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## Uncanny Sleep: A Study of Sleep Paralysis through Health Humanities

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### Uncanny Sleep: A Study of Sleep Paralysis Through Health Humanities

Troubled sleep, its causes and remedies, find a recent focus in the turn to wellness – a discourse engaged in therapies through mindfulness, meditation, melatonin etc. aimed at improving sleep. My research studies a sleep disorder called sleep paralysis, an uncanny sleep event set apart by vivid hallucinations, a twilight consciousness trapped between waking and sleeping, and a state of terror caused by the inability to move. What is peculiar about sleep paralysis as a recognized sleep disorder is its affinity to the supernatural through ghosts, aliens, and hags that are reported in hallucinations. Using an interdisciplinary approach, I examine how late 19<sup>th</sup> century British and Indian literature constitute an experimental and speculative sleep lab, where sleep paralysis emerges through horror and gothic literature to reveal radical uncertainties about the nature of bodies. The relationship between science and literature emerges through this research as mutually transformative in understanding sleep paralysis. (149 words)



Caption: Henry Fuseli's 1781 painting titled *The Nightmare*, which depicts sleep paralysis in the form of a demonic figure sitting on a woman's chest

Credit: Detroit Institute of Arts, USA