

## A Response to Jennifer Smith

**ABSTRACT** Andra Ivănescu responds to Jennifer Smith's review of *Popular Music in the Nostalgia Video Game: The Way It Never Sounded*. **KEYWORDS** Andra Ivănescu, Jennifer Smith, nostalgia, retro

Nostalgia pervaded gaming releases in 2019, from Game Freak's new *Sword and Shield Pokémon* games to remakes of classics like *The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening* (Nintendo), from the retro-styled *Oxygen Not Included* (Klei) to *Star Wars Jedi: Fallen Order* (Respawn), nostalgic on so many levels it becomes difficult to quantify. Most of these are examples of what Svetlana Boym would describe as "restorative nostalgia,"<sup>1</sup> often aiming to relive childhood gaming experiences and the commercial successes associated with them, engineered to appeal to fans of classic franchises and particular eras of gaming. The nostalgia video game makes some appearances as well, with Obsidian's *The Outer Worlds* delivering a scathing commentary on hypercapitalism and corporate culture through its "reflective nostalgia." Here, nostalgia is part of the game's appeal beyond its aesthetics, particularly for those fans of the *Fallout* franchise disappointed in *Fallout 76*, who see *The Outer Worlds* as a spiritual successor. The reflective and the restorative are never far from each other—nostalgia acts as both problem and solution, as both question and answer.

As Smith suggests in her review, I try to tackle a large breadth of topics in my first monograph, many of them seminal to game studies, and even cultural studies. I agree with her that much of what I try to achieve is both to bring new perspective to culturally influential case studies and lay the groundwork for more interdisciplinary further work. Depth is perhaps sacrificed at times in favor of the breadth that I believe nostalgia offers us, its pervasiveness only made more evident by how the landscape of video game releases has changed (or rather hasn't) in the short time since the book has come out. I thank Smith for appreciating the swiftness of the book, and I am relieved that the accessibility I strive for is sufficiently notable to be mentioned in a review. Finally, I hope that, as Smith notes, some concepts examined in this book can be useful to other scholars and can inspire further research into these topics. ■

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

Boym, Svetlana. *The Future of Nostalgia*. New York: Basic, 2001.

1. Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic, 2001), xviii.