

# Embracing the Clutter of Collections: Against the “Nextness” of Streaming and Netflix

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Popular streaming media operates according to a logic of next. Perhaps this is stating the obvious. The fact that less than two decades ago this sentence would be a nonsense should strike us. The obviousness of stating that streaming media’s appeal rests on the next thing—a constant and ceaseless succession—means the basis of streaming’s inner workings and its popular appeal are ripe for interrogation. The status quo of any kind of medial appeal is reached slowly but then, once it is concretized, it can be difficult to reconstruct. What’s more, once an appeal has become obvious and a matter of course, the value of uncovering what undergirds it can seem dubious or unenlightening. Bearing that difficulty in mind, this essay will briefly work through the history of streaming to show how a now dominant method of formatting and distributing media always already contained within it a vision for organizing investment around popular culture.

That vision of culture is one of being perpetually strung along—a game of *fort/ da* where the thrown *da* can never be pulled back. To put it simply, with streaming one never gets the whole thing. By this I mean, one *accesses* a stream as opposed to *possessing* a digital download. We no longer have a commodity to fetishize but rather access to a buffet of fetish objects none of which we actually own. This basic fact has a number of consequences that this essay will tease out and explore. For one, streaming suffocates desire through a plenitude of options. Focusing on popular streaming video with Netflix as the main argumentative touchstone, this essay seeks to position the “Next Episode” or “Next Series” button ubiquitous to streaming platforms

but invented by Netflix as a synecdoche for both the appeal of streaming and its internal design.

What emerges here is the idea that “next,” as continually reinforced by Netflix and other streaming platform holders, is a refusal—an attempted foreclosure even—of retroactivity. The logic of retroactivity is an existential threat to the comfortably capitalist logic of streaming’s articulation of *next*. Retroactive interruptions confront us with reflection. Capital is allergic to such reflection; like feeling a small pebble in one’s shoe on an otherwise peaceful walk. Here “Next” is a refusal of any kind of retroactivity, pause, or interruption that might cause the subject to encounter anything other than “next.” Psychoanalysis, as both a clinical practice and theoretical discipline, is the very embodiment of the pebble stuck in one’s shoe. As such, this essay will explore an antidote to the rampant cultural logic of streaming by staging an encounter between Walter Benjamin’s work on collections and Mari Ruti’s work on sublimation. Through the sublimation of the collection this essay proposes a way of interrupting the pastless present of streaming.

### **Streaming History (or, How We Started is Where We Went)**

Streaming is a logic of next that simultaneously entails an erasure of the past and the pushing of a relentless present. This is where we have ended up, but we did not arrive here all at once. The theoretical intervention I’m trying to make with this analysis requires the support of a more prosaic look back through the history and development of streaming as a technology and even a reference to the kinds of filetypes that are currently the industry standard. My claim is that even though early attempts to experiment with and legitimize streaming lacked the intention to divide what used to be publicly available broadcast media (e.g., television and music) into dozens of narrowcast subscription services, this argument for *how* the method of data compression and delivery we call streaming would be used was contained within the development of streaming itself. In other words, the way streaming disseminated information during its infancy anticipated the mature usages we see everywhere today.

Streaming media, in its most basic principles, does not work at all dissimilarly from broadcast media. A television or radio antenna is continuously receiving data and exclusively “displaying” the data it has just received.<sup>1</sup> In an elementary way, this seems remarkably consistent with the experience of being an end user of a streaming platform waiting for content to refresh or update. However, it would be wrong to conclude that the narrowcasting of

streaming media to a single smartphone is just broadcast but with extra steps. To move the amount of content a streaming platform provider such as Netflix does requires subdividing its functions into a series of hundreds of interrelated microservices maintained by thousands of daily engineering changes which are responding and reacting to millions of individuated consumer interactions an hour.<sup>2</sup> All of the labor behind the user interface—and its environmental impact—is by no means immaterial, as a vast data center of servers is required to make a streaming platform like Netflix appear to work as seamlessly as a car radio perfectly tuning in to crisp FM radio station.<sup>3</sup> Obviously, behind the scenes labor has always attended broadcast media but the magnitude and manner of contemporary streaming strain the comparison. While the end user experience of watching a film on Netflix or live streaming an NBA Finals game does not feel sufficiently different from flipping through channels on cable TV, the fragmenting and multiplying of microrelations is significantly and meaningfully different. It took almost two decades for streaming technology to start to resemble what it likes like today, though, as we will uncover, there is an intrinsic tie knotting together the architecture of streaming technological *as such* and its development.

Like the Portland, Oregon of IFC's *Portlandia*, streaming was a dream of the 1990s.<sup>4</sup> At Xerox Parc, a technological development campus in Palo Alto, California, computer scientists Stephen Casner, Steve Deering, Van Jacobson, and Allison Mankin began seriously experimenting with the potential for streaming media over the internet in 1992.<sup>5</sup> Their experiments took place using the multicast-backbone or "Mbone" system. Mbone was a virtual network, meaning it worked by interfacing with various internet connected routers as a way to deliver packets of digital information. Mbone used what might today be more familiar as a mesh approach to interconnect its traffic across already existing networks. This multifarious and non-monolithic systems approach is key to understanding streaming. It is not the singular and unitary delivery of one piece of content to one single user but, rather, is the successful fragmentation of a single piece of content across various networks to all coalesce on an end user's device as a continuous set of data (e.g., moving images, audio files, video games).

After successfully streaming David Blair's feature film *Wax or the Discovery of Television Among the Bees* in May of 1993, the next challenge for the Mbone virtual network would be to transmit something that was not already pre-recorded. On June 24<sup>th</sup>, 1993, garage rock band Severe Tire Damage would become frontmen to the first ever successful music livestream over the

internet.<sup>6</sup> While the previous proof of concept for streaming acted akin to broadcast television or cable by transmitting an internet accessible version of a live action film, streaming a live and spontaneously unfolding concert performance was a different kind of proof for the viability of streaming. September of 1995 saw this possibility for livestreaming pushed further, as major cable sports network ESPN would livestream a radio call of a baseball game played between the Seattle Mariners and the New York Yankees.<sup>7</sup> Rob Glaser, partial owner of the Mariners and CEO of Progressive Networks, a company developing a proprietary encoding technology called Real Audio that could broadcast a terrestrial audio signal in a way that could be accessed over the internet, arranged for this milestone moment in live internet streaming.<sup>8</sup> In this brief working through of the early days of streaming, we can plainly see that the point of these experiments was to distribute live media content (or, in the case of *Wax*, to distribute previously recorded media content live). What this means is that streaming was initially developed with an eye toward being a high-tech alternative to traditional live broadcasts.

Even in the infancy of these early years, we see echoes of the ever-present pillars of today's streaming content: indie films (think A24, Blumhouse, and Neon), live concerts (think *The Eras Tour*), and live sports (think "Hulu Has Live Sports," YouTube TV's purchase of the NFL Sunday Ticket package, among other examples). Again, in the first three years of streaming experimentation we saw an attempt to render accessible the kind of content that even today drives interest in streaming platforms and the streaming platforms covet as a way to direct attention away from their competitors. There is one thing missing in this account, however: video-on-demand. It's noticeable by its absence that video-on-demand was not a part of these early experiments. Rather, all of the abovementioned experimentations with streaming video were attempts to *live stream* different kinds of content. In a meaningful sense, the early attempts to stream were much closer to serving as alternatives to traditional broadcasts. The *on-demand* aspect of streaming would not appear until the invention and debut of Napster.

Six years to the month after the first successful experiment in streaming, the ultimate direction of streaming as a driver of culture would irrevocably change. Shawn Fanning and Sean Parker's Napster, a peer-to-peer file sharing service, launched in June of 1999 and very quickly took hold of the mainstreaming of broadband internet. As opposed to streaming—especially live streaming—Napster was purposed with allowing users to download digital *copies* of media files (especially music files), rather than give users fleeting

access to a live event. Even today, while Netflix requires a veritable field of servers to handle media storage on the company side of things, for the end user there is no storage with streaming, only the nextness of the coming bits. Unless one is watching, say, YouTube TV with a DVR plan, there is little to no storage involved with streaming. Even then, this storage is limited in critical ways, and you cannot access previously downloaded material if one's subscription to a service lapses or expires. One can download Netflix or Hulu content for travel (within a storage and access limit) but one cannot store content from these digital libraries on one's own hard drive for keeping in a personal collection. (At least one cannot do this without recourse to programs whose functions work outside of the expectations of the streaming platform, which is a long way of saying "without Robin Hooding/ pirating the content.")

The mp3 music file format was the undisputed star of Napster's rise and it continues to exert an influence over the digital audio space even today, long after Napster's fall (e.g., no matter what podcast file one uploads to, say, Apple Podcasts or Spotify, it is automatically converted to an mp3 for easier distribution). As Jonathan Sterne writes in *MP3: The Meaning of a Format*, "We may talk of media as being invented and developed, but the equivalent—and much less spectacular—moment of birth for a format would have to be the moment it becomes a standard."<sup>9</sup> The standardizing of the mp3 not only disrupted the economic model of the music industry but it challenged a boringly evident audiophile truism: higher quality listening is a chief driver of audio innovation. From the earliest phonographs playing back recordings etched into wax or lead cylinders to the Mobile Fidelity Sound Lab's half-time inscription of Pink Floyd's *Dark Side of the Moon* to golden compact disk copies of Bob Dylan's *Blonde on Blonde*, it seemed beyond obvious to observe that a large appeal of listening to and collecting music came from the increasing quality of recordings available for use in home theater systems. While the history of music technology had been on an upward trajectory of greater fidelity up until 1999, Napster and the mp3—a lower bitrate and thus lower quality (or "lossy") version of an audio file—showed that a more shareable though lower fidelity version of a song was not just good enough for the peer-to-peer downloading scene but *ideal*. This is what Sterne means by encouraging media theorists to pay attention to both history, invention, and development but also the moment where a previous long-running standard gives way to something new. We can know that we've seen a new standard installed when a fresh set of obvious observations take hold in both popular and academic conversations surrounding the field of media.

The widespread downloading of ripped audio files in the late-90s and early 2000s taught the entertainment industry a number of things. Most relevant for the present inquiry are the following: 1. There was/is an untapped digital market for content distribution, 2. That content need not be at the standard of what is purchasable as physical media (e.g., “lossy” vs. lossless formats), and 3. “Owning” a digital file can and should be disputed. It would take years but gradually the fervent interest in collecting digital copies that we saw Napster and its imitators seize on would be replaced by the promise of access to streaming libraries. The idea of streaming is to always be transmitting a new *next* but to never deliver a whole. Napster contributed to a marked change in the shape and direction of music distribution. Streaming, as a wholesale logic and method of data transmission, has become the dominant cultural mode. What the Napster and the digital download explosion did for streaming media was to unlock what the architecture was always already giving us: *just a little bit more* than the present moment but never the whole thing. Streaming is a dream of limited access rather than a guarantee of anything resembling ownership. It sells us on propulsion to the next image, the next scene, the next episode. This logic predominates in the media and cultural landscape today. To borrow Yannis Varoufakis’s term, streaming was both a harbinger of “techno-feudalism” and coextensive with its development.<sup>10</sup> With techno-feudalism, one is constantly leasing restricted access to cultural production. The logic of the coal mine town—where the coal mine company owns the town and therefore everything sold in the town and prints its own money, so one does not even own the house one lives in or the things in it since it was bought from the coal mine company store with coal mine company scrip—has been generalized. I use my iPhone to access Apple Music and listen to podcasts on Apple Podcasts and watch film and television content on Apple+. When I no longer subscribe to Apple Music or lose my iPhone and no longer subscribe to Apple+, what do I have? A hole where access used to be.

### **Collection vs. Commodity Accumulation**

Given the way the logic of streaming predominates today, it seems difficult to imagine an alternative. Anna Kornbluh has recently and convincingly written about the perils and consequences of investing in streaming media’s seeming immediacy.<sup>11</sup> The flattening of medium distinctions that can be observed with streaming is not something this essay will take up. Instead, my intention has been to underline how a logic of transmitting visual and aural data has become the dominant mode of understanding contemporary culture. This

logic privileges access over ownership, a relentless nextness over storage, and the constant curation of a seemingly frictionless surface. As we saw above, this logic of streaming was not developed socially or through market forces but, rather, was coded into the architecture of streaming itself.

Today the ubiquity of streaming means it is no longer simply an ad hoc option to a broadcast television signal or an expansive DVD library, but rather, it is the substitution for these things. Major retailers such as Walmart, Target, and Best Buy are and have been drastically reducing their store shelves of Blu-Rays and DVDs. This mirrors an entertainment industry wide rejection of physical media that we can, again, locate the impetus in Netflix. Mike Flanagan, who created Netflix's *Haunting of Hill House* (among other video content), recently told the crowd at the Austin, Texas Film Festival that through his attempts to push Netflix to release his film *Hush* or *Hill House* TV series on DVD he learned that, organizationally and institutionally, the company is, "actively hostile to the idea of physical media."<sup>12</sup>

And yet, it is precisely here that the generalizing of streaming and its attendant architectural logic is the perfect obstacle to serve as an impetus for a contradictory and, potentially, emancipatory rebuttal—especially if we take the stakes of techno-feudalism seriously. It's vital to recognize that we are also living in a moment of a complete revival for vinyl records, a once thought dead physical media format. Beginning in 2007—the year Netflix started streaming films and television series, perhaps not coincidentally—vinyl sales embarked on a trajectory that, today, outstrip the sale of CDs. We also have the growth of film (and soon-to-be television) based social media site Letterboxd, the continued success of *Criterion* edition physical film releases, and the growing secondary market for DVD and Blu Ray sales to see that *interest* in physical media has not waned in the exact proportion to industry hostility.<sup>13</sup> What's more Christopher Nolan's recent film *Oppenheimer* continually sold out its 4K UHD physical release.<sup>14</sup> There's even the (to some) ethically quarrelsome practice of turning a library of pirated movies and TV shows into a personal archive on streaming app Plex. Perhaps we could call a *mélange* of these practices engaging in a project of "next" defined not by what is new but a curation of the old.

Our leading lights for this project will be Walter Benjamin and Mari Ruti. We start with Benjamin who, in 1931 wrote a short yet influential essay titled "Unpacking My Library: A Talk About Book Collecting." Benjamin, who refers to himself as "a genuine collector,"<sup>15</sup> endeavors to explain "the relationship of a book collector to his possessions" throughout the essay.<sup>16</sup> Where he

brings us is to an appreciation of the “dialectical tension between the poles of disorder and order” that exist both in a collection and in the life of a collector.<sup>17</sup> These two states act on and inform each other dialectically—they are not to be mediated through simple anodyne synthesis. There is a chaos to collecting. Arresting an order out of that chaos can be therapeutic or cathartic but is no less chaotic. “Every passion borders on the chaotic,” as Benjamin writes, “but the collector’s passion borders on the chaos of memories. More than that: the chance, the fate, that suffuse the past before my eyes are conspicuously present in the accustomed confusion of these books.”<sup>18</sup> What Benjamin moves to focus on—what he positions as the position and enjoyment of the collector—is diametrically opposed to the logic of streaming. As he writes, “ownership is the most intimate relationship that one can have to objects. Not that they come alive in him; it is he who lives in them.”<sup>19</sup> There is a dialectical relationship here where one does not simply possess an object, but an object possesses something of the subject. There is a reciprocal and coextensive and co-formational relationship at work here, as opposed to the unitary and unidirectional content dump we see with streaming. With a collection it’s very much the future item or, at least, the minimally proximate and present one that has diminished value. The ceaseless succession of now that contemporary capitalism presents us with wilts in front of the memory and retroactivity of the collection. Organizing and reorganizing a past to extract the new.

Consider the substantial difference between what Benjamin describes doing with his library and what typically one does with the Netflix library. That is, one binges it. One does not wrest tenuous order out of disorder, one does not see in the Netflix library something more than the algorithm. We do not have this romantic encounter with an object of the past, of memory. We have a clean and orderly User Interface (UI) that directs us always to click the “Next Episode” button when we’ve found some content worth watching. Or, conversely, we are dazzled and stupefied by the genre-within-genre presentation of Netflix’s digital library and know not where to turn for the next show, often leaving it up to the platform itself to make the decision for us. Like streaming, bingeing, as both a cultural practice and a method of releasing content, has its future anticipated in its earliest definitions. In other words, the “destiny” of bingeing *qua solution* is sewn into the word’s very history. The word “binge” first appears in English dialect dictionaries, such as Anne Elizabeth Baker’s *Glossary of Northamptonshire Words and Phrases* (1854), in the mid-19th century (perhaps not coincidentally around the exact same time serial narrative had begun making a large-scale cultural impact). The word



was then used, according to Baker, as a term that:

primarily signifies the act of soaking, and is applied substantively to persons, and adjectively and verbally to things. A man goes to the alehouse to get a good binge, or to binge himself [to drink to excess.] A heavy rain is a good bingeing shower: but the most general and frequent application of the term is to the soaking of tubs or wooden vessels to prevent leaking.<sup>20</sup>

By saturating wood, one prevents it from absorbing any more water, wine, beer, etc. The wood swells and thus becomes watertight. Though we have a century and a half of technological development between this method of bingeing and the one we are most familiar with today, this is precisely what Netflix attempts to do with its users and its digital library. Thinking this way, users do not binge Netflix content, Netflix *binges* us. We are submerged in the digital cask where there is diminished incentive and capacity for retroactivity and memory. (One only has to think of the common phenomenon whereby people who binge a television series on Netflix cannot disaggregate one episode from another.) In a word, dialectics are structurally thrown out the window. One could not come up with a system more opposed to Benjamin's principles than that.

It's important to be clear that we have agency in this matter, and we have shown, again and again, that, broadly speaking, we like to binge. We like to be submerged or immersed in content. That is one of the fundamental appeals to all the streaming services. Pushing back against the logic of streaming means pushing back against the ease and convenience it heralds. However, there is a danger here of lapsing into pure narcissism on this project of reclaiming a personal collection away from the familiar digital library as organized by streaming providers such as Netflix. We need a protection against the collection becoming wanton commodity accumulation. When Netflix first introduced streaming functionality to its website for subscribers in 2007 it succeeded on the basis of providing a newly convenient way to watch already released TV shows and films. In other words, people did not have to wait any longer for DVDs to arrive in the mail. Now, given the way so many properties are unceremoniously cancelled or, in some cases, removed, Netflix treats anything older than tomorrow as pure detritus. The nextness of capitalism, as seen in synecdoche through Netflix, is premised on making only the next iteration valuable. Replacing one kind of ceaseless succession (e.g., Netflix and streaming) with another (e.g., a stream of physical media purchases) will not undo or repair anything. It merely replaces the content of

one form of logic with a different content—doing nothing to undermine the form itself. Indeed, we need a way to think of collection as both a retroactive and prospective dialectical formation, as Benjamin suggests. So how do we approach collection without lapsing into narcissism?

As Mari Ruti writes about the love relationship in *The Call of Character: Living a Life Worth Living*, “Narcissism is the very opposite of authentic relationality, for whenever we operate from a narcissistic premise, we cannot really see the other person, but rather bask in the flattering image of ourselves that he or she reflects back to us.”<sup>21</sup> Adjusting the terminology here, Ruti gives us a guide for separating a narcissistic collection from a dialectical one. If our collection lets us “bask in the flattering image of ourselves” then we’ve done nothing but created the physical media equivalent of Narcissus’s Pond. The collection should not reflect an idealized version of ourselves but rather should reflect our excess. In other words, a collection for you and by you that’s not about you.

With *The Call of Character*, Ruti takes two interrelated ideas in French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan’s work—*das Ding* and sublimation—and uses them to build a theory of ethical living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This ethical guide is defined by one of Lacan’s enduring axioms: “from an analytical point of view, the only thing of which one can be guilty is of having given ground relative to one’s desire.”<sup>22</sup> Ruti takes this in an effort to replace the consumer capitalist *want* with a psychoanalytically informed notion of *desire*. As she writes, “our desire offers an excellent clue to which things are “really” us and which aren’t.”<sup>23</sup> Reckoning with and understanding when our desire calls to us is a crucial part of Ruti’s project which refuses the idea, often seen in prescription drug ads in the United States or airport self-help books, that the best life is the one of balance free from extreme highs or lows. She endeavors to show that a life of ups and downs—a life of failure, even—can be deeply meaningful. Central to this is Lacan’s gloss on sublimation.

Sublimation, for Lacan, is not the process where an ersatz pleasure replaces the authentic. Rather, sublimation raises a base object to the status of The Thing (*das Ding*). Consider it an alchemy of desire. Again, we are not talking at the level replacement or substitution but, rather, a dialectic where a base object provides the exact same pleasure as something else. This “something else” is an echo, a resonance, in us that we can feel in people and things in the world. The consequences for thinking like this are as Ruti explains:

I have proposed that it is because we cannot locate the ultimate meaning of our lives that we are compelled to produce more partial meanings that res-

onate with the uniqueness of our character. Similarly, it is because we cannot have the Thing that we feel motivated to reach for its echo through the various objects that we encounter in the world; it is because we cannot have the sublime object that we are driven to look for its luster in more mundane substitutes. Such substitutes may fall short of the Thing's luminescence, yet insofar as they evoke it, they lend meaning to our lives. As to which objects speak to us and which do not, that is determined by the always highly idiosyncratic manner in which we experience the Thing's absence. In other words, the specificity of our desire—what Lacan calls the “truth” of our desire—has to do with the unique parameters of our sense of existential deprivation.

In short, and to again adjust Ruti's work to the present inquiry, she shows that there has to be an unconscious resonance in the act of collection. Should we collect physical media against to push back against nextness without a past, it has to be at the level of the desire of *das Ding*. It cannot be an omnivorous attempted replacement for the capaciousness of a library like Netflix. It has to touch something else. The vinyl record resurgence contains the most important logic for us to consider and it is neatly concretized in the following cartoon:



*“The two things that really drew me to vinyl were the expense and the inconvenience.”*

Figure 1. Alex Gregory, *The New Yorker*, May 25, 2015

Compared to the clean and uncluttered life that subscription services offer, collecting vinyl records—as this cartoon deftly shows—is impractical, inconvenient, and a waste of good rent money. It’s engaging in commerce, yes, but engaging in commerce is not by necessity the same as capitalist accumulation. In other words, it is not the interpassivity of how money makes money by working *for* the capitalist. In a significant and important way, the kind of collecting referenced by the above cartoon does us injury and that is precisely the point where it escapes the logic of streaming and subscription capitalism. On this score, what Benjamin and Ruti show us is how we can think what I’d like to call the *unconscious collection*. It is not the case that a collection can serve as a catalogue of our unconscious—that would make it fully conscious. Rather, in seeing the lengths to which we can and do go to collect certain things our desire can be made manifest to us. I want to suggest that the antidote to the leasing of culture that streaming represents in an increasing number of corners of everyday life is here; in the plumbing and replumbing of an unconscious collection. Bringing some manner of inconvenience to one’s life does not reproduce the narcissism of the Netflix algorithm. It’s in this inconvenience where we can hear the clarion call of desire that Ruti writes about. It is not in the “Are you still watching?” prompt Netflix’s UI graces the binger with nor is it in the automatic playing of the next episode. Netflix’s user interface, in these examples, is working to count desire as a quantifiable good. We, on the other hand, are attempting to account for desire as an interruptive factor.

### **The Unconscious Collection**

In a milieu where the point of streaming as a cultural logic is that media content matters if and when it is new, we want to replace the anxiety of access—the paralysis of Netflix’s lack of lack—with the intimacy of the collection.<sup>26</sup> There’s a contemporary cliché that “nothing is ever deleted from the internet.” However, given the state of the way the logic of streaming is cynically mobilized, it means that nothing on the internet truly lasts. What’s more, streaming platform holders such as Warner Bros. Discovery (Max) have deleted series such as HBO’s *Westworld* from their digital libraries and outright canceled the release of films such as *Batgirl* and (as of this writing) *Coyote vs. ACME*. A thoughtless accumulation of physical media is no genuine antidote to the problem introduced by streaming and the partial leasing of cultural production represented by subscription services. In other words, just because physical media is diminished in the retail sphere does not, by

itself, make the purchase and acquisition of physical media somehow anti-capitalist. However, as I hope this essay has showed, the unconscious collection—premised on retroactivity and a notion of “next” that refuses the self-same streaming version of next—can be meaningfully transgressive, if not personally enriching and enlivening. As Buffy Summers once said, the hardest thing to do in this world is live in it. We might update this by saying the hardest thing to do in this world is *rent* in it. It’s my wager, however, that there can be no meaningful material nor structural pushback to the techno-feudalism of the present moment without a psychical way of reorganizing our relationship to objects. Fusing Walter Benjamin and Mari Ruti has, I hope, showed that a collection of inconveniences and obstacles may make ours a life worth living.

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#### NOTES

1. Michael Topic, *Streaming Media Demystified*, (McGraw-Hill, 2002), 10-11.
2. Mayukh Nair, “How Netflix works: the (hugely simplified) complex stuff that happens every time you hit Play,” *Refraction: tech+everything*, *Medium*, October 17, 2017. <https://medium.com/refraction-tech-everything/how-netflix-works-the-hugely-simplified-complex-stuff-that-happens-every-time-you-hit-play-3a40c9be254b>
3. Precise calculation of the carbon generated by streaming—or by Netflix alone—is the matter of some intense recent debate. A bombshell report by *The Shift Project* brought this issue widespread attention in 2019, when its findings determined that an hour of Netflix viewing could power a Tesla EV for a month. Since then, the findings and metrics used by *The Shift Project* have received criticism, most notably by George Kamiya of the International Energy Association (see “The carbon footprint of streaming video: fact-checking the headlines,” 11 December 2020, <https://www.iea.org/commentaries/the-carbon-footprint-of-streaming-video-fact-checking-the-headlines>), for which *The Shift Project* issued a partial retraction of its findings. See “Climate Crisis: The Unsustainable Use of Online Video: Our New Report On the Environmental Impact of ICT,” *The Shift Project*, 11 July, 2019, <https://theshiftproject.org/en/article/unsustainable-use-online-video/> and “Did the Shift Project Really Overestimate the Carbon Footprint of Online Video? Our Analysis of the IEA and Carbon Brief Articles,” *The Shift Project*, 15 June, 2020, <https://theshiftproject.org/en/article/shift-pro->

ject-really-overestimate-carbon-footprint-video-analysis/

4. “The Dream of the 90s is Alive in Portland,” *Portlandia*, season 1, episode 1, January 21, 2011, YouTube 3 min., 17 sec., <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TZtpOc3moc>

5. Mbone,” Wikipedia.org, last modified 22 June, 2024, 8:38 (UTC), <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mbone/>

6. “Severe Tire Damage Played the First Live Music Performance on the Internet,” Severe Tire Damage: The House Band of the Internet Livestreaming, accessed June 2024, <https://std.org/text/live.html>

7. “1995: The Beginning of Internet Baseball Broadcasts,” Miscbaseball, 10 September, 2012. <https://miscbaseball.wordpress.com/2012/09/10/1995-the-beginning-of-internet-baseball-broadcasts/>

8. “1995: The Beginning of Internet Baseball Broadcasts.”

9. Jonathan Sterne, *MP3: The Meaning of a Format* (Duke University Press, 2012), 22.

10. Yannis Varoufakis writes in *Technofeudalism: What Killed Capitalism*, “Technofeudalism is synonymous with the universalization of exploitation and with the shrinking of the value base (in proportion to the rise of cloud rent’s share of all incomes). This dynamic accentuates the system’s propensity to deeper and more frequent crises. As a result, the central banks that funded the initial accumulation of cloud capital will be forced perpetually to print more and more monies to replace the role that profits and wages used to play under capitalism . . . In short, technofeudalism is condemned to exhibit a dynamic doom-loop more volatile and explosive than even that of capitalism.” Yannis Varoufakis, *Technofeudalism: What Killed Capitalism* (Penguin Random House, 2023), 205.

11. Writes Anna Kornbluh, “in the streaming age [...] the platforms for video circulation initiate a new homogeneity, a specificity whose trait is immediacy.” Anna Kornbluh, *Immediacy or the Style of Too-Late Capitalism* (Verso, 2024), 147, eBook.

12. Flanagan’s full statement reads: “In the years I worked at Netflix, I tried very hard to get them to release my work on blu-ray and DVD. They refused at every turn. It became clear very fast that their only priority was subs, and that they were actively hostile to the idea of physical media. This is a very dangerous point of view. While companies like Netflix pride themselves on being disruptors and have proven that they can affect great change in the industry, they sometimes fail to see the difference between disruption and damage. So much that they can find themselves, intentionally or not, doing enormous harm to the very concept of film preservation.” Mike Flanagan, qtd. in Lauren Milici, “*Haunting of Hill House* creator Mike Flanagan says Netflix ‘refused at every turn to release his movies and shows on DVD,’” *Games Radar*, June 3, 2024. <https://www.gamesradar.com/entertainment/horror-shows/haunting-of-hill-house-creator-mike-flanagan-says-netflix-refused-at-every-turn-to-release-his-movies-and-shows-on-dvd/>

13. The website Self.inc maintains and updates a rolling list of the best categories of items to list and sell on eBay. DVDs and Blu Rays, in the current 90-day tracking period, list fourth on best categories of resell. See: <https://www.self.inc/info/best-items-to-sell-on-ebay/>

14. Clare Thorpe, "Oppenheimer and the resurgence of Blu-ray and DVDs: How to stop your films and music from disappearing," *BBC*, 3 January 2024. <https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20240102-oppenheimer-and-the-resurgence-of-blu-ray-and-dvds-were-now-in-the-age-of-streaming-anxiety/>
15. Walter Benjamin, "Unpacking My Library," in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn, ed. Hannah Arendt, 99-115 (Boston: Mariner Books, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2019), 99.
16. *Ibid.*, 100.
17. *Ibid.*, 101.
18. *Ibid.*, 100.
19. *Ibid.*, 100.
20. Anne Elizabeth Baker, "binge," *Glossary of Northamptonshire Words and Phrases* (1864), Archive.org, (p. 49 in original text): [https://archive.org/stream/glossarynortham01bakegoog/glossarynortham01bakegoog\\_djvu.txt/](https://archive.org/stream/glossarynortham01bakegoog/glossarynortham01bakegoog_djvu.txt/)
21. Mari Ruti, *The Call of Character: Living a Life Worth Living* (Columbia University Press, 2013), 50.
22. Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis 1959-1960: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book VII*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Dennis Potter (W.W. Norton & Company, 1992), 319.
23. Ruti, *The Call of Character*, 11.
24. Lacan, *Seminar VII*, 112.
25. Ruti, *The Call of Character*, 48.
26. Anxiety in the properly Lacanian sense of a lack of lack. Lacan pursues this line of argumentation throughout the entirety of Seminar x.