

## *Bodies of Water: Stream-Psych in the Contemporary Digital*

### *I. Introduction - On the Index/Indexicality:*

The goal of this article is to theorize what I shall refer to as the Stream in its relation to streaming digital media platform technologies. In particular, it is interested in speculating on said platforms' psycho-emotional affectivity in consumers. By 'Stream', I am referring to the confluence of various tributaries of data in digital late capitalism. These include production, dissemination, storage, access, and consumption. By way of extension and continuity, I consider the contemporary digital Stream as a reach – as in reach-of-a-stream in geographic parlance – of previous manifestations of the Stream in human history: the great Ptolemaic/Alexandrine bibliotechnical ages, or the emergence of the then new Informational Commons precipitated by the invention of the printing press, for example. In digital late capital, the Stream has become a fluid and ubiquitous determinant of user-viewers' understanding of past(s), present(s), and possible future(s). Conveyors of the contemporary Informational Commons like digital media streaming platforms are robust tributaries of a more general digital Stream. Using Netflix as a Ur-example of one of the most powerful current digital media streaming platforms, this article will develop a sketch of the indexical tension between the psycho-emotional costs of data production, storage, and consumption inextricable from contemporary streaming and digital life sublimated within the spectacle of the Stream itself.

There will be numerous moments where this paper plays with language in order to provoke paradox and aporia, loops and specularities, refractions and ricochets. This is an intentional design feature of the author's. The goal of this latently ludic approach is keenly focused on teasing out various relations and obfuscations between/of the psycho-emotional

affects of the viewer and contemporary creative digital archives and platforms that (re)induce them, of which they are (a)part.

To do so, this paper will explore the contemporary user of digital streaming platforms like Netflix and their experiences of such phenomena as a paradoxical sense of hyperconnected isolation and the various permutations of the pressure of FOMO. It also provides a theoretical excursus on the relation between contemporary digital streaming platforms and older theoretical exegeses of mass culture while also engaging with and gesturing to the psycho-emotional consequences of contemporary digital streaming platforms. In so doing, it consciously utilizes poetic language to render an everyday concept – streaming – as strange and unfamiliar, forcing the reader-viewer to confront their assumptions about their own media habits. It is the author's hope that the essay's efficacy will inhere as a study of language as much as a speculative theorization of streaming. In the latter way, this piece is about the indexical relationship between what we watch, how we watch what we watch, who we think we are as a result of what we watch, and how this relates to the contemporary digital media platforms from which what we watch emerges. It selects the Stream as one such index – or even 'meta-' or 'mega-index' – and explores what it points at/to, what it turns toward/away from in terms of various related concepts concerned with technology and psycho-emotionality. Let me now briefly provide basic definitions of processor terms - these are sedulous terms - I deploy in this piece, and how I understand them:

#### *The Stream:*

The technosocial media assemblage comprising of visual culture; Hyperreality; The Spectacle of visual and popular culture; The telecommunications Stack comprised of indexical links, associations, and co-operations in a platform-network-consumer-user

complex; The Stream is a manifold of various socio-political, economic, cultural *and* ecological points, apparatuses, and resources that form a highly rhizometric, mercurial, and inter-indexical Stack within/upon which the topology of life in contemporary late digital capital flows; Despite the transformations of its constituent elements, the existence of the Stream in some form is invariant.

#### Dreams:

Both serialized and non-serialized audio-visual content provided by the Stream and its platform-network-consumer-user complex. These can (re)manifest through the headless operations of the virtual/pseudo/emulated terminal and insecure shell of the imagination.

#### Swimming:

The psycho-emotional and material processes and operations of engaging with, that is consuming, the dream-content of The Stream.

#### Swimmers:

I use the terms “Stream-swimmer”, “user-viewer”, and “viewer-consumer” interchangeably to refer to individuals, users, and/or viewers who consume digital media via contemporary streaming platforms.

## ***II. Theorizing the Stream: The Saddestfactory - the Culture Industry and The Stream as Mass Deception***

One would think that the current sociopolitical, economic, cultural, and ecological situation on Earth – the rise of fascism and populism, the consecutive economic collapses in global markets since 2008, global health crises in the form of viral pandemics, and both the fiery and rimy manifestation of climate change – would have given rise to 'cultural chaos', as Adorno and Horkheimer put it in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.<sup>1</sup> Even in the 1940s, Adorno and Horkheimer

were right to say that such a conclusion was then and is now consistently refuted by daily experience. In our time, the soporific effect, the psycho-emotionally ameliorative operation, aptitude, and indeed use of the Stream functions indexically as a psycho-emotional analgesic. Mass media culture is a pharmakon from which most of the Streaming-World/World-Stream seeks succor in some form. In this way, it is also both the productive-archive and index of global cultural sameness. Adorno and Horkheimer give a succinct definition of the type of cultural sameness I'm gesturing to: “Culture today is infecting everything with sameness. Film, radio and magazines form a system. Each branch of culture is unanimous within itself and all are unanimous together” (94).

This could be an expedient logline for the Stream. Its tributaries, especially those which function through and by the image, therefore global visual and popular culture, most notably the streaming platform Netflix and its rivals, operate by engendering a type of thematic and experiential hegemony. We Stream in the same way for the same reasons: to learn, to know, to participate, to escape. Be it Hulu or HBO Max, Netflix or iFlix, the seeming ‘variety’ of streaming platforms “crystallize into homogenous, well-organized complexes”, complexes whose experience and operation attest to the palindromic “conspicuous unity of macrocosm and microcosm [which] confronts human beings with a model of their culture: the false identity of universal and particular” (Adorno and Horkheimer 95).

The Stream is able to reproduce spectacular, imagistic, and hyperreal facsimiles of reality that can even go *beyond* reality in a way that entices viewer-consumers to incline toward the ostensibly controlled derealization of the screen over the uncertain decline of developments in reality beyond its virtual plane. Only think of the launch of Google Glass in 2014 and the advance in haptic technologies and wearables that precipitate a more immediate interaction between levels and modes of metamateriality/metareality in increasingly ‘polyreal’ environs like the Zuckerbergian Metaverse. Such phenomena obviously gesture to more than the immersive film-viewing experience, but also to contemporary technologies like 3D and VR. Sink or swim, we have technoculturally arrived as a point where in reality, virtual and augmented alike, going beyond reality increasingly means, amongst other things, experiencing a Baudrillardian precession of the simulacra of reality that we perceive as of higher fidelity to reality than our unmediated experience thereof. “Thus”,

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1. There are several studies and investigations into the ecological impact of maintaining the flow of data in late digital global capitalism I need to at least make mention of here. Examples include, but are not limited to: Hayley Richardson's “How Your Netflix Binge is Killing the Planet,” Mailonline, March 05, 2020, <https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-8079175/amp/How-binging-Netflix-killing-planet-new-documentary-reveals.html>; BBC's Reality Check Team's in depth article “Climate Change: Is Your Netflix Habit Bad for the Environment?,” BBC, October 12, 2018, <https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.bbc.com/news/amp/technology-45798523>; Jeanette Cwienk's “Is Netflix Bad for the Environment? How Streaming Video Contributes to Climate Change”, Deutsche Welle, July 11, 2019; and Sarah Griffiths' “Why Your Internet Habits Are Not As Clean As You Think”, BBC, March 06, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20200305-why-your-internet-habits-are-not-as-clean-as-you-think>

write Adorno and Horkheimer, “the omnipresent and impenetrable world of appearances is set up as the ideal. Ideology is split between the photographing of brute existence and the blatant lie about its meaning” (119).

But this reproduction is incomplete, and its incompleteness is precisely in/by/through the inter-cising screen, ostensibly projecting a total reality, but cutting off the very *crises* of reality: “The more densely and completely its techniques duplicate empirical objects, the more easily it creates the illusion that the world outside is a seamless extension of the one which has been revealed in the cinema [...] thus it trains those exposed to it to identify film directly with reality” (Adorno and Horkheimer 100). In other words, the reflection of self in the Stream, on its surface, is fundamentally *narcissistic*: it is an index of drowning. The Stream tries to not so much determine reality, but to determine its significance in the psycho-emotional registers of the swimmer. Excluded here is a confession of complicity in the dire reality it obfuscates, for which it provides escape from.

The latently obfuscatory facets of the Stream are indexically inextricable from their relationship to entertainment: “Entertainment is the prolongation of work under late capitalism. It is sought by those who want to escape the mechanized labor process so that they can cope with it again” (Adorno and Horkheimer 109). Swimming, therefore, “indicates a release, whether from physical danger or from the grip of logic” (112). In this ironically captivating release, “the culture industry replaces pain, which is present in ecstasy no less than in asceticism, with jovial denial” (112). We may not only like, but in some ways *need*, to swim in the Stream. We relish it as a type of freedom. A freedom, a *luxury*, to drown and disappear. To ripple Keats, I could say that the point of diving into the Stream is not immediately to swim to the shores of reality, but to be in the Stream, to luxuriate in the sensation of its pixel-water. Perhaps this is latently a nihilistic, self-capitulating desire to be ahead of the curve's end. To die, dreaming, in our sleep, as the house and bed catch fire around us. Acknowledging, memeifying, and obfuscating this phenomena is how the Stream “asserts itself more imperiously the more the perfected technology [of its platform] reduces the tension between culture product and everyday existence”, the more it stems the flow of crisis into dream, the more it disrupts its own indexicality (101). In the same or similar way that the culture industry “bows to the vote it has itself

rigged”, the Stream seeks to escape/obfuscate/sublimate a complicity it actively engenders (106).

It also seeks to keep the Stream-swimmer firmly within the sway of its currents. As such, the Stream is bad swimming because it is hard to stay buoyant in those currents: “in face of the slick presentation no one may appear stupid even for a moment; everyone has to keep up, emulating the smartness displayed and propagated by the production. This makes it doubtful whether the culture industry even still fulfills its self-proclaimed function of distraction” (Adorno and Horkheimer 110). While Adorno and Horkheimer argue that “the bloated entertainment apparatus does not make life more worthy of human beings”, it certainly does not ensure or safeguard in any meaningful way life's continuation (111). The dream does not foreclose reality. Even corpses float. The Stream, as a tributary of the culture industry, “endlessly cheats its consumers out of what it endlessly promises” (111). A promise that the water is safe, warm, and just the right depth. In reality, it is riddled with teratogens, approaching boiling, and fathomlessly dark. We see a thumbnail offering a documentary of the mysterious beauty of the sea. In that flitting facsimile, we do not see its surface throttled with postponing plastic. Exposure to this reality can be heartbreaking, disheartening in the extreme. It is in moments like these, of reality rupturing through, that the inundating abilities of the Stream take on a high luster for many Stream-swimmers. It is in moments like these that “entertainment fosters the resignation which seeks to forget itself in entertainment” (113). However, it is always-Also impossible for the Stream to wash away its own flow. It can never totally obfuscate its indexicality in that “entertainment makes itself possible only by insulating itself from the totality of the social process [...] Amusement always means putting things out of mind, forgetting suffering, even when it is on display. At its root is powerlessness. It is indeed escape, but not, as it claims, escape from bad reality but from the last thought of resisting that reality” (115-6). This sense of powerlessness can also be thought of as indexical in nature: the Stream is seemingly so well equipped to perform a double operation: to draw our attention toward crisis as a means of simultaneously obfuscating or containing it within itself.

### ***III. Re-Theorizing the Psychology of the Stream: On Stream-Psych***

To explore the various modalities between the

Stream and what I will call Stream-psych, this part will be broken into three sub-sections: i) *Purity*, ii) *Isolation*, and iii) *Flow*. The indexical relationship between flow, purity, and isolation are inherently circuitous whereby each is a hyperstitiatory index of each.

*i. Purity:*

The contemporary Stream is seemingly governed by purer Stream-tides. The new methods of consuming serialized telecinema through digital providers including Netflix are no longer predicated on “basic market strategies of ‘push and ‘pull’, representing new trends of television content [whereby] programme delivery is also shifting from ‘over-the-air broadcast’ where viewers have content ‘pushed’ to them; in favor of an expanding online environment where they ‘pull’ what they want to watch when they want to see it” (Gonzalez 6). The implication here is that online digital media, provided through streaming services, online subscriptions, and VOD services provide consumers vast databases and archives of varied genre media seemingly culled from numerous networks and times. In this sense, the ever updated Netflix catalog functions like Foucault's heterotopia of time, but specifically for telecinema, where cultural texts are archived, dislodged from the sequential temporal imperatives of over-the-air broadcast, allowing consumers to pull content from seemingly any genre and any period. We can watch as many, if not all, the episodes of a show, the oeuvre of a performer, and/or the corpus of an auteur, liberated, now, from the rigor of broadcast scheduling and the topological locatedness of the silver screen cathedral (see Hirsén). We fish content out of the Stream, no longer having to wait, like bears, at the lip of the falls for the fish to leap into our mouths. Here, the content-current is governed by uninterrupted control over the pace and volume of our media consumption. Ostensibly, whether viewed as latently glutenous or not, these alterations seemingly describe a *purified* media consciousness and consumptive experience (see Damratoski, Field, Mizell, & Budden; Schweidel & Moe).

However, this purity has a hard coded pyrite peculiarity. The Stream's presentiformance of continental infinite expanse may succeed because when immersed in a contemporary creative digital archive's platform, it can certainly *feel* like viewer-users can pull content from any genre and any period. However, this is an illusion. The reality of the situation is tantamount to a meme of itself. Streaming services are well known for their highly specific and limited,

right-determined selection of older media. Despite this, the Stream *wants* us to think we can watch anything, while denying us access to most things. Despite its heretofore efficacy, what results is a false consciousness of scope and service, content and experience – all of which emerge in and through a far narrower remit than is advertised.

Here, purity necessarily indexes a user-centric, non-technological understanding of Stream-Psych. Inherent to the idea of a self-determined Stream-slurp is the idea of purification, that is private, isolated, uncut entertainment. Jason Jacobs discusses the concept of the ‘polluted’ text, which is “the idea that there is such a thing as a ‘pure’ text until it is interrupted or framed by advertising or other supposedly undesired programming. In other words, schedules serve as a means to dilute the ‘pure’ text.” (257). In this sense, the correlation here is between isolation, purity, and flow. The more the content is isolated from undesirable programming/influences, the purer not only said content but its consumption becomes. The more isolated the content, the less impurities, the easier the flow.

However, the Stream cannot annul real life. “Digital television”, argues Jacobs, “does not remove everyday life – [...] it seems attuned to a particularly privatized and individualized everyday – but its online, onscreen variations allow users to mitigate or entirely remove the unwanted or surplus marks of the traditional schedule” (259). Whether controlled or mitigated, the perception and experience of everyday reality as ‘impure’ persists and will always-Also interrupt, intrude, encroach, and dilute the individual media experience in the way indexical opposites do. The ideas of remove and purity subtending ‘isolated’ content are both illusions, specifically designed and sold in their appellant forms to user/viewers as such. There is no pure text mediated by and (re)produced under the aegis of profit. The Stream seemingly sells you a miracle of both uninterrupted access, but also uninterrupted control, as well as uninterrupted peace in one's enjoyment of one's media content. Isolation-flow-purity are therefore three indexical pillars of the manner in which the Stream is *sold*. No distractions from the outside world, the reality upon which the Stream relies, that reality being perceived as exterior to the soporific dream interiority of the Stream. That exterior reality is seen as impure, cluttered, inefficient, and diminished within the auspices of individual autonomy, the orbits of individual deordination, the remit of one's (re)watch/ability. The illusion being sold and promulgated here is one of an unending

dream into which one can slip and still be lucid enough to control. A somnambuvviewer with revenant retinæ only returned to the reality of the body by the seemingly banal question projected on the screen: “are you still watching?”.

The illusion of viewer control is a powerful one, indeed. “Embedded in a neoliberal capitalist system”,

the self-scheduled nature of [streamed media content] suggests unprecedented levels of control. The control industry maintains, again, indicates the problematic relationship between power and control. If the addiction metaphor can indicate anything in this context, it is an exploitative relationship between those in charge of ‘supply’ (industry) and ‘addicts’ (viewers). It implies that viewers may not be fully aware of what they give up in exchange for control over TV. (Jenner 114)

While Jenner argues that this might be to over-interpret the terms in a paranoid fashion, I think contextualizing them or reading them as indexical terms brings into stark relief what they, as indices, point to, specifically in terms of Stream-Psych. This ultimately redounds to the illusion of control-in-escape, versus the reality of the pleasure of being bound to shallow tributaries of content you cannot control in the way you think you already do. In this sense, drowning is also bad swimming and one can drown even in an ever-shrinking puddle.

**ii. Isolation:**

While preoccupied with autonomy and control, much of the data concerning the development of Netflix point to a design model focused increasingly on distancing. Initially, streaming as an ancillary add-on to U.S Netflix was designed to allow Stream-swimmers instant access to content. Accordingly, this add-on intensified the principle of a monthly subscription fee which allowed Stream-swimmers to buy and consume as much content as they could or wanted to watch, at whatever pace suited them (see Jurgensen; Jenner 110). Latent here is a fundamentally triadic telos of a viewer-consumer experience marked by an isolated (that is self-determined) consumption of uninterrupted (that is flowing) pure (that is without impurities such as commercials) media (Jenner 110). In this sense, what the Netflix subscriber was projected to purchase was not only a subscription, but *distance* from material conditions of one's entertainment, even if only in the seemingly banal form of not having to wait on broadcast sources and

their scheduling, or having to deal with other people, store clerks, or other users at all: isolation = autonomy.

The extreme implication of Stream-isolation is that the Stream offers hedonic inundation as a salve-distraction from the various floods of reality. However, the indexical *opposite* is also true: Stream-swimming motivations also index a pronounced desire for *interaction, dissemination, and sharing*. Here, Stream-Psych has a paradoxical relationship with isolation. It would seem that much of the experience of so-called pure, uninterrupted media consumption indexes a necessarily *isolated personal experience*. However, the Stream provides new and intensified opportunities for fandom predicated on the paradoxical communal isolation of an 'alone-together' ethos (see Derrick, Gabriel, & Hugenberg). On the one hand, Raj Devasagayam notes how Stream-isolation educes the development of one-sided unconscious bonds between viewer-consumers and the characters and narratives they consume. This experience, like Narcissus falling in love with his warbled reflection on the stream surface, is considered one of the main factors influencing the various style-strokes of Stream-swimming. On the other hand, Yu-Kei Tse describes the experience of 'togetherness' as an important motivator for Stream-swimming, especially in teenage viewer-consumers: “by using online platforms, audience achieved a sense of togetherness in two ways: by connecting to others with the same interests in foreign programs and by re-associating with their home when they are abroad by consuming domestic programs” (1547).

In this way, for many viewer-consumers, particularly of younger demographics, Stream-swimming has far less to do with social exile than it does with “enabling and enhancing participation in social conversations and cliques” (Matrix 127). Chuck Tryon and Max Dawson go even further and assert that their research points to a key motivator for Gen Y students to follow their favorite shows being “to secure their positions within social groups defined in large part by their members' shared cultural competencies” (224). The Stream and the paradoxical triad of the purity of flowing isolation/the isolation of flowing purity are indexical of links between social television, and the emergence of new flows of digital publics enacting new forms of participatory cultural citizenship. This citizenship, like a place, is some kind of (pre)post-apocalyptic Spectacle-biome – a matrix, if you will –, which has become increasingly important since the advent of contemporary mass streaming

culture. Not only students, but many viewers today are more likely to Stream-swim in order to participate in the discourses of the digital commons. The digitization of the Stream through its manifold of tributaries, audiences, channels, and communities of widespread consumption of time-shifted content has not altered – and I propose rather intensified – viewer-consumers' desires and opportunities for participatory cultural citizenship. Stream-swimmers “continue to benefit from opportunities for social belonging and mediated connectedness when they watch TV contemporaneously, often by bingeing, insofar as it affords them an opportunity to be part of the pop culture conversational flow, as it happens or soon after” (Matrix 128).

This citizenship is precarious. The Netflix effect, as a sociocentripetal one, which ostensibly joins people in their collective experience of mass-media cultural productions whether collocated or virtually connected, is, in no small way based on FOMO. The fear of being the only one who has not viewed *the* episode, completed *the* series, and as a result of this failure, is unable to participate in *the* discourse, forfeiting their place in the community, the conversation, both online and off. This fear is indexical of the import of participation and valuation. An extreme supposition, but perhaps not an entirely inaccurate one is that it may be increasingly more important to belong than it is to act (Matrix 129).

### iii. Flow

Stream-swimming is predicated on channelings of flow. Perks describes flow via two inter-indexical terms: *entrance* flow, which I think of as *fall-flow* to describe the rapid flow of content, and *insulated* flow, which I think of as *delta-flow* to describe the slow-flow of content siltation. Entrance flow refers to how Netflix and its recommendation algorithm seek to constantly introduce the viewer-consumer to content that adheres to and reflects said user's tastes. Once achieved, entrance flow ensures/ensnares/inundates the viewer-consumer with serialized programming. A content delta then emerges around the Stream-swimmer whereby the clay of their viewership silts their consumption of the Stream. Here, technological and interface ergonomics (fitting if, as Adorno and Horkheimer argue, that in capitalism, entertainment is labor) like the 'skip intro' feature, serve to establish an uninterrupted and insulated flow from one episode to the next. Netflix's production mandate for in-house productions or licensed IPs serve to establish and maintain flow (Jenner 115). The goal? The maintenance of not just the Stream-Dream, but

the isolating/isolated flow of a pure Dream-state. The Stream *wants* you to swim badly, that is, not well enough to escape from the currents of the current Stream-Dream and alight on the shores of reality beyond its platform, but simultaneously well enough to not drown, that is, cease Streaming entirely.

Hongjin Shim and Ki Joon Kim describe flow, in relation to a Stream-swimmer's desire for enjoyment and entertainment, as “the pleasurable feeling of being completely *immersed* in a show's storyline. The results of the *regression* analyses indicate that the enjoyment, efficiency, and fandom motivations are indeed positively associated with binge-watching behavior” (100, emphasis mine). In the same thought-stream, self-determination theorists analyzing enjoyment (see Deci & Ryan; Renaud-Dube, Guay, Talbot, Taylor, & Koestner; Tamborini, Bowman, Eden, Grizzard, & Organ) assert that the Stream-swimmer's derivation of amusement, excitement, and distraction are driven by *serial* and *continuous* exposure to media, enabling said viewer-consumer to fulfill the desire (and indeed enjoyment) for the continuousness and inundation inherent to flow (see Bourdaa).

Stream-Psych both indexes and is indexed by flow which is itself indexed and indexes the co-constitutive nature of a purity-flow-isolation complex. This goes back to Netflix's origins as a mail-order DVD rental store. In 1997, delivering DVDs by mail was a development that allowed renters to retain their media for longer without incurring extensive late fees. This innovation allowed user-viewers to consume more, to retain more, to create their *own* micro-flows from Netflix's extensive library of then tens of thousands of titles, for as long as they pleased for a monthly fee. Here, *flow* meets both isolation *and* purity because “transactions were conducted by mail, customers no longer had to run a special errand, confront long lines or opinionated staff, or deal with the poor selection at their video store” (Jenner 110).

While the reality of the pseudo-infinite reach of the Stream is far more doubtful than it claims to be, the flow-state seemingly permits the viewer to, in essence, engineer, that is consciously influence, their mood positively or negatively (see Raney). Under the flow, the viewer has “imaginatively left their immediate surroundings behind and entered the narrative world. Importantly, being transported into a story has strong cognitive and emotional consequences and leaves a [viewer] susceptible to change from the themes of a story they are experiencing” (Snider 119). At its most extreme, the flow-state of Stream-Psych, describes something akin to lucid dreaming. In this

state, Mar, Oatley, Djikic, and Mullin propose that viewer-consumers may experience meaningful and even transformational emotions, which offer the viewer perceived insights regarding both themselves and society more broadly. While indeed greater insights and appreciations of self and society can occur in the isolation-flow-purity of the Stream, so too can “greater anxiety and fearfulness”, as well as “greater interpersonal mistrust” develop (Shrum 149).

It is a strange *pharmakonik* situation in which immersion-through-isolation, meaningful as it may be, somehow engenders insights into society more broadly. As if going inside allows one to see outside (Eyal and Tukachinsky 8). It is a position Alex Pang takes up, stating that what I have referred to as Stream-Psych is really an index of reversal: the salubrious experience of Stream-swimming can only occur when the world-out-there is reterritorialized in the isolation, purity, and uninterrupted flow of the dream-in-here. Pang asserts that Stream-swimming gives people something to intensely focus on in protest to the digital ADHD hyperreality in which we live. For Pang, the ameliorative qualities of Stream-swimming are comparable to other restorative activities like dog walking in the park, reading a book, or any experience in which one escapes to recharge. Ironically, however, the very FOMOTivity of the Stream necessarily enfolds into its various tributaries of contemporary telecinematic culture the most enabling aspects of platform addiction. The isolated flow of seemingly pure content controlled and consumed by the viewer-user the Stream seemingly represents is equally undercut by the ‘cliffhanger’ format of many TV shows which then also necessarily trigger for “ADHD”-like impulses.

#### IV. Conclusion

Using Streaming, specifically Netflix, and the psycho-emotional aspects of digital life in late capitalism, this piece has attempted to draw together two ideas – the Stream and psychology – in an indexical relationship. In view of the above, there would seem to be an ultimately and indeed inherently self-destructive or antagonistic kernel in this indexical knot. One conclusion to be derived is that within Stream-Psych, some needs' indexing of others need be separated, screened off, forgotten, or overlooked in order to be enjoyed, let alone fulfilled in any meaningful way. In the last instance, however, the Stream is both screen and index. The insistence of the need for entertainment in a world in disarray and decay is

indicative of a powerful need to sequester, to intermise the underlying anxious need to address said decay and disarray whether successfully or not. The Stream is therefore an index of a complex of needs that form a self-referential indexical knot of simultaneity that paradoxically refers to itself in the very moment it tries to defer itself from itself.

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