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Pacing Your Fears

Narrative Adaptation in the Age of Binge Culture

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Entertainment is an ever-changing medium, and television specifically has gone through many technological innovations since its bright beginnings. These innovations have consistently changed the way stories are told. Stylistic shifts in key elements ranging from shot format to the way shows are constructed can be seen especially clearly in horror which does not have the same narrative constraints as many other genres, and therefore more room to experiment. By tracking changes in the narrative formats of serialized and anthology horror shows, I plan to define a new era of television brought about by the prevalence of streaming, and the rise of binge culture.

The First Genre

Horror components have been ubiquitous within the world of moving pictures since the medium's conception in the late 1800s. Film scholars and casual enthusiasts alike recall the story of Lumiere's *Arrival of a Train at the Station*. Frequently invoked when discussing exciting technological developments, the narrative of audiences running in fear from the oncoming representation of the moving train is regarded by many to be the beginning of commercial film. There are a number of challenges to the credibility of this story, but whether apocryphal or not, it is telling that this moment of produced horror is often recounted as the first audience reaction to film (Gunning).

Unlike most genres, horror is defined not by its contents or setting, but by the reaction it intends to evoke in its audience. When we look back on the early days of film, it is clear to see the role that key tenants of horror played in its development. As sideshow attractions, these first works promised a great degree of shock and awe. Contrary to what one might expect, this shock and awe did not come in the form of perceived reality, like the imminent danger of a train. Often the presentation of these early films would begin with a still image, or even a full description of the events that would take place, but despite these challenges to its illusionistic nature, audiences

were stunned nonetheless (Gunning 118). In *An Aesthetic of Astonishment: Early Film and the (In)Credulous Spectator*, Tom Gunning claims that these “spoilers” are in fact the draw of cinema for early viewers. While a still frame or full description forbids one’s perception of the film as reality, it heightens the illusion itself. Gunning names the film format based around a series of visual shocks the ‘cinema of attractions’. Like trompe l’oeil paintings, the cinema of attractions may fool the eye, but not the brain, and it is precisely from this discrepancy that both the discomfort and thrill arise. To ensure that the images have this effect, a format develops: “a moment of crisis, prepared for and delayed, then bursting upon the audience” (Gunning, 121). This premise may sound familiar to modern day horror fans as it echoes the long derided ‘jump scare’¹, but it takes more subtle forms as well. By building expectations and then postponing them, audiences experience a heightened moment of true shock and awe. This does not mean that audiences believe in these images, quite the opposite, but the combination of anticipation and novelty build to a satisfyingly thrilling illusion. (Gunning)

Especially in these early works, narrative itself could be secondary to shock. Georges Méliès stated, “the scenario constructed in this manner has no importance, since I use it merely as a pretext for the ‘stage effects’ the ‘tricks’” (Gunning, 64). Similarly, when describing the success of P.T. Barnum, Neil Harris suggests, “Barnum's mechanical stunts and hoaxes invited spectators to embrace an ‘operational aesthetic’ in which the pleasure was less about ‘what will happen?’ and more concerning ‘how did he do that?’” (Mittell, 35). While this is primarily illustrative of the values of Méliès’ and Barnum’s work, it also holds weight today. As audiences were less shocked by the medium itself, shock needed to be achieved in other forms. Sometimes

¹ “the horror technique of having something happen unexpectedly and suddenly (usually something popping up out of nowhere). It's frequently accompanied by an equally sudden loud noise to go with it, and often happens after a period of tension-building to ramp up the nerves of both the character(s) and audience and make the scare that much more effective for both” (tvtropes.org)

this does come in the form of ‘tricks’ like wires, effects makeup or CGI, but often it comes in the form of narrative. A trend towards narrative complexity, or a merging between the demands of serial and episodic formats, centers the narrative as a vehicle for shock. (Mittell). This doesn’t necessarily mean that the narrative is a coherent one. As anyone who has watched an M. Night Shyamalan film knows, plot twists can fracture or completely invalidate the narrative, and yet the desire for astonishment can still outweigh the desire for a plausible story arc. This issue, coined the “surprise/acceptability problem” isn’t necessarily unique to horror, but the issue of “stimulating and maintaining interest in plot points in an acceptable manner” plays a large role in a genre dominated by shock (Dolan, 35).

Why Horror?

The emphasis on shock, the dual role of narrative, the intense focus on audience reaction and the lack of singular definition make horror an ideal genre in which to compare stylistic changes over time. The vast variety within horror media and necessity of innovation in creating impactful content allows for a wider sample size than more constrained genres like westerns or film noir. As a genre that thrives in shock and astonishment, horror has consistently adapted to changing viewing formats.

From its place in the sideshow attractions and vaudeville stages to modern movie theatres and homes, horror has maintained an awareness of the demands of the times. Through the lens of George A. Romero’s zombie films, Caetlin Benson-Allott tracks the ways horror has changed to fit its mode of presentation. Romero’s transition to close-ups, rack focus and simplistic sets for *Day of the Dead*, his first film that would be watched primarily out of theatres², is just one of the

² Though *Day of the Dead* had a theatrical release, the trend toward video had already begun. The expectation that *Day of the Dead* would be watched primarily on home video sets can be seen in Romero’s tonal uniformity. The smaller contrast ratio of videotape (40:1 as opposed to 130:1 on

examples of deriving the media itself from its mode of production, or in this case, distribution.

Romero was especially aware of consumption trends and tailored each of his films to the medium in which it would be viewed.³ Limiting the color palette and increasing the use of close-up are emblematic of his adaptation of style and format to better suit his audiences.

In *TV Horror: Investigating the Dark Side of the Small Screen*, Lorna Jowett and Stacey Abbott contextualize similar developments in three distinct epochs of horror television. In the period from 1950 to 1975, defined as TVI, television sets are small and black and white, and programming is heavily constrained. Defined as an era of mainstream address, and experimentation in the face of limitations, TVI thrived in the outdated conventions of past horror films, which at this point, had been replaced in popular culture with works like *Psycho* and *Night of the Living Dead*. To battle technical constraints, horror shows primarily utilized close ups, which not only allowed for a better view of the subjects being portrayed, but made the most of the location of the television set. In many ways, the images on the TV were invading each family's domestic sphere, and the more imposing the image, the greater impact it had (Jowett and Abbott). Because watching television was presented as a family activity, censorship was also a constraint during this era. This meant that, unlike horror films, television had to rely on more subtle forms of creating terror. For anthology series like the *Twilight Zone*, this meant dropping viewers into a world they were told did not behave like their own, and building tension until a final reveal of what exactly was amiss. These plotlines lasted for exactly one episode, leaving viewers with no way of determining what might await them next week. For *Dark Shadows*, the

celluloid) often meant colorful films would appear to "bleed out" and blur the image when viewed via home video. In accounting for this, Romero clarifies the intended platform for his film. (Benson-Allott).

³ *Dawn of the Dead*, Romero's second film which would have been seen primarily in movie theatres inside of malls, was not only set inside a mall, but featured oversaturated colors and comic book-esque shots. Similarly, *Diary of the Dead*, Romero's film intended for the internet, utilized a found footage format which commented directly on the lack of contextualization of online media. (Romero).

opposite was true. A familiar cast of characters in a serialized soap opera style plot are plagued by supernatural horrors and gothic atmosphere. Both of these shows created feelings of dread in their audiences by using very different narrative formulas. (Jowett and Abbott).

These formulas are developed further in TVII, the period between 1975 and the 1990s. TVII is defined by the transition between network and digital television, and therefore marks significant innovation based on the expansion of the medium. As the options for content increased, so did competition for audience attention. This leads to the beginning of narrowcasting, or creating content for specific markets rather than the population as a whole (Jowett and Abbott). Here is where television horror begins to deviate from its simplest forms into genre hybrids like *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* or aestheticised horror, like *Twin Peaks*, meant to appeal to niche, and presumably more upscale audiences than the generalized “mainstream”. Ultimately, these shows are offshoots of the anthology and serial narratives presented in TVI, but with greater narrative complexity. Much like TVI, TVII was constrained by censors, and therefore continued in developing alternate methods of creating a reaction of horror in their viewers. Clearly, these methods paid off. In an interview with Engadget, *Channel Zero* creator Nick Antosca claims,

“You can't sustain that, the kind of fear that people expect from a horror movie, over episodes after episodes. You can't do five or six seasons of what we think of as genuine horror. So horror on TV, good horror either has to be a limited series, or it has to be a different kind of horror. It has to be about a sense of dread, a pervasive feeling of menace or something off. That is why *Twin Peaks* is the greatest horror TV show”

(Devindra Hardawar).

This claim acknowledges the many forms that horror can take, and the ways that certain shows were able to best adapt to the television medium. *Twin Peaks*' unique approach will be discussed more in depth, but it's important that it be recognized as a quintessential TVII text. The developments made in TVII shows like *Twin Peaks* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* lead directly into Jowett and Abbot's third era of horror television.

TVIII, which in Jowett and Abbot's conception stretches from the 1990s to the present day, is generally less constrained. With technological advances in cameras, special effects, and the television sets themselves, the opportunities for what could be shown increased exponentially. Similarly, the formation of channels like HBO which created 'grittier' content viewers needed to pay additionally to see had effectively dissolved barriers of censorship.⁴ TVIII shows like *Masters of Horror*, *Tales from the Crypt* and *The Walking Dead* thrive on a balance of plot and spectacle. While some of these shows feel (or are) still current, the idea that TVIII encompasses the current mode of television horror is inaccurate. As online streaming and the resulting binge watching culture has become more pervasive, the way that stories are told must adapt. Original horror content created by streaming platforms will certainly usher in a new age of convention and expectation in the realm of television horror and television itself. (Jowett and Abbot)

A New Age of Television

Were a TVIV to be defined, it would likely be characterized as the age of hyperserialization. Hyperserialization, a term coined by *Breaking Bad* creator Vince Gilligan in an interview with Newsweek's Andrew Romano, characterizes a new model of television

⁴ HBO was founded in 1972 but battled censors through the 1980s, finally reaching a peak at the beginning of TVIII

storytelling that emphasizes a “purer, more intense focus on one linear, series-long plot line” (Romano). These shows are effectively designed to be binged. A show can be seen as hyperserial when it utilizes an overarching implicit, or, in some cases, explicit, question to keep the story moving forward and audiences engaged. While the hyperserial shows we know today aren’t too different from the those in the perceived ‘Golden Age’ of television⁵, it is far easier to state exactly what happens in their seasons or episodes. Now that each episode of a show can always be seen in conjunction with its season or series, there is no need for that narrative to stand on its own. Similarly, shows designed for streaming mediums don’t need to account for commercial breaks or previous episode recaps, allowing more time for narrative development. These two changes in particular bring current television closer to a past misconception. Historically, serial television has been incorrectly described as simply longer movies. Both the increasingly cinematic trends of television and the rise of hyperserialization make this misconception the truest it has ever been.

The tension between hyperserialization and horror lies in the varying relations both have with narrative. While a show needs a strong narrative arc to keep audiences watching for multiple hours, horror relies on shock and terror which rarely are achieved within the context of familiarity. Horror, for all of its variations, can be categorized into two basic plot formats: serial or anthology. Serial shows, like *Dark Shadows*, *Twin Peaks* and *Stranger Things*, follow the structure of what would be expected from a drama or soap opera. The narrative typically unfolds sequentially over the show’s run, and, when looking back on the series as a whole, one can follow plots from start to finish. Serial shows, of course, are the basis for the term ‘hyperserial’ and therefore this is the only plot structure in which that binge-ability can be structurally

⁵ The most recent Golden Age of Television, which theorists typically conflate with the premiere of *The Sopranos* in 1999, is characterized by the presence of “adult themes, [an] infatuation with antiheroes, cinematic art direction, and the intersections of character and society” (Romano).

encouraged. On the other hand, anthology shows like *The Twilight Zone*, *Tales from the Crypt* and *Lore* are episodic, meaning each narrative is contained to the episode in which it was presented. Often there is an overarching theme or narrator, but no narrative thread connects the individual episodes. For this reason, anthology style shows are not ideal for bingeing. They are, however, ideal for horror. As evidenced by the success of multitudes that have been made, anthology horror shows are capable of maintaining long term interest specifically by not using a throughline narrative. In looking at some of the most popular or simply the most recent horror shows available, the battle between serial and anthology is still being played out, and creating some interesting hybrids in its wake.

2017 was a bigger year for horror television than many might realize. Returning favorites like *American Horror Story*, *The Walking Dead* and *Stranger Things* remain immensely popular among a wide variety of demographics, and several interesting horror projects premiered. This thesis will focus on six horror shows that aired episodes this year which range in style, content, and most significantly format. *The Walking Dead* and *American Horror Story*, represent different narrative formats and use of viewing platforms. These returning favorites have experimented with narrative in very different ways and to incredibly different effects, making them useful in determining a trajectory. On the other hand, relative newcomers like *Stranger Things*, *Channel Zero*, *Blood Drive* and *Lore* can indicate how producers are interpreting overall trends. I plan to identify the main narrative components including structure, source and use of respective medium. In order to do this effectively, I'll need to first outline the basic trajectory of the two most popular narrative formats.

Anthology Horror

Though *The Twilight Zone* was not the first anthology horror television show, it is considered by many to be the defining example of the genre, likely due to its ability to adapt and thrive within its medium, which was heavily constrained at the time. Created by Rod Serling in 1959, *The Twilight Zone* claimed to bring its audience out of their reality and into another dimension which had unpredictable rules and often an unsettling atmosphere. When *The Twilight Zone* premiered, television sets came in both black and white, and color, and ranged from sixteen to twenty-one inches wide. For both aesthetic and budgetary reasons, the entire series was shot in black and white. Many families hadn't yet purchased a color television, and color images would've had lower contrast and a higher rate of blurring than black and white content on any television set. Though the use of black and white was primarily used because of the constraints of the medium, it added significantly to *The Twilight Zone*'s eerie atmosphere, and lent itself well to a show that constantly changed time periods and settings. Similarly, the lack of color meant audiences focused primarily on the story being told rather than a colorful background. But the use of black and white wasn't the only way *The Twilight Zone* utilized its medium fully.

The anthology series had a number of distinct benefits in relation to the viewing habits of the time. The lack of a narrative throughline meant the show didn't need to devote any time to recapping the events of past episodes. Instead, Serling would introduce both the show and the premise for each night's episode before dropping viewers into the story. Serling's narration could range in function from clarifying to obfuscating, from moralizing to simply unifying by serving as brand recognition. *The Twilight Zone* episodes varied pretty considerably, and with Serling as their only link, were often incredibly successful in shocking, or at least unsettling many viewers

through its devotion to plot twists. Through *The Twilight Zone*, the anthology format is clearly tied to iconic and influential horror.

Masters of Horror constitutes a significant shift in a cinematic direction. Created by Mick Garris for Showtime in 2005, *Masters of Horror* was an anthology of independent hour long episodes. These episodes were almost entirely unrelated, as each was directed by a different “Master of Horror”. Notable film directors including Dario Argento (*Suspria*), John Carpenter (*Halloween*), and Tom Holland (*Child’s Play*) had complete control over each of their episodes, which were, effectively, short films. In fact, in a 2005 trailer these episodes were advertised as “thirteen all new original movies from the Masters of Horror” (Horror Trailers HD). *Masters of Horror* can be seen clearly as a TVIII text. Freed, at least in part, from censorship and time constraints, horror television could move in a more cinematic direction, using the same formulas, and same developers as film. In *Masters of Horror*, we see a unique conceptualization of what it means to be a cinematic television show. While alternate cinematic forms will develop in television, *Masters of Horror* remains the primary example of the structure of film being directly translated into a television format.

Serial Horror

Dark Shadows premiered on ABC in 1966 to a generally poor reviews. The soap opera followed Victoria Winters (played by unknown actress Alexandra Isles), an orphan who arrives in the mysterious town of Collinsport Maine with the intent of finding employment and unraveling her past. Audiences were originally unimpressed with the slow pace of the series which featured a gothic aesthetic but none of the supernatural characteristics it came to be known for. The show begins to toy with the concept of the supernatural roughly 50 episodes in, claiming that ghosts abound in Collinsport. However, it is 35 episodes after this statement until a ghost

actually appears. With ratings still flagging roughly a year after its premiere, show creator Dan Curtis introduced the character of Barnabas Collins (Jonathan Frid), the vampire relative of the current inhabitants of the great Collinwood estate. Barnabas is introduced to the series when Willie (John Karlen), a first-time grave robber, opens his sealed casket in the Collins family mausoleum and is attacked. Though Barnabas is clearly a vampire from the audience perspective, it is roughly 20 episodes before the residents of Collinswood are aware of the reality of their situation. This is especially remarkable considering Barnabas was originally only meant to be part of the show for thirteen weeks, or 65 episodes. This plotting exemplifies Gunning's cinema of attractions. The audience is aware that at any moment, Barnabas could be revealed as the monster we know him to be. This preparation and delay makes the revelation of Barnabas' situation to the characters exciting, even though audiences are aware that it is coming. Similarly, this level of preparation and delay are necessary when you consider the reality of the medium in 1966. In Romano's work, *Breaking Bad* creator Vince Gilligan states "When I started doing TV almost 20 years ago, studies showed that a so-called fan of a TV show probably saw one in four episodes on average", and with *Dark Shadows* airing daily almost 30 years before Gilligan began his career, that disparity could likely be even higher (Romano). Audiences effectively needed a built in grace period which assumed they wouldn't see every moment unfolding. This reality of viewership was also ameliorated by Victoria's eerie narration which began each episode. These introductions gave audiences a vague recap of recent events and a hint of what audiences might expect in the moments to come. Creator Dan Curtis effectively utilized the constraints of 1960s television to place his show more firmly in the gothic tradition it developed from and add to the atmosphere instead of detracting. Alongside the slow pacing, this introductory narration is a clear example of how horror television can thrive within the constraints of the medium. Obviously,

television has come a long way, but with greater opportunity comes greater competition. When *Dark Shadows* premiered, it was one of only 18 daytime soap operas.

Twin Peaks premiered in 1990 amidst an advertising campaign centering a number of questions. Teaser ads like “Who took the video of Laura in the woods?” built up to the larger question regarding the inciting incident of the show’s plot: Who Killed Laura Palmer? The presence of this question seems to present the opportunity to view *Twin Peaks* as an early hyperserial text. Unfortunately, a number of narrative choices prevent this from being the case.

Twin Peaks premiered after the establishment of many of the defining stylistic components of TVII. Especially significant among these was the importance and expectation of a season-ending cliffhanger (Dolan, 34). *Twin Peaks*, however, didn’t totally fit the mold set forward by the other shows. Instead of adhering to either a purely continuous plotline or a purely episodic one, *Twin Peaks* utilized the episodic format of a detective show as an expository tool for soap opera. This narrative complexity both marked *Twin Peaks* as an avant garde text and set audience expectations that it would struggle with later on. By beginning this process with an overarching question: Who Killed Laura Palmer?, *Twin Peaks* suggested that answering this question would be the primary goal of the show. Though *Twin Peaks* was seen as avant garde and cinematic show, audiences still felt it was beholden to some narrative convention, and were frustrated when the show began to deviate from its presumed focus. (Dolan).

Twin Peaks was incredibly popular in its first season, but the narrative structure of Season Two led to its rejection and ridicule by its former audience. The first season of *Twin Peaks* did not answer the question it put forward originally. However, by the finale there were three primary suspects, all of whom could be responsible for Laura’s death. Leaving this cliffhanger was, at this point, expected. However, David Lynch had no interest in revealing

Laura's killer, intending instead, for that question to continue to guide the show forward. Partially for that reason, when Season Two picked back up, things went in a different direction. Like in *Dark Shadows*, *Twin Peaks* dug deeper into its supernatural elements, ruling out the terrestrial suspects and instead placing blame on an otherworldly and indefinite figure called BOB. Lynch's intent seems to be a transition to a new guiding question: Who Is BOB? To some extent this is effective, but at the same time, Special Agent Dale Cooper (Kyle MacLachlan) and the Twin Peaks police force are chasing down BOB's human host, who is, of course, Laura's killer. Therefore when BOB's host is revealed, caught, and charged, per network request, by Episode 9 of Season 2, the show loses a significant amount of inertia. The remaining thirteen episodes seem to be split into five smaller episodic serials. The White Lodge/Black Lodge, Ben Horne's spiritual quest, and James' incredibly long road trip are all very different plot lines that intersect with the larger narrative of the season, but allow for multiple avenues to be explored outside the context of a season guiding question or threat. Lynch has been incredibly vocal regarding his disappointment with Season Two and his frustration with expectations of the network. The inability for Lynch to define key aspects of his own content represents a significant constraint in television development. However, the attempts made to work around these constraints have considerable value moving forward. While the strategy of "bite-size" narratives ultimately disappointed fans, it indicated another form of serial hybridity that prevents both exhausting a plotline and entering into plot developments fans would deem unacceptable.

Hybridization

As early as TVII, horror creators were melding the two primary forms into all new plot amalgamations. This can be seen clearly in Joss Whedon's *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*. While the series as a whole follows a consistent group of characters through a clearly narrative plot,

touches of anthology have been added to maintain the novelty that fear often requires. For instance, it was in reference to *Buffy* that the term ‘Big Bad’ was coined to describe the most significant or final villain in each season. Knowing that the same threat could only be scary for so long, Whedon featured a primary antagonist per season that his main characters, the ‘Scooby Gang’, would need to face. This kept the comedy-horror amalgamation feeling fresh rather than tired over its seven seasons. (Mittell)

Another tactic Whedon used dates back to TVI. When *The Outer Limits*, an anthology series that premiered in 1963, needed to take on its competitor, *The Twilight Zone*, the writing team promised a new monster each week. (tvtropes.org). Naturally this makes sense in an anthology format, but Monster of the Week now refers to any episode in which a monster is both introduced and destroyed, never to be seen again in the series. Arguably *Buffy*’s most famous episode, *Hush*, introduced the Gentlemen, dreamlike monsters who steal the voices of the residents of Sunnydale. While the Gentlemen are massively regarded as the most frightening *Buffy* villains, they are presumably defeated in *Hush* and don’t appear again in *Buffy*’s seven seasons. *Hush* furthers some elements of the season’s larger plot arc, but it is also inarguably drawing upon the anthology tradition to push the medium just a little bit further. (Mittell).

While Big Bad and Monster of the Week are fairly established conventions, recently a new hybrid has taken precedence as the horror television standard. Shows like *American Horror Story* and *Channel Zero* have embraced an anthology plot model in which each season is its own self-contained narrative. Blending the narrative capabilities of the serial form with the novelty of the anthology, these shows allow for completely immersive and bingeable narratives that still don’t stick around long enough to lose their edge. Similarly, these shows benefit from advertising campaigns encouraging fans to guess what next season’s theme could be. The hype

surrounding this transition is a huge draw, and a way to build interest through visual shocks without revealing the narrative framework to which they belong. This combination of forms is uniquely suited to our current technology. Most television series still premiere on a weekly basis, but in most cases are uploaded to a streaming platform either immediately after airing or at the start of the next season. This makes it possible for younger fans who often don't watch TV on actual televisions to view the season as a whole rather than episode by episode. While this format is unique to TVIV, it may not be the ideal format for bingeing. Comparing a variety of current horror programming could be used to determine where the future of television structure might lie.

The Walking Dead can best be described as a TVIII show in a TVIV world. Premiering in 2010, the show following Rick Grimes (Andrew Lincoln) and his band of survivors in a zombie apocalypse has consistently been one of the most watched on television. Starting out as a narrative about group survival in the face of an overwhelming threat, *The Walking Dead* transitioned into a Big Bad format in the middle of its third season when the show became spaced out into half-seasons. This decision has impacted the show's narrative, and not for the better. As Atlantic writer David Sims explains,

“It's easy to guess how this season is going to go. Over the next several episodes, at the very least, Rick will wage his war, and its toll will reverberate throughout the show's vast ensemble; Negan will only be toppled by the winter finale (at the absolute earliest). How do I know that? Over the past few years, *The Walking Dead's* split-season structure has made its story arcs predictable and stretched-out; the current narrative feels more deliberative than ever.”

By following a formula for how and when its seasonal antagonist will be taken down, *The Walking Dead* has ultimately negated the benefits of utilizing the plot structure in the first place. Fans appear to feel the same way, since the shows viewership has dropped by 40% over the course of its 2016-2017 season. The idea that a threat is only scary for so long used to justify a seasonal change-up, but now, it appears that even a season may be too long to antagonize over the same solo antagonist. If you know the answer to “Will Rick defeat Negan?” before the season even starts, the hyperserial structure is pointless.

SyFy’s *Channel Zero* grapples with narrative familiarity by exploring aestheticized internet scary stories in season long arcs. Based on creepypastas like Candle Cove and No-End House, *Channel Zero* draws on the form contemporary form of horror. Creepypasta is derived from the term “cospypasta,” which described any piece of text that was endlessly “copy-pasted” across the Internet. These internet short stories usually present a fictional eyewitness account of a horrifying creature or scenario and since it’s often impossible to find the original posting, can rarely be verified or even accurately sourced. The best known example of a creepypasta is likely the “Slenderman”, a tall, faceless man in a suit who inspired both a video game series and an attempted murder.⁶ (Brodsky). By utilizing a narrative that is both familiar and mysterious in origin, *Channel Zero* can build on stories that are already shown to have shock value in an abbreviated capacity. In this case, the anthology plot structure works better than a Big Bad might, since each narrative can contain multiple threats, and varied story arcs. In fact, the first season of *Channel Zero* uses two different creepypastas as source material. Though there are considerable benefits to keeping a horror narrative from running too long, in the case of *Channel Zero*, there is limited incentive to continue with the series after finishing a season. Since each

⁶ In 2014, 12-year-olds Anissa Weier and Morgan Geyser stabbed their friend, Payton Leutner, in an attempt to appease Slenderman. (Brodsky)

season is an entirely separate story with a brand new cast and unconnected marketing, they vary considerably. This is incredibly successful in drawing viewers in, and maintaining their interest in a season long plot, but doesn't formally encourage viewers to continue with the series once that season ends. This can be a considerable problem once the show is available on an online platform. If viewers aren't incentivized to start the next season, shows like *Channel Zero* could have difficulty maintaining a following.

Arguably the first of the anthology season hybrids, *American Horror Story* has consistently experimented with narrative since its premiere in 2011. The show is in its seventh season, and has masterfully accounted for the constraints of familiarity inherent to the horror genre. The theme of the series changes every season, and often the announcement of the next season's focus is prefaced by conceptual and disturbing teaser trailers. Not only does this avoid a lull in the plot, but it also encourages fans to interact with the show even when it isn't airing. Another strength of this format is the ability to develop distinct season storylines. The first three seasons can be characterized by compelling questions like, "Who is the Rubberman?" "Who is Bloodyface?" and "Who is the next Supreme?". Though *American Horror Story* features a multitude of secondary plots, the presence of these mysteries is felt throughout each season propelling the viewer forward. In many cases, these overarching plotlines are not the most horrifying component of the season. In addition to Rubberman, revealed to be our protagonist's dead, school-shooter boyfriend, characters face off against a myriad of ghosts, copycat killers, arsonists, the Black Dahlia killer and an undead monstrous baby. Similarly, though the revelation that supportive therapist Oliver Threadson is the Ed Gein-esque Bloodyface is horrifying enough, Season Two also features alien abduction, demonic possession, torturous "cures" for insanity, racism, homophobia, and an actual Nazi doctor. *American Horror Story* consistently

overburdens its narratives, developing a format that can certainly be described as astonishing. For all the bells and whistles present, the overarching question in these seasons is about who among them the characters should fear. This focus accounts for another significant challenge facing hyperserial horror: character death.

American Horror Story's unique approach to format has also provided the opportunity to continue with the same body of actors season after season while still maintaining a tremendous body count. One of the most shocking things that can happen in a series is the death of a significant or beloved character. However, with so much competition, the loss of a favorite actor could send fans seeking content elsewhere. Horror serials have dealt with this in different ways and often end up erring on the unacceptable end of the surprise/acceptability problem.⁷ However since each season of *American Horror Story* is set in a different time and place, fan favorite actors can reappear in the next season with no questions asked. In fact, in both Seasons 5 and 6, series staple Sarah Paulson appears as two different characters within the scope of the same narrative.⁸ This phenomenon, alongside the overt aestheticism present in *American Horror Story*, calls back to Gunning's work. *American Horror Story* is not intended to be frightening because it is perceived as real. The presence of double casting alone illustrates the show's disregard for typical conventions of naturalistic storytelling. Instead, *American Horror Story* attempts to shock not just by overwhelming visually, but also narratively. In addition to consistent plot twists, the series also offers moments that are simply conceptually horrifying: rebuilding a boy you like from body parts salvaged from a bus explosion, gouging your own eyes out, being burned alive,

⁷ The two main characters of the CW's *Supernatural* have died (and come back) a total of 117 times over the show's 13 season run while *The Walking Dead* has been consistently criticized for limiting main character death to avoid upsetting fans.

⁸ In season five, "Hotel", Paulson appears both as Sally, the ghost of a heroin addict, and Billie Dean Howard, a spiritualist she played in the series' first season. In season six, "Roanoke", Paulson plays both Audrey Tindall, an actress tasked playing the character of Shelby in the reenactment show the season masquerades as, and Lana Winters, a reporter she previously played in season two of the series.

being buried alive, being added to a doll collection after your death and engaging in sexual relations with a torture victim who has transformed into a minotaur. All of the events just mentioned took place in *American Horror Story*'s third season.

In addition to these intense and rarely contextualized moments of shock, the changing plot foci, and the ability for significant character death, *American Horror Story* has one more structural strength. In a 2014 interview with *Entertainment Weekly*, show creator Ryan Murphy confirmed the standing fan theory that the seasons of *American Horror Story*, though originally canonically separate, all take place in the same universe and have significant overlap with each other.⁹ As early as season 3, characters, not just actors, from previous seasons were appearing again, even though it made almost no sense for them to be there.¹⁰ Murphy has leaned into this especially heavily by utilizing Sarah Paulson, the only actor to be in every season, in the reprisal of early roles in different contexts. This inclusion not only encourages fans to interact with the show outside of its airtime, postulating fan theories and rewatching to find further examples it also allows for a hyperserial style question that could encourage people to keep watching after a season has ended: how does it all connect?

Syfy's homage to Grindhouse, *Blood Drive* premiered in fall of 2017. The show follows squeaky-clean cop, Arthur (Alan Ritchson) and desperate driver, Grace (Christina Ochoa) on a televised, post-apocalyptic, cross-country car race to save her sister. The title comes from the twist that said cars run on blood. *Blood Drive* received little positive attention, and in fact, has already been cancelled, but its format is quite well suited to its medium. Over the course of the show, Grace and Arthur stop in a number of different small towns which have all been affected

⁹ Characters in different seasons share last names, familiar settings are returned to in alternate contexts, and characters in more recent seasons occasionally discuss the "historical" events that happened in earlier parts of the series.

¹⁰ The character Pepper's presence in both *Asylum* and *Freak Show* suggests she hasn't aged in the 12 years since audiences saw her last

differently by the mysterious cataclysm that turned society on its head. The road trip narrative allows for a monster of the week format in addition to the larger season arc. These episode long pit stops are vehicles for considerable violence, often surrounding the car's unique fueling needs. The use of Monster of the Week in a new show is interesting in and of itself, but the Grindhouse component of *Blood Drive* added formal complexity that has interesting implications moving forward.

Like Robert Rodriguez and Quentin Tarantino's *Grindhouse*, *Blood Drive* features integrated ads and artificial damage in an attempt to equate it with Grindhouse films of the past. Because Grindhouse is primarily characterized by the quality of a film in terms of concept, production, and distribution, many of these films were damaged by by the time they got to the ill-reputed theatres in which they were played. However, unlike film, television never had an era characterized by dust, celluloid burns and missing reels, nor did Grindhouse movies feature intermittent ads the way television shows do. *Blood Drive* seeks to integrate the consistent commercial breaks inherent to cable television with other in-world commercial breaks. For example, an ad for the Pixie Swallows motel and restaurant, a location viewers know is run by cannibals, appears immediately before an actual commercial break in a number of episodes. Unlike a majority of hyperserial narratives, *Blood Drive* spends just as much time, if not more, on recapping past episodes and cutting to commercial than its predecessors. Effectively, *Blood Drive* is structured to spend less time embedded in the actual plot than a majority of its competition. Presenting episodes of different lengths is often only possible in the context of a streaming site, but by meshing two past conventions of episode structure, *Blood Drive* succeeds in determining exactly how long an episode, and by extension, a plot line will last. In contrast to

the goal of most contemporary shows, *Blood Drive* structurally encourages less engagement with the narrative, not more.

It's clear from looking at these examples that TVIV is an era marked by narrative complexity in a number of different forms. By utilizing different hybridizations of serial, episodic and anthology formats, these shows are concerned primarily with how audiences will engage with their work. However, all of these shows still air on a weekly basis, and while all are available for streaming in some capacity, they are still beholden to a format that may soon become outdated. According to a 2017 study conducted by Leichtman Research, there are officially more people in the United States with Netflix subscriptions than with cable. (Morris). This has massive implications for the kind of content that will be produced, and for what platform. However, that doesn't mean that the innovations of the past aren't still present in the most popular horror show designed for a streaming platform: *Stranger Things*.

The Strangest Things

Stranger Things is the only text that is not only hyperserial, but is likely beyond that. The Netflix original is one of the platform's most popular to date and illustrates a significant shift in the way television content is meant to be viewed. Netflix was the first to release entire seasons of its shows at once with *House of Cards* in 2013 (Romano). Reports showed that thousands of people watched all 13 episodes within 14 hours of its premiere. (Romano). Beau Willimon, the head writer for Netflix's *House of Cards* explained, "You don't even have to think of it as television. And none of us did. For us, it was a 13-hour movie" (Romano). This trend towards a more cinematic conception of television is one we've seen consistently in relation to evolution in the available technology. The Duffer Brothers have stated consistently that they thought also about the first season of *Stranger Things* as an eight hour movie. (Fienberg). Not only do Netflix

subscribers have the option to watch *Stranger Things*' 8-10 hour seasons all at once, but that method of viewing is expected. In *Beyond Stranger Things*, the interview style companion piece which was released with Season 2, host Jim Rash opens with,

“Alright, if you’re like me, you just watched nine hours of *Stranger Things* And I am feeling exhilarated, I am blown away, I am shocked, I am mad. Not mad at the show, All right? Just angry that there aren’t more episodes to keep me binge-watching”

(*Beyond Stranger Things*).

This companion program, which immediately follows Season 2, not only encourages bingeing, but suggests that, if given the opportunity, audiences should be excited about the prospect of bingeing even more. Similarly, at no point during the 9 hours of *Stranger Things* Season 2 does Netflix prompt “Are You Still Watching” as it does with other shows. This attitude, and clear platform discrepancy, illustrates that *Stranger Things* is meant to be watched, as creators the Duffer Brothers explain, in the case of Season 1, “as an eight-hour story”, or even a nine hour story in the case of Season 2 (Fienberg). *Stranger Things* doesn’t quite fit the mold of a hyperserial narrative. Any overarching questions that might drive the plot forward are typically answered in some form or another with relative consistency; Q: What happened to Will Byers? A: He’s trapped in the Upside Down, Q: What’s going on at Hawkins Lab? A: Ethically dubious experimentation. In fact, what could have been the greatest mystery of *Stranger Things*: Who/What is Eleven? Is answered before the character even appears.¹¹ On top of this, in Season 1 of *Stranger Things*, nearly every moment that could be considered horrific or astonishing takes place in either the first or last eight minutes of the episode. In fact, the first two minutes of Season 1 Episode 3 are effectively the same as the last five in Season 1 Episode 2. The second

¹¹ We are aware that Eleven has escaped from Hawkins Lab before she’s first seen on screen, and aware of her telekinetic powers before she meets the other protagonists.

episode ends with Barb (Shannon Purser), sitting alone on the diving board of a pool when the light above her flickers out and the sound associated with the season's monster, coined the Demogorgon, is heard. The implication that Barb has met the same fate as recent vanishee Will Byers (Noah Schnapp) is seemingly a mystery. However Netflix subscribers only have to wait 10 seconds or less to see Barb awaken in an alternate version of the pool filled with vines and the eerie atmosphere audiences will have already come to associate with the Upside Down. Within the first two minutes of the episode, Barb is chased by the Demogorgon, caught by the Demogorgon and dragged into the hellish pool. This doesn't even receive the full two minutes of screen time. The conclusion to the cliffhanger of Episode 2 is interspersed with Barb's best friend Nancy's first time having sex. It isn't particularly remarkable that so much happens in the first two minutes of this episode, television is fast paced after all. It's how little happens in the rest of it.

Episode 3, entitled *Holly Jolly*, progresses pretty slowly after this thrilling introduction. We see Nancy (Natalia Dyer) grappling with losing her virginity and, secondarily, her friend, Will's mother, Joyce Byers, (Winona Ryder) stringing up Christmas lights, Eleven (Millie Bobby Brown) wandering around the Wheeler house, and Police Chief Hopper (David Harbour) going to the library. This isn't to say that there aren't exciting moments within this episode. Roughly halfway through, Holly Wheeler (Tinsley Price) follows the flashing Christmas lights in the Byers house to Will's room where she encounters a monstrous hand reaching for her from inside the wall. Similarly, Eleven's mundane exploits are riddled with the occasional intense flashback to her time at Hawkins lab. While these moments are visually striking, they don't reveal any new information to the audience. We already know that Will can communicate through the lights, and that Eleven was experimented upon by dangerous people. The only new

information comes, as usual, in the last 8 minutes of the episode. About 44 minutes into the roughly 50 minute episode, the boys are interrupted by the sound of sirens. They get on their bikes and begin the chase. Approximately three minutes before the end of the episode, the boys witness a group of State Troopers pulling what appears to be Will's body from the lake. This moment is both heart wrenching and shocking as audiences have been led to believe that Will is still alive. The episode ends with the image of Joyce Byers and her other son, Jonathan (Charlie Heaton) hugging in the street with police cars approaching. The cliffhanger of Episode 3 is how Joyce will react to the alleged death of her son. Barb's disappearance and the discovery of Will's body are narrative, dramatic, and emotional high points that aren't matched at any other moment in the episode. And, as Episode 3 did, Episode 4 picks up immediately where its predecessor left off, as Joyce Byers is being informed of the discovery of her son's body. Similarly, it isn't until the last 4 minutes of Episode 4 that the next high point, Hopper's discovery that Will's body is fake, occurs.

The overwhelmingly positive audience response to this new format has been notable in and of itself, but a number of format variations in the second season offer a look at what past innovations are at work in *Stranger Things*. Season 2 is divided in almost bite-size plots in order to cover the considerable number of threats facing the characters. Like in *Twin Peaks*, this prevents any one narrative from being burned out too quickly. The Duffer brothers mention this explicitly in *Beyond Stranger Things* explaining their desire for antagonist with a "hive mind" that could control other threats. It's similarly clear from *Beyond Stranger Things* the extent to which the plot elements were split up. As Joyce and Will battle this new villain, the Mind Flayer, at the source, unlikely pair Dustin and Steve (Joe Keery) deal with a baby Demogorgon, and Nancy and Jonathan go on a quest to expose Hawkins Lab. This format allowed for a more

multifaceted threat than was present in Season 1, therefore increasing the audience's anticipation of how the collective threat would be defeated. As the series increases its scope, changes like these that allow more to actually happen over the course of the season benefit the program tremendously, but not all narrative exploration in Season Two was as successful.

The most notable example comes with Season 2 Episode 7. Eleven has been in search of the family taken from her before her imprisonment at Hawkins Lab. This leads her to her gifted and bitter "sister", Kali (Linnea Berthelsen) who lives with a group of outcasts in an abandoned building in Chicago. Unlike most episodes which weave back and forth among storylines or Twin Peaks-esque segmentations, Episode 7 is placed in entirely in Chicago, a far cry from the show's traditional small town setting of Hawkins. Episode 7 is not only the lowest rated episode in *Stranger Things* history, but also faced considerable critique for things ranging from bad dialogue, terrible costuming, an overuse of tropes and generally lazy writing (Adams). None of these critiques are unfair, but ultimately, I believe fans were frustrated with the break in what they've come to expect from the *Stranger Things* format. This perceived narrative stagnation serves to further illustrate the usual narrative complexity of *Stranger Things*.

Conclusion

When drawing a line through the past conventions of storytelling, anthology horror seems to dead end in *Stranger Things*. The overwhelmingly negative reaction to Episode 7, alongside the show's typically all-consuming narrative complexity seems to propose a clear victory for the serial series moving forward. As television content becomes increasingly based in streaming and binge culture, networks will no longer be motivating viewers to tune in next week, but to stay tuned for considerable chunks of time. By supplementing narrative content with behind-the-scenes looks reveling in the operational aesthetic, Netflix was able to monopolize an additional

two and a half hours of viewers' time. As we move forward into an age dominated by streaming, we can expect a departure from narrative conventions introduced as recently as TV14.

All of this is not to say that horror content created for streaming is inherently better than content created for networks or cable. In fact, there has been significant critique of *Stranger Things*' pacing from critics who did not watch the show all at once. While the fan response to *Stranger Things* might indicate that streaming platforms are generally more forgiving, especially for content made for bingeing, another new arrival in 2017 shows that isn't always the case.

Amazon's *Lore* can be seen as the most effective comparison point for *Stranger Things*. An anthology horror based off of the podcast by the same name, *Lore* utilized narration, animation, and reenactment to tell horrifying stories with a historical basis. The slow pace, laborious reenactment dialogue, borderline tangential secondary tales present in each episode, and, of course, audience reaction mark *Lore* as a pretty significant failure. A remake of a show with a committed fan following, *Lore* struggled to keep the interest of even those potential viewers. With reboots of both *Tales from the Crypt* and *The Twilight Zone* allegedly in the works, the future of the horror anthology is not yet determined. But while I can't say exactly what your future favorite might look like, I can confidently recommend you'll want to make time to watch it all at once.

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Benson-Allott, Caetlin. "1 Distributing the Dead: Video Spectatorship in the Movies of George A. Romero." *Killer Tapes and Shattered Screens: Video Spectatorship from VHS to File Sharing*, U of California P, 2013.

In the first chapter of her book, Benson-Allott compares the zombie films of George A. Romero to track the stylistic changes in horror film production and themes alongside the development of technology. By matching each film to the dominant viewing medium of the time, Benson-Allott puts Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* and its many sequels in the contexts that they were viewed: the drive-in, the mall, home video, DVD, and online. In this process, she explores the roles that color, screen size, blocking and theme play in making films with the audience in mind. This will be useful in developing my argument that horror television made for streaming is primarily concerned with eliciting a specific response from their viewership. This piece provides concrete examples for some of the conventions laid out in previous theorizations on horror, including those by Noel Carroll. Though this chapter specifically discusses film, the vocabulary and context it provides will be helpful in describing the changes in television as it makes a different kind of transition.

Benson-Allott, Caetlin. "4 Going, Going, Grindhouse: Simulacral Cinematicity and Postcinematic Spectatorship." *Killer Tapes and Shattered Screens: Video Spectatorship from VHS to File Sharing*, U of California P, 2013.

The fourth chapter of Benson-Allott's book centers the 2007 film *Grindhouse* in order to explore the role that the intent for reproduction can play in horror filmmaking. Benson-Allott argues that while Rodriguez and Tarantino attempt to recreate a nostalgic viewing experience, they ultimately create an entirely different form of storytelling. By building in ads for movies that won't exist as well as altering the digital copy to appear damaged, Rodriguez and Tarantino don't quite evoke the Grindhouse films of the past, but rather redefine the genre for a new audience. *Grindhouse* centers an audience experience and invokes nostalgic imagery. Benson-Allott's piece provides a helpful framework for looking at shows like *Blood Drive*, a Grindhouse inspired series, and *Stranger Things*, which invokes the films of the 80s in both style and content. I plan to draw upon this piece in my discussion of how form directly shapes the viewing experience as well as the role of nostalgia in horror.

Benson-Allott, Caetlin. "Paranormal Spectatorship: Faux Footage Horror and the P2P Spectator." *Killer Tapes and Shattered Screens: Video Spectatorship from VHS to File Sharing*, U of California P, 2013.

Benson-Allott's chapter on 'faux footage' horror claims that moral lessons so omnipresent in the horror genre can be presented through form as well. Films like *The Blair Witch Project*, *Cannibal Holocaust*, *Paranormal Activity*, and even *The Ring*, stress the danger in watching found footage. Benson-Allott believes that the rise of this genre is very much in part to the rise of the internet and the early forms of streaming. The idea of an imbedded warning against piracy in horror films presents an interesting development in the concept of form and the role that it can play in a work. I especially plan on using this essay to contextualize *American Horror Story: Roanoke*, which claims to be *My Roanoke Nightmare*, a

fictional horror reenactment show a la *My Ghost Story*. I similarly hope to use it in my discussion of the phenomenon of reality horror shows, and especially reality horror competition shows. By presenting the form as a component of horror in itself, Benson-Allott provides an interesting new way to look at hyperserialized horror.

Benson-Allott, Caetlin. "Conclusion: Power Play." Afterword. *Killer Tapes and Shattered Screens: Video Spectatorship from VHS to File Sharing*, U of California P, 2013.

In the conclusion of *Killer Tapes and Shattered Screens*, Benson-Allott discusses the temporal control available to the horror viewer of today. With the ability to play a horror film at any time, alongside the ability to stop, pause, or rewind at will, the horror viewer of today has agency in their experience. While Benson-Allott refers specifically to film, this ability plays an even larger role when it comes to streaming and binge watching. Because viewers have more control over their viewing experience, more must be done to ensure that they have the intended response to the content available.

Carroll, Noel. "The Philosophy of Horror : Or, Paradoxes of the Heart." Taylor and Francis, 1990. ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/claremont/detail.action?docID=180966>.

In *The Philosophy of Horror*, Noel Carroll defines horror as a genre and lays out models of conventional horror plots. Carroll explains that like suspense or mystery genres, horror is defined by its intended capacity to raise an effect in a viewer and is signaled by "the presence of monsters who cannot be accommodated naturalistically by science". While this definition feels somewhat lacking, it is a great jumping off point for determining this quality that is meant to be elicited in viewers. Carroll also extrapolates on the 'complex discovery' and the 'overreacher' plots which I will use as a framework to examine the different narrative strategies of modern horror. This piece will be especially helpful in explaining why horror is one of the best mediums to consider in the search of viewer focused production.

Dolan, Marc. "The Peaks and Valleys of Serial Creativity: What Happened to/on Twin Peaks." *Full of Secrets: Critical Approaches to Twin Peaks*, by David Lavery, Detroit, Wayne State UP, 1995, pp. 30-50.

Marc Dolan presents the two most compelling theories regarding the downfall of Twin Peaks in this piece. Emphasizing the distinct narrative formats in the first and second season, Dolan draws on different structural theorists to explain the relationship between presentation and audience reception. Specifically this piece is incredibly useful in both contextualizing Twin Peaks and touching on issues I'm grappling with including ideal length, serialization, and overarching plot function. I think this piece will intersect with Gunning in a useful way that fleshes out my argument regarding the complicated intersection of astonishment and narrative.

Gunning, Tom. "An Aesthetic of Astonishment: Early Film and the (In)Credulous Spectator." *Art and Text*, vol. 34, 1989, pp. 114-29.

In *An Aesthetic of Astonishment*, Tom Gunning contradicts the oft-told story of Lumiere's *Arrival of a Train at the Station*. Gunning argues that spectators did not truly believe that they were to be hit by an

oncoming train, but willingly suspended disbelief to better enjoy the technological marvel that was being presented. Early audiences, he says, were not only very aware of what they were going to experience, they were explicitly told as part of the experience. Gunning argues that spectators are more enthralled by the transformation from still to moving image rather than by a perceived reality, and the build up to this moment is just as much part of the 'thrill' as the moment itself. This work is relevant both in building a history of horror and contextualize the creation of suspense and scares in modern works.

Gunning, Tom. "The Cinema of Attraction: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde." *Wide Angle*, vol. 8, Fall 1986, pp. 63-70.

Gunning explores the history of narrative film as a vehicle for shocking images or effects. Contextualizing early cinema alongside fairground attractions rather than in cinemas, Gunning puts emphasis on the spectacular and exhibitionist nature of film. Most contemporary theorists emphasize the role that narrative plays in horror, but it's important to acknowledge that shock value is an important component of horror. Though not always immediately recognizable, the tenets of Gunning's cinema of attractions are still present in modern horror television.

Jowett, Lorna and Stacey Abbott. *TV Horror : Investigating the Dark Side of the Small Screen*. I.B.Tauris, 2013. EBSCOhost, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=864703&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

In *TV Horror*, Jowett and Abbott track the changes in conventions of horror television throughout three defined periods. As in Benson-Allott's essay, Jowett and Abbott draw parallels to the changing style and subject matter of television, horror shows especially, and the technological advancements taking place. This book provides a number of plot formats and conventions including the anthology, the adaptation and the most serialized soap opera formats. Jowett and Abbott's book provides the most thorough history of horror television and the most comprehensive amalgamation of tropes. I plan to build on their work, and potentially define a new period in horror television based in the rise of streaming.

Mittell, Jason. "Narrative Complexity in Contemporary American Television." *The Velvet Light Trap*, University of Texas Press, 12 Oct. 2006, muse.jhu.edu/article/204769.

Mittell's framework for exploring contemporary narrative complexity proves extremely useful in centering my argument on narrative evolution. Similarly, the concept of "operational aesthetic" ties well into shows like *Beyond Stranger Things* which speak entirely to this secondary mode of viewership.

Romano, Andrew. "Why You're Addicted to TV." *Newsweek*, 15 May 2013, www.newsweek.com/2013/05/15/why-youre-addicted-tv-237340.html. Accessed 5 Nov. 2017.

Andrew Romano's piece argues that as technology changes, the way we tell stories changes with it. In this article, Vince Gilligan coins the term 'hyperserialization', the current mode of consuming television which is characterized around a "purer, more intense focus on one linear, series-long plotline". The article also explores the neurocinematic approach to television and the role a director must play in controlling the

way a viewer's eye moves through their experience. These facets combine in the hopes of keeping audiences coming back each week, but I'm especially interested in how shows plan to keep audiences coming back after ten seconds. This is one of the only sources that specifically references the way streaming and binge culture affect television and will be especially valuable in carrying the narrative put forward by Jowett and Abbott into the present.

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