

Some free comments on folklore and etymology

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«Nightmare»: An innocent word?

Nowadays

nightmare = bad dream

but...

«Nightmare»: An innocent word?

Definition of nightmare:

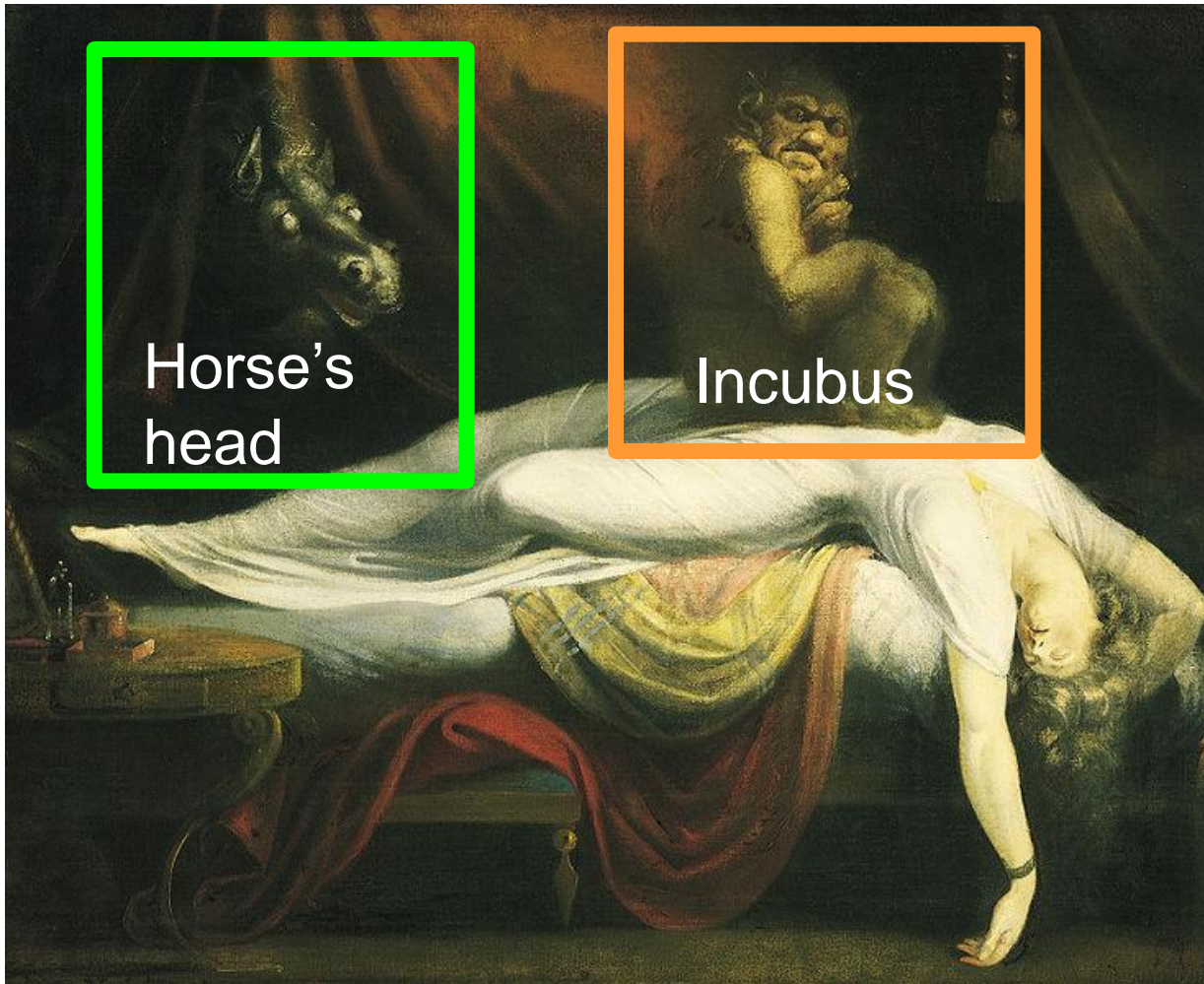
- 1. an evil spirit formerly thought to oppress people during sleep*
- 2. a frightening dream that usually awakens the sleeper*
- 3. something (as an experience, situation, or object) having the monstrous character of a nightmare or producing a feeling of anxiety or terror*

From Merriam Webster dictionary

«The nightmare» by Henry Fuseli (1781)



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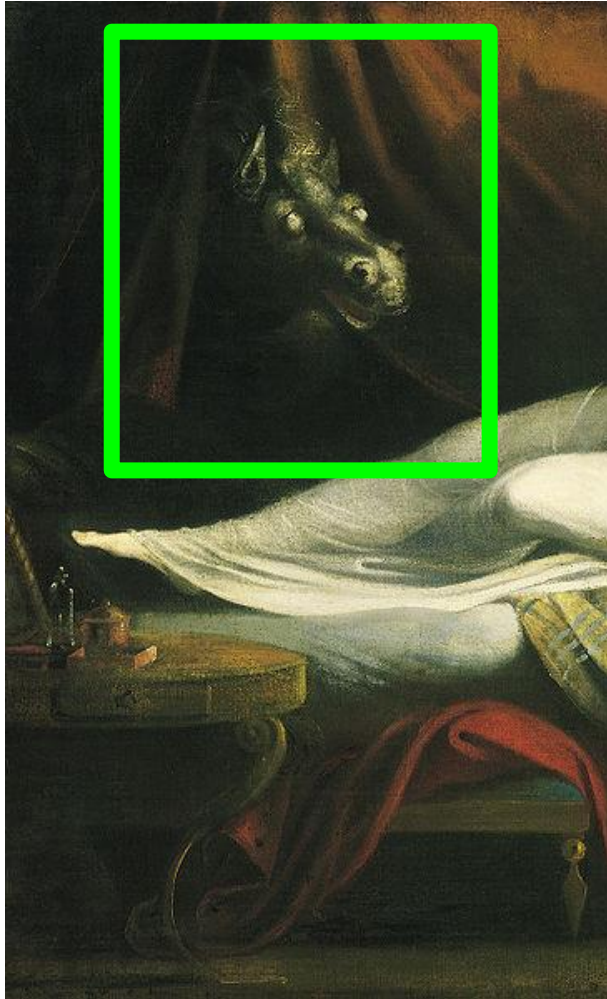
Incubus (pl. incubi)



«Incubus»: From the Latin verb, *incubo*, *incubare*, meaning «to lie upon».

In current Italian *Incubo* means Incubus and bad dream.

Mare



«Nightmare»

Origin: From *night* and *mare*.

First use: 14th century

«Mare»

1. Obsolete term for an evil preternatural being causing nightmares

Origin: Old English

First use: before 12th century

2. A mature female horse.

Origin: Old English *mere*

First use: before 12th century

Mare

- «Mara» or «mare»: a kind of female evil being of the North European folklore
- By night, they suffocate sleepers, they ride horses until they are exhausted and other evil actions.
- Probably origin Indo-European
- Many languages share the Word in some way.

Mare in some languages

- ▶ German: «nachtsmahr» = nightmare
- ▶ Norwegian: «mareritt» = nightmare
- ▶ Danish: «mareridt» = nightmare
- ▶ Icelandic: «martröð» = nightmare
- ▶ Swedish: «mardröm» = nightmare
- ▶ Swedish: «martallar» = dwarf pines (pines of Mara, by the action of Mares)
- ▶ Polish: «koshmar» = nightmare
- ▶ Russian: «кошмар» (мар = mar) = nightmare
- ▶ French: «cauchemar» = nightmare, from Picard language, «cauquemaire», «cauquer» = to press
- ▶ Romanian «moroi» = ghost, vampire
- ▶ Czech: «nocni můra» = nightmare
- ▶ Etc.

In the Iberian Peninsula

- In Spanish, there are the word «pesadilla» = the little heavyweight.
- Portuguese: «Pesadelo» = nightmare.
- Galicia language: «Pesadela».
- Asturian language (Bable) «Pesadiellu» o «Pisadiellu».
- In general, they are thought as hairballs, old hags, witches, huge black dogs, etc.

In Catalan

- There is not any similar word in current Catalan for bad dreams (*malsons*)
- In Catalan folklore there is the word «pesanta», a huge dog (sometimes a cat) who also attacks people when they sleep and causing the most horrible bad dreams.

Thank you for your attention