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Nostalgia and Style in Retro America: Moods, Modes, and Media Recycling

Paul Grainge

If current levels of U.S. retro consumption are allowed to continue unchecked, we may run entirely out of past by as soon as 2005.

U.S. Retro Secretary, as reported in *The Onion*, 1997¹

In the last three decades of the twentieth century, nostalgia was commodified and aestheticized in American culture as perhaps never before. One may posit a variety of factors contributing to this emergent retro fascination, including diversifying markets for memory, the growth of the heritage industry, the political aesthetic of Reaganism, the demographic size of a baby-boom generation entering middle age and the attendant selling of the “boomer” past, the proliferation of technologies of time-shifting and digital reproduction, and a representational economy of recycling and pastiche. In no singular way, these all helped develop nostalgia as a cultural style, a consumable mode as much as it can be said to be an experienced mood. Mocking the prevalence of American pop-cultural kitsch appreciation in the late 1990s, the irreverent online magazine *The Onion* ran a headline story that cautioned of an imminent national retro crisis, stating: “U.S. Dept. of Retro Warns: ‘We May Be Running Out of Past.’” In many ways, this was satirically engaged with the kind of crisis scenario envisaged by critics who often read the proliferation of nostalgia as a sign of 1) creative bankruptcy, 2) millennial longing, 3) temporal breakdown, 4) postmodern amnesia, 5) other kinds of prescriptive malaise. The reservoir of American popular nostalgia has been generously tapped in recent times and this has encouraged a trend in rather foreboding cultural diagnoses. Instead of joining the warning calls levelled against the current retro “crisis,” satirically couched or otherwise, I want to explore the status, as well as historicize the development, of nostalgia as a popular style in American media culture.

There is a critical tendency, across various disciplines, to explain the new preponderance for the past in terms of what Jim Collins has called, and criticized

as, a “*Zeitgeist* model”: that is to say, a mode of analysis that accounts for the rising stock of nostalgia by relating it to a governing narrative or cultural temper (7). The zeitgeist model is especially prevalent in accounts of the initial “nostalgia boom” of the 1970s, a phenomenon that can be seen to include films like *The Sting* and *American Graffiti*, sitcoms such as *Happy Days*, the flourishing of “retro-chic” in the fashion industry, the turn towards historic preservation in city architecture, and the burgeoning interest in heritage evidenced in, and inspired by, dramas like *Roots*. Explaining the growing currency of nostalgia, emergent in the 1970s, critics often refer to a sense of national crisis. Writing in 1979, Fred Davis argued that “the current nostalgia boom must be understood in terms of its close relationship to the era of social upheaval that preceded it” (90). For Davis, nostalgia is a social emotion but also a “distinctive aesthetic modality” that can emerge in climates of transition and in response to the yearning for continuity. In cultural terms, Allison Graham relates the production of nostalgia in the 1970s and 1980s to a moment of creative exhaustion, a time where “popular art no longer springs from creative associations with a contemporary social reality” (364). She suggests that America is drawn to its recent history and the re-creation of cultural artifacts because of a certain alienation and detachment from vital issues experienced in the present. In different ways, these arguments link nostalgia to a prevailing cultural experience and condition, the consequence of socio-political disorientation and creative enervation.

While the production of nostalgia may have grown in tandem with a sense of cultural crisis, it cannot be reduced to this explanatory model; the commodification and aestheticization of nostalgia, in the 1970s and beyond, cannot be contained within theories of loss and malaise. While the selling of the past may have developed in accordance with social ruptures, notably in the 1970s, theories that reduce commodified nostalgia to a climate of enveloping decline

and dislocation do not always account for the more particular technological, economic, and design histories behind specific nostalgia modes, or for the economy of pastness that has developed within the textual and taste regimes of contemporary culture. At the same time, theories like that of Fredric Jameson, which relate an emergent "nostalgia mode" to a culture of amnesia and *historicist* crisis, do not always allow for the particular narratives of cultural memory that can be produced through the recycling and/or random hybridization of past styles. Beginning with an exploration of critical tendencies in modern nostalgia theory, this essay will examine the production of nostalgia in the cable and broadcast industries, suggesting that modes of (media) nostalgia have developed in a culture that is neither reeling from longing nor forgetting, but that is able to transmit, store, retrieve, reconfigure, and invoke the past in new and specific ways. Like Jim Collins, I take issue with the "comfortable fictions" of zeitgeist theories; I seek to analyze nostalgia as a media style, but without collapsing my argument into any explanatory metanarrative.

Theorizing Nostalgia Isn't What It Used To Be

It is necessary to begin with nostalgia theory as there would seem to be something of a critical impasse in finding adequate ways to make sense of, and engage with, nostalgia as a cultural style. In general terms, there are perhaps two dominant tendencies at work in modern nostalgia critique, captured in the distinction between mood and mode. These terms do not represent a binary opposition but distinguish the poles of a theoretical continuum. The nostalgia mood articulates a concept of experience. Theoretically, nostalgia is understood as a socio-cultural response to forms of discontinuity, claiming a vision of stability and authenticity in some conceptual "golden age." This approximates the conventional sense of nostalgia as a yearning. As a form of idealized remembrance, the nostalgia mood emerges from, and is made to relate to, a grounding concept of longing or loss.

Much important work has been done analyzing the progressive, as well as reactionary, potential of nostalgia as a mood, a rhetoric, and a "structure of feeling." I do not want to question the validity of nostalgia critique of this sort, of work focused conceptually on the (politicized) experience of absence and discontinuity. Rather, I want to question particular assumptions that can emerge from it and that tend to reduce any form or *style* of nostalgia in cultural life to a question of manifest longing. In this view, the popularity of, say, retro fashion, products of the heritage

industry, or the resurgence of the television rerun, would be explained in terms of discontent or uncertainty in the present. While the relationship between mood and mode cannot be ignored, neither should it simply be assumed. Nostalgia modes are not, by necessity, generated by nostalgic moods, or vice versa. Reducing sentiment and style to a fixed and causal relation can underestimate the way that, as a cultural style, nostalgia has become divorced from a necessary concept of loss; such a critical sleight does not allow for images and objects from/of the past to be understood or consumed in ways other than through a tendentious relationship with yearning. Writing of the contemporary "culture of nostalgia," Donna Bassin suggests that: "The current nostalgia among baby boomers for their fifties childhood is evidenced by the increased seeking and collecting of retro artifacts and the surging increase of flea markets and vintage stores" (164). Not only does this assertion ignore the significant popularity of retro and vintage styles among the children of the baby boomers to which Bassin refers, it overdetermines the relationship between middle-age longing and acts of consumption. Bassin does not account for the taste regimes that make retro artifacts popular, the broad development of nostalgia as a commodified genre, or the means by which "the fifties" might exist simultaneously with other kinds of period nostalgia. I would suggest that to get any sense of nostalgia as a cultural style, one must complicate theories which conflate mood and mode, and which read the popularity of commodified/aestheticized nostalgia in terms of political dislocation, baby-boom longing, fin-de-siècle syndromes, or other kinds of personal and cultural anxiety.

The second major conceptual tendency in modern nostalgia critique involves the conception, and examination, of nostalgia as a culturally specific *mode*. Critics are often less concerned with the basis and politics of nostalgic longing than with its stylistic form and significance in a world of media image, temporal breakdown, and cultural amnesia. At issue here is not the substance of nostalgic loss but the specificity of postmodern memory itself. This reaches its theoretical apogee in the work of Fredric Jameson. For Jameson, postmodernism involves a profound waning or blockage of historicity. In a culture distinguished by the "spatial logic of the simulacrum," historicity has been replaced by a new aesthetic "nostalgia mode." This describes an art language where the past is realized through stylistic connotation and consumed as pastiche. Symptomatic of a crisis in the postmodern historical imagination, the nostalgia mode satisfies a desperate craving for history, while rein-

forcing the past as “a vast collection of images, a multitudinous photographic simulacrum” (18). In Jameson’s influential theory, the historical past is replaced by fashionable and glossy *pastness*. Evident in the contemporary “nostalgia film” (a “genre” which can be taken to include movies like *American Graffiti*, *Body Heat*, *Boogie Nights*, and *Forrest Gump*), representations of the past are replaced by our cultural stereotypes of that past; periods are plundered for style in the attempt to satisfy our “image fixation *cum* historical cravings.” The nostalgia mode represents a stylistic hyperrealization of the past in a time when, according to Jameson, the past has become fundamentally estranged.

Jameson identifies, and usefully conceives, something new about nostalgia and its aesthetic place in cultural life; he posits a concept of nostalgia that can be distinguished from more conventional ideas of loss, absence, and an idealized past. More problematic, however, is the way that he almost entirely jettisons concepts like memory, history, and time. What Jameson and other critics who warn of a new viral amnesia fail to see are the particular negotiations of memory and meaning undertaken by the so-called “nostalgia mode.” Critics like Kaja Silverman suggest that retro—meaning a stylistic currency that borrows and quotes from the past—is not a mark of cultural amnesia or creative bankruptcy, but a way of acknowledging that the past exists through textual traces in cultural and ideological mediation with the present. There is, in other words, a more acute sensitivity in the nostalgia mode to the fact that access to the past is never direct or natural, but realized through a complex history of representations. Silverman reads this in the context of fashion, suggesting that the stylized nostalgia of retro problematizes the binary of “old” and “new.” She argues that retro fashion inserts the wearer “into a complex network of cultural and historical references. At the same time, it avoids the pitfalls of a naïve referentiality; by putting quotation marks around the garments it revitalizes, it makes clear that the past is available to us only in a textual form, and through the mediation of the present” (150). According to Silverman, retro need not entail memory crisis, but can suggest an increasing semiotic awareness of the textuality of the past.

The mood/mode distinction should not be taken to suggest mutually exclusive categories; I do not want to exaggerate or schematize the difference between the two critical orientations. Many critics have addressed nostalgia as a feeling *and* a style, as a cultural emotion *and* a representational effect. The relationship between each will often be understood, how-

ever, through conceptual presuppositions that I have characterized in the distinction between loss and amnesia. To illustrate, one might compare Fred Davis and Fredric Jameson. In his sociological study *Yearning for Yesterday*, Davis is concerned with nostalgia as a collective mood, a way of adapting to social change and responding to the experience of discontinuity. When Davis considers nostalgia as a cultural style, it is an aesthetic figuration of this mood, “the symbolization of an emotion.” In his theory, the mode grows from and helps enact the mood; nostalgia is a collectively felt and culturally realized experience of longing. By contrast, Fredric Jameson is concerned with nostalgia as a mode, a form of pastiche symptomatic of the postmodern crisis of historicity. When Jameson considers nostalgia as a mood, it is only as a casualty of the depthless and spatial logic of late capitalism. The mood has become a bankrupt emotion and has been replaced by a stylistic regime characterized by the historical “waning of effect.” While Davis has little sense that nostalgia may have become a consumable style reflecting economies of taste and textuality rather than compulsory feelings of loss, Jameson disconnects stylized nostalgia from any concept of memory at all.

In accounting for the development of nostalgia as a style, I would argue that a culturalist position needs to mediate between the poles of loss and amnesia. This involves a particular kind of analysis that will neither ignore the development of nostalgia as it is bound in specific configurations of taste and textuality, nor underestimate the capacity of aestheticized nostalgia to construct meaningful narratives of cultural memory. More attention needs to be given to the genesis, development, and function of particular nostalgia modes, but without scripting their potential significance into general models of cultural longing and/or postmodern forgetting. The remainder of this essay will focus upon the case of recycling in American culture, demonstrating how modes of media nostalgia are not the necessary reflection of a mood (longing) or cultural condition (amnesia), but the result of specific technological transformations and strategies of niche marketing.

Recycling

In 1985, during the highpoint of Ronald Reagan’s “new politics of old values,” a new 24-hour cable station was launched called “The Nostalgia Network.” Offering a “unique blend of non-violent, feel-good programming with traditional values,” the new station seemed commensurate with a political culture trafficking heavily in a mythic, pre-1960s, past. Products

of popular culture cannot be divorced from the political climate in which they emerge. If, as Lawrence Grossberg suggests, the new conservatism of the 1980s was put in place through people's relation with popular culture, one might be especially inclined to relate the nostalgia of the Reagan presidency to certain manifestations in film, television, and music. This might range from the pastoralism of Garrison Keillor's national radio show, *The Prairie Home Companion*, to the re-creation of family values in the enormously popular sitcoms *The Cosby Show* and *The Wonder Years*. While there is considerable scope for ideological critique of this sort, the production of nostalgia in the 1980s cannot be explained, or examined, through the interests and agenda of the New Right alone. Indeed, the genesis of The Nostalgia Network must be measured, first and foremost, not in relation to a political project or pervasive cultural temper, but to the massive expansion in cable television during the 1980s.

In 1976, 90 percent of television viewers watched programs broadcast by the three major networks, ABC, CBS, or NBC. By the mid-1980s, this figure had dropped to 75 percent. Making use of new satellite technologies that could reach large geographical areas, and encouraged by the deregulation of the cable industry's pricing structure in the free-market frenzy of the 1980s, there was a proliferation of cable networks, including the likes of MTV and CNN (Cullen 259-69). The Nostalgia Network was one of a large number of cable creations that emerged in the 1980s, helping to segment television viewing by targeting specific demographic groups. Exploiting a vast television market, and targeting post-49-year olds, The Nostalgia Network combined niche information and lifestyle programs with acquired shows like *The Love Boat*, *The Rockford Files*, and *The Streets of San Francisco*. In the early 1990s, the network reached a subscription peak of nine million, tapping one of the fastest growing segments of the population, that of middle-aged "baby-boomers."

Market demographers generally split the baby-boom generation into two categories: those born between the end of World War II and the mid-1950s and those born between the mid-1950s and the mid-1960s. Together, they comprise well over a quarter of the population. With high disposable incomes and increased leisure time, the aging baby-boom generation has become a major target group within the marketing community. If cable networks acquire revenue through subscription fees and paid advertising, the Nostalgia Network provides a programming service, as well as an advertising platform, aimed at the post-

49 market. Competing with such as The History Channel, TV Land, Home and Garden Television, and American Movie Classics, The Nostalgia Network is a lifestyle channel that targets the interests, concerns, and entertainment predilections of the "greying sector." Ron Neeson, who hosts an information program on the network called "Issues and Answers," suggests that while those in the post-49 market are diverse, they may nevertheless share certain attitudes towards money, leisure time, entertainers, food, and music. Of his own program (the title of which, "Issues and Answers," was bought by The Nostalgia Network, having been a long-running show on ABC), Neeson comments: "We try to deal with serious issues, particularly issues to people over 50, not a lot of shouting and yelling." He continues: "We try to provide information because that's the other thing people over 50 are looking for, information: what to do with their own money, what's the government going to do to them or for them, what candidates best represent them and so forth."³ Just as MTV, with its fast cut format and high degree of yelling, serves a youth market, The Nostalgia Network provides a programming option at the other end of the demographic scale.

The Nostalgia Network is not about the past, per se, but about niche marketing and the taste and value differentials of particular demographic segments. Significant here is perhaps the connotative drift experienced by the very word and concept of "nostalgia." In commercial terms, it need not depend on a specific idea of the past but can designate anything which has been culturally recycled and/or appeals to a market where pastness is a value. It is not, in other words, symptomatic of cultural or consumer longing but is an index of commodities, media products, and programming orientations, that draw upon notions of tradition, or use an idea of the past to position themselves within particular niche markets. After a drop in viewing figures in the mid-1990s, The Nostalgia Network underwent a process of rebranding. This entailed the adoption of a new name to portray the contemporary aspects of its revamped schedule. "Nostalgia Good-tv" was deemed by management a better description of its value-oriented rather than past-oriented programming. As President and CEO of The Nostalgia Network, Squire Rushnell identified the network in the following way:

Audiences have been set adrift in a cluttered, fast-paced television environment characterized by sex, violence, and social cynicism. Nostalgia Good-tv provides an entertainment oasis that is especially attractive to viewers, because we offer more than old programming; we present innova-

tive, original programs built around friendly personalities who uplift, relax and entertain without assaulting one's sensibilities.⁴

Rushnell plays upon a certain nostalgia for an idea of television as warm and wholesome; there is a picture of decline based around the apparently cluttered, violent, sex-ridden television culture of the 1990s. He is also quick to emphasize, however, that Nostalgia Good-tv is not about returning to a golden age, or reliving a better past. It is about innovation and originality. In a business climate where cable stations must fight desperately for broadcast audiences, Nostalgia Good-tv caters to an older media generation, a specific demographic market, whose values are sponsored and then serviced in the development of contemporary niche programming.

"Nostalgia" has become something of a genre in a media culture of "narrowcasting," a term denoting the pursuit of narrow but profitable segments of the viewing audience. As a commodity, "nostalgia" designates a particular kind of programming in the radio as well as the television industry. Capitalizing on the growing market for radio syndication in the 1990s, the Nostalgia Broadcasting Corporation (a company that operates NBG Radio and that went public in 1996) offered four networks of radio programming, including the Financial Network, Nostalgia Network, Sports Network, and Entertainment Network. According to its own corporate profile, "the company's approach to radio syndication is to produce and/or acquire speciality audio shows and enroll radio station affiliates to broadcast these programs. NBG's new product development is market driven; niche radio programming important to specific national advertisers is the first target."⁵ Nostalgia is therefore one of four niche options in this context. NBG sells two radio shows, "The Golden Age of Radio" and "Big Band Classics," to stations filling what radio insiders have come to call an "Oldies" format.

With the marked increase of radio stations and television channels in the 1980s and 1990s—all trying to fill schedules and in competition for listeners and viewers—syndication became an extremely lucrative business. The rerun became an especially cheap and reliable source of material in this context, providing a base component of contemporary broadcast nostalgia. Of course, the rerun has a long syndication history. In television, it dates back to the 1950s where the production costs of live television became too expensive and stations came to rely on filmed, and hence repeatable, programming. The expansion of the cable industry and the growth of commercial radio in the 1980s,

however, gave the rerun an invigorated life. Old serials and sitcoms were targeted not only at the post-49 market, but also framed in programming formats that helped foster a cult youth following. *Nick at Nite* is perhaps the best example of this, launched in 1985 as part of the evening schedule of the children's cable station, Nickelodeon. Hosted by Dr. Will Miller, and then by Dick Van Dyke, *Nick at Nite* specializes in old sitcoms and television reruns. This is expedient for Viacom, the company which owns Nickelodeon, because it has at its disposal a large stock of old network programming. Accounting for the success of *Nick at Nite*, Lynn Spigel writes: "The popularity of *Nick at Nite*'s reruns probably has less to do with the universal appeal of television art—its ability to last through generations—than with the network's strategies of representation. Nickelodeon created a new reception context for old reruns by repackaging them through a new camp sensibility" (18). This "repackaging" involves a certain playfulness in the way that sitcoms are introduced, employing stars like David Cassidy to host special program marathons. It also derives from original programming such as Nickelodeon's own 1991 sitcom *Hi, Honey, I'm Home*. This show was based on a black-and-white rerun family displaced into the 1990s, a concept that would be replicated and reversed by Hollywood in *Pleasantville* (1998), a film in which two color teenagers from the 1990s are displaced into a black-and-white fifties sitcom. By replaying and recontextualizing reruns in programming formats aimed at particular demographic segments, cable stations have sold nostalgia both as generational reminiscence and postmodern camp.

Within the broadcast industries, the commodification of nostalgia has not been a market response to generalized cultural longing but can be explained through commercial imperatives such as market segmentation and media syndication. Cable channels like The Nostalgia Network, radio syndicators like the Nostalgia Broadcasting Corporation, and more specific programs such as *Nick at Nite* are fairly indiscriminate about the constitution of "nostalgia" in their broadcast formats. As a generic category, nostalgia can encompass anything from ballroom dancing and Big Band interviews, to multi-lingual versions of *The Streets of San Francisco* and rerun marathons of *The Partridge Family*. The content and "meaning" of nostalgia is, in many respects, secondary to strategies of production and the imperatives of niche consumption. If nostalgia is a marketable mode in the broadcast industries, it has become so in the context of the fragmentation of the television and radio audience. While

not denying that nostalgic loss may well be experienced and played upon in contemporary media culture, the commodification of nostalgia perhaps more accurately demonstrates the contingencies of niche marketing than any particular index of cultural longing.

The proliferation of nostalgia in American popular culture must be set in relation to a cumulation of factors. One must account for the strategic deployment of "nostalgia" within specific consumer industries, but one must also bear in mind the significance of new technological innovations and their ability to rescue, recycle, and reconfigure the past in the cultural and media terrain. The digital and video revolutions have, in particular, transformed our ability to access, circulate, and consume the cultural past. The surfeit of information in contemporary culture, enabled by information technologies like computers, cable television, VCR and digital recording, has had a dramatic impact both on our engagement with the past and our sense of the archive. Whether through the click of a mouse or the push of a TV or CD remote, the past has become, in the words of Jim Collins, "a matter of perpetually reconfigurable random access" (3). If nostalgia is a style based on a particular economy of "pastness," one must recognize the cultural influence of technologies that enable the recuperation of images, styles, and sounds drawn from the past.

In a *Herald Tribune* article entitled "New Nostalgia on Record," Bernard Hollard suggests that "classical music is recycling with the best of them" (12). Owning the tapes of classical recordings made thirty or forty years ago, Hollard notes that companies will prefer to pay the re-use rights rather than hire an orchestra to record a new version. Sony Classical, for example, has gathered many performances from its back-catalogue and reissued them on compilation CDs. What lies behind this strategy are the digital technologies that enable old recordings to be produced and sold as high quality merchandise. Selling the musical past has grown exponentially with CDs. Whether jazz, classical, punk, or folk, there has been an extremely profitable outpouring of musical box sets and single-album reissues in the 1980s and 1990s. These are produced by record companies who own the master tapes of old recordings and can make profits through reselling their archives as "classic." Nostalgia has become a musical category in its own right within this context. The music magazine *Gramophone* gathers under this title compilation CDs by artists such as Nat King Cole, Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald, Peggy Lee, Sarah Vaughan, Dean Martin, and Frank Sinatra (102-4). In the music industry, "nostalgia" denotes a

particular kind of "pre-rock" performer—mainly jazz artists, crooners, and torch singers—who can be sold under ready rubrics such as "timeless" and "legendary."

If the record industry experienced a commercial windfall in the digital remastering of old music, the film and television industries have also capitalized on the possibilities of cultural recycling opened up by video. As a technological and aesthetic form, video has enormous possibilities for repetition and recycling. From a commercial point of view, it provides the film and television industries with a means of repackaging their products, enabling consumers to watch again their favorite movies and shows, including the "classics" that might otherwise have been laid to rest in company vaults. A video revolution occurred in the 1980s. While in 1978 there were just 440,000 VCRs, by 1983 there were 4.1 million. By 1990, 75 percent of American homes owned a video recorder (Gomery 269-74). One consequence of this technological tide has been a newly figured relationship with the here-and-now of television "presence." Central to the impact of video is the capacity for "time-shifting." Practically, this gives the individual far more control over the way that television can be watched; viewers are released from network programming schedules with the possibility of replay, and are given more choice through the advent of home-rental. Douglas Gomery states that by the beginning of the 1990s revenue from tape rentals was exceeding \$10 billion a year (276-93). The video market vastly increased the interest in movie watching. By the mid-1980s, more than one hundred million cassettes were being rented each month. Marketing the filmic, as well as the televisual, past became integral to this new media environment. Catering to niche markets, companies like Video Yesteryear have come to specialize in old movies, adding to the range of films drawn from studio archives that are broadcast and sold through cable and video outlets. Marketing the past has, in short, become a lucrative by-product of the new relationship being forged in the age of video between institutions, texts, and viewers.

The central point I want to make from these various examples of media recycling is that nostalgia modes do not emerge from, or reflect in any simple way, nostalgia moods. If nostalgia has developed as a cultural style in contemporary American life, it cannot be explained through any single master narrative of decline, crisis, longing, or loss. This does not mean to say that modes of nostalgia have not developed in the context of crisis, or that longing and loss are not powerful and operative narratives within certain kinds of

discourse. Instead, I want to suggest an approach that resists a critical reduction where nostalgia modes become the reflex result of anxieties and dissatisfactions with the present. As a cultural style, nostalgia has developed in accordance with a series of cultural, demographic, technological, and commercial factors that have made "pastness" an expedient and marketable mode. The aestheticization of nostalgia has emerged in a cultural moment able to access, circulate, and reconfigure the textual traces of the past in new and dynamic ways, that has taken up nostalgia in particular representational and taste regimes, and that has generally disjoined nostalgia from any specific meaning located in the past. Rather than suggesting an amnesiac culture based on sanitized or hyperrealized memory, I would argue that the proliferation of nostalgic modes, markets, genres, and styles may instead reflect a new kind of engagement with the past, a relationship based fundamentally on its cultural mediation and textual reconfiguration in the present. Retro America need not describe a culture in crisis, but may rather suggest a moment distinguished by its re-evaluation and re-presentation of the forms, contexts, and values of the past.

Notes

¹The *Onion* began as a satirical college magazine, established by graduates of the University of Wisconsin in 1988. By the end of the 1990s, the magazine had grown into a global Internet phenomenon, reaching two million readers a month via its website.

²See, for example, Stuart Tannock, "Nostalgia Critique," *Cultural Studies* 9 (3) 1995: 453-64; James Combs, *The Reagan Range: The Nostalgic Myth in American Politics* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1993); Fred Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia* (New York: Free Press, 1979); and Janice Doane and Devon Hodges, *Nostalgia and Sexual Difference: The Resistance to Contemporary Feminism* (New York: Methuen, 1987).

³Interview with Ron Neeson." 27 April 1998. www.flighttalk.com.

⁴"Nostalgia Good-tv Launches Fall Season with New Variety, Sports, and Personality Programs." 27 April 1998. www.goodtv.com.

⁵"NBG Investor Relations." 27 April 1998. www.nbgradio.com.

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