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Dream Reports and the Question of Meaning

In the course of the 20th century, dream reports emancipate themselves from being an object of study in psychological research and become a literary genre. In numerous publications, the authors not only refuse to interpret their dreams, but they also intervene in the reading experience by explicitly rejecting (at least a certain, especially psychological direction of) interpretation (cf. f. ex. Vierordt 1922, 11; Yourcenar 1938, 33 f.; Okopenko 1998, 203; Cixous 2003, 18). In their prefaces and afterwords, the authors generally admit that dreams do have meaning – even if they don't want this meaning to be deciphered.

Some publications go beyond such introductory reflections to explore and negotiate the question of »making sense«. Henri Michaux' dream reports in *Façons d'endormi, façons d'éveillé* (1969) are accompanied by extensive interpretations which often exceed the dream narrative in terms of length. In my paper, I would like to analyse the effect of these interpretative passages on the dream report itself and on the reading process (1). Furthermore, they display an awareness of traditional and modern dream theories. Dreams and their contemplation have lost their »innocence« (Michaux, 13): far from being spontaneous, original and natural, they are already informed and, to some extent, shaped by discourses. Hence, a second question of my paper will be how the authors' interpretations navigate between different theories and methods and how they reflect on them (2). In Hans C. Artmann's *Grünverschlossene Botschaft: 90 Träume* (1967), theories and methods positioning themselves outside of the dream report, aspiring to »make sense« of them, become objects of the oneiric narrative themselves. The interpretation process is carried out in a hyperbolic way, thereby creating a parodistic effect: »If, in the morning, porcelain dolls with dissecting knives frighten you, and you fear losing your manhood [...], don't say a word, get up and draw a green *seven* in your notebook« (7), Artmann writes, humorously linking Freudian symbolism to prophetic dream theories and traditional number symbolism.¹ Comparing primarily French and German examples, my paper will explore how collections of dream reports negotiate the question of meaning and how they deal with interpretative theories.

¹ Hans Carl Artmann, *Grünverschlossene Botschaft. 90 Träume* [1967]. Gezeichnet von Ernst Fuchs. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp 1972, 7: »Schrecken dich gegen morgen porzellanene puppen mit seziermessern, und fürchtest du deine mannbarkeit zu verlieren [...] so verrate kein wort, stehe auf und zeichne dir eine grüne *sieben* ins merkbuch«.