

Abstract

On one side, the diploma thesis examines the phenomenon of sleep paralysis (hereinafter referred to as SP), its cultural conceptualizations in archaic folklore in the Czech lands and in contemporary (modern) folklore – mainly it is focused on individual and collective explanations of its meanings. The theoretical part briefly outlines the character of SP from the perspective of modern psychiatry and the archaic folkloric interpretations of this sleep disorder appearing in various non-European cultures. The theoretical part is mostly focused on the phenomenon of the moth, the phantom, which the author considers to be one of possible understandings of this sleep disorder in the legends and customs of archaic Czech folklore. The research part of the thesis is based on ethnographic fieldwork. The aim was to map out, on the basis of ethnographic interviews with people who have experienced SP, how SP can be interpreted individually today, how this individual interpretation overlaps with the folkloric manifestations of the sleep disorder described in the theoretical part, relevant to a given cultural setting, and how pre-existing cultural models appearing in contemporary popular culture and modern folklore shape the individual experience of SP and the personal interpretation of informants. In yet another section, the author further explores the autoethnographic analysis of his own experiences and interpretations of SP. The comparison of the theoretical part and the research part shows that not only one's own personality and psyche, but also the socio-cultural environment significantly influences the interpretation of SP, the individually experienced course, as well as the hallucinations usually accompanying it.

Key words: sleep paralysis, autoethnography, moth, ghosts, witches, revenants, cultural phenomenon
UFOs, dreams, hallucinations, conspiracy theories