

Dreams with natural elements in psychotherapy

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Summary. The paper focuses on dreams containing images of natural elements. In theory and research, it is based on the extensive works by Ernest Hartmann, who discovered that these dreams appear with increased frequency in people after various traumatic events. The publication considers a broader framework of this knowledge. It assumes that intense dreams with natural elements appear as a result of any extremely intense emotional energy that has remained unexpressed or unexperienced in the dreamer, not just the traumatic one. These assumptions are verified on the basis of three case studies. The first case study contains a dream with the image of a tornado, the second a dream with the image of a storm and the third a dream with the image of a hurricane. Thanks to the analysis of these dreams, which resulted from current scientific knowledge, assumptions have been accepted that dreams with natural elements can be associated with unexpressed or unexperienced emotional energy.

Keywords: Working with dreams, emotions in dreams, dream contents

1. Introduction

Many plots or dream images occur in our dreams with consistent frequency. These can include dreams in which we are exposed to the power of natural elements such as tsunami, fire, earthquake, storm, tornado, lightning, meteorite fall or others. In the process of psychotherapy, these are important dreams, as these dreams usually have an anxious character and negative plot scenario. They are often recurring dreams that can burden the dreamer for many years.

The researcher most contributing to exploring the essence of natural elements in our dreams was the Austrian-American psychoanalyst Ernest Hartmann (2010, 1998). His research showed that dreams with natural elements frequently occur in people after traumatic experiences, e.g., accident, rape, etc. Hartmann (2010) assumed that in similar events, when one strong emotion suppresses everything else, a dream with the character of natural elements occurs. Among the typical images he considered were tidal waves, although he also described others, such as gale or fire. Hartmann (2010) demonstrated through his research that such dreams do not usually reflect real events in waking life, because many people have not encountered such elements in real life. According to him, these dreams often depict the dreamer's strong and threatening emotional energy related to a previous trauma. To some extent, his words were confirmed by other researches and studies (e.g., Barrett, 1994; Fábik, 2020, 2021, 2022; Roesler, 2018a, 2018b, 2020), which also found that many images in a dream can indicate "symbolic images for parts of the psyche (e.g., unmet needs

or aggressive impulses), that are not yet integrated into the whole of the personality" (e.g., Roesler, 2018a, p. 316).

Hartmann (2010) clarified the meaning of these dreams by the very function of dreaming. According to him, dreaming creates broad and loose connections in emotionally important areas. He calls this property hyperconnectivity. Creating new connections under the influence of emotions subsequently has an adaptive function in bringing new material into that part of memory which is based on emotions. Connections integrate and restore our memory systems in the cerebral cortex. However, it is not a sheer consolidation of memory, but the incorporation of new emotion-driven material into the old one. Consequently, this function works by making emotional experiences less stressful. Hartmann refers to this function as "weaving" new material into the old one (Hartmann, 2008) or as adding new experiences to pre-existing memories (Hartmann, 2007). Similar considerations are also held by other researchers. Prominent experts such as Cartwright (2010) and Hill (1996) share the same conclusion and define the function of a dream similarly, i.e., as the consolidation and integration of emotions and emotional stimuli from wakefulness.

According to Hartmann (2010), we can see the whole process in dreams after traumatic experiences. The first dreams after a traumatic experience usually reliably document fragments of the negative experience. Subsequently, emotions coming from the experience, usually fear, are displayed in an intense dream, e.g., about a tidal wave. This is followed by dreams in which memories of the trauma and images of similar traumas from the past are combined. Eventually, after a few months, dreams return to their usual form. Thus, the dream gradually integrated the emotional experience.

Hartmann (1998) regards his conclusion about dreams with tidal waves or other elements in the context of the experienced trauma as a certain paradigm, which, in view of the amount of research carried out and similar results of other authors (e.g., Siegel, 2003), can be agreed with. However, Hartmann adds that the same visual representation of our experience, although less intense, can be observed in dreams after various stressful situations in wakefulness (e.g., pregnancy). His words are confirmed by everyday psychotherapy practice, which indicates that dreams with natu-

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Submitted for publication: July 2022

Accepted for publication: September 2022

DOI: 10.11588/ijodr.2022.2.90096

ral elements do not occur only in people who have experienced a significant traumatic event. An illustrative example is a study (Fábik, 2021) presenting an analysis of a dream in which the dreamer confronted the force of a natural element, namely lightning. He was very scared because he was concerned that lightning might kill his mother. Based on the patient's psychodynamic structure and family history, the lightning was interpreted as an impulse of hostility towards his own mother, which was accompanied by massive anxiety in a dream. Hartmann (2010) assumed that a dream with natural elements has its origin in emotional experiences that suppress all other tendencies in the experience of the individual. In accordance with this assumption, it can be considered that the impulse of hostility was so strong and overwhelming in the dreamer that it evoked the image of a strong and overwhelming natural element. As a result, the dream with a natural element symbolized the impulse resulting from a common event, not a traumatic one.

In this context, it would be possible to consider one basic condition creating dreams with images of natural elements. It can be assumed that dreams with natural elements may result from enormous emotional energy or impulse that remains unexpressed or unexperienced in wakefulness and is subsequently processed in a dream. Understandably, the whole process can be applied in a more pronounced form after experienced traumatic events, where people experience extraordinary emotions, with their displacement occurring relatively often. Therefore, dreams with natural elements are so typical after traumatic events. However, it seems that the same process can occur in a similar form outside of traumatic events.

Current study

The introduction of our work suggested that the dream image of a natural element may have its origin in enormous emotional energy/impulse (in the paper, we will use these words in a synonymous sense) that has not been expressed or experienced. In the following section, three dreams are presented, based on which the stated assumptions will be verified. Each dream comes from a different patient, none of whom have been exposed to a particular traumatic event. No specific psychotherapy system is preferred when working with dreams. We use a simple and non-invasive method, based on several current and empirically verified premises. Specific procedures are listed in the section *Analytical procedure for working with dreams*.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

Patients are adult women who have undergone long-term therapy. The first suffers from non-clinical conditions of increased tension, the second suffers from panic disorder, the third suffers from generalized anxiety disorder. All three dreams were selected for publication for two reasons. The first one was the fact that the dreams were well remembered by the patients, which made it possible to use a wide range of methods, including therapy conversation, relaxation or free associations. The second factor was the openness of all three patients to the dream interpretation method, which increased their engagement and motivation in working with dreams. More information about individual patients is provided at the beginning of each dream.

2.2. Analytical procedure for working with dreams

Our analysis of the dreams was based on a current theory of dreaming, which defines a dream as a function serving to process, consolidate and integrate our emotions from wakefulness (e.g., Cartwright, 2010; Hartmann, 2010; Hill, 1996). Emotion processing supports emotional memory (Baran et al., 2012; Cipolli et al., 2005; Groch et al., 2013; Nielsen and Stentrom, 2005; Nishida et al., 2009; Wagner et al., 2006) and ensures emotional regulation of the individual (Deliens et al., 2014; Gujar et al., 2011), including mood regulation (Scott et al., 2006) and anxiety (Minkel et al., 2012). Through dreaming, our emotions are processed and consolidated, incorporating them into the emotional self-system of the individual and thus creating our emotional existence – our perception of ourselves (Hartmann, 2010). This theory created a consistent platform in the context of which the data obtained from patients were interpreted.

The work with a dream itself used three steps that were applied and described in previous studies (Fábik, 2021, 2022). In the first and second phases of working with the dream, dream emotions and dream contents were analysed as two of the most important aspects of the dream for its interpretation (e.g., Boss, 1977). By analysing these components, preliminary interpretations were made, which were then verified in the third step in the continuing therapy conversation. The following is a closer description of all the steps:

2.2.1 Analysis of dream emotions

Dream emotions (emotions experienced by a person during a dream) were considered patient's own emotions originating from their waking life, which are being consolidated and integrated by dreaming. This definition of dream emotions stems from the continuity hypothesis, which suggested that dream emotions are continuous, or parallel waking emotions (e.g., Hartmann, 2010; Komasi et al., 2018; Mikulinger et al., 2011; Selterman et al., 2014; Serpe & DeCicco, 2020; Schredl & Reinhard, 2010; Sikka et al., 2018). For this reason, many authors recommend looking for the same emotional dynamics that take place in both dream and wakefulness when analysing dreams (e.g., Totlis, 2011), which can lead to significant new patient perspectives in a short time (Hartmann, 2010). For example, if the patient feels satisfied or relaxed in a dream and subsequently begins to experience anger under the influence of a certain situation, it can be assumed that the same emotions (emotional dynamics) were experienced by the patient even in waking life. This assumption was also applied to our analyses. At first, the dreamers were let to consistently describe the emotions experienced in a dream, and subsequently we tried to look for the same emotional dynamics in waking life with the help of a therapeutic conversation.

2.2.2 Analysis of dream contents

In accordance with Hartmann (2010, 1998) and several researchers focused on dream contents (Barrett, 1994; Fábik, 2020, 2021, 2022; Roesler, 2018a, 2018b, 2020), we defined dream contents (in this case, natural elements) as symbols of intrapsychic dynamics of the patients themselves. For a closer specification of these symbols, the patients' primary fantasies or short relaxations were used in this step, which aimed to empathize with and personify the natural elements

in the dream. For example, if the dreamer felt the tsunami in the dream as angry or aggressive, it was to be considered the emotional energy of aggression. Consequently, it is enough to assign the specific emotional experience analysed in the previous step to the given impulse.

2.2.3 Determination of dream interpretation

By analysing dream emotions and dream contents, a preliminary interpretation was obtained, formed by impulse (symbolized by a certain natural element) and associated emotion. Subsequently, our preliminary interpretation was verified in the same therapy conversation. For this purpose, some specific psychotherapeutic questions were used that helped clarify the given impulse in a dream from a psychodynamic point of view. By being able to clarify the occurrence of impulses and emotions in a dream in accordance with the patient's personality structure and their basic psychodynamic conflict, verification of the reliability of our interpretation is to be considered sufficient. In addition, each patient has accepted and acknowledged the interpretation.

3. Case studies

The following section offers case studies, which represent a detailed procedure for dream analysis and interpretation. The first case study presents a full transcript of the therapy conversation, which illustrates the structure of the conversation in accordance with the *analytical procedure for working with dreams*. The remaining two case studies are, considering the appropriate scope of publication and the use of some specific methods (e.g. relaxation) paraphrased. It cannot be overlooked that some aspects of the dream remained without closer analysis, such as the environment of the dream, thus reflecting the requirement of both scientific research and psychotherapy practice, where it proves more beneficial to get to know the core of the dream rather than each of its elements (e.g., Fromm, 1998; Hartman, 2010; Yalom, 2017). The core of the dream is defined, in accordance with Hartmann (2010), as the most intense part of the dream. The interviews with patients were conducted by Dušan Fábik.

3.1. Patient 1

The dreamer is a 20-year-old student who narrated a dream from when she was 10 years old. She used to dream this repeatedly in slight variations until the age of 17.

In the dream, I woke up from an afternoon nap. No one was home. I wanted to go for a walk. I was walking down the street as if I were going to grandma's and I heard a voice. When I followed it, I made it all the way to the store, where I found out that the voice belonged to a tornado. I started talking to the tornado and I was talking to it like to a friend. Then the tornado wanted something from me – I don't know what, but I didn't like it, so I decided to go home. But the tornado followed me. I was very scared along the way, I wanted to tell someone that it wanted something from me and it wouldn't give me a break, but no one noticed me. When I got home, I hid under the bed.

The following is a full and accurate transcript of the therapy conversation that was recorded on the dictaphone. For some answers, the author's notes will also be shown, which

clarify some of the psychologist's questions and statements of the patient, in accordance with the *Analytical procedure for working with dreams* mentioned above.

D.F. *Could you tell me what emotions you experienced from beginning to end, what accompanied that dream?*

(Recognition and analysis of dream emotions is the first phase of dream work, which we described in analytical procedures).

K. *Well, at first it was calmness, it felt like a normal situation and then there was kind of uncertainty.*

D.F. *Uncertainty?*

K. *When I heard that voice, and when I was already talking to it, I was quite happy to have someone to talk to. Then when the tornado wanted something from me that I didn't want, the anxiety started. I know I was thinking for a while that I would do this because I didn't want it to stop talking to me. But in the end, I was scared and I just left. And when the tornado followed me, I was even more scared. I felt alone... in a situation I don't know how to get out of, and all I could think of was hiding in my room.*

D.F. *And what was the most intense moment of the whole dream?*

(In an emotionally and content-wise intensive dream, the specific part that deserves the most attention from the therapist will be gained by defining its most intense part (Hartmann, 2010). According to research (Borowik et al., 2013, Delorm, 2002, Malinowski, 2015), it reflects emotions or thoughts that remained largely unexpressed and unexperienced in wakefulness).

K. *Um, when I got home, it was that there was still no one there. I was just alone.*

D.F. *Uhm, and can you tell what it felt like?*

K. *Bad, very bad.*

(This is a highly frequent answer when the patient answers the first question only vaguely. It is essential to be thorough in the inquiry.)

D.F. *We know a lot of these bad feelings – fear, anger, sadness, disappointment, shame, jealousy, etc.*

K. *So it was such a "mixture" of disappointment and anxiety and fear.*

D.F. *Uhm.*

K. *And in some moments also anger...*

D.F. *And some of those emotions you mentioned... disappointment, fear, anger. Do you remember them? Did you encounter them when you were 10 years old?*

(The meaning of this question was clarified above. At this point, therefore, the elaboration will only be limited to reminding that finding the same emotional dynamics between dream and wakefulness is the fastest and most accurate way to understand a dream).

K. *Yeah.*

D.F. *Which emotion?*

K. *Mostly disappointment, a little bit of fear and even that anger. But the anger is more like... I rather forget about it. Probably the most disappointment.*

(The patient says she prefers to "forget" about the anger. From this answer, it can be indicated that the dreamer tends to suppress/displace anger. However, she identified the emotion of disappointment as the key one, which is why attention is paid to this feeling.)

D.F. *Uhm, disappointment. Can you tell what you were disappointed about?*

K. *That's when it started in our family... simply, my father*

went to Russia for a business trip... We knew he was coming back, but then when he came back, at first they didn't want to tell me, but then they told me he had found someone else. And he wanted to take me away... Well, I guess that's why the disappointment.

D.F. Take you to Russia?

K. Um, yeah, well. But in the end, my mum and I stayed together.

D.F. Uhm.

K. Well, but it's all sorts of things...

D.F. I see... You also mentioned fear... did you also experience it during that period?

K. Fear that I would have to leave and I didn't want to leave, especially my brother, so I was afraid of that. And then the same fear like in that dream when there was the angry tornado. At that time, I was often afraid of all kinds of things.

D.F. An angry tornado... So you felt it was angry?

(Hartmann (2010) assumed that the image of a natural element in our dreams reflects an intense emotional experience from waking life. At the same time, our patient perceives the natural element in question as angry. It can be therefore deduced that the intense emotional experience from waking life could be related to anger.)

K. It just got angry that I didn't want to do something.

D.F. And you mentioned anger in that childhood period in your everyday life, saying that you don't think about it or forget...

K. Yeah, from what my mum told me, because I don't remember much about that period, she said I had a lot of arguments with my father. Even like instead of her, too, that's actually the anger.

D.F. And you don't remember? You were... you said 10 years old...?

K. No, I don't remember at all.

D.F. And how does mum describe it? What were you doing?

K. When he said something about my mother, I just started the fight with him.

D.F. Uhm...

K. Or when my brother wasn't at home, I was just arguing with him.

D.F. And how do you explain that you don't remember?

K. Well, I guess I rather forgot about it than... (silence).

(At this stage of the conversation, it can already be legitimately assumed that the anger or defiance that the patient experienced as a child began to be displaced at the given age.)

D.F. And these dreams ended around the age of 17. What was typical of that period?

K. Well, we had already moved to Smolenice at the time (a town in Slovakia), and everything was fine. My father got together with mum again - it actually lasts until now. But the fact that they didn't solve it somehow makes it all wrong, but that's about it.

(It is obvious that the restoration of the relationship between mother and father ended the occurrence of anxiety dreams. It can be assumed that anxiety-creating aggression resulted mainly from family circumstances.)

D.F. And a tornado, when you say a tornado, what does it evoke in you, what comes to mind?

(Although there are compelling arguments for believing that a tornado represents the impulse of aggression, we

also verify these assumptions with the help of free associations.)

K. Well, at the time, it made me so respectful and basically also a little afraid. Because my brother, he... I guess it connected with the fact that he really liked to watch that kind of things... He's a weather fan and watched things about storms and tornadoes. And I watched it with him sometimes, so that's just why it's a tornado. I guess it just replaced something bad.

(The patient's point of view can be agreed with. By watching films about tornadoes, there may have been a strong association created between the immense power and the image of a tornado, which is why the enormous emotional energy of aggression was represented by this very symbol.)

D.F. And when you say a tornado, what is the first word that comes to your mind?

K. Destruction.

(This answer emphasizes the aforementioned assumptions. The patient is probably in contact with her aggressive or destructive impulse in the dream. I am moving on to interpretation.)

D.F. I'm thinking about you using the term "angry tornado" and that at the same time you were experiencing anger in your waking life. I think that in a dream, you might be dealing with your angry, destructive side. The tornado has no face, it's not a specific figure... it's such an intangible, vague thing...

K. Something like a forgotten rage...

(The patient accepted the interpretation and spontaneously completed it herself.)

By summarizing the conversation, it can be assumed that the tornado in the dream represents the aggressive or destructive impulse of the dreamer, which is accompanied by intense anxiety. The reliability of this assumption is demonstrated by several aspects. The first one is respect for the continuity hypothesis, meaning that the interpretation maintained the consistency between dream and waking life. In the dream, the patient experiences anxiety from a tornado, and in wakefulness from an impulse of aggression. The second aspect increasing the reliability of the interpretation is that our assumptions are consistent with the patient's associations and testimony. And the third, fundamental fact remains the patient's description of specific areas of life where she could experience the given impulses. Thus, our interpretation was meaningfully set in the context of a life history of the dreamer.

3.2. Patient 2

The patient is a 32-year-old female who is experiencing panic attacks.

"I was somewhere outside in an unknown place and I was supposed to travel somewhere. All of a sudden, the sky clouded over and the storm started coming. I felt it was going to be very strong."

At the beginning of the analysis, the first attribute forming a dream was recognized – dream emotions. The most significant emotion in the dream was the increasing anxiety, which, however, the patient could not compare to any emotional situation in wakefulness. Therefore, we focused on the analysis of the second aspect of creating a dream – the analysis of dream contents. Based on the assumption made

in section 2.2.2 Analysis of dream contents, it was hypothesized that the storm in the dream represents a certain impulse of the dreamer herself. Our goal was to reveal the specific form of the impulse with the help of free associations. For this reason, the patient was put into a short relaxation, in which she relived the dream events again. After relaxation, the patient stated that the storm felt aggressive. However, the thoughts of the storm itself appeared even more significant. The dreamer said that the storm thought: *“You hurt me and I’m going to hurt you.”*

When the assumptions are accepted that some dream contents can represent the impulses of the dreamers themselves, it can be considered that the emotional energy in the form of a storm symbolizes an unspecified injury of the patient (“you hurt me”). At the same time, this injury is linked to a hostile reaction (“I’m going to hurt you”). At first, the dreamer could not assign an area of life to which these words could refer. It was only after a while that she began to think about her mother, who left her and her father a few years ago. This experience was extremely hurtful (“you hurt me”) while simultaneously creating a lot of anger (“I’m going to hurt you”). It was the first time that the patient realized her emotional injury and the intensity of her anger.

3.3. Patient 3

The 42-year-old female patient has been suffering from a generalised anxiety disorder for the past two years. The dream presented comes from the initial meeting.

“I was falling from the tower and I knew I was going to die. I remember being thrown off that tower by a huge hurricane that came through there.”

The beginning of the dream analysis was again directed towards knowing and describing dream emotions. It is clear from the very context of the dream that the patient was experiencing the dream with great anxiety. Since anxiety in the dream was caused by a hurricane, the goal was to know its significance with regard to the dreamer’s waking life. The patient was invited to empathize with the hurricane, its thinking and feelings. Her spontaneous responses were: *“...I feel terrible strength. Such tremendous power. The omnipotence that I can do whatever I want.”* Subsequently we were investigating what would happen if the patient had the characteristics of this hurricane in everyday life. There was a short pause, after which tears began to flow down the patient’s face. She said: *“It would mean that I am not afraid to show my feelings in front of my children and other people. I wouldn’t have to hide them.”*

That answer suggested that the image of a hurricane can represent the emotional energy of immense power. However, accepting this strength or courage would mean experiencing emotions that are contrary to the expectations of the environment. Therefore, the patient felt fear of her own strength, which can be seen in a symbolic form in the intense anxiety from the hurricane.

The benefit of this interpretation was confirmed by the patient’s touching dream, dreamed on the first night after our meeting. She was located on a several meters high bar counter. She felt anxious and tried to get down from it. Suddenly, a waiter showed up to help her find her way. She experienced joy, relief and a pleasant feeling. She had not experienced a feeling of relief in years, she said.

4. Discussion

At the beginning of the discussion, the reliability of the presented analyses and the resulting interpretations are to be summarised. Firstly, the analyses submitted respected one of a current theory of dreaming (e.g., Cartwright, 2010; Hartmann, 2010; Hill, 1996) which sees the dream as a consolidation and integration of emotions from our waking life. For this reason, in each analysis, dream emotions were understood as emotions originating from wakefulness, which are handled through the dream process. Second, each interpretation contained a correspondence between the emotional experience in wakefulness and in the dream, thus remaining in line with the continuity hypothesis (e.g., Hartmann, 2010; Komasi et al., 2018; Mikulinger et al., 2011; Selterman et al., 2014; Serpe & DeCicco, 2020; Schredl & Reinhard, 2010; Sikka et al., 2018). Third, the dream contents were understood in accordance with Hartmann (2010, 1998) and other researchers (e.g., Barrett, 1994; Fábik, 2020, 2021, 2022; Roesler, 2020, 2018a, 2018b) as symbols of the intrapsychic dynamics of the dreamers themselves. Fourth, the interpretations contained only information expressed by the patients themselves and, conversely, did not contain any additional data created by the therapist. Fifth, the resulting interpretation was meaningfully embedded into the dreamer’s life history and accepted by each patient. And sixth, the above-mentioned analytical procedure for working with dreams, called *Personality integrity approach*, is based solely on research conclusions and has already been used in previous studies (e.g., Fábik, 2021, 2022). Based on these significant aspects enhancing the reliability of the analyses presented, some conclusions will now be considered.

It was indicated in the introduction of the paper that the basic attribute leading to dreams with natural elements is a huge emotional energy (e.g., hostility, aggression, power, hopelessness) which remained unexpressed and unexperienced in waking life. Based on our case studies, it can be said that intense emotional energy in the patients’ experiences has been demonstrated in all cases. In case study 1, it could be noticed that before the patient started suppressing/displacing her impulse of aggression, it was significantly intense, e.g., *“mum said I had a lot of arguments with my father”* or *“when he said something about my mother, I just started the fight with him.”* In case study 2, it was discovered that the dreamer faced a huge emotional trauma in her life history in the form of separation from her mother, which, according to our analysis, led to hostile tendencies. Finally, in case study 3, the patient stated, after empathizing with the hurricane, that she felt *“...terrible strength. Such tremendous power. The omnipotence...”* The answers thus indicate that the patients in question may have experienced strong impulses in waking life, which, according to our assumptions, acquired the form of natural elements in their dreams. It can also be noticed that in all cases, these strong impulses were probably unexpressed and unexperienced. Perhaps the clearest example is the patient in case study 1, who stated that *“the anger is more like... I rather forget about it.”* Suppression or displacement can also be assumed in the case of patient from the case study 2, to whom her own words resulting from the dream analysis (*“you hurt me and I’m going to hurt you”*) seemed completely strange at first. Although there were no specific words observed in the case of the patient in case study 3 that would more fundamentally indicate the phenomenon of suppression or displacement, since both the dream analysis process and

the resulting interpretation probably influenced the patient's other dreams, it can be considered as a certain indicator of a confirmed hypothesis.

In summary, it can be said that the above-mentioned cases confirmed our assumptions, which considered the images of natural elements to be symbols of our intrapsychic dynamics. Of course, this conclusion cannot yet be generalised to apply to any dream with a natural element. Further studies are needed for a complete and reliable conclusion. Likewise, it cannot yet be ruled out that other phenomena can also lead to dreams with natural elements. At this point, all we can do is express our support for Hartmann's findings, which indicated that dreams with natural elements arise as a result of an unprocessed emotional stress.

It remains an interesting question why certain impulse is visualized in dreams in the form of natural elements. Although it will undoubtedly take some time for research evidence to become available, some assumptions can already be made. Support can be found in the experience and knowledge of the German-American psychoanalyst Erich Fromm (2013). He assumed that the essence of many dream symbols lies in the characteristics of our body, our senses or mind, which are common to all people and are therefore not limited to individuals or specific groups. As an example, Fromm mentions fire. Fire is captivating because of some of its qualities. Above all, with its liveliness, power, energy, charm, lightness or destruction. It is as if it were constantly dancing and had an inexhaustible supply of energy. The dream image of fire will therefore have a very similar meaning in any person's dream resulting from the same sensory experience, i.e., the aforementioned liveliness, energy or power. Thus, it seems reasonable that the intense force and energy of our impulse can be represented by natural elements. We associate them with extreme and threatening energy.

In conclusion, I have provided some dreamwork considerations for the therapy practice. One repeatedly discover that working with a dream containing natural elements is not easy. The reason, I believe, is that the process of suppression or displacement obscures the association with waking emotion, which significantly limits the awareness of one's own impulses appearing in a dream. It is particular that the meaning of the dream itself can be theoretically recognized based on a thorough analysis of dream emotions and dream contents, but a deep insight from a patient with intense emotional impact can come later. An example is case study 2, in which the dreamer was threatened by a storm. During the meeting itself, the dream analysis was not associated with intense emotions. It was only, when the patient returned to her own words ("*You hurt me and I'm going to hurt you.*"); that she recognized the impact of this impulse in her life. The analysis of dreams with natural elements can be therefore useful in many cases, especially in the long term.

5. Conclusion

In the presented case studies, three forms of natural elements were described: a tornado, a storm and a hurricane. The analysis of these dreams led to the conclusion that their underlying emotions can be the same as those of dreams following traumatic events documented by Ernest Hartmann, who argue that, natural elements can symbolize the unexpressed and unexperienced emotional energy of the dreamer. It remains questionable whether every dream containing a natural element signifies certain emotional en-

ergy, but at least in the case of dreams with high intensity, it seems often. It is up to further research and studies to confirm or refute these assumptions.

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