UNTITLED PASSAGES
BY HENRI MICHAUX

LIBRARY

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TO DRAW THE FLOW OF TIME

Henri Michaux

BEFORE TAKING UP DRAWING I had a doubt that no doubt stood in the way and that absolutely had to be realized beforehand. It seemed to correspond to my true needs and even to a general need.

Instead of one vision to the exclusion of others, I wanted to draw the moments that and we will make life, to show the inner phrase, the wordless phrase, the tireless strand that unwinds indefinitely and is ultimately present in each inner and outer scene.

I wanted to draw the consciousness of existing and the flow of time. As one takes one's pulse. Or signs, more modestly, that which appears when, is the evening, the film that has been exposed to the day's images, but shorter and muted, is retain.

Cinemas' Cinema.

True, I was attached to my own. But how happy I would have been to see a line phased by someone else and to be able to read in this ups and outs of another's life, just like entering my hands along a marvelous string, discovering its knots and scenes.

My own particular film was sooner more than one or two of lines seen meeting up here and there with a few others, now forming a thicket, now a plait, further on joining hands, rolling into a ball or—feeling very unnecessarily interesting—forming a sign, arrangement, pride, or cruder or lower ... that could be seen, that I thought should have been seen but that, in all the truth, almost no one saw.

Intrigued, people looked at my pages and asked me what kind of 'art' was that. I were shamed. I had been made to doubt too much of their communicability. We were individuals bind in that writing become interwoven in groups of litter here and there, tiny crossroads of impercentability and event, which they called signs, urging me even to make a dictionary of them. They were still too interested in the signs to suspect development. I'd a distance had not yet been in existence for long.

One day a publisher was willing to reproduce some of them on account of a certain charm he found in them, and to me: "All you have to do is make them bigger."

Annoyed—for our writing be enlarged!—I wizzed hold of a brush (which was destined to replace the fine-nibbed pen) so as straightaway to demonstrate that the scandalous operation was impossible.

As I drew the first lines I felt, to my extreme surprise, that something that had always been closed had opened up in me, and that this breach was to effect an outlet for a mass of movements.

The fullness of the gesture necessitated by the characters that were supposed to come out bigger had changed the spirit of the drawing. Instead of characters, instead of notions of an undifferentiable 'something', they become propulsion, participation, released torrent.

Through amplitude I was able to communicate with my own speed, and in so doing I

forgot what I was supposed to be about and changed my original focus.

There thus emerged into view a mass of movements of which I was full, overflowing, and had been for years. When, as a child, I stared in deployment, "wet" in the sea of movements, was I a prince and not very often a conqueror, but I was extraordinary in remembrance. Was I a prince and not very often a conqueror, but I was extraordinary in movements. A veritable prodigy in movements. Prodigious movements, movements of which, in fact, no trace was visible in my conscious and which could not have been suspected, except on account of a certain air of dreamy and my ability to cut myself off.

Animals and I, we had dealings together. My movements, I mentally changed their form and, by that means, released from the limitation of being neo-lacent, I expanded beyond myself... I became inebriated with them, inebriated with them alone: extraordinary wild, sudden, and jerky. I invented impossible ones and I brought in man, not with his four limbs just about good enough for sport, but equipped with prodigious proportions, spontaneously prompted by his muscle, his desires, in an incessant morphic creation.

This, still, caused me to cut out my drawings and rushed in a rush, I filled hundreds of pages with the sudden release of supernatural arms and legs and dancing movements without however managing to find in my imagination the form that was practical and achieved for years. Drawing was less familiar to me. But thereby I entered differently into that world.

Through my joy and liberation, however, I at times felt a slight uneasiness as though I had been a free rush to giving myself over to this public pleasure in which I relinquished one of my secret charisms.

Perhaps too I was frightened of changing steps.

Blinked, my only pages were scattered on pages of signs, that is to say movement that had been stabilized, stopped, interrupted.

Everyone asks, when I encounter my drawing solid them, to maintain their tempo. Through thick and thin. Through events, emotions, adventures, just as they must, through cold scenes, in such jerky, rapid and sudden appearance.

By a highly skillful and constant balance between impulses that one accepts and impulses on which one rejects, I have kept the balance of equilibrium in which the impulses of speed and the slightest acceleration are ingeniously neutralized.

It is enough lightly to touch a particular point in the hypothalamus dramatically to speed up a person's tempo, and the subject will, without being at all predisposed, through the uncontrollable acceleration of his thoughts, impressions, images, words, and many of his mental functions, be as though mad and show all the signs of manic psychosis.

Ever, prolonged anxiety, hormone changes may also bring about this change.

I was myself to discover what an awful, contagious experience it is to change one's tempo, to live it suddenly, to find another in its place, an unknown, terrifying tempo that one does not know how to handle, that makes everything different, unrecognizable, insane, that causes everything to overflow itself and flow by, that causes the feeling that one must be followed, where thoughts and feelings now proceed like projectiles, where inner images in much movement are accelerated, how all of a drill with unbearable intensity, unleashes, of an inner vision from which it is no longer possible to detach oneself, luminous like burning suspension, spurred by a tri-and-fro movement like the slide of a machine tool,

infinitesimal, and which vibrate, shudder, and zig-zag, caught up in an incessant Brownian movement, images where the straight lines twisted with an upward momentum are naturally vertical, cathedral lines, that have no upper limit but go on meaning indefinitely, where the broken lines in a continual scism crack, divide, crumble, and shred, where the curved lines get lost in extravagant loops, twists, and twirls, infinitely intricate lacework patterns, images where objects seem set in tiny, dazzling troughs of healing iron, where parallel lines and parallel objects indefinitely repeated and all the more forcefully the more one observes it, shatter the mind of him who vainly wishes to get back to himself in the general gallivation.

Images marked by streaming, sparkling, extreme seething, in which all remains ambiguous and, although glaringly evident, escapes being determined once and for all, and in which, although the frolics remain circumscribed within the visual field, one knows that one is under the sway of berserk trills, piercing whistles, grotesque exceptions, and scales run amok and as though berserk.

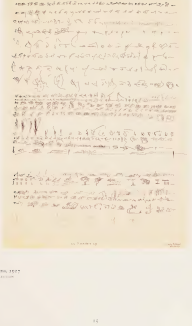
Torn from one's lumps, in the storm of infinitesimal frenzied waves, or in the hell of egotily sudden, spontaneous, and insane impulses, one can not imagine the inhuman speed ever ceasing ...

1. Tonight is a good idea for everyone to observe (to know how, for their part, they manage.
2. Through the senses of sensitive and lysergic acid.

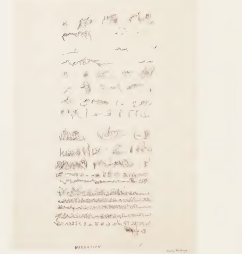
CATALOGUE

Untitled, 1976
Collection de Claude Roy, Paris

Alphabet 1994, 1995
Pencil on paper, 21 x 29.7 cm



Alphabet, 1927
Private collection



Memoriae, 1991
Private collection

Henri Pourrat

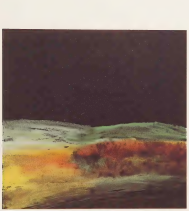
THE TRANSFER OF CREATIVE ACTIVITIES is one of the strangest of all voyages into the self. Strange decomposition, putting to sleep one part of the mind, the speaking, writing part (part, no rather a system of connections). You change clearing stations when you start painting.
The word-factory (thought-words, picture-words, emotion-words, motor-words) disappears, is simply, dizzyingly drowned. It no longer exists. The operating stops. Night. Localized death. No more desire, no more appetite, for talking. The part of the head that used to be the most concerned with it cooks-off. It's a surprising experience.

And how restful!

A strange feeling. You locate the world through another window. Like a child, you have to learn to walk. You don't know a thing. You're buzzing with questions. You constantly try to guess ... to plan ahead ...

New problems. New temptations.

Untitled (Original Tree Fables des troupeaux), 1937
Watercolor, ink on paper

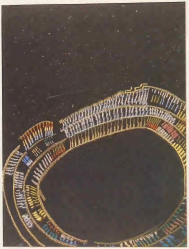


Untitled 1938–39
Collection of the Artist, Paris, France

Untitled (The Blue Lattice Witch's Hearth, 1956

Collection of Dennis Simon Dixon

Untitled (Indigo Brown Gouache), 1958
Collection of Claude Berri, Paris



The Arena (El Abiod), 1938
Mixed medium (cut paper), United Colors Foundation, Paris

(From *Passages*)

THE FLAILING BY OF COLORS LIKE FISHES ON the expanse of water where I put them, that's what I like about watercolors.

The little heap of color that breaks down into tiny particles, these trails and not the final lick, the picture. In a word, what I appreciate most in painting is cinema.

Paper that soaks up, readily, in vast quantities, persistently, deeply, this is what means *more* to me than colors, which in any case I merely put down in haste, as detection, as nausea to be angorged.

Most often, most naturally, I use red. What is spilt more easily than blood?

Water of watercolors, as immense as a lake, water, omniscient-demon, carrying away islands, creating vistas, breaking down dams, overflowing from worlds ...

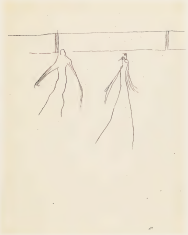
I note with a secret joy that becomes increasingly evident this leakage from the line of my drawing, in the water and the all-pervading seeping.

This tumacy that so closely resembles the pattern of my life, this instantaneous treachery, this letting go that becomes ever more pronounced and leaves me feeling ever more helpless, here on the contrary fascinates me and restores me to myself, through the success of this instantaneous and gradual quid pro quo, making an about-middle of my lines that were clearly marked out to begin with, that wan away on all sides, carrying off my subject towards a blur that unexpectedly dilates, or changes tack, surface of dissolution, divergence and distortion, journeying towards a *re-dissolving* that leaves me gaping on the shore.

Untitled 1956–64
Courtesy of the Ann Lemon Photography, Houston.

Untitled 1941–42
Collection of Mr. James Fitzpatrick, Cincinnati

Untitled, 1942–44
Collection of Mrs. Edwin Engelberts, Geneva



Untitled 1944
Pen on paper

Rinsbil 1938
Collection of Dr. Ernst Photiadis, Zurich

Étude, 1947-48
Pinceau et encre de Chine

Untitled 1954

Collection of Claude Berri, Paris

Untitled 1963
Collection of Claude Ryan, Paris

Untitled, 1962–96
Pen on cream paper

Dunkerque, 1914-1918.
Carnet : [illegible] sur Hôpital d'arr. et d'évacuation. Canons.

Untitled, 1995–96
Pen and ink on paper, 10 cm

Untitled, 1947–48
Private collection

Unveröffentlichtes, 1944
Photographie, Gelatinesilber

Untitled (Alphabet), 1944
Crayon et aquarelle sur papier, 27,5 cm x 21,5 cm
Crayon and watercolour on paper, 10 3/8 in x 8 1/2 in

Unedited Alphabet, 1998
Photo: Gustavo Gilabert

Untitled (Alphabet), 1994
Photopolymer on Arches paper

Untitled (Alphabet), 1944
Private collection

Untitled (Alphabet), 1992
Ballpoint pen, gouache and collage on paper, 18 x 24 in. (46 x 61 cm). Courtesy Galerie Lelong, New York

Untitled (Alphabet), 1944
Private collection

From Mantrawd

SIGNS OF THE TEN THOUSAND WAYS of keeping one's balance in this moving world: thir
scoffs at adaptation
signs shown all to retrieve one's being from the trap of the language of others
made to get the better of you, like a well-regulated roulette wheel
promising you a few good goes
and rain and defeat in the end
all laid down beforehand for you, as for everyone

Signs not to extract one's steps
but to facilitate headway at every instant
signs not from copying
but by way of signs piloting
of headway being plotted

Signs, not to be complete
but true to one's passing
signs not to conquerin
but to regain the gift of tongues
one's own at least, or else who will speak it?

Direct writing for unwinding
from the compact spool of forms
to unfurlin, to revoke
to clear the billboard mind of our times of its heavy glut of images
Lacking rain, at least let's cart out effluvia to the wards.

Untitled (Mouvements [Movements]), 1950–51
Private collection

Lysiosquilla Maxima (Haan) (actual size)
Photo: Alan Jones

Untitled (Hommes [Manomonde]), 1961–62
Pen and ink on paper, 16 × 20 in.

Untitled (Monument), 1960–63
Private collection

L'Oubli d'Mouvoirs [*Movements*], 1956–61
Private collection

Ulotrichale Chaetomorpha [*Chaetomorpha*], 1068.11

PHOTO: GREG SHEA

[Untitled] (Mouvement [Movement]), 1950–51
Pen and ink on paper

Orchid (Microstylis [Malaxis?]), 1926–43

Photographs

Untitled (*Monsieur* [*Mannomatl*], 1971–72
Private collection

Cheirlod (Movements [Mouvements]), 1960–61
Gouache sur papier des Moulins à Malt et à Sorcières, Gruyère

Untitled (Mouvements [Movements]), 1948–51
Ink on Japan paper, 10 × 7 in.

Dactylis Glomerata (Mantonwood), 1 actual

Photo: Gordon Cullen

Untitled (Monument/Monument), 1907

Private collection, courtesy of Galerie Maeght, Paris

Untitled (Hieroglyphs) [Matisse-work], 1951
Private collection, on loan to Galerie Lelong, Paris

Untitled (*Monument*) (*Monument*), 1967
Pen and ink on vellum, 10 1/2 x 13 1/2 in. (26.7 x 34.3 cm)

Untitled (Movement Motionless), 1911
Private collection, Courtesy Galerie Thomas, Paris

[From *Bonfire, Movements*]

THESE MOVEMENT BEGAME MY MOVEMENTS. The more there were of them, the more I evolved. The more of them I wanted. Growing them, I became quite other. I avoided my body (my centers of action and repose). It's often a bit remote from my head, my body. I hold it now, tingling, cleanse. Like a rider on a galloping horse that together make but one. I was possessed by movements, on edge with these forms that came to me rhythmically. Often one rhythm ruled this page, sometimes several pages in succession, and the more numerous were the signs that appeared (one day there were close on five thousand), the more alive they were.

Although this—must I say experiment? may be repeated by many, I should like to warn anyone who prizes personal explanations that I see here the reused of indolence.

The greater part of my life, stretched out on my bed for interminable hours of which I never tired, I imparted motion to one or two or three forms, but always one more quickly, more to the hour, more fabulously quickly than any other. Instead of exalting, or wearing it with riches, happiness, earthly goods as they are called, I gave it, as very poor as it remained in other respects, I instilled in it a quite extraordinary mobility of which I was the counterpart and the motor, allied unmoving and doubled. Electrified it, while I myself was the despair of artist people or the object of their scorn.

All I have done here is to repeat, sort of, on paper, in Indian ink, some of the innumerable entrances of my useless life.

B.B. points out that in this book drawing and writing are not equivalent, the former being freer and the latter more dense.

There's nothing interesting about that. They are not the same sign. The drawings are quite new in me, especially these, in the very process of being born, in the state of innocence, of negative; but the words, the words came afterwards, afterwards, always afterwards . . . and so many others. How could they set me free? On the contrary, it is through having fixed me from words, those tenacious partners, that the drawings are lively and almost joyous, that their movements came buoyantly to me even in exasperation. And so I see in them a new language, opening the verbal, and so I use them as literature.

Whatever, having pressed my signs, is led by my example to create signs himself according to his being and his needs will, unless I am very much mistaken, discover a source of exhilaration, a release such as he has never known, a disencrustation, a new life open to him, a writing salvaged for, affording relief, in which he will be able at ease to express himself for firm words, words, the words of others.

Untitled, 1999
Collection of the Fonds Fredericks, Canada

Untitled 1978
Pen and ink on Canson Beaux Arts

Untitled, 1958
Collection of Claude Bérri, Paris

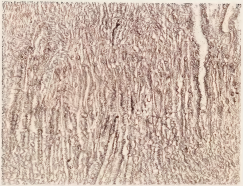
Untitled (The Three Sum: Ye Two Schools), 1998
Collection of Mark Gunter Sports Page

Untitled, 1918–19
Watercolour, Indian ink, Gouache, Chinese

Untitled 1908–09
Reserve Stock Drawings, Paris

Untitled 1959
©Galerie Samuel Tetreau, Paris

Untitled, 1979
Eleanor Dickinson Thomas Paine



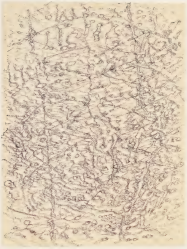
Mouvement dansant, 1966

Collection de Madame Marie Bonin, Paris

Meadow Journey 1997
Pastel on paper

Pelagic dawning, 1976
Pen and ink on paper

Meadow drawing, 1998
Private collection



Meandering drawing, 1956
INK, Lithographic crayon

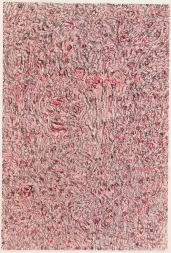
Mescaline drawing, c. 1956
Private collection

Manuscript drawing, c. 1908
Photo courtesy Sotheby's

Meadow Among, 1956–58
Private collection

Meudon dessin, 1998
Mine de plomb, 21 × 29,7 cm. Collection Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris

Meadow drawing, 1957
Private collection



Mescaline drawing, 1955

Collection de Pierre Alechinsky, Bruxelles, France

Meadow drawing, c. 1956
Photomontage, Estate Mona Hatoum

Mescaline drawing, 1958–59
Collection of Galerie Rive Droite, Paris

Mandala drawing, 1960
The Museum of Modern Art, New York

[From *Polis* date de [illegible]]

SO IT CAME BEGINNING FORTH. But more violently, more electrically, more fantastically. For hour, the first ones especially, the ones most fraught with images. When I was very dazed, I watched as a vision a sort of vertical torrent came tumbling tumultuously down.

This high-voltaic carpet that had something in common with a discharge of electricity, sparks branching out, and that also resembled magnetic tracings, this indefinable quivering, burning, seething, like spasms for nerves, this tree with delicate branches, or scale, what could just as well have been outpourings along its sides, this tempestuous, centrifugal fluid, dazzling and leaping, ready to bubble forth but held back elastically and prevented from overflowing by a kind of surface tension, this nervous projection screen, even more mysterious that the vision that preceded it, I do not know, nor will I ever know, how to speak of it fittingly. Nothing like it is known. No one, so far as I know, has ever heard of anything that approaches it. But who can say that by means of some new sense upon the regions of the mind, it will not one day be visible to almost anyone who wants to see it, and this which I have drawn, engraved or not, will be recognized.

Meanwhile it bubbled, before me, for me, through me, a furious and impetuous seething, and I would see part of this seething, caught up in the onward movement, onward into the onward, in the violent hate, the spasth, the wrenching, enabled, concealed particularly in the face of these passages of me revealed on the unexpected and incredibly luminous screen, in a total silence, a baffling silence.

Despite its curious and novel appearance, I believe that I am showing a basic phenomenon that was bound to be discovered one day. Here it was plain and unconsidered, here it was unexpected in a state of exception, but—unless I am very much mistaken—it is a primal and general phenomenon that underlies even the most placid consciousness, the most strictly controlled and beclouding intelligence, and that, perhaps vaguely felt, but not seen, passes by unperceived and lacked other appearance than that of greater interest.

I believe then, that I am showing, having several times for many hours been in its then-prodigious presence, I believe that I am showing the very without end, the tree of life that is a source, that is dotted with words and images and propounding riddles, the flow that, without interruption, even for one single second, passes through men from the very first moment of his life right up to the last, stream or sandglass, that only stops when life stops.

The present drawings are, need I say? conservations. A hard two hundred times more agile than the human hand would not be up to the task of following the speeding course of the inexhaustible spectacle.

And it is out of the question to do anything other than follow. It is not possible here to take hold of thoughts, words, or forms, in order to elaborate on them, draw inspiration from them or improvise them. All power over them has been lost. Such is the price of their speed, their independence.

Untitled, 1959
Private collection

Untitled, 1995
Photocollagraph

Untitled, 1980
Fondation Maeght, Saint-Paul-de-Vence, France

Untitled, 1980
Ink Drawing on Mylar, 60 × 50 in.

Untitled, c. 1960

Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris

Untitled, 1980

Pen and ink on paper, 27 x 38 cm (10 x 15 in). Private collection, Paris, France.

Untitled, 1960
Private collection

Untitled, 1960
Private collection

Untitled, 1961
Collection of Claude Bonin, Paris

Untitled, 1961
Private collection, courtesy of Galerie Yves Hélène, Paris

Untitled, 1985
Private collection

Untitled (Peinture en Encre sur Papier à Fumer de Cilinda), 1965

Private collection, Courtesy Galerie Gimpel & Hanover, Zurich

Untitled (Chinese Ink Series 68 [Women & Dance de Chirali]), 1982
Watercolor, 22 x 30 in.

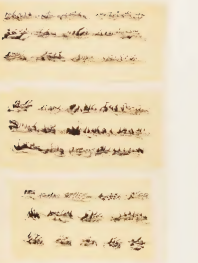
Untitled (Painting to Indian ink Thirteen à Cours de Chinoise, 1961)
Private collection

Untitled, 1981
Oil on canvas. Courtesy of Ace Maximo, Seoul.

[From *Ecuador*]

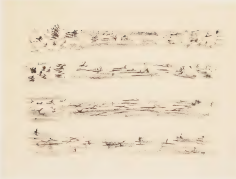
IS A STATEMENT REALLY NECESSARY? Isn't it obvious that I paint so as to leave work behind, to put an end to the tormenting question of how and why? Could it really be that I draw because I see so clearly this thing or that thing? Not at all. Quite the contrary. I do it to be perplexed again. And I am delighted if there are traps. I look for surprises. To know always would bore me. It would upset me. Must I at least be aware of what's been going on? Not even. Others will see it in another way and will perhaps be better placed to do so. Do I have a purpose? It doesn't matter. It is not what I want that must happen to me, but what tries to happen in spite of me . . . and happens incompletely, which is not serious. Once the work were finished I should be afraid that it might finish me too and bury me. Watch out for that. I try to name the indefinite, to not absolutely state within me and which may thus (who knows?) break out suddenly, a suddenly new and living movement. It is this movement that I know must take place, this improvised spontaneous movement. I should like to paint in the inner element, not just paint with it or thanks to it.

Now about the libre. I have said too much already. I bet that's what they are waiting for, the libre. Well, I have them. I love the writer, but there—no. They despise me. I am never rid of them until I have made them jump, run, climb, chatter down again. In themselves they are whatever to me and really only libre, which tell me nothing. (I have never been able to see anything at all in a Rorschach Test.) So I fight them, whip them, I should like to be done in once with their presence, stupidly, galvanize them, bewilder them, enrapture them, ally them enormously with everything that moves in the innumerable crowd of beings, of non-beings with a rage for being, to everything, mutinible desires or knots of force, which are destined never to take form, here or elsewhere. With their troop I busy myself with eating the libre. The libre are a provocation. I meet it. Quickly. One must act quickly with these big lime-ones that are apt to go wallowing everywhere. The crucial minute comes quickly. Quickly, before they extend their realm of dizziness and vomiting. Unbearable libre. If I'm a 'tachiste,' I'm one who can't stand 'tache' (blots).



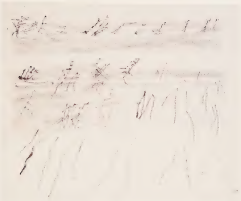
Untitled, 1961–62
Private collection

Untitled 1961
Private collection



Untitled, 1961
Collection of Claude Emmy, Paris

Untitled, 1981
Private collection



Untitled, 1982.
Mixed media on paper, 22.5 × 30.5 cm. Private Collection, Pennsylvania, Paris.

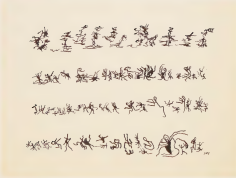
Untitled, 1981
Private collection

Untitled, 1961
Photolithograph

Untitled 1987
Private collection

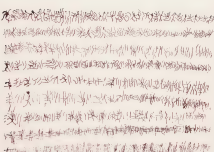
Untitled Drawing in Indian ink (Dessinar à l'encre de l'Inde), 1961
Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris

Untitled, 1963
Pen on vellum, 9 × 12 in.



Untitled, 1988.
Collection of Gerard Hertz-Pauw

Untitled, 1987
Pencil on canvas, 72 x 72 in.



Untitled, 1981–83
Collection of Carol Bove, Dear

Mescaline drawing, n.d.
Collection of Marie-Claude Tabarin, Paris

Mountain drawing, n.d.
Private collection

Moisissure dessiné, n.d.
Photocopie, collection privée

Lower Branchings (Arborescence inférieure), c. 1981–83
Mixed media, ink, watercolor, Collection Kathryn Dreyfuss, Paris

Pen-and-ink drawing, 1961
JPC Collection, Geneva

Pen-overlain drawing, 1966
PARIS, INSTITUT NATIONAL D'HIST. ÉMOTIONS, BRAIN

Pen-and-ink drawing, 1966
COLLECTION OF CLAUDE SERRE, PARIS

Pen-and-ink drawing, 1961
Based on Vézelay, France

Pari-mescaline drawing, c. 1964
Private collection

Pier-installation drawing, c. 1969
Private collection

From Vision Mescaline

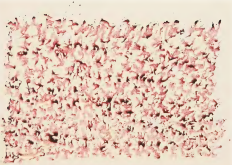
MESCALINE DRAWINGS. About these, yes. I ought to make a statement (gets ...). They do in fact happen differently. Strange, strange repetitions of moccoline, stranger than any drawing could be, even if it were to cover a whole wall with its pointed lines. When one first becomes conscious of internal images (and of external phenomena as well), it is only with a certain limited quantity of consciousness, a certain restricted speed of consciousness succeeding each other and making 'contact.'

Mescaline multiplies, sharpens, accelerates, intensifies the inner moments of becoming conscious. You watch their extraordinary flood, reconstructed, uncomprehending. With your eyes shut, you are in the presence of an immense world. Nothing has prepared you for this. You don't recognize it. Tremendously present, active, colored, swarming in tiny islands very close together with no empty space, turning, vibrating but stationary, fostering with ornaments, saturating the space that still remains immeasurable, that keeps coming in fits in seizings, twistings, intertwinings, in unpreventable accumulations ...

That world is another consciousness ...

Temples of monotonous contemplation, with ornaments and columns endlessly repeated by the novices of the perpetual ... Temples of indigent infinity, revealed incessantly, without progress, in a sterile, mechanical serenity, devoid of life (of this life or the emptiness and grimaces of the great Terrifier with his unheard-of rhythms. Each one unknowingly adds his uneasiness, his banality, simple, uneducated people contribute their poor riches. A strange world, that other one, where each sees in a different way, where only the real multiplication, the accumulation, the repetition have been perceived by everyone.

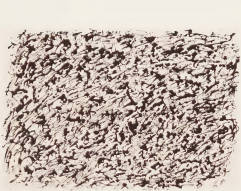
As for myself, I have usually (not always) seen the rhythm, the counter-rhythm. Much remains for me to do. I need other materials and another technique (especially for the colors). I had fare of all to record the rhythms accurately, and the process of infinitization through the infinitesimal ... I am just beginning.



Untitled, 1988.
Dimensions Gouache Ecoline Pens

Untitled 1968

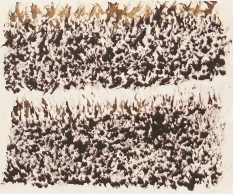
Private Collection, Kunst-Palast Essen, Germany



Untitled, 1960
Watercolor, Gouache, Ink on Paper, 18 x 24 in.

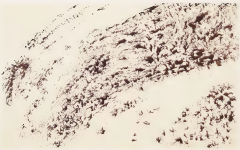
Untitled c. 1950
Photo: [illegible]

Untitled, 1955
Private collection

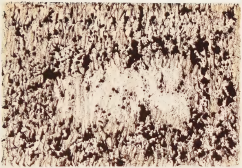


Untitled, 1968
Collection of Lorenzo Pecoraro, Paris

Untitled, 1976.
Ink. Collection Gerber

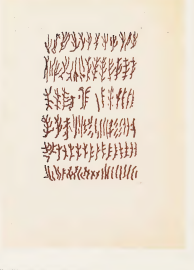


Untitled, c. 1963
Photo: Gregory Colon



Untitled (Gouache Découpée), n.d.
Photo: Jean-Claude Lemagny

Untitled, 1975
Private collection



Untitled (Rubbed Rhythm III), Ecoline, charcoal, ink, 1974
Private collection

Untitled (The War of Elephants [Par le roi des éléphants]), 1974
Private collection

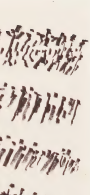
Untitled (To Wes of Ventura/For Lewis Ann and mom), 1974
Private collection

Lunchal the Wise of Elephant (Par le voir des enfants), 1874
Photo: [illegible]

Untitled (the Wire of Nineteen Thirty-Six into the underworld), 1974
Pen on vellum, 1 of 10

Untitled (the Wire of Shadow Wire is only the pretext), 1974
Private collection

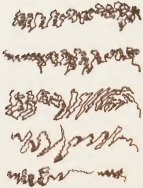
Untitled (Wall of Bamboo [Mur de bambous]), 1974
Photo: Jean Lambert



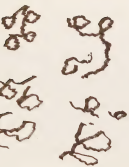
Untitled (Ici et Maintenant [Here and now]), 1974
Private collection

Untitled (The Way of Wisdom [Tao Te Ching] also embroidered), 1974
Private collection

Untitled (The Way of Wisdom [Jae le ssi do ordinal]), 1974
Private collection



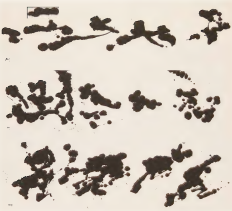
Untitled (the Wife of Zilahan [Ilse Grosvenor-Ordway]), 1974
Pencil on [illegible]



Untitled (By Way of Mathew [for la voie de verbouil], 1974
Photo: Gilles Coudyzer

Untitled c. 1970
Watercolour on paper

Untitled 1979
Private collection



Untitled 1960
Photo: [illegible]

Untitled, 1980
Private collection

Untitled (Procession of Monks, or Rather of Mandarins (1925)) / A moiner ou bien de mandarinats, 1930
Private collection

[From *Alibi*]

The author has often lived elsewhere: two years in Carabaud, about the same in the Land of Magic, a bit less in Poddania. Or a lot more. There are no precise dates.

He did not always particularly like those countries. Here and there, he nearly got used to them. Not really. When it comes to countries, the more one distrusts them the better.

He came back home after each trip. His resistance isn't infinite.

Some readers have found these countries a bit strange. That wasn't fast. The impression is already fading.

He who sought to escape the World becomes its translator, too. Who can escape? The container is closed.

You'll see: these countries are perfectly natural after all. Soon they will be encountered everywhere. ... Natural as plants, insects, natural as hunger, habit, age, custom, customs, as the presence of the unknown bordering on the known. Behind that which is, which nearly was, which tended to be, threatened to be, and which among millions of 'possibilities' began to be, but was unable to settle in completely ...

AN INTERVIEW WITH HENRI MICHAUX

John Ashbery

HENRI MICHAUX IS BADLY A PAINTER, hardly even a writer, but a conscience—the most persuasive substance you discovered for registering the fluctuating signals of day-to-day, minute-to-minute living.

Michaux lives in Paris on the rue Séguier, in the heart of a small district of crumbling but still aristocratic palaces that seems strongly hushed and dull in spite of the proximity of St. Germain-des-Prés and the Latin Quarter. A wooden scaffolding has been put up in the entrance hall to prevent the apartment house from collapsing. Michaux's apartment seems to have been carved out of a larger one. In spite of the character of the architecture and some hundred old furniture, the effect is neutral. The walls are no color, even the garden outside looks ghostly. Almost no pictures—a Zao Wou-ki and a Chinese painting of a horse (more or less hopeless to be there, don't blow any conclusions from them.) The only remarkable object is a large, bound-raw radio: like many poets, many painters, Michaux prefers music.

He seems interviewed, and seemed unable to remember why he had consented to this one. That may say as well things, since year by year he has tried to hide his light so that it was difficult to see him; he shielded his face with his hand and contemplated me warily over the corner of his eye. Michaux will not be photographed, and refuses to allow the drawing of himself to be reproduced. Faces have a horrible fascination for him. He has written: "A man and his face, it's a little as if they were intentionally designed to scare us." An editor who once wrote asking him for a photograph to publish in a catalogue with others, he replied: "I write in order to reveal a person whose existence no one would ever have suspected even looking at me"—this sentence was published in the space that had been intended for his portrait.

Yet Michaux's face is pleasant and gentle. He is Belgian, born in Namur in 1899, and if he has the pale complexion of northern peoples, and something of their phlegm, his face can still light up in a broad Flemish grin, and he is like a charming, unexpected giggle.

Has painting supplanted writing as a means of expression for him?

Not at all. In the last five years I've had three or four shows and published three or four books. Since I took up painting I do more of everything—but not at the same time. I write or paint in alternating periods.

I began painting in the mid-1950s partly as a result of a flow chart I saw, partly because of my trip to the Congo. I once asked a prostitute for directions in Dakar and she (she's lovely dressing to show us Everybody drives in the Ubeti).

The trip was a capital experience in Michaux's life: out of it came *Un barbare en Asie* as well as the discovery of a whole new rhythm of life and creation.

I had always thought there would be another form of expression for me—but I never thought it would be painting. But then, I'm always wrong about myself. I always wanted to be a tailor when I was young.

and I need a lot a whole, but I *simply didn't know the physical strength necessary. I had always thought I* didn't want to write, unless I had a physical urge, derived from such prison deprivations as take thumbscrews or Tom Jones's reading of *Pamela* aloud. Artists are such prima donnas—they take thumbscrews so seriously. Well, I was a prima donna—tumors, and, taken all point, I'd could, I would still prefer to be a musician. But you have to study. If there were only some way to store directly into a keyboard . . . Music machines are diatonic. My large ink drawings are already nothing but rhythm. Poetry doesn't satisfy me as much as painting—but other forms do satisfy.

Who are the artists who mean the most to him?

I love the work of Ensor and Klee, but they alone wouldn't have been enough to meet me painting seriously. I admire the Americans too—Pollock and Tobey—but they created a climate in which I could work seriously. I feel a great affinity for Klee, but I don't think I could have worked with him. I need a great personal. Just as one values the heroes of the past who have done what he (the painter) also they gave everybody to write whatever comes into their heads. And of course the Chinese classical painters showed me what could be done with just a few lines, just a few statements.

But I don't think very much about influences. You may listening to people's voices in the street, but they don't make your problem for you. What is something good is dormant you from your problem.

Did he feel that his poetry and his painting were two different forms of expression of the same thing?

Both of them try to express music. But poetry also tries to express some non-logical truth—a truth which exists when you read it beside. Painting is different—there is no question of truth. I make decisions about things just as I would dance. This is not a virtue.

I asked Sheehan whether he felt his experiences of mescaline had had an effect on his art, other than the drawings he did under its influence, which he calls "mescaline drawings," and which, with their hypersensitive meaning of insubstantial, filament-like lines into notes, look different from the bold, abrupt stuff he does under normal conditions.

"Mescaline gives you more attention for everything—for details, for terribly rapid successions." Describing such an experience in his recent book, *Pain deep by Pleasure*, he wrote:

My trouble was great. The decoration was greater. The speed was even greater . . . A hand two hundred times more light than the human hand would not have sufficed to follow the accelerated course of this unparalleled spectacle. And there was no question of anything but following. You cannot resist a thought, a texts, a figure, to work them over, get inspiration from them, improve on them. All power is lost on them. This is the point of their quality, their independence.

He also spoke of the superhuman detachment he felt under the influence of mescaline, as though he could observe the machinery of his own mind from a distance. This detachment can be terrible, but on one occasion it resulted in a vision of beatitude, the only one in his life, which he describes in *L'Infini turbulent*: "I am thousands of gods . . . Everything was perfect . . . I hadn't lived in vain . . . My futile, wandering existence was at last setting foot on the miraculous road . . .

This moment of peace and fulfillment was without precedent in Michaux's experience. He hasn't sought to return it—"It was enough that it happened." And he hasn't taken mescaline in over a year, not that he "knows." Perhaps I'll take it again when I'm a virgin

once more." he said. "But this sort of thing should be experienced only rarely. The Indians tend to smoke the peyote plant only on great occasions. Today people smoke five or six packs of cigarettes a day. How can one experience anything that way?"

It had begun to grow dark in the room and the noises in the gray garden outside seemed to belong on the once metaphysical terrain he describes in *Me Peyote*. I remembered that minute aspects overlay in his work. "That is not correct," he said. "At any rate, animals do. I adore animals. If ever I come to your country it will no doubt be to visit the zoo." (In only visit to America was as a sailor, in 1920, and he saw only Norfolk, Savannah, and Newport News.)

I once had two hours to spend in Frankfurt when I had a close three, and I shocked the director of the Botanical Garden by asking to see the botanical garden rather than the museum. As a matter of fact, the garden was not very interesting. I concluded I can no longer feel a sense of kinship with animals. The spectacle of my own mind is so much more interesting, or more conscious of my mind, I can no longer feel sympathy with a dog, because he hasn't one. (Laughs.)

We discussed the mechanism he uses. Though he works with oils and watercolors, he prefers India ink. The large white sheets of drawing paper studded all over with hard black little knots, or strewn with vaguely human figures that suggest some hopeless battle or pilgrimage, are typical of Michaux. "With India ink I can make a small, very minute drawing, then." he said. "But I have other plans for ink. Among other things, I've been doing some India ink paintings on canvas. I'm enthusiastic about this. Because I can be both precise and blurry with the same brush, at the same moment. It's direct; there are no rules. You're not up against the traces of all the, *ancêtres* of painting."

In these canvases Michaux often paints three wide vertical bands, using little ink to give a dreamy effect. In this vague medium swim dozens of desperately articulate little figures: birds, men, wings, more deliberately drawn than in the drawings but animated by the same intensive energy.

Major than his other work, they seemed to realize his intentions for painting as he expressed them recently in the magazine *Quadrum*:

> [Instead of one vision that includes others, I would have liked to free the monsters that glared side by side, given rise to gap a life. To expand the interior phrase for people to see, the phrase that has no words, a phrase which is musically, and intensively accompanies everything that impinges from the outside or the inside. I wanted to show the circumvolutions of existence and the flow of time. As one takes one's pulse.
>
> *Art News*, March 1961

Pierre Michaud in his studio, photographed by Cécile Fournel, n.d.

Catherine de Zegher

PEN IN HAND, WRITING OR DRAWING, forming concepts or images, Henri Michaux leaves a trail of ink behind him, an invitation to the voyage. A true poet and artist, he believes imagination, or rather the movement of imagination, action, to be "one of the strangest of all voyages into the self." He was himself carried away in "the poetry of incomplete perfected to repetitious accounts, to copies. Markings launched into the air, flattening as if caught by the moment of a sudden inspiration, and not precisely ..." It is a model of the Brilliant spiritual mobility shattering the static and established images that well-defined words have become. "Born, raised, educated in an environment and culture uniquely given over to the 'verbal,' I paint it deconstructed myself." Michaux opens *Emergences-Resurgences*. The non-mimetic process of his tracing becomes a way of turning the truth-dimensional representational and social activity into a two-dimensional equivalent of self-abandonment in literary space, where cultural and social underpinnings of imaginaire remain both questions and answers. Literary language and not the mirror is the site of the observation, the interrogation of linguistic systems in Michaux's quest—and like all quests, it does not cease in discovering its object but in accepting the discontinuity and impossibility.

From an early age Michaux struggled to contest many conventions of Western society, most importantly the powerful role assigned to words. As a young sailor he exhibited a worldwide journey to mind "drawbacks," in a quest that was to exemplify his battle against pre-established codes. As "a man of letters" he could be supposed to hold words in high regard, yet he was aware of how they could serve those in authority and devised numerous strategies of resistance. Marking the blank page is such a transfer and a subversion like the thickening of words, and instead of forcing one to speak, and to speak violently, any form of coded inertia. Beginning in the 1920s, he experimented with making his first "illegible" marks in works such as *Epouvantes* and *Nouvelles*. "Illegible writing indicates in fact that the signs has been irremorsefully eaten away by its own figurative nature; and that it does indeed take almost nothing at all for the figure to revert back to its status as a mere drawing." This activity allowed him to imagine an expanded linguistic system composed of non-quasi-lexical but still somehow meaningful elements operating spontaneously in the junction between pictogram, line, stain, and character. Constantly in flux, his ink drawings exploded representative signs, explored the unknown, and conquered the profound and indescribable.

Whether he threw a stain paper or flung it from the pen itself, Michaux's use of ink followed later by watercolor, was fluid, direct, and idiosyncratic. Water-soluble, these transparent and fast-moving materials demanded the artist's absolute interventions, but allowed him "to draw the consciousness of existing and the flow of time. So one takes one's pulse." More interested in transformation and movement than in the finished product,

Michaux loved the fluidity of the endless, its uncertainty, its freedom, and its gratuitous physicality. "Could it really be that I drew because I see so clearly this thing or that thing? Not at all. Quite the contrary, I do it to be peripheral again. And I am delighted if there are traps. I look for surprises." In same work he noted that "writing poetry was a game." Described by artist as "premotion" to be dealt with rapidly: "One must act quickly with these big trap areas that are up to go-and-come-back-from-there. The crucial minute comes quickly. Quickly before they extend their realm of objectivness and vomiting."

Although the amazement of his work invites comparison with the contemporaneous Surrealist practice of automatism, it was not the unconscious, but rather absolute conscious-ness, that Michaux sought to express. For him, the implications of an established set of signs contained a way of making language visible and belonged to the domain of the legible. Through his writing was philosophical, yielding to the rigorous non-meaning silence involved typographical experimentation, visual parody, or consideration of the graphic make-up of the sign. Such fundamental disruptions of the textual level seemed to be directly related to his use of drawing. In his book *Mouvements* he developed a method of tracing rigidly suggestive (referential) "motions" in "motion," with no meaning, yet suggesting meaning, and proposing and appraising the world status as part of a coded linguistic system that could not be ignored. Even if the structures seemed inadequate, limited, and absurd to him, it still had a sense, perhaps a meaning. In contrast to the surrealists, who sought their automatism independent of free association and their structural formulations attempted to destroy tradition and logic, disregarded any codified generative structure, and, in the extreme, Michaux stayed within a pan-linguistic interdisciplinary system of expressive marks. Working from the model of Chinese ideograms, he sees the material of a universal language of pure lines that would communicate universally or "martian," without forming any ideas too definitely. "Drawn with our swiggering languages, with their rigid, enslaving syntax and grammar. Let's have no alphabets—no words." In his book *Par des traits* Michaux suggests: "The sign finally delivering us from litanies of words, of phrases depending only on phrases, continuing indefinitely. It would free the brain from social over-occupation. . . . Signs that would enable us to be open to the world differently, creating and developing a different language, a different consciousness, etc."

Michaux's oeuvre—where logic and a refusal of any form of logic are opposed—oscillates between order and disorder, language and non-language, form and deform, social signs and personal escape, as such, its place is world literature and art is important but difficult to fix and categorize, and certainly, Michaux effectively achieved his purpose of rendering the non-definite. John Ashbery described him as "hardly a painter, hardly even a writer, but a phenomenon—the most sensitive substance yet discovered for registering the fluctuating aspects of day-to-day, minute-to-minute living." Some of Michaux's writings were translated into English and were exhibited in the spring by the Californian Bear generation, in particular *Miserable miracle*, which related his experiences with mescaline. His ultimate range from the poet Alain Gouiberg and the writer Jorge Luis Borges to the French top-ten MC Solaar is the legacy. Because of the resistance to the gestural and exploratory nature of the painting and drawing, Francis Bacon, among other artists, compared Michaux to Jackson Pollock, claiming

> I think that Michaux is a very intelligent man—intelligent and extremely well-educated—perhaps a reminiscence of the situation in which he was neglected. It seems to me the same thing happens with Michaux as happened with Pollock, he is misunderstood. I feel that equally in this respect to Jackson Pollock.[7]

But then again, even if in the famous lack of Michaux and Pollock the practice of 'action painting' and 'action drawing' seems to emerge more as the simultaneous (if not equal) urge and contact then on a formal level, their 'performance' reveals a very different investigation and attempt to describe the inner and outer space of the artist. Pollock, at the 'age-of', was made in oil and bordered on the spectacular, Michaux's less 'dripping' was made in ink (ecrit) and bordered on the spontaneous writing of an inner message. As Michaux's practice remains unclassifiable, it seems to escape a connection to the Abstract Expressionists as much as to the Surrealist movement.

A writer of the drawn or a drawer of the written, Michaux never abandoned pen or paper. He was the author of more than thirty books of poetry, prose poems, narratives, essays, journals, and thousands of drawings. The drawings, which included a wide range of experiment (some of them with mescaline in the mid 1950's), are not merely accompanying words, but conceived and collided with them. Michaux took his writing into his drawing and his drawing into his writing, producing the hybridization of each form of artistic practice. Letters within or without alphabets appeared as dark and powerful signs on the surfaces of the page. In "To Draw the Flow of Time" Michaux relates how, at the suggestion of a publisher, he started to write characters. At the beginning, he was trying "against his wo-illness" – for fear writing be enlarged!" – he stared hold of a breath (which was destined to replace the fine-mitred pen of his characters that were supposed to cover the page). But, "I soon changed the spice of the drawing."[1] The artist-writer began to entrach these "left-handed exercises" with two-pronged quantities and variations of blacks, whites, and stains, which, for him, are to produce a sense of intense chaos. Now covering large sheets of paper, the marks gathered in megaphonic "battles" that were waged at the margins between formal and graphic expression. In fact, language as existential space was a battlefield that preoccupied him during his whole life. The work's intensity and passion is powerfully described by Michaux himself:

> (I Henri Michaux) intervenes strike in so so close to so and spot so directly to our fate, even though they do not seem to explicitly or at all, it is free of the bitterness, free of the bitterness of our destiny, namely, that it can only discover a meaning in its attempt to escape from this meaning and indeed from all possible meaning altogether – so that the phenomenon of the meaning and the intentions of his language is what matters to us the most. But, at the same time, this pronouncement, this objection without resentment, this blind and dumb protest by an object and a language that are extremely decisive the power of anger and of expressiveness, misery and despair, infinite emotion. There is no other language that is so intense and so intense that it makes here Pascal as expressive as Jean-marie-marcel and Gustave Moreau, or a voice more plural and more logic.

When *Rimes* Rimbe painted out to Michaux that in *Mouvements* drawing and writing are not equivalent, the former being freer and the latter more dense, the artist responded:

> There's nothing intermediary about that. They are not the same ego. The drawings are quite one-to-one, especially those, in the very process of being born, in the state of innocence, of surprise, but the words, the words come afterwards, afterwards, always afterwards ... and after so many others. How could they get me free? On the contrary, it is through having fled my front words, these tentacious partners, that the drawings are freely and dexter poses, that their movements come bacipeedy to me even in exasperation. And so I am in them I new language, spurning the words, and so I am them as dreams.[2]

Ever the astute translator and diplomat, Michaux's drawings are collaborating between the written text and its liberating counterpart, drawing. Seemingly prefiguring the conceptual artist, he reflects publicly in essays and poetic aphorisms about his work and the world.

Therefore, a book dedicated to his work—in this case the exhibition catalogue from The Drawing Center—should begin with Michaux's presence as a draftsman and a writer who worked with a wide spectrum, from the merely visible to the highly legible.

Inside a Michaux catalogue drawing at a distance, or a discussion of writing as a distrance of knowledge, his position can be compared to what Georges Agamben describes in Western culture as the Sabbatian relationship to the word, the notion "that man preserves in object without knowing it while philosophy knows in object without possessing it. The word is thus divided between what it unsays, as it falls from the sky, and enjoys the object of knowledge by representing it in beautiful form, and a word that has all sensations and consciousness for itself but does not enjoy its object because it does not know how to represent it."[1] However, Michaux, who was fascinated by neurotrical experiences and non-Western cultures, tried again and again to grind the opposition of entirmentation between drawing and writing by developing a continuous exchange and acknowledging that both follow the same creating impulse and drive in the inscriptive gesture of drawing. Above all, this process is about the hand exploring a given space, traveling over the paper, and engraving it according to its own possibilities. "The genesis of the text, as of any written mark (particularly that of drawing), must be considered from the viewpoint of the hand and spatial play which the hand urges. Neither the paradigm of the eye nor that of language allows us to grasp the meaning of this drift, displacement, and transformation of the text. It born is distraction from what it enunciates. The paradigm of the hand, however, achieves such an understanding. Originally what is at stake in the hand is the very material of psychic investments which are bound up in it."[2] In the tracing process, Michaux often intended to blur the distinction between writing and drawing by incorporating ideogrammatic signs, the alphabet, and calligraphic marks, while removing them from the duty of representation or consistency. He altered and played with the forms of language, until they disappeared into continually changing fragments of movement, creating a new, visual language to contemplate the disruption of the language. Through their work, Michaux attempted to return the lines and strokes to a pre-symbolic, pre-linguistic state. There thus emerges a sort of truth of the hand, which requires drawing to show everything without dissimulation, without cheating, without trickery.[3] Paradoxically, this ethical dimension expressed according to fidelity to the dictates of an inner emphasizes its instrumental function as the signifier corresponding to the signified. This, of course, goes back to the Renaissance conception of drawing as idea and brings us further toward the recent claims of conceptual art, which has argued emphasis on radicalize drawing as the expression of an idea and its processes of coming-into-being. This characteristic would seem to relegate writing and drawing, charging both of them with the expression of thought, of clarity, of black-on-white. Posited as a pure vehicle for content, however, this conception of drawing neglects the bodily impulse present in elementary texts or strokes. It is the perception of the fluidity hand that makes Michaux's all-embracing stroke even more fascinating. The hand-traveling of the artist's gestural lines and distorted articulations produces a non-discourse that undermines linguistic systems. "Meaning further and further away from mimesis, representation, and intention, Michaux's language, ironically, moves from the same body Bataille merge or at least eclipse. His audience is asked to perceive, read, decipher lines permeating residue to a familiar alphabet not to a recognizable outline and defying the principles of

repetition and analysis."[7] Drawing has while mind to the conquer and his whole and to the things, he tries to reconcile their contradictory tensions as impossible, to reconcile "the image cannot give matter to the concept; the concept, by giving stability to the image, would stifle its existence."[8]

The dialectic operative in Michaux's work seem to epitomize the literal passages in Merleau-ponty's text from the more general expression of the unconscious to the conceptualization of a form of thought. In this sense, the exhibition *Untitled Passages by Henri Michaux* seems more than a selection and includes work from the 1920s through the 1970s, has been conceived as an imaginary image between the first and second part of the twentieth century represented by two historical exhibitions at The Drawing Center: the first exhibition—*The Primitive Collection: Drawings* open in November 1996 and drawing from the 1890s to the 1920s—being about the line drawn *Beyond* reason, and the forthcoming exhibition drawing in minimalist and conceptual art with work from the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s—being about the line drawn within reason. Through this series, The Drawing Center attempts to expose various dialectics implicit in twentieth-century drawing. A challenging exploration rather than a conventional historical survey, the series considers drawing as a vehicle for exploring various contexts of practice. Through Michaux's lesser-known areas of visual production, each of the exhibitions returns a decisive moment of the development of drawing throughout the 20th century and the 21st century. Michaux's exposition is dedicated to specific topics and moments, this way of working allows flexibility and open-mindedness in the analysis of the subject of drawing—signifying the matter-of-fact drawing itself—and as much it does not claim to establish one reading but to induce many readings.

Michaux's exhibition is not conceived of as a retrospective, it seems to primarily rent-figurative works that explore drawing as an outlet for expression beyond and within the limits of language. Rather than strictly following a chronology, the display traces the thinking permeating the work with repetitions, pauses, ruptures, disappearances, and resurgences—in the manner of a dance. The exhibition takes its name from Michaux's large body of untitled drawings more released from descriptive burdens and use of his books of poetic writings. *Passages*, in seeking to continue the two art forms, the exhibition intentionally is what centers the boundaries between the fields of literature and art, and crossed, and proposes a timely reconsideration of Michaux's creative process. He worked in transcribe into the image of the "inner phrase," a sort of polyphonic that render expression but that been witness to the passage of life within a person as well as to the emotionate passage from the real to the imaginary. The exhibition exposes this same kind of movement and emphasizes the connections in Michaux's work between the abandonment of the self within a floating world devoid of points of reference and the concern for the unfolding of visual and written expression on the blank page.

In 1948 The Drawing Center initiated to research into the line between the literary and the visual through the exhibition *Shadows of the Hand: The Drawings of Victor Hugo*. When one views work by artist-writers such as Victor Hugo and Henri Michaux, it becomes clear that the writing process, as it takes on the form of thought in which it gives form, can be considered a practice forever on the point of drifting off course." This appears during the pauses and hesitations of the thought process, when the pen escapes the accomplishment of meaning, publication, scribbles, and the excessive embellishment of letters, the transformation of words,

lines, and sidelines into bends, animals, or other, less explicable things—the hand tells' eyes Dadaffe. The visible curves and paths with the legible, it is unpunctuation, playful, useless, and it drews writing towards stocking." This uncontrolled relationship between writing and drawing, nonetheless be lost in the transformation from the manuscript to publication in the digitized text. What the personalities linked together, the keystroke seems to set apart. As the hand uses different typefaces and instruments, ranging from the pencil to the typewriter to the computer, its gestures follow the same itinerary during the thought process, but all its drawing traces are erased on the screen, drawn into invisibility. The legible becomes too legible. The whole conceptual process of marking is effaced and results in a perfect printer with or hard copy to be delivered without stains, without surprises.

Still, at least potentially, the current technological revolution seems to bring the computer closer to the conditions of manual creation than the typewriter had done before, because the latter excluded the many operations to be performed quickly and easily by the hand, which the computer facilitates and stimulates. With the mouse one can move and edit the sentence as well as in several complex ways. Although within the normative use of standard word programs the array of discretional matter is lost, there are more possibilities for an artist relationship with the machine that allow one to play and try and explore and discover. At this moment such interfacing and engagement can also be recorded. Still, once the interpretive gesture of typing is rendered in this manner, one can see that what probably this question is triggered only by a certain nostalgia—what is going to happen down the road of digitalization and computerization to the frontiers between the legible and the visible—is related to literally to be found in the margin on the pages of draft copybooks, at the direct intersection between writing and drawing. Often the traces emerged from simple graphic annotations and doodles to more elaborate sketches throughout the body of the manuscript, superimposed on the text or drawn on the back of the written pages. On the one hand the interspace between words and sketches dissolved the illusory barrier between the domains of literature and art, but on the other hand it constituted a sort of "sanctuary" that could become literature as a finished product if it became visible. Over the course of centuries of unchained improvements, typographical continuity, whereby the visual traces of the thought process have been concealed, has thus become more and more unreachable. Lost in virtual space, the trail of ink may no longer indicate the path taken by the traveler at the heart of darkness.

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During the exhibition, The Drawing Center and the Maison Française, New York University, will be the hosts of a grand discussion on Michaux's work to be chaired by Denis Hollier, Professor of French Literature, New York University. Congenial co-hosts of the evening's main authors (Professor Bilboue, Professor Sieburth, Professor Jerry) and Professor Antoine Compagnon, they will offer an opportunity to pare our understanding of a celebrated figure who moved freely between the realms of poetry and the visual arts. For her interest in pursuing us as an organizer of this event I thank Francine Saillant, Director of the Maison Française of New York University.

In the last few years, The Drawing Center has been the beneficiary of the exemplary work of the French Cultural Services, which has encouraged the development of projects, such as our Victor Hugo exhibition, that bring renewed attention to exceptional individuals who have enriched French culture. At the French Cultural Services I am particularly grateful to Pierre Buhler, Cultural Counselor; Béatrice Ellis, Cultural Attachée; Antoine Vigne; Olivier Brossard, and Hervé Fergon. The exhibition has been made possible by generous grants from them, along with the Eugene V. and Clara E. Thaw Charitable Trust, The Michel-David-Weill Foundation, and again S. I am deeply appreciative of these funders for their early and sustained support. Finally, it has been both a pleasure and an honor to undertake this project with the unfailing guidance of The Drawing Center's Board of Directors. I extend special thanks to board members Edward H. Tuck and Elizabeth Robson for their invaluable counsel and steady enthusiasm. Long champions of French arts and letters, they were quick to realize the value of this project devoted to a Belgian artist who came to make his home—and his mark—in Paris and written marks—in France.

Notes

1 Gaston Bachelard, *La Poétique* (Imprimerie Bonneton and Brown, ed., 1992, and 1960, *Colette Cocteau, Dalida*, Texas Christian University Press, 1968), p. 18.

2 Henri Michaux, *Passages*, trans. Richard Howard, Paris: Gallimard, 1950, p. 7.

3 Henri Michaux, *Emergences-Résurgences* (1972), trans. Richard Sieburth, Milan (Skira) and New York (The Drawing Center), 1994, p.

4 Thierry Bizot, "Gilbert Prilleux Lapidaire Cubiste," *Sculpture: Writing and Drawing, Yale French Studies*, no. 89, 1995, p. 6.

5 Henri Michaux, "Le Rouge Dans le Dessin de Tous," 1959, Richard Sieburth, "Fascinating Gestures," no. 1, Brussels 1997. Republished in Henri Michaux, *Artists and Poets*, Paris: Gallimard, 1998, p. 9. Translation by Richard Sieburth, "Fascinating Gestures," Brussels, Musée national des ancien arts, 1998, p. 28.

6 Henri Michaux, *Passages*, trans. Richard Howard, Paris: Gallimard, 1950, p. 7. London: Boston: Faber Gallery, 1983. First published in Henri Michaux, *Barcos, poemas, dessins*, trans. Cocteau, Paris, Colette Donat Cornelius Schneider, November 1949.

7 Colette Donat, Cocteau, *Dessins*, Paris: Michaux Anthology, 1950, p. 14. Reflecting and Line Amphoras, Collections and London University of Texas Press, 1968.

8 Henri Michaux, *Dire du rêve*, Paris: Éditions Fontaine, 1946.

9 Dali 1944, pp. 97–98.

10 Dali 1944, p. 98. "Dali Interviews a Dwarf Splendor" in the journal *Dessins* (Genève: no. 16), November 1948, p. 11. According to Alfred Pacquement's note (pseudonym for, p. 14, 16) it originally come from a 1946 interview with David Gascoyne.

11 "L'Heure Pas Heure d'Yves," Gaugebrunn Fragments (1976), p. 41.

12 *Thomas Bernhard*, Saint Sylvester or *A Nightmare*, Trans. (Stuttgart) 1999, pp. 80. *Der Untergeher* trans. Richard Sieburth.

13 Pierre Pélicier, Préface, Harmonies et Rose Brehl, Paris (Collection Le Point du Jour, Gallimard) 1947.

14 Jean Cocteau, "Hommage à Henri Brehl," Exposition Brehl, Paris: Galerie Pierre Colle, 1950. Harold S. Wechsler, *Dance and Allegory of Literature*, L'XIII, Montparnasse and Cocteau's University of Minnesota Press 1994, p. 1.

15 Sarge Tiernan, "All Writing is Drawing: The Spatial Dimension of the Manuscript," *Sculpture: Writing and Drawing, Yale French Studies*, no. 89, 1995, p. 10.

16 Georges Boyer, "Writing/Drawing/Line," *Sculpture: Writing and Drawing, Yale French Studies*, no. 89, 1995, pp. 41–48.

17 Dali 1944, p. 98. "Dernière Heure Mon Ami." *Les mots pour quoi faire*, "*Sculpture: Writing and Drawing, Yale French Studies*, no. 89, 1995, p. 10.

18 Dali 1944, p. 98.

19 Dali 1944, p. 8.

Florian Rodari

I FORGIVE ER BE BIG BAAV VINTERED—his journeys abroad as well as in the spiritual realm—Hazar Machsaia always remained an *homme de plume*, a pen-man. While the French expression may be somewhat ironic, the remark itself is an way more disparagingly: On the one hand, it implies that the poet held in his hand throughout his life, and used as much in his writings as in the sketching of his drawings, remains one of the most mobile and strong, and at the same time one of the most precise and sobering, this century has given us. But in Michaux, there is an essential connection to the notion that guides the hand, lets it dangle or caress it to the sustenance, to the ink; this jumps out right away at someone reading him for the first time, or discovering one of his pieces hanging on the wall. A specific distance that everywhere and at all times reveals a writing, that is, a flow and, at the same time, an encounting of resistance.

Two sides have forever coexisted within the act of writing. The first, outwardly the most artist of the two (or at any rate, the one that produces the most particular pieces of work in literature), is in reality governed by discourse, conforming to the dictates of thought, to impulses of the heart or force of memory. The other is another side, unknown, the less familiar and less obvious, and which, without knowing it, responds to the fundamental mutations of language. In the West, virtually nothing is done to derive the full development of this part; hidden, resistant to logical proof, it is nevertheless a translator of immense depths. Calligraphy (more thoroughly named *the art of writing*, as practiced in the East, particularly in China), on the other hand, distinguishes between these two sides, exploiting both or even cultivating the second at the expense of the first. The calligrapher, mindful of every gesture of both himself and the works—in the manner of his wrist, his entire body involved in the approach, through the dactility of the ink, the suppleness of the brush, the resistance of the paper—experiences a stillness, an extraordinary fusion, unimaginable in our own rational and authoritarian practices of writing. There is no need to recall the extent to which this unusual aspect of transcribed speech was lost with the advent of typography. Indeed, since the invention of type, or even further back, since lines have been engraved, since Latin epigraphy and its masons inscribed in marble, it has trapped the written word within the silence and discipline of margins. This force will to regiment words, to place them in formations, squares, columns, lines, and squares—a veritable polis (in French this word also refers to typeface) serving the orderly mind and limited time—contrasts with the mind writing of the East and its unsounding ability to condense into a single mark the expansiveness of gesture, and the distant echo of a scene.

From his very first texts, the poet Hazar Machsaia set out to eliminate the authoritarian complicity of institutionalized language in his writings, this pompous, morbid, rapid, and dreadfully pretentious tale that contaminates man's speech the moment they use it to judge,

effect, or direct. Right from the outset and for the duration of his life, he longed to replace *this* pin, revealed in one of his first poems (*I get a pin / or dolphin in the bread*?), with a mobiley, a suspension, a reticulum more in keeping with life and its motion. From *Qwe Ro*, published in 1967, onwards, Michaux devises a new kind of poetic structure.

That, words seemed to have fallen from grace when this young writer of the 1920s was choosing his mode of expression. These days, like Michaux, were almost over. The war in Europe still reeling from the rifts of war suspected words of having failed in their task, of benevolent disappointing and not being appropriate for describing the urgency and ruin opened up by the collective insanity. The effectiveness that had for so long been thrive-bringing men together by ensuring the continuity of a viable social order—was seriously shaken. The more demanding denounced the failure of this logical world, established in part by words and perpetuated by them for centuries. Despite the rare precision of the verbal tool very quickly in his possession, a precision inordinately recognized by his elders, Michaux soon felt the need, as did so many of his peers in this era, to shake his precious talent, to subject his nature of expression to outsider other than that of access or power. That, he soon wanted to divest his natural talent for description, as well as his delight in writing and playing with words, to divest from his first real concerns. His aspirations in reality, to put them to work for a higher purpose, one detoured from within by the artist, even unprecedented desire for truth.

The fact remains that words, uniquely, belong to a code that one may not jettison without fear of ending up in an aporia, in a sterile stalemate; it is for that reason, no doubt, that Michaux never followed the example of André Breton and his Surrealist friends in their pioneering experiments. His more extreme attempts, in scorn or anger, always remain an ear with the communication system in which he has agreed to express himself. His oracles against quality and the established order have never frequent and nothing that may be, in real life, outside the foundations of language. Indeed, in his own, language is defined by a structure that requires some, it is absurd, he is necessary. Admittedly, the authority of relationship, the sentiment of feeling, and thoroughfarness remain the meager lot that falls to those who choose to use words but wish to be able to escape from the self-enclosed system, as many ways a remarkable one, but nonetheless enclosed. Michaux, who could not write entirely to escape their company, however imperfect or disabled they may be, and it was precisely in the often-made attempt to this disability that he would derive the best part of his written work.

Partly quickly, however, Michaux decided to entrust the task of probing those depths that words, too slow and disengaged, cannot reach, to the obscure, ignored part of the drawing board. The effects of this decision, made in the wake of shock that followed a revolving encounter with certain images, drug-drive generated profitable displacements of Kline and Max Ernst, was immediate, the crash, immediate and miraculous. Freed of its obligation to serve rational discourse, the spontaneous and unexpected rush carrying it along despite itself, the hand immediately experienced a joyous certainty, one often returned by Michaux. What is more, this suddenly acquired speed allowed it to discover domains that are utterly inspiring. The celebrated *dessin à fond noir* (black background), drawings done in black pencil that date from the late 1950s, are dropped in this respect. Here we see the playing out of a setting before the alphabet, before the "restaining" of the child through the

acquisition of communication rules. Here the world is still without barriers, without language or gender distinctions, spread out in full exclusivity. As he returned to an origin, into the space of its beginnings, a moving definition in which strange primordial notions are stirred up and whose trial cycles are formed of which we have no knowledge, the poet-painter-seer, which seems to an unobtrusive observer, "Black is my crystal ball," Michaux once said, even before beginning to hear, and then describe, the spectacular definition he knew was "Black is my eye." The black space contains images, just as the sheet of paper irresistibly attracts them.

Right now, Michaux seems to be interested in the drawing pen allows us to return to our more distant childhood, to recover in ourselves the very depths where aviational terror consists with the utopias of joy.

There is no doubt that in Michaux's eyes, at least in the early years of his career, painting was to have the advantage of opening up an unknown continent, one unscathed by points of reference and uncharted with concepts. What is more, a different horizon of fantastic, unhoped-for perspectives, compared with oriental, booby-trapped, old-hippie literature, because where the hand, youthful and wide-open, must have made a mark, it was a clear off, fancy-free, in a resolutely beneficial state of ignorance.

Existence of the world, the feeling that engages the eye of the individual who stops forward to the discovery of these works pocket-sized paintings one must read up close, hand-held paintings suitable for a portfolio consultation, constitutive of a gallery. Michaux's work, the notion of the page to be read and of the book emerge in the same proportion of familiarity and convenience to us, made, no large canvases, a minimum of equipment. Limited to oneself. On the flat of the desk. What is more, Michaux's preferred support is paper, a truly manipulated lightness making it for all things in ideal portrait, used sometimes for an absorbent quality, sometimes for its high resistance and shape. Obviously, the portrait of one who approaches a sheet of paper being that before him is similar to that of the painter attacking a canvas from an upright position and thus in an altogether different relationship of confrontation. Here, having no model, the artist has only to bend over himself.

For a long time, fine-tipped pens and paintbrushes, Indian ink, watches, watercolor, and gouache, Michaux, in his more sophisticated equipment, were the instruments chosen for the ease with which they can be handled, as well as for their ability to respond to mental pressure, they allow the artist to react quickly and subtly to the impulse of the moment. In every one the gesture, confined in scene and space, can be qualified as writing. In calligraphy —this is in fact one of its rudiments—gestures do not have to be sweeping ones, they need only mobilize maximum, but contained, power, as well as maximum sensibility. The ink can flow through the air or drift, it of digestible, but in any case it seems to be without forces. Oil painting, more deliberate, clings to the ground, does not break free. And when, rather belatedly, it was used by Michaux, it was in fluid flat tints, or in short, nervous accents, never in thick, slow-drying pastes.

As regards interstitials throughout his work as a painter, Michaux devoted himself to pages of writing, where signs, notations, ideograms, whatever we want to call them, show a consistent style, a freedom of pursuit seemingly boundless. There is never any repetition or absolute automatism in this hand running wild, ensuring the maintenance of each of these forms, which, while related, show no family resemblance, sign-cells in which the muscular energy

voice according to time and life. An intensive knowledge of the body as well as a blind faith in space are constantly visible in these pages, as extreme balance is maintained between the uncontrollable outburst of the hand, which dances and races across the sheet, covering its area. In this space as well, the pen aids flight.

In contrast to these small and deliberate black grenades that grab the eye, the colors used by Michaux are, in general, subdued and extremely assertive. Pretty pastels, mauves and olive greenish tints, colombin, pale turquoise, saffron yellows, glints rather than sources of light, and in truth not very straightforward, rather cowardly, almost sickly—these all do their part in and the gray into a state of indecision, a perceptible wavering between well-being and uneasiness, always irresponsible. Applied as translucent glazes, these colors never clearly associate with a form; they are tints rarely seen in the Western world, barely even tints for the mutant, in any case defying any customary belief definition one might have of them. And this slight skewing of our habitual modes of perception reinforces the sense that means are irrepressibly conveyed by these colors. The only substance of order is provided by a sort of interplay of these means, ever responding to tones, in the meantime, to form a harmonic repetition that revitalizes the disintegration and gives a vague sense to the tones.

In these works, then, we are confronted with the modesty of means, the lack of materials, the tolerance of effects. They seem to be made of nothing, sometimes even less. The speed surprises and certainly recalling not so much Oriental calligraphy as Western distance. One comes across forms that are reluctant to be fixed, charged with a phenomenon that for all of its intensity does not provide any direction. The meanings cling to glass without entering themselves, or with a slowness that fails to persuade. One realizes not, as mentioned, colors that are barely colors, little glaze of pale water that dissolves the surface of the paper or fabric, giving the impression of delicacy, of precariousness, of hesitancy to remain. Everywhere, we see various delicacies and overturning the tentative to the negligent, to the ink; if necessary, to accidents like folds, smudges, blots, mishaps. The artist seems satisfied just to witness their natural metamorphoses, accepting the disturbance of the projected drawing caused by the encounters of pigment and liquid or watercolors as well as the sheet of the paper. The work must develop on its own, before the eyes of the one hatching it, who gaze it assume attention but intervenes only at a minimum. Even the pigs itself never holds appreciative order they attempt to impose. In these works, and in continuing fighting the refusal to accept order, logic opposes the refusal to accept logic. Thus, familiarity alternates with strangeness; the two sometimes overlap, to the point where one ends up feeling as if the spectacular disturbance of space that strikes these images is nothing more than respect for an order imposed from further away—a higher order, but one that is always escaping the body, escaping the mind, one that is always on the run, unfathomable, elusive. But if one loses oneself in it for a few minutes, all gaze of very ancient, vital sensations resurface, and the textures usually assigned by sight reassert themselves materially, sounds, even smells that seem to escape from the contemplation—modified but forcefully beating out their forgotten rhythm.

Admittedly, his books also reach upon the accident infinity (*Chefoo notebooks*), this world of absence, this "chance world, well-known, immense and immensely perfunctory, in which everything is, and is the same size is not, in which everything shows and does not

show, contains and does not contain? (*Lorsqu'on-Rimaque-Ils-Ellisent-d'un-Alors-Sinon*) 1972, p. 108), more precisely, it would be which everything continues that comes before, forward, and where paradox reveals. One can recognize some of the same qualities in Michaux's language, as well as a similarly interrogative attitude toward the reader and toward of matter. Thus, when he describes awkward situations in his texts—like those in which his heroes are trapped in a bottle, underwater, in a toy, because of the very fact that their large or costly crystal actions by which he seeks to dissemble the reader and propel him beyond his natural horizon, it is with his writing pen, and through very much the same means: deviations obtained by his parenthesis, the same slight subdivisions, those mistakes just slightly off the mark, those slippages of logic, which are not too far from the sad realities of life. Certain descriptions, for example those depicting the *Mescheme*, or even the accounts of Plume's story adventures, possess the retreating characteristics of immediately tumbling into the absurd, and extremely involving disappointment, of being too realistic, of having gone too worldless, the empty, the useless. And for good measure, they have the ability to reveal the distinct, those between scenes of being, in most delicate, most fragile, most ephemeral, about, its petty outcomes, its fears and consolations.

Nevertheless, the Mescheme, as many times repeated, by trading his writing pen for the drawing brush he was seeking to escape from the sense that magnetism wards, from them impossible by their entirely within the universe and destroying their forced movement. All of a sudden, he was demanding space, but space without size—without delay, without restriction. And yet, with the brush he was seeking to escape the pen, the pen of *Quelque Fu, ou Le Nuit rêveur*, of *Voyage en Grande Garabagne*, provided ample amounts of this space? Yes, but not at the same time. For painting—a century that was still figurative, and not Hun, or at any rate, relatively archaical in his eyes—above all she allowed him the freedom of an exercise in which each new crack, each forced or unusual accident, spontaneous appearing on the paper or curve became an unexpected pleasure, delight, stimulation, the creation of a field of possibilities that writing sensed henceforth incapable of achieving in this quasi-orbit with joy. In painting, there is no longer any prerequisite for description, and description no longer over anything to a language system very naturally it discovers itself through pattern and the unpredictability with pocket beats which pulse.

Whatever the point might have done with phrases and lines in his attempt to convey the difficult life, he is beaten by it, or better still to eliminate the fear of all that he wished to achieve, at some point words inevitably caught up with him, re-fastened him to sense edge, kept him from falling. He should have kept quiet—this Michaux knew perfectly well. For to speak is to refuse to let oneself drift off entirely, it is to keep a link with sense, with the earth, with others, the familiar, the norm, despite whatever efforts might be made to destroy these authorities within oneself. Notwithstanding this, was Michaux ever for a moment tempted to do silent? Never. The transition into painting, on the other hand, allowed him to restore a balance that had been quiet, to meet an expectation. It was also the result of an extraordinary openness and there for knowledge, two elements that, together, would have lead him to embark on other courses and, specifically, to experiment with mescaline.

Pen still at hand, seated in the same place, drawing the same paper, never really changing his gaunt, not his distance above the sheet, Michaux did very quickly, more quickly even than was for a long time imagined, into the adventure without words, the

adventure without environs that is drawing. And even if elements of the familiar world come back to him along the way—masks, faces, landscapes, animals—they are transformed, the poems are constantly apparent, it was in spite of him: it was because the body's memory had brought back and fixed those elements and it was because the poem was the only thing that overcomes evil. From the moment Michaux devoted himself to painting, as he saw it, all he had to do was follow, or, better, he was no longer directing anything: it was he himself even him leading the pen with ink. Instead, he was carried by the fluid, agreeing to let himself be swept away, literally taken for a ride.

As soon as he grabs hold of his paintbrush, all filters disappear—this is something he has said, written, and repeated. Having pushed out of the way, once and for all, the delays created by verbal explanations, the concessions made to syntax, and all the clever metaphors, the painter now only has to draw an image that was closer to the truth that language is much. Not a more knowing magic, but one that is more vibrant: more carnal, a heart heavier with blood, with sap. Microscopic and Indian ink alike, both selected for their durability, seem to capture at being thus displayed in the raw. Hieroglyphic, any image is simultaneously, and, if it may seriously wound, as if painting were down all the defenses and rendered anguish and the magic element more vulnerable, more accessible to immanence. Here, more than ever, an image. Things are no longer a laughing matter. One has traveled into the inside of paint, of the sciences of the Orient, Outlaws and poets have gone to the bottom of the gathomish, which through capillary attraction seems its way into the most intimate interstices of the wound, going back to the source of primitive violence. The world, in its trembling, its cruelty, its splendor, surfaces: it imposes its horrible and fascinating redness.

In the images, one also comes across the mental phenomena of Michaux's poems, those beings that tear such other to pieces, gesticulating in the void, brandishing their pipe dreams against forces so futile and dangerous for themselves. But from this point on, their struggle has something tragically definitive about it, and all the more so since everything that appears before the gaze is singularly lacking in the capacity to make itself organic. These figures look quite like men, or rather some kind of human form with a head, arms, and hands, but this is never a very convincing resemblance. They are more similar to the homunculus, the nun, the rag doll, and when gathered in a crowd—which happens from time to time—they look more really like soldiers, never advance in the same direction: they don't even look alike, every figure is one of a kind itself. Finally, when figures appear, they are dislocated, bruised, numb. Nor does the drawing ever assert itself in structures or in solids. In fact, sometimes recall the fragile plant attached and scattered in the wind. Elastomers, flopped about. In other times they remind us of the amorphic kingdom where microscopic animals, protozoa, spermatozoa, hard to distinguish in the cloudy liquid, propel themselves with a sudden flip of the tail behind a rock, or bury themselves in the sand. Every apparition suggests a pre-anxiety, before life, an aquarium life that is therefore purified, wanted, not yet settled in its being nor in its place. Even more rarely do the figures have a center: what was taken for their eyes might just as well be a navel or a genital. There is no link to the ground, no sediment, no organization. Even repetition, one of Michaux's leitmotifs, never guarantees the presence of a country. Once, the single reference point is the uncertainty of waterzooes, sometimes emerging from the quick tracer that the painter clears from the primordial soup, and that he stretches out, dribbling liters, his pen notwithstanding

reconstructing a coherence, though only a minimally acceptable one. The faces emerge unexpectedly along the way, under the path of the brush. And still the point: this same difficulty assuming its perception to their form, in the same way that one must progressively refuse to bring poetry to the dirty, or to distinguish Beauty from Truth, or Good from Evil. Their blurred outlines bring about spatial hallucinations and category confusions. One is haunted by them, and wonders when they will cease their signal, or when the signal will take. All one knows is this indecisive, these faces evoke as accidental events, dictated by the structure of the brush and the properties of the materials. Guided by some secret instinct, the eyes, the nose, and the mouth position themselves in the right places, but that is as far as this goes. Determinateness and resemblance stop there, and it is precisely this that brings about the strong uneasiness and distressing expressive force of these images, not to mention their heightened kind of anxiety. For what could be more distressing than a face that looks like you, could even be your own, but in the end has remained nothing but strings, the inverse of a double, with a fixed stare, a wild look, interrupting a place elsewhere, flooded by the blue or bilious hemoglobin, worse yet, a transmission of a dead signal, with no intention at all.

At this stage of complexification, all resistance is useless. We must in our turn agree to this frightened descent into a space without points of reference, stairs in realities still foreign to us, guided in this by the only psychopomp figures capable of a meaty presence, the tremendously vague and tremendously passive round mass, remnants, apples, violoins, merging with the origin to which we will never have access, but even for moments they everything to it. Here, we are no longer provided with the criteria that allowed us to catch our breath, to rest, while reading our lives. The relational invites to forget, and the disappearance of spatial axes are for too divorced from any known code for us to be able to keep ourselves from falling backward, tumbling, tumbling, at a loss.

Beware of the poet! Such is the warning that was often pronounced in reference to the paintings and drawings of Henri Michaux, in a warning that he himself heard more than one occasion and that, understandably enough, irritated him. As if it were not appropriate for an artist, already active and almost confirmed in one art, to venture into another, as if each of us were dealt only one hand in the game – Michaux, nonetheless exigence of himself and the world, worked relentlessly to destroy this absurd prejudice by working at the point of contact between and within this multiple body of work. Movements that the two facets of the hand-with-pen may not be dissociated from one another, that often they are interwoven, more frequently even than one has sometimes been willing to admit, finally, that their double presence is necessary if one is to dispense once and for all with this pandemic organizing of different genres within a single man, within one and the same desire. But which of these facets will have the upper hand in this conquest is never precisely predictable. Thus, on the occasion of his voyage into mescaline country some years later, the two courses offered by the art of writing were successively taken in order to procure the effects of drugs on the page. And if at first sight the hand– drawing, subjected to impulse–appears to be the ideal ciné-photo-graph, capable of recording with virtual synchronicity the slightest ticks in the body's temporally diverted functions, one could profitably then distinguish discourse of a *pointer* evaluation would provide such a precise and rich report on the experience. The accounts found in numerous drug-related texts such

as *Nietzsche wrote*. *Connaissance par le gouffre*, and *Face aux sources*, in endeavoring to find a verbal equivalent of the vision experienced, are often more eloquent than the paintings, which can seem rather repetitive. The lucidity, tendency and mastery of writing thus provide a remarkable podium to the approach by drawing, especially when Michaux's drawings are compared with the finishing experience related in the textual accounts, and somewhat frozen, as if concerned by the effort of retracing the tremors, the simultaneously muscular and obsessive movements occupying the pupil of the alkaloid-altered subject. The unbearable richness of vision, the inexhaustible combinations of memory, the expansions of spatial reality—all of these are conveyed by the texts:

> By flashes of signs, by flashes of transverse flights, by flashes of lightning crooks, I see things appear, I see them disappear, I see them appear and disappear, I see them, I see them, I see them

greatness, or the oil painting, the poem, the narrative, and the analysis all lead sense to what we can see never depicts, never to the branch of knowledge from which we can see here again, never to the amusement source from which we begin to speak, to see. Like many of his contemporaries, Michelangelo was persuaded that an intuition of the ideal, the universal, the and ordinary possessing a sort of occasion or revelation of every perceptible channel that gives access to the ideal, the universal, the and ordinary. In the artist, indeed, he is, for example, that is, start with himself. Constant self-institution, constant descent. Tumbling to the bottom, turning off all of the lights. Silencing the noises to which his eyes are had given life, with the exception of those that form a sort of vague vegetative and impersonal environment, enabling all manifestation of his self, *enabling* one *now* see an actual appearance. And in this naked state, without any references passes, before and beyond all identity, wholly abandoned, but without anonymity, despite oneself, allowing new paths, new directions to take shape, paths and directions which the pen—the pen as well as any other instrument—follows, letting words or signs escape. At this stage of non-participation, keeping provoked a state of passivity the deliberate renouncement, contemplation, contemplation, the passive, an extraordinary movement union, and a life unlikely life with jabs, withdrawals, doublings, and suspensions once again becoming possible. Nothing a link is a connection, on the condition, once more, of renouncing the possession of all things, or the exercise of all powers, of giving to participation in fictions which begin to take a position or shape, or modify in flow by the, one, imperceptible negotiations within. To be the active witness of all the dramas that have collapsed, of all the blasted forms that will never constitute themselves, of all the faces which will remain in the latent state, of all the sentences that will never take place in space, of all the terms that will never happen in time. It was only by the grace of the left-hand part of his being, the uneducated, insolent part, it was only by relentlessly and fearlessly offering himself to the winds of the unknown, that Michelangelo managed to do, or, perhaps, to be, or, rather, to begin against the terrible prison of the real that forever holds things up, ends them, bores, and tumbles. And this is the way in which Michelangelo managed to renounce and revive the most precious and solemn part of what lies within us, by continually separating their own convictions. In their strange familiarity we recognize our own illusions, as much as our own wickedness. They invite us to a tour of our tendency conditions and our nervous terminus. They are constantly dashing on, nibbling at, but knowing just as well how to re-strengthen our desire to go and find out.

This victory was reaped by Michelangelo because he knew how to die battle on a terrain that is forever to be conquered, forever to be re-occupied, a terrain where mass—free, active, and attentive, inner and outer—finally becomes able to bear, see, and love in the nakedness of the First Day, with the tenderness of one discovering the world as it was in the beginning, at once violent and splendid, before the division of the sense. And if Michaue is still so close to us to-day, it is a much for this freedom as it is because he unceremoniously forces us to face ourselves, and this confrontation, cruel and embarrassing as it might be, beneficially erases us to re-examine all our assumptions. This kind of authority is only seen through utter faithfulness to one's art—constantly pushing it to its limits, every day issuing new challenges that will later appear to us many conquests.

Above: Mohsen in front of the studio-connected garage (Maisland, photographs by Maurice Dugowson, 1990)

SIMPLE GESTURES

Laurence Jenney

Michaux began publishing in 1922. He started painting in 1925, probably after seeing a Surrealist exhibition where he had been able to discover the work of Paul Klee, Max Ernst, and Giorgio de Chirico. But it was not until 1948–that painting became a constant activity for him. There counts as Indian ink fish, drawn in an almost calligraphic style, from 1955 and a large blot called *de Grèque or a Cry* (a dress, in fact, resembling both an octopus and a map of Paris) from 1956, autographed for Jean Paulhan. Two drawings from 1957—the year his first collection of texts (*Spaces*, Plon, Paris; Wheel Wave was published—are even more important, however, for establishing the origins of Michaux's pictorial project. In title and form, these drawings—*Alphabet* and *Nebulosity*—clearly show the direction Michaux's aesthetic quest would take: his aim was to reconcile writing and drawing, which after all are both artifacts of the same kind, a line that is neither lyrical nor descriptive, neither a sign or relate, or even to hesitate linearly between the two. It was from this point on that Michaux, justified in his literary work, would be pressured into developing a language of graphic signs, a kind of visual Esperanto. Fifty years after *Alphabet*, we still find this same preoccupation in a small booklet entitled *Signes et significations Chinois*, and again, just prior to his death, in the collection *Par des traits*,[1] where pages of drawings end with a meditation on the possibility of a graphic language. From the outset this language could be understood as having to be learned. It is not really a language,[2] writes Michaux, "but completely alive, more like emotions in signs that only distress and humor can decipher."

Although he never studied painting formally and rarely frequented artistic milieus, it would be naive to think of Michaux as an 'outsider artist,' to believe that he somehow appeared, innocent-like, out of nowhere. Between 1922 and 1957 the essential aspects of Michaux's pictorial problematic were forged through contact with a few great works. There is no doubt, for example, that in those years he was absorbing the post-Symbolist theories of art that were in the air—those of Wassily Kandinsky, for example, for whom form "is a spiritual being endowed with the properties that are identified with it," and responds to an "External necessity." Obviously, it is a long way from Kandinsky's spiritualism to Michaux's universe of psychic movements and aspirations. As we shall see, their "internal necessity" is not of the same order, but both Kandinsky and Paul Klee, Bauhaus theorists, could not fail to alert Michaux's interest, working as they did to reveal the line of a dynamic pictorial language. For them, forms are not inert traces but energetic movements that have their origins in internal tensions and are themselves producers of spatial tensions. And—this is the most 'modernist' aspect of their theory—the most basic elements of forms can, if necessary, be isolated in order to create an emergent pattern. Even formulated by the Bauhaus, this idea was in full bloom by the time Michaux began to work. As someone who created alphabets and sought out movement, Michaux could not have remained indifferent

to *Le Pauvre and Lisa* or *Flaubert* (Lise and Lise to Flaut).[4] Kandinsky devised a graphic language, starting in whole from a basic element formed by writing and dividing the point, or period (*le point*). An ambiguous element, both graphic existence and discretized mark, "the sense of silence and speech," the conjunction of the visible and the invisible, asking not whether it is linguistic ("symbol of interruption, of non-being") or graphic ("the most concise and permanent affirmation, produced by hand, pen, brush, and quickly"). He had in Mallarmé's work a meditation on the logical values of affirmation and negation that are implied by form, but never as a pure drawing. All of Michaux's plants (everyone knows their repertoire, a word he uses to mean both experimentation—in which forms and materials are manipulated—and lived experience, that is, from an active reception of the unexpected nature of form.

Michaux's early painting is contemporary with yet another movement of opposition, "pure psychic automatism," and an experiment project to realize the "real functioning of thought." In the early days of Surrealism, the nature of this "thought" was still ill-defined: was it associative thought that had its origins in primary Freudian processes, or was it rational, deductive, or spiritualist meanings? As early as 1923 Michaux was already critical of Surrealism. In an article in the journal *Le Disque vert*, he wrote about the "inconsistency" of Surrealism, its "conventional" character, and its inconsistency. In his eyes, Surrealist automatism, "an mnemonics of the sea," remained abstract and disincarnate. He (unlikely Surrealist) had lifelong body, but it lacked a diverse, mobile subject. Further, and perhaps most importantly, painting had no place in the 1924 Surrealist Manifesto. Yet at that time the very idea of a possible Surrealist painting was the subject of keen discussion among Surrealists in the pages of their journal, *La Révolution surréaliste*. There was heated debate between Pierre Naville and André Breton on the subject, but it was Max Morise who first clearly articulated the terms of this debate in an article of December 1924 entitled "Les Vacances."[5] The question was whether painting—the art of space—necessarily synthetic, calculated, and conscious of its own traces, was compatible with the spontaneous immediacy of psychic automatism. Practically speaking, there were three kinds of responses to this question, responses that were more or less legitimized by Breton in the articles he devoted to Surrealism and painting, beginning in 1925:

> Abstract automatism, of which André Masson was virtually the sole representative;
> Surrealist collage, as practiced by Max Ernst; and
> mimetic automatism, as illustrated at the time by de Chirico (and later, by Tanguy, Magritte, and Dali).

There is no doubt that Masson's abstract automatism was the closest of all three to Michaux's preoccupations, although, as far as I know, Michaux never made reference to it. Masson drew in a trance-like state, stimulated by the interruption of support-surfaces (such as "transformation," "fall," and "whirlwind"). Later Masson would write:

> The first graphic operations on paper are pure gestures, rhythm, inscription, and as a result pure signs, free of any "meaning." In the second phase, the design (which had been latent) reclaims its rights. When the design appeared, it is time to stop. This image is merely vestige, trace, analogy.[6]

At least one of Michaux's drawings exists, reproduced as early as the journal *Le Disque vert*, the tracing of which vividly calls to mind Masson's automatic drawings as they appeared in *La Révolution surréaliste*[7] at the time. Michaux was surely not indifferent to the spontaneity of

Mauron's gesture. But he had also keenly observed the work of another Surrealist: Max Ernst. It was on Ernst the "inventor"—the one who had invented "frottage" and the technique of Cubist collage—who interested Michaux, but rather Ernst the "visionary."

Indeed, in August 1927 Ernst (relocated in Paris) was in the process of completing the designs for a hotel-room floor, Ernst became obsessed with an idea from which he freed himself by enlisting a large-scale action painting of paper he had placed directly on the wooden floor. The images revealed were of forests, jungles, birds of animals, and he collected them In his Histoire naturelle (1926). Later, he wrote that the artist here was a kind of "spectator, indifferent or passionate, at the origin of his work, who observes the phases of its development." The idea of the revolution of a latent image was fundamental for Ernst, just as it had been for Mauron. It would continue to haunt Michaux, who, much later, would take his inspiration from techniques promoted by Ernst, such as frottage and painting on a black background. But the status of these latent images, and their relation to the sexual preoccupy Michaux for a long time to come. If, then, Michaux did not really learn to paint, he did learn to look, and he is part of an "expressive pictorial trend that can't accept realism and Surrealism: a quest for a personal language and a visual revolution of the unconscious.

Still, this trend could not have reached Michaux had not his personal history (and his life), by "endogenesis," to the necessity of certain gestures and sequences of gestures. This history must be recounted, or rather re-seen (not necessarily chronologically, follows), since he erased his own original myth. In 1929 a text entitled "The Sea of the Microcephals" appeared in the journal *Cimaise*. It was reprinted in 1930 in *Un certain Plume*, under the title "Portrait of A," and, finally, in 1938 in *Plume*, in the section entitled "Difficulties." The autobiographical nature of this text is not in doubt (it can be verified by emigrating to its other texts, in particular to a short text that Michaux wrote at age 50 for Robert Bréchon entitled "Some Information about Fifty-Nine Years of Existence." It is described as a bizarre psychological tale, which must not be reduced summarily to contemporary psychiatric nosography:

> Up to the threshold of adolescence he kept forming a hermetic and self-sufficient ball, a dense and personal and dim universe where nothing came in, neither parents, nor affections, nor any object, nor their images, nor their existence, unless they made him quivver with fear.

But the relationships with which the doctors forced him to cut finally got through to A., bringing him to the end of what he believed to be a state of perfection, of untethered silence:

> His perfect ball was unannounced and was devastated suddenly.
>
> A great language, this ball. A great language, a great silence, a powerful emotion. An inertia, a stupefaction, a stasis. That particularly stable something that one encounters quite often in voices, or in silence.
>
> So the ball lost its perfection.
>
> Perfection gone, nutrition over, comprehension over. When he was seven year old, he learned the alphabet and ate.

Still, the state of being a ball did not disappear but instead became externalized, defined, by means of a displacement:

> His first thoughts were of the person of God.
>
> God a ball, God a ball, he repeated. He must be. Perfection is. It is. He alone is conceivable. He is. Furthermore, he is immense.

Nutrition and the alphabet are thus interpreted as a fall, in the etymological sense of the word: the half continues to stay, but it is a distance from A. A has not really been born, but not really aborted the world. But born or not, he seeks a path to birth:

He would like to act. But the fall between perfection, the circle, repeat, and the mouse continually. From his hole it mocks, mocks and laughs. The mouse, the mouse, the mouse, but a muscle by itself cannot move. It is the circle within the mouse that. He doesn't move any more. It is the circle within the mouse. He is the circle within the mouse. He is the circle within the mouse. It is the mouse. It is the circle within the mouse. It is the circle within the mouse. It is the mouse. It is the circle within the mouse. It is the circle within the mouse. It is the mouse. It is the circle within the mouse. It

By taking into account this psycho-surrealist background, we can sketch out an elementary poetics of Michaux's poetic work. That is, we can distinguish in it a number of "tracings" that are never simply dynamic discharges, but also always movements of thought, logical precision of experiment and critical, of differentiation. Michaux himself sometimes has identified this logical value of his gestures with a great deal of facility in the operations of his poetic work. In a letter, he is at pains to opposition to the theoretical approach of a Kandinsky or a Klee. There is no prior abstract theorizing for Michaux, but rather an attention and suffering proportionate to gestures and forms. Here, each discovery is "vital."

I identify in Michaux's work three kinds of gestures that imply values of affirmation or negation:

Tracing
Repelling
Revealing

It goes without saying that I am not trying to establish a chronological trajectory here: this enrichment classification intends rather to show a logical development of his painting. In fact, Michaux did not especially start by beginning at the beginning (or, rather, from 1927 on, he sketched out all beginnings at the same time); and I would add here that when one paints or writes the beginning can always be taken up again.

Tracing

The trace of the line in Michaux's work does not "draw." It translates the primary impulse to act. "In actual Lesser [*Agir je vous*]," Michaux writes in one of his poems, "taking action and the impulse to take action are one and the same thing, since one comes to this act-taking and this act-taking is nothing other than a 'crossing to,' in an instantaneous." Here the verb to trace (*tracer*) must also be understood in its contemporary slang meaning in French ("*tracer*" in this sense means to move so rapidly that one can only be apprehended by the traces of one's disappearance. Tracing knows a line in place: a cinematic thread beyond which exists "different life" in the hope of never catching up to itself. Michaux meditated on the line on several occasions, in "Avventures de lignes," in "Lignes," and in "Avventures de Bourgeoisie." The first text is a beginning for him, to whom Michaux attributes his awakening to painting. Among other things, Michaux finds in Klee the freedom of a line that is "intransitive" in a certain sense, the result of an "invasion of muscle" that presents itself from arriving. Michaux would continue to recognize himself in this freedom:

> Like me, the line is seeking without knowing what it is seeking, it wants what comes was ready, solicitous offered, first recognition. Preventing itself from arriving. Size of blind prerogatives. Without looking to anything, without attempting to be beautiful or interesting, criss-crossing itself without opening a hole, without turning away, without turning itself in knots or desiring itself to remarking, without preserving anyone, without being.
>
> Without being, without being, without being itself.
>
> Carried in plants, yet not exhibiting
> Emerging nothing and never encircled
> A line that has not yet been chosen, not ready to be finalized. Without preference, without accentuation, without complexity giving in to opposition.
>
> Wanted, wandering. Celibate line, it intends to remain so, does not submit, blind to the material world.
>
> It neither dominates, nor accompanies, and it certainly not subordinate.

in his "Esquisses pédagogiques" (1925). Klee began by working on "*active* line, frolicking freely, a pictorialism for the sake of pictorializing, without a particular goal." This line is clearly related to Michaux's lines to come, but in an abstract way, its activity is purely spatial, caught in a play of purely spatial forces: its resistance to gravity, its tendency that would threaten its "passionless" [illegible].

Michaux imagines a line that belongs to nothing, "without filiation," infinitely unwinding the skein of the "ball." The line transforms the inertia of the "ball" into a tumacous activity. It gives birth to what Michaux calls, in a text from *Mouvements*, "the thin mass":

Little and however
in a hurry and knowing that quickly he has to know
to decoagulate in his little palace
on a little
a palace
palace as long as he can
palace or sacking!

Here, by means of "tearing," the subject is transformed into a "thin mass," "all-purpose," or, again, in "*Arbre plus*," Why a "plus"? Because it is necessary to be way of whatever pitfalls may await the line. Because the line could succeed too well, proceed so infinitely, to the point where it becomes no more than the diminution of any plane, any thickness, and, in the end, of any tracing. Michaux experienced the horror of this becoming-line in a particularly difficult mescaline trip:

The main horror of it was that I was only a line. In normal life, you're a sphere, a sphere that comes upon pinnacles. . . . Here only a line. A line breaking into a thousand directions.

In the absence of dimension the pure line enclosure even more than the "ball." And if the line "does not arrive," it is for the wrong reasons: it is because it never left, or because it left without finding any space in which to be. The line that should have been the pure affirmation of acting is now only the shape of pure submission without perspective, of an internal disintoxication in which it finds itself as if removed from itself. But the other danger awaiting the line is enclosure, arrest. It is the opposite danger of a line that would arrive too well or too quickly. In a short text from 1948 entitled "Drawing by children's drawings," Michaux enunciates that the child really begins to draw only once he has broken the repetition of circling lines that constitute the stage of his scribbling, once he has broken free of his "itch to include." In the beginning is repetition and the sphere. One day, however:

One day other many days, escaping from the Bacchic orgiastic, exerted line will not go around an object, will not go around a face, will not go around a supposed child, it stands something to him, keeps him in suspense and makes him hold back and ponder.[1]

The child is on the road to resemblance. But "resemblance," as understood by Michaux, breaks with the outline. It has nothing to do with either the shading or the finish of the drawing. It begins with the incorporation of the surface, the opening of the sphere: "Resemblance" is the polar opposite of a personal acknowledgment that entropies to produce a surface, a hard and impenetrable crust. It is a purely phenomenonic resemblance. The line, in order truly to grasp something of the world, must be prevented from closing up, enclosing. It must be concerned with the allusive bending.

The line must be pulsed 'celibately,' without wedging itself in any of its folds, equidistant from infinite being and abyssal outline, from abstraction and the fleshiness, from the closed matter. In this space between, there is room for a rich variety of lines. In 'Avventure de figure,' which was inspired by Klee, but in which Michaux's line-drawing is very much about himself, he catalogued hundreds of lines. Unlike Klee, in "Esquisses polaroïdes" he did not have recourse to the logic of "series" but rather to a logic of "mutations" or "intermediary" lines (half-way between the motion of a point and the effect of a plane), and "pattern" lines (which compose a plane). He distinguished "traveling" lines, which "don't create objects so much as they create journeys, itineraries," "penetrating" lines, which "lie from volume, far from contours, seek a center nonetheless, a center that is less apparent, but is more the master of the mechanism," "alluvion" lines, "mad about concentrating . . . creating microscopic palaces of proliferating cellular life."

And yet this space between is still and perhaps impossible. First and foremost because, in physics reality, the only way for a line to exist spatially is to give itself up. Its true freedom is seen in its ability to surrender its origin by which it begins itself, to decline into the abstraction and become a stretch. The tracing adopts the line's power of affirmation, but only finds its consistency in the line's power to be broken. It is the broke contour, the power to cross out something else, and, in particular, another stroke, unless it is first intrinsically an affirmation-negation, an unsteady no-no. And, in this way, it is faithful to the ambivalent nature of vision as Michaux describes it in *Saisir*:

As for the seeing of things and beings, one sees by excluding as much as by receiving. There are innocent gazes.

And, therefore, there are no innocent forms. Behind every form, and in order for it to be possible, lies an obligation to disobey itself (i.e. "be a rebel, I had sworn to myself," Michaux writes). The disobedience of the line is called the 'stroke.' One of Michaux's best published illustrations is thus entitled *Par des traits* (Through the strokes). It must never be forgotten since it is essentially composed of tracings. The drawing is it is hard, utterly black on a white background, outlined in the slightest tracing never-ends. And if the stroke appears here or there to the eye, on the road to consistentcy, it is not because it adopts an idiosyncratic appearance or does clothes. Rather, it is because it corresponds to the power of the stroke, its dual logical power of affirmation and negation.

Once this ambivalence has been recognized it becomes Michaux's principal building-block, not only in the construction of himself (recall his statement that because the title of Claude Lorlet's wonderful study "I hadl myself open as sheet colonne"), but also in the construction of all representation. He recognizes it at work in *Saisir*, a book of texts and drawings collected in a kind of representative "prodigality" in this work. Michaux wanted to open himself "to the hunger of the world that are each other," to appropriate a kind of personal bestiary by means of graphic signs. But the painter-predator met with some bizarre resistance along the way:

The animals, inherent thoroughly to my contradictory representation, were crossed by hunger strokes that were, in my place against. Which they really were."

But these negating strokes are also constructive. In drawing, it is even 100% negation that one best represents. And this explains, paradoxically perhaps, why the most domesticated or

the most familiar animals (dogs, cats, sparrows, and horses—animals that are too substantive, too similar, or too close to human) are absent from Sonia's, whereas inanimate or explicit images crowd the work, as if they had been captured by the negativity of the strokes. The strokes that contain not a thinker but a structure.

The ambivalence of the gesture thus moves into the stroke. The stroke implies this ambivalence intrinsically. The stroke is dedicated to spread beyond the artist, to contract itself among the different elements of painting, thereby enriching the pictorial field without obliterating any of its representative tension. I am thinking specifically of all the processes that use the conflict of different materials as a constructive force. This is, for example, what Michaux does with watercolor, using the water as an agent to dissolve crinkle and color:

I had wanted to attach the pigments, which undo themselves, contradict each other, intensify, or increase their opposite, jeering at the forces and lines that have decreed, ordering a mockery of all forms, all drawing, freedom and control, to the very opposite, to an exploding screaming song.[7]

Watercolor is the height of strength through failure. It opposes the positive affirmation of the line, or its dissolution by the water that soaks up pigment in colors. The drawing is subjected to watch over autonomous time, a time of liquefaction and incomplete. And yet Michaux reclaims this cinematic power to revive forms, both which he provokes and to which he submits, as a faithless to form and to himself, to his own unlikely state. His music violent watercolors are from the dark period when his wife was dying, a dark period they plan on every negating gesture. Returning from the hospital, he would rush to the watercolors and bringing together the interruption of the stroke, the attack of the fairy with water, and finally the performance of paper as if it were another self to be made to bleed:

In pain, furiously scratching out, I attack as surfaces to work destruction upon them, so devastation the entire die has been laid out in one, another day being a sore. May the paper, also, be a sore.[8]

This is no double painting's ultimate thrust: the interruption of the stroke, the dissolution of the form, the piercing of the paper. The furthest limit, where everything runs the risk of disappearing, even the wound itself.

Repelling

Michaux also experienced other painting points, or "inception," one of which was the exact opposite of drawing and watercolor. It wasn't until 1955 that, already at ease with Indian ink, he abandoned the brush and poured the ink directly onto the paper. What is of utmost importance here is the random way the ink spreads. The spilled ink creates an organic situation: it demands an intervention in the short time it takes to dry (and not, like watercolor, in the time it takes to be absorbed by the paper):

This dirty black line that spreads out, demolishing the page and its horizon, which it crosses blindly, uncouth, unfortunate, collapsing not in surprise.

From the first of sages it presents me, I recover, I return to its divide it, quarter it, and it pulsing.

I want nothing to do with that curatively stabilizing line, I reject it, undo it, scatter it. It's my nature.

The morning greyness I make is an end of the pacifistic curatively help to express great disgust, great exasperation. They are opposites. I have to work quickly. The weather postponed the rain strong.

From this blow molded with ink oneness my is so clearly unawakening, to decide instantly.

I struggle with the black, there are hatches.

I repel.[9]

This practice brings a certain number of reversals into play. Representation no longer exists from a positive movement that discovers its negativity along the way, it exists simply as a response to the negativity of the "dirty black flow" that must be made positive again. The illusion no longer belongs to the ball and its reflection, it belongs to the mirror, the mirror-like, that ensures its "sunlike pseudopods" to emerge. The action required is no longer one of measure, but of response. The time of urgency begun by the spread liquid is no longer, as it was with watercolor, a passive time in which the medium imposes its flexation of dissolution on the painter's propositions. It is an overactive time. The spread black ink becomes the painter's "see clearly," that is, so invest its sign; it forces an awakening. It creates a state of pause, reviving other amateurs of failure:

Paint, then, on today the paper soak up too quickly, or the black sent too away from my purpose, that paint is almost immediately school in me by a thousand other monsters of paint, either up from my not happy paper.

But this pause, objectified on the page, becomes an instrument of painting, a stimulus to creation, a dynamic of opposition. The painter's gesture no longer consists of dissolving or repulsing an invasive material. From now on, form is asserted as a hollow. Its positivity is in the negation of a negation.

Revelation

What has also been up-ended, as in a game of Gestalt, is the relation of precession between background and figure. The initiative of diversity was on the side of the background (well before the background, undermining any effects of surface, of disease. Wintersoke began the process of reversal. It transformed the paper into a mirror, not because it glittered like a mirror but because it returned the initiative to the background, thereby transforming the paper into a space where figures were revealed, or free. From then on a Narcissus, Protean and anxious, could be mirrored in the black reflections (black is his 'crystal ball') and see not just one figure emerge, but a thousand, unrecognizable and fleeting. The pitfalls are not only in the contradictory gestures of multiplying the figures in a space of opposition. It forms the dynamic version of the *desire à faire* (see the black background) from 1956–57. After 1960, Dubuffet drives from an effect of depth and convergence:

As soon as I begin, as soon as a few colors have been on the sheet of black paper, it ensues to be paper, and becomes sight. The coming out down a mainte have been experience emerging from the night.

I come to blackness. Blackness brings me back to bedrock, to origins.

Bury all deep-lichens. From the night comes the unexplained, the unparticulated, the unattached to visible causes, the surprise attack, mystery, the sense of the sacred, but — and insistence, begotten of the word, out of a mother.

It is not, therefore, the blackness that creates depth—it is the color, set down ahead of it, that hollows it out and transforms it into a space of paradoxical generation. The black is "made right" by the color. Its neurasthy is transmuted into an active and productive negativity. Color and night are jointly rent from one another. There is here a somber miracle that brings us back to the question of birth, or rather, to its assistance. The black background causes apparitions to emerge from nothing. This is, on the one hand, the creating miracle's desire for self-sufficiency, for the subject also desirous of being born from nothing. This non-matrimonial space offers us to create gleam-like apparitions that are unstable and

without ecological continuity, but he recognizes himself in this very deficiency. The black background, before the tale, then acts as a kind of developer, revealing latent images. It transforms each figure into an image that has arisen from a latency; it mimics the subject's inner life, mysterious and unknowable to the outside, but kept partly alive by a faint pulse. From 1944 to 1947, it was the footage that seemed to bring our eloquent figures through the hazards of the mutation. In the image of developing/revealing, nothing needs to be created, and everything is to be revealed, set free. Black here has no pedagogical or illustrative value, and revelation can take place on any background, light or dark, as long as it is contained in a space of other emergence.

What, then, does this subject see in the paper? Is seen 'figures' rising, 'figures' which we must understand here as faces. But these faces don't resemble the immobile mask of the finished mask. Incomplete and fluctuating, they aggressively defy simple resemblance:

Behind the set features, discretely seeking a way out, expressions like a pack of howling dogs. From the brush, in black blobs, somehow they flow forth; they liberate themselves. They let the masses, and is captured.

Faces of lost souls, of criminals, sometimes, neither known nor absolutely unfamiliar either lineage, remote, correspondence of. From of mutilated perspectives, 'other' shards, fragments, solitudes, a property for outcasts and monstrous, tallied, kilted tale.

From the night of the paper and the white sheet, or rather all the phases, all the moments of the self that had to be denied in order to be, but for all that have not been reduced to nothing. They continue to haunt subjectivity. They bear the stigma of this negation and emerge as a flow of tormented faces, disengaged or fall of hatred.

Painting has the power to assist the work of the self, to revive in paper all its forse mundo and to summon them back from the night into which they were rejected. Similarly, other annihilating experiences had among them repressed 'selves' to emerge from the subject's own face, during a mescaline-induced state recounted in Marinko's novel. Mescaline sets the face of the "savaged madness," "set to kill" in the mirror. But this presence was experienced as infinitely dangerous, horrifying to an insanity. No screen of paper could provide shelter from this other self, the madness in himself. "Intimate crowd our clan," wrote Michaux. Painting provides this wandering crowd with a face and a place. Without limiting, over it, emotionally, one could say. We recall Michaux's advice:

The matter is not the place to observe yourself. Here, look at yourselves in the paper.

We now have a better idea of the genealogy of Michaux's pictorial gestures. These gestures struggle against a dual inertia: first, that of a body-born body (fetal state, untethered, ahypnotic, fatigue) that seeks a path to escape from itself, to produce itself in movement (these will be the dynamic and affirmative traits of tracing, but also the reactive forms of repulsion), and second, that of a self that is born too well, fixed in its masks, and tied to the world of organism and virtual existences that continuously mock it. The pictorial gestures strive birth go back into labor by means of all the forms of revelation that cause latent figures to arise from the background. These gestures fight faces with faces. Painting, the visible output of which is nothing but cooled traces, is thus a potential mediator that allows one to go back in time, within the stages of the self, to the moment when they are still

hesitating to form themselves. This potential is itself fanciful, and it tirelessly conserves a wholly unpalatable sign in the parade of facts in which it could have actually found itself.

Although the imagination's activity here may appear unrelated to what has always been Michaux's explicit pictorial project—the elaboration of a graphic language, or rather of "intuitions in signs that exist thirteen and human (in depth)" it is in fact this unmistakable genesis of the self that Michaux draws all his scientific resources. There is not a single pictorial gesture that does not find an urgency or its resistance in the subject's attempt to be. If we compare Michaux to those modernists contemporary with the early part of his career, we can more easily see what distinguishes him from them. Kandinsky's concerns may appear related to Michaux's when the former attempts, in his theoretical writings, to elaborate an alphabet of forms, especially since he deals with forms that are always perceived in their emergence dynamics. The fact, it is not enough that defines the artwork as a pictorial work, but rather, the forces and tensions that reside in these forms[1].

For Kandinsky, however, the work is identified by the accumulation of elementary forms, each one endowed with its own tension and entering into composition with the others in order to produce a global energetic configuration. If we relate this phase approach to the construction of a language, we must understand it as being genesis in nature, proceeding a whole from the value of each individual element, which is, on the opposite approach. He broks complexity with the "alphabetic" temptations of his early works. He is not prescribed not by signs, but by elementary semantic structures of affirmation, negation, or affirmation-negation. The gesture, more than the form, is engaged from the outset in a discursive creation of meaning. And as we have seen, these gestural operations are never absurd. They are altogether psychologically motivated. They go back to paths that are impulse-driven. "Intuition" drives, paths that create the relationship between being and the refusal to be, between opening and closing. They take them up, prolong them, place them in dialogue with one another, and rediscover them. The forms produced in this way may thus be characterized as 'emotions in signs'; this is how they "speak to the mind." The myth of the 'bull,' begun in the "Portrait of X," goes well beyond Michaux's case; it bears within it a certain universality. It speaks to us of the primitive archaic movements that are at the origin of every self. Still, we would be betraying Michaux's work if we reduced it merely to this psychological expressiveness. It, indeed, his work draws its productive energy from it, it is not limited to it. Michaux of course encounters forms (obviously) he is a painter, but they are secondary to his gestures. There is no mind movement that does not overflow beyond its "mental" in order to confront the one who has traced it with a stubborn externality that cannot be reduced to its origin in drive. This is true of even the simplest stroke, the individuation of which always exceeds intention, surprising us, making us think. And it is obviously this return of form that Michaux was attempting to consider in its pure state, by blindly spilling ink (or water) on paper—beginning, in a sense, by the future. "And then the question of expression is processed: it is by responding to what form proposes that the painter invents himself, and these proposals are also "psychological tests." Selection of frightening, unbearable, and proposals that are unexceptionally accepted, rejected, modified, without our ever being able to state of their meticulous production.

Notes

1 Henri Michaux, *Mouvements et Chin, Montpellier-Paris Mercure*, 1951.

2 *Du monde entier*, 1953.

3 Wassily Kandinsky, *Du spirituel dans l'art*, Paris (Étoile-Éditeur) 1989, p. 118. This is the French translation of *Über das Geistige in der Kunst* 1912.

4 Wassily Kandinsky, *Point et ligne sur plan*, Paris (Étoile-Éditeur) 1991, first published 1926. This is the French translation of *Punkt und Linie zu Fläche*, Bauhaus-Bücher Langewiesche – 1926.

5 Henri Michaux, "Expressions" (*Le Disque vert*, January 1924, reprinted in *Œuvres complètes*, I, Pléi.) Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Gallimard, 1998, p. 1 sq.

6 Max Ernst, "Les hommes-insectes," *Le Surréalisme révolutionnaire*, no. 1, (December 1924) p. 18.

7 André Breton, "Propos sur le surréalisme," *Minotaure*, no. 3 numéro spécial, reprinted in *Le Surréalisme du surréalisme*, Paris (Skyrsen) 1950, p. 19 (Breton's emphasis) and in *Manifestes du surréalisme*, Gallimard, 1962.

8 Reproduced in Michel Desguffroy, *Henri Michaux*, Paris, Gallimard, 1987, p. 160.

9 Max Ernst, "Comment se forment l'inquiétant," *La LUGLAN*, 8 (May 1936) p. 10.

10 Elias Canetti and the term "Germanism" or Bergman for the production of these mechanisms. Also discussed on a black background. See, for example, the Black Prince of 1951, to which Michaux makes reference six years later in the *Prince de Lorraine*. *Prince de Lorraine* 1957.

11 "Anti-dessin reprinted since, *Sur, les mangeurs Reprinted Refaire* 1961, *Henri Michaux, Paris Gallimard* 1962 (Mercure 1966).

12 Henri Michaux, *Silence Writings*, trans. Richard Ellmann, New York (New Directions) 1958, pp. 9–11.

13 *Œuvres complètes*, I, 1998, p. 8.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid., p. 8–9.

16 Ibid., p. 9.

17 Cf. Gallimard, for example, of "Le Sourd et le." in *Le Voir-entendre* 1953, in *Œuvres complètes*, I, 1998, p. 408.

18 Cf. Gallimard, for example, of "Le Sourd et le." in *Le Voir-entendre* 1953, in *Œuvres complètes*, I, 1998, p. 408. Also in Guggenheim-Pompidou, 1978, p. 1. Good in the text translation in Freiburg in Guggenheim-Pompidou, 1978, Cahiers de Paris 1960.

19 Henri Michaux, *Passages Poteaux, Paris Gallimard* 1963, p. 59. first published 1962.

20 *Passages Reprinted* 1963, p. 59.

21 *Passages Reprinted* 1963, p. 60.

22 *Reprinted in Dessins et Les mauvais*, Paris (Fata Morgana) 1986, p. 75.

23 Ibid. 1963, p. 60.

24 Ibid., p. 59.

25 Henri Michaux, *Les Grandes Commissures*, Montpellier (Fata Morgana) 1985.

26 Ibid., p. 14.

27 Henri Michaux, *Saisir*, Montpellier (Fata Morgana) 1991, unpaginated.

28 *Passages* 1963, p. 60.

29 *Passages Reprinted* 1963, p. 60.

30 Ibid., p. 58. Freiburg in Guggenheim-Pompidou, 1978, p. 10.

31 *Passages Reprinted* 1963, p. 59.

32 *Passages* 1963, p. 59. Freiburg in Guggenheim-Pompidou, 1978, p. 10.

33 Henri Michaux, "Le Sourd et le." in *Le Voir-entendre* 1953, in *Œuvres complètes*, I, 1998, p. 408 (emphasis mine).

34 Henri Michaux, "Et pourtant au jaillissement de la spontanéité," *Fondation Maeght, Paris* (Maeght) 1964, p. 18, translated in Freiburg in Guggenheim-Pompidou, 1978, p. 12.

35 *Passages* 1963, p. 60.

36 Kandinsky, 1912, p. 38.

37 The third component is characteristic of Kandinsky's catalogue, and is especially remarkable in a work like *Small Dreams in Red* (1925), which can be considered a perfect illustration of this theme.

38 I have borrowed this wonderful expression from Hans Prinzhorn's *Les Créations Psychotiques*, Paris (PUF), 1922, p. 12 (first published 1922).

39 Prinzhorn's discussion of the "Schizophrenic" work of the Swiss landscape artist Adolf Wölfli is particularly illuminating: "Not for art lovers, but for psychiatrists and, without doubt, the genius of a large-scale domain is some by organic and non-organic forces of the religious, which is open or closed."

Raymond Bellour

In Michael Thief's a true utopian *Lise*—the only one actively to fulfill the mid-evenings for utopian and spatial transitions that his insistence of reality inspired. It is the utopia of the sign.

Very early on, Michaux learnt languages, languages other than his native Walloon. First Flemish, between the ages of seven and eleven (more or twelve, "my second language, which I spoke as well if not better than French—since forgotten."[1] Then Latin, which he pursued with the help of his father—"a beautiful language, one that sets him apart from others, transplants him to his first departure."[2] Then, in the mid-1920s, when he had settled in Paris, one sees him turning to new languages and applying all of this to his various correspondents. Thus he wrote his friend Robert Guerne, "I'm incredibly tired, overworked, and an abbreviation to work myself harder and harder. I'm taking lessons in Amharic, Russian, English, I'm drawing, I'm writing."[3] The same day, he asked Claude Cahun, with whom he was for a short time closely linked, and who in those years spoke English because, to procure for him *Annamite in 30 Lessons* at Albin Michel, 22 rue Hautefeuille.[4] Michaux furthermore wrote Pudlhan: "Right now my interests are alphabetical, phonetic, especially Annamite. I can make all forty-three of its sounds, which none but the initiated are able to tell apart."

From this environment, where writing, drawing, and language intermingle, suddenly there appeared (to complete of a writer suddenly returning into painting and drawing—work which embody a power of enigma it would take Michaux a lifetime to unfold towards ever-greater accelerations). Both of these ink compositions are dated October 1927.[5] The first of them, presented in Jean Paulhan as an "exercise," is titled *Alphabet*. It consists of signs mostly arrayed into several blocks. At first mimicking a script which might seem born of very ancient times, the fourteen lines widen out and again become fewer and further between, better exposing their contrived aspect as well as their ambiguous suggestions of figuration. The second study is entitled *Narration*. It, too, constitutes a block of writing, from top to bottom one that is narrower on the page. Here, by contrast, lazy and spread-out signs draw about together towards the bottom of the page, forming compact lines that are like pieces of thread or cornmeal. The connection between these two titles, in its very simplicity, is stunning. The sign, then, is also given over to fiction, observing the strange law without law which dictates that it should contrive itself, like the language it embodies, and thus represent itself as the image of its own origins.

This is what Michaux was dreaming about, some years later and in a different fashion, when he came to grips with Haitian life spontaneous experience for fiction, which would be forever in conflict with his wish for supreme harmony, was at this point sketched in front of a emulsioned medium on Chinese painting, theater, writing, and poetry. Things crop up in a

very scrambled eye on these pages, making them either sticky to comment upon. But this reticence is relative to what perhaps first brings them Chinese culture is the product of relocations at much, at least, may be gathered from them: Chinese culture is the product of relocations at once eclipsed and manifest, a system of deductive allusions by which nature and culture are at one, and yet, perpetually and patiently making signals, so to speak, to an other culture. From this point on, Michaux would forever endeavor ideally to transpose this state of affairs into his own writing-pointing only, but pointing with exactitude for the distress bound up with the persuasive subjectivity of the West, which he turned, in connection with love and in contrast with that displayed by the Chinese woman, "white anxiety."

The most distinct taken of all this was desired to remain merely virtual (this is, after all, the line of escape). In 1938, while Prince Sihanouk's Chinese interpreter was once more taking shape around the only hero who appeared to offer Michaux a sustained guarantee of fiction, he introduced within the book, among the lists of proverbs he is rather, the following proverb "In preparation". "The rudiments of a universal ideographic language containing nine hundred diagrams and a grammar of 300 pages. The sole exercise ever made of it, specific. Two features may be deduced from this description: on the one hand, the rudimentary and thus restricted nature of this language, indeed, the very limited number of ideograms envisaged; on the other hand, and on the contrary, its universal nature. This is the path that takes off from and goes beyond "Chinese, which could have been a universal language." This is the dream of the impossible: a language constructed of ideograms that are one, true, and nevertheless belonging to a community.

At one point, Michaux would in fact propose to the reader within the conception of his imaginary voyages to the fiction of "The Dialect of the Gulewos," in *Ici, Poddema*. But in the first instance, this language was in no way ideographic, so to speak, of ideograms it falls short of the sign, remaining purely phonic. What's more, Michaux limited examples of it to about twelve words. Later, but not without a definitive language, in the sense that its few mutilated principles were designed to warp, contradict, or disorganize one another, and above all to produce, one by one and as a group, a language that, still, even gesturing more and ever committed to this dream, Michaux conceived a link between this dialect, as false as it is fantastic, and Chinese. By way by analogy, he has "And what is this, precisely, in relation every sentence? It's the uncertainty syllable." Of the Chinese language, of its short, onomatopoeic words, Michaux said that "Chinese calls this uncertainty." that offers "a flooding consonant (*n* or *g*) substances it in the sound of a gong."[6]

Above and beyond this narrow play, it was in Mouvements, in 1951, that the project he had envisaged was given a total semblance of extension. The book's Preface, which accompanies the poem and sixty four pages of drawings, sets out to establish their nature and relations.[7] Michaux directly refers to the drawings in question as "signs." He has filled twelve hundred pages with them, he admits, from which, thanks to René Bertelé, he made the selection in the book (if one goes by a very large number of ten signs per page, that comes out to be around twelve thousand signs or figures—Michaux mentions a certain day on which he supposedly did nearly five thousand of them). He clarifies the circumstances of their genesis:

> I had been urged to go back to composing ideograms, which I had been doing on and off for twenty years under the pretext of which cosmo ranked in the great dictionary, but only on a lazy and fascinating. Over and over again I had abandoned them for lack of my success, I tired once more, but

profundity the future is uncovered: supplanted by contractual forms, the emotionally composed movements. What I compose doing than more. These movements because my movements

A pure grapho-thrust, an expressionless language of the body has taken the place of any religious religiousness of language/code or of any other set system, to which, nevertheless, the word "signs" still refers. Signs are "signs" in the poetic Romanticism, the poetic Romanticism is "Signs"—the latter them standing, in a meaningful way, for "Signs" and "gestures"—fresh, fresh practical and single-minded right in the name of two positionless. Rather than naming and arranging the world by referring to its reality, the signs must allow one simultaneously to dodge the "ring of other people's language" and to decipher "at last a direct writing for the unveiling of forms."[1] Thus, in the Poetics to the poem, Michaux firmly puts the exercise of drawing, a "new language," an "arbiped-for writing," against the "verbal," against words—which are incapable to reach being words in the being. Other people's words.

And yet, barely three years later, while the poem Mouvements was being reissued on its own and in our corpus, Michaux published a text in which he returns to his former utopia: his recourse to the very word that had just been used to move away from it. "Signs," Michaux tried to write, "signs are the world's Mouvements. Signs had fresh juices, real reality, knowledge, and totality. "All of nature is signs, signs upon signs, a mass of signs". He then likens the "signs" to the "signs" of the Chinese ideogrammes: "Signs have the same fluidity, rigidity, and opposes the nonsense liquidity of words to "clear-cut signs of which one is the production, not the violation." Signs are "contracts, clearly-cut, clearly drawn and clearly stamped in tune with "this hard century," this "age of engineers," a "totally contracted" new language, "a real concept of signs," limited to defines "new ideologies." Free from the reason strictly speaking anything, in which, strangely, "signs appear. Certainly not to create a universal language and, in fact, we're not even sure that they are indeed signs." Even so, the new strict, informing the discussions of Cappagnoni and somewhat more ironically Mathieu, as well as Michaux's consensus in his case-by-case "Are these sky signs? They were gestures. They were movements (movement/motion). Later I broke the movements down into bits. Maybe all of this was a way of running away from the sign." Thus, towards the end of the text, a utopia that forces more around the relief of building and, in the end, the mere exchange of signs. Michaux presents the equivocal notion of "situation-sign" to designate that which he has now, in the "Poetics to the Poem" Contra-introducing the "signs" of a future, he concludes with words that recall, in a much softer tone, the fervent anticipations of the poem "Arrival," written ninety years earlier: "What an experience it will be when the time is ripe at last and having got into the habit of thinking in signs, we are able to exchange secrets with a few natural spirits like a handful of twigs."

Twenty-five thirty years later, shortly before Michaux's death, the line that opened up had brought to two small books that closely complement one another, *Saisir* and *Par des traits*[2] Blending words with images (either on the page itself or in separate notebooks, as had been the case in *Mouvements*), these two books mainly renewed a tension between language and non-language, stability and motion, codification and freedom, social utopia and subjective solitudinal. The sign-system the poet-artist tries to create, the tension between signs and gestures, Michaux's texts are scrawled on the pages of *Saisir*, linked to his amputeds attempt at abecedarian, a bestiary, or a graphic dictionary. Michaux was off again, sliding

from represental reality, the likeness of which he always refused in the end, to the gesture of excretion itself, which he called "diverse excretion." In this way, the sign was not constituted the power of signs towards perceptible abstraction. The sign became virtually capable of treating not just animals, men, or objects, but also, in a single movement, entire worlds, or whole ontology and cosmiatry (Michaux, multiplying the equivocal relations between milk, code, sound, and the meaning, yet is irremediably "language without in depth"). But this, by the same token, was in order to confer upon the designate or pictogram, above and beyond their indemnifiable referents, a motion, "a special impetus." A final example illustrates this chimerical desire to seize, in "transfer" the most abstract fundamentals (with the following unexcluded question —"Is there anything that can escape signs altogether?"). A discussion heard on the radio about the composition of matter and the birth of the universe immediately modified the various drawings, lines, and signs, already under way for several months (almost as if the book were "live"!—and the last drawings of the volume, strategically, positioned, somewhat bear proof of this change "With a small, leaning structure in the shape of a parallelogram, the Ardoz, and great adventures in the elucidation of the universe as a whole."

Par des traits, on the other hand, gives the emphasis on the idea of pre-language "affiliated languages," "lots of languages" that have yielded before the tyranny of "languages of implementation, of management." These pre-languages have four characteristics (which are, deliberately, somewhat indistinguishable from each other). They remain figurative, pictographic, and iconographic. They are impoverished, made of few signs (in contrast to overly rich languages, recorded in the account books of the "offices of Universal Science"). They are playful, joyful, and, in certain respects, mirth-ful (we recall that the training herb endowed without anyone intending it). They are local, and in the minority ("languages of very limited scope ... language for limited needs, among friends, not territorial"). From this *bricolage*, from these singular, intensive, and minor "*superdevoiers*," Bitrement and poems turn things to their advantage, "new magical power" taking over "these bridges leading from litter to things, to gestures, to situations" (via analogies, similes, and metaphors). Thus, centered on self, spread everywhere "catalogued, all of them transitive," this force is able to say within sight of "*a mere mother, mere mountain, mere dragon*" which, even so, will be "not really a language, but a thing very much alive, more like emotions in signs ... Signs that would enable me to be open to the world differently, seeing and developing *a different function* in man, DISLOCATIVE MAN."

Thus, from the handful of songs to the stories on tree bark, from dream of dictionaries to the scissor of situations as abstract as they are alive, one can see the conflicting utopia outlined in "Signes" and beyond, for so long, in various forms, as it reformulates itself. The point is that literature, or rather, the activity of writing, however Michaux may have discovered it the syntax of *Par des traits* in which this movement sets itself up is carried "Of Language and Writing" Why the urge to turn away from there?), remains within the very utopia that would have it transformed into "continua in signs" (and so, in, Movement, in order to arrive at this direct writing that allows the "unwinding of forms," one must open oneself up to those signs that allow one to "discover the gift of languages," and thus give access to one's own language. The unresolved, unresolvable tension is clearly utopia itself. That is, above all, in these books, *Mouvement*, *Saisir*, *Par des traits*, and many others show in

much as tells the sign, the idea of sign, embodies the spinning-twirling line that joins, in a single divided gesture, the impossible fusion of writing and painting-drawing. The sign is thus the instrumental and theoretical focus of these passages informing the crux of this article, altogether unique but being so fully back and forth.

One may somewhat exercise this whirlwind of thought and affect by relating a determinate instance of the "transgression of diagrams in Chine." In a book more than forty years after his study of the Asiatiness language, mentioned as a few of his letters, and just under four decades after his single, long trip to China, Michaux took up Chinese. A notebook attests to this,[7] mentioning, without any other explanations, at least four sessions between November 1931 and December 1, Michaux's notebook, over thirty-seven pages, various sequences of ideograms, complete with explanatory comments, using a textbook written in English and designed for people without knowledge, or more precisely, for people learning the simple Chinese character (ideograms and pictograms) used in Japanese. What's strange, is that the notebook contains a biographer with a Chinese notebook in hand. While no indication of the date is given, the device must be from this same period. One is first struck by the fact that one is in his. Michaux set about this exercise in a very speculative fashion, perhaps to prepare himself for the practice he would soon take in Ecuador and Peru-Bolivia. Curious about all those low things work, bringing a constant lookout for a knowledge-little-by-little-until-compose-something-of-a-whole-thing-that-is-not-to-be-easy the line, the trace, by following, wherever the example took him, the graphic evolution of the Chinese character. In this, it is recognizable how this exercise is cropping every-thing-possible ethnomics, and even a flagrant carelessness in his tracing of a good number of strokes.[8] One might conclude that he may have been willing to do his job, with as little interest as he can. But this would still not explain everything—for example, his mistake that shows that he should be corrected. It is more interesting to suppose that Michaux was here experimenting a particular incompetence in copying, both when the character is a rather good likeness (as Chinese characters were in the beginning) and when the character (as it is today) is subsequently becomed. For copying, with its obligatory realism linking it back to the model, absolutely cuts every single professional mastery of the hand, every mimesis of tracing, encasing this instinct. Just as Michaux was rarely able to copy a text without distorting it or mixing or inserting, so he subjected characters to a disfigurement that at times causes them to lose even their very meaning.

Towards its close, this notebook displays seven pages of drawings of a totally different kind. They are for the most part mimetic, more or less realistic sketches: hand on the branch of a tree; a man's head in a landscape, near a house; faces; a cat, etc. The drawings are so poor that one has troubled believing that they were born of Michaux's hand. But by what other hand could they have been traced, located on a page where one reads words written in his handwriting, however unrelated they may be to these hasty or representations? How now, is it more interesting to suppose that Michaux's profound ambitions for copying was the reason behind this disconcerting end-product. In either case, it was the sign at cross-ends of knowledge and recognition, that was being caused—and more or less directly affected, and yet tracked. And it was precisely in the gap between the conventions of Chinese language and the analogical sign of representation that Michaux set out expressively to refigure the sign, both written and graphic—the written sign attempting, in spite of the

continually dissociated borders and interdisciplines of language, to speak of the graphic sign, which is displayed and re-displayed to contain the total hope for a single 'language' made up of both, a language of signs that would be at once personal and social, born of the absolute specificity of the body and yet designed for universal exchange, a language for all, yet belonging to none. Here, Tiepolo confronting utopian divers inform Michaux's dual vision of the ever-exemplary Chinese language, the language of Gene—a vision that constrains Chinese as being constantly in evolution, constantly in regression.[1]

One day in 1986, in the course of one of his rare interviews, entitled "The Experience of Signs," Michaux spoke more directly than ever before about his grand project:

> I dictated for a time, without my serious studies, of something for a universal language. I tried to some signs with characters clear for all, independent of speech. But nothing ever came of it. . . . Or if, only one character was more different enough from the rest. I was missing the point. In Chinese writing, when one sees a character, one sees a character, one sees a character, one sees a character. Not in Chinese. Hope to find the language among other signs and in other places, in, then, the universe. I was thinking about that this is some too clear so that it remains conventional: stars, woman, mountain, stream, mountain, woman. It's a hope that I have not fulfilled. I abandoned the project. I gave up that I have to achieve this.
>
> I wanted to do this research for a time, but I could never find anyone but cellists like myself. Still I remain persuaded there is something to do there in that direction. I wanted to share my discoveries with a psychic connect. Human beings today are disorderly with their language. Beyond signals—signals are well and have its few hundred signs necessary in society—well, it represents the problem of signals and non-verbalizable signals is key. Speaking, yes, it is many ways related to man, will grow and develop. Perhaps I have said more, perhaps not.
>
> All that I'm explaining here is simply my regret at having wanted a direction but having wanted too long to hope.[2]

Another day, a variant day, in Lavandou or Paris, Michaux perhaps cries the nearest ever to the utopian point that impelled him along the way. He wrote "Alphabet," and continued two pages of pen drawings opposite it: thirty-seven signs or figures, distributed into boxes set up in a regular grid (with just the touch of irregularity that makes the order bearable). Few empty boxes, one up for two boxes, three signs in one enormous box, two in one single box, a sign outside of a box). Most of these figures are creatures of animals, but also objects, faces, all more or less enigmatic. In this alphabet of essences animated by a strange emotion, the last displays an amazing charmeuse, a mastery of childish naïveté. The two creatures, in the first person, the experience of a death and resurrection. The dying man even one final glance on the creature, so as to keep safe their science. "They dwelled, and at last were reduced to a sort of alphabet, but an alphabet that could have served in the other world, in any world." In this way the child's death is defined, the hero, soothed by this process, is able to climb back up "the open slope of life."

In the metamorphosis alluded to in this text, in the words chosen to do so, opposite the images illustrating it, and "without anything speech" (as he noted in his interview), there is something so precise that one might just discern the fallout, most all-imitating into Michaux ever wrote, concerning his great dream. This was all that he ever sought: a sort of alphabet that could have served in the other world, in any world.

Two pages from Michaux's 1963 notebook, recording his study of Chinese calligraphy

Notes

1 *Mercure galant* or *Nouveau Mercure galant*, 1672–1724, 1726–1810.

2 'Dans l'obscurité du ciel / Des Nuits sans étoiles', *Œuvres complètes*, I, 1128, p. 1000.

3 Letter dating from April 31, 1677 (Gilbert and Hubert d'Alembert, *Œuvres*, III, 1772–1776), I, 1128, p. 1000.

4 *Prince* = Grimm. *Bel*

5 *Ibid.*, p. 1001.

6 'Dans un des bassins de Versailles', 1683, pp. 11–12.

7 'L'Architecture', *Œuvres complètes*, I, 1128, pp. 364–87.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 1001.

9 'Le Triomphe', posthumously published in 1740.

10 'L'Architecture', *Œuvres complètes*, I, 1128, p. 365.

11 *Lettres*, Paris (Gallimard) 1967, pp. 1001–02. Fragment was first published in 1945.

12 'L'Architecture', *Œuvres complètes*, I, 1128, p. 365. In Molière, 'prose' is one of the central terms of the discussion, musical poetry being the other. 'Le Long Débat d'un mot', *Grande Œuvre complètes*, I, 1128, p. 1001, and Gilbert, *Œuvres*, III, p. 1772.

13 'Notre Gallimard'. For our review, Paris (Gallimard) 1950, 1951, 1952, 1953, 1954.

14 Ibid. pp. 1–2.

15 It was published in Urbino 1616, on 4 January 1616, pp. 48–61. The text is illustrated with three indices, ed. Antonio de Nicolaus, *Ingenio e Arte nella Lettera Dedicatoria del Cortegiano di Baldassare Castiglione*, Urbino, 'Vignoni' was translated by Henri Hubert, *Le langage de poetes d'aujourd'hui*, 1926, 1927, Paris, Éditions Thème Perdu, 1992, pp. 11–12, 'Le Langage de la nature' relative to the natural relation of Ego to complex. 'If this concern, particularly word for word, the distant correspondences longing for a music language.' See 'Premières impressions', Paris (Gallimard) 1950, 1951, 1952, 1953, 1954.

16 *Mercure galant*, I, 1128, pp. 1001–02. Also cited in *Lettres*, 1967.

17 Published by Pierre Marquiss, Manuscript 1951, 1964, both are unpublished.

18 'Je ne peut être Poussin ni Delacroix, Jamais Corbin ni Gaudreau. Delacroix deformed on the distinction to be with Poussin', Paris (Gallimard) 1967, pp. 1, 1967 is the above and especially Poussin's essay Corbin was given to me pic. Rouault or Dufy. Marquiss 1964.

19 'Le Langage de la nature', Paris (Gallimard) 1950, 1951, 1952, 1953, 1954, 1967, 1967 is the above and Corbin was given to me pic. Rouault or Dufy. Marquiss 1964.

20 'Lettre de Calligraphie' ebauche 'Ecrit à partir du manuscrit', Paris (Gallimard) 1950, 1951, 1952, 1953, 1954, 1967.

21 The forty-one page typescript manuscript was included in the exhibition of Maurice Sailhet library (no. 22), Drouot, March 13, 1968. It belongs to a Parisian collectioner and to my knowledge has never received any commentary other than a stylistic commentary made in the catalogue.

22 *Ibid.*

23 Many thanks to Yolande Fiscarelle, specialist in Chinese manuscripts and calligraphy, who has kind enough to look closely at this notebook and help me with her comments.

24 Are with regard to the two Richard Anthonioz's very reliable study 'Sagesse Asiatique' The Lithographs of Yves Brayer and Henri Michaux' Paris (Gallimard) 1967, the catalogue raisonné of the work was published in Robert Anthonioz, *Sagesse de Lettre Brayer*, Gallimard, New York (Harry Abrams) 1967, 1970.

25 See Jean Dominique Rey, in Henri Michaux, *Œuvres Choisies* 1979–1984, exhibit. cat., Marseille, Musée Cantini, Fondation de Maeght, Saint-Paul-de-Vence, 1984.

26 The text may be found in *Documents*, Paris (Minuit) 1966–1974, reprinted in *Œuvres complètes*, Paris 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987. The drawings, entitled *Le Rêve*, and *Mescaline with mescal*, respectively, are reproduced on pp. 4, 5.

SIGNS IN ACTION: THE IDEOGRAMS OF EZRA POUND AND HENRI MICHAUX

Richard Sieburth

I SHOULD LIKE TO BEGIN BY ENTERING A TRANSLATION that never saw the light. In his obituary memoir of Ezra Pound, Guy Davenport notes that during his final years in Venice *il voyage Inferno*, having abandoned his Cantos as a colossal botch, having edged further and further into silence, was nevertheless contemplating a translation of Henri Michaux's *Idéogrammes en Chine*. Pound's health was failing, as was his confidence in the word, and apparently after a few false starts the project was set aside. It was left to a younger American poet, Gustave Sobin, to complete the task—with the result that Michaux's *Idéogrammes en Chine* was finally made available to English-speaking readers in 1984, published, appropriately enough, under the Poundian imprint of New Directions as a listerday complement (so the blurb reads) to Pound's and Ernest Fenollosa's classic study, "The Chinese Character as a Medium for Poetry."

Literary history is, of course, filled with such failed encounters—dialogues abandoned in mutual misunderstanding—but it seems to me that the project of translating Pound and Michaux, however tenuous, however mute it might have been, is especially resonant, for here was Pound at the dusk of his career circling back to beginning, returning once more to the ideograms he had first learned to hieroglyphize in 1913 with the aid of Fenollosa's manuscript on the Chinese character, and remaining, moreover, in the company of a Frenchman whose own graphic and literary work had, since the late 1920s, been engaging the grit and gesture of Chinese ideogram with an interesting and originality matched by few other artists of the twentieth century.

A translation of a French poet's meditations on Chinese calligraphy—the configuration is typically Poundian (think of the first Cantos, a translation into Anglo-Saxonized English of a Renaissance Latin version of Homer). And if Michaux's French prose poetry acts as a mediator in this transaction between East and West, Chinese and English, this too is another memory of beginnings, a trace of the China Pound first discovered in French guise—whether it be via Pauthier's version of Confucius or via Judith Gautier's *Livre de jade*, the delicate chinoiseries of which Pound would extend into the haiku-like condensations of the Imagist lyric or the poems of Cathay (1915). Pound's China, a realm where Mencius speaks to Mussolini and Confucius converses with the Adams dynasty in an idiom that blends the civic apophthegms of the Encyclopedists with the hieratic resonance of a Mallarmé, is an imaginary kingdom as quirky as any of those to be found in Michaux's *Voyage en Grande Garabagne*. Like Pound's late, sister dialogue with Michaux's *Idéogrammes en Chine* as a final, failed gesture toward this imaginary China—a last visit to the Empire of Signs (to use Barthes's term) or (if one prefers Gourmont's behind Fenollosa) of Ideograms—Michaux observes in an essay on Michaux and Borges that one of the tasks of criticism is to render old companions impossible: I would therefore like to proceed by simply juxtaposing

rather than explicitly comparing, Pound's and Michaux's encounters with the Chinese character, in the hope that such a juxtaposition might tell us something about hyper-mnesic invoking modernism, Cryptism, and the poetics of the sign. I use the term juxtaposition deliberately because it is fundamental to what I have called "pano-plation" (a neologism I use to mean the method that underlies both the factual and didactic design of the Cantos. Pound called his poetic "ideogrammic" because he thought the (misleadingly Fenollosan in hindsight, of course, wrongly) that the sense of individual Chinese characters was visibly generated by the juxtaposition of their graphic or pictographic components. Fenollosa writes, for example:

> The ideograph "to speak" is a mouth with two words and a flame coming out of it. The sign meaning "to grow up with difficulty" is grass with a second root. … In this process of compounding, two things added together do not give a third thing but the relation between the two things between them. For example, the ideograph for a "barrow" is a man with the … (Fenollosa 8.9, pp. 8-9)

The key terms here is relation, for, as Fenollosa writes elsewhere in the same essay (predicting the structuralists), "Relations are more real and more important than the things they relate" (Fenollosa 1.0, p. 32). Wilhelm Worringer's "Composition" (1908) also "Seeks perception of relations, hallmark of genius."[1]

Such "such perception of relations," as illustrated by Aristotle with the imitation of metaphor, is what is pano-like Pound's "In a Station of the Metro" of 1913 is not to record mid-utterance. The original printing emphasized the intervals that punctuate the poem, each semantic or rhythmic cluster functioning as a discrete, autonomous character, three characters in each line:

The apparition	of these faces	in a crowd
Petals	on a wet, black	bough.

This technique of ideogrammic juxtaposition, still simple-simple and straightforward in Pound's "Metro" haiku, is applied at a number of levels in the Cantos. Only the scale of the units has placed in relation changes, ranging from single words or sag-phrases to complete lines or blocks of lines or entire Cantos or sequences of Cantos. Rather than explicitly articulating the semantical or narrative connections between the items thus juxtaposed, rather than subordinating one to another (hypotaxis), Pound instead situates his material side by side on the same flat surface as equivalent units of design (parataxis). Pound's paratactic disposition of seemingly unrelated units may be of course been frequently compared to modernist practices of collage or assemblage, but it is worth emphasizing that he conceived of his poetic method not only in the context of avant-garde experiment, but as a recovery of something profoundly traditional or archaic—other ur, both the compound graphic and semantic structure of the Chinese character and the preferred paranoia of classical Chinese poetry seemed great enough that other languages, other grammars of an were indeed possible. Sergei Eisenstein, for one, came to similar conclusions about the unexplored linguistic possibilities of classically montage after studying Chinese ideograms, as witnessed by the title of his essay of 1929, "The Cinematographic Principle and Ideograph," a text roughly contemporary with Michaux's first graphic experiments with these imaginary alphabets or rebuses he would later term "ideo-composition" or "ideomatic drawings."[2]

Pound, Eisenstein, Michaux—a critical ideogram comprised of these names working in three different media, here assembled merely to indicate the extent to which the Chinese

character, from the time of Leibniz all the way up to Saussure, has tended to speak primarily in Western terms (this despite the fact that the Chinese "is closer to nature in its use of phonic compounds). The Imagist Pound was delighted to find in Chinese a language of signs so physically suggestive that he found the Fenollosa Chinese notes "a mine of material for a Chinese dictionary and effectively tied the forms of many radicals at sight. Pound's (meme Fenollosa, respectively) view of the American Transcendentalist tradition, encouraged his conviction that Chinese was a perfect natural language since it represented not sounds, but rather the "visible hieroglyphics" of Nature itself. Like, for example, Fenollosa's gloss on the Chinese sentence "Man sees horse."

> For Chinese nouns is something much more than abstract symbols. It is based upon a vivid shorthand picture of the operation of nature. In the sightseer figure and in the spoken word there is no natural connection between thing and sign: all depends on their convention. But the Chinese method follows the operation of nature. Man sees horse. Man sees horse. Man sees horse. Sound is a vibration. Man sees horse. Man sees horse. Man sees horse

or Pound consider Chinese the ideal medium for poetry; it is because its elements actually *mean* or respond to the very processes of Nature in a language that is so fluid as to be visibly patterned by the primal energies of the elements (much as, in Pound's example of the indescript, the wind causes the weathervane to respond with its particular movement to a newer universe, a nature in process, in the making. Chinese writing thus becomes a *corpuscular* artifact, a writing in and of the physical world (Kenner's formulation) rather than a *sign* (the verb *must* be the primary fact of nature).[10] The cherry tree is all that it does? yes and no; it gets down to its sap with Pound's very drift from aestheticism into activist politics (a point is all that he does, however grievously he might err in the process), but it also served to shape his conception of the Gaston as a kind of gigantic action-poem—not an autonomous textual artifact, not a noun, but a verb, an ongoing enactment of individual and collective process, a performance experiment open to whatever might at the moment be at hand, including its own alteration or eventual ruin.

I have deliberately borrowed the notion of an action poem from the vocabulary of modern art history (it was Harold Rosenberg who gave the first to point of the term originally) because it provides an obvious bridge into Michaux—part, painter, actor, in short, member of action or again an owner or guardian of dynamic events that are not simply signs, signs, traces of movement, vestiges of gesture. Scholars of Michaux concur in emphasizing the centrality of gesture to his entire work—from the early experimentations and generalizations of Michaux's 'nonsense' verse or the calligraphic pantomime that is a trademark of his drawings.[11] Michaux's aesthetic follows the process recorded in *Mouvements*, a series of nine twelve hundred sheets of ideogrammatic signs enacted in Indian ink over the course of 1951-52: "It involved no preliminary sketches, for which we have no labor, yet our disposal but only the desire of limbs, tensions, claws, all made up of living cords, never thick, never swollen with flesh or hardened in skin." Gestures incessantly dominating something beyond or before the body, gestures realizing themselves in or as signs, in the production or proliferation of which aloom Michaux to leave words behind:

> On the contrary, it is through hand-to-line-to-line-to-hand, these tentacular partners, that he dissolves, yet totally and always joyous, that their movements come burgeoning in our eyes as, in the beginning, the sun, the moon, the vegetable kingdom, and the animals, in the eyes of Adam.
>
> *Movements* . . . a writing unbound by alphabetic rules, in which *forms* will be able at last to express freedom! Far from words, words the enemy of forms.

Yet, which one might juxtapose Julia Kristeva's essay on gesture in *Semeiotiké*, which addresses gesturality in an instance of their absence, their expunction, in either words, or a semiotic practice that puts into question not only the conventional communicative function of verbal language, but more crucially the phonocentric priority generally accorded to voice by Western linguistics and metaphysics.[12] Kristeva bases much of her notion of gesture on Tchang Tchong-Ming's (*Hermes chinois et le geste humain* (147), the very same book, it turns out, that inspired Claudel's "La Figure, ou mouvement et le geste dans l'écriture en Chine et en Occident."[13] Although Kristeva wants to consider gesture not in terms of representation or expression, but rather as a kind of anaphora or index (in the Hauerwas sense of deixis), her vocabulary oddly echoes Freudian.[14] Before and behind tone and timing there is anaphora: the gesture that endorses, that institutes relations and eliminates enclosure. The syntactic system of the Dogon (Kristeva's anteriorpoint now migrates from China

to Alfred), which in the end seems to be more a religious/semiotic system than a verbal one, it thus hasn't an indicative but, then, to learn to speak as it learns to indicate by "pointing."

This revisionary Demiurgos truth of origine, which stages the anteriority of *erotare* (referring, insisting, insisting, wheeling) to speech, brings to mind Derrida's *Glas de origine*. In quote the title of one of his earliest books (1972). In his semi-autobiographical *Parergon* (Derrida's book, I hold the origin story is his own course as a writer-painter). In the beginning was the line, the trace, the traversal and division of space:

> One day, late in life, I was led the impulse to draw, to participate in the world by lines. One line, rather than many lines. And so I began, allowing myself to be led by a single line, giving it free rein without so much as fitting pencil from paper—until, having wandered aimlessly in this restricted space, it inevitably returns to a point.

This fit line as sheer presence, having no other motive than its own exploratory traversal of the field of the page. This nomadic, contradictoriness line, fold of stenographic indicator of the aleatory psyche and physical version thus have converged on the page, in Michaux's own version of Surrealistic automatic writing. But having gone beyond mere *écriture*, in pure *parergon* or *major*, Michaux soon finds himself confronting signs: pages emerge covered with imaginary alphabets (which he calls "pictographs" or "ideographs"), their squiggles and strokes arranged into furrows of writing.

Here is Michaux's retrospective account of these *Alphabets* or *Narrations* that he drew/wrote in 1927:

> Later, the signs, certain signs. Signs speak to me. I would gladly draw them, but a sign is also a sign sign. And to the question: «Is it something? Is it some thing?» I have to answer: «I don't know without proof, like life itself, the thing that keeps on going ... I want my markings (my music) to be like very glittering (in physical life, they are), determinable, necessary.»

On the one hand, Michaux's move from the single arbitrarian line into a series of signs embodies an attempt to discover a kind of language or semiotic system that goes beyond (or before) the conventional marks of writing or at least an experimentation with series of signifiers without signifieds (or rather, that would simply signify the desire to write, draw, describe, signify, a purely private alphabet that would be free from being the speak (or draw) like anybody else, a succession of signs that one might turn ideograms (somewhat on the order of the ideographic Mallarmé was experimenting with during this same period in the poems of *Quo je fui*). On the other hand, Michaux's discovery of signs is, he notes, also an encounter with a certain kind of blockage or stoppage. Yet, as the continuous line breaks up into a sequence or grouping of signs, an impetus is lost, a forty sets in, the flow of traffic now halted by stop signs—"*un jour, un signal d'arrêt.*"

Such stasis or arrests of course, goes directly counter to Michaux's desire to embody a continuous, a short, an unbroken exercise of motion—and the fact that he takes these imaginary alphabets or pictographs, *Narrations* indicates just how far this aesthetic of continuity has fallen from Pound's panoramic ideogram, which into instead of pulverizing the syntagms of narrative, of arrange transitions, of opening up intervals and breaks, is a construction technique of collage or parataxis or montage that serves to indulge the signs thus juxtaposed. Michaux, by contrast, wants to maintain such agglutination, to continue the stasis, to impose an interval, to keep the rapidity of his transversal through it. His nonsense writings and drawings of the 1950s, for

example, register a state of flux where there is virtually no intervening element between images or marks, but rather a plenum of intermeshing potentials and mediations.[7] Similarly, if Michaux's poetry leaves great intention over lines of verse (and a prose, moreover, that is often metaphor-laden), it is largely because he is after the kind of intensive transformation of lines that will somehow court the ongoing pulse or tempo of *blue* void.

Michaux's early idiosyncratic poetry, with its *Ici-Bas* or *Emergences-Résurgences*, led to an impasse or *blue* that caused him to abandon painting altogether for a number of years. It was only in the course of his travels in the Far East in 1927–31 that he suddenly recognized what he had been looking for in his earlier explorations of lines and signs:

> But it is Chinese painting that enters into me in depth, conveys me. As soon as I see it I become a Chinese painter, I become a Chinese painter without having to change my name, without having to metamorphosed preferred to overtaxes accounts, to expire. Michaux branched into the art, flowering as if caught by the motion of a sudden inspiration, and not positively, laboriously, exhaustively trained. But is what spoke to me, what joined me, what carried me away. This time, the course of painting had been wrest.

In *Ici barbare en ligne*, Michaux 1933 travelogue of this same journey, he similarly underscores the importance of this semiotic encounter with the classic. For in Chinese he discovered a tradition of painting, writing, and theatre that was in once concrete and abstract, intellectual and sensuous, mobile and fluid—a tradition that, firmly grounded not in mimesis, not in copying, but rather in the art of signification:

> The Chinese have a talent for relaying long or spellbinding conversations (in the talent for alphabet or sticks). If a knife is to take place, they do not hesitate to draw it, or an outstretched hand. They signify. This is what is doing that surprises them, the rest of the world would come down to *signes*.[8]

Or, as Michaux letter puts it in *Idéogrammes en Chine*: "No longer imitate nature. Signify. By marks [*signes*], by dance." The French word *signes*, in Barthes observes, is a term shared both by the graphic arts and by linguistics.[9] It suggests a kind of diacritical mapping that is fundamental to the Chinese conception of *wen*, a character that signifies a conglomeration of marks, whether those be the tracks of animals on the ground, the strokes that connect stars into constellations, the tracks of animals on the ground, or finally, the art of writing, of literature, and of social conduct.[10]

Michaux's 1941 visit to the Empire of Signs, according to his own account, verified his enormous as an adept of *wen*, as an adventurer in that semiotic no-man's-land that exists somewhere between (or perhaps before) visual and verbal language. An entire strand of Michaux's graphic work shows his drawing or painting continually moving toward the territory of writing. His early *Alphabets* or *Nervosités* of 1927 will overflow in the release of *Epreuves, exorcismes* 1940–1949 (1945), the ideogrammic lines of *Mouvements* (1951), the serial gouaches beginning of 1951, the Indian and yogic ink exercises of 1961–62, the gouache ensigns of 1963–66, or the anthropomorphic scripts and aquarelles of the 1970s. But if the graphic is often resin towards the graphemic in Michaux, the reverse is also true, perhaps nowhere more so than in the mescaline drawings of *Miserable miracle* (1956) in which the horizontal lettering of actual words in the page gradually disintegrates into a series of entomologic vertical or transversal strokes that resemble the jabberish penmanship of a Saul Steinberg or the unreadable tags of a subway graffiti artist.

Michaux's explorations of the process whereby drawing or painting translates into writing and vice versa (by which one should also add his many books in which the direct translation of text to image is virtually reversible) prepare his return to China in *Idéogramme en Chine* (1975). Further meditation on the relation of text to image and on writing, per se, are present in trends like an animated episode in the adventures of Monsieur Plume: *Idéogramme en Chine* was initially written for a television series, Jean Jehanne Jugan-Yard's *Les Idéogrammes chinois: Un art à quatre dimensions*.[7] The text therefore presents itself in the form of a commentary on, or accompanying text of Michaux's book on Mugrette, *En revenant à partir de pictures idéogrammes* (1969), as a rewrite inspired by the samples of Chinese calligraphy that interspersed the French text and provide the themes on which his commentary will play in variations. Just as Michaux takes Mugrette's paintings and name them into stories, so *Idéogramme* links its visual pictures into a chronicle evoking the genealogy and evolution of Chinese writing. Its overall plot may be summarized as follows: 1) writing at its origin, 2) the law of origin, 3) the memory of origin as metaphor, 4) writing as representation, 5) moving toward writing as signification, and 6) the return, via abstraction, to Nature and origins. As this rough outline might make clear, Michaux's essay on the ideogram enacts a kind of dialectical confrontation between origin and derivation, absence and presence, representation and signification, a movement that leads in the end to an equilibrium or "just balance of opposites" embodied by calligraphy (which he prefers to Western "communication and suspension").

As in the Emotion-Poem and essay on the Chinese character, a Cratylistic nostalgia haunts Michaux's meditations on calligraphy. After a brief introductory section that registers the inevitable bewilderment of the Westerner upon first encountering a page of Chinese calligraphy ("Lines going off in all directions. In every which way: commas, loops, curlicues, strous marks, unusually in every point, at all levels: a bewildering thicket of accents"), Michaux posses beyond this stage of originary confusion to evoke the dream of Chinese writing as the Clean Dynamo, the mythic era of its own because inscriptions:[8]

> There was a time, however, when the signs still spoke, or rarely, when, already abstract, they revealed—rather than simple things or bodies or materials—groups, constellations, situations, even a time.

But this "primitive availability" (this Golden Age of "the original reality, the concrete and its closely related signs," is succeeded by a period in which the "inclination toward concealing" and "the pleasure in abstraction" invade writing, as the sinful chief of the brazen or stone engineer gives way to the slender breath of the calligrapher: writing henceforth loses its epic, public face to become an elite secret shared by the scribal initiate. Michaux's endeavors grow noticeably elegiac:

> Withdrawal, self-absorption was set.
> Was cast the will to be mindless.
> Cease, now, sons those archaic characters that had stared the heart. And those signs, so palpable, that had overwhelmed their own creators and caused them very fast traders.
> Cease, now, sons the mountains and simplicity, the rushes pouring the underseas that arose from the antipodes of the first "necessity".
> All creators cut, now, with the hatchet, so dependent on reality. Vanished from stage, from language.
> Cease, now, sons the hatchet characters, so dependent on reality. Vanished from stage, from language.

With the signs thus increasingly alienated from its natural model, the aura of the written character as ritual object or even now reader. "Religion in writing was on the decline; the irreligion of writing had just begun." Sacred grew way to secular scrutiny.

But in this world of the Fall, where writing now functions as an agent of exclusion and entombment, there is nonetheless hope of redemption: as scholars piously regather the ancient characters into tablets, so too, a first etymological dictionary (the *Shuo-wen*) is born, restoring words to their origins, resurrecting the characters from their tombs of destruction. At this etymological juncture, Michaux's text suddenly starts into a Whitmanesque (or Borgesian) catalogue of this rediscovered plenitude—an inventory of the wealth of a world again filled with people, things, events, signs:

> full of moons, and horses, full of doors
> full of men who bow
> who withdraw, grow angry, and make amends
> full of obstacles
> full of right hands, of left hands
> of hands that clap, that respond, that join forever
> full of hands facing hands
> of hands on guard, and others, at work
> full of mornings
> full of days

Their emphasis continues for two pages, a familiar variant on one of Michaux's favorite modes—the abecedarian, the bestiary, the taxonomy, the serial proliferation of signs. This profusion is made possible by an etymological perspective that restitutes (or reconstructs) the sign in relation to its source—as Fenollosa remarked, poets proceed by "finding back along the ancient lines of advance," a process particularly evident in Michaux's own ideogrammic drawings and paintings, which are in a sense etymologies of gestures, enactments of their own origin, meanings of the moment at which signs, not yet fully beyond of action, begin to come into being.

This explicits, I think, why Michaux's allegorical history of the ideogram should now move from etymology into the next stage, the development of calligraphy—the sign in (or as) action. The increasingly stylized action of the calligrapher represents for Michaux a further (and higher) remove from iconicity, from resemblance:

> Are signs the Chinese had been drawn, in this field and other, to the chain of resemblance: to an immediate resemblance, at first, and then to a distant one, and finally to the composition of resembling elements;
>
> to obstacle, as well it had to be overcome.
>
> Now, that the further resemblance, There was no meaning: all resemblance was to be abandoned further.
>
> Another destiny awaited the Chinese.
>
> To distract oneset to first succeed, to some thermadol.

Alternative, associated rather with secrecy and concealment and serving the hegemony of a verbal elite, now re-emerges as a religious mystic or genius. Bloodied into the art of calligraphy, this action writing/painting completely dematerializes the world into a revolution of pure speed, pure flight, pure mind: "The destiny that awaited Chinese writing was inter-weightlessness." But if calligraphy exalts the material body of the sign to be

transfigured into pure spirit, the very acidity of this sentence *ambre* nonetheless plunges us back (by a kind of dialectical reversal) into the immanent energies of a nature *Antérieure*. Freed from imitating nature, signs may now signify it, respond to it, participate in its rose:

No longer its tatters, but its tapsody, nature, the tapsody of the Ancients of the immediate, of the lightning bolt.
The sign is the sign of what which is no longer in any way mimetic, has the green of its own impetuous: It has drawn from nature its flight, its dizziness, its unmistakable way of knowing how to bend, its quality of being bent.
Like nature, the Chinese language does not draw any conclusions of its own, but lets itself be read ... Character opens onto several directions at once.
Point of view: vagabondage.
Calligraphy is its role in mediator between commission and eleptoses ...
Calligraphy around which—quite simply—one might abide as one's tree, or a rock, or a source.

At the end of this long detour through China, Michaux thus rediscovers a modernist version of the ancient dream of Cratylus, a semiosphere in which all its works, all its gestures, all his *praxis* will begin to *phrase* of natural process. The aspects of his earlier work now give way to the last serenity of *Jours de silence* (1956), the sign pulsing at the heart of stillness:

Certitude silencieuse
et saisie de lieu, que fait signe
ainsi et silence, sur le lieu signe.

Whence certainty
the touch of lieu, making a sign
peak, silent on the same lieu.

NOTES

This essay was delivered as a lecture at a colloquium on Michaux and Eigeldinger at New York University in the spring of 1989. A slightly different version was then published in a special issue of Revue de la Société des Amis de Henri Michaux (Paris, 1990).

I would like to thank Sten Dieckmann and Gerard Sullivan for permission to quote extensively from the English translation of Michaux's *Affrontements et Cris*.

1. *Affrontements et Cris* (1965), Jacquemin & Chimo, trans. Gerard Sullivan, New York (Dove Dimension) 1989, Forrest Donellan, *The Chinese Experience*, Jacquemin & Chimo, trans. Alan Prescott, San Francisco (City Lights) 1987. All subsequent page references to the Fontana edition will be included in the body of the text.

2. Michaux, *Les Grandes Épreuves des Esprits*, Gallimard, Paris. Subsequent Paris Gallimard editions (*Plume*, *Idéogrammes*, etc.).

3. *Il n'y a Jadis* (Gallimard, Paris 1962), *Idéogrammes de l'Ouest* (Fata Morgana, Montpellier 1975), *Ecuador* (Gallimard, Paris 1929), *Emergences, Résurgences* (Skira, Geneva 1946), *Passages* (Gallimard, Paris 1950), *Face aux Verrous* (Gallimard, Paris 1954), *Vents et Poussières* (Gallimard, Paris 1955), *Mes Propriétés* (Fata Morgana, Montpellier 1974), *Ici, Maintenant* (Gallimard, Paris 1966), *Par des Chemins Secrets* (Gallimard, Paris 1967), *Le Lointain Intérieur* (Gallimard, Paris 1938), *Un Barbare en Asie* (Gallimard, Paris 1933), *Voyage en Grande Garabagne* (Gallimard, Paris 1936), *Au pays de la Magie* (Gallimard, Paris 1941), *Ailleurs* (Gallimard, Paris 1948), *Plume* (Gallimard, Paris 1938), *Lointain Intérieur* (Gallimard, Paris 1938), *Misérable Miracle* (Fata Morgana, Montpellier 1972), *Mes Propriétés* (Fata Morgana, Montpellier 1974), *Moi, Mes Peintures* (Fata Morgana, Montpellier 1975), *Idéogrammes de l'Ouest* (Fata Morgana, Montpellier 1975), *Ecuador* (Gallimard, Paris 1929

9. Jean-Claude Coquet, "La Lettre et le idiogrammes occidentaux," *Poétique*, no. 11, 1972, p. 400.
10. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*.
11. Emergence discipline (1974, p. 1). My translation.
12. Ibid. p. 2.
13. Jacques Derrida, Peter Kaufman, Oxford (Oxford University Press) 1973, pp. 18–19.
14. Emergence discipline (1974, p. 3).
15. Les lettres en chaîne, Paris (Gallimard) 1974, pp. 98–11. It might be correct in passing that this book was then translated into English by Betsy Mack, Sensor et Pensé and published at Lyons, New York (Free Distribution) 1976.
16. Roland Barthes, L'Empire de signes, Geneva (Editions d'art Albert Skira) 1970, p. 9.
17. Jacques Derrida, Le Facteur de la vérité, Paris (Les Éditions de Minuit) 1975, p. 14, and Jacques Derrida, De la grammatologie, Paris (Éditions de Minuit) 1967 (1967), pp. 20–21.
18. Lungs 'Sin 1971.
19. All the quotations from idiogrammes et Chine are drawn from Gerard Soler's translation, Since the New Directions edition is unpaginated, page references have been omitted.

CHRONOLOGY

Leslie Jones

This chronology combines the complete text of Henri Michaux's "Some Information about Fifty-Nine Years of Existence" (dated 31 Jul 1961, with additional biographical information culled from other sources. Citations for extended notes are given below. Evident in a comparison of the two accounts is a number of discrepancies in dates and events, evidence that shortly to Michaux's intended or not intended sun-mondhaunts. Unless otherwise noted, translations are by the editor.

Sources: Henri Michaux, "Some Information about Fifty-Nine Years of Existence," Bal 1949; originally published as "Quelques renseignements sur cinquante-neuf années d'existence," in Robert Bréchon, *Henri Michaux* (Paris: Gallimard, 1960); Jacques Mavrikis, Gallimard 1999; for the Marcel Duchamp, Biographie Pierre Cabanne, Éditions Pierre Cailler, Genève, 1966; for Jean-Michel Manipoulo and Florence de Lussy, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, 1998; for Jean-Michel Maulpoix, *Michaux* (Paris: Seuil, 1999); Yvi Tran, "Chronologie," Magazine Littéraire, no. 384, April 1998, pp. 16–17; Brigitte Cherry-Vial, *Henri Michaux, par lui-même*, Lyon (La Manufacture) 1982; Rémi Bertaïla, "Biographie," trans. Eliane Haves, in Guggenheim/Pompidou 1978; and Geneviève Bonnefoy, "Biographie," *Henri Michaux. Poèmes*, Gallimard (Collection de Poésie) 1978.

1899.
Mar 24, 1899
Nature: Belgium
Born into a middle-class family.
Father from the Ardennes
Mother Walloon.
One of his grandparents, whom he never knew, of German origin.
A brother, three years older.
Distant Spanish ancestry.

Born Henri-Eugène-Marie Ghislain Michaux to Jeanne-Marie-Constance Blanke (1869–1930) and Octave-Jean-Marie Michaux (1861–1932). His father was a merchant in Rochefort before his marriage and a banker in Namur, although Michaux claims never to have seen his father work, describing him as "a man of independent means." Michaux has no elder brother, Marcel-Frédéric-Marie Michaux (1856–1945), who will become a lawyer in Brussels.

He is born with a weak heart, which he describes as having "holes in it," that will afflict him throughout his life.

1900–06

Brussels.
Indifference.
Exaggerated
Resistance.
Unexpected.

He avoids life, games, amusements, and variation.
Food disgusts him.
Odors, contrite.
His narrow does not make blood.
His blood isn't wild about oxygen.
Anemia.
Dreams, without images without words, motionless
He dreams of permanence, of perpetuity without change.
His way of existing in the margins, always on strike, is frightening or exasperating.
He's sent to the country.

1906–10

Patte-Graschenik.
Little village in la Campine.
Five years in boarding school.
Poor, rough, cold school.
Classes are in Flemish.
His classmates, sons and daughters of poor peasants.

Stoneiew.
Withdrawn.
Ashamed of what surrounds him, of everything that has surrounded him since he came into the world, ashamed of himself, of being only what he is, scorn for himself and for everything he has known up to now.
He is still disgusted by foods, wraps them in paper and stuffs them in his pocket. Once he's outside, he buries them.

1911–14

Brussels.
Return to Brussels. Saved! So he does prefer one reality to another. Preferences begin. Watch out! sooner or later, belonging to the world will come in. He is twelve.
Art hunkers in the garden.
Discovery of the dictionary, of words that do not yet belong to phrases, to phrasemakers, masses of words, words he can use himself in his own way. Goes to a Jesuit school.

With his father's help, he becomes interested in Latin, a beautiful language, which sets him apart from others, triumphant: him: his first departure. Also the first sustained effort he engages.

Music just a bit.

Attends Collège Saint-Michel, a Jesuit school. Among his classmates are the poet Nimpe, the playwright Herman Closson, and the writer Camille Germain. According to Michaux, the Jesuits emphasize teaching of the humanities over the sciences, and what he learns about the art of Classical Greece and Rome, in particular, leaves him "indifferent," very "hostile," having all that repeatedse the "real." He is inspired rather by Chinese calligraphy and insects, which he would "examine at length under a magnifying glass from which he was never separated."

1912–13

Brussels.

Five years of German occupation.

First French composition in school. A shock for him. The things he finds in his compatriots! A shock even for the teacher, who pushes him toward literature. But he rejects the temptation to write; it could turn him away from the main point. What main point? "The secret that, from his earliest childhood, he has unpacked night and somewhere. People around him are visibly unaware of it.

All kinds of reading. Research to discover his family, scattered through the world, his real parents, though not quite his parents either, to discover those who may "know" Franz Hellis, Raymbaut, Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky.[1] Reads Lautréamont, the most surprising, the farthest removed from the average man. Also readings in bizarre writers, eccentrics or Jérôme Bolgiaye[2] who write in a strange style he would like to see still stranger. After his Saccharomyces,[3] with the university closed because of the Occupation, two years of readings, of intellectual pottering about.

1916

First year of medical school.

Doesn't show up at the final exams. Gives up studying medicine.

When the university in Brussels reopens following the war, Michaux takes classes in physics, chemistry, and biology in preparation for the study of medicine. Unsatisfied with the mediocre level of education and the system of learning by heart, Michaux decides not to take the first-year final exams. This leads to an argument with his parents, who cut off financial support.

1920

Boulogne-sur-Mer.

Ships out as a sailor on a five-masted schooner.

Rotterdam.

Ships out a second time. On *La Victorieuse*, a ten-thousand-ton free-hoisting vessel the Germans have just delivered to France.

There are fourteen of us in a little crew's cabin, in the bow. Amazing comradeship, cosmopolitan, no-quarreling. Bremen, Savannah, Norfolk, Newport News, Rio de Janeiro, Buenos Aires.

On the way back from Rio, the crew complains about the food, refuses to go on and unanimously reports to sick. Out of solidarity, he leaves this boat, too. . . . . this missing the shipwreck that will take place twenty days later, south of New York.

Michaux's time spent as a merchant marine begins a lifetime fascination with the sea: "What I know, what is mine, is the indefinite sea." Arriving in Rio, he falls from a ladder in the ship's hold and, after hospitalization, returns to Marseilles.

1924

Marseilles.
All over the world, ships (formerly used to transport troops and food) are being laid up. Impossible to find a job. The big wonder closes once again. He is obliged to turn away from the sea.
Back to the city and people he detests.
Disgust.
Despair. Various professions and jobs, all poor and poorly performed.
Trip of his chart is a failure.

After global disarmament, Michaux is unemployed and, back in Brussels, takes a number of odd jobs, including school supervisor, editor, and taxi driver. In April he is inducted into the second regiment of grenadiers in Beverloo and enters officer reserve school in the fall. After six months he is declared unfit for service because of his heart condition.

1925

Brussels.
Finish *L'autre(immense?) Mallarmé* "Shock . . . which soon brings on the long-forgotten need to write. First pages. Franz Hellens then Paulhan' see something in them, others see nothing at all.
Still reticent. He wouldn't like to 'have to' write.
It prevents dreaming. It makes him come out.
He prefers to remain coiled up.
I know Belgium for good.

1926–29 Publishes first text, "Cas de folie circulaire," in the Belgian literary journal *Le Disque vert* (September 1926). Part of this text is a myth describing the "Origin of Painting," republished in *Fables des origines* (1929). Over the next two years, Michaux contributes regularly to *Le Disque vert* and, in 1929, becomes the co-director in Paris. Other contributors include Blaise Cendrars, Jean Paulhan, André Malraux, Jean Cocteau, Vladimir Maiakovski, André Gide, Jules Supervielle, Francis Ponge, and Jacques Rigaut. In 1929 publishes his first book, *Les Rêves et le jambe*, *Ecrits* (*Cas* 16), and, at the end of the year, leaves Brussels for Paris.

1924

Paris.
He writes, but still ambivalent.

Can't manage to find a pen name that would encompass him—shy, his tenderness and his potentialities.

He continues to sign with his ordinary name; he distains it, he is ashamed of it, like a label marked 'mediocre quality'. Perhaps he hopes just a touch of indulgence in his tenderness and disentitlement. So he will never produce anything proudly, but always dragging that hell and shame behind his dull work, thus keeping him from even a slight feeling of intuitiveness and achievement.

Marcel Bénabou, Jacqueline and Jean Pouillon through Franz Hellens, and the three become lifelong friends. With Pouillon, in addition to writing, shows enthusiasm for Pingo Poop and the natural sciences. Pouillon becomes Michaux's contact in "le monde parisien" and a favorite reader and editor. Supervielle helps Michaux financially, living him occasionally as a secretary and as a tutor to his children, and inviting him regularly to his home (every Sunday for lunch) and to his vacation residences in La Picquey and Pont-Croix.

Marcel André Bénabou while preparing the article "Notes sur le suicide, Enigmes, Surréalisme" for the January 1957 issue of *Le Disque vert*, Bachelard about Surrealism's mentalistic strategies, Michaux shows their aim of challenging the status quo, stating, "the marvelous surrealist is monstrousness but between the marvelous and whatever it is, I hesitate not. Long live the monstrous."

1954

Kiki, then Man Ernst, Christo ... Extreme surprise. Up to now, he had hated painting and the fine-tuned art of painting, "as if there will weren't enough of reality, of that awful reality," he used to think. "But to want to repeat it, to come back to it!"
Vernon-zolo. In a publishing house for a while, production department.

Man Ernst and Paul Klee get me interested in painting about the same time, when I was twenty-four. Until then I had enough reason to. I based passers even those passers-by the so I considered them to being the voluntary helpers of cumbersome reality and its appearances, which form an all-too-conspicuous cement in the colossal but never perfected edifice. On the contrary, I felt, thanks to Ernst and Klee, I was able to get a glimpse of what goes on behind the scenes. It was a way, a hope. So it was possible to do something with Western painting, which had been "exhausted" until then."

Makes first attempts at painting in a variety of media.

About this time meets Brassaï and the writer and photographer Claude Cahun, who teaches him English. Cahun is the first of but a few photographers he agrees to sit for. Becomes interested in Annamites (Vietnamese).

1957

Cocteau.
Yves's trip to Ecuador, with Gongoteta, an Ecuadorian poet possessed by genius and ill luck. He dies young and after him his poems, most of them unpublished, burst up in a phase, crash, disappear forever.

Publishes his first important book, *Qui je fus*, Paris (Collection Une Oeuvre, un Portrait, Gallimard), a compilation of texts previously published in journals such as *La Revue*

exégèses, Les Cahiers du Sud, Commerce, and *La Nouvelle Revue française* between 1924 and 1927.

A line drawing—the first to be reproduced—is published in "Hommage à Léon-Paul Fargue," included in the June issue of *Les Feuilles Libres*. Another drawing is reproduced a few months later in conjunction with his text "Ensoufflements" in the August-September issue of *Les Cahiers du Sud*.

Even signs' drawings, *Alphabet* and *Narration*, are compositions of vigorously pictorial signs that resemble writing, yet are indecipherable. Such "writings" reflect his interest in notions of universal language and anticipate his later use of signs in the Alphabets (1963) and *Mouvements* (1951) series. After these initial attempts, Michaux virtually abandons painting and drawing until 1929.

I put something from signs. I would gladly draw some, but a sign is also a stop-signal . . . I know instead what resembles pacquemens, or rather pictographic paintings, but without rules. I want my drawings to be the very plunge of life, but flexible, but deformable, tentacle . . . On swing them, three-armed my well-armed, shook their heads in embarrassment . . . I am on the strong track . . . instead of writing and letting it at that.

What corresponded to an extreme need this second to me is instead the need for bread, water, air, sleep, and I cannot do without it without being in a state of extreme deficiency, of extreme pain.

Thus I am not the man who sets out such theories the awkwardness and the totality of my texts yesterday. How could it be otherwise? How could I dare to leave the paper just like this!

What an experiment is mine so!

Drawing had no part in my upbringing. There are my first tables. I have to get used to the stomper's impedimenta. Mines. Not entirely a certain embryo . . . perhaps for later on. I give up. I put my desire to sleep. I go on a few voyages. The source of writing has run out, my cells recall back to me.[1]

Departs Amsterdam on December 28 for Guayaquil, Ecuador via Panama aboard the *Bishop* with Alfonso Gangotena, an Ecuadorian poet and close friend that Michaux met in 1927.

1928

Paris.

Arrives in Quito, Ecuador on January 28. Throughout his year-long stay in South America, strech tests recounting his experiences to Jean Paulhan that will eventually be published as *Ecuador*, Paris (Gallimard) 1929. Suffers physically in the mountain climate but continues strenuous travels nonetheless.

I believed, perhaps confusedly, in justifying my existence by navigating the long routes (of the river) or climbing the Nape (a tributary of the Amazon) in a dugout canoe; by visiting mountains and volcanoes with Indian confidants. I felt crushed myself. I made myself wish that no body responded hastily to the adventure.

Begins reading the works of the Tibetan Buddhist master Milarepa (1040–1123). The writings of this "Jewish Bodhisattva" ("Hebrew fellow") became his "bedside reading."[2]

1929

His father dies. Ten days later, his mother dies. Voyages to Turkey, Italy, North Africa . . . His travels against

To drive his country out of him, his attachments of all kinds and whatever elements of Greek or Roman culture or Belgian habits have become attached to him, despite himself. Vomiting of repatriation.
Still, his intention begins to yield just a bit to the desire for assimilation.
He will have a lot to learn, to learn to open up. It will take a long time.

1929–30 *Mes propriétés* published by Jacques-Olivier Fourcade, who would become a lifelong friend. Over the years Michaux will frequently work and reside in the media-converted garage adjacent to the Fourcade residence in Meudon.

Death of Michaux's father in Forest, Belgium, on March 22, 1930. His mother dies later that same month on March 29 in Ginlet, Belgium. Michaux sells his half of the family home to his brother and uses the money to travel. While abroad he invents the character Plume—the protagonist of *Ce certain Plume*, Paris (Gallimard, Ou Catrefour) 1930.

1930–31
in Asia.
At last his voyage.
India, the first people who, manifestly, seem to correspond to what is essential, at last a people with destiny in the distinguished from the others.
Indonesia, China, countries about which he writes too quickly, out of his excitement and amazement at having been in deeply touched, countries about which he will then have to think and ruminate for years.

1931–32 Departs for an eight-month tour of Asia on November 9. His impressions of India, Nepal, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), China, Japan, Malaysia, and Indonesia are recounted in *Un barbare en Asie*, Paris (Gallimard) 1933. During this trip Michaux will develop a lifelong interest in Asian art, culture, and philosophy. Learns breathing exercises and how to meditate in Chandernagor, India, and in China "takes pleasure in the and the practicing of Lao-Tzu." His experiences in India and China so move him that he once claims he would not be bothered if the eighteen-foot Lao-Tzu were to be "unchewed."

Upon his return to Paris in the fall of 1932 he immerses himself in Hindu and Chinese texts and refuses an invitation to visit Prullion and Supervielle in Pont-Croix, stating, "I must go to work at the Music Center."

1933
Lisbon-Paris

1934 Publishes "Dessins commentés" in *La Nouvelle Revue française* (NRF). Michaux's first text, based on art of his own drawings, is republished in *La Nuit remue*, Paris (Gallimard) 1935, and announces Michaux's return to making art after seven years. Travels in Spain and meets Salvador Dalí and André Breton in Barcelona. Arrives in Lisbon in October and stays for an extended four months. He describes Portugal as the first country where nothing "wounds" him. "It spends most of its time writing and making drawings that will eventually appear in

Entre cours et adieux (Henri Matisse's) 1951

1951

Marriedjan, Buenos Aires.

Becomes a member of the editorial board of *Mercure* while continuing to contribute to *Les Cahiers du Sud* and the NRF. Publishes *La Nuit remise*, which receives wide critical attention (with reviews by Pierre Lazarte, Michel Leiris, René Daumal, and Maurice Saillet) and establishes Michaux as a known writer.

Meets Doctor Gaston Ferdière, a psychiatrist, and his wife Marie-Louise (née Tormet) at the home of Claude Cahun and Suzanne Malherbe. Attends Ferdière's "*présentation de malades*" at Sainte-Anne, where the doctor is working with Laure. Marie-Louise is impressed by mescaline and, she is a student of art historian Henri Focillon and takes courses at l'Institut d'Art et d'Archéologie at the Ecole du Louvre. Tormet and Michaux will eventually marry in 1953.

1956 Since January I have been working with gouache. Yes, this January was the day of my Eureka. I found my way of painting (it's as free as brush and water) and we will see . . . what we will see.[1]

Becomes a member of the editorial board of *Hermes*, a Belgian review devoted to poetry, philosophy, and mysticism. From 1957 to 1959 he will act as the editor-in-chief.

Refused the Prix Albert 1er on the protest that the poem "Mon ivre" in *La Nuit remise* is perceived by one of the members of the jury as an insult to the Belgian king.

First separate in Colpach, Luxembourg, at the home of Mme Meyrisch Saint-Hubert, woman of letters and wife of a Luxembourg industrialist. She and Michaux share interests in Asia, Zen philosophy, poetry, and mescaline. Meets the Nineteenth century German Maître Eckart. Michaux separates regularly at her chateau in Colpach until her death in 1957. On the tenth anniversary of her death Michaux writes in homage: "Of her, more than of anyone, I am happy to say that 'we had been friends.'"[2]

Publishes *Entre cours et adieux* (Henri Matisse's), the first book to include reproductions of his drawings (eight, including a frontispiece).

Departs for Argentina in July with Superville to attend the XIVth Congress of PEN CLUB of Buenos Aires, where he delivers a lecture titled "L'Avenir de la poésie."

Meets Jorge Luis Borges in Buenos Aires. Borges will translate *Un barbare en Asie* for Éditions SUR (1963).

Travels to Uruguay where he meets Santa Sosa, a poet and translator, and the only daughter of a wealthy and renowned Uruguayan doctor. Michaux would like to marry her but doesn't want to move to South America. For a short while he becomes the lover of Angelica Gorodyn, the younger sister of Victoria Ocampo, director of the Argentinian literary review *SUR*.

1957

Begins to draw more than from time to time. First show (Galerie Pierre in Paris.)

Begin series of paintings executed in highly colored gouache or pastel on black backgrounds (1931–36, depicting mysterious landscapes and figures. Sixteen of these paintings will be reproduced in *Peintures* (GLM), 1939, along with seven poems. "Black is his crystal ball," wrote Michaux, "from black alone can he see life emerge. A completely imaginary life."

Marie-Louise attempts suicide after the end Michaux discuss breaking off their liaison. Michaux arrives in time to call Bremaux and save her.

First exhibition of paintings and drawings at the Librairie-Galerie de la Pléiade, Paris.

My exhibition had a certain success, but few sales. These gentlemen were first to convince themselves that it's not simply an infatuation on my part. I'm preparing another tightrope exhibition for them in October."

1938 Exhibition of gouaches paintings at Galerie Pierre, Paris. The announcement card reads: "A POET CHANGES INTO A PAINTER."

1938–39
Meudon.
Edits the review *Hermès*.

1939
Brazil (Minas Gerais and the State of Rio).

Publishes *Peintures* (GLM), which includes seven poems and reproductions of sixteen paintings (black backgrounds and watercolors).

The murder of creative activities is one of the strangest of all voyages into the self . . . You change thinking stations when you start painting.

The word-factory (thought-words), picture-words, emotion-words, motor-words) disappears, is silently, discreetly dismantled. A new language is born.

Departs for Brazil in July where he stays six months. He is joined by Marie-Louise Fruhinsz in October. Writes *Au pays de la magie*, Paris (Gallimard) 1941, and makes drawings, structures of which will appear in *Arbre des tropiques*, Paris (Gallimard) 1942.

January 1940
Back to Paris. In July, the exodus of refugees from the Germans.
Saint-Antonin. Their Le Lavandou.

1940 Works in the garage-atelier of the Fourcade residence in Meudon.

I was writing from my garage, reduced at the moment to its simplest state, without heat, without light other than that of two candles, with thousands of the hunger, but not without spiders.

On June 3 bombs fall very close to the Fourcade home, and on June 7 Michaux departs as a refugee for the South of France. He spends a few months in Saint-Antonin before moving into the residence assigned to him by the Vichy government in Le Lavandou (Villa Ar-mor). This will remain his official residence until July 1945. During this time he will travel only to

Marcelles and Caheti, near Grasse, where Mme. Maytrich with André Gide and others have sought refuge.

1940–42
Le Lavandou with the women who will soon be his wife.

A letter by André Gide on Michaux's character: Plume is to be delivered in Nice on June 21, 1942, but is recalled by the Légion des Combattants, "not because this Plume is perfectly unknown, but because of his (Gide's) personal morality." The written version is published shortly thereafter as *Découverte Henri Michaux*, Paris (Gallimard), 1942.

Paints a series of watercolors (c. 1941–43) depicting expansive landscapes (some with figures) and begins a series of "the most nightmarish beasts that you've ever seen." Because Michaux, as a Belgian citizen, is unable to obtain permission to travel, Marie-Louise brings twenty paintings to Paris for the exhibition of June 1942 at the Galerie de l'Abbaye (Gabrielle Zack). During the opening a group of students from the École des Beaux-Arts, accompanied by their professor, M. Pouplon, create a scandal. One of the students shouts repeatedly: "This is disgusting. This is shit." When asked to leave by Maurice Sachet, the student refuses, a fight breaks out, and the police are called to intervene. Upon hearing of the scandal, Michaux writes to Sachet: "Did Mme Gide have to help herself from buying up these Beaux-Arts types. Reactionaries are the Perpetual Enemy. But to want to obtain more from them is useless. Even in death they undoubtedly take the wrong direction."

Divorce of Marie-Louise from Gaston Ferdière (on July 12).

1943
Back in Paris. German Occupation (the second one).

Crowe accordingly makes sequestered to Le Lavandou, where there are "few lectures. Few people of knowledge . . ." and he experiences more and more "fits of rage."

On July 3, after a long negotiation, Michaux finally receives permission to return to Paris.

Visits Picasso in his studio with Brassaï, and asks Pouillon to take him to the studios of Jean Fautrier and Georges Braque.

Marries Marie-Louise on November 17, with Pouillon and Marianne Rasen as witnesses.

Publishes *Exorcismes* (Robert J. Godet), with reproductions of eleven drawings. Among the drawings are new mingles or ideograms or "alphabets."

1944
His brother dies.

Begins series of *frottages* created by randomly rubbing lead on paper, often overlapping a textured surface. "Drew without anything particular in mind, scribble mechanical." Michaux declared, "almost always, faces will appear on the paper." In this series executed between 1944 and 1947, bizarre anthropoid images emerge through this automatic drawing process.

discovered by the Surrealist Max Ernst—an artist Michaux had admired since the 1920s. Seven of Michaux's frottage will be reproduced in *Aquarelles* ("La Calligraphie," Collection Le Point du Jour, Gallimard) 1948.

Publishes *La Lutte des monstres*, Lyon (L'Arbalète), with a line drawing titled *Phasme* as the frontispiece, and *Labyrinthe* (Robert J. Godet), with reproductions of fourteen line drawings.

Exhibition at Galerie Rive Gauche, Paris.

1945
Wieskrieg by food shortages, his wife catches tuberculosis. Together in Combs-la-Ville.

Begins series of pen and ink drawings on watercolor wash. Exploring the duality of the mononcular phenomenon, Michaux's line blends, loosely defining forms in sensing metamorphosis from insect to human, human to insect. Examples of these drawings will be reproduced the following year in *Poésie et dessin*. Michaux continues making drawings in this manner over the next two years, with a notable increase in production following the death of his wife in 1948.

Death of his brother in Brussels on May 20.

Publishes "Combat contre l'espace" in the French literary and art review *Fontaine*—his first text since "Origine de la peinture" (1922) to be devoted to the topic of painting—and *Epreuves, exorcismes 1940–1944*, Paris (Gallimard), which states three collections published during the war: *Exorcismes*, *Labyrinthes*, and *La Lutte des monstres*.

1948 Marie-Louise contracts tuberculosis, and she and Michaux spend several months in Combs-la-Ville.

Publishes *Aquarelles*, which contains reproductions of seven *frottages*. It is the first book conceived with René Bertelé, who will become an important editor and organizer of many of Michaux's exhibitions.

Exhibition of drawings at Galerie Rive Gauche, Paris.

Begins publishes Bertelé's Henri Michaux. This book will serve as the single most important reference work on Michaux until Robert Bréchon's 1959 book.

Publishes *Poésie et dessin* (Collection Le Point du Jour, Gallimard), with reproductions of forty-four works combined with extracts from poems and an important preface—"La pensant au phénomène de la peinture"—that outlines Michaux's ideas on art, including:

> "I'VE NOTICED
> If I bled from and became capable of some individuals, I would surely launch a school of painting.
> PERCEPTIONS FOR PSYCHOLOGISTS
> The fact that twins, I don't paint a dyad. I paint the trait of the double (who doesn't unanimosly need twins) and can have a framework of eyes.
> I also paint the relative of the double, (it may accompany us the clearly or tips that he has red, but in a place where it is free

> ...what I would like is to paint the color of the temperament of others. That is to make the portrait of temperament.[1]

The original gouaches and watercolors reproduced in *Printemps et automne* are exhibited at Galerie Galerie La Hune, Paris.

Contributes a watercolor and three *frottages* from *Apparitions* to an auction organized to raise funds for Antonin Artaud's living expenses.

Jean Dubuffet paints several portraits of Michaux.

1947

Almost cured. Voyages of consciousness and forgetting about troubles, in Egypt.

Exhibition at Galerie du Livre, Basel.

1948 Marie-Louise's colon rotc catches fire when it comes in contact with an electric heater and she is severely burned.

> An accident. Serious. Very serious. Involving ominous risks to me. Everything comes to a halt. Reality does not exist much some anymore, the other reality, that of diversion, which has no people with Doppelbrot is hospital bun much still. No change for better or worse. My days are spent there. Every morning I have to run to see that Doppelbrot... has then well will never be pronounced. I must tarrif hope, courage. Returning one evening from the hospital, weak and exhausted after spending the day there, I think of looking at some pictures. At home I think that what I'm going to do, I paint a portfolio. It contains a few reproductions of works of my. To hell with them! I drag them away. I can no longer get into them. A few sketches of white paper come next. Changed as well. Intimacies, they seem foolish, hateful, pretentious to me, uncharted to reality. In a black mood I start, having produced zero, to cover it with a few lines, a few spots, a few scribbles, a few dots and random, not in order to do anything in particular, and certainly not a painting. I am not looking to do, I have only to tinkle. To make the world of enclosed, conflicting things in which I can project.[2]

Editorial: 1948

Death of his wife as a result of atrocious burns.

Following his wife's death, executes hundreds of ink drawings on watercolor wash at an incredibly rapid speed, described by the writer and art collector Henri-Pierre Roché: "His disposition causes to fast that sometimes he drove aside with his left hand the painting he had just finished and simultaneously started another with his right hand."[3]

One hundred and sixty-five ink and wash drawings are exhibited in the Galerie René Drouin, Paris. The exhibition brings increased recognition of his art.

Begins experimenting with lithography, and in the fall publishes *Mouvements* (Collection Le Point du Jour, Gallimard), illustrated with reproductions of thirteen lithographs (including the cover).

1950 Further explores the expressive potential of watercolor, mostly in red and black. Exhibits recent watercolors at the Galerie René Drouin, Paris.

Publishes *Poésie pour pouvoir* (René Drouin) which contains a frontispiece by Michaux and lithographs by Michel Tapie.

Un barbare en Asie published in English as *A Barbarian in Asia*, trans. Sylvia Beach (New Directions).

1950 Returns to exploration of 'signs' that began in 1927 with a series of approximately twelve hundred pages covered with ink markings, 1929–four of which will be published in *Miserocosmi* (1931).

They were geometric, interior geometry, the ones with which we don't have kinks but desires for kinks, the infinite, speculative movements and all this with living figurations that are more dark, never big, only flesh not enclosed in skin . . . What an experience it will be when the time is ripe at last and, having got into the habit of thinking in signs, we are able to exchange concerts with a few natural orcades like a bundle of wings.

Publishes *Lettres par Henri Michaux & trois bibographies de Zao Wou-Ki* (Fatras et Robert J. Godet); the latter series of poems based on the work of another artist, Philippe Paraire; an anthology of previously published writings, focused primarily on art. A revised and expanded version will appear in 1963.

1951–1952–1953
He writes less and less, he paints more.

1954 First retrospective exhibition, *Pour mieux connaître Henri Michaux* (1927–1953), at Galerie Rive Gauche, Paris.

The Space Within published in English (New Directions, trans. Richard Ellmann).

Publishes *Mouvements* (Collection Le Point du Jour, Gallimard), which includes a poem, preface, and reproductions of sixty-four pen and ink drawings.

I've not seen what they are, these signs that I've produced. I am perhaps the least fit to speak of them, close to them as I am. I had covered twelve hundred pages with them and was aware only of their surge and flow when they finally got back of their own, and, surprisingly, reflectively, discovered that they seemed to have engaged . . . and to this book came them, more his work than mine.

But what of the signs? It was like this: I had been immersed for years in composing alongside, which I had been doing me and all for twenty years and the pursue of which seems indeed to be part of my destiny, composing alongside, I say, with certain figures, certain figurations, certain figures, certain figurations.

I tried once more, but gradually the forms 'in movement' regulated the constructed forms, the continually composed characters. What I enjoyed doing then seem. Their movement became my movement. The more them were of them, the more I tired. The more of them I wanted. Creating them, I became quite other. I emerged my body (my instrument of action and repose). It's when a lot remain from my body, my body, I hold it more singing, electric. Like a tube or a galloping horse that together make but one. . . .

1955 Executes a group of gouache paintings composed of numerous expressive black marks resembling stick figures, similar to many of the 'signs' in the *Mouvements* series. Filed together, these essentially identical configurations have often been described as scenes of "crowds" ("*foules*") or "battles" ("*batailles*").

1955 Begins a series of 'signs' composed in gouache, which are exhibited at Galerie Nina Dausset, Paris.

1954 Makes first 'blot' paintings in ink. "One day I firmly did it straight out. I emptied a can of the bottle with jerky movements and let it spread." This blot painting is an important and subsequent biggest format ink drawings would lead many to associate Michaux with the French movement known as "Tachisme". The artist rejected such an affiliation, stating: "If I'm a 'tachiste', I'm one who can't stand 'tache.'" For Michaux, the blot functioned as a means, not an end. "I have myself with eating the blots. The blots are a provocation. I must it. Quickly. One must act quickly with those big lungs ones that are apt to go wallowing everywhere. The crucial minute comes quickly. Quickly, before they extend their realm of shortness and vomiting. Unbearable blots."[1]

Exhibition of ink paintings at Galerie René Drouin, Paris. First US exhibition at the Dunstan Gallery, New York.

Naturalized French on August 17.

Publishes "Aventures de lignes," preface to Will Grohmann's *Paul Klee*, Geneva (Coédition Flinker/Trois Collines).

First experience with the drug mescaline, an alkaloid from the mescal cactus plant found in Mexico. Over the next few years he will produce numerous drawings, paintings, and writings in an attempt to render the experience of his altered state. The drawings are most frequently executed in a thin, agitated line, like that of a seismograph, which seems to track interior pulsations and vibrations. The paintings are all on *lavis* (or number and are an attempt to render the experience as the effect of the drug fades away. Written accounts of his drug use, often including reproductions of mescaline drawings, are published in several books: *Miserable miracle* (1956), *Choplin turbulent* (1957), *Plus dans le dessinement* (1959), *Connaissance par les gouffres* (1961), *Les Grandes Épreuves de l'esprit* (1966). He will also experiment with hashish, LSD, ritaline, and peyolocus.

Mescaline made me realize that I was rejected such a commitment with little.[2]

Mescaline nodulaire, sharpens, synthetises, intensifies the inward movement of hereditary conscious.[3]

1955

Naturalized French.

1956

First experiment with mescaline.

Publishes *Miserable miracle*, Monaco (Éditions du Rocher), which includes reproductions of forty-eight mescaline drawings. An exhibition of mescaline drawings, titled *Description d'un miracle*, takes place at the Librairie Galerie La Hune, Paris.

Travels to Egypt and Sudan on the occasion of an exhibition of watercolors at the Maison de la Culture Française at Cairo.

The exhibition *Peintures Henri Michaux, 1924 à 1956* is held at Galerie René Drouin, Paris. Exhibitions also held at the Ruth Moskin Gallery, New York, and Galleria d'Arte Selerio, Rome.

Publishes *Quatre vents bonnes et mauvaises* (Éditions Gallimard, Paris).

Publishes *Quarante ans bonnes et mauvaises* (Éditions Gallimard, Paris).

Publishes *Qui je fus* (Éditions Gallimard, Paris).

Publishes *Plume* (Éditions Gallimard, Paris).

Publishes *Lointain intérieur* (Éditions Gallimard, Paris).

Publishes *Passages* (Éditions Gallimard, Paris).

Publishes *Face aux verrous* (Éditions Gallimard, Paris).

Publishes *Connaissance par les gouffres* (Éditions Gallimard, Paris).

Publishes *Mes propriétés* (Éditions Gallimard, Paris).

Publishes *Ecuador* (Éditions Gallimard, Paris).

Publishes *Vent de rêves* (Éditions Gallimard, Paris).

Publishes *Ici, Maintenant* (Éditions Gallimard, Paris).

Publishes *Les Grandes épreuves des fantômes* (Éditions Gallimard, Paris).

Publishes *Poteaux d'angle* (Éditions Gallimard, Paris).

Publishes *Les Ailleurs et les jours* (Éditions Fata Morgana, Paris).

Publishes *Les Ailleurs et les jours* (Éditions Gallimard

every year until 1965. Exhibitions also held at Galerie Charles Lienhard, Zürich, and Galerie André Drouhet, Reims.

J'ai aidé celé l'choser painting at a mame . . . First, I chose it in order not to be remembered . . . also the still the mine into a dessin behind which I have dear of l'intérieur . . . In painting I don't feel overcome. Nonetheless, the large black ink paintings are also continuous, but conformist of the moment, of a single moment . . .

1962 Exhibit at the Venice Biennale and receives the Einaudi Prize.

Contributes poem "Sous les yeux" as preface to *Joseph Sima* exhibition catalogue (Galerie Paul Facchetti).

Exhibitions at Galerie Blanche, Stockholm, and Galleria Blu, Milan.

1963 Continues making 'signs' by experimenting with different supports, like canvas and Japanese paper, and materials, like sepia and gouache. Also begins to lay down ink washes indicating horizontal rows or registers on which he lines up numerous 'signs'.

Contributes large ink drawing to section organized to benefit Georges Bataille.

Publishes *Connaissance par le gouffre* (Collection Le Point du Jour, Gallimard).

Meets Micheline Phankim, who will become his companion and executor.

1964 Publishes *Vents et poussières* (Karl Flinker), with reproductions of nine mescaline drawings. Retrospective held at the Silkeborg Museum in Denmark. Exhibitions also held at Galerie Daniel Cordier, Paris, and Galleria Notizia, Turin.

1965 Makes film, *Images des mondes visionnaires*, with Eric Duvivier on his experiences with mescaline and hashish. Produced by Sandoz Laboratories.

First voyages with Michaux: Phankim: Morocco (February–July–August, November), India and Nepal (December–January 1966). They will take travel each winter on a grand voyage (Asia, Africa, America) and each spring to a Mediterranean country.

Mescaline mescaline is translated into English by Louise Varèse and published by City Lights, publishers of the Beat poets.

Numerous exhibitions held worldwide: Robert Fraser Gallery, London; Cordier-Eluerson Gallery, New York; Libreria Rizzoli, Rome; Galerie de Buren, Stockholm; and Galerie Van de Loo, Munich.

1966 *Henri Michaux ou l'espace du dedans*, a film about Michaux by, made by Geneviève Bonnefoi and Jacques Voisin. The film is shown as part of Michaux's 1966 exhibition at the Galerie Engelbert in Geneva.

First major retrospective at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam. Another retrospective is held at Galerie Maeght, Geneva.

Publishes "Et n'étoient à partir de peintures énigmatiques," an ensemble of texts extracted from paintings by Magritte, in the journal *Mercure de France*.[1] Republished as *En n'étant à partir de peintures énigmatiques*, Montpellier (Fata Morgana) 1971.

1969 Major retrospective of more than two hundred and fifty paintings and drawings at the Musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris. Exhibitions also held at Gimpel Hanover, Zürich, and Cordier-Ekstrom Gallery, New York.

Becomes a member of Dada-Gesellschaft, "Compagnie de l'art brut."

Michaux receives the Grand Prix national des lettres.

1966 Returns to drawing in the style of the miscellanie drawings, without actually being under the influence of the drug. (He does so again in 1969.) "Those who have once experienced the visions and the fascinating passivity cannot forget. Mescaline is not, however, indispensable. Without it I have several times been able to have visions. The brain is able, and must be able, to reproduce everything that it has experienced."[2] To differentiate them from the earlier works, he first calls them "disaggregated" ("désagrégées") drawings, later modifying the term to "fragmegrams" ("fragmégrames") drawings.

Exhibitions at the Galerie Le Point Cardinal with Artaud and Ernst. First exhibition of disaggregation drawings. This exhibition marks the beginning of a long collaboration with Jean Hugues who will exhibit Michaux's work regularly at Le Point Cardinal. Exhibitions also held at Galerie Ernst Engelberts, Geneva, and Galerie Rudolf Zwirner, Cologne.

Publishes *Parcours* (Le Point Cardinal), a suite of twelve engravings that demonstrates a new development in his interest in alphabets and signs.

The *Cahiers de l'Herne* devotes a special issue to Michaux.

Travels to India, Thailand, and Cambodia.

1967 Begins experiments with acrylics, applying paint directly from the tube. Vigorously figurative, these works anticipate his 1968 series titled Mouvements (A Wrenching Turning Away).[3]

Exhibitions of recent work held at Galerie Le Point Cardinal, Paris. Exhibitions also held at Galerie-Librairie La Tournale, Marseille; Galleria del Naviglio, Milan; and Palazzo Grassi, Venice.

Travels to Lisbon, Miami, and the Yucatan.

1968 The May 1968 uprisings inspire Michaux to make large acrylic paintings, some of which are grouped under the title Arachnaeus.

Exhibition of paintings (1948–67) at INSCULA, Université de Rouen. Exhibitions also held at Galerie d'Art Moderne, Basel; Galerie Le Point Cardinal, Paris (with Pons and Vieira); and Galerie Edwin Engelberts, Geneva.

Travels to New York and Columbia.

Death of Jean Paulhan.

1969 Exhibition of a hundred drawings and paintings at the Von der Heydt Museum in Wuppertal, Germany. Visits the Musée des arts et de l'industrie, Saint-Etienne. Exhibition also held at Galerie de Bayen, Stockholm, and Galerie Van de Loo, Munich.

Publishes *Façons d'endormir, façons d'éveiller* (Collection Le Point du Jour, Gallimard), Michaux's second book devoted to drawing, forty-five years after *Les Rêves et le sommeil*.

1970 Travels to the Ivory Coast.

Exhibitions held at Galerie Maeght, Brussels; Galerie Melin, Lausanne; and Galerie Arteck, Helsinki.

Writes preface to *La Calligraphie chinoise. Un art à quatre dimensions* by Léon Tchang Long-Yen. Republished separately as *Idéogrammes en Chine*, Montpellier (Fata Morgana) 1975.

1971 Exhibition of recent work at Galerie Le Point Cardinal, Paris, notably new "Batailles" ink works. Retrospective held at the Palais des Beaux-Arts de Charleroi; it travels to the Museum voor Schoon Kunsten, Gent, and the Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels.

1972 Publishes *Emergences-Résurgences*, Geneva (Edition d'art Albert Skira), which traces the genesis of his art and contains reproductions of seventy-six paintings and drawings.

Retrospective held at the Kestner-Gesellschaft in Hanover.

1973 Exhibition held at Galerie S. Mazuede, Lisbon.

Publishes *Moments. Transcrits du temps* (Collection Le Point du Jour, Gallimard), which includes poems inspired by the sea of Malta and others.

1974 Publishes *Par la voie des rythmes*, Montpellier (Fata Morgana), a book with reproductions of eighty-four drawings (including front and back covers) and no text. It is accompanied by a suite of twelve lithographs.

Exhibitions held at Galerie Le Point Cardinal, Paris, and Galerie Erker, Saint-Gall, Switzerland.

1975 Numerous exhibitions held worldwide: Galerie J. Davidson, Tours; Lefebre Gallery, New York; Galerie Melin, Lausanne; Galerie Loeb, Bern; Galerie Gilles Gheerbrant, Montreal; and Moderna Museet, Stockholm.

1976 Major retrospective at the Fondation Maeght, Saint-Paul-de-Vence. Other retrospectives held at the Staatsmuseum, Gent, and the Museum des zu Jubelhaeren, Vienna. Exhibitions held at Galerie Edwa Engelberts, Gerwen; Galerie Maeght, Brussels; and Galerie Le Point Cardinal, Paris.

Publishes *Les Rêveuses*, Montpellier (Fata Morgana), written while considering paintings by the Image.

1977 Executes a number of small-scale oil paintings apparently related to earlier massive paintings. In his later years, works more with thicker media such as oil and acrylic, while continuing to work in ink and watercolor.

Exhibitions held at the Institut Français, Stockholm; Galerie Van de Loo, Munich; and Galerie Thomas Borgmann, Cologne.

1978 The largest retrospective to date is held at the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris. Travels to the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York and the Musée d'art contemporain, Montréal. Exhibitions also held at Galerie Le Point Cardinal, Paris; Galerie Hubert Winter, Vienna; Galerie Heide Cortie, Vienne; and Galerie Gilles Gheerbrant, Montréal.

1979 Publishes *Saisir*, Montpellier (Fata Morgana), with reproductions of sixty-seven drawings.

Exhibitions held at Galerie Paulello, Bonn, and Galerie A. Munich.

1980 Michaux injures his Achilles tendon while running for the train in Lausanne. Executes some small drawings in colored pencil while his foot is in a cast.

Exhibitions held at Galerie René Ziegler, Zürich, and Galerie Le Point Cardinal, Paris.

1981 Publishes *Comme en exaltement*, Montpellier (Fata Morgana), with serigraphs.[7]

Exhibitions held at Kanako Art Gallery, Tokyo, and the Institut Français, Athens.

1982 Exhibitions held at Galerie Obsen, Stockholm; Galerie Le Point Cardinal, Paris; and Kanako Art Gallery, Tokyo.

1983 Retrospective held at the Seibu Museum of Art, Tokyo. Exhibitions also held at the Musée Municipal de Kinkenjobe, the Centre d'Exposition, Hiroo, and Galerie Le Point Cardinal, Paris.

Publishes *Les Commencements, Dernier de profond, Essais d'enfance*, Montpellier (Fata Morgana).

1984 Publishes *Par des traits*, Montpellier (Fata Morgana), with reproductions of sixty-five drawings. It's the last book published during Michaux's lifetime.

Works on a series of small oil paintings.

Exhibitions held at Studio d'Arte, Turin; Galerie Le Point Cardinal, Paris; Galerie Artley, Skissskattegrift; Galerie Blanche, Stockholm; Galerie Obsen, Stockholm; Musée de Valence, France; Edward Thorp Gallery, New York; and Galerie Artek, Helsinki.

Dies in a hospital following a heart attack on October 19.

Notes

1 French spelling punch from Lindsay Edition.

2 Belgian counterpoint bookmag on Nielsen.

3 Cited in Jean-Pierre Barricelli, *Gide*, p. 52; Cited in Cherry Vail 1985, p. 43.

4 Pierre Mille was then considered the national critic, and Gide's book was the only article the *Mercure* will do about Bernhard; it the great Dutch source of the twentieth century.

5 Founded in the late nineteenth century by Belgian poets who felt the literary scene needed the official literature of the time.

6 The nationalists (for gave half a high-school diploma and summer into university in French-speaking countries.

7 Cited in Jean-Pierre Barricelli, *Gide*, p. 52; Cited in Cherry Vail 1985, p. 43.

8 The Surrealist could claim Lautréamont as their spiritual ancestor because of the Chants de Maldoror published in 1868-69.

9 Pierre Hellens was a Belgian writer with Surrealist sympathies; Jean Paulhan, revisit and editor of *La Nouvelle Revue Française* are one of the most influential men in French letters in the first half of this century. He was to remain a force because chief of Gallimard, his house of publication.

10 Cited in Le Temps 1911, January 1-4, p. 88.

11 Quoted by Patrick Waldberg, *Sur Proust*, Paris: Jean Jacques Pauvert, 1958, p. 300. Cited in Coppenhaver/Pierpont 1978, p. 11.

12 Georgenon Bourgeois, trans. Elaine Blair, in Coppenhaver/Pierpont 1978, p. 14.

13 Cited in Cherry Vail 1985, p. 44.

14 From a letter to Gide, Paulhan, May 14, 1918. Cited by Bellour and Tiret 1998, p. 10.

15 From a letter to Claude Cahun, May 1914. Cited in Robert 1999, p. 14.

16 Written expressly for Paulhan to use in the Nouvelle Revue Française, August 1, 1914. Cited in Cherry Vail 1985, p. 44.

17 Gide's letter to Paulhan, August 1, 1914. Cited in Robert 1999, p. 14; Cited in Robert 1999, p. 14.

18 Cited in Cherry Vail 1985, p. 44. The Blaise Cendrars.

19 Letter to Jacques-Emile Blanche and Gide, p. 1.

20 Letter to Jean Paulhan, January 1, 1918. Cited in Cherry Vail 1985, p. 100.

21 Cited in Robert 1999, p. 14.

22 Cited by Vail, Fantasy, 1985. Claire Paulhan to Coppenhaver/Pierpont 1978, p. 15.

23 Letter to Claude Cahun, August 1918. Cited in Robert 1999, p. 14.

24 Letter to Cherry Vail 1985, p. 100.

25 Letter to Jacques-Emile Blanche, David Bell to Bell 1992, p. 370.

26 Cited in Robert 1999, p. 14.

27 Bellour and Tiret 1998, p. 10.

28 Letter to Supervielle, July 13, 1919. Cited in Robert 1999, p. 14.

29 Letter to Jean Paulhan, July 1, 1918. Cited in Robert 1999, p. 14.

30 Cited in Bellour and Tiret 1998, p. 10.

31 Letter to Maurice Saillet, June 1, 1919. Cited in Cherry Vail 1985, p. 100.

32 Letter to Paulhan, January 1919. Cited in Cherry Vail 1985, p. 100.

33 The present or particulate is in Paulhan, Cendrars, Jacob, Gide, David Bell to Bell 1992, p. 370.

34 Georgenon Bourgeois, trans. Blair Fowlie, in Coppenhaver/Pierpont 1978, p. 16.

35 Jill Roche, "Les Caractères de Marcel Proust," *Revue Générale*, 1966, 101.

36 Cited in Jean-Pierre Barricelli, *Gide*, p. 52; Cited in Coppenhaver/Pierpont 1978, p. 16.

37 Pichon, *Souvenirs*, 1929. Michel Leiris, Cited in Coppenhaver/Pierpont 1978, p. 16.

38 Georgenon Bourgeois, trans. Claire Paulhan, Cited in Coppenhaver/Pierpont 1978, p. 17.

39 Trans. John Sullivan in Gide to Dorat Centre 1999, Cited in Coppenhaver/Pierpont 1978, p. 17.

40 Ibid.

41 "Conversation avec Henri Michaux" (1950) in Michel Leiris, *Les Heures Claires: Poètes d'hier et de Bâchelier* 1961, p. 30.

42 "Mercure de France" 1911, 1912. Michel Leiris, Cited in Coppenhaver/Pierpont 1978, p. 17.

43 Chinese guide to Friends, which gave no point, cinema, as well as the opportunity to the usual eight hundred stars of eight-thou

44 Cited in Cherry Vail 1985, p. 100.

45 Letter to Robert Bichet, 1918 Cited in Robert 1999, p. 14.

46 Cited in Bellour and Tiret 1998, p. 10.

47 Ibid, p. 11, spring 1919. Reconsidered in Ibid 1998, 14.

48 "Contre et Temps" was published in "Cahiers Périodiques de temps" Ch Blanc du Flore et Tiret, Flamgin, Paris-Lallemand, 1980.

49 Georgenon Bourgeois, trans. Blair Fowlie, p. 19.

50 *Mercure de France*, no. 1014, December 1919.

51 Trans. Jean Johnny Bellour Robert Tiret Cahiers, 1983. Cited in Coppenhaver/Pierpont 1978, p. 19.

52 Trans. Claire Paulhan in Coppenhaver/Pierpont 1978, p. 19.

53 Critics of 1917 noticed a very noticeable change. Nonetheless it was convinced that so epithet.

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Leslie Jones

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[See by René Berthier]

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CHECKLIST

Works are listed alphabetically by collection, and thereafter chronologically. Heights precede widths.

Collection of Perry Ametzoy, Bedford, France

Meadow drawing, 1959–59.
Indian ink and watercolour on paper
[illegible] × [illegible] (8 × 12 in.)

Collection of Claude Berri, Paris

Untitled, 1951–52
Indian ink on paper
[illegible] × [illegible] (9 × 12 in.)

Untitled (Long Dress [Cambe]), 1958–59
Crayon on black paper
[illegible] × [illegible] (60 × 50 in.)

Untitled, 1958–59, 58–59
Crayon on black paper
[illegible] × [illegible] (60 × 50 in.)

Untitled, 1959–59
Indian ink on paper
[illegible] × [illegible] (9 × 12 in.)

Untitled, 1959–60
Crayon on paper
[illegible] × [illegible] (9 × 12 in.)

Untitled (*Mercurvanne* [*Mercurvanne*]), 1951–52, 60
Crayon on black paper
[illegible] × [illegible] (9 × 12 in.)

Meadow drawing, 1959–60
Indian ink on paper
[illegible] × [illegible] (9 × 12 in.)

Meadow drawing, 1958–59, 59–60
Indian ink on paper
[illegible] × [illegible] (9 × 12 in.)

Untitled, 1960–61
Indian ink on paper
[illegible] × [illegible] (9 × 12 in.)

Untitled, 1960–61, 61–62
Indian ink on paper
[illegible] × [illegible] (9 × 12 in.)

Untitled, 1960–61
Indian ink on paper
[illegible] × [illegible] (9 × 12 in.)

Untitled, 1960–61
Indian ink on paper
[illegible] × [illegible] (9 × 12 in.)

Post-mescaline drawing, 1960–61, 62
Indian ink on paper
[illegible] × [illegible] (9 × 12 in.)

Untitled, 1960–61, 62
Indian ink on paper
[illegible] × [illegible] (9 × 12 in.)

Cabinet des dessins du Musée d'art et d'histoire, Genève

Untitled (*Alphabet*), 1944–46
Indian ink on paper
[illegible] × [illegible] (9 × 12 in.)

Untitled (*Alphabet*), 1944–46
Indian ink on paper
[illegible] × [illegible] (9 × 12 in.)

Untitled, 1945–46
Watercolour and ink on paper
[illegible] × [illegible] (9 × 12 in.)

Untitled (*Mercurvanne* [*Mercurvanne*]), 1951–52, 52
Indian ink on paper
[illegible] × [illegible] (9 × 12 in.)

COLLECTION OF MR. EDMOND FAGALDE, GENEVA

Untitled, 1940–49/50
Indian ink on paper
9½ × 12½ in. (24 × 32 cm)

Untitled, 1940–49/50
Indian ink on paper
9½ × 12½ in. (24 × 32 cm)

Untitled, 1940–49/50
Indian ink on paper
9½ × 12½ in. (24 × 32 cm)

Untitled, 1949
Indian ink on paper
9½ × 12½ in. (24 × 32 cm)

Untitled, 1949–50
Indian ink on paper
9½ × 12½ in. (24 × 32 cm)

Untitled, 1949–50
Indian ink on yellow ink on paper
9½ × 12½ in. (24 × 32 cm)

FONDATION HARSY, SAINT-PAUL-DE-VENCE, FRANCE

Untitled, 1960–70
Indian ink on paper
19½ × 25½ in. (50 × 65 cm)

Untitled, 1968–70
Indian ink on paper
19½ × 25½ in. (50 × 65 cm)

FONDS MÉDICAL D'ART CONTEMPORAIN DE PLOMBIÈRES, DIGNES, FRANCE

Untitled, 1960–70
Indian ink on paper
19½ × 25½ in. (50 × 65 cm)

COLLECTION OF MR. AND MRS. CLAUDE FRIEDLIN

Untitled (Monument, Montmartre), 1957–58
Indian ink on paper
19½ × 25½ in. (50 × 65 cm)

COLLECTION THEODE HERMES, PARIS

Untitled, 1958–59/60
Indian ink on paper
19½ × 25½ in. (50 × 65 cm)

Untitled, 1958–59/60
Indian ink on paper
19½ × 25½ in. (50 × 65 cm)

Untitled, 1959–60
Indian ink on paper
19½ × 25½ in. (50 × 65 cm)

Untitled, 1959–60
Indian ink and gouache on paper
19½ × 25½ in. (50 × 65 cm)

Untitled, 1960–61/62
Indian ink on paper
19½ × 25½ in. (50 × 65 cm)

Untitled, 1960–61/62
Indian ink on paper
19½ × 25½ in. (50 × 65 cm)

Untitled, 1960–61/62
Indian ink on paper
19½ × 25½ in. (50 × 65 cm)

PRIVATE COLLECTION, COURTESY OF GALERIE THEODE HERMES, PARIS

Untitled (Monument, Montmartre), 1957–58
Indian ink on paper
19½ × 25½ in. (50 × 65 cm)

Untitled (Monument, Montmartre), 1957–58
Indian ink on paper
19½ × 25½ in. (50 × 65 cm)

Untitled, 1961–62/63
Indian ink on paper
19½ × 25½ in. (50 × 65 cm)

COLLECTION OF MARGUERITE JOBERT, PARIS

Untitled (The Blue Ladder II, Lebrun-Sous-Le-Bois), 1958–59/60
Gouache on black paper
19½ × 25½ in. (50 × 65 cm)

DIXIE, MUSEUM FRANCAIS D'ART MODERNE, VERSAILLES

Untitled, 1960–61/62
Indian ink and watercolor on paper
19½ × 25½ in. (50 × 65 cm)

Pen-wasshcn drawing, 1968–70
Ink on paper
19½ × 25½ in. (50 × 65 cm)

JPC COLLECTION, GENEVA

Wasshcn drawing, 1958–59/60
Indian ink on paper
19½ × 25½ in. (50 × 65 cm)

Pen-wasshcn drawing, 1964–65/66
Indian ink on paper
19½ × 25½ in. (50 × 65 cm)

Untitled, 1968–70/71
Indian ink on paper
19½ × 25½ in. (50 × 65 cm)

MONTE DA VALDEVEZ, FRANCE

Pen-wasshcn drawing, 1964–65/66
Indian ink on paper
19½ × 25½ in. (50 × 65 cm)

ANTOLOGY EXHIBITED BY HENRI MATISSE

Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris

The Among Leaves, 1948–50 (12)
Pen on black paper
[illegible] × [illegible] cm

Meadow drawing, 1948–50 (13)
Ink on white paper
[illegible] × [illegible] cm

Untitled, c. 1946–50 (14)
Ink wash and watercolor on paper
[illegible] × [illegible] cm

Untitled, 1946–50 (15)
Ink on white paper
[illegible] × [illegible] cm

Untitled, 1946–50 (16)
Ink on white paper
[illegible] × [illegible] cm

Untitled (Painting in Indian ink [Peinture à l'encre de Chine]), 1946–50
Indian ink on paper
[illegible] × [illegible] cm

Untitled (Painting in Indian ink [Peinture à l'encre de Chine]), 1946–50
Indian ink and tempera on paper
[illegible] × [illegible] cm

Jazz: Dancing (Arbre-serpent [antivenin]), c. 1946–48, 1952
Indian ink on paper
[illegible] × [illegible] cm

The Museum of Modern Art, New York

Meadow drawing, 1946–50 (9)
Pen and ink on paper
[illegible] × [illegible] cm

Untitled, 1946–50 (10)
Pen and ink on paper
[illegible] × [illegible] cm

Collection de Catherine Putman, Paris

Untitled, 1946–50 (8)
Indian ink on paper
[illegible] × [illegible] cm

Collection de Marie-Claude Tornay, Paris

Untitled (The Three Sons [Les Trois Soleils]), 1946–50 (11)
Indian ink on paper
[illegible] × [illegible] cm

Meadow drawing, 1948–50 (12)
Ink on paper
[illegible] × [illegible] cm

PRIVATE COLLECTIONS

Alphabet, 1947–50 (1)
Ink on paper
[illegible] × [illegible] cm

Narcissus, 1947–50 (2)
Ink on paper
[illegible] × [illegible] cm

Untitled (Original Text [Lettre des tropiques]), 1947–50 (3)
Ink on white paper
[illegible] × [illegible] cm

Untitled (Alphabet), 1949–50 (5)
Indian ink on paper
[illegible] × [illegible] cm

Untitled (Alphabet), 1949–50 (6)
Indian ink on paper
[illegible] × [illegible] cm

Untitled (Alphabet), 1949–50 (7)
Indian ink on paper
[illegible] × [illegible] cm

Untitled (Alphabet), 1949–50 (8)
Indian ink on paper
[illegible] × [illegible] cm

Untitled (Alphabet), 1949–50 (9)
Indian ink on paper
[illegible] × [illegible] cm

Untitled, 1949–50 (10)
Indian ink on paper
[illegible] × [illegible] cm

Untitled, 1949–50 (11)
Watercolor and ink on paper
[illegible] × [illegible] cm

Untitled, 1949–50 (12)
Watercolor and ink on paper
[illegible] × [illegible] cm

Untitled, 1949–50 (13)
Watercolor and ink on paper
[illegible] × [illegible] cm

Untitled (Harmonie [Harmonie]), 1950–51 (14)
Indian ink on paper
[illegible] × [illegible] cm

Untitled (Harmonie [Harmonie]), 1950–51 (15)
Ink on paper
[illegible] × [illegible] cm

Untitled (Movements (Maintenant)), 1957–61 (c. 40)
Indian ink on paper
27×21 cm ($10\frac{5}{8} \times 8\frac{1}{4}$ in)

Untitled (Movements (Maintenant)), 1957–61 (c. 41)
Indian ink on paper
27×21 cm ($10\frac{5}{8} \times 8\frac{1}{4}$ in)

Untitled (Movements (Maintenant)), 1957–61 (c. 42)
Indian ink on paper
27×21 cm ($10\frac{5}{8} \times 8\frac{1}{4}$ in)

Untitled (Movements (Maintenant)), 1957–61 (c. 50)
Indian ink on paper
27×21 cm ($10\frac{5}{8} \times 8\frac{1}{4}$ in)

Untitled (Movements (Maintenant)), 1957–61 (c. 51)
Indian ink on paper
27×21 cm ($10\frac{5}{8} \times 8\frac{1}{4}$ in)

Untitled (Movements (Maintenant)), 1957–61 (c. 52)
Indian ink on paper
27×21 cm ($10\frac{5}{8} \times 8\frac{1}{4}$ in)

Untitled (Movements (Maintenant)), 1957–61 (c. 53)
Indian ink on paper
27×21 cm ($10\frac{5}{8} \times 8\frac{1}{4}$ in)

Untitled (Movements (Maintenant)), 1957–61 (c. 54)
Indian ink on paper
27×21 cm ($10\frac{5}{8} \times 8\frac{1}{4}$ in)

Untitled (Movements (Maintenant)), 1957–61 (c. 56)
Indian ink on paper
27×21 cm ($10\frac{5}{8} \times 8\frac{1}{4}$ in)

Untitled, 1957 (not reproduced here)
Indian ink on paper
27×21 cm ($10\frac{5}{8} \times 8\frac{1}{4}$ in)

Meudon drawing, 1957–61
Indian ink on paper
27×21 cm ($10\frac{5}{8} \times 8\frac{1}{4}$ in)

Meudon drawing, c. 1958 (c. 76)
Pencil on paper
27×21 cm ($10\frac{5}{8} \times 8\frac{1}{4}$ in)

Meudon drawing, c. 1958 (c. 77)
Pencil on paper
27×21 cm ($10\frac{5}{8} \times 8\frac{1}{4}$ in)

Meudon drawing, 1958–59
Indian ink on paper
27×21 cm ($10\frac{5}{8} \times 8\frac{1}{4}$ in)

Philosophy drawing, 1958–59
Indian ink on paper
27×21 cm ($10\frac{5}{8} \times 8\frac{1}{4}$ in)

Meudon drawing, 1958–58 (c. 46)
Coloured pencil on paper
28×21 cm ($11 \times 8\frac{1}{4}$ in)

Meudon drawing, 1957–61 (c. 61)
Indian ink on paper
27×21 cm ($10\frac{5}{8} \times 8\frac{1}{4}$ in)

Untitled, 1959 (c. 80)
Pastel and Indian ink on paper
27×21 cm ($10\frac{5}{8} \times 8\frac{1}{4}$ in)

Untitled, 1959 (c. 88)
Indian ink on paper
27×21 cm ($10\frac{5}{8} \times 8\frac{1}{4}$ in)

Untitled, 1960–70 (c. 10)
Indian ink on paper
27×21 cm ($10\frac{5}{8} \times 8\frac{1}{4}$ in)

Untitled, 1960–70 (c. 36–37)
Indian ink on paper
27×21 cm ($10\frac{5}{8} \times 8\frac{1}{4}$ in)

Untitled, c. 1960–70 (c. 1)
Indian ink on paper
27×21 cm ($10\frac{5}{8} \times 8\frac{1}{4}$ in)

Untitled, 1960–70 (c. 100)
Indian ink on paper
27×21 cm ($10\frac{5}{8} \times 8\frac{1}{4}$ in)

Untitled, 1960–70 (c. 101)
Indian ink on paper
27×21 cm ($10\frac{5}{8} \times 8\frac{1}{4}$ in)

Untitled, 1960–70 (c. 102)
Indian ink on paper
27×21 cm ($10\frac{5}{8} \times 8\frac{1}{4}$ in)

Untitled, 1960–70 (c. 103)
Indian ink on paper
27×21 cm ($10\frac{5}{8} \times 8\frac{1}{4}$ in)

Untitled, 1960–70 (c. 104)
Indian ink on paper
27×21 cm ($10\frac{5}{8} \times 8\frac{1}{4}$ in)

Untitled (Painting on Indian ink (Peinture à l'encre de Chine)), 1960–70 (c. 105)
Indian ink on paper
27×21 cm ($10\frac{5}{8} \times 8\frac{1}{4}$ in)

Untitled (Painting on Indian ink (Peinture à l'encre de Chine)), 1960–70 (c. 106)
Indian ink on paper
27×21 cm ($10\frac{5}{8} \times 8\frac{1}{4}$ in)

Untitled, 1960–70 (c. 108)
Indian ink on paper
27×21 cm ($10\frac{5}{8} \times 8\frac{1}{4}$ in)

Untitled, 1969-70
Indian ink and crayon on paper
14 1/2 x 20 in. (36.8 x 50.8 cm)

Four mandrake drawings, c. 1969-70
Indian ink and crayon on paper
14 1/2 x 20 in. (36.8 x 50.8 cm)

Four mandrake drawings, c. 1969-70
Indian ink and coloured ink on paper
14 1/2 x 20 in. (36.8 x 50.8 cm)

Untitled, c. 1970-71
Indian ink on paper
14 1/2 x 20 in. (36.8 x 50.8 cm)

Untitled, c. 1970-71
Indian ink and acrylic on paper
14 1/2 x 20 in. (36.8 x 50.8 cm)

Untitled, 1970-71
Indian ink and crayon on paper
14 1/2 x 20 in. (36.8 x 50.8 cm)

Untitled, 1970-71
Indian ink on paper
14 1/2 x 20 in. (36.8 x 50.8 cm)

Untitled (Day of Rhythm [Par le trait des rythmes]), 1972-73
Ink on paper
17 1/2 x 23 in. (44.5 x 58.4

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Front cover, bottom: *Untitled*, 1960 (Fondation Maeght, Saint-Paul-de-Vence, France)

Back cover: Portrait of Henri Matisse, anonymous, n.d.

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The celebrated Belgian/French poet Henri Michaux (1899–1984) made *drawing* a highly significant component of the full spectrum of his life as an artist. The possible means of his practice as a draftsman and his artistic motivations are as varied as the mediums he employed and the subjects he explored, ranging from mysterious personal dreamlike visions to hallucinatory or hallucinogenic language turned into sensuous sets of pen and pigment which he employed as a weapon to attack the established linguistic order through his deliberate blurring of one medium into another. Michaux took his drawing into his writing and his writing into his drawing, stretching the boundaries of each form of expression in an effort to say the unsayable. *Untitled Passages by Henri Michaux* conjoins thought-provoking texts and subtly disturbing images to explore every aspect of Michaux's marvelous employment of systems of expression.

Michaux thought that it was the art one produced—something that would never be apparent simply from looking at one's face—that was of primary importance in the construction of one's identity. His own art involved an unrelenting exploration and interrogation of the systems and structures of Western consciousness, upon which he brought to bear his fascination with Chinese calligraphy and its implications both for the nature of language and for the relationship between the self and the world. Michaux's work, influenced by the work of Paul Klee, Wassily Kandinsky, and Ernst Fuchs, Michaux's insights, informed by his experiments with mescaline and LSD, were nevertheless all his own. *Untitled Passages*, which contains the entire text of Michaux's "Some Information about Fifty-Nine Years of Existence" and "To Draw the Flow of Time," as well as a rare 1960s interview with the artist and new essays by authorities in their fields, pays fitting tribute to the man and his work.

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