This is why advertising is an interesting area for analyzing the phenomenon of nostalgia. From a semiotic perspective, analyzing advertisements extends the observation and application of the expressive modalities of nostalgia. While there are numerous and important studies focused on nostalgia in the fields of marketing and media languages<sup>8</sup>, the aim of this work is to highlight the synergies that arise from the dialogue between the semiotics of passions and studies on the marketing of nostalgia and consumer behavior. This dialogue explores the analytic potential of post-Greimasian semiotics (cf. Marrone 2007; Traini 2008), demonstrating how semiotics can be seen as a discipline capable of capturing emerging trends in the contemporary social context. The semiotic analysis of nostalgia in advertising aims precisely to achieve this goal, inserting semiotics in the context of disciplines that can most effectively capture the complexity of a constantly evolving communicative scenario

<sup>1</sup> The cases mentioned in the paragraph are not meant to be exhaustive of all nostalgic advertising or of all the sectors in which nostalgic advertising is expressed. They represent exemplary cases and have been chosen as representative of some predominant trends in contemporary consumption.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PKVdkEeck7o>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jQWLKhhWBTs>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wIToJ-Km53g&amp;t=13s>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2aV3Iyyt2EM>

<sup>6</sup> In particular, see the voice: "Il ruolo della pubblicità".

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=848kapapk8I>

<sup>8</sup> See for instance Carman et al. (2005), Stern (1992), Holbrook & Schindler (2003).

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### **Nostalgiche ironie in *Midnight in Paris* di Woody Allen**

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Keywords: storia delle passioni; nostalgia mediale; vintage; retromania; Woody Allen

Anche le passioni subiscono o sono protagoniste a vario titolo delle mode: è il caso della nostalgia, chiamata anche retromania o passione vintage, che da molti anni è al centro del sentire comune, alimentata dai media in varie forme. Dopo un rapido excursus nella storia culturale, l'articolo si sofferma un celebre film di Woody Allen, *Midnight in Paris*, costruito appunto come un divertente caso di "nostalgia mediale". A partire da un gioco di rimandi testuali che lo caratterizzano come un meta-discorso sulla nostalgia, il film ne propone una versione "produttiva": di un rivolgersi al passato, cioè, non come disincanto e ripiego intimista, ma come necessario trampolino, sia pur ironico, per una più euforica riconversione esistenziale.

### **Nostalgie seriali: Il fantastico scenario della Fantastica signora Maisel**

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Keywords: nostalgia; vintage; serialità televisiva; umorismo ebraico; semiotica della cultura

In questo contributo sarà analizzata la serie *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel* (*La fantastica signora Maisel*), scritta e diretta da Amy Sherman-Palladino, e ambientata a cavallo fra gli anni Cinquanta e gli anni Sessanta del secolo scorso. Dopo una rapida presentazione dei protagonisti e delle principali linee narrative (par. 1), si passerà a considerare un'ambiguità di base, quella fra ambientazione nel passato e stili espressivi contemporanei, che ascrive questo prodotto al cosiddetto *vintage mood* (par. 2). Il par. 3 sarà dedicato all'analisi di alcuni aspetti strutturali della serie, fra cui il valore profondo/auto-realizzazione della donna/, ancora così attuale; nonché la costruzione degli attori, delle atmosfere, delle passioni, degli stili visivi e dei dialoghi. Il par. 4 verte sul ruolo della comicità, e in particolare sul doppio registro della comicità d'epoca (le performance di Miriam come *stand-up comedian*) e comicità da *sit com* creata dai personaggi della serie nelle loro relazioni reciproche "reali". L'argomento è approfondito nel par. 5 in cui si considera l'appartenenza di tutti i protagonisti alla comunità ebraica. L'intera serie ruota attorno a una forma di "lateralismo culturale" rispetto alla maggioranza WASP nella New York dell'epoca, in particolare l'umorismo ebraico funziona come un "frullatore" di valori e una continua messa in discussione delle interpretazioni. Infine, nel conclusivo par. 6, si suggerisce che l'effetto-nostalgia prodotto dalla serie sia legato soprattutto all'immersione dello spettatore in un mondo-scenario dalla coerenza perfetta. La moda, la scenografia, e tutti gli aspetti concreti di questo mondo non sono affatto accessori ma diventano "attori", protagonisti a pieno titolo accanto ai protagonisti umani. Si sospende felicemente la credenza circa un'esistenza effettiva, nel passato, di questo fantastico scenario e se ne fruisce come in un'esperienza di realtà estesa.

## **Da Top Gun a Top Gun: Maverick: Intertestualità e ipertestualità al servizio della nostalgia** Piero Polidoro (Università LUMSA di Roma – p.polidoro@lumsa.it)

Keywords: semiotica; cinema; audiovisivo; intertestualità; nostalgia; narrazione

*Top Gun* (USA 1986, regia di Tony Scott) è stato uno dei film più iconici degli anni Ottanta del secolo scorso e ancora oggi ha numerosi fan. Nel 2022, dopo ben trentasei anni e molti rinvii, è arrivato finalmente nelle sale cinematografiche il suo *sequel*, *Top Gun: Maverick* (USA 2022, regia di Joseph Kosinski). In questo articolo verrà analizzato il modo in cui il nuovo film è riuscito a proporre una storia originale e – al tempo stesso – a recuperare il patrimonio nostalgico rappresentato dal film del 1986. Per farlo, verranno innanzitutto messe in evidenza le differenze narrative fra i due film. Successivamente, usando i concetti messi a punto da Gérard Genette, verranno identificati i meccanismi intertestuali e ipertestuali che collegano *Top Gun: Maverick* a *Top Gun*, distinguendoli in tre categorie: 1) citazioni e allusioni, 2) riferimenti ipertestuali senza trasformazioni narrative, 3) riferimenti ipertestuali con trasformazioni narrative. Con diversi gradi e a diversi livelli, questi tre tipi di meccanismi permettono al film del 2022 di recuperare in funzione nostalgica quello del 1986, riuscendo però anche a sviluppare una trama e strutture narrative autonome.

## **Come d'incanto: Il nostalgico ritorno del futuro negli immaginari premediati**

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Keywords: premediazione; futuro; feticismo; nostalgia; incanto

Gli immaginari sul futuro che popolano il panorama mediale contemporaneo spesso disegnano scenari distopici e disorientanti, suscitando nello spettatore un certo senso di nostalgia per un tempo passato o per ciò che rimane del presente prima dell'apocalisse incombente. La strategia nostalgica si gioca proprio nella relazione, spesso di sovrapposizione, tra questi piani temporali e mediali, che mettono in comunicazione la dimensione dell'immaginario futuro con quella dello spettatore nel momento della visione. Media e tecnologie sono protagonisti di molti universi narrativi distopici, dove spesso sono tematizzati e raffigurati come elementi negativi: strumenti diventati fine e scopo, colpevoli di avere sterilizzato il mondo reale e appiattito l'immaginario; protesi che hanno progressivamente anestetizzato corpo e mente dell'essere umano, narcotizzandone la presa estetica e significativa sulla realtà, la capacità di dare e creare senso (cfr. Montani 2014).

Tuttavia, il merito di questi immaginari premediati (cfr. Grusin 2010; Demaria e Piluso 2020) è quello di offrire allo spettatore una via di fuga, verso una nuova spirale riflessiva. La nostalgia del passato viene proiettata sugli stessi oggetti mediali e tecnologici che ne hanno sciolto l'incanto. Media e tecnologie sembrano recuperare la propria aura – si fanno oggetti museali, di valore nostalgico a cui potersi "finalmente" ricongiungere. Lo spettatore gode di questi beni in maniera feticistica: non si tratta di superare l'alienazione, del rivedere se stessi nell'immagine che questi oggetti riflettono, ma piuttosto di perdersi nello spettacolo di un'immagine che si riverbera lungo la superficie dello schermo, di rimanere incantati di fronte alla perfezione operativa e alla chiusura riflessiva di una realtà troppo oggettivata per venire assoggettata.

Non si tratta del mito di Prometeo e dell'origine della civiltà umana, ma piuttosto di quello di Narciso (cfr. McLuhan 1967), nella sua interpretazione più apocalittica – e come ogni mito, si tratta di ideologia. Attraverso l'analisi di alcuni immaginari mediali sul futuro, in particolare il film d'animazione *Wall-e* e la serie *Love, Death + Robot*, l'obiettivo di questo contributo sarà di indagare le logiche narrative, mediali e soprattutto visive/figurative che ne sostengono la mitologia. Il tema della nostalgia sarà oggetto e strumento di indagine privilegiato: vettore prezioso per comprendere la relazione tra i testi in esame e il loro senso, tra immagini e immaginario.

## **La nostalgie au futur: Autour de La vie des objets de Mohamed El Khatib**

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Keywords: sémioesthétique; nostalgie; affiches; objets; Charles Sanders Peirce

Dans cette contribution, nous souhaitons examiner la complexité du dispositif mémoriel mis en place par le metteur en scène Mohamed El Khatib dans *La vie des objets* (2021), en collaboration avec la photographe Yohanne Lamoulère, qui a été exposée au Maif Social Club (Paris).

L'intérêt de cette création vis-à-vis des relations entre nostalgie, mémoire et objets est double.

D'un côté, le "visible" se rend en quelque sorte "tangibile" par la spécificité des objets "représentés" ou, mieux, imprimés sur les affiches composant l'exposition. Ce sont des objets ordinaires qui sont associés à des récits de vie issus de moments et milieux fragiles – personnes en situation de marginalité sociale, migrations, etc. De ce point de vue, la sémiose mémorielle est directement inscrite sur le support *matériel et formel* (les affiches), et active des processus d'investissement somatique et des dynamiques de traduction intersémiotique entre les objets et les textes.

De l'autre côté, le caractère reproductible et sériel des affiches, ainsi que l'objet-affiche en tant que tel, semblent engendrer une dynamique seconde d'appel à la mémoire chez les visiteurs. Ils pouvaient emporter avec eux les affiches-objets de leur choix. Ainsi, ils deviennent eux-mêmes des œuvres d'une mémoire autre, seconde, réflexive par rapport aux témoignages et aux objets imprimés, en se posant à la fois comme vestiges d'un temps double (le vécu affiché et celui du visiteur), et antidote à une nostalgie à venir (le conflit entre trace et oubli, la promesse de mémoire déléguée aux visiteurs).

En d'autres termes, les affiches et les objets de cette création semblent réaliser une véritable extériorisation du vécu nostalgique, individuel et collectif. Dans ce sens, la mise en relation de la "nostalgie" avec l'"Eingedenken" d'Ernst Bloch tel qu'il est repris par Walter Benjamin – ainsi que les traductions de ce terme, "souvenance" ou "immémoration" –, nous permettra de dégager le potentiel de futur inscrit dans les traces du passé.

### **Effetto di passato: Strategie cognitive ed estetiche della nostalgia nel fumetto contemporaneo**

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Keywords: fumetti; nostalgia; narratologia; semiotica visiva; archeologia dei media

Lo scopo di questo articolo consiste nell'analizzare i meccanismi nostalgici presenti nel fumetto contemporaneo, identificando le caratteristiche tematiche, stilistiche e strutturali che concorrono a generare un effetto nostalgico di concerto con l'interattività e le lacune che caratterizzano la narrazione a fumetti. Concentrandosi sugli aspetti propri del medium del fumetto, il contributo evidenzia nondimeno procedimenti ed effetti di senso comuni ad altri media. Nello specifico, l'articolo individua nell'esperienza nostalgica una serie di tensioni, che vengono rappresentate tematicamente attraverso motivi legati a momenti, luoghi, oggetti ed esperienze sensoriali in grado di creare un effetto nostalgico (che in alcuni casi viene definito "effetto di passato"). Si analizzano, inoltre, le strategie stilistiche sottese all'estetica nostalgica, considerando in particolare il ruolo della grafiazione e del colore, e la loro connessione con la materialità del medium. Viene discusso il modello analettico come struttura prototipica delle narrazioni nostalgiche, investigandone le peculiarità nel fumetto ed esaminando le implicazioni nostalgiche di strategie transtestuali come la paratestualità, le riscritture e la capacità archivistica del mezzo. Infine, l'articolo approfondisce l'effetto di eco e rinforzo delle narrazioni nostalgiche derivanti dai meccanismi cognitivi ed emotivi legati al fumetto, come la tessitura di rimandi semantici e figurativi tra vignette e la presenza di lacune narrative che necessitano di essere riempite da parte del lettore.

### **Odisseo e la nostalgia del divenire**

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Keywords: nostalgia; Odissea; semiotica interpretativa; De Chirico; semiotica della cultura

Gli studi contemporanei sulla nostalgia inquadrano il concetto principalmente da un punto di vista temporale, cioè kantianamente come una passione rivolta verso un passato perduto e irraggiungibile. Tuttavia, alcuni studi psicologici mostrano che gli individui inquadrano il sentimento in maniera composita e non sempre riconducibile a questo quadro (cfr. Hepper et al. 2012). Questo è probabilmente dovuto al fatto che la storia della nostalgia nella nostra cultura si nutre di immagini e rappresentazioni ben più radicate e durevoli del concetto stesso introdotto da Hofer nel 1688. Nell'enciclopedia (Eco 1984) circola infatti un concetto diverso di nostalgia, connesso alla sua rappresentazione omerica (cfr. Austin 2010), dove il sentimento unisce al rimpianto per uno spazio altro il desiderio di agire e una spinta motivazionale. Indagando come il sentimento nostalgico si articola nell'*Odissea*, si mostrerà come la passione di Odisseo non sia solo relativa ad un luogo, ma ad una temporalità che include una posizione spaziale e attoriale, un desiderio di divenire e di evolversi che Odisseo insegue al di là di ogni promessa di immortalità. Per mostrare come questa nostalgia

del divenire si articoli partiremo dal quadro di de Chirico *Il ritorno di Ulisse*, e analizzeremo diversi episodi come quello dell'isola di Calipso e dell'incontro finale tra Penelope e l'eroe.

### **The Room of the Saint: Museums and the Management of Nostalgia**

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Keywords: museum; saint; indexicality; grief; memory

Greimas (1986) encourages researchers to explore the mechanisms by which the nostalgic subject, “débrayé” from the object of value, presentifies this object thus originating a “doubled” pathemic path characterized by an imaginary isotopy. In Proust, e.g., this mechanism is activated through the madeleine, but its varieties and characteristics are still to be fully explored. This paper intends to shed light on a specific kind of nostalgic mechanism, based on two premises:

1. The unreachable object of value can also be “a person”, and the loss can be due to death. Reflection must therefore be devoted to the relationship between nostalgia and the elaboration of the memory of the deceased (mourning).
2. The mechanism of nostalgia can be not only individual and private, but also collective and institutional. From this perspective, several kinds of museums can be seen as strategic cultural devices for the management of nostalgia connected to people, objects or events belonging to a mythologized past.

The case of the museums devoted to saints of the Catholic Church, generally owned by religious orders, provide a good example of this institutional management of the nostalgic memory of an exemplary figure, loved by the faithful.

Indeed, saints are recognized as such after their death: their cult is basically “retrospective”, and even though it entails the creation of a spiritual relationship, in Catholic culture there is a strong attachment to all the indexical signs that give the faithful the impression to maintain a bodily connection with the venerated characters. This is true not only for relics, but also for the saints’ room or cell. The importance attributed to the cell can be related to a religious imaginary that creates a parallelism between the interior and spiritual space of the soul and the exterior space of the room in which the spiritual experience takes place (cf. Ponso 2023; Leone 2013): the material space of the cell is deemed to bear traces of the spiritual quality of the exceptional individuals who inhabited them, thus resulting somehow “sanctified”. This explains why the saints’ houses or cells are often musealized, as part of the process of construction and transmission of their memory. These museums aim at providing a testimony which is both historical and religious, and have to face the potential clash – typical of Catholic culture – between the need for signs of the saints’ bodily life, and the need to deviate the attention from materiality to spirituality (cf. Leone 2014).

The analysis of a sample of museums of saints (e.g. Giovanni Bosco, Pio of Pietrelcina) shows therefore the strategies which make the saints’ room available to visitors, and how settings and paratexts improve the visitor’s cultural-historical knowledge, but also create or reinforce a pathemic bond with the saints by presentifying and materializing their absence. The analysis takes inspiration from studies about the construction of places of memory, the spatial language of the museums, and their semio-ethnographic observation (cf. Violi 2014, Pezzini 2011, Marsciani 2021). These theories, mainly elaborated with reference to secular museums, are re-thought in relation to the cultural-religious context of the considered case study, as well as to the mechanism of nostalgia, intended as a semiotic strategy used to regulate (both igniting and containing) the sense of loss and desire for the saintly figure.

### **La nuova nostalgia della letteratura ebraica**

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Keywords: nostalgia; distacco; espulsione; letteratura ebraica statunitense; letteratura ebraica israeliana

Il distacco dal “villaggio dell’infanzia” produce una nostalgia che diventa un perno psichico per ciascuno di noi. Nel caso della cultura ebraica, la perdita della propria terra d’origine fa sì che i temi del rimpianto e della nostalgia siano delle vere e proprie costanti. Il presente contributo, senza aspirare

a una generalizzazione che lo spazio a disposizione non permetterebbe, propone alcuni esempi di scrittori e romanzi appartenenti alla cultura ebraica in cui il tema della nostalgia è particolarmente cruciale e soprattutto, a seconda delle epoche e dei contesti, in trasformazione. La letteratura ebraica del Novecento sembrava modulata prevalentemente su un registro secondo cui il distacco si alterava in una variante patologica più simile all'espulsione. Negli ultimi decenni del secolo scorso emerge però, soprattutto negli Stati Uniti, la determinazione a uscire dal *leitmotiv* del "popolo escluso": gli scrittori ebrei americani aspirano ad affermarsi come scrittori *tout-court* anche se, in questa fase, gli esiti rimangono parziali e la nostalgia legata alla peculiare tradizione ebraica sembra non essere mai stata veramente esautorata. Al contrario, le nuove generazioni di scrittori, pur non unificate da una comune percezione, hanno fatto notevoli passi avanti nel tentativo di emergere dalla drammatica storia del popolo ebraico per volgersi a un futuro dove anche la nostalgia sia un sentimento universale, comune a tutti gli uomini.

**Saudade: A Central Passion in the Discursive Construction of Portuguese National Identity**  
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Keywords: saudade, Portugal, nostalgia, passions, national identity

Portugal has been bound to a clearly delimited territory since the thirteenth century. Since that time, this country located in the geographical margins of Europe has been the source of discourses revolving around Portuguese national identity. Over the past centuries, social actors have used these discourses to distinguish an alleged Portuguese way of being from those linked to other national groups. This article uses a socio-cultural semiotic perspective to argue that national identities can be approached as the output of a dynamic process of discursive construction that is extended in time. In particular, it studies the Portuguese case with a focus on the central role that *saudade* – a type of nostalgia frequently presented as typically Portuguese – has played in the discursive articulation of Portuguese national identity.

**Nostalgic Advertising: Exploring the Dialogue Between Semiotics and Nostalgia Marketing**  
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Keywords: semiotics, nostalgia, marketing, advertising, Covid-19

The objective of this research is to analyze the passion of nostalgia in advertising from both theoretical and analytical perspectives. The theoretical part of the study aims to explain nostalgia in the field of semiotics of consumption by exploring the differences and similarities between nostalgia and the vintage mood, the different emotions that drive them, and how nostalgia works. It also investigates who are the perfect targets for nostalgia marketing strategies. Media and marketing collaborate to evoke old or new feelings of nostalgia, selecting what is worth recovering from the past. Nostalgic ads trigger memories of the past, permeating everyday life and continually influencing consumers' practices and choices. Therefore, advertising provides an interesting area for analyzing nostalgia. The use of nostalgia indicates a certain way of considering consumption: the past is rediscovered and re-proposed, without losing contact with modernity. The analytical part of the paper focuses on advertisements in the fields of automotive, fashion, food, and technology. The study conducts a semiotic analysis of the advertisements using the theoretical frame of structural semiotics. The aim is to analyze the different manifestations of nostalgia in advertising, in order to show how semiotics can help us to understand the values and the meanings behind the advertising messages, and how vintage mood is conveyed differently by each of them. From a narrative standpoint, nostalgia indicates a disconnection from an object of value, and the nostalgia strategy aims to establish a pathemic connection with the consumer by presenting past products, places, and practices in a modern way. Moreover, the nostalgic text inscribes within it a specific profile of the public and establishes with it a communicative pact in which the past is evoked as an element of connection. The analysis also includes nostalgic advertising during the Covid-19 pandemic, where commercials recalled moments of past daily life that were temporarily lost due to the pandemic. Semiotics allows us to grasp these aspects and analyze their implications.