

# ARE WE OUR OWN DEMONS?

By Lucy Gillis © 2009

Recently, two emails were sent to LDE that reminded me of an article I wrote several years ago that appears in Dr. Jorge Conesa-Sevilla's book *Wrestling With Ghosts: A Personal and Scientific Account*:

## Out of Phase Dual Awareness?

By Lucy Gillis

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I had an idea occur to me when I read of a sleep paralysis incident experienced by Jorge Conesa. During an e-mail discussion, Jorge wrote:

"I induced an SP and accidentally an OBE three nights ago. I panicked seeing my own body and did not know how to get back. So I approached my sleeping body and began chewing on and biting my own toes so I would wake up. This did not work. So instead, I did my "roll up" trick and woke up with a jolt!"

It struck me funny, and I burst out laughing at the thought of being OBE, hunched over your own physical body and gnawing on your own feet! But then, that image of a hunched figure bent over a sleeping body led me to recall some of the classical nightmare descriptions, such as an incubus crouched on a sleeper's chest, the familiar image often used when describing effects of sleep paralysis.

And then I began to wonder...

What if, on some occasions, the dreamer himself is the one actively producing the sensations felt during sleep paralysis?

Suppose the dreamer doesn't recall being out-of-body. According to one theory, we leave our bodies every night when we sleep. We simply don't remember that we do so. Just like we all dream every night, but not everyone remembers their dreams. (For those who don't believe that we "go" anywhere in our sleep, instead of the phrase "leave our bodies," substitute "withdraw attention from the outer physical environment as our senses become cut off or reduced as we enter the sleep cycle.")

Add to this the fact that time does not usually operate in the dream state as it does in waking reality. We can experience the past as well as the future; in some dreams, hours or days can be felt to pass when in fact only moments have gone by. What if, besides this time distortion, there can sometimes also be a time lag? What if our bodies experience sensations that may have had their origin only seconds **before**, but the cause of those sensations (the dream experience) is forgotten, not remembered at all on a waking consciousness level in much the same way that sleepwalkers have no memory of their sleepwalking?

Could this be a kind of dual awareness, but not a strictly simultaneous one? Could sensations being produced during the dream scene be physically felt **after** the scene is over? In other words, could the production of sensations and the feeling of sensations be experienced out of synch, or out-of-phase?

When we awaken, feelings and emotions are often more easily recalled than visual images. I'm sure we've all, on occasion, awakened from a dream with a lingering feeling, perhaps anxiety, or happiness, yet we couldn't recall what the specific dream was about.

What if, in the out of body state, we encounter difficulties getting back into the physical body? (Or, if not "out of body" we encounter difficulties in waking up and we hallucinate a dream version of our waking body.) What if we do like Jorge and attempt to get back in (or wake up) by alerting the physical body, trying to stir it to wakefulness? Could some of the sensations felt during sleep paralysis be an "echo" of this activity when the mind switches from dreaming consciousness to waking?

If we tend not to remember our dreams when we wake, or not recall out-of-body excursions, but we have a lasting feeling of anxiety or panic (from trying to get back in the body or wake up), perhaps the mind produces a distorted version of what is happening, trying to translate the sensations into something familiar, as best it can.

Could we ourselves be the "demon" sitting on our own chests, trying to get back into our bodies, when in fact it is the mind trying to translate the dream experience of our own attempts to return to waking reality? (End of article.)



The first email I received was from Javier. (You can read his entire dream report in the "In Your Dreams!" section of LDE.) Toward the end he writes:

... "I tried to gently open my eyes, but they didn't open. I decided to put more of an effort into it, then I woke myself up. The feeling of making yourself wake up is a weird feeling that I can still remember, but it's hard to explain. It sort of gives you a small headache and your eyes seem to hurt like somebody is poking your eyes. . . . I woke up, and immediately I went into a state of paralysis. I was frightened since it had been some time since this had happened. I used to experience it regularly about two months ago. I decided to stay calm because trying to move made my body feel like something was poking me. That was not a pleasant lucid dream, but that is when I realized that sleep paralysis was actually normal, and not a thing of the devil. I know this because I searched, and I came upon this [LDE] website!"

It was the last paragraph that Javier wrote that reminded me of my theory of what I called an "Out-of-Phase Dual Awareness." The act of trying to wake himself up, produced painful feelings in his body: *"The feeling of making yourself wake up is a weird feeling that I can still remember, but it's hard to explain. It sort of gives you a small headache and your eyes seem to hurt **like somebody is poking your eyes.**"*

He also observed that trying to move created more problems: *"I decided to stay calm because **trying to move made my body feel like something was poking me.**"*

Essentially, he sensed that his own attempts at trying to wake up (or move) created unpleasant sensations that *appeared* to originate from outside himself.

Within a few days I received another email, this one, from Dustin, somewhat resembling Jorge's experience:

"My name is Dustin and I have lucid dreams several nights a week and I would like to tell you of one of the many I cannot forget. One day after school I was tired and while I was doing my homework I fell asleep on my bed, sitting up with my back against the wall. During my nap I had a few dreams I cannot remember, but toward the end of my nap I felt as if I had suddenly awakened. The next thing I knew I felt

something grab and pull my hair from above me. The thing then started dragging me up the wall by my hair and all I could feel was overwhelming fear! Then in the blink of an eye (literally) the strangest and most unbelievable thing happened. I blinked my eyes and kept them shut for only a second or two and when I opened them I was no longer being pulled up the wall! I was now standing on the wall as if it was the floor and, as I looked down, to my surprise *I held a handful of hair!* I was outside of my body and I was pulling myself up the wall. I was no longer afraid, but then I awakened from the shock of realizing what had happened.”

In this case, it would seem that Dustin became aware that it was he himself who had provoked his sensations/experiences of being dragged by the hair.

Interestingly, of the three examples, Jorge remembers his attempt at getting back into his body, Javier recognized that unpleasant sensations occurred when he attempted to move or wake up, and Dustin was surprised to discover "evidence" that in the dreamstate, he had seemingly dragged his own (dream) body.

In light of these experiences reported by Jorge, Javier, and Dustin, I ask again, could we ourselves, be our own "demons" simply trying to wake up or get back into our bodies?