

Agency of the Dead in Dream Narratives: From Traditional Culture to (Post)modern Perspectives

Lina Būgienė

Dream narratives can generally be regarded as a certain meta-language, turning the specific individual oneiric experience into a socially acceptable public performance. As folklore fieldwork data inevitably testifies, the deceased hold an especially prominent place in dreams. In traditional Lithuanian culture, the deceased appearing in dreams used to cause concerns and prompt the living to take actions aimed at improving the conditions of the deceased. However, in modern and postmodern society, attitudes towards death and the deceased have altered considerably. Thus, the perspective in dream narratives seems also to have shifted somewhat and the focus is now increasingly turning to dreaming individuals and their problems.

KEYWORDS: dream narratives, autobiographical narratives / life stories, oneiric experience, traditional culture, folk belief, Lithuania

Pripovedi o sanjah lahko na splošno razumemo kot nekakšen meta-jezik, ki specifično individualno sanjsko izkušnjo preoblikuje v družbeno sprejemljivo javno pripoved. Kot neizogibno pričajo podatki folklorističnega terenskega dela, imajo pokojni v sanjah posebej pomembno mesto. V tradicionalni litovski kulturi je pojav pokojnikov v sanjah vzbujal skrb ter žive spodbujal k dejanjem, namenjenim izboljšanju razmer pokojnih. V sodobni in postmoderni družbi pa so se odnosi do smrti in pokojnih precej spremenili. Zato se zdi, da se je nekoliko premaknila tudi perspektiva v pripovedih o sanjah, saj se pozornost vse bolj usmerja k sanjajočim posameznikom in njihovim težavam.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: pripovedi o sanjah, avtobiografske pripovedi / življenjske zgodbe, sanjska izkušnja, tradicionalna kultura, ljudsko verovanje, Litva

INTRODUCTION

Dream narratives can generally be regarded as a certain meta-language, turning specific individual oneiric experience into a socially acceptable public performance:

Upon awakening, the dream phenomenon can be referred to only through the prism of remembering and reporting, as it goes through the necessary translation from visual representations to verbal ones. The dream, therefore, can exist during wakefulness only as a dream narrative. (Raufman, 2008: 19)

Three major stages of transforming the actual dream into a narrative, which contribute to the formation of a cultural identity, may be discerned: “the ‘real’ dream (which we cannot access), the ‘recalled’ dream (remembered by the dreamer and reported to a third party), and the ‘culturally remembered’ dream (reported and widely disseminated)” (Harrison, 2009: 12). As such, the dream narrative is closely related to the phenomenon of cultural memory, to use the term coined by Jan Assmann (2006). The narrative is the only way to turn a dream into a cultural text that conveys the individual experiences by means of collective categories, e.g. translating them into the language of the community tradition. This is precisely what makes oneiric narratives a valid subject of folklore research.

However, for a long time since the beginning of folklore studies in Lithuania, the main focus was on interpreting dream symbols, typically using the popular and relatively numerous “dream books” (*sapnininkai* [pl.] in Lithuanian). These were both handwritten, as well as printed and published, throughout the 20th century and served as a kind of vocabulary aiding the “translation” of dream images as symbolic signs into pragmatic language for the purposes of everyday use and divination. These binary formulas (X seen in the dream means Y in life) can be attributed to small folklore forms and even considered akin to paremias (Safronov, 2016: 16). This “folk dream interpretation”, to use the concept devised by Polish and Russian ethnolinguists (Tolstoy, 1993; Nebzhegovska, 1994), has long constituted the main subject of interest for both Lithuanian folklore collectors and researchers alike (e.g. see Višinskaitė, 2007), whereas exhaustive texts describing dream experiences as such were considerably lacking.¹

Nordic folklore researchers were probably among the first to shift their focus to dream narratives as exhaustive cultural texts (see Virtanen, 1989; Kaivola-Bregenhøj, Palmenfelt, 1992; Järvinen, Timonen, 1992) emphasising their adherence to the collective tradition:

Dream narration and interpretation bear many of the characteristics of folklore: dreams are part of the personal experience narrative tradition and contain both idiosyncratic symbols, and symbols that are culture-bound, anonymous in origin, highly stereotyped and passed on from one person to another. The models available for dreams demanding an interpretation are, furthermore, both individual and part of the collective tradition. (Kaivola-Bregenhøj, 1993: 211)

Since the 1990s, the number of works dealing with dream narratives as folklore texts has significantly increased (for references, see Đorđević Belić, 2021). It has been established that dream narratives can be rightfully regarded as fairly typical folklore texts in terms of sociocultural representation. Ágnes Hesz defines such texts as “memorate type dream narratives”, noting that they usually have a rather elaborate structure: “These narratives may often include a brief recapitulation of the dream experience, the antecedents

¹ A similar situation is also documented in other European countries: e.g. in Sweden, Carl-Herman Tillhagen, curator of the folklore archive at the Nordiska Museet, Stockholm, noted in 1968 that very few narratives of dreams had been recorded from folk tradition (Arvidsson, 2024: 51).

of the dream, its circumstances, interpretation and conclusions” (2012: 141). Researchers talk about “dream cultures”, differentiating between various types of dreams – nightmares, erotic, ecstatic, prophetic and initiatory, which are present in ancient, pre-modern and tribal cultures, and in traditional belief communities (Milne, 2019: 129).

In Lithuania, dream narratives have only received considerable attention from folklorists since the first decade of the 21st century, following the wider methodological shift that took place in Lithuanian folklore research (Būgienė, 2017: 36–40). This included the newly defined concept of *homo narrans* and a significantly broadened understanding of folk narrative in general (Stundžienė, 2008; Ivanauskaitė-Šeibutienė, 2007; 2012). Currently, in Lithuanian folklore studies, dream narratives are perhaps most actively researched as parts of autobiographical narratives, or life stories. As folklorists know from fieldwork experience, our informants can usually be expected to relate one or more dreams that they consider particularly important in their lives. However, in some cases even their whole life story may be constructed as a narrated chain of prophetic dreams that have subsequently “come true” (see Būgienė, 2007: 66–67). In life stories, dreams tend to be depicted as significant events: completely individual in their experience, yet considerably more universal and canonical in their narration. They are frequently remembered and reconsidered or, according to informants, remain literally unforgettable throughout their lives (Ivanauskaitė-Šeibutienė, 2012: 201). Women seem to be particularly keen dreamers and enthusiastic dream narrators, and this has been observed not only in Lithuania. “Descriptions and interpretations of dreams mostly belong to women’s activities”, states Gabriela Kiliánová in her research on a Slovakian village community (2010: 20). Perhaps this is due to women’s lives being traditionally centred upon family and community, with special emphasis on interpersonal relations, emotions and presentiments (Būgienė, 2012: 84). It may also be because in traditional culture, it often falls upon women to preserve religious rituals and social norms, thus constructing something that may be termed a “moral community” (Stark et al., 1996), or an “emotional community” (Đorđević Belić, 2021: 206–207).²

The theme of death is especially prominent – both in dream narratives and in folkloristic dream research. The emphasis is usually on communication between the living and the dead in dreams. Thus, dreams are addressed as a communication method between the living and the dead (Kiliánová, 2010), indirect communication (Hesz, 2012), or a form of communication with the otherworldly (Đorđević Belić, 2021). Communication, obviously, implies reciprocity; in Lithuanian folklore research on dream narratives, emphasis is typically placed on community ties between the living and the dead.³ The dead, their visits, requests or warnings constitute an absolutely predominant topic of the dream narratives recorded by folklore collectors. Meanwhile, variations directly depend on the changing attitudes towards death, funerals and the deceased (Ivanauskaitė-Šeibutienė, 2022: 13).

² Regarding the role of women in ancient Jewish dream culture, see also Hasan-Rokem, 1999: 216.

³ In Lithuania, most research on dream narratives has been conducted by Vita Ivanauskaitė-Šeibutienė (2007; 2010; 2011; 2012; 2014; 2016; 2022). I am greatly indebted to Vita for her unparalleled expertise and kind advice when writing this study.

The present study also adopts the established research perspective that interprets dreams about the deceased as a form of communication. However, when addressing dream narratives I add the dimension of agency by investigating the roles ascribed to the participants in this communication and by attempting to grasp how these roles may have changed over time.

The research material for this study was acquired during several folklore fieldwork sessions organised in north-western Lithuania, in the parishes of Vieکشniai and Židikai (Mažeikiai district) in 2006–2007, and in eastern Lithuania – the districts of Švenčionys and Ignalina in 2010–2011.⁴ The data from these fieldwork sessions⁵ comprise hours of audio recordings, stored in the form of mini discs or CDs at the Lithuanian Folklore Archives division for sound recordings (LTRF). When necessary, other archived materials recorded at approximately the same time in Eastern Lithuania by volunteer folklore collectors were also used, particularly a substantial manuscript collection of dream narratives from the district of Ukmergė (LTR 7672). A wealth of relevant material was also provided by folklorist Nijolė Marcinkevičienė (1997; 1998) who has spent many years collecting folk narratives and other material in the southern part of Lithuania (the ethnographic region of Dzūkija). Nevertheless, all this material is fairly homogeneous, as it was acquired following essentially the same folklore collection strategies. The majority of informants were elderly or middle-aged inhabitants of Lithuanian villages or small towns, and the majority were women. The only differentiating factor is the age of the informants, or rather their belonging to different generations (see Daraškevičienė, 2009). Unfortunately, exhaustive dream narratives recorded by folklorists among younger urban populations, such as students, are almost entirely lacking. One can rely only on several studies investigating beliefs or superstitions rather than narratives (Merkienė, 2002; Savickaitė, 2010), or on research conducted by psychologists (Daraškevičienė, 2009; Lovčikienė, 2019). However, such uniformity of the available material has both advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, it does not provide a broader and more diverse perspective; on the other, it enables us to trace developments in views and attitudes rooted essentially in the same tradition – that of Lithuanian Catholic peasants, albeit from various regions of Lithuania. Let us now consider these developments.

THE COMMUNITY OF THE LIVING AND THE DEAD IN TRADITIONAL CULTURE AS REFLECTED BY DREAM NARRATIVES

The majority of dream narratives rooted in traditional society's worldview are related to the complex of funeral rites, and their successful or incomplete performance. Numerous

⁴ The latter two sessions took place in the course of implementing the research project *Homo narrans: Exploration of Folk Memory*, which was carried out by a group of folklore researchers at the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore in 2010–2012, and was supported by the Research Council of Lithuania (contract no. LIT-2-31).

⁵ In addition to the fieldwork material that I recorded personally during these sessions, I also rely here on the data collected by my colleagues Bronė Stundžienė, Vaita Ivanauskaitė-Šeibutienė, Vilma Daugirdaitė, Jūratė Šlekonytė, Jurgita Ūsaitytė, Andželika Jakubynienė and Irena Žilienė. I am grateful to all of them for their kind assistance and advice.

studies on death in traditional cultures confirm that the outstanding importance of funeral rites in community life, as well as their exceptional complexity, was determined by the archaic and universal concept of death as a rite of passage (cf. Račiūnaitė, 1997). Only a funeral performed in its full extent and with all the obligatory attributes guaranteed the successful separation of the deceased from the living and protected them from the fate of hostages trapped between this world and the next. Thus, the appearance of the dead in dreams and their explicit or implicit requests and demands were inevitably regarded as evidence that the funeral ritual had been improperly performed or not fully completed. Therefore, the appearance of the deceased in dreams could be perceived as both undesirable – as it signalled that the dead were lacking something (cf. Kiliánova, 2010: 13–14; Đorđević Belić, 2021: 198) – and benevolent, as it enabled the living to set things right: to complete unfinished rites, to provide missing items (mostly clothing or footwear that had not been put on properly prior to burial), or to settle the deceased person's debts – so that they could rest in peace. In any event, in traditional societies, the main concern of the living was ensuring the wellbeing of the deceased. The underlying aspiration remained unchanged for centuries – namely, to restore order, ensure peace for the deceased, and establish a proper connection between the living and the dead (Ivanauskaitė-Šeibutienė, 2022: 13).

In traditional Lithuanian culture, it was strictly forbidden to ask for the deceased to appear in one's dreams, since the main objective of the funeral was to clearly separate them from the living. Only the deceased could determine *when* and *whether* to enter the dreams of the living; otherwise, their appearance was regarded as menacing and even dangerous. The following dream narrative, recorded in 2006 from Zuzana, a Samogitian⁶ woman born in 1924, recounts how upset she was that her neighbour had dreamt of her diseased mother while she herself had not, and the situation that ensued:

I felt so angry and heartbroken... You see, I missed my mother so much, I wanted so badly to see her. I did not have a husband, I was so lonely. So I was thinking, why did she appear to others, and not me? /.../ And I did dream of her at night. As if, you see, I wanted her so much, so my mother did come back. She entered the room, wearing a scarf, dressed in a thick coat. /.../ And I did not know what to do. Me and my sister, we looked at each other [in the dream], wondering what we should do. We were so scared! /.../ I moved, I wanted to invite her closer, but then she disappeared. /.../ Then I realised that I did not have to ask her to appear. Things were just the way they had to be /.../ and I had no business bothering her and crying for her to come back. /.../ She showed me this clearly. (LTRF md 135/34/)⁷

⁶ Samogitia is the western part of Lithuania, characterised by a distinct dialect and certain ethnographic peculiarities.

⁷ Unless otherwise indicated, the translations of the quotations from Lithuanian to English are by the author.

Sometimes, excessive crying for the departed and requests for them to come back were due to the difficult, unbearable life of the surviving family, but in that case, it was believed that the returning deceased might cause harm:

People say: if a person has died, and you've buried them, you should not cry and call for them. My mum used to cry for my deceased father very much. She was left alone with small children and could hardly cope. Whenever something bad happened, she would start crying: "Please, come back at least in the darkness of the night, show yourself, help me..." When she cried like this, I would wrap my head in a sheet and wish for him not to appear because I felt so scared. People say that if you cry for the deceased very much, they will appear, but instead of doing anything good, they will do bad things. (Marcinkevičienė, 1998: 183)

Likewise, it was forbidden to weep or grieve excessively, especially for one's deceased children,⁸ as they would then have to be wet or carry buckets of water, which worsened their conditions in the afterlife and angered them:

There was this woman in our neighbourhood, and she had lost her 14-year-old son. You know what she did? She kept crying and crying and crying. And then she dreamt of her son. In her dream, she saw everyone walking, and her son was the last one in line, since he was carrying two buckets of water, and he was completely wet. She approached him and offered to carry those buckets for him, since he looked so tired. And he responded by ordering her to escape because he might tear her apart! "Look how the others are walking nicely, and I am completely wet. I cannot carry this water all the time!" Waking up, the woman went and confessed to a priest. The priest told her to stop crying, immediately. (LTRF cd 204/22/)⁹

However, if the deceased appeared in dreams of their own accord, members of traditional society interpreted this as meaning that they required something: the living had to take action to ease the fate of the departed. Such requests were regarded as particularly serious and given priority over the needs and wishes of the living. One of the most vivid examples is another story recorded from the same woman named Zuzana. She dreamt of her deceased acquaintance. She talked to him in her dream, although she was aware (while still dreaming!) that he had passed away. She asked him what he wanted. He responded by asking her to order a Mass for him, and moreover, to pay 30 rubles for the Mass (much more than usual). Zuzana commented that her monthly salary at that

⁸ On the contrary, children were expected to grieve and mourn for their deceased parents, as it was believed that children's tears helped their souls in purgatory (Marcinkevičienė, 1997: 21).

⁹ Ágnes Hesz describes similar prohibitions of prolonged or ostentatious grieving existing also in Hungarian culture; according to her, dream narratives of this kind were used with normative intent (2012: 144).

time was only 70 rubles. *“I do not part with my money quite so easily!”* she remarked, continuing to describe how she tried to negotiate the price in her dream, advising the deceased person to turn to his former girlfriend instead, and so on. When she woke up and told her brother, he ordered her to take the requested sum to the church, as *“you cannot play games with the departed!”* (LTRF md 135/33/). This story is echoed by another, recorded from Aniceta, an 80-year-old woman, who told us in 2006 about a dream in which she encountered her deceased friend, who asked her to remind his parents that they still had not paid a certain woman for her services. *“Aniceta, I am now dead”*, said her friend in the dream. Afterwards, she wrote a letter to his parents, the debt was paid, and then she dreamt of him again. *“Aniceta, I am now happy thanks to you!”* he proclaimed (LTRF md 125/13/).

Sometimes, the request to set things right might be conveyed in a dream even before the burial, as in the following example:

A good acquaintance of mine received a message late in the evening, informing her that her uncle, to whom she was very close, had passed away. That same night she dreamt her uncle asking her to help, since he had been laid in the coffin dressed in a jacket that was torn at the back, and he could not appear at the Last Judgement in such attire. The following morning, the girl went to her deceased uncle's house and told his wife about her dream. The woman shook her head in anguish, lamenting: “Oh, what have we done? What have we done?” Apparently, her husband's body had become so swollen before his death that it seemed impossible to put his jacket on properly. Thus, they had cut the jacket at the back and laid him in the coffin, hoping it would be ok. However, after this cry for help from the deceased, the family changed their minds and bought him another jacket, so he could await the Last Judgement properly dressed. (LTR 7672/7/)

The dream narrative conveyed by a close family member may also be regarded as a parental behest to their children. For example, a woman from the town of Rietavas (in Samogitia) described how her parents had taken care of the local cemetery during their lifetime. In addition, her mother used to organise the singing of traditional religious hymns on All Souls' Day and several other annual occasions dedicated to the souls of the deceased – particularly those who were no longer remembered. However, one year she failed to fulfil this obligation. Then her mother had a dream in which the deceased reproached her: *“Domicelė, we expected a feast, but you did not organise it for us!”* (LTRF cd 527/6/). Afterwards, her mother dutifully organised the singing and her daughter took over caring for the cemetery after her parents passed away. Having narrated the story, she claimed she could no longer imagine her life without these activities (Ivanauskaitė-Šeibutienė, 2016: 124).

In the dream narratives recorded from people born in the beginning of the 20th century and predominantly adhering to a traditional worldview, the dead are endowed with special agency: they affect the behaviour of the living, frequently inducing them to

take certain actions. Yet these actions are almost exclusively directed at the deceased, and their aim is to improve the fate of the departed. According to the narrators, the most important thing was to decipher what the deceased required, if the request was not explicitly stated in the dream. For members of traditional society, paying for a Mass (or just offering prayers) was a universal solution in such cases; this applied even if a deceased relative demanded something, such as an item of clothing to be returned (LTR 7582/138/) or something similar. As an informant who was born in the Šalčininkai region of Eastern Lithuania in 1915 stated: “The soul does not require food. The soul only requires prayers” (Marcinkevičienė, 1997: 25). Another informant born in Southern Lithuania in 1911, offered this story:

My mother paid for a Mass when our father died. And her sister-in-law had also been dead for some time. So my mother dreamt of her sister-in-law. She saw her sitting by the barn, on the logs brought there by our deceased father. My mother asked her [in the dream]: “Agula, do you know that Petras is dead?” Her sister-in-law replied: “Sure, I know!” And then she went to the cowshed to check on her animals... Afterwards, my mother asked her: “Agula, does it really help the souls if Masses are offered for them?” “Of course, it does, Vincula! Look, when the priest held the Mass for Petras, he also asked [the congregation] to pray for all the family members. This not only helped Petras, but we were all released from the cold. Now we are all happy!” (Marcinkevičienė, 1997: 25)

Apparently, offering prayers and fulfilling other requests of the deceased, conveyed through dreams, were regarded by members of traditional society as matters of utmost importance. Traditional culture provided the means and interpretative codes for deciphering these requests, while dream narratives – similarly to other folklore texts, such as folk belief legends and memorates – functioned as culturally established mechanisms for ensuring the continuity of this tradition.

DREAMING OF THE DEAD IN TIMES OF CRISIS: THE PERSISTENT CONNECTION

Connections with departed family members, members of the community, or just friends and close ones are typically experienced most intensely – and may even be actively sought – in times of crisis or when major difficulties arise. This part of the article examines such situations and the dream narratives related to them in more detail.

Traditionally, the deceased were believed to maintain connections with the living. These connections were supposed to function in both directions – the deceased could also be expected to offer help, solace, or advice and warnings. These ties would become especially relevant whenever a person felt lost, powerless or faced insurmountable difficulties. For instance, deceased mothers were believed to maintain particularly close

connections with their surviving children, helping the orphans through various difficulties. Informants would promptly conclude such stories by remarking that “motherly love is stronger than death”.

I have often heard that deceased mothers visit their children at night. When my aunt Truskienė died, she left behind her 11-year-old son and two small daughters, aged six and three. /.../ During her funeral, the girls sat by the stove, crying. People were singing hymns and the girls kept lamenting: “Oh, where is our mummy? Who will care for us, who will dress us?” This is how they cried. However, several days later, my elder sister was leaving and she decided to say goodbye to Bronytė, one of the deceased woman’s daughters. And the girl was sleeping in her late mother’s bed. So my sister went in and stopped dead in her tracks. Afterwards, she told me: “I saw it clearly. It was Truskienė’s face. She even had the same scarf on her head. And she was lying close to Bronytė, they were both cuddled together. And Bronytė was sleeping peacefully.” It was still very early in the morning. (Marcinkevičienė, 1997: 25)

In this case it is not clear “whether it is a dreaming experience or a vision similar to dreaming” (Đorđević Belić, 2021: 193) but it clearly illustrates the traditional attitude towards the bonds that were believed to exist between a mother and her child. These bonds were believed to be so strong that deceased mothers could allegedly reach out to their orphaned children not only in dreams, but also in visions or in “real life” to soothe and help them. However, the last sentence of the story, indicating that the described experience took place “very early in the morning”, suggests that we might be dealing here with the liminal state between sleep and wakefulness, as experienced by the “observer”. Various memorable encounters and uncanny experiences are believed to be especially frequent in such liminal states of consciousness, when the person is not yet fully asleep, or not fully awake. The informants usually describe these situations as “I was lying in bed, but had not yet fallen asleep”.¹⁰ The same applies to certain particularly intense situations that verge on the boundary between life and death, such as childbirth. Here is another narrative:

When my mother died, I was just one year old. I don’t even know what she was like. I wanted so much to see her – at least in a dream. And I saw her just once, before giving birth to [my son] Petrusis. We still lived in the old house then. I was in labour, and it was so hard, I thought I was not going to pull through. Then I saw a woman approaching. She had a white scarf on her head and was dressed in a grey coat. She did not come close, so I was unable to see her face. She stood sideways to me and said she

¹⁰ Psychologists refer to such altered mental states that exist between wakefulness and sleep as “threshold consciousness” and consider them especially fertile ground for creativity and problem-solving (Liestner, 2025).

was my mummy. “I’ve come to make your bed”, she said. I can still hear her voice. But she did not say anything else, and I never saw her again. (Marcinkevičienė, 1997: 25)

Dreaming and dream narratives, as shown by researchers in the fields of history and cultural anthropology, play an important role not only in times of personal crisis, but also during periods of social upheaval and political cataclysm, when entire communities and even states find themselves in danger. Thus, prophetic dreams involving the dead are often the subject of narratives by Lithuanian freedom fighters, political prisoners, deportees and their relatives who opposed Stalin’s regime in the 1940s and 1950s and frequently became its victims, being tortured, imprisoned or deported. According to the historian Rokas Sinkevičius, who examined these dream narratives in detail, such dreams were usually perceived and described as predicting significant changes in the dreamer’s situation, or political changes in general, predicting the death of people who were close to them, warning dreamers of imminent danger and thus saving their lives, or inspiring faith. Such dreams could often become recurrent, guiding dreamers throughout their entire lives (Sinkevičius, 2014b: 80). In general, dreaming of dead family members in such dramatic circumstances was considered a bad sign, foretelling a person’s death. Some dreams even conveyed very specific information concerning the deaths of dreamers’ family members, particularly their parents (Sinkevičius, 2014b: 85–87). According to the researcher, dream narratives concerning death in the memoirs of Lithuanian freedom fighters generally adhere to centuries-old traditions, customs and beliefs. Many narratives employ images directly associated with funeral rituals (such as coffins, tombstones, funeral hymns, etc.) or metaphorical symbols (such as broken trees). The deceased persons appearing in the dreams of partisans are described as looking very vivid and behaving as if they were alive; they are the agents driving the dream’s action. The behaviour of the deceased persons in dreams is usually interpreted by the narrators in the context of traditionally defined meanings: they might ask the dreamer to come closer or to follow them, or conversely push them away. Notably, such dream narratives usually indicate a close connection between the content of the dream and the dreamer’s physical and mental state (stress, exhaustion and suffering), as well as their emotional situation, such as feelings of powerlessness in the face of unrestrained military aggression or reliance on brothers in arms (Sinkevičius, 2014a: 90).

Another peculiar case, exhaustively analysed by the Lithuanian folklore and mythology scholar Daiva Vaitkevičienė, involves the guidance and prophetic dreams reported by relatives of deportees who travelled to Siberia in the late 1980s to retrieve the remains of their deceased family members and rebury them in their native soil.¹¹ Although these events took place at the end of the 20th century, the associated dream narratives are

¹¹ This enterprise – comprising numerous individual and organised expeditions undertaken by Lithuanians shortly before the restoration of Lithuanian independence, who travelled to Siberia, Kazakhstan and other places to which their family members had been deported by the Soviet regime in the 1940s, in order to retrieve the remains of the deceased and bring them home – is unparalleled and testifies to an exceptionally close bond between the living and the dead that is deeply rooted in the Lithuanian culture and social life.

notably traditional: they are deeply rooted in a mythical worldview and employ symbolic imagery characteristic of loss, separation and funerary practices. The image of the deceased is certainly the chief focus of these narratives; notably, even the journey itself can be inspired by the appearance of the deceased in a dream.

Before making the trip to bring back remains, I had a dream. /.../ one night I dreamt that I'm standing in a doorway, it is incredibly bright, and my mother is spreading a white tablecloth on a long narrow table, spreading it out with her hands. And I'm standing in the doorway and I say: "Mother, why are you doing that, why is it necessary?" And she is just laying and evening that tablecloth, and she then places one bouquet on the table, and then another. And those bouquets are just sticks with some dried black berries on them. She places the bouquets on the table in vases, at a bit of a slant, and says: "I just need to!" And then she disappears.

I thought and thought about that dream, and finally came to the conclusion that she wanted us to go and bring them – my parents – back. And that the trip would be successful, because she anticipated everything, she knew, she smoothed things out for us. And those dried berries, those bouquets – that was their graves. The bouquets were at a slant because it hadn't been possible to bury my parents side by side. My father lay about five or six meters away from her, at an angle. /.../ Those sticks were their old graves, the dried berries – old tears.¹² (Vaitkevičienė, 2020: 73)

A common motif in such dreams is of the dead complaining that they are hungry or cold. In traditional dream narratives, as already discussed above, these kinds of images mean that the dead are asking for an offering (that a Mass be held in their memory). However, people dreaming of loved ones buried in Siberia used to interpret such complaints as the dead asking to be brought home (Vaitkevičienė, 2020: 74). The journeys subsequently undertaken involved considerable physical and emotional stress, as people encountered various hardships: long distances covered on foot in harsh weather, hostility from the locals, the impossible task of locating long-abandoned graves, etc. However, many of them recounted significant dreams that helped and guided them along the way.

Dreams do not only urge people to undertake challenging journeys; the dead can also help to locate graves. One such unusual story was told in a 1990 issue of the newspaper *Tremtinys*. In 1989 Stasys Tolvaiša and his wife Veronika, a couple from the city of Panevėžys, travelled to the town of Mina, in Krasnoyarsk region, to bring back the remains of Veronika's mother, Mrs. Dambrauskienė, and Veronika's brothers Bronius and Romualdas. Because, upon leaving Siberia, they had made a detailed plan of the cemetery, they found Veronika's mother's and Romualdas's graves easily.

¹² Here and further, the dream narratives quoted from D. Vaitkevičienė's study are translated by Karla Gruodis.

But where Bronius's grave should have been they found a fresh mound and a new cross with a different name, and there was no sign of the original grave. After a few days of fruitless searching, Bronius appeared to his sister in a dream and said: "Why are you looking for me in the wrong place? On the first day that you were looking, three tree stumps away there was a crow that kept squawking. You even remarked upon it. Following the plan, carefully measure the distance from those stumps and you will find where I am buried." When they measured one more time, Bronius's relatives discovered that his grave was right next to the new one. "It's sometimes hard to imagine how the dead are nearby and can help us," writes the article's author at the end of the text. (Vaitkevičienė, 2020: 75–76)

Again, as concluded by the researcher, these journeys and the repatriation of remains may be interpreted as the continuation and completion of previously unfinished funeral rituals. They fully align with traditional dream narratives. Moreover, "the repatriation of deportee remains to Lithuania not only completes the deceased person's journey: it also liberates their relatives from the burden they felt until their dead relation's final, deathbed wish of returning to their homeland was fulfilled" (Vaitkevičienė, 2020: 83).

In general, dreaming of the dead during stressful or difficult times in life is not only frequent, but such dreams are perceived as particularly important, meaningful and memorable: "the situation in life brings up the dream, and the dream speaks about life and affects it" (Lovčikienė, 2019: 49). In such instances, the existence of a community "between the worlds of living and the dead people who need each other" (Kiliánová, 2010: 7) is especially strongly felt. It may be observed that such dream narratives still use traditional codes and images; however, their meanings may be interpreted differently, and the narrators testify to a somewhat altered situation: not only do the living attend to the needs and requests of the deceased, but the deceased may also be seen as helping and guiding the living.

(POST)MODERN VIEWS OF DEATH AND DYING

The dream narratives recorded from informants born around the middle of the 20th century or later (during the Soviet era) testify to a certain change that became more obvious towards the end of the century. This change is associated with the general transformation of views and attitudes towards death, dying and funerary practices (see Žičkienė, 2004).

Above all, narrators recounting their dreams describe certain difficulties in deciphering messages from the deceased, or an inability to fulfil their requests.

After the death of my godparents, I dreamt my godmother was chasing me and asking me to come to her. I was so scared of this dream and felt upset upon waking up. I wondered what I was supposed to do. The graves were well tended and a monument had already been erected. However,

it had not yet been blessed. So I went over and arranged for the blessing; afterwards, I had no more dreams like that. Usually, whenever I dream of the deceased, I just go to the cemetery and light a candle. (LTR 7672/86/)

Right after my mum's funeral I dreamt of her sitting up in her coffin, reaching up to me and complaining that her shoes were hurting her feet: "Daughter, dear, my shoes are so tight! Please take them off!" I remember being so worried in my dream, not able to figure out how to help my mother. I woke up still feeling worried, and this dream tormented me for quite a while. (LTR 7672/265/)

The latter dream, related by a woman born in 1956, indicates her inability to react to the situation in a way suggested by the traditional worldview. The woman is still aware of the traditional code of behaviour that such a dream implies (the necessity of addressing the needs of the departed), but she is no longer sure how to fulfil it. Moreover, the emphasis in describing the after-effects of this disturbing dream has already shifted to the dreamer, who repeatedly asserts that *she* felt worried and tormented. Thus, it is no longer the deceased who is at the centre of the narrative, but rather the living and dreaming individual. This marks an important shift that may be explained by a number of factors. Ethnologist Regina Irena Merkienė wrote:

Analysis of the ethnocultural expression of death-related images in modern society enables researchers to highlight the interactions between religion and magic, religious practices and esoterica, beliefs and sorcery, as well as establishing the etic interrelationships existing in ethnic and religious communities, their aesthetic forms, moral obligations and their development in the course of social modernisation and contacts with atheisation. (Merkienė, 2002: 227)

This scholar studied the idea of souls in the popular worldview of Lithuanians living in southeastern Latvia at the end of the 20th century. The majority of her informants were born between the 1920s and the late 1950s. The views of these people were shaped during the interwar period and the first post-war decades, subsequently subjected to the pressure of the Soviet regime's policies of total atheisation, and, after 1990, the influx of esoteric literature. However, their ideas regarding communication with the dead were still grounded in folklore heritage and their personal experiences (e.g. observation of dying family members). The majority asserted that the dying can see the souls of their departed relatives; yet some also mentioned that they can see a "bright light", which should be considered a modern innovation. Nevertheless, none of the informants would venture to deny the possibility of communication with the dead altogether. On the other hand, very few people still believed that the souls of the deceased could appear among the living; most of them believed they appeared in dreams, or on some special occasions (Merkienė, 2002: 228–232). Thus, Merkienė has been able to grasp in her research the

process of shifting attitudes that began in the second half of the 20th century and subsequently gained momentum.

The psychosociologist Audronė Daraškevičienė, who studied popular perceptions of the afterlife in the Samogitian region of Lithuania, also described a considerable rupture in the worldview and notions of the afterlife that occurred during the 20th century. In her study, she makes a clear distinction between the views of the generation born at the beginning of the 20th century, which she calls the *interwar generation*, and those of people born and raised during the Soviet period, whose views were affected by the ideological, philosophical and social factors, values and realities of this period, whom she refers to as the *post-Soviet generation* (Daraškevičienė, 2009: 164). In her opinion, the popular images related to death and the afterlife, which were initially rather “material” and “earthbound”, have generally become much more abstract and less attached to the world of the living. By the end of the 20th century, the soul of the deceased was no longer perceived as capable of appearing in a visible or palpable form (making noises, etc.). The post-Soviet generation regards visions of the dead as the result of the observer’s mental activity. The soul can no longer retain any physical features of the deceased person’s body, and it is therefore impossible to describe what it looks like. The dead body and its features are no longer regarded as a means of communication employed by the soul; the soul is no longer believed to have any relation to the body. This is one reason, among others, why the bodies of unbaptised individuals, or the victims of suicides, can be buried in consecrated cemetery plots. The essential changes in worldview across these generations can be summarised in the following scheme:

Interwar (traditional) generation	Post-Soviet (modern) generation
The soul can be visible, palpable, it can make noises	It is impossible to see or feel the soul of the deceased
The dead can appear of their own accord	Visions of the dead are the result of the viewer’s mental state / activity
The soul retains the form, dress and other attributes of the body	The soul has no earthly attributes and is immaterial; it cannot be described
The body of the deceased may signal its state and intentions, i.e. an open eye may indicate that the deceased intends to take somebody else with them	This idea is totally absent; the soul is considered unrelated to the body of the deceased
Caring for graves is important for the souls	Souls pay no attention to their graves; the living care for them due to different considerations of their own
The souls of the dead can visit the living in their dreams	The souls of the dead can visit the living in their dreams, but this is a result of the dreamer’s mental activity
The relationship with the dead is perceived as mutual	The relationship with the dead is perceived as one-directional

Table 1: Comparison of worldviews between the interwar and post-Soviet generations of Samogitians (Compiled according to Daraškevičienė, 2009)

As we can see, the notion that the deceased can visit the living in their dreams is especially persistent and remained very much alive even at the end of the 20th century (and presumably continues to be so today). However, its interpretation is different. Professor Merkienė conducted a small survey among her university students in 1997, inquiring whether they considered communication with their dead relatives possible. According to her findings, most of the young respondents claimed to have felt some kind of connection with the dead, who could help in difficult situations and offer advice on solving problems (Žičkienė, 2004: 82). The post-Soviet generation still believes it is possible that deceased persons can appear in their dreams, or even ask for something, give advice, etc. However, the prevailing attitude is that such experiences are merely products of the dreamer's mental activity rather than manifestations of the deceased. According to the informants, such dreams can signify the surviving person's sense of guilt, or a close relationship to the departed that still affects us emotionally. Warnings delivered by the deceased are also considered to be messages originating from one's own subconscious:

If you dream of a deceased person, you start thinking that they probably need something. But it's just your belief. Probably [in this case] the living person feels guilty for not having done something.

Dreaming of someone close to you, even if they are deceased, is only natural. Everything we experience in life has an impact on our subconscious. If a deceased person warns you in a dream, this means that your own common sense is alerting you. Everything has a material explanation! (Daraškevičienė, 2009: 170)

The “materialism” expressed by this informant may be regarded as echoing the “scientific” materialist ideology promoted by the Soviet regime, which inevitably took root in the popular worldview. Along with the state-promoted atheism, it significantly affected popular perceptions in the second half of the 20th century, including attitudes towards dreams. However, the effect was ambivalent as the regime and the ideology it imposed were strongly opposed by the majority of the population. The preservation of traditional culture was regarded by many as a form of resistance. Besides, as noted by Gabriela Kiliánová who is studying a similar situation in Slovakia, under the totalitarian regime “many issues including death and dying were taboo, whereas conservative and traditional phenomena, attitudes, and values were supported in mundane culture” (2010: 8). The same is largely true in the case of Lithuania, where the attempts by the governing regime to control even the most private spheres of human life, such as rituals and notions related to death and funerals, frequently backfired, producing results quite contrary to those intended (Putinaitė, 2025).

After the collapse of the Soviet regime in 1991, Lithuania was exposed to multiple cultural tendencies associated with globalisation, including diverse trends and teachings of New Age spirituality. Yet the multiplicity and diversity of these cultural trends and spiritual teachings arguably prevented the emergence of any coherent and universal worldview, although they introduced a range of miscellaneous ideas that sometimes feature in

dream narratives, such as seeing a bright light at the end of a tunnel or beliefs in reincarnation. Thus, researchers analysing the magical practices and beliefs of contemporary Lithuanian students note the extremely strong influence of “mass culture”. Numerous beliefs and “omens” upheld by Lithuanian students seem quite universal and are also found in many other countries. However, when compared with traditional Lithuanian culture, these beliefs and superstitions held by students still display “a certain tendency to continue the tradition. Nevertheless, this continuation is usually adapted to special individual needs and circumstances” (Savickaitė, 2010: 34). The key word here is perhaps “individual”, since, in line with popular tendencies in psychology – particularly the popularisation of personal psychotherapy, which relies heavily on dream analysis – dreams are increasingly regarded as reflections of an individual’s unique mental world and, therefore, as effective tools of psychotherapy. Jungian psychoanalyst Elona Lovčikienė collected a considerable number of “great dreams” experienced by prominent Lithuanian personalities – including historical leaders, artists and freedom fighters. She analyses them from the perspectives of Jungian analytical psychology and James Hillman’s archetypal psychology (Lovčikienė, 2019: 58). She emphasises the significant role these dreams may have played in the subsequent lives of the dreamers and, occasionally also in Lithuanian history. However, it is noteworthy that dreamers, as a rule, tend to interpret their oneiric visions as experiences centred exclusively on their own lives that are intended to help resolve personal problems or critical issues. For example, the poet Birutė Baltrušaitytė recounted having dreamt in 1990 of Herkus Mantas (Henrich Monte, or Monts in German), the leader of the 13th century Prussian uprising. According to Baltrušaitytė, the dream was probably inspired by her visit to historical sites associated with the uprising. She concluded her account of the dream as follows: “Upon waking up, I really thought this had not happened by chance, that I had indeed dreamt of Herkus Mantas, and he seemed so real; it was probably a sign that I had to continue writing – that’s why he appeared to me” (see Lovčikienė, 2019: 54). In this way, agency within the narrative is invested entirely in the dreamer, while the figure of the deceased seen in the dream serves merely as a means of assisting the living individual in getting on with their life.

Unfortunately, the lack of relevant research material in this field does not allow these tendencies to be assessed more accurately. The existing research only enables us to acknowledge that for the post-Soviet generation, the relationship with the deceased is still perceived as continuing to exist, yet its interpretation – including within dream narratives – is markedly ambivalent and diverse. Nevertheless, a certain shift in agency seems to have taken place: in dream narratives and especially in their interpretation, the role of the dreaming individual acquires considerable prominence in comparison with the deceased person they are dreaming about.

CONCLUSION

Dream narratives in both traditional and (post)modern societies function as folklore texts: they are composed, interpreted and disseminated similarly to other forms of folklore. The deceased assume a particularly important role in these narratives, as, despite all the

ideological and cultural changes of the 20th century, people continue to believe in the possibility of communicating with the deceased in dreams. However, in any historical period, this communication is interpreted in line with the prevailing ideas and worldviews. In traditional society, which preserves a rich corpus of beliefs associated with the after-life – including the existence of the soul and its ability to manifest itself in the lives of the living – the focus is on community with the deceased and on attending to their needs through means prescribed by the belief system. In modern and especially postmodern society, characterised by pronounced individualism, the interpretation of dreams and their narratives tends to concentrate on the effects that these dreams have on the dreamer's mental state. This shift in agency seems very interesting and could be quite revealing in terms of a broader cultural and anthropological perspective; however, it still requires much more detailed research and attention from folklorists.

STATEMENT ON RESEARCH DATA MANAGEMENT

The article is based on archival sources (Lithuanian Folklore Archives at the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore), which I cite in the references below.

REFERENCES

- Arvidsson, Alf. 2024. Coming to Terms with Dreams in the Early Nineteenth Century. *Arv: Nordic Yearbook of Folklore* 80: 49–72. DOI: 10.61897/arv.v80i.44668.
- Assmann, Jan. 2006. *Religion and Cultural Memory*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Būgienė, Lina. 2007. Pasakojamoji tautosaka skirtingų kartų žemaičių lūpose: kelios pastabos apie Viekšnių apylinkių pasakojimus. *Tautosakos darbai* 33: 56–71.
- Būgienė, Lina. 2012. Pasaulio refleksija autobiografiniuose vyrų ir moterų pasakojimuose. In *Homo narrans: folklorinė atmintis iš arti*, ed. Bronė Stundžienė, 69–95. Vilnius: Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos institutas.
- Būgienė, Lina. 2017. Lithuanian Folkloristics during the Late Soviet and Post-Soviet Periods: Changes and Challenges. In *Mapping the History of Folklore Studies: Centers, Borderlands and Shared Spaces*, eds. Dace Bula and Sandis Laime, 29–42. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Daraškevičienė, Audronė. 2009. Populiarių pomirtinio gyvenimo vaizdinių kaita XX a. Žemaitijoje. *Tautosakos darbai* 37: 162–178.
- Đorđević Belić, Smiljana. 2021. The Dreams about the Deceased as Form of Communication with the Otherworldly. In *Disenchantment, Re-Enchantment and Folklore Genres*, eds. Nemanja Radulović and Smiljana Đorđević Belić, 185–214. Belgrade: Institute for Literature and Arts.
- Harrison, Juliette Grace. 2009. *Cultural Memory and Imagination: Dreams and Dreaming in the Roman Empire 31 BC – AD 200*. PhD thesis (University of Birmingham). <https://etheses.bham.ac.uk/id/eprint/469/1/Harrison09PhD.pdf> (accessed 24.9.2025).
- Hasan-Rokem, Galit. 1999. Communication with the Dead in Jewish Dream Culture. In *Dream Cultures: Explorations in the Comparative History of Dreaming*, eds. David Shulman and Guy G. Stroumsa, 213–232. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.

- Hesz, Ágnes. 2012. Hidden Messages: Dream Narratives about the Dead as Indirect Communication. In *Vernacular Religion in Everyday Life: Expressions of Belief*, eds. Marion Bowman and Ūlo Valk, 140–160. London: Equinox Publishing.
- Ivanauskaitė, Vita. 2007. Žemaičių sapnai: tekstų folkloriškumas ir kontekstų reikšmė. *Tautosakos darbai* 34: 79–96.
- Ivanauskaitė-Šeibutienė, Vita. 2010. Lemtingi pasimatymai sapnuose: oneirinės patirtys advento-Kalėdų ciklo tikėjimuose. *Tautosakos darbai* 40: 42–65.
- Ivanauskaitė-Šeibutienė, Vita. 2011. Mirusiųjų sapnavimas katalikiškuose tikėjimo patirčių ir liudijimų kontekstuose. *Tautosakos darbai* 42: 56–77.
- Ivanauskaitė-Šeibutienė, Vita. 2012. Sapno pasakojimas kaip folklorinis naratyvas. In *Homo narrans: folklorinė atmintis iš arti*, ed. Bronė Stundžienė, 178–217. Vilnius: Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos institutas.
- Ivanauskaitė-Šeibutienė, Vita. 2014. Folklorinė sapno kalba: oneiriniai naratyvai bendruomeninėje komunikacijoje. *Tautosakos darbai* 48: 53–70.
- Ivanauskaitė-Šeibutienė, Vita. 2016. Susapnuota bendrystė: namiškių ryšiai tradiciniuose sapnų pasakojimuose. *Tautosakos darbai* 51: 111–127.
- Ivanauskaitė-Šeibutienė, Vita. 2022. Rūpesčio ir paguodos sapnai: laidotuvių apeigų refleksijos sapnų pasakojimuose. *Tautosakos darbai* 63: 11–34. DOI: 10.51554/TD.22.63.01.
- Järvinen, Irma-Riitta and Senni Timonen. 1992. Memorial Rituals and Dreams in a Karelian Village. *Byzantium and the North* 6: 51–71.
- Kaivola-Bregenhøj, Annikki. 1993. Dreams as Folklore. *Fabula* 34 (3-4): 211–224. DOI: 10.1515/fabl.1993.34.3-4.211.
- Kaivola-Bregenhøj, Annikki and Ulf Palmenfelt, eds. 1992. *Drömmar och kultur. Drömböcker och drömtolkning*. Stockholm: Carlssons.
- Kiliánová, Gabriela. 2010. Dreams as Communication Method between the Living and the Dead: Ethnographic Case Study from Slovakia. *Traditiones* 39 (2): 7–23. DOI: 10.3986/Traditio2010390201.
- Liester, Mitchell B. 2025. The Drowsy Genius: Dreams and Liminal States. *Psychology Today*, 28 May. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-leading-edge/202505/the-drowsy-genius-dreams-and-liminal-states> (accessed 25.9.2025).
- Lovčikienė, Elona. 2019. Didieji sapnai Lietuvos asmenybių dienoraščiuose ir prisiminimuose. *Būdas* 2 (185): 49–58.
- LTR – Lietuvių tautosakos rankraštynas Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos institute [The Lithuanian Folklore Archives of the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore].
- LTRF – Lietuvių tautosakos rankraštyno fonoteka Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos institute [The Collection of Sound Recordings at the Lithuanian Folklore Archives of the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore].
- Marcinkevičienė, Nijolė. 1997. Žmonės – apie mirtį ir pomirtinį gyvenimą. *Liaudies kultūra* 5: 19–27.
- Marcinkevičienė, Nijolė. 1998. *Pavarėnis*. Vilnius: Lietuvos liaudies kultūros centras.
- Merkienė, Irena Regina. 2002. Vėlės XX a. pabaigos pasaulėjautoje: Pietryčių Latvijos lietuvių memoratai. *Darbai ir dienos* 31: 227–238.
- Milne, Louise S. 2019. One, Two, Many: Dream-Culture, Charms and Nightmares. In *Charms and Charming. Studies on Magic in Everyday Life*, ed. Éva Pócs, 129–167. Ljubljana: Institute of Slovenian Ethnology.
- Nebzhegovska, Stanislava. 1994. Sonnik kak zhanr pol'skogo fol'klora. *Slavjanovedenie* 5: 67–74.

- Putinaitė, Nerija. 2025. *Mirties politika sovietinėje Lietuvoje: prasmės, ritualai, simboliai, jausmai*. Vilnius: Naujasis židinys-Aidai.
- Račiūnaitė, Rasa. 1997. Perėjimo ritualai gimtųjų, vestuvių ir laidotuvių papročiuose. *Liaudies kultūra* 5: 10–12.
- Raufman, Ravit. 2008. Folkloristic Methods in Dreams Interpretation. *Funzione Gamma* 21 (2): 18–37.
- Safronov, Yevgeny V. 2016. *Snovideniya v tradicionnoj kulture*. Moskva: Labirint.
- Savickaitė, Eglė. 2010. Studentų prietariai: tradicijos tęstinumas ir masinės kultūros įtaka. *Liaudies kultūra* 2: 30–35.
- Sinkevičius, Rokas. 2014a. Mirtį pranašaujantys sapnai partizanų ir jų artimųjų atsiminimuose. *Istorija* 93 (1): 79–94.
- Sinkevičius, Rokas. 2014b. Pranašiški sapnai partizanų, politinių kalinių ir tremtinių prisiminimuose. *Istorija* 94 (2): 78–100.
- Stark, Laura, Irma-Riitta Järvinen, Senni Timonen and Terhi Utriainen. 1996. Constructing the Moral Community: Women's Use of Dream Narratives in a Russian-Orthodox Karelian Village. In *The Literature of Nationalism. Studies in Russia and East Europe*, ed. Robert B. Pynsent, 247–274. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Stundžienė, Bronė. 2008. Folkloras kaip naujas kultūrinis tekstas. *Tautosakos darbai* 35: 25–37.
- Tolstoy, Nikita I. 1993. Slavianskie narodnie tolkovaniya snov i ih mifologicheskaya osnova. In *Son – semioticheskoe okno: snovidenie i sobytie, snovidenie i iskusstvo, snovidenie i tekst*, eds. Irina E. Danilova and Dmitrij J. Molok, 80–93. Moskva: Gosudarstvennyj muzej izobrazitel'nyh iskusstv im. A. S. Pushkina.
- Vaitkevičienė, Daiva. 2020. The Dead Want to Come Home: Stories about the Repatriation of Siberian Deportee Remains to Lithuania. In *The Storytelling Human: Lithuanian Folk Tradition Today*, ed. Lina Būgienė, 52–87. Boston: Academic Studies Press.
- Virtanen, Leea. 1989. Dream-Telling Today. In *Studies in Oral Narrative*, ed. Anna-Leena Siikala, 137–148. Helsinki: SKS.
- Višinskaitė, Asta. 2007. *Lietuvių liaudies sapnų aiškinimai ir pasakojimai apie sapnus: sandara, funkcionavimo specifika, reikšmės*. PhD thesis (University of Vytautas Magnus). Kaunas: Vytauto Didžiojo universitetas, Lietuvos istorijos institutas.
- Žičkienė, Aušra. 2004. Trijų muzikinės kultūros sluoksnių sandūra lietuvių mirusiųjų pagerbimo apeigose. *Tautosakos darbai* 20 (27): 75–83.

MIRUSIŲJŲ VEIKIMAS SAPNŲ PASAKOJIMUOSE: NUO TRADICINĖS KULTŪROS IKI (POST)MODERNIŲ PERSPEKTYVŲ

Straipsnis skiriamas mirusiųjų agentiškamui, atspindimam sapnų pasakojimų, aptarti. Tyrimo objektas – folkloro lauko tyrimų metu skirtinguose Lietuvos regionuose užrašyta medžiaga, taip pat archyviniai rinkiniai ir tyrėjų paskelbti duomenys. Laikomasi pastaraisiais dešimtmečiais folkloristikoje įtvirtinto požiūrio į sapno pasakojimą kaip į folklorinį tekstą, kuriame atsispindi ne vien unikali individualaus

sapno patirtis, bet ir kultūrinė bendruomenės tapatybė. Ypatingas dėmesys skiriamas sapnams apie mirusiuosius, užrašytiems iš skirtingų kartų pateikėjų, stengiantis užčiuopti, kaip skiriasi tradicinės bendruomenės ir (post)modernaus pasaulėvaizdžio nulemtas mirusiųjų vaidmens suvokimas sapno kontekste.

Pirmiausia straipsnyje aptariamas glaudus gyvųjų ir mirusiųjų ryšys tradicinės kultūros suformuotuose sapno pasakojimuose, kur mirusiųjų pasirodymas sapne dažniausiai reiškia netinkamai ar ne iki galo atliktas laidojimo apeigas, dėl ko mirusysis negali visiškai sėkmingai pereiti į anapusinį pasaulį. Mirusiųjų prašymai sapnuose gyvųjų suvokiami kaip privalomi (paprastai tikima, kad mirusysis pageidauja maldos ar mišių), o jų įvykdymas – kaip galintis esmingai palengvinti mirusiojo būvį. Dažnai sapnų apie mirusiuosius pasakojimai būna normatyvinio pobūdžio: pavyzdžiui, juose nurodoma, koks gyvųjų elgesys laikomas pageidautinu – palankiu mirusiajam. Akcentuojama, kad tradicinės kultūros inspiruoti sapnų pasakojimai, kaip ir kiti folkloriniai tekstai (sakmės ar memoratai), laikytini būdu išsaugoti tradiciją.

Antroje straipsnio dalyje analizuojamas sapnavimas įtemptais asmeninio gyvenimo laikotarpiais ar socialinių, politinių krizių metu. Tokiuose sapnų pasakojimuose mirusieji figūroja kaip patarėjai, pagalbininkai, galintys perspėti, numatyti ateitį ar parodyti kelią gyviesiems. Tokie naratyvai dažnai vartoja tradicinius simbolius ar įvaizdžius, tačiau jų prasmė gali būti suprantama ir kitaip, o mirusieji nebelaikomi vien rūpesčio gavėjais – jų vaidmuo gerokai aktyvesnis.

Galiausiai straipsnyje apžvelgiami XX a. įvykę tradicinio pasaulėvaizdžio pokyčiai, nulemti daugelio veiksnių: sovietinio režimo propaguotos materialistinės pasaulėžiūros, valstybinio ateizmo, taip pat – po Nepriklausomybės atkūrimo Lietuvą užgriuvusios ezoterinės literatūros, skirtingų pakraipų dvasinių mokymų ir kitokių globalizacijos nulemtų įtakų bangos, gerokai pakeitusios taip pat ir mirties bei pomirtinio pasaulio įsivaizdavimą. Ypač didelę įtaką, autorės manymu, šiuo atžvilgiu turėjo jungiškiosios psichologijos populiarizacija, įtvirtinusi sapno, kaip sapnuojančiojo individo dvasios atspindžio, sampratą. Viso to rezultatas, kiek galima užčiuopti, remiantis esamais duomenimis, – ženkliai pakitę gyvųjų ir mirusiųjų vaidmenys, į sapnų ir jų pasakojimų centrą iškeliant sapnuojantįjį, o mirusiuosius paverčiant labiau priemone atsakyti į jam kylančius klausimus. Deja, relevantiškos (post)modernųjų sapnų pasakojimų medžiagos trūkumas neleidžia šiuo atžvilgiu padaryti vienareikšmiškų išvadų, tik išvelgti tam tikras tendencijas, kurios būtų įdomios plačiau patyrinti kultūrinės ir antropologinės raidos kontekste.