



Dream interpretation goes back into the mists of history. Shamans (the original healers) drew part of their power from their firsthand knowledge of the spirit world where dreams were said to be born. Sigmund Freud's theory of dreams was an essential part of his division of the mind into the ego, id, and superego. Dreams were the venue where the primitive id could symbolically express the impulses and urges that would be unacceptable to the ego and superego during ordinary (Victorian) waking experience. Along with Freud, many dream interpreters have sought a reliable system of translation of dream symbols. A basement means one thing; a bird something else; your mother's hairbrush a third. Such specific mapping of dream symbols to psychologic issues has never been scientifically validated but continues to play out as a theme in the popular imagination, from *The Wizard of Oz* to *No Country for Old Men*.

Dreams have always fascinated me. At times, I've kept "dream journals" by the bedside, doing my best to capture the fleeting images before the day begins in earnest. My own dreams are frequently amusing and sometimes

startling. My own working theory holds that, although dreams are typically just a mishmash of the waking life's events, they occasionally reach beyond the mundane, and, like great art, invite one to accompany them on a journey of insight and integration.

Most of my working hours as a primary care physician involve the practical facts of human biology: blood pressure, electrolytes, skin lesions, rashes, etc. The power of medical science derives in large part from its huge collection of reliable facts that allow for the predictable therapeutic alteration of pathologic processes. Perhaps, in dreams, my mind seeks a kind of balance to the logic and predictability of medical science by presenting me with absurdity, novelty, and provocation.

Tomorrow morning before jumping out of bed, why don't you too spend a moment and see if your dreams might have brought you a gift. **SDP**

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Early Morning Awakening

The hum of the cars on the freeway
 Old love songs that play in my head
 The voices of friends and of family
 The words of those living and dead.

Remnants of dreams on my pillows
 Yesterday's pains in my bones
 Smoke from my conscience that billows
 For sins I have yet to atone.

My dog's curled up in the corner
 He sleeps more contented than I
 And wakes not a sheik nor a mourner
 But the same hound who lay down last night

That's so unlike me who's astonished
 When my dreams drop me off on the shore
 Sometimes lauded and sometimes admonished
 At what happened behind slumber's door

A prince adored by his minions
 A scoundrel of character foul
 A writer of startling opinions
 Or a fiend with a permanent scowl.

A farmer cut down by a fever
 A crow that transmutes to a horse
 A maiden whose lover deceives her
 A prisoner's futile discourse

These phantasms give no instructions
 Though I used to believe that they might
 Explain life's puzzling constructions
 Loose knots that the daytime ties tight

They're not grandiose or important
 To anyone other than me
 They don't steer the world's comportment
 Or reveal what the future might be.

Yet these chapters are more than amusing
 More than just residued scenes
 Though seemingly weird and confusing
 They ask me to find what they mean

They're clues from my personal riddle
 There's news scattered in with the muck
 They're tunes from my unconscious fiddle
 Whose strings I must tune and then pluck.

So tonight when I lie down to doze off
 I'll swim in the darkness beneath
 And explore what my shadow side knows of
 And wake up with pearls in my teeth.