

**UNIVERSITY OF TARTU**  
**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH STUDIES**

**“YOU ARE PROBABLY ALONE”: ANALYSING THE INTIMACY OF  
SECOND-PERSON ELEMENTS IN HORROR FICTION PODCASTS ON  
THE EXAMPLE OF *WITHIN THE WIRES***

**MA Thesis**

**ALISTAIR THEODORE ALEKSIN**

**SUPERVISOR: Prof. RAILI MARLING**

**Dr. FRANCESCA ARNAVAS**

**TARTU**

**2026**

## ABSTRACT

Fiction podcasting is a form of narrative storytelling that has been rapidly growing over the course of the 21st century. It has spread over many genres, with horror fiction podcasting in particular being one of the fastest-growing subgenres of horror. Despite that, the medium is under-researched. The following thesis deals with second-person narration in a psychological horror podcast, *Within the Wires*.

In the introduction, a brief overview of second-person narration and the research surrounding it is given. The literature review provides an overview of how podcasting as a medium emerged and the way it approaches storytelling. The empirical analysis is conducted with the help of the embodied narratology framework, which takes into account people's embodied responses. In the conclusion, the findings of the thesis are summarised and the aims reiterated.

Keywords: second-person narration, embodied narratology, fiction podcasts, horror

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|                                                                |    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| ABSTRACT.....                                                  | 2  |
| LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....                                     | 4  |
| INTRODUCTION.....                                              | 5  |
| PODCASTING AS AN ACCESSIBLE MODE OF STORYTELLING.....          | 12 |
| 1.1. Radio or not radio? Discovering what makes a podcast..... | 12 |
| 1.2. Fictionalising nonfictional formats.....                  | 19 |
| 1.3. Sensory nature of audio horror.....                       | 24 |
| EMBODIED NATURE OF RELAXATION CASSETTES.....                   | 30 |
| 2.1. Methodology.....                                          | 30 |
| 2.2. Embodiment in structure.....                              | 33 |
| 2.2.1. Textual repetitions.....                                | 34 |
| 2.2.2. Episode titles.....                                     | 36 |
| 2.2.3. The listening experience.....                           | 39 |
| 2.3. Embodied dynamics of absence.....                         | 43 |
| 2.3.1. The solitude of obsession.....                          | 45 |
| 2.4. The desire for intimacy.....                              | 48 |
| 2.4.1. The intimacy of self-reflection.....                    | 50 |
| CONCLUSION.....                                                | 53 |
| REFERENCES.....                                                | 57 |
| RESÜMEE.....                                                   | 61 |

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

|     |                      |
|-----|----------------------|
| WtW | Within the Wires     |
| RC  | Relaxation Cassettes |

## INTRODUCTION

Fiction podcasting is a relatively under-researched media form. Hancock & McMurtry (2017: 2) report that *Welcome to Night Vale*, a narrative podcast that began its serialisation in 2012, is often mistakenly named the first narrative fiction podcast. In fact, fiction podcasts have existed for as long as the medium itself, and the genre is rapidly growing. The subgenre of horror fiction podcasts in particular is reported to be one of the fastest-growing subgenres of horror fiction in the past decade (Hancock & McMurtry 2017: 2). However, not many titles have been touched upon in the relatively recent field of podcast research. This thesis will focus on *Within the Wires* (2016-...), a science-fiction podcast with elements of psychological horror, produced by Night Vale Presents. *Within the Wires* (WtW) consists of several stand-alone seasons, all set in the same dystopian universe, which are presented in the form of lost audio tapes. This thesis will tackle specifically the first season of the show, *Relaxation Cassettes* (RC). RC takes the form of a meditation guide, the real purpose of which is to aid a girl named Oleta in her escape from a prison-like Institute. The only voice heard throughout the season is that of the narrator, who is addressing Oleta in the second person. Moreover, because the meditation guide is not supposed to be immediately recognised as a personal message, the identity of the narratee is initially ambiguous, allowing any podcast listener to imagine themselves being addressed by it. While the narrator's personal monologues start gradually entering the narrative further into the season, most of it is rather consistently narrated in second person. The first season of WtW has garnered some attention in the world of podcast research in recent years, notably by Euritt, who has studied the podcast's fanbase intimacy (Euritt 2020) and the queer eroticism in the narrative (Euritt 2023). However, the existing studies do not touch upon the fact that RC is a piece of second-person fiction, which will be the focus of this thesis.

This thesis aims to study WtW narratologically, contributing both to the field of narratological studies and to the field of podcast research. This thesis argues that fiction podcasting offers unique opportunities for the use of second-person narratives because of its history of engaging with the audience and because of the intimate qualities of audio. Moreover, through the use of the theoretical lens of embodied narratology, the thesis argues that the use of second person helps accentuate the physical responses already elicited in the listeners by the psychological horror elements in the podcast. The embodied narratological analysis focuses on textual elements of the podcast transcript rather than the sound design and other technical elements. Elke (2005: 45-46) prefaces her theoretical frame for audio drama analysis by saying that the method of analysing audio dramas as a literary genre, which she claims used to be common in both German and British radio research of the 20th century, is incorrect, as it dismisses the role that the sound plays in making audio drama its own, separate art form. She writes that the practice of analysing auditory media based on transcripts, like this thesis will proceed to do, ignores the acoustic features that, even when transcribed, cannot replace the actual experience of hearing them (Elke 2005: 49-50). While I agree that the spoken or written word is not the only or the most important element in auditory media such as podcasts, I believe that the transcripts, as written text, can be analysed with established narratological tools that reduce the subjectivity that may emerge in the discussion of sound and other multimodal elements. In the case of RC, while the acoustical qualities of the narrator's voice are an essential part of the listening experience, so are the textual choices made in the narrative. However, it is important to acknowledge that the text works together with other elements to create the full experience of the story for the listener. This aspect deserves further research elsewhere.

Second-person narratives are mostly encountered in non-fictional contexts. Although Mildorf (2012: 76) and Giacconi (2022: 6) both point out that, in real life, it is rare for

someone to tell another person their own life story, the you-narration is often used, instead, in the form of someone telling their own story in the second person to distance themselves from difficult or traumatic experiences (Jeziorska-Haładyj 2024: 20). As such, it can be found in stories of illnesses, occasionally in autobiographies, or in personal anecdotes. Cases of homocommunicative second-person narratives — those where a narrator presents the addressee, or a narratee, with their own actions (Fludernik 1994: 446) — also exist in non-fictional storytelling. Giacconi (2022) talks about those instances in self-help guides, meditations guides or other media forms that aim to provide advice through direct but impersonal address. Thus, although the idea that the addressee cannot speak for themselves might appear confusing, you-narratives are actually quite common.

In fiction, compared to first- and third person narratives, second-person narratives are not so widespread. That does not mean that they do not exist: in fact, a bibliography compiled by Fludernik in 1994 already showed hundreds of works that use the second-person pronoun ‘you’ to refer to their protagonist. Fludernik’s (1994) bibliography dates the first known case to the late 19th century, although the second-person mode of narration might have been attempted before that as well. According to Jeziorska-Haładyj and Rembowska-Pluciennik’s (2022: 9) estimation, if one was to compile such a bibliography today, the number of works in it would likely reach thousands. Moreover, the interest in the second person has spiked not only in the field of traditionally published literature. In fact, Rembowska-Pluciennik (2018: 11) actually links literature’s newly-found interest in this mode of narration to digital media forms, such as video games. Bell and Ensslin (2011) claim that various types of digital interactive fiction constitute the most natural use of second-person narration, as not only does the ‘you’ actually refer to the player who gets to progress the story, that player also gets an active role by having to physically use their mouse or keyboard to engage with it. As such, in

video game discourse,<sup>1</sup> second person is used regularly (Bell 2022). The possibilities of second-person narration in television are also being considered (e.g. Wong 2022). Thus, the potential and implications of a second-person narrative are constantly being reimaged, tested, and applied to various types of media.

When it comes to the body of research that has been done into second-person narratives, there are two novels that stand out as having been most frequently brought up to exemplify that mode of narration: Michel Butor's *La Modification* (1956) (e.g. Bal 2017: 22; Morrisette 1965), and Italo Calvino's *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller* (1979) (e.g. Fludernik 1994: 448; Kacandes 1993). Both of them were originally published several decades ago, and neither was originally written in English. It can be theorised that, perhaps, second-person narratives have a different effect in different languages. Mildorf (2012: 79) points out that, in languages that differentiate between formal and informal 'you's, this difference can showcase people's attitudes towards each other and towards group identity; if second-person fiction is written in one of such languages, the choice of which 'you' to use may open different creative opportunities. On the other hand, Fludernik (2001: 107) points out that, in the English language, second-person 'you' is routinely used as a generalised pronoun, often in the meaning of 'one', and such generalisation can create a different effect. Keeping this distinction in mind, it is important that the body of English-language research into second-person narratives also looks into texts intended to be read in English, many of which have not been studied yet at the time of writing this thesis.

While the body of research into second-person is growing, it appears that the mode of narration has thus far retained a reputation for being subpar to first- and third person narrations. Genette (1988: 133-134) and Bal (2017: 21-23) both dedicate a brief moment totalking about second person but ultimately find it to be a disguised form of either first (Bal

---

<sup>1</sup> Interestingly enough, in that same video game discourse, even those games that extensively address the player would still fall under the categorisation of first- or third-person games. Recently, people in fan spaces have started to consider and share what they think a 'real' second-person game would look like (e.g. Potteccary 2013).

2017: 22) or third (Genette 1988: 133) person that is not worth much attention by itself. While studies that focus on the second person as its own mode of narration do exist, its experimental status often remains highlighted in those as well. For example, second-person narration is discussed in *Unnatural Voices* (2006) by Richardson, and in Reitan's essay in *Strange Voices in Narrative Fiction* (2011). The titles of those books seem to imply second-person narration's deviation from the narrative norm. Other scholars are more direct in this assessment: Castelli (2023: 41), for example, refers to it as "unconventional, underused, and underexplored". When discussing second-person narration in fiction, Bal (2017: 22) points out that both 'you' and 'I' are, in isolation, empty pronouns. What she means is that while third person pronouns by definition always refer to someone, whether the third party is present or not, the first and second person only exist in dialogue with each other and switch places depending on the perspective. Bal's (2017: 23) criticism of the second person in fiction, then, is that no switching of places can take place in the narrative, and the 'you', who cannot logically be the reader, is left alienated from every other agent in the story.

However, just like second-person narration is possible in certain cases of real life conversations and non-fiction, despite the initially apparent lack of motivation for it, the ambiguity of second-person in fiction can be utilised as well. Kacandes (1993: 139) says the following about the inclination to feel addressed by the second-person even when one is not part of the situation: "In a crowded place, when someone yells, 'hey, you!' everyone turns around". She then argues that even when the narratee, the you-character, and their experiences start to diverge from those that any reader could easily identify with, one can still conceptualise an addressee that would identify with them. Then, because self-identification is still strongly bound to 'you' as a pronoun, one might start alternating between positioning themselves and the character-bound narratee in the story as it progresses (Kacandes 1993: 143). Castelli (2023: 41-42) makes a similar point about how the narrator, the reader, and the

character all alternate in the role of the protagonist, something that is unique to second-person narration.

It is because of this quality of second-person narration that embodied narratology was chosen for the textual analysis in this thesis. Embodied narratology is a type of narratology that focuses on the way narratives may elicit embodied responses in the audiences, making them feel physically connected to the story. Developed by Caracciolo and Kukkonen (2021), it is a framework through which the experience and comprehension of narratives are conceptualised in a way that is rooted in the interactions of people's bodies with their environment. This thesis uses this framework to study the potential embodied responses caused by a second-person narrative. This thesis argues that the use of the direct address helps connect the narrative experiences to the bodies of the audience members, and it concerns itself with the textual strategies used to elicit embodied emotions. The primary research question of this thesis is therefore: What textual strategies does WtW employ, with the help of second-person narration, to elicit embodied responses? The secondary question of this thesis is: What do the elements of psychological horror in the podcast add to the evocation of said embodied responses?

This thesis consists of two major chapters. The first chapter will familiarise the readers with podcasting as a medium and a storytelling format, acknowledging factors other than text that make fiction podcasting its own art form. Broken into three subchapters, it first explores podcast as a relatively new medium, then delves into the concept of a fiction podcast specifically, examining the storytelling formats commonly used in podcast fiction; finally, the third subchapter gives a brief overview of the history of audio horror. The second chapter of this thesis is the textual analysis of selected episode transcripts from RC. The scenes transcribed were chosen for the emphasis the narration puts on bodily sensations, especially when the sensations are narrated as being felt by the second-person narratee. The

methodology section of the second chapter explains the ideas behind embodied narratology and how it is going to be applied in the analysis.

## **PODCASTING AS AN ACCESSIBLE MODE OF STORYTELLING**

The history of podcasting as a medium can be said to have begun in 2004, when the term was first coined by Hammersley. The term was used as one of the suggestions for the results of the so-called online audible revolution of the time. In the same article, Hammersley refers to it as “amateur radio”, and the interviewed creator Christopher Lydon calls it “an experiment”, both referring to the fact that podcasting was born as a result of the rise in the accessibility of recording and editing tools, which made it easily available to virtually anyone and anywhere.

To this day, opinions on how to define a podcast vary. Even though surveys show that at least half of the population of the US would have listened to a podcast at least once in their lives and that people are therefore familiar with the concept, separating it from other types of auditory media is something many struggle with (Rime et al. 2022: 1261). The definition of podcasting is rooted in its ever-evolving identity. On the one hand, there is the question of quality that comes with anyone being able to produce podcasts, as opposed to professionally-made radio shows. On the other hand, Verma (2024: 10) refers to the podcast’s “next-big-thingness” — a characteristic of podcasting which has caused it to remain the topic of conversation throughout the years. Rime et al. (2022: 1273) point out that podcasts are grounded in innovation, that they emerged as one of the interconnections between art and technology and will therefore keep evolving alongside both. The aim of this chapter, then, is to give the reader an overview of what podcasting is, how it emerged, and particularly what sets apart fiction podcasts among other types of narrative fiction media.

### **1.1. Radio or not radio? Discovering what makes a podcast**

The history of podcasting cannot be separated from the history of radio. Indeed, many dictionaries (e.g. CUP) still define ‘podcast’ as “a radio programme that is stored in digital

form”. On the other hand, OED, for example, which also used to refer to radio in its definition (Verma 2024: 10), no longer makes that direct link, defining it instead as a “digital audio file of speech, music, broadcast material, etc., made available on the internet”. Whether or not podcast and radio are one and the same, separated only by the former’s digital nature, is a question that has been debated for a long time now. It appears that, with time, the confusion has only spread, as Verma (2024: 11) reports that nowadays these terms are often used interchangeably, whereas in the early 2010s people differentiated the two. The confusion is not unreasonable. For example, Marcu (2019) speaks of the type of podcasts that were created specifically to convey messages of established radio stations in more accessible ways and on a freer schedule. Indeed, many well-known radio organisations produce podcasts now alongside their regular programme, to which they refer on their web pages. However, restricting podcasts to only such practice would ignore the large number of podcasts that are produced independently of radio stations. Marcu (2019: 80) acknowledges that both radio and podcast exist simultaneously in the contemporary world, and it is not only the modern podcasts that can be accessed digitally, but the older, archived radio programmes as well, and they are each referred to by their own name. Thus, while radio is, indeed, a medium that has evolved over time, particularly in relation to technological advances, it is problematic to say that the podcast has evolved from and replaced radio.

Berry (2016) brings up the fact that the state of limbo between the two types of broadcasting poses existential questions to both the radio and the podcast. Not only do the two exist simultaneously in the contemporary world, but they can also be said to be in competition with each other when it comes to gathering and keeping an audience. Rime et al. (2022: 1264) point out that, when the podcast first emerged, many young people turned to it seeking the same things they used to get from radio — mainly information and interactivity, — now available with the convenience of digital features, such as being able to fast-forward

and rewind the audio file. However, the digital features are not the only thing that differentiates radio and podcasts. Now that most radio is being archived and can be accessed digitally as well, it is still distinct from the podcast because it carries its own cultural meaning and practices. Berry (2016: 9) makes a distinction between the two types of broadcasts by saying that podcasts “can be radio”, if made by people with experience in the field that are familiar with those practices, but they can also be something else entirely. According to Verma (2024: 8), it is typical for the writing on podcasts to either emphasise that podcasting exists in linear continuity from radio or claim a clean break between the two mediums. Verma (2024), however, believes it to be a more nuanced matter and that the definition of podcasting is rooted in the discourse surrounding it in different points of its history. This thesis also believes on the basis of the research cited above that the two practices may overlap, but that it is nevertheless necessary for them to have their own, separate identities. When this thesis talks about podcasts, especially specific titles, it refers to episodic, digitally-distributed, primarily auditory media that self-identify as such — a podcast is something that the people involved in its production refer to as a ‘podcast’.

If the radio’s reputation is built on its long-standing cultural practices, the podcast has a reputation as well, although its formation is less established. Around 2009, Rime et al. (2022: 1268) say, podcasting had a reputation of being an elite club for “tech-savvy college graduates earning over \$75,000 per year”,<sup>2</sup> a rather narrow demographic that would put off other types of potential listeners. This image has followed podcasting through the 2010. During the time that Verma (2024: 4-5) describes as a “podcast revolution”, when the medium was receiving regular coverage in the popular news outlets, much of what was being produced was still either a means of self-promotion or otherwise heavily monetised talk-shows, with white, middle-class men overrepresented in both the production and listenership. While

---

<sup>2</sup> approximately \$112,500 in 2025 purchase value, not accounting for the rise in salaries in the field

Verma (2024: 5) reports that the demographic has begun to gradually change in the early 2020s, in light of the data from the previous decade the notion that podcasting is accessible and easy for everyone who can obtain the skills and the technical equipment appears to be misleading. Verma (2024: 7) brings up several surveys reporting that most of the chart-breaking podcasts have been running for years with hundreds of episodes, while new titles struggle to break into the mainstream. On the other hand, judging by the ever-growing number of podcasts produced, this does not seem to actively discourage people from trying out the medium for themselves. Rime et al. (2022: 1267) quote a rhetorical question “Who doesn’t have a podcast?”, which has been frequently used over the years as a sarcastic, dismissive gesture towards podcasting, disregarding it as unsolicited opinion pieces not worth serious time. While the podcast revolution of the 2010s was indeed accompanied by a great rise in podcast production numbers, its media coverage was greatly exaggerating how lucrative it is as a business venue, as well as how rapidly radio was losing relevance when compared to podcasts (Verma 2024: 4).

In a way, the identity of the podcast is built on contradictions or, rather, on finding a balance between seemingly contradictory characteristics. Rime et al. (2022: 1262) refer to the framework of podcasting as “the six tensions”: personalisation vs automation, independent vs mainstream, unique vs universal, art vs technology, immersion vs interactivity, and current vs possible demographic. Podcasting has to find a balance between all of those axes as it evolves as a medium. The tension between independent and mainstream production means that while only a select few titles and podcast genres are known to the wider public, the accessibility of the medium nevertheless leads to diversity in narratives told, which in turn leads to the expansion and branching-out of the medium. For example, Gupta (2020) and White (2023) report that it is easier to find diverse casts of POC and queer people, including non-traditional gender identities, in certain subgenres of podcasts than it is in mainstream television. On the

topic of diversity, Euritt (2023: 62), as well as White (2023: 149-150), mention that, in the early days of radio, there was a certain feeling of anxiety surrounding the auditory medium due to the fact that the lack of visual elements made the race, gender, or class of some speakers unidentifiable. Women were often driven off the radio on the basis of one of the two contradictory claims: either women's voices were too weak to produce the needed effect when broadcasting, or their voices were found to be inherently too sensual, and female speakers therefore prone to "seducing" the audience (White 2023: 150-151). When it came to POC, if they were allowed to be on air, radio would employ carefully structured use of language to make sure the skin color of the speakers was transparent. Black people would be forced to perform according to stereotypes and speak in exaggerated accents and dialects. Everyone on radio was thus "white until proven otherwise" (White 2023: 153-154). In contrast, modern podcasts fully embrace the opportunities for diversity. The independent nature of podcast creation plays a major role here, as instead of being reliant on major studios, most podcasts survive on donations and fundraising campaigns and are therefore less restricted in their creative processes (Mangnus 2023: 339; White 2023: 155). This environment has also led podcasting to be a rather tightly-knit, community-driven medium, in which the relationships between the producers and the listeners play a major role.

Euritt (2023: 1) describes podcasts as "an intimate medium" and specifies that the intimacy is not innate to auditory media but is instead created by the podcast culture drawing from the way people construct the feeling of closeness. She writes that the research done into podcast intimacy usually tackles one of the four aspects: the way podcast hosts perform intimacy, the way the creators interact with their listeners, the relationship between the listeners and the devices they use to listen, or the aesthetics of the human voice (Euritt 2023: 17). The auditory nature of podcasts, therefore, holds only as much importance as the other three aspects; this does not mean that it is insignificant but rather that it is all those aspects in

combination that create podcast culture. To quote Euritt (2023: 9) on the subject, “[podcasting’s] status as podcasting does something” to the way people experience the medium. The intimate nature of podcasting affects the creators getting into the field as well. In 2021, Sharon and John (2024) conducted interviews with several podcast creators, which revealed a tendency in podcasting culture that they referred to as “inverse parasocial relationships”. Typically, parasocial relationships are defined as a long-term social involvement of a private individual with a public figure or a fictional character, where the former experiences an illusionary feeling of personal closeness with the latter (Dibble et al. 2015). In the world of podcasting, however, the reverse appears to be common as well: the creators imagine themselves to be in closer relationships with their audiences than is factually true. Largely, this is a phenomenon that occurs even before the creators form a loyal fanbase and start explicitly interacting with the fans (Sharon & John 2024). This coincides with one of the definitions of parasocial relationships, which states that those can develop without explicit interactions that could trigger an illusion of a relationship (Dibble et al. 2015: 25). The interviews conducted by Sharon and John (2024) revealed that podcast creators typically find it easier to imagine themselves addressing an individual rather than a large crowd, emphasizing that even if the person they are addressing is imaginary, the idea of a passionate, like-minded individual listening to their work is very important. Again, the accessibility of podcast equipment contributes to this fact: because starting a podcast does not require professional equipment or advanced technological skills, many podcasters start off recording with and/or for their friends and therefore do know their initial audience personally. (Sharon & John 2024: 258)

The creation of closeness does not only go one way, even in the case of these inverse relationships. It has already been briefly mentioned that people tuned into radio programmes partly to seek companionship, and, when the podcast emerged, companionship was one of the

things listeners were looking for as well. However, the type of companionship generated by the two types of broadcasting is different. While the appeal of traditional radio is that people tune into the same programme at the same time, the appeal of podcasts lies rather in the fact that listeners have to actively seek out titles that they are interested in and further make a choice to subscribe to updates (Sharon & John 2019: 334 & 2024: 251). Rather than being a collective shared experience, the emphasis in podcast culture lies on the individual experience and the feeling of intimacy that it conjures. While there are instances of podcasts encouraging so-called “listening parties” where people come together to listen to the show, those are rare (Sharon & John 2019: 335) and typically people prefer to listen alone, often while commuting to work or doing chores (Euritt 2023: 90) or as a source of inspiration during physical or creative activities (Heshmat et al. 2018: 70). Some listeners even report being categorically against sharing the listening experience that they view as their special solitary time (Heshmat et al. 2018: 69). Listening to podcasts to fall asleep is relatively common as well (Dittrich 2023; Euritt 2023: 91). While the auditory quality of the podcast is important, especially in the age when the widespread use of earbuds makes voices as physically close to the listener as possible, playing right in their heads (Euritt 2023: 62), it does not define its intimate nature but instead works with the other elements discussed to maximise it. As Euritt (2023: 1) claims, the intimacy is deliberate because it involves the audience continuously engaging with the source material, as well as with the exclusive interactive features or bonus content that podcast creators often offer for a paid subscription. The creators, in the meantime, simulate personalisation by addressing the audience as though they are speaking to a friend. Moreover, Sharon and John (2024: 252) believe that “creators invoke audiences” when they make explicit assumptions about their listeners, as those may either invite the exact type of people they are describing or influence the existing audiences into committing to certain lifestyles.

What makes a podcast is thus the explicit effort that the creators make in connecting with their audiences and the willing response of the listeners to follow along in the process.

## **1.2.Fictionalising nonfictional formats**

Podcasts have gained popularity because of the wide range of genres, formats, and topics that can be found within the medium. Rime et al. (2022: 1267) write that podcasts “offer a unique experience with a universality of content”, where listeners can choose whenever they like to tune into a programme that speaks to them the most. While most early podcasts could be described as “conversations” and simply consisted of a spoken discussion on a given topic, nowadays the pool of podcasts is filled with many more narratives, both fiction and nonfiction. When it comes to podcast fiction, people seem to express surprise and excitement at the idea that solely-auditory fiction can cover the same action-filled genres that television does (Rime et al. 2022: 1267). In fact, many fiction podcasts nowadays are gripping, fast-paced, and story-driven (Hancock & McMurtry 2018: 90). Unlike the early audiences of non-fiction podcasts, who, as was previously discussed, sought in podcasts the experiences they had been getting from radio, the audiences of fiction podcasts seem to be largely unfamiliar with the medium and narrative frameworks of radio drama (White 2023: 159). Television is something they are much more familiar with, which makes the comparisons to it rather prevalent to the promotions of fiction podcasts and sometimes leads to popular titles being picked up for adaptations to the TV format (e.g. *Homecoming* (2018), *Limetown* (2019), *Archive 81* (2022)) (Verma 2024: 15-16). While translation into the more mainstream format often helps bring new fans to the original podcasts, Gupta (2019) comments that there is a lot of creative freedom to this auditory medium, that genre-bending and opportunities for diversity happen specifically on the level of the podcast, and that “the goal of this creative medium should not be to ultimately escape the podcast format”. In recent

years, the format of a “podcast movie” or simply a “feature-length podcast” has also started to appear. One of the things such a format does is once again provide new and more accessible opportunities for creators. While serialised podcasts normally require creators to have a long-term story in mind, the idea of a ‘podcast movie’ allows for more contained stories to be told. Alix Sobler, a writer behind one of the podcast movies that have been released so far, comments that it might be a nice, fresh experience for the listeners as well. The listeners in this case experience a complete, stand-alone story at their convenience, “without having to sit down in a theater or in front of a television” (Ugwu 2021). Most podcast fiction, however, sticks to the serialised format that has long proven to attract audiences.

Euritt (2023: 39) argues that seriality, the telling of a single story in installments, is another element that can contribute to building the podcast’s intimacy. Seriality allows the narrative to refer back to previous episodes and therefore build recognition through repetition. While serialisation could be found in podcasts before 2014, there was one podcast in particular that popularised it in the medium, to the extent that titles that came after can be classified as post-*Serial* (Hancock & McMurtry 2018). *Serial* (2014-...) is an investigative true crime podcast hosted by Sarah Koenig. During the airing time of its first season, it quickly gained viral levels of popularity, achieving millions of episode downloads in record times (O’Meara 2015; Hancock & McMurtry 2018: 82; Rime et al. 2022: 1265). While *Serial* is an exclusively nonfiction podcast that is classified as investigative journalism, Hancock and McMurtry (2018: 82) claim that it has been “the most influential force upon podcast *fiction* since Old Time Radio drama”. One reason for that is that *Serial*, which effectively uses its episodic structure and the atmospheric auditory features of the medium (O’Meara 2015), changed the way people had perceived podcasts and media networks started viewing them as monetisable and therefore worth investing in (Mangnus 2023: 338). In the eyes of the general public, the podcast rose in entertainment value (Rime et al. 2022: 1265). Another reason is

that its format of an investigative mystery, which Cipri (2016) also compares to the television show *X-Files*, became an easy trope for thriller fictions to follow, resulting in shows such as *Limetown* (2015-2018) and *The Black Tapes* (2015-2017), which build their stories and plots on elements such as fictional interview recordings (Hancock & McMurtry 2018: 82-83). Moreover, fiction podcasts have a certain advantage over true crime podcasts that they take inspiration from: while the latter can only speculate and discuss things that have actually happened with no guaranteed conclusions, fictional stories almost always guarantee their audiences the satisfaction of a resolved mystery (Owen 2015).

Many fiction podcasts borrow from nonfiction formats or otherwise show self-awareness of their auditory nature in the way they handle storytelling. Dan Powell, the creator of a fiction podcast *Archive 81* (2016-2018), is quoted saying that “When a fiction podcast uses a nonfiction form, there’s a set of contexts that makes sense to you, as a listener”; the creators of *Welcome to Night Vale* (2012-...) similarly say that their show, the narrator of which is a radio host, fictionalised the format already familiar to the listeners (Locke 2016). *Archive 81* is a story told through tape recordings made by the main character. In general, tape recorders are a popular narrative device in fiction podcasts, creating a ‘found footage’ feeling, as though the described events could really have happened before the recordings ended up in front of the listeners. While this format might indeed ease the listeners into the idea of audio storytelling, people from the podcast company Audiohm Media (2019) point out that it is not always sustainable in the long run. *The Bright Sessions* (2015-2018), for example, a fiction podcast that starts off as recordings of therapy sessions with the characters, eventually has to abandon this format when the events breach the containment of the therapist’s office. For this reason, perhaps the found footage format is more sustainable in anthology-type shows such as *WtW*, where the focus of the story changes after every 10-episode season. On the other hand, some fiction podcasts commit to following the format

throughout their entire run, such as *The Magnus Archives* (2016-2021), which integrates the narrative use of a tape recorder, the idea that no conversations can be private, into an element of its supernatural horror.

Another common storytelling format in podcast fiction is the so-called ‘actual play’ podcast. Actual play refers to the subgenre of podcasts that follow the host and their chosen group of people as they play a game of *Dungeons and Dragons* (Greenstone 2025). Wyld (2021: 346) describes it as a middle ground between fiction and nonfiction podcasts: while the story that is being told through the game is fictional, the episodes contain a lot of out-of-character collaborative discussions, preventing it from being pure fiction. He also calls it “performative fiction”, noting that such podcasts utilise the unique qualities of the medium by allowing the audience to witness the collaborative process of storytelling. While the collaboration in actual play podcasts occurs mainly between the creators, the audience also participates in the process. Yeates (2020: 227) brings up fan conventions such as Comic Con, which podcasters also attend as creators, with the idea that the attending fans expect to be able to share their opinions at the panels and have those opinions be heard and acknowledged. While actual play podcasts often depend on chance, as certain plot developments depend on the roll of a dice, Yeates (2020: 231-232) uses *The Adventure Zone* (2014-...) as an example of a podcast the audience of which has been able to affect writing decisions by, for example, introducing items (such as swords) that would later be used as proper plot devices, as well as controlling the inclusivity and representation of marginalised characters through feedback.

Audience engagement is an important part of podcast culture. Actual play podcasts are not the only ones that explicitly collaborate with their fans. Some pre-scripted fiction podcasts, for example, *Malevolent* (2020-2026) and *You are the Ghost in This House* (2024-...), consistently let their subscribed members vote on the directions the story takes in between episodes. While that is not a very common practice among pre-scripted podcasts,

audience engagement is still commonly achieved through more remote means, such as ensuring the fans have access to discussion forums or opportunities to ask questions from the creators. When it comes to WtW, Euritt (2020: 40-42) explains that the use of monetised paratexts, such as posters and live performances, is also a way for creators to form intimate relationships with their fanbases. While not necessary for getting the full experience of the story, those paratexts allow fans to experience recognition within the community and to further integrate the show into their lives. Additionally, the paratexts allow the fans to feel recognised as fans by the creators, especially when the merchandise or the live performances build upon emotional moments that the fans are already familiar with and feel personal connection to (Euritt 2020: 42-43). While those are nonfiction elements that come in addition to the podcast itself, Euritt (2020: 36-38) writes that the creators of WtW engage with their audience through the way they write the text of the podcast as well. Textual repetitions, and the repetitions of themes from one episode to the next, are used to acknowledge the time and emotional connection that the fans put into consuming the show.

As was quoted earlier in this chapter, when podcast fiction borrows from nonfiction to present stories to the audiences, taking the form of radio programmes, security footage, or any other type of archived recordings, it comes with a set of predetermined contexts. By taking advantage of their auditory format, those podcasts are able to acknowledge that they have a listenership not only outside of the show but actively within the show as well. In a way, then, the fans always feel addressed by the text, regardless of whether the characters address their potential audience or not. Sharon and John (2024: 253) argue that “the very act of recording a podcast generates an idea of an addressee” and although their argument applies mainly to nonfiction podcasts, which are made with an idea of having a conversation with the listeners in mind, it is also relevant in the context of podcast fiction because it is surrounded by the same podcast culture that prioritises the feelings of connection and intimacy.

### 1.3. Sensory nature of audio horror

The same way that fiction podcasts as a whole are relatively understudied in the academic field, not much research has been done into the subgenre of horror fiction podcasts specifically. Nevertheless, horror appears to hold a special place in the history of podcast fiction, at least on account of *Welcome to Night Vale*'s success being, for a lot of people, their first introduction to fiction podcasting (Hancock & McMurtry 2017: 2). Hancock and McMurtry (2017 & 2018) believe that the fiction podcast takes after Old Time Radio in its pursuit of the horror genre, and Hand (2014: 165), similarly, considers fiction podcasting to be a renaissance of radio drama. While podcast horror differs from the horror radio shows of the 20th century in the same ways that podcasts in general do (e.g. fewer restrictions in terms of length, schedule, and content) (Hancock & McMurtry 2017), the characteristics that come from producing horror stories in auditory format remain the same. For these reasons, this thesis will use research into Old Time Radio horror shows to showcase what makes the auditory format that is also used by podcasts so suitable for the genre.

While Killmeier (2013: 156-157) points out that, in the years of Old Time Radio, 'horror' as a genre that we call it today did not exactly exist, as all of those shows were instead categorised as 'mystery-thrillers', their characteristics nevertheless remain the same as what would typically be categorised as horror today. Killmeier (2013: 167) even explains that the difference in the categorisation comes partly from the fact that, in the 1930s, the mystery genre would be applied to all shows that contained eerie or spiritual events, often with elements of science fiction or the supernatural, as opposed to specifically crime-solving, detective fiction, to which it is applied today. Thriller, in the meantime, has always been applied to works meant to evoke heightened emotions and therefore qualified for the grotesque, shocking violence nowadays often associated with horror (Killmeier 2013: 168).

What further points to the widespread use of horror in Old Time Radio is the number of audio dramas that were adapted from works of classical Gothic literature (Hand 2014: 2-3). Original fear-inducing shows were also being regularly written for radio, and so, in the 1930s, horror shows rose in popularity among radio listenership and dominated the field of audio dramas (Hand 2014: 48). Moreover, when most of the classic horror anthologies came to their end a few decades later, their legacy stayed in radio in the form of comedic parodies commonly produced in the 1970s (Hand 2014: 134).

Sound is commonly utilised in horror, regardless of the form. The works of Edgar Allan Poe, for example, often include detailed descriptions of the auditory experiences that serve to enhance the feeling of suspense or even function as a plot device (Hand 2014: 16). In cinema, although the focus is on the visuals, sound design nevertheless serves not only a purely practical, but an essential atmospheric purpose, both in the way the characters speak, and in the way the surroundings are presented through the use of background noise (for example, the way the weather conditions are presented through the sound of the wind) (Hand 2014: 14). While it is often believed that the role of sound never goes past merely supporting the horror aesthetics, the auditory media does in fact carry a lot of potential for carrying horror narratives on its own (Hancock & McMurtry 2017: 2). Some of the elements that make the audio format so suitable for the horror genre have already been discussed above as the elements that make podcasting the medium that it is. First of all, the lack of visuals means that the costs of production are relatively low when compared to other mediums, as no part of the budget has to go into creating elaborate sets or make-up and costumes for the characters. When dealing with horror, that is particularly advantageous, since it practically eliminates the risk of disappointing the audience when the monster is revealed to be less terrifying than what they had imagined it to look like. A certain level of interactivity is involved, where the listeners are expected to actively engage with the show, visualising for themselves the

surroundings that the sound design only hints at. The intimate nature of audio plays a major role (Hand 2014: 4).

To tackle these points in more detail, it is important to acknowledge that audio is not the only non-visual medium that is dependent on the imagination. White (2023: 147) points out that printed literature may also choose to leave things out for the purpose of letting the audience fill in the gaps themselves, and yet almost no major literary research has focused on the lack of visuals. Yet, there are also distinct ways in which audio specifically plays with the imagination. Stephen Gallagher, interviewed by Hand (2014: 4), argues that “with audio horror there’s always something legitimately withheld”, implying that sound, when not accompanied by any visual description of its source, gives incomplete information, and it is that uncertainty, the empty space that it creates that is unsettling. Hand (2014: 8) also adds that sound is “extremely hard to avoid”, and often the attempts to block it out (for example, with the use of earplugs) fail to get rid of it entirely. It could be argued that, even when reading a book, the reader may choose to skip over the lines if the image they are conjuring gets too unnerving, whereas it is more difficult to do while listening to radio or a podcast. On this subject, Euritt and McMurtry (2021: 5) also talk about how the fact that sound surrounds us at all times means that the line between sounds coming from one’s headphones, when listening to auditory media, and the noise of the real world may get blurry, also leads to unnerving experiences.

White (2023: 146-147) writes that while the claims such as those presented above can be (and often are) made, they are not supported by empirical evidence, and the idea that sound holds a special power is culturally constructed. Nevertheless, this does not erase the role that audio plays in the horror genre or that which horror plays in the history of radio. Instead, it leads this thesis to consider how the relationship between the two started. Hand (2014: 20-21) urges his readers to think about how uncanny the concept of disembodied voices being

broadcast for everyone to hear is in principle, and how people must have felt about it when the radio first emerged. The fact that it was not only live voices from far distances that could be broadcast but also pre-recorded voices of people no longer living was generally met with unease and created a quick association with ghost stories, while the ability to technologically manipulate those recordings branded radio in its early days as a “hypnotic device” (Hand 2014: 21; Giacconi 2022: 6). It was thought that the development of sound technology would carry with it the potential to capture the supernatural, an idea that has been carried to this day by certain circles that employ EVP, or the Electronic Voice Phenomena, in their attempts to communicate with the dead (Hand 2014: 22). Overall though, it was not radio that caused people to consider the uncanny nature of disembodied voices; rather, radio provided opportunities for disembodied voices and their eerie qualities to be used for the purpose of entertainment. The idea that the association of sound with fear has always been a significant part of human culture is best summarised in a quote by R. Murray Schafer: “Radio existed long before it was invented, it existed whenever there were invisible voices in the wind, in thunder, in the dream” (Hand 2014: 22).

Horror is a genre often focused on sensory encounters (Euritt & McMurtry 2021; Giacconi 2022). When it comes to auditory horror, heightened sensory or embodied feelings may be created through establishing uncomfortable intimacy. Euritt (2023: 49-51) explores the idea that, as much as intimacy can be created by emotional or physical closeness that also creates a safe space, when the element of familiarity is missing from the equation or is compromised, the intimacy can instead feel invasive, uncomfortable, and unnerving. Hand (2014: 192) mentions the example of a podcast show *Everyday Moments* (2011), which was an experimental audio drama that would create simple but intimate scenes, the unexpected intensity and emotional weight of which could feel “somewhat uncanny”. David Cummings, the creator of a horror podcast *NoSleep* (2011), argues that the physical intimacy that comes

with listening to a horror show in one's headphones, isolated from the rest of the world in this experience, leads to a level of immersion that produces sensory experiences of fear regardless of the atmosphere in the real world, "[even] in a sunny park". On the other hand, if the atmosphere or the setting in the show does match that of the person's real life surroundings, the overlap only serves to intensify the unnerving feeling (O'Donoghue 2016).

The role of headphones in the experience of audio horror is somewhat ambiguous. For most of the history of audio horror, the use of headphones was not widespread and therefore played no major role in how intimacy around the genre was created. Still, the development of sound technology since has led to new possibilities when it comes to making fiction sound more real. For example, horror podcast creators have been experimenting with binaural recording, a type of recording reliant on the use of headphones that allows sound to be perceived as coming from different directions around the listener, creating a more authentic experience, where the person wearing headphones appears to be standing in the middle of the events (Hand 2014: 185; Euritt & McMurtry 2021). A downside of binaural recording, however, is that the use of headphones is the only way to correctly experience it, as it does not have the same effect when the recording is coming from a speaker; moreover, some types of lower quality headphones might not be able to support it either (Hand 2014: 186). Because of that, if a show is fully reliant on the use of quality sound technology in the way it delivers the aesthetics of horror, it comes with a risk of the experience only reaching a selection of the audience.

The developments in audio technology is not the only aspect that has changed the experience and consumption of the horror genre in recent years. With the advent of the digital age, the horror genre has become more interactive, more accessible to share in between different languages and cultures, and more accessible for creators in mediums other than cinema and traditional literature, including the audio format. Additionally, it was at the start

of the 21st century that the found-footage subgenre of horror rose in popularity, following the release of *The Blair Witch Project* (1999), which would inspire many types of horror-adjacent content following the format, from other movies to social media blog posts (Littles 2023: 144-145). The accessibility of the audio format has already been discussed earlier in this chapter, and so has the popularity of the found media format in podcast fiction overall. However, there is more to the popularity of found-footage in horror specifically than the fact that recording and editing tools have become more accessible. When discussing *Welcome to Night Vale*'s success as a horror podcast, Hancock (2016: 224) points out that its narrator's role as a radio host contributes to the uncanny feeling created by the show, as a real life radio host would not be able to narrate the events as they happen with the level of omnipotence that *Night Vale*'s Cecil exhibits in each episode. Therefore, while part of the popularity of the found media feeling in podcast fiction is due to creating a feeling of familiarity and sometimes interactivity for the listeners, part of that also has to do with how easy it is to manipulate those feelings into the realm of uncanny. By presenting the audience with a familiar format and an idea that a tape of the show could be found by them in the real world, the writers get an opportunity to then terrify the listeners by putting into their narrative something that would be shocking or unexpected from the real world.

## **EMBODIED NATURE OF RELAXATION CASSETTES**

### **2.1. Methodology**

This chapter will provide the textual analysis of the episode transcripts from the first season of WtW, entitled RC. The analysis uses the embodied narratology approach developed by Caracciolo and Kukkonen (2021). The term ‘embodied’ in this approach is derived from the 4E (extended, embedded, embodied, and enactive nature of mind) cognition framework that Caracciolo and Kukkonen (2021) build upon. The idea behind the 4E model is that any person’s cognition is uniquely shaped by the interactions (both active and passive) of their body with their physical and social environment (Caracciolo & Kukkonen 2021: 12). ‘Embodiment’, then, refers specifically to the way cognitive processes are shaped by combinations of sensory and motor capabilities of human bodies (Caracciolo & Kukkonen 2021: 13-14). By using this model in narratology, Caracciolo and Kukkonen (2021: 13) argue that, in the process of reading a literary text, being attuned to one’s own body makes the experience richer. Concurring with the studies of Glenberg and Kaschak (2002), who found through a series of experiments that language understanding is grounded in physical action, they believe that motor resonance can be activated not only through the direct act of observing an action, but through mental reconstructions triggered by textual descriptions as well (Caracciolo and Kukkonen 2021: 156-158). While Caracciolo and Kukkonen do not apply their theory to auditory media and solely focus on written texts, this thesis believes that motor resonance operates similarly when textual descriptions are read out to one by someone other than the person themselves.

In this theory, ‘body’ refers to a speculative projection of a likely reader response, a body belonging to an imagined ‘embodied reader’ (Caracciolo & Kukkonen 2021: 23). Ryan (2010: 476) summarises the state of cognitive narratology (to which embodied narratology belongs) by saying that it borrows both textual analytical tools from traditional literary

criticism and the evidence derived from cognitive sciences; however, because the analysis does not amount to an empirical study of the audience's neurological processes, the discussion of the reader response remains largely speculative. Additionally, when research is not coupled with existing empirical studies, the role of cognitive narratology is to propose questions related to the nature of cognition that could be further considered in experimental sciences (Ryan 2010). Caracciolo and Kukkonen (2021: 23) acknowledge that human embodiment is "a uniquely complex phenomenon", and that their approach cannot possibly cover and consider all the possible embodied responses. This thesis relies primarily on the examples given by Caracciolo and Kukkonen to further speculate about the potential responses. Nevertheless, the main argument that this thesis is trying to make with its use of an embodied reader model (or an embodied listener in this case) is that potential embodied responses, such as, for example, closely following in one's mental image the movements of a character's hand as it searches for objects in the dark, and attuning to that experience (Caracciolo & Kukkonen 2021: 98), play a major role in engaging with a story.

Embodied narratological analysis is performed with the help of situation models, which are listeners' imaginative reconstructions of narrative events, created and updated unconsciously throughout the process of consuming a narrative, as well as image schemata, which are mental templates derived from one's previous experiences of interacting with the world around them (Ryan 2010: 470). For example, the experiences of linear movement lodge themselves in a person's mind as a PATH schema, which typically implies a beginning and an end. The schemata have a cognitive role of helping the person understand more abstract concepts that also follow a linear pattern (Caracciolo & Kukkonen 2021: 16-17). Caracciolo & Kukkonen (2021: 39) argue that, during the process of consuming a narrative, the audience's attention is fully captured by their own imagined situation models, whereas the textual and narrative strategies that make up those models get processed unconsciously and

then fade from the audience's view. It is, then, the job of the following chapter and its textual analysis to take a closer look at the precise strategies utilised in the podcasts' texts to elicit embodied responses, such as a distinctive sense of place, a sense of flow of the narrative, and even the feeling of empathy towards the characters. Metaphorical language plays a significant role in eliciting embodied responses because of the way it creates emotional connotations for objects and places that the audience would otherwise be less likely to fully flesh out in their heads (Caracciolo & Kukkonen 2021: 115-116). In this way, metaphorical language often builds up atmosphere and lets the audience see the story space in the way it is seen by the characters. However, plain descriptions of bodily actions may also immerse listeners in a character's experience, as mapping out those actions in one's mind may "foster a sense that they are enacting the character's consciousness rather than observing him from the outside" (Caracciolo & Kukkonen 2021: 98).

One final thing that needs to be addressed before the analysis is internal focalisation. Internal focalisation refers to the kind of narrative where the story elements are filtered through the consciousness of a single character, the focaliser (Bal 2017: 136). Caracciolo and Kukkonen (2021: 95) hypothesise that the use of this kind of focalisation in a narrative serves to strengthen the feeling of empathy towards the characters. They believe that it causes instances of somatic empathy in the audience, a physical mirroring of feelings experienced by another, by allowing them a glimpse of very private experiences, such as the characters' physical pain (Caracciolo & Kukkonen 2021: 98-100). Fludernik (2001: 107-108) claims that internal focalisation is possible in second-person narratives through the same means that it is possible in third-person narratives, if the 'you' address steps away from being a generalised pronoun that could refer to anyone and is instead used to relay deeply personal experiences. Thus, the analysis will also look at instances of internal focalisation in RC.

Rather than analysing the entire transcribed text of RC, this chapter will first look at the overall structure of the season and its thematic patterns. The analysis will pick out structural and thematic repetitions on the basis of how they might affect the listeners' perception of the embodied flow of the narrative. Then, the role of the second person narration in the general flow of the story will be discussed. Moving on from the structure, the analysis will tackle narrower elements of the narrative, such as specific scenes that focus on striking descriptions of bodily sensations or movements. The analysis will take a close look at the textual strategies used in the transcripts of those scenes and speculate on the potential responses they could elicit in the listeners. Because the narrator delves deeper into her personal relationship with the protagonist starting from episode six, most of the example scenes in this analysis come from the first half of the season, cassettes one to five, where the second person elements are more apparent.

## **2.2. Embodiment in structure**

In one of the subsections of their book, "Scripts, (Image) Schemata, and Narrative Sequentiality", Caracciolo and Kukkonen (2021: 165-173) argue that image schemata help reveal the embodied workings of the narrative that are too subtle to be explicitly picked up by the readers but which are nevertheless experienced by them in an affective manner. For example, a character in a narrative working towards a goal is bound to activate the PATH schemata and produce the feeling of anticipation, regardless of the textual strategies used to describe the progression towards that goal (Caracciolo & Kukkonen 2021: 171). Ultimately, affective associations from image schemata develop and maintain people's expectations about the plot. Those expectations can then be affected by the emotional dimensions of the narrative (e.g. wanting the goal to be reached despite not finding it epistemically probable) (Caracciolo & Kukkonen 2021: 162-164), but the readers' perception of the flow of the story is affected

by the previously acquired knowledge of schematic structures regardless of the outcome. Embodiment of the narrative begins, then, from the structure of the story.

Each episode of RC follows the same basic structure: the first half of the episode represents side ‘A’ of a given cassette, while the second half represents side ‘B’. The narrator introduces an intermission in the middle of the episode accordingly, when the cassette is supposed to be flipped. Furthermore, each episode begins with some instructions on the conditions under which the cassette is supposed to be listened to, as well as an introduction of a theme; at the end of the episode, instructions are given for what to do after the end of the cassette. As such, the narrative structure of the season follows the CYCLE schema. The circular narrative concurs with the breathing cycle being one of the most important thematic elements of the season; additionally, it might create the same feeling that breathing exercises are supposed to create, keeping the listeners grounded and alleviating stress. WtW falls under the definition of psychological horror,<sup>3</sup> and the episodes are therefore often intense and generate heightened anxiety in the listeners. Despite that, the CYCLE schema offers a promise of calm by making each episode end the way that it started. The listeners come to expect the moments of emotional distress to be over by the middle of the episode and later, by the end of it, which keeps them grounded.

### **2.2.1. Textual repetitions**

Caracciolo and Kukkonen (2021: 138) believe that “[Narrative fiction depends on] structural and thematic repetition for establishing meaningful patterns through its verbal medium”. They argue that those patterns also thicken the audience’s situation models because the embodied responses caused by the repetitions resonate with each other throughout the text (Caracciolo & Kukkonen 2021: 138). The repetitions therefore create an embodied sense of

---

<sup>3</sup> Psychological horror can be described as a subgenre of horror that elicits fear responses by delving into the emotional and psychological states of the characters as opposed to, for example, dealing with the more physically-manifested subgenres of horror, such as gore (Tomé et al, 2024: 3)

rhythm in the narrative. The CYCLE schema is maintained through structural repetitions, but textual repetitions are important for the rhythm as well. Here, like in the case with the CYCLE schema, breathing plays a major role: the most prominent example of textual repetitions in this season is the narrator instructing Oleta to breathe. Rhythmic commands of “Breathe in” and “Breathe out” not only repeat throughout the season but appear multiple times throughout a single episode as well. The breathing exercises interrupt the narrative flow of the episode that otherwise tends to distract the listener from its supposed role of a meditation guide and remind them that the actual setting of the story is contained, throughout most of it, to a single room. Within the narrative, it is a relaxation technique that keeps Oleta grounded, but outside of the narrative, it is also a textual strategy that resonates with the listeners as the story goes on.

Another prominent case of textual repetitions is the use of the phrase “[something] iterated many times” (e.g. WtW, “Cassette 1: Stress, Shoulders” & “Cassette 6: For Oleta”). Euritt (2020) discusses these repetitions in the context of the podcast creating the feeling of recognition among the fans when they interact with the media text. While she does not touch upon it with the embodied approach, the ideas that she discusses correspond with what Caracciolo and Kukkonen (2021: 138) say about textual repetitions resonating with each other and thickening situation models. Euritt (2022: 38) points out that “textual repetition, either serialised or within a single episode, can create recognition because listeners experience multiple moments of time simultaneously”. In the context of embodiment, these repetitions, which are used in different contexts across several episodes, gain emotional significance and carry with them the embodied feelings that are attached to them throughout the narrative.

For example, the first use of iterations happens as early as episode one. In it, the narrator directs Oleta into a visualisation exercise, in which she is presented as a damselfly, whose eyes “see the same thing iterated many times”. This expression is then repeated several

times throughout the rest of the episode: the narrator describes a little girl “iterated many times”, as well as a bird, also “iterated many times” as it watches the child rip the damselfly’s — Oleta’s — wings off her body. The language that is used in this scene is sensual, emphasising the locations where the little girl touches the damselfly, and how those sensations resonate with “your” body (e.g. “She holds you firmly in her fingers, breathing into your body, and inhaling it back into her own. [...] Your body shudders. Your many legs push against her skin.” From WtW, “Cassette 1: Stress, Shoulders”). It is one of the uncomfortably intimate scenes in RC that create a feeling of dread as the addressee character is unable to escape the scenario that the narrator pushes onto her. The repeated use of the word ‘iterated’, which appears at the beginning and the end, as well the middle of the scene, gets imprinted onto the imagery. When the same phrase is used later, it brings with it the associations of its initial use. In episode six, the narrator goes over the history of her own relationship with Oleta, saying “I saw you, outside on an autumn day, and there you were, in my mind, iterated many times” (WtW, “Cassette 6: For Oleta”). Although the context is different, and it is the narrator seeing the iterations rather than Oleta, the association with the phrase brings the intimate connotations taken from the damselfly scene into the simple act of the narrator remembering the girl.

### **2.2.2. Episode titles**

Each episode in RC, with the exception of episodes six and ten, has a title consisting of two nouns, the first being an emotional problem of some kind that the meditation guide aims to resolve (Stress, Anxiety, Insomnia etc), and the second being a body part (Shoulders, Stomach, Feet etc). The connection between the themes in the episode titles and the visualisation exercises can be rather abstract, but the theme is nevertheless prevalent in the details that the narration chooses to single out or to focus on. For example, episode three aims

to deal with insomnia and to relax one's feet. The visualisation exercise in the first half of the episode urges Oleta to imagine a scene at a pond where she has been before, describing the nature, the girl that she has met there, and other people that exist in that space. While the narrator does not fill the scene with imagery that would be typically associated with feet, such as walking, she makes sure to keep the idea of feet at the front of the listeners' minds by inserting occasional movement instructions for Oleta to follow while visualising. After a rather lengthy scene exposition which describes two people implied to have been spying on Oleta, the narrator says the following:

Imagine the three geese. Imagine their feet. Orange, flat, wide. Alternating flicks to keep moving forward. Imagine what the geese see. Fish and water and possible predators. They see patterns of similar birds. They see you and they do not trust you, but they know they can get away if you turn on them. They know they can go to places in ways that you cannot follow. Imagine going to places in a way that others cannot follow. (WtW, "Cassette 3: Insomnia, Feet")

The attention given to the birds' feet is sudden but does not come as a surprise because of all the previous allusions to Oleta's own feet. Moreover, because of the emphasis already created by the narrative thus far, the listeners might immediately sense a parallel between the geese and Oleta, and imagine getting away the way geese would before the narrative even explicitly tells them to. In any case, the prolonged focus on feet activates the image schemata associated with walking, travelling, and subsequently escaping from someplace or something. The listeners attune to the birds' sense of freedom and their ability to leave, translate it into Oleta's desire to do so, and consequently might experience this feeling as well.

The second half of the same episode claims to deal with potential cures for insomnia, and it consists of the narrator describing a potential journey that Oleta could take outside of the walls of the Institute. Although the visualisation exercise in this half of the episode is not accompanied by instructions for physical foot exercises for Oleta, and the previously visualised scene of the park is not brought up again, the idea of 'feet' and the associated actions nevertheless remains as a theme uniting the two sides of the same cassette. Moreover,

it is this half of the episode, which does not instruct physical relaxation exercises, that contains extensive imagery of walking. As such, the episode is balanced with plain bodily descriptions on the one hand and general thematic language on the other. The second half of the episode upholds the feet imagery, for example, by having Oleta count her steps as she walks. Additionally, it is emphasised that she needs to take care to make her steps light and the journey thus depicts her to be barefoot. As soon as the narrator mentions that “You have left your slippers, as bare feet are more nimble”, she also starts describing the ground on which Oleta walks in more detail: “Feel the rough, pebbly ground on the outskirts of the forest. As you approach 50 steps, feel the pebbles give way to bramble and grass. As you approach 200 steps, feel large rocks.” (WtW, “Cassette 3: Insomnia, Feet”). The mere mention of bare feet makes the sensory imagery elicited by these descriptions more vivid.

Not every episode links the title to the content as explicitly as episode three does. For the most part, the body part given in the title is only relevant as the focus of a given relaxation exercise and does not otherwise create strong embodied associations the way feet create an association with movement and specifically escape. The association between the body part and the mental issue given in the title is typically present: for example, episode one includes textual allusions to tensed up shoulders to remind the listeners that the cassette aims to alleviate stress. Episode two, in contrast, takes a more abstract route: through the descriptions of Oleta’s stomach being touched while she is forced to lie quietly, it creates the feeling of uncomfortable intimacy that can otherwise be described as the stomach churning, a feeling commonly used to describe anxiety. However, this idea seems to have little to do with the visualisation exercises. Episode five links the nose with focus, saying “smell and memory are intricately linked” and then using descriptions of various scents to make Oleta focus on her memories (WtW, “Cassette 5: Focus, Nose”), and episode seven links the head with doubt, implying that doubt comes from critical evaluation rather than pure emotions. Perhaps the

reason that feet in episode three are so much more emphasised than any other body part throughout the season is because it conjures the more obvious embodied association with movement, such as the restless leg syndrome that often accompanies insomnia, when compared with the association of the other body parts.

### **2.2.3. The listening experience**

The you-narration that is prevalent throughout RC leads to instances in which metafictional<sup>4</sup> devices are introduced. Although the narrator never explicitly addresses the listeners outside of the presented fictional world, her act of pretending to address an unspecified subject, rather than talking to Oleta directly, produces a similar effect: the story acknowledges its real-life auditory format, and it acknowledges that there are listeners other than the intended fictional addressee who could potentially listen to these cassettes. The address function is innate to second-person narration, and the acknowledgement of the form further leads the listeners to associate themselves with the addressee. It helps that it is only halfway through the season, in Cassette #6, that Oleta gets referred to by her name and therefore gains a more concrete presence as a character. The protagonist's gender is hinted at earlier, most explicitly in episode three when the few personal belongings that she has brought with her to the Institute are listed, among them a "brassiere, [...] tube of persimmon lipstick and hairpin" (WtW, "Cassette 3: Insomnia, Feet"). While these items, in particular the brassiere, might cause some listeners to reevaluate the narration if they had previously positioned a male character as the addressee, the first half of the season is overall rather neutral in the way it builds up Oleta's body. When it comes to bodily descriptions, there does not seem to be anything specifically sexed about the protagonist's body one way or the other. While the language is sensual, the sensuality often comes from the narrator describing the

---

<sup>4</sup> Metafictionality refers to instances when the fictionality of the story is acknowledged by or within the story in some way (Neumann & Nünning 2014: 344)

body from within, the intimate details that even the person themselves is not actively aware of (e.g. “Feel the pulses in your gut, your veins vibrant highways around and away from your stomach” from WtW, “Cassette 2: Anxiety, Stomach”), rather than the descriptions of the outer curves and shapes of a human body. Knowing that Oleta is a woman watched and addressed by another female voice brings a queer element to the story, but, at the same time, as Euritt (2023: 32-33) writes: “*Within the Wires* does not put any particular emphasis on the fact that its main two characters are women”. Queer relationships are normalised in-universe and Oleta’s gender therefore does not hold focal importance to the story. As for Oleta’s personality and the ways she enacts her agency, those are always narrated by an outsider rather than verbalised by Oleta herself and therefore a large part of her character remains untouched and open for interpretation.

Metafictional self-awareness of RC is best exemplified through its so-called visualisation exercises. Until the last two episodes of the season, not much actually happens in the world of the story: rather, most of the narrated scenes are supposed to be imagined by the fictional addressee, mimicking the experience of the real world listeners relying on their imagination to experience the story. Therefore, when the narrator uses imperative commands such as “Breathe in” or instructs “you” to visualise something, those commands are primarily directed towards the fictional addressee, Oleta, but are simultaneously being followed by the listeners as well. Because a lot of the scenarios offered by the narrator — such as getting turned into a damselfly and being crushed by a child’s hand — are technically not happening to the intended fictional addressee either, it can be said that real life listeners are going through the same experiences that Oleta is: both of them are being guided by a voice that they cannot see and told things that they cannot be sure are true, either in their supposed reality or in the context of the proposed storyworld. Episode one starts with breathing exercises that are relatively easy to follow: when the narrator says to “[Feel the cool air] slip down your neck,

across your shoulders, and into your lungs” (WtW, “Cassette 1: Stress, Shoulders”), the listeners’ bodies can follow this sensation because it is something realistic for them. Later, when the described sensations become more specific or, alternatively, abstract, the listeners may still choose to attune to them because that is what the style of the narration has conditioned them to do.

As the season goes on, Oleta’s surroundings become more concrete, and the narration more targeted towards her specific character rather than a generalised listener. Some of the visualisation exercises stop being abstract and turn into what are supposed to be actual scenes from the protagonist’s past. When the narrator gives Oleta specific instructions on where some of the tapes should be listened to before proceeding with the visualisation exercises (e.g. “Listen to this cassette publicly, in the Institute’s Community Garden. [...] Lie down on the stone bench and close your eyes.” From WtW, “Cassette 5: Focus, Nose”), it is actually unlikely that a real life listener would listen to the episodes under the same or even similar conditions. While it is possible that some listen in the comfort of their own bedroom or in a public park, an average podcast listener describes themselves listening while performing some sort of secondary activity rather than lying down to solely focus on the visualisation. For this reason, the complete attunement of one’s own body to that of the addressee character is not a possibility that this thesis considers.

Nevertheless, other elements of podcast culture play a role in the narrative potentially eliciting embodied responses. The expectations of the medium often include the listener being one-on-one with the podcast and the listeners seem to often think of a show as their companion throughout the day. RC continuously emphasising Oleta’s solitude and not introducing any major acting characters other than the narrator and the addressee plays into those expectations and the continuous second-person address keeps part of the listeners’ attention always on the narrative. Even assuming that an average WtW fan is occupied with

secondary activities while listening to the show, the second person narration makes the listening experience feel personal, and the bodies of the listeners thus respond to the address by mentally connecting to the imagined events. While the listener likely will not follow the instructions of, for example, lying down onto a bench, they will comprehend the sensations that come with it, further described by the narrator.

If Oleta plays the role of a listener for whom the content of the tapes is presented as non-fiction, then the narrator plays the role of a host of one of such shows. In chapter one of this thesis, the idea of reverse parasocial relationships between a podcast host and their potential listeners was mentioned. Euritt (2023: 32-33) at the beginning of her discussion of WtW, says that the way RC constructs intimacy is reflected through the concept of “extreme para-sociability”, and I agree with that assessment. From the very beginning, the way the narrator addresses Oleta is very familiar and sensual, as though she is addressing a long-term friend or even a romantic interest. She does not ease the listener into the relaxation exercises slowly by the means of starting with something remote and impersonal; instead, she plunges the listener straight into deeply personal visualisations of being in intimate contact with another person. Like a real world podcast host, she records her tapes ahead of the time and therefore has to rely on her own assumptions of what Oleta is like, choosing to think of her as someone she could have an intimate conversation with, someone who would trust her in such vulnerable moments as the visualisation exercises describe. Although, as was stated earlier, the narrator does not describe bodies as being explicitly sexed, certain sexual connotations are nevertheless present in the way she speaks of Oleta’s body. Already the second episode starts with the following words: “In this cassette we will explore inside you. Indeed, we are always exploring you. You are here to be explored”, which later leads to “There’s no reason why we can’t have both pleasure and understanding. The Institute is interested in your physical well-being” (WtW, “Cassette 2: Anxiety, Stomach”), all while Oleta is being inspected by a

nurse. Throughout that part of the episode, Oleta is not allowed to open her eyes, whereas the narrator is implied to be watching her in this vulnerable position. She therefore takes Oleta's potential trust as a given. While the narrative does eventually reveal that the narrator and Oleta used to know each other and have a close friendship, it is important to remember that Oleta forgot about that relationship and does not recognise the narrator as someone she knows until halfway through the season. As such, her experience listening to the intimate address is the same as that of the real world listener, who is getting addressed by somebody who is initially a complete stranger. Such an experience of intimacy easily slips into being uncanny. The uncanniness comes also from the contrast between the listeners mentally embodying Oleta while simultaneously doing their own thing in their own bodies. The second-person address and psychological horror of RC therefore work hand in hand.

### **2.3. Embodied dynamics of absence**

Many of the psychological horror elements of RC come from the uncertainty created by the narrator. Euritt (2020: 46) discusses the possibility that the entire season is led by an unreliable narrator and that, after the end of the last cassette, it is up to each individual listener, as well as Oleta, to decide whether to trust the narrator or not, as the ending is left open. Throughout the season, the narrator tries to help Oleta remember events from her childhood that she has forgotten, implying that, in this fictional universe, everyone's memory is wiped at a certain age. However, the narrator's words are the only frame of reference for both the world building and for Oleta's alleged past, as Oleta is unable to speak up on the matter. A lot of the narrative is therefore built on absences, like gaps in Oleta's memory or physical lack of presence in space while Oleta is confined to the solitude of her bedroom.

In the introduction of the first Cassette, the narrator urges the protagonist to "find a private spot, alone", adamant that the process of listening not be interrupted by any external

interference. Despite such instructions, which the narrator can only assume are being followed, the certainty of the space in which the character is positioned is challenged later in the episode in the following manner:

Listen to the breaths. Who is that breathing right now?  
Is it you? Is it your own breathing you're hearing? Are you certain?  
Imagine there is another. Someone standing just over your shoulder. Breathing In. [beat] Breathing out.  
[beat]  
A hand touches your right shoulder, pressing you down gently, as if to keep a balloon from lifting out of gravity. [...]  
You *\*will\** learn to trust my voice.  
Feel a breath from just behind you. You smell its caffeine acidity, its umami and metal musk through cotton lips. You know these breaths. How do you know them?  
[firmly] How do you know them?  
The hand on your shoulder lifts away. You are alone. You are fine.  
No one else is with you. Who would be with you?  
You are probably alone. (WtW, "Cassette 1: Stress, Shoulders")

Despite persuading the addressee that she has to learn to trust her, the narrator immediately gives a conflicting account of someone else's presence. The idea that Oleta is alone despite the vivid imagery that was just described to her could almost imply that she should not trust her own senses. At the same time, however, the entire account of a stranger's presence is emotionally charged specifically due to the emphasis on the absence. Although there are hints to a foreign presence in the room, it is explicitly positioned right outside of the protagonist's field of vision, standing behind Oleta's back and breathing over her shoulder. Caracciolo and Kukkonen (2021: 115) argue that, when modeling the space of a story, emotional dynamics of space are more important to the audience than the exact locational relations of objects. The only corporeal part of the implied stranger is their hand — and even the hand belonging to another person can be argued to be irrelevant. There is nothing about this hand that speaks of its characteristics; rather, it is the feeling that it elicits that is important: the gentle press. The role of the hand is to provide a foreign sensation and then to lift away, emphasising its absence. While the hand is not given any characteristics, characteristics are given to the stranger's breath, with its distinct "acidic" and "metal" scent. Because neither Oleta nor the listener can see the stranger, the narrative focuses on senses

other than sight with which that presence can be detected: touch, smell, and hearing. The intimate image of someone breathing down your back, created through the distinct descriptions of the breath, thus elicits vivid emotional responses from the listeners despite the lack of visual imagery.

In episode three, the narrator admits to having lied about there being no one in the room before: “Close your eyes. I promise you are alone. You are definitely alone this time. You weren’t alone during the last cassette, even though I said you were. But you are now. I promise.” (WtW, “Cassette 3: Insomnia, Feet”). Here, the narrator alludes specifically to episode two, in which Oleta feels pressure of hands upon her stomach despite supposedly being alone in her room. However, the narrator’s own admission that she can choose to lie about such presences casts doubt on all the past and future instances of solitude. As a result, the descriptions of physical sensations become more important for any assessment of Oleta’s surroundings than direct claims: rather than the initial impression in episode one — that Oleta should not trust her own senses — the opposite now appears to be at play. The narration, the focus of which gradually shifts into giving instructions on how to escape the Institute and then survive in the wilderness, urges Oleta to memorise the positions of objects, the number of doors, distances in footsteps, all through visualisation exercises rather than having her physically walk through the building. Oleta’s success in escaping thus relies on how sharp her senses are, as well as how much she trusts them, rather than solely relying on visual cues.

### **2.3.1. The solitude of obsession**

When discussing why a ghost story in particular is ideally suited for radio drama, Hand (2018) quotes Hanson (2016: 149) on his definition of a ghost, emphasising the following: “Ghosts are heard more than seen.” Ghosts are also described as anti-social and often stuck to one place. RC is not a ghost story, nor are any other seasons of the show;

however, it is reminiscent of one in the way that it constructs its narrative. A disembodied voice, the focus on the auditory and sensory rather than visual elements — those are things that could bring forth an association with ghosts. A larger element is RC's focus on memories. Memories, like ghosts, are things of the past that continue to haunt the present; in RC, Oleta and the narrator can both be described as being "a ghost from the past" for the other, as they had forgotten about each other until an unexpected reunion. They do not interact directly, except through the act of recording and listening to the cassettes but are constantly on each other's minds regardless. While other subjects and employees of the Institute are occasionally referenced, none are given a face nor a name and therefore only exist in the narrative passively.

The instances of embodiment in RC, whether it is Oleta feeling phantom touches on her body or attuning to the sensations coming from within, are all the more intense due to the fact that the narrative does not let her explicitly interact with other people. The repeated insistence that "You are alone" has a somewhat different effect at different points throughout the season. In episode one, when the narrator says "You are alone. You are fine." (WtW, "Cassette 1: Stress, Shoulders"), the words are still comforting. They are surrounded by uncertainty and a somewhat mocking tone caused by the use of the word 'probably', but they bring a stop to the vivid descriptions of a stranger, which are the main cause of anxiety in that scene. At the beginning, being alone feels preferred to being haunted by presences that you cannot fully recall; the descriptions of phantom touches are therefore unwelcome and cause the feeling of aversion. In episode seven, which comes after the narrator reveals that she was the one who initially brought Oleta to the Institute, Oleta is locked up after a failed attempt to escape. The cassette starts with the narrator addressing the fact that Oleta feels betrayed and does not trust her anymore. It is then said that she has been shouting and pounding at the door, which the narrator points out is a type of behaviour that will bring unnecessary attention.

However, the cassette is supposed to be played at a time where no one is watching the cell, leading the narrator to once again assert: “You are alone. You are fine.” (WtW, “Cassette 7: Doubt, Head”). The words are said in the same manner as they have been said before and with the same goal of calming Oleta down. However, the previous implications that Oleta does not trust the narrator anymore makes the insistence that “You are fine” fall flat. While Oleta does not want to stay in the Institute, being alone with the voice from the cassettes no longer feels like a better alternative to being surrounded by nurses; instead, is it a reminder of her loneliness.

Being alone is always something that the narrator insists upon. Starting from episode four, she does not just ask Oleta to listen to the cassettes alone in her room but insists that the act of listening itself be kept a secret: “Listen to this cassette alone. No one needs to know you are listening to this cassette, or any cassette. From here on out, no one needs to know about what you are doing with your ears.” (WtW, “Cassette 4: Sadness, Lungs”). While that is reasonable to a degree, as other Institute employees getting hold of the cassettes would bring an end to any attempts at escaping, it is also true that keeping a secret further isolates Oleta from everyone else. Whereas before she was encouraged to answer another nurse’s questions about her listening experience, now she has lost this small point of human connection.

In episode two, the narrator instructs Oleta to visualise herself lifting up over the Institute:

You are above The Institute now, and you can see it as a whole being, as an arc of interconnected white rectangles, a boxy crescent moon. Inside there are rooms and corridors and wardens and Security Teams. Inside there is you and... ..and no, no one else. You cannot see anyone else. You can only feel them. (WtW, “Cassette 2: Anxiety, Stomach”)

The narrator mentions Security Teams and otherwise implies that many people could be residing in the many rooms of the building; right after, she backtracks and says that there is no one there except for Oleta. For the narrator, Oleta is the only person in the Institute that she cares about. This obsession affects the narrative because it leaves everyone else out and treats

Oleta as the centerpiece. Everything that the narrator says is addressed to one person and pertains to her too, every sensation that she describes belongs to Oleta, either directly or through the means of forced somatic empathy. Being in the Institute is an isolating experience for Oleta because she is taken out of the society that she knows and is denied her own memories; at the same time, listening to the cassettes is an isolating experience for the listeners because it is filtered through the narrator's obsession with the girl, and the second-person address that it entails. The instances of embodiment continuously connect with the listeners because they are all tightly concentrated on one person.

## **2.4. The desire for intimacy**

Being set in a dystopian timeline where traditional family dynamics have been demolished, WtW as a whole is fundamentally a story about the loss and yearning for that special kind of intimacy. When the visualisation exercises in RC do not consist of mapping out and navigating an imagined space, they often focus on contact between bodies. While some scenes are filled with an erotic kind of intimacy, as has been discussed by Euritt (2023), others are intimate in a way that is equally private but driven by a different kind of desire. For example, in episode one, the very first thing the narrator asks Oleta to visualise along with the breathing exercise is the following scene:

Envision the air as a liquid, just like the first time you swam. This was before you were born, when you were floating, unaware, fluid within and without your body. You breathed it just fine. You don't remember any of this. [...] You don't remember the loud thrum of another's body, a mother's body, noisily soothing your unwitting transition into a conscious and sentient creature. You are again breathing liquid, your lungs a milk-soaked yellow cake. (WtW, "Cassette 1: Stress, Shoulders")

While, as the narrator rightfully points out, this is not something that Oleta, or anyone, could actually remember, it is still an experience that she had to have gone through, when her body was still developing in her mother's womb. The reason this imagery is so intimate despite the fact that it would have had to occur before the development of consciousness is the association with motherhood. This scene takes place before the narrative reveals that the

mother and child bond is a lost relationship in this universe; nevertheless, the longing to go back to the most innocent days of childhood, when comfort could always be found in a mother's embrace, is a feeling familiar to even those listeners whose parents are still present in their lives, which is what makes this scene effective. For Oleta, this non-memory of being soothed during her mother's pregnancy is her only point of connection to the relationship that she otherwise never got to have. For a listener who has grown up in traditional family dynamics, this is a reminder of the type of comfort that cannot be achieved in the life of an adult. The narrator thus creates a scene that is both general, as most listeners would have gone through a stage of existence like that, but simultaneously very intimate, for it has personal connotations to any listening individual depending on their upbringing.

Later in the same episode, in the visualisation exercise with the damselfly, the narrator describes a little girl and allows the listeners a glimpse of that child's feelings:

Through her touch, you understand her. [...] You understand suddenly that she once had a caretaker place a palm on her shoulder, the weight of it pressing upon her, as if to keep a balloon from lifting out of gravity. The hand, which comforted and calmed, left her head quickly, apologetically, acknowledging its mistake, and her shoulder felt cool and sore in its absence. [...] Two of the child's fingers hold you firmly, with intention, the way she herself has never been held. In a way she wants to be held, to be seen. [...] She wishes for a hand again upon her shoulder and blows your wings like a kiss to the wind. (WtW, "Cassette 1: Stress, Shoulders")

The use of the word "understand", which is emphasised through repetition, is focal here. Unlike the scene with the mother's womb, this scene is focalised in third person and does not try to pass off the described experience as something that could have been experienced by the listeners. Nevertheless, the word "understand" entails sympathy towards and, to a certain degree, identification with the subject. It is also notable that the listener is said to understand the girl through touch: that detail adds weight to physical intimacy and implies that any described sensations are charged with emotional significance. The contrasts are also significant: the touch of the caretaker's hand is simultaneously calming and comforting, which usually has the connotations of being gentle, but also firm and heavy. The imagery of the mother's womb was also contrasting, described as being soothing despite the

constant noise. The child here takes these contrasts and puts them into how she interacts with the world: when she crushes the damselfly, despite the vivid cruelty of this simple act, it is described as an act of love: “She sees the beauty in the body you cannot see” (WtW, “Cassette 1: Stress, Shoulders”). When she rips off its wings and blows them away, it is akin to a kiss. Oleta as the damselfly is terrified of what is happening to her but nevertheless understands what the child is going through; because the narration of the episode has previously established the desire for intimacy in the way that any listener can relate to, the listener is able to understand it too. Thus, with this scene, RC establishes the very core of intimacy: built on the contradiction between the desire to be seen and understood and the fear of vulnerability, of getting close to someone.

#### **2.4.1. The intimacy of self-reflection**

So far, the fact that RC is a story told through meditation cassettes has been mainly discussed in the context of it being a facade. Although the narrative consists, for the most part, of breathing exercises and visualisation exercises, the instructions are given by the narrator with an ulterior motive in mind, that of making Oleta remember her. Instead of generic relaxation exercises, RC offers the listeners distressing, intense scenarios that aim to keep Oleta on edge and ultimately to prepare her for survival outside the walls of the Institute. However, even though there is more to the cassettes than the narrator originally claims, one of its goals remains the same as that of an ordinary meditation guide: total-body awareness.

In episode two, while Oleta is lying down with her eyes closed, the narrator keeps referring to “the eye that is your mind”. This “eye” floats over Oleta’s body and watches her, giving her a different perspective from what she usually sees with her eyes open:

Let the eye that is your mind linger on your face, ignoring the face of the one who stands above you. There is no one else standing near you. Linger on the slant of your eyebrows, on the brown of your eyes, on the width of your nose. On the scar on your chin, the long, thin scar. The scar is your childhood. (WtW, “Cassette 2: Anxiety, Stomach)

The narrator then proceeds to tell the story of how Oleta got that scar, although she ends it by clarifying that that is just a speculation, that whoever is listening to this cassette might not have a scar like that at all. More importantly, the narrator describes the qualities that the person with such a scar would have: “You were careless then. You were free” (WtW, “Cassette 2: Anxiety, Stomach”). Although the word ‘careless’ typically has negative connotations, it contrasts with the joy emitted by the word ‘free’, and the overall segment is filled with fondness for the time that has gone but of which there is still a physical reminder. Knowing the history between Oleta and the narrator, this childhood scene is clearly filtered through the narrator’s own nostalgic lenses; and even at this point of the story when it is yet unclear how deep the connection between them goes, it is not hard to guess that the narrator is not just speculating a potential scenario. Still, it is also a scene of self-reflection. The descriptions of Oleta’s face that precede the flashback are very neutral: her features are accompanied by purely descriptive terms and do not seem to hold any weight of the narrator’s personal feelings about the protagonist’s appearance. It is because those descriptions are so neutral that they feel like something that one might experience when actually looking at oneself. However, due to the previous emphasis on your eyes being closed, it also feels different from looking at oneself in the mirror. It is emphasised in the text that the “eye” is on the outside and therefore sees things differently, from the outside perspective. By setting this up, RC imitates the calm feeling of self-reflection that can be experienced when personal biases are let go of and one is able to assess oneself as just another human being, with neutral features and contrasts in personality.

To conclude the analysis, the intimacy of second-person elements in RC relies on somatic empathy experienced by the listeners towards Oleta and, occasionally, the narrator as well. That the empathy is felt is ensured by balancing Oleta’s unusual circumstances in a fictional dystopian setting with general human experiences of wanting to be free and wanting

to be understood. Although the narrator's desire to form an intimate bond with Oleta can come across as off-putting because of the intensity of her words and the imagery created by the visualisation exercises, it too comes from the place of having grown up in the society that disconnects children from the intimacy of familiar relationships. Intimacy is therefore the very thematic core of the narrative.

## CONCLUSION

This thesis analysed RC, the first season of a fiction podcast WtW, through narratological lenses. The analysis focused on the way the podcast uses second-person narration to construct the feeling of intimacy between the narrator and the listeners. The theoretical frame of embodied narratology was used to argue that attuning to the second person address and mentally mapping out the exercises dictated by the narrator as though they are addressed to and pertain to the real life listeners makes for a richer experience of the story and for a deeper connection with the fictional addressee. The thesis was motivated by the lack of attention that has been given to fiction podcasts in the academic context. By choosing a fiction podcast that has previously been noted to create the feeling of intimacy among the fanbase and making it a focus of a narratological analysis, this thesis provided further evidence for the intimate nature of podcast culture and made a case for how unconventional narrative strategies, such as second-person narration, can be uniquely utilised for auditory storytelling.

The first chapter was a literature review giving a brief account of the history of the podcasting medium and the common tropes used in the fiction subgenres within it. Although there are but a few narratological studies on works of podcast fiction created over the course of the past decade, this thesis filled in certain gaps by turning to research done on Old Time Radio dramas and on non-fiction podcast shows. The literature review has shown that fiction podcasting is a medium that often relies on the culture surrounding auditory media to construct its stories. As such, many of the better known fiction podcasts fictionalise the use of radio and various audio recording devices to make their listeners feel like the story is unfolding in the real world. In a similar manner, they can fictionalise the interactive nature of non-fiction podcasts either by actively engaging with the fanbase outside of the show or by letting the listeners make certain choices in the story progression. When it comes to podcast

horror in particular, podcast fiction utilises the same cultural construct that radio dramas used in the past, the idea that sound is able to make people believe something is real even when visuals are not present, while also causing unease in those who hear it without being aware of the source. The fact that a non-fiction true crime podcast was an influence behind a whole subgenre of podcast fiction thrillers means that the creators in the medium are aware of and ready to build upon the conventions introduced by non-fiction podcasting.

The introduction asked two research questions that this thesis aimed to answer. The primary question was: What textual strategies does WtW employ, with the help of second-person narration, to elicit embodied responses? In the process of the analysis, some structural patterns of the narrative were revealed, which may affect the way the listeners perceive the flow of the story. While not all of them are concerned with the use of the second person pronoun specifically, those patterns are used to position the experience of real world listeners in parallel to the experience of the fictional addressee. The circular narrative structure creates certain expectations about the directions the story takes and therefore may alleviate anxiety otherwise caused by intense moments. This parallels the breathing exercises followed by the protagonist. Similarly, episode titles create expectations in the listeners about the content of the episode, although the analysis also showed that the degree to which the title affects the themes of a given episode varies greatly. When it does affect the themes, it has to do with whether a body part that a given episode is titled after creates enough of an embodied association to maintain thematic repetitions. The use of repetitions in the text helps create emotional associations with certain words and phrases. When the same phrase repeats throughout the same episode, it contributes to the circular structure of the narrative; when it repeats in several episodes throughout the show, it may cause the listener to experience the same emotions that they had experienced the first time the phrase was used.

Like many of the fiction podcasts discussed in the literature review, WtW fictionalises a non-fictional medium, in the case of its first season that of meditation tapes. The combination of the setting and the continuous second-person address add metafictional elements to the narrative, wherein the narrator's instructions are being followed by the listeners both in and outside of the storyworld. The analysis showed that, although the fictional addressee has a name and a story that gradually build her up as a distinct character rather than a blank slate for the listeners to position themselves in the story, RC keeps the protagonist's identity just ambiguous enough at the beginning that different types of real world listeners can be engaged by the narrator's voice. The narrative setting creates intimacy because it parallels the way it is done by non-fiction podcasts: with the narrator implying a personal relationship with the addressee and maintaining the narration as a one-on-one conversation. Additionally, the narrator continuously alludes to intimacy through the text. The narrative speaks about different types of interpersonal relationships in a manner that emphasises the yearning felt when those relationships are unattainable. Because the desire for an intimate relationship is brought up on several levels, from a child's desire for a parental figure to a possessive desire for a romantic partner, and the general desire to be seen and understood, the narrative is more likely to resonate with individual listeners.

The second research question of the thesis was concerned with the genre of the podcast: What do the elements of psychological horror in the podcast add to the evocation of embodied responses? Here, the analysis showed that the narrative puts a lot of emphasis on solitude and on absences in space. The narrator keeps assuring the addressee that she is alone before alluding to potential foreign presences through textual descriptions of touch and bodily sensations. In this way, the narrative plays with the listeners' expectations and their emotional responses. The literature review showed that auditory horror often relies on the lack of visuals and on the idea that the listeners will conjure scary imagery of their own instead.

Psychological horror of RC relies on the fact that touch typically requires an outside source. By claiming that the source is lacking but the touch is felt nonetheless, the narrator psychologically attacks the listeners. The embodied responses of the listeners who had already attuned to the second-person address become more vivid with the added factors of confusion and fear. Similarly, much of the intimacy created by the narrative can be described as uncomfortable intimacy, which is intrusive and unwelcome. The listeners who attune to the experiences of the fictional addressee are forced to be the objects of the narrator's obsession; the discomfort caused by the forced isolation results in embodied responses.

The analysis revealed that it is not only the second-person pronoun that makes up a second-person narrative; other elements are involved in making sure the audience feels addressed by the narrative. In the case of fiction podcasting, the example of WtW shows that second-person narration can be maintained through the parallels made to the experience of listening to a podcast outside of the realm of fictional storytelling. The relationship between a podcast host and their listener, which subverts the typical parasocial dynamic, here translates into the relationship between the narrator and the addressee. The use of the embodied framework proved useful in determining potential responses that might be caused in the listeners by the instances of intimacy in the text. The findings of this thesis can serve as an example of how the podcast culture can influence narrative storytelling and will hopefully inspire further studies into different works of fiction podcasting in the future.

It should be noted that this textual analysis does not account for all the ways in which WtW constructs intimacy. Although many elements that work together can be extracted from the transcript of the podcast, the acoustic qualities of the narration could reveal additional information about the way the second-person address is perceived during the listening experience. That, however, should be studied by other researchers in the future.

## REFERENCES

### PRIMARY SOURCES

- Within the Wires. 2016. Season 1, Cassette 1: Stress, Shoulders. Transcript available at <https://www.patreon.com/posts/transcript-1-1-21980137>, accessed April 3, 2026.
- Within the Wires. 2016. Season 1, Cassette 2: Anxiety, Stomach. Transcript available at <https://www.patreon.com/posts/transcript-1-2-21980164>, accessed April 3, 2026.
- Within the Wires. 2016. Season 1, Cassette 3: Insomnia, Feet. Transcript available at <https://www.patreon.com/posts/transcript-1-3-21980181>, accessed April 3, 2026.
- Within the Wires. 2016. Season 1, Cassette 4: Sadness, Lungs. Transcript available at <https://www.patreon.com/posts/transcript-1-4-21980197>, accessed April 3, 2026.
- Within the Wires. 2016. Season 1, Cassette 5: Focus, Nose. Transcript available at <https://www.patreon.com/posts/transcript-1-5-21980215>, accessed April 3, 2026.
- Within the Wires. 2016. Season 1, Cassette 6: For Oleta. Transcript available at <https://www.patreon.com/posts/transcript-1-6-21980231>, accessed April 3, 2026.
- Within the Wires. 2016. Season 1, Cassette 7: Doubt, Head. Transcript available at <https://www.patreon.com/posts/transcript-1-7-21980247>, accessed May 5, 2026.

### SECONDARY SOURCES

- Audiohm Media. 2019. The “this is a recording” trope in fiction podcasts. Available at: <https://audiohmmedia.com/the-this-is-a-recording-trope-in-fiction-podcasts/>, accessed January 15, 2026.
- Bal, Mieke. 2017. *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (4th ed.). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Bell, Alice. 2022. “You know, are you you?”: Being versus playing the second person in digital fiction. In Iché, Virginie & Sandrine Sorlin (eds.). *The Rhetoric of Literary Communication: From Classical English Novels to Contemporary Digital Fiction*, 179-194. New York: Routledge.
- Bell, Alice & Astrid Ensslin. 2011. “I know what it was. You know what it was”: Second-person narration in hypertext fiction. *Narrative*. 19: 3, 311-329.
- Berry, Richard. 2016. Podcasting: Considering the evolution of the medium and its association with the word ‘radio’. *The Radio Journal International Studies in Broadcast and Audio Media*. 14: 1, 7-22.
- Cambridge University Press. (n.d.). Podcast. In *Cambridge Dictionary*. Retrieved October 14, 2025, from <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/podcast>
- Caraccialo, Marco & Kukkonen, Karin. 2021. *With Bodies: Narrative Theory and Embodied Cognition*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press.
- Castelli, Alberto. 2023. The melancholy of the second-person narrator. *Confluencia*. 38: 2, 41-59.
- Cipri, Nino. 2016. The Black Tapes Podcast Produced by Paul Bae and Terry Miles (Reviews). *Strange Horizons*. Available at: <https://strangehorizons.com/wordpress/non-fiction/reviews/the-black-tapes-podcast-produced-by-paul-bae-and-terry-miles/>, accessed January 15, 2026.
- Dibble, Jayson L.; Hartmann, Tilo & Sarah F. Rosaen. 2016. Parasocial interaction and parasocial relationship: conceptual clarification and a critical assessment of measures. *Human Communication Research*. 42: 1, 21-44.
- Dittrich, Josh. 2023. Bedtime stories: Audiobooks, podcasts, and reading as listening (and sleeping). *Intermedialités / Intermediality*. 41, 1-20.

- Euritt, Alyn. 2020. Within the Wires' Intimate Fan-Based Publics. *Gender Forum*. 77, 35-50.
- Euritt, Alyn. 2023. *Podcasting as an Intimate Medium*. New York: Routledge.
- Euritt, Alyn & Leslie McMurtry. 2021. Immersive Night: Audio horror in radio and podcasting. *Journal of Entertainment Media*. 35.
- Fludernik, Monika. The establishment of internal focalization in odd pronominal contexts. In van Peer, Willie & Seymour Chatman (eds). 2001. *New Perspectives on Narrative Perspective*, 101-112. New York: SUNY Press.
- Fludernik, Monika. 1994. Second-person narrative: A bibliography. *Style*. 28: 4, 525-548.
- Fludernik, Monika. 1994. Second-person narrative as a test case for narratology: the limits of realism. *Style*. 28: 3, 445-479.
- Genette, Gérard. 1988. *Narrative Discourse Revisited*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Giacconi, Riccardo. 2022. Body genres, embodiment and engagement: Second person in audio storytelling. *RadioDoc Review*. 8: 1.
- Greenstone, Scott. 2025. It started with friends at home. Now Dungeons & Dragons is in its stadium era. *National Public Radio*. Available at: <https://www.npr.org/2025/08/07/nx-s1-5489813/dungeons-dragons-dimension-20-critical-role-madison-square-garden-stadium>, accessed January 19, 2026.
- Gupta, Harshita. 2019. Why You Should Listen to Fiction Podcasts. *34th Street Magazine*. Available at: <https://www.34st.com/article/2019/10/podcasts-entertainment-fiction-the-adventure-zone-welcome-to-night-vale-diversity>, accessed January 14, 2026.
- Gupta, Harshita. 2020. How Diverse Podcasts Make Film and Television Look Bland. *34th Street Magazine*. Available at: <https://www.34st.com/article/2020/09/fiction-podcasts-queer-diversity-poc-trans-gender-representation-penumbra-podcast>, accessed January 14, 2026.
- Hammersley, Ben. 2004. Audible revolution. *The Guardian*. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2004/feb/12/broadcasting.digitalmedia>, accessed November 25, 2025.
- Hancock, Danielle. 2016. Welcome to Welcome to Night Vale: First steps in exploring the horror podcast. *Horror Studies*. 7: 2, 219-234.
- Hancock, Danielle & Leslie McMurtry. 2017. "Cycles upon cycles, stories upon stories": contemporary audio media and podcast horror's new frights. *Palgrave Communications*. 3.
- Hancock, Danielle & Leslie McMurtry. "I know what a podcast is": post-Serial fiction and podcast media identity. In Llinares, Dario; Fox, Neil & Richard Berry. (eds). 2018. *Podcasting: New Aural Cultures and Digital Media*, 81-102. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hand, Richard J. 2014. *Listen in Terror: British Horror Radio from the Advent of Broadcasting to the Digital Age*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Hand, Richard J. 2018. Spirits on the Air: Ghosts, Sound, and the Radio. In Brewster, Scott & Luke Thurston (eds). *The Routledge Handbook to the Ghost Story*, 370-377. New York: Routledge.
- Hanson, Robin. 2016. *The Age of Em: Work, Love, and Life when Robots Rule the Earth*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Heshmat et al., Yasamin; Yang, Lillian & Carman Neustaedter. 2018. Quality 'alone' time through conversations and storytelling: podcast listening behaviors and routines. *Graphics Interface Conference*. 67-73.
- Huwiler, Elke. 2005. Storytelling by sound: a theoretical frame for radio drama analysis. *The Radio Journal International Studies in Broadcast and Audio Media*. 3: 1. 45-59.

- Jeziorska-Haładyj, Joanna. 2024. Your illness: second person narrative in non-fictional stories of health crises. *Autobiografia Literatura Kultura Media*. 1: 22, 19-30.
- Jeziorska-Haładyj, Joanna & Rembowska-Pluciennik, Magdalena. 2022. Second person in different genres and cultural practices. *Zagadnienia Rodzajów Literackich*. 4, 7-16.
- Kacandes, Irene. 1993. Are you in the text?: The “literary performative” in postmodernist fiction. *Text and Performance Quarterly*. 13: 2, 139-153.
- Killmeier, Matthew A.. 2013. More than monsters: *Dark Fantasy*, the mystery-thriller and horror’s heterogeneous history. *Journal of Radio & Audio Media*. 20: 1, 165-180.
- Littles, Carlos. 2023. The evolution of horror in new media. In Bacon, Simon (ed). *The Evolution of Horror in the Twenty-First Century*, 143-154. Lanham: Lexington Books.
- Locke, Charley. 2016. Fiction Podcasts are Finally a Thing! Thank you, Sci-Fi and Horror. *WIRED*. Available at: <https://www.wired.com/2016/08/found-footage-fiction-podcasts/>, accessed January 15, 2026.
- Mangnus, Anna. 2023. Broadcasting LGBTQ+ stories in fiction podcasting. *Tijdschrift voor Genderstudies*. 26: 3/4, 335-353.
- Marcu, Mariana. 2019. The podcast as a form for the distribution of a radio product. *International Journal of Communication Research*. 9: 1, 80-83.
- Mildorf, Jarmila. 2016. Reconsidering second-person narration and involvement. *Language and Literature*. 25: 2, 145-158.
- Mildorf, Jarmila. 2012. Second-person narration in literary and conversational storytelling. *Storyworlds: A Journal of Narrative Studies*. 4, 75-98.
- Morrisette, Bruce. 1965. Narrative “You” in contemporary literature. *Comparative Literature Studies*. 2: 1, 1-24.
- Neumann, Birgit & Ansgar Nünning. 2014. Metanarration and Metafiction. In Hühn, P; Meister, J.P.; Pier, J. & Schmidt, W. (eds). *Handbook of Narratology*, 344-352. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- O’Donoghue, David. 2016. Why Podcasts Are the Hottest New Medium for Scary Stories. *Cultured Vultures*. Available at: <https://culturedvultures.com/podcasts-scary-stories/>, accessed February 6, 2026.
- O’Meara, Jennifer. 2015. “Like Movies for Radio”: Media Convergence and the Serial Podcast Sensation. *Frames Cinema Journal*. Available at: <https://framescinemajournal.com/article/like-movies-for-radio-media-convergence-and-the-serial-podcast-sensation/>, accessed January 14, 2026.
- Oxford University Press. (n.d.). Podcast, n. In *Oxford English dictionary*. Retrieved October 14, 2025, from <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/2475224403>
- Owen, Laura Hazard. 2015. Serial meets The X-Files in Limetown, a fictional podcast drawing raves after just one episode. *NiemanLab*. Available at: <https://www.niemanlab.org/2015/08/serial-meets-the-x-files-in-limetown-a-fictional-podcast-drawing-raves-after-just-one-episode/>, accessed January 15, 2026.
- Pottecary, Christopher. 2013. The Potential of Second-Person Perspective Games: The Aesthetics of Shooting Yourself. *The Artifice*. Available at <https://the-artifice.com/second-person-perspective-games/>, accessed November 25, 2025.
- Reitan, Rolf. 2011. Theorizing second-person narratives: a backwater project? In Hansen, P. K.; Iversen, S.; Nielsen, H. S. & Reitan, R. (eds). *Strange Voices in Narrative Fiction*, 147-172. Berlin: Walter De Gruyter.
- Rembowska-Pluciennik, Magdalena. 2018. Second-person narration as a joint action. *Language and Literature*. 1-17.

- Rembowska-Pluciennik, Magdalena. 2022. Enactive, interactive, social—New contexts for reading second-person narration. *Narrative*. 30: 1, 67-84.
- Richardson, Brian. 2006. *Unnatural Voices: Extreme Narration in Modern and Contemporary Fiction*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press.
- Rime, Jemily; Pike, Chris & Tom Collins. 2022. What is a podcast? Considering innovations in podcasting through the six-tensions framework. *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*. 28: 5, 1260-1282.
- Ryan, Marie-Laure. 2010. Narratology and cognitive science: a problematic relation. *Style*. 44: 4, 469-495.
- Sharon, Tzlil and Nicholas A. John. 2019. Imagining an ideal podcast listener. *Popular Communication*. 17: 4, 333-347.
- Sharon, Tzlil and Nicholas A. John. 2024. “It’s between me and myself”: Inverse parasocial relationships in addressing (imagined) podcast listeners. *New Media & Society*. 28: 1, 250-269.
- Tomé, F.; Pires, A.; Jiskrová, A.; Saial, A.; & Campos, P. 2024. “I found it cathartic”: Exploring empathy and mental health awareness in psychological horror video games. *Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction*. 8: CHI PLAY, 1-21.
- Ugwu, Reggie. 2021. ‘Podcast Movies’? Feature-Length Fiction Stretches the Medium. The New York Times. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/24/arts/podcast-movies-fiction.html#>, accessed January 15, 2026.
- Verma, Neil. 2024. *Narrative Podcasting in an Age of Obsession*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- White, Shaoni C. 2023. Race, gender, and the separation of voice and body in the audio drama podcast. *Studies in Popular Culture*. 45: 1/2, 145-170.
- Wong, Denise. 2022. Gazing beyond the fourth wall: shame and second-person narration in Fleabag. *Textual Practice*. 36: 10, 1689-1711.
- Wyld, Jasper. 2021. Collaborative storytelling and canon fluidity in The Adventure Zone podcast. *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*. 27: 2, 343-356.
- Yeates, Robert. 2020. Serial fiction podcasting and participatory culture: Fan influence and representation in The Adventure Zone. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*. 23: 2, 223-243.

## RESÜMEE

TARTU ÜLIKOOL

ANGLISTIKA OSAKOND

**Alistair Theodore Aleksin**

**“You are probably alone”: Analysing the intimacy of second-person elements in horror fiction podcasts on the example of Within the Wires**

**“Sa oled ilmselt üksi”: Sina-jutustuse elementide kasutamine intiimsuse loomiseks õuduskirjanduses taskuhäälingusaate “Within the Wires”i näitel**

(magistritöö)

2026

Lehekülgede arv: 60

Annotatsioon:

Ilukirjanduslikud taskuhäälingud on 21. sajandi jooksul kiirelt arenenud narratiivituüp. Sellel on mitmeid žanre, millest , õudus on üks populaarsemaid. Siiski on antud meediumi vähe uuritud. Kuna audiodraamat käsitlevad 20. sajandi uuringud keskendusid pigem raadiosaadete tekstile ilma akustilisi tegureid arvesse võtmata, on tänapäeval teinud uurimused just vastupidist. Ilukirjanduslike taskuhäälingute jaoks tähendab see seda, et narratoloogiliste uurimuste luubi alla on võetud vaid mõnda üksikut näidet.

Siinne magistritöö käsitleb sarja “Within the Wires”. Antud sarja esimene hooaeg valiti uurimuse jaoks sina-jutustuse kasutamise tõttu, mida on tihti peetud ebaharilikuks. See valik on motiveeritud arvamusest, et taskuhäälinguid ümbritsev intiimsus loob õhkkonna, mis teeb sina-jutustuse “Within the Wires” sarja jaoks sobilikuks. Antud magistritöö otsib vastust küsimusele, kuidas õuduselement eelmainitud intiimsust mõjutab.

Sissejuhatus annab lühiülevaate sina-jutustustest ja selle kohta seni tehtud uurimustest ning selgitab, kuidas sina-jutustus inimesi eri meediumites mõjutanud on. Kirjanduse ülevaade näitab, kuidas taskuhäälingud alguse said, kuidas antud meediumis lugusid jutustatakse ja kuidas kuulajad sellesse suhtuvad. Analüüsi osa kasutab kehastatud narratoloogia teooriaid, mis võtavad arvesse inimeste kehastatud reaktsioone narratiivi läbimise jooksul. Analüüs keskendub narratiivi ülesehitusele ja kehaliste aistingute kirjeldustele tekstis. Kokkuvõttes tehakse magistritöö lõplikud järeldused.

Võtmesõnad: sina-jutustus, kehastatud narratoloogia, kirjanduslikud taskuhäälingud, õudus.

## **Lihtlitsents lõputöö reprodutseerimiseks ja üldsusele kättesaadavaks tegemiseks**

Mina, Alistair Theodore Aleksin,

1. annan Tartu Ülikoolile tasuta loa (lihtlitsentsi) minu loodud teose “*You are probably alone*”: *Analysing the intimacy of second-person elements in horror fiction podcasts on the example of Within the Wires*

mille juhendajad on prof. Raili Marling ja teadur Francesca Arnavas,

reprodutseerimiseks eesmärgiga seda säilitada, sealhulgas lisada digitaalarhiivi DSpace kuni autoriõiguse kehtivuse lõppemiseni.

2. Annan Tartu Ülikoolile loa teha punktis 1 nimetatud teos üldsusele kättesaadavaks Tartu Ülikooli veebikeskkonna, sealhulgas digitaalarhiivi DSpace kaudu Creative Commons'i litsentsiga CC BY NC ND 3.0, mis lubab autorile viidates teost reprodutseerida, levitada ja üldsusele suunata ning keelab luua tuletatud teost ja kasutada teost ärieesmärgil, kuni autoriõiguse kehtivuse lõppemiseni.

3. Olen teadlik, et punktides 1 ja 2 nimetatud õigused jäävad alles ka autorile.

4. Kinnitan, et lihtlitsentsi andmisega ei riku ma teiste isikute intellektuaalomandi ega isikuandmete kaitse õigusaktidest tulenevaid õigusi.

Alistair Theodore Aleksin

Tartus, 12.05.2026

## **Autorsuse kinnitus**

Kinnitan, et olen koostanud käesoleva magistritöö ise ning toonud korrektselt välja teiste autorite panuse. Töö on koostatud lähtudes Tartu Ülikooli maailma keelte ja kultuuride kolledži anglistika osakonna magistritöö nõuetest ning on kooskõlas heade akadeemiliste tavadega.

Alistair Theodore Aleksin

Tartus, 12.05.2026

Lõputöö on lubatud kaitsmisele.

Raili Marling

Tartus, 12.05.2026