

“Not everyone dies” - Analysis of the horror and different characters in Reddit’s r/NoSleep subreddit

Bachelor’s thesis

Eetu Riihimäki

University of Jyväskylä

Department of Language and Communication Studies

English

May 2024



UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

Tiedekunta - Faculty Humanistis-yhteiskuntatieteellinen tiedekunta	Laitos - Department Kieli- ja viestintätieteiden laitos
Tekijä - Author Eetu Riihimäki	
Työn nimi - Title "Not everyone dies" - Analysis of the horror and different characters in Reddit's r/NoSleep subreddit	
Oppiaine - Subject Englannin kieli	Työn laji - Level Kandidaatin tutkielma
Aika - Month and year Toukokuu 2024	Sivumäärä - Number of pages 22
<p>Tiivistelmä - Abstract</p> <p>Tässä kandidaatintutkielmassa tarkastellaan NoSleep-kauhutarinoiden henkilöhahmojen kuvauksia ja niiden yhteneväisyyksiä sekä kyseisten henkilöhahmojen vaikutusta kauhun elementtiin kyseisissä tarinoissa. NoSleep-kauhutarinat ovat sosiaalisen median palvelun, Redditin, keskustelupalstoille kirjoitettuja kauhutarinoita, joissa minäkertojina esitellyt hahmot kokevat kauhustuttavia kokemuksia. Aiemmin aihetta tutkinut Minkkinen (2021) keskittyy tutkimuksessaan tarkemmin tarinoiden kertojiin ja genreen itseensä. Tutkimuksen aineisto koostuu viidestä kaikkien aikojen suosituimmasta NoSleep-tarinasta. Tutkimuksen tekoon hyödynnetään kirjallisuusanalyysia sekä Forsterin (1927) ja Fokkeman (1991) teorioita kirjallisuuden henkilöhahmoista.</p> <p>Tutkimuksen tulokset osoittavat, että eri NoSleep-tarinoiden henkilöhahmot jakavat keskenään samankaltaisuuksia. NoSleep-tarinoiden henkilöhahmot noudattavat hyvin säännöllisesti Fokkeman (1991) asettamia konnotatiivisia koodeja eli tapoja, joilla määritellään henkilöhahmon syvyyttä. Tuloksista selviää myös, että eri henkilöhahmojen piirteet ovat tärkeässä osassa NoSleep-tarinoiden kauhun rakentamisessa. Päähenkilöiden inhimillisuus ja samaistuttavuus herättävät lukijassa kauhun tunteita. Myös NoSleep-tarinoissa usein käytetyt hirviöt ja niiden kuvailutavat vaikuttavat tarinan kauhun elementtiin valtavasti.</p> <p>Tutkimuksen tuloksia voisi jatkossa hyödyntää kirjallisuudentutkimuksen alalla, erityisesti ajatellen modernia internet-kauhukirjallisuutta, kuten NoSleep-tarinoita. Tutkimuksen tulokset antavat laajan pohjan NoSleep-tarinoiden käsittelyyn syvemmin ajatellen esimerkiksi yhteyksiä tarinoiden teemojen ja hahmojen välillä.</p>	
Asiasanat - Keywords horror, characters, Reddit, nosleep, literary analysis, internet horror fiction, Forster, Fokkema	
Säilytyspaikka - Depository JYX	
Additional information	

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	4
2	THEORETICAL BACKGROUND	6
	2.1 Horror fiction.....	6
	2.2 Characters in fiction	8
	2.3 Internet horror.....	9
3	THE PRESENT STUDY	11
	3.1 Research aim and questions	11
	3.2 Data.....	12
	3.3 Method of analysis	13
4	ANALYSIS	15
	4.1 Portrayal of characters in NoSleep stories	15
	4.2 Use of characters to enhance horror in NoSleep stories.....	18
5	DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION	21
	REFERENCES.....	24

1 INTRODUCTION

“The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown.” (Lovecraft, 1927, p. 1) Horror fiction has fascinated people since the ancient times and continues to do so even today. The fascination towards horror has also spurred some research on the field, and Colavito (2008) is one of the people who have researched horror and its periods. Characters in fiction are an important factor to completely understand horror fiction and studies from people such as Forster (1927) and Fokkema (1991) help shed light on this aspect of fiction. With internet, a form of indie horror fiction is constantly gaining more popularity among different communities, especially the social media platform Reddit’s forum called r/NoSleep. In this bachelor’s thesis, the posts from r/NoSleep subreddit will be referred to as NoSleep stories. The study will be focusing on the characters introduced in the stories and how the way they are written contribute to the horror elements of the story.

The aim of the present study is to fill a research gap in the field of modern horror fiction. As a phenomenon, NoSleep stories have been researched previously by Minkkinen (2021) as an example. Nevertheless, the research on these stories is still scarce and the phenomenon should be studied more in depth. Heikkinen (2019) studied Creepypastas, which are stories that are in some ways to similar

to NoSleep stories. The works of modern internet horror fiction share qualities that are alike. This phenomenon will be discussed more in depth in section 2.3.

The thesis is divided into five subsections. The following chapter will discuss the theoretical background. The third chapter will discuss the methodology of the present study. The fourth chapter will include the analysis. The final chapter will include discussion of the results, and a conclusion for the thesis.

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This section of my thesis will go through the works of theory that give the present research a theoretical background. The section will begin by discussing different aspects of horror fiction and horror as a genre. After that, it will go more in depth in horror by discussing what kinds of characters works of horror fiction can have. Lastly, the section will discuss the overall state of modern internet horror fiction.

2.1 Horror fiction

Horror genre has a multitude of definitions. Leppälahti (2018) states that defining horror is quite a difficult task. There are many ways to define horror. Some examples are phenomena that cannot be rationally explained, actions that defy the laws of physics, and everything that cannot be logically categorized (Leppälahti, 2018, p. 9). As this definition is quite broad, other researchers offer narrower ways to approach horror. According to Colavito (2008), Carroll defines horror genre as stories that revolve around the concept of a monster, further claiming that anything else described as horror is not what horror is really supposed to be (Colavito, 2008, p. 13). Even though Colavito presents this aspect as a possibility in defining horror, they criticize Carroll's approach and disagree with them, saying that everything that awakens the feeling of fear could be defined as horror (Colavito, 2008, pp. 13-14). Taking all these different ways of

defining horror into consideration, horror genre has at least one defining feature: the ability to invoke fear.

As a genre, horror fiction has developed during different periods. Colavito (2008) introduces a multitude of the periods of horror fiction since the eighteenth century. The current period of horror is known as the Horror of Helplessness. The defining feature for this period is the realization of human beings' limited control in the face of a greater horror (Colavito, 2008, p. 18). They also introduce the major categories of horror, which are supernatural horror, weird tale, contes cruelles, psychological horror, dark fantasy, and science fiction (Colavito, 2008, pp. 14-15). The works of horror fiction are often categorized by the features of these categories.

Certain elements are quite common for the works of horror fiction. Fear of the unknown is an element many scholars have discussed. Horror is something that is always with us, something that lurks in the dark, and something that humanity tries to shed some light on in the hope of breaking its grasp on us (Colavito, 2008, p. 5). Fear of this unknown has also been described as the strongest and oldest fear we have, making it a critical element in horror fiction (Lovecraft, 1927, p. 1). The fear of unknown has many ways of manifesting itself in horror fiction. One of the most common manifestations of this phenomenon is monsters. When a monster is an undead character (i.e. a being that is simultaneously dead and alive), the coexistence of these features creates a contradiction that defies understanding. A monster can also be a supernatural being such as a ghost or a demon, thus shattering the wall between dimensions (Leppälahti, 2018). Conclusively, a monster is a being that creates terror by being unexplainable.

2.2 Characters in fiction

There are multiple theories about what defines a character in earlier literary research. Forster (1927) divides characters into two main categories: flat and round characters. Flat characters are described as caricatural or stereotypical actors in the story that consist of very few details and lack depth. They can even appear only in a single sentence of a story and never be mentioned again. These characters can be very useful to an author since they require very little in-depth characterization. Round characters, in turn, are constantly developing individuals that gain more aspects and qualities as the story progresses (Forster, 1927, pp. 46-51). Forster's theory has later been criticized by other researchers for not considering the possibility that a character can consist of a combination of qualities from both categories (Käkelä-Puumala, 2008, pp. 246-247).

Literary characters have also been categorized depending on their different qualities. A more detailed definition for characters in literature is introduced by Fokkema (1991). According to their theory, literary characters can be categorized by different denotative and connotative codes. Denotative codes are divided into two elements, which are the name of a character and the pronoun that is used when referring to them. Fokkema argues that the name of the character is extremely important because its purpose is to define an identity to a character (Käkelä-Puumala, 2008, p. 257). Fokkema's connotative codes are as follows:

1. Logical code
2. Biological code
3. Psychological code
4. Social code
5. Code of metaphor and metonymy

There are some requirements for these codes. The logical code requires for the character to be a logical being. This means that a character either completely exists or does not exist, meaning that the character cannot be existent and non-existent at the same time. The character cannot be human and inhuman at the same time either. The biological code requires for the character to have biological aspects, meaning that the character has biological parents and biological needs. When a character has some internal activity, for example feelings, desires or needs, the psychological code is valid. It is generally the lack of the psychological code that makes a character flat. The social code requires for the character to belong in a social community. When a character belongs to a social community, it can usually be seen in the interactions between characters. The code of metaphor and metonymy has two initial requirements. Firstly, the character must be in some way describable, thus filling the code of metonymy. Secondly, some outer features (i.e. the character's name or appearance) should have some ties to the characters personality, thus filling the code of metaphor (Käkelä-Puumala, 2008, pp. 257-258).

These codes add to Forster's (1927) theory by helping to define how flat or round a character is. The more a character fills the codes given by Fokkema, the more round a character is, and vice versa (Käkelä-Puumala, 2008, pp. 257-258). However, there are exceptions to this. For example, in the case that a character fills the psychological code very broadly but lacks the social code, the character could still be classified as a round character due to the psychological code is important in this categorization.

2.3 Internet horror

Internet horror has developed rapidly during the last decade. Nevertheless, the research in the field of internet horror is still scarce. In a study conducted by

Heikkinen (2019) a form of internet horror known as Creepypasta is analyzed more in depth. Methods used in this study were literary analysis and qualitative content analysis. In their study, the author mostly focused on the position of computers in works of Creepypasta. They found out that by being in a central position in our modern lives, the thought of computers invoking horror in stories provokes fear. Creepypastas are mostly based on urban legends and are shared widely across the internet. One common factor in these stories is the way they are written as truthful, factual experiences of the author (Heikkinen, 2019). It is not only in Creepypastas that this narrative is used. In their study, Minkkinen (2021) investigates narrator conventions in NoSleep stories and comes to the conclusion that these stories are invariably written from a first-person perspective. In this way, internet horror fiction is constantly testing the boundary of fiction itself. With these results it can be deduced that internet horror is in the form of a non-factual experience provided by the author of the story.

Some of these points differ from how horror is traditionally understood. Horror literature, in the traditional sense, can be written in the same way as these modern internet horror stories, but traditional works of horror can also utilize different narrators for different occasions whereas these internet horror stories only use the first-person narrator. On the other hand, traditional horror lacks the effect of an internet blog post. The author of internet horror stories is usually hidden behind a pseudonym or other kind of username, which changes the effect of the story drastically. This is discussed more in depth in section 4.2.

3 THE PRESENT STUDY

This section of my thesis will go through the most important framework behind the present study. The section will begin by introducing the study's research aims and questions and explain the choice of research questions. Next, it will introduce the chosen data and explain the choice of data. Lastly, the section goes through the methods that have been used in the thesis.

3.1 Research aim and questions

The present research aims to fill a research gap in the field of the study of modern horror fiction. More specifically the research focuses on characters in internet horror fiction and aims to find out more about how these characters are constructed, and how these characters can be analyzed applying previously presented theories from, for example Forster (1927) and Fokkema (1991).

This study's research questions are:

1. How are characters in NoSleep stories portrayed?
2. How are these characters used to intensify horror?

The first research question was chosen on the basis of studying the character conventions in the stories. The second research question was chosen on the basis of studying the characters' effects on the element of horror in the stories.

3.2 Data

The data collected for the study are the five most popular NoSleep stories of all time. The length of the individual stories spans between 2300 and 6700 words. The data for the study were collected from a social media platform known as Reddit and more specifically, a subreddit called r/NoSleep. The popularity of a story is determined according to votes called "upvotes" given by the members of the subreddit. Six months after the publishing of the story, it will be automatically archived making it impossible to comment or upvote the story. The most upvoted stories at the time of my research are as follows:

- A) My sugar daddy asks me for weird favors (71 500 upvotes)
- B) My wife has been peeking at me from around corners and behind furniture. It's gone from weird to terrifying (68 200 upvotes)
- C) Something walks whistling past my house every night at 3:03. (49 000 upvotes)
- D) She Sold Happiness in Glass Jars (43 200 upvotes)
- E) A Shattered Life (34 800 upvotes)

This data was chosen because the most popular stories in this subreddit represent how a well-written NoSleep story is constructed. Thus, analyzing the characters in these five stories will provide the most accurate answers to my research questions.

The stories in the subreddit r/NoSleep follow a certain set of rules. Here the rules that define the contents of a NoSleep story are introduced. Firstly, every story posted on the forum must include enough horror elements and the narrator of

the story must express their fear at least once in the story. Secondly, every story must be a complete horror story, as in it must contain “a horror themed event followed by a directly related and significant consequence” (Nosleep: Posting guidelines, 2023). Thirdly, every story must be written in a way that the narrator can be the one who experienced the horror and then recounted it in some form. This means that NoSleep stories need to be framed to be real experiences of the story’s narrator (Nosleep: Posting guidelines, 2023). By implementing these rules, the subreddit’s moderators ensure that all posted stories follow a similar structure.

3.3 Method of analysis

The present study focuses on analyzing the characters presented in NoSleep stories. The research will be a qualitative study, which focuses on analyzing differences and similarities in the selected stories from the subreddit r/NoSleep. The characters of the selected stories were analyzed using two different works of literary theory: Forster’s and Fokkema’s theories of a literary character. To answer my research questions, I will utilize literary analysis along with the theory from Fokkema and Forster. Literary analysis is the method of analyzing different literary devices used in the analyzed data. Literary analysis can be used to find out the significance and meanings of these literary devices in the data (Al-Hindawi & Al-Khazaali, 2017).

When considering the ethical questions of the study, there are a few to consider. To protect the identity of the content creators in Reddit, they have usernames the users have chosen themselves, thus giving them complete pseudonymity. Pseudonymity is almost as effective as anonymity when trying to conceal someone’s identity. The usage of these stories is ethical as well. The subreddit

r/NoSleep, along with its contents, is available on the internet for everyone to use, as long as the content creators are credited.

4 ANALYSIS

In this section of my BA thesis, the characters from the NoSleep stories are analyzed. First, the portrayal of characters in NoSleep stories is analyzed by using for example Forster's and Fokkema's literary theory. After that, the effect of these characters to the horror elements of the stories is analyzed. Fokkema's connotative codes are vital when analyzing both of these aspects. The data is referred to by the letters, which are presented in chapter 3.2. For example, the story *A Shattered Life* will be referred to as story E.

4.1 Portrayal of characters in NoSleep stories

The main characters are portrayed in a way that corresponds with Forster's round characters (see subsection 2.2). Some main characters are rounder than others but despite that, none of them have the lack of features typical for flat characters. The main characters of all the stories from the data are described quite broadly and as is characteristic of a round character, they show the ability to learn and grow as characters as well as have the ability to surprise the reader. For example, in story A, the main character is presented with a set of rules that need to be followed no matter what. Even though they express irritation due to the situation, they decide to learn the rules. Another great example of the roundness of main characters is in story D where the main character discovers an odd phone

number and, without any specific reason decides to call the number as can be seen in excerpt 1. This shows the character’s ability to surprise the reader. Even though the main characters are classified as round characters, multiple flat characters can also be found in nosleep stories (see Table 1).

Excerpt 1

As I took the same route home that I did every day to work and back, I walked by the same poster I had passed the day before. I don’t know why, I really don’t, but I decided to call the number. I figured it would be some joke.

Data	Round characters	Flat characters	Total
<i>Story A</i>	3	4	7
<i>Story B</i>	4	3	7
<i>Story C</i>	6	6	12
<i>Story D</i>	3	3	6
<i>Story E</i>	4	7	11

Table 1. Round and flat characters in the data

Fokkema’s connotative codes (see subsection 2.2) are extremely useful when trying to describe or categorize characters. The main character is usually a relatively normal person. This is referring to the main characters’ tendency to follow Fokkema’s connotative codes almost perfectly. The main characters always logically exist fulfilling the logical code. Most main characters express biological needs like hunger or sleep thus fulfilling the biological code. Psychological code is in a very important position, showing the main character’s internal motivation and thoughts. A great example of these can be found in story B, which tells the story of Ben, whose wife starts acting strangely to the point of almost driving him insane. Ben’s wife, Lynn, starts peeking at him from around the house which gets increasingly worse as time passes. Lynn begins to change even on the physical level, which makes Ben even more paranoid of his wife. The

main character of this story, Ben, adheres to Fokkema's codes, most visibly to the psychological code and biological code, which can be seen from Ben's thoughts in the story. His thoughts express visible anxiety and the desire to sleep in excerpt 2.

Excerpt 2

The mere thought of going back home gave me anxiety. I tossed and turned, unable to sleep.

Fokkema's connotative codes include two more codes. Social code is mostly followed by all main characters unless they are in a situation where the author wants to express the characters solitude or loneliness. Story C has a clear link to the social community (i.e. the neighborhood) around the main character, which is shown in excerpt 3. Story C tells a story of a young child who lives with their family in an odd neighborhood that is haunted by a nightly whistler which is forbidden to look at.

Excerpt 3

My neighborhood is a funny place. I've lived here since I was six and I love it. The houses are small but well-kept, good-sized yards, plenty of places to roam. There are a lot of other kids here my age, I turned 13 back in October. We grew up together and would always play four square in the cul de sac or roam around from back porch to back porch in the summer.

Fokkema's code of metaphor and metonymy is, however, different from the others. Main characters of nosleep stories are rarely widely described. On the other hand, the antagonists, which are usually monsters, adhere to the code exceptionally well. The monsters' outer features are described in depth, and usually they adhere to the code of metaphor and metonymy but not any of the other codes. This means that the monsters, for example, do not logically exist nor have biological needs. These points can be seen in later excerpts 5 and 7.

Some main characters lack the other half of Fokkema's denotative codes: a name. This may be due to the rules of the subreddit r/NoSleep. As the rules state, a nosleep story must be framed as a real-life account of the narrator. The lack of the name of the story's writer makes it seem like a hastily written internet post. For example, story A begins quite bluntly, without any sort of introduction. Story A tells the story of an unnamed 21-year-old woman who gets a suggestion to do errands for a man named Jack through a dating app (see excerpt 4).

Excerpt 4

His Tinder profile said he was 45, but he looked to be in his early thirties at most.

The supporting characters are often skeptical of the supernatural. Usually this has a large effect on the main characters psyche and that way, psychological code. This skepticism from the supporting characters enhances the solitude of the main character. As an example, the main character of story E could not convince the church to believe him: *The priests didn't believe me.*

Narrator is always the main character. This is due to the rules of the subreddit, which state that the narrator is always the one who experiences the horror. This was already concluded by Minkkinen (2021) in their study about narrators in NoSleep stories. By analyzing the characters more in depth, it can be concluded that the discovery made by Minkkinen still stands.

4.2 Use of characters to enhance horror in NoSleep stories

Horror of the unknown is an often-used element in NoSleep stories. As Lovecraft (1927) stated, the horror of the unknown is the strongest fear a person can experience. In NoSleep stories, there always appears to be a factor that is

completely unknown to the main character, as well as the reader. In story A, the main character encounters a being that can completely mimic other people.

Excerpt 5

It sounded like Jack, but still, I didn't get up. He would have a key, wouldn't he? Why would he need me to let him in? This continued for almost a full hour; different people would ring the doorbell, announce themselves, and then disappear when I didn't respond.

The current period of horror, the horror of helplessness, as presented by Colavito (2008) is present in NoSleep stories. The defining feature for the period is humankind's limited control against greater horror. This greater horror often manifests in NoSleep stories in the form of incomprehensible monsters or situations as an example.

Monsters are a type of characters that are used to create horror in NoSleep stories. Monsters are beings that create horror by being unexplainable, and that type of horror is very typical of NoSleep stories (Leppälahti, 2018). Most of the analyzed stories contain a monster of some kind. Story E tells a story of a man who encounters an entity that starts warping time around him. The man starts experiencing his life out of order and starts seeking for a cure with his grandson. This entity is described in the story as a cure is found.

Excerpt 6

The electricity moved through the creature like a wave, briefly revealing the terrible nature of what was happening to me. A bulging leech-like mouth was wrapped around the back of my head, coming down to my eyebrows and touching each ear, and its slug-like body ran over my shoulder and into my very soul. It was a parasite. And it was feeding on my mind.

Excessive description of characters is very common in NoSleep stories. As the lack of description can cause horror of the unknown, excessive description of

characters can still invoke fear. When a character is described very meticulously, it is easier to imagine what they actually look like. Excessive description is similar to what has already been seen in earlier findings in both traditional and modern horror fiction. For example, monsters, which are a usual element in both traditional and modern horror fiction, create horror by being unexplainable but when an unexplainable being is described, it creates horror (Leppälahti, 2018). Story B offers another great example, when the main character's wife, Lynn, is being described. The detailed, grotesque description Lynn puts the reader in the place of the main character.

Excerpt 7

Lynn was peeking from behind the shower curtain, her entire head stretched into the shower, leaving just her body outside. Her long dark hair hung against the curtain, the ends dripping with water. Her mouth hung open in a terrible grin, eyes wide and red, as if she hadn't blinked in a while. I screamed and jumped back against the wall. She didn't move nor did her smile waver. Her makeup ran down her cheeks in two black streaks. She looked giddy and completely deranged. I was fucking terrified.

The characters are used to create horror by being relatable. The main characters of the analyzed stories always express emotions, fears and other humane features that make them relatable to the reader. This is due to the human characters' adherence to Fokkema's codes (see section 4.1). If the character encounters a monster, they are understandably terrified which can be seen from the previous excerpt 7. Another feature intensifying the horror in these situations is the juxtaposition of characters. Whereas human characters are relatable and human-like, the presented monsters are the complete opposite. The feeling of loneliness the characters express enhances the horror in the story. All in all, the characters think and act like normal human beings in terrifying situations which makes it all the more terrifying. These findings are similar to previous findings.

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The focus of my study was to find out what kind of characters are used in NoSleep stories, and how these characters enhance the horror in the story. The research questions for this study were how characters in NoSleep stories are portrayed, and how these characters are used to intensify the horror in the NoSleep story. The data for the study were the five most popular NoSleep stories of all time. Literary analysis and previous theory of characters in literature were utilized as the methods for the analysis.

The analysis shows that main and supportive characters from NoSleep stories follow Fokkema's (1991) codes quite well and fit into the framework presented by Forster (1927). The characters are portrayed as logical beings who have biological needs, psychological thoughts and motivations as well as ties to social communities. The portrayal of characters is also done in a way that makes the characters relatable, for example by adhering to the beforementioned codes. All in all, a character in a NoSleep story is portrayed as a normal person who gets dragged into a terrifying situation. The analysis also reveals that the characters' effects to the element of horror in NoSleep stories is significant. Excessive description of characters, in this case especially monsters, intensifies the effect of horror by making it easier to imagine the grotesque sights the main character is exposed to. The relatability of the human characters is an important factor as well.

To put it simply, the fact that the main characters are human and act like it, makes the horror easy to feel for a human reader.

My study focuses on filling a research gap in the field of modern horror fiction. Currently there is little to none known research on the phenomenon of NoSleep stories. Research on nosleep stories is still lacking. Minkkinen (2021) conducted a study in which they analyzed narrators of NoSleep stories, thus creating new discussion of the phenomenon but still leaving room for more research. My research questions focus on defining the characteristics of different characters in nosleep stories. When discussing the nature of modern internet horror fiction and the narrator conventions of NoSleep horror stories, the findings made in the present thesis are in line with the previous findings from Minkkinen (2021) and Heikkinen (2019). However, the findings of the present study discuss characters in these stories my in depth therefore contributing to the research of modern horror fiction. Considering the fact, that this type of internet horror stories is currently a quite popular form of horror fiction, more research on the topic is essential. The results of the study might help shed some light on the current state of internet horror.

There are limitations to the study as well. Due to the length of the study, it was not possible to cover all aspects of characters in NoSleep stories. The data used for this study consists of five NoSleep stories, which is a rather limited amount of data since new NoSleep stories have been published daily since the founding of the subreddit r/NoSleep. Furthermore, by using theoretical framework different to this thesis, findings could slightly differ from the ones made in the present research.

Implications of the study are focused on literary research. The findings made in this study can be used by researchers of literature and genre, more specifically, researchers of modern horror fiction to study NoSleep stories more in depth, for

example by comparing the characters and themes of NoSleep stories. By utilizing both the findings of the present research and the research conducted Minkkinen (2021), a more in depth study about character conventions in NoSleep stories could be conducted. The findings of the present research could be utilized by researchers of culture as well. In a way, these findings could be used by authors of NoSleep stories. The findings of the present study go through how a successful NoSleep character is constructed and the findings could be used to further develop the characters in the genre by creating a more definite way of constructing NoSleep stories.

More possible research on the topic could be conducted on why this kind of horror fiction is popular and how it reflects the society of the current time. Horror can often be seen as a metaphorical description of the larger fears in a society, so the research done on the topic can be used in cultural research. Continuous research on literature, in this case horror fiction, is needed because literature is ever changing.

REFERENCES

PRIMARY SOURCES

[EaPAtp]. (October 16, 2019). *My sugar daddy asks me for weird favors* [Online forum post]. Retrieved from https://www.reddit.com/r/nosleep/comments/diuucz/my_sugar_daddy_asks_me_for_weird_favors/

[Maliagirl1314]. (February 18, 2022). *My wife has been peeking at me from around corners and behind furniture. It's gone from weird to terrifying* [Online forum post]. Retrieved from https://www.reddit.com/r/nosleep/comments/sva7z6/my_wife_has_been_peeking_at_me_from_around/

[Grand_Theft_Motto]. (November 19, 2019). *Something walks whistling past my house every night at 3:03.* [Online forum post]. Retrieved from https://www.reddit.com/r/nosleep/comments/dyqd5e/something_walks_whistling_past_my_house_every/

[flard]. (March 24, 2019). *She Sold Happiness in Glass Jars* [Online forum post]. Retrieved from https://www.reddit.com/r/nosleep/comments/b4vyxc/she_sold_happiness_in_glass_jars/

[M59Gar] (January 30, 2018). *A Shattered Life* [Online forum post]. Retrieved from https://www.reddit.com/r/nosleep/comments/7txais/a_shattered_life/

SECONDARY SOURCES

Al-Hindawi, F. H., & Al-Khazaali, M. (2017) *Linguistic analysis of literary data*. Anchor Academic Publishing.

Colavito, J. (2008). *Knowing fear: science, knowledge and the development of the horror genre*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co.

Forster, E. M. (1927). *Aspects of the Novel*. Lontoo: Edward Arnold.

Heikkinen, H. (2019). *Kodissa asuva vieras – Tietokoneen voima internet-kauhussa*. University of Jyväskylä. <http://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi:jyu-201901301358>.

Käkelä-Puumala, T. (2008). Persoona, funktio, teksti – henkilöhahmojen tutkimuksesta. In O. Alanko-Kahiluoto & T. Käkelä-Puumala (toim.), *Kirjallisuudentutkimuksen peruskäsitteitä* (p. 240-270). Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura.

Leppälahti, M. (2018). *Kaiken maailman kauhua: Kauhu ilmiönä ja harrastuksena*. Apatura.

Lovecraft, H.P. (1927). *Supernatural horror in literature*. <http://www.hplovecraft.com/writings/texts/essays/shil.aspx>. (October 29, 2023).

Minkkinen, L. (2021). *“But of course I wouldn’t be writing this if it hadn’t gotten worse”*: Narrator and genre conventions of r/nosleep horror stories. <http://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi:jyu-202102041435>

Nosleep: Posting guidelines.

https://www.reddit.com/r/nosleep/wiki/posting_guidelines. (November 19, 2023).