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**The new internet phenomenon: short horror stories written  
by amateur writers**

**Bakalářská práce**

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Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto bakalářskou práci vypracovala samostatně a že jsem uvedla úplný seznam citované a použité literatury.

V Olomouci dne:.....

## **Poděkování**

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

In my bachelor thesis, I would like to introduce a new possibility of expressing a horror text, short horror stories written by amateur mostly anonymous writers. Essentially creepy stories are pasted across the internet, thus in this thesis, the term creepypasta stories or creepypastas will be used. The authors upload these stories on the internet, more specifically on the websites specifically created for such purposes as *creepypasta.com*, or the subreddit<sup>1</sup> *Nosleep* and their real identity is unknown, meaning they usually upload these stories under a pseudonym. I am going to introduce this phenomenon by analyzing the common features of the most popular creepypastas.

## 1.1. Introduction and research question

The internet horror stories, written by amateur writers, are a part of the new possibility to create, which essentially is determined by the development of the Internet, thus being a new form of expressing and the endeavors to impact readers, the desired effect being to evoke fear and dread. This thesis explores the themes and topics employed by the authors. At the same time exploring the impact of the new environment of these authors, the Internet, meaning how the Internet influenced their decisions about the elements in such tales. For the examination of these elements incorporated in the creepypasta stories, the historical development of the horror elements is needed. By comparing the features of the traditional literary horror with the creepypasta stories, we gain a perspective on the new possibility of writing those stories. The inclusion of the aesthetic, which is a shared feature with traditional literary horror, will then enable us to understand the motives of the authors. Through the exploration of the narratives and elements of horror, we are guided to find the purpose of the horror stories and horror in general.

Through the comparison of the traditional horror texts with this new mode of writing a horror story is shown the necessity of exploring the creepypasta realm. The comparison requires a common feature, meaning the creepypasta stories being a newly developed part of the horror literature. The examination of all elements of the creepypasta stories is nearly impossible considering the vast number of stories also if we regard the nature of

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<sup>1</sup> A subpart of an online forum, on the social media *Reddit*, that is concerned with a specific topic.

the Internet. Thus it is impossible to analyze all the stories, let be all the elements. Thus the analysis will concern the stories which are considered to be the most disturbing and scary, through the rankings of different sites, which were fused and chosen accordingly. For the analyses, it is fundamental to consider elements such as the themes, narratives structure, and other prominent features apparent for the particular story. By arranging, these stories into categories according to the shared elements, we will be able to see which elements and features are necessary for the best stories, meaning the stories that fulfilled the effect of scaring the reader.

Considering that the creepypasta phenomena is a part of the horror mode, I am going, to begin with a brief introduction to the genre itself, including one section concerning the history of horror, not only on the conventional history of that genre but also the horror elements in older texts. I am going to look at the features common for the traditional horror and the internet horror stories, but also find the differences between them. Next, I would like to examine the aesthetics, traditional narratives, and elements of horror. Moreover, I am going to introduce the different theories on why some enjoy the horror genre. Following will be a brief introduction to the creepypasta realm. Thereafter I will distinguish different types of those stories and categorize them accordingly. I am going to apply this categorization to the stories which were chosen with respect to the ratings from the users of the creepypasta website and other sites. My main questions are What are the main literary devices of the creepypasta writers which made them so successful and have reached so great audience? What are some of the tropes and themes in the creepypasta realms and how does the narrative technique influence the story? Finally, are these characteristics discrete to the creepypasta realm?

## **2.CREEPYPASTA**

Creepypastas are stories posted on the internet with the purpose to scare the readers. The author of those stories usually includes something supernatural, unexplainable. *Horror Literature Through History* 2017, by Matt Cardin, introduces the history of horror and includes a part concerning the Horror Literature in the Internet Age,<sup>2</sup> in

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<sup>2</sup> Matt Cardin, *Horror literature through history: An Encyclopedia of the Stories That Speak to Our Deepest Fears*. Unabridged, (Greenwood, 2017), 111.

which the creepypasta is mentioned. The creepypasta stories started to appear during the beginnings of Web 2.0, which refers to the period in which the users of the internet started to create their own content, and possibly share it further.<sup>3</sup> In other words, the consumer became a creator who is able to interact with the audience and the audience is able to interact with the creator. During this time started to appear the first “chain mails” that were supposed to scare the receiver if the person refused to obey and would not disseminate the mail.<sup>4</sup> At the same time internet started to be a place where the horror genre would obtain a new form or maybe even create a new genre.<sup>5</sup> The World Wide Web allowed to connect people thus would bring new opportunities on how to connect and be a new place for discussion.

Creepypasta stories were since the beginning created to frighten the reader, as mentioned before, but most importantly those stories were meant to spread among the users of the internet. The term aroused from the label “copypasta” which referred to usually anonymous texts which were supposed to be copied and pasted on the internet and later renamed because of the creepy features of those texts on creepypasta. Those stories were mainly posted on *4chan* and sites such as *creepypasta.com* or a subreddit Nosleep and other forums and websites.<sup>6</sup> Creepypasta stories usually rely on the bizarre,<sup>7</sup> unknown,<sup>8</sup> uncanny,<sup>9</sup> and unsettling.<sup>10</sup> The structure usually of the personal narratives and set in an authentic setting. Trevor J. Blank and Lynne S. McNeill state in their publication *Slender Man Is Coming: Creepypasta and Contemporary Legends on the Internet* that the authors of creepypastas aim to disturb, fright, and cause paranoia and feelings of wrongness to the readers.<sup>11</sup>

One of the firsts creepypasta stories is “Smile dog”<sup>12</sup> which was directly inspired by the chain email and essentially a macabre and bizarre version of it. The creepypasta of

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<sup>3</sup> Matt Cardin, *Horror literature through history: an encyclopedia of the stories that speak to our deepest fears*. Unabridged, (Greenwood, 2017), 111.

<sup>4</sup> Cardin, 113.

<sup>5</sup> Cardin, 113.

<sup>6</sup> Cardin, 174 – 175

<sup>7</sup> something unusual, strange, peculiar

<sup>8</sup> the opposite of familiar, thus being a source of negative emotions

<sup>9</sup> Freud introduces the uncanny as a feeling or a sense which results from a strange mix of familiarity and unfamiliarity, which will be discussed later.

<sup>10</sup> Refers to something disturbing, shocking, provokes negative feelings related to the horror, e.g. anxiety, shock, and tension.

<sup>11</sup> Trevor J. Blank, and Lynne S. McNeill. *Slender Man Is Coming: Creepypasta and Contemporary Legends on the Internet* (Utah State University Press, 2018), 6.

<sup>12</sup> “Smile Dog,” Creepypasta, last modified April 28, 2010, <https://www.creepypasta.com/smile-dog/>.

employs the theme of a cursed object in a form of a picture on a disk. The reference to the chain email is there considering that the revelation, in the end, is that one has to spread the message, and the curse with it, in order to remove the curse. The story of a “Slenderman”<sup>13</sup> is essentially a new contemporary myth created in the creepypasta realm. The story and a mythology of a strange-looking creature that is inhumanly tall and thin, with long tentacles. “Slenderman”<sup>14</sup> is another creepypasta that first appeared in 2009, which also had real-life consequences. The real-life crime in 2014 in Wisconsin when two twelve-year-old girls attacked and attempted to murder another twelve-year-old girl and claimed that the Slenderman told them to do so.<sup>15</sup>

## 2.1. Horror genre

In this section, I am going to introduce a general idea surrounding the notion of horror, and looking at the general horror elements during history, determining how and why those elements emerged furthermore where were those elements recycled. The history of horror will be mainly drawn from Cardin's *Horror Literature Through History* (2017), *The Palgrave Handbook to Horror Literature* (2018) by Kevin Kremmel, and Laura Kremmel, Birkhead's *The Tale of Terror* (1920), Fahy's *The Philosophy of Horror* (2010)

The following section will be concerned with the aesthetic of horror texts. Meaning I will be stating the structure of the horror texts and the importance of the monster of the narrative, according to Noël Carroll which he explored in his 1990 publication *The Philosophy of Horror, or Paradoxes of the Heart*. Carroll also draws from Todorov's *The Fantastic*, thus will be discussed as well. This segment will also include a brief psychological insight into Freud's notion of uncanny which he examined in his 1919 essay “The “Uncanny””. Moreover the psychologist Carl Gustav Jung developed a notion of the shadow theory or shadow archetype in his early work *Psychology of the Unconscious* (1912) which could be viewed as important when discussing the enjoyment of reading horror texts.

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<sup>13</sup> “Slender man,” Creepypasta, last modified January 14, 2010, <https://www.creepypasta.com/slenderman/>.

<sup>14</sup> “Slender man,” Creepypasta, last modified January 14, 2010, <https://www.creepypasta.com/slenderman/>.

<sup>15</sup> Cardin, *Horror Literature through History*, 174.



### 2.1.1. Introduction

The beginning of the horror genre is usually linked to gothic literature.<sup>16</sup> But the horror, meaning the horror elements, in the literature is much older than that. The distinction of different kinds of horror is emphasized by Noël Carroll who in *The Philosophy of Horror, or Paradoxes of the Heart* (1990), differentiates horror as the emotion and horror as a genre, which he terms as a natural horror and an art-horror.<sup>17</sup> If we look at horror literature as a whole, it is considered art, thus it could be said that it correlates with many issues; historical, cultural, sociological, ideological, scientific, artistic, philosophical, religious, spiritual, and existential.<sup>18</sup> Narratives that use terror and horror to reinforce moral guidance and social commentary, have been present since the first myths,<sup>19</sup> such as the myth of a great flood which could be considered both for the first myth<sup>20</sup> and a universal one.<sup>21</sup>

The desire to terrify the reader and these horror elements are found even in the oldest texts, which could confirm that human beings display the desire to be scared. However, it is not always only the sense of fear that is expressed through horror, according to Cardin, it is essentially an inner urge of some sort, something inside us.<sup>22</sup> Nonetheless, this psychological aspect of horror will be discussed in the later section. If we should talk about the history of horror it is important to note that the scare devices and tactics used by the authors, who sought to induce fear in the reader changed over the years, also the reason for these endeavors changed as well.<sup>23</sup> The same could be applied to the themes and topics included in those horror texts. These themes and topics in many cases overlap in the contemporary culture, but important is that all of those features have some beginning and inspiration usually taken from the fears and anxieties

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<sup>16</sup> Kevin Kremmel, and Laura Kremmel, *Palgrave Handbook to Horror Literature* (Springer International PU, 2019) 21.

<sup>17</sup> Noël Carroll, *Philosophy of Horror: Or, Paradoxes of the Heart* (Routledge, 2015), 13.

<sup>18</sup> Cardin, *Horror literature through history*, 30.

<sup>19</sup> Cardin, 165.

<sup>20</sup> Edith Birkhead, *The Tale of Terror: a Study of the Gothic Romance* (Nabu Press, 2010) 6

<sup>21</sup> Universal meaning this myth appear in different cultures, not only Christianity but also in Greek, Norse, Chinese mythology, Hinduism and many more.

<sup>22</sup> Cardin, *Horror Literature through History*, 24

<sup>23</sup> As I will later elaborate on this, but briefly, during the beginnings, in the ancient texts, the reasons were to explain the world around them through the myths and stories of monsters. During the middle ages, the main purpose of literature that could be considered for horror was to control society, through religious terror, by promising them infinite torture in hell.

of that particular age,<sup>24</sup> which will be later demonstrated on the concrete texts and period they emerged.<sup>25</sup>

The horror genre has undergone quite a change in recent years. This manifests as the appearance of horror video games,<sup>26</sup> comics,<sup>27</sup> or the emergence of many new horror series<sup>28</sup> and movies that fall not only into the genre of horror but also could be further identified as in terms of a subgenre<sup>29,30</sup>. Currently, this also results in spreading the genre into all different types of storytelling and contributing new characteristics to the genre.<sup>31</sup> According to the essay “Horror and the Idea of Everyday Life” by Philip J. Nickel attributed the horror with two main requirements; the appearance of an evil supernatural presence or some kind of monster, not just a supernatural one, meaning the monster’s requirement could be fulfilled by the presence of a murderer. The second requirement is the emotions evoked in a reader, the feelings of dread, revulsion, and fear are essential.<sup>32</sup>

The notions of horror also may differ in various cultures across the world. One instance is introduced by Fahy in his *The Philosophy of Horror*, the notion of horror in the Indian aesthetic in which the concept of horror being an aesthetic experience is rooted in the third century BCE.<sup>33</sup> And this aesthetic experience was considered to be something enlightening and pleasurable thus applied to poetry and theatre. The basis of folklore, mythology was developed by those ancient traditions. This enables us to understand the wider context of horror texts.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Cardin, *Horror Literature through History*, 27

<sup>25</sup> For example, the novel *Frankenstein* expressed the fear of body snatchers.

<sup>26</sup> E.g. *Alone in the Dark*, *Resident Evil*

<sup>27</sup> E.g. *Through the Woods* (2014), *Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* (2014)

<sup>28</sup> E.g. *The Vampire Diaries*, *The Walking Dead*

<sup>29</sup> Such movies are for example the remake of King's adaptation the movie *It* (2017). The movies that are considered for a subgenre of apocalyptic movies are *Bird Box* (2018), or *A Quiet Place* (2018). For the Found Footage horror, there are *The Blair Witch Project* and its sequels (1999, 2000, 2016), or *Paranormal Activity* and its sequels (2007, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2014, 2015). Or the Splatter, Gore movies with its freshly gained attention considering it has appeared, the according to Cardin's *Horror Literature through History*, in the 80s. In recent years the movies that fall under this category are the film series *Saw* (2003-2010), *Hostel* (2005), *I Spit On Your Grave* series (2010-2013).

<sup>30</sup> Cardin, *Horror Literature through History*, 97

<sup>31</sup> Cardin, 27.

<sup>32</sup> Thomas Richard Fahy, *The Philosophy of Horror* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2012) 15.

<sup>33</sup> Fahy, 15.

<sup>34</sup> Kevin Kremmel, and Laura Kremmel, *Palgrave Handbook to Horror Literature*, 21.

Despite the long history of the literature with horror elements, the genre itself is criticized for insufficient terminology, unclear boundaries, rules and overall questioned for its validity and not being respected enough.<sup>35</sup> Noël Carroll, for example, mentions that the works of Edgar Allan Poe do not fit into the horror genre, considering that according to his work the horror story always requires a supernatural monster for the story to be a horror and rather considers his work for the writings of terror.<sup>36</sup> Eric Walter Frederick Tomlin on the other hand treats the supernatural as something added to the horror and sometimes the horror literature does not even require the supernatural.<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, the horror literary texts serve as an expression of our dark side, it mirrors the dark side of humanity, “the deepest intuitive and inviolate sense of right and wrong.”<sup>38</sup>

Since there are these conflicting ideas and theories, it is important to take into account not only the traditional horror genre but the elements of horror in the literature in order to gain a different perspective considering the topic of this thesis.

### **2.1.2. The History of the Horror genre**

The fearful elements are included already in the oldest texts. One of the earliest tales of terror is the myth of a great flood but a number of other ancient myths, legends, and heroic tales embracing terror.<sup>39</sup> Many of the motifs and elements which are connected to the horror genre even today, were established by ancient civilizations.<sup>40</sup> These are for instance the appearance of a werewolf, hellish monsters, ghosts, haunted houses, or omnipotent gods who punish those who disobey them, in those texts. The horrific elements and the desire to portray something that would evoke fear are present specifically in the ancient writings of Homer’s *Odyssey* (written in 700 BCE), in one of the oldest texts Mesopotamian *Epic of Gilgamesh* (ca. 1700 BCE), which depicts such topics as the underworld, oneiromancy,<sup>41</sup> or immortality. Homer in his *Odyssey*

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<sup>35</sup> Mark A. Fabrizi, *Horror Literature and Dark Fantasy: Challenging Genres*. (Brill | Sense, 2018) 1 – 2.

<sup>36</sup> Carroll, *Philosophy of Horror: Or, Paradoxes of the Heart*, 215

<sup>37</sup> Jack Morgan, *The Biology of Horror: Gothic Literature and Film*. Carbondale, (IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2006) 36 – 39.

<sup>38</sup> Fahy, *The Philosophy of Horror*, 40

<sup>39</sup> Edith Birkhead, *The Tale of Terror: a Study of the Gothic Romance* (Nabu Press, 2010) 6.

<sup>40</sup> Cardin, *Horror Literature through History*, 51.

<sup>41</sup> A form of divination through the interpretation of dreams

established some of the now most common topics of the horror genre. He portrays the horrific monsters<sup>42</sup> which his main hero encounters. He also depicted the theme of death through Odysseus's journey to the underworld. In his other text *Iliad*, Homer also explores the topic of ghosts<sup>43</sup>.<sup>44</sup> The works of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, their Greek tragedy, also incorporate supernatural features and gruesome physical horror scenes. Petronius in his *Satyricon* (ca. 65 CE) tells a tale about a soldier turning into a wolf, the first story of a werewolf in ancient literature.<sup>45</sup> Even though this depiction was for a comedic effect, the character of a werewolf indeed was depicted as a bloodthirsty creature in the Epic of Gilgamesh.<sup>46</sup> Other transformation tales are told in Ovid's *Metamorphosis* which portrays the alteration of human beings into animals and plants.<sup>47</sup> Those accounts of horror and horrifying elements in the ancient world and the works of ancient authors display the recognition of our unavoidable destiny, our mortality.<sup>48</sup>

With the beginning of the Middle Ages falls the Roman empire and with that falls the respect and value of those "pagan" texts.<sup>49</sup> The heroic stories were replaced by the "religious terror"<sup>50</sup> caused by the growing Christian influence. In the texts written during The Middle Ages, many tropes and elements of horror fiction are established but one should note that there was no horror genre considering the separation of "fiction" and "nonfiction" are modern concepts.<sup>51</sup> The epic poem *Beowulf* (written between 750 and 1000 CE), the work of Old English Literature is an adventure narrative portraying monsters, dragons, and kings. A hero narrative of Hygelac, King of the Geats who fights and defeats the feared horrifying monsters Grendel and his mother. After a long life, he finally dies in a battle with a dragon. Here we see the inclusion of monsters and

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<sup>42</sup> E.g. Sirens (half bird and half woman creatures), The Scylla (six headed sea monster), Cyclops ("round-eyed" giants), the sorceress Circe, Hesiod's *Theogony* (ca. 700 BCE) elaborate more on the description of these monsters.

<sup>43</sup> The ghost of Patroclus who is unable to cross the river Styx and enter the underworld.

<sup>44</sup> Cardin, *Horror Literature through History*, 45 – 47.

<sup>45</sup> Cardin, 49.

<sup>46</sup> Cardin, 1053

<sup>47</sup> Cardin, 49.

<sup>48</sup> Kremmel, *Palgrave Handbook to Horror Literature*, 1

<sup>49</sup> Cardin, *Horror Literature through History*, 51.

<sup>50</sup> The term refers to the idea of religion being a source of terror, in this case, the religion being Christianity. It emphasizes the involvement of violence in religion. The topics such as demon possession, or any references to hellish malevolent figures could be considered as a part of this concept.

<sup>51</sup> Cardin, *Horror Literature through History*, 52 – 53.

the supernatural in the forms of Grendel, Grendel's mother, and the dragon, who are the antagonists of the story. The work was analyzed for years for its linguistic and historical meanings and connections.<sup>52</sup> Other features started to be added to the literature.

Fantastic and supernatural aspects, including monstrous enemies, giants, magic, and spells, started to be introduced. Also, the development of heroism occurred, and as the essential attribute of a hero was the killing of a monster, therefore the common description of fear as a response to the dangerous situations began to be described.<sup>53</sup>

During the Middle Ages, the first romance narratives began to emerge in Europe and the character of the knight started to be the focus of the new fiction. Those narratives also abounded with fantastic elements, including monsters, ghosts, fairies, werewolves, enchanted weapons, mystical transformations, mysterious castles.

Arthurian tales are the oldest examples of romance.<sup>54</sup> Arthurian legends present the myth of King Arthur. One of the defining features of the stories is that they are indeed abundant with supernatural beings and other elements. For example the important role of the magicians and wizards specifically the character of Merlin and with Morgan. The element of spells is also manifested through the Excalibur, a magical sword that is given to him by Lady of the Lake, a fairy-like creature. Another important element is the inclusion of giants with whom Arthur and the knights of the Round Table have to battle.

The time period of the Modern Era also known as the Renaissance, the age of great authors such as William Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe, or John Milton. The horror genre may seem to be marginalized considering that the notion of the traditional horror is regarded the later period, the eighteenth century, the Enlightenment.<sup>55</sup> Many of the novels, that are considered gothic classics were produced during the eighteenth century and thus the predecessor of the horror narrative, meaning work as *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, *The Monk*, and of course what is today considered the first gothic novel, *The Castle of Ontario*.

However today, the texts from the early modern era are analyzed for the elements of horror.<sup>56</sup> We see the prominent feature of the description of death, decay, bodily deterioration. The clash of the Catholics and Protestants concerning the different

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<sup>52</sup> Cardin, *Horror Literature through History*, 54.

<sup>53</sup> Cardin, 55.

<sup>54</sup> Cardin, 56.

<sup>55</sup> Cardin, 56.

<sup>56</sup> Cardin, 57.

conflicting worldviews also marked this period, which also brought feelings of uncertainty and ambivalence<sup>57</sup>, these uncertainties and unpredictability have indeed marked the approach of the horror texts. This also contributes to the idea of projecting and expressing the anxieties of the given time. Religion played a major role in the life of people therefore the religious realm started to be explored for the sources and inspiration for literature. This inspiration taken from religion resulted in the incorporation of topics such as ghosts, demons, and witches.<sup>58</sup> These topics appear in the creepypasta stories such as “The Devil Game.”<sup>59</sup> During this period occurred another development in the horror imagery and it was the great emphasis on death and bodily decay. This emphasis on bodily decay is present in the creepypasta “Never Judge a Book by its Cover,”<sup>60</sup> where the author incorporates the descriptions of decomposing human remains.

The view of death being a spiritual journey shifted towards a more physical and fearful experience and description of gruesome physical details.<sup>61</sup> This shift was most likely caused by the plague pandemic which struck Europe. The texts from this period which include the horror elements of decay and gruesome death mirror the anxiety of the society. The theme of pandemia also occurred in the later period, for example in the short stories “King Pest” (1835) and “Masque of the Red Death”(1842) by Edgar Allan Poe, *Arrowsmith* (1925) by Sinclair Lewis, or *The Stand* (1978) Stephen King.<sup>62</sup> An important role played the revenge tragedies which were characterized by the brutal murder scenes, mutilations, and images of blood. One of the first and most known revenge tragedy which depicts such horrific and cruel scene is the work of Thomas Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy* (ca. 1587). In contemporary work is this type of scene present in torture movies such as *Saw* (2004).<sup>63</sup> It is important to note that horrific, graphic and violent descriptions are present in many of the creepypasta stories, such as the attack depicted in the creepypasta “Skinwalker,”<sup>64</sup> as well as the death considering the

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<sup>57</sup> Cardin, *Horror Literature through History*, 58.

<sup>58</sup> Cardin, 58.

<sup>59</sup> “The Devil Game,” Creepypasta, last modified October 23, 2013, <https://www.creepypasta.com/the-devil-game/>.

<sup>60</sup> “Never Judge a Book by its Cover,” Creepypasta Horror & Paranormal Stories, last modified 20 August 2015, <http://www.creepypasta.org/creepypasta/never-judge-a-book-by-its-cover-2>.

<sup>61</sup> Morgan, *The Biology of Horror*, 49.

<sup>62</sup> Morgan, 50.

<sup>63</sup> Cardin, *Horror Literature through History*, 60.

<sup>64</sup> “Skinwalker,” Creepypasta, last modified December 28, 2013, <https://www.creepypasta.com/skinwalker/>.

characters in the stories are endangered when they are witnessing some of the gruesome scenes.

The eighteenth century was the period known for horror to be a popular fictional genre. This horror genre would have the form of Gothic novels, the forerunner of modern horror. However, the label “horror fiction” was starting to be used during the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>65</sup> Many authors of the eighteenth century reflected on the appeal of such supernatural terrors, sometimes connecting them both to the significant role played by legend and superstition in the creation of cultural and ethnic identities, and to the more universal notion of the sublime<sup>66</sup>. The sublime, an affective state blending awe and fear, became a significant artistic category in England and Western Europe. In his 1704 work, “Grounds of Criticism in Verse”, John Dennis (1658-1734), an English playwright and critic, emphasized the significance of sublime horror in poetry and theatre. Dennis also elaborated on the features and sources of terror used in the Gothic texts. For example, he mentioned, “gods, demons, hell, spirits and souls of men, miracles, prodigies, enchantments, witchcraft, earthquakes, monsters, war, pestilence, famine, etc.”<sup>67</sup> And again here, the theme of witchcraft and rituals is quite prevalent in the creepypasta realm.

The first text which would introduce the Gothic romance is considered the *Castle of Otranto* (1764), written by Horace Walpole. The tale is set in a medieval building, thus setting the Gothic interest in the medieval.<sup>68</sup> The medieval setting of the gothic texts is very useful because this offers a darker and more grotesque setting. The imagery of decay, description of the environment in a claustrophobic manner, inescapable setting, visible in Poe’s “The Fall of the House of Usher” (1839) or “The Pit and the Pendulum” (1842).<sup>69</sup>

Finally, I opened my eyes. My worst thoughts were confirmed. The blackness of eternal night encompassed me. I struggled for breath. The darkness seemed to

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<sup>65</sup> Cardin, *Horror Literature through History*, 63.

<sup>66</sup> The philosopher Edmund Burke defined sublime in his work *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757) as something that could evoke terror in readers, and considered fear for an emotion that evokes an inherent pleasure, thus being one of the strongest emotions.

<sup>67</sup> Cardin, *Horror Literature through History*, 63.

<sup>68</sup> Birkhead, *The Tale of Terror*, 13.

<sup>69</sup> Morgan, *The Biology of Horror*, 62.

smother me ... Had they buried me alive? I had to know! I stood up and thrust my arms wildly above and around me in all directions. I felt nothing, but I dreaded to move a step for fear that I should be stopped by the walls of a TOMB.<sup>70</sup>

Through this quote, we can see the description of the typical claustrophobic sense and the ominous dark setting in Poe's "The Pit and the Pendulum". The gloomy gothic setting is described in his short story "The Fall of the House of Usher":

we had put her body in its resting place, in a room inside the cold walls of the palace, a damp, dark vault, a fearful place ... We closed the heavy iron door and returned to the rooms above, which were hardly less gloomy than the vault.<sup>71</sup>

But even before the publication of *The Castle of Otranto, Adventures of Ferdinand, Count Fathom* (1753) by Tobias Smollett would display some of the features of the Gothic. Similar to the knight stories, the hero is subjected to a dangerous situation, but Smollett portrays the horror he feels. The fear is a result of the lonely, isolated, and dark setting.<sup>72</sup> These elements are present in the following quote:

Common fear was a comfortable sensation to what he felt in this excursion. The first steps he had taken for his preservation were the effects of mere instinct, while his faculties were extinguished or suppressed by despair; but now, as his reflection began to recur, he was haunted by the most intolerable apprehensions... Every whisper of the wind through the thickets was swelled into the hoarse menaces of murder<sup>73</sup>

Irish philosopher and statesman Edmund Burke in his 1757 treatise, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, voiced the literary aesthetic of death, pain, power, and cosmic sheer enormity which continue to predominate in contemporary horror and also defined the sublime. But most importantly Burke employed scientific psychology concepts to conclude that fear was the most powerful emotion an individual could feel. This argument influenced not only the early

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<sup>70</sup> Edgar Allan Poe, *The Pit and the Pendulum* (UK, Penguin Books, 2009), 13.

<sup>71</sup> Edgar Allan Poe, *Edgar Allan Poe: Storyteller* (Washington, D.C.: Office of English Language Programs, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, 2013), 30.

<sup>72</sup> Birkhead, *The Tale of Terror*, 15.

<sup>73</sup> Tobias Smollett, *Adventures of Ferdinand, Count Fathom. Expedition against Carthagera* (HardPress Publishing, 2018), 101.



Gothic authors<sup>74</sup> but also later writers such as Edgar Allan Poe and H. P. Lovecraft.<sup>75</sup> The psychological element is very clear in the works of H.P. Lovecraft, for example in his work "Dagon" (1919), where the narrator starts the story by explaining his mental condition and expresses his need for medication: "I am writing this under an appreciable mental strain since by tonight I shall be no more. Penniless, and at the end of my supply of the drug which alone, makes life endurable, I can bear the torture no longer; and shall cast myself from this garret window into the squalid street below."<sup>76</sup>

Similarly starts the short story "The Tell-Tale Heart", considering its narration starts with the narrator explaining he has *full control of his mind* and his senses are even better than before thus the reader soon discovers that he indeed went mad, therefore Poe employs the element of one's mind and psychological state:

IT'S TRUE! Yes, I have been ill, very ill. But why do you say that I have lost control of my mind, why do you say that I am mad? Can you not see that I have full control of my mind? Is it not clear that I am not mad? Indeed, the illness only made my mind, my feelings, my senses stronger, more powerful. My sense of hearing especially became more powerful. I could hear sounds I had never heard before.<sup>77</sup>

The darkness and fearsome forest, the whole Gothic sublime setting<sup>78</sup> of *The Castle of Ontario*, *The Monk*, *Frankenstein*, and *Dracula*, would also inspire the horror genre known as "natural horror" or "eco-horror". According to Cardin's *Horror Literature through History*, the term "natural horror" in the broadest sense, refers to a narrative that depicts nature as horrific, gloomy, or even violent.<sup>79</sup> For example the gothic descriptions in *The Castle of Ontario*, which evoke tense feelings by the portrayal of the total darkness caused by the puff of air: "... she approached the door that had been

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<sup>74</sup> E.g. Horace Walpole (*The Castle of Ontario*, 1764) and Ann Radcliffe (*The Mysteries of Udolpho*, 1794)

<sup>75</sup> Cardin, *Horror Literature through History*, 67.

<sup>76</sup> H.P. Lovecraft, *Dagon* (Global Grey, 2018), 1.

<sup>77</sup> Edgar Allan Poe, *Edgar Allan Poe: Storyteller*, 61.

<sup>78</sup> gothic sublime refers to the endeavors producing awe and terror from psychologically induced fear and 'uncanny', therefore present the blend of the gothic aesthetic features with the sublime (Vijay Mishra, *The Gothic Sublime*, State University of New York Press, 1994)

<sup>79</sup> Cardin, *Horror Literature through History*, 105.

opened; but a sudden gust of wind that met her at the door extinguished her lamp, and left her in total darkness.”<sup>80</sup>

For contemporary text to be considered "natural horror", it should fulfill the key factor which is the revenge of nature which should lead to the encouragement towards environmental awareness. This genre is prevalent mainly during the second half of the twentieth century: *The Day of the Triffids* (1951) by John Wyndham, Daphne du Maurier's "The Bird" (1952), Peter Benchley's *Jaws* (1974), Stephen King's *Cujo* (1981), James Herbert's *The Rats* (1982).<sup>81</sup> In the novel or a movie appears some kind of monster, in a form of an abnormal animal or plant, whose purpose is to kill humans, which supposedly represents the revenge of nature upon humanity. For example one of the earliest texts of this kind is *The Day of the Triffids*, which employs the theme of the appearance of strange and dangerous plants, whose purpose is to harm human civilization, considering their ability to kill people.

The authors of novels such as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), Charles Robert Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), and James Hogg's *Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824). They would enhance the horrific elements by adding the psychological effect, especially the work *Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* which is considered to be a psychological mystery.<sup>82</sup> The narrative essentially employs the description of the complex mental process of a serial killer Robert. The psychological element is also present in Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher" where the fall, or an end of the family, its bloodline is symbolized through the literal fall of the house.<sup>83</sup> *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley not only employs the struggles of the individual and disunity of the self, when at first Victor was determined to create his monster but after he creates it he runs away from his responsibility. Mary Shelley also establishes the main archetypes of modern horror fiction.<sup>84</sup> For example, the figure of the already mentioned Victor Frankenstein, being the Mad Scientist. Charles Robert Maturin in his *Melmoth the Wanderer* was the first to

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<sup>80</sup> Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Ontario*, (Penguin, 2002) 27.

<sup>81</sup> Cardin, *Horror Literature through History*, 109.

<sup>82</sup> Cardin, 74

<sup>83</sup> Cardin, 74.

<sup>84</sup> Cardin, 73.

incorporate the “urban corruption”, the gritty dark setting which would increase the deleterious impacts of horror fiction<sup>85</sup>.

Urban corruption refers to the urban being the source of these immoralities, considering the pleasures found by the affected characters are present in the urban setting. The two main examples being *Melmoth the Wanderer* which inspired *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, in both cases the moral decay is affected them in the painting. The theme of the fear of moral decay and urbanization corruption would later inspire Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890).<sup>86</sup> The moral decay is depicted through the symbolism of Dorian's picture, through which the corruption of one's soul, the moral decay is physically manifested as the decay Dorian's painting. The depiction of two sides of London, and Dorian's “two faces”, also points the moral decay by implying the opposites. Meaning the luxurious life in the upper Westside and the shadowy East End.

Edward George Earle Lytton Bulwer contributed to the horror genre by the inclination to the metaphysical and thus introducing the first occult novel *Zanoni* (1842). As a result of employing the features of ritual magic and spiritualism, his works serve as a transformation of Gothic to modern supernatural fiction. *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), *Dracula* (1897), *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) were inspired by the elements such as alchemy, search for immortality, and incarnation, first introduced in another Bulwer’s occult novel *A Strange Story* (1862).<sup>87</sup> The occult fiction inspired several contemporary authors. By incorporating the secret history notion into the narrative, no so much rely on the magic aspect but more on the conspiracy. The main element of such a story being some secret society that holds the power which enables them to control and manipulate history. Examples of those novels are *Secret History* (1992) by Donna Tartt or Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* (2003).<sup>88</sup>

Mary Shelley’s novel *Frankenstein* employs the theme of the scientist who went mad, which is also present in another gothic Robert Louis Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. These novels introduced the notion of the body being the source of horror, which later influenced the “medical horror”. This term refers to

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<sup>85</sup> Kremmel, *Palgrave Handbook to Horror Literature*, 175.

<sup>86</sup> Kremmel, 176.

<sup>87</sup> Cardin, *Horror Literature through History*, 344.

<sup>88</sup> Cardin, 199.

text that relies on the mental and physical vulnerability of humans. This also means the shift from predominating supernatural horror to a more scientific setting and situations. “Medical horror” refers to texts in which the fear is provoked through the elements such as experimentation on the human body, injuries, diseases, and interaction with medical organizations. As mentioned before, the horror texts mirror the anxieties of the society in which the text is written. This “medical horror” and the motif of a mad scientist was drawn from the fear of body snatchers<sup>89</sup>.

During the beginning of the twentieth century, M. R. James published *Ghost stories of an Antiquary* (1904), a collection of ghost stories, seemingly not an original concept, but James added an innovative technique. In his stories, James incorporated a series of clues and signs which culminated in an encounter with danger from the past. Another important contribution to the horror genre was brought by an English author, Algernon Blackwood, who also made use of the traditional outdoor setting and natural mysticism, which manifested in his works such as “The Willows” (1907) and “The Wendigo” (1910). Short stories “Seaton’s Aunt” (1921) and “All Hallows” (1926) by Walter de la Mare, also employed the ghost element but he connected the ghostly with the psychological.<sup>90</sup>

The most influential author of the horror genre of the first half of the H. P. Lovecraft. He contributed his first story “Dagon” in the American horror fiction magazine, *Wierd Tales*. Towards the end of his life, his creativity and success suffered and were caused by his high self-confidence.<sup>91</sup> Despite his problematic ideas, white supremacy, obsession with the “danger of multiculturalism” and overall racism<sup>92</sup>, he remains one of the most widely read horror writers.<sup>93</sup> Lovecraft created a new subgenre of horror, cosmic horror. In this genre, he depicts ancient monsters and unimaginable creatures. Those being essentially metaphors that express his great fear of the rapid technological progressions during the beginnings of the twentieth century. The inability to fight back these technologies was depicted through the inability to fight horrific creatures. He is also known for his ability to create extreme feelings of sheer terror through his

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<sup>89</sup> The term body snatching refers to the removal of the recently buried corpses with the intention to sell those bodies to hospitals, for experiments and dissection.

<sup>90</sup> Cardin, *Horror Literature through History*, 77 – 78.

<sup>91</sup> Cardin, 79.

<sup>92</sup> Lovecraft’s stories depict many racist but also classist themes

<sup>93</sup> Cardin, *Horror Literature through History*, 168.

descriptive depiction of his horror aesthetic manifesting as an infinite disintegration, decay, and the themes of existential horror which he later developed into his mythos.<sup>94</sup>

The second half of the twentieth century is marked by the emergence of traditional horror novels in the context of contemporary horror. Such novels are Robert Bloch's *Psycho* (1959), Ira Levin's *Rosemary's Baby* (1967), or *The Exorcist* (1971) by Peter Blatty. Those novels were later also adapted into films and equally, as their written counterparts, are considered movie classics. Interesting is the reappearance of the traditional Gothic notions in horror in novels such as *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959), and *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* (1962) written by Shirley Jackson. Later the seventies are known in the horror realm as the beginnings of Steven King, an author of horror novels that are published up today. His reoccurring topics of supernatural horror were already evident in his first novel *Carrie* (1972). Even though his novels rely on the supernatural, he also employs the pressure of the society - *Carrie*, the psychological struggles of the individual - *The Shining* (1977), mourning over death - *Pet Sematary* (1983), overall the anxieties associated with contemporary society.<sup>95</sup>

The main characteristics of the contemporary period of the Internet age<sup>96</sup> are the general growth of online connection and the overall growth of digital technology. This development has manifested itself as a rise in the possibility of expressing the horror genre, such as video games, as well as employing the new trope of the internet in horror texts. A number of new themes and motifs were created by the supernatural being superimposed onto the realm of the new media. But also as a result of the Internet, real-life anxieties, such as privacy invasion or the anonymous nature of the internet, appeared in the genre.<sup>97</sup> One of the most important horror text which emerged during the beginnings of this period is the novel *House of Leaves* (2000) by Mark Z. Danielewski. Employing the classical trope of the labyrinth through a story of an editor writing in his diary about a story of a blind man's book about a movie which no one saw and is about a haunted house. This confused many readers about the real inspirations and urban legends which may have inspired the story. Furthermore, he employs both of

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<sup>94</sup> Mark Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie* (London: Repeater Books, 2016), 16.

<sup>95</sup> Cardin, *Horror Literature through History*, 85 – 89.

<sup>96</sup> Sometimes also referred to as the computer age, new digital age, or new media age.

<sup>97</sup> Cardin, *Horror Literature through History*, 171.

the notions *Unheimlich* and *Heimlich*, through the reproduction of the spatial horror and the reader's required participation in the story.<sup>98</sup>

Danielewski challenged the general idea of what a book is and how much the form of a story influences how the story is perceived and thus he has inspired future writers of horror stories on the internet. Similar to the creepypastas, he blurred the lines between reality and fiction, through the labyrinth structure or by the employment of scientific details. The creepypasta stories are sometimes told in a similar manner. For example, the creepypasta “The Skinwalker,”<sup>99</sup> in which the narrator of the narration begins by stating that the following story is essentially a story of his father thus this encounter with the monster is told from the perspective of the father, even though the narration as a whole is presented by the narrator. Therefore creating a similar labyrinth as in *House of Leaves*.

### **2.1.3. The Philosophy of Horror**

Even though the horror genre is a part of the feelings of horror, the emotion of fear. But the horror genre is not only this sense of fear. The important function of this genre has to do with other elements such as disgust, loathing, wrongness or weird feeling, person, creature, act, event, being a source of such sensation.<sup>100</sup> But even these elements of horror contribute to the art experience and value. But the interest of the audience in the horror as a genre is said to be paradoxical.<sup>101</sup> One of the prominent characteristics is the dramatization of everyday life, turning ordinary into different. The rooting of the horror in the reality makes the horror “realistic” and thus introduces its threats as genuinely terrifying.<sup>102</sup> The notion of something being realistic refers to the undeniable referent to the reality, meaning the text provides something familiar, relatable. The horror texts evoke fear based on reality because of the primary sense of normalcy. For example the realistic setting replicable in everyday reality.

One of the main question surrounding the horror genre is why the horror even exist as a genre when it is essentially synonymous with negative emotions such as fear,

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<sup>98</sup> Kimmel, *Palgrave Handbook to Horror Literature*, 345.

<sup>99</sup> “The Skinwalker,” Creepypasta, last modified December 28, 2013, <https://www.creepypasta.com/skinwalker/>.

<sup>100</sup> Cardin, *Horror Literature through History*, 25.

<sup>101</sup> Fahy, *The Philosophy of Horror*, 16.

<sup>102</sup> Fahy, 18.

dread, and terror which are generally considered unpleasant emotions. The notion of horror has been compared many times to the roller coaster<sup>103</sup>, that the emotions which are associated with the horror genre also bring up pleasant emotions, delight.<sup>104</sup> The adrenaline rush brings the enjoyment and entertainment of the genre and thus the horror genre is sought out for the same reason as the laugh brought by comedy.<sup>105</sup> One of the more thorough theories was brought by Aristotle by proposing the concept of catharsis applied to the Greek tragedy plays. Narrations containing despair, deception, and unhappy endings would serve as a way for the audience to purge such emotions without living through those emotions in their real life.<sup>106</sup> Even though Aristotle discussed the catharsis in the context of tragedy, this could be applied to the horror genre as well. As when one who views the tragedy identifies with the hero, the one who sympathizes with the victim on an emotional level.<sup>107</sup>

Another profound proposition is concerned with the sensitivity of the reader which meets the sensitivity of the writer. The writer uses their imagination in the story through which they give a sense to the world around them, and this resonates with the reader. The reader thus feels some kind of comfort in knowing that someone shares their feelings and reflects them in art, they feel the comfort of empathy. This theory was introduced by Thomas Ligotti in his essay “The Consolations of Horror”.<sup>108</sup> Ligotti most importantly emphasized the importance of the imagination: “The horror story does the work of a certain kind of dream we all know. Sometimes it does this so well that even the most irrational and unlikely subject matter can infect the reader with a sense of realism beyond the realistic, a trick usually not seen outside the vaudeville of sleep.”<sup>109</sup> At the same time he stressing the importance of employing realistic writing which is reflected from the world around them because “nothing is worse than that which happens personally to a person.”<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Which gave the name to the roller coaster or funhouse theory of horror, which was inspired by the similarity of unpleasant but at the same time pleasant feelings when on a roller coaster.

<sup>104</sup> Cardin, *Horror Literature through History*, 28.

<sup>105</sup> Cardin, 28.

<sup>106</sup> Cardin, 29.

<sup>107</sup> Fahy, *The Philosophy of Horror*, 34.

<sup>108</sup> Cardin, *Horror Literature through History*, 29.

<sup>109</sup> Thomas Ligotti, “The Consolations of Horror”, *Crypt of Cthulhu* No. 68 (Hallowmass 1989): 48.

<sup>110</sup> Thomas Ligotti, “The Consolations of Horror”, 43.

This sensitivity could be found in the creepypastas as well. For example in the form of relatability in the creepypasta “Bedtime”<sup>111</sup>, where the narrator shares the story of his childhood, the fear of the monster under one bed is met with the majority of people, thus meeting the sensitivity of the narrator with the reader, through the employment of author's imagination:

As I moved, the rustling noise from underneath me ceased. I thought that I must have disturbed my cat, but quickly I realized that the visitor in the bottom bunk was much less mundane than my pet trying to sleep, and much more sinister.<sup>112</sup>

The stories considered as horror are unique because of the emotions linked to the genre, the feelings of horror, fear, panic, and terror are forcing us to feel alone, the more peculiar it is that audience would seek out those kinds of texts, thus it is said horror to be associated with paradoxical feelings.<sup>113</sup>

Psychology also has its propositions for the allure brought by the horror genre and these emotions. An important acknowledgment is, that horror is art, which manifests itself as a way of expressing ourselves and equals with an opportunity to experience something unusual, or unique.<sup>114</sup> Something that does not occur in everyday situations. Horror is a way of experiencing something unusual. For example, the creepypasta “Never Judge a Book by its Cover”<sup>115</sup> provides us with a glimpse of the mind of a psychopath, his thought process, his point of view, which we would most likely never experienced:

I would have never removed your eyes if I truly did not have that silly notion that I would someday put you back by that pond and let you free. Please believe me when I say I never planned on killing you. I was so naïve back then! Your eyes were such a pretty shade of blue. I actually kept them in a jar in the cabinet, but I'm going to burn them too. Sadly they have lost most of their vivid coloring by now. Still yet, that was not my worse mistake. I wish with all my heart that I

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<sup>111</sup> “Bedtime,” Creepypasta, last modified October 11, 2012, <https://www.creepypasta.com/bedtime/>.

<sup>112</sup> “Bedtime,” Creepypasta, last modified October 11, 2012, <https://www.creepypasta.com/bedtime/>.

<sup>113</sup> Stephen King, *Danse Macabre* (Hodder & Stoughton, 2012) 16.

<sup>114</sup> Nick Dobryakov, "Philosophical Ideas of the 20th Century." Philosophy: Names, Schools, and Ideas. Podcast audio. <https://artforintrovert.com/course-philosophy-school>

<sup>115</sup> “Never Judge a Book by Its Cover,” Creepypasta Wiki, last modified June 24, 2014, [https://creepypasta.fandom.com/wiki/Never\\_Judge\\_a\\_Book\\_by\\_Its\\_Cover](https://creepypasta.fandom.com/wiki/Never_Judge_a_Book_by_Its_Cover).



would have asked you one simple question before I cut your tongue out and severed your vocal cords.<sup>116</sup>

This offers us the adrenalin rush, emotions of fear. Nevertheless, we would not enjoy those feelings as much as if there was not for the protection of knowing, that those stories are only on paper.<sup>117</sup> It is hard for us to admit that there indeed is a desire for violence, the dark side if you will. The death drive, Thanatos, a concept introduced by Sigmund Freud, is a reflection of the desire for destruction. The death drive is one of our main forces, or attractions, that guide our actions. The attraction to life and the attraction to death.<sup>118</sup> Our human psyche is simply sometimes attracted to violence, destruction, and that scares us. Another psychoanalyst, Carl Gustav Jung, referred to the *Shadow*, which is a hidden, dark aspect of oneself that contains the corrupt and destructive fantasies one has.<sup>119</sup>

As mentioned before Noël Carroll separates horror into the art-horror and natural horror. One of the important indicators of the art-horror is the presence of a monster, which has to fulfill certain conditions.<sup>120</sup> Recognizing the origin of the monster, which could be either supernatural or sci-fi, meaning it is not possible to scientifically explain their origin and existence as such, provide us with a next important function of a monster in horror, according to Carroll, which serves as a distinguishment from tales of terror<sup>121</sup> and tales of abnormal psychologies.<sup>122</sup> But the presence of a monster is not sufficient considering, monsters are part of fairytales<sup>123</sup>, fables<sup>124</sup>, and odysseys<sup>125</sup> which even though may contain horrific elements, these narrations are not recognized as a part of the horror genre.

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<sup>116</sup> "Never Judge a Book by Its Cover," Creepypasta Wiki, last modified June 24, 2014, [https://creepypasta.fandom.com/wiki/Never\\_Judge\\_a\\_Book\\_by\\_Its\\_Cover](https://creepypasta.fandom.com/wiki/Never_Judge_a_Book_by_Its_Cover).

<sup>117</sup> Nick Dobryakov, "Philosophical Ideas of the 20th Century." Philosophy: Names, Schools, and Ideas. Podcast audio. <https://artforintrovert.com/course-philosophy-school>.

<sup>118</sup> Freud, Sigmund. "The uncanny." David McLintock, and Hugh Haughton. New York: Penguin Books, 2003.

<sup>119</sup> Jung, Carl Gustav. Psychology of the Unconscious. (Courier Corporation, 2012).

<sup>120</sup> Carroll, *Philosophy of Horror: Or, Paradoxes of the Heart*, 14.

<sup>121</sup> E.g. Poe's "The Pit and the Pendulum," or "The Telltale Heart"

<sup>122</sup> Carroll, 15.

<sup>123</sup> A story mainly meant for children, contains a fantastic plot, characters, usually has a happy ending, the evil is punished.

<sup>124</sup> Tales, with moral lessons, written in a form of poem or prose, typical characters are animals with personalities and flaws typical for people.

<sup>125</sup> The narrative most notably used by Homer in ancient Greek, a hero epic which contains a dangerous journey or a quest, full of monsters and ancient gods.

But Carroll reasons that the monster in horror is something abnormal in the stories which take place in an ordinary world, the fairy tales on the other hand in fairytales, the monster is something ordinary in an extraordinary world, thus the notion of the monster differ across the genres. Therefore what appears to be the differentiating force is the distinctive attitudes of the characters in the horror story from other characters depicted in different literary genres.<sup>126</sup> However, the monsters in horror have fulfilled other conditions. Considering the horror has to evoke negative emotions, the monster is the one element linked to these emotions, the component which helps to create this sensation. Carroll says that the monsters are dangerous, threatening, horrifying, impure.<sup>127</sup> Monsters are dangerous when one believes that by the presence of the monster, the situation one is in becomes dangerous.<sup>128</sup> For example, in the creepypasta “Bedtime,”<sup>129</sup> the narrator believes the monster is real, he thinks and feels the presence of this creature being dangerous. The aspect of the monster being threatening manifests not only as a physical threat but also a moral threat, overall it refers to their potential to harm physically and morally.<sup>130</sup> The horrific monster is recognized through the horrifying descriptions.<sup>131</sup>

The following horrifying description is of the monster from the story “The Skinwalker”:

It was clawing at my dad, removing whole chunks of his flesh. It started on his torso, peeling off the skin on his chest, and then it moved up. It tore out his throat, ripped his nose clean off, and gouged out his eyes. Then it scalped him, and started digging in. I stood there, helpless, as it ripped off the bottom half of his jaw, the little bones and that tube in his neck, and then his ribs.<sup>132</sup>

Through this section we see that this monster is perceived also as impure, considering the distasteful description. Impurity refers to the inability to categorize them, considering them being outside the natural order.<sup>133</sup> According to the characteristics of the monsters, they evoke appropriate feelings in the audience. When a monster is

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<sup>126</sup> Carroll, 16 – 17.

<sup>127</sup> Carroll, 42 – 43

<sup>128</sup> Carroll, 26.

<sup>129</sup> “Bedtime,” Creepypasta, last modified October 11, 2012, <https://www.creepypasta.com/bedtime/>.

<sup>130</sup> Carroll, *Philosophy of Horror: Or, Paradoxes of the Heart*, 43.

<sup>131</sup> Carroll, 82.

<sup>132</sup> “The Skinwalker,” Creepypasta, last modified December 28, 2013, <https://www.creepypasta.com/skinwalker/>.

<sup>133</sup> Carroll, *Philosophy of Horror: Or, Paradoxes of the Heart*, 189.

considered threatening, the corresponding emotion is fear, if the monster is impure, the emotion is disgust. This also helps to define the art-horror<sup>134</sup> since the art-horror requires the monster to be threatening and impure.<sup>135</sup> Another interesting approach is that the monster does not represent itself but also signifies something else.<sup>136</sup> The monster and creatures presented in the horror genre are the embodiment of anxieties and fears of the society in which the given monster was presented. This could be extended to the creepypasta, in which there is a more direct reflection of those fears. For example, the stories which include modern technology, such as “Candle Cove”<sup>137</sup> may very likely express the anxiety and concerns surrounding the beginnings of the modern media.

To summarize Carroll’s approach, his theory demands the monster to be a threat, supernatural/sci-fi<sup>138</sup>, and impure. Impurity refers to a category mistake according to which he differentiates the kind of a monster. In other words, the category of those mistakes tells us what kind of mistake the story monster present. Carroll presents the following category mistake types: Fusion,<sup>139</sup> Fission,<sup>140</sup> Massification,<sup>141</sup> Magnification,<sup>142</sup> and Metonymy.<sup>143</sup> Fusion is referring to a monster that fuses or combines two categories into one.<sup>144</sup> This category is further divided according to the possible combinations: inside/outside, insect/human, animate/inanimate, living/dead, flesh/machine, anima/human.<sup>145</sup> These monsters are impure on the basis of the combination of those categories, such as combining insect and human thus creating a monster based on the mistake of fusion. Magnification refers to a categorical mistake in which monsters that are abnormally big such as Godzilla, or the shark in *Jaws*.<sup>146</sup> The category mistake of magnification, in terms of creepypasta monster, is employed in the story “Slender Man,”<sup>147</sup> considering

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<sup>134</sup> Carroll in his *Philosophy of Horror* uses the term art-horror to describe the horror genre considering, it is supposed to aim for an emotional response.

<sup>135</sup> Carroll, *Philosophy of Horror: Or, Paradoxes of the Heart*, 28.

<sup>136</sup> Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Monster Theory: Reading Culture* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 4.

<sup>137</sup> “Candle Cove,” Creepypasta, last modified June 5, 2009, <https://www.creepypasta.com/candle-cove/>.

<sup>138</sup> Meaning the existence of the monster cannot be explained by science.

<sup>139</sup> Carroll, *Philosophy of Horror: Or, Paradoxes of the Heart*, 43.

<sup>140</sup> Carroll, 45.

<sup>141</sup> Carroll, 50.

<sup>142</sup> Carroll, 52.

<sup>143</sup> Carroll, 52.

<sup>144</sup> Carroll, 43.

<sup>145</sup> Carroll, 46.

<sup>146</sup> Carroll, 50.

<sup>147</sup> “Slender Man,” Creepypasta, last modified January 14, 2010, <https://www.creepypasta.com/slenderman/>

that Slenderman is of extreme<sup>148</sup> height furthermore it appears to be “a being (male in appearance) who looks like a man with extremely long, slender arms and legs.”<sup>149</sup> Fission refers to the opposite of the Fusion, meaning the monster is based on some kind of splitting, for example, werewolf which is half-human, half-wolf, or similarly Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. The contradictory elements from the fusion category could be fissured in two ways and thus creating either temporal fission<sup>150</sup> or spatial fission<sup>151</sup> meaning temporal or special split, but still connected metaphysically.<sup>152</sup> This is present for example in the creepypasta “The Skinwalker”<sup>153</sup>. From the following quote, we see that the monster described in this story corresponds with the notion of spatial fission:

It was leaning over a carcass, tearing off its flesh, and throwing what it didn't nibble at aside. There was blood all over the brick, glistening in the moonlight. It was pale white, and looked a little like a man, but not quite human. It had arms and legs like ours, but it sat like a monkey, hunched over. And its hands weren't normal; it had long fingers with claws at the end.<sup>154</sup>

The same could be applied to the creepypasta “Slender Man”<sup>155</sup>, where the monster is described as something what first resembles a man but still posses inhuman properties:

At first, she could only see an inky blackness and somehow seemed to swirl in itself. ... In its place, there stood what she could only guess was once a man. The limbs were long and inhumanly awkward, with bulky joints branching off into several arms, not unlike the branches of a tree. The creature was draped in a black suit, somehow making the thing more nightmarish to her. The icing on the proverbial cake, however, was what passed as the hellish thing's face.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> extreme in terms of human height, considering his close human characteristics

<sup>149</sup> “Slender Man,” Creepypasta, last modified January 14, 2010,

<https://www.creepypasta.com/slenderman/>.

<sup>150</sup> The monster is essentially two different characters or rather personalities in one body, and they cannot be together at the same time, e.g. werewolf

<sup>151</sup> The monster is essentially one character that has two different bodies, e.g. doppelgangers.

<sup>152</sup> Carroll, *Philosophy of Horror: Or, Paradoxes of the Heart*, 46.

<sup>153</sup> “The Skinwalker,” Creepypasta, last modified December 28, 2013,

<https://www.creepypasta.com/skinwalker/>.

<sup>154</sup> “The Skinwalker,” Creepypasta, last modified December 28, 2013,

<https://www.creepypasta.com/skinwalker/>.

<sup>155</sup> “Slender Man,” Creepypasta, last modified January 14, 2010,

<https://www.creepypasta.com/slenderman/>.

<sup>156</sup> “Slender Man,” Creepypasta, last modified January 14, 2010,

<https://www.creepypasta.com/slenderman/>.

Massification means an unnatural number of something dangerous such as zombies considering these monsters are usually employed as a group.<sup>157</sup> This is employed in the creepypasta “NoEnd House”<sup>158</sup>. The narrator describes the sensation of insects crawling all over his body, but he saw none. Nevertheless the most important is the response of this crawling effect which the real bugs would have

I could feel them crawl. I heard them fly by my face and sting my skin but I couldn't see a single one. I dropped to the ground and began to roll wildly. I was desperate. I hated bugs, especially ones I couldn't see or touch. But these bugs could touch me and they were everywhere.”<sup>159</sup>

Apart from being one of the key elements of this genre, according to Carroll, Monsters also help to incorporate suspense into the story, which is also an integral part of horror. The suspense in the story could be generated by different tactics than a monster, for example through the narrative development or the overall plot structure. Nevertheless, suspense is considered to be one of the crucial plot elements, even though it is not unique for the genre, it is necessary for horror.<sup>160</sup>

For the horror genre, there is a specific way of plotting the horror. According to Noël Carroll, the plots of horror are as follows The Complex Discovery Plot and its variations,<sup>161</sup> Overreacher Plot,<sup>162</sup> and The Fantastic.<sup>163</sup> The complex discovery plot consists of four main elements: The Onset, Discovery, Confirmation, and Confrontation. The first element, the Onset, is the part of the story when the existence of the monster is established for the readers, before the character(s).<sup>164</sup> During the discovery, the character(s) of the story recognizes the presence of the monster as well. Part of the story when the characters are trying to convince others about the presence of the monster is called Confirmation.<sup>165</sup> The confirmation is the point during which the suspense is built, which is the main device in the complex discovery plot.<sup>166</sup> The

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<sup>157</sup> Carroll, *Philosophy of Horror: Or, Paradoxes of the Heart*, 44.

<sup>158</sup> “NoEnd House,” Creepypasta, last modified June 30, 2011, <https://www.creepypasta.com/noend-house/>

<sup>159</sup> “NoEnd House,” Creepypasta, last modified June 30, 2011, <https://www.creepypasta.com/noend-house/>

<sup>160</sup> Carroll, *Philosophy of Horror: Or, Paradoxes of the Heart*, 139.

<sup>161</sup> Carroll, 99.

<sup>162</sup> Carroll, 118.

<sup>163</sup> Carroll, 144.

<sup>164</sup> Carroll, 99.

<sup>165</sup> Carroll, 100.

<sup>166</sup> Carroll, 100.

suspense of the monster getting more threatening. Confrontation is when the character(s) finally face the monster.<sup>167</sup> The variations are when a story does not precisely use all these parts.<sup>168</sup> The plot could begin with the discovery, dispense the confirmation and continue to the confrontation. There could be a plot without the onset or on the contrary plot with onset, discovery, and then another onset.<sup>169</sup>

The second type of plot, the less common one, is the Overreacher, which includes the following points, Preparation, Experiment, Boomerang, Confrontation. The overreach refers to the one who carries out the experiment, reaches over where the humans should.<sup>170</sup> During the preparation, he prepares for the experiment. The boomerang refers to the unintended consequences. And the confrontation of the monster or experiment.<sup>171</sup>

The Fantastic is only a partial horror plot and deals with the fantastic hesitation<sup>172</sup>, terms which refer to the hesitation that occurs when deciding if the events that occurred are of a supernatural origin and thus supernatural explanation or of a naturalistic origin and explanation.<sup>173</sup> According to Todorov, who defined the fantastic, it is somewhere else, and the reader, or the character with whom the reader identifies, thus can not tell if the events are of the supernatural cause or natural cause considering the events take place in the other world.<sup>174</sup> When the fantastic hesitation prevails until the end, and even after the ending of the story, the reader is not sure about the explanation, Noël Carroll refers to Pure Fantastic<sup>175</sup>. The Fantastic Uncanny refers to a plot that is ended with a revelation of the natural explanation as in Arthur Conan Doyle's *Hound of the Baskervilles* (1902).<sup>176</sup> And finally, the Fantastic Marvelous plot is ended by the supernatural explanation even though throughout the story the readers wondered if it truly was supernatural or not.<sup>177</sup> This plot appears to be applied in the creepypasta "Charles Bonnet Syndrome"<sup>178</sup> considering the revelation at the very end of

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<sup>167</sup> Carroll, 100.

<sup>168</sup> Carroll, 101.

<sup>169</sup> Carroll, 99.

<sup>170</sup> Carroll, 118.

<sup>171</sup> Carroll, 118.

<sup>172</sup> Carroll, *Philosophy of Horror: Or, Paradoxes of the Heart*, 118.

<sup>173</sup> Carroll, 144 – 145.

<sup>174</sup> Ken Gelder, *The Horror Reader* (London: Routledge, 2005), 11.

<sup>175</sup> Carroll, 144.

<sup>176</sup> Carroll, *Philosophy of Horror: Or, Paradoxes of the Heart*, 150.

<sup>177</sup> Carroll, 150.

<sup>178</sup> "Charles Bonnet Syndrome," Creepypasta, last modified May 4, 2017, <https://www.creepypasta.com/charles-bonnet-syndrome/>.

the story, which confirms the supernatural involvement even though through the majority of the story the narrator tells the story in such ways the reader has to hesitate if the events are of supernatural or a natural origin. The same is implemented onto the creepypasta “The Portraits.”<sup>179</sup>

As mentioned before, the response of the characters in horror texts is, what the genre differentiates from other genres. Another important aspect is the mirroring-effect that occurs between the audience and characters in horror fiction<sup>180</sup>. The responses of monsters consist of revulsion, screaming, paralysis, shrinking, and nausea. Those feelings are primarily experienced by the characters but at the same time are supposed to be met, although not exactly duplicate, with the feelings of the audience.<sup>181</sup> These emotions invoked in the reader are given by the nature of the monster, meaning its threatening and impure characteristics, moreover the devised idea of the monster being real.<sup>182</sup>

There is one important term that is intertwined with the horror genre and the horror theory, it was addressed not only by Noell but also by Freud. The term I would like to discuss is the *Uncanny*. Freud in his essay, “Das Unheimliche/The Uncanny” (1999) which is a literal sense translates “unhomely”, meaning “unknown”, suggests that this is the source of our fears, “das Unheimliche”<sup>183</sup>, the unknown, something what is not familiar to us. He often also uses it with the correlation with the weird which is an emotion associated with the sense of wrongness, displacement, that something is not how it is supposed to be.<sup>184</sup>

The psychological explanation of the uncanny phenomenon in the terms of the familiar, known and unfamiliar, unknown, and the feelings connected to those phenomena. According to Freud when we encounter something for the first time, this element is considered unknown and feelings of anxiety and uneasiness are produced.<sup>185</sup> With time and growing experience, the unknown is turned into known, meaning the unfamiliar is

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<sup>179</sup> “The Portraits,” Creepypasta, last modified April 20, 2009, <https://www.creepypasta.com/the-portraits/>.

<sup>180</sup> Carroll, *Philosophy of Horror: Or, Paradoxes of the Heart*, 18.

<sup>181</sup> Carroll, 18.

<sup>182</sup> Carroll, *Philosophy of Horror: Or, Paradoxes of the Heart*, 19.

<sup>183</sup> Freud, Sigmund. "The uncanny." David McLintock, and Hugh Haughton. New York: Penguin Books, 2003.

<sup>184</sup> Mark Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie* (London: Repeater Books, 2016) 10 – 13.

<sup>185</sup> Freud, Sigmund. "The uncanny." David McLintock, and Hugh Haughton. New York: Penguin Books, 2003.

becoming familiar. However the uncanny is created when this familiar element is taking the unfamiliar characteristics.<sup>186</sup>

Important to note is also the contradiction of the term itself, which is the second sense of “das Unheimliche” referring to what is hidden in the home, what is supposed to remain secret. This led Freud to developed a theory concerning what is it that scares us that should remain hidden inside us. He analyses the fear of something that is strange because of its nostalgic familiar feel it carries. He suggests that our childhood irrational, supposedly repressed, fears are still inside us during our whole life. Even though we know our fears and beliefs were irrational we are still uncertain about our new beliefs. The uncanny in this case refers to the fact, that as an adult we are afraid that our childhood fears were justified and our perception of the world was more right-minded than it is now.<sup>187</sup> One notion that is required by the Uncanny is the sense of realism, in order for the uncanny to occur, we have to pretend to move in the world of reality.<sup>188</sup> The author of the narration is insisting that the event is a reality. Thus as an audience, we are led into believing that what we are reading, or watching is true and tries to rationalize the occurring event.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> Freud, Sigmund. “The uncanny.” David McLintock, and Hugh Haughton. New York: Penguin Books, 2003.

<sup>187</sup> Kremmel, *The Palgrave Handbook to Horror Literature*, 135.

<sup>188</sup> Freud, “The Uncanny.”

<sup>189</sup> Freud, “The Uncanny.”



### 3. ANALYSIS

#### 3.1. Introduction

The creepypasta stories are, indeed, as mentioned before, among other characteristics, stories that are meant to scare the reader. This is standard for the horror genre. Nevertheless, these stories have also their specifics. In order to find these specifics of the creepypasta stories, there is a need for analysis.

In the following part, I am going to analyze the selected stories which will be divided into categories. The categorization will be realized according to the main themes, tropes, style of narration, or other elements common to each category. I will not consider all the previously mentioned terms in every category, in order to maintain clear characteristics. However, I will mainly focus on the most prominent feature or features that are the differentiating factor of one type of story from the other types of stories. Each category will be briefly described, then I will include the chosen stories and analyze the prominent features. At the end of the analytical part, I will conclude which features are common for the creepypastas across the categories, which features are different from the traditional horror literature.

#### 3.2 Categorization

Even though every story is original and presents different narration, it is possible to create categories and I will be doing so in order to better analyze those stories and thus determine the property of the creepypastas as such. The following categories are differentiated according to the themes,<sup>190</sup> tropes,<sup>191</sup> and other elements such as plot,<sup>192</sup> setting,<sup>193</sup> and characters<sup>194</sup> considering these are the main elements that create a story frightening. The naming of each category will reflect the main and the most prominent feature, which separates the presented stories from other stories in

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<sup>190</sup> a repeated or a prevailing idea, topic in a concrete story

<sup>191</sup> an important, repetitive motif, subject

<sup>192</sup> the unfolding of events in a story

<sup>193</sup> elements that surround the main characters that follow the plot, the setting essentially involves the surroundings of the story

<sup>194</sup> the people or monsters that are a part of the given surroundings are an essential part of the plot; they move the plot and are involved with the themes and motifs

other categories. Simultaneously considering other important characteristics of the story.

These categories are by no means fixed, there may be overlaps and even some features could be interpreted and therefore categorized very differently. The established categories are mainly for better analyses and a better understanding of the specific stories. However, there is to say that the creation of the categories led me to believe that there is indeed some sort of pattern which distinguishes not just those categories apart but the creepypasta stories from other more traditional horror stories. Nevertheless, in the following categorization, I am going to focus on finding the Uncanny, Freud's theory described prior to the analytical part, and the other possible elements employed by the authors in their narratives in order to frighten the reader, the main factor that unifies the category.

### **3.2.1. A monster encounter creepypasta**

The first category of stories involves a narration which includes some type of monster which may or may not be typical for horror, but most importantly it is inspired by or even based on already existing legend, myth, folklore. Meaning the narratives do not include the monsters that are usually connected to the traditional horror literature or even the horror genre as such; for example vampires, zombies, werewolves, witches, ghosts, etc. Therefore could be considered traditional.

However, this does not imply that there is no creepypasta that contains those traditional monsters. Nevertheless, these are significantly less common in the realm of creepypasta than in traditional horror literature. The authors usually rely on not-so-conventional monsters and are inspired by cultures that are not well known in western societies. The monster itself may or may not display the original abilities, yet however, the monsters are presented as threatening, meaning physically dangerous, moreover disgusting considering these monsters are surrounded by decay, filth, rotting.<sup>195</sup>

Furthermore, to appear more horrific, their powers are increased or modified to evoke fear. For example the monsters in the creepypasta "The Fairies".<sup>196</sup> The author is taking the supernatural being that is somewhat traditional but is not usually portrayed as a

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<sup>195</sup> Carroll, *Philosophy of Horror: Or, Paradoxes of the Heart*, 22.

<sup>196</sup> "The Fairies," Creepypasta, last modified April 2, 2016, <https://www.creepypasta.com/the-fairies/>.

monster. The fairies fulfill the role of a monster therefore their abilities<sup>197</sup> were alternated to appear horrifying.

The main theme is usually the encounter or certain kind of confrontation between the monster and the narrator. Noël Carroll proposed that horror stories are relying on curiosity<sup>198</sup> which is apparent in those kinds of stories. The narrator is curious and sometimes skeptical, which is mentioned when recounting the event, the narrator did not believe in the supernatural. The confrontation is usually caused by the curiosity of the narrator and results in the corruption of reality because of the narrator's skepticism. Furthermore, the curiosity of the narrator is projected onto the readers, and thus are more engaged in the story and the disclosure, discovery, proof, explanation, hypothesis.<sup>199</sup>

An important role fulfills the setting of those stories considering the abandoned places and woods are a part of suspense evoked in readers, as well as it contributes to the sense of unknown and the feelings of vulnerability. The characters in those stories appear in a dangerous situation, this is determined by the setting of the narrative considering they appear in a secluded, abandoned place, alone and vulnerable. For example, the story “Bedtime”<sup>200</sup> has the setting of a night, when the protagonist is alone in their room.

“The Fairies” – Creepypasta with the significant choice of a monster; the narrative employs the fairies as a monster. The fairies appear as threatening considering they are taking the offerings in form of sacrifices the killing people. They also appear dangerous because of their scary characteristics for example the sounds in a form of quiet laughs they produce. The key horrifying event is set in deep woods, where the protagonist appears alone thus vulnerable.

The story of a cryptozoologist, John, who visits his partner's parents for the first time. They live in a small town in Canada. Not long after their arrival, John finds out that the whole town is scared of nearby woods. He is later acquainted with the local legend of the “forest walkers”<sup>201</sup> who permitted the local tribe to hunt and live in the woods. In return, these creatures requested sacrifice every full moon and this results in many

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<sup>197</sup> The abilities to kill people; the need for a sacrifice

<sup>198</sup> Carroll, *Philosophy of Horror: Or, Paradoxes of the Heart*, 182.

<sup>199</sup> Carroll, 182.

<sup>200</sup> “Bedtime,” Creepypasta, last modified October 11, 2012, <https://www.creepypasta.com/bedtime/>.

<sup>201</sup> “The Fairies,” Creepypasta, last modified April 2, 2016, <https://www.creepypasta.com/the-fairies/>.

missing person cases. John, very infatuated with this legend, decided to investigate and tries to capture the creature on camera, but captures only a “faint giggle”<sup>202</sup>. After collecting the information and stories told by the townspeople, he ends up in the woods during a full moon and finally encounters those horrifying creatures himself.

The narrator of the story and the main protagonists is very much interested in the folklore and myths which is also a prevailing theme of the story. The story even starts with the narrator (John) stating that he “has always been fascinated with the unknown, particularly creatures of the unknown.”<sup>203</sup> This is important considering this is the reason, why the protagonists appear in a dangerous situation and lead to a horrifying revelation. This interest in the unknown significantly increased his chances of being exposed to such events.

This story very much relies on the myth of fairies but at the same time the author creates a new legend and he does so by merging the traditional myth, becoming acquainted with local legend and sacrifices. One of the important features is the introduction of the myth inside the story, explaining the source of the fear but at the same time prevailing mystery and the dark atmosphere by telling the myth to the narrator. The story inside a story thus gives the reader a sense of authenticity. Relying on already existing mythical elements and folklore and merging it with other elements such as sacrifice, history of tribe, mysterious setting, which results in creating a new myth or a myth with a twist.

The sense of uncanny here is the fact that the fairies are traditionally a part of a childhood bedtime story, but the author made them seem dangerous and thus threatening creatures, that kill people and stuff them inside the trees. Something that the reader encounter as a child appeared innocent, the author turned into a monster.

Each full moon we would send one chose person by lot into the forest. Their screams would fill the night sky. It was a horrible thing but for us to survive the chief made the deal and we kept to it. Many years would pass as we sacrificed one after another of our own.<sup>204</sup>

The sense of reality is given by the realistic setting of the story and through establishing an ordinary life. The setting of a small town, which is ordinary and relatable for most

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<sup>202</sup> “The Fairies,” Creepypasta, last modified April 2, 2016, <https://www.creepypasta.com/the-fairies/>.

<sup>203</sup> “The Fairies,” Creepypasta, last modified April 2, 2016, <https://www.creepypasta.com/the-fairies/>.

<sup>204</sup> “The Fairies,” Creepypasta, last modified April 2, 2016, <https://www.creepypasta.com/the-fairies/>.

people.<sup>205</sup> This ordinariness and normality are interrupted with mystery and a mysterious setting. One of the main forces and catalyzes is insatiable curiosity, the desire for knowledge. The narrator then faces a new discovery that results in the destruction of his reality.

“Skinwalker” – The narrator starts the narration by explaining that this story was told by his father and admits that first he did not believe him, but after getting more information, he started to believe him. The story by his father starts in the woods and describes finding a massacred group of deer the father and his father (the narrator's grandfather). He started to track what he thought were coyotes. Finally, he comes across an “old schoolhouse that sits on the top of a hill”<sup>206</sup>, but instead of an animal, he finds some half-human half-animal creature. The father manages to escape but his father is brutally murdered and eaten by the creature, the skinwalker<sup>207</sup>. The main theme of the story is the attack of the skinwalker, a creature that is threatening because it is described as physically dangerous.<sup>208</sup> The narrator explicitly depicts its dangerous qualities through its description by the massacred deers and later during the attack of his father. The story is set mainly in the woods and remote places which evokes feelings of vulnerability, isolation and manifests in feelings of suspense.

The author relies on the already existing myth of skinwalker. The narrator also makes it clear that the story is not directly about him but it was told by his father which is somewhat similar to the labyrinth-like structure of the *House of Leaves* by Mark Z. Danielewski, meaning the story is not told from the source but the story is narrated indirectly, it is a narration about a narration. The element of the “nonbeliever”<sup>209</sup> is the

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<sup>205</sup> King, *Danse Macabre*, 5.

<sup>206</sup> “Skinwalker,” Creepypasta, last modified December 28, 2013, <https://www.creepypasta.com/skinwalker/>.

<sup>207</sup> Skinwalker is a myth of native Americans, specifically a legend of a Navajo tribe, therefore, could be indeed considered for a traditional part of mythology, however not in the western society terms; the monster is not conventional in a sense werewolf or vampire are, these creatures are more prevalent in the western literature and art in general. This is not to suggest there is no fiction that involves this native American myth; the skinwalker is present in a book *Boomtown* (2019) by James A. Moore or series such as *Supernatural* (2005 - 2020). It is only to say that the monster, and perhaps the culture, is rediscovered and employed by the author of the creepypasta stories.

<sup>208</sup> Carroll, *Philosophy of Horror: Or, Paradoxes of the Heart*, 43.

<sup>209</sup> The nonbeliever is someone who does not believe in the existence of the supernatural. He/She/They are later subjected to Carroll's fantastic hesitation, meaning they contemplate, together with the reader, whether the events are natural or supernatural, they are usually the ones who do believe in the natural (Carroll 1990, 144). At the same time, they could be

narrator himself, but he is later convinced that the story of his father is not only a scary story but it is a real event that occurred and reveals that he believes that what his father encounter was Rake.

“Slenderman” – The creepypasta is not exclusively one story but rather a created myth, constructed solely by the creepypasta community. Creation of an uncanny monster, meaning it is based on something familiar, it resembles a man, but the unfamiliar features being the monster having no face, having tentacles, and being of extreme height, which at the same time fulfills the condition for Magnification.<sup>210</sup> It also appears to be dangerous considering the thoughts of its presence of the creature feel frightening because no one really knows what happens with its victims furthermore “it is rumored he kills children almost exclusively, but it is difficult to say whether or not his only objective is slaughter”<sup>211</sup>. This is even more relevant for this specific story considering the individual narratives use this as a device for building tensions when mentioning they “are feeling like someone or rather something is watching them”<sup>212</sup> and ends the story with.

The Slender Man is not only a single story but rather an invented character or more specifically a monster which features in many different stories and employed by different authors. The creature is described in those stories as something impossibly tall, thin, faceless. One can not even look at it without feeling uneasy. The Slenderman usually stalks its victim, torments them by causing them nightmares and feelings of paranoia. The creepypasta started only as an edited image but later was transported into a large number of stories, a witness reencounter of incidents and supposed confrontation with the monster itself. The character is described in great detail, he is even given his own legend and myths. Many of the stories describe his alleged origin and folklore around the world, mentioning for example “appearances in with many other legends around the world, including; Fear Dubh (or, The Dark Man) in Scotland, the Dutch Takkenmann (Branch Man), and the German legend of Der Großmann or Der Grosse

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considered to giving us a sense of reliability, thus according to Liggotti, giving the story a realistic notion thus making the narration scarier (Ligotti 1989, 48).

<sup>210</sup> Carroll, *Philosophy of Horror: Or, Paradoxes of the Heart*, 50.

<sup>211</sup> “Slender Man,” Creepypasta, last modified January 14, 2010, <https://www.creepypasta.com/slenderman/>.

<sup>212</sup> “Slender Man,” Creepypasta, last modified January 14, 2010, <https://www.creepypasta.com/slenderman/>.

Mann (the Tall Man) ”<sup>213</sup>. Thus the Slenderman stories blur the lines between the real myths and the fictional ones.

It is said that the creature feeds on one's fear and belief. Many of the stories mentioned the fact that by reading or even thinking about the creature could the reader lure the Slenderman which essentially leads the reader to think about it, even more, this is in psychology known as the reactance theory<sup>214</sup> thus evoking the feelings of uncanny, considering the story manifests through the psychological phenomena into the real life. The narrator usually states this point at the end of the already horrifying story, thus furthermore invoking the fear in the reader. Authors of Slenderman stories meaning they are employing the character are thus expanding the mythos. The creation of “Slenderman” is not reduced to those stories about him, but also creating a myth about him, creating folklore and the supposed origin of his.

### **3.2.2. The new kind of monster**

These stories are not built around a creation nor are inspired by any kind of myth or folklore or a “traditional” kind of monster, but present the invention of the new monster, who used to be a human. For example in the story which describes the origin of the monster “Eyeless Jack”.<sup>215</sup> The story “Origin of Eyeless Jack” is about Jack before he turned into a monster and describes him as a normal “college student who would hang out with his friends on the campus or play videogames”<sup>216</sup>.

Similar to the Slenderman, the stories in this category, are more about the creation of the character and are not linked to one specific narration. Thus the main distinguishing characteristic is that these stories do not directly reference any traditional folklore or myth to the story. Despite having no traditional myth or folklore those authors could relate to, they supplement it with the origin of the antagonist, describing the life of the character before he/she became a monster and killer. These origin narrations are usually set in the present and through the sense of familiarity giving the story a closer feel.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> “Slender Man,” Creepypasta, last modified January 14, 2010.

<https://www.creepypasta.com/slenderman/>.

<sup>214</sup> Refers to the desire to express one's freedom by doing the opposite of what we are told, or what we are forbidden to do.

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<sup>216</sup> “Origin of Eyeless Jack,” Deviant Art, last modified Apr 7, 2013, <https://www.deviantart.com/lamishi-mish/art/Origin-of-Eyeless-Jack-363990065>.

<sup>217</sup> E.g. Jeff being bullied as a kid, or Jack being a normal student.

The second story “Jeff The Killer”<sup>218</sup> starts as the origin story, and his character would later spread further into other stories such as “Jane's Letter”<sup>219</sup>, “Born of Science: Jane The Killer”<sup>220</sup>, or “Homicidal Liu”<sup>221</sup>.

The human origin of those monsters is a fascinating feature and could suggest that everyone could become a monster, which refers back to Freud's theory of the death drive,<sup>222</sup> our dark side. Moreover, in Carroll's terms, they meet the requirements for a monster, meaning they possess dangerous features thus are threatening,<sup>223</sup> supernatural, which refers to the fact that science cannot explain their existence and their impurity is based on the Metonymy, considering they are not impure themselves but they are connected to something impure.<sup>224</sup>

“Eyeless Jack” – The creature which used to be a normal boy, a human being who turned into a monster thus being a part of this category. The stories of the creature Eyeless Jack, describe an organ stealing monster, thus not directly being impure but through the connection to the impure.<sup>225</sup>

I saw Edwin's body and something small lying next to it. I retrieved it up and entered my parent's car, not mentioning Edwin's corpse. I looked at the thing I had picked up and nearly vomited. I was holding my stolen half-eaten kidney, with some black substance on it.<sup>226</sup>

The character of Eyeless Jack with a human origin is a monster figure in a black hoodie, mask, and no eyes. He visits his victims during the night, he removes their kidneys without the victim even noticing and then supposedly eats those kidneys. According to one of the stories, the origin story, Jack used to be a college student, who found himself

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<sup>218</sup> “Jeff The Killer,” Creepypasta Wiki, last modified November 21st, 2011.

[http://creepypasta.wikia.com/wiki/Jeff\\_The\\_Killer](http://creepypasta.wikia.com/wiki/Jeff_The_Killer).

<sup>219</sup> “Jane's Letter,” Just The Kittens, last modified 2012,

[https://jtk.fandom.com/wiki/Jane%27s\\_Letter\\_\(AKA\\_Jane\\_the\\_Killer\)](https://jtk.fandom.com/wiki/Jane%27s_Letter_(AKA_Jane_the_Killer)).

<sup>220</sup> “Born of Science: Jane The Killer,” Creepypasta Files, last modified Jun 17, 2014,

[https://creepypastafiles.fandom.com/wiki/Born\\_of\\_Science:\\_Jane\\_The\\_Killer](https://creepypastafiles.fandom.com/wiki/Born_of_Science:_Jane_The_Killer).

<sup>221</sup> “Homicidal Liu,” last modified April 22, 2013, <https://ask-homicidal-liu.tumblr.com/post/25900163512/the-story-of-liu>.

<sup>222</sup> Freud, Sigmund. “The uncanny.”

<sup>223</sup> Carroll, *Philosophy of Horror: Or, Paradoxes of the Heart*, 43.

<sup>224</sup> Carroll, 51.

<sup>225</sup> Carroll, 51.

<sup>226</sup> “Eyeless Jack,” Creepypasta, last modified January 5, 2013, <https://www.creepypasta.com/eyeless-jack/>.



in a friend group which was a cult worshipping a demon. Jack involuntary became a part of the ritual which would turn him into a demon. He was blinded by the group of the worshippers who slit their throats, and their insides were eaten by Jack.

The sense of authenticity is given by the closeness of the story, the seeming ordinariness of the origin of the story. Also, the fear of cannibalism and satanic rituals is a part of the second half of the twentieth century and the early two thousand<sup>227</sup>. The fear of the occult and satanist was at the highest peak which could have inspired the author to incorporate the motifs of worshipping and sacrifice and the cannibalistic feature of the character itself. The stealing organs creature is invoking the sense of uncanny in the reader, also it is intensified by the feelings of powerlessness, considering the narrator of the story had no idea about this creature; it was in the hospital when his doctor told him: “You somehow lost your left kidney last night,”<sup>228</sup> but explained to him that they don’t know how this happened.

“Jeff The Killer” – The story of a boy who is bullied and ends up in a hospital after he was attacked by a group of boys. It seems he went mad, deformed his face by slicing up his mouth and cutting off his eyelids so he “could not fall asleep again”<sup>229</sup>. After he killed his parents and sibling, he escaped a went on a murder spree. The author of one of the stories of Jeff the Killer also created a female counterpart, “Jane the Killer” whose life was spared and since then she was committed to founding and kill Jeff. Many of the creepypastas about Jeff the Killer include a newspaper excerpt in the narration. The news about “unexplained murders, ominous unknown killers is still on the rise” serves as a source of the uncanny evoked in the reader. With this incorporation of the references to reality, we are deceived into believing the realistic setting thus finding the story frightening.

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<sup>227</sup> Joseph P. Laycock, *Dangerous Games What the Moral Panic over Role-Playing Games Says about Play, Religion, and Imagined Worlds*, (Oakland: University of California Press,2015), 103.

<sup>228</sup> “Eyeless Jack,” Creepypasta, last modified January 5, 2013, <https://www.creepypasta.com/eyeless-jack/>.

<sup>229</sup> “Jeff The Killer,” Creepypasta Wiki, last modified November 21st, 2011. [http://creepypasta.wikia.com/wiki/Jeff\\_The\\_Killer](http://creepypasta.wikia.com/wiki/Jeff_The_Killer).

### 3.2.3. Scientific creepypasta

For stories that fall under this category is the key factor, the scientific setting, or the scientific theme. The narration usually concerns the scientific experiments that were never supposed to be public, they were supposed to stay hidden. The reasons may differ usually it is because something went wrong, such story is “The Russian Sleep Experiment.”<sup>230</sup> The experiment could have gone wrong because of the unexpected consequences, for example in the case of the creepypasta “The Russian Sleep Experiment”, it was an accidental creation of a monster. Thus they may involve some of the horror archetypes, such as the already mentioned archetype of the mad scientist.<sup>231</sup>

The sense of genuineness of the story relies on the real-life events, such as the cold war in the case of the creepypasta “The Russian Sleep Experiment” and adding horrifying elements. The “authenticity” is mainly supported by the scientific setting and sometimes the use of linguistic units, usually terms, typical for the scientific environment.

The prevailing theme is finding out some secret or hidden story, uncovering a forbidden knowledge. The theme of the forbidden knowledge has its origin in ancient Greek literature and revolves around knowledge that was taboo for human beings and was exclusively possessed by divine figures.<sup>232</sup> The authors of this type of stories focus on the description of the knowledge which is secret and hidden from the majority and exclusive to scientists or secret societies. Exactly this element of secret societies is very similar to those of the occult novels that are rooted in the nineteenth century. The plot of the creepypasta could also partly align with Carroll's plot element, the overreacher, someone who overreaches some kind of knowledge forbidden to humans. The experiment does not go as planned, the only outcome that is assured is the unexpected one. The scientists, or the responsible figure, have to face the consequences.<sup>233</sup>

“The Russian Sleep Experiment” – The story involves a scientific theme of an inhuman experiment that had horrifying consequences. The scientists accidentally created

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<sup>230</sup> “The Russian Sleep Experiment,” Creepypasta, last modified July 8, 2012, <https://www.creepypasta.com/the-russian-sleep-experiment/>.

<sup>231</sup> Cardin, *Horror Literature through History*, 73.

<sup>232</sup> Cardin, 317.

<sup>233</sup> Carroll, *Philosophy of Horror: Or, Paradoxes of the Heart*, 118.

inhuman creatures that had to be killed. Thus this story could be viewed as a warning for others who would try to deceive nature.

The scientific theme is increased through the use of technical terminology that is used to describe the macabre images: “The abdominal organs below the ribcage of all four test subjects had been removed. While the heart, lungs and diaphragm remained in place, the skin and most of the muscles attached to the ribs had been ripped off, exposing the lungs through the ribcage.”<sup>234</sup>

The theme of the scientific experiment went bad which is set in history, terrifying, descriptive gruesome scenes and events put in perspective, for example by mentioning that “The test subjects were political prisoners deemed enemies of the state during World War II.”<sup>235</sup> This gives the story an omniscient feel thus evoking the feelings of loneliness and vulnerability, and more importantly supply the story with uncanny.

The creepypasta is about a supposed Russian experiment that took place during the late 1940s. The scientists tested an experimental gas, that was supposed to keep political prisoners, “the test subjects”<sup>236</sup>, awake for thirty days while closely monitoring them in a chamber. After a few days, the gas started to take the effect. Some of the test subjects died and were eaten by the ones who survived. The test subjects refused to be removed from the chamber and demanded more of the gas to stay awake. The experiment thus fails and the scientists are losing control.

The creepypasta is written in the third person omniscient narrator thus the narration correlates with the scientific setting which aligns with Freud's theory, meaning the author is deceiving us into pretending it is a reality.<sup>237</sup>

Similar usage of language and the formal nature of the language is employed in “The God Experiment”,<sup>238</sup> which tells a story of a sociological terrifying experiment with the theme of a government conspiracy. Instead of using the names of people who are participating, they are referred to as subjects: “The subjects were dissidents. They were

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<sup>234</sup> “The Russian Sleep Experiment,” Creepypasta, last modified July 8, 2012, <https://www.creepypasta.com/the-russian-sleep-experiment/>.

<sup>235</sup> “The Russian Sleep Experiment,” Creepypasta, last modified July 8, 2012, <https://www.creepypasta.com/the-russian-sleep-experiment/>.

<sup>236</sup> “The Russian Sleep Experiment,” Creepypasta, last modified July 8, 2012, <https://www.creepypasta.com/the-russian-sleep-experiment/>.

<sup>237</sup> Freud, Sigmund. “The uncanny.”

<sup>238</sup> “The God Experiment,” Creepypasta, last modified May 21, 2019, <https://www.creepypasta.com/the-god-experiment/>.

destined to die because our government wanted them dead. Our purpose in The God Experiment was only to ensure death came at the right time.”<sup>239</sup>

The theme of lost documents, diaries, or stories that contain forbidden or lost knowledge is prevalent in a number of stories such as “I Found a Diary Tucked in a Brick at an Abandoned Psych Hospital”,<sup>240</sup> The story giving the reader a sense of forbidden knowledge which manifests as a feeling of excitement. But this primary anticipation is later replaced with terrifying realization many times employed through the use of horrifying descriptions of the medical practice of the mental institution.

#### **3.2.4. The fine line between reality and supernatural**

The narrator of the story usually foreshadows in the exposition the resolution moreover reassures the readers the following story is true. The narrative itself usually starts what seems to be a very normal onset, an event with a natural explanation. Later the supernatural horrifying element or event occur but those events are usually explained and considered to be normal. Towards the end of the story, the narrator reveals a shocking fact, or a shocking event occurs and the influence of the supernatural is obvious. This partially aligns with Carroll's Fantastic plot, more specifically Fantastic Marvelous, considering the nature of the category when the reader and characters wonder if the events are of the natural or supernatural origin.<sup>241</sup> Thus the main device used in these stories to scare the reader is the structure of the narrative, fantastic hesitation, to which an unexpected ending employing a horrific element.

The horrifying twist is essentially a part of confirmation and/or confrontation of a complex discovery plot, which corresponds with the resolution of the story. As we see the resolution of the story “Charles Bonnet Syndrome” it is indeed the very end of the story when the reader and the narrator uncover the truth. The narrators of those stories are usually unreliable, given by the nature of the narrative, the narrator is often somehow disadvantaged. This further contributes to the blurring of the lines between reality and the supernatural, contributing to the uncanny considering the efforts of the

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<sup>239</sup> “The God Experiment,” Creepypasta, last modified May 21, 2019, <https://www.creepypasta.com/the-god-experiment/>.

<sup>240</sup> “I Found a Diary Tucked in a Brick at an Abandoned Psych Hospital,” Creepypasta, last modified November 22, 2019, <https://www.creepypasta.com/i-found-a-diary-tucked-in-a-brick-at-an-abandoned-psych-hospital/>.

<sup>241</sup> Carroll, *Philosophy of Horror: Or, Paradoxes of the Heart*,

author to attribute the events to the natural explanation thus employing the reality in the story.

“Charles Bonnet Syndrome” – The story begins with a twenty-six-year-old narrator Andrew, informing readers, that he suffers from a condition called “Charles Bonnet Syndrome” which causes him a visual hallucination. He starts recollecting his story in a flashback. When Andrew was only twenty-four years old he was diagnosed with diabetes which caused him a vision impairment. A year after his diagnosis he started to have hallucinations of victorian images or a strange rotating levitating globe. He realized he cannot trust his own perception anymore but at the same, he refused to be institutionalized so Andrew ignored his hallucinations. But after an accident caused because one of the hallucinations, he ended up in a hospital, where he, despite his fear, finally opened up about his visions. The doctor reassured him he is not losing his mind but has explained to him that since these things he is seeing are only visions, and not audible or phatic hallucinations, he suffers from a condition called Charles Bonnet Syndrome. Andrew is relieved that he is not going mad and he continues to have these “tricks of the eye”<sup>242</sup> and even “he came to enjoy them”<sup>243</sup>. One night he started seeing a tall, bizarrely clothed character with a malicious smile, pointing at him with her third hand. Andrew immediately recognized that she feels different from other of his hallucinations, more real. After one of his more vivid and terrifying hallucinations of this woman, he called his friend to feel safe and suggested giving her name. During his next vision of her, he seemingly overcomes his fear by dismissing the hallucination, when suddenly he hears a raspy ‘Goodnight, Andrew’.

The story with a theme of a medical condition and Andrew's effort to come to terms with it may seem quite ordinary and nothing unusual. The incorporation of the real-life condition which causes visual hallucination gives the readers an anchor to real life. The reader supposes that this could happen to them, enables them to pretend to be the real world further evoking the sense of uncanny with the horrifying realization at the end of the story. The hallucinations are already a potential source of horrifying visions, furthermore, these visions are of the character who has no control over them. The

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<sup>242</sup> “Charles Bonnet Syndrome” Creepypasta, last modified May 21, 2019, <https://www.creepypasta.com/charles-bonnet-syndrome/>.

<sup>243</sup> “Charles Bonnet Syndrome” Creepypasta, last modified May 21, 2019, <https://www.creepypasta.com/charles-bonnet-syndrome/>.

terrifying vision of a monster-like woman in the night, its unsettling description, and the mysterious nature, is the main element that causes the reader to be horrified and is employed towards the end of the story. But the reader still hesitates if this mysterious woman is in fact a hallucination or something supernatural.

The attempts to demystify her, thus ultimately confirm that it is not a supernatural entity together with Andrew's little victory, result in a false sense of security: "I laid there, a sense of tremendous pride surging through me, and I grinned to myself in my warm, comfortable bed, overjoyed at the emotional victory of overcoming my own fear."<sup>244</sup>

This is later replaced with the terrifying disillusionment when at the unexpectedly abrupt end of the story the reader finds out, that she is in fact not a vision and he describes the feelings of fear as "something his turned his blood to ice water"<sup>245</sup> These emotions are thus reflected onto the reader as a result of the mirroring.<sup>246</sup>

"The Portraits" – The short story of a hunter who finds himself in the middle of the woods, after a long day of hunting. It was getting dark when he spotted a cabin, which was open and empty, therefore the hunter let himself in with the intent to explain himself to the owner tomorrow morning. During the night he woke up multiple times, because of the unsettling portraits depicting hateful faces, hanging all over the walls of the cabin but he finally managed to fall asleep. In the morning he discovered that there is not a single portrait, just windows. The character feels sure that the faces he sees, the stares he feels, are portraits and does not even acknowledge it could be anything else which again according to the uncanny theory tricks the reader into believing the story, by the narrator insisting on the mundanity of the events. The abrupt ending follows a horrifying realization, even though the narrator does not offer any explanation, it is certainly of supernatural origin. The uncanny feeling is caused by the sense of security, the fact that when the hunter woke up in the middle of the night he did not even consider the possibility of those stares being something unnatural. The sense of this

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<sup>244</sup> "Charles Bonnet Syndrome" Creepypasta, last modified May 21, 2019, <https://www.creepypasta.com/charles-bonnet-syndrome/>.

<sup>245</sup> "Charles Bonnet Syndrome" Creepypasta, last modified May 21, 2019, <https://www.creepypasta.com/charles-bonnet-syndrome/>.

<sup>246</sup> Carroll, *Philosophy of Horror: Or, Paradoxes of the Heart*, 18.

false security is once again shattered at the end of the story when the hunter and the reader realize there are no portraits, just windows.

“Bedtime” – The narrator starts the story of how, during his childhood, bedtime was the most horrifying time of the day and proceeds to tell that he needs to get the story he is about to tell off his chest. He described always seeing things in his room, the shapes, the movement, he felt the stares when abruptly woken up in the middle of the night. He imagined the “thing” which, according to him, would certainly “reach out and grab him, pulling him into the darkness”<sup>247</sup>. Every day, with every minute he felt more and more dread, because of the unstoppable marching of the time during the day. But he never dared to make an excuse, for not wanting to sleep in his room. One night, when he wakes up, he is sure he sees something, something moving, since then he is unable to stay in that room. Unfortunately because of unpleasant circumstances, he was forced to stay one night in his room again. This time the boy does not hear any shuffling, nor sees any movement. “The room felt lifeless yet not empty”<sup>248</sup> when he suddenly realized that the thing was not in the bottom bunk, but with him in the bed. Even though he did not see the thing he was certain he felt it. He was not able to move, scream, just to lay in the darkness, with a weight that pressed him down on his chest, for hours. Suddenly he felt like he was being moved, but not voluntarily, he was being taken into the wall. Fortunately, the sunrise was coming, and the boy woke up.

The story combines real-life phenomena, sleep paralysis, and terrifying images of the visions. Sleep paralysis is common enough to be relatable and the feeling of losing control, not being physically able to escape or hide is for many horrifying. Similar to the “Charles Bonnet Syndrome”<sup>249</sup> story, in this narration the reference to reality is also given by this condition, through which the narrator pulls the reader into the story. The narrator slowly builds up the suspense in the story, which results in a horrifying event when the boy is pulled by an evil unknown force into a wallpaper.

The setting itself is also horrifying, considering these events take place during the nighttime. Considering the narrator tells the story when he was a child, bedtime was certainly a scary time that many readers could also relate to.

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<sup>247</sup> “Bedtime” Creepypasta, last modified October 11, 2012, <https://www.creepypasta.com/bedtime/>.

<sup>248</sup> “Bedtime” Creepypasta, last modified October 11, 2012, <https://www.creepypasta.com/bedtime/>.

<sup>249</sup> “Charles Bonnet Syndrome” Creepypasta, last modified May 21, 2019, <https://www.creepypasta.com/charles-bonnet-syndrome/>.

Many of the motifs are very common and ordinary to the readers and the horror genre. The fear of the darkness, fearing of the bogeyman under the bed, one and the only protection from the monster being the blanket. The great role in the story plays the familiar theme of every reader during their childhood, the uncanny which is combined with the fantastic hesitation. The character starts to question whether or not they are going insane, this is the part of the fantastic hesitation, considering the reader also begins to challenge the possible explanation, but later it is discovered that the events were most likely not of the natural explanation.

“NoEnd House” – The story from the perspective of the narrator who is telling his tale of how his friend told him about a NoEnd House, a house outside the city which no one ever reaches its end. Essentially an attraction, a game with simple rules, if the person got through all of the nine rooms, he would win \$500. Upon arrival, the narrator immediately describes an uneasiness that surrounded the place. When he enters the first two rooms that were not horrifying or frightening at all. But as soon as he reaches the third room, he again feels an unexplainable feeling of dread. In the next room, he did not see any door in front of him, he felt a dark presence, heard noises, hums. Yet he manages to reach the next door and enters room number five. He interrupts his narration to reassure the readers that he is not a drug addict nor crazy. It is the first time he started to question not only the size of the house but also the mundanity of the house.

He was somehow transferred into a forest, with an unimaginably large number of bugs. With the shrinking distance of him and the door, grew the feeling of terror of the next room. Room six evokes feelings of insanity, rage but also unnerving fear caused by a devil looking like a devil. By the time he entered the next room, the narrator is mentally and physically exhausted and fearful of what awaits him, but he found himself outside of the house. He felt great relief and went home feeling safe. Though when he arrived home, he found his parents dead, mutilated with an unnerving smile on their faces.

Next to them was a door with a number eight on them, the only thing he could do was to continue with the journey. In the room, he saw a man sitting in a chair, the man was him. Undeniable copies of each other, except one little detail, the man on the chair had on his shirt embroidered the number nine. After the terrifying scene when Dave, the narrator, killed his doppelganger he found himself falling into a deep sadness, literally and mentally:



The darkness around me was like nothing I had experienced up to that point. Room four was dark, but it didn't come close to what was completely engulfing me. I wasn't even sure if I was falling after a while. I felt weightless, covered in dark. Then a deep sadness came over me. I felt lost, depressed, and suicidal.<sup>250</sup>

The feeling of emptiness, disembodiment completely consumed him. David was sure he was in hell. Then suddenly he saw a light, he appeared where he began. David received the price and happily went back home. But suddenly he saw the number ten carved into the wooden door of his house.

The story employs the reality through the narrator's desire for financial gain and ultimately underestimating the following events and thus being completely unprepared for the incoming events. Moreover, the narrator building the suspense through the multiplication of the rooms. The fact that the narrator interrupts the story and mentions that he is not mentally deranged also expands the feeling of suspense. The theme of a haunted house both in the gothic sense, considering the references of ghosts, unexplained paranormal events, the devil, and Haunted House in the sense of attraction which contributes to the feeling of ordinariness and relatability. Thus the combination of both results in the uncanny. While the most terrifying matter being the dreadful twist at the end of the story that brings the hopelessness and defeat evoked by the infinite, neverending suffering. After the narrator seemingly leaves the house, he feels safe, which is reflected onto the reader. The more the reader has the feeling of security, the more frightening the realization later in the story is.

“Never Judge a Book by its Cover”– The story begins as a diary entry, in which the owner expresses the gratefulness for having the diary because he is able to tell horrifying secrets, thoughts, and fantasies without acting on them. But he continues that he will need a new one, but the diary does not have to be afraid and reassures "it" he will miss it. The owner contemplates how to get rid of the diary. Considered burry it or burning it. Describing how the owner unchains the diary for the last time. Then he mentions Diary being a unique name and reassuring that the fire will kill her quickly. Towards the end of the story, the reader finds out with the progression of the narration,

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<sup>250</sup> “NoEnd House,” Creepypasta, last modified June 30, 2011, <https://www.creepypasta.com/noend-house/>.

that the owner in fact found a mutilated dead body which he kept. The narrator of the story begins the narration as a journal prompt:

Dear Diary, You have given me so much joy throughout the years of being in my possession. I have shared all of my memories with you, the good and the bad. I have revealed all of my secrets to you, even the deepest and darkest of them all.<sup>251</sup>

However, at the same time, he treats and speaks to the journal as it was a person, which immediately confuses the reader. Later in the story, the reader finds out that he speaks to a corpse, named Diary.

After I'm done reading this last letter to you, I'm going to unbind you from your chains for the very last time. After removing that heavy collar and handcuffs around your wrists, I will place your name tag in a glass frame. Diary is the most unique and beautiful name I have ever heard! When I first read it the night I found you I was so confused. I had never heard Diary as a name before.<sup>252</sup>

The ominous tone of the narration is used for making the reader rather uncomfortable considering the obvious unpredictability of the text. The main theme seemingly being journaling, a mundane task, which is turned into a horrific and disturbing revelation invoke the notion of uncanny.<sup>253</sup> At the same time, the theme and horrifying description are an important feature of the story, the body is the source of the horror thus the story could be considered a medical horror. The story is built on vulnerability and even moves away from the supernatural.

This story is one exception to any other creepypastas involved in this thesis, considering the outcome is not of the supernatural origin but of a real-life psychopath, which would even further terrify the reader. The narrator did not even have to pretend that there is a sense of supernatural even though the reader could. The fantastic hesitation<sup>254</sup> is present but the later the reader finds out the events are of a naturalistic origin, thus according to Carroll it is considered a The Fantastic Uncanny<sup>255</sup>. The not-so-unordinary beginning

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<sup>251</sup> "Never Judge a Book by its Cover, " Creepypasta Horror & Paranormal Stories, last modified 20 August 2015, <http://www.creepypasta.org/creepypasta/never-judge-a-book-by-its-cover-2>.

<sup>252</sup> "Never Judge a Book by its Cover, " Creepypasta Horror & Paranormal Stories, last modified 20 August 2015, <http://www.creepypasta.org/creepypasta/never-judge-a-book-by-its-cover-2>.

<sup>253</sup> Freud, Sigmund. "The uncanny."

<sup>254</sup> Carroll, *Philosophy of Horror: Or, Paradoxes of the Heart*, 118.

<sup>255</sup> Carroll, 118

which furthers into the story is revealed through the depictions of horrifying images and the feelings of helplessness lead to the suspense.<sup>256</sup> The story pushes the boundaries, when the reader is sure the narrator reaches the final terrifying twist, he continues to incorporate even more horrible incidents.

### **3.2.5. The new-age creepypasta**

The stories of this type usually rely on the narratives of authors who recollect some kind of forgotten memory and those stories are based on their childhood memory. This implies, according to the Uncanny theory of Freud<sup>257</sup>, that fear is induced through the possibility of a better perception of the world during our childhood than adulthood.<sup>258</sup> At the same time the concept and storylines of the episodes which were not considered disturbing to children, are now viewed by the narrators and readers, as disturbing.

The prevalent role of those stories is a new perception of the new technologies, especially of the internet, considering it is depicted as something which could potentially induce fear. Many times the authors of those stories remind us in the exposition of something of a nostalgic value, usually computer games, or supposedly forgotten or lost episodes. Something that used to be familiar but does not appear so, because of the unfamiliar characteristics. Slowly but surely the author starts to include some more disturbing memories, which were then not considered troubling. It is until the resolution when the reader understands the terrifying truth. But of course, the theme of the internet and modern technologies being a source of anxiety and fear was employed before the creepypasta. An example is the story “Candle Cove”,<sup>259</sup> a discussion on a forum, where the users reminisce about the tv show, the more they remember, the more they find it disturbing. The suspense builds up when at the end they are faced with a disturbing discovery. The fear in those stories is caused by their early origin and the context, considering these concrete stories belong to the early period of the creepypasta phenomenon, during which time, the readers of those stories were not sure what is reality and what is fiction.

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<sup>256</sup> Carroll, 91.

<sup>257</sup> Freud, Sigmund. "The uncanny."

<sup>258</sup> Freud, Sigmund. "The uncanny."

<sup>259</sup> “Candle Cove” Creepypasta, last modified June 5, 2009, <https://www.creepypasta.com/candle-cove/>.

“1999”– The title refers to the year 1999, narrator emphasis the importance of this year for him when he “lost his childhood innocence”<sup>260</sup> which was a result of the horrific events, and this recollection of events the narrator revealed in his blog. As a child, he encountered channel 21 called Caledon Local 21. It was later in his life when he realized the disturbing content of this channel. Then the narrator lists the tv shows that he remembers. One of those was a show called Mr. Bear’s Cellar, with the main character being a man with a bear mask. Many of the episodes seemed innocent at first but later turned into horrific events that had real-life consequences. In one of the episodes, Mr. Bear invites the audience, the children, to his cellar. The narrator uncovers that it was later discovered that a man under the pseudonym Mr. Bear established a local TV channel with the intention to lure children and later murder them in a satanic ritual. The narrator later reveals to his blog that he has in fact visited the place where the kids were murdered. In the following passage, we learn that the blog of the narrator was hacked by Mr. Bear.

We can see that here is the main theme of the story is employing the TV show which seemed innocent during his childhood but later turned out to be malevolent and dangerous, which the narrator did not learn until their adulthood. The nostalgic nevertheless the familiar is turned into the unfamiliar through the new perspective of the adult eyes, thus this being the uncanny element.<sup>261</sup> An important element is the character of Mr. Bear, the murderer, who is an insane individual, not a supernatural, thus the story feels to be true. The narrator refers to a real setting and mentions news articles which also induces feelings of credibility and the likelihood of the situation and of the story itself.

“Candle Cove” – The creepypasta has a form of a redding forum discussion called NetNostalgia. One of the users starts a conversation asking if someone remembers a weird 70s show called Candle Cove. Not long after other users confirm that they also recollect the show about pirates and the horrifying villains of the story. The more they reminisce about the story the more they find it disturbing. Strange episodes about the brutal terrifying-looking villain, the Skin-Taker, who would threaten the character

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<sup>260</sup> “1999,” Creepypasta, last modified November 14, 2009, <https://www.creepypasta.com/1999-creepypasta/>.

<sup>261</sup> Freud, Sigmund. “The uncanny.”

to “grind their skin”<sup>262</sup>. One of the users then describes a terrible nightmare about the show, but others reassure the user that it was an actual episode that was without a plot, just character screaming and crying. Later one of the users writes that he was visiting his mother, who told him that the show in fact never existed and she mentioned that when he was a kid and the Candle Cove was “on”, the TV would be tuned to static.

The main theme of the creepypasta is the new technologies, the TV, involved in terrifying events. The name of the forum, *NetNostalgia*, offers to the readers to relate since it is a real forum, and it also refers to the beginnings of the new technologies which offered the nostalgic feeling. The terrifying revelation is thus more disturbing, moreover ending the story without any explanation of what really was behind the show, only knowing the explanation is not of the natural origin.

By using this particular structure where the story is narrated through forum posts, and the further participation of the users and recollecting the episodes is according to the Uncanny theory the device used by the author to contribute to the feelings of relatability, and sense of reality. Furthermore, Freud refers to the sense of nostalgia linked to this feeling similar to the prior story, “1999”. Thus it is the sense of familiarity in a form of a childhood TV program that draws the reader in. Thus this is almost a direct representation of the uncanny, characterized by the terrifying feeling to which Freud refers to. What once used to be familiar and perceived as a normal TV show, was by the adults evaluated and considered unfamiliar because of the recollection and new view on the world. The recollection of the memories from childhood as well contributes to the feelings of bittersweet nostalgia which results in an unexpected twist when behind mundane events, such as the memories of a TV show, was something more sinister.

“My Dead Girlfriend Keeps Messaging Me on Facebook” – The narrative opens with a narrator stating that his “girlfriend died on August 7th of 2012”<sup>263</sup>, but after thirteen months he starts to receive messages from Emily's, his girlfriend that passed away. First, he reasons that it is her mother, who forgot she is using her account. Later he believed that someone hacked the profile when “Emily” started to tag herself in his pictures. After a while, he discovered that the responses from the profile were replies

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<sup>262</sup> “Candle Cove” Creepypasta, last modified June 5, 2009, <https://www.creepypasta.com/candle-cove/>.

<sup>263</sup> “My Dead Girlfriend Keeps Messaging Me on Facebook,” Creepypasta, last modified 1 April 2013, [https://creepypasta.fandom.com/wiki/My\\_Dead\\_Girlfriend\\_Keeps\\_Messaging\\_Me\\_on\\_Facebook](https://creepypasta.fandom.com/wiki/My_Dead_Girlfriend_Keeps_Messaging_Me_on_Facebook).

used from previous conversations. The “person” kept messaging him, even though he admitted he should stop he could not make himself to prevent her from it. He admits that the “conversation” is what is keeping him from missing her. But Emily started sending him stranger stranger messages also posted photos of him that seem to be photographed in secret. The story ends the story with a scary update in which he notifies the reader that and the last picture is taken in front of the narrator's house.

The narrator of the story here focuses on the dependency of the internet when he mentions that he could just stop using the Facebook platform, but he could not do it, even though during the climax of the story and resolution when the readers are almost certain, that the profile that is messaging him is the ghost of his dead girlfriend. Thus it could be viewed as the obsession and addiction to the social media of today's society. But most likely the author uses the messenger as a modern-day Ouiji board, but the ghost contacts him, not the other way around. Therefore the sense of not having control over a certain situation could be viewed as a device to induce fear in the reader. The traditional trope of ghost haunting takes place on a social platform which could evoke the feelings of uncanny,<sup>264</sup> considering the familiar trope which takes unfamiliar form.

### **3.2.6. Ritual creepypasta**

Authors of those stories explain some kind of ritual, game, or rather the steps or rules of the game, which is essentially a ritual because through fulfilling the steps the person is summoning some kind of supernatural entity.

The narrator is usually talking directly to the reader. The game itself usually involves some kind of ghost or demonic entity, which (if the game/ritual is done correctly) grants the person, performing the game/ritual, a knowledge of some kind – the person usually has a question, and therefore summoned this entity to answers the question.

These types of stories could be considered a subgenre of urban legends similar to the “Bloody Mary” ritual. It is possible that the authors are inspired by already existing ones or some are even rooted in the real rituals, for example, creepypasta “Tulpa”. The story of this dark double taking over one's mind has its origins in a real spiritual ritual,

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<sup>264</sup> Freud, Sigmund. “The uncanny.”

rooted in Tibetan culture, that includes meditation in a dark room until one sees a wicked, misshapen doppelganger.

Also, similar motifs, appear during the preparation of the ritual are common for this category. For example the use of the mirror, which for many cultures has different properties. According to some Japanese legends, for example, a mirror is said to have cleansing qualities. When we look at the properties of mirrors in the context of other cultures, where it represents something sinister and negative, which is presented through the already mentioned urban legend Bloody Mary where we are given a completely different narrative. Or when one breaks the mirror means seven years of bad luck. Overall mirrors are very prominent in folklore and in a number of legends. The same applies to the creepypasta realm, for example, the story “Three Kings Ritual”, which includes a mirror that serves as a window to another world where one could encounter demons, ghosts.

“Has Anyone Heard of the Left/Right Game” – The author of the story, also the unnamed narrator, starts the story by prefacing, that it is not his story but a story of one of his friends, Alice a friend he met in college, thus apologizing for the narration not being the best. After she was offered a newspaper job in a different city they drifted apart, but later is discovered she had disappeared. One day, the narrator got a file which according to him, Alice documented her disappearance. One of the files is called The Left/Right game. This is when the first shift of the narrator occurs, the narrator reads the story written by Alice in which she describes everything about the Left/Right Game. The participant became a part of this ritual when one drives in a specific area in Phoenix takes the first turn left, then the next possible one right, then the next turn left, until one reaches the end, or dies. Alice describes how she and a group of supernatural enthusiasts decided to experience this “local attraction” even though everyone was convinced this to be staged, and serving as a way to attract tourists. But after a while, she started to be suspicious that something is not right. Busy call lines, feeling like the world is going something else, picking up an only radio station that plays, what seems to be the tortured souls from hell. Picking up a strange hitchhiker, obviously otherworldly, there is no specification on what he really is, the only thing they know is that no matter what, it is forbidden to interact with him. After a while the realization starts to hit, the game is real.

The main theme of this story is a ritualistic game, with a realistic setting and set in everyday reality. By including a real-life setting, or the real area, the author draws in the readers. The theme of transporting from our world to somewhere else is never completely explained, which leaves the readers wondering how it works. The features of the cosmic horror evoke the feeling of loneliness, emptiness, and one's unimportance which is also intensified by the busy call lines and feelings as if in another dimension. The mentioning of the author for not being the best narrator establishes a better relationship with the readers who have the sense that he is one of them, he read the story once and felt the same as the reader does.

“The Devil Game” – The anonymous narrator of the story starts to narrate what seems more like a conversation, even though the narrator says that the text below is manual on how to speak with the devil. The purpose of the game is quite clear if one does the ritual correctly and somehow outsmarts the devil, he will answer any kind of question considering he has the ability to “know a lot of things”<sup>265</sup>. The narrator describes the steps of summoning the devil, then he explains the rules of the game itself moreover what kind of question one should ask the devil in case one would defeat him. The ritual has to take place in a church and requires a huge mirror, red string, salt, needle. And in the mirror appears the devil himself.

The theme of the ritual and summoning the devil is a traditional horror element but in the creepypasta realm, the stories which include this kind of trope usually describe an incredibly detailed step-by-step process. The narrator foreshadows at the beginning who is really behind the story when he says that “for the sake of the human race”<sup>266</sup> he hopes that most of us (readers) “are not that stupid”<sup>267</sup>. Towards the end, when instead of saying that the devil is trying to tract new “challengers”<sup>268</sup> he mistakenly refers to those possible participants as “suckers”<sup>269</sup>, the readers understand

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<sup>265</sup> “The Devil Game,” Creepypasta, last modified October 23, 2013, <https://www.creepypasta.com/the-devil-game/>.

<sup>266</sup> “The Devil Game,” Creepypasta, last modified October 23, 2013, <https://www.creepypasta.com/the-devil-game/>.

<sup>267</sup> “The Devil Game,” Creepypasta, last modified October 23, 2013, <https://www.creepypasta.com/the-devil-game/>.

<sup>268</sup> “The Devil Game,” Creepypasta, last modified October 23, 2013, <https://www.creepypasta.com/the-devil-game/>.

<sup>269</sup> “The Devil Game,” Creepypasta, last modified October 23, 2013, <https://www.creepypasta.com/the-devil-game/>.



that the story is in fact narrated by the devil who is malicious and manipulative, tries to lure in humans to play with him:

But if you've made it this far without shying, a little twist at the end isn't going to put you off, is it, dear Reader? I'm sure there are plenty of intrepid adventurers among you with burning questions you'd like answered. And you're all a smart bunch. You know the pitfalls, you know the conventions, you live and breathe this sort of thing, do you not? There's no way YOU'D fall into any of the obvious traps, right?<sup>270</sup>

Nevertheless, the ending is quite shocking and unexpected which evokes in the reader feelings of astonishment and horror when realizing this matter of fact.

### **3. 3. Conclusion**

In the following section, I am going to conclude the analysis of those categories and compare them to traditional horror literature. I am going to focus on the prevalent themes and other elements that influenced the categorization of those stories and put them into a perspective with the respect to traditional horror. Important is the consideration of the creepypasta as a whole, not only consider them as individual stories nor categories, but rather a subgenre of horror, because of its nature and form. Therefore I will conclude the characteristics and specifics of the creepypasta realm as such.

#### **3. 3. 1. Comparison of the elements in the stories**

As presented through those categories, the creepypasta stories are very flexible in the themes and horror elements and do not rely solely only on modern technologies as the main theme although they do fulfill an important role. For example, the creepypasta stories such as "Eyeless jack" or "The Devils Game" are directly inspired by traditional topics of the devil and ritual, sacrifice. The topic of the devil, demons, and sacrifices, a religious theme that is set in this modern era of the internet. Moreover, the story itself is distributed on the web.

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<sup>270</sup> "The Devil Game," Creepypasta, last modified October 23, 2013, <https://www.creepypasta.com/the-devil-game/>.

The authors of those stories do not explore just the traditional European myths, in stories such as “Skinwalker”<sup>271</sup> we see the influence of mythologies and legends of the Native Americans. The authors of the “Slenderman”<sup>272</sup> creepypasta created legends or myths of the creature which was based on Egyptian and Roman culture. Creepypasta stories allow us to discover new themes, and topics from different cultures thus we are able to connect and learn from other people through those stories. Thus creating a new kind of direction for stories. Of course, a big part was the internet and still growing globalization and connection to other parts of the world and cultures.

The “new” sources of inspiration could be considered a device used to scare its audience of creepypasta stories. Many of those legends are often new to the readers, and it is the first time they encounter them. Therefore the typical legends of mythical creatures such as a rake, or a skinwalker, which have the origin in Indian mythology, and thus represent the fear of the unknown. Or if the story is inspired or based on some already existing myth, the author changes or alternates its narrative, thus turning the familiar. Instead of incorporating the “traditional” monsters such as werewolf or vampire, the authors of creepypasta have shown their preference in including less conventional monsters. Many times those authors begin with introducing some type of legend, myth. This frequentness may be given by the possibilities of the internet and its possibility to connect with a vast number of people and cultures.

At the same time, the creepypasta phenomena seem to merge the new technologies and new media with the traditional sources of fear. As stated in the beginning, the internet itself is an important feature of those stories since the technologies are always a part of the anxiety which is represented in the horror genre.<sup>273</sup> A crucial element is the incorporation of the uncanny,<sup>274</sup> which is done through the particular way of employing the theme or the key trope in a story. Such as in the creepypastas which employ the once familiar element in a way that appears unfamiliar.

Most of the plots partially agree with the theory of Noël Carroll who proposed that for the confirmation function is the aspect of the nonbeliever essential thus is a required

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<sup>271</sup> “Skinwalker,” Creepypasta, last modified December 28, 2013, <https://www.creepypasta.com/skinwalker/>.

<sup>272</sup> “Slender Man,” Creepypasta, last modified January 14, 2010. <https://www.creepypasta.com/slenderman/>.

<sup>273</sup> Cardin, *Horror Literature through History*, 171.

<sup>274</sup> Freud, Sigmund. “The uncanny.”

element.<sup>275</sup> The structure of the creepypasta is mostly said in the point of view of the narrator, who states in the exposition of the story he/she is telling the truth, even though the reader is not obligated to believe him/her, but insists that the following account is true. Sometimes the narrator even mentions he did not use to believe in the supernatural. Thus the creepypasta stories essentially contain two possible “nonbelievers”, the narrator and the reader which is connected to the desire of the author to present the story with as much authenticity as possible and convince the audience.

### 3. 3. 2. Aspects of creepypasta in perspective

Various cultural influences, globalization, the technological influence such as the WEB 2.0, contribute to the rise of the possibly new subgenre of creepypastas. A significant part of those stories is the sense of familiarity to the author because of the close possibility of interaction, the story is told by a “friend”, considering the nature of the internet. The sense of the connection between the users manifests in a closer relationship between the reader and the author as opposed to traditional horror literature.

Creepypastas can be regarded as a part of the horror genre only to a certain degree considering its origin in the world of the internet. During the beginnings of the creepypasta phenomena, the readers of those first stories were not sure if the tale is true or not, because many of those stories were posted on Reddit and other social platforms. The sense of a true horror story, meaning the authors claims the narrative is based on reality, prevailed in today's creepypasta stories. This endeavor is most likely not found in a book of the horror genre. A fascinating point is that even though everybody knows the creepypasta stories are not real, the readers on the contrary are treating it as genuine, everybody is *playing* the game with the author.

One of the principal literary devices of the authors of creepypasta stories is mainly the form of those stories, the stories are essentially accounts of events, the narrators are also the users of the specific websites, they are a part of the audience, but also the audience feels closer to the creator. Other added devices depend upon the individual categories. The first category, for example, shows the dependence on an already existing myth and

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<sup>275</sup> Carroll, *Philosophy of Horror: Or, Paradoxes of the Heart*, 101.

a monster which somehow enhanced. The main tropes and themes of the creepypasta stories are again dependent on the specific category. Nevertheless in general, the shared attribute of those stories is the inclusion of monsters, or for the most part a supernatural being of some kind. Some stories deviate from this tradition, story such as “Never Judge a Book by its Cover”.<sup>276</sup>

As mentioned before, the narrative is quite important, considering it provides the creepypastas in general with specific characteristics which differentiate them from the traditional horror literature. The narration is usually from a point of view of the narrator and the narrator is, in general, the protagonist, the one who is faced with a scary situation, the one who is confronted with the monster. An interesting attribute of those stories is the specificity, meaning they are a phenomenon strictly on the internet. Thus when a certain author decides to publish those stories, meaning they would have a physical form, meaning the form of traditional horror literature, if they would still be considered a creepypasta. The last point that emerges from the creepypasta realm is caused by the nature of the internet, and it is the cultural inclusivity of those stories, considering the stories such as “Skinwalker”,<sup>277</sup> which are inspired by the Native American myth. Thus, some creepypastas provide readers with alternative approaches to horror literature or culturally different horror traditions.

## **SUMMARY**

This thesis focuses on a new way of writing horror narrations. The thesis is concerned with a specific form taking into account the main attribute of those stories. These stories are published and further shared in the internet realm – creepypastas – stories whose purpose is to scare (creepy) and are shared (paste). In order to find the specifics correctly and systematically, I have decided to categorize the individual narrations. I have mainly focussed on the most prominent features of concrete stories and subsequently sorted them into groups or categories. The thesis includes the historical context of the horror tradition and the main theoretical frameworks that are concerned with horror texts as such. This provided context would be used for a better analysis of

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<sup>276</sup> “Never Judge a Book by Its Cover,” Creepypasta Wiki, last modified June 24, 2014, [https://creepypasta.fandom.com/wiki/Never\\_Judge\\_a\\_Book\\_by\\_Its\\_Cover](https://creepypasta.fandom.com/wiki/Never_Judge_a_Book_by_Its_Cover).

<sup>277</sup> “The Skinwalker,” Creepypasta, last modified December 28, 2013, <https://www.creepypasta.com/skinwalker/>.

the traditional horror literature and the internet stories. The most important element of the creepypasta stories being the form and the authorship of those stories, meaning these are the feature that differentiates creepypastas from the traditional horror literature furthermore, it is simultaneously used as an element that would support to fulfill the intentions of the amateur writers. By examining the similarities and differences, provided in this thesis, we could conclude that creepypastas could be considered a subgenre to traditional horror literature.

## **ANOTACE**

Bakalářská práce se dívá na nový způsob psaní hororového vyprávění. Jedná se o specifickou formu hororu vzhledem k hlavnímu atributu těchto příběhů. Jsou publikovány a dále sdíleny v prostředí internetu – creepypasty – příběhy jež mají čtenáře vyděsit (creepy) a jsou dále sdíleny (past). Abych mohla správně a systematicky rozeznat specifika tohoto fenoménu rozhodla jsem příběhy kategorizovat a brát na vědomí rozhodující elementy jednotlivých příběhů. Práce zahrnuje jak historický kontext hororové tradice, tak i základní teoretické rámce týkající se hororových textů jako takových. Tento poskytnutý kontext poté sloužil ke srovnání podobností a rozdílů tradiční hororové literatury s internetovými příběhy. Sdílenou klíčovou charakteristikou a prominentním znakem těchto amatérských příběhů je jejich samotná forma a autorství, jestliže uvážíme hodnotu těchto atributů, které pomáhají autorům dosáhnout žádoucích cílů. Právě analyzováním podobností a odlišností, můžeme uvažovat o creepypastách jako o samostatné kategorii uvnitř hororového žánru.

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