Everything is True Here, Even if it Isn't: the performance of belief online

Dr Vivian Asimos
Alt-ac.uk
asimos.vivian@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The primary stage for contemporary horror storytelling online, the subreddit No Sleep, declares the most important rule for users: everything is true here, even if it isn't. This rule dictates the way users typically interact both on the subreddit and elsewhere while writing and reading horror stories online. Users typically post 'in character', or write as if the narrative is a true story. This impacts not only the comments, but also the story itself. Users engage with a playful performance of belief, demonstrating that belief is not just an on/off switch – ludically immersing themselves in ontological realities beyond their own. Using fieldwork conducted at No Sleep, this paper seeks to demonstrate the playful performances of belief as something much greater than 'simple play', but a demonstration of the sliding scale possible in belief. The process is not necessarily about finding belief, or changing belief, but about the performance itself. The performance of belief creates a social reality for the community. It is a manipulation of belief, which creates a form of mythic thinking which can create a spiritual experience. Realistic supernatural stories bring the supernatural into the everyday, but also brings the everyday into the supernatural.

KEYWORDS

Online storytelling; Playing with belief; Performance of belief; Horror; Realism.

Introduction

The room is only lit by the soft blue glow of a computer screen, only on due to a consistently renewed promise that after this next story I will sleep. But with each story the dark encroaches closer and closer, until it feels the screen is the only comfort. The radiators click with the soft settling of a slowly cooling boiler beginning to rest for the night. Each noise makes my eyes dart around the every-darkening room in the sudden fear the horror from the screen is now here, lurking somewhere in the darkened corners of the room.

The forum site Reddit is home to the largest community and location for horror writing online. With over thirteen million subscribers, the subreddit No Sleep is home to the largest centre of horror writers and audiences, with new stories being added constantly. No Sleep prides itself on a home for 'realistic' horror writing; all narratives are written in first-person and comments are written as if the narrative is true. The main rule on the subreddit is written 'everything is true here, even if it isn't', a phrase which sums up the primary realistic mode of the writings.

This paper unpacks the steadfast rule of r/nosleep: everything is true here, even if it isn't. This rule dictates the way users typically interact both on the subreddit and elsewhere while writing and reading horror stories online. Users typically post 'in character,' or write as if the narrative is a true story. This impacts not only the comments, but also the story itself. Users engage with a playful performance of belief – ludically immersing themselves in ontological realities beyond their own. Using fieldwork conducted at No Sleep, this paper seeks to demonstrate the playful performances of belief as something much greater than 'simple play', but a demonstration of the sliding scale possible in belief. It also exhibits the users' abilities to thoughtfully participate in supernatural beliefs otherwise inaccessible to them through language and play.

Reddit and Horror Writing Online

The forum website reddit has become one of the foundational locations for social interaction and communication. It has become so popular to describe itself as 'the front page of the internet'. Reddit is divided into subreddits, or forums specifically focused on particular topics. There are subreddits for general themes, such as world news or cute images, and subreddits for very specific niche topics such as the one for houseplants.

The subreddit No Sleep is the subforum for horror storytelling and has amassed over thirteen million subscribers (reddit, n.d.). All posts are narratives written by users, and they are regulated by users. Posts become more easily seen the more they are 'upvoted' or considered good enough to be given a positive point. If narratives are deemed as low quality, a user can 'downvote' the post, which gives it a negative point. Posts can be organised by the highest ratings, allowing users to more easily find posts the community at large finds most agreeable.

The most important rule of the subreddit is the declaration that 'everything is true here, even if it isn't'. The rule summarises how the posts are expected to be written in first-person and communicated as if true. The point is to mimic the way posts are presented on other subreddits which are not popularised as fictional. The subreddit Entitled Parents, which tells narratives

of users' encounters with parents acting entitled, is centred on true narratives and, therefore, are written in first person. No Sleep attempts to copy this format in order to bring greater realism to the narratives; not only are posts written in first-person, but so are the comments by others on the story itself.

Another way of understanding how this might work is described as in character communication. Essentially, this means users talk as if real. Instead of directly asking for another story from an individual because they enjoy the story, they say something such as 'keep us updated' or 'have you done any more research?'. This brings realism to the communication surrounding the narrative as well as the narrative itself – the entire subreddit becomes part of the storytelling frame.

This emphasis on realism encapsulates even the nature of the narratives which are told. In previous incarnations of creepypasta (a term for online horror writing), such as the Slender Man mythology, the narrative often took shape in forms of 'proof', such as email transcripts, digitally manipulated photos, or what appears to be government documents (Asimos, 2019). Unlike the Slender Man mythology, No Sleep does not tell stories in these ways, but the essence behind the purpose remains the same. For previous creepypastas like the Slender Man, the realism came in the form of information someone might discover while doing research, such as images or newspaper articles. For No Sleep, the realism comes from the format of the forum site itself. Reddit is often a place in which first-hand accounts are a given, and therefore No Sleep mimics this to a fictional end. First-hand accounts are more easily written, allowing for a multitude of individuals to participate in the storytelling, as opposed to the select few more adept at using Photoshop.

As part of my role as researcher using participant-observation, I felt it important to take part in the process not only by reading and commenting in character, but also writing my own first-hand narrative as well. The process allowed me to fully explore the role playing with belief has on both the narratives and the community's engagement with the narratives.

Playing with Belief

The horror genre is not a novice at audience's play with belief. The horror genre first began to appear in the eighteenth century with the publication of Horace Walpole's The Castle of Otranto (1765) (Carroll, 1990: 4). The English Gothic novel itself encouraged the intimate relationship between the text and the reader (Kilgour, 1995: 6). Often, this was encouraged through the nature of the epistemological framing. Gothic novels such as Mary Shelley's Frankenstein (1818) framed the narrative as a collection of letters and diary entries, creating a sense of reality to the narrative.

Like many reactions to the online environment, Gothic novels at the time were considered particularly damaging to individuals. James Beattie, for example, described reading Gothic novels as causing negative consequences, filling 'the mind with extravagant thoughts and too often with criminal propensities' (Beattie, 1809). This kind of reaction against an aspect of popular culture has not stopped with the Gothic novel and reflects the reactions of media outlets to the realisation of the online horror storytelling scene. After a stabbing in 2012 which had been attributed to an online monster, one blogger wrote 'there is something really sick and twisted about the people who put up websites

like this' (Plattor, 2014). Just as readers in the eighteenth-century were more than capable of dispelling fact from fiction, so, too, are the readers online and on No Sleep in particular. The realism presents a fun game of 'what if', allowing users to dabble with a reality which is not reality temporarily.

When discussing my studies in the middle of my research, I was frequently faced with the sudden question: 'Does anyone actually believe this stuff?' It was a startling question to receive, especially from scholars in the study of religion. The question of 'actually' believing pushes the concept of belief into an easy yes or no answer. But belief, even outside the conversation of online fictional narratives, is not so simple.

Abby Day has successfully sketched a detailed overview of ideas toward, and definitions of, the term 'belief' far more successfully than possible here (Day, 2011). She notes how scholars often use the word without an exploration of what they mean by the word, nor even what the people they study might mean (ibid: 3). Throughout past academic treatments of belief, there are different understandings and definitions, stretching from Webb Keane's use of 'sincerity' (Keane, 2002; 2007) to Mary Douglas's understanding of beliefs being formed through the responses to changing circumstances (Douglas, 1966). There are also differing configurations of the relationship between belief and the individual and the social. Grace Davie's famous 'believing without belonging' (1994) demonstrates a belief as individualised, while Raymond Firth sees belief as stemming from the social (Firth, 1948). Belief being a simple yes or no question, therefore, is already taking a large assumption on the idea of belief.

For participants in horror storytelling online, and in particular the subreddit No Sleep, the authors do not by any means think their creations or narratives actively exist. For them, when not directly engaging with the narrative, all pretences of its existence fades. However, this does not mean users are not engaging or playing with the idea of belief during the process of storytelling and story-receiving.

Richard Schechner proposed two types of play: 'make believe' and 'make belief' (Schechner, 2002: 42). The first maintains the set boundaries which distinguish between what is considered real and what is considered pretend. The second, however, intentionally blurs them. Schechner, therefore, questions how much a performer believes their own performance in order to distinguish between the two. Jane McGonigal argues against this and sees it as problematic to rely purely on the performer's self-awareness, because this is something which can be shifted easily. Instead, she posits different questions to distinguish, particularly the pleasures and payoffs for feigned belief in a play setting, or how these practices of performed belief influence performers in their everyday life (McGonigal, 2003).

Perhaps most similar to the practice of belief performance is Michael Kinsella's work on legend-tripping, or when there is a journey to a specific location or a performance of certain action which, according to a legend, has the potential to trigger a supernatural experience (Kinsella, 2011: 28). Legend tripping relies on Dégh and Vázsonyi's concept of ostention and ostensive acts, or the ways in which 'real'-life activities are guided by legends and mythology (Dégh and Vázsonyi, 1983). Legend-tripping uses ostensive acts in order to trigger such experiences, and so the two work in tandem, and both work in order to blur the traditional binary of 'reality' and 'fiction'. Kinsella comments that

legend-trippers perform the strange intermingling between fantasy and reality, with the purpose more toward the exploitation of the emotive feel of the performance than in proving some objective existence of the supernatural (Kinsella, 2011: 147).

Kinsella's legend-trippers and McGonigal's exploration into alternative reality games (ARGs), help to explore a new avenue of what belief could be. Rather than an individual's sense of yes or no, belief is more a scale of possibilities. Rather than assuming belief as an in-group or out-group, either from an individual or communal standpoint, perhaps it is better to think of belief as a community pool. There is a deep end, in which some may completely immersive themselves in the waters of belief, diving head-first into the waters. But there is an incline to the shallow end, where some may prefer to stand in the waist-height waters of belief. Others may wish to drift, paddling from one end to the other, but never wanting to get their hair wet. And even others may want to simply sit on the side of the pool with only their feet in.

The analogy of the pool and its waters of belief allow us to understand how belief is rarely anything firm and set. Individuals in a particular religion may not feel compelled to feel married to any particular belief typically ascribed to their religion. In fact, individuals may shift where they emphasise their intensity for the religion, sometimes in beliefs, sometimes not, and sometimes in different beliefs than before. I first encountered this type of fluctuating belief when I was working with Christian Scientists in Edinburgh, Scotland. While sitting in on a Wednesday evening meeting, I witnessed one of the women who had been quite vocal about the importance of Christian Science to me take an ibuprofen. This act of taking a bit of medication is technically against the beliefs of Christian Science, but she rationalised the action to me through a rounded discussion of how she understands the taking of medication does not affect her as much as prayer, but that it helps.

Belief is something which is malleable, constantly shifting in nature and, in Kinsella's terms, something able to be manipulated. It is inherently something which can be performed and played with. The playing with belief for horror online like No Sleep takes the form of in character communication and the attempt to explore realism in the fictional.

The Crossing of Reality and Fiction

During my time 'living' on the subreddit No Sleep, I drafted my own horror stories to partake in the process. The hope was the practice would teach me about the methods of communicating about the narrative in first-person. My actual experience, however, taught me more about the complicated nature of the idea of realism in horror writing online.

No Sleep describes itself as a place for 'realistic' horror, mostly communicated through the first-person, in character, storytelling and communication. When it comes to the role of the supernatural in horror, the concept of 'realism' becomes ultimately more complicated. In what mindset can the supernatural be considered 'realistic'? What one considers a realistic depiction of how the supernatural may function may appear outlandish to another. As a religious studies scholar, we encounter this frequently when teaching undergraduates, as we attempt to force them to consider another's perspective of the supernatural as equally valid as their own. But the subreddit

No Sleep are not my students – they are my writing peers, and most of them are far superior at the act of creative writing than myself.

I ended up writing two stories. My first was deleted by the subreddit for not being horror enough. The deletion of my writing was a blow to the ego – I felt I had drafted something which blurred what could possibly be happening, attempting to not take any stance on a realistic horror in order to avoid facing the complicated question. It obviously did not work. My second took a much more direct approach, while still hinting at the resultant ending. But the role of the supernatural was still heavily present, and heavily obvious.

The process encouraged me to re-comprehend the role of the supernatural in horror writing from the perspective of the writer, and especially as a writer who has already failed. The upvote/downvote system causes a level of anxiety in the process of writing, which is not necessarily released after the posting. The story remains part of the individual author, while also now belonging and existing with the community simultaneously. It is the community which ultimately makes or breaks a horror narrative.

The connection of community to narrative for the No Sleep community is only slightly different to the same connection for older horror online narratives. Creepypasta, a term used for online horror storytelling, was typically done with the purpose of avoiding connections between story and author. The intent was for the narrative to live in a liminal space online, between the worlds of reality and fiction. The narrative would be rationally understood as fictional, but its detachment from author would allow it to live in a kind of urban legend level of true world. The audience could play with the concept of its reality. The best example of this is the mythology of the Slender Man, a mythological complex which details the horrific deeds of a monster who appears to be a tall man wearing a suit. The original creator of the Slender Man, Victor Surge, never claimed the Slender Man as his own (Slender Nation Podcast, 2011), leaving the creature as always a place of communal property. For the Slender Man mythos, the mythology itself was held as greater than individual authorship. The moment a narrative was created and shared, it no longer belonged to the individual, but to the community and mythology at large.

There is an element of this in No Sleep, but to a much different end. On No Sleep, individual authorial connection is held as immensely important. Many of my participants voiced a longing to write full time as a job, and many saw No Sleep as the avenue through which this was possible. One of my participants told me she was successful, and a movie studio had picked up one of her narratives. She was actively writing the script for the movie at the time I talked with her. Where other areas of creepypasta would see a narrative thriving somewhere else with no connection to author as success, the authors on No Sleep see the narrative living elsewhere with their name as success. On the surface, this appears to break the earlier conception of the communal authority over the individual, and a privileging of the individual. And to some extent, this is accurate. However, there is also the important role the community plays in which narratives are easily seen and which become buried. While the community would perhaps reject the idea that they, as a collective, hold authorship, they as a collective definitely hold the authority to allow a narrative to thrive.

My inability to write a realistic horror narrative the way the community would like led to my first narrative being buried and ultimately deleted. My own

intention and thoughts as individual author were not as important as the functioning role of the community. This led me to reconsider the way in which a supernatural horror would be understood and conceived by the audience and community.

The complicated nature of the 'real' horror rests in the understanding of the narrative as bridging a gap between reality and fiction. My narrative must, in some way, be obviously fictional, while also being realistic enough to cause a horrified reaction in the minds of the audience, and most importantly to allow them to question 'what if' in regard to its reality. In many ways, my audience must function as Kinsella's legend-trippers. The ostensive action leading them to experience the supernatural is my own narrative, but the experience should link them somehow with an understanding of supernatural possibility.

When talking to writers during my fieldwork, writers seemed to immediately renounce the idea of including a supernatural element to the writing, but most backtracked quite quickly in the conversation by amending it to comment it must be 'realistic', although what made one supernatural narrative more realistic than another was not discussed as openly. Digging into other elements of the discussion can elicit a greater understanding of what this might mean. Many participants voiced the importance of true crime narratives to their inspiration, most notably an interest in true crime stories which are quietly mysterious. In particular, one discussed the story of Elisa Lam.

Elisa Lam was a twenty-one-year-old Canadian university student, found dead at the Cecil Hotel in Los Angeles on January 31, 2013. Her body was found floating in one of the hotel's water tanks, and much of the details have remained quite mysterious (Ishak, 2019). Adding to the mystery, as well as inspiring the internet to help, was a released surveillance video of Lam in the elevator of the hotel. The video, released by the police to find her when still missing, depicted Lam acting very oddly. She steps into the elevator and pushes all the floor buttons. She keeps stepping in and out of the elevator door, always looking toward the hallways of the hotel. The end of the video shows Lam standing by the door, moving her hands in strange gestures. No one else was captured on the video (Dennis Romero, 2013). The question of how Lam ended up in the water tank, and what the surveillance video truly meant, led to much speculation. The video of her elevator experience reached tens of millions of views (Ishak, 2019).

What is interesting about my participant's enthusiastic conversation with me about Elisa Lam was the emphasis put on the stranger occurrences surrounding her death. Despite the true nature of the crime, the strange circumstances seen in the video footage of the elevator can easily lead an individual to the possibility something other than natural was occurring. It was excitedly commented to me that perhaps she could see something we could not. Not in the same sense of a mental break, which is sometimes concluded for Lam, but rather we are incapable of seeing something she was capable of. This more supernatural consideration of the events surrounding her death gives her more agency but also leverages a sense of possibility and realism to supernatural occurrences surrounding an unfortunate death.

Writers like my excited participant are a flipped nature of Kinsella's legend-trippers. Kinsella writes how legend-trippers combine the nature of folklore with forms of fiction, most notably Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos. Several versions of the once fictional Necronomicon have now been fully published by

those interested in the occult. These writers claim Lovecraft had unknowingly tapped into an occult reality but had ascribed it to his imagination instead (Kinsella, 2011: 59). This exploration provides an interesting foreground for a discussion on the interplay between the nature of reality and the role of fiction. For these legend-trippers who use the Cthulhu Mythos to trigger their experiences, the fictional is brought into the real via their own ideas and experiences. The writers on No Sleep flip this; instead of bringing the fictional into the real, they bring the real into the fictional through the exploration of true crime narratives and the emphasis on the realistic nature of both narratives and communication about narratives.

It is not just the communication about the narratives which blurs the boundary between reality and fiction, but the narratives themselves. Older takes on creepypasta attempted the same duelling realism, often taking the form of digitally manipulated photos, or government documents. The attempt was to present images and elements typically considered arenas of proof and to purposely shift it to be a form of storytelling. As mentioned previously, this was done with the sole purpose of spreading the narrative in a variety of locations, ideally without the context of fiction. Whether or not this was ever successful can be debated, but the main purpose of storytelling formats, such as the Slender Man's depiction in historic wood cuts, is for it to be shared widely as if real. Unlike other forms of fiction which attempt to be as realistic as possible to draw readers into the world, writers of online horror such as those on No Sleep and the Slender Man are not writing realistically in order to convince or suspend disbelief, rather writers use realism in order to play the game of as if reality.

The play with reality, even in terms of the supernatural, allow writers to engage with the myriad of possibilities on the scale of belief. The purpose, however, is not about changing their own beliefs. They are not engaging with the supernatural in order to decide whether to convert. Rather, it is more about the performance itself.

Playing and Manipulating Belief

Claude Lévi-Strauss explored the notion of mythical thought as always working from a knowledge of oppositions to their mediation (Lévi-Strauss, 1963). Whether it is consciously done or unconsciously done, the writers on No Sleep are directly engaging with an inherent binary, the separation of the real from the fictional. The as if play of their narratives begin to bridge the gap as its own mediation. The play with belief inherent in both the narrative format and the in-character communication lives in the middle-ground between the two worlds, being a Lévi-Straussian mediator.

The process of this play creates mythic thinking, and mythic thinking can create spiritual experiences. These experiences are not necessarily as overt as those created by Kinsella's legend-trippers but allows for the writer's mind to actively engage with conceptions of the supernatural which fit within their preconceived notion of possible reality. My participant who spoke of Elisa Lam, for instance, told her story with a kind of intensity which made me feel he was living vicariously through it, seeing a supernatural experience of horror ready to be told. The process of writing allows for the individual to shift from somewhere off the scale of belief to on it, while engaging with the wide variety allowed through the fictional lens.

For the writers, it was not so much about changing belief, or finding a way into conversion. The play was not intended for this purpose. Rather, it is about the performance itself, about the engagement and play within belief, even as temporary. To use Kinsella's words, it is more a 'manipulation of belief' (Kinsella, 2011: 15), a direct engagement with the fuzziness of the word belief, and to shift it and mould it to their own purposes.

When first talking with my participants, I asked all of them whether they liked horror writing, either for themselves writing or reading, which involves the supernatural. Surprisingly, most initially disliked the idea, but then began to piece together how they actually did enjoy aspects of the supernatural when deemed as 'realistic'. The idea of what is 'supernatural' itself is primarily based on some preconceived idea of the way the world works: the difference between what is natural and what is, therefore, supernatural is based on preconceived categories (Northcote, 2004: 89; Hunter, 2015). When the writers engage with aspects of the supernatural that, at one point, is deemed as too otherworldly to be considered real, and playing with the concept to have it fit the role of a realistic perspective, the writer is actively engaging in a process of negotiating once differing worldviews.

A shifting of an understanding of the world is already a process some of the writers have already gone through. One participant responded to a question about why they write horror with a lengthy explanation of past childhood trauma, and how the writing of horror helped to cope with their reality. Traumatic events may change the way an individual sees the world, shifting the original conception of reality to one which can incorporate their experience (Park et al., 2012). Horror writing is a way for these individuals to describe their experiences with agency, but also to depict the transitioning of worldviews and the negotiation of new ways of considering the world.

The play with belief depicts the process of bringing the supernatural into the everyday, as well as the bringing the everyday into the supernatural. In character communication and the content of the stories themselves help to make this possible. And in this endeavour, everything is true, even if it isn't.

Conclusion

Many conceptions of what is considered real and what is considered unreal are set and irreconcilable. However, the writers on No Sleep were able to shift their own conceptions, even if temporarily. The blurring gives the writers a true sense of agency within their own worldview categorisation. Especially for those who have experienced trauma, the process of writing in a way which blurs boundaries demonstrates an engagement with their own changing understandings of their world.

The rule 'everything is true here, even if it isn't' is much more than just a guideline for narratives and interactions on the thread. It also demonstrates the way in which the community understands its own agency in navigating preconceived separations of reality and fiction. The play and performance of belief in both narrative and narrative discussion blurs the once distinct binaries of fiction and real, allowing for writers and audience members to delve into the true spectrum of belief possibilities. Writers engage with new worldviews, but rather than applying to their own, they apply them to narrative worlds.

For some, like the blogger responding to the stabbing in 2012, it is easy to look at the interactions on the subreddit No Sleep and deem them as irresponsible or 'sick or twisted' (Plattor, 2014). These are limited understandings of both the community and the creative endeavours the community is producing. The individuals on No Sleep are engaging in a complicated experiment of worldview negotiation, created through a blurring of once strict dichotomies. The bridging of the everyday and the supernatural begins to question the role of realism in relation to considerations of supernatural experiences.

The community's performance of belief allows them to negotiate their own understandings of both the supernatural and the natural – they have agency in their own engagement with the *as if* world of No Sleep. The performance allows them to actively engage in a play with the variations possible within belief, dabbling in the waters of belief for a purpose of manipulating fiction to a realistic end. The result is a detailed and complicated blurring of the dichotomy of reality and fiction, because, there, everything is true, even if it isn't.

References

Asimos, V. (2019) *The Slender Man Mythos: a structuralist analysis of an online mythology*. Unpublished PhD. thesis, Durham, Durham University.

Beattie, J. (1809) 'On Fable and Romance' in *The Works of James Beattie: Dissertations, Moral and Critical*. Philadelphia, PA, Hopkins and Earle.

Carroll, N. (1990) *The philosophy of horror, or, Paradoxes of the heart*. New York, Routledge.

Davie, G. (1994) *Religion in Britain since 1945: believing without belonging*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Day, A. (2011) *Believing in Belonging: Belief and Social Identity in the Modern World*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Dégh, L. and Vázsonyi, A. (1983) 'Does the Word "Dog" Bite? Ostensive Action: A Means of Legend-Telling', *Journal of Folklore Research* vol. 20, pp. 5–34.

Dennis Romero (2013). Elisa Lam Video.

Douglas, M. (1966) *Purity and danger: an analysis of the concepts of pollution and taboo*. London: Routledge.

Firth, R. (1948). 'Religious belief and personal adjustment', *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, vol. 78, pp. 25–43.

Hunter, J. (2015) '"Between Realness and Unrealness": Anthropology, Paraphyschology and the Ontology of Non-Ordinary Realities', *DISKUS*, vol. 17, pp. 4–20.

Ishak, N. (2019) 'The Unsolved Mystery Behind the Disturbing Death of Elisa Lam.' *All That's Interesting*, 5th April. Available at: allthatsinteresting.com/elisa-lam-death (Accessed 27 October 2020)

Keane, W. (2007) *Christian moderns*. Berkeley, CA, University of California Press.

Keane, W. (2002) 'Sincerity, modernity and the protestants', *Cultural Anthropology*, vol. 17, pp. 65–92.

Kilgour, M. (1995) *The rise of the Gothic novel*. London: Routledge.

Kinsella, M. (2011) *Legend-Tripping Online: supernatural folklore and the search for Ong's hat*. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi.

Lévi-Strauss, C. (1963) 'The Structural Study of Myth,' in Jacobson, C., Schoepf, B.G. (trans.) *Structural Anthropology*. New York: Basic Books, pp. 206–231.

McGonigal, J. (2003) 'A Real Little Game: The Performance of Belief in Pervasive Play,' *Proceedings of DiGRA 2003*.

Northcote, J. (2004) 'Objectivity and the supernormal: the limitations of bracketing approaches in providing neutral accounts of supernormal claims', *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, vol. 19, pp. 85–98.

Park, C.L., Mills, M.A., Edmondson, D. (2012) 'PTSD as meaning violation: Testing a cognitive worldview perspective', *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, vol. 4, pp. 66–73.

Plattor, C. (2014) '12-Year-Olds Stabbing 12-Year-Olds: Are We Paying Attention Yet?' *Candace Plattor*, 4th June. Available at: candaceplattor.com/blog/12-year-olds-stabbing-12-year-olds-are-we-paying-attention-yet/ (Accessed on 27 October 2020)

r/nosleep (n.d), *Reddit*. Available at: reddit.com/r/nosleep (Accessed on 30 October, 2017).

Schechner, R. (2002) *Performance studies: an introduction*. London, Routledge.

Slender Nation Podcast (2011). 'VICTOR @#$%ING SURGE.' Available at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=YUT5rjZVgcw (Accessed 27 October 2020)