

# A Sweet Dream: Analytic Enquiry of a Disguised Tension

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## Abstract:

No doubt, dreaming could always be one of the best parts of sleep, if, according to Freud, it was based only on fulfillment of wishes (1). Nonetheless, it is not constantly so. Cover-ups, which are affected by unconscious mental tricks, like displacement, condensation, adaptable or unprincipled exploitation of daily residues or real incidents, for schematic demonstration of incessant and prohibited erotic or aggressive impulses into allowable demeanor, are totally in service of pulling down cerebral tensions and increasing emotional contentment, whether guardedly or deceptively

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## Introduction

No doubt, dreaming could always be one of the best parts of sleep, if, according to Freud, it was based only on fulfillment of wishes [1]. Nonetheless, it is not constantly so. Cover-ups, which are affected by unconscious mental tricks, like displacement, condensation, adaptable or unprincipled exploitation of daily residues or real incidents, for schematic demonstration of incessant and prohibited erotic or aggressive impulses into allowable demeanor, are totally in service of pulling down cerebral tensions and increasing emotional contentment, whether guardedly or deceptively. But dreams are not the only tool for mental settlement. Similarly, pathological lying, also known as mythomania, pseudologia fantastica or morbid lying, is a chronic behavior characterized by the habitual or compulsive tendency to lie and telling people things you know aren't true, which seems to be more prevalent in narcissistic, histrionic, and antisocial personality disorders, and may leads to clinically significant impairment of functioning in social, occupational, or other areas and may cause marked distress, which poses a risk to the self or others, and occurs for longer than 6 months. Such lies are believable and may have truthful elements, which may continue for a long period of time and are not caused by some immediate pressure, and while they tend to represent the liar positively, the lies have an internal—rather than external—motivation [2-3]. Likewise, in another series of awake fibbers, pleasant misbeliefs, like grandiose delusions (unfounded or inaccurate beliefs that one has special powers, wealth, mission, or identity.) or erotomanic delusions (when you think someone is in love with you but they're not. It may be a person you've never met or they might even be famous, like a politician or an actor) in psychotic or manic cases, all are in the service of aiding mental apparatus to save confidence, forte or survival. Maybe, due to said alike protecting endeavor, some scholars have believed, metaphorically, that while non-psychotic people are dreaming intuitively during the night, psychotic patients are dreaming consciously during the day. Anyhow, in spite of controversial views regarding the value of dream interpretation in modern psychiatry, which is based on descriptive phenomenology, the following case may demonstrate some opposing aspects of dreams between characteristic wish-fulfilment and bewildering worries in the same dreamer, which is a usual subject for insight-oriented

psychotherapists, and may contribute to a better understanding of mentality of people who ask for a more convincing explanations or recommendations.

## Case vignette:

A sixty-eight-year-old lawyer, who had planned recently to become retired and to follow his personal longings, like fishing, hunting and traveling, reported one of his nightly dreams to his counselor, which had occurred last night, just before his next morning session, and had surprised him a lot. He was a widowed man who had lost his wife years ago due to malignancy, and his only daughter, who after graduation had married one of her colleagues, was living far from him. The relationship between father and daughter was mutable due to a series of accusations or rumors regarding her father's violence and extramarital affairs, when her mother was still alive. Her father's accounts and approaches, as well, during the past years, could not convince or ease her to modify her attitude properly re her father's deeds or intents. So, the said loss and current domestic distress decreased his tolerance regarding work-related tensions, which, in spite of his experience and credibility, eventually swayed him to apply for retirement. Similarly, the said mental pressures encouraged him to have some weekly visits with a psychotherapist, for simple counseling and find some problem-solving strategies for dealing with different worries. The aforesaid dream had occurred just before the third session. Furthermore, while the counselor was not a psychoanalyst, psychodynamic psychotherapist or short-term analytic psychotherapist, he had studied a psychodynamic fellowship curriculum. Also, since the client was an educated person, he was not unaware, theoretically, with regard to unconscious mental processes.

## Manifest content of dream:

In a small room with bright beams, he was seated on a sofa. A young girl, who wanted to sit there next to him, sat suddenly and flirtatiously, but painfully due to sensed heaviness and force, on his right limb. After that, she slipped and sat normally next to him. He thought that she was going to be his partner and therefore started a chat with her, which could be a kind of

familiarization. But, before her response, the sleep ended and he woke up in a state of vague joyfulness.

### Analysis of latent content of dream:

As stated by the client during interview, the said girl in the dream was one of his fellow students, during his college years in law school, around fifty years ago, though at that time she was a first-year apprentice and he was a second-year undergraduate. While there was no specific romantic relationship between them, one day, in the reading room, he noticed that she had stared oddly at him, which he attributed to his charm, though it did not repeat again till his completion of training. Moreover, he never saw her again or heard anything regarding her after graduation. He did not even know her name, because, apparently, she was not important to him, though she was a pretty girl. So, if there was no cathexis re her, why had she been selected by the dream-related processes? Also, he could remember that around five years ago he met a law enforcement female agent at a professional conference, who was, phenotypically, to some extent similar to her, but there was no specific chat or affair between them, and he did not see her another time. Similarly, around two years ago, he saw frequently, though for a short time, another female coworker, who could incite some sensual feelings in him, due to her verbal and non-verbal expressions. While she was, also, a bit similar to the said fellow pupil, there was no particular bond between them. Once more, around one year ago, he saw a photo of a stripper on the web, who was very similar to the said female classmate and was, erotically, interesting to him. Now he could remember that the said college student, also, was sexually, not lovingly, eye-catching for him, and she was the subject of a few of his masturbations during adolescence at that time, though it was never limited to her. Therefore, it seems that the physical image of that girl had been, accidentally, repeated during different epochs, which may have enforced, unconsciously, its later influence and appearance in the aforesaid dream. But, ordinarily, all of the said process could not be limited to only that girl, and in reality, there could be many girls with similar reminiscences and analogous appearances, as well. Anyhow, with respect to this question about why this female phenotype has been chosen among a lot of attractive girls in his life, two reasons could be found; firstly, a few days ago, during a random surfing on the web, he had found the picture of a female workmate on the web, with a specific pose and gaze, very similar to the said scene in college. Though she was not of the said phenotype, she was very sexy and attractive, and her posture was amazingly similar to the said classmate. Secondly, the said peer belonged to a specific epoch where usually every young man searches heartily for his missing Cinderella. Therefore, maybe, that fellow pupil was not, erotically, so trivial that he thought beforehand, though, maybe, she was not listed as the only available Cinderella. Thirdly, likewise, a few hours ago, just before sleeping, he had seen some fascinating images of another female classmate in primary school, who was in some way attention-grabbing for him. So, possibly, past experiences, preceding sweethearts and daily residue, including the explicit stance of the said workmate, has stimulated or prepared milieu for a new coupling, based on previous childhood fantasies and youngster's yearnings, which usually never die. But, if so, then why did the dream work avoid his deceased wife's image? Perhaps, because, first, her figure was not phenotypically adaptable to the said epochs and process of selection, and second, he was not ever in real love with her. Thus, though he always admired her as a good wife, and a respectable companion, his wife's image could not substitute, straightforwardly, the image of an erotic schoolmistress. He married his wife thirteen years after graduation and, as said before, he lost her after around ten years. But, if the said college classmate was so erotic for him, why was her sitting near him so erratic and throbbing. He could remember that around sixteen years ago he had visited a stripper in a gentlemen's club, who was seated on his limb, amateurishly, in a style which was very similar to the said similar scene during dreaming. Therefore, the painful maneuver of the said stripper, who was not phenotypically similar to the aforementioned figures, had been isolated from the original figure and displaced to the college's sweetheart. But, why has that painful maneuver been selected, instead of other nice styles of strippers, who may act more

professionally than the said one. Perhaps, because such a coupling could not be without penalty. As mentioned before, he did not want to make his familial relationship with his daughter worse than before, and, consequently, based on his obsessive-compulsive traits and conscientiousness, he had avoided re-coupling; a decision which neither improved her resentment, nor his loneliness. On the other hand, perhaps, he wanted to belittle the said collegian classmate, because she was not devoted to him and did not repeat the same pose, which was very pleasant for him. But then again, what had revived the old memory of the said stripper? Maybe, as said before, the picture of another stripper who was phenotypically similar to his collegian classmate had shaped an association with older experience. The said law enforcement female agent, also, may have formed an ambivalent attitude as regards the said darling, which means that re-coupling is not stress-free. Another provoking factor for the revitalization of the academic milieu in his mentality, also, could include reading of an innovative announcement in the newspaper regarding enactment of some academic courses for related professions.

### Psychodynamic formulation and therapeutic recommendation:

Since the present client was not under deep or intensive analysis by an accredited psychoanalyst, an analytic formulation, including prime defense mechanisms or objects, was not plausible. But the present dream seems to be a classic portrayal of an unconscious conflict between the erotic feelings of an old man, who fears to lose the chance of a real love and partner for ever due to his growing oldness, and impending threats, which could involve his daughters' resentment, fear of an obsessive person regarding endangerment of his sovereignty, renewal of preceding rumors, and risk of another loss, similar to demise of his first wife. Latent content of the said dream, in addition to palpable clues of other dreams, debates and associations, leads to referral of the client to a family therapist, for more relational probe and guidance.

### Conclusion:

Though currently many biologically - oriented psychiatrists and experimental, behavioral or cognitive-behavioral psychotherapists may underestimate dream analysis as a tool for searching for unconscious or subconscious struggles, it may still be a valuable means for monitoring existing ambivalences, anxieties or conflicts. On the other hand, though many critics may believe that such an approach is more a subjective methodology than an objective tactic (pseudoscience), and the analyzer may do that based on personal preferences or inferences, they themselves do not have a better approach, in this regard. Anyhow, the arrangement of the involved elements in the said dream and the client's mindset seems to be more intelligible than throwaway. Moreover, whatever is exposible by analysis of dreams is not undiscoverable by methodical interview, free association, act out, slip or transference, or even simple counseling. Dream analysis is only an additional tool for a more comprehensive investigation, approval of findings, monitoring of transference in client, or monitoring of countertransference in therapist, which may enhance the opportunity of therapeutic sittings and shared salutary objectives [4-9].

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