

Hybrid Project Personal Statement:  
Anthology Horror in Television: Legacy and Continuing Applications  
In “Tales for Night Terrors”  
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## **Table of Contents**

|  |       |
|--|-------|
| Tales for Night Terrors Transcript               | 3-5   |
| Creative Statement Introduction                  | 6-10  |
| Anthology Horror Influences and Changing Mediums | 11-14 |
| Bibliography                                     | 15    |

**Pilot, *Tales for Night Terrors*, Transcript (Video Length: 7 Minutes, 8 Seconds)**

The episode opens with The Doctor, a man in his early 20s, with brown hair and a mustache with a black collared shirt directly in front of the camera in front of a projector.

As he leans forward and clasps his hands, there is a brief clip which is played in reverse of The Doctor speaking to someone off screen, with images of eyes on the projector.

There is a cut back to The Doctor leaning forward and he says  
“Good evening, did you know that not getting proper sleep can affect your eyesight?”  
There is a visual effect glitch, which distorts his facial features for a moment.

As the projector flashes images of eyes interspersed with darkness, and a visual effect distorts his face intermittently, The Doctor says  
“You can experience dryness, itchiness, even redness. But worst of all, you can experience hallucinations. A patient of mine, Alice, experienced chronic eye pain, and as a result of this, experienced dreaded night terrors. Until she found a proper solution for herself”

In the background there is an audible hum, although the source is not shown to the audience. The camera changes angle to a side profile of The Doctor, and he turns to face that camera.

As his face gradually becomes more stretched and distorted he says “Of course I told her, maybe because she’s sleeping too close to the tv, because that light and sound can also affect you getting a good night’s rest. But above all else, I want this to be a cautionary tale for you, a tale about taking proper care of your eyes and body, and getting a good night's rest.”

The projector screen goes white, and there is a cut to an advertisement.

A pair of green eyes appear alongside the green text “QUEYETTE” and the advertisement footage is shown within circle masking. A teenage girl watching the tv, seems to be eating her own eyes with a fork as she watches the tv.

The advertisement narrator speaks this monologue over the footage. The narration is layered, and slightly delayed. “Queyette. Queyette, a new medicine for the short term treatment of insomnia characterized by sleep initiations. Queyette binds brain receptors that get in the way of a good nights sleep. Consult your doctor, for peace, and quiet.” Followed by a whisper, and ending with the green eyes fading out.

The footage cuts back to the doctor, in front of the white projector screen, sitting center. He says  
“Keep the peace, keep your sleep, keep queyette. And now tonight’s story.”

The doctor looks down as a distorted voice from off screen says “alright” and their footsteps can be heard approaching the doctor. The footage ends abruptly.

The next scene opens with a small cracked mirror next to a postcard that says Life Swap Day. The character of Alice, a pale woman with glasses and brown hair approaches the mirror and adjusts her thick black framed glasses as a robotic voice explains the parameters of her job, and the static hum from The Doctor’s section can be heard, but louder.

“Welcome to your position as our nighttime sleep study monitor.” There is a closeup on a pillow shaped like a cartoon flower. “We are pleased to hire employees who suffer with insomnia as part of our mission statement to collective unconscious.” There is a table littered with various caffeinated beverages, and Alice reads a book on a couch titled “One Mans Meat” next to the flower pillow. Alice can be seen wearing a silver watch.

While Alice walks through a dimly lit hallway with yellow doors and faded plaster walls, the narration continues “As your handbook states you have access to our top of the line breakroom and security keys.” Alice pushes on the handles of the doors in the hallway, making sure that they are locked. “On your shift there are three rules. Do not unlock or enter any lab rooms.” Briefly, there is a pause where there is no narration or humming, on a close up of Alice’s eyes.

As Alice returns to the break room and turns off the lights the narration continues. “Do not sleep on the job. Do not enter our trash rooms. Shifts start at 8pm and end at 8am.” Alice appears to be gradually falling asleep on the couch in the breakroom, which sits in front of a tv. “Remember if you work hard, you too, can have a spot in one of our sleep studies and be cured.”

Alice is asleep, and the television screen reflects through her glasses. “Don’t forget to clock out, and turn off our white noise machinal tvs.” After the narration ends, there is a cut to black and the humming pauses.

The next scene is of Alice walking up gray cement stairs, and the humming recommences. She walks down the hallway littered with abandoned furniture, checking the doors. The humming oddly cuts in and out, as Alice pushes a handle and the door unlocks, instead of being closed. She walks away in silence, and none of the other doors are unlocked.

As Alice stares at herself in the mirror and checks her watch, the humming continues. She approaches the trash room, and takes a bottle of unlabeled medicine out of the trash room. She takes the medicine in the breakroom, seeing herself chew them in the reflection. Afterwards, she is sitting in front of the television holding the flower pillow. She leans into the television and suddenly the image becomes distorted and glitches as she holds her face and eyes against the

blue television screen, smiling. When the glitching ends, Alice is asleep on the floor in front of the tv.

There is a closeup of Alice's watch, and she returns to the open door from earlier. As she attempts to open it, the screen glitches, and she witnesses a person wrapped in a trash bag, which is a doppelganger of herself, staring, mouth agape. There are rapid cuts which jump in time between Alice opening and closing the door. Alice covers her eyes and begins to hyperventilate in the hallway.

In a green bathroom, Alice opens the pill bottle from the trash room and takes another pill, chewing it slowly and staring at herself. She returns once more to the hallway, staring at her reflection and pulling down her skin. The door she had opened closes itself.

In the dark, Alice takes a handful of the pills and washes her face with water. She stares at her image in the cracked mirror, adjusting her hair and glasses once more, as the hum of static returns.

Returning to the hallway from the staircase, Alice approaches the door again. This time, she opens the door to the room and no one is inside. As she panics and tries to understand what is happening, the narrator returns.

“You have violated the rules of your position.” Alice picks up a phone, seemingly where the voice of the narrator is coming from in the diegetic world. She listens to the narration. “You have now been terminated. This will be your last shift.”

The footage begins to glitch as the cracked mirror from the hallway is shown empty, with no reflection. “Don't forget to dispose of yourself.” Alice approaches the open room, and walks in. In Between the footage are cuts of her both outside and inside the room. A negative image of her doppelganger quickly flashes. As the door to the room closes behind Alice the narrator is still heard. “You are now worthless, have a good night.”

The last shot is of Alice, on the ground, in front of the blue television. Her eyes are wide open in fear, but a frame of a hand on a tv is placed covering her mouth. The glitches move in swirls, and are blue from the tv light.

**Fine Cut of “Tales for Night Terrors” URL**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-RB-r0kW2\\_U&ab\\_channel=GabrielleVines](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-RB-r0kW2_U&ab_channel=GabrielleVines)

## Creative Statement Introduction

The primary impetus behind the hybrid project was to prove the generational reproducibility of the anthology horror as a television format. Using the academic research, history of the anthology horror format, and personal love of the genre, I wanted to craft a prototype pilot that can emulate a proof of concept for the anthology horror in the televisual realm. This process involved choosing multiple key conceptual figures from legacy and emerging tv shows to create something both personal to me and continuous to the format traditions. In this section I will be going over the personal and researched stylistic decisions that informed the artistic choices of the pilot.

The title of the pilot is *Tales for Night Terrors*, which pays homage to *Grizzly Tales for Gruesome Kids* (2000) is an anthology series concept which draws from both the conventions of the television anthology and the webseries. The pilot opens with an archetype of a doctor, who is the only repeated character. Inspired by the character Rod Sterling plays in *The Twilight Zone* (1959) and the way in which his authority guides the series, the doctor, played by Nathan Bonk, fulfills this role. However, his authority and position can come into question by the spectator. In the pilot during The Doctor's segment, he can be seen looking off screen. At the end of the segment, a voice is heard from off screen, signaling the end of The Doctor's script. as Bonk's character looks down instead of into the camera, he does not seem confident, or in control, when he references the authority above him off camera. This authority can be likened to the real world systems which come above the authority of medical professionals. The subtle nod to an authority above The Doctor is a further act of questioning figures of authority and the messages they are broadcasting, or being told to broadcast. Alongside visual glitches such as the distortion of The Doctor's face, and jarring cuts to multiple cameras, it is clear that The Doctor is being watched

and altered by forces outside himself. The Doctor communicates directly with the audience, but it is clear that he is communicating on behalf of a larger force. The episode which follows The Doctor's introduction centers Alice, played by Lauren Wren, a nighttime security guard who breaks the rules of her position and falls into an induced-hysteria. Themes of disturbed sleep, breaks in self-identification, and untrustworthy messages from systems of authority are all placed into Alice's story in the pilot.

In Sigmund Freud's essay on the properties of *unheimlich*, or closely translated into english as the *uncanny*. Freud theorizes that horror consists of several distinct motifs which produce the psychological response of fear. I implemented several of these conventions into the pilot episode to produce a sense of uncanniness. The two motifs that I decided to pay close attention to were the eyes/surveillance and the doppelganger as focal elements. While Freud's work is originally applied to literature, it can easily be adapted to the close analysis of film as visual motifs rather than written ones.



*Exhibit A, still from Tales for Night Terrors.*

In the pilot, Alice's character, played by Lauren Wren, acts as a security guard, who is supposed to keep a watch on sleep study patients. Yet, Alice is being watched from multiple entities. One is the spectator of the pilot, watching Alice devolve as she takes more and more of a thrown away medicine. The company she works for also watches her, letting her know she is terminated, and keeping tabs on her behavior. The final is herself, watching her through mirror reflections, tv screens, and a double in dark rooms. This appearance of both the eye and being watched as a visual cue, as well as the presence and appearance of the doppelgänger cues the audience into larger thematic ideas of surveillance, while creating an eerie or uncanny feeling. While working with the main actress, Lauren Wren, it was important to work on expressiveness with the eyes, between awake, terrified, sleepy, and hypnotized. Since the piece is mostly dialogue-less, physical acting and especially the importance of the eyes in telling the story needed to be conveyed. The television sets Lauren interacts with do not reflect her image back, which is indicative of a lack of identification within them. Unlike the mirrors that Alice interacts with or the doppelgänger she faces, the television is the sole visual element in which she cannot see herself.

Another choice that was made to convey a sense of eeriness and an uneasy mistrust of the medium of television itself was visual effect glitches and television static. In *Haunted Media* written by Jeffery Sconce, that television has the eerie capability of looking back at its viewer. In Sconce's writing, television is theorized to have a spectral quality in its interaction with the spectator. Through not only having the character of Alice become derealized with her interactions with the television, the television static and glitching that occurs to the video the spectator is watching can have a brechtian effect of reminding the spectator that they are both watching, and being watched. Similarly, the sounds of television are integrated into the piece to



provide an unsettling ambiance. Throughout the work, both diegetic white noise and tv static is present, in addition to added tv static sound effects. Paired with the visual effects of tv static and glitches, this points towards the television being a more sinister technology.



*Exhibit B, still from Tales for Night Terrors.*

The personal connections to anthology horror television come from watching *The Twilight Zone* from childhood, and growing up with various sleep conditions such as sleep walking, sleep talking, and insomnia where I would be completely incapable of sleeping without knowing why. Both my love of horror and sleep problems stayed into my adulthood, but I began to engage with media such as *Don't Hug Me I'm Scared*, a web series which not only questioned the authority of the medium of television, but piqued my interest to how the webseries was an evolution of the television series. For this hybrid project, it was my goal to both draw from my personal mistrust of the medical industry and television ads from Big Pharma, and the

ever-evolving format and potential for creative evolution that the television series, and the web series, can provide. Working chronologically, I want to specifically note the creative and historical elements that each series contributed not only to my personal hybrid project but to the anthology horror genre. In addition, the intertwined relationship between television and sleep was important to the central element of insomnia in the piece. An important text which informed this connection was Jean Ma's *At The Edges of Sleep* which explores both artistic visual installations in which an audience sleeping is key to the immersive experience. The relationship between the unconscious and subconscious, dreams, and how they manifest on through television are what makes the immersive experiences particularly spectacular. The line between what is real and imagined is something I explored in my piece using the theme of sleep but it is not limited to the fictional world. The liminal feeling of experiencing media in a state between awake and dream is what *At The Edges of Sleep* documents. Through learning of the integration of sleep to art, I was able to better understand and emulate the strange effects television and sleep create together.

### **Anthology Horror Influences and Changing Mediums:**

In the midst of the golden age of television, a new, and lasting format would emerge as a new style of cultural criticism. This format was anthology horror. The majority of television programming after WWII was hyper focused on rebuilding the market, pushing consumption and re-investment into industry through entertainment and advertising. However, television programming began to emerge that subverted this push towards domesticity and consumption in the mid to late 50s. The prime example is *The Twilight Zone* (1959-1964) which aired on CBS in the United States which existed in opposition to the television programming that was coined by Newton Minnow as part of the “vast wasteland.” However, Minnow highlighted *The Twilight Zone* directly as his hope for the future of television.<sup>1</sup> Unique from the serial narrative which had become the standard for tv shows of the late 50s, *The Twilight Zone* featured a new set of characters and story for each new episode, rather than follow a continuous story. The show was not entirely discontinuous, as the host, Rod Sterling, appeared at the start and end of every episode, a familiar, yet mysterious figurehead for the program. The ability to completely alter its surroundings for every new episode gave *The Twilight Zone* a freedom to cover whatever sociopolitical and cultural tensions and anxieties the writers could identify. One of the most common themes covered in the show, even appearing in the pilot titled “*Where is Everybody*” was a mistrust and questioning of authority. Evolving from *The Twilight Zone*, the anthology horror has had an enduring legacy as a flexible format which provides the space to question authority and the medium of television itself, and stand out from more hegemonic television programming. Not only anthology horror which has evolved within the medium of television, but has also been reformatted in the internet age to exist as a new extension of television, within the web series.

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<sup>1</sup> Murray, Brian. “The Enduring Legacy of “the Twilight Zone.”Pg.90, *The New Atlantis*, no. 48, 2016

*The Twilight Zone* operated within the impetus of the television set, the show was broadcasted into the home, where spectatorship previously was defined as a one way relationship. However *The Twilight Zone* set the stage for what Jeffrey Sconce defines in his writing, *Haunted Media*, as the quality of television to be an ever-watching eye, the ability to “transport the viewer “live” to localities around the world...however, television was also the most plausible agent to serve as a “window on the home.” The spectator was not merely monitoring programming, but the programming was monitoring the spectators. With the creation of Nilsen ratings, which would track the demographics of viewers at home, influencing tv advertisement and programming, television was a complicated mixture of watching and being watched. A visual metaphor *The Twilight Zone* depicted over and over again was surveillance, and specifically the tv as a mode of it. It questioned the programming on tv and the position of the tv itself, setting it apart from that “vast wasteland” of other shows. This theme of surveillance merely evolved with the introduction of contemporary technology, or what in Marshall McLuhan’s *The Medium is the Massage*, defines as contemporary or “electronic technology” the medium of television and the presence of surveillance would increase tenfold, with the internet. Now, watching television expanded past the tv set– to computers, tablets, phones, or any other personal device. Now, far more information could be garnered about a viewer than just their demographics, something that *Black Mirror (2011-present)* would integrate as a key part of their anthology horror structure. New technologies and their present threat to individual privacy and security were at the heart of the series, both the UK and US versions. Another part of *Black Mirror* which thematically evolves the show is its representation and questioning of the integration between the human body and the machine. In Angela Cirruci and Barry Vacker’s *Black Mirror and Critical Media Theory* presents *Black Mirror* as a piece of emerging futurist

theory that critiques technology and surveillance. This is a recurring theme that I wanted to exemplify in *Tales for Night Terrors*, the dangers and horrors in identifying the human consciousness with machines. Through episodes such as *Arkangel*, the show specifically critiques the application of technology in modifying human behavior and bodies, and how it can be used as a tool of violence and surveillance. The mother installing surveillance technology on the daughter which she then watches is a clear hierarchy of authority, which places surveillance with authority and spectatorship. *Black Mirror* is a critically acclaimed tv series, and is not the furthest development of the contemporary anthology horror in the contemporary field.

The webseries, a format which I drew prominent inspiration from, is a natural development of tv. A shortened yet highly produced series distributed through the internet, primarily Youtube or Vimeo. Some web series are styled after pre-existing television formats such as *Local 58 (2015)* which playfully copies the styling of a local newscast, or *Don't Hug Me I'm Scared (2011)* which adopts the style of a childrens serial. While shorter in nature than the average television episode, the webseries is far less censored and restricted than television shows which have to conform to a network. Oftentimes, their lack of seriality or episode titling can allow them to transcend traditional anthology horror as without a definite "order" web series like *Local 58* can be watched in any arrangement. The surreal, horrifying, and medium defying moments that shows like *Don't Hug Me I'm Scared* can have through blending contemporary technology within the pre-existing conventions of television cement the genre as a natural evolution of television within the internet age. In Episode 4 of *Don't Hug Me I'm Scared*, titled Computers, the entire set is deconstructed in a Brechtian reveal of the verite of tv-making, while also turning the internet and the persona of a computer into its own horror. It acknowledges both

the conventions of television and production while also introducing a new evil, and form of unique spectatorship, the internet.

I chose to model *Tales for Night Terrors* after some of the most fascinating elements of the television anthology horror shows and the anthology horror web series. The character of The Doctor and the authority structure he introduces within the narrative as a prerequisite to the main narrative are inspired by *The Twilight Zone* and the character Rod Sterling adopts within the show. Whereas the advertisement, and the eerie tone of Queyette Advertisement were inspired by *Black Mirror* and its bold-faced critiques of modern technology and medicine that modifies the natural human body and mind. The length and style of the episode are inspired by the Webseries, its cliff-hanger ending and moments of quickly cutting away or hiding frames are all tropes within the webseries that craft its surreal moments and aesthetics. I wanted to imbue both a personal and academic connection to the aspect of sleep and sleeplessness as it relates to television but also the spectrality of television with the visual television static and glitches, and the audible hum of television static and machinery. While some of the horror of *Tales for Night Terrors* comes from the eerie authority and liminal space of the sleep lab, the blending of identification with the blue television and the human character of Alice were a driving force for my vision behind the episode.

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