

Retro, Prospo, or IDK?

Reorienting the Question of Nostalgia with Retrogaming

Richy Srirachanikorn

PhD Social & Cultural Analysis, Concordia University

ReAnimate School

June 13th 2025

What is nostalgia?

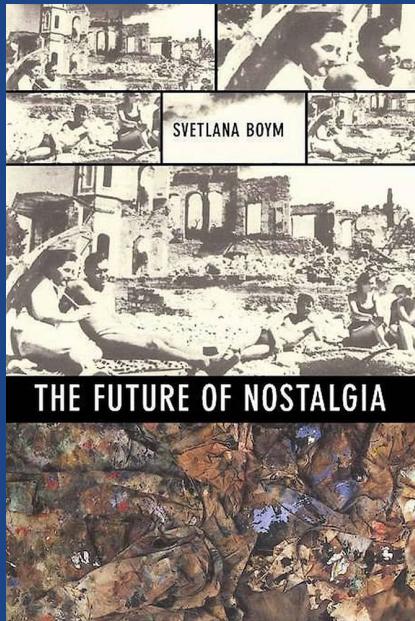
Tim Wulf
Nick Bowman
Diana Rieger
Clay Routledge
John Velez





Dylan Trigg
Tobias Becker
Simon Reynolds
Peter Fritzsche
Svetlana Boym

Nostalgia is not a regressive,
but a prospective emotion.



Svetlana Boym

**What is nostalgia?
for a sociologist?**



Nostalgia is a social emotion

Fred Davis



Nostalgia is a social emotion

Fred Davis

We use nostalgia for a sense of comfort and to slow down time

Michael Hviid Jacobsen



Nostalgia is a social emotion

Fred Davis

We use nostalgia for a sense of
comfort and to slow down time

Michael Hviid Jacobsen

By holding on the nostalgia of the what-if,
we can access our future possible selves

Janelle Wilson



What is nostalgia?
for a sociologist?
within retrogaming?



Grand Theft Auto IV and Nostalgic Disjuncture

Richy Srirachanikorn

PhD, Social & Cultural Analysis
Concordia University

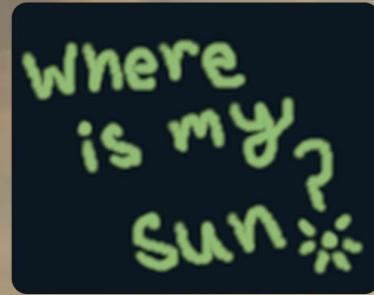


Richy's talk at the *Canadian Game Studies Association* conference focuses on the culturally produced nostalgia of socially withdrawing people (also known as *Hikikomori*) in television, comics, and videogames. Richy contrasts this with a video game that could reveal the nuanced experience of living in social withdrawal. Inspired by Saito Tamaki's (1998) "structural ignorance" of *Hikikomori* as a social issue, Richy terms this playfully serious intervention, "structural empathy" (Srirachanikorn 2024).

bionasard

X @srirachanikorn

Sociologist of the self, death, and social pain through video games.



Press Start

Lost Again

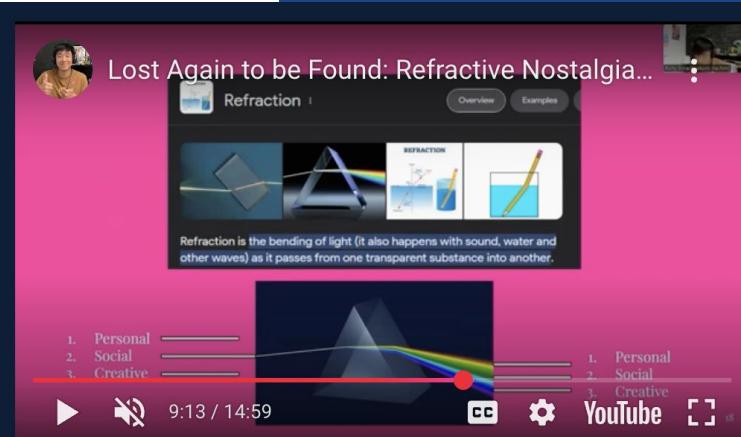
Lost Again: Refractive Nostalgia and Video Games

Ricky Srirachanikorn

Concordia University, Canada

Abstract

In tackling chronophobia, which Svetlana Boym defines as anxiety of deciding how to use our time meaningfully, video games become purposeful spaces where we have lost, or what we anticipate will be lost. Video games are ideal tools that help us retreat from following Boym, I argue that this "does not happen in the future" (2001, p. 351). To revisit or experience the past with time through games, players must lose meaning in the present to pursue it. This circular use of nostalgia with chronophobia and in a state of feeling "lost again" presents three case studies where nostalgic players find something generative for their present and future. This original solution to chronophobia draws on my work, game studies, and nostalgia research, amounting to my contribution of what I call "refractive nostalgia."



Psychological research has shown that video games are effective conveyors of old and new nostalgia. Sociologically, can we utilize video games to make people feel nostalgic for the future?

Ricky cites 3 games that successfully bring the idea of loss (in the past, or a projected future) to generate meaning, sociality, and potential collective action for its players in the present. *Club Penguin*, *Minecraft*, and *Fallout 4* carry what Ricky has termed as Refractive Nostalgia (Srirachanikorn 2024).

Keywords

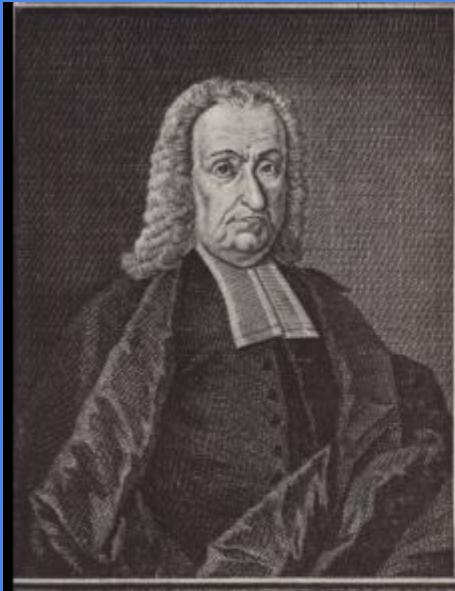
Nostalgia; Boym; chronophobia; *Roblox Titanic*; *Club Penguin*; *Minecraft*.



Nostalgia is a relationship
with the idea of the past

Retro, Prospo, or IDK?

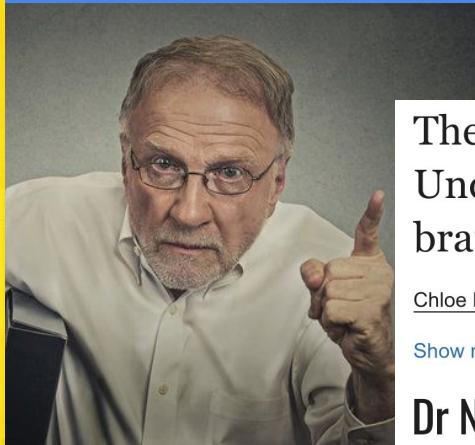
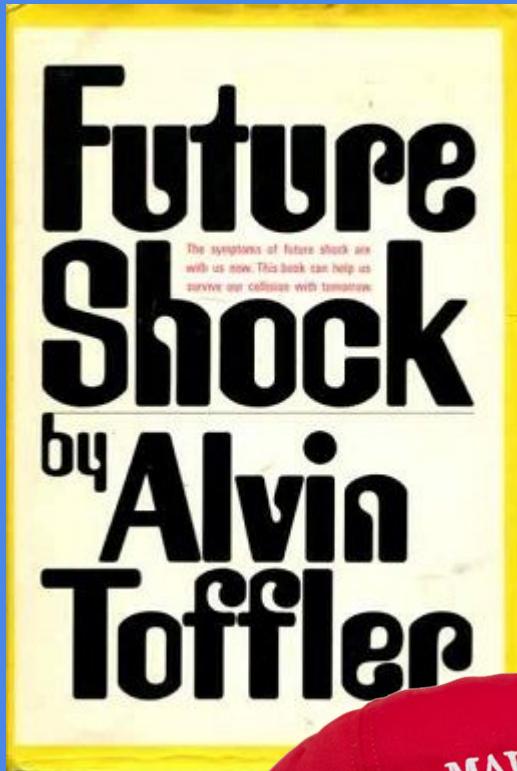
Reorienting the Question of Nostalgia with Retrogaming



JOHANNES HOFERUS
Med. Doct. Anat. & Botan. Profess.
Consil. Medic. Medico-Universitatis Electus
Diss. de Nostalgia. Anno 1700. Marti 25.
Basileae, Typis Iacobi Bertschii.







Theorizing regressive nostalgia: Understanding exclusionary consumers as a brand threat

[Chloe Preece ^a✉](#), [Finola Kerrigan ^b✉](#), [Daragh O'Reilly ^c](#)

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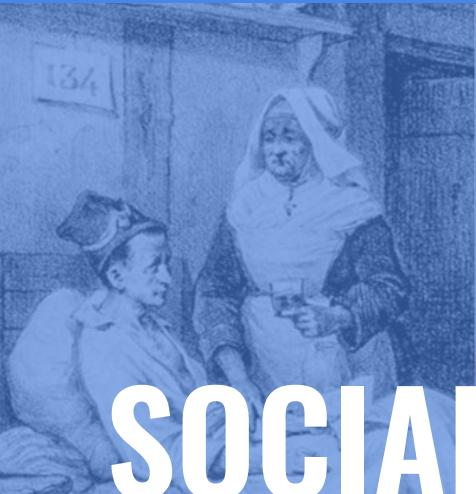
Dr No-No: Brands face threat of 'regressive nostalgia'

OCTOBER 21, 2024 11:33 AM



Marketing textbooks might well state that consumers look to nostalgia in hard times but brand owners are being urged to tread carefully when adopting this strategy, amid claims that many of the negative connotations associated with the past can alienate their core consumer base.

Retro, Prospo, or IDK?



SOCIAL



1987



1989





2007

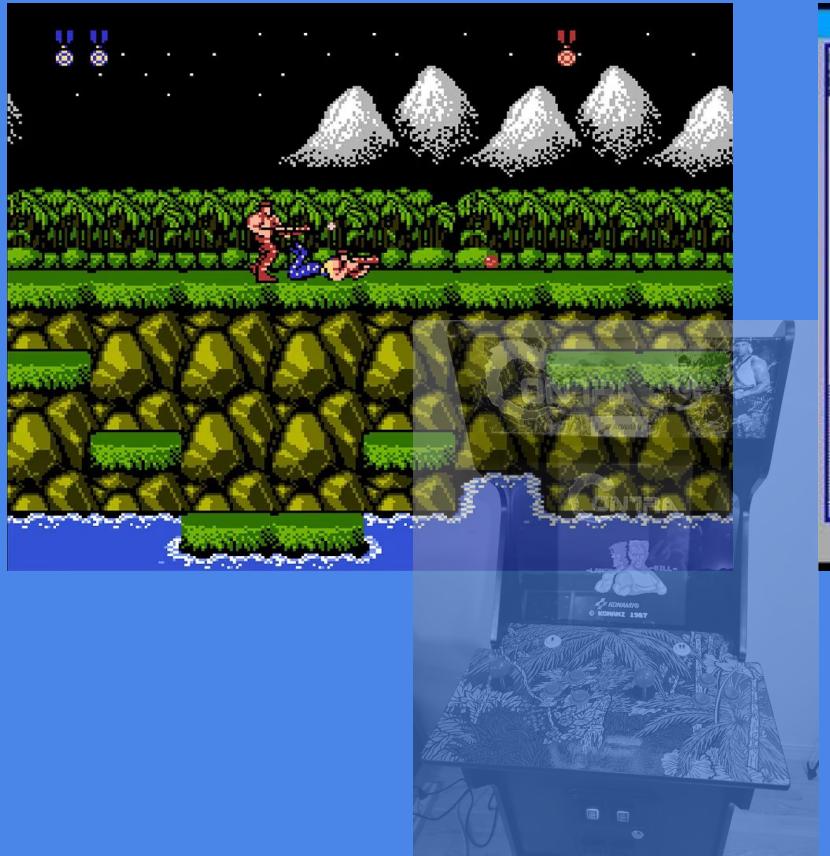


2009

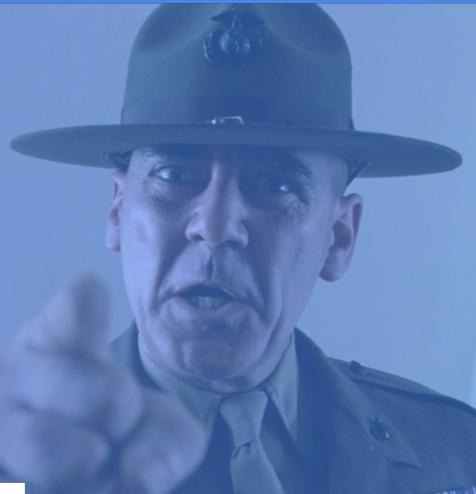








Retro, Prospo, or IDK?



SOCIAL

Retro, Prospo, or IDK?



VS



CULTURAL



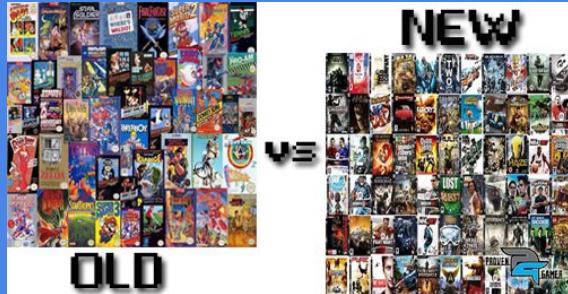
KONAMI





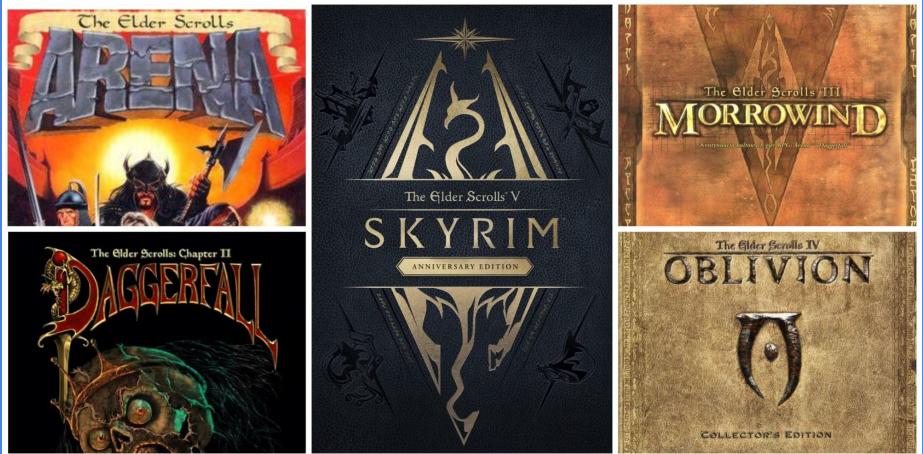
“A peculiar side effect of technological ‘progress’ in gaming is that the games of an era become as obsolete as the hardware they were designed for”

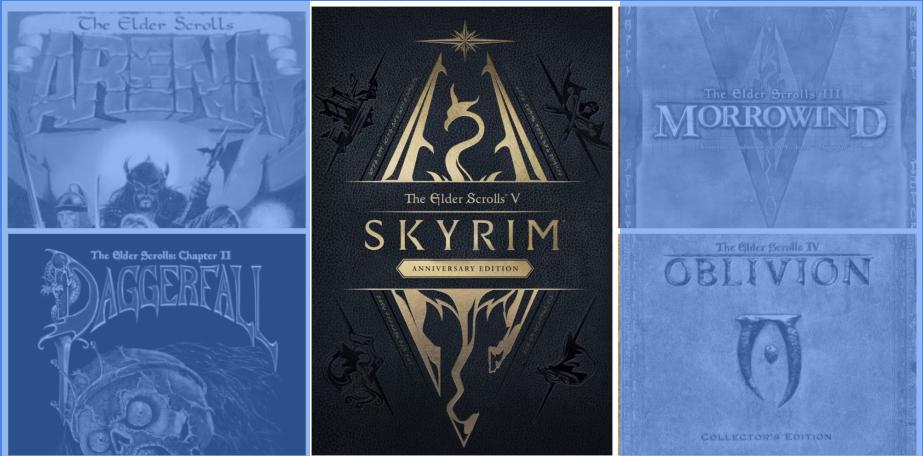
Jacob Birken

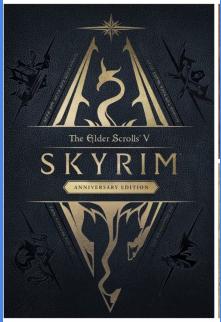


“Video games are the newest medium of storytelling
but the quickest to become obsolete”

Peter Makai







“Keeping the retro titles alive
in the collective memory”

Maria Garda



Consumers form a nostalgic sensibility

Jaakko Suominen

Consumers form a nostalgic sensibility

Jaakko Suominen

“Nostalgia is not the property of an object itself but... generated in our innerly experienced relation to it”

Maria Garda

Consumers form a nostalgic sensibility

Jaakko Suominen

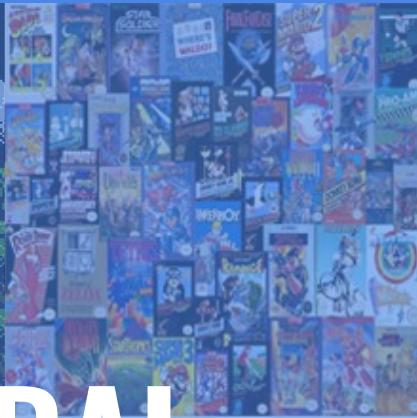
“Nostalgia is not the property of an object itself but... generated in our innerly experienced relation to it”

Maria Garda

“The value of a digital game... by its contribution to technological progress, or, more cynically, by its claims to make older games obsolete”

Jacob Birken

Retro, Prospo, or IDK?



VS



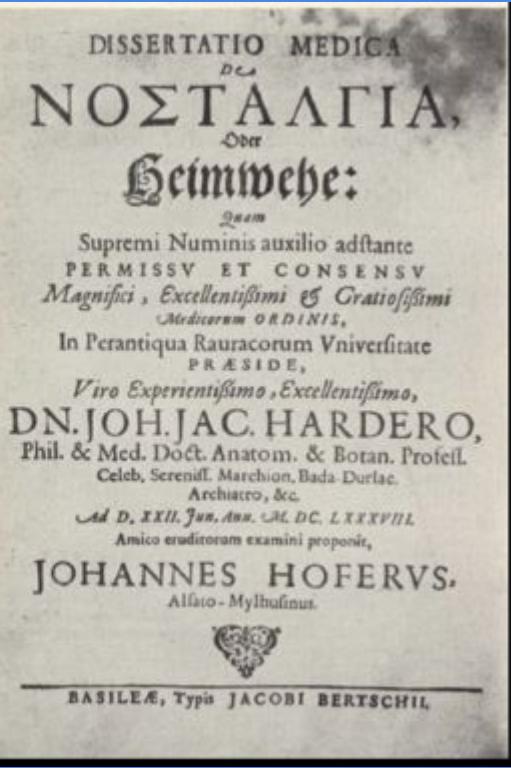
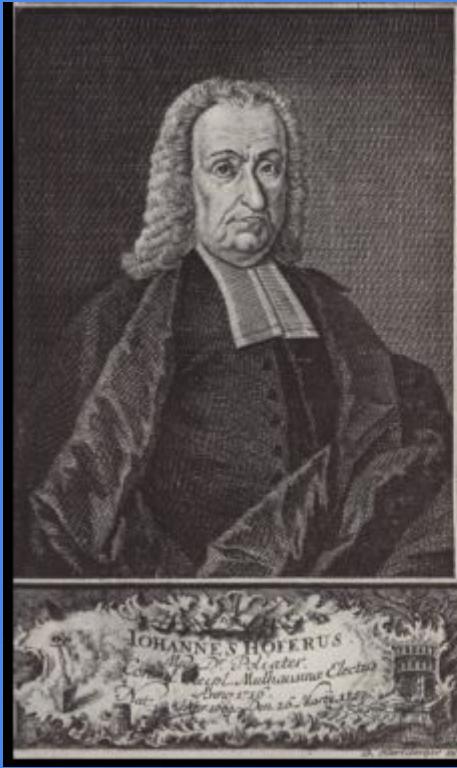
CULTURAL



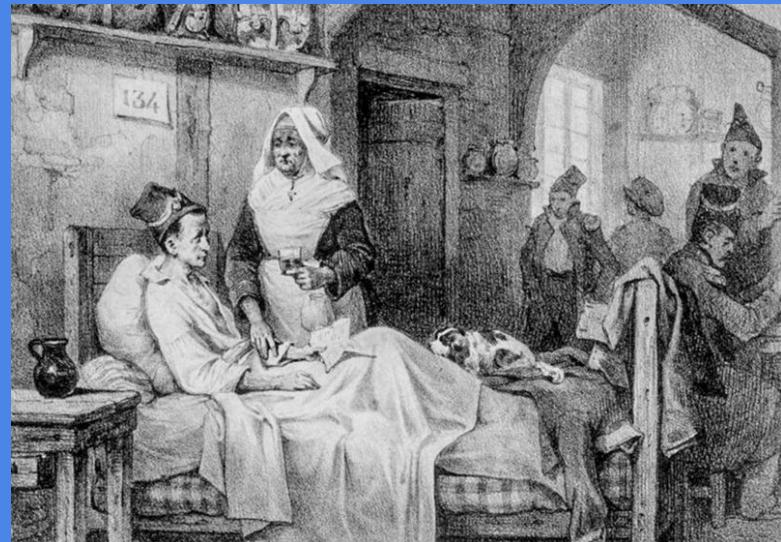
Retro, Prospo, or IDK?



MATERIAL



*nostos
algos*



Jacob Birken

2003



“mimic the joystick of
the ATARI 2600 console”

Jacob Birken



2003



1997

Jacob Birken

*nostos
algos*

“Keeping the retro titles alive
in the collective memory”

Maria Garda



2003

1997

*nostos
algos*

Longing



*nostos
algos*

Belonging



Personal Nostalgia



Historical Nostalgia



Figure 1

Controller Comparisons Between the Controllers Used in the Current Study

NES Classic controller

Wii Controller Classic

Wii Controller Classic Pro



Dimensions:
5.5 x 3.1 x 2 inches
5 ounces



Dimensions:
6.3 x 4.2 x 4 inches
8 ounces



Dimensions:
9.5 x 4.5 x 2.7 inches
9.4 ounces

Note. NES = Nintendo Entertainment System. See the online article for the color version of this figure.



Discussion

In this study, we investigated the nostalgia-inducing capabilities of video game controllers when engaging with classic video game properties. Overall, we found no evidence that different controllers had any impact on either personal nostalgia (recollections of one's own past experience) or historical nostalgia (a longing for past experiences not part of one's own past experience). Moreover, although our study did not find nostalgia to vary as a function of game controller, we did find other relationships that further our collective understanding of video games and nostalgia: Personal nostalgia was highest when players had more positive perceptions of their in-game performance and prior gaming expertise, and historical nostalgia was highest for younger players without prior *SMB* experience who felt more positively about their in-game performance.

Figure 1
Controller Comparisons Between the Controllers Used in the Current Study

NES Classic controller Wii Controller Classic Wii Controller Classic Pro



Dimensions:
5.5 x 3.1 x 2 inches
5 ounces

Dimensions:
6.3 x 4.2 x 4 inches
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NES Classic controller

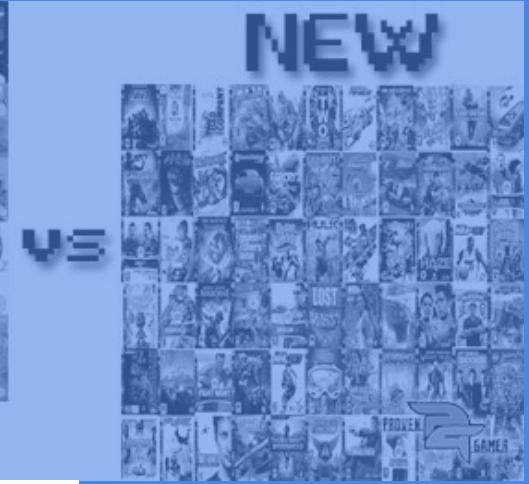


Wii Controller Classic



OLD

Wii Controller Classic Pro



NEW





Digital Nostalgia

Katharina Niemeyer

NES Classic controller



Wii Controller Classic



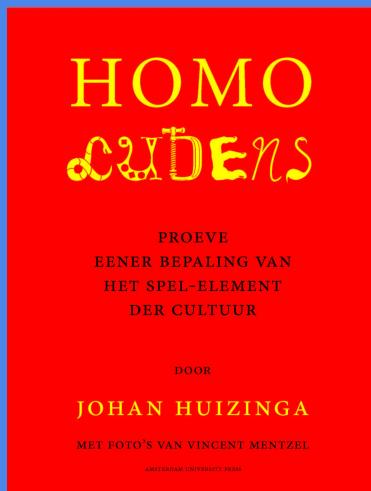
Wii Controller Classic Pro



vs

NEW





There is No Magic Circle

Mia Consalvo [View all authors and affiliations](#)

[Volume 4, Issue 4](#) | <https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412009343575>

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Abstract

Games are created through the act of gameplay, which is contingent on player acts. However, to understand gameplay, we must also investigate contexts, justifications, and limitations. Cheating can be an excellent path into studying the gameplay situation, because it lays bare player's frustrations and limitations. It points to ludic hopes and activities, and it causes us to question our values, our ethics. In comparison, the concept of the magic circle seems static and overly formalist. Structures may be necessary to begin gameplay, but we cannot stop at structures as a way of understanding the gameplay experience. Because of that, we cannot say that games are magic circles, where the ordinary rules of life do not apply. Of course they apply, but in addition to, in competition with, other rules and in relation to multiple contexts, across varying cultures, and



SOCIAL



CULTURAL



MATERIAL



SOCIAL



CULTURAL



MATERIAL

*nostos
algos*

Belonging

Retro, Prospo, or IDK?

Reorienting the Question of Nostalgia with Retrogaming

Retro, Prospo, or IDK?

Reorienting the Question of Nostalgia with Retrogaming

1

Retro, Prospo, or IDK?



Retro, Prospo, or IDK?



Retro, Prospo, or IDK?



Retro, Prospo, or IDK?



Retro, Prospo, or IDK?



Retro, Prospo, or IDK?



0.9.23a_01



Counterfactual Nostalgia

Jesper Juul

“independent style
which can be described as a
representation of a representation...

...such as large pixels, crayons, or low-poly 3D”

Counterfactual Nostalgia

Jesper Juul



Counterfactual Nostalgia

Jesper Juul



retro = pixels = old = inferior = nostalgic look

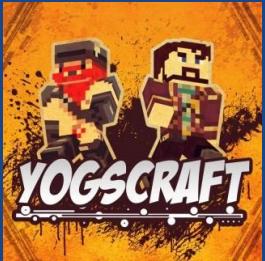
A contemporary retro game has a
“retro flair with modern, focused gameplay”

Kayali & Shuh



Blockiness of the Game

Mojang/Microsoft's Timelessness



#1 MODDED SURVIVAL ISLAND ≈ 100 videos

MINECRAFT SHIZZLE ≈ 52 videos

WRECKED THE PUMPKIN CURSE ≈ 1 video

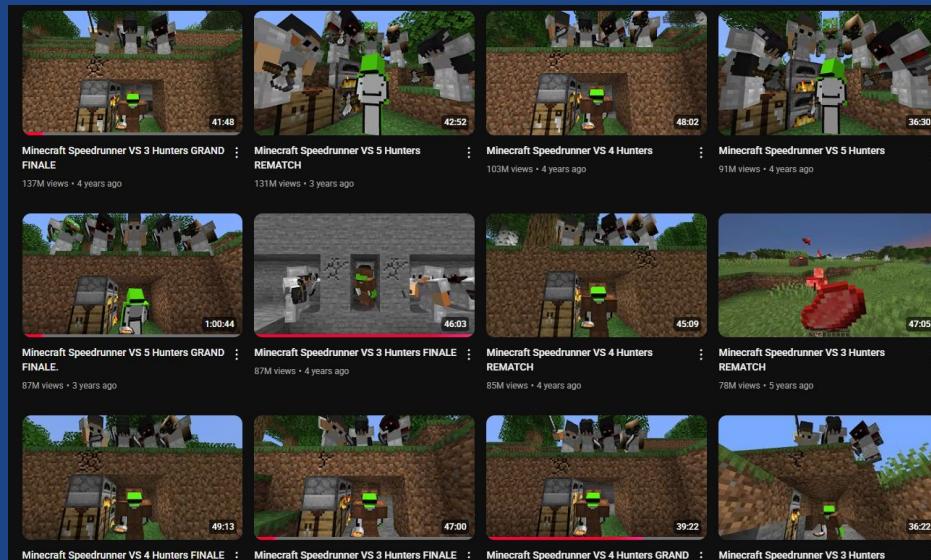
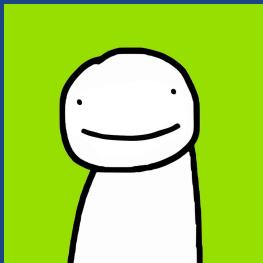


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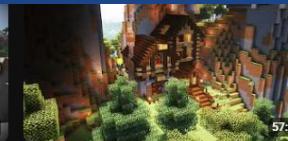
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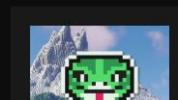
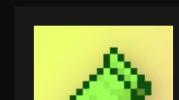
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Consumers seek things that look like the past for a sense of comfort and to slow down time.

Michael Hviid Jacobsen

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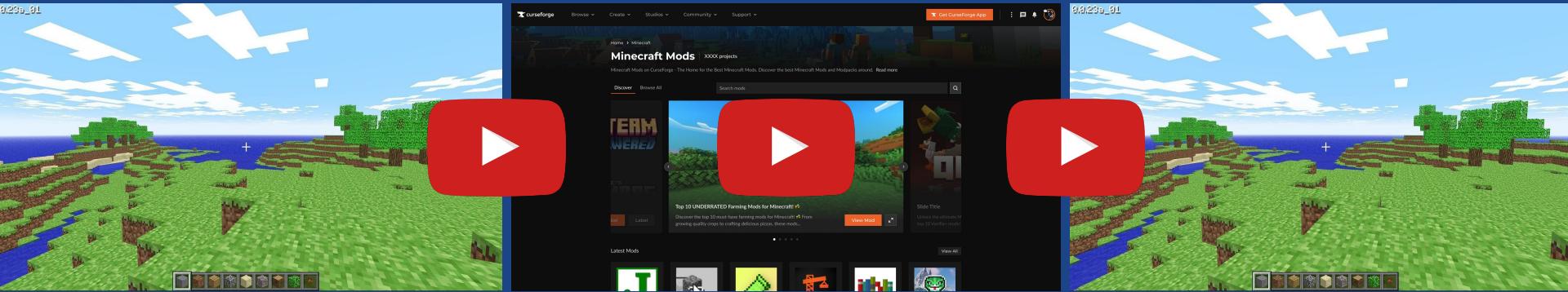


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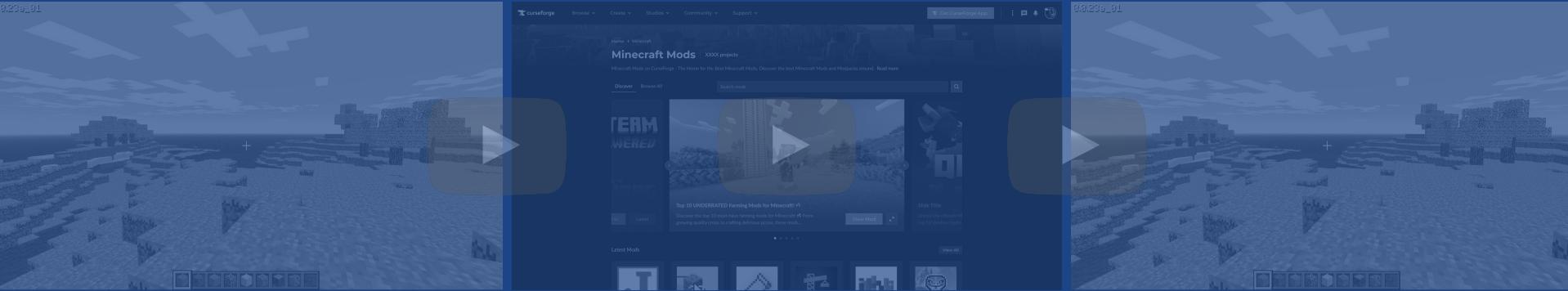


Counterfactual Nostalgia

Jesper Juul

A contemporary retro game
Kayali & Shuh

Retro, Prospo, or IDK?



2

Retro gaming is the rise of
“obsolete or obsolete-looking techniques
[that] have become an aesthetic choice”

Jacob Birken

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10 Modern Games For Retro Gamers



By Zach Gass — Published Apr 21, 2022

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James Cartlidge



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11 key moments in this video



“Shattering of nostalgic selectiveness”

Robin Sloan



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Post-digital paradigm

Digital saturation, leading to a “renewed taste for the analogue”

Mattia Thibault

Not to go to the past, but just to hold something
that is not the present / sold as progress

Digital saturation, leading to a “renewed taste for the analogue”

Mattia Thibault



Music Week

Vinyl Alliance says Gen-Z is now the 'driving force' behind the format's popularity

A new report from the Vinyl Alliance has explored why Gen-Z is embracing the format – including integrating it into their digital lives.

28 Jan 2025



Not to go to the past, but just to hold something that is not the present / sold as progress

Post-digital paradigm

Retro games helps players long for a “better past”

Maria Garda



Retro games helps players long for a “better past”

Maria Garda



That the “past is not necessarily ‘better’, but is a starting point for emancipatory approaches”

Jacob Birken

Retro, Prospo, or IDK?



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SOCIAL



CULTURAL



MATERIAL

3

Richy Srirachanikorn



Richy Srirachanikorn

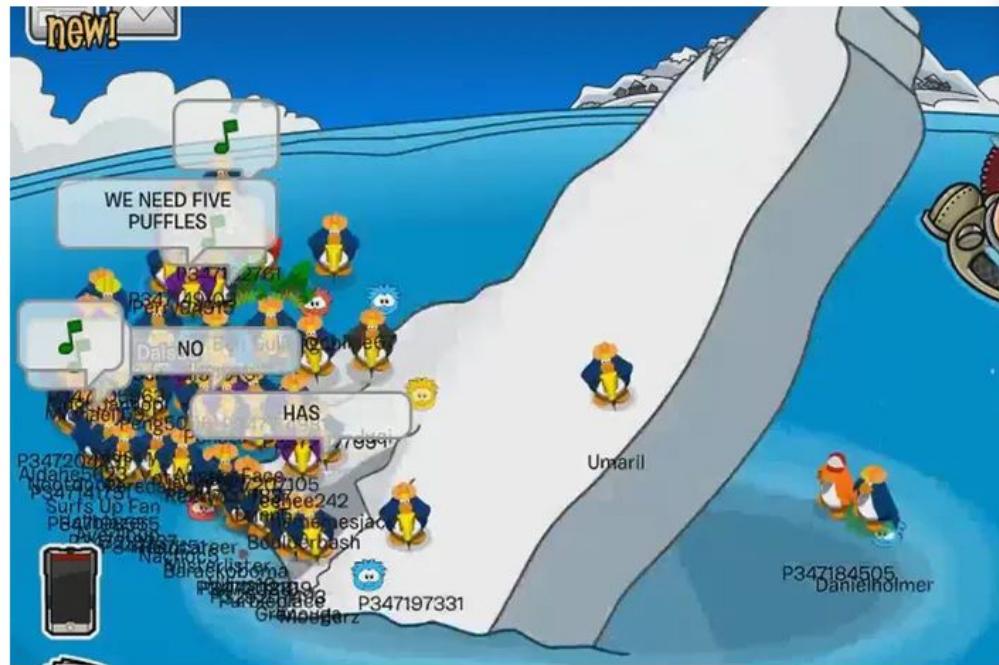


Intelligencer

SELECT ALL

Club Penguin Users Finally Tip the Iceberg, Solving Decadelong Mystery

By Brian Feldman



Ricky Srirachanikorn

The connection has been lost.
Thank you for playing Club Penguin.
Waddle on!

[Learn More](#)

10004

MAP



Richy Srirachanikorn



CLUB
PENGUIN
PLUS

CLUB
PENGUIN
LEGACY

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PENGUIN
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CLUB
PENGUIN
AVALANCHE



Ricky Srirachanikorn



CLUB
PENGUIN
PLUS

Disney

CLUB
PENGUIN
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PENGUIN
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<https://www.cplegacy.com/discord> :

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Discord

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Ricky Srirachanikorn

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Club Penguin Society

Waddle around campus and meet new friends!

[✉ uogclubpenguinsociety@gmail.com](mailto:uogclubpenguinsociety@gmail.com)

[🌐 Website](#)

[📷 UoGClubPenguin](#)

[📍](#)

[Follow us on Twitter](#)

[🔗 @uogclubpenguin](#)

[🔗 https://discord.gg/rM4bAR6UPU](https://discord.gg/rM4bAR6UPU)

[...](#)



[Buy your membership](#)



Discord

<https://discord.com/invite/clubpenguin>

⋮

New Club Penguin

Welcome to New Club Penguin! **Friendly community, monthly events, & exciting activities.** Come waddle with us today! | 182208 members.



Discord

<https://discord.com/invite/cpjourney>

⋮

Club Penguin Journey

Welcome to the official Discord server for the largest Club Penguin recreation, Club Penguin Journey! | 29738 members.



Club Penguin Legacy

<https://www.cplegacy.com/discord>

⋮

Discord Community

Before You Join! **Discord** is an exciting and interactive platform where you can stay updated with the latest news and chat with the Club Penguin Legacy Team.



Discord

<https://discord.com/invite/armyofcp>

⋮

Army of Club Penguin

The Army of Club Penguin is an **online international gaming community** established in 2006 on Disney's Club Penguin. | 11785 members.

Richy Srirachanikorn



Retro, Prospo, or IDK?



SOCIAL



CULTURAL



MATERIAL

What is nostalgia?
for a sociologist?
within retrogaming?

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Retro, Prospo, or IDK?

Reorienting the Question of Nostalgia with Retrogaming

Richy Srirachanikorn

PhD Social & Cultural Analysis, Concordia University

ReAnimate School

June 13th 2025