APPRENTICESHIPS IN TENDER ABSTRACTION: MICHAUX, VALÉRY, AND BURROUGHS

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Abstract

This dissertation takes as its subject matter transformations in subjectivity that take the form of learnings, apprenticeships and (de)habituations. Instead of conversion, rupture and direct negation, the temporalities and styles of the transformations in question take a form that adjusts to the everyday, soft powers of habit, in its signature ambiguities between passivity and activity, insensibility and acquisition of new capacities. The aspect of "paideia" characterized in this fashion is explored in the specifically "poetic" company of the formal experiments undertaken by the historically para-modernist trio made up by Henri Michaux, Paul Valéry and William S. Burroughs. Although the study has the formal characteristics of a collection of monographs, this is in the context of the consistency of a larger problematic which breaches the self-containment of each engagement.

What distinguishes these writers is a common tendency to conceive writing and formal abstraction at large as a process of intervention in automatisms of thought, feeling and perception on a basis not limited to the thematic or narratively representational. Their experiments hinge upon the way new symbolic constructs (like cut-up, combinatorially produced notebooks and gestural graphisms) can be used as performative aids in the quest to alter the configurations of human capacities like perception, attention, memory, reading and pattern recognition. Each writer in his own fashion puts the contingencies at play in the expansive practice of writing in relation with the contingencies of becoming, by charging formal abstraction with the task of creating variations in the experience of time: it is not only about the abstract forms, but the regimes of temporality in accord with which such forms are elaborated.

Furthermore, being astute communicators of their experimental aims, each writer displays a critical awareness of the limits of his artistic production, supplementing the poetic work in form, graphism and abstraction with reasoned and critical discourses of research open to productive dialogues with various disciplines, insofar as they offer perspectives on apprenticeship and habituation: philosophy, biology, neurosciences, developmental psychology, literary and semiotic studies of form and even addiction research (as in Burroughs' work).

The approach taken by this study in the face of such a potentially vast field of ramifications relies as a heuristic on a form of philosophically directed close reading across several carefully chosen force fields. In engagement with each writer, the dissertation tries to locate problematic points of entry that both extend and complicate the main framework, making for a multiplicity of models and examples which offer disparate but complementary views on the problems at stake: from Valéry's organologically inflected concept of human possibility "implex", through Michaux's semiotics of everyday situations, to Burroughs' reframing of the problem of addiction as a problem of reading, the questions of apprenticeship and habit seldom take an identical form across these authors, and the study aims to do justice to the incomparabilities while articulating a network of concepts that establish links: inertia and automatism; a revitalizing repetition; differences and overlappings between specialized capacities; effortfulness or effortlessness; limit, obstacle and inability; and finally value.

Ultimately, these themes are not imposed on the careers of the writers, but organically generated from within close engagements with their writings. Nevertheless the framework created in this fashion can be expanded to yield futher insights concerning the domains which informed the study in the first place: the fortunes of graphic abstraction in the 20th century art and aesthetic theory; philosophical considerations of plasticity and ontogenesis; and finally studies of learning, apprenticeship and psychological development.

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Introduction

In this work I make the case that formal experimentation in Michaux, Valéry, and Burroughs is intrinsically guided by purposes of tracing, preparing, and enabling transformations in subjectivity which give an active role to work in form. Across thematically interrelated studies of three oeuvres I tackle the relation between poesis or formal experiment and subjectivations that take the form of learnings, apprenticeships, or dehabituations. Instead of periodization, generic commonality, national and linguistic belonging, or monographic depth, the organizing principle is furnished by this thematic interrelation which serves to stage a meeting across differences—notwithstanding the fact that that there *were* encounters, and visions exchanged between two of these authors in real life, as well as criticisms directed from one to the other.[1] With respect to its emergent organizing principle the dissertation adopts the task of showing how it is founded not only on ideational content, but also a constitution in practice: the authors posit a possibility of

[1] Michaux's early call to Valéry in *Ecuador* is as good a statement as any about the differences of sensibility and attitude between them: "Paul Valéry has beautifully defined modern, i.e. European civilization. But I had had my fill of it long before coming upon his point by point documentation of its various limits.[...] Oh yes –European civilization. Well, Mr. Valéry, neither your Greeks, Romans, nor Christians have enough oxygen in them for anyone any more" (*Ecuador* 61). On the other hand it is known that Michaux had easier time communicating with Burroughs, not least because of a shared interest in consciousness alteration through psychedelics and chemicals otherwise. As Burroughs biographer Barry Miles reports: "[...] Michaux returned several times to continue the discussions with Burroughs.[...] He and Bill talk about the various kinds of effects from nutmeg" (Miles, *Burroughs: A Life*).

transforming themselves by their forms and act on it, and this study aims to come to grips with the temporal, conceptual, and media-historical determinations at play in this practice, as well as the question of its very viability. The underlying assumption is that it is not simply the doctrinal, propositional affirmation of the relation between habituation and form that is transformative, but the practice of temporal elaboration —or "instauration"— which accompanies the propositional assent.

Habit is a major actor here as a disposition which acts below conscious awareness, and therefore a prime differentiator, but also a link, between propositional affirmation and practical elaboration. The authors all converge on a sense that habit and its prereflective mechanism—however disparate in its manifestations— entails an obstruction for enrichments in subjectivity which would be available if not for the obstruction. My study therefore legitimates its grouping of phenomena as diverse as Michaux's gestural drawings, Burroughs's cut-ups, and Valéry's entries in the Cahiers on the basis of their mobilization against impoverishments that hinge on habit, bare repetition and other similar forms of closure around a restricted range of thought and/or behavior. In other words, this study is about what Michaux calls "predestination", Burroughs "prerecording", and Valéry sums up by referring to "a kind of principle of inertia"; correlatively, it is also about how the styles or most characteristic experiments of their works were designed to respond to the confinements encoded in these tellingly temporal terms (*Stroke by Stroke*; *The Ticket that Exploded*; *Notebooks* Vol. 3 194). Even if the degrees of explicit commitment vary as to the centrality of this problematic across the three authors, the case studies collected here each bears witness to an efficacy of transformation obtained out of the indirect means provided by formal experiment, insofar as the prereflective or infra-conscious status of the

domain problematized seems to bar direct conscious access or objectification: "The most important phenomena for us, our existence, our sensibility, our thought, are intimately linked to events smaller than the smallest phenomena accessible to our senses, or amenable to our acts" (Valéry *Notebooks* Vol. 3 Psych. 255).

By way of a negotiation between the temporalities of rupture and continuity, an important point constantly reemphasized in the study is that the mobilization against habit is also a traversal through it, and in fact only efficacious on this condition. A *critique* of everyday dispositions, adaptations, and easy spontaneity is carried out with a view to the new relations with the world it can lead to; subjectivity is involved as the possibility of these new forms of relation, be they perceptual, emotional, or intellectual. As Burroughs and Valéry each openly admits, both writing against habit, and writing itself as a habit have some role here. It is mainly this gesture of relying on habit as a medium for its own traversal and a departure for the becomings that it otherwise occludes which leads to the crux of my argument: that there is a necessarily reciprocal presupposition between specific artifices of writing on the hand and the possibility of self-transformation on the other because formal and stylistic elaboration involved in these artifices opens to intensifications of experience or modulated temporalities which invite or offer the blueprints of a continuity other than that of bare repetition; just as a pragmatic use of formal experiment in the works often corresponds to an apprenticeship, apprenticeship finds an indispensable anchor in a certain experience of time in work or poetic elaboration.

Importantly this reciprocal presupposition which I aim to demonstrate here, does not result in an ultimate, tried and tested rule, but instead depends on felicitous and necessarily

fragile applications valid in particular cases. What is replicated from one author to the other in terms of formal experimentation and its effects is not the precise form of the deconditioning attested by the individual authors—these forms or the effects sought do not necessarily mirror each other—but the arrow of research from poetic experience (as an art of indirection) toward the domain of the prereflective, dispositional, and nonconscious, or in terms of the ancient Greek understanding for a habit qua possession, "hexic"; what is replicated is the drive of making possession and hexis negotiable in writing or through formal abstraction. Within the field constituted by this repetition, there are variations both between and within the individual studies, such that this study may be characterized as an anthology of a sorts: in each of the three chapters, to do justice to the specifics of the works of the individual authors, it branches out into a number of figures with exclusive relevance to each (for Valéry the implex and fiducia; for Burroughs the distinction between narrative-cut-up, and habit as a biological phenomenon; for Michaux, rhythm, the situation sign, and the stroke); a fractal multiplication of detail in local context as an aspiration to concretion guides the individual chapters. However, while pursuing this strategy this study also seeks to make the local analyses result in an enhanced sense of depth for the main problematic.

Although this study eschews classification through periodization in favor of more lateral and conceptual connections —between literature and philosophical discourses on apprenticeship and habituation; literature and the neurosciences; as well as literature and biology— one of the categories deployed to correspond to the real basis of communication among the three authors finds an inspiration in, and builds on a past intervention pertinent at once to the history of modernism, abstraction, and the connection between time and form at large. In its application to the three authors, the "tender abstraction" of my title can

be understood as a proximate literary descendant of what the painter Paul Klee called "cool romanticism", which might in turn have been a flipped version of the scientific ideal Goethe called "tender empiricism", implying the embedding of repetition and generality in the uniqueness of the singular case (Klee, *Diaries* 313; Goethe, *Scientific Studies*). Klee's suggestive category corresponds to a toning down of pathos in painting to the benefit of an intelligible construction of relations where "the poetic and the architectonic" are in balance (Watson 5). The abstraction to which it is linked, is an abstraction of construction (Klee *Thinking Eye*, 463). While certain aspects of this category—such as its debts to Wilhelm Worringer's concept of pictorial abstraction—have less relevance for my study of the three authors, other features of Klee's understanding of abstraction are useful, namely the emphasis on construction or the achievement of architectonic rigor in the poetic itself, and the concomitant insinuation of time into form in the guise of *genesis* or formation. Finally, if abstraction is understood in the way Klee put into practice, it also gives footholds to a semiotic characterization of the formal innovations and experiments undertaken by the three authors studied here (involving a reflection on signs and signification; constraints or new viabilities for composition; forms of interplay between symbols and their perceptual context; indexicality and the impact of all these factors on thought).[2]

[2] There is another inheritance from a selectively understood Romanticism as well, and this rests on the model of "organological" (after Novalis) reflection common across the three authors which posits a possibility of expansion of sensory, perceptual, affective and ideational "ranges" or "scopes of pattern" of a given psycho-organism, by engaging the limits imposed by habit. Thus the discourse of other metabolism/tropism in Michaux; Burroughs' scanning patterns; and Valéry's implex as a capacity responsive to extension through selective exposure to external circumstance, all find an important precursor in the speculations of a thinker like Novalis. On the other hand, if Modernism is employed as a category often identified with an acute sensibility for and preoccupation with form (Miller 84) the categories "Post-Romantic" and "Para-Modernist" can serve to indicate the broad coordinates of the focus of this dissertation, or offer historical shorthands for its field. The important qualification here is that the three authors' preoccupation with formalization also distinctly works as something that decenters the center of gravity of construction from the satisfactions of the terminus provided by an autonomous work — a decentring corresponding to the share commanded by transformations in subjectivity conceptualized under the rubric apprenticeship here.

At their simplest, new ways of using signs bring with them either new ways or kinds of thinking, or humor different intensities of the capacities already employed by ordinary communicative verbal language— with a causality that is never unidirectional. Burroughs wrote some of his books with a view toward a "message of format", implying that his experiments in randomization had a message to enact or convey, over and beyond the narrative nature and contents of his writings. He also singled out physics and mathematics for the "whole nonverbal communication systems" at their disposal, arguably abreast with the "message of format" these systems themselves held in store. Michaux on his part, offered an anticipatory glimpse of what kind of a language of signs he would try to forge, and what he expected from it when he wrote about "a new language, which would be entirely constructed to be an instrument composed of signs, with polyvalent ligatures allowing precise superpositions and vast developments, without being burdened with ancient meanings" and expressed his hope that "like mathematical physics creates a new intelligence, this arrangement of new elements and shortcuts (rejecting the old associations against which we pass our lives fighting) would create a new intelligence, rapidly at that" (Michaux, Œuvres complètes Vol 2 430). Finally, Valéry, who set out with more antiphilosophical inclinations in reaction to what he perceived to be the misleading and speculative nature of traditional philosophical categories—time, finality, chance, faculty—also discovered he could depend on the affordances of a new and artifical language in reinterpreting these categories: "What is called invention is in the nature of a communication. Inventiveness in every field keeps pace with the acquisition and improvements of means of communication. A good system of notation leads to invention" (*Analects* 285).

As a category generated out of individual engagements with the works of the three authors, tender abstraction more specifically comprises the following elements in these works: a reliance on randomization and chance through combinatorial shufflings; situation-proximity or situation-dependence of certain kinds of signs; the place of a dimension of presemiotic/protosemantic gestures which anchors abstraction in the body as its virtual matrix.[3] These elements create a sense of inclusiveness which makes tender abstraction less a matter of certain types of signs and more a matter of the pragmatic ends of self-transformation which harness signs or the various temporal effects to which, they along with procedures of composition, lend themselves. Therefore tender abstraction already implies a type of abstraction intrinsically open to what I call apprenticeship here, insofar as the pragmatic efficacy of work in form to alter and create new sensibilities or change ingrained perceptual biases depends on a process of continuous investment and acquisition of new capacities.

Before introducing the central focus of this study on an association between time and forms, some clarification is in order as to the theoretical underpinnings of the notions of apprenticeship and habit as they are used here: this study's debt to various philosophical precursors demand acknowledging, not without pointing out how they inform a work primarily guided by often charitable close readings in the works of the three authors. For the purposes of opening up the close readings to problems of broader import and ensuring communication across established separations between different branches of thinking—

[3] It bears noting that these last two elements also correspond to an intimation of "concretion", which makes up the proper philosophical counterpart and accompaniment—but not quite an opposition— to abstraction in philosophies as diverse as those of Hegel, Marx, Whitehead, and Wahl. For a brief discussion teasing out the relation between concretion and abstraction in the case of one of the authors studied here, see the section on Michaux's situation signs below.

between philosophy and literature as well as literature and psychology— a strongly felt necessity behind this study has been connecting what the authors problematize as a dispossessing sense of habit (or an impoverished subjectivity trapped in its behavioral and ideational ruts) with the traditional philosophical understandings of habit, with its signature ambivalence between passivity and activity, insensibility and acquisition of new capacities, as well as the biological and the psychological. Equally importantly however, it has been necessary to create this intended rapprochement in a spirit otherwise than the imposition of an external framework. With these requirements in mind, my work establishes dialogues with philosophers like Deleuze, and to a lesser extent Simondon, to articulate a notion of apprenticeship that is sufficient to do justice—without overshadowing— to the crucial junctures where each author seems to press formal innovation to the service of enriching their subjectivity, as exemplified in Burroughs' problem with the alteration of scanning patterns, Valéry's "implex" as a plastic capacity, and Michaux's focus on new "functions" or deconditioning. The dialogues with these philosophers do not entail total commitment to their overall philosophies, but are selective instead: there are crossings and modifications.

What has proven useful for the aims of this study in Deleuze's work devolves on his explicit emphasis on apprenticeship, his take on the tradition of psychological compartmentalization in Western philosophical tradition (the question of faculties), as well as the accompaniment these find in his more longstanding concern with virtuality. *Difference and Repetition*, as the work which offers a discussion where apprenticeship, virtuality, and faculties are inseparably brought together has therefore been the most intimately informative for this study, supported as well by Deleuze's even earlier concern with a specifically literary apprenticeship in the work of Marcel Proust. In *Difference and*

Repetition Deleuze conceptualizes the deep presuppositions concerning the limits of what thought can legitimately be ("image of thought") : whether it is to be conceived on a model of representation, recognition and harmonious agreement between cognitive capacities or faculties already accepted as distinctly given (traditional image of thought), or something that is to be understood as more generative and in deeper consort with nonphilosophical promptings, the unconscious, and affective shocks which rule out recognition. It is here that learning or apprenticeship becomes a model of thought for Deleuze, as the experience of what is not recognized but gained gropingly from perceptual and affective multiplicities: "There is no more a method for learning than there is a method for finding treasures, but a violent training, a culture or paideia which affects the entire individual (an albino in whom emerges the act of sensing in sensibility, an aphasic in whom emerges the act of speech in language, an acephalous being in whom emerges the act of thinking in thought)" (*Difference* 165). Enumerating the faculties—language, sensibility or memory— as distinct or specialized capacities of the individual, in conformity with the philosophical tradition from Kant to Bergson, Deleuze nevertheless establishes a new type of relation between them, which relation identifies learning with an unpredictable, adventurous, because wildly variable process where there are unlegislated transferals of power between the faculties, starting from the sensibility.[4] In Deleuze's discussion the faculties seem to constitute a

[4] The relevant passages in Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition* seem to suggest that faculties are both disordered, and to some extent re-created thanks to the new relations established among them. That is why I have emphasized the issue Deleuze takes with conceiving the faculties as already given.

> Rather than all the faculties converging and contributing to a common project of recognising an object, we see divergent projects in which, with regard to what concerns it essentially, each faculty is in the presence of that which is its 'own'. [...] Discord of the faculties, chain of force and fuse along which each confronts its limit, receiving from (or communicating to) the other only a violence which brings it face to face with its own element, as though with its disappearance or its perfection. [...] It [a faculty] grasps that in the world which concerns it exclusively and brings it into the world (DR 141; 143).

The last sentence also underlines Deleuze's implicit reliance on a model of possibility that is closely linked to the advent of the new along the lines Bergson describes in *Creative Mind*, which in turn implies the relation between virtual and actual as two ontological orders, the passage between which does not follow the contours of a *resemblance*. The importance of this exclusion of resemblance as a genetic

multiplicity of the kind Bergson called "confused multiplicity" where their relations are not subject to spatial or extensive differentiation securing their borders, but admit jarring qualitative overlaps at the prompting of contingently encountered signs and objects.[5]

Deleuze's model of apprenticeship as a thinking not guided by a model of recognition, as well as his association between faculties and apprenticeship have both been crucial for this study. Most immediately, it is impossible to ignore a common interest in the dimension of learning across the authors studied here: as I argue below, Burroughs' approach to learning and training (in reading for instance), Michaux's dealings with base cenesthetic stimuli which put an emphasis on a nonconscious know-how, and most saliently, the figure of the Gladiator in Valéry—"Gladiator is the effort expended by one's being against probability. An effort which is called Art, the transformation of chance into near-certainty" (Glad. 300) — are each determining components for understanding these respective works, accounting for the insights a broadly conceived notion of apprenticeship can offer. The supposition of a positive concept of freedom founded on the enrichment in capabilities, self-transformation, an enhanced responsiveness to the world, as well as the activation of different psycho-organic functions is hard to bypass in confronting these works.

Next, the franchise Deleuze extends to nonphilosophical as well as nonconscious stimulants in driving thinking qua apprenticeship have proven useful in my attempts to

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principle is further highlighted in *The Logic of Sense*: "The foundation can never resemble what it founds. It does not suffice to say of the foundation that it is another matter-it is also another geography, without being another world" (LOS 99). To sum up, the condition of nonresemblance as a problem of "grounding" attends the formulation of the relation between faculties and their emergence.

[5] Bergson writes: "Beneath homogeneous duration [i.e., “time”], extensive symbol of real duration, an attentive psychology discerns a duration whose heterogeneous moments interpenetrate; beneath the numerical multiplicity of conscious states, there is a qualitative multiplicity; beneath the self of well defined states, there is a self where succession implies fusion and organization" (Qtd. in Guerlac 71).

accompany Michaux, Valéry, and Burroughs to a realm where their experiments and speculations seem to put into play a subjectivity that is not necessarily identical with a legislative use of mental categories, or conscious manipulation, but involves functions and capacities below conscious integration, foregrounding responsiveness, use-based habituation, suggestibility and subliminal resonances, and finally tacit synchronizations with what is socially circulating: when thought is characterized by "silent micro-operations" (Michaux), to-whom-it-may-concern-subliminal messages (Burroughs), or when ideas seem to contain a "hidden element" on which their "affective power depends" (Valéry), the model of thinking inherent in representation and recognition is likely to block further inquiry. Moreover, as I argue below, the question of the faculties as well as the presuppositions of rigid specialization that often attaches to it is explicitly thematized at least by one author—Valéry— here , indirectly informing the problem he called the "implex" (not coincidentally, in its turn appropriated by Deleuze).

Despite the strong influence of Deleuze's take on apprenticeship however, this study also finds it necessary to raise certain problems in ways that do not necessarily follow the philosopher's main conceptual innovations and preferences. For instance, my association of habit with the category of apprenticeship endows the latter with some of the former's ambiguities, a relation which does not apply to Deleuze's account. It is important to this study that apprenticeship and the capacities it develops, are understood as not *guaranteeing* the survival of a sense beyond habit's anasthetizing tendencies, tendencies which Catherine Malabou christens as "addiction": "existence at its worst" (Preface to Ravaisson's *Of Habit*). Alternatively, this also means that effortlessness may turn into a liability, as the writer Samuel Butler attests in a hypothetical scenario of technical

invention: "Also they make the simpler kinds of machinery too easily to be able to follow their operations—the manner of their apprenticeship being to them as a buried city" (Butler, *Life and Habit*). For this study as well, apprenticeship is something that can get or stay buried, and for which manoeuvres of reactualization may be necessary. This is one reason why a problematic of hexis or having informs each case study here, pointing to ambiguous and reversible situations of possessing and being possessed by attitudes, habits, ways of seeing, schemes of action and conduct.[6]

To mention another difference with Deleuze's notion of apprenticeship, in its pursuit of the thematics of dehabituation, this study often finds itself having to take account of a dimension of values, in the straightforward sense that certain learnings or dispositions seem to be more preferable to the authors—to the point of impinging on an organic dimension. There is perhaps a justly common impression that the discourse of values belongs to politically conservative thought, but this is not the sense in which I make a reference to value.[7] Here Georges Canguilhem's arguments against a reductive form of behaviorism (centring on conditioned response) has been more informative for me, insofar as it seemed possible to adjust his views on "vital values" active between the organism and

[6] To remedy this ambiguity one can certainly offer to make a distinction like the one Gilbert Simondon makes between two forms of adaptation like "dressage" and "apprenticeship/learning", a distinction that seems exactly established to dispel the kind of ambiguity highlighted above: "adaptation is possible according to two processes that are opposed: the one we have just evoked is dressage, which results in a behavior that is more and more stereotyped and in a more and more narrow relation with a determined milieu. The second form of adaptation is apprenticeship, which in contrast augments the availability of a being in relation to different milieus in which it finds itself, developing the richness of symbol systems and dynamisms which integrate past experience according to a divergent determinism" (Simondon *Lumiere* 271-72). Contrary to the manner in which Simondon sharply contrasts dressage and apprenticeship, I would like to insist on their imbrication, guided by the close intimacy of the "divergent" and the "convergent" across each of the three authors' attitudes to learning and training.

[7] It is not necessary to go far for an example of this diagnosis: "Nietzsche, the creator of the philosophy of values, would have seen, if he had lived longer, his most critical notion serving and turning into the most insipid and base ideological conformism" (Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy* 55). For a take on values that does not conform to the common association between conservatism and value, David Graeber's work in anthropology deserves mention.

its milieu to the question of habituation. Questions along the lines of why it might be desirable to quit an addiction, or what kind of psycho-organic equilibriums are preferable, and what would deconditioning would serve in the first place, all seem to invite responses that would be hard put to avoid a register of values. To speak to the main basis of divergence with Deleuze here, his account of an "inorganic life" and other elaborations around life as "pure immanence" proved less determining for this study's various engagements with the vital level implied by habit.[8] This incorporation of a problem of life has also kept me from making learning or apprenticeship a cultural "veneer" or overlay superimposed on "bare life": Valéry's frequent resort to a term usually reserved for horses —dressage— in describing his efforts at training, as well as Michaux's understanding of the natural as a "usage prolonged" both lend themselves to the preservation of a non-anthropocentric nuance of this kind.

Finally, it is time to present a leitmotif which runs through the entire study and braids tender abstraction and apprenticeship with each other: the recurrent reference to the janus faced structure where the temporalities of various forms like cut-up or Cahiers entries meet an aestheticization of time. Across its three case studies this study trains a particular attention on this subject, mainly with the purpose of showing how it controls the claims the authors make in the name of a subjectivation and apprenticeship through form. In the way

[8] To offer a speculation, the absence of an explicit axiology in Deleuze—aside from his reading of Nietzsche— might be because of an avoidance of imposing external and transcendent values on existence and becoming; in this sense Deleuze would regard a certain part of value discourse as dangerously close to what he calls "judgment". Nevertheless, there are appearances that indicate that the absence of axiology is more a surface impression than a thoroughgoing commitment. By way of an example, here is *What is Philosophy?* on what it —with Mario Levi— calls the "shame of being human": "We also experience it in insignificant conditions,before the meanness and vulgarity of existence that haunts democracies, before the propagation of these modes of existence and of thought-for-the-market, and before the values, ideals, and opinions of our time. The ignominy of the possibilities of life that we are offered appears from within" (Deleuze and Guattari 107-8).

they open to the elaboration of a "significant" which holds and prolongs the attention; the preparation of a surprise which marshals extraordinary mental energy (Valéry); in rallying the resources of the simultaneous, the rhythmic or the configurational in pictorial space (Michaux); in mobilizing an awareness of as yet unrealized virtual gestures; and finally, by creating reassembled or anachronistic continuities that demand coming to terms with new and jarring associations, the formal experiments involved here all seem to pivot around artificial alterations of the perceptions of time (and even of the order of the events of historical time) to the point of making writing and poesis an original source of insights about temporality as such. On a broad level this relation ties up with a circular form of causality, where "making" is conceived as a process in which one is rendered capable of making by the product one makes in its various phases (the question of demand or meontological negativity in Valéry, and that of nascency in Michaux).[9] Similarly, there is a concomitant interest in the capacity of categories originally conceived to think aesthetic experience to extend beyond the region of art in narrowly understood sense to become categories of perception (Cf. Burroughs' "port of entry").[10] In fact it would be true to my intentions to posit a bilateral exchange between categories of cognition in general and aesthetic experience.

As I pointed out earlier, this study owes a debt to the paradoxical historical classification offered by Klee for his own work, and it has an even stronger connection with a

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[9] Because the works involved here often point beyond the "work" as an end in itself, either by situating themselves as "counter-finites" (Valéry) which bank on the primacy of productivity over product, or with the constitutive links they establish with modes of perception in separation from which they lose justification (Burroughs), it would be true to argue that the forms of literary apprenticeship studied here mark out a zone between the traditional concepts of praxis—modes of action having as their ends their own exercise—and poesis—modes of action that aim at works separable from their own exercise.

[10] This is another point where Deleuze's work has provided a guidepost, in the attention it draws to a duality in the aesthetic between possible and real experience.

burgeoning sub-field—however minor— in literary studies that has already witnessed kindred attempts to couple writing and time by way of an approach to habituation.[11] Here it is possible to mention Kate Stanley's dissertation "Surprise Encounters" —on what she calls Transatlantic Modernism— and Michael Clune's book *Writing Against Time*. Both writers show an interest in an impoverishing form of habit, and attribute to certain literary works—Proust is a shared point of reference— a role or ambition in modifying the sense of time or the structure of anticipation inculcated by habit. Stanley suggests that authors like Gertrude Stein and Henry James seem to write as if in preoccupation with the question "How do I write so that every sentence is new?" (Stanley 5) and she sees here a possibility beyond the merely formal, namely that of "training new habits of attention to the unpredictable events that punctuate daily life" (Stanley "Abstract"). The problem Stanley raises of making what seems to be merely ruptural and fleeting like a surprise encounter a source of a new consistency in subjectivation is one that is also shared by this study (with its discussions of Valérian surprise and the Burroughsian ideal of making a "permanent acquisition" out of consciousness expansion).[12] The ideal she formulates and attributes to Proust, could characterize equally well a certain streak common to the authors studied here: "a practice of developing habits of surprise" (Stanley 10). Apart from the authors studied one major difference between Stanley's informative study and this one lies in the

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[11] I use the word sub-field because this phenomenon of convergence in the literary studies cannot be separated from the rising profile of the problem of habit across the board in fields ranging from art history and media theory (e.g. works by Richard Coyne and Wendy Hui Kyong Chun) to studies of cognition— not to mention philosophies of corporeity whose interest is not that recent. Even the more specific connection between art and dehabituation is gaining a certain prominence. As a direct example one can take Alva Noe's recent claim that "art displays us to ourselves, and in a way makes us anew, by disrupting our habitual activities of doing and making". Similarly for Barbara Stafford's less generically formulated suggestion that "gapped configurations" in certain visual representations "undercut automaticity" (Stafford).

[12] Stanley writes, "My most immediate claim is that when a structure of surprise is differentiated from the rubric of rupture, shock becomes only one possibility among many for understanding modern encounters" (Stanley 4).

stronger investment made here in the biological or vital underpinnings of habit, which also implies limits to transformation through "habits of surprise" (e.g. addiction in Burroughs). Secondly, the borrowings from the philosophical discourse around apprenticeship and specialization involved here—a sign of the markedly synthetic tendencies of this project—mean an investment in the question of specialization or functional polyvalence which gives a certain determinacy to habit's equally important association with the acquisition of capability (discussed below apropos the link between the organological and the habitual in the section on Valéry's implex).

Clune approaches a position similar to Stanley's when he argues that "the ideal work counters habituation. It's always new. In its vicinity, experience remains alive" (Clune 59). However because he brings up the extreme case of addiction which requires a certain restraint in the endorsement of the ideal "practice of developing habits of surprise", he seems more likely to place habit in a framework informed by the biological: "What needs to be corrected is not the scientific method but the human nervous system" (Clune 59). While I share Clune's interest in the interface between addiction and writing (as discussed apropos Burroughs here) his tendency to equate temporal modulation achieved by literature tout court with an "arresting of time" does not find support in my engagement with Michaux, Valéry, and Burroughs.[13]

To offer a brief overview of the chapters, the first chapter devoted to Michaux takes three interrelated approaches to the author's work, starting from a discussion of the explict

[13] Clune writes, " Literature [...] takes a particular perspective on addiction. This perspective, as I've begun to argue, is shaped by the desire for the truly effective work of art—the work that will destroy habit and arrest experiential time" (62).

intention of deconditioning that guides his *Emergences-Resurgences* (1972). In this sense the first Michaux section is foundational for the following two. The chronological weight is given to the author's late work, with the sense that the dimension of voluntary self-transformation through artistic activity seems to command a more central place here compared to the immediately preceding period (late fifties through sixties) marked by his renowned psychedelic experiments. The second section of this chapter brings out the surrounding conditions of Michaux's elusive semiotic ideal of "the sign of the situation," with implications for the relation between abstraction and concretion, as well as iterability and singularity; the problem overall is the artistic and philosophical status to be given to a pragmatically oriented semiotic practice departing from proximity and circumstance. The final section, "Unstroke the Office Empire" offers a focused reading of Michaux's late work *Stroke by Stroke* [*Par des Traits*] which brings to a culmination and raises the stakes of the problems developed at the interfaces between semiotics, form, time and subjectivation in the previous sections.

The chapter on Valéry is made up of a series of studies of the *Cahiers* which not only contains Valéry's most important and extensive discussions of training and self-transformation but also is the product of a highly regular schedule of labor itself beholden to habit. The first section offers a general framework which situates Valéry's work between potentially contradictory drives toward the logical closure of a system and the openness and undecidabilities of the mental experiments which effectively transform the observer. The next section goes on to situate the Cahiers as a work that finds a condition in a relation to trust and belief. Against this background the third chapter offers a strategic discussion of the commanding figure of human possibility, subjectivation, and training in Valéry's work:

the implex. The excursus immediately following seeks to explore the problems of reflexivity in Cahiers as a work produced by habit in its turn reflectively exploring habit and dehabituation; a work produced by chance inquiring into chance. Finally, in the last section entitled "Time is Production" I offer an extended discussion of the way an understanding of time and poetic production develop in mutually informative ways in Cahiers. Insofar as this final section shows the existence of a counterintuitive link between habituation and surprise, it has strategic importance for my discussion of apprenticeship in Valéry.

The chapter on Burroughs departs from the various relations between narrative and cut-up in Burroughs' work, and progressively builds up toward a direct problematization of the place of addiction. My intention in the first sections of this chapter is offering an overview of the way cut-up constitutes a qualification of randomization, if randomization is taken as an abdication of authorial control; this is an important condition of my overall goal of reclaiming Burroughs' use of cut-up for an argument on apprenticeship. Thus, I situate cut-up along with narrative with regard to the way it enables a purchase on habit through formal means. In the chapter, my problematization of addiction responds to stakes concerning different images of learning: in dialogue with interlocutors from both sides of the so-called "divide" between humanities and the sciences I explore Burroughs' work with a view to the image of apprenticeship that can be obtained from his writings (with particular emphasis on the difference between conditioning and other modes of subjectivation).

In terms of an alternative navigation of my dissertation which does not take the proper

names as the only guarantee of coherence, more thematic groupings among the sections are also possible: These groupings may follow the contours of types of formalism (e.g. narrative and cut-up in Burroughs coupled with the sign of situation in Michaux); formalism and time (e.g. rhythm in Michaux coupled with "Time is Production" in Valéry; apprenticeship (e.g. conditioning in Burroughs coupled with implex in Valéry, as well as rhythm and situation in Michaux); finally the question of habit itself (e.g. excursus x 2).

Three Paths into a Pedagogy of Signs with Henri Michaux

Introduction

In a potentially instructive challenge, if one was asked to come up with a single magic-pill of a word that would capture and compress the work of the Belgian writer Henri Michaux, "expatriation" would be a strong candidate, as Jean-Claude Mathieu also seems to have believed.[14] The hybrid function of this word—part philosophical, part poetically invocative—can be given the power to extend over and highlight a domain in Michaux's work that has its proper coherence despite all its dissipation, making an emblem for a determinate

[14] The significance critics like Matthieu read into this word, depends on a generalization from Michaux's self-characterization in the autobiographical document "Some Information About Fifty-Nine Years of Existence": "He 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" (*Darkness Moves* xxii). Cf. Richard Elman's early but very perceptive remarks on a similar figure: dépaysement. Ellmann writes,

> The two most frequent expressions of a basic dépaysement are travels and diseases. The protagonist is a traveller in strange lands because there he is expatriated and can look on with an unconcern impossible to him at home; or else he is a sick man because in disease, too, alienated from the crowd, he wages a conflict both spiritual and physical with an enemy who has no face, and under the pressure of fever drastically distorts reality. (Ellmann 194)

section of this dynamic whole that is resistant to totalizing views, as Raymond Bellour on his part helpfully admitted in talking about a certain unreadability in Michaux's work: "this [unreadability] arises from the impossibility for the reader to find any point of view on the whole..." that would reconcile and integrate all the heterogenous dimensions and aspects (Bellour 43).

The strategy my study takes vis-a-vis this unreadability is trying to give multiple forms and confirmations to a central intuition regarding Michaux's work, that the poetic idea of expatriation involves a series of problems tying formal invention (whether writing or drawing) to a "plastic life", mediated by scenes of hexis, exercise, habit, and apprenticeship. As my work progressed, the last of these categories took on a particular importance in terms of the connection it establishes between Michaux's interest in a vision of life and nature determined by plasticity or transformability through extended habituations on the one hand, and the role of artistic and formal operations on the other. Apprenticeship provides a way of talking about Michaux's work that both retains central associations with his preferred lexicon of expatriation,[15] and renders his work open to dialogues with philosophical and cognitive scientific questions of learning and subjectivation. Just like expatriation, apprenticeship has the ambivalence of both growing out of and being intentionally rallied against certain states of restraint and conduction. In light of this, apprenticeship can be provisionally defined as a creative relation to states of restraint and conduction that enlists those same states; unlearning and learning at once. In

[15] Michaux has a distinct preference for using the prefix -de with a certain group of figures that are scattered wide across his work, and yet have a similar function: "Disincrustation (*Mouvements*); disagglutinate, disalienate (*Par des Traits*); dégager, deplacer, desensevelissment (*Chemins cherchés*); deconditioning (*Emergences*), déplacement des activites creatrices ("Peindre"), desorientations (Grande épreuves) and finally depaysement. In most of these figures the prefix -de indicates a relationship that takes place between a prior state of feeling physically and psychically restrained (range) or conducted (drive/direction) and a relative release from this state.

this capacity it is a notion that is both sufficiently parsimonious and sufficiently problematic.

Apprenticeship is problematic first because it carries a temporal conundrum, and involves the question of a passage from what is phenomenologically passive synthetic and dependably habitual to the invention of new purposes and equilibriums, without leaving everything to a ruptural schema of change. Secondly, it implies a coexistence and collaboration and to some extent a blurring between the induced and the involuntary. Finally it is linked to a register of values in their application to learning/unlearning: just as the epigraph "learn cautiously" (*Tent Posts* 13) reminds of the fait accomplis and the irrevocables learning is capable of producing, not every unlearning is desirable and would carry the status of expatriation. For Michaux there is no question that certain paths make up for a "mal vivre" (v3 897). For all that the presence of an insistent inquiry into the coming into existence of norms in Michaux keeps this implicit anchoring of his poetics in an axiology of dehabituation from being "normative" in the crude sense.

There are three disparate yet interrelated takes to the mapping of Michaux's engagement with a poetics of plasticity and apprenticeship here. Chronologically, the concentration is on Michaux's late work, and specifically the works that follow the period of research that focus on the experience of altered consciousness afforded by psychedelics. While my discussion makes extensive reference to this period of activity—of around 10 years— in the author's work, its engagement with it is selectively oriented to the question of formal abstraction as a matter for subjectivation. Arguably this question which is certainly present in the so-called drug books, finds better and more detailed exploration in the author's later

works, which witness a turn to a more thorough and direct engagement with the interface between the question of signs and that of subjectivation, exemplified by works *exclusively* devoted to gestural and graphic experiments, often in the pointed absence of verbal elaboration. The assumption is that although the radical expropriations that often enter and mark the accounts of psychedelic exploration are not strictly resistant to learning and subjectivation, their constraints are vastly different from those offered by graphic experiment in the absence of psychedelics. The distinction borders on one between form leading experience and experience leading form.

The correlation habit establishes between different types of abstraction and forms of subjectivity, as well as the apprenticeships attainable in various forms of semiotic competence, make for a potentially vast spectrum of relations. Against this background my specific goals across the three sections of this chapter are bringing out and making more visible the vision of learning and habituated disposition at stake in Michaux's experiments (the organic and behavioral sites involved like functions and gestures); to identify and understand the pedagogical/paidea-based justifications for the particular types of formalism around which the author seems to gravitate (elaborating different attitudes to perceptual context, willing, and duration); and finally, to engage the historical self-understanding that seems to underlie the graphic experiments (modernism certainly; an implicit philosophical anthropology; a not-so-implicit natural history; and finally a perspective on the large scale effects of the proprietary and administrative action of the human species and human institutions on Earth at large).

The sections that deal with these questions do not follow a chronological order among

themselves, but each makes departures from more or less overlapping periods of activity. The first section departs from the chronological point of the aftermath of Michaux's famous psychedelic experiments, as Michaux's interest in artistic experiment informed by a distrust of verbality starts to exert a stronger draw, released as it is from the drive to gain insight into the flux of consciousness under drug causality. Therefore, in response to a remark of Michel Butor, this section called "Changing Stride: Graphic Experiment as Apprenticeship" treats Michaux's artistic and graphic experiments from the '70's onward as a methodical practice of self-transformation and an exercise of subjectivation *without* the agency of psychedelics. The second take assumes the task of clarifying a problematic notion from Michaux's work that scholars like Raymond Bellour and Marc Durain each acknowledged in their own ways: the sign of situation. Here I offer a conceptual reconstruction of Michaux's intermittent references to the possibility of a semiotics that departs from the singularity of relatively wholistic situations or contexts. However, this reconstruction is firmly grounded on key references from across Michaux's long career. I show that Michaux's attempts to formulate a situation sign can be traced from earlier texts like "Signes" to some of his latest like *Saisir.* On the other hand, the section finds it necessary to situate—so to speak—Michaux's extended exploration in the larger context of existential, Gestaltist and phenomenological understandings of situational embeddedness and facticity. The positive contribution of this section to the problematic of apprenticeship in formalizations is another proof of the relevance of the framework of expatriation and apprenticeship: Michaux's situation signs are not neutral representative signs, but in their intimacy with the radical importance of contextual embeddedness, carry implications for subjectivation and learning: at their most fundamental, situation signs are developed with a view to transforming the situations they map or diagram.

The final section is about one of Michaux's latest works, *Par des Traits* (1984), the most striking aspect of which is that it offers an unexpected culmination for the line of reflection of expatriation in Michaux. Not only does it extend Michaux's invocative register of operations of expatriation —with its major concerns of "derealizing" and "insignifying"— but it also puts it in contact with a number of divergent interests Michaux has developed in his career until 1984: what characterizes this meeting in general terms is the particularly charged encounter between the persistent poetic-experimental streak in Michaux (the temporality of gestures, new types of signs) and a more political concern with totality he has developed from mid '70's onward. As it were, his interest in subjectivation scales up, and is no longer defined in relation to the purchase local artistic practice can afford on one's dispositions and individual habits; Michaux imbues his semiotics with sociohistorical stakes, and offers it as a modest response to a determinate historical situation in no unclear terms.

Hopefully the overlapping of perspectives and framings these three individual studies together provide, can amount to a sense that is commensurable to this heterogenous work in all its disorienting complexity. Certain notions common across the three studies help the establishment of a mobile integration with their recurrence and contextual variations. Functions, capacities, the idea of a deprivational revelation for capacities, limits or obstacles, paths or trajectories, the values at play in various forms of directed habituation, and finally the fraught contrast between traditionally signifying verbality and Michaux's preferred forms like gestural lines and signs make consistent refrains offering a certain density of cross-references.

Changing Stride: Graphic Experiment as a Model of Apprenticeship in Henri Michaux

At first glance it is hard to see the connection between Henri Michaux's graphic experiments and his long engagement with psychedelic drugs. Whereas the graphic experiments seem to privilege the question of form, constraint and semiotic invention, Michaux's engagement with psychedelic drugs mainly revolves around gaining an understanding for structures of consciousness and perception as well as the experience of duration without constant reliance on form. Nevertheless, in a discussion of Michaux's work, Michel Butor remarked on a problem of connection between a path of subjectivation through psychedelic drugs and another path without such substances, by raising the question of why the extensive period in psychedelic experimentation effectively closed in Michaux's case : "The essential—and this is one of the reasons why Michaux will deliver himself from his dependence […] is finding a new relation between the other paradisiac worlds glimpsed and the everyday world. Insofar as one cannot short-circuit the drugs one is in constant unhappiness" (Butor 138). Butor is referring to the ecstatic aspects of Michaux's experiments —which punctuate regular psychic disorientation— emphasizing the way they did not seem to have led for the author to a sustainable or consistent trajectory of subjectivation in touch with the "everyday world", despite the insights they may ultimately have offered him. Thus Butor posits a relay between the Michaux of the '60s and Michaux of the '70s, pointing to an identifiable switch from drug assisted explorations of consciousness-alteration to a deeper engagement with the question of form

and semiotics in its own right: "drawing linked to writing can short-circuit pharmaceuticals, taking up their relay" (Butor 155).

The significance Butor reads into the vital formula for Michaux's final books—drawing allied to reasoned discourse on new types of signs— also informs this chapter, albeit not necessarily in an identical fashion. This section will argue that through different means, Michaux's graphic experiments pursue ambitions similar to his drug experiments, and although the direct neurochemical action of drawing may be negligible compared to drugs, his work on both tracks can be favorably studied as a matter of *apprenticeship*. In other words, in this section I adopt Michel Butor's observation on a form of relay at once chronological and qualitative between the Michaux of drug protocols and the Michaux of graphic experimentations that postdate these protocols, and base this relay on a notion of apprenticeship.[16]

For this study there are a few major discourses that serve as inspirations for a serviceable concept of apprenticeship. By inspiration, here I mean the relation of an inspiration of confidence, the interlocutor inspiring not by the specific content espoused, but the demonstration of possibility—in this case the possibility of a discourse of learning departing from formal experiment in general and semiotic practices in particular. One such discourse is found in the philosopher Gilles Deleuze's writings, whose most characteristic example—certainly not the only one—with regard to apprenticeship is his book on Proust,

[16] My gesture finds support in Michaux's crucial remarks in the drug books by which he places them under the sign of a certain ideal of learning: "In such a way my study began: I was faithful to the phenomenon. I considered the spectacle that I might learn from it [...] Certain experiences must be communicated. It falls to them to reveal chaotically, gradually, and by surprise the course of an erratic and difficult apprenticeship in which elements of a world, of a form of knowledge, and of a new life assemble before him who knows how to see" (*Infinite Turbulence* 19).

Proust and Signs. In this work Deleuze treats Proust's novel *In Search of Lost Time* in terms of "the apprenticeship of a man of letters", elegantly incorporating the uses of memory, and most importantly perhaps, the way Proust problematizes the new ways of looking his character develops in navigating various social milieus. For Deleuze, Proust's apprenticeship has a deeply semiotic undercurrent, involving a negotiation of signs that subtly annex acts and thoughts. A major distinction Deleuze makes and which grounds apprenticeship is clear enough: apprenticeship is something that is different from an accumulation of "abstract knowledge", it rather takes a process of unforeseen cultivation riddled with shifting tracks, limits, corrections, and disappointments.

Another discourse of relevance and a possible interlocutor is, rather straightforwardly, the scientific literature on developmental psychology and cognitive science, which both take an interest in the emergence of cognitive and affective capacities. This study finds in this basic orientation with reference to emergence a congenial recourse in remedying the often tempting psychologist tendency to take psyhological structures as given once and for all.[17] Looking at a work by the prominent developmental psychologist Alison Gopnik, which contains an explicit discussion of the subject, it is possible to isolate a few key aspects: Gopnik takes apprenticeship at its most immediate to involve the achievement of "mastery" and the processes that inform such an achievement in child development. In fact the association of apprenticeship with a sense of mastery for which it would be striving is undeniable. While this may mean apprenticeship is a process which is strictly temporary

[17] The potential radicality of developmental psychology in the work of precursors like Lev Vygotsky and Maurice Merleau-Ponty may benefit psychology and possible concepts of apprenticeship inspired by it even today. In an example of the type of intervention I have in mind, Vygotsky set out to even question a concept like "will," in aiming to return it to the matrix of learning in what he called the "mastery of situation" (Vygotsky *Higher Mental Functions* 86).

and subordinate to the end formulated in this fashion, Gopnik also offers another possible way of looking, mentioning an experience where the "process and outcome of learning is indistinguishable" (Gopnik). What seems to be necessary is to acknowledge that there are ways in which strivings may come to absorb their ends, collapsing process and outcomes into each other.

Now the question which naturally occurs is what may be the connection between an account such as Deleuze's and Gopnik's; or whether there are there constants or core determinants for a concept of apprenticeship that apply equally well to Deleuze's literary apprenticeship and Gopnik's developmental one— considering both may make valuable contributions to the problems to be engaged. If a certain incommensurability is the last word here, either apprenticeship as an aspect of ontogenesis amenable to developmental accounts *or* a more philosophical account attuned to its contrast with straightforwardly epistemological pursuits needs to be retained. However, there are good reasons that a reflection on apprenticeship as a matter of artistic experimentation should not have to give up on either of these discourses. Instead, I propose a schema informed by both of these two understandings, one that can be put in relation to the inborn insights of Michaux's work without imposing distortions. Minimally I propose an overlapping on three accounts: the contrast between skill or know-how and abstract knowledge; the time (necessary for) of cultivation; and the role of different types of media and propagation (mimesis, reading, signs). Given these core components, it is not necessary for the subject to be a child in development—as it often tends to be with developmental psychological studies.[18]

[18] It should be noted that adopted in the form consisting of the central core components of know-how, change, and types of media identified above, the account of apprenticeship obtained means neither of Gopnik's or Deleuze's account are to be straightforwardly applied to the case of Michaux, whose work already offers its own immanent resources for an engagement along these lines. The reason for the

Thus the section will make an argument which concretely exhibits the move from the goals of knowledge pursued in drug-assisted experiments to an image of apprenticeship with stronger ties to the exploration of a unique graphic practice involving lines and signs, so as to arrive at a better understanding of the creative disalienation that makes the subject of Michaux's late works. The section consists of two main parts, each dedicated to a specific book: the first part engages Michaux's *Emergences-Resurgences*, one of the most revealing examples of a combination of verbality and drawing in his oeuvre, explicitly tethered to a problem of apprenticeship. The second work is *Par la Voie des Rhythmes*, composed solely of a multiplicity of signs —or kinds of signs— populating the traditional book-form. This is Michaux's only fully graphic and yet non-verbal book, transposing the "provoked anomaly" of drug experimentations on to the level of rhythm and its readability as such. In the section, this work is subject to formal analysis and a speculative recasting, in line with an argument on the particular status of rhythm and rhythmic entrainment in a framework of habituation and apprenticeship at large.

Deconditioning

Henri Michaux often expressed his overarching artistic motive as a dehabituation or unlearning of certain dispositions. What is also clear is that these targeted dispositions

incorporation of these two different discourses is the presence of an instructive configuration into which Michaux's work could be made to fit, thereby opening the framework Michaux himself relies on to a proper context of interlocutors by forestalling an impression of isolated or philosophically irrelevant speculation. The underlying gambit is that Michaux and the other artists involved in this study— especially in their approaches to apprenticeship— represent something more than niche phenomena of limited general interest.

involved partialities and disequilibriums instilled by a civilization he learned to recognize as provincially European. The figures, images and concepts that testify to this motive make a rich vista of experimentation in their own right: From the long-standing idea of "expatriation" ("Some Information about Fifty Years of Existence" in *Darkness Moves*; "Jours de Silence" in *Chemins cherchés* 148), to variations on negatives dis-/de- (disincrustation, degagement, disagglutinate, disestablish, decrocher, desensevelissment, dépaysement, desorientation, deplacement) to finally the more affirmative register of the phrases composed with other- (metabolisms, tropisms, movements, aptitudes, filters), Michaux's problem with modes of being informed by habit and their possible destabilization has a wide range of expressions in his work. These various figures are also intimately entwined with and punctuate an equally long standing interest in plasticity, if at its core this concept means the ability to change and find new developmental forms. As an occasional essay on the experience of contemplation illustrates, this essential dimension of Michaux's work targets "the ideas which made my form (and despite my struggles), prohibited another form, such that... I was being restrained from evolving" (V3 897), a notion which finds its most emphatic illustration in Michaux's reflection on "usages" from *Bras cassé* ["The Broken Arm" in *Darkness Moves*]: "There is not, in this life, any naturalness that is really natural. Only adaptation. Usage, use prolonged a bit, usages".

Thus we have a configuration which might be appropriately termed a "labor of dehabituation".[19] Habit, even in elision, is a constant horizon in relation to which Michaux continually searches for new modifications to his subjectivity, a pivotal point of reference around which new orientations in subjectivity can be explored. Although Michaux's work

[19] A phrase which Paul Valéry adopted apropos the work that went into his own Notebooks.

does not make explicit use of habit as a principle of metaphysical or ontological scope, his pragmatic approach to the various ways in which it manifests in perception, sensory-motor response, and thought orients his work, which would therefore profit from an interpretation in its light-- along with the traditional mediations it implies between vitality and the mind, the voluntary and the involuntary, the natural and the cultural.[20] In particular, the question which demands attention is what Michaux finds form has to become, in order to transform the range of psychisms and assert the axiological preferences that the question of habit seems to encode in his work. This is because form is not a self-evident answer to the modes of existence Michaux assumes to manifest a parochial and inertial form of being attributable to habit. It becomes necessary to inquire into what in drawing and semiosis — as act, gesture, recognition, fabrication, and finally, temporal experience— can claim a legitimate place in informing psychism itself, insofar as this place is opened in terms of what Michaux calls deconditioning, and what can also be characterized as dehabituation.[21] However, because habit is not a metaphysical principle, activating it as a potential access to Michaux's work requires responding to more specific questions. Questions along the lines of, for instance, what it might be that Michaux realized he wanted to unlearn (also implying a problem about values qua preference); how he negotiated the imbrication between the voluntary and involuntary in this process of experimentation; and finally, how

[20] Among the explicit instantiations one may count the early text "Qui Je Fus"; the first work of psychedelic experiment *Miserable Miracle* (where it finds form in a reference to *having*); the underlying idea of conditioning in *Emergences*; and perhaps most importantly, the reflections in *Tent Posts* where Michaux talks about a bodily and behavioral "center" which limits the range of possible thought for a given diachronic point of view as well as the understanding between different minds: "If we were familiar with the fundamental sensation of others we would always be comfortable with them. By choice they in fact stay inside certain parts of their being, not occupying the full range of their body equally, only a few strongholds and privileged positions." Michaux explicitly associates this center with habit, adopting the view of habit as an infra-conscious adaptation or insensibility that is quite established in the philosophical tradition: "even they don't know, though they blindly make use of it— exactly where their center is, that approximate, shifting base with its habits" (Michaux 52).

[21] Cf. Deleuze : "We must regard habit as the foundation from which all other psychic phenomena derive" (Deleuze, *Difference* 78).

he conceived the historical possibility (shared between the different scales of phylogenesis of forms and developmental ontogenesis with its implications for subjectivity) of the transformation he suggestively called an expatriation. These are some of the questions this section will address by a look at his key work *Emergences- Resurgences*, which will ensure a more determinate handle on the problems of apprenticeship and habituation in Michaux which concern this study.

Emergences opens with an often quoted and characteristic statement: "born, raised, educated in an environment and culture uniquely given over to the "verbal", I paint *to decondition myself*" (*Emergences* 9). At face value, the declaration signals the predominance of verbal forms of thought as the target for a process of unlearning, the means of which is in turn given by a freshly adopted practice of painting. As we will see, for Michaux verbality has an unbreakable association with the codified and the prefabricated, which is due to the specific form of historicity that underlies language. The particular skepticism of the word behind Michaux's encounter with painting, and the reason which makes the direction of dehabituation to point from the verbal to the nonverbal, is this historicity. Certainly, Michaux's declaration does not involve a general and dogmatic statement about what words are/are not capable of doing, but applies to his specific case and *conditioning*.

Yet what is not immediately clear is how deconditioning the drive to verbalization in one, might also serve deconditioning at large, in a relatively more encompassing process of subjectivation which is evoked by the phrase "to decondition myself". Here I propose to take the phrase to mean that when one deconditions the compulsion/function to verbalize,

one possibly deconditions other proclivities that communicate with it—in a way similar to the phenomenon of learning contemporary psychologists helpfully name the "transfer of learning". After all, the core idea of a transfer is present in Michaux: "Create a new circuit (or an equivalent). Every faculty that is not employed darkens all the other faculties. Every activity refused, every act one could have committed hinders the entire behavior, continually returns to knock on the door" (V2 346, also in *Passages*). Applied to verbalization, the transfer of learning implied in Michaux's "deconditioning" would mean there is no self-standing faculty for the employment of words, but a "recycling" of finite capacities for the specific end of verbalization which in turn buttresses them, without these capacities being reducible to their role in verbalization. For instance, for Michaux there is a power to decide, a power to order thought sequences as well as a readiness for action toward short term goals (including communication), all informing the power to verbalize in their different ways, capacities therefore open to manipulations through the detour of a reckoning with the hold of verbalization. This view of verbality has its implications for nonverbal forms of communication too, pointing to their own possible entwinement with a host of mental operations different than these powers and capacities. This is the condition for Michaux to later make a plea for an efficacy of signs beyond the purview of their token communicative function, for "signs enabling us to be open to the world in a different fashion, creating and developing a different function within man, disalienating man" (*Stroke by Stroke*, n.p.).

In other words, for Michaux verbalization is not just verbalization, but also a strategic proxy for particular mental operations which directly decide on the range of possible contents of thought and establish a range of relations with the world. In fact, Michaux

often indicates that his discomfort with verbalization is not necessarily a simple plea for the essential ineffability of experience, or for that matter a yearning for lost immediacy. Instead there are two major determinate factors that inform the measured move away from the verbal: the range of operations at stake in verbal thought and their relation to time, and the role of willing in the same operations.

Michaux's problem has a great deal to do with a specifically verbal restriction of thought to a series of operations among which he counts "acquisition, retention, and —mental ruminant—of elaboration, integration" (*Miserable Miracle* 177). Therefore Michaux's reservations regarding verbality and its occlusion of other possible modes of thinking can be situated as a restlessness with the self-evident facility of the mental operations he identifies. Each of these operations are also marked by a common attitude to time taken as the preexistent condition of their action. It is by an effective capture which makes thinking identical with combination, predetermined syntactical degrees of freedom, and forms of systematicity at the disposal of a given native language (each considered with a view to their attitude to time) that the "verbal" can be said to restrict thought.

On another score, the mescaline experience—as an experience of new speeds and rhythms — has a consequence which directly influences Michaux's attitude to the question of the relation between thought and speech/verbalization, resulting in a distinctive resistance to their identification: "Speech obliges thought to follow its own uneventful path. Thought must join the procession of words, must put on the garment of words, must enter the inscription of words, must attach, alter, think itself by way of words. A fall into verbalization" (*Major Ordeals*). Thus words shore up certain distinctive capacities, which

Michaux learns not to take for granted during the course of his experience with drugs, since the effect of drugs—and mescaline in particular— takes the form of a temporary but revelatory privation of these capacities.[22] What is perhaps most significant from the perspective of the guiding questions I raised earlier, is that for Michaux the accidental establishment of verbalization as an intuitive course of thought, or the way it may often parade as the most natural or authentic has also a strong affinity with the place and status reserved for voluntary operations in the organization of the mind. In several places in his work Michaux lists the operations forming an alliance between the voluntary and the verbalized, noting "the action of the will that will direct them [thoughts], bind them, group them, try them, put them aside for later to remember, combine them, tirelessly combine them, organize them, subordinate them" (*Thousand Times* 45). In contrast Michaux often suggests that he is invested in the revelatory possibilities of the junctures where "being able to formulate and fix a thought, to keep it from escaping, from being independent...to keep two subject matters, two sequences of thoughts, from coalescing", do not go without saying, and are made to confront the improbability of their own exercise (*Major Ordeals*).[23] Therefore no positive statement about Michaux's approach to painting as a route of

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[22] My use of the word capacity simply refers to the sense of "I can" that underlies the operations of thought like retention, classification and the ordering of elements Michaux has in mind when he talks about the "breakdowns in mental skills which are really suited to 'reveal' us to ourselves" (*Major Ordeals*). *Tent Posts* is more succinct on the instructive capacities of the privative: "You want to learn what your being is? Pull out [Decroche]" (*Tent Posts* 73).

[23] Since Michaux discusses the status of the verbal articulately, in a verbal medium with conventional sequential ordering and combination, there would be not a little irony if he were defending the irrational. Let it be noted that instead of a programmatic defense of the liberatory potentials of irrational immediacy, Michaux's pronouncements should be taken as responses to, and outgrowths of an experience, which dictate that thought is not necessarily measured by its exercise within the limits of the aforementioned operations. On the other hand, a clinical dimension is certainly not absent here. In her discussion of aphasia for a compendium of medical humanities, Laura Salisbury diagnosed a widespread interrogation of language common across modernism, which made of aphasia a discovery of experimental fiction convergent with medicine. The conclusion she reaches is also applicable to Michaux's own attitudes to language: "Paying attention to a historical moment that began to insist that being true to experience meant recognising how life might be woven together in ways that are fragile and contingent, always subject to unravelling and respooling, brings incapacity, interruption and lassitude—it brings illness—back into what is proper to human life" (Salisbury 458).

deconditioning can be made without taking a decentering of the voluntary into account, which will receive more extensive treatment in the following.

In summary, Michaux's problem with entrenched mental operations favored by verbalization can be taken to respond to two characteristic categories of apprenticeship he consistently employs: Inertia or *insensibility* to achievement and the limitation of the *range* of capacities enjoyed.[24] Thus, by referring to a "culture uniquely given over to the verbal", the opening salvo of *Emergences* can be interpreted to question first the claim of a range of verbally supported mental operations to exhaust thinking, and next the habituated inertia of these operations which divides them from the generative limits out of which they spring. Further in the *Emergences*, inertia even makes an explicit appearance in a statement with the directness of a slogan: "Art goes against inertia" (*Emergences* 41). Consequently, these two features bring us back to the region highlighted by Michaux's phrase combinations with "other-" mentioned above, calling for an enlargement of scope (of pattern), and gesturing at other movements and aptitudes in thought as yet undiscovered.

On Emergence-Resurgence

The irreducibility of thought to verbalization is taken to a more positive embodiment in Michaux's involvement with a practice of drawing which opens a space for the incursion of the involuntary and the event-like; and *Emergences* primarily treats this experience of

[24] Michaux has an understanding of organism as a highly plastic structure, which responds to practice and prolonged contacts, and the significance of the notion range stems from this understanding: "In a person's life the amount of emotions he can assimilate is not infinite. Many even come quickly to the end. More seriously, the range of what you're capable of feeling, like a folding-fan, has only a limited breadth (...) the fan [range] of nature is made so that, unless you're vigilant, it shrinks quickly, relentlessly, until it closes" (*Tent Posts* 37).

incursion. This subject which is certainly a nodal point for the thematics of dehabituation in Michaux, can be profitably treated in the light of two interlocking temporal axes along which he seems to define his experiments: a phylogenetic level for forms and media, and an ontogenetic level for artistic subjectivation, each enfolded within the other. On the one hand Michaux makes a distinction between the temporalities assignable to painting and verbal languages, which entail in both cases relatively long spans of time clearly beyond the life spans of individuals, hence my reference to phylogenesis as a possible category applying to historicities involved in types of media. On the other hand, Michaux is interested in the forms of expression in question and their respective historical possibilities for the implications they hold for his subjectivity, consciousness, as well as cognitive make-up, which together highlight the question of ontogenesis or the very generation and the plasticity of a given cognitive make-up (involving for instance, trained responsiveness to stimuli, speeds of registration of data, self-reflection, and the relation between these and symbolic thought). In other words, the book aligns a developmental plasticity —with implications for subjectivity— and the historical evolution of forms of expression with each other.[25] Presiding over their connection is the titular genesis of form Michaux calls "emergence-resurgence". This is important because whatever involuntary emergence Michaux's experience affords him, it is either directed by his voluntary attempts to decondition himself—and the concomitant values involved—or inscribed retrospectively in

[25] For Michaux, the aim of deconditioning, for which painting becomes an indispensable aid, thus also raises questions about the respective long term historicities of language and painting, questions that admittedly have deep roots and also wide contemporary resonance (to mention a few interlocutors, Merleau-Ponty and Andre Leroi-Gourhan). In this context the natural historical resonance of the term "phylum" originating with Ernst Haeckel is also germane in a discussion of Michaux, and its artistic application has its precursors like Deleuze and Guattari. In an especially relevant example, these latter use it to conceive the relation of different arts to their own historicity, and how this may help differentiate them: "That is because each time they paint, they [artists] must create or recreate a phylum, and they must do so on the basis of bodies of light and color they themselves produce, whereas musicians have at their disposal a kind of germinal continuity, even if it is latent or indirect, on the basis of which they produce sound bodies" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 347).

the narrative of these attempts.

Emergences-Resurgences (1972) is a book that appeared some time after the books written during the ten years of experimentation with psychedelics.[26] Although it is basically an account of how Michaux arrived at painting as a mode of self-expression, thanks to this succession it stages a style of engagement with questions of painting and writing that is sensitive to their differing mental and physiological conditions of possibility and temporal modulations. Early in the quasi-narrative parts of *Emergences*, reconstructing his burgeoning interest in painting leads Michaux to make a contrast between the respective historicities of painting and language, lingering especially with the sense of inescapably codified preexistence language implies for him. Outlined against painting, language feels for Michaux like "an immense prefabricated house handed down from generation to generation" (*Emergences* 12). Elaborating later, he writes, "it was inevitable I meet up with painting. Painting is a ground where you can begin from zero. A ground that owes less to ancestors. At last I am beginning to burst one of the lids that was weighing down on me" (Ibid. 50). Michaux's understanding of the deeper indebtedness of acts of speech to ancestors finds some support in a series of phenomena from etymological drift of words across a continuum of related languages (such as Latin to French), to relatively more synchronic relations of recurrence which nevertheless offer indications about preceding choices that weight communicative language—giving a basis to frequency dictionaries for instance.[27] A frequency dictionary for painting, which offsets iterability with effects of unrepeatable and undecomposable presence to a greater extent than verbality, is a less likely achievement. Yet students of modernism may well question the self-evidence of the

[26] Cf. Bellour 516.
[27] Cf. Spitzer "Linguistics and Literary History"

decision to move to a pictorial medium due to the perceived weight of prefabricated verbal meaning. There are others like Gertrude Stein, for instance, who, when they found in themselves the same urges and dissatisfaction with the "prefabricated", chose instead to carry out experiments *within* the medium of verbality, with results that would also be desirable for an artist like Michaux: "smashing every connotation that words ever had, in order to get them back clean" (William Carlos Williams qtd. in Rasula). In other words there is something else which must have led Michaux to take up painting, insofar as a status of prefabrication, preexistence or the ready-made character that often defines verbality for him, does not necessarily imply the remedy of a flight to painting and its asyntactical and involuntary patterns.

A possible implication would be that Michaux's engagement with painting strikes him as an experience in which either the medium of expression is itself fabricated anew, or the novel result of fabrication absorbs the media once and for all— instead of one in which the medium is borrowed ready-made in an endless chain of iteration. The voluntary bending and shaping of verbal structures for communicable messages, this specific finitude, leaves its place to the singularity or customized nature of material configurations which do not require communicative efficiency, involving a different relation with willing. Moreover the claim that painting offers an escape from the prefabricated finds justification on a few other levels in Michaux's text. It is first of all linked with personal reasons like the absence of "skill" which allows a new and conscious relation to a developing and as yet not-fully-existing capacity: "My lack of skill continues to provide me with surprises. Young in knowledge, young at heart [jeune par jeune savoir]. Blunders and collisions" (*Emergences*

44).[28] It presupposes more philosophical reasons like the differing approach to time inherent in the mental operations involved. Michaux's graphic experiments in the '70s explore a consistent register of temporal variations indicated in reference to formal categories like rhythm, "parcours," and of course "emergence" itself. Apparently, for Michaux painting and drawing are associated with a movement from what is discrete in verbality toward the continuous, an interest carrying over from the sense of infinite given him by the mescaline experience: "I would gladly make signs, but a sign is also a stop sign. And at this juncture there is still something I desire above all else. A continuum. A murmur without end , like life itself […] Impossible to draw as if this continuum did not exist" (*Emergences* 11).

Finally, there is an argument from phylogenesis that needs to be considered here. Michaux also thinks painting offers a room for salutary poverty and escape from overwhelming precedence in a way language does not, weighed as it is with the abundance of codified syntactic and semantic possibilities which are themselves the result of a specific collective relation to history. Overall, if taken as a statement of a difference between the kinds of historicity at work in writing and painting, as opening up a new space of play between these phyla—rather than as a wholesale dismissal of the syntactical and combinatorial possibilities characterizing language— Michaux's account of the motives that lead him into taking up painting is quite perceptive.[29]

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[28] The matter of savoir or know-how receives more extensive treatment in the fragments Michaux collects in *Tent Posts* (1976), indicating a continuity of interest (33, 52, 72).

[29] Michaux's problem with language as a historical reality also finds expression in the early and essential text "Signes", where he refers to French and German as "adult languages...with little maneuvrability, and too far from their roots and sources". In the same breath Michaux immediately adds, that it is the state of being "open to other directions of thought" that matters to him (V2 430). Obviously, Michaux is not isolated in his cultural context with his sense that language and painting could differ in terms of the way they articulate their histories. There are other examples of this tension stated in potentially more hierarchical terms, such as the one found in the Merleau-Ponty of "Indirect Language and Voices of

It is possible to argue that the titular notion of emergence offers the privileged site of the proposed deconditioning Michaux aims to carry out, making it a prime element of whatever deconditioning he obtains from his endeavor of painting; the positive statement of the kind of *de*conditioning and dehabituating power Michaux finds in painting hinges on a sense of emergence, as I will characterize presently. It bears noting that in painting, it is the effort toward forms rather than the final visual or pictorial product which has priority for Michaux, trailing along another important point: With a regressive extrapolation, the cherished sense of emergence can also be made to reflect on Michaux's relation to words and operations of the verbal discussed earlier: what fascinates Michaux in the act of painting and from the standpoint of which he inquires into the possibility of a becoming, is a relation to a mode of being and thinking not exhausted by "the action of the will": painting opens up a divergent array of operations at odds with the action of the will toward directing, binding, grouping, trying, remembering, combining, organizing and subordinating which Michaux assumes to be at stake in verbal language. This is why, in the form of a state of nascency ushered into being with less —or should one say more?— than fully conscious and voluntary means, emergence makes up the experimental crux of deconditioning and spearheads a process Michaux variously calls a "reorganization" [remaniement] or a becoming.

Emergences is important because the book is one of the few places where the

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Silence". As Alex Potts points out, here Merleau-Ponty came to "deny to visual art, and to painting in particular, language's capacity to articulate its own historicity". Due to his perception that the work of art was relatively " 'self-sufficient and closed in upon its own intimate significance," Merleau-Ponty believed "it could not effect the interweaving of past, present, and future played out in language" (Merleau-Ponty quoted in Potts 97). Whether he changed his position—which he did— later is another matter.

characteristics of the forms that provoke these reflections on becoming and dehabituation are recorded and open to direct perusal alongside the reflective account. Among the rich collection of insights, anecdotes, reports, and analogies that make up the work, a particular relationship stands out, and also carries great significance for this study. This is the way Michaux couples the way his paintings seem to take on a life of their own, and the changes he can fuzzily identify himself to undergo; and in the capacity of accommodating both, emergence-resurgence refers to two interrelated aspects of a single process. Emergence can fulfill this function largely because Michaux does not seem to allow himself to take credit for the whole process, constantly reminding himself how the forms he "makes" in turn *make* him respond with incalculable demands: "This messy black flow, sprawling out, demolishing the page and its horizon [...] With every burst of anger it calls forth from me..."; " ...the dark pseudopodia suddenly surging from blots bloated with wink *command me to see things clearly right away*, to decide then and there..." (Ibid. 40, emphasis in the original).

Correlatively, the book accumulates phrases and figures around the ideas of nascency, birth and incompleteness in a way familiar from his work elsewhere, leading Michaux to bolder and broader generalizations: "the problem for anyone who creates, the problem within the problem of work is perhaps—whether one is proud of it or secretly ashamed— the problem of rebirth, of perpetual rebirth, the phoenix periodically, and astonishingly reborn from its ashes and void" (Ibid 29). Here it is important to note that nascency seems to bear on both forms in the making and his gestural efforts: "immediacy, immediacies.... the newly arrived...in statu nascendi...freeing up I know not what in me, overcoming inhibitions, celebrating a becoming..." (Ibid. 50). In a way reminiscent of what Michaux calls a "theory

of exchanges"— which involves an oblique manipulation of proprioceptively assessed and inflected body schemas through the intervention made possible by a set-up of form in the making—the book and its gambit of deconditioning seems to turn on a conversation of sorts, one between two nascencies; by the same token, the processes and results of an experiment in a given medium simultaneously turn into an experiment on oneself.

The switching point where an experience in a given medium is also an experiment on oneself involves first and foremost the problem of gestures, and their relation to the emergent forms. Given Michaux lends to his forms the power to make demands and make him respond, gestures themselves are caught up in this set-up, explained less by a unilateral origin of premeditation than a thick performative give-and-take which informs his investment in the experience of nascency. Take Michaux's discussion of the way human figures appear in his canvasses: "in hundreds of pages, one by one as if enumerated...man happens to me, comes back to me... Judiciously gathered, could one have made a catalogue of them...a catalogue of inner stances, an encyclopaedia of those invisible gestures and spontaneous metamorphoses that man, day in day out, needs in order to survive?" (Ibid 34).[30] Here as elsewhere, it is not easy to decide whether the invisible gestures are merely depicted with no participatory resonance on Michaux's part, or whether they can also be attributed to him. Further on, Michaux seems to explicitly admit that this panorama of everyday gestures of the generic man, can also be his own, making him mention a process of "reification", which as it were, depose his gestures on the page for activation: "Fighting

[30] Here Jay Hetrick's important study on Michaux's understanding of gestures deserves mention. According to Hetrick, in Michaux's notion of gesture a rift is visible between the external stroke and an intensive internal dimension Michaux calls "pregesture"—corresponding to interoceptively registered states—ultimately expressing a caution against "falling completely on the side of the external brushstroke at the expense of losing his conscious connection to the delicate pre-gestural movements that coursed through his interior" (Hetrick 271).

off these blobs I enter into the fray. Soon reified all my [the] rages and tantrums become combatants, silhouettes of soldiers rushing..." (*Emergences* 40).[31]

On the one hand there is a pregestural dimension that accounts for and is anterior to finished forms, on the other hand, this dimension is in a state of constant reciprocal constitution with the emerging forms and thresholds of reification. Here it bears noting that in Michaux's work it is very hard to ignore the intimate ties that bind the thematics of bourgeoning growth—be it of living forms or the inorganic— the unfinished and the nascent (of which emergence is a part) and life as such, and *Emergences-Resurgences*, this work crucial from the perspective of dehabituation, is no exception, with its reference to a sense of life opening thanks to this experiment: "to find one's terrain, the terrain to carry out a life, another life in the making [en instance], a new life to accomplish [vie à accomplir], hic et nunc, a life not there before...To be able to be truly engaged by it, to live an actualised life" (Ibid. 52).[32] In a sense by circling around a problem of coupled or communicating nascencies in this way, Michaux is arguably talking about a *life*. Certainly, while the phylogenetic undercurrents of Michaux's forays into natural history may bespeak a sense of life in a more vitalist—thus metaphysical— sense, the more difficult thing is conceiving this life in its indistinction from the everyday, a challenge of re-integration also present in Michaux's other works such as *Stroke by Stroke* [*Saisir* and *Par des Traits*] and *A Thousand Times Broken* [*Paix dans les brisements*]. For now, let us note the implicit

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[31] Richard Sieburth's translation understandably turns "les rages, les emportements" of the original into "my rages and tantrums", but let's note that Michaux's more impersonal choice may conceal other implications, not least among them the possibility of the relative contemporaneity between rage and form, rather than form expressing a preexistent rage.

[32] Cf. the texts "Mouvements" and "Signes". Especially the text "Signes" is important for the way it establishes an explicit theoretical connection between semiosis and life. This text is also significant for the way Michaux broaches the subject of the link between forms of semiotic activity such as mathematical formalization and painting.

possibility of a negotiation between the life in the making that opens with experimentation, and "those invisible gestures and spontaneous metamorphoses that man, day in day out, needs in order to survive".

Rhythms of Entrainment and Tender Abstraction in Michaux's *Par la Voie des Rhythmes*

To make a heuristic characterization of Michaux's work, one can point out two outstanding problems which compete for recurrence, corresponding to two grand and interrelated ambitions: "signifying nature" on the one hand and accessing a new function on the other. The first of them (*Ideograms of China*; "Signes"; *Emergences*) is a motivation that owes much to the artist Paul Klee, and deals with generative, "invisible"[33] and involuntary processes of making to account for the finalized, visible, and relatively inert formations of marks, lines, traces, and signs on the page. Essentially, this aspect of Michaux's work finds a source and inspiration for semiotic production in the processes of "production" and growth in nature, and brings artistic attention to bear on nature as a semiotic process where the becoming sign of nature is coupled with a becoming nature of the sign: in the words of "Signes", "all nature is signs".[34] The other outstanding project clings more closely to the dimension of subjectivation and looks for the ways in which a release from a set of habitual dispositions experienced as limiting can be aligned with the creation of a new

[33] "Invisible" here is borrowed from the way Paul Klee uses the term, in a certain contrast which makes the visible a matter of deposition and finishedness that lacks a living relation to a time of generation and development. Michaux's idea of pregestures —mentioned above— is a close equivalent of this earlier distinction by Klee, and provides it with explicitly bodily underpinnings.

[34] A similar superimposition in the fashion of a double becoming between a given form of sign and a semiotic nature is also found in Michaux's *A Barbarian in Asia*, where the lines of certain Chinese paintings are claimed to mimic "the linearness of things" (*A Barbarian in Asia*).

"function": figures of expatriation, the creation of new circuits, discovery of other metabolisms and tropisms, and finally the imaginary of "ranges" and their possible extension all belong to this problematic, which finds its crucial experiment in the particular case of Michaux's claim to accede to a new function through his graphic and semiotic activity (*Emergences*; *Saisir*; *Par des Traits*).

We might argue that works that fulfill both conditions at once—signifying nature and cultivating a new function— or that seem to have characteristics of both problems by mediating them, are —by virtue of the concretion obtained— especially well-suited to shed a light on Michaux's overarching investment in habituation and partial dispositions created through prolonged "usage", which on its own part reveals the natural as a problem of habit. Just like *Emergences-Resurgences,* the work *Par des Voie des Rhythmes* also fits this description, and thus may offer a privileged entry to the stakes of Michaux's nonverbal graphic experiments. This section aims to balance the fundamental reticence of this work composed of solely pictorial traces —with the exception of the verbal title— by a careful reading of the structure of its visible features, the main challenge being to stick to a path that follows the internal logic residing in its sensible forms, and meet the strictly visual eloquence of the book with an appropriate verbal discourse which does not make a bid for imposing extraneous conceptual intelligibility. On this path a first clue may be found in the book's chronological context with regard to the classic locus of dehabituation in Michaux. Michaux's key reflections on his arm fracture and his observation on "prolonged usages" precede this book by no more than a year: "There is not, in this life, any naturalness that is really natural. Only adaptation. Usage, use prolonged a bit, usages".

In addition to its strict fidelity to the visible over against the verbal, oral or audition at large, the work offers other challenges, starting from the stage of the title: "By way of Rhythms" clearly names a status of means or mediality, but the end that seems to be evoked in the same breath is nowhere to be seen. This in marked contrast with a work like *Par des Traits*, which is perhaps the clearest statement by Michaux on his views on the promises and transformative efficacy to be hoped from a modest experiment with signs. In addition to the ends valorized by this later work—namely the creation of a "different function in man" akin to a disalienation—which may lend some proximal intelligibility to the book on rhythms, other possible objectives suggest themselves too: Relying on the associations of the "way", one may think of a method, in which case the book—for it is a book[35]— can be taken as the primer of a graphic method for which it is the sole application, even pedagogical like some of Paul Klee's sketches and lecture titles, the most immediately relevant being "Wege Zur Form". Without forgetting of course, how Michaux's work regularly gravitates around figures of the path, trajectory, thread, and orientation, indicating either the contingency and determinacy of the roads taken in the exclusion of other possible ones, or a process of discovery non-reducible to narrowly predetermined goals.

Alternatively, and relying on the conceptual coherence of rhythm itself, the book can be equally construed as a matrix for the generation and experience of various rhythms, thanks to the unfolding spaces, and the interplay between succession and simultaneity that characterize the marks and gaps deposited on the pages. In this case—and as Nina Parish

[35] The preservation of the book format is a significant constraint of this project on rhythms in Michaux; on this specific subject, Nina Parish's helpful article "Destruction of the Book Form and the Creation of the Book Object", deserves mention.

also pointed out—beyond offering a method, the book requires a participatory competence on Michaux's and his reader's part, and can only find proper response —or its "proof" so to speak—if the rhythms are taken up. Put this way, the book suggests an experiment on oneself more than a primer on method. More specifically, the claim here is that emphasizing what is rhythmic in a way of writing is not indifferent with regard to the development of long term tendencies, cognitive biases, and even new modes of reading; an intimacy with a new form has consequences in terms of ontogenesis, as some art historians would also argue: "Just as a coalescent self-awareness must continuously emerge from tangles of neurons, the activity of pictorial piecing involves an ongoing relational system. If narrative turns the world into a plot, gapped configurations undercut automaticity, illusion, and the feeling that one is in the grips of remote control (Stafford 154). Since this possibility is one that is potentially rewarding to pursue thanks to the support it finds in Michaux's work at large, this approach will be exploited in more depth in the following. In fact, it is even possible to tell the story of Michaux's entire work through a discussion of rhythm: the dominant themes of plasticity/ontogenesis, experiments with drugs, the experience of illness, the serenity of the late poems ("Vers la Complétude"; "Distraitement Frappé, Rhythmes") and his laconic epigrams (e.g. "evil, it's the rhythm of others") all cross ways with this important theme at some point or other.[36]

In his last work of experimentation on altered perception through drug use, Michaux notices a particular "provoked anomaly" in the form of an impact on his sense of rhythm. Specifically, drug assisted change of rhythm seems to influence the way Michaux connects

[36] Also see for instance Michaux's reference to a "physiological time created by another combustion, another circulatory and respiratory rhythm" (*Passages*) in childhood, an episode often forgotten by adults, but for this very reason requiring attention as a proof that no such basal rhythm has to be permanently fixed from the point of view of development and plasticity.

words and forms sentences: "And now there appears a different attitude with regard to the word, the word as substance to peruse, to write, to outline. A word, of course, is written in several stages, in groups of two, three, four, five, or more letters; each individual has his own unalterable capacity, like his stride—his capacity of three, four, five letters at once. This measurement, too, is part of a personality" (Major Ordeals 48). Thus, in the rest of the passage, Michaux goes on to describe an alteration of personality whose main sign is a change in the pacing and rhythm of writing; the transformation of a signature rhythm with potential ramifications wider than quirks of writing, as per the supposition of a "transfer of learning" mentioned above: "Before writing, each of us has his own way of envisaging the portion to be selected [...] the number of letters to be written, the rhythm. Seeing these manifestations altered, I know that I am no longer the same. Another kind of man is revealed to me, and in me" (ibid. 49).

Coupled with Michaux's earlier insights into the potentially "sclerotic" nature of possessing a style, which associate it with "a lack of courage, lack of openness, of renewal" and an "unchanged distance" with regard to oneself, that Michaux may have attempted the book as a modest experiment in self-transformation suggests a viable assumption (*Tent Posts* 57). Since Michaux seems to think that stages of development as well as ruts or styles that beset adult ways of thinking distinguish or manifest themselves with modes of rhythmic expression implicating the body, it would not be a surprise if he should conceive an experiment on rhythm as a terrain for a new orientation in subjectivation.

Moreover, there is another way the focus on rhythm connects with longstanding interests of Michaux by advancing them further, such as the intention of exhibiting and making

discernible the extraordinary which underlies the ordinary, what he otherwise calls "the marvelous normal". In fact, the various routes in Michaux's work through which this intention is fulfilled, be they documentations of accidents, health problems or accounts of mescaline trips, and experiences of the infinite, all bring Michaux to the brink of discovering a "rhythmanalysis", without any help from Henri Lefebvre, who deserves credit for a more explicit elaboration for this idea: "It is only in suffering that a particular rhythm breaks apart, modified by illness. The analysis—rhythmanalysis— comes closer to pathology than habitual arrhythmia because we normally don't realize the rhythms that constitute us" (Lefebvre). In this sense, *Par la Voie des Rhythmes* could be taken as responding in its own way to two interrelated exigencies: first, precipitating or at least simulating those "breakdowns" which Michaux thinks are revelatory of the real nature of "the normal",[37] and next, more creatively, using these moments as a springboard for the discovery of other possible valuations of normality and synthetically bring about other continuties. Michaux's understanding of rhythm thus shows a certain overlapping with that of Lefebvre, who situates rhythm in a mediating position between crises and long-term potentiations: "disruptions and crises always have origins and effects on rhythms: those of institutions, of growth..." (Lefebvre).

Coming at the problem from another direction, an experiment on rhythm or rhythmic graphism constitutes a particularly well suited intervention in the nodes of historicity Michaux seems to favor in his work, namely the junctures where the ambitiously long term

[37] As Michaux writes in *Saisir*, often the problem for him is coming to grips with "the secret of daily life, of the ordinary without end, of the nonetheless extraordinary ordinary, when a certain detachment allows it to regain its uncanniness, its fatal uncanniness" (*Stroke by Stroke*). Similarly, see *Major Ordeals,* which mentions "the extraordinary created from what is almost ordinary, but as an apparition" (*Major Ordeals* 39). The oppositions --"against the servility of the everyday" or "the enemy disguised as dailiness"-- which appear in his last book *Par des Traits*, should thus be positioned against this background, without diminishing their incantatory sense of disobedience.

scale of the phylogenesis of human expression informs ontogenetic development. In fact, one could argue that by making a book that serves as a compendium of rhythms, Michaux practices a form of experimental philosophical anthropology at home with deep history, since rhythmic abstraction constitutes one of the first historical forms of writing or graphism.[38] It is not a coincidence then that Michaux's book also stages an engagement with the prehistoric, as noted by his friend René Bertelé, who writes about a "writing of the beginning of the world, of prehistory" (V2 432). Under the aegis of the prehistoric, there is no contradiction between a non-mimetic graphism, and the endless serial modulations of the pages which also provide evocations of cave paintings with their depictions of animal shapes (see Figure 2).

Finally, a brief characterization of the experience of time called up by the book's forms may be in order, considering the importance of any such account to a discussion of habituation and its own brand of punctuated continuity. As Lefebvre also notes, in rhythm there are both continuities and discontinuities in play, and a disruptive irregularity can lead to the institution of a new rhythm. According to this supposition, the book-form partitions of Michaux's series of images and signs (five separate sections indicated with signs that also work as headings) serve as a direct acknowledgment of the possibility of identifying multiple continuities, epochs, or phases, so to speak. Therefore it would not be wrong to suggest that Michaux gives an adventurous graphic form to one of the oldest resources of "spiritual techniques", namely the one which depends on methodical effort to achieve a transformation of bodily rhythms. As Leroi-Gourhan points out, "great mystical schools

[38] "Graphism did not begin with naive representations of reality but with abstraction" (Leroi-Gourhan 190). According to Leroi-Gourhan, inscribed artifacts that still survive like "churingas" are some of the best examples of such a rhythmic abstraction, in the way they flout iconic pictorial representation and depend on relatively austere line spacings.

have tended toward physiological control, toward escape from rhythms through contemplation and control of the visceral-apparatus" so as to "break the cycle to establish a quasi permanent second state" (Leroi-Gourhan 285). Although this study makes no commitment to the spiritual status of the work, it still upholds that a similar form of intervention in disposition—at once breaking and steadying— is indeed involved, given Michaux's explicit sense of rhythmic graphism, which covers the same ground as Leroi-Gourhan: "Artists, and not only buddhists, know that parallel, closely spaced lines, gently undulating, repeated rhythmically with very few variations, are lines of abandonment to feelings of pity, religion and the infinite" (*Darkness Moves* 215/originally from *Knowledge through the Abyss*). According to this comparison the stylistic shifts that characterize the book and which result in multiple continuities could also count as gestures toward multiple "quasi permanent second states".

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As noted by scholars such as Nina Parish, Marie-Aline Villard, and Raymond Bellour, a striking aspect of *Par La Voie Des Rhythmes* is the way it simultaneously excludes and offers a simulation of verbality. There is in fact no question that the book is entirely composed of nonverbal signs, but it also behaves like a verbally constituted book with what looks like an evocation of a paratextual apparatus: an ideographic table of contents and chapter headings, presumably for the ease of navigation. From the start it confronts the reader with questions regarding what rightfully constitutes a "unit" in the book, if words and letters are accepted as the identifiably discrete units of an ordinary written discourse. Correlatively, given the lack of the anchoring the expedient finitude of an alphabet may

offer —as a matrix for the composition of the totality of its signs— the book also poses

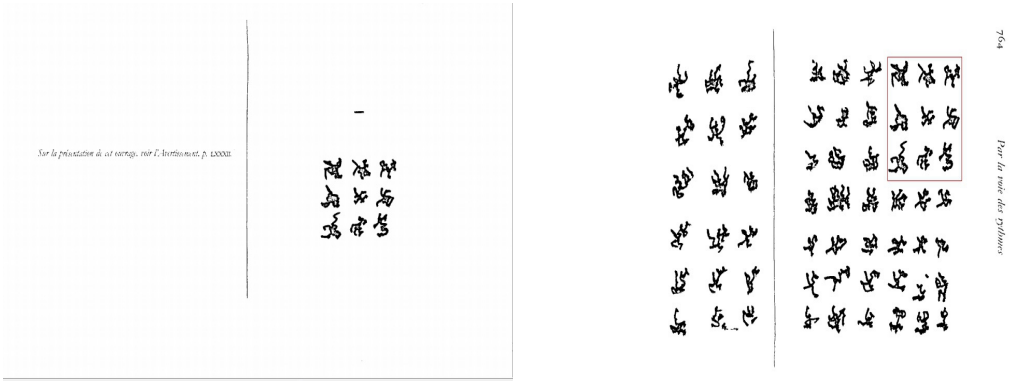

Figure 1: The first page of the book followed by a repetition in the next page, Michaux, *OC* V3 763-4. Although each of the discrete figures on the first page are open to separate use like letters, the second page which *repeats the group* seems to both preserve their previous unity and changes it by embedding it in a new context.

questions about recognizability as well as infinity. After all, with its primarily phonetic rationality an alphabetic letter is efficient insofar as it is recognizable.[39] As Marie Aline

Villard notes —apropos a similar enterprise which is Michaux's *Parcours*— Michaux courts ambiguity in placing his strictly "nonrecognizable (hence unreadable) lines in a configuration of the book (which incites to recognition)" (Villard 5). If Jean-François Lyotard's—whom Villard quotes—pithy formulation that "learning how to see is unlearning how to recognize" is taken as a guide, then an important step is already taken in situating the book in relation to a problem of apprenticeship (Lyotard 153).[40]

[39] In her celebrated study of the history and neurology of reading, Maryanne Wolfe informs that letter recognition has its developmental roots in object recognition, therefore providing another instance for the transfers of learning Michaux explores in his writings: "(A)n important, early set of conceptual skills—pattern invariance—facilitates learning letters. As an infant, our young child already learned that some visual features (mother's face, and father's) don't change. They are invariant patterns... At a simple level, recognizing and naming objects are the processes children first use to begin connecting their underlying visual areas to areas serving language processes" (Wolfe 92). Such an insight helps us to see the fundamental continuity between the book of rhythms and some earlier reflections found in a book of aphorisms such as Michaux's *Tent Posts*: "Recognizing somebody isn't automatic. Recognizing a father, wife, son, or friend calls for a tuning so fine that we wonder sometimes how it happens that we succeed at this activity so often..." (*Tent Posts* 69).

[40] On another score, perhaps this simultaneous titillation of meaning and resistance to it, is why the book is such an appropriate example for the tendencies to semiotic utopia a few scholars identified in Michaux's experiments with signs. As Raymond Bellour in particular stated in various places, there is an utopia of writing or the line (537, 461) here. In a parallel way, Richard Sieburth on his part finds a "semiotopia" in

In addition to benefiting from the use of what is "unrecognizable" (without real precursor in any established historical phylum of written characters) and of uncertain scale or unit in a familiar format, Michaux also accepts certain other constraints which make the book an example of an experiment on language that is guided by an ethos of formalism and precision. I believe it is important to insist on this point, since so long as one regards the book as the effusive and blindly expressive result of an unbridled spontaneity and automatism, one risks ignoring certain important features of the work. In the remaining part of this study, a particular emphasis will be laid on this aspect.

The basic constraints that shape the book perhaps find a background in the most global and direct impression which the work makes, which is that of an overarching continuum or flow which seems to fulfill intentions present in Michaux's career from the beginning: "I wanted to draw the consciousness of existing and the flow of time. As you might take your pulse" ("Drawing The Flow Of Time"). Again, in a work still closer in spirit which is the subject of his project of self-deconditioning through painting, Michaux writes, "at this juncture there is still something I desire above all else. A continuum—A murmur without end, like life itself..." (*Emergences* 11). In Michaux's mescaline drawings as well as the rhythm book in particular, the variability of plastic space takes on the task of conveying this flow.[41] However, given the presence of identifiable elements of different scale that are

Michaux's work at large (Sieburth 15). In other words, an intimation of utopia would be present in the way the book gestures toward a radically heterogenous regime of meaning—as well as the life to entertain that meaning— *in the making*, despite remaining within the familiar framework of the book. Correlatively, instead of the category "asemic writing" commonly used for this type of project, it would be better to characterize it with a term along the lines of Steve McCaffery's "protosemantics", acknowledging a more ambiguous status regarding meaning or sense.

[41] Nina Parish makes an important observation on the changes in the pacing and rate of flow Michaux creates with formal procedures: "the transformation from long, dense lines to small downward blobs implies a breaking-up of the figures through the introduction of blank space. This disintegration in turn

sometimes repeated and modulated, here there is also articulation; and at its most general level the book stages a reconciliation between articulation and flow, flow becoming the flow of articulation, and articulation the articulation of flow. Relatedly, the enduring "secondary states" and new habits the book promises become largely dependent on the consistent maintenance of this formula. Moreover, it is likely an important requisite for Michaux to appropriate articulation and a measure of diacritical difference, given temporal effects only achievable through these means, such as the "all at onceness" and the simultaneity of regionally associated fuzzy multiples (see figure 1).[42] After all it is Michaux himself that elsewhere associates rhythm in writing with a "capacity of three, four, five letters at once", which in turn "is part of a personality" (*Major Ordeals*).[43]

In a formulation meant to denote an immediacy—the uncodified and unrecognizable signs make demands on perception and affect that is not neutralizable by recognition— that is at home with abstraction (there are internal displacements and re-evocations), here is a tender abstraction that does not renounce discrete signs, but finds a use radically different for them than a lexical and limited syntactic integration serving to ensure a "severely directed traffic" (*Thousand Times*).[44] Perhaps this is the reason why Raymond Bellour insists that

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connotes speed. At this point, the first totally blank page of the text appears, which brings the accelaration of signs to an unexpected halt" (Parish "Destruction" 21).

42 The idea of an "all-at-onceness" in plastic space is taken up again in the works *Saisir* and *Commencements.*Although this idea has a long history reaching back to Lessing—according to which painting is an art of coexistence rather than progression in time like poetry— in Michaux's case it comes to absorb all the sense of liberation he finds in a detachment from the imperative of linearity characteristic of alphabetic writing.

43 In this context Raymond Bellour's comments regarding the drawings in the work *Peace in the Breaking* are also relevant: "These drawings, in fact, are read or are seen two at a time, each time according to the continuity of the two pages opened together" (Bellour qtd. in Conoley 18).

44 As Michaux writes apropos music, but in a way that is also relevant here, "the only intelligent voyage: the abstract" (V3 369). Perhaps the most astute commentator of the importance of abstraction in Michaux has been Gabriel Bounoure, who wrote that in this work, "we cannot enter reality save by irreality, just as it is through the abstract that we penetrate the furthest into the images of matter, and the concrete of our life" (Bounoure 28).

the work manifests both "rigorous and aleatory" aspects (Bellour 538). [45]

Continuing a description reliant on formal constraints, we may thus indicate the alphabetic letter as the lower limit for the work, a scale and level of standardization it pointedly does not occupy. On the other hand the book itself would provide the upper limit, beyond the bounds of which no long scale continuity or rhythmic repetition can be observed. The letter —and alphabetization of course— is a capture of the line in favor of implicit ends of speech, but renouncing the book is not necessary to liberate the line. This may sound obvious, but it is necessary to indicate the large and extremely well-utilized field of play that remains for Michaux's work on the line, a paradoxical infinity of variations squeezed between two orders of magnitude.[46] Michaux's book can be taken as an attempt to free the line from the capture of the letter in order to compose non-verbal "phrases" of uncertain scale and syntactic possibility, those "polyvalent ligatures" that he once dreamed of ("Signes" V2 430), in close contact and reciprocity with the states of the body.

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[45] In this sense Michaux's work does not follow an impetus such as the one Ralph Ubl finds in the automatic drawings of an artist like Andre Masson. Despite the comparable investment the latter makes in figures of nascency, and a similar valorization of nature as the surpassing of premeditated architectonics, Michaux's work rarely looks for the "writing of a nature not yet divided into discrete signs" (Ubl). What is important to underline here is the presence of determinate constraints which guide Michaux's practice, constraints that would be hard to reconcile with allegiance to automatism as a method of insight. Here may be an affinity with Max Ernst then, given Ernst's own sense for the discrete, the typewritten and the alphabetic in a context of "natural history"; a space for the discrete and minimally repeatable sign exists in Michaux's book, although it would be difficult to contain his vision of writing within an engagement with the "repeatable combinable letters of natural history".Ubl's insistence on the repeatable is understandable, and can be attributed to a desire to avoid an "ideological" celebration of spontaneity which, as Steve McCaffery notes, was a warning made by the likes of Althusser and Barthes too: "that every ‘spontaneous’ language is an ideological language, the vehicle of an ideology" (Althusser qtd. in McCaffery 175). But warding off a restricted conception of spontaneity also bars the extension of Ubl's framework wholesale to a study of Michaux, especially considering the latter's understanding of gesture and its interplays with the page in formation, which is unthinkable without a degree of spontaneity. In a sense the real polarity which Michaux adopts as the constraint for his work on the line is something that finds expression in his work on Chinese ideograms, where he mentions "the two traps of calligraphy": Rigidity (which would be the letter here) and baroque (which would be freedom in the vein of automatic writing/drawing).

[46] Here we can remember Michaux's reference to a "proletarian line" in his discussion of Klee, expressing sympathy for a line whose labor is effaced. Here, the same line seems liberated with its work on its sleeve.

As Bellour states, the line liberated within two orders of magnitude here is irreducibly linked to the "primary reality of the body and the origins of a temperament" (540).[47] This observation is also harmonious with Leroi-Gourhan's assertion that rhythmicity favors "a certain conception of life that borrows its foundation from the pact between oneself and one's body" (Leroi Gourhan). If an institution of new habits or rhythmic entrainment is possible through introducing new partitions to what is recognizable or what constitutes a semiotic integration that makes sense, it cannot but imply the body which generates the patterns on the page, gauges the relations on the go, and responds by starting anew. In fact here it is possible to see a subterrenean connection between the interest Michaux shows in interoceptive attention in early graphic works like *Mouvements*—which talks about the gestures of an ignored life and vain latencies— and the problem of the exercise of different functions or achievements of different continuums enabled by forms in the making (V2 438-9). In effect, as an experience of a certain intensity of attending and thus the creation of a unique temporal window, the making/generation of form in Michaux's graphic activity offers an awareness about and purchase on a domain characterized by constitutive latency and nonmanipulability—a bodily unconscious.[48] As Villards puts it, the line links the eye, the hand and corporeity at large, a corporeity which forms a virtual matrix of nascent gestures and equilibriums, as in Michaux's earlier work *Mouvements*. The line, in other words, beats a measure for a virtual body that is modestly made and remade in its preferences and leanings thanks to drawing, which among other things, serves to "abbreviate" its changing states poised in states of *pregesture*: "line is not an abbreviation of volume or surface, but an abbreviation of hundreds of gestures and attitudes and

[47] See also Villard's reference to a "corporeal resonance" in her discussion of *Parcours* (Villard 5) .
[48] Or in Jed Rasula's words, a "somatic underworld" (*The Shadow Mouth* 120).

impressions and emotions" ("Grasp" in *Stroke by Stroke,* n.p.).

For this reason, perhaps it is not unwarranted to wonder whether Michaux's book does not in itself constitute the fiction of the birth of formalization out of life as such, with its rich dramatization of the gestural beginnings of the structure and rhythm of writing. Since Michaux's book delves deep into prehistory in several of its frames, life divides to occupy two sides of the making: at once theme and generator, if —as Bellour suggests— the book really "possesses the uncontrollable liberty of species and movements of life" (537). Here, what the earlier work *Emergences* calls a "life in the making" comes to occupy two sides of the drawing set-up. Consequently, there also emerges an important link between this work and Michaux's *Ideograms of China*, dedicated to narrating the evolution of Chinese ideograms. What the latter achieves on the level of narrative, with distinctions established between different epochs of writing and an exposition bearing on vast scales of time, the book of rhythms seems to perform or *enact* in its own scale for an unspecified human language. Along the way, the natural history of writing really inflects the history of the subject, in the book's idiosyncratically Taoist way.[49]

Thus among all the different figures and signs of Michaux's book— from the most solitary line to the most enveloping; broken lines horizontally or vertically integrated; and finally

[49] The formulation Ralph Ubl makes about Max Ernst, that "natural history simultaneously recounts the history of the subject" is here adopted and applied to Michaux with some modification. A passage from Chuang Tzu that is resonant with the problematics of rhythm constructed here has been highlighted by Joseph Needham: "Then were seen now security and now insecurity, in mutual change; misery and happiness produced each other; gentleness and urgency pressed on each other; the movements of collection and dispersion were established: these names and processes can be examined, and, however minute, can be recorded. The rules determining the order in which they follow one another, their mutual influence now acting directly and now revolving, how, when they are exhausted, they revive, and how they end and begin again; these are the properties belonging to things..." (Legge translation qtd. in Needham 40).

the intermediate figures of knots, mazes or membranous formations—shapes of the living stand out as the ones that come closest to a mode of mimesis different from the predominant abstraction. With its surprise amphibians, ferns and pointillist big mammals, and even algae, the book seems to amplify its vision of rhythm to include and leap across evolutions, charting an arc from families of signs to families of the living. In the sense of the formal choices exploited within the limits and constraints adopted, a mimetic retrograde movement in the vast scales of a contrary evolution is thereby interleaved with the cues, slowings, and accelerations of a rhythmic abstraction.

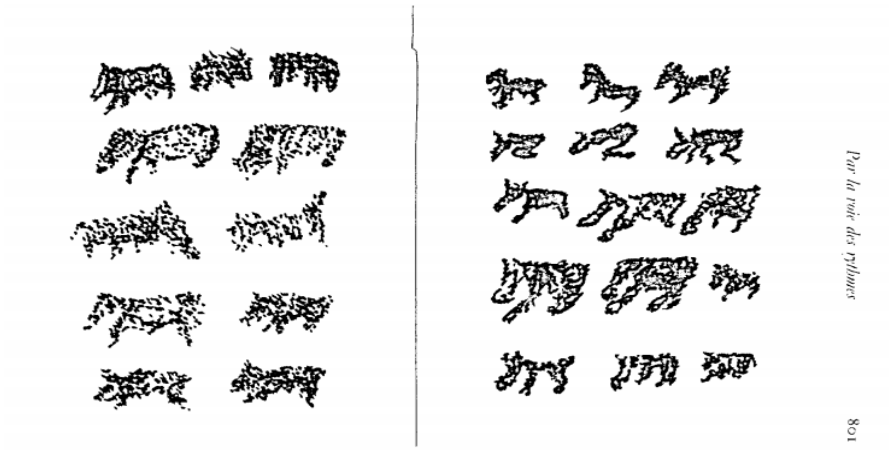

Figure 2: Michaux *OC* V3 801. A clear evocation of prehistoric cave paintings like those found in Lascaux, with their depictions of big mammals.

In addition to the polarity inherent in these main strategies, the book offers pulsed alternations in terms of size, spacing, linearity and pointillism, density and sparseness/rarefaction, knotting and unravelling, filaments and envelopes, verticality and horizontality, as well as between the germinal narrativity and talismanic stillness of its signs, as if to discourage the tendency of getting used to any one theme, pacing or reading: an imposing wiggle of a line is *new* after a predominance of sacks, a kind of sack is new after a splayed line, and all of these unite in not quite being able to prepare the reader for the animal-series. A rhythm exists here then which is dual and ternary at once, and dual again on a greater and qualitatively different scale for being dual and ternary. With the shadings, combinations and breaks that occur *between*, thought is also challenged, it becoming increasingly harder to come up with overarching principles that would account for the unpredictable expansion of different series and the new articulations between them. For instance, if more pointillist brushwork really implies acceleration, as Nina Parish

suggests, it becomes hard to assign valence to a configuration composed of the serenity and interruption of rare circular signs and the surrounding rainfall of pointillist black: might it be spelling out a proverb like "don't rush into serenity" (see Figure 3)?

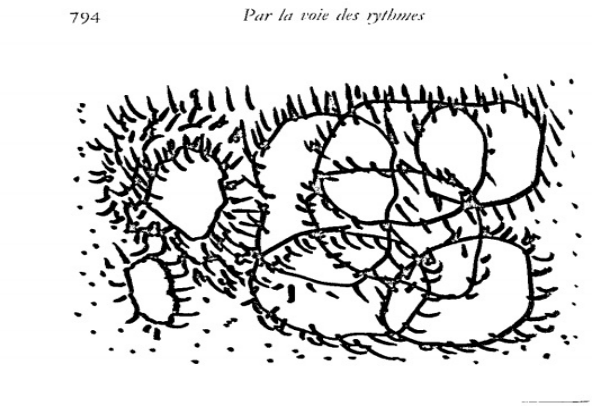

Figure 3: Michaux, ibid. 794. Two types of strokes in paradoxical interplay: The continous or the flowing and the pointillist/discrete.

Regardless of any propositional translation though, if we remember Michaux's earlier observation on the link between "parallel, closely spaced lines, gently undulating, repeated rhythmically with very few variations" and "feelings of pity, religion and the infinite", the affective correlatives also start to offer a significantly expansive register capable of highly paradoxical symbioses like Michaux's earlier titles tailored to suit the mescaline experience: "turbulent infinity" or "peace in the breaking". The difference is that here we have these paradoxes in visual form, in this "book which does not say a word", and also without the subordination of signs and drawings to a more primal mental episode for which they would be the "epiphenomena", as Michaux claims for some sections of the mescaline books.[50] The figures of the rhythm book are their own phenomena, and they are certainly

[50] "My drawings express the epiphenomenon occurring irregularly in the passage of this or that reflection" (*Thousand Times 47*).

not there for only cognitive registration and recognition, but also for the rehearsal of a transformation. In anticipatory vein, it is possible to propose that the book anticipates a new "function" in man, the qualitatively new cognitive efforts and rhythms of decipherment which it prepares being interesting in the measure of the way it can create a vibrant sense for the the larger natural historical importance of semiotic capacities at large.

Here I have provided a commentary for a visual work by latching onto a few aspects that seemed salient in the guidance of a hypothesis disclosed in the beginning: the continuity between Michaux's experiment on rhythm and his psychically instructive mescaline experiments. Certain other —preceding as well as subsequent— interests central to Michaux's career, such as a natural history of signs and a radical developmental orientation that dreams of enriching the organism's range of receptivity to phenomena beyond conditioned preferences, have also found some room for exposition. In this respect the central assumption has been that Michaux's narrative of a shift toward painting contained in *Emergences* and his semiotic experimentation with rhythm explore directions complementary with each other. In anticipation of the following sections, this discussion aimed to situate these two experimental forays as a further extension of Michaux's longstanding interest in the possibilities of plasticity and apprenticeship, perhaps best exemplified by his episodic references to the emergence of "natural" disposition out of prolonged "usage".

Michaux: Encountering the Situation Sign

In his authoritative writings on Henri Michaux collected in *Lire Michaux*, Raymond Bellour mentioned "the obscure and troubling idea of a 'sign of situation'", referring to Michaux's interest in a semiotic practice that targets the entirety of "situations" instead of individual objects, ideas or processes. This study takes its departure from this notion, finding it a potentially rewarding pursuit to try to dispel the impression of obscurity in a way that does not cancel the salutarily troubling aspects.

Michaux gave the first indication of the semiotic ideal in question in an article from 1953 entitled "Signs": "the sign, without representation of man, the sign of situation: this I have never ceased to find" (V2 431). This statement gives us a clue into the general character of the situation sign: Michaux conceives it as a sign which carries a certain degree of abstraction, in the sense that it is not intended to be representational, or laden with the weight of human objects and forms. The answer to the question what its object might be if not representational human forms, depends on the notion of situation itself. In other words, when we wonder about the needs and desires in response to which the "situation sign" emerges in Michaux's work, it also becomes urgent to obtain a sense for situation itself, as it is very unlikely to pursue a semiotics of situations without an understanding— pregiven or developing— of what a situation may mean.

Appearing as early as his *La Vie dans les Plis* (1949), the idea of situation finds itself

among other key contexts of Michaux's attempts at formalization or semiotic inscription, such as the category of the infinite, proprioceptive sense of movement, consciousness as a temporal continuum, and finally, rhythmicity. Thus as much as the other themes, it also makes for a type of formalization which trails along an established collection of historical precursors, dedicated discourses or practices (geometry, topology, and calligraphy) as well as possible interlocutors from among Michaux's contemporaries.

It is necessary to come to grips with the notion of situation to define the situation sign itself; and to attain a comprehensive view of Michaux's notion of the situation by identifying the stakes involved in it, an immersion in its particular extensions is necessary. While doing this, it would also be desirable to gain a sense of the problem as one that does not emerge in a historical vacuum. In fact, on accounts of both a reflection on the semiotic riddle of the "situation-sign" on the one hand, and "situation" itself as a mode of inhabitation of a specific environment on the other, Michaux's pursuit offers overlaps with important currents of thought from among his contemporaries. Among them figure Gestaltist understandings of context, existential understandings of situation as a problem of freedom and conformity, as well as phenomenological notions of the deictic/demonstrative context of possible propositions.

The contexts of four main questions tentatively guide the semiotically inflected treatment of the question of the situation here: The first one concerns the kind of whole Michaux takes the "situation" to be, taking it axiomatic that the situation refers to a part-whole relation of sorts in which it can figure as a whole, denoting first of all a certain emphasis on the concreteness of a set of real relationships between environments and a variety of

subject positions. Here Michaux's developing notion of situation is juxtaposed with the variations expounded by Jean-Paul Sartre and Kurt Lewin. A second heading is the possible role of situation as a category of extremity and ordeal, bringing up (psychological) normality and its endangerments as well as anomalies, even in more directly clinical contexts. In the focus of this second question, we find primarily what Michaux calls an "abyss situation". In a way that follows from the former, the third question involves the relation between the situation and nonconscious stimuli/reception, insofar as the nonconscious can imply a limit to thematizability due to an "envelopment" by a given situation. The aim of the discussion on this specific heading is exploring the possibility of obtaining an environmentally stressed notion of the nonconscious from Michaux's work, for which crucial interlocutors are found in phenomenology and the contemporary cognitive sciences. This is also the juncture where situation emerges in its diachronically generative determinations, which signal its connections with the fraught problematic of apprenticeship in Michaux's work.

Finally the last question or axis concerns the particular status of the notion of situation with regard to language and formalization in Michaux's work. This last conjunction is profoundly contradictory, since here semiotic inscription as an undeniable form of abstraction is tethered to the inherent concretion of what the notion of situation requires. Here we will see how situation implies a crucial shift from a constatively neutral portrayal to a more pragmatic understanding of semiosis, closely related to a "hold" on sedimented habits, attitudes, everyday postures and their transformation.

Illuminating the emergence of the situation sign, and exploring the paradoxical duality of

its investment in context and sign, as well as the singular and the iterable, is the goal of the following exposition. To this end, the basic movement of the argument traces a curve across a discussion of situation in its status as a spatiotemporal structure or milieu for actions and projects, the possible scales it can be assigned, and finally the ways it can inform a conceptualization of everyday life and habituation thanks to the stakes involving apprenticeship. Situations are real ideograms and real diagrams, and formal graphisms are charged with evoking them —not without directing— in all the obscurity of their composition. The goal here is showing how a semiotic pragmatic may make certain situations thematizable *on their own terms*.

Early Situations and a Disjunctive Convergence on Hodology

No more projects

Magic circle beyond the projects. (V3 38; Mescaline and Music, *Light through Darkness*)

It is interesting to remember that in the time Michaux was tentatively and intermittently defining a sense for the situation, there were others deeply invested in it as a figure for "facticity", or a certain existentially weighted sense of the contingency of the relations between finite human individuals and their historically indexed and varying environments. If situation has associations of a generic whole, Jean-Paul Sartre certainly did a lot to bring determinacy to it in terms of the needs, projects and the limits of human action. That is why, for an understanding of other possible valences of the situation around the time Michaux was writing, a brief look at the philosopher's work may be instructive. Aside from his influence, it is by virtue of an opportunity of significant

differentiation that Sartre's account of situation matters. A key point in coming to grips with Sartre's existential notion of situation is his 1943 magnum opus *Being and Nothingness*, a work that is emblematic for the war years, with its existential emphasis on freedom within a problematic of action, choice and responsibility. Here Sartre crucially identifies the role of consciousness and the corporeal human components of his ontological vision—which he calls the "for-itself"—with a situated existence (or existence as a situation): "The body is not distinct from the situation of the for itself since for the for itself, to exist and to be situated are one and the same" (*Being and Nothingness* 408).

Furthermore, in a stance he shares with Merleau-Ponty, Sartre also endows the situation with a sense of embodied perspectivism, according to which the *world*—as the ultimate concrete— is always taken into account from a factically determined position of relation: "I cannot survey [or float above it without being implicated] the world without the world disappearing" (ibid. 432). In a point that goes back to Heidegger's own Dasein-analytic, the world never appears to the situated human "subject" as it would to a pure theoretical gaze, but is always caught up in one's projects, actions, and fateful existential limits.[51] Thus, Sartre's situation is a contingent environmental whole for possible actions which thoroughly mediates the individual's various relations with the world. It is at once a perspectival and inhabited whole, a whole that intrinsically plays up finitude and facticity, and sets the terms for the possible projects and adaptations within the limits of that finitude.

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Cf. Jan Patočka's discussion of Heidegger, where he interprets the latter's "thrownness" as a concept of situatedness: "Situation has the character of the already; whenever projection, disposition, realization get under way, they always presuppose something already" (Patočka, *Body, Community, Language, World* 129).

As an anchoring point of facticity from which projects are launched, Sartre's situation is profoundly determined by the possible ends of human action, even so far as depending on projected actions to come forward as a structure of facticity. Thus it would be true to argue that the situation is marked by a dependence on a futural mode for its intelligibility:

> "The future- a projected future intervenes everywhere..."
>
> "Constituted in the light of my end, my place reminds me symbolically of this end in all its details as in its connections...."
>
> "If the end can illuminate the situation, this is because the end is a projected modification of this situation..."
>
> "My place appears in terms of the changes which I project" (*Being and Nothingness* 633-5).

To note the overarching context for these disparate but mutually illuminating remarks, in Sartre's philosophical program, this essential link between situation and projected future action finds its meaning in the key of freedom, humanistic personal responsibility and "engagement" that underlies a better part of his work.

Continuing, we can argue that in Sartre, the environmental whole that is the situation has a specific *scale* in the measure of the limits of human action and human goals, and its spatiotemporal status also answers to this main feature. An important aspect of the way this status is determined is Sartre's appropriation (and ontologization) of a concept from Gestalt psychology, namely Kurt Lewin's notion of a "hodological space". According to this notion, which stems from Kurt Lewin's innovative construction of a psychological "field theory", a situation is defined by various paths (hodos in Greek), ways of access as

well as obstacles between an individual and his/her specific goals in the field where he/she is embedded. His model allows Lewin to represent and bring clarity to relationships between an agent and the goals it sets itself in its "life space", for instance both in terms of immediate needs—take a child on the playground— and more "distant" goals like the goal of a vocation to adopt. In such an abstract model, the schematically drawn obstacles and paths constitute and offer a diagrammic summation of the possible set of relationships between the subject and its milieu.[52] In a straightforward employment of Lewin's psychological framework, Sartre writes, "The real space of the world is the space which Lewin calls hodological (...) the space which is originally revealed to me is a hodological space; it is furrowed with paths and highways; it is instrumental and the location of tools" (Sartre 407). Thus to expand on a synopsis of Sartre's concept of situation in *Being and Nothingness*, the whole it constitutes is a perspectival whole of finitude whose intelligibility devolves on projects, and whose structure is hodological in terms of its availability and access to the goals or projects of human action, continuing an earlier approach to Lewin in this regard: "when the paths traced out become too difficult, or when we see no path, we can no longer live in so urgent and difficult a world. However we must act..." (Sartre).

In this brief but hopefully sufficiently informative characterization of Sartre's early

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[52] Lewin also somewhat indirectly acknowledges the difficulty of delimiting the scale of the situation, resorting to distinctions of the kind between "momentary" situations, and larger and more encompassing "life situations": macro and micro. Take for instance, a passage where Lewin's spatial models for psychology finds a culmination:

> A person who is trying to decide whether or not to get married, whether or not to go into a certain business, whether or not to begin a lawsuit against an influential opponent, will in general act in accord with his whole life situation. Only happy-go-lucky, superficial, or childish persons act out of a narrow momentary situation in important questions of life. On the other hand whether a man who is taking a walk goes along the right or the left side of the road will be decided by a much less inclusive momentary situation (*Principles of Topological Psychology* 23).

concept of situation, an important contextual point stands out. It is the appearance of geometry in the folds of the most committed existential discourse. An appearance whose only acknowledgment resides in Sartre's casual establishment of a symbolic tie between the situation and projected ends when he writes, "my place reminds me symbolically of this end". Thus whenever Sartre refers to a hodological model as an original existential structure of space, he is also implicitly aligning ontology with the resources of geometry. Contrary to Sartre, his source Lewin is very clear on the geometrical provenance of his concept:

> Psychology has to deal with a multitude of co-existing facts which are interrelated and have a relative position to each other; in mathematical terms, it has to deal with a "space"...Since Einstein it has been known that Euclidean geometry, which previously was the only geometry applied in physics, is not best fitted for representing the empirical physical space. For psychology, a recently developed nonquantitative geometry, called "topology," can be used satisfactorily in dealing with problems of structure and position in a psychological field...The topological space is too "general" for representing those dynamical psychological problems which include the concept of direction, distance, or force. They can be treated with a somewhat more specific geometry, which I have called "hodological space" (Lewin 1939, 891-2).

As we will see with an aspect of Michaux's work that is important to take into account, in contrast with Sartre, his engagement with situations would be more open to an explicit engagement with the "topological" as the basis of a notion of hodological spatiotemporality— largely thanks to a deeper investment in inventions of a semiotic

nature or *poesis* at large.

With regard to possible convergences of Michaux's own gestures toward the situation with Sartre's notion, the aspects of an encompassing whole of a human scale and finitude would certainly have traction in Michaux's work (without exhausting it of course), especially in a sense that charges the situation with implications of factical preexistence. A patent sense of association between the situation and a patterned whole exists specifically in Michaux's various references to a "graphique resume of a total situation" (*Emergences*); signs of situations as "signs of any whole" (*Saisir*); and finally his discussion about Chinese signs: "there was a time, however, when the signs still spoke...when already allusive, they revealed—rather than simple things or bodies or materials—groups, ensembles, situations" (*Ideograms in China*).[53] If we pay attention to this contiguity or series between "groups, ensembles, and situations", we can see that here a primacy is accorded to contextual relationships and groups over individual objects, ideas, or processes taken in themselves. The transformative coupling between the sign and the situation has to take place on the basis of this primacy accorded to relational wholes and ensembles. From another perspective, if the "situation sign" calls up the notion of situation, this relation can also be insribed in terms of the alternative relation between abstraction and concreteness; accordingly we might say Michaux shares with Sartre the sense that the situation is the key to a certain *concretion,* with an additional emphasis which makes it something from which abstractions might depart, and to which they have to respond. As we will see, the great aspiration of the situation sign in Michaux is *signifying* a problematic situation without entirely neutralizing it.

[53] That the provenance of these remarks is largely the late work does not necessarily point to a late emergence of this association between the situation and the whole perhaps, but only a making-explicit of what was not spelled out in "Signes" (1953) where Michaux brings up the sign of situation.

Against the backdrop of these broadly stated similarities— enveloping wholes with various hodological structures, and the place of emotion—it is necessary to indicate the major differences of accentuation in Michaux, involving the greater role given to failures of adaptation, as well as antagonism, especially since these aspects also bring into view a thematics of habituation and apprenticeship. The best illustration on this score is provided by Michaux's 1949 book *Life in the Folds*, where a certain notion of "situation" has two separate sections devoted to it, consisting of "Situations Etrange" and simply "Situations", each putting an emphasis on the variability of situations.

Of these two the first conveys a sense of disorientation with the help of the refrain "but there was a change" which punctuates and conjoins Michaux's successive descriptions of interrupted visions: "But there is change after change. Water replaces milk, already water! (*Plis* 74). The second section on situations is even more significant in that it gives articulate form to the affective implications of the magic scenarios Blanchot tackled, and plays up the intervals, disadaptations and incongruities that unite and separate a subject and its milieu:

> Given the situation, there was some excitement [effervescence], given my temperament there is serenity. How to unite them? Then the situation changed. There was coagulation and call to coagulation. There again our incompatibility. My core is hard, I like it to be hard... In the end of these epochs and many others like them, a situation is there, and in it there is calm. But for a long time all tranquillity disappeared from me, and now hesitant and agitated, I don't recognize it, or recognized it as an old

acquiantance with which one knows something to be wrong (*Plis* 86).[54]

It is difficult to overstate the importance of the movement that is outlined here, as by virtue of the title it can be taken to provide a paradigmatic schema of what Michaux takes a situation to be. Notably, as in the previous extract, here too variation is essential; situations are nothing if not changing. The section starts with a problem of incongruity and inadaptation, by predicating different qualities and affects to the situation and the subject. Neither the situations encountered by one are necessarily constitutive of one's responses to them, nor can one single-handedly decide the tenor of a situation oneself riddling the situation with gaps of a sort. There is a time-lag or leeway for temperamental difference. However, in the course of the passage Michaux's speaker takes on, contracts, or absorbs some of the agitation of his milieu, *shaped* by it to a certain extent, as if to enact an involuntary reconciliation and synchronization between his temperament and the situation. Here Michaux's model is very different than a phenomenological intentionality, which would be associated too closely with a unilinear thematization. There are no stable attributes, and the gap between the situation and the subject is charged in a way which makes possible the transmission of affects and attributes across it. Instead of magic, habituation fulfills the task of confronting "difficulty"—if only it did not end up in another disadaptation of course. As the initially effervescent situation reverts to tranquility on its path of transformation ("life follows its inexorable path, short and regulated"), the subject can only fail to recognize it after traversing its contrasting and constitutively untimely path of transformation into a *habit of agitation*. As a result, the places get switched: now, in the situation there is serenity, and in the temperament there is effervescence, seemingly

[54] The schema outlined in the passage can be transposed to a reluctantly visited Christmas party (effervescence), which starts to lose its animation and disperse after midnight, only to leave the reluctant participant even more dissatisified, because at some point he/she *did* start to welcome the goings on and adjust to them, albeit too late.

with no hope of "uniting them", which would be a summary cancellation of these incongruities and antagonisms.

As one of Michaux's first and most direct employments of a notion of situation, the passage can be construed to offer an abstract scheme for the spatiotemporal and even material structure of a situation. A situation makes sense in the presence of a receptive psychoorganism which can feel out of phase with it, and/or take a path of divergent becoming with it, a becoming that is not dependent on intentionality. At the same time, Michaux's vignette does not preordain the situation in terms of its scale, leaving it open to both macro and micro deployments, and this indetermination of the scale conceals important implications: perhaps the situation does not have to be macro *or* micro, or work through their mutual constitution. Michaux's situation is first of all variable, in the key of the variable scale physicists call "meso".[55] Furthermore, it is safe to claim that differently from Sartre there is a stronger emphasis on the existentially undramatic discrepancy of processes/historicities and rates of change that affect the sides or participants of the scenario differently, with results that rarely work in favor of unproblematic equalization or equilibrium. Here, human action and its projected ends do not yoke the situation to a narrative of existential appropriation of freedom and facticity through choice. Michaux seems more interested in the diversity—not limited to human action— of the *forces* and

[55] Isabelle Stengers associates the meso scale with a core sense of singularity adhering to materiality, in the context of a discussion of materials science: "The idea of the 'meso' is quite new in physics. Microphysics is well known, it's the stuff of physicists' dreams. The macro in physics is also familiar, it's crystals, liquids, and bodies that can be characterized by general, measurable properties. But the meso is neither of these. It concerns not matter, but material. Why does glue stick? Why do metals tend to stress and break? This is a science of the interstices and the cracks. It's a science of defects. It is the kind of science where it is always a question of this material, rather than Matter, and which encounters 'procedures,' like those of metallurgy. Why must the iron be beaten as long as it is hot? The macro is matter in general. Gas is marvellously 'in general.' *With the meso, on the other hand, it is necessary in each instance to redefine topically how the relations between the micro and the macro are assembled.* (Stengers, my emphasis).

possible values at play in these relations, also opening up the question of the value of adaptation and habitual adjustment insofar as uniting with a situation that is agitated can certainly imply a problem of value. In an example of poetic thinking familiar elsewhere in his work, Michaux seems to be asking whether it is good to be united with a situation that is effervescent, as well as when it might be good: "It is bad to be in equilibrium on running water, water spindles, water vortices and generally on all water that passes or stagnates. It is bad to be balanced on baked bread, on plunging sea lions, on the branches of an aspen, on a flying torpedo. But how, from these precarious and insupportable passages, to emigrate to a satisfactory and definitive equilibrium?" ("Faits Divers" v3 482).

Michaux's passage also sidelines the role of projected action, this centerpiece of Sartre's situation, and it is necessary to look at what Michaux would find problematic in it. In juxtaposition with the linkage situation-projected action in Sartre, which conditions his treatment of the hodological status of situations, it is possible to claim that Michaux's problem presents itself as one that involves *trajectories* instead of projects. Here I take trajectory in the sense of a different relation to goals which would rest ill at ease with the determination of the paths in advance inherent in projects. Significantly, this distinction has meaning both for poetics at large and Michaux's poetics in particular: "Before being a product [oeuvre], thought is a process ["trajet"]. Don't be ashamed about having to pass through difficult, undignified places that don't seem made for you" (*Tent Posts* 36). Furthermore, an image of directional freedom often serves Michaux as an emblematic image of the expectations regarding subjectivation he brings to his formal experiments, "I write to roam [parcourir]. Painting, composing, writing: roaming. This is the adventure of

life" (*Passages*). Other examples support and continue this line: "multiple not one, to sow, scatter" (*Par des Traits*) ; "characters open onto several directions at once" (*Ideograms*). In fact, Michaux's essay on Klee, where it is exactly a matter of hodological trajectories in a developmental context, comes out in the same year—1953— as the situation sign-remark cited above: "Travelers, lines that don't so much make objects as trajectories, paths. […] The problem children have and then subsequently forget, the one they put into all their drawings at that age: locating things, leave here, go there, the distance, the directions, the path leading to the house as necessary as the house itself" (*Darkness Moves* 317).

As to the larger significance that can be attributed to these signs of an espousal of trajectories over against projects, a germane insight is offered by the philosopher Étienne Souriau: "In considering only the project... we eliminate the discovery, the exploration, and all the experiential contribution that occurs throughout the historial development of the work's advancement" (Souriau 231). It is in this sense that Michaux's propensity for a category of incompleteness, and an experience of directionality or tendency stripped from preconceived ends —clearly highlighted by critics like Peter Broome and Evelyne Grossman— can find meaning as a preference for trajectories over against projects: "It is for this reason that the author favours such titles as Toward Serenity [Vers la sérénité] and Toward Completion [Vers La Complétude], stressing continued 'movement towards' rather than finality..." (Broome 22).[56] The emphatic siding with the trajectory signals

[56] As Broome notes, Michaux's *Passages* opens with an epigram from Yoshido Kenko: "it is incompleteness that is desirable. In all things regularity is bad. In the palaces of old one always, obligatorily, left an incomplete building" (V2 280). Also see Michaux's metaphor of folding and unfolding in *The Land of Magic*: "The child, the chieftain's child, the sick man's child, the plowman's child, the idiot's child, the child of the Magus, the child is born with twenty-two folds. They must be unfolded. The life of man is then complete. In this form he dies. He has no folds left to open" (*Darkness Moves* 122).

Michaux's misgivings regarding any orientation to a futurity which only promises predetermined options and loci to explore, and concretely evokes a model of path traversal that is alternative to both Lewin and Sartre.

Shifting speculation toward Michaux's relation to Lewin in particular, the experience of directionality without end in Michaux also modifies the spatiotemporal status to be given to hodological space.[57] Trajectory comes to inform this status with an openness to unregulated becomings, including those to be obtained from promiscuous contractions of habit, and circumstances of artistic production or invention. Trajectory's capacity as a characteristic of thought at odds with "finishedness"—the work-quality— which Michaux highlights above, also informs and finds support in the relation to the environment, where it manifests as a contrast with well-defined objects. Therefore, a more variable sense of topological space is called for, with paths being laid down, and space itself constituted in processes of change with different time signatures, keeping the scale from being definitively tied to the measure of voluntary human action and its projects. In this sense, Michaux's situation-trajectory coupling would contain an interesting and obliquely artistic revitalization of what some Greek Stoics called a "path-making hexis" (*hexis hodopoetik*).[58]

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[57] This discussion follows the illuminating use Gilbert Simondon and Gilles Deleuze make of Lewin's category in going beyond it, in particular by referring to a "prehodological" domain not exhausted by defined objects and sensory-motor responsiveness --the first apropos a problem of adaptation, the latter in the context of cinematic experience.

[58] According to Cornelius Castoriadis, the Stoics used the term to refer to the mode of existence of technicity. In this discussion it is appropriated for the literal implications of topological creativity. See Castoriadis, *Les Carrefours du Labyrinthe*, *Tome 1,* 292. We may also represent this highly important aspect that guides Michaux's work in the form of a contrast between relatively more static *grid structures* and *manifolds,* which latter would be open at once to an infinity of paths and a continuity of scales. Trajectories made up of habits and orientations are here proposed to be manners of relating to manifolds, they make manifolds, whereas the mode of action of projects is always better captured in a grid form preexistent to what occurs in it. Here is a movement from what Michaux calls a futural "unstratified space" in his early work *La Nuit Remue*, to Deleuze and Guattari's distinction between "smooth" and "striated" in *A Thousand Plateaus*, returning with this enrichment back to Michaux.

On a general level, although Michaux's work does not show any explicit sign of a familiarity with Lewin's writings, it still makes a resourceful poetic response to Lewin's topological psychology, both with his attention to the modifications of "psychological space" (*Miserable Miracle* 99), and an extensive reliance on the model of paths: From the book *Chemins cherchés Chemins Perdu* to various titles with "voies" (*Par la voie des Rhythms*; *Un Voie de l'Insubordination*) to his graphic experiment *Parcours*, Michaux's work in general, and his notion of situation in particular is inseparable from a problematic of orientation[59] in an incompletely determined milieu, with the only ends left to speak of being those that are left for discovery and groping exploration.

Moreover, in contrast with Lewin, there is a pragmatic aspect to Michaux's interest; for him, the situation sign is not tethered to a psychological insight only, entertaining solely a theoretical relation to a structural whole. Rather, there is an avowal of situation as personal envelopment and finitude, *along with* an accompanying desire to modify it in line with other abstractions that could find their genesis or departure in the same situation. Michaux perceives a use for theoretical diagrammatics, but he is more implicated as an individual, and presses the poet and the artist in him to service in order to create handles and achieve a manoeuvrability with regard to enveloping situations. As it will be seen presently, this also means the situation has an intimate link with a potentially instructive experience of mental disorientation, as the opening of Michaux's last book on psychotropic experiments *Major Ordeals* testifies, with its brief episode of a momentary haschisch disorientation in the streets of Paris: "True, I had recaptured a sense of place

[59] In a presentation, the scholar Muriel Pic made the interesting remark that Michaux "substititutes orientation for being".

[situation]. Some sense of place [situation]. At moments, a complete sense of place; but over and over again, erratically, in ten or a hundred different ways, I kept losing track of it" (*Major Ordeals* 3-4).

To recapitulate then, Michaux joins Lewin in his trust in the power of a certain type of vectorial formalization/abstraction to get a purchase on the relationships and forces situations may hold; there is a convergence on the necessity of a dynamic model of everyday situations and enveloping structures. Yet in contrast with Lewin, Michaux would stand out as a rogue experimenter, who is more explicit about the variability of scale—the "meso"— as well as the forms of extremity or disorientation that might characterize a situation, finding topological psychology to not carry sufficient antagonism and contrasts of value.[60] Secondly, Michaux would be a poet whose paths of habituation and becoming would lead him to a different form of hodology, which would constitute a pragmatic form of *poesis*.

With Sartre, Michaux shares an interest in concretion; but in contrast with him he is the semiotician of situations who withdraws from projects and the primacy of a model of existential futurity. Even if for Michaux too, the situation is an inhabited/perspectival whole that is not neutral with regard to valences of freedom and conformity, he

[60] To revisit an old but relevant dispute here, for philosophers like Adorno, who react against a general image of Gestalt presuppositions, the whole with which Gestalt theories cast their lot tends to occlude antagonism and disparity in favor of an image of a reconciliation that overrides telling detail and unreconciled fragmentation. As Steven Helmling notes, "Adorno's discussion projects *Gestalt* as the ideological problem rather than its critical solution: like Kant's "unity of apperception," the functioning of *Gestalt* is "unconsciously synthetic," thus effecting (false, familiarized, familiarizing) reconciliations or integrations of experiential fragmentariness. By these lights, *Gestalt* is an instance or model, indeed an epitome, of ideology as such: reflex and reinforcer of the habitual familiarizations, the ideological conditionings, the false reconciliations or 'imaginary solutions to real contradictions' of the historically and culturally given" (Helmling 2003). This seems to be a conclusion convergently reached by Simondon with regard to Lewin's hodology in particular, through a very different route. For a different assessment of Gestalt alla Lewin see Pierre Kaufman.

distinguishes himself from the philosopher in insisting on a specific way of grasp on the whole the situation is, trying at least to entertain a relation to its inherent pattern, semiosis and intelligibility, however abstracted and nonmimetic: "the sign, without representation of man, sign of situation: this I have never ceased to begin finding" (V2 431). In sum Michaux is a proponent of the occluded potential of signs, and what might be sign-like in the situations themselves, offering a missing shade between this intellectual couple that is undreamed of.

The Abyss-Situation and Patterns of Normality

He who was born in the night
again and again will remake his Mandala (The Thin Man – *Thousand Times Broken*)

At the juncture where the situations that preoccupy him get more metaphysical, or turn into trying ordeals of psychedelic (bad) infinity thanks to his drug experiments, Michaux also finds himself launched into a furious activity of formalization, as if limits of orientation are necessarily conjoined to limits of inscription and formalization; or as if one could outgrow situations through the mere intensity with which their patterns are contemplated. In other words, the unique combination between the categories of *disorientation* and *situation sign*, highlighted above as a signature contribution of Michaux to a possible notion of situation, finds a renewed incarnation in his engagements with more extreme scenarios like madness, relatively better controlled psychedelic trips and the breakdown of mental functions they involve. Being able to discern and relate to

certain patterns, and becoming adept at their grammar (or not) are therefore intrinsic to adaptation/disadaptation and new compromises between a subject and its milieu. All of these problems come to a head in the category of extreme situation which Michaux employs as a subtitle in his penultimate psychedelic book[61]: "abyss-situation" (situations-gouffres), which describes borderline scenarios that call into question rigid differentiations between normality and mental illness, in keeping with Michaux's research intentions: "More than the all too excellent mental skills of the metaphysicians, it is the dementias, the backwardnesses, the deliriums, the ecstasies and agonies, the breakdowns in mental skills which are really suited to 'reveal' us to ourselves" (*Major Ordeals* 3).[62]

What is the link between the abyss situation and the notation of this situation; or the experience of disorientation as Michaux frequently describes it and experimental formalization? Surely, the first sets a limit for the second. But is not the second with its sense of patterns or lack thereof, an intrinsic part of the first too? If there is an action of orientation, is this without reference to a domain of patterns and faint indications of direction bordering on the semiotic? In a case from the "abyss situations" section contained in the aptly titled *Connaissance par les Gouffres*, Michaux writes of a psychotic patient suffering from thoughts of persecution in the form of auditory hallucinations:

> Consciousness (the sense of the situation) is no longer a kind of plane where the world and ourselves make acquintance by means of moderate signals, it has become a kind of irregular landscape [pays accidente] where, in blinding flashes, in instantaneous cliffs [falaises instantanees], stridences, he receives signals which mean nothing, signals destructive of

[61] *Connaissance par les Gouffres*

[62] As François Emmanuel points out, Michaux makes a rare admission of the desire for a "psychiatry redirected as a whole", in a letter to Jean Paulhan (Michaux qtd. in Emmanuel 10).

> peace, elements of the great and polymorphous revolution against his sovereignty (*Light Dark* 150/ v3 113).

Consciousness here distinguishes itself primarily through enabling orientation. In a rare attempt at what could be a directly topological formalization abreast with the "landscapes" of psychic abnormality, Michaux sets limits to description, the extreme case making the difficulty of achieving a handle, and thus description, an intrinsic part of the problem. One suffers from an anomaly or pathology of consciousness to the same extent that one is disoriented and has trouble having a grip on a situation, "the sense of the situation".

This use of the notion of "situation" consolidates the connection between the two outstanding aspects of Michaux's earlier engagement: a semiosis of situations and failures of adaptation or normal function. Significantly, perhaps one of the best illustrations of a relation to situation that satisfies these features appears in Michaux's book of deconditioning and pictorial apprenticeship *Emergences-Resurgences.* The book's remote appraisal of its contemporary countercultural art movements also serves Michaux to advance his oblique elaboration of a notion of the situation. The investment in a possible concept of situation, and the concomitant attempt to give it an artistic form, prompt Michaux to situate his own work in relation to those of his contemporaries. Here the strong correlation between the drive to locate patterns for orientation and mental normativity—art and sanity?—is crystallized in Michaux's insightful discussion of the significance of Mandala patterns. In a sense, a Mandala perhaps offers the most direct example of a "sign of the situation" Michaux confessed to have "never ceased to begin finding", even though the identity is only hinted at here.

After writing about a new form of art in the creation "of environments, rooms with mobile floors and covered with sinuisoidal lines in all directions",[63] Michaux goes on to offer a description of certain works he witnessed, and which are reproduced in his book:

> If a certain vision of things accompanied the subject in these moments, it presented itself somewhat like this: a circle, within it a square, a now magical square, comprehending everything [...] Construction of the Infinite. In the absence of which, Constitution. Graphic epitome of an overall— and highly metaphysical— situation […] This kind of drawing practiced in India since time immemorial, is created on a poorer but no less rigorous scale by certain of the insane. […] More than anybody else, more than any philosopher, day in day out and without rest, they need basic frames of reference that can respond to everything. (That they to a certain extent lack the means to accomplish this is another question. What makes their pictures extraordinary is simply their aim.) (68, 70)

To spell out the implications, in a sweeping historical telescoping Michaux claims that the Mandala art shares the same origin as the works that deal in the creation of environments with their estranging hodologies, those cutting edge artistic experiments of the sixties which have their descendants in today's interactive arts.[64] In this sense Michaux's

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[63] The example Michaux chooses for an illustration of the creation of environments belongs to the '60s art group USCO. As Fred Turner writes, "rather than work with a transmission model of communication, in which performers or others attempt to send a message to their audience, USCO events tried to take advantage of what Gerd Stern [USCO member] called 'the environmental circumstance'. That is, USCO constructed all-encompassing technological environments, theatrical ecologies in which the audience was simply one species of being among many, and waited to observe their effects" (Turner 50-1).

[64] Note that Michaux's intuitions have been given a new lease of life by Massumi: "What interactive art can do, what its strength is in my opinion, is to take the situation as its 'object.' Not a function, not a use, not a need, not a behavior, exploratory or otherwise, not an action-reaction. But a situation, with its own little ocean of complexity. It can take a situation and 'open' the interactions it affords" (Massumi 52). Massumi also approaches the status of disparity and the gapped nature of situations in a fashion similar to Michaux: "We will have to give the gaps between things, and from one moment to the next, their vital, virtual due. It is in those gaps that the reality of the situation is to be found" (Massumi 67).

appropriation of the Mandala form is noticeably less archaicist than Carl Gustav Jung's.[65] Since Michaux goes on to describe how infinity is put to work inside the form of a Mandala, through successive encasements or envelopments of geometric figures, a lot depends on an idea of a circumstance, circumscription, and being enclosed/enveloped here.[66]

Tethered to an operation of infinity, Mandala's main and distinguishing association for Michaux seems to be totality, the sense of a whole that preserves its unity despite the endlessly fractal iteration at play in it: "The subject at that point possessed, or rather experienced a total knowledge of the world". Thus the relation to situation Michaux discerns to be at stake in the mandala art by the mentally ill raises the problem of describing a situation from within the near-breakdown of the power to entertain and relate to it as a totality, to orient oneself in relation to it, so as to find an openness and path —or a liberating distance— immanent to the infinite circumscription, and the blinding proximity involved. This leads Michaux to a formal similarity between a form of traditional Indian art and the art by the mentally ill, thanks to a pragmatic convergence on drawing and representation. The important point lies in Michaux's sense that, while a "metaphysical" situation might be difficult o navigate and thematize at all, it can still respond to the artificial navigation of forms and patterns. Michaux's insertion of a certain

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[65] The parallel with the depth psychologist's work around this question is striking however. As Michael Whan points out, Jung also favored mandala-like figures, as a mediation between the microcosmic and the macrocosmic: "During the period 1918-1919... Jung, each morning sketched a small, circular drawing. He viewed these as 'cryptograms' which corresponded to this inner situation'" (Whan in *Drawing the Soul*). Perhaps the essential similarity here is in the way Jung seems to derive the structure of his figure from a certain form of movement, just like Michaux shows an inclination to deriving topological structure from movement on his part (a gesture I linked to the Stoic "hexis hodopoetik"). Jung writes, "there is no linear evolution; there is only a circumambulation of the self" (Qtd. in Whan).

[66] We are not that far from Michaux's magic situations, which in Blanchot's reading involve an emphasis on the spatial structures and aberrant hodologies generated by emotion. As Simondon writes, emotion itself is "totalitarian" insofar as it involves an impossibility of distanciation and a tendency to "perseverance" (Lumiere 261).

semiotic and artistic capacity within a register of normativity is nowhere more apparent than here. The mentally ill artist who produces Mandala like forms out of a deep and vital need to situate him/herself –an artist like Adolf Wolfli comes to mind—does this not out of some primarily artistic motivation, but to manufacture a compass or sense of direction that is painfully lacking in the first place. In the absence of a reliably endogenous sense of orientation, in the absence of an inborn facility of orientation that comes naturally to the mentally healthy, the "insane" who practice it, benefit from the exoteric practice of this type of drawing to rediscover a missing sense of situation.

Finally, Michaux finds the *aim* of this art fascinating because it still resonates with his experience and relatively healthy psychology. Michaux gives away that he is not indifferent to the potential efficacy of such an artifice in everyday situations: I think it would be correct to read such a meaning into his appreciation of the "aim" of the drawings, dubbed "extraordinary" regardless of their use by the mentally ill or the sane. Here is Michaux, about his own need of painting with respect to the various "situations" that greet him in life: "Jolting me out of natural inertia, it thus provides the most energetic inner means at my disposal against my near or distant surroundings, it is that which most charges me up and which provides an answer to hundreds of situations, for I am fairly often overwhelmed by life, or rather, would be without this" (*Emergences* 44). Perhaps it is an experience of envelopment that Michaux shares with the mentally ill referents of his discourse, at least as he interprets their plight.

The Holiday to the Conscious

What is a Michaudian nonconscious under the sign of the situation? At its least problematic, it points to a local perceptual context traversed by both synchronic and diachronic relations, with the important condition that this context of facticity is not exhausted by clearly thematizable, representable relations that would be open to immediate voluntary and conscious access. This would be the nonconscious that comes to expression when Michaux writes, "a normal man is as much a being who absorbs as a being who forgets, who forgets many things and especially and immediately a hundred or a thousand impressions per second he has no need of keeping in mind" (*Major Ordeals* 22). There is a broader base of stimuli that act and are received by the situated human psychoorganism than what lends itself to consciousness: "In the huge organism that a human being is, there always remains a waking zone, which collects, which amasses, which has learned, which now knows" (*Major Ordeals* 42). These stimuli may simply belong to the environment, but they can also be data related to the states of the body, as highlighted in Michaux's idiosyncratic poems about the "mystery" of bodily postures (*Spaced, Displaced* 173). Thus we might argue that the shape of the nonconscious in Michaux would differ from the psychoanalytic unconscious in terms of a major shift of emphasis first: to the dramas of development inside certain family structures, the important role of repression and finally an individuating access to the symbolic realm, Michaux substitutes the drama and pathos of the unremarkable, the false transparency of proximity, as well as the self-evidences of the rut-like in terms of life trajectories. Here I offer a brief discussion of how these interests play out in Michaux's work in general and

in relation to a possible notion of situation in particular.

The unremarkable is closer to the synchronic end of the spectrum of relations that define Michaux's nonconscious; it intends the very nature of the *selectivity* that makes certain data in/accessible and the determinacy of the ways in which one relates to given environments, simultaneously calling up what must have been excised to *render* the environment in the specific way one does: thus and not otherwise.[67] This is the sense of facticity and limitation of access that comes to expression in the invocations of a late poem like *Par des Traits*: "so as to open out to other encounters/to disagglutinate/to disestablish" (Par des Traits, n.p.). What escapes momentary notice and eludes response in a given environment—as well as the body—might be in the merely physical terms of the scale of space, or the speed of mobility, but it may also involve intensity and more qualitative or emotional dimensions. The provision Michaux makes for a nonconscious influence of the context on the organism, or a nonconscious *contraction* of the environment by the organism resonates with a long tradition of psychological experiment in the 20th century, starting with but not limited to Gestalt and the associated theories of Form. Gilbert Simondon's summary of these contextualist theories might be helpful inasmuch as it expounds precedents and an idea of situation that have strong affinities with Michaux's own foray into this domain: "The notion of situation in the philosophical and phenomenological sense of the term, has importance for the comprehension of the effects of context. A window, a door, a key, a lock, do not have the same sensory-motor meaning [sens] for a prisoner, a house owner...the reality is the totality of interactions between the organism and its milieu where the qualitative and the affective intervene"

[67] In this sense this concern speaks to what must be one of the most Burroughsian themes in Michaux.

(*Cours* 357-3).[68] To refer back to Michaux's interest in the artistic creation of environments and other artificial circumscriptions, it seems that he was not alone in his sense of the shaping power of context that would come to expression in a notion of situation.

Furthermore, the nonconscious nature of a broad extent of stimuli in Michaux has an outcome—if not directly a "purpose"—and this outcome is making smooth and everyday functioning possible, in a way that borders on and even embraces some measure of automatism. Generally speaking, his questions about what he generally calls the "subconscious" has a lot to do with automatism, and those conjunctions of usage and sedimented self-evidence that characterize his vision of what is natural. For this reason what Michaux calls the subconscious can be characterized as a *contractile* or hexic unconscious: "If we were familiar with the fundamental sensation of others we would always be comfortable with them. By choice they in fact stay inside certain parts of their being, not occupying the full range of their body equally, only a few strongholds and privileged positions. However even they don't know [il leur manque de savoir]—thought they make use of it—exactly where their center is, that approximate, shifting base with its habits, its cycles, its irregularities, which renders it almost personal" (*Tent Posts* 55).

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[68] For a good background on what Simondon refers to as a phenomenological sense of the situation, see Lyotard's comments on Maurice Merleau-Ponty's engagement with Freud: "To say with Freud that logic of dream obeys the pleasure principle, is to say that detached from the real consciousness lives the sexual without situating it, setting it at a distance...What Freud called the unconscious is in fact consciousness unable to grasp itself as specified—I am "circumvented" within a situation, and understand it only insofar as I move out of it, into another situation. In particular, only this transplanting of consciousness enables us to understand the psychoanalytic cure; for it is on the basis of the present situation, and especially upon the relation I experience with the analyst (transference), that I can identify, name, and ultimately deliver myself from the past traumatic experience" (Lyotard *Phenomenology* 93-94). See also, Jan Patocka, who draws attention to the essential overlapping between a notion of situation and Heidegger's concept of thrownness: "The three moments of Dasein's structure (projection-situation-that with which we cope in the situation) themselves point to something like a temporal structure (...) Situation has the character of the already; whenever projection, disposition, realization get underway, they always presuppose something already" (Patocka 129).

This brings us to the diachronic end of the spectrum which determines the nonconscious, insofar as the biases or selectivities that inform bodily attitudes and patterns of perception do not emerge instantaneusly. A diachronic axis requires inquiring into how an automatism emerges, and what may be the specific modes of its action with regard to possible stimuli and potentials of action in a given environment. In this context, it is possible to derive from Michaux's work a vision of automatism that is distinct from a behaviorist conditioned reflex model of action, which characteristically isolates the organism from internal values and the vagaries of an implicated/infolded history, a dimension we have seen Simondon to allude to when he referred to a "sensory-motor meaning/orientation [sens]". It would be true to claim that Michaux's version of automatism is one for which a presupposition of past situations —implicated and expressible in the organism— is a vital condition, making it inhabit an ambiguous zone between perception, habit and memory. As in the example of the situation of effervescence from *Life in the Folds*, the environment does not act without activating a counter-training on the part of the subject, which partly amounts to a transformative involution of the nature of the said environment.[69] Although Michaux does not engage in an explicit critique of behaviorist models of association- and conditioning-based forms of learning, his work still gives the blueprints of a relation to perception and habit that would be at odds with the abstraction from context inherent in most examples of behaviorist theories of learning.

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[69] A consequence of this nonbehavioristic and situational retooling of automatism is that situation finally finds a basis on which one can decide on its scale without a fiat, as it often happens in Lewin's hodologies and the distinction he makes between momentary and life situations, micro and macro. The situation is of a flexible *meso scale* in Michaux, and the shares of the proximate and the distant are not so clearly distinguishable here: a situation can be at once a life situation and momentary situation. Perhaps, a canniness as to real concretion is something like this.

The diachronic makings of a given structure of automatism with its associated range of availability for response, often receives light but incisive treatment in Michaux's work, as in this excerpt from *Tent Posts*: "N. was going to be assassinated. The glittering blade of the long knife directed at him was about to plunge. The moment to cry out had come and would not come again. Things had to happen fast. But because things had to happen so unusually, exceptionally fast, at this extraordinary juncture, out of proportion to the encounters made up to then his existence, N. was incapable of moving, however slightly, the vocal cords at the base of his throat" (*Tent Posts* 52-3). Continuing, Michaux implicitly locates the reason of his hypothetical victim's unreadiness in the fact of his meeting an "incomparable moment". Thus automatism in this more expansive sense, as a sedimented readiness for a limited range of events/situations the breaching of whose limits is a matter of time and circumstance, points to the training carried out by past situations and encounters, a training which obeys neither a reflex model, nor one of wilfull autonomy. As Michaux notes in an early remark that prophesies his later themes: "Every situation is dependence and hundreds of dependences" (V1 773). Put otherwise, inasmuch as situations experienced in the successions of a life-span offer a basis of lived comparison, parity and synthesis, they confer binding and nonpropositional expectations that act like living rules (habit) and generalities, which are bound to be shaken in meeting the incomparable. Therefore Michaux's understanding of a nonconscious relation to situations, also have a lot in common with the more recent contemporary discussions of "cognitive unconscious", as in Katherine Hayles' following formulation: "Without our being aware of it, consciousness edits events to make them conform to customary expectations, a function that makes eyewitness testimony notoriously unreliable. Even in

the most ordinary circumstances, consciousness confabulates more or less continuously, smoothing out the world to fit our expectations and screening from us the world's capacity for infinite surprise" (Hayles 44).

It is not a coincidence then that the way Michaux problematized this nonconscious domain—with its associated modes of perception and action— also indicates that he did not want to stop at merely acknowledging its existence. Instead, one often finds in his work an open desire to strengthen the relations with this domain on various levels, some more theoretical and some more pragmatic; especially, he admits to a desire to "regain that knowledge [savoir]" which he takes the nonconscious to hold (*Major Ordeals* 42). We are in a position to see that Michaux hopes to achieve some practical relation to this mode because he wants to escape what Simondon would call a "determinism of situations" (*Lumiere* 237). In correlation with Michaux's persistent concern with receptivity (which finds expression around the effervescent situation) situations are also what induce dependences and determinisms. It is not a secret that Michaux has a well-established uneasiness with the familiarities, rules of conduct and ranges of response established despite any vigilance, implying as they are a certain helplessness to direct one's trajectory. This uneasiness and the concomitant desire to shake certain situationally contracted dispositions find form in his references to "other aptitudes", "other movements", "meshings", and "other metabolisms", all variations on implicit altered *selectivities* that have their own histories (respectively from *Spaced, Displaced* and *Passages*). Even his attitudes to language offer variations on this score, with his specific investment in signs that would create "a different function in Man" (*Stroke by Stroke*).

In other words, Michaux tends to approach the domain of nonconscious response and stimuli with a particular focus on exploring new possibilities of subjectivation foreclosed by historically-diachronically accrued selectivities. He seeks a path of apprenticeship and ontogenesis in the field of what resists direct conscious appropriation, gesturing toward procedures that would help alter the "criteria of what counts as new" for him. As Simondon argues in the context of perception, "significative grouping of qualities depend on the orientation of apprenticeship and the motivations of subjects", all the way to the possibilities of social "conditioning" (*Cours* 354-7). In Michaux's particular case too, the idea seems to be: since we are "at the mercy" of the selectivities of our perception, and implicitly depend on the environment even for the occasions of our thinking, it becomes desirable to pay attention—as a practice of intelligibility—to the shaping effects of these occasions to confront the limits they generate for trajectories of subjectivation.[70]

Significantly, Michaux's position is very different than taking responsibility for the nonconscious, in the sense that his engagement with the nonconscious does not entail subordinating relations with it to the screening, control and sovereign directions of what is conscious, however difficult this may be. If there is a transferential working through or a steering of one domain by the other, he is more interested in the inborn steering capacities of the nonconscious; he has the utopian desire of a relation to the nonconscious

[70] This way of presenting Michaux's engagement with the nonconscious again indicates an overlapping with theories of "implicit apprenticeship" that often inform the recent contemporary discussions of "nonconscious cognition". In this context, Hayles points to a fundamental correlative to theories of cognition that prioritize "embodied and embedded actions in the world": "One consequence of the view... is the emphasis it places on the brain's ontogenetic capacities, in which its interactions with the environment reconfigure synaptic networks" (Hayles 49). An extensive argument to a similar end can be found in Jed Rasula's *Modernism and Poetic Inspiration*, with its similar emphasis on context and placement apropos a discussion of Kleist: "The uncanny dimension most evident in architectural circumstance reflects Kleist's sense that our placement does much of our thinking for us—almost as if we were there to coax a divulgence from a window, already half surmised by the shadows of a corridor" (Rasula 203).

that does not lead to its reocclusion by conscious operations. The domain of the nonconscious and its specific relation to situations thus emerges by and by as a "savoir" to be regained; given rein as much as possible in its own terms. Michaux adopts a resourceful nonconscious know-how with an ability to make an answer to "hundreds of situations" as a desirable teacher, of at once theoretical and axiological value:

> The subconscious contains everything that constitutes unsatisfied aspiration— the desiring subconscious, and the knowing subconscious too. It has its depths, its stops. What is needed is to further one's relations with it...Some have recently tried to make it study during sleep. But it already knows a great deal. It is already too full of lessons learned. It were better to give it problems to solve, which it will solve perfectly, more surely than we. We should leave it alone. Let it finish. Give a holiday to the conscious. Give up the deplorable habit of doing everything ourselves. What is important (in the order of thought) must, on the contrary, always be left unfinished. We must wait for *its* illumination. Sacrifice the "first" man who makes us live like cripples. Bring back the daimon. Restore relations.[71]

To make sense of the implications of this call to unlikely delegation, we can return to previous formulations: restoring relations would mean shifting the partitions which

[71] With this formulation, a nonmodern slant to Michaux's approach also comes to the fore, whether through the reference to the "daimonic" or "the exceptional states of parapsychic or nearly miraculous states" in the rest of the same passage. Yet Michaux's idea of giving the nonconscious problems to solve is not that farfetched and finds support in experiments conducted at least since his day, leading to today's discussions around the cognitive nonconscious. To turn to Hayles again, it is common to find experiments showing the nonconscious capacities to solve certain cognitive problems better than any conscious deliberation, across tasks ranging from pattern recognition to learning: "In one experiment, for example, subjects were asked to locate a target character (in one case, the digit 6) amid an array of distractor symbols. Experimenters found that if there is a consistent correlation between a subtle background pattern and the target, subjects are able to perceive that correlation and learn from it, as indicated by increased perfor-mance and faster response times...Moreover, even though their improved performance depends on this learning, they are unable to detect the same pattern when consciously attempting to do so" (Hayles 50-1). A more controversial but good summary of older experiments with similar results is found in Julian Jaynes' famous work *The Origin of Consciousness in the Break Down of the Bicameral Mind*.

consign in a normal person "a hundred or a thousand impressions per second" to forgetting and indifference, and activating for a new purpose the organic retentions of that "waking zone, which collects, which amasses" Michaux mentions in *The Major Ordeals*.

Thus this new "pact" with the nonconscious/subconscious is one that is also designed to reenchant or estrange the everyday functionings and habitual adaptations of the organism, making situation traverse the extremes of psychic disorientation and the most uneventful moments of a life. The context of the drug-books largely accounts for the link between Michaux's notion of the nonconscious and his particular vision of everyday life, the adventure of perceptual modulation undertaken there also concealing a program for the transformation of everyday life. More specifically, the conviction that the ordinary is at base constituted by a very extraordinary set of adaptations and speeds which normally stay hidden to function, emerges out of the context of Michaux's psychedelic experiments: "Not until insidious derangement by a drug had brought this mechanism [of orientation] to a halt did I at last, quite late in life, realize an experimentally so vital, almost omnipresent function, whose incessant action had just ceased. This sudden revelation of everyday unconsciousness was so confounding that I would never be able to forget it again; it gave me notice to seek it elsewhere, however omnipresent it might be, to the point where one might almost say that thinking is unconscious" (*Major Ordeals* 4-5).

Michaux is indeed unable to forget these insights, and in his late career often deals with this mode of everyday nonconsciousness through practices of attention that do not necessarily require psychedelics— be it in contemplation, body techniques involving

posture, or graphism itself: "Whatever takes place in the mind, sedately, noncommented, nonanalyzed, takes place contemplated" (V3 900). The vision of non-appropriable everyday at large which this passage informs, also looks back to Michaux's deep discomfort with "the tendency to continuous effort, to vigilance with a view to invariable objectives" which defines his view of "projects", as discussed in a previous contrast with Sartre's account of situations: "The important hours are the motionless ones. Those stopped fractions of time, half dead minutes, are the truest thing about you, the truest you —not owning them or being owned by them, without attributes, you could not render them, horizontal expanses over bottomless pits" (*Tent Posts 105*). Thus Michaux comes to the conclusion that there is a kind of uneventfulness that is no more appropriable and no less instructive than the abyss situations he so adeptly recounts in the drug books, and situation is also informed by such a basal uneventfulness.

Finally, the relation of language and situation is also inserted in this specific juncture. In late works like *Saisir*, it is graphism and its possible purchase on, even oblique identity with the everyday situation that seems to constitute the experimentum crucis of the situation, therefore also helping Michaux avoid the potential pitfalls inherent in a relation with the nonconscious on its own terms. As Michaux acknowledges, his "abyss situation" and taking it as a field of learning poses certain "dangers", holding the prospect of "innumerable suspensions of power and more than anything, what is also the disciple's malady, susceptibility" (*Light Dark* 230). In other words, rallying formal abstraction to the task of a practice of orientation in the concrete everyday means certain constraints of viability and self-protection —or an avoidance of fullblown psychosis— are built into this formal enterprise of apprenticeship from the get go.

Situations, Language Itself

Inasmuch as it informs his own understanding of situation, Michaux's pragmatic motivation to strenghten relations with the nonconscious can here serve as a transition to the enunciative and semiotic stakes of his own notion, which distinguish the situation sign both from a narrowly artistic enterprise, and from a neutral representation. Among the needs and urgencies to which the sign of the situation responds in Michaux's perspective, a feeling of heteronomy asserts itself as a legitimate one, a feeling which could make him write: "I write so that what was true should no longer be true. Prison revealed is a prison no longer" (*Darkness Moves* 330; v2 347). This raises the question of what Michaux saw in certain situations that made him understand them as coercive structures, nudging his experiments in the direction of a "dwelling in the non-situated" (v3 900); in other words, here the focus is on the reasons why the relation between the situation and the sign is not exhausted by a neutral description. The status of situation sign as a kind of abstraction depends for illumination largely on these questions.

In fact the groundwork of the case for the enunciative nonneutrality of Michaux's situation sign has already been laid. The situation sign can be positioned with regard to the maneuvrability it introduces to each of the various aspects outlined above. By way of a summary, if Michaux's situation makes reference to a certain non-contemporaneity or disparity of affect as one of its constitutive aspects, his situation sign also responds to this problem, rallied for adaptation and synchronization or further emphasis on difference. If

Michaux's situation is conceivable only through its relation to certain limits to thematization and appropriation, his situation sign again gets charged with a task of orientation: the unappropriable everyday and its unremarkable circumstances, it aims to render open to estranging indication. The overwhelming, it helps to regulate; the overwhelmingly close and encircling, it aims to render distant, thematizable and even intuitable as a *whole*. Finally, the bounds of a habitual orientation that seems to have a law of repetition or determinism of its own, it disturbs, evoking the possibility of entertaining other selectivities. Michaux's situation-sign is a participatory form of "cognitive mapping".

When we look at the kind of sign Michaux often associates with situations, we have an interesting case of "tender abstraction" which crossbreeds a kind of calligraphy with a kind of topology. Just like the other signs Michaux favors at large, the situation sign is almost never directly and unproblematically mimetic. This is evident from his first reference to the notion onward: "the sign, without representation of man, sign of situation: this I have never ceased to begin finding" (V2 431). Michaux often uses abstraction in the sense of a reduction to essentials, very much in the fashion of Charles Peirce, who favors the diagrammic sign because "it suppresses a quantity of details, and so allows the mind more easily to think of the important features" (Qtd. in Ljungberg 144). Thus situation sign points to a performative geometry or diagram inserted in facticity, and a transfiguration of context achieved in concomitance.

Accordingly there are both formal requirements and requirements regarding context that apply to the situation sign, making it a nexus between the singular and the iterable. Crucially, that the sign in question is a sign *for* the situation also means that abstraction is

constrained to be answerable to something irreducible in the concrete; this becomes apparent when Michaux expresses in very strong terms his distaste with a language which would bid to dominate all circumstance: "master of the situation, language will answer every need (!). Like tyrannies" (*Stroke by Stroke* n.p.). In fact, despite his keen natural affinity with abstraction as a power of manipulation exercised on the given, Michaux is avowedly interested in "encountering the concrete on 'its' terrain" (*Emergences* 77). In this context, the quality of irreducible concretion encompasses what we have discussed in the way of inappropriable everyday, envelopment by a given situation, and diachronic environmental conditioning. Therefore the immanent formal measure of felicity for the situation-sign is an allusiveness in expression that reaches beyond the visible and a narrow temporal present *for* the interests of the concrete: the situation sign is charged with pulling things by the spatiotemporal roots, or accompanying them in emergence and dispersion.

Apart from its pragmatic valence, what makes the situation-sign so fascinating and such a crucial semiotic challenge for Michaux is largely its median position between a flattening abstraction and realistic fidelity, the importance of which can be traced to the way Michaux uses *signification* itself in this same median sense (neither entirely abstract nor mimetic). To return again to one of his discussions of the Chinese sign: "In this particular calligraphy—this art of the temporal, expressing as it does trajectory, passage—its most admirable quality...is its spontaneity...No longer to imitate, but signify nature. By strokes, darts, dashes. Ascesis of the immediate, of the lightning bolt" (*Ideograms in China*). The crowning paradox encapsulated in "abstract, but immediate" which corresponds to signifying also informs the situation sign. In a line of reflection that is not exhaustively

pursued in Michaux's work, the situation sign seems to be one of the epitomes of what signifying in itself entails. Yet, this does not mean that situations wait for an external observer to come and signify them. In a way that justifies Bellour's characterization of the situation sign as "troubling", Michaux seems to be giving a distributive character to the act of signification, amounting to a direct expressive franchise to situation: "Situations, language itself, its deeps" (*Stroke by Stroke* n.p.).[72] Thus in a perverse inversion of the common observation that symbolism finds its source in a "release from proximity" or "thinking at a distance,"[73] Michaux makes a gesture of restoring thinking and symbolism to the situation, along with what it may entail in the way of proximity and indexical footholds.

This kind of link between the notion of situation and language has an important precedent in the history of "situation-dependency" (cf. Gunther Anders - "Satz und Situation") in phenomenological reflection on language, as well as around what Edmund Husserl called "occasional" expressions such as personal pronouns, and demonstratives "this/that" (cf. Husserl in *Logical Investigations* Vol. 2 Chapter 3). However it is hard to assign a phenomenological meaning to Michaux's terse formula. Situations, as "language itself, its deeps", neither seem to be in the position of the phenomenologically intentional object of consciousness, nor a linguistic referent. According to this direct equation, situations are not "language itself" because they correspond to the kind of context populated by human enunciators, as if every situation needs a resident human enunciator. It is hard to assign such a meaning to Michaux's terse formula. A more likely interpretation of the relation of signifying a situation, where situations become language itself, would be that it is more

[72] Here Michaux offers a version of distributed enunciation that is very similar to what Deleuze and Guattari call an "assemblage of enunciation" in *A Thousand Plateaus*.

[73] Cf. Gary Tomlinson *A Million Years of Music: The Emergence of Human Modernity*

properly latching into what is sign-like or sense making in the situation itself: proto-signifying directions, forces and differences, charging language and semiosis themselves with an inherent relation of emergence to the idea of living context and singularity expressed by the situation. To remember some of the associations the situations have accrued in the course of this discussion, this would make language in its resurgence a kind of process and function that *arises* from those contexts of the concrete which are totalizing patterns, infraperceptive stimuli and temporal orientations of habit, only to return to them by charging them with novel significance.[74]

The work (*Saisir*) which offers the equation "situations = language itself", is a progression of increasingly more abstract tasks of modeling, departing from the difficulty of conveying the impression of an insect peripherally impinging on the visual field, to move on to the problem of conveying gestures before they take form, to finally arrive at situations. Without any explicit acknowledgement, the book's trajectory is thus truly topological in the sense of a continuous transformation of levels. In the relevant stage, Michaux writes, "animals, men, gestures are no longer the problem, the problem at the present is situations. Signs signifying a situation. I should have made more of them. Alas

[74] In this instance a parallel is warranted with the work of psychologist Lev Vygotsky who wrote on the developmental function of language and abstraction as well as the importance of their immanently social logic in child development. As Arto Artinian points out, Vygotsky's thoughts on this threshold have a dialectical form, one which matches the tact of Michaux's paradoxical formulations: "The freedom from a concrete situation is enabled by thinking in concepts...Vygotsky understood freedom as a condition made possible by the practice of abstract thought...Still the necessity for abstract concept formation is not sufficient to permit freedom of action. The cycle must be completed back to the concrete reality in which one is living" (Artinian). His experiments led Vygotsky to find in language a creative dynamic which alters local contexts and situations, in a way that loosens rigid subservience to immediately given or factically visible terms of any given problem. Vygotsky even attributes to language a capacity to induce "deautomatization": "From the moment the child begins to master the situation with the help of speech after mastering his own behavior, a radically new organization of behavior appears as well as new relations with the environment" (Vygotsky "Tool and Sign"). In other words what Michaux the artist is looking for in the situation sign as a mode of intervention in forms of restrictive immediacy, Vygotsky the psychologist also explores, in an open dialogue with figures like Lewin, who has already appeared in this section.

unprepared. To seize a situation via signs, amazing! What a transformation!" (*Stroke by Stroke* n.p.). In keeping with our emphasis on enunciative non-neutrality, the semiotic grasp on situation that exhilarates Michaux has little to do with representative exhaustiveness, and everything to do with the possibility of maneuvrability it introduces into everyday dispositions. Like Walter Benjamin's proverbs, situation-signs are transformative enunciations.[75]

Against the larger background of Michaux's longstanding investment in situation, this move in *Saisir* have important implications. First, situation as enfolded with language is what ultimately secures the link between Michaux's so called drug books, devoted to various forms of limit experience—as in the abyss-situations— and the uneventful continuities of the ordinary. The transformative uses of drawing Michaux locates in the extreme case of the mentally ill artist—regaining a sense or vision of situation— comes to inform a type of sign itself, irrespective of the status of the sign-maker with regard to mental health. In great inclusiveness, not only limit situations need and become their formulas, but any everyday "situation" offers opportunities of transformation when "signified" in Michaux's sense: "Nothing expresses a situation more soberly, more astonishingly, more magically than a few signs assembled together, even if the situation be completely ordinary and familiar and then turn fantastic, outlandish—and be reconsidered" (*Stroke by Stroke* n.p.). Secondly, in this late instance too Michaux seems to be siding with the powers of detachment first, instead of offering the sign of situation as a guide or mere prepaideutic to projected action: "Signs of the secret of any whole

[75] As Benjamin wrote, "proverbs cannot be applied to situations. Instead, they have a kind of magical character: they transform the situation. It is scarcely within the powers of the individual to purify the lessons of his life completely by purging them of his particular experience. But the proverb can do this by taking possession of them (Benjamin, *Selected 2* 582).

whatsoever. The secret of daily life, of the ordinary without end, of the nonetheless extraordinary ordinary, when a certain detachment allows it to regain its uncanniness, its fatal uncanniness" (ibid.). In yet another paradox, grasping an everyday situation in signs, is equivalent to a possible detachment in practical terms. The fatal uncanniness obtained this way is fatal for an everyday and its conformities which can often turn "servile", according to Michaux's other work *Par des Traits*.

In lieu of a conclusion, it is possible to insist that there is an elusive but fundamental internal coherence to Michaux's various engagements with or indirect questionings of this notion. From the strange and marginally therapeutic/clinical use outlined around drug books to the avidly embraced possibility of transfiguring the structures of everyday dispositions and sedimented attitudes, situations always involve a practical interest in Michaux. So much so that Michaux's reflections on situations and the tensions between abstraction and concretion they exhibit often cross paths with theoretical approaches which can be variously described as process oriented, dialectical, or transformative as can be observed in the juxtaposition with Sartre. Michaux's preoccupations might not have directly yielded the following formula, but their thrust have fundamental affinities with the attitude and stakes expressed in it: "Freedom means to criticize and change situations, not to confirm them by deciding within their coercive structure" (Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* 226).

In pursuit of this interest, Michaux's work is endlessly resourceful in the perspectives it takes and the problems it produces, exploiting a highly idiosyncratic route which does not rule out illuminating dialogues with a number of possible interlocutors like Sartre,

Heidegger, Lewin, Simondon and the Situationists, to mention those of European provenance. It can easily be argued that in Michaux's work situation and its signs become instigators of far from equilibrium exchanges which help them to carry out the work of an alternative mediation between particularity and universality, micro and macro that does not take the path of subsumption. As Michaux gives to think in *Emergences*, the notion of situation as he comes to use it, minoritarian and merely artistic as it may seem at first glance, may not be without bearing on historicity at large, thanks to its signature revisions of the relations between singularity and repetition, context and sign: "An author is not a copy machine, he is someone who sees before others have seen, who discovers the means to free up what is stymied, to turn unacceptable situations aroung. Even if a failure, he never fails among the smugly near-sighted. In freeing up his own situation, he frees up a hundred more—the situations of an entire era, or of an era that is still hatching" (*Emergences* 52).

Ultimately, with a certain parsimony Michaux's longstanding reflection on this thorny question offers instructive challenges to traditional forms of linguistic thought (like structuralist semiotics), unilinear psychological understandings of context and placement —such as behaviorism—and finally the presuppositions of constitutive subjectivity in one single interlacing of a concept. In addition however, its intelligibility does not depend on the restrictive contemporaneity defined by the European scene. Perhaps it is appropriate that Michaux often articulates his thoughts in dialogue with various traditional forms from Asian art like Mandalas and Chinese calligraphy, looking for a "situation" or context for a notion of situation tellingly beyond his immediate milieu.

Unstroke the Office Empire

In this section I propose a reading of one of Michaux's last works, *Par Des Traits*, also the last example of the series of books that make arguments in (conjunction with) visual form, finding equilibriums in various combinations of drawing and writing. This work is one where some of Michaux's most characteristic concerns like new semiotic practices and subjectivations hinging on new formalizations, come to a head and reach heightened stakes. It especially offers a most significant exploration of the possibility that a historically specific, collective and transindividual underpinning might be provided for a framework that departs from apprenticeship.

The reading consists of a scheme of interrelated problems: it aims to stage what happens when the questions of "function", "the ordinary", and "real subsumption"—come in contact and interlock with each other in their extensive implications. The questions are not successive but the exposition is. An important part of the case to be made here, is that the book has a special status among Michaux's works for the arc it traces between an ostensibly individual apprenticeship brought to bear on semiotic capacities, and the qualitatively amplified problems like the transindividual manifestations of language or semiosis and the historical orientation of the human species. The bid is to exhibit what happens when Michaux embeds and tentatively maps physiologically based mental functions onto the milieu of a world in rapid transformation, from the early 1980s forward— a time significant for a number of reasons. The main goal of the reading is basically to obtain or regain a sense for *Par des Traits*' strange constellation of problems,

the fascinating convergences of which needs to be made palpable.

Before outlining what a function may mean or the associations it carries, it is perhaps a better strategy to discuss the stakes with which a discourse about functions is regularly aligned in Michaux. Posing the question this way, it is relatively unproblematic to establish and situate it as a notion which helps Michaux advance his bid to deconditioning himself, especially considering the role it assumes in *Par des Traits*. In the idiosyncratic framework of this work, problems of directly ontogenetic import and the problem of functions go hand in hand: "TO CHANGE/to finally end up changing the being given to us as a gift" is here coupled to the dream of "developing a different function in Man". Thus a function here is not to be understood independently from a journey of apprenticeship. However, here this apprenticeship itself attains a level of contextual complication that requires some patient unpacking.

Introducing Functions: Psychological Disorders and the Experience of Contemplation

In Michaux a discourse about functions generally orients itself along a few different axes. If one of these insists on a physiological grounding for individual functions, the other insists on the nexus and relationships between different functions. If one of them takes normality and the everyday life as its pivot, the other mines pathologies, anomalies and experiences of "consciousness expansion" for resources of new subjectivation. All of them leave their traces on *Par des Traits*.

Functions are not identical with anatomical substrates, but they are not independent of

them either. Just as Michaux's fragmentary reflections on faculties in *Passages* call for the creation of a "new circuit", he is not shy of writing of a "brain function" that would be developed thanks to writing systems (*Par des Traits,* n.p.). Functions are not things, but they are workings, and determinate or stabilized ways an organism carries out the operations relevant to it. Next, a function implies specialization. In other words, one knows it by its specialized products. For instance when Michaux talks about an "imaginogenic" function which he "assists" or cultivates in his visions, it is straightforward to take the function involved as one responsible for the generation of images (V3 614).[76] Thus a function is specialized, and in a defaultly operative state; it does not have to be reflective or voluntary, but it churns out products, making it ambiguous whether it is something somebody owns, or something that owns somebody. There are functions that work to "know", and there can be a function of knowing that may be set to work to *know functions*, including itself. Thus the carrying out of observation can be a part of a function, but so are epistemic undecidabilities: "just as the stomach does not digest itself, just as it is essential that the stomach do no such thing, the mind is constructed in such a way that it cannot grasp itself, cannot directly, continuously grasp its own mechanism and action, having other matter to grasp". A function is more like an operation of the kind in a gerundive mode —"grasping"— Michaux refers to here.

On the other hand, the descriptive discourse of organic and psychological function often breaks neutrality in Michaux's work, and takes on the thrust of his search for a new orientation in subjectivation. In other words, as it often tends to happen with seemingly

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In a similar fashion, what he idiosyncratically calls "colorofabrication" to indicate the spontaneous and overflowing activity of a psychedelic experience of colors, again implies a function. Finally, Michaux refers to nodes of verbal activity as "word workshops" (*Miserable Miracle*).

descriptive psychological concepts in Michaux's work, functions are not only objects of disinterested knowledge. A function may be straightforward, but the manner of relating to it is no simple affair, an issue that becomes apparent when Michaux reflects on savant abilities: "By what dissociation, by what disconnection do they manage to take advantage of the real mental speed, to enter into a direct relation with it?" (*Major Ordeals* 23). In Michaux's work the problem of a subjectivating relation to functions that exceeds the neutrality of knowledge is one that takes an especially acute form when it comes into contact with signs and language as well as their impact on basic perceptual and affective reaches of response. Thus Michaux's *Par des Traits* where a certain function in its intrinsic difference is something that depends on signs for its *emergence* : "Signs enabling us to be open to the world in a different fashion, creating and developing a *different function* in man, *disalienating man*" (*Stroke by Stroke* n.p.).

In the following I will try to come to a satisfactory understanding of this formula and its strange temporality, which hitches a notion of disalienation— a restoration one might reasonably assume— to the very emergence of what is different and new. For now let us postpone engaging this troubling identification, but highlight another aspect of the foregoing: Signs, or the historicity of signs is one of the most illustrative cases in Michaux which demands treating functions in the extended milieu of their operation, insofar as signs have by definition an externality which accounts for the communication they make possible. But the requirement of a milieu is not restricted to the obvious sociality of signs. Even at its most reflexive and solitary— as in the grasp grasping itself — a function is not separable from a milieu for which it is a relevant, and sometimes acceptable operation. Milieus "carry" functions, and their patience or carrying capacities matter. More than reified individual possessions and predicates, functions are thus sited

congelations of "usage", contributors as well as results of concrete worldly arrangements, arrangements that start very close to home, in the balances established between a plurality of functions, as well as the unevenness of development which makes some functions break "equilibrium".[77] Lack of emphasis on visual skills and an overemphasis on verbal reasoning in a given process of education is a possible example.

Michaux shows an uncommonly keen sensitivity to the sustaining solidarities between different functions or faculties: "Create a new circuit (or an equivalent). Every faculty that is not employed darkens all the other faculties. Every activity refused, every act one could have committed hinders the entire behavior, continually returns to knock on the door" (V2 346). *Par des Traits* is the particular place where Michaux seems to draw the conclusion that not only "individual" functions support or dominate other functions in mutual arrangements for a given individuality, but that certain definite functions in social circulation support or overcode individual functions, to the point of indistinction and mutual constitution. The acuter Michaux's interest in the opportunistic historical coevolutions between given human capacities becomes, the closer he comes to treating these capacities in the extended ground of their emergence, which is a collectively inhabited material world. In other words, if functions—and developing a different one—are so important in this work, it is because they are emerging as subjects of history in their own right.[78]

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[77] Here it bears acknowledging the work of a researcher like Vygotsky, who paid a keen attention to what he called the "mobile system of functions" ("Tool and Sign in Child Development") at play between various domains such as speech, drawing and practical tasks from a developmental perspective.

[78] With their reference to human "faculties taken out of circulation" in given historical periods and modes of production, Alexander Kluge and Oskar Negt offer a particularly germane analysis of the skewedness and asymmetries that beset certain arrangements between labor capacities; what in the arrested faculties may come to upset these arrangements, and finally the temporality of these transformations. In a way particularly resonant with the form Michaux gives to the problem, Kluge and Negt posit a self-regulative and habitus-based temporality for these relations of "obstinacy" (Devin Fore's Introduction). See especially their chapter, "The Historical Terrain where Labor Capacities Emerge" in *History and Obstinacy.*

Correlatively, functions are placed in a matrix of invention, mutual fostering, care, and expansion, but at the same time, inhibition, arrest, negation, and deprivation. In the key of the most persistent insight in Michaux, from the perspective of the infinite and the capacities recoiling from it, the normal productivity of functions do not go without saying. Michaux's frequent resort to a deprivational mode of analysis that proceed through "provoked anomalies", suggests that functions also trail along a question of normativity, despite the factualist connotations and immediate impressions of descriptive neutrality.

Since functions are also what can break down, in the process other equilibriums come into being for the remaining ones. There is a pathological and even forensic way of conceptualizing function the possibility of which inheres in the function itself, and not merely its mode of analysis.[79] In a great example of this scenario, Michaux's broken arm is also literally a function that is taken out of the loop. An even more profound consequence of this variability in equilibrium is that Michaux affirms or refuses –and predicates a value for—certain equilibriums and relations between functions, to the point of looking for a *new health* seemingly captured by a certain historical and yet naturalized equilibrium of functions. The overcoding of a function such as the perception of wholistic patterns by a function pertaining to verbal linearity is an example of an equilibrium he wants to change or inhibit to a certain extent: a "bad equilibrium" . The whole problematic of cure and therapy that marks *Par des Traits*, comes from this axiological

[79] Here again Kluge and Negt's concept of obstinacy [Eigensinn] may offer a significant overlap. In Fredric Jameson's words, "it is not therefore some primal self that has *Eigensinn,* but rather a whole range of historically acquired and developed skills, drives, capacities, each of which makes its own "stubborn" demands and has its own distinct 'meaning.' Such forces, however can be residual or emergent; they often fail to be used to capacity; and their unemployment generates specific pathologies, as does their repression, alienation, or diversion.." (Jameson 159).

dimension of his interests. For instance what the prose part of the work presents as the exigency "to impose a re-equilibrium on Man in all his dyssymetries", finds a more emphatic expression in the poem : "Cure stroke by stroke/ release of gear, sudden veer.../strokes: our therapy, our hygiene..." (*Par des Traits*, n.p.) The implicit reference to value, the attitude of vigilance and the attempt to introduce some control into what is experienced as spontaneously operative translates to a desire to change the balance between functions, by rediscovering and taking the side of certain disenfranchised ones whose activity need some "encouragement" for real fruition: "a queer case of drawers that can function only alternately: some must be closed before others may open" (*Major Ordeals* 5-6). .

In Michaux the desire to institute new relations to one's constitutively obscure functions on the one hand and abnormalities or breakdowns on the other, often go hand in hand. This has important implications for *Par des Traits*' inconspicuous reference to the emergence of "a different function", especially since for Michaux just like savant abilities, disorders, abnormalities and pathologies may also represent the emergence of different functions, or at least a changing balance between a plurality of existent functions. Thus in a discussion of the situation of the hysteric Michaux can write, "able also completely to arrest certain functions, certain needs even though indispensable, also presenting wounds which no longer bleed, she has new relations with her body (or relations which the human species had merely lost (*Light Dark* 229). The tone of valorization is hard to miss, as the hysteric goes through a process Michaux finds desirable for himself on some level: establishing or rediscovering new relations with his body, and bringing certain capacities like pattern perception out from under the function of verbality that overcodes it, by *arresting* verbality or signifying semiotics. Yet Michaux is also aware of the strains of

this particular path, conceding that it "undoubtedly masks better paths" (*Light Dark* 197). Again this gesture toward a better path for a modulation of functions should again alert us to *Par des Traits's* choice of the way of semiotic activity. What Michaux seems to think, then, is that it is necessary to try and "restore relations" with a dimension of nascent function —in fact a certain way of talking of the "subconscious" and an expansion of function seems interchangeable in Michaux[80]— but hysteria and other abnormalities represent only one among possible paths of this restoration, which is also the liberation of a new and "vast space beyond".[81]

Functions Reshuffled, Functions in the World

This brings us to the way Michaux explicitly embeds the stakes of these functional transformations in the world at large. The experience of contemplation is paradigmatic for a recurrently negative emphasis of Michaux's late work on a dimension of subjectivation stamped by drives to acquisition, ownership, "adhesion" or attachment to short term goals, and a generalized attitude of preoccupation.[82] A petty finitude of laboriousness, and a restlessness not of potential liberation but of indefinite thralldom are at stake. Michaux's text entitled "Addenda:1968-71", accompanying his first work of psychedelic

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[80] See Emergences v 3 690 and 603.

[81] In a use from his late work "Survenue de la Contemplation", anticipating the "different function in man" which *Par Des Traits* predicates on new semiotic practices, Michaux attributes a similar change of function, and a concomitant reclamation of a new space for subjectivation to an experience of contemplation loosening the grip of long standing attitudes and dispositions: "A fonction plus envie de fonctionner" (v3 896). For instance, here Michaux finds himself unable to take note of his thoughts and reflections for the express purpose of the "imprint of a future memory", finding himself in general in a markedly less *proprietary* mode.

[82] Cf. *Major Ordeals,* where Michaux addresses the encounter with the infinite as a massive divestment paramount to what others like Georges Bataille would call "sovereignty" : "The static, the finite, the solid had seen their day. There was nothing left of them, or almost nothing. Divested, I rose, propelled; stripped of possessions and attributes, stripped even of all recourse to the earth, all sense of place being lost— an unimaginable divestment, which seemed almost absolute, since I was unable to find anything it would not have taken from me" (Major Ordeals 92).

experiments *Miserable Miracle* pursues such a theme in rare directness and offers a retrospective reading of his experiments from the point of view of his fresh reckoning with a deep seated and compulsive drive to acquisition:

> You were, only moments before, a man with possessions, and, like all men with possessions, constantly looking to acquire and appropriate more. You were busy with the functions of acquisition, retention, and —mental ruminant—of elaboration, integration. Is it, as it would seem, the fact of "having" that maintains the ego, hic et nunc, that allows each of us to be individuated? It's this "having," abruptly emptied out, that via its sudden disadhesion, has changed everything. (*Miserable Miracle* 171)

What seems like a slippage, thus a difference of kind, between a category of "mental" function and a more immediately worldly sense of possession is an impression likely to be created by this passage. However there is no indication that mental retention, elaboration, memory and so forth are metaphorically transposed to the level of possession of goods (as in "a man with possessions"), or the other way round. If anything, they seem to signal operations of the same kind as materially effective functions or possessions from the standpoint of subjectivation or "individuation" that is important to Michaux. The ostensibly mental functions —acquire, retain, integrate, or merely group thoughts, to "try them, put them aside for later to remember, combine them, tirelessly combine them, organize them, subordinate them" (*Thousand Times* 45)— are all functions in this twofold sense and have immediate inherent material efficacy (and material possession mental and psychological).

What's more, here, apropos the occasion of a mescalinized infinity which gives impetus

to an estrangement and becomes a lived critique of a disposition of acquisition/preoccupation, Michaux makes explicit reference to the social role of the functions he just highlighted: A divestment or "disadhesion" from these functions, and what it produces in the way of "subsequent incitements to detachment", Michaux suggests, are "what everything around you will contradict and what society dreads" (*Miserable Miracle* 173). To spell out what this implies, to Michaux "society"—or the historically specific form of society he finds himself to be a part of— is something that works like a nourishing milieu of sustenance and patience for the specific and limited range of functions he just enumerated, *because* it is in a relation of need and production with these functions: needs these functions to function, and cannot tolerate a withdrawal from them. Consequently, we also get a faint glimpse of Michaux's self-understanding as one engaged in an idiosyncratic exploration of what "society dreads".

The Addendum passage with its list of operations and specific constellation of interests sets a perfect stage for discussing *Par des Traits*' concerns, and the imagery in which it advances them. What the "Addendum" thematizes as a "having" or an "individuation" in the restricted image of possessing and acquiring, *Par des Traits* completes with a full-blown dystopia[83] of a managerial "office empire" with its various references to "the future organizers of the planet banded together to orient, to lead"; "local overoccupation"; "the world of utilitarian signals"; language "becoming an ADMINISTRATION into which every conscience must enter" and finally, a certain "gravity owners assume once they have claimed the first strokes of inspiration as their property" (*Par des Traits*, n.p.). Here language and semioses are treated both in their directly formal qualities and the larger,

[83] There is a subtle thread of dystopian imaginary running through Michaux's career, with a particular prescience toward the late works, whether through the urgencies that made him imagine "planetary disasters" and "self-cleaning atmospheres" in "Document D", or a cryptic projection of the kind given by "Notes au lieu d'actes", dated forward to 2004: "ethnography of the future holds humiliations in store" (V2 386).

molar and collectively instantiated purposes, attitudes and subjectivations that enlist them.[84]

For this reason, as will be seen shfortly in more detail, all this perimeter-covering in the instance of the functions is crucial as a preparation for *Par des Traits.* What this late work refers to as a "disalienation" finds meaning against such a backdrop of a scaled-up and amplified subsumption of reality through a subsumption of functions and human capacities. In the light of these relations, it is finally possible to return to the problematic character of the statement we already mentioned at the beginning, in other words, the paradoxical manner of the coupling between a past-oriented "disalienation", and a future oriented "different function".

In a note attached to the formulation of this coupling, Michaux refers to "signs able up to a certain point to impose a re-equilibrium on Man in all his dissymetries" (*Stroke by Stroke* n.p.). While here Michaux may give the impression of a nostalgic hankering after an equilibrium lost,[85] one needs to remember that he never actually abandons his basic

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[84] It is necessary to bring up a final theme—the ordinary— for a more complete contextual embedding of *Par des Traits* in Michaux's work at large. The dismissals and devaluations of ordinary life, "the servile everyday" (*Par des Traits*) in Michaux's late work gain intelligibility only if they are taken as the expressions of an unproblematic relation to the attitude Michaux describes as a hegemonically proprietary one. The ordinary is aligned with the unquestioned importance of pursuing immediate short term goals, associated with a particular finitude and a lack of a sense of distance characterizing the preoccupation that adopts them as ends. The ordinary in this sense is a state of capture and being implicated in projects one cannot shake off on the level of mere ideation. It is no accident that it figures in the same passage as Michaux's enumeration of functions as simultaneously social functions in the Addendum: Whereas "the habitual state, is in fact the prolonged absence of the infinite", the functions Michaux discovers in psychedelic experience is "the end of finitude. You are freed of it. The end of ordinary life was then—one could say—something like those recessive hereditary traits that step aside in the presence of the dominant trait" (*Miserable Miracle* 149).
Also see *Major Ordeals*: "But once the ordinary was restored, reality re-established itself, insistent in its plurality which constitutes, which begins reconstituting the contradictions, the absurdities, the thousand complications and inescapable inadequacies of behavior, the stumbling blocks of the future. Legion are the bonds, and legion they reassert themselves. The habitations of bondage are invisible..." (*Major Ordeals* 100).

[85] A certain overdetermination characterizes Michaux's reliance on the idea of equilibrium. However, from the earliest works like "Portrait d'Homme" onward to "Faits Divers" with its brilliant litany of "bad equilibriums", from the central instance of the postface to *Plume* ("There is not one self. There are not

conviction that "there is not, in this life, any naturalness that is really natural. Only adaptation. Usage, use prolonged a bit, usages" (*Darkness Moves*). Thus the idea—not spelled out at any length— is more specific than a traditional humanism may capture. Given the prominence in Michaux's account of the figures of local preoccupation, attachment and capture by acquisitive and appropriative individuations, as well as the unmistakeable critique of the orientations and modes of existence implied in these attitudes, it is likely that the alienation is precisely the one which is inherent to these attitudes and modes of existence, inasmuch as they block and occlude the fundamental openness of new usages and functions. In other words, they are modes of existence inextricable from the functions they favor and foster to disproportion, functions including the possibilities of language. The nature and the essence of which they deprive man (the reference to the generic "Man" is not arbitrary, as will be seen shortly), is no more and no less than the possibility of staying open to new functions, a possibility which Michaux also conceives in ontogenetic terms: "to finally end up changing the being given to us as a gift". Thus an essence that is the possibility of an ongoing creative drift, joins Michaux's other paradoxical formulations: an everyday that is the uncanny, the marvelous that is the normal, and a cure which would be a new health.

Finally, to speak to the efficacy of signs to help bring about a new function in humanity

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ten selves. There is no self. ME is only a position in equilibrium") to one of the last works *Par des Traits*, the two constants of transformation and value make up for a certain consistency. Equilibrium commands a comparable place in the work of Andre Leroi-Gourhan, with a similar ambiguity. Yet it is questionable whether the critique his use of the notion received would be applicable to Michaux's use in *Par des Traits*. With reference to Leroi-Gourhan's prescription for a "rebalancing of the disparate forces that determine the contemporary situation of Homo sapiens" Christopher Johnson took the anthropologist to task:

> The problem is that, while this concept may be useful in describing certain aspects of biological form and functional adaptation, its extension to qualitatively different levels of relation and organization is not self-evident. The implication of the final sentence of *Le Geste et la parole* is that humanity possesses a natural point of biocultural equilibrium to which it will spontaneously seek to return, whereas the macroscopic narrative of *Le Geste et la parole* has in fact described a series of departures from equilibrium that have at each stage altered the mental and physiological configuration of the human animal... (Johnson 487)

as a species, an ambition which sounds so grand in this often self-deprecatingly modest author, the confidence behind this belief comes from history. The efficacy of signs to transform human nature is not merely asserted as a prospect before being a fact, insofar as signs have already done this and are still contributing to this transformation:

> Connections that granted an exceptional kind of emotion, a specifically human emotion, personal, shared, and emotion that in its subsequent forms of analogy, simile, and metaphor would become one of the joys and specialties of literatures and of poems, for readers (or listeners) and inventors alike. A habit was being formed.(...) The efficiency of memorization made possible by these tools, the brain function thereby developed, would transform mankind, everybody a student, everybody forming a society, societies, humanity, human knowledge..." (*Stroke by Stroke* n.p.).[86]

The Stroke: Direct Line to Totality

Par des Traits consists of three parts: a poem, drawings, and a prose argument complementing each other in multiple ways. The poem consists of snapshots from a state of totalization or "dialectical images", and perhaps makes up the closest equivalent in Michaux's work to Antonin Artaud's poem "To Have Done With the Judgment of God".[87]

[86] Cf. The last sentence of "Signes", from 1954: "What an emotion it will be when the age reaches the desirable point of having taken the habit of thinking in signs, when people will exchange secrets in a few traits/strokes of nature [traits nature] like a handful of twigs.

[87] This comparison is evoked for the reason that Artaud's poem has generated a more widespread critical discourse, and still holds a certain referential authority for discussions of Post-War French Culture. As Lucy Bradnock writes, "Artaud's ideas had a profound impact upon artists and writers in the 1950s and 1960s in large part because the multifarious procedures of delirium seemed a compelling artistic strategy for the neo-avant-garde" (Bradnock 68). Both poems are written in an invocative tone that is intended to enact rather than merely represent their stances of antagonism, and convey an urgent sense for the need for the creation of a new mode of existence, often with passing but revealing reference to contemporary historical events like wars, capitalism and Americanization in Artaud's case, and war and corporatization in Michaux's. However, in general, Michaux's vision of a secular chokehold of a totality

Michaux's poem dramatizes and responds to a planetary totality it locates in the present ("on Earth in present danger/gun to the planet's head"), depicting it as a unity of stasis, regimentation ("against today's barbed wire/against tomorrow's quartered body"), circumscription, qualitative homogeneity, and a paralytic improbability of change. This totality is described in its various manifestations as something that sets limits to novel *signification*, and as setting rigid criteria for the qualification of what counts as *real*. Rather than metaphysical, the totality is also shown to enclose and find its basis in a dimension of everyday life which it renders natural and unproblematic; precisely for this reason an everyday laden with an insidious "servility", and a power to infect and "diminish our days". Often the poem employs incantatory negatives to enact the stance and movements of firm opposition and resistance which make its raison d'etre, negatives precisely chosen to correspond to the aspects of this totality already mentioned: the reality of subsumption, it wants to "derealize"; the significations of subsumption it wants to "insignify"; from the immobilizing webs and agglutinations, it wants to "detach" and "disagglutinate", heaping Michaux's characteristic infinitives one upon the other (*Stroke by Stroke*, n.p.).[88] Finally, the poem also expresses Michaux's search for a new health, against all the odds of the "poisoned milieu" which it vividly evokes, and in extension of the links between "functions" and normativity discussed above. In all this, the stroke [trait] of the title has a pivotal function, seeming to indicate at once the molecular historical constituents, or the "'traits" of the state of affairs the poem rallies against, and what might counter [retrait], or put a stop to it; thus the literal strokes of Michaux's drawings and the historical traits of the poem's worldly referent find themselves in a mutually charged association: the stroke detaching from, facing down, and turning

brims with a more sober, specific and all too worldly discontent and energy.

[88] Cf. Esther Rowlands' analysis of the infinitive in Michaux, in *Redefining Resistance*.

against something that looks a lot like capitalism in its neoliberal avatar.

Now to the conditions of this vision which it might not be a major license to take as one of "real subsumption". Perhaps categories like Modernity or Enframing would be equally relevant here, but there are certain elements in the texts of *Par des Traits* which seem more directly to echo Marx's category of an advanced stage of capitalism in which the relation between capital and labor morphs into a qualitative transformation of the subjectivities caught in its net. Michaux's unmistakeable inclusion of economic accessories and landscapes in his general image of totalization is one supporting reason for this choice to refer to real subsumption. Another one would be the date of this text (1984), which is more important for the unchallenged global ascendancy of state-assisted capitalist interests it marks than the famous fiction that uses it as its dystopian setting. Michaux's poem not only draws an enigmatic arc from "the hand to office empire"— doubling the "trait"— it also closes on a clear call to use the stroke to "cross out political debates, office buildings, corporations". Together his texts in this work sketch a revealing picture of the key personae/actors, evoking images of management, finance and utility that sound all too familiar today: "future organizers of the planet" and "directorial types". In this sense the texts also follow in the footsteps of an earlier collection of writings called *Coups d'arrêt*, deeply important for the tones of caution it rings regarding blind and unchecked growth within the context of its own planetary concerns: "No more refuges, the species given over to measureless activity and measureless growth will have cut everything" (*Chemins* 78).

Moreover, in extension of the limits on signification and a restricted image of reality which the text recognizes as aspects of the totalization in its focus, a good part of the

argumentative prose section continues to trace and pursue the vision of subsumption in the status of language and its historically diminished possibilities: "Applied languages, directed languages, organizational tools. A business enterprise now, language, unbeknown to anybody, takes the place of murmurs, laments (faint or clear), calls. Commanding, commandeering. Destined to become an ADMINISTRATION into which every conscience must enter" (*Stroke by Stroke* n.p.).[89] Perhaps more than anything however, it is Michaux's dispute with a compulsive form of "local preoccupation" that makes his poem a counter to or contestation of something like real subsumption: If the core of the concept of real subsumption is taken to be that it takes the labor process as a site of thoroughgoing control by the interests of capital, and bases an extending play room for capital on an indefinite extension of the labor process, Michaux's call for a "disalienation" through the creation of new and nonutilitarian functions in a transformed humanity can be taken to offer a favorable analogue of a determinate negation of real subsumption.

Perhaps the greatest problem that appears at this juncture is the way Michaux looks for a "different function" —serving as yet undefined principles and ends other than subsumption— in the seemingly limited and ineffective field of invention, use, and

[89] Cf. Michaux's reservations about the political valences of verbal languages as organizational tools finds echoes in Felix Guattari's search for non-representational or "asignifying" semiologies. As Maurizio Lazzarato characterizes these semiologies, unlike language, they "do not involve a distinguishable speaker and hearer. Words do not play a major part, since the message is carried not via linguistic chains, but via bodies, sounds, mimicry, posture and so on" (Lazzarato). Elsewhere Lazzarato enumerates "the gestural, ritual, productive, corporeal, musical" as participants in asignifying forms, among which the gestural strikes a clear chord with the Michaux of Par des Traits with its opening line "gestures rather than signs" (*Stroke by Stroke* n.p.) . Although at times Lazzarato --and perhaps Guattari as well-- makes a straw man out of "signifying semiotics" ("Since symbolic semiotics are 'transitional, polyvocal, animistic, and transindividual,' they are not easily assigned to individuated subjects, to persons whereas semiologies of signification bring together only two strata", by which he means that of the "signifier/signified") the stakes these questions find in Guattari's and Lazzarato's work offers an important parallel with Michaux in terms of assigning concrete political underpinnings to semiosis: "Guattari opens more than one venue for reflection, uniting a critique of representative politics and critique of representative functions of language...Signifying semiotics (language, writing) claim to represent all other supposedly pre-signifying modes of expression (corporeal, gestural, iconic) as wll as asignifying ones" (Lazzarato).

sharing of signs and significations. The question naturally occurs whether despite the economic references, it is still a harmlessly artistic novelty Michaux is after, making his work an inconsequential complaint or denunciation. However, insofar as Michaux does not seem to take language and mental functions to be incidental appendages to more immediately material social relations and functions, and instead tends (as he does in "Addendum") to assign a twofold (at once mental and material) meaning to facts or pursuits of "acquisition", "appropriation" and "possession" as modes of having, there is room for a charitable response to his idiosyncratic critique of totality: even if a habit of mental or linguistic appropriation is but a manifestation of a larger world of appropriation and expropriation, it is an *immanent manifestation* for it on the level of the disproportion of development between various human functions.[90] Signs and the functions they foster, the functions and the signs they produce, are deeply interrelated on the fundamental level of their effects on subjectivation, and the role they play in modifying the balance between various human capacities or functions.

In the following, I will draw on some instructive passages from "Coups d'arrêt" that may support such a reading, and also shed light on the planetary subtext of *Par des Traits*. Inasmuch as *Par des Traits* tries to think through and beyond the limited realm of significations afforded by a specific historical stage of association among human

[90] The emphasis on functions and their inherent link to the division of labor, rules out a superstructure-base scheme as a cogent reading of the relations that are at stake here. It is precisely because real subsumption reaches modes of signification that unstroking or retreating an immanent manifestation of real subsumption through the efficacy of signs may contribute to a retreating *at large*. In other words finding in Michaux's problem with signs a mere escape to ideality would miss important aspects of this work. Here the germane insistence Giorgio Agamben makes on the difficulty of finding in Marx's work a superstructure-base structure mediation supports this point: "...the relationship between structure and superstructure can neither be one of causal determination nor one of dialectical mediation, but one of direct correspondence. The hypocrisy implicit in the separation of economic structure and cultural superstructure remains exactly the same if the economic process is made the determining cause, and it is left to mediation to give it a bashful covering with its dialectical veil. The only true materialism is one which radically abolishes this separation, never seeing in concrete historical reality the sum of structure and superstructure, but the direct unity of the two terms in praxis" (Agamben, *Infancy and History*, 119-20).

collectives, and does this from the perspective of the effects of this association on Earth at large, the fragments of "Coups d'arrêt" offer some revealing precedents. The most remarkable in this context is the coexistence of a number of interests that also defines *Par des Traits* with its own tall order of problems: The intimate connection between a historically limited relation to language —or formalization at large— as a form of human sense making, a subjectivation in the hold of acquisitive preoccupation, and the slowly developing status of the human species as an actor on the earth at large. Thus among "Coups d'arrêts"'s portentous formulations one finds references to not only measureless growth but also to a situation characterized by "hominien omnipresence" which resembles in its effects a "threshold of catastrophe" (*Chemins* 79, 77). In talking about a "management and displacement preceding annihilation" (ibid. 77), Michaux also anticipates the responsibility for planetary depredations *Par Des Traits* ascribes to the "office empire": "gun to the planet's head" (*Stroke by Stroke*, n.p.)

As to the status of language and formalization, it is not independent from this management of catastrophe and the limping civilization of "new agitations". In this context, "Coups d'arrêts" offers one of the most likely justifications for the potentially perplexing claim of universality *Par des Traits* makes for the stroke: "Negation, subtraction, RETREAT STROKE BY STROKE/ From birth to death, a stroke/ universal model/ From morning to night/ from unicellular to whale/ from harvest to industry...from tribe to Society/ from hand to office empire" (*Stroke by Stroke* n.p.). The enigma of the stanza certainly owes a lot to the doubling of stroke as constituent of reality and sign or formal constituent in writing. Michaux's lines seem to have a deliberate ambiguity concerning whether the strokes only carry out negations along the axes of amplification he names, or whether they should also be understood to be constitutive of what they

negate: from harvest to industry, and hand to office empire, it would be the work of some sort of stroke or trait that engenders reality at large; and what makes it can unmake it as well. This means the stroke is not an enclave of purity and lost spontaneity, but rather something whose universality precisely follows that of the subsumption itself, giving a justification for the capitals used for RETREAT. Thus the retreating or unstroking in question would have to start from the determinate point of departure of what we suggest to be a state of affairs akin to real subsumption, with all its implications for human capacities and functions.

Moreover, when read in light of "Coups d'arrêts"'s position on a specific form of universalizing formalization, the direction of the passage becomes even more clear. In question is the strong reservation Michaux expresses about the ascendancy of quantitative formalization, in a fragment that tellingly precedes his remark about "measureless growth": "The barrier of signs holds back, the barrier of denominations, the barrier of injunctions. Universality of mathematical measurement. On the other hand, those who seek and encounter in advancing, the unthinkable, the more and more unthinkable, the inconceivable, the indefinitely ungraspable" (*Chemins* 78). For Michaux a form of mathematical/quantitative measurement as the predominant formalization serves a homogenizing function and deals in the fare of the too easily thinkable, creating a reductive form of universality. The vision he conjures evokes an image of social relations programmed by various algorithms at their worst and most homogenizing. When juxtaposed with such a concern, the prospective universality Michaux attributes to the stroke in *Par des Traits* certainly becomes more intelligible: it is a turn toward the inconceivable, toward what does not make sense in the current situation, and eludes the universality of the thinkable conditioned by the social relations of the office empire, as

well as the world of functions it encourages. This explains why the unthinkable should be given such a nonmystical and directly antagonistic thrust that has little to do with a holier-than-thou apophatism: "Against the enemy disguised as dailiness/ against those who "diminish our years"/ at the edges of the well of the Unknown" (*Stroke by Stroke* n.p.).

In one of his last works then, Michaux's characteristic concerns reach heightened stakes, and scale up in terms of their potential implications. It is no longer Michaux the isolated artist, trying to decondition himself in confronting the historicity of a medium or phylum of communication only; what stands to be gained or lost seems much more vital and comprehensive. It is at once health, wakefulness, the gift of being, freedom for unanticipated movement, possibility of different significations, and an everyday that is not lived as a servility. In correlation, the countersign of the unthinkable and the unknown he wants the stroke to be, also carries a gesture toward sociality which makes only intermittent appearance in his work: "I wrote My Properties out of hygiene . . . for my health . . . this book, this experiment which seems to have been born entirely from egotism—I would venture to say it is social . . . an operation within everyone's reach" (*Darkness Moves*).[91] In the poem of *Par des Traits*, Michaux even uses an invocative "we" as his preferred pronoun: "Cure stroke by stroke/ release of gear, sudden veer, stroke by stroke/ Strokes: our therapy, our hygiene, /our defense perimeter" (*Stroke by Stroke* n.p.).

In one sense the stroke is literal, and nothing more than a brush stroke, yet in another

[91] As Richard Ellman writes in an early but accurate evaluation, "thus, as Michaux has declared, his work which appears so egoistic is really social. The hygienic value he says he derives from writing his poems is also derived from reading them" (Ellman).

sense it becomes the repository of all the antagonistic impulses Michaux arrays in his text: it is the agent of unruly multiplicity ("Multiple/above all not single/ not reduced to one/ To sow, to scatter"); it frees novel significations that go against the grain of the thinkable ("So as to open out to new encounters ...offering new chances"). Finally, it holds the promise of a semiosis which can contribute to a nonproprietary subjectivation, a language of desistance from the functions of subsumption, with all the consequences this might mean in terms of avoiding actions and organizations that might exhaust the patience of the planetary milieu:

> a language fulfilling a few basic needs, among friends (and refusing hangers-on), not territorial, not aiming to respond to everything, to cover the entire ground of the Earth, even less to conquer, to convince, to subjugate, to occupy a country or span a lifetime spent in its service, but a language with flavor, with privacy...Beyond the world of utilitarian signals (another chain in the making), a future still lies ahead, a vastness, a renewal, a vacation, satisfaction in, and of, itself. Sign: at last delivering us from litanies of words, from phrases extending into further phrases, it would set the brain free from local overoccupations. Back to a primitive operation whose temptation, still unspoken, now receives a fresh impulse. Signs enabling us to be open to the world in a different fashion, creating and developing a different function within man, *disalienating* man.

To offer an overview of the development so far is in order, before raising a few critical points: Michaux's pragmatic understanding of semiosis which evaluates different systems and forms of expression and signification on the basis of the modes of existence and human capacities with which they are solidary, finds a culmination in *Par des Traits*. In other words, while it is necessary to register the amplification of scale involved in this

work, it would not be true to declare a qualitative rupture with the problem of apprenticeship that has been sketched across this chapter. The discourse which makes the emergences of a different function in humanity dependent on a transformation in prolonged collective practices in alternative semiosis may in fact make reference to historical and social tendencies that are very specific (on the level of semiosis, the rise of the quantitative; and on the level of sociality the establishment of diffuse modes of governance at the service of corporate power). Yet Michaux's overarching interests still shine through here, with a departure in a form of unrest that strongly recalls the episode that opens this chapter: the problem of deconditioning which Michaux first articulates in a context of the hold of verbal signification, seems to be at play in *Par Des Traits* in an equally determining fashion, with the difference that it takes on a slant which accentuates the pressures of the historical present on trainable human functions. Here as well, the main driver of experimentation is a sense of the contingency of what becomes naturalized, with the difference that here Michaux has a much more observant or concrete sense of the complex causalities that inform any arrangement between subjective capacities, including the pragmatic valences of the languages in use in a given society. Here too Michaux sets out with the hypothesis that there are other functions to cultivate than verbality and its compositional possibilities when it comes to thought. However, while the experience of painting shows a novelty rich enough to be sufficient for the Michaux of *Emergences*, *Par Des Traits* takes a more pointed distance with regard to individual artistic work in favor of the idea of an open-ended and collective elaboration of new signs. A further consequence of exactly this change of problem, is that Michaux's preference of trajectories over against projects, reaches a new and differently scaled embodiment, insofar as a trajectory implies a certain contrast with the work-quality of thought, or finishedness.

A solicitude for other functions, habits and temporalities, as well as a desire for a different relation to immediate goals and projects still have relevance here, and the central sclerosis or pathology diagnosed still finds expression as a felt narrowness of possible encounters—the problem of perceptual and affective range which we have identified as a concept important for the configuration of apprenticeship in Michaux. The main difference is that here Michaux is certainly more forthcoming in giving voice to his discontent with the given state of his functions, readiness, and formation as a social and historical discontent, even so far as to intimate a new sense of a prospective universality hinging on signs. Finally, an identifiable contrast is at play with the mode of psychological and psychiatric insight through self-experimentation which characterizes the drug books, and a more direct engagement with social "pathologies" that masquerade as psychological normalities (subjectivity and the relation to language in the hold of preoccupations with a view to acquisitive appropriation and the associated functionalities). It is not a coincidence that Michaux's characteristic language of desistance which finds form in the prefixes like de- and in- —a language of difference and deviation through traversal— makes such an important appearance in the poem — "derealize", "detach", "disagglutinate", "disalienate"— and there is an oblique but nevertheless unmistakable curve that connects deconditioning, disadhesion(Addendum) and the derealization of subsumption with each other.

To air certain criticisms and questions, Michaux is making a proposal which certainly has its problems in terms of the way he situates it in relation to the larger conditions of the world he depicts: the sign, does it and if it does, how does it really fit in and hold a beacon to a world without office buildings and corporations? After all the poem ends on

an unambiguous call to "cross" them out "stroke by stroke". There is the problem of the relation between the "retreating" ingroup he dreams about and the world at large which he knows to have been woven into a web: "Everything is to be a woven into a web, the web of words, the tree into a web, the passing breeze, into a web the distant and the near, into a web the birds on the wing, into a web the unsettled soul, even the blood, the racing blood, into a web if boredom, of enslavement, into a common, monotonous thing" (*Stroke by Stroke*, n.p,).

What is there to ensure that the group and its novel common-places will not turn into the sort of "mandarin" exclusivity Michaux writes about in his idiosyncratic story of the Chinese ideograms?: "withdrawal, self-absorption won out. Won out: the will to be mandarin" (*Ideograms*). Can there be a rigorous democracy of signs without the looseness of an anything goes attitude?: "Thus sort of pictogram or rebus should not exclusively derive from some secret body of knowledge handed down by tradition for the use of occultists, alchemists, astrologers or fringe groups or sects" ("Grasp", *Stroke by Stroke* n.p.).

These open questions notwithstanding, the semiotic ways Michaux weaves into and out of the totalization he diagnoses—which looks suspiciously like real subsumption— is nothing less than provoking, lending itself to both dialogues with concepts forged by Marx, and contemporary thinkers like Felix Guattari, with his own agenda of a nonsignifying semiology in similarly asymmetrical warfare with the signifying semiology and capitalism. Whatever the possible aporias of such a proposal, in the end it is hard not to agree with Raymond Bellour when he writes that there is an "irremediable simplicity" in the way Michaux opens himself "to all of nature, with the insane thought that the real

hope would be changing it. The more prosaic utopia of the secular saint which he becomes is that the future would reserve to man a chance of being something else, so as to glimpse and touch the reality of another nature" (Bellour 40).

Paul Valéry between Method and Paideia

Among the three authors which make the subject of this work's divagations on apprenticeship in formal abstraction, and habit and its relation to emergent forms, perhaps Paul Valéry is the one closest to representing an idea of cultural establishment. Yet he is also the one who spent his whole working career laboring on a gargantuan and little shared project, which was largely unpublished in his life: the Cahiers, the "burrow" and workshop for the more polished pieces he put out for publication during his life. Thanks to the achievements of the editorial work carried out on this unlikely masterpiece of processual writing in the last 30 years, this study can prioritize an engagement with this specific work, in order to come to grips with the networks of relations Valéry wove between writing and habit, as well as the insights he attained in learning from the process of his own notoriously regular, periodic writing on this project.

The main strategy of this study will be distinguishing aspects of Valéry's work that endow it with generative tensions and paradoxes, in order to use them as a relevant background for the main problem unfolded here, that is the various relations between, on the hand, the apprenticeships and habits that inflect a given psycho-physiology on the long term, and on the other, a writing that thematizes and enacts these changes as a worldly part of the system Valéry frequently inscribed as body-mind-world [corps-esprit-monde/CEM].

In a famous quip, Paul Valéry wrote that "poetry is a prolonged hesitation between sound and sense". There are a few other prolonged hesitations that mattered to Valéry, like the

distribution between spontaneity and "articulated" reflection in artistic invention. However, perhaps the most central one which also has relevance for the relation between apprenticeship and experiments with formalization is the one between what he presents as methods or the systematic ambitions of the *Cahiers* and the performative orientation of the becomings of paideia/training.[92] Here it is important to emphasize that this specific hesitation has a predominant place with regard to the themes that govern the direction and historical choices—case studies—of this dissertation. To point out one important reason, the idea of making contingency itself a mode of consistency of the art work and making it communicate with the place of habits in the composition of subjectivity is especially well-served by the framework inherent in this central hesitation between method and paidea.

To offer a roadmap for the coming sections of this chapter, in the following we will find this hesitation informing and being ramified by three main areas and one excursus which constitute strategic portals or tarrying points to explore Valéry's position regarding questions like apprenticeship and habit, and the purchase a pragmatic understanding of formalization offers on these questions. The first of these areas pertains to the oscillation between two different tendencies that mark Cahiers itself, one concerned with logical consistency and systematic closure, and the other the transformations in subjectivity through writing; I argue that a necessary extension of this problematic takes the form of a question of belief. The second area is provided by Valéry's idiosyncratic concept

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It should be pointed out that this difference and polarity is borrowed with modification from Gilles Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition,* where the philosopher's vision of apprenticeship is what drives a wedge between method/knowledge and paideia/subjectivation in exercises of thought: "There is no more a method for learning than there is a method for finding treasures, but a violent training, a culture or paideia which affects the entire individual...Method is the means of that knowledge which regulates the collaboration of all the faculties. It is therefore the manifestation of a common sense or the realisation of a Cogitatio natura, and presupposes a good will as though this were a 'premeditated decision' of the thinker. Culture, however, is an involuntary adventure..." (Deleuze 165).

"implex", primarily a way of re-articulating traditional psychological faculties with the specifications of a functionality-oriented discourse about organs and instrumentality (including writing). Finding its source in Valéry's earlier obsession with the idea and modality of possibility, the implex leads it to inform a generically unlimited number (a multiplicity) of human potentialities, their coexistence, and the manner of their generation and development through training. This section is the most likely one to contribute to Valéry scholarship at large, beyond the restricted aims of this dissertation; the implex would be like a key point in the larger landscape of the whole chapter. Next, an excursus on the role of habit and chance in the *Notebooks* helps stage the way in which Valéry's often expressed intentions to systematize are underwritten or even waylaid by the sheer labor of writing, and concentrates on the periodic style of creation that characterizes the *Notebooks*. Thanks to a number of entries in which Valéry addresses the manner of composition of the work— the regularity of waking up at dawn and jotting down in his notebooks— this section contains the most direct consideration of the ideas of work and aesthetic production for which Valéry is famous. More specifically, this excursus helps me address the charged junctures where Valéry's attention to habit as a dimension of human psycho-physiology also turns to his own labor of formalization in the Notebooks to "out" them as a *labor of dehabituation*. A similar problem is at stake with the relation between chance and its inflections of the architectonically precise modes of labor which Valéry often valorizes. On the basis of this last section, the final outgrowth for the framework of Valéry's central hesitation between method and paidea becomes the fraught relationship between time and formalization, the subject of the final section of this chapter. Here I offer an unfolding of Valéry's implicit aesthetic philosophy of time which makes it coextensive with poetic and artistic realization.

In terms of my approach to scholarship, this positing of a central axis between method and paidea and its further ramifications through strategic interests in Valéry's work, makes for a largely conceptual mode of investigation that excludes certain well frequented foci of historical contextualization, such as the author's relation to his poetic precursors like Stéphane Mallarmé or a more thorough mapping of his relation to contemperanous literary and scientific movements at large.[93] In terms of extension, my study sticks to a reading of Cahiers in Valéry's large body of writings (poetry and prose), for the reason that it offers a fascinating trove of insights —but also exercises and performances— crucial to the theme of the relation between formal abstraction and subjectivation I pursue in this study. Thus I agree with a commentator like Paul Gifford when he underscores the uniqueness of the "private practice of thought centred on the thinking-writing subject" expressed in the Cahiers (Gifford 37). While Valéry's famous dialogues such as Idee Fixe and Eupalinos contribute to my discussion around certain key problems (implexity and the act of production) his poems are of less determining import for this study; this is a deliberate choice on my part that acknowledges but does not consider it necessary to engage with the diverse and "original effects of induction" (Blanchot)— Valéry sought with his poems.[94] Among the two senses of poesis between

[93] Philosophically, works by figures who made Valéry's work a departure for a pursuit of their own singular problems in creative readings have set the primary guideposts for this study, among them Adorno and his essay "Valéry's Deviations", Jean-François Lyotard and his essay "Disorder", Kojin Karatani's *Architecture as Metaphor*, and Renaud Barbaras' *La Vie Lacunaire*. I have also benefitted from focused discussions of particular subjects in Valéry's work in a more literary critical vein, including Robert Pickering's reflections on the relation between form and self-transformation, and Benedetta Zaccarello's discussion of the interplay between visuality and linearity in the Cahiers. Finally works which seem to explore directions conversant with Science Studies and neuroscientific approaches have also influenced this study: Karin Krauthausen's examination of Cahiers in the context of a scriptural technology, Robert Brain's historical study of the overlaps between modernism and technological inscription of time, and Gabriel Fedrigo's intriguing work on Valéry's interest in the brain have all been informative.

[94] This choice on my part is supported by a frequent emphasis in Valéry scholarship on Valéry's instrumentalization of poetry in restricted sense. Joseph Epstein for instance, quotes Valéry as stating that "Poetry [..]. has never been a goal for me—more an instrument, an exercise, and its character derives from this—an artifice—a product of will" (Qtd in Epstein 111). Similarly James Lawler returns to the encounter between Mallarmé and Valéry from the same perspective, and describes Valéry's position in this exchange: "Where Mallarmé sought to turn the poem into an absolute that subsumed memories and dreams in the language of beauty, Valéry made self-awareness his matter and method whose unachievable consummation might yet be considered an ultimate goal, to be possessed 'once and

which Valéry distinguished, my study focuses on the aspect of research on the temporal conditions of production, rather than Valéry's otherwise remarkable exercises and meticulous craftsmanship in forms generically categorized as poems. It is true that Valéry was a vocal critic of rigid oppositions between "abstract thought" and poetry; however, the deliberate narrowing or circumscription of a field is a legitimate strategy in confrontation with a work as rich and diverse as this one. As an appropriative gesture common among various readers of Valéry —of singling out one aspect out of the multiplicity of this authors' interests— indicates, there is a plurality of Valérys, and each new study has to "appropriate", recreate, and come to terms with a unique —albeit communicable— one.[95] My study therefore follows in part a retroactive procedure of research which mines Valéry's work for its engagement with a roster of philosophical problems—ontogenesis, apprenticeship, habit— which are bound to be charged with renewed significance in its proximity. Despite this sacrifice of deep contextual embedding however, with the animation of certain nodes and points of tension, I hope to show how the Valéry which takes habit as a problem of writing, and writing as a problem of habit, at least humors this approach.

Formalization between Exercises and Experiments

Valéry's work in Cahiers from the start shows itself divided between two problematic

for all'" (Lawler 110). Cf. Gladiator 270. Although I am not taking this instrumentalization at face value in the following, I nevertheless think that it renders the letter of the poems in large part contingent in relation to the "metapedagogical" problem of apprenticeship in Cahiers I aim to trace in this chapter.

[95] "Which Valéry?" is a question that accompanies many recent approaches to this author, whether in Anne Mairesse's presentation of a Valéry the "anthropologist", Marcel Gauchet's "unknown reflexologist" or finally, what —in a version which is pertinent to this study— Vincent Kauffman calls "the freest Valéry": "Genetic theory willingly sees itself as the result of a Valéryian relationship to the work and the published text, which Valéry—or at least the 'freest' Valéry, the Valéry of the Cahiers— considered a simple accident" (Kauffman, "Valéry's Garbage Can").

trajectories variously characterized as knowledge and training, system and ethics, experiment and exercise. He admits as much in repeatedly taking up this question; and even the editorial organization of the Cahiers bears witness to this central polarity, with sections dedicated to "System" (knowledge) and Gladiator (training) kept separate, however contemperanous their development may have been.[96] How does Valéry link them up with each other, and overcome the irreconcilabilities in this relation? More immediately how might this relation impact on Valéry's sense of writing and poetic production as a form of ' 'making oneself" or one's mind? Here I offer a discussion which presents a possible approach to this overarching polarity, in preparation for my concentration on individual figures and problems like fiducia and implex in the coming sections.

In the first trajectory, methods of research, procedures of self-observation, analysis, as well as the representation of consciousness have a determining role to play, and Valéry often classifies this trajectory with the title "System", gesturing toward the formalization of psycho-physiological spacetime, experience, function, and occurrence. The entries bearing on the system and the possibility of a method often distinguish themselves with a singular preoccupation with the merits, adequacy and limits of analysis as a procedure of thought: "Any method consists, basically, of clearly distinguishing and knowing its elements- the rest is nothing, it takes care of itself".[97] From an interest in the delimitation

[96] In one his several attempts at expressing what he might take as the polarity of his orientations between method and paidea Valéry writes "The work is twofold - 1. To purify - to redraw things giving them new signs, to dissolve the relations between them and cause them to crystallize all over again - To prepare pure bodies - Musical scale. And, 2. to transpose these new elements into the realm of what is available, the spontaneous future, the immediate, - making them both automatic and part of the sensibility" (Phil. 52). Here the significant contrast and coexistence between abstraction and immediacy –sensibility as well its role in a making "automatic"— deserve special mention of course.

[97] In a note Valéry writes, "My ideal is essentially one o f analytics - more all-embracing and less pretentious than that of metaphysicians. Which comes down to never introducing entities, only concepts, and not using terms overloaded with meaning" (Phil 77). And yet he is also capable of resituating this claim by stating that "Only one thing is important - that which, infinitely and indefinitely, escapes analysis, — that tiny particle, that residue, that extreme decimal. And this is why

and precision of the object—whether it is consciousness, a series of functions[98] or psychological "operations"— Valéry often moves to a more meta-level interest in the language or "figuration" employed to provide descriptions and analyses; and thus the status of representation itself gets charged with renewed significance: "I sense that all future progress in philosophy will depend upon how strong the desire will be to represent consciousness and thought more or less accurately" (Phil. 39). Therefore the pursuit of a language which can establish relations of referentiality that serve clarity, distinctness (univalence) and consistency makes up an integral part of the "System", and fuels Valéry's critique of established philosophical terminology[99] in favor of a freshly designed "alphabet of thoughts, hence of a formalised set of relationships between the products of the mind" (Pietra 92). Benedetta Zaccarello, who points out an impression of Valéry's work as expressing "a generic will to clarity and rationality" (Zaccarello 3, pour une logique organique du tracé) is referring to this dimension of Valéry's work, as does Regina Pietra, when she writes that Descartes represents for him "the inventor of a method borrowing its rigour from mathematics,'le premier constructeur d'un univers entierement metrique'('the first constructor of an entirely metrical universe').[100]

As these scholars attest there is an aspect of Valéry's work –finding particular expression in the section System in the Cahier— which is marked by an insistence on the minute

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ever more clear-cut, tightly argued, subtle, precise - unbearable - analyses must be carried out" (Ibid. 51).

98 Underlying its organic applications, Valéry defines "function" as follows: "I used this term to name those things that can only do one thing, such as muscle fibres, and which respond only in this way, whatever the incitement" (Phil. 114).

99 Pietra gives some relevant examples here: "'hypothesis','substance','soul','spirit','idea','thought'".

100 See Valéry's note on Descartes apropos the possibility of a system: "Grosso modo the System involved the search for a language or a notation that would allow me to treat de omni re in the same way that Des Cartes's analytic geometry made it possible to deal with all figures. The human body (seen as a system of variables) must provide the secret. Function, here, means dependency — Hence the notion of functional states" (Phil 69). Yet we should note that no statement of Valéry's relation to Descartes is complete without taking into account the unique interrogative twist he would ultimately give to Cogito: "*To be self aware, is this not to feel that one could be quite different?*" (*Collected Works. Moi 291*).

observation of the living being, a search for referential clarity and verification, an eliminationist critique of philosophy from the point of view of the impurities of its language, and an overall ambition to exhaustively document the workings of various human functions under observation—physiological and mental— with the help of an efficient and coherent "system" of representation composed of univalent notions or signs. The fundamental imperative here is to describe without changing or "muddling," finding merit in a methodical abstraction without a significant pragmatic dimension that would deserve the name; purity of concepts and exhaustive referential relation define the main goals.

In contrast however, there are other demands which develop alongside these tendencies: as if to indicate how they are cut from the same cloth, these demands are those that are disregarded by the first trajectory, and revolve around the increasing of possibility, gaining mastery over one's skills, reaching into a conception of psychism more open to a pragmatic relation with itself, enabling Valéry to inquire into the question of automatization and habit as forms of internalization and incorporation of change. A crucial condition here is a supposition of a psycho-organic possibility open to extension and transformation through training, attention, and even descriptive inscription. While a certain taste for abstraction is preserved here, this second trajectory also implies a different relation to language. Whereas under the first aspect demands on language have a largely referential and analytical orientation, the aspect of self-transformation in Valéry concerns psychoorganic functions, preferences, and habits, which would include the language which describes them. The predominant relation shifts from one between object and description to one between power and transformation. This strand of his work thereby becomes much more performative, ultimately showing an interest in the way language—

and in this case observation too— may be caught up in the transformation of the situations and structures on which it is brought to bear. To put it simply, the distinction between the two strands thereby comes down to describing without changing on the one hand, and changing while describing change.[101] These two strands of Valéry's work, the epistemic-exhausting-necessitating and the pragmatic-exhausted-possibilizing[102] (provisional labels to be unpacked shortly) communicate across their separation, and their differences make up an interesting spectrum between method's excess over becoming and becoming's excess over method, condensing all the antithetical dilemmas and the fragile integrations of Valérian thought.[103]

What are here called exhausting and exhausted—borrowed with modification from Gilles Deleuze—correspond to different polarized and interlocking ambitions of Valéry's writing. The exhausting, which seeks the benefits of a minute classification working on the results of previous observation on the mind, organism and milieu is characterized by a drive to all-encompassing systems, with symbols and notations involved being spared the inconvenience of ever moving on the same level with what they are intended to represent and deduce, either forestalling or with no sense for paradoxes of undecidability: "The idea

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[101] If the performative as a charecterization of the second pole works, this is for the same reason that "constative" may also do, for the first.

[102] I borrow these terms from Gilles Deleuze's study of Samuel Beckett. However the specific functions of the terms in Deleuze's study are not preserved here, and the appropriation works on the level of words more than meaning. One could certainly appropriate them otherwise in a way more faithful to their Deleuzian source, for instance by bringing them to bear on Valéry's own problems with fatigue and a sense of effort, but this is not an option that is pursued here.

[103] Belying the impression that these contrasting aspects are in rigid opposition, Valéry's Gladiator—ostensibly concerned with training and apprenticeship—offers some of the most instructive examples of the charged complementarity where symbolic transparency and transformation impinge on each other's ground. A theoretical imperative to "redraw things by giving them new signs" may not necessarily lead to intervening in an automatism, but any interest in automatism has strong stakes in rendering things conscious: "the notion of Gymnastics is of capital importance—that's where my philosophy is to be found. The constant maneuvring of two great inverse operations: passing from the conscious to the unconscious; from the unconscious back to the conscious" (Glad. 264). The point of convergence for the contrasting searches for analytical purity and self-transformation finds an apt example in the inducement of consciousness for acts of language themselves: "Render language conscious—like a conscious act...Words are foreigners. In the mental act they are the point at which awareness of the act ceases. Defining is intended to push awareness further on" (Glad. 291).

is of a pan-logic - of representing all things by a closed system, or of deducing from the things you perceive - a system of usable images analogous to a closed system" (System 74). Since Valéry himself repeatedly associates the desire for the closed system with a certain ideal of exhaustiveness, this aspect is here called the exhaustive, defined by obeying the imperatives of total clarity, translatability and commutability. This desire for exhausting approximates and has strong kinships with what Deleuze and Guattari characterize as an axiomatic "Royal science". It is also called exhaustive for the implication of an end or telos to research, in disparity with Valéry's appreciation for the unfinished and the nascent otherwise, amply accounted for by the overall quality of the document that is the Cahiers regardless of any individual entry such as "There is no thought which by its very nature can be the last possible thought" (Psych 90).

In this capacity the exhausting corresponds to any rigorous formalization practice and set of logical processes that value as products precision, univalence and security of deductive grounds over a formal productivity not exhausted in its products. As a corollary, taken on its own, the exhausting in Valéry also makes unthinkable a tighter correlation between his interest in systems of formalization and his interests in aesthetic production, because in Valéry it is sensation that carries endless productivity and suspension of telos into the work of mind. As he writes, "sense...the germ of production of the work of art is that neither any act, nor any term can exhaust it" (Notion Generale) and the germ of production is "sensible", witness his bold attempt at a generalization of sensation as a generative "imbalance".[104]

[104] In a note, Valéry writes: "Here is one theory: sensation is an imbalance produced in a fundamental system or economy that is subcurrent. The imbalance can be produced in any number of systems—which generalizes the common notion of sensation. Thus a contrast in ideas which would be a sensation of intelligence" (Sens. 326).

In contrast, the exhausted here spans the whole extent of Valéry's writings that makes a certain provision for the value of making felt the production, maintenance and transformations of systems physiological-intrinsic or representational. It is never an exclusion of abstract formalization, but an attempt to link it with the dynamism of sensate embodiment and generatively prolonged gestural operations. Philosophically, the exhausted in Valéry is really invested in reestablishing the connection between sensible and intelligible sense. In this function it carries out a reversal of the unfeasible metalinguistic project of the definitive separation between formalization and what it is intended to model or signify, especially when the object is the situated human subject involved in paradoxes of self-observation/knowledge as in the writing of the Cahiers. More particularly, the exhausted opens up abstract notation[105] to a dehabituating drift through what Valéry calls a "re-function" or "re-faculty", the sensitizing element in training that prioritizes the counteraction of the unquestioned given through resources of modulating repetition, or habit in its achievement capacity : "Thinking-Rethinking. It is an application of the Re-faculty (Reflecting). It involves going from the known to the unknown. Meditation of this sort is in the opposite direction. What I knew I no longer know. What I crossed is now an obstacle" (Psych 236). Whatever one calls them, the attitude defined by a desire to harness reflexivity for countering tendencies of habituated insensibility or anesthesis, differs in its goals from the attitude defined by the aim of expanding "logic" to incorporate human functions with the help of a largely indifferent linguistic instrument; and their close partnership makes up for paradoxical situations (e.g. what about a project of formalization that loses its "re-faculty", or tries to re-gain it?).

The exhausted is also what is easily observable in Valéry's various analyses on nausea, fatigue, confusion, distraction, physiological self-maintenance, tail-wagging, finger-

[105] Such as the one that upholds the pan-logic by making it an efficiently descriptive system.

tapping expectation, the difference and assembly of discontinuous phases that delimit the range of possible action and knowledge like sleep or alertness, and finally his conceptualization of the time-bound act of knowing or encounter with cognitive objects as a "non-stable state... that constitutes an event", fulfilling the vision of what he calls a "physics of the mind" (System 102). All the more so for construction, which can only be an act of knowing of what it can put together contingently in a not quite accident-free set-up. In summary, whereas the exhausting Valéry aspires to a language and a closed formal system presiding over a pan-physical-psychical realm of phenomena with no regard for the empirical limits, formal undecidabilities and the accidents that may beleaguer it, the exhausted Valéry concerns itself with "the physics of the mind" in its generative instability, the chiasms between the observer and the observed[106] as well as the "hexic" potentials of thought and inscription itself.

These oscillations account for the most diverse antitheses of the Cahiers, particularly in terms of Valéry's self-definitions of his project, and offer a pivoting power for the conceptualization of its most wrenching contradictions. Whereas Valéry frequently takes the side of the axiomatic, and seems to hitch his notebooks to explorations in this vein, the manner in which he makes his case seems to open up different possibilities. As Karin Krauthausen writes, "The writing praxis of the Cahiers does not implement the writing model of the Cahiers, but it implements a writing as technology of the self, in which writing alone demands a continuation of writing" (Krauthausen 247).

[106] To take a late entry which is more than cognizant of this problem and broaches it apropos the formation of instinctive yet prepared muscular reactions, Valéry writes, "all means of notation for ourselves as for others- suppose a division (and opposition) between the object and the operator. Yet that is precisely what characterizes these nascent states -that there is no such clear stable division. One would need a system where perception did not modify what is perceived" (*Psych* 194). Then again the notes dedicated to the "system" close on a similar note in the *Notebooks*: "I am unable, have never been able to separate a 'knowledge of knowledge' from a representation of the functioning of the whole system" (*System* 115).

This is not to argue however that the two aspects in Valéry's development admit a clean-cut separation. Rather, there are good reasons to suppose that Valéry's interest in analytical and even deductive notation itself might have led to or at least made significant contributions to the more performative, practice-oriented vein in his writing. From the earliest beginnings of his interest in geometry, Valéry seems to find its abstract forms open to more sensuous grasp, referring to the "sensation of formation" of images in their "natal milieu", and their "unstable composition" (v7 163). Accordingly, from the start Valéry has a strong sense of formalization—at least the geometrical— as a milieu for the transformation of the given, in conformity with his preference for distinguishing "what is given from what it can become through work" (Collected W. Moi 301). The spectrum of relations between the exhausting Valéry and exhausted Valéry thus includes versions that imply direct superimposition and indiscernibility between them. Whenever his more abstract preoccupations around notation starts moving away from the ambitions of exhaustive closure through axiomatic progress, to incorporate a power of constant renewal and a gestural element, Valéry's work gains a fascinating depth anticipating philosophical theories of mathematical creativity like Gilles Chatelet's work on diagrams: "As it were, they [diagrams] can prolong themselves into an operation which keeps them from becoming worn out..." (Chatelet 10). It is only when commutability of functions, metalinguistic purity and clarity of univalent terms start to gain primacy at the expense of an operation around the given that Valéry's formalization practice loses its vital connections with hexic embodiment and weakens its signature adventure in the virtuality of form.

Consolidating the complementarity of the two Valérys, exploring the limits of systematizing may become exactly that, and there is a case to be made that certain

insights about becoming can only be gained by traversing systems to the end. It is important to admit that perhaps it is not least in exploiting systems to the full that Valéry is able to put systems in a trial of becoming, foreshadowing something akin to Kojin Karatani's rigorist insistence that "only persistent formalization or construction would lead to the exteriority [what lies outside] of form", which would not be a bad description of a certain fortunate compromise in Valéry. Thus, what Valéry very insightfully describes as the "two chapters" of his philosophy, experiments (de/recomposition of functions, abilities, phases and their analytical comparison) and exercises (the hexic and somatic underpinnings of generalized sensibility that "realize" the former) are simultaneous and conceivable only one through the other (Glad. 269).[107] A primarily propositional tendency breaks down and classifies into groups while a primarily nonpropositional tendency gathers up, contracts and lives, but the analytical itself lives and constructs, and realization is an implicit power of future analysis in its developments and directional determinations. The famous problems of "worklessness" and an instrumental use of work for subjective self-improvement in Valéry are inscribed exactly within and between these simultaneous currents.[108]

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[107] The entry that is the basis of these two categories deserves quoting in full: "My philosophy -It is contained in two chapters. These chapters are not consecutive. One of them first, then the other.; or the reverse. For if truth be told, they are, and can only be, simultaneous. One is called: Experiments. The other is called: Exercises. The first deals with impressions, hesitant approaches and clarity. It makes its way towards the construction of acts; organization and disorganization; energies and impediments; movements in successive states –;chance the accidental, the significant, and what is adapted or accomodated. The other is functioning, formal development" (Glad. 269). To what extent the analytical and functioning/exercise can encroach on each other's terrain is already clear in this entry. It especially bears pointing out how the objectives of Valéry's experimental attitude themselves require a relation to them that already subtly slips into something more than method: a construction of acts, "chance the accidental", adaptation...

[108] As a result of these interlockings it becomes really hard to decide whether the philosophy attributable to Valéry is an "epistemology of potentiality" as Pablo Valdivia Orozco helpfully proposes, or something else. If an epistemology of potentiality is only another attempt at exhaustion and completion of potentialities and functions of psychophysiology without establishing the inherent potentiality and emergence of the function of knowing itself, one is left with the narrowly representative "exhausting" Valéry's primacy at the expense of all the others. If "to REPRESENT *that which is*, that which can be...and construct a system of functional images" (System 64), becomes an adequate statement of the goals of this "philosophy", thereby identifying it with a static project, both the genesis of representation, and the genesis, maintenance and the becomings of the represented system gets short shrift. If epistemology is about the conditions of truthful representation only, it cannot but make impossible the posing of certain questions pertaining to Cahiers. However, when epistemology meets in Valéry the

To offer a condensed summary, we might posit that in Valéry, there is a necessary coexistence between a provision for the possibility of the emergence of new functions or capacities through education or habituating acts, and the decentring of a problematics of knowledge. A Cahiers entry brings a lucid simplicity to this general problem of classification of Valéry's philosophy: "My philosophy is not explicative but operative. Explanation itself is simply an application of its operative activity. Between Being and Knowing is Doing..." (System 97).

An operative philosophy is perhaps neither an ontology nor an epistemology and remains irreducible to problems of knowledge understood traditionally. In response, Valéry's works contains rich stagings of the interplay between knowing and making, an interplay which ceaselessly confronts the insufficiency of purely epistemic approaches with ones residing in techne, "doing and acquiring of know-how" (*Phil* 329). When knowing and making receive treatment as coeval parts of a single composite process of comprehension-invention in his work, Valéry indirectly introduces a strategic gap between knowing and recognition, as an object of knowing that is simultaneously a product of artistic making can rarely be an object of recognition. However, it is perhaps the question of the relation between making and belief and its specific temporalities that have not received much attention, considering the amount of reflection Valéry devoted to

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training of whatever functions needed to know, or know otherwise, and starts taking into account what given functions need to become what they are, in other words, when it has to know potentiality through potentiality, it variously moves toward or hands over to an ethics, an anthropotechnics, a philosophy of paideia and individuation. It is interesting that Valéry repeatedly gravitates toward these interrelated problems whenever he casts around for a formulation of his "philosophy": "Don't look for 'truth' - but cultivate the powers and the modes of organization which serve to seek out or establish truth...Don't look for the work — but for the powers behind it. Knowledge is worth its value as dressage" (Glad. 266). Similarly, the imperative to "reform ways of thinking-ways of feeling", in explicit engagement with the limits of a "psychoorganic domain of possibility", and the pragmatic desire "to bring the springs of my own being into play" deserve a framework other than purely epistemological, if one is to respond to distinctly Valerian concepts like "the implex".

belief. If the problem of belief may not be "the ultimate problem" of Valéry's work as Daniel Oster somewhat playfully suggested, it is still worth considering whether the operative philosophy wedged between knowledge and being, can correspond to a form of believing.

Writing as Trust: Account of a "Fiduciary" Practice

In the previous section I referred to Valéry's gesture toward an operative philosophy which aims to be a conscious processual activity/doing of explication and not merely the search for an explication as a result, a philosophy which allows a certain spacing between making and knowledge. I also mentioned the way Valéry's brushes with "Royal Science" and ideals of metalinguistic purification inadvertently create an obstacle for a thorough engagement with the question of sensibility, which would necessarily inform an aesthetic practice of making and inquiries directed toward it—even more so considering Valéry's avowed investment in situating sensibility—as a generative imbalance— as one of the conditions of a constructive abstraction. Supported by the the tentative but unmistakable associations Valéry makes between a form of belief—what he calls "Fiducia"— and sensibility, in this section I take belief as a figure which fleshes out Valéry's operative philosophy and tempers its axiomatic tendencies through providing a mediation with sensibility. With its reference to belief as a "force" exterior to propositional construction but nevertheless enabling it, I intend this brief discussion to prepare the ground for the next section on Implex.

Although the role of belief in the writing of Cahiers has not received sufficient attention in the scholarship, there are important benefits to a perspective of belief, including but not limited to the so-called "operative philosophy". If we follow Valéry in moving from a satisfaction with results and products to conditions and powers accounting for production —"never look for a perfection or power of an individual mind — in a result"—the question of the totality of forces that account for the production of Cahiers becomes a legitimate one. Here I propose that the questions "How did Cahiers get to be written?" and "How is the 'system' itself possible?" would not find sufficient response without an examination of the role of belief in the poetic economy of the work. More particularly I think there is a case to be made that the polarities and even dualities of Cahiers between the objectives of exhausting formalization and self-transformation find a certain resolution in the behavior—one can also call it a mode of existence— of the one who believes.[109] A more concrete idea of how the rapprochement of training and abstraction on the level of belief works, is inseparable from a temporal dimension that belief takes on in the economy of Cahiers: it is possible to show the way belief might be active in the fragmentary form and temporality of the Cahiers, beyond a generic assertion of its importance.

Let us establish the context which situates belief as a possible resolution between the endeavor toward formal abstraction/closed systems—the exhausting— and the more ontogenetically oriented "paideia" branch of Valérian thought. Valéry candidly exposes the belief that sustains one of the axiomatic cornerstones of his projected closed system,

[109] Here I refer to the "mode of existence of the one who believes" with reference to the disassociation it enables between transcendence and belief. As Deleuze and Guattari argue in *What is Philosophy?* belief entails possibilities of relation with the world not necessarily exhausted by the positing of a transcendent object and its impositions of reverence in the image of religious faith. I would argue that this move of bringing Valerian Fiducia within the ambit of a more immanent relation to world would not be contradicted by his views in the Cahiers: "For myself – faith is a quasi-physical fact" (*Theta* 420).

the assertion that "thought and knowledge derive from a certain — vital — mental form of mechanics": "I spent my life believing in this, and making observations to this end;—thus becoming more sensitive to this perspective, — and thus also discovering the necessary grounds for my belief" (System 111).[110] Belief seems to have constitutive importance for the Cahiers' task of analyzing the vital-mechanical derivation of knowledge and thought, because it also makes Valéry ever more sensitive to the possible justifications—experimental and speculative—of the initial allegiance.[111] As an illustration we can take the apparatus of abbreviations, notations and operations—Ψ for mind instance— Valéry uses to inscribe the relations between mind, body and the world to be driven by a kind of belief in the final instance. However, in a strange echo of this statement, belief is also shown to characterize Valéry's attitude to the aspect of his reflections revolving around paidea and ontogenesis: "I realize I never write in these notebooks what gives me pleasure...but rather, anything that seems to me capable of increasing my power of transformation—of modifying by combination—my implex. This supposes a kind of belief in some form of self-construction" (Notebooks 1 47). As we emphasized earlier the attitude defined by the aim of expanding "logic" to tabulate human functions and the attitude defined by intervention in habits and increasing one's possibilities coexist despite their difference; thus it is striking that this second statement

[110] A definition of "confirmation bias" if you will. As Valéry seems to have felt intimately, "either you really don't see it - or you pretend you don't see it. All faith has bad faith for auxiliary" (*Theta* 416).

[111] In the most famous avatar of belief in Valéry's work, the concept he calls "Fiducia", belief is classically an assent without the guarantee of return in "observable" and verifiable data, thus "purely verbal" in the common characterization preferred by Valéry. It is easy to recognize that this role of belief owes its existence in major part to the same iconoclastic impulses that give rise to the "exhausting," the stickler-for univalent definitions-Valéry: "Example: We speak of 'time' - But what do we observe that makes us use this noun?" (Phil. 349). Thus when he is undermining the fiducia "expended" on other similar concepts like time, he only acts in accordance with a fundamental tendency of his work identified in the last section as an eliminationist critique of philosophy: "The only questions to be considered and retained are those that are concerned with the *observable* functioning of the living being" (my emphasis). Much like a category such as ideology as false consciousness, Fiducia makes up the domain of the fictional relations and purely expedient commitments in "social life, religion, politics and history", taking which at face value would be a naive and misguided credulity. Regine Pietra's article "An art of rethinking: Valéry's' negative philosophy", is important for a philosophical commentary on this concept, establishing its links with the early Platonic understanding of "doxa".

bases the pragmatic relation between transformation and power on belief, in the same way as the first bases the theoretical assertion of the "vital-mechanical" derivation of knowledge on the same. I suggest that in this convergence there lies a promise of intelligibility concerning the production of Cahiers.

The question should occur in what sense are we talking about the same thing, and whether the twinned statements make a confession of faith or mere doxa—fiducia in Valéry's unflattering equivalent for the fictive and groundlessly credulous. As it would be unlikely for Valéry to consign his work of 40 years to mere opinion, it becomes legitimate to elaborate in what sense a reference to belief is at work, in the most characteristic avowals of the kind expressed with "as though", or similarly when Valéry writes "My 'faith' has been in a system, a system of thought, based on the equivalence of all things or all categories of things... " (*Phil.* 559).[112]

Schematically, I propose two headings under which belief demands to be rethought in relation to Cahiers. The first one concerns a tempering of the foundationalist impulses that drive the axiomatic ambitions of the Cahiers, and the second concerns a recipe for attention geared to an intensity deployed for more "abductive" insights.[113] Following

[112] The theoretical faith is implied in philosophically resonant hypotheticals like "as though", frequently establishing the basis of his resort to mathematics as a formal system: "I cannot see sleep — attention — except as 'equations'. It's the basis of my theory of phases. I reason as though these equations existed" (System 53). "For 40 years I have been thinking as though there existed a hidden mathematics of the 'properties of the mind,' of which everything thought, discovered etc. would be merely the disguised consequences" (System 100). Perhaps it would not be wrong to compare a belief of this kind that Valéry admits underlies his work with what Brian Massumi calls a "lived belief": "We all adhere, impersonally, in a lived belief in the world's continued holding-together across its gaps...This belief is 'lived' because it is prior to any possible verification, having been always-already experienced by the time it is tested" (Massumi 220). In Valéry's case the holding together is that of the Notebooks as much as it is of the world. Thus there is a strong case to be made that what kept Valéry producing the notebooks in the 50 years he mentions cannot only be the brittle propositional certainty of the viability of his project, since it is repeatedly under question, but a more practical and even living element that works on a level beneath the explicit verbal commitment to this or other credo. A trust at once freer—given the bypassing of explicit propositional justification—and less free—one is driven—is at stake.

[113] In one of his many attempts at definition, Charles Sanders Peirce characterized "abduction" as follows: "The abductive suggestion comes to us like a flash. It is an act of insight, although of extremely fallible

Valéry I call this aspect "sensitization". Of these two headings I propose the second one to be an intimate sharer in the role of belief in self-construction and therefore give weight of elaboration to it.

In contrast with what Valéry calls a "Fiducia" in the iconoclastic sense, there is room for a belief which represents a trust that is not deliberate ignorance of the real conditions of an affirmation, but a betting and a performative overview that itself brings into existence the correlatives and guarantees of its affirmations, regardless of the fact that the initial gamble—that sleep and attention are amenable to inscription in the form of equations, for instance— is not based on an exhaustive determination of the plausibility of the project.[114] If there is a will to science in Valéry, it is accompanied by a sense that science needs a certain relation on the order of belief not discernible from its effects in the accretion of experiment and proof. Specifically, in Cahiers Valéry has to reconcile the difficult scepticism of readymade definitions and traditional metaphysical concepts—like time, being, finality and even freedom— with a suspension of disbelief in the insightfully synoptic efforts of his work in progress, thus reconcile critique with conceptual construction, resulting in a balancing act between the desire for foundational purity and what is ultimately the indefinite delegation or postponement of any foundational statement to future.

Secondly belief has a natural affinity with what Valéry elsewhere calls "sensitization", indicating that it can play a mediating role between his abstract preoccupations with the

insight. It is true that the different elements of the hypothesis were in our minds before; but it is the idea of putting together what we had never before dreamed of putting together which flashes the new suggestion before our contemplation".

[114] In a personal recapitulation of the philosophical gesture of drawing out the presuppositions of scientific rationality in an initiatory "faith in the order of the world", or a "theoretical faith" Valéry candidly exposes the belief that sustains one of the axiomatic cornerstones of his projected closed system. The two phrases come respectively from A.N. Whitehead and Kojin Karatani in their parallel conclusions on the relative obscurity which may conceal the belief which is a driving factor even for the exact sciences.

analytical notation of the human physiological system and his more aesthetically oriented inquiries centered around the production of works of art as extensions of a "psycho-organic domain of possibility". Sensitization is a time-bound process of attunement to certain givens which is open to intensification. A great example of this is found in Valéry's essay *Man and the Sea Shell*, where he tries to bring a rational explanation to the impression of chance given by the discovery of a seashell—with its striking form: "to say that a thing is remarkable is to bring in a man— a person who is particularly sensitive to it, and it is this person w ho supplies everything that is remarkable about it. W hat difference does it make to me, if I have no lottery ticket, whether one number or another is picked out of the urn? I have not been 'sensitized' to the event" (*Man and the Sea Shell* 124). The impression of chance generative of wonder and surprise is to be attributed to a certain structure of anticipation in a "man"—which is in turn generated out of engagement with newly articulated problems— and it is this model that I take to introduce a form of constitutive belief to the actual writing process, and the combinatory development of Cahiers, as there are indications of an association between sensitization in this sense and "fiducia" in Valéry's notes. Insofar as a reference to sensitization encodes an acknowledgment of a domain of receptivity amenable to indirect intervention, it also introduces a certain relation to habituation.

In the scholarship there are discussions of the relation between fiducia and problems of semiotics, but often these are elaborated in a restricted context.[115] However, the promise of intelligibility fiducia brings to the relation between belief/trust and self-transformation

[115] For instance, Thomas Vercruysse noted how "the problematic of fiducia is partly related to that of the sign", remarking on Valéry's demand to meet the verbal edifice of his System with observables that would correspond to it: As Vercruyyse notes—along with Jarrety— in Valéry it is the verbal artifacts not motivated by directly observable functions—such as a substantial soul—that are prone to the designation "fiduciary". Vercruyse's understanding of the relation between sign-fiducia therefore goes through the first and limited sense of fiducia which makes it equivalent to a certain naiveity of opinion.

—mediated through production— requires supplementing this relation with a differently articulated one cognizant of the more affirmative implications fiducia is capable of carrying in Valéry's work.When taken out of the more predictable strictures against the purely verbal, and transposed into the production of Cahiers, fiducia in its capacity of binding to signs and forms has much more interesting extensions, like a belief in/as the capacity for that very improbable feat that is surprising oneself—in the face of the new configurations much frequented signs may enter. As I emphasized above, what is at stake is an indirect attempt to intervene in modes of receptivity.[116]

Particularly I would propose that the combinatory dynamics of writing in the Cahiers presupposes a structure of intensification, the gaining of salience or a sense of contrast that follows the contours of the process he calls sensitization. For Valéry, every idea that inflects his system, has necessarily active virtual ties with the pscyho-physiological constellation or group out of which it springs, and which it simultaneously constitutes in the first place. He is always more interested in an overdetermined and enabling background or network that constitutes a hidden but controlling remainder for any given idea than the idea itself, witness his elaborate and extensive attempts to establish a chrono-topological model for this network.[117] In the economy of ideas and signs fiducia corresponds precisely to the power of transformation atributed to this larger ensemble on the occasion of any emergent idea, thereby entailing an impregnation of the resolutely

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[116] Valéry's connection between fiducia and signs brings a whole metaphorics of money and stock to bear on language. As "The Freedom of the Mind" essay, and the introduction to his course in poetics at College De France show, Valéry had an ongoing fondness for this metaphor, frequently bringing up "the going rate" of mind in culture at large, or that of the individual ideas in his own system, in tension with the group of incommensurables he found in chance, surprise, and the improbable, which Adorno must have had in mind when he mentioned a "dignity of chance" in Valéry's work. However, the economic capacity of signs, and by implication Fiducia, is not limited to this stimulating and much frequented question of metaphorics and the possible deconstruction of the distinction between what is proper and what is improper.

[117] This is an aspect of his work that is also supported by a concept such as the "phase", on which more later.

abstract with values that are sensible: "'Ideas' are nothing without values. Every idea has a VALUE, situated between zero and infinity, which is sometimes lasting and at times inseparable from it; sometimes intermittent—. This value or 'fiducia' is energy, the action of the idea on the sensibility, firstly; and then, on the motor system. In short, on the reserves of free energy" (*Sensibility* 329). Thus the degree to which an idea —such as the possible influences of Mediterranean urban environments on the psychology of their inhabitants, as in the case of a Valéry essay— enlists an intensity of investment corresponds to its fiducia.[118] Moreover, ideas are not only repositories of sensory values because of the "energy" and investment they marshal however, but also because sensibility intrinsically holds in store the model of a task-to-be-completed/imbalance that informs the ideas in their own fashion: "Seeing an object is not seeing what the eye perceives—a task—constantly providing the final term in a series of substitutions" (*Sensibility* 337). "Fiducia. Seeing is only of use through a belief in the properties not seen, which are recalled or suggested by what you do see" (*Psych* 243).[119]

It is mainly through these two features—action on sensibility, and the task nature inherent in it— that the real writing model of Cahiers, which deviates from axiomatic and deductive systematization, continually relaunches a problematic of belief at the same time as obtaining a productivity from it. The way Cahiers constantly returns to certain privileged objects of concern like attention, memory, chance, habit and a vision of

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[118] Often, Valéry describes the same processes under the aegis of a dimension that will be even more important for this study later, one that corresponds to the relative obscurity or hiddenness of an enabling background for any given idea:

> The new fact finds no place within the frame of the given...phase. If (through this) we can compare an 'idea' to a detonation or a shock because of the results produced, it is because ideas contain a *hidden element. No idea without something else*, that is part of the significant and marks its value, but acts upon the formal — and that precisely is its value. That is what differentiates ideas deep down and constitutes the charge of signs on which the immediate affective power depends (*Psych* 191).

[119] "Belief. The real and indispensable function of *believing* is of a practical order. *One can't do anything* without *ignoring* certain aspects of perceptions, and without *adding* to what's left certain values not in evidence" (Psych 245).

capacities in development is thus a testament to their power to act upon the very singular physical constitution that is Paul Valéry, or the way this author felt "energized" and ultimately transformed by the "task" of thinking or writing about them. Since the practice of writing here has a fragmentary nature, any temporal framework has to take into account the productive intervals between the Cahiers entries, always transposing, synthesizing and re-processing the synthesis, and reversely giving rise to new receptivities and productive phases: "You need to be two to invent. One man takes combinations, while the other selects, notices what he wants and what can be of service to him in the total output of his colleague" (*Analects* 285).[120] It would not be wrong then to align fiducia with that "charge of signs" that is itself strongly related to an affective-sensible power animating for thought, suggesting that a "credibility" or trust that has an affective form has a place among and beside the austere abstractions of Cahiers.[121]

[120] The constitutive affective power that goes into an idea mediated by signs or forms raises the question of temporality of this process of instigation/ induction which Valéry elsewhere likened to the evolution of a nebula. The proper characterization of the temporality at work in the activation of a fiduciary charge for thought, such as the one that drove the diverse conceptual inventions of Valéry throughout the years he wrote the Cahiers (phase; implex; the use of topology and group theory in psychology) certainly cannot rely on a scheme of bare repetition, leaving inventiveness unaccounted for. More importantly it cannot presuppose the identity of the emotional and intellectual phase that attaches to each of the entries. The temporal framework has to take into account the productive intervals between the Cahiers entries, always transposing, synthesizing and re-processing the synthesis, and reversely giving rise to new authors and productive phases. The equation for this balance is supplied very early in Valéry's career: "Among the conditions of thought, is the following: not too much conservation—and symmetrically not too much transformation-" (Psych. 182)

It is against this background of maneuvres around modulating repetition that another crucial model of time in formal invention appears in Valéry, a model which has a privileged relationship to the problematic of belief and making. In contrast to the passive, and slightly providential trust characterizing the vague anticipation of the coming future self, this other trust and investment seems to be generated by the future, and holds a determinacy of its own in what is basically a negative mode. A certain intensity of tending toward a new form, and its excess over what came before defines this model of time which, for better or worse, bypasses a fundamental criterion of inventive control in Valéry, thereby crystallizing one of the main tensions of his work: "What is important for me above all else is to obtain from that which is going to be, that it should with all the vigor of its newness satisfy the reasonable requirements of that which has been" (*Eupalinos* 88). The circulation and recasting of old problems in different forms, has a limit in terms of what is truly inventive. Here belief would no longer be squeezed between a critical terminological scepticism and the vague present hope for future correction and synthesis, but closely clings to the experience of surprising oneself, in the heightened state of disquiet Valéry often attributes to the creative process: "I'm creating . . . something. I'm drawing from myself what I didn't even know I contained.—You're drawing on something that isn't there" (*Idée Fixe* 52). Cf. the discussion on "meontology" in the last section.

[121] As discussed in Valéry's other works, the effect of a charge of signs of this type is not reducible to recognition—recognition being "a relative insensibility"— but rather it is always a belief in the incompleteness of an open question that at once entails a heightened attention, a curiosity bordering on

It is not implausible that belief can occupy the position of a mediator between the two great branches of Valérian "philosophy", experiments or exhaustive formalization and exercise or ontogenetic self-transformation. The simultaneity and interconnection of these two branches is ensured not least by the similar relations of belief Valéry establishes with them. Just as some of the most poignant admissions of belief are of the theoretical kind in Valéry, as we have seen there are also a few but crucial examples that specifically concern self-transformation, or the topos of paideia. To return to an instance in which implex serves as an end in its own right, Valéry writes that "I realize I never write in these notebooks what gives me pleasure...but rather, anything that seems to me capable of increasing my power of transformation—of modifying by combination—my implex. This supposes a kind of belief in some form of self-construction" (*Notebooks* 1 47). The importance of this conviction, that a massively combinatory manner and activity of writing can have transformative effects for the not-entirely-determinable and partially latent subjective capacities and powers of the artist, which Valéry calls "implex", cannot be overstated. What it offers is one of the few real counterweights to Valéry's well entrenched skeptical bent otherwise:

> Art will progress toward constructions resembling those of engineers. Making innovations in Nature by means of her own means. Producing what I can feel by means of a "machine" adapted to the task. The result will be an enhancement of my self, but an enhancement that is durable. It is not drawn out of me directly by the accidents of circumstances, but is, rather, a product of my qualities in general and, if well and truly produced, will be proof against all skepticism, and persist (*Analects* 150).

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disquiet and an inability to recognize in the encounter with a sign, an idea, or a natural object like a sea-shell.

In replacing the reference to "self-construction" the passage ultimately raises the possibility that the paideia or exercise chapter of his work, and the beliefs it incorporates, can be alternatively aligned with a less straightforward mode of self-transformation/construction than direct transitive/instrumental manipulation. Finally, the passage has also a less direct implication concerning what the first passage calls an "implex" in the position of an internal capacity to be transformed. Since the absorption of the means in the materials of generation inherent in natural production, replaces self-construction on a more dominating technical mode in this last passage, the status of what Valéry means by implex, also becomes open to negotiation. Might it be that the art-work used as a means in the transformation for the organism and the implexes of the artist, is not separate from a becoming means of the organism for the art work? Is the implex that is the end product of artistic production, also the means or the very productivity of that production?

The Implex : That by Which We Remain Conditional, Contingent

This section argues for the relevance of what Paul Valéry called the "implex", to philosophical areas of interest like potentiality and virtuality, and scientific areas of interest like developmental psychology and theories of learning. It offers an exposition of the wider context of Valéry's coinage, by delving into his extensive notebooks, in addition to its immediate place of introduction *Idée Fixe*. As a majority of Valéry's comments and reflections on the concept are suggestive and provisional, the paper attempts to piece together a background that must have been generative for it. The implex is traced to its

larger context of emergence through an engagement with several anticipatory or accompanying models like organs, machines and faculties.

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The development of human capacities through a life span, the honing of various skills, the adaptations with a given milieu discovered in a trajectory of maturation and apprenticeship, as well as the cognitive apportionment of tasks and specialization of mental capacities which are traditionally known as "faculties" (imagination, reason, understanding and so on), all enter into the considerations behind Paul Valéry's idiosyncratic notion "implex", which serves as a way of re-articulating traditional psychological faculties with the specifications of a functionality-oriented discourse about organs and instrumentality (including writing). Finding its source in Valéry's earlier obsession with the idea and modality of possibility, the implex leads it to inform a generically unlimited number of human potentialities, their transfers, recyclings and coexistence, as well as the manner of their generation and development through training. As Gilles Deleuze phrased it in an indirect appropriation from Valéry, the implex is an "implicated multiplicity" that pertains to development, ontogenesis and apprenticeship.[122]

In this section I aim to offer a genetic-critical and conceptual discussion of Valéry's vision of possibility and human potentiality contained in the implex, under the guidance of both certain preceding models, and some constitutive paradoxes. For instance, the implex is both associated with faculties of knowledge and their a priori functionality, and make reference to processes of training. It depends on repetition, but also responds to, and finds animation in novelty. Furthermore, thanks to its fruitful inherent tensions that arise from a certain overdetermination, the implex not only provides an intriguing way of formalizing

[122] Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition,* trans. Paul Patton (Columbia University Press, 1995), 244.

potentiality, but also enters and benefits from a dialogue with a significant diversity of research areas, from cognitive science to developmental psychology, from neuroplasticity to organology, from machines to mediality. In order to accompany the concept in its variations and extensions, the paper therefore takes a mainly expository and reanimating strategy, rather than a directly argumentative one.

Valéry thinks the concept is always an artifice of organization with rather fragile links with the observable and verifiable in the realm of psycho-organism and nature, "for no concept was ever observable". Concept is something one only "falls back into" out of a failure of nerve in the proper stringency of persisting in "the domain of real powers and practical consequences" (Phil. 126-5). Yet in the strange project that is the *Cahiers*, which attempts among other things, to formalize psycho-physiological spacetime, experience, function and occurrence, Valéry also needs a distinctive language in which to conduct his research and not only report but actively make, index, move or cross-pollinate his thoughts in a potentially vast combinatorial milieu. That he associates the philosophical concept with a certain speculative, or a merely verbal impurity, should not obscure his own requirements for what are in fact concepts, in the sense of emissaries and precipitations of thought that are responsible for a charting of the real of his experience, themselves a part of the same experience in the economy of his writing: "My task is not easy: It's a question of getting to grips once more with all that represents man, of getting down again to the real phenomena that lie so well hidden beneath words, beneath habits, beneath logic itself, of perceiving the things that have become invisible because they are too obvious...of constructing entirely new concepts, at the very point where humankind has over time established crude ones" (Ibid. 42.).

Among all the results of Paul Valéry's drive to make new and appropriately descriptive concepts to better set forth the impersonal potentialities he found in the observation of his own organism and thought, the implex stands out in its ambition, its deliberately abstract, artificial and neologistic character, and above all the intervention it constitutes in the history of philosophical endeavors pertaining to a range of categories like possibility, virtuality and power. Considering how possibility finds its concretion in all the myriad cognitive, practical and corporeal skills and capacities that belong to living and thinking beings, the potential extent of this coinage may be better appreciated.[123] What's more, Valéry often elaborates the implex in a tentative dialogue with categories of interest that preoccupied the discourses of psychology that were his contemporaries: reflex schemes as well as the existence and efficacy of non-conscious and unconscious compulsions and tendencies. Considering the rich implications, it is no wonder then that critics like Benedetta Zaccarello, Jean Michel Rey and Fabrizio Desideri single out the implex in their introduction to their recent engagement with Valéry, calling it a "mysterious potential, most worthy of every philosophical curiosity" (Zaccarello et al. "Editoriale" 4).

One can rightfully situate the implex in the aftermath of Valéry's creation of the philosophical dramatis persona, Monsieur Teste, who is intended to be the very embodiment of possibility, or a "demon of possibility" as Valéry characterizes him. Teste's intimate association with possibility depends both on his general rigor or a practiced, second-naturally consolidated excellence in the art of thinking—"He is the person who (by accomplished training, and habit which has become second nature) thinks all the time and on every occasion, according to carefully studied data and definitions" (Glad. 295)—and the fact that he prioritizes possibility over its actualization: "All I do and think is only

[123] The implex is also as crucial as fiducia as a mediator in the centrally prolonged hesitation that sums up Valéry's career: between systems of formalization and exercises in self-transformation.

a Sample of my possibilities. Man is more—more general—than his life and acts. He is somehow made for more eventualities than he can know" (*Monsieur Teste*). By the same token, Teste also represents one of the early inspirations for the questioning of the imperatives of autonomous work for the writers that came to favor an overdetermined concept of worklessness (as a dismantling of control, of subjective self-presence, of the tyranny of the productive/useful and of a dialectical ideal of work as human/humanistic act of negation). Thanks to these qualities of his fictional character, Valéry finds himself also in the company of arch-modernists like Musil and Joyce, each of whom were equally invested in the fortunes of a possibility beyond actualization around the same time as Valéry was writing. As noted by Daniel Oster, Valéry has especially striking similarities with Musil both in the scale and incompleteness of his works and his guiding problematics driven by that very incompleteness.

However, the implex takes the question of possibility much further than its restriction to unrealized possibility as in *Monsieur Teste*, especially by communicating with a number of different contexts which are also indirectly generative for it, among them Valéry's long-standing interest in chance ("it [the implex] is the the potential of general and special sensibility—of which the present is always a matter of chance"[124]), the psychological reflex scheme, the nature of mediality/instrumentality, the conditions of artistic intuition and productivity, and finally the question of the distinction between organs and machines.[125]

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[124] Psychology 221.

[125] Perhaps what Valéry intended by this concept finds in the end a close affinity with the work of that other protean figure Henri Michaux, who always took a pointed distance with regard to Valéry. To illustrate this most crucial parallel, quoting a fragment from Michaux's *Passages* is in order: "Thinking! Or rather acting on my machine of being (and thinking) to find myself in the position of being able to think in a new fashion, of having the possibility of really new thoughts. In this sense, I would have made the thought experimental" (V 3 347). In Valéry's work the implex is exactly in the same position as a machine of being/thought on which one can reflexively and experimentally act in order to expand its capacities. On the other hand, it should be noted that Valéry also finds himself echoing certain concepts and approaches that have been attributed to Michaux earlier: such as the modelization of the living body

An Instrument without End

After this brief and admittedly partial historical contextualization, it is necessary to look at the work of this concept in the larger economy of Valéry's work as well as the fields of tension and potential incompatibilities it is made to negotiate. Valéry memorably defines the implex for the first time as that "by which and in virtue of which we remain contingent, conditional" (Idée Fixe 57) and later in numerous places in *Cahiers* continues to elaborate on it. Moreover, despite a certain elusive coherence, his examples are deliberately and intriguingly discordant, for instance, the implex referring both to the ranged activity of muscles and the possible conjugations of a verb in language. Thereby, already in one of its first appearances the concept is endowed with a sweeping and flexible abstraction. This is why, in order to guide the following remarks, it is necessary to give a heuristically helpful picture of implex as a capacity in transformation, and the various connotations it accrues in time. Sketching out the historical possibility of this concept for an abstract sense of possibility is the task of the following comments.

In general, the implex holds in reserve a poetic logic for the generation and organization of human abilities or functions, and in this sense has a very pronounced developmental and ontogenetic orientation.[126] It also reflects Valéry's partiality for power over results,

with an extendable "range" of capacities, and privileged postures, dimensions and orientations thanks to which extension encounters with certain cognitive and affective givens otherwise impossible can occur. To use Jed Rasula's apt formulation, the common aim is "disrupting pattern recognition to expand the scope of pattern", in a way that includes the powers of language and conception.

[126] Implex's ties to the concept of adaptation are strong, yet do not qualify for straightforward identity. Rather, one can claim that in an anticipatory way it responds to a question very much similar to the one asked by the developmental psychologists Esther Thelen and Linda Smith: "Where do both global organization/order of development across, and then the messy variability of tasks come from?" (Thelen and Smith 41). Correlatively, when it emerges, the implex also comes to be inserted in certain already established "niches" in Valéry's work, like the one that is dedicated to an induction of a heightened

and productivity over products: "Don't look for 'truth' - but cultivate the powers and the modes of organization which serve to seek out or establish truth" (*Glad* 266). Elsewhere Valéry writes, "the production of ideas is implex, but not the products themselves insofar as they are creations of the moment" (*Psych* 221).

Taking on the role of a thematization of productive capacities and functions in entangled development, and having priority over their products, the implex is often expounded in a language of means and ends relations and mediality, which in turn contribute a good deal to its abstraction. Its status with regard to these relations is not unequivocal however. While by virtue of its functional nature and identification with potentiality, it is a departure or means for which ends may be defined—say an implex for languages—the way Valéry conceives it as subject to cultivation and training makes it approximate more of an end in itself, as when Valéry professes to favor "anything that seems to me capable of increasing my power of transformation—of modifying by combination—my implex" (*Notebooks,* 1 47). His examples do not conceal the signs of this status of abstract mediality, bespeaking his intention to equip the concept with the capacity to connect the most thickly embodied and the intuitively contemplative: To repeat, Valéry's first uses of the term include both the degrees of freedom in muscular action—"the imperceptible mechanism of your arm and fingers during an act" (*Psych* 186)— and the potential crystallization of mental connections through the medium of a narrower key idea in a process of intuition: "Cf. Sudden crystallization – in a saturated medium. One can thus surmise that the connections presenting themselves to the mind which are so swift at

awareness for taken-for-granted everyday capacities of sensibility, motor action, and "higher" cognitive feats like attention maintenance, along with the various –exclusive, complementary and interruptive— relationships between these different capacities: "None of our psychologists has been struck by the simple fact that you can talk and think *while walking*, though nothing has given me more to think about" (*Psych* 233); "We pay no attention to the even ground we walk upon, and the walking itself allows us to think of other things... Both pursue separately their trains of substitutions etc. But when the terrain becomes difficult, this freedom is doubly renounced. Either the walking has to ally itself to the thinking, or the thinking stops the walking" (Psych 227).

times—so unexpected and fortuitous at others—result from a medium of which a 'fragment' of a hidden potential [implexite] is revealed" (ibid. 178).[127] Thanks in large part to this core flexibility, the implex can also intervene in other crucial disparities especially vital for Valéry's project in general. In question is the spectrum of differences and even possible superimpositions between the body and language, organ and machine, and finally creativity and automatic or rote actions guided by reflex schemes.

In order to understand how implex is inserted into these contextually charged fields of tension, one may draw from the Cahiers' fragmentary observations certain distinguishing characteristics, and break it down into four provisional features: a latency which keeps the "ability" hidden except for certain select circumstances, raising the question of the position of the concept with regard to (un)consciousness; a responsiveness to a relational and accidental activation from a potential state, which means a necessity of external stimulation ("a matter of chance"); an inequality or skewedness of *specialization* for which adaptation to one given end may but does not necessarily include others, which feature amounts to a functional identity, however fuzzy in its multiplicity or bundling; and finally a self-regulatory nature which is determining with regard to passivity and activity, by which the already acquired/formed implex not only receives stimulation and is activated, but actively demands to be activated too. This is crucial because Valéry knows it would be very difficult to distinguish implex from a reflex arc, if it were merely equated with an instantaneously accidental activation from the outside. Instead, it encompasses intrinsic self-regulation, countering and completing the lack of appropriation in stimulation—to be stimulated does not quite amount to having a property

[127] In addition to his attention to the lived body itself—crystallized in his famous image of the 3 bodies—Valéry always tended to attribute an analogically corporeal and physical character to thought and mentality, frequently treating limits in this realm on the basis of a corporeal model: "Just as any curve described by a point of the hand or arm is fixed in relation to the body, so... there is a finite elongation and amplitude, - a distance from something that I might call the Body of the mind" (Psych 230).

or a faculty— with a functional closure: "The implex is a set of possibilities of reactions or transformations - as effects of causes of any sort, linked to a self-conserving, cyclical system. Reflexes, memory, sensations or rather the capacity of sensations" (235).[128] Other consequences of the implex, such as the possibility of training; an unpredictably delayed, non-present/non-given and always imminent or incomplete temporal existence matching its productive valence; and a purposive indistinction that makes it swing between a means and an end, largely follow and accompany these main properties that add up to a composite picture. The Swiss army knife could be a good but deceptive example, because it doesn't quite change in time, never quite occupies the position of a relative end, and doesn't admit "training". As a foil, it proves the implex to have too much of the irreducibly living in it. If Valéry's obviously predominant example of the mind is left aside, a biological example like the immune system on the other hand, would perhaps offer one of the least distorting illustrations in its relative latency, multiply and transformatively adaptive character to different stimulating agents, and finally its patent properties of self-conservation and relative "trainability".

These main features of the implex, a latent self-regulating potentiality that develops in response and adaptation to the world's multiplicity, also brings it in a certain proximity with a problematics of habit and hexis, especially discernible in Valéry's various emphases on a fundamental "having" or hexic appropriation[129] around the implex, along

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[128] This functional closure is the main reason this ability in transformation offers an image of freedom for Valéry, as when he writes "Freedom exists. It's a phase or depends upon a phase. It's the aspect of a possible plurality of acts...What allows for it is the principle of delay-inhibited reflexes which appears to me ever more extensive. — In many areas, and diverse ones, I see the plurality of solutions — possibility of temporization — procrastination — lack of imperative force or invariable constraint in what is transmitted" (*Phil*. 132).

[129] The origin of a significant part of Western philosophical treatments of habit, hexis finds its most influential formulation in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* where it underlies the exercise of virtue or excellence. Claire Carlisle writes, "the noun hexis derives from the verb ekhein, 'to have': as an enduring 'having', the process by which a hexis develops is one of acquisition, appropriation, assimilation" (Carlisle "From Hexis to Plasticity" 33).

with the examples he chooses to illustrate it: "...Acquired capacities suggest the projects, as much as carrying them out. What you have, multiplies what you want — Knowing how to swim, to drive, to cook. I tend to want as much as I can" (Psych 229). Or as Catherine Malabous suggests, "habit is first an effect, a way of being that results from change, but it gradually becomes a cause of change itself" (Malabou ix). There is a precarious balance that the implex is designed to achieve: one between the pole of a property enjoyed by right, which is what knowing how to swim tends to become to an expert swimmer, and the pole inherent in a reflex scheme that requires no stable possession, even as a potential. For this reason, with a slight licence, the implex can be understood as a concept that blurs the distinction between heteronomy and autonomy, outside and inside. As it were, an acquired capacity stimulates itself as an "occasion"—normally a function carried out by an external condition—for its exercise, thus putting itself in development and incompletion. The mediation is significant, for it overlaps with a dimension of habituation that allows for "potentiation" and training. As Gabriel Fedrigo indicates, Valéry has a particular sensitivity to those unstable conjunctions where a habit is as yet still being formed, and it is especially this concern with nascency and partial appropriation that is relevant to the implex insofar as it is a range of possibility subject to extension and dependent on activation by external and accidental stimulation. As Fedrigo writes, "in Valéry the attention to the initial phase of the habit is justified by two different motivations: the accidental nature of the formation of the mind of a person under the guise of acquired habits, and clarifying an action contrary to the formation of habit" (Fedrigo *L'Atleta* 52). As we will see, on its part the implex echoes Valéry's concern with "an action contrary to the formation of habit" through its inherent link with the modulation of what Valéry calls "psycho-organic possibility".

Two Models of Potentiality: The Technological and The Psychological

The implex certainly does not emerge in a vacuum, and various Cahiers notes seem to cast self-reflective glances to its possible precursors in Valéry's work. In fact one can easily argue that reading the history of its formation and the constraints that led to its emergence in its distinctively abstract form, is exactly what one needs to do to get to what it is capable of, in simulation of the formation of what could count as a "real" implex, given its developmental or ontogenetic underpinnings. In this sense a moderately genetic inspiration in criticism might be of great benefit, perhaps not out of place with one of the authors who has proved the most receptive to genetic-critical treatments.[130] To this end we will look at a series of models which could have served as forerunners for the implex in its abstract form: these models are respectively, instrument, faculty, machine and organ.

Among Valéry's self-reflective glances, the one that links the implex "to my old 'theory' of the Instrument" is very noteworthy (Psych 186), since it allows one to fill in the mediating/medial status Valéry ascribes to implex, establishing a more or less technological provenance for it. In an entry that simply carries the title "Instrument", Valéry writes, "The great, immeasurable characteristic of human beings of a certain degree— being able to overlook or dominate infinitesimal circumstances (in general). I'm writing this for example without taking into consideration the paper...This magical

[130] In an essay entitled "Valéry's Garbage Can", Vincent Kauffman points out how Valéry's ideas provided a most congenial support for the movement in criticism that takes drafts, projects, and fragments as a valid and necessary expansion of the literary object of study, alongside the published and finished works: "Genetic theory willingly sees itself as the result of a Valéryian relationship to the work and the published text, which Valéry—or at least the 'freest' Valéry, the Valéry of the Cahiers— considered a simple accident" (Kauffman 71).

tendency consists of adaptations - habits, acquired scraps or 'sets' of experience which have imposed themselves on our make-up" (*Psych.* 109). The finality of a function or an ability to act with a built-in capacity for inducing insensibility for things immediate but non-relevant to function, defines the instrument here. In this capacity the instrument in large part corresponds to the aspect of habit defined by insensibility: "habit and education eliminate the sense of anything intermediary between willing and acting. Turning you into an instrument" (*Psych.* 149).

While the instrument must have been useful for Valéry to theorize unremarked upon and silent adaptations achieved with repetition, it trails along a vision of production and transitivity of use that is largely unscrutinized by Valéry. Especially in terms of the relations betweens purposes and means, the instrument continues a very traditional understanding of technics, even if the technics in question is credited to the body. As Émile Benveniste once noted, "to speak of an instrument is to put man and nature in opposition. The pick, the arrow, and the wheel are not in nature. They are fabrications" (Benveniste 223-224; also Virno 24). For the instrument to encompass a more flexible vision of creatively acquired capacity that does not necessarily imply an extra-natural adaptation, one needs to consult an entry from approximately 4 years later: "The usefulness of an object or an act is relative to a function, and is measured by the effort they save...Above and beyond the usefulness, there's yet another notion not designated by language, which would indicate the capacity to increase possibility, to confer a new unnecessary function, like flying, communicating with people far away" (*Psych.* 121). In one of its entangled threads then, the implex is coined to account for an experience in which the instrument or ability used enables a transformation of the user or the fabricator of it, conferring new functions, along the way qualifying the detached transitivity which

implies a restricting vision of the relations between ends and means.

In its rudiments the instrument is an instructive rehearsal for the implex, especially from the point Valéry starts insisting on "the capacity to increase possibility". In its essence, the acknowledgment of a requisite temporal dimension of emergence and cultivation that will belong to the implex always characterizes Valéry's instrument as well, especially in its vocation of producing ideas. Thus Valéry frequently compares the establishment of the circumstance or the achievement of the modification necessary for thinking any given idea to "assembling a machine", in its turn requiring a "hidden preparation during an intermediary phase" (*Psych.* 80). What is perhaps missing until implex makes its appearance is a more sweeping generalization, and a stronger association with a form of practice that accomodates a more supple logic concerning means and ends.

Insofar as it aids in considering agents and bearers of potentiality in the ever changing multiplicity or bundle of abilities which compose them, the instrument also isolates in the implex that which may anticipate a valuable concept from evolutionary theory such as "exaptation". In Stephen Jay Gould and Elisabeth Vrba's insightful work, germane to the context of Valéry's implex, a motivation for the introduction of this concept is a desire to clear ambiguities in the all-purpose biological notion "adaptation", by introducing an analytical distinction between "current utility" and "historical pathway" of generation for any given adaptation. In other terms, the distinction the biologists propose is between emergence of function and extant function: A chin bone coopted for the function of hearing in the stage of absence of any hearing-specific organs may offer a simple illustration. Hence one contribution of exaptation corresponds exactly to what Valéry seems to have been looking for around 1920's in the instrument —albeit in less biological

guises— and the biologists' various references to "flexibility for use" and "cooptability for fitness" encapsulate what is singularly prescient in the final and malleably abstract form of the implex. In fact, the implex is unthinkable without a provision for "cooptability of fitness". Without the possibility of a generative temporal expansion which allows an implex/instrument to enter constitutive interactions with different contexts of use, the implex would be no more than a simple reflex. Moreover as it will be seen in another context below, since the structures of the human organism are radically finite for an indefinite array of determined tasks, polyvalence in function undertaken by identical structures is an empirical necessity. Once equipped with the creative logic of exaptation proper to the prehistory of the implex in "instrument", it becomes more clear why Valéry would want to use the implex to discuss more linguistic and —only seemingly— less embodied capacities as well: "Language, however intimate it may be in us, is in origin no less statistical and in destination purely practical. The problem of the poet must be drawing from that practical instrument the means of realizing a work essentially non-practical" ("Calepin d'une Poet", *Oeuvres Complet* 1). According to this more poetic example, the cooptability for fitness applies to language as subject to bifurcation and organization of new uses, anticipating the implex as a concept very closely related to exaptation in its abstraction.

Insofar as it entails a relation of "finality" or fitness, the instrument also suggests another possible contributor to the ultimate form of the implex, this time arising from a more cognitive and psychological, rather than a technological context. Valéry's relation to the traditional philosophical concept of a "faculty" is ambivalent, and tellingly, the fortunes of the faculties in Valéry's work are most clearly observable until the implex appears to absorb their functions. From Kant to Nietzsche, and later to Deleuze, producing different

critiques of faculties like imagination, reason and understanding, or proposing new organizations for them have always been an important concern of philosophy, thus Valéry's attention is not very singular.[131] What is singular are his hesitations. Across a few entries it is possible to see Valéry waver between the contrary desires of preserving and dispensing altogether with the faculties. He can both give up on them, writing that the "notion of power, faculties, future capacity" is "wrong-footed" (*Psych* 83), and much later urge that "we have to rework entirely our notion of them [faculties]. The whole of potentiality needs thinking out again" (Phil. 199). It is perhaps not so difficult to understand the ambivalent appeal of faculties for Valéry, interested as he is in the question of "what is a man capable of" in general, and different models for modelizing the properties and possibilities of the human psycho-organism in particular. For instance, there are points where Valéry expects faculties to offer pretty much the same flexibility as he expects from the "instrument", insofar it is productive of ideas, writing of "the faculty of having or acquiring ideas" (ibid. 188).[132]

Valéry's complicated intentions to preserve a certain use for faculties while radically revising them, have a great deal to do with the kind of discomfort felt also by Nietzsche among others, who asked whether "by virtue of a faculty" could really be an answer, and not just a "repetition of the question" of the genesis of knowledge (Nietzsche 13). The objections Nietzsche raised to the category of faculties, and which Deleuze later adopted in his philosophy of difference can thus be articulated in two main branches: The

[131] Note that the word Kant uses —Vermögen— for faculties does not conceal the strong link with the register of potentiality which informs the implex.

[132] As he elsewhere equates an idea with "the opposite of routine activity" however, even here his use of the faculty structure of cognition is not of a traditional kind, and instead has a problematic relation to givenness in the acquisitive disquiet and "action contrary to habit" it assumes; one could suggest, he seems to be looking for a faculty for faculties. Moreover since a faculty itself has a level of abstraction that makes it very convenient in identifying the functional differences between the various abilities and possibilities of the mind and the organism at large, Valéry has certainly not been alone and one could argue the tenacity of the old logic of the traditional faculty structure in contemporary cognitive science arises from this convenience too.

requirement of genesis and a latitude for antagonistic or friction-laden manners of communication between extant faculties. For instance, in one of Deleuze's provocative examples, what makes imagination imagination, and gives birth to it is a limit object—the "imaginandum"— that drives a new and heightened form of exercise, which in turn challenges the preordained harmonious interaction between imagination and other faculties like reason and understanding. To underline the strict association between the two features here, we may suggest that there is a creative disorder at large which arises from the "birth" or exponential empowerment of any one faculty.

In a parallel way but in certainly less strident terms, Valéry's own reservations have to do both with the necessity of acknowledging a creative dynamism by which new acts, act cycles, and events of sensation can translate to a larger vista of a plurality that welcomes new faculties, and the indeterminacy of the new relations which would be thereby generated among them in toto. Here Valéry uses the environmental openness and the built-in contingencies of the reflex scheme to bend the rigidity of the pre-adaptation between traditional faculties and their objects. "Notion of faculty" is wrong-footed, because "having as many responses as there are (probably) stimuli" (*Psych* 83) seems to him to be a more accurate picture of the organism. Correlatively, Valéry is very interested in mapping the possible convergences between experience and functions,[133] and his conclusions about what must be the increasingly *complex* overdeterminations among a

[133] In his notebooks on psychology Paul Valéry called for a thought experiment: "Imagine a person whose entire experience were changed into functions. He would be the scientific being par excellence. Would he not be troubled by these innumerable functions? A person who would not forget the cards already played and would deduce the opponent's play. Intellect is simply the activity which substitutes for this infinity, the use and organization of a limited number of functions. Or rather which transforms experiences into functions" (Psych. 111-112). The scenario laid out in the passage depends on the assumption of a disparity between the undenumerable multiplicity that composes experience, and the intrinsic finitude of the functions that can be carried out by human psychophysiology. This way the commutability introduced between experience and function works first to position the innumerably diverse and relational experiences as potentially permanent acquisitions for an individual. One can take this as a creative metabolization of experience, which finds itself incorporated and to have taken the path from relation to possession/predicate.

growing multiplicity of skills and capacities at large are derived from his reflections on the sensibility: "Each sense offers us a group of new connections. If we suddenly acquired a magnetic sense, magnetized bodies and circuits would become apparent to that sense as a light emitting body to the naked eye. The group of these sensations would be added to the others and there would be links" (*Sens.* 305).

An attendant consequence of this critique of faculties is the problem of assigning a determinately identifiable faculty to any stimulant and event. As it were, in the cognitive capacities and their relationships, there resides an equivalent of what would be a phenomenon of synaesthesia in the realm of senses. Traditional faculty structure of cognition with its more or less strict sharing of tasks—even/especially in Kant's work with its strong juridical leanings— does not accomodate the messiness and paradoxes Valéry expects from the interaction of his "faculties", and for this reason "combination" becomes a key term for him: "Thus to take the old vocabulary: memory, attention, intelligence, etc., I sometimes think you could draw up a table in which each of these words entered a real combination with others... You can maintain that there is intelligent memory; that memory has a sensibility; that there's an automatism of choice and reflection; a fatality or a law of freedom; an attention or vigilance during sleep; a memory which chooses" (*Psych* 84). In another entry Valéry succinctly argues that "even when it is possible to separate them, this is artificial and always incomplete" (*Psych* 98).[134] Consequently, and in a schematic way, the implex can variously be understood as an implicated bundle of capacities on the occasion of a single object/event, or the fuzzy identity of a capacity for a potential multiplicity of objects/events along a line of temporal difference, the point of resolution being the evolving bundle itself.

[134] Cf. Michaux: "Create a new circuit (or an equivalent). Every faculty that is not employed darkens all the other faculties. Every activity refused, every act one could have committed hinders the entire behavior, continually returns to knock on the door" (V2 346, also in *Passages*).

From several other entries, one can obtain a sense of Valéry's other main difficulty with faculties as well, the risk that when a capacity like remembering is conceptualized as a faculty, it assumes a relationship with its "objects" which would leave its own possibilities intact and more or less unaltered in accordance with its a priori adjustment. To repeat, it is the notion of faculty as "a future capacity" that strikes him as unfeasible in an early entry in the Cahiers. He has doubts about and attributes a "fiduciary" structure to a faculty which can be what it is "by right", and not by fact or all the accidental exchanges with what constitutes an environment. Significantly, this can go both ways, meaning it can both come to mean (the recognition of) an experiential increase or a decrease in the possibilities of being adequate to a task: "Our great masters teach us, at the end of the day, that there are more things permitted and more forbidden than we had previously thought. They teach that what is possible (positive or negative) can be displaced" (Glad. 300). But even more importantly, this is a marker for the radical contingency that brings a capacity from inexistence into existence in the first place. Valéry's possibilities find their proper weight only when they are put in communication with the improbabilities and inertias that go for rules in the psychic make-up; only by surmounting their limits and measured against their own impossibility do they make sense: "Normally, within man, there are stable and imperceptible obstacles, restrictions, impossibilities, improbabilities...And among all the types of these restrictions is this one: What has never been within me, tends never to be so. This is a kind of principle of inertia" (*Psych* 194).

As a result one could argue that Valéry considers it necessary to engage with the traditional faculties in order to define his own approach to what is an appropriate characterization of a mental and physiological possibility that responds to contingency,

and takes into account the concomitant historical transformations that result from the frictions between the capacities and other environmental entanglements. While the relative abstraction of the "faculty" can be claimed to be useful for his purposes, in the end he finds too many liabilities in it to preserve it as a serviceable or, for that matter, sufficient abstraction. The necessity that brought Valéry to implex is more intelligible against the backdrop of these liabilities, not least among them, the lack of a provision for emerging sensitivities that lead to a broader spectrum of available qualities, along with the possible role of artistic production in this process of emergence: "One additional idea doesn't in itself make any difference to the faculty of having or acquiring ideas. The possibility remains. Repeating the act doesn't tend to make it impossible. If this occurs—it's through the change of another sort. And the Body intervenes—fatigue. What's more there's *on the contrary* an increase of possibilities through production itself. This point is highly important and extremely difficult. It's an essential property which emerges!" (*Psych* 188). Elsewhere, Valéry characterizes this virtuous loop by which essential properties are generated as a dynamic whereby "the more I think the more I think", which only escapes being a straightforward tautology thanks to the convoluted mediation and instrumentalities inherent in the implex.

Between the Machinic and the Organological

After looking at the respective domains of the technological and the broadly psychological as offering anticipatory models for the implex, it is necessary to discuss another domain that could have set constraints for the final form of the concept. This domain is biology, albeit overdetermined in a technical fashion, just as the instrument

showed some traces of the living in *exaptation*. Before discussing how biology is integrated in this problem however, a detour through a highly relevant historical antecedent is in order, especially since we have just discussed why a faculty could not exhaust the exigencies that led Valéry to the implex.

The scholar Leif Weatherby has excavated and commented on the fascinating lineage of "organology" in Post-Kantian philosophy, identifying the various ways how Romantics like Holderlin and Novalis responded to Kantian transcendental idealism with at once a naturphilosophical and genre-theoretical inspiration that made them seek other solutions to the problems of knowledge and ethics they inherited from Kant. Weatherby argues that it is Novalis who developed a full-fledged organology which presented itself as a revision and transformation for the Kantian structure of faculties and their relation to being, introducing a historically more generative dimension to cognition through undermining its intimate links with a timelessly stable a priori structure in the Critical philosophy. Organs in Novalis stand for this intervention. As Weatherby suggests, "there can be no Kantian critique of organs—indeed, for Kant, organs fall into the realm of physiology (thus the medical faculty) because they are empirical". Weatherby's comment can also be taken to mark the limitations of Kantian critique that make it finally stop at the threshold of a consideration of the living being, culminating in his conceptualization of purposes without purposes in the Third Critique. Despite Kant's prescient insights into "self-organization" and indirect part-whole mediations in the biological realm, the links between these insights and the transcendental structure of cognition charted by his earlier work is not satisfactorily accounted for in his philosophy. Weatherby places Novalis at this juncture, writing that "the shift from faculty to organ reflects the program of organology...Novalis insists on the history of possibility, indeed on the possibility of

possibility". In all its abstraction, what Novalis takes to be an organ, involves an indeterminate tool-being that is deeply related to Valéry's own questions, and straddles the realms of the living (including the capacity of a bearer of knowledge), technology and even politics. Novalis' organs, Weatherby emphasizes, are thus "fields of potential, precipitated out of historical formations of this very site of the formation of categories, which are in development, changing" (Weatherby 234).

Now, it can be argued that, organology as Novalis conceptualized it, whether through its emphasis on bio-historical or technological genesis and even the open-ended multiplicity that it requires in the creation of "new organs", has a singular affinity to the problems Valéry tackled in the prehistory of his implex. What Novalis was looking for in the guise of "a plastic metaphysics, capable of remaining open to the contingency of phenomena and their history" takes the form in Valéry of an operative philosophy with its own armature of concepts designed to negotiate the living being in its adaptability to different tasks, a contingent historical novelty as the source of its functions, and a correlative place for artistic productivity as a matrix for new capacities (according to which a project like the *Cahiers* would then correspond to Novalis' genre-theoretical endeavor with the encyclopedia form). These authors also converge in arriving at their respective organs and capacities, only through the amplification of a core interest in the question of sensibility. Moreover, even the transcendentalist trappings of the Romantic configuration have counterparts in Valéry. Inasmuch as an organ for Novalis constitutes a scenography for a field of new potentials from which it is constitutively absent—for this reason Weatherby calls the organs "holes in the fabric of the universe"— Valéry's own interest in a constitutive latency[135] in the matter of the implex has a great deal of the organ in it, from

[135] The status of implex as a concept that has certain affinities as well as rivalries with a Freudian unconscious is a problem that deserves much more than I can devote to it here. It is clear that Valéry felt he had to distinguish his own invention sharply from Freud's on various accounts: "What I call Implex is

"the imperceptible mechanism of your own arm", to muscles as machines whose workings are unknown, to finally include the characteristic example of seeing: "And one can say that we know so many things on account of not knowing our own functioning. The eye doesn't see itself, it sees the distant stars. Seeing is incomprehensible. It's hidden by what it reveals" (*Psych* 196). Thus the "indirect action" on sensibility and psycho-organic possibility Valéry adopts as art's mode of work, has a lot to do with an indirect action on what makes access to the world possible and also determinate, a "scope of pattern" that responds to reorganization: "The most important phenomena for us, our existence, our sensibility, our thought, are intimately linked to events smaller than the smallest phenomena accessible to our senses, or amenable to our acts. We are unable to intervene directly in the knowledge of what we are doing. Medicine is indirect intervention — as indeed are the other arts" (*Soma* 255).

A certain literalism in the treatment of organs in Valéry is not entirely out of place, a problem that also evokes the limits of a literalism of machines. The implex stands in the middle of this symmetrically organized field and carries associations from both the machine and the organ, as was hinted earlier with a comparison to Michaux's "machine of being". Whereas faculties are useful for Valéry's purposes for the elements of differentiation and combinatorial potential they carry along, the machine has different

not to be confused with what is called the Unconscious or the Subconscious (active form of the Unconscious?)" (*Psych.* 221); "no, the Implex is not an activity. Quite the contrary. It's a capacity: our capacity for feeling, reacting, doing, and understanding... individual, inconstant, more or less known to us, but always imperfectly and indirectly" (*Idée Fixe* 56). Valéry thus attempts to distinguish his implex through an emphasis on basic inherent potentiality, and its known—although imperfectly— nature that arguably abolishes his need to rely on any supposition of repression. As for many important writers whose attitudes to psychoanalysis were more or less hostile or showily indifferent, Valéry's conclusions may also depend on some level of willed misinformation about Freud's work. However the very text where Valéry seems to give the freest rein to his distaste with psychoanalysis, Idée Fixe, finds a point of departure in Pierre Janet's work, thus a more Pre-Freudian treatment of matters that would later fall under the domain of a study of the unconscious. But a Pre-Freudian treatment can also look forward to an aftermath of Lacan, whose appreciation for Valéry is well-known. For an interestingly unremarked upon kinship, see Felix Guattari's *Machinic Unconscious*: "an unconsious turned towards the future whose screen would be the possible itself, possible as hypersensitive to language, to touch" (Guattari 10).

appeals and strengths. If one had uses for broad brush labels here, it would be necessary to affirm that Valéry was never a vitalist in a substantialist sense. An aspect of Valéry's theoretical faith is unthinkable without a machine model of the psycho-organism: "When in psychology you want to get away from vagueness, you have to ask: How does this work? -Which comes down to looking at something as if it were a machine" (*Psych* 117). Perhaps an emissary for the adventurous side of formalist exhaustiveness, machine is the condition of an analytical precision, and this precision requires doing as if the human organism is a state of the art automaton. It is unsurprising that Valéry's work also holds the records of a thorough engagement with the contemporary developments in thermodynamics and advances in electromagnetism, as well as relativistic and statistical physics. The input of these domains suggests Valéry to have held a broad notion of the machine, never identical with mere mechanics, and inclusive of the living thanks to the extension of certain notions from these areas borrowed as conducive to his understanding of the living: entropy, work-cycle, self-conservation, equilibrium, disorder, phase. Thus there is an attempt at reconciliation in Valéry between the laws of dynamics and the living, expressed in a category of compromise such as "vital machine" (*Sens.* 348), a reconciliation that resembles A.N. Whitehead's "organic mechanism", albeit without the kind of speculative philosophical construction the latter made his signature.

Moreover the theoretical faith in the machine as a model for the organism is accompanied by a belief in the machine in its own right, insofar as it can transform: "Machines are still only in their trial period... Man will have machines that create just as he will have machines for precision thinking-His role will be reduced to choosing" (*Psych* 165). Attributing a power of creativity is certainly the highest compliment Valéry can pay,[136] a compliment that extends to another typical concern: the possibility of training. Since

[136] Cf. the entry from the Gladiator notebooks, which mentions "the machine for Creating" (Glad. 291).

Valéry regularly uses the machine as the example of a type of production that differs from nature — despite his own overdetermined naturalist inclinations amply documented in works like *Man and the Sea Shell*—and juxtaposes its negativistic productivity with the inertias given in the natural product, the machine also appears as a figure for the excellence obtainable as result of exercise and training of powers in the Gladiator framework: "Man does nothing good naturally... This is the principle of Sport—of machines that progress, and holds for all fields" (*Glad.* 295).

Notwithstanding the strength of its associations with precision, productivity and training, why the machine cannot fulfill the role the implex later fulfills has a great deal to do with the specific contribution of the organs. I believe there are two main reasons that can be extracted from Valéry's work which can be taken to lead to the irreducibility of the organ to a narrowly defined machine: the first one is training itself, and the second is polyvalence. As bold as Valéry's attempts are to attribute a power of progress to the machine, progress is not identical with generation. Whatever the affinity between a problematics of learning and a problematics of generation, the affirmation that machines learn does not imply the affirmation of their non-human genesis. Georges Canguilhem, who devoted an illuminating article to the question of this difference wrote that, "it seems that the more one compares living beings to automatic machines, the better one understands their function but the less one understands their genesis" (Canguilhem 90). The same thing goes for Valéry, and it is possible to argue that the quality of his wonder in the face of physiology—when he writes, for instance, that "I see everything that is physiological in a religious light" (*Sens.* 349)— still speaks for a certain ontological irreducibility of the living to the machine, unless machine becomes a more speculative concept.[137] Valéry's conspicuous resort to regressions that refer to machines momentarily

[137] In the manner of what Felix Guattari calls the "machinic" for instance, which is not necessarily

assembled for immediate action—or machines of machines— within the framework of physiological response might also be taken as an indirect admission of the problem of genesis (*Psych* 80; *Soma* 254).[138] Consequently, whereas Valéry never sides with a substantialist vitalism, for him the living is never completely reducible to the machine either, resulting in the semantic fissures and new possibilities of abstraction the implex emerged to negotiate. The implex carries the trace of the transitions where machines are proved to be strained examples, calling for the elegance of another model.

The second reason why an organ should be able to bestow nuances on implex not covered by the machine is polyvalence, or a certain degree of detachment from specialization, which means a role diversity adaptable to a plurality of different contexts— "cooptability for fitness" in short, to remember the discussion of *exaptation* above. Polyvalence of tasks in the framework of a finite assembly of organs is what characterizes the finitude of the human organism, and in Valéry polyvalence or possibility of specialization for a multiple and changing set of tasks quite consistently characterizes the living, as well as the salience of its mental achievements. In contrast, for all the qualities it accrues in Valéry's theoretical project of modeling the possibilities of the organism, the tie that binds the machine to the single context of a univalent specialization remains quite strong. Thus in various places Valéry associates the latitude for different specializations with an inherent instability pertaining to the human organism-intelligence, in differentiation from both the machine and the animal: "What is simple in the machine is compound in the intelligent individual. The molecule is mono-atomic in the one, and polyvalent in the other. Uniformity is characteristic of the machine. This is the reason why intelligence

exclusive of the biological.

[138] Valéry writes, "among the modifications a person experiences, there are some which can't be produced straight off, from a particular instant. Rather, they require a more or less hidden preparation during an intermediary phase. This preparation can be compared to assembling a machine (*Psych* 80).

draws its resources from chance" (*Glad.* 279). A condition of role-diversity means that the machine, precise and productive as it is, is lacking in the resources of chance. The allure of polyvalence through instability accounts for the more flagrantly hierarchical tendencies in Valéry's reflections on the species-difference as well: "Mankind is characterized by the instability of the role that mental events play. In animals, the role is fixed. Something envisaged is either of no consequence or leads to acts that tend to be predetermined" (*Psych.* 100). The difference in Valéry's work hereby indicated between the incompletely specialized or cooptable for fitness and the univalently fixed, did not escape Canguilhem, who seems to have enlisted Valéry as a witness for his own inquiry into a philosophical "organology". Canguilhem wrote, "We must at least admit that, in the organism, a plurality of functions can adapt to the singularity of an organ. An organism thus has greater latitude of action than a machine. It has less purpose and more potentialities" (Canguilhem 90).[139] Continuing, Canguilhem quotes a characteristic passage by Valéry: "Artificial means: which tends towards a defined goal. And it thereby contrasts with living" (Valéry qtd. in Canguilhem 90).[140]

Valéry's work offers numerous examples to support a direct association between the organs and a multiplicity or group of possibilities, an association that is inherent in the implex. Even before the implex emerges with all its usefulness in encapsulating chancily gained functions—"as many responses as there are (probably) stimuli"— and latently

[139] As Canguilhem also registers, the liver seems to take the prize here, with the seven different cell types it contains and "over 5000 functions" it carries out, according to the cell biologist Gaspar Banfalvi (Banfalvi 143).

[140] It seems as if Canguilhem's own conceptual work between the machine and organism leads him to a juncture that is very similar to the creative deviations and repurposings covered under "exaptation", insofar as what he finds in organology is precisely a differential unity between historical pathway (genesis) and the residence of multiple functions in a single structure. It bears noting that the equation of under-specialization with adaptiveness across a multiplicity of contexts can also be found in Whitehead: "An unspecialized society can survive through important changes in the environment. This means that it can take on different functions in respect to its changing environment..." (Whitehead Process and Reality). Also see the contrast Jesper Hoffmeyer makes between specialization and role fixation as a principle of habit and flexibility as "anarchic autonomy" (Hoffmeyer 27,8).

transformed abilities, Valéry endows organs with an indeterminacy that even tends to go beyond polyvalence in biological function. A term of note frequently used by Valéry in this context is an "organ of the possible": "The mind is the organ/ has an organ/ of the possible. How is this organ itself possible? How is it possible for a sensory incident to break into a system in such a way as to cause it to emit possibilities?" (*Psych.* 142). Moreover Valéry later transfers this resonant epithet to the hand itself in a famous address to surgeons, emphasizing the versatility and attainment that endows it with an ability to work healing inside fragile human bodies: "This universal agent is successively instrumental, symbolic, oratorical, calculating. Might one not call it the organ of the possible, just as in another way it is the organ of absolute certainty? Thus the hand distinguishes itself from all other organs capable of doing only one thing" (*Coll. Occasions* 143, 233). If one notes how Valéry's discourse takes on the same nuances that it took in praise of the instabilities of role diversity, the implex's organological provenance might be better appreciated. Finally the transferral itself from the mind to the hand, already indicates Valéry appreciates a more adaptably indeterminate conceptual tool.

On the Status of Language and Semiosis

Consequently the implex indeed works like an "implicated multiplicity" (Deleuze) in Valéry's work, neither reducible to the productivity and unilateral adaptations of the machine, nor the givenness of the human organism separated from the instability of its own internal maintenance and possibilities of training. The most one can say is that the implex is neither identifiable with a structure, nor a simple tool, but the most abstract possibility of deeply relational functioning, and seems to float in a fuzzy chronotopology

that collapses depth and surface, like the germ of a capacity with no restricting localization to hold it other than the places of its encounter with the stimulating environments where it can find activation or consolidation. As such, the implex is a unique, and one might say, dedicated concept of apprenticeship, insofar as it makes training and various forms of divergent adaptation thinkable through its own positing. It inhabits "shady fringes" in which organs end and machines begin, machines end and faculties begin, or the germination of an idea is at the same time like a stretching of muscles. At the same time Valéry's understanding of language and artistic production cannot be left unchanged in the light of the requirements of this concept either; since one of the privileged sources of implex is a combinatorial model of intuition and crystallization—"faculty of having ideas"— his thoughts about language do as well receive new determination from what they themselves helped spawn. In fact, if as Valéry exclaims, the production of ideas and forms is a domain where "essential properties emerge", language, semiotic activity and artistic production never make up just one among other possible provenances of the implex, but rather a privileged one. In this last part of the section, the status of language with regard to implex is raised as an open problem that may bear further research.

As Adorno astutely noted, Valérian poetics allows for situations where the author "becomes an organ for the accomplishment of the work's desires" (Adorno "Valéry's Deviations" 161), but the work of language is itself again an organ and locus of productivity for this operation in its subjective instance insofar as the work makes virtual solicitations for further generative acts. To return to a passage only partially quoted before: "Thus language (in a state of being implex in the subject) is one of the authors of thought — one of the main authors — rather as learnt acts and their instruments are in

relation to actions. For these acquired capacities suggest the projects, as much as carrying them out" (*Psych*. 229). In a way that extends the hexic underpinnings of the implex which require seeing latent habitual capacities as causes as much as results of change, Valéry takes the sedimented and contextual potentialities of language as propulsive for thought. Simultaneously, the indeterminable status of the implex comes to inform language itself, interlacing faculty, instrument, machine and organ: "A good writer keeps close to his language. Language is within us like a second implex - more or less as if present –i.e. like the system of possible forces and movements that is more or less aroused, in hand " (Edu. 615). As discussed above, insofar as Valéry finds in language a proliferation of functions that bend rigid specialization, a cooptability for fitness characteristic of the organ also applies to it.[141]

The problem here pertains to the particular way Valéry acknowledges the complexity of language in its own right. A reliable indication of the implex, is that it evokes a trainable capacity, often finding illustrations in corporeal skilled behavior: "knowing how to swim, to drive, to cook". For Valéry that language is also trainable is also pretty straightforward, and the more traditional ideal of self-surpassing in the Gladiator notebooks recognizes an

[141] In the culmination of the convoluted instrumentalities of the implex, for the mind to become an organ of a work, the work needs to become an organ for the failures and unlikely self-surpassings of subjective capacities, an organ and machine for apprenticeship. Adorno's other observation about Valérian poetics that "the way the mind gains possession of itself is through the process of the work's gaining possession of the mind" (Adorno ibid. 148) captures this process in which the mind and work both "emit" possibilities, each outbidding the other in terms of the valorization of the other's capacities, the work an externalized mind, the mind the resonation chamber that responds to the work's bets. It is necessary however to avoid a too easy and glib an articulation here between the subjective capacity and the consistency found in language. Today it is in fact a familiar and common gesture to recognize the work as an externalized power. Before today's externalist school of cognitive science represented by a philosopher like Andy Clark, it is possible to find formations where provision is made for techniques and systems of thought as extensions of thought, external structures worthy of "epistemic credit" (Andy Clark) of their own. As Weatherby points out, for Novalis mathematics is “perhaps nothing more than the exotericized force of the soul we call the understanding, made into an object and an organ” (Weatherby 215). To a certain extent the relationship of productive conversation between the work and the writer established by Valéry's implex is partially a reiteration of this insight, inasmuch as it contains a similar acknowledgment of an external locus satisfying a coherent set of contextual requirements and thereby relieving the burdens of endogenous capacities: "Many feelings are perhaps actions dimly experienced but for which there is no specialized organ. The musical scale is an artificial sense organ - a model of an organ" (*Sens.* 306).

excellence or control that would "train the mare Sensibility. Ars Magna. Train language. Work on it like an artist" (*Glad.* 274). The difficulty starts when the training of language, or its capacity of being a productive participant in thought, even the author of thought, is modeled on the basis of other corporeal attainments, and in this sense the implex runs the risk of doing more damage than good to the insights found in Valéry's otherwise interesting engagements with language. A physics of mind, a habit that is an inscription, a body of mind, are possibilities of conceptualization Valérian thought tries to fulfill, but it also acknowledges a certain principle of redundancy or deterritorializing agency in language, imlying a resistance to a direct and unqualified corporeal model. Valéry arrives at a difference of this kind in a reflection on sensibility as a particular domain of possibility, by asking whether the structures characterizing sensibility, affectivity, and what he calls a "combinatory imaginative sensibility" all share the same "equally limited and virtually closed" structure (*Sens.* 349). By the time his reflection moves on to a consideration of language however, he insists on a deeper rift than the Gladiator quote above—which makes light of the transition from sensation to language— might lead one to expect: "At this point there appears, to throw everything into confusion, the jumble of surrogates, of signs, of words and their possible combinations" (ibid.) Therefore Valéry's implied answer is that language does not share a structure of possibility that is "equally limited" or virtually closed to the same extent as other implexes inherent in sensibility and even combinatory imagination. The combinatory dynamics enabled by language indexes a threshold which Valéry elsewhere associates with an "inflation".[142] Just as thought meets "raw perception" with an excess of "relationships over objects", an implex of language, while trainable as others perhaps, obeys different imperatives and puts into

[142] Valéry's revealing reflection on this score takes the following form: "If thought is the product of a function, as the analysis of these 2 notions (thought, function) can determine, further questions ensue ——Whether it is stimulated or depressed by the same actions which stimulate and depress functions in general. If it's limited as a function, is it not limited in itself — and can its value as thought surpass its value as function? Is there not inflation? Role of language here" (*Psych* 189).

play an inflated combinatorics not available otherwise (*Psych 189*; *Sens. 335*).

Therefore if language shows an exaptational creativity, or if it seems like an exotericized power in places, it is on the basis of a radically modified model which is poised to activate subjective capacities more directly involved with a dispensation over relationships rather than objects. If language takes a habit, as required by a speculative "implexite", it is in a realm of transposition where an exacerbated combinatorics entail an equally heightened virtuality, involving different constraints, a different and more pronounced experience of necessity, and correlatively a different experience of time. The inconspicuous difficulty of the term "training" applied to language as an implex can be better appreciated now perhaps. At the limit Valéry will look for the dynamical incompletion that characterizes his idea of sensation and the particular way it opens to negotiation an "initial phase of the habit" in the domain of the deterritorialized redundancy, and level of order possible through the inflation that is language—of the Cahiers.

Excursus on habit and chance in the Cahiers

Labor of Dehabituation

On a certain level the interest of this chapter overlaps with a theme with wide circulation, which is Valéry's position as a thinker of aesthetic production, since the idea of work and the various challenges Valéry posed to it have always been privileged objects of study for scholars of all stripes, many of whom rightly assumed an identification between the

author and this particular topic. Even philosophers like Adorno took "artistic production" to be "the area of Valéry's specific experience" (Adorno 151).[143] In my argument too this inheritence from Valéry around the question of production is of determining import, with all the related debates around what constitutes an author, the respective roles of voluntary control or imposition of order and the claims of more unruly powers like chance and nature.

This traditional question of work—traditional because it touches on deeply rooted assumptions about art in European philosophy and intellectual history— also immediately links up with what could be termed a problem of subjectivation. Dismantling the idol of the work as a finished object is accompanied in Valéry by a strong emphasis on procedures of methodical self-transformation, and an interest in enlisting various forms of intellectual or artistic media for this agenda, prompting thinkers like Jean Wahl to observe a certain "pragmatism" in this subordination (Wahl *L'Experience Metaphysique* 124).[144] This is a pragmatism that consists in using the work as a sounding board or a means for various cognitive and aesthetic capacities in development, without however aiming for its completion. Wahl's charge of "pragmatism" may also be restated and given a less critical—since it makes self-transformation a *disappointment* of work—turn however: the question can be stated on the level of the kind of demands Valéry feels being made on him by the works and the forms on which he nevertheless labors and in what sense these demands—intellectual certainly, but also practical— do not receive the efforts a traditional work assumes. By referring to a certain difference in demands, I

[143] Texts like "Notion Generale d'Art" and Valéry's inaugural Address at College de France dealing with the idea of poesis are some noteworthy examples of this identification.

[144] We should note that in the passage concerned Wahl does not seem to be referring to the philosophical movement known as Pragmatism and often associated with American philosophers like Peirce, James, and Dewey. He seems to refer to pragmatism in a more colloquial and non-technical sense of making use of something—such as a work of art— in a way that subordinates its ordinary ends to relatively more private and less self-evident goals.

mainly refer to the imperatives of training which underpin Valéry's long exploration of human psychism and physiology on the basis of self-observation. In this sense, the hypothesis of a different but no less rigorous relationship between effort and a work's own demands is what is called for by the *Cahiers*' peculiar economy as a work. In fact, there are good grounds for supposing that artistic work as an activity if not as an object is merely displaced, rendered more conscious and never cancelled. At stake is the possibility of a work enabling an intervention in various corporeal and mental capacities, and at the limit, the emergence of new capacities, through the external manipulation of art or forms through a stringent give and take with their nascent dynamism. Symmetrically, the pragmatism goes both ways, and a "self" or its various phases are worked into being to produce something as well.

Cahiers in particular as a whole is inextricable from a switch from the valorization of self-contained forms and works well-defined in their ends, to a "research" which enjoys a certain latitude in terms of the formal status of the conduits and ends of its pursuit.[145] A research which, even if epistemically oriented toward representation and knowledge, always recognizes the enabling share of *techne* that underlies it, such that what is needed for returning to the foundation of the observable becomes an "art of reducing the number of ideas" (Phil. 71). On a parallel score, whereas in poetry formal excellence and evocativeness on the level of products is a requirement and "demand" that justifies and gauges the value of the exercise, in Cahiers it is often Valéry's changing feelings and experiences of habitual facility and difficulty which provide gauges for the value of the

[145] I use this term "research" in the way Maurice Blanchot used in situating his own writing in *The Infinite Conversation* as a form non-neutral or non-indifferent for what might lend itself to thought: "Poetry has a form, the novel has a form; research, the research in which the movement of all research is in play, seems unaware that it does not have a form, or worse still, refuses to question the form that it borrows from tradition" (Blanchot 3). Valéry's practice in Cahiers can be taken as a research deeply cognizant of the effects of its own mode of articulation—which does not neatly fit the discursive categories of science, philosophy, and literature— on the substantial concerns which it pursues.

exercise: there is often the sense that relying on accepted definitions and categories—of time, finality, and being for instance— do not merely represent intellectual failures for Valéry, but a lack of persistence in seeing through, and setting out the nature of certain problems.[146] Thus Cahiers not only unfolds a program of analysis, but becomes a "research" into the limits or extendability of attention; self-transformation, and acquisition of new powers to think. There is an image of learning in the making, and it puts premium on exploring limitation.[147]

A self-consciously performative sense of difficulty in its own right is an instructive sign of the way Valéry approaches thought as a trial of capabilities, and I believe it is from such a perspective that we can make sense of a remarkable statement about the function of the Notebooks: that the notebooks constitute the medium of a "labor of dehabituation" (Qtd. in Guerlac; also see Fedrigo *L'Atleta* 53). Valéry always had an urgent sense that he needed to make a break with ingrained assumptions about the living being, and in its resort to an abstraction of the observables of living Cahiers served as the main stage of this break. A work of reformulation and reproblematization is necessary, he thought, if he was not to find satisfaction in received ideas about the body, psyche, life and other philosophical problems; but his sense of the work of reformulation implicates himself in his habits, habit largely serving as a figure for facticity and unscrutinized inheritance: "My dream will have been one day to be able to think with the help of principles, definitions and assessments of thought I would have recreated according to my own

[146] In an entry in the section "System" in Notebooks, Valéry expresses his intellectual ideal of tarrying with difficulty in terms of an artisanal process: "One shouldn't be concerned with answers, but with how things are set out. Never be in a hurry to resolve, but rather go more deeply into the nature of the difficulty and specify it — cut its facets sharp and clean, like a diamond — make it dazzling and pure. So that the entire set of intellectual aspects turns on a few diamond points, all the more hard and brilliant because reduced to a few" (Phil. 127).

[147] It is not a coincidence that difficulty appears in the notes specifically gathered under the heading Education in the Notebooks, employed with a view to bridging "activity and passivity" as well as "stimulation" and "acquisition" in learning: "The difficulty must be made *interesting*- challenging – for its sake" (Edu. 635-6).

reflections and not received through language, through its forms and the transitive habits it carries with it and imposes" (Phil. 71). While Valéry highlights the role of a received language in imposing a deceptive facility—"transitive habits"— of solutions, in contrast with a purely propositional endeavor, he is alert to the possibility of a critique of this facility on a level different from objectification, insofar as the "negation" implied by "–de" is pointedly conceived as a "labor".

I think there is a complementarity between Valéry's valorization of the experience of difficulty, and the idea of dehabituation expressed here, and that this complementarity finds ample support in the constitutive ambivalence of habit in the philosophical tradition, which indirectly informs Valéry's own understanding of his project, as I hope to show in the following discussion.[148] A characteristic aspect of the ambivalence in question associates habit with an unremitting passivity, "possession" and insensibility; and because habit is passivity and possession in one of its determinations, Valéry's gestures toward the experience of difficulty (particularly, all the ways he made a practice of inciting and responding to it) make sense from the perspective of an active confrontation with this determination. Difficulty becomes a pivotal moment of "research" in its own right and dehabituation shows itself to be necessary because Valéry makes the assumption of an

[148] The ambivalence in question is between a benign habit –plasticity, adaptation or "long term potentiation"— and insensibility or deadening of affect.There are two important discussions of habit as a traditionally ambivalent category that I am relying on here: The first is Catherine Malabou's discussion of the work of Felix Ravaisson, *On Habit*, about which she claims that "The entire essay is dedicated to the bifurcated treatment of habit: there is no presence without a parasite" (Malabou xviii). My second resource on this score is Dominique Janicaud who also informs Alberto Toscano's attempt to give an ontogenetic status to habit, and base the ontogenetic problematic on a necessary reference to ambivalence inherent to it: Janicaud writes, "In our lives, we constantly experience this ambivalence of habit. Janus bifrons working like time towards growth and expansion as well as degradation and erosion. Without habit, no maturing of intelligence, of taste; but as a result of habit, how many sources dried up, freshness lost, enthusiasms buried under the grey shroud of routine" (Qtd. in Toscano 110). Continuing Toscano suggests, "to place one's ontological speculations in the element of ambivalence, oscillation and reversibility between process and state, is perhaps another necessary prelude to considering habit as a method of nature; that is,not merely as a derivative operation obfuscating the lucid functioning of intellect, but as a constitutive element in an ontology of individuation (Toscano 113).

insensibility—as habit— counterproductive for thought. With thinkers before him like Maine de Biran, Valéry can be taken to make use of "the figure of habit as the intimate nemesis, at once fugitive and inescapable, of philosophical activity and indeed of thinking as such" (Toscano 112).

A provisional survey will help drive home the point. In one of his characteristic stock-takings in his late work, Valéry wrote, "I have always feared doing what I could do best. And what I could do best, I have done, fearing to do it" (Collected Works v. 15, 302). The puzzling statement may also apply to the work that is the *Notebooks*. In straightforward interpretation it would first mean a search for and confrontation with difficulty, in the form of avoiding what he could do best, with all the potential consequences involved: failure, mastery, gradual adaptations through practice and so on. For instance, Valéry's notes gathered under the heading Ego in Cahiers express a certain distrust in the peculiarities of his thinking, foremost among them a temperamental "rapidity" of thought which amounts to "the impossibility of containing myself within any object., or subject" (Ego 95; cf. 71). Valéry even confesses to a certain reluctance or inability for mental absorption, which to say the least, surprises a careful reader of Cahiers; but the surprise disappears if one remembers the aspect of labor Valéry emphasizes and takes the resultant work that is the Cahiers as the complex result and testament of a labor against the author's habitual tendency to eclecticism. According to the perspective of dehabituation, Valéry's eclecticism and tendency to variety for its own sake, must have been some of the driving factors or sources of inspiration for the long-term emergence of regularity within Cahiers' area of inquiries.[149] The very process of the discovery of *organization*, and its challenges

[149] According to the logic which makes of mastery an object of avoidance however, the establishement of a certain regularity among *Cahiers'* problems might also be considered a failure, because of the very reason that it helps Valéry achieve an effortless avoidance of what he set out to defy in himself. From the radical perspective of Gladiator section in particular, the only true achievements in Cahiers would be reactivations of difficulty and returning to the brink of failure, instanced in the experience of habits

are traceable across the letter of the notebooks.

Throughout the notebooks there are more direct expressions of these questions, and the ambiguous drive to inhabit the uninhabitable involved. While his experience required of Valéry that he first admit "the imperceptible transformation which changes a voluntary, composite act into an automatic one", he also thought that the resourceful habit also concealed a reverse alchemy: "A non-automatic state can be brought on by an automatic procedure - with the result that the automatic and the non-automatic are inter-connected. I can have the habit of trying to conquer habit" (*Psych* 205, 65). Thus, on some level, Valéry's work in Cahiers in particular becomes very much a compendium of the various versions of habit in its different acceptations. From assigning degrees or phases to habit to darker visions of bodysnatching— "Habit is a short-cut - a more direct route. The short-cut occurs on its own and takes me over - replaces me" (Psych. 66), back to M. Teste's elusive intellectual excellence achieved once again through habit (Glad. 295), Valéry's work cannot be thought apart from a problematic of hexis, as scholars like Gabriel Fedrigo also registered. Thus for instance, the desirability of the "resistance of materials" Adorno mentions in his essay "Valéry's Deviations," has a straightforward explanation according to a negative view of habit as an insensibility: difficulty, resistance and hesitation are experinces which characterize situations not directly consigned to habitual smoothness, as in wearing a new shoe which is not "broken in", or using a new language. This affirmative approach to difficulty—which takes it to be a sign of abilities in development— is also echoed in Valéry's view of difficulty as a generative part of the process of artistic production conducive to the acquisition of new functions and capacities. Difficulty for Valéry is associated with the determination bestowed by precisely set problems and challenges on any mental or physical power and capacity

discovered, maintained in their initial dynamism, and deliberately cast off.

brought to bear on them: "Thought was one day born from indeterminacy...An animal in difficulty — an animal in front of an impassable, invisible barrier of glass" (*Psych.* 234).[150] Resistance is a stimulus, since it is provokingly salient and striking in a way unproblematic success is not: "The lack of success becomes a perceptible thing; success, achieving what was predicted, would have been a non-event" (*Psych.* 238).[151]

Some of Valéry's most significant evaluations of his activity in the notebooks rely on a framework consisting of habits and the incremental results they achieve. In multiple entries of the Cahiers, Valéry explicitly thematizes his scene of writing, discussing his famous custom of waking up before dawn for his rendezvous with the notebooks, making comparisons with various forms of hexis and corporeal schemas bound up with daily tasks, as a result clearly suggesting that in all their multiplicity Cahiers's writers are a bundle of habits. Valéry writes, "these notebooks and the habits they represent are, for me, more the 'causes' of the said writing than an effect and an instrument of the explicit intention to write this or that" ("The Notebooks" V 1, 46). The individual entries, whatever their purported subject matter and immediate goals, are the object of a continued detour and deviation in conformity with the larger and lawlike scales and productive exigencies of habit, which persists through them and makes them possible. This is true even when they emphasize more analytical and abstract functions of formalization and call for rigor and a complete presence of mind, if it is not rather, especially then. Juxtaposed with the previous remarks about difficulty, this strain of

[150] This aspect of Valéry's vision of apprenticeship also finds expression in his *Eupalinos* within an architectural context: "if no obstacle impedes your progress, progress is quite impossible...But, on the other hand, once the necessary obstacle is present, it works against you; it drinks up your fatigues, parsimoniously metes out to you space in time" (*Eupalinos* 139).

[151] The question of difficulty can be attached to a problem of unlearning with stakes in the exploration of a more extended range of behaviors and thought; and the possibility of this extension itself devolves on certain assumptions about human physiology. As Valéry observes in a Cahiers note, "Nothing is simple — Nothing is natural. That is what a pathology of awareness reveals" (*Psych.* 139). Not having much to do with a crude blank slate vision of the organism, this sense of the way deviation discloses insights about the normal rather points to what Valéry calls "the innateness of possibility" (*Psych.* 224).

reflection situates the *Cahiers* in a unitary register of hexis, albeit paradoxical within that belonging: It is both true that the Notebooks are produced by habits, and that their most important activity is intervening in habits with well-determined challenges, regimes and obstacles.

In Cahiers, references to needs and habits like smoking, wearing slippers, threading a needle, practicing the musical scales, the grazing of an animal, all furnish analogies to Valéry's conceptualization of his practice,[152] and he can claim that "the production of ideas is, in my case, a natural, almost physiological function - whose restriction severely affects my physical make-up, whose free- flow is indispensable for me" (ibid. 46). Similar ruminations situate writing in a longstanding tradition of thinking on habits defined by doctrinal forms of "anthropotechnics" aiming at the transformation of the self through asceses—such as Thomism— and distinctly evoke the tension that belongs to that tradition: the one between freedom and nature. In characteristic fashion however, Valéry has no tolerance for a direct opposition and rather more like Hegel inclines to find freedom in what is cultivable as a naturalized skill or customary act and its productivity.[153] In this sense, he identifies the free flow of his ideas with being compelled

[152] By practice I am referring to Valéry's sustained —and one might say iconic— habit of waking up before dawn and starting writing in the notebooks, with the steady accompaniment of stimulants like coffee and cigarettes. This practice deserves the title of "meditation" with its performative character, relation to a time which it does not merely take as preexistent, its unflagging regularity, as well as its deep relation to the problem of achieving a certain mastery over awareness.

[153] Especially significant from this perspective, is Valéry's view of what he calls instruments, prostheses activating certain habitual adaptations which are nevertheless founded on the insensibility they induce for nonrelevant sensory givens. As discussed apropos the implex, the instrument corresponds to the benefits residing in "being able to overlook or dominate infinitesimal circumstances". Here Claire Carlisle's work on the place of habit in Hegel's view of freedom through habit (in *Philosophy of Mind*) points to an illuminating parallel:

> He suggests that the soul's possession and domestication of itself by means of habit accomplishes its liberation: 'In this manner the soul has the contents in possession, and contains them in such a manner that in these features it is not sentient, nor does it stand in relationship with them as distinguishing itself from them, nor is absorbed in them...and whilst existing in these forms as its possession, it is at the same time open to be otherwise occupied and engaged.' Here, Hegel offers a philosophical interpretation of the everyday phenomenon of habituation. Because so much of our activity is taken care of by habit – moving around our home or our workplace, driving a car, using a pen or a keyboard – our energies and attention are free for other things, including creative thought.

in such and such ways he chooses—the notebooks. The habit of making entries for the notebooks as "the compulsion of the freedom of the mind", is equally the result of a "blind power routinely occurring" and blind power is simultaneously endowed with a power of continuous transformation, since in the Valérian "system" the category of "ideas" only make sense as a type of transformation.

If there is any benefit to pursuing the various accents and changing positions of the habitual in Valéry, it is the opportunity of observing how deeply the questions of qualitative temporal embodiment represented by habit reaches into his more abstract preoccupations and inventions, effectively grounding thought in a genetic dimension constituted by repetition and periodicity as well as their inventive destabilization: "The most agile awareness, the most alert and free intelligence, are called into being (and to be as they are) through routine habits. Automatism brings with it the 'time' of creation. [...] Thus the regular movement of the means of transportation tads the explorer into unknown territory. - Because the unknown territory is made up of elements that are known" (Psych 197). Nonetheless this is not to claim that habit exhausts all the forms of becoming that is available to an author caught up in his work as discussed by Valéry. The emphasis here is for the strategic reason that habit establishes links and relays between the most biologically grounded living functions and the most abstract mental preoccupations, taking what one could call an ontogenetic slant— unless of course Valéry did not have a critical intolerance of this philosophical lexicon. It cannot be overstated that in Valéry the prominent problematic of work continually seeks out and places itself under a heading of productive habituation, carving a space of "praxis" within "poesis".

(Carlisle "The Question of Habit in Theology and Philosophy: From Hexis to Plasticity", 48)

It is easy to see why Valéry's concern with habit inflects and is an indispensable aspect of "the area of his special experience", artistic production. In various texts like *Eupalinos*, *Man and the Seashell*, as well as the *Cahiers*, Valéry devotes considerable effort to defining and articulating the differences between three main modes of production: nature, chance and human work. But the most interesting junctures in these reflections appear when he discovers overlappings between them that tend to go beyond analogy, so that what is "natural" can be equally be produced by human work, signifying the way human work diverges from its capacity of premeditation and its very acts build up to an involuntary excession of its supervisory role in the process of making. Thus what is not to be reduced to the activity of the subject, comes about "by way of the subject" in Adorno's felicitous formulation. Valéry's different concerns with habit, chance and the arts' possible interventions in habitual cycles that ultimately belong to human (neuro)physiology thus come to a head at the point where a single process of making seems to accomodate both a naturalistic type of emergence and planned construction. In the same group of entries on the writing of the notebooks, Valéry speculates that he writes them not to make "some work or system out of them", but "just as a spider spins its web without a future or a past, just as a mollusc would continue to produce its spiral shell - not seeing why or how it might cease to secrete it, step by step" ("Notebooks" V1, 46). As Kojin Karatani astutely observed, the natural in Valéry never admits a common-sense division with the cultural, but rather "indicates everything that we do not know how to make" yet nevertheless end up making (Karatani 25). Consequently, writing —and not only diaries but also mathematical formalization— frequently accrues in Cahiers a natural-historical significance under the aegis of an extended understanding of what "working" means.

Anti-chance

Similarly, chance is what habituation cannot account for, yet what it strives to "steer" (Adorno 148) inasmuch as habit can be one of invention in formalization. Chance and habit are intimate, indissociable and for all that, mutually abrasive in Cahiers. It is not possible to do justice to Valéry's vast and sometimes conflicting treatments of chance here, but in the oscillations between a Neoromantic/Symbolist revalorization and Neorationalist deflation, it also very much belongs to the paradoxes and hesitations constitutive of Valéry's work at large. First, in a negative function, the complete control attainable in a given region of experience is "anti-chance"— a form of sure-handedness— as the overriding of the accidents stemming from the granularity or resistance of the materials; a disposition modulated by habit implies the relatively high degree of probability for the chance-free success of an operation: "Generally speaking, the resolution [in a situation of material resistance] will be quicker, more economical, more complete etc., if the person has modified himself, voluntarily or not, - and has made himself anti-chance" (Glad. 239). Accordingly, in its various degrees or phases, habit and dishabituation can be enabling/disabling or genetic for chance in principle. But conversely, chance in its turn can be genetic or enabling for the mind in the training, composition and quality of its habits. Valéry points out that "as things stand, dressage [training] is totally given over to chance. The press, education, one's milieu have their effects, all of a nature to diminish independence of movement. It's true that society, perhaps, demands this" (*Glad.* 307). Since Valéry perceives in the facticity of a milieu delivered to the influences of the media, social determinations and institutional influences like education a certain heteronomy and arbitrariness —insofar as their influence does not necessarily ask for the deliberation or approval of anyone exposed to them on an individual basis— he comes to characterize their formative action by chance.

In the writing of Cahiers both habit and chance work as equally expropriatory conditions of thought and artistic work, like two alien authorial interlopers or ghost writers. Just as habit in Valéry's work manifests in its traditional ambivalence, chance is also subject to a continuous revision in the *Cahiers* that positions it against itself, not least in its productive valence, looking back to certain Romantic preoccupations.[154] At the limit this means that among the reciprocal actions between chance and habit considerered in Valéry's work, there is room for a search to establish habitual routes for chance and its initiatory accomodations in artistic production: First, the Cahiers is the work of a habit, but more specifically, it is the work of a habit of chance findings.[155] Thus, parallel to habit, chance also combines antagonistic values, on the one hand a random perturbation and on the other a breakthrough in thought that can sustain the necessity of an elaboration. However, this latter type of productive chance has very little to do with an inspiration which is left to its inscrutability. Valéry's analytical rationalist bent and insistence on the articulated/architectonic aspects of production are both too strong to allow such a role for chance as inspiration. Instead, chance is an aspect of what Valéry calls "the work of the mind", always bound up with an articulated process: "a strange game of chance which precedes, prepares and seeks to eliminate chance, though it's embedded in its strings" (*Psych* 103).[156]

[154] The example of Novalis is significant in this context too.

[155] Cf. Burroughs and his pursuit of making the experience of chance hinging on the technique of cut-up, and consciousness expansion in general a form of "permanent acquisition".

[156] In a way apparent here, Valéry seeks to accomodate and formulate both chance and habit in reflexive and exponential configurations: a habit that conquers habit, a chance become necessity that eliminates chance. As it were, more traditional categories of reflexivity quietly inform these borderline recursivities: consciousness (of consciousness) and knowledge (of knowledge). These rogue reflexivities perhaps imply a transfiguration of a traditionally epistemic configuration into a directly practical one, since both reflexivities find their relevant reverberations within the revisions, operations and recombinations that make up the writing of the Cahiers. For a treatment of the role of this structure of reflexivity in the author's work, see Marcel Gauchet's article "Une reflexologist inconnue". Gauchet finds in Valéry's work a certain tendency to transform problems of self-reference in consciousness to a direct and literal reflex model, with desirable results of demystification, including a shift from a substantial to more antisubstantialist or functional status for the mind. Gauchet quotes a characteristic statement by Valéry: "'The essential act, and the most frequent is finding oneself. This act is confused

In its multifarious associations with surprise and a failure to anticipate, states that are as meticulously analyzed in *Cahiers*, chance also directly functions like a momentary glitch in the accomodations and the pre-adaptations brought to bear on any situation, thereby a momentary suspension and destabilization of habituated attitude within a process of production. If dressage—as a training partaking of habit's generativity— is chance, it is not only so in its origin, but also in its partially voluntary modulations. Concomitantly, chance also occupies a discreet but important place in the portion of Valéry's work that specifically focuses on self-transformation and training, the "Gladiator": "Gladiator is the effort expended by one's being against probability. An effort which is called Art, the transformation of chance into near-certainty" (Glad. 300). As we will see in the final section, this paradoxical inscription of the fundamentally involuntary workings of initiatory short-term "chance" of formal procedures, in a predominantly voluntary and desiringly induced long-term transformation will be of paramount importance.

Following from these questions then, the next section looks at a group of entries in the Cahiers that translate and displace into a more general realm the problems of habit and chance as authorial accomplices, and while doing so reveal the conceptual landscape and coordinates that implicitly inform their functional coexistence. Ultimately, any negotiation of their roles have to take into account Valéry's approaches to another couple of interrelated preoccupations: form or language and time. If habit and chance make such necessary and continuously merging points of reference in the Cahiers, their presence have a lot to do with this other inextricable simultaneity and conjoining between time and form, a simultaneity which did not escape the authors of *Order out of Chaos*, who

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with the mind itself. It is reflex." With regard to this attitude Gauchet comments "This desubstantialization, denies the most classical problems...everything takes place within the doubling made possible by the reversibility of a reflected reflex, so to speak" (Gauchet 163-4). Finally, Gauchet's discussion also draws our attention to the importance of language in this operation of desubstantialization in Valéry.

enlisted Valéry in affirming that "time is construction": "instant engenders form, form makes the instant visible" (*Dialogues* 58). The habits and dehabituations Valéry describe and enact through The *Cahiers* most often find their medium in performative formalization, and his work of formalization is such that with its analytical fervor and recombinatory linkings provides a favorable site for "fortunate coincidence" through the play of temporal discontinuity and continuity. In a sense, the improbable ways chance and habit find a joint orientation in form accounts for why the Cahiers must necessarily be what it is, namely one of the most singular cases in the 20th century art of a desistance from the autonomous finitude of a traditional work in favor of the potential richness of a processual mode of working that absorbs and transforms the subjectivity and "makes the mind" of the artist.

Time is Production: On the Relation Between Time and Form in Valéry's Work

General Problems

Valéry's *Idée Fixe* is marked by a self-consciously playful inventiveness, such that in places the dialogue reads like an exercise in self-justified but essentially harmless linguistic atrocity. With a calculated flippancy, the text gives through the speakers —a M. Teste and his interlocutor— words like "omnivalent", "implex" (first public occurrence), multiparous (many births) and equally puzzling other "conceits" like a nebular theory of creativity. In this last section devoted to an aspect of Valéry's work that is especially close to its heart, namely his longstanding efforts to think time through writing or form and form in turn through time, a similar catalogue can serve as anticipatory shorthands that

will set the stage for what will follow. At least the same spirit of the seriousness of jest can inform what I propose here as an "energetic mereo-chrono-topology with somatic underpinnings and intercalary openings", or a "nonisotropic time of incompressible imminence". But if even a degree of obfuscation such as this can be vindicated in its unfoldings to come, this can only be under the sign of its relation to the seemingly simpler: "time is production". Especially since what may be signified by "time is production" is a problem for any attempt to link Valéry's interests in training or "dehabituation" and subjectivation through work, the whole purpose of the following is its unpacking.

More specifically, the following aims to pursue the hesitations and paradoxes of Valéry's work between exercises and experiments into an area where they find a particularly acute instantiation. While Valéry's more logical and analytically formalist tendencies lead him to come up with good, serviceable and unilinear representations of time, the persistent drift of the Notebooks to a self-transformation without end give these representations a more performative slant. Inscriptions of time that are offered as neutral clarifications of the experience of duration, enter a fateful partnership with inscriptions that do not represent without changing the systems they are intended to inscribe, deriving time out of a practice of writing. This state of affairs is a prime example for a concentration on "the time of cultivation", which the introduction to this study identifies as one of the constants that bring together philosophical and cognitive scientific understandings of apprenticeship.

In a notebook entry Valéry wrote, "I want to eliminate time", taking up a tentative proposal to replace it with apparently more easily verifiable categories like

"transformation" and "conservation". Rather than referring to a project such as abolishing the reality of time along the lines of the Mallarméan attempt at an abolition of chance, he was referring to time as a concept, in this sense only affirming his long-established eliminationist tendencies with regard to philosophy.[157] Nevertheless one might as well concede that even if Valéry's style of discourse is positioned in ambivalent exteriority to philosophy— since "philosophy is a matter of form"— and by implication in exteriority to a philosophy of time, it is nevertheless undeniable that his work offers serious engagements with a variety of questions that have occupied philosophies of time since the Pre-Socratics, not to mention attempts at formulating fresh questions of his own concerning notions like rhythm, repetition as well as the perception of change. For this reason, in order to approach Valéry's direct derivations of a (new description) of the experience of time from his experience of making, characterizing his general approach to time and his related critiques with regard to important interlocutors and precedents like Bergson and Kant might be necessary. This is not to say however that what will occupy us here will be an aim of hunting his dialogic sources.

One can argue that when he starts to interrogate and recoup established philosophical categories and antitheses like simultaneity and succession or quality and quantity, or when he sets out to determine the place of a functioning body not only in the perception but also the constitution of time, Valéry very much situates himself in the company of a host of other contemporary figures like Bergson, Whitehead, Husserl, Einstein and Minkowski. On the other hand, in a company such as this, what is singular in Valéry's work should not be missed either: Only at the juncture where his inquiries into time turn out to be inextricably linked to his poetic concern with the making of form and creation of effects, that Valéry's thought on temporality comes into its own. The reverse claim has

[157] See Jacques Bouveresse's important article "Philosophy from an Antiphilosopher: Paul Valéry".

validity too: that form in Valéry is only worth whatever its function may be as continuous temporal modulation. Thus under the general heading of time, it is possible to follow at least two simultaneous pathways across his work: one that departs from an engagement with time to arrive at an enriched understanding of the nascency of form, and vice versa, one that departs from form to arrive at an enriched concept of time in its own right. This section will travel these paths successively. For now, let us note that what is at stake in the coexistence of these directions of thought in Valéry is nothing less than the complementary possibilities of a poetic time that is not merely subjective, and a time-as-such thought on the basis of its original openings to poetic scansion, rhythm and production. What's more, these pathways and their complementarity in the economy of Valéry's work, also point to a search for a new conception of the aesthetic in a bid to overcome its division between a discourse bearing on the conditions of possible experience, and a practice bearing on the conditions of real experience.[158]

From Kantian Time to Time as Local System

Although Valéry's engagements with Kant do not amount to an exhausting critical account or even lengthily elaborated explanations for disagreement, it is still possible to isolate certain objections he raises as an entry to his particular account of time at large. Valéry imputes generally to Kant's epistemology and particularly his account of time a certain deficiency in fulfilling criteria regarding observation, experience and an awareness of language. For instance he makes an objection to Kant's distinction between the form of judgements as synthetic and analytic a priori/a posteriori, arguing that the said distinction conceals "an even earlier problem, the very existence of JUDGEMENT as

[158] In his celebrated discussion in *The Logic of Sense* on the duality or splitting of the aesthetic between conditions of real and possible experience, Deleuze corroborates Valéry, while bringing a clarity of philosophical kind to the significance of this rift.

such" (Phil 131). If the problem of the emergence of judgement is restored its necessary connections with the possibility in a "gain in knowledge" that is essentially "expansive", Valéry's remark can be better appreciated as a negotiation of the relation between invention and knowing, with all the implications for a notation that discovers vis-a-vis a notation that merely transcribes/translates. Put otherwise, by questioning judgement Valéry is also questioning the possibility of any judgement that is not limited to propositional identity, thus tracing a curve from a logic proper to an ontology of time.[159]

In a similar vein, Valéry seems uncomfortable around Kant's binding of knowledge and functioning (in Valéry's account a term corresponding to a physio-neurologically based and expanded account of messily interrelated physical/mental faculties and responsive task capacities) in a predetermined "table" of categories. Finally, in a criticism that carries the real burden of Valéry's disagreement, he refers to Kant's "failure to consider language" (*Phil.* 341). In fact, the problem of language dominates Valéry's most references to Kant and extends especially to his view of time, amounting to a general reproach that Kant smuggles in an unquestioned —"fiduciary"— metaphysics by relying on his definitions of time and space as nonphenomenal forms of sensibility: "Kant says that space and time are 'forms of sensibility', which means something only as a negation of other theses - but to say form and to say sensibility isn't to say anything positive at all - that's less clear even than just sticking to space and time and altogether less useful" (Phil. 350). Aside from a detailed excavation of the reasons for Valéry's discomfort expressed in this and similar remarks, it should rather be possible to read the outlines of his main strategies about time in the negative here: a revalorization and redefinition of the role of sensation in

[159] Valéry's suspicions of universality and necessity as not so implicit desiderata of knowing in Kant's theory of judgement is a consequence of this more general critique. The locutions "gain in knowledge" and "expansion" come respectively from Jean-François Lyotard's *Discourse, Figure*, and Kojin Karatani's *Transcritique*, both carrying out a repurposing of the Kantian distinction between the analytic and synthetic judgements.

experiences of time, the place of the physiological or organological as a naturalized and intraphenomenal form of time-keeping, an expanded and more differentiated armature of concepts borrowed from various sources like thermodynamics, physiology and biology (thus an emphasis on exact language), and a correlated drive to locate modest observational loci and cases of experimentation (something "positive") before any declaration on what constitutes time in a nonphenomenal sense. Consequently, more than an interlocutor or a dialogic source in his own right, Kant might have played a role of instructive contrast in the development of Valéry's approach to time.

In a sense, the case of Kant and Valéry's search for observational and descriptive accuracy is significant also because it allows us to witness a somewhat anti-philosophical impulse — "philosophers are concerned with time. They defend this territory. It seems easier to hold forth on time—without restriction" (*Phil.* 264) — in Valéry leading to supporting a more experimental and performative bent in his thinking. Instead of an anti-theoretical consequence however, the performative does lead to a theory. As it will be seen shortly, ironically, it is partly because Valéry insists on avoiding what he thinks to be vague definitions and aims to supply his declarations with their observational counterparts in kind that he may end up with what itself looks like a speculative stance on time, namely one that merges an interrogation of temporality with an inquiry into the events of a somatically based aesthetics, which is ultimately the domain of Valéry's most significant observations on transformation and becoming generally. As it were, the abandonment of mere expediency in communication, or undoing the reliance on current words has always a productive valence for Valéry, opening the way for invention, which involves a new abundance in the expressions, notations and even "concepts" of time in this case. Moreover, parallel to the overlappings between experiment and exercise that typify his

work, Valéry's paradoxical exhortation to analytical rigor works equally in the service of the very thing whose potential disorder it is supposed to mitigate: sensibility.

A prominent feature of Valéry's understanding of time is that, instead of assuming a universal and absolute time to find it applicable in individually localized set-ups later, it always starts from the closure of an observably local functional cycle that is capable of undergoing transformations and modulations. In this abstract sense the vision of time compatible with Valéry's functionalism is also one that accomodates his perspectivism, a perspectivism that is not limited to human subjectivities but in principle includes abiotic materials and living things at large. In illustration, take Valéry's interpretation of biological time: "The dynamic structure of plants-reminds us that our ideas of life and death go back to an era when we had no idea of functioning—something machines make us think about. Living beings are based on a cycle, or rather on a system of cycles-and epicycles—of which they are only vaguely aware—Sometimes these cycles are easily linked to astronomical cycles—and the general idea of time is introduced—as 'Order of the world'. But time is particular to each system and each functioning, of which it is the vague name" (*Bios* 146).[160]

As a corollary of this functional and operational conceptualization of time, Valéry is led to expanding the role of somato-sensory physiological systems in the human time perception too. In a passage that bears quoting at length, he writes:

> To say that the moving object O moves according to time, is to say that perception of O is conserved by means of a modification of something independent of it, and yet that modification depends on perception of it;

[160] To his credit, Valéry's abstract considerations also position him to conceive the possibility of a time beyond human consciousness, displaying a fascination shared by people like Jacob Von Uexkull, William James, Michaux and Vilem Flusser: "How does an animal experience time?" (Time. 324)

> and finally since this modification excludes all others...Then the time in question becomes a partial perception, or rather a sensible part of the perceived modification—as e.g. the sensation of breathing in, of taking into the nostrils, is a part of the sensation of a smell—and the change in sensation is a function of the change in breathing in. From which we must conclude: There is no such thing as time separate from other things—On the contrary!—There is no time except as there is difference,—contrast. (*Time* 399)

It bears noting that although it may look like Valéry is making time dependent on movement in Aristotelian fashion, or even worse, seems to be reducing it to its subjective repercussions and perceptions, it is possible to maintain that he does neither. Here the importance of the generic lexicon used cannot be overstated. Just as Valéry did not require the plant to observe its own cycles to make its prefunctional growth a partial inductive basis for the human concept of time, here there are only modifications, framings and partial events without any assumptions about a constitutively subjective thematizing; the body on the other hand is only one of the events participating in the potentially obscure loops of functions reciprocally taking each other into account. It is against a generic level such as this that Valéry's conviction that "time is no such thing as separate from other things" gains intelligibility. In other words, instead of being a transcendental principle beyond experience and setting a parameter for it, time is not separate from the becoming of real things and their functions, but a variable coextensive with them. No wonder, the passage arrives at a thought of *difference* and *contrast* with a fertile and indeterminately broad area of relevance. Before discussing how this vision of system-bound time of local singularity may inform and in turn be informed by Valéry's investment in somatic conditions of sensibility, a comparison is necessary to drive home

the main consequences involved.

Valéry's engagement with Kant as a contemporaneous element of his own attempts at a differentiated description of temporal experience may be no coincidence, since Kant's formal construal of time often prompts critiques from philosophical endeavors that resist the derivation of time from mere succession. Two examples are especially relevant here. For reasons that will be apparent later, both examples come from figures who prize rhythm as an irreducible aspect of the experience of time in its own right. By way of the first example, I take A. N. Whitehead, whose particular engagement with relativistic physics led him to a notion he called "epochal duration" which has a significant affinity with Valéry's notion of time as a coextensive variable, immanently built-in to the structure of events.

In affirming that "the epochal duration is not realised via its successive divisible parts, but is given with its parts", Whitehead certainly wanted to establish temporality on the basis of the coherence and the internal patterns of the events of nature and radical experience without any separate transcendental timekeeping, ultimately ruling out any conception of time as another continuous process, metrically accompanying what is happening, be this conception a Newtonian absolute time, or a more indirect subordination of irreversibility and becoming to the geometry of spacetime as in Einstein: "temporalisation is realisation. Temporalisation is not another continuous process. It is an atomic succession. Thus time is, atomic (i.e., epochal), though what is temporalised is divisible" (*Science and the Modern World* 128-29). Significantly, Whitehead's arrival at a "time qua realisation" was already prepared by an earlier foray into the irreducible character of rhythmicity in the temporality of the living: "Life (as known to us) involves the completion of rhythmic

parts within the life-bearing event which exhibits that object. We can diminish the time-parts, and, if the rhythms be unbroken, still discover the same object of life in the curtailed event. But if the diminution of the duration be carried to the extent of breaking the rhythm, the life-bearing object is no longer to be found as a quality of the slice of the original event cut off within that duration" (Whitehead, *Enquiry* 196). In response Valéry would write of rhythm that it is "divisible artificially physically; it is no longer so, functionally" (Time 325): "The notion of division is misleading in the case of rhythm, which is the sense of a mode of action that constructs -and in that 'construction', THE SAID 'FEELING' ARISES, and there's a sort of reciprocity" (Ibid. 390).

As we will see, Valéry's nonmetric time will also find a necessary unfolding in a consideration of rhythm. To come to my second example, it is an insight from philosophy of music and, in terms of the manner of its derivation, provides a much closer affinity with Valéry's mode of thinking. Victor Zuckerkandl, whose own conceptualization of time also found a departure in a thinking of rhythm, made a critique of a formal time in very much the same terms as Valéry: "Anyone who thought that he could arrive at time by thinking away everything that is in time, the moving things, the sense perceptions that crowd upon us, our feelings, all the concrete content of our consciousness, and retaining 'only the form,' would be in for a rude awakening; with the things that are in time, time itself would have slipped through his fingers" (Zuckerkandl 204). Thus looking back to Whitehead, a patterned order of sound events would not be accompanied and subject to counting by a metric time with uniform spaces, but hold in store a temporal variable coextensive with the *realization* of sounds in whatever irregular spacing: "We observe an oscillation, an accumulation— and this oscillation, this accumulation, is time...we see tree trunks moved, bridge piles subjected to pressure, soil carried away and deposited— but

there is no water, the stream bed is empty" (ibid. 208). Or as Valéry puts it: "There is no such thing as time in general. There are only the times belonging to systems" (*Time* 386).

Coming from very different antecedents and harboring different motives, the three thinkers nevertheless seem to reach an agreement around a nonisotropic and coextensive temporality whose crucial experiment is unbreakable rhythmicity, or a vision of locally structured wholes given with their parts as well as intervals. Some important consequences and further questions follow from this first critical feature of Valéry's understanding of time. The first thing to note is the decisive contribution of this understanding—what I call "nonisotropic"— of time to the ultimate equation between time and production. Only a time that is immanent and co-belonging with realization can be equivalent to production. But equally significant is the demand this feature places on Valéry in terms of conceiving time on the basis of a physiologically functioning, differentially equipped body among all the other possible cyclically functioning local systems—a chronosomatism. This body is emphatically not an anatomical but a "real body", suffusing the functions of consciousness and even the I (*Soma* 257). The system of functions at the disposal of Valéry's observations, the system also responsible for the same observations, radiates from his own body, if treated in a sufficiently impersonal regime. Thus "the body is the clock of the present" (*Soma* 252).

Furthermore, the composition of the body involves internal heterogeneities, ultimately raising the possibility that endogenous disparity[161] or disjunction may be the condition of any unitary temporal experience, a disparity in deep complicity with the central role

[161] Valéry writes, "every action or modification is a form of disparity -(of distribution) - opposed to a general parity and freedom of the system of Being. Return to parity is a fundamental necessity — and is expressed, in sensibility, by a force opposed to that which by local stimulation created the disparity" (*Time* 389).

played by rhythm in Valéry's attitude to time: "The perception of duration is due to the difference between the state of a sensible part of the body and the state in which it ought to be (less or not at all sensible) in order to maintain its equilibrium with the sensibility of the whole" (*Time* 377). Thus everything happens as if at the base of bodily time there is a certain nexus of local disparities that get levelled more or less efficiently in their integration to the whole, and here as elsewhere difference, tension and what Valéry calls "intervals" are paramount: "The various constituents of the living being are not in the same 'epoch' or phase" (ibid. 393). In other words the living being is composed of multiple phases in any given moment.

In these remarks Valéry builds on his earlier insights that found the experience of time on an ensemble of relations between the world, mind and the body (a body with the contribution of all its relatively peripheral extensions instead of being identified with the dream of a neuronal island). According to Valéry's implicit scheme with energetic underpinnings, the overcharging of any psycho-physiological locus with excess stimuli is always bound up with changes in the perception of time, such that the perception of time in its own right becomes inextricable from the state of these localities, whether they be "in hesitation before urinating" or in a "pause before sneeze" (*Psych.* 71). Morever, if Valéry's attentiveness to the insensibilities of automatism and habit is remembered in this specific context, it is easy to imagine that he would not separate ordinary experience of time from the sedimented attunements and capacities of an individual body inasmuch as they would trail skewed insensibilities with them: "the less or not at all sensible". Although extreme perhaps, the foregoing examples are totally consistent with Valéry's main argument about the essential place of the peripheral body in the sense of time: "The muscular component of ourselves, in so far as we feel it, is the most important sense—the

one whose properties are at the root of our 'time, space, power' etc.," (*Psych.* 198).

What the process of the composition of a work of art can introduce to this sense of an intrinsically heterogenous bodily time is not beyond speculation either. In the invocation to his body, Valéry's architect Eupalinos enjoins it to furnish his intelligence "with thy presences, with thy demands, with thy local ties" (*Dialogues* 91), presumably for enabling access to a sensible harmony that needs the body's direct participation to be accurate. As Eupalinos confesses, "how strange soever it may appear to you, it seems to me my body is playing its part in the game" (*Dialogues* 89). Thus it can be argued that in the empirical setting of the process of poetic making, the emerging work is also involved with the system on the basis of which it makes sense to speak of time. This is why Valéry's self-bestowed label "formism" is equally a "verbal materialism" ("Calepin d'un poète"), not leaving much room for a hylemorphic organization of materials from a center such as consciousness to which everything will be referred.[162]

The First Case of Reciprocity Between the Successive and the Simultaneous: Rhythm

A second consequence of Valéry's critique of a formal notion of time and succession with no reciprocal envelopment with "realization" of systems and functions is his revaluation of simultaneity in the context of rhythm and what generally went by the name of "association" in the psychology with which he was contemporary. In fact, in a way that anticipates Gilbert Simondon's theory of reflexive consciousness as a field of reciprocity

[162] If this were not so it would be hard to account for the various places where Valéry talks about the experience of the work of making and receiving as the "fragments of an alien time", intimating an almost inhuman drift only possible through the consistency of a process of making.

between simultaneity and succession,[163] Valéry seems to make much of states defined by a reciprocity or "correspondence" (*Time* 313) between the simultaneous and the successive. The avoidance of a metrically formal succession as a model of time finds an alignment in Valéry with a countercharge of simultaneity.[164]

Rhythm is the most important of these states of reciprocity, but there are other avatars like form-gesture translations—"A pitted surface can be represented by mimicking the action of small hammer blows" (*Time* 324)— webs/groups of association, and what Valéry variously calls "chrono-topological agglutination" (*Psych.* 217), or "additivity", since only a simultaneity can "add" up moments: "time is summation—additive process. And we are an additive process" (*Time* 377). Calling for a revision of the philosophical categories of successive and the simultaneous in the instance of rhythm, Valéry remarks, "Perhaps the usual division of time relations is inadequate. We limit it to the successive and the simultaneous...In rhythm, the successive has some of the properties of the simultaneous. It's a succession of moments, although these moments are separate—nevertheless their sequence can occur in one manner only...between antecedent and subsequent events, there are links as if all the terms were simultaneous and present, but appeared only sequentially" (*Time* 324).

Benedetta Zaccarello rightly located in this "co-belonging of the successive and the simultaneous" (3) a defining characteristic of the poetics of Cahiers in particular and Valéry's work at large, thus drawing attention to this juncture as one of the most important

[163] Simondon writes, "We do not want to affirm...that a radical distinction exists between the order of the biological and the order of the psychological; by hypothesis only, we say that pure biological reality is constituted by a nonreciprocity of relation between the domain of the simultaneous and that of the successive, whereas psychological reality is precisely the instauration of this reciprocity which one can give the name reflexion" (*Lumiere* 277).

[164] Cf. the place of simultaneity in Burroughs' cut-up and Michaux's *Par la Voie des Rhythmes.*

in determining the Valérian nexus between time and form. A reason why Valéry is interested in the correspondence of simultaneity and successiveness in rhythm and "addition" is that it seems to offer a model to grasp the creative and dynamic incompletion of thoughts in linking with, altering and charging each other; it represents a deployment of the resources of the organism that is at home with the prolongation—a keyword in Valéry— of attention against the greater odds of its dissipation; and in the final instance, it is more accomodating of the kind of order-emergent-from-disorder Valéry thinks to be a significant part of poetic acts of making: "Our sense of duration is linked to the difference in state between a part and a whole, and to the preservation of that difference, that inequality. Then addition occurs—or rather accumulation, increase, and no longer substitution through equal exchanges" (*Psych.* 157). Thus the simultaneous or rather, a rhythmic addition understood in the sense of the *simultaneity of the heterogenous in the successive*,[165] becomes not only a theoretical case of great interest bearing on time, but also emerges as something Valéry actively tries to bring about in his poetics: "Creation of the simultaneous = creation of the significant. Permanence - discontinuous addition" (*Attention* 286).

Functioning like a mediating node between the two chapters of Valéry's work that are the exercises and becomings vs. the experiments, models or methods, as well as between the two movements of time-to-form and form-to-time traversed in this section, the simultaneous in this richer and almost dialectical sense is also associated with what holds salience or significance in sensory, affective as well as intellectual terms, acting like the currency of pregnant psychic ingressions—and in the long run the unequal exchanges of dehabituation. The consequence of a conception of time as realization and precarious

[165] As I understand it, the formulation "disjunct simultaneity" used by William Haver has a certain relevance I would like to acknowledge here.

consistency of an addition, it sheds an instructive light on the essentially non-sclerotic attunements and modes of being sought by Valéry as an outcome of his exercises.

As to the expansively additive aspect Valéry highlights in association with rhythm, the *Cahiers* is especially well poised to illuminate its mode of action. In the notebooks, the experiences of prolongation, forgetting and becoming that cling to the making of the individual entries, surely correspond to an experience of addition, offering a model for Valéry's reflection on rhythmicity. However, the entries do this not only in terms of their subsistently juxtaposed parts, but also by allowing and preparing an active role for the very intervals that individuate them and discriminate them as phases. In this sense what is added are nothing but somehow determinate intervals and absences, the difference of addition being equally a subtraction. Hence the *Cahiers* is a good example of what Barbara Stafford helpfully calls a "gapped configuration that undercuts automaticity" (Stafford 153).

Quality

The pairing and mutual intertwining of succession and simultaneity in rhythm, raises the question of that other pairing relevant to experiences and descriptions of time: quality and quantity, as well as the associated notions of measure and energy. From Whitehead's reference to divisibility onward, a certain question has also been looming whether what amounts to a plea for irreducibility of time to mere succession is equivalent to an endorsement of the Bergsonian experience of duration on Valéry's part. Certain entries in the *Cahiers* may create this impression in their emphases on the radical irreducibility of rhythm: "Experiment: It's impossible to think a rhythm. Keep quite still and try to

imagine a rhythm. Impossible. I've seen someone think he could do it and beat out the rhythm with his eyelids. Or by twitches in the muscles around the mouth" (*Time* 379). Especially significant is the way experiences of quality like color gets associated with an ostensible independence from perception of time: "A sound and a temperature do not - of themselves, become classified as 'before after" (*Time* 400). Thus it seems Valéry conceives the relationship between certain sensory givens and time as an organization between different layers of process, senses being able to manifest in a relative independence from temporal coordinates. Consequently he can write about "the indivisibility of an experience of color" (ibid. 394).

However, in a way that corrects this stratification which recognizes an *atemporal quality*, there is in Valéry an important notion which makes the experience of time itself a matter of quality: phase. Having its origin in Valéry's "soft spot for analogies with physics and mechanics" (Science 295), most importantly Gibbs's statistical mechanics, phase describes a spacetime section of a system or functions: "My old theory of phases was good, productive" wrote Valéry in 1929, continuing to explain: "..Consisted in observing that an individual's possibilities varied with the moment—that the outcomes of the same stimulation were not the same at Ta as at Tb, that the time taken to assemble them internally was limited; that as a result, in each of these phases a degree of freedom had to be taken into account-conditions of connectivity and conditions of energy..." (*Psych.* 162). Thus, sleep (as a shutting down of the responsiveness to exterior stimuli), alertness, fatigue and finally a seemingly more intellectual state of "unequal exchange" or receptivity open to new thought formations and ideas can all be determined in terms of the different phases that limit and make them possible: "it [phase] indicates in short a state of possibilities of all kinds (and the impossibilities that these possibilities can

engender), some modifications being *immediately* feasible, others requiring a change of phase which is sometimes *abrupt* (i..e. perceptible), and sometimes modulated: an abrupt awakening, a gradual awakening" (*Psych.* 216). Thus based perhaps on very simple principles— "Short times are not of the same nature as long times. They differ profoundly in quality" (*Time* 387)—phase nevertheless serves Valéry in making minute classifications between different states of possibility and affordance, giving a molecular counterpart to his implex.

What's more, as a category of quality, phase is not at odds with quantity and energy, and the states it differentiates depart from a community of energetic/quantitative resources. According to Valéry, every structured ability/faculty can have various phases defining its readiness to response, level of cultivation or dormancy, the phase providing a temporal marker fit for Valéry's closely associated and complementary concept implex, on its part closely bound up with "degrees of freedom". Here too the logic of Valéry's thinking shows a certain level of spontaneously dialectical intricacy: just as he turns out to be capable of conceiving an embodied skill informing a competence for abstraction (implex), and a simultaneity of the heterogenous activated in the successive, here the quality that is a phase is bound up with quantity.

In its necessary links with Valéry's adoption of a thermodynamic understanding of energy, phase significantly brings to his theories of time a certain quality not directly derivable from part-whole relations and other echoes or evocations of Gestalt so predominant in his writings on rhythm. Finally, in a pragmatic inflection, phase seems to finds its own when it is used to describe an inadequacy or inability to assimilate/anticipate closely related to invention or a new and surprising connection: "The new fact finds no place within the

frame of the given (energetic or specialized) phase. Finding no outlet, the energy dissipates through all kinds of disorder - or, on the contrary, is everywhere insufficient" (*Psych.* 191). Thus perhaps one of the most instructive scenarios for the use of this concept is where a phase responsible for producing a form is in its turn transformed and dephased by its unanticipated product, indicating the generative capacity of the work of art itself.

These features of Valéry's understanding of time instanced in the phase may go some way toward dispelling the misconception that Valéry was a follower of Bergson in any sense, a misconception already demonstrated by Judith Robinson Valéry. Especially important to note is that the way Valéry counters the encroachments of an abstractly divisible time is different than Bergson's. For Valéry, the energetically finite organism would naturally carry inborn quantities with which it could be defined, in this sense allowing for cases where quality—in the sense of relational irreplaceability for determinate tasks— itself would be informed by quantity: fatigue, attention, tension, dissipation of attention. In this sense, Valéry's vision of the organism—and in correlation, the effects of art on the organism— is certainly closer to the psycho-physical conception common in his time.[166]

Overall, notwithstanding his more "nominalist" and experimental approach that aims to deny content to the philosophical concept of time, and allowing room for a more far-reaching role to the unique elements of his research like a somaesthetic dimension and energy-Gestalt complementarity, the cumulative picture obtained from Valéry's understanding of time and *times* carries a great deal of resemblance to a formulation provided by Jean Wahl: "It is no more times, but the events that succeed or precede one

[166] Robert Brain, who discusses the cultural influence of the psychophysical vision around the turn of the century, rightly points out that Valéry conceived of art "as a kind of direct material action on the sensory-motor organization of the beholder" (Brain 142-3).

another, and are contemporaries with each other. If time is quality, it is the quality of these events (Wahl 308).

A Principle of Virtuality

At this juncture that connects the two movements of time to form and form to time, the decisive shift of perspective again bears on language and notation, and its position with regard to time.

An early version of a time-form relation in Valéry depends on straightforward objectification and thematization of the temporal, even raising the possibility of an "elimination" of time from the notations that would serve as its representation. Ernst Cassirer once observed that "the precise distinction and designation of time relations present language with a far more difficult and complex problem than the development of its spatial conceptions and terms", especially since basic temporal determinations like antecedence or succession "are never, like things of objective intuition, given to the consciousness simultaneously" (Cassirer 215). Cassirer thinks this aspect of the relation between time and representation puts operations of differentiation and combination in a particularly privileged position in signifying time. Valéry's early interests largely take a similar direction regarding the relation between time and its possible semiotic insriptions. In a *Cahiers* entry dated 1906, Valéry wrote, "The knowledge and power relating to a particular person may be considered either as instantaneous or over time, whether the period is definite or indefinite... According to whether the particular form of representation which can be effected through language or any other means (limitation) either does or does not eliminate the aspect of time. The whole set of possible systems of notation can be viewed as either taking account of the properties of time or not" (*Psych*.

42). In this entry combining a sense of time detachable from the events and realizations that would fulfill it, with a concomitant promise of time-free representation, Valéry provides a model of notation that would precisely not lend itself to a "work of dehabituation" as he came to designate it later. In this sense, he also invites an inquiry concerning what other modes of connection between time and notation can be obtained from his writings to do justice to this "work", especially considering how his reflections on time found a culmination in the affirmation that "time is production". It becomes especially worthwhile to establish how Valéry moved from a notation that ideally objectifies time to a notation that itself becomes a temporal object, or better, an event and "edification". In other words, it is necessary to understand how a consideration of "work" becomes a necessary element for a reflection on the possible concepts of temporality in their own right, with potential implications for "the duality" of the aesthetic.

Here it is possible to pursue a tack based on a characteristic strategy on Valéry's part. The strategy in question involves looking for a key to the experience(s) of time in variously eccentric aspects of making, most notably the incompleteness and the combinatory discontinuities of the "gapped configuration", with the attendant place it assigns to the experience of surprise/the improbable in its unique energetic determinations. In a way that echoes his claims for the muscular sense, Valéry indeed attempts to found time on a pivotal sense of incompleteness that characterizes his notion of the mind: "Whether it's a matter of dream, of attention, of poetry, of reasoning—everything always requires an analysis of the acts—for these different psycho-physical products stem from combinations directed by incomplete impulses or suggestions of acts-which tend to complete themselves as best they can so that it's possible to return to zero. In other words: NOTHING OF THE MIND IS COMPLETE. And that is the root of time. Nothing

resembles a perfect shape, circle, or square in conscious life" (*Psych.* 206). As he proposes elsewhere, "the unfinished, the incomplete is the basis of time" (*Time* 365). In fidelity to his insight that there are only times specific to systems moreover, the way incompletion of the acts hold the key to time finds an echo in the specificity of the combinatory: "Above all, thought is mixing, mixture, and with a sophistication in the mixing which is inexpressible...The combinations are closely linked to the notion of time. The divisibility of thoughts by the independence of the constituents of thought, or their indivisibility — this is a problem of time" (*Psych.* 85).

As there is no real logical obstacle to subsuming the combinatory under the broader problem of incompletion—on the plane of genesis it is always a combination coming to be—the incomplete thus emerges as one of the most important lessons of the praxis of writing for a thinking of time in general.[167] It is in fact possible to speak of a "meontological" configuration in Valéry, in the sense of a poetic revalorization of nothingness and absence as productive principles.[168] Rather than taking absence in an

[167] Cf. Michaux and the emphasis he makes on nascency in his *Emergences* .

[168] This category which comes from the Greek "me-on" has had a certain resurgence, even making appearances where it does not find explicit acknowledgment. To offer a brief overview of relevant topoi, there is Deleuze with his early claim that Hegelian dialectics hijacked a sense of negative originally broader than the one that came to assimilate negative to Hegelian negation, a sense of negative actually equivalent to the primacy of his preferred concepts virtuality and "difference": "The third illusion concerns the negative and the manner in which it subordinates difference to itself, in the form of both limitation and opposition...Limitation and opposition are first- and second-dimension surface effects, whereas the living depths, the diagonal, is populated by differences without negation. In this understanding me on is a negative of virtuality as a *problematic being*: "Anger and love are powers of the Idea which develop on the basis of a me on - in other words, not from a negative or a non-being [auk on] but from a problematic being or non-existent, a being implicit in those existences beyond the ground (Deleuze 267, 191 respectively). Then there is the earlier and yet concordant challenge of Simondon with the idea of "transduction" as a negative that is not a sublating intervention in what already exists: "in this research it is called on to play a role that dialectics cannot play because the operation of individuation does not seem to correspond to the appearance of negative as a second stage, but rather the immanence of negative inside the primary condition, in the ambivalent form of tension and incompatibility...this is what is most positive in the preindividual being, which is to say the existence of potentials; therefore it is not a substantial negative... negative is primary as ontogenetic incompatibility" (*Lumiere* 34). It is safe to assume that, readers of Hegel like Catherine Malabou would not necessarily agree with these evaluations of the narrowness of Hegelian negative, as apparent in her The Future of Hegel, where she takes up the question of the "me-on". In the contemporary scene otherwise Leo Bersani has made an interesting exploration of meontological negativity, or negativity we are in the position of seeing as a *problematic incipience*. See "Far Out" and *Forms of Being*.

absolute sense, this configuration revolves around the creation of forms that seem to surpass their origin in a given subjective agency, by making their own demands on that agency during the process of production. The "creative demand" works like a generative absence and a productive nothing. Starting from Valéry's longstanding fascination with the unfinished, all the different ways in which he indicates a positive role for absence, interval and inequality are a part of this configuration, instanced in remarks on how in sensibility "an absence of excitation acts positively on us", or similarly how the mind is a "creative absence" (OE 1409; *Eupalinos* 91; also see Vercruysse, "Acte pur"). People like Jean Wahl noticed the way this formally inspired experience of incompletion informed Valéry's understanding of time, writing that "time is imminence for him, we are always on the point of coming into existence, time is lack; it is distance" (Wahl 306).[169] Mirroring Valéry's attitude to the simultaneous in the successive, the interest in the incomplete provides another important juncture where Valéry's theoretical and poetic interests seem to converge, detached observations about a state of affairs equally serving as tasks bordering on an imperative.[170]

In this sense it is possible to speak of a value of the nascent in Valéry, or in even stronger terms, to speak of the nascent and the incomplete as the very source of value and importance: "Importance is something created by non-compensation, by nervous incompleteness" (*Sens.* 335). It is no coincidence that Valéry spoke of "the divinity of nascent states" (*Psych.* 173). The priority of the equation which makes "importance" a

[169] Cf. Valéry's Dialogue about dance: "_She filches from nature impossible attitudes, even under the very eye of Time!...She is divine in the Unstable, offers it as a gift to our regard!..._We never see her but about to fall" (*Dialogues*)

[170] It is possible to argue that the meontological tendencies in Valéry are in exactly inverse proportion to the possibility of achieving an end to construction, thus meontology simultaneuosly implicating a non-teleological impulse. Karin Krauthausen, who noted Valéry's interest in the "construction and cognition in an eternal status nascendi" also discusses the experience of "non-finality" offered to Valéry by the *Cahiers*. A rigorous complementarity seems to exist between a shortcircuit in the relation between the artwork —or the research in the case of Cahiers— and its ends, and the operation driven by an initial and propulsive "nothingness".

matter of incompleteness means Valéry's preferred forms like the notebooks will serve as delegate loci of a fertile instability, departing from the vision of a subjectively fulfillable end for making. A dynamically generative and initiatory nothingness thus simultaneously accounts for the abandonment of an autonomously integrated work. This mechanism can work through the entries of the notebooks as well as in the interface between graphic figures and the instaurating gestures to which Thomas Vercruyse drew attention. It can be argued, Valéry—as well as Michaux— made a practice of creating the "demanding remnant" with its own imperatives, being driven by this practice to downgrading the voluntary in poetics. This is to say, there are really singular points for these artists, where in aiding "the presentation of a thought", they also become the surprised recipients of the forms they usher into being.

Despite its irreducible place in Valérian poetics, the involuntary is thus actually subordinate to the larger set-up where a dynamism of the initial negative, the incomplete or the unequal finds activation, and this set-up is governed by what Valéry called a "principle of virtuality", whose flip side is that locution of overdetermination, the "I can" or the implex: "The most valuable thing... in what mathematics teaches are the possibilities of transformation — and the habit or tendency — when faced with a given relation, (from experience, or chance, or need) to operate on it without regard to its meaning outside of its form, quite freely in that respect - but exploiting only its formal properties of expression" (*Math* 220-1, 3; also see Krauthausen). Incompletion and the nascency of forms, their openness to further handling and prolongation, become the motors or precursors of transformative reprises and connections, offering the possibility that a capacity (habit or tendency) or implex can develop in response to these transformations. There are numerous avatars of this set-up in the *Cahiers*, whether

bearing on the experience of drawing, geometry[171] or other "acts" like dance. Suffice it to say that by whatever name it is called, the principle of virtuality, incompleteness, nascency, or "the supplicating soul", this experience of notation as an experience of time, also stamps the exercise or self-transformation topos in Valéry: "The world in Valéry's eyes is never more strange than at the moment of its inception, of that radical recreation of an all encompassing Genesis which is dawn. Numerous analyses and prose poems testify to the extraordinary power, the intimate fascination, of these moments, whose significance lies far less in the banal fact that they accompanied a lifetime's writing in the notebooks than in their capacity for self-discovery, a self-recreation which is at the same time a rediscovery of self-expression and the world" (Pickering, "Word, pictorial image and the genesis of writing in Paul Valéry's Cahiers" 160).

Since a dimension of value underlying the relay from the theoretical to the poetic has been discovered in the temporal experiences offered to Valéry by his forms, it is appropriate to address another aspect of this dimension, which is attention. In his work, attention is one of the most important functions whose intelligibility is constructed through the employment of a consistently energetic model: "mental phenomena do not have their own energy but they make use of a general-special energy-cf. attention" (*Psych* 45).[172] Moreover, in extension of the problem of nascency, attention has a major

[171] In an entry on geometry, Valéry writes: "Lucid mysticism, the intuition of geometers, which consists in regarding the images in their natal milieu, in their unstable *composition*, accompanied by sensations of their formation, their transcendental maintenence [maintien], or the variations, either conforming to their figure, or their human nature, their support..." (v7 163).

[172] A few words are due to address the broadly energetic models that underpin Valéry's attempts to bring intelligibility to organic and mental functions: "All science looks for what is conserved, or what is reproduced" (*Time* 378). Time is not exempt from the energetic models Valéry imports from thermodynamics and electromagnetism; in fact, with his central proposal to replace the concept of time as such with thermodynamic operators like transformation and conservation, it plays the most prominent role in Valéry's experiments with this type of modelization: "time is the sensation of the uncompensated depletion of usable energy" (*Time* 349). To speak to the merely symptomatic in Valéry's work, he surely shares with a range of figures from Freud to Bataille a hope that psychic structures, needs and drives can be symbolized and reconstructed on the basis of an energetic system which offers a basis of exchane between the organism and its environment. In the specific economy of Valéry's work however, energy comes to fulfill certain unique functions. First, it brings to Valéry's view of temporality which is prone

significance in the mediation between the axiological and the theoretical in Valéry's reflections, since it is a condition for the "creation of the significant" and is accompanied by limits to power that make a provocation for Valéry's sense of possibility: "Artistic minds" Valéry thinks, are "distracted-attentive" ones too, always trying to wrench their insights from the impossibility defined by confusion, distraction, inconsistency and forgetting: "The mind at work, struggling against its own mobility, against its own constitutional restlessness and diversity, against the dissipation or natural decay of any specialized attitude...finds incomparable resources in this very condition itself" (*Psych* 157; "The Course in Poetics: First Lesson" 101).[173]

On the basis of the notes collected under the rubric "Attention" in the *Cahiers* and various other places like public lectures, it can easily be argued that the continuous revisions and the intercalary organization that characterize Valéry's work in general and the Cahiers in particular, serve as a technology, instrument and implex of attention. The technology in question is effective in the prolongation of attention for Valéry, and conversely, the question of prolongation central for the Valérian understanding of time, finds one of its sources in attention: "Attention is the effort to prolong, to continue the realm of clarity"; "Attention = analytic prolonging" (*Attention* 293,4).

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to an identification with extratemporal part-whole relations and the cancellation of succession an incontestable irreversibility. Even on a psychosomatic level, Valéry always acknowledged this irreversibility in a range of figures that indicate finitude: effort, fatigue and distraction. Secondly, under the sign of the difference equal vs. unequal exchange, energetic models of physiology and excitation allow Valéry to conceptualize what goes beyond the maintenance of stability and homeostasis—of functional cycles— he attributes to the organism. Thus energy plays the role of an effective fiction for Valéry to help him describe what goes beyond utility or "equal exchange" in artistic activity; it is rallied to make sense of what Valéry experiences as a productive *inequality* in his creative process. Since energy is an effective fiction, theoretical reconstruction of functions like reflex or protracted mental effort on the basis of energy is not sundered from the possibilities of an enrichment of subjectivity for Valéry. However, it would perhaps be an overstatement to assimilate Valéry's artistic energetics to Bataille's "unproductive expenditure" as scholars like Lucia Ruprecht and Gabriel Brandstetter each propose to do.

[173] For somebody who is often culturally identified with his projections of mastery and virtuosity this is the closest Valéry came to the problem of an inability to think as the condition of thought (cf. Artaud, Heidegger, Deleuze).

The Second Case of Reciprocity Between the Successive and the Simultaneous: Prolongation

What is prolongation, and what can it hope to prolong other than attention? Can a labor of dehabituation be conceived on a model of prolongation (to bring together two different aspects of Valéry's self-understanding from the perspective of time)? "Prolongation" is a recurrent expression in Valéry that accrues a fertile complexity across its movement across the oeuvre. Arguably, it is an indispensable node in the web of relations that tie time, making and form together in Valéry's work. A point of convergence for Valéry's various interests, it already implies a notion of time coextensive with realization. More concretely, it evokes something of the additivity associated with the rhythmical, in that sense bringing into play a transaction characterized by the reciprocity between the simultaneous and the successive. However, since it is deeply connected with mental effort, in contrast with rhythm which is "organization despite being succession" (*Time* 349), it is more like succession despite the simultaneity of a constellation in precarious maintenance.

"Prolonged hesitation between sound and sense" is a quintessential example, already aligning prolongation with the labor of keeping open a certain interval, but there are others, much less obvious and equally important. It can be argued that, in a certain capacity, Valérian "prolongation" itself prolongs the Kleistian strategy of employing "tricks which will prolong my speech in order to gain sufficient time for the fabrication of my idea in the workshop of reason", imbuing formal time with an affordance for thought.

In this sense the centrality of prolongation confirms Krauthausen's observation on how Valéry derives his slowly determined procedures of writing from a "concrete writing and drawing practice", since he needs the prolongation of this practice to attain the said procedures perceived to be productive of insight.

Inasmuch as attention is its native context, prolongation brings into play the quantitative, but for the same reason that it is linked to attention, it is not identifiable with the bad infinite/indefinite. Because it is largely a proxy for the maintenance of attention, it is never characterized by a bare repetition of the past. As per a simple experiment Valéry designs in the Cahiers, if prolongation bears on the attention devoted to an isolated function, this is only to "obtain a fresh response" which equals to a "creation of the significant" (Att. 289)[174]; in this sense its raison d'etre is a qualitative threshold, and a certain apposition. The implicit injunction that attends prolongation is that the formal relations already established should be prolonged in such ways so as to keep their productive dynamism or their status as inductors of a fertile negativity or demand. In this sense prolongation is deeply linked with that elusive necessity from chance, and order from disorder that makes such an important aspect of Valéry's view of aesthetic work. Formal prolongation brings to succession and irreversibility a stringent modality.

Like the privileged domain of the function of attention itself, prolongation gains a certain edge over givenness in the way it measures a power against its own impossibility, amounting to a thought of the limit in the form of "the unprolongable". In illustration, Valéry's famous essay on Degas describes the energetic economy of the dancer's body as

[174] The context of this phrase makes direct reference to prolonging: "Each observation is a unique value — to which one responds in general, — by an average value. Stage 1 — you isolate one act of observation from the subsequent ones and the responses that are provoked. Stage 2 — you prolong it. Stage 3 'You obtain a fresh response. (Creation of the significant)" (*Att.* 289).

the prolongation of "a state which cannot prolong itself", seeing as this body makes a resource of imbalance and instability. Hence prolongation is an emblem of precarious consistency for a whole range of actions and attempts at production not limited to dance; owing its axiological weight partly to this precarious consistency. Prolongation finds intelligibility against the background of the ever present possibility of interruption or worse, an exhaustion of productivity in the product.

Finally, prolongation is the secret sharer of every major conceptualization of sensation Valéry makes, indexing an extension of sensation in the service of attention, and vice versa. If "sensation excites expectation", and sensibility is the domain of a meontological dynamism where "satisfaction gives birth to desire; the response regenerates the demand; the possession engenders a growing appetite of the thing possessed", then what Valéry calls prolongation becomes an abstract expansion of this logic in terms of other functions and events like attention, consciousness and the emergence of a work (Œ, II, 1343, also see Vercruyyse, "L'acte pur...").[175] For Valéry, any state of the whole organism "tending to annul the event(s)" that happens to it, "gives rise to questions of the prolongation, the anticipation, the revitalizing, the transformation, the measure - of events, - and of their development" (*Sens.* 316), a series in which the production of a work can be inscribed without any incompatibility. Here, what could be called an imperative seems to be attached to the possibility of prolongation; against the acknowledged fact of exhaustion and interruption of prolongation, this imperative would demand one to work against an always imminent neutralization, and keep unequal exchange from reverting to an equal one. In the words of Valéry's essay on Degas again, the work at stake is one of a "reprise

[175] We are not out of a rhythmic constellation of interests yet: "To establish a rhythm you have to see how to set up a closed D R [demand response] system — i.e. a system such that the response recreates the stimulus. Rhythmic state = state in which the response to stimulation restores it to a point at which the stimulation is renewed" (*Time* 379).

and regeneration" brought to bear on an initial sensation.

Before passing to the main instance of the inscription of production in prolongation however, let us note that there is no coincidence when Valéry endows prolongation with not only a diachronic sense following the faultlines of a realization or event, but —as we will see— also a sense of mediation between faculties, functions and tasks such as sensation and intellection. This aspect follows to some extent from the reciprocity and correspondence between the simultaneous and the successive to which Valéry is partial. But what is not illuminated by this reciprocity is the way the mediation between functions or tasks that applies to prolongation takes the form of a transmission of intensity, and significantly, pleasure.

In one of his most comprehensive statements on aesthetics, Valéry expounds on aesthetic pleasure and its prolongation from the standpoint of its special status between sensation and making: "This sort of pleasure is indivisible from developments which exceed the domain of sensibility, and always associates it with the production of affective modifications, those which prolong and enrich themselves in the paths of the intellect and which perhaps lead to the enterprise of exterior actions on the matter, on the sense and mind of the other, requiring the combined exercise of all the human forces" (Œuvres, II, 1298).[176] Thus the incompletion of sensation translates to an aesthetic pleasure directly active in the production of works, answering with pleasure our earlier question, "what can prolongation hope to prolong?"— a pleasure that is as much a pleasure in formal necessity as a simple sensation.[177] In summary, prolongation accrues a polyvalence that

[176] See also Desideri, "Asymétrie du plaisir et naissance de l'esthétique", and Barbaras' "Dynamique de la Sensibilite" in *La Vie Lacunaire.*

[177] Therefore it becomes hard not to remember Valéry when Jean-Luc Nancy describes pleasure as "the relation that leads to its prolongation" in a similar linking between production and sensation (Nancy, *Pleasure in Drawing* 66).

signifies both the temporal status of the unfolding which derives a work from an initial sensation, and a variable mode of linking among the faculties and functions of the psychoorganism at stake in this unfolding. In this sense prolongation is both the descriptive tool for a time coextensively variable with the necessities of making, and the descriptive tool for the labile mental architecture hinging on the relations between the functions/faculties of the psychoorganism. In these capacities it provides a cornerstone for any possible interpretation of the time = production equation in Valéry.

Questions of Surprise

After a charting of the various relations Valérian interest in temporal form entertains to rhythm, the body, the simultaneous, the qualitative, energy and finally modality, it is necessary to round out this account with a final inquiry into the function of surprise in creating new dispositions, a claim generally present in Valéry but accentuated here in a speculative vein. Although it has its relatively obvious and intuitive aspects, Valéry's treatment of this subject is so extensive it would require a book of its own. In fact, Valéry seems to have considered generalizing surprise to model "any unstable duality, any paired couplet" (*Psych.* 146), thus some guideposts are in order. If one thing stands out in this context, it is the way surprise functions as one of the most critical among all the experiences Valéry examines in a circuit of instructive reciprocity with the question of time: "But every present can be surprised. One cannot foresee everything. That's the point at which a reflection on Time should find its place" (*Time* 378).

To begin with, surprise has as consistent an energetic underpinning as attention in

Valéry's work. It is one of the best examples of what he classifies as an "unequal exchange", having to do with a transformation that suspends the tendency to return to relative indifference, interrupting the cyclic functions of a psychoorganic system that work in conformity with a range of normalized expectancy. In this sense surprise is always associated with a perturbation that puts unusual strains on the capacity to efficiently dissipate external stimuli; although it would be hasty to attribute a directly dehabituating function to it, at least a contrast with insensibility is an inherent aspect for it. Following from the fact that its perturbations take longer to dissipate than average, it is identified with a specific and determinate temporal duration: "That caesura! which is of measurable duration" (*Time* 315; see the illustration below). In Valéry's treatment, one of the obvious assumptions concerning surprise that nevertheless requires a prior acknowledgment is thus that it occurs as a shock and rupture: "Surprise is a halt, a suspense caused by sudden external change" (*Time* 315, 72). As a form of "unequal exchange" that refuses to return to immediate equilibrium or cancellation, it also shows the features Valéry attributes to this form of organic and mental relation, namely an expenditure of effort usually unwarranted by mere utility: "huge call on immediate energy. Deficit" (*Time* 354).

In terms of possibility the unequal exchange of surprise implies a relation to the improbable, and the "secret of the power of surprise" is very much tied up with its lived contradiction of "my total possibility" (*Time* 336). Thus what can be expressed in terms of excess, expenditure of effort or "waste", also finds expression in another familiar Valérian register, this time hewing closer to the problem of what is possible to experience (the scope of pattern) and even possible to think in a given stretch of time: "If the unusual produces an effect like that of violence or abruptness—it's because for each of us, our

possible ideas form at every stage of our lives a territory whose frontier we cannot see—or else we confuse that frontier with the frontier of our absolute power to think" (*Time* 335). This also explains why Valéry attributes to surprise a certain window of opportunity to transform a given "psychoorganic domain of possibility", and potentially even bring into existence new "implexes" (*Psych.* 190).

To pass from what is relatively intuitive to the less intuitive, the question becomes how these ideas are embedded in the dimension of practice and production this discussion have made much of so far. Instead of taking experiences of chance and surprise as artistic goals in their own right for Valéry, perhaps it would be better to situate them in the intimate nexus of two respective relations: a zone of indistinction between long term temporalities (habituation foremost) and real time acts, and a zone of indistinction between the voluntary and the involuntary. In other words, two zones of indistinction in a contact zone of their own. Of these two, the second is perhaps the more familiar: In question is the paradox of working toward a state which will sunder the relation to any previous preparation including those voluntary efforts directed toward it. Embracing this paradox, Valéry presents it as a natural aspect of his mode of working, as a recipe for creating the significant: "In the same way, I can be surprised by my own action if that action was long Prepared: I have forgotten it, — by preparing and then forgetting it, I had set up a surprise!" (*Time* 335). The domain in which Valéry most extensively practiced his ability to set up a surprise is simply ideas, essentially imbued with the hidden element of a "charge of signs on which the immediate affective power depends" (*Psych.* 191). Familiar as a direct motivation for the writing and the form of Cahiers from the previous section, surprise then would be nothing but the lived belief fulfilled by the unpredictable resurgence of a connection already worked over.

The notion of setting up a surprise does not sound as paradoxical in the semiotic and topological formalizations which Valéry elsewhere attaches to it, which bring a more refreshingly defamiliarizing imaginary to bear on the subject. According to this imaginary, the interruption of continuity achieved by surprise can be likened to an awakening that creates a new dimension : "This awakening taught me to see a new dimension. In the previous phase, all events of whatever kind interrupted my trajectory. But surprise or awakening introduced this idea: that a group, a sequence of events, a 'life' could interrupt another trajectory which is my own enlarged, raised to a higher power. This new domain thus has more dimensions than the first" (*Time* 333). Fulfilling his own high expectations from a precise notation of experience—namely that it help invention—this attempt to conceive a geometry of surprise/chance, decisively qualifies the more commonplace image of surprise as a mere interruption of a unilinear temporal progress, and provides it with a stronger connection with continuity, since here surprise does not only suspend but also evokes a life, making the change no longer an external insertion or rupture, but a power of becoming akin to the discovery of new directions and dimensions. In fact, suprise's retroactive action is such that the previous phase is itself proved to be an inferior continuity, arbitrarily "interrupted by all events", thus experimentally refuted in its lived claim to exhaust total possibility. At the same time surprise becomes the herald of a "new domain" described in the implicitly value-laden terminology of a dimensional enlargement. Consequently, Valéry's assertion that "a reflection on Time should find its place" adjacent to a consideration of surprise, also gains a new meaning here. Time takes condensations, dilations and dimensional expansions; and the most radical severance can be contained in the possibility of making the most extensive overview, enabling the reorientation of mental topology.[178]

[178] Insofar as Valéry's valorization of this specific mediation or indistinction between voluntary-involuntary

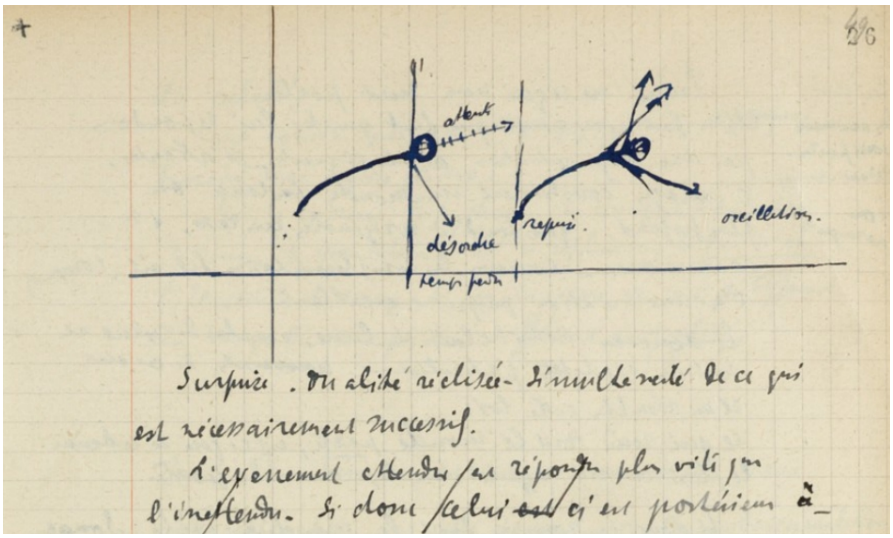

Illustration 1: An example of the temporal notation of surprise from the Cahiers (Source: Gallica, Valéry, Paul. Cahier S [NAF 19302])

Although one can analytically separate the axis of voluntary-involuntary from that of the axis of temporal scales, in practice they always accompany each other; and their connection largely depends on the value-laden and rewarding insight concerning a higher continuity made available by surprise. There is a way in which surprise not only serves as a rupture to a given trajectory and its norms but in fact actively instaurates new continuities that enfold as well as refunction the past. Symmetrically to the way prolongation is measured against the possibility of interruption and exhaustion, surprise does not interrupt without opening a previously unrealized path or potentiality of becoming and structuration. This feature is also immanent to the important relation that links it to repetition, which Valéry thinks to be of "capital importance" (*Time* 333).

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can be separated from the first (temporal scales) it amounts to a conception of work —as well as thinking— that incorporates play, which he calls "another form of seriousness": "The whole power of the mind is based on the innumerable chances of thought. The mind plays for high stakes, gambling a thousand to one that the result will stand. Without chance, no reflection" (*Psych.* 106, 81). Thus it becomes necessary to insist that the common identification between Valéry and an interest in the conditions of the production of a work, should assume an inclusive disjunction between play and work if one wants to be comprehensive enough.

A possible clarification of this relation goes through the model of physical energy that informs Valéry's conceptualizations of surprise; in this case surprise instigates and provides the general model of a certain repetition because it creates an excess or undissipated build-up finding outlet in an "oscillation": "surprise is at once a special sensation— a delay in the physiological response modification—as well as production of oscillatory sensory phenomena, like the oscillations of a slow-moving pendulum—and of repeats (*Psych.* 190, see the illustration above). Again Valéry notes, "a man who is stupefied repeats what has struck him, unable to re-constitute it or transform it into an appropriate action...He finds it impossible to produce what he receives, he can only reproduce it — which is very different. To be surprised is to reproduce without having produced; — to see again without having seen; to end up seeing after you have seen again. Reproduction precedes production" (333).

In characteristic fashion, Valéry's statements that have the ring of most extensive generality can be convincingly restored to the matrix of his daily writing practice. If surprise and any ostensible chance event occurs with an in-built bid for repetition (insofar as they leave oscillatory after-effects) that assumes the task of living them out, this also means, they must occur with a bid for *long-term potentiation*. Valéry confirms this in no uncertain terms: "Our unfolding life is to a large extent made up of renewed beginnings, our functions describe closed cycles. The events that change us in the long term must therefore establish cycles in us" (*Psych.* 124). The new connections and recombinant inferences made day by day in the Cahiers, and the feedback loops to which they seem to give rise are there to see, and they beckon the reader to meet the multiple rhythms of this "work" with the ones that can be obtained from living them out in reading.

Conclusion

In terms of a specific conclusion, this study has tried to show that Valéry's antiphilosophical repurposing of philosophical concepts of time in the light of an experience of form and notation is inadvertently rewarding from a philosophical perspective. A new way of talking about time, and the formal practices and experiments that evolve partly out of this way of talking, create productive derailments and generate new and eccentric foci of interest that do not often find evaluation in most standard philosophies of time. Among all the insights generated in this endeavor, the artistic dimension of work, important in its own right, emerges perhaps as a most fruitful source of insights concerning lived time as well. In this context the emphasis placed on the shift between a discourse which takes time as its object, and a systemic perspective on time-as-realization that treats the set-up of work and formal genesis as an original inflection of the experience of time might perhaps be offered as the single most crucial contribution of this study. The themes and figures generated or taken up in this trajectory like prolongation, attention and the diverse modalities involved in making, reestablish and bring to a culmination the connections and contradictions of Valéry's work as a project invested at once in formalization and self-transformation as well as their cross-fertilization.

Conclusion to the Chapter

In this chapter overall—and by way of a general conclusion— I discussed and elaborated some of the tensions, paradoxes, constraints and the conceptual mediations that characterize Valéry's Cahiers with a view to gaining a serviceable understanding of the

function of the malleable form of the notebooks in the practice of self-transformation/construction which he adopted as the core of his artistic activity (with all the implications this has for philosophical considerations of habit, apprenticeship and ontogenesis). Thus I allowed this largely posthumous work to decide on the scope of my argument, taking into consideration the stringent demands of reconstruction and interpretation it makes in its own right.

In conformity with what I argued to be the main disparity of Valéry's work between method and paidea, my approach has paid a particular attention to and tried to follow the "weawings" between formal objectification and abstract analysis of human psycho-physiology (a language for human-psychophysiology) on the one hand, and the problem of language itself as a power or capability (a temporally articulated power of abstraction and language) on the other.

My study has taken the option of exhibiting the weawings between detached thematization and performative enaction in the instance of certain separate but mutually interrelated components or "figures" such as fiducia, implex, and a temporality coextensive with realization (e.g. rhythm and prolongation). Thus I have relied on a procedure of repetitive variation to drive home the various implications of my argument for the urgency, pertinence and the specific nature of the problem of apprenticeship in Valéry's work. On a certain level, this is because I agree with Roland Barthes when he writes—in a different context—that "while I don't know whether, as the saying goes, 'things which are repeated are pleasing,' my belief is that they are significant" (Barthes in *Mythologies*)

The theoretical hinge of my argument has been the implex, which offers itself as a "medium of contingency" in the strongest sense we can give to this phrase. I use the word hinge here with respect to the double duty implex seems to do in Valéry's work, as a product of a labor of abstraction/ figuration, the object of a descriptive discourse created in rapport with a philosophical register of concepts —faculty, organ, instrument—on the one hand, and an apercu into the performative character of abstraction and language themselves on the other, especially when Valéry fatefully decides to speak of language as an implex, making abstraction and language take on some of the corporeal and hexic (habit-bound) connotations of the medium of contingency he sees in it. If, in my close engagement I have not been clear enough as to the larger significance of my discussions on this score, it bears repearting that my argument applies to the notebooks themselves as the work of stimulating and bringing intelligibility to a medium of contingency harnessed within the limits of a certain image of learning (transferences of power between specializations and even de-specializations). In its simultaneous investment in reflex models and cognitive capacities with a certain persistence, the implex contains a potentially fruitful image of learning, which also offers a certain charged contrast with the crucial role Valéry ascribes elsewhere to limitation, difficulty, obstacle and even deficiency.

My last section makes a foray into a different configuration involving the question of how time must be understood if the notebooks can be appreciated in their specific role of inducing transformations in subjectivity, nevertheless it carries further a central problem tackled first in the instance of the implex : this is the problem of faculties. Whereas around the implex, my intention in part has been determining it as an intervention in a philosophy of organology, I have not really commented on its possible relation to specific

efforts of poetic production on Valéry's part. In the last section, I situate the fragmentary writing of the kind Valéry practiced in the Cahiers as a technique of "prolongation" equally relevant for the mediations between the short-term and long-term and the one between different specializations of a cognitive make-up. Insofar as this last mediation involves a reconsideration of the interplay between sensibility and intellection in the production and reception of works of art, I also give a final extension to the series of discussions initiated with a reference to Valéry's intertwined commitments to method and paidea, a series including the section on fiducia.

Is it a philosophy that I expounded here, and if so in what sense? I think Valéry's inquiries in the Cahiers take up the same problems as those that concerned the philosophy that was contemporaneous with his work, and often functions in the way of a "phenomenology"— in a loose sense— of aesthetic production insofar as it rests on a certain radicality in self-observation. But the question of formal abstraction and its reciprocity with Valéry's more pragmatic interest in the question of power/abilities in development makes for a genuinely unprecedented landscape of problems which I tried to present in their singularity and tentatively "resolve" here. Although the "research" at play in Cahiers shows a strong investment in the exchange between aesthetic and cognitive categories, it ultimately situates itself in a certain tension with an aesthetics that takes finished works as the ultimate bases of evaluation. And nevertheless it shows an equal distance to the mode of research identified with philosophy itself insofar as philosophy for Valéry is capable of lending itself to unscrutinized convention, and often has a tendency to disregard its own scriptural and formal stakes.

William S. Burroughs and the Engineering of Perception

Introduction

For reasons of a desirable integration, this study proposes to approach Burroughs' work in the context of the ongoing problematic that it has been constructing and which spans over the interrelated themes of habituation, form, the contingent conditions of art making, and apprenticeship. However, this integration cannot be carried out without certain important complications. I aim to take these very complications inherent in the grouping of Burroughs alongside the study's two previous case studies, and benefit from them as strategic launching points for a preliminary entry into his work.

Thus before undertaking any close reading or theoretical discussion of what may serve as "key" concepts, it becomes a necessary task to briefly identify certain relevant divergences as well as continuities between the works of the two Francophone authors as they have been presented and Burroughs' own, not only to recapitulate some previous arguments but also to obtain strategic access points to the relevant features of Burroughs' work. In other words, I propose to chart a path from old fashioned extrinsic difference — comparison in traditional sense—to home in on an intrinsic difference of a possible encounter with Burroughs' work.

So far this study presented Valéry and Michaux largely as authors that made use of imaginatively introspective first person styles to come to open ended theoretical

conclusions bearing on the experience of time, the problem of artistic work and development/ontogenesis. In both chapters an attention turned to somatic events in their correlation with perception, art making and sense of time commanded a significant place; the two authors converging to an important extent on impersonal regimes of experimentation and observation brought to bear on their own bodies, mediating different scales of time such as the real time of art making and the long scale temporality of plasticity or habituation. With a certain selectiveness, the two chapters put a strong emphasis on the theoretical results of the authors' equally idiosyncratic experiments with form, marking the junctures where literature and art imperceptibly shaded into a research with links to both philosophy and science, but in the end identifiable with neither.

In a sense Burroughs' work shows similarly experimental and theoretical ambitions that have immediate resonance with the two previous cases. While he shares with Valéry a strong conviction about the neurophysiological grounding of thought, consciousness and affect—what he calls the "physics of nervous system"— as well as a keen curiosity in scientific developments in this regard, his interest in the question of qualitative experience, openness to limit experiences, and willingness to experiment with chemical modulation in order to obtain insights on his organism echo Michaux. In fact, as much as Michaux, Burroughs himself shows a career long obsession with the question of "how to extend levels of experience" (Burroughs, *Letters 1945-1959*). However, despite these broadly sketched parallels, there is a theoretical interest that has peculiar intensity in Burroughs, which involves the being of the word and its various relations to life and sexuality.

The question of research which has made an undercurrent for the engagements with the

two authors, points toward another zone of intersection between their works, which is the question of a reterritorialization on/autonomy of art. In a way that settles this question without any ambiguity, both cases have borne out the centrality of a dimension of practice or apprenticeship which while certainly having artistic work as an essential moment, gestures beyond it to a question of subjective transformation. In exhibiting the various ways the two authors refused any reterritorialization on art, I have also made a connection between an axiological register and various forms of (re)habituation in order to draw attention to the aspect of conscious or reflective direction brought to bear on nonpropositional, habitual or dispositional transformations. As it will be seen later, a similar interest in the interface between the voluntary and the involuntary/prereflective or habitual also defines Burroughs' work, providing one of the most significant areas of integration between the three cases. In fact, as far as the major continuity ensured by the simultaneous investment in habit and formal experimentation is concerned, Burroughs' work makes the intimacy of this association felt in the most acute way possible, renewing it with new stakes such as a greater emphasis on the interface between new forms of symbolic exchange and "control" or addiction.

Against this background a basic disparity suggests itself between Michaux and Valéry as they have been presented here, and Burroughs, namely the obvious fact that the majority of Burroughs' work is "fiction" whereas the nonfictional output of the Francophone authors exceed by a wide margin their respective fictional outputs—at least if these categories are provisionally accepted. However pointing out this difference is not enough, but rather invites other questions such as whether a fiction (in a largely third person form) can have an implicit first-person grounding or conversely, whether the detached discourse of research one finds in Michaux and Valéry is also the "fiction" of a research that aims to

benefit from an arsenal of methods and practices that lie on the other side of any claim to scientific or philosophic legitimacy. In other words here there is room for both the extension of a pre-existent framework and retroactive reformulations that inflect previous inquiries.

It might in fact be a fruitful strategy to approach certain elements of Burroughs' work as if it was a Michaux drug protocol, or Valerian notebook entry, restoring the mythological and cosmological in this work a relation to the needs and desires of a writing body with its own habits and affordances. Since there is agreement in the scholarship that Burroughs' "map of his location in history includes himself" (Mottram 271; also Harris) it is likely that this way of looking at the work would not be unfruitful. Thus the extension of my thematic framework to Burroughs also involves the possibility of carrying over the problems, strengths (a test subject ever cooperative and ready, if need be) and impasses of a first person method as found in Valéry and Michaux, to the wild phantasmagoria and routines of Burroughs' novels, which normally presuppose a third person mode of witnessing. Put otherwise, the question becomes to what extent and on what levels—such as thematic, formal or performative— the possessions and the control manipulations and the trainings Burroughs' characters undergo can be reconciled with the question of a real apprenticeship— a question that is more about the use and efficacy of word and symbols, than any biographical focus on Burroughs' life.

In order to enable crossings of the kind intended here, between the third person and the first, as well as formalization and apprenticeship, it is necessary to foreground the encounter and interface between body and writing/word as it has been developed in the previous chapters, which raises a number of points concerning observation as well as the

possibility of the distribution of events between interiority and exteriority.

Both Valéry and Michaux are intrepidly exploratory observers of the events in their total situation and corporeal field, variously calling for references to endogenous somatic events and thus making much of a first person perspective even though their works are not reducible to it. In a sense their works allow the provisional assumption that "the first person" is interior, before they go on to carry out creative dismantlings on it in the circuits of making. Although Burroughs is as pointedly observant and experimental as these authors, his situation is a little different thanks to a unique twist he puts on the distribution between interiority and exteriority. In a sense, the identifiable shift from the first to third person[179] that characterizes his early work takes on an anticipatory tenor in the light of the dynamics of virality that later comes to stamp his work, while making virality in turn communicate with inevitable formal and narratological decisions.

A pivotal tension of Burroughs' work is nothing other than this oscillation between the possibility of introspection and the fact of external manipulation, variously described in political terms of control, nonmodern terms of possession and epidemiological terms of contagion. On the one hand commentators like Richard Doyle reclaim Burroughs in the name of a spirit of first person experimentation that values phenomenal experience on the same level as physical substrates like neurons and genes, while emphasizing the correlated demands his writing makes on the readers: "readers must practice introspection and explore life from the inside" (Doyle "Naked Life: William S.Burroughs, Bioscientist"). Oliver Harris similarly argues that Burroughs' "research into language was

[179] As Oliver Harris points out, there is a significant bifurcation point in Burroughs' career in which he stopped using the first person in his narratives and shifted to a relatively consistent third person point of view, largely identifiable in early works such as *Queer* and *Interzone*, suggesting a possibility of conversion or at least transfer between the third and first person. Also see, Interzone 106 ; 114.

less experimental writing than scientific self-experimentation". Certainly Burroughs himself gives ample support to these views by his references to "inner exploration" and or a "cosmonautics of inner space" in the context of his writing. On the other hand, it is equally possible to find antithetical remarks in his work, especially when it comes to information and communication technologies, showing his inclination and indebtedness to behaviorist frameworks: "The study of thinking machines teaches us more about the brain than we can learn by introspective methods. Western man is externalizing himself in the form of gadgets". A behavioristic strand of thinking can certainly be detected in Burroughs' work, in a way that undermines any stable investment in a traditional form of introspection. Leaving its examination for another section, here the point is rather to underline the difficulty of delimiting a stable interiority on which an introspective observation can be brought to bear, notwithstanding the presence of a problem of self-experimentation.

At least minimally, it would be safe to affirm that Burroughs' work asks for an acknowledgment of an interiority that is not necessarily identical with a domain of the same, and an exteriority that is not identical with the other; and his considerations of habit, perception, life and metabolism find a significant precondition in the central assumption that given a milieu of accelerated information exchange, "there is no clear-cut difference between inner and outer" (Intro. *Queer*). In Burroughs, looking in can be a way of "looking out", and vice versa, to confirm the insight concerning extensive topological continuity highlighted by Doyle: to the incursions inside by a virus, corresponds an opening out through acts of consumption and the "fix". To illustrate what is at stake here in formal terms, it would be necessary to speak of what would be an endogenous third person view ("shifting dominion of the other inside"), or multiple forms of fictive first

person introspection—thus points of view— that sprout from various sexual, symbolic and metabolic exchanges. Moreover it is important to understand these promiscuous interferences in a sense not limited to the spatial, especially since in Burroughs' work the register of possession or contraction of habits is indissociable from the primacy of past determinations called "prerecordings". Thus contamination could endow Burroughs' work with a movement that goes from the external to the internal and past to present, if only Burroughs did not constantly complicate and cast doubt on it with other dynamics such as metabolic assimilation and retroactive transformation.

As a result of these relationships it becomes possible to establish a direct connection between the problem of presumed interiority and what is perhaps the most characteristic thematic concern of Burroughs' work, which is biological and informational contagion. The question of contagion and the logic it commands is so versatile that it is hard to resist the temptation to base the reading of the questions of habituation and form directly on it. A more balanced approach however, as I hope to maintain here, rather insists on the equal weight that should be given to both problems: neither making the logic of virality primary and constitutive in relation to the axis of corporeal and psychic interiority vs exteriority, nor making this axis primary and constitutive in relation to contagion. In a sense the problem of interiority and exteriority in Burroughs' work implies a constellation of interests that is not exhausted by mimetic propagation: the relationships between the interior and the external are not limited to contracting an illness, a habit or emotion in the vast landscape of contractions drawn in his work, but also contain the externalization of human nervous system by technological and communicational apparatuses in a reverse direction. Burroughs' own principle of avoiding either-or type of exclusive disjunctions in favor of inclusive ones certainly may come in handy here.

Rewriting Natural History and Anachronism

The life of a human being receives its worth, its importance, from the way in which unrealized ideals shape its purposes and tinge its actions. (Whitehead, *Modes of Thought* 27)

After these preliminary reflections that departed from the previous "case" studies to arrive at what I consider to be the essential intrinsic differences that Burroughs' work embodies, it is now necessary to explore a kindred problem already prefigured in the previous: the relation between types of formal experimentation and notation like cut-up and (realist) narrative in Burroughs' work. I believe it is necessary to get a grasp of this main formal tension before moving on to Burroughs' visions of control, habit and life, especially since these formal problems themselves are never divorced from the substantive concerns of Burroughs' writings. In keeping with Burroughs' epistolary reference to "a message not of content but format" in a discussion of his Nova Trilogy, the themes are rarely isolable from the shape and distortions Burroughs brings to the form or information.

A message of format is closely related to what is intended by notation here, as a form of semiotic abstraction understood in its affordance for determinate mental operations that are not equally encouraged by other forms of signs. In other words, when consciously exploited as in Burroughs, notation means a language of research with its multiple constraints and opportunities for thought, in correlation with the assumption of a thought inseparable from its presentation. This is in fact the same point already registered in

Valéry's appointment of language as the author of thought apropos his implex. Since each of the three writers studied here are interested in systems of symbolization and the way formalization processes may enable or give lead to new hypotheses in thought otherwise impossible, I use notation in the sense Kojin Karatani implies when he writes that "new forms of expression(...) automatically produce new concepts in and by themselves" (Karatani 130). According to this rather broad characterization, cut-up and fold-in techniques are notations in the same way as algebraic signs and the notebook entries that contain them serve as notations for Paul Valéry, or the gestural writings for Michaux. Used in this sense notation very closely accompanies the process of thinking, indicating thought's at once catalyzing and limiting exposure to materials of semiotic function, and the opportunity of invention attendant thereupon. Therefore notation here means something slightly different and temporally more distributed than its consignment to a subsequent stage of arrangement for materials already gathered, especially given Burroughs' tendency to see cut-up as an explicit extension of "a sensory process that is going on all the time anyway" (*Third Mind*).[180]

What is required is to see techniques like cut-up [fragmenting and joining in a different way the parts of a given readymade text] together and fold-in [folding the parts of a given readymade text which are not normally contiguous together] as catalyzers of a particular kind of thought process of which they are the most practical routes. These thought processes are characterized by jarring but felicitous associations instead of step by step logical progress and deduction. Regular syntactic and semantic connections are disregarded in favor of a bid to enhance the simultaneity of diverse and at times conflicting associations. In a sense, cut-up which cuts prewritten texts into randomized

[180] See Krauthausen' restricting definition of notation as "a set of rules which, subsequent to the moment of recording or 'transcription,' allows the configuration of the.. individual findings" (Krauthausen).

bits is a direct descendant of Dada and Surrealist techniques of montage that similarly valorize "chance" connections; its formally special status comes from the way Burroughs intends it to penetrate into and enter a symbiosis with narrative.[181] As Burroughs' answer to a query on this score indicates, cut-up's function in its interaction with "conventional narrative" is an amplification of significant variation: "Any narrative passage or any passage, say, of poetic image is is subject to any number of variations, all of which may be interesting and valid in their own right. A page of Rimbaud cut-up and rearranged will give you quite new images" (*The Third Mind*).

The coexistence of two main strategies like cut-up notations and narrative rarely means a rigid opposition between them. Insisting on an irreconcilable difference is only possible when one of the terms of the contrast is taken to be a subset of narrative fiction which is roughly equivalent to "realism". This difference in nuance between narrative as such and realist narrative also explains why Burroughs should have qualified his early statement— made around the time he wrote *Naked Lunch*— that "I do not presume to impose story plot continuity", and continued to write narratives that exhibited these elements in the rest of his career.[182] As it were, the urgency to which cut-up and fold-in respond, could be, and were partially absorbed by the relatively less experimental narratives of Burrough's later period, drawing attention to the importance of constants that carry over like the decisive role of points of view, an interest in pattern generation-detection as well as experiments of recombination across phenomena of space-time.

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[181] In a more expansive view, cut-up also informs Burroughs' attitudes to history and the relation between certain cognitive and sensory capacities apropos reading.

[182] In the interviews collected in *The Job*, Burroughs says that he was "perhaps going a bit far" with the remark about story and continuity: "One tries not to impose story plot or continuity artificially but you do have to compose the materials, you can't just dump down a jumble of notes and thoughts and considerations and expect people to read" (*The Job*).

In any case, the simultaneity or coexistence between cut-up and "regular" narrative, a distinction constantly undermined by Burroughs' *Nova Trilogy*, involves a spectrum of relations and overlappings, including both reciprocal irreplacebility for certain given ends and convergence for the same. In the end, what obtains regarding the positions of narrative and cut-up is more complex than suggested by Burroughs' various statements that declare novel to be a "dead form" or alternatively, a criticism such as Frank Kermode's that finds fault with the Nova novels for their perceived lack of "measure": "Mesure is rhythm, and rhythm implies continuities and ends and organization" (Kermode 118). Instead it is possible to show that Burroughs rather establishes collaborations that are nothing if not rhythmic between these alternatives, and at his best is able to benefit from the strengths of each over the other. Thus to some extent these two strategies of discourse are complementary—another inclusive disjunction— with each other, their coexistence depending on the common goals that implicitly govern Burroughs' fiction.

Before covering the zones of incompatibility in which notation (cut-up and fold-in) or narrative perform irreplaceable tasks and enter hierarchical relations, one might as well describe their various convergences. First of all, Burroughs' rationales for using the cut-up take on a narrative character at times, if narrative is taken in a sense broad enough to accomodate any idea of origin, mythical or deferred (including various types of pathogenesis). Since a major function of cut-ups in Burroughs' work is to break automatic and habitual patterns of association animated or embodied by the activity of words, his fictions that seek to construct anthropological or epidemiological scenes of emergence for this new ability that is language can be taken as stabs at supplying remote conditions for the present employment of prophylactic cut-ups: the depictions of natural-historical origin simultaneously offer a retroactively narrative ground of cut-up.

Apart from this overlapping there is an even more comprehensive interest that requires notation in cut-up and narrative fiction to work together. It can be argued that Burroughs' "regular" narratives and cut-ups respond to a single diagnostic vision that is natural-historical and metaphysical at the same time, and obey a common imperative broadly defined as "rewriting". The metaphysical vision involves the assumptions and questioning Burroughs brings to bear on time, space, causality as well as reality in the framework of his fiction. Yet "metaphysical" is here being used advisedly, in desublimated fashion, considering the way experiences like withdrawal or relatively modest technical questions like who dispenses over apparatuses of reduplication seem to lead to inquries into time and life themselves (or as Harris notes, "time", "life" and "fortune", after the famous magazines).This is the point where cut-ups can be dissociated from their usual understanding as neutral tools, and the substantive concerns informing the mythological and space-opera edifice of Burroughs' work identified. In addition, setting forth these substantive concerns can also make it possible to understand what "realist fiction" might mean in the context of Burroughs' work, and what is entailed by its dismantling.[183]

An image of necessity lies at the bottom of the imperative to rewrite common to notation and narrative, guiding their respective uses in Burroughs' work. For this reason, a tentative distinction is possible in terms of the difference between a rewrite of notation and a rewrite of narrative, in view of the particular networks each commands. In a way that is closely related to his association of addiction and heteronomous control[184] at large

[183] See Harris' important comments on the question of realism in Burroughs's work in his foreword to *The Ticket*.

[184] Burroughs often personifies or makes a mythically identifiable entity out of what he variously calls Control or Control machine, which nevertheless corresponds to a determinable historical condition where subjective autonomy, will, and spontaneity are captured by various groups or loci of interest like

with a temporal predetermination/sclerotic repetition, Burroughs' general preoccupation with time reveals a strong opposition to irreversibility and its modal ally necessity. This opposition deeply informs Burroughs' calls for opportunistic technical or symbolic manipulation of reality. A strategic commitment that banks on a destabilizing "power of the false" rather than a naive wish to turn back the clock, the insistence on reversibility is illuminated by a range of manipulations Burroughs proposes in recording technologies, and as such figure centrally in the makings of his fiction as well: "We think of the past as being unchangeable. Actually the past is ours to shape and change as we will. Two men talk...If no recording of the conversation is made, it exists only in the memory of the two actors. Suppose I make a recording of the conversation, alter and falsify the recording, and play the recording back to the two actors..." (*The Job*). Consequently, it would not be a mistake to locate in Burroughs a particular investment in that conceptual juncture between truth and Time, partly accounting for what is there in his work in the nature of an "intervention" in reality: "I am concerned with the precise manipulation of word and image to create an action...not to go out and buy a Coca-Cola, but to create an alteration in the reader's consciousness" (Burroughs qtd. in Harris' foreword to *Ticket*).

Directly or indirectly Burroughs' whole fiction tackles "the implicit assumption that time is irreversible" (*The Western Lands*), and understandably, his tendency to nostalgia made

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corporations or media organs. In its most prescient Burroughs' "control" makes provision for both hard and both soft versions, equally responsive to state and government regulation of drug policies for instance, (thus involving a certain liberal emphasis on the "curtailment" of freedoms) and the more positive annexation of desires through technologically intensified mimetic propagation of symbols of gratification. Thus, since Control as Burroughs envisions it accomodates both direct coercion and what Michel Foucault would call an "incitation", there is in fact some ground to Gilles Deleuze's famous attribution of credit to Burroughs regarding his own distinction between coercive disciplinary societies and control societies: "We're moving toward control societies that no longer operate by confining people but through continuous control and instant communication. Burroughs was the first to address this" (*Negotiations* 174). In a more specific use, we could safely claim that Control is linked to a control over language and its various imbrications with subjectivation in Burroughs, as suggested by his frequent use of collocations like "control symbols" or "life scripts". In the following sections, this study will pay particular attention to a type of control embodied in or activated through habituations lived in language.

a constant point of reference for his critics. Thus the primarily narrative form of rewrite as I distinguished above, decisively invites questions as to the meaning of (natural) historical reversibility, such as whether there can be a reversibility without "ressentiment" and restorative nostalgia, or a return that is not in the least an attachment to the identity of a past present. There is indeed something of the cavalier attitude of Gatsby in Burroughs' work: "'Can't repeat the past?' he cried incredulously. "Why, of course you can" (Fitzgerald). However, as we will see, he manages to make of this drive or attitude of rewriting a replenishing resource for new affirmations that are not to be restricted to a regressive form of nostalgia and ressentiment.

One can certainly find a prefiguration of this kind of intention or stubbornness in the prehistory of the *Nova* novels where irreversibility is involved in narrative simulations of certain decisive threshold experiences, like the severing of erotic ties and the beginning of addiction. There is a level on which the irreversibility Burroughs aims to subject to narrative cancellation was once the irreversibility of "a habit once contracted, so difficult to break" (Interzone). Similarly, in his letters to Ginsberg one finds Burroughs referring to his desperate pursuit of Lewis Marker[185] as "a final attempt to change fact", the stubborn facts or irreversibilities of rejection and addiction further drawn together with the mention of "the Marker habit" (*The Letters 1945-1959*).

Further variations on this core necessity to rewrite in the *Nova* novels take on the scale of a deep interplanetary history. If in personal history Burroughs mobilized against certain facts, his fiction also imagines scenarios where a "hole in reality" is made and "doubt consumes all the facts of history" (*The Job*). In *The Ticket that Exploded*, Burroughs

[185] Lewis Marker was Burroughs's one time travel companion, for whom he nursed erotic longing. For more on this score, Harris' book *The Secret of Fascination* is helpful.

ventriloquizes the control elements around whose downfall the books of the trilogy revolve: "Newspapers, magazines, muttering voices on TV and radio — 'birth and death and the human condition—always been that way and always will—Besides you can't do anything—Don't stick your neck out—Don't get ulcers' " (*The Ticket*). Since the rewriting at stake is of a necessity in irreversibility, the desire to create routes that convict such a vision of necessity of deception, or at least of an arbitrary regime of truth drives Burroughs' resort to narrative simulacra. In the proliferating variants and repetitions of events in which his *Nova* novels specialize, the Anti-Platonic way Burroughs makes an ally of illusion or a power of the false is easily apparent. In a word that Burroughs himself uses for his own myth-making tendency, at stake is the possibility of fiction to induce real "friction" (*The Western Lands*), rather than an amusement with abstract possibilities.[186]

The Nova novels' massive recombinatory shufflings are not the only or for that matter the most relevant topoi for Burroughs' search for narratives of historically weighted real friction. In a further stage of his writing where he took up a more restrained and relatively more conventional style of plot and character construction, this concern is all the more visible. *The Red Light Trilogy* is exemplary with its poignant forays into missed chances, "unrealized ideals" (Whitehead) and its creative departures from the same. In introducing its "pirate utopia", *The Cities of the Red Night* opens with a characteristic sally of the counterfactual in this regard: "Imagine such a movement on a world wide-scale. Faced by the actual practice of freedom, the French and American revolutions would be forced to stand by their words...I cite this example of retroactive Utopia since it actually could have

[186] In an interview Burroughs would say, "love plays little part in my mythology, which is a mythology of war and conflict". This alliance between questions of narrative and friction can be profitably accomodated within the framework of contemporary treatments of narrative from the perspective of balance and "homeostasis", as in Ellen Spolsky's work. According to this move, a type of fiction would be precisely understood in the capacity of destabilizing balance and homeostasis.

happened in terms of the techniques and human resources available at the time...The chance was there. The chance was missed" (*Red Night*). Later, the novel *The Western Lands* worries similar possibilities in the realm of biological evolution, imagining in terms worthy of Novalis a "biologic revolution that could have broken down the lines established between the species, thus precipitating unimaginable chaos, horror, joy and terror, unknown fears and ecstasies, wild vertigoes of extreme experience, immeasurable gain and loss, hideous dead ends" (*The Western Lands*). The same sense of value lost informs Burroughs' ecological sensibility, with its keen emphasis on lost species which could have been preserved, and evocations of possible diseases which could have been unleashed.

The recurrent scenes of origin for language (thus rationales for cut-up) that his fiction generates also communicate with a similar natural-historical dimension. In fact, more than communicate, the being of the word and its development precisely overlap with history in this work: "Perhaps the word itself is recent about ten thousand years old. What we call history is the history of the word" (*The Ticket*). As to why this is a natural-history, the reversibility or rewrite that Burroughs has in mind includes among its proposed roll-backs changes that scale up to the level of the species as such, language being the prime example. In this sense Burroughs' work is an immanent case against the naturalization of given historical entrenchments from language to schemes of political domination.

The *Nova* novels are traversed by a refrain which is significant in this regard. In question are the incantatory variations on substitute semiosis that are offered to remedy the word's depredations— largely associated with a preoccupation with heteronormative sexuality— with color, light and spontaneous elements of the landscape: "sex words back to slow

motion of rivers"; "Rings of Saturn in the morning sky melted sex words back to color"; "sex words back to trade winds"; "sex words exploded in photo flash"; "flash from word to color"; "singing came before talking" (from *Ticket* and *Nova*). Here color, flashes and etc. are taken as silent media not abandoned to control, introducing variabilities and rhythms that offer alternatives to the "word", as selected from a repertory of phenomena that predate the word in their physical existence, hence the movement "back".[187] Burroughs' characters who work to bring down the various conspiracies on the constitution of human reality are themselves prone to using these substitute semioses: "He was conversing with his survivors in color flashes and projected concepts" (*Nova Express*).

Furthermore, the various dramatizations of theft— "lies, denials, white papers" (*Ticket*)— conspiracy, crimes, monopolistic appropriation and elusive primal traumas, also belong to a similar register, prompting Burroughs to resort to scenarios of legal prosecution reminiscent of Kafka. The role assigned to law to ensure reversibility ("reverse all your gimmicks"), recompense, remedy or reparation (a "playing back" correlated with a "paying back") for a past wrong, despite Burroughs' own cherished outlaw tendencies, indicates that there are contrasting levels of authority and (il)legality between which Burroughs' narratives attempt to differentiate. When tape recorder experiments undermine a certain law—"technical brains melted the law"— this is not the same law as the one invoked when an alien "Nova Mob" is legally charged with parasitic control of human hosts in *The Nova Express*. Instead, the Nova police as well as the Biological Courts enlisted to prosecute the Nova Mob (otherwise known as Control) constitutes a legitimate means of protection for the partisans mobilizing against Control. The parasitic law of

[187] Nevertheless these negations have a significance that cannot be but established on the basis of the indelible blueprint of the word.

control that increases arbitrary restrictions and the "Biologic law" that is brought against it create a conflict reminiscent of Antigone, writ large and untragic in interplanetary and eschatological terms.

It is telling that Burroughs' "Rewrite Department"—carying out propaganda functions to establish a control free reality— has at its disposal an option to pull the switch to "It Never Happened", boasting a power not only to roll-back on the line of a contrary evolution, but cancel and erase with no traces the very existence of a fact of wrong. The refrain is significant for the way it indicates a technical intervention that is also a legal one, confirming a vision of reality, history and law as messily subject to opportunistic arrangement by competing factions. However, while this is true, an "it never happened" switch certainly risks "historiographical perversion" in following its desire for triumphant elimination of past threat and wrong.[188] As Lochlann Jane put it in terms resonant with Burroughs' work, and witty in their own right, "the law's promise to rewrite history can offer only a palimpsestic attempt to tack a more satisfying conclusion onto the aftermath of a mistake. Even Madonna or Mozart can't completely erase Kenny Rogers or Shaun Cassidy" (Jane 110).

Nevertheless it is possible that this instance and its comically unfeasible ambition is an isolated one, and the strategies Burroughs concocts to find ways around inexorable precedence is not restricted to mere denial or a never happened switch, which is, to say the least, a blunt instrument of re-writing in the negotiation of past events qua "pre" scripted. Burroughs' sense of justice and history may in fact be both more nuanced and imaginative than that, even in the *Nova* novels: "all concepts of revenge and moral

[188] The debates on various forms of revisionism in history perhaps supply the stakes of such a "perversion" in the clearest way, as seen in work by Jean-François Lyotard and Marc Nichanian for instance.

indignation must be excised from a biologic police agent—We are not here to keep this tired old injustice show on the road but to stop it short of Nova" (*Nova Express*). A "ressentiment" avoided certainly, but perhaps for the sake of a more generative or consequential ressentiment. As he writes in the same work, a rewrite in a different mode such as "creat(ing) facts that will tend to open biologic potentials", is much more promising, since at least it does not hint at any erasure of the never-happened kind.[189]

In this brief inquiry into the specifically narrative potential of "rewrite" as a crucial part of Burroughs' campaign against a metaphysics and natural history of necessity, a final point remains, which is the question of anachronism. More than any other example of narrative rewrite, anachronism also functions as a mediator between innovations of notation like cut-up and narrative. Its cross-fertilizations seem to take what is potentially narrative and temporal in the combinatorial dynamics of notation, and lead them to a zone where they can inform narrative with a new logic. Moreover, in its proper capacities of inducing friction, anachronism also counterbalances the centrality of reversibility, which is always bound up with a measure of restorative nostalgia and abstract possibility.

With its exuberant energy curiously at odds with nostalgia, Burroughs' anachronistic imaginary generally shows a quality descending from a formal element typical of his work at large: the routine.[190] In Burroughs' own terms routine "means a usually humorous,

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[189] Burroughs' avowed "factualism"—on this see *Naked Lunch*— is to be understood in this broader sense of the possibility inherent in the actual and more than rhetorical creation of new facts.

[190] This is as appropriate an occasion as any for proposing a scheme to enhance the intelligibility of the relations between the multiple styles of Burroughs' fiction. After Maurice Blanchot's original employment of a strategy of the classification for the heterogenous "voices" at play in Marx's work (philosophical, political and scientific), one can formulate a similar one for Burroughs' narratives. There are at least three different voices or base tones alternatively inflecting Burroughs' narratives, which even reach into identifiable manifestations in cut-up passages: One of them is a descriptively lyrical language of aura, nostalgia, distance and missed chance (*Interzone* and *Ghost of Chance*). The second is a language of litigation, prosecution and conspiracy (*Nova* novels, the origins of Control), whereas the third is a language of day dream, set plays or routines of violence, exuberance and shock (*Naked Lunch,* the theme of monstrosity, and especially Burroughs' urban panoramas). Since these are base tones, there

sustained tour de force, never more than three or four pages" (Interview with Mikriammos). Usually routines are short and shocking depictions of excess in a context of tension (think Burroughs' Dr. Benway talking about performing an appendectomy with a rusty sardine can) on which they have a relieving effect. In this sense routines are efficacious; and the fact that they are intended to be efficacious also means they have a strong reliance on the promise of the reader's perspective, preparing and carrying their own wonderstruck reception: "the audience is an integral part of the routine". Furthermore, routines inhabit a liminal zone between symbolism and action, with intriguing implications for routines of anachronism: "what distinguishes the routine from writing, painting, music? It is not completely symbolic but subject to slide over into action at any time (cutting off finger joint, wrecking the car, etc.)" (*Interzone*).[191]

Anachronism is a special case of routine in Burroughs' later work, and it insinuates cut-up into narrative as a principle of large scale re-assembly of events separated by vast durations rather than syntactical disorientation. While cut-up works to a large extent by reassembling given relations of spatial contiguity, narrative anachronism reassembles relations belonging to the diachronic order of historical time, leading to a "colportage" phenomenon[192] where sections from different real causal sequences form strange and jarring simultanities. In this sense anachronism carries an acknowledgment of the "palimpsestic" quality which is lacking in the "never-happened": "Film sequentially presented...now imagine that you are dead and see your whole life spread out in a spatial

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are no reasons why they should not interact, for instance the language of aura and nostalgia subtly informing Burroughs' inquiries into biological and historical opportunities deliberately obscured, thereby on the verge of turning into litigation.

[191] As will be discussed in more depth later, it is not a coincidence that Burroughs would compare routines with habits, in an appropriate return to the homonym "routine", which has originally little to do with this particular category of a formal sketch.

[192] According to Howard Eiland' succint definition, this notion expounded by Walter Benjamin "involves the disclosure of unexpected stations in a familiar milieu, of many places in one place" (Eiland ix, *On Hashish*).

panorama, a vast maze of rooms, streets, landscapes, not sequential but arranged in shifting associational patterns. Your attic room in St. Louis opens into a New York loft, from which you step into a Tangier street".[193] Here the working maxim is not to deny what has already occurred but something more in the lines of "instead of crossing the river, bring the people on the other side to your side, where you know the country and can marshal your allies" (*The The Western Lands*); or similarly "to understand an ancient question bring it into present time" (*Cat Inside*). Insofar as this operation carries its distorting functions on its sleeve, it is never assimilable to a rewrite of erasure.

If anachronism involves a ressentiment at all it is one that is more fruitful; while it does not target the "factuality of a fact" (Nichanian), it still worries unrealized possibilities and ideals in the immanence of historical time, exerting its destabilizing effects on what it aims to disclose as an artificial or opportunistically established order of time instead of the factuality of individual events. In illustration, Kathryn Hume rightly notes "the curiously modern technologies of control" in "The Mayan Caper" episode of *The Soft Machine*, written back into the Mayan civilization. In *The Western Lands*, the god Osiris speaks with words befitting a modern day New York hustler. But perhaps most significantly, anachronism allows Burroughs to reimagine alternative concretizations or ecologies of technicity and conflict. *Cities of the Red Night* moves back the invention of the gatling cannon by a hundred years, lending a slight but lethally effective advantage to Burroughs' pirate utopia, whereas *The Place of Dead Roads* is distinguished by a more expansive effort in invention of weaponry. The most memorable example however is perhaps the truly unhinged climactic scenes from *Cities*, where "Pancho Villa's men shoot

[193] Perhaps, scholars working on narrative plays on historical time overstated the case that space might be an exit from historical time. One might argue that the spatial in the realm of the historical does not equal atemporal per se, for this is a simplistic claim: space is also interval, spacing and diastema, a "difference in the order of the temporal" (Lyotard), as a legitimate way of indicating difference against succession gone homogenous, which is what Burroughs' "prerecording" registers.

down a helicopter from Operation Intercept": "Now he boards a Spanish man-of-war with cutlass and laser gun...Rockets whistle through the air, sharp smell of weeds and dry heat from old westerns, snow and ice with Viking ships...shift partners round and round...Malay youths with krisses skewering religious women...southern lawmen are hacked to Hollywood and gone..." (*Cities* 303)[194]

Regardless of the violent way the anachronism surfaces in this last instance, it is possible to rehabilitate it for the reason it constitutes a fictional rehearsal for a real repartitioning of existent and realistically sanctioned divisions between the possible and the impossible: certainly there was nobody to defy Operation Intercept as effectively as to make it impossible, but it was not a fate either. Routines of this type draw attention to possible contingencies of encounter,[195] real anachronisms and noncomtemporeaneities at play inside ostensibly synchronous sections of time. Moreover, as routines, these passages of anachronism are not intended to be closed inside their wickedly humorous symbolism. Anachronism brings the chronological order of the historical under a consequential estrangement, and it does this by spotlighting the genealogical trajectories between Burroughs' present and the narrated pasts in a different light than a linear sequence of cause and effect can do. Thus it works as a rehearsal because ultimately it provides an artistic exercise on how an "untimely" event itself acts on or alongside the historical level, strange enough not to be immediately derivable from historical antecedence, and familiar enough not to lack certain associational relations or fulgurations of nonlinear intersection

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[194] Operation Intercept here seems to serve as an emblem of the "war on drugs" which , according to Burroughs, only did harm to the new possibilities in subjectivation and consciousness expansion some drugs are proven to aid. It is the paradigm of officious righteousness and in its effects, a symptom of the ultimate backfiring of prohibitive measures. It is known that Burroughs found harm reduction preceding/alongside experimentation as a more fruitful relation to hallucinogenic drugs.

[195] Such as the one that was decisive for the birth of capitalism, according to the overlapping analyses of Althusser and Deleuze and Guattari: the historical meeting of labor and capital did not have to take place in the conditions it did in the European societies.

with the signs offered by the past about the possibility of different social relations.[196]

Consequently what a narrative rewrite may involve in Burroughs' vision of natural history is not exhausted by straightforward reversibility and restorative nostalgia, but includes a range of operations and interests enriched by the insights of his experiments with form otherwise. On the one hand one might argue that Burroughs' narratives are speculative fictions that have a genealogical inspiration, with all their concentration on nonlinear evolutions, dead-ends and contrary evolutions. It is significant in this regard that even Burroughs' scenes of origin which could very much turn into wholesale and unqualified myth-making, are tempered with a strong undercurrent of humor, which arguably works like a self-deconstruction of origins.

On the other hand, his narratives directly engage some of the most vital questions that attend the relation between history and fiction, and show a particular resourcefulness in scenarios that give full rein to fiction's unique capacities to imagine beyond what passes as law and necessity from the inevitably finite point of view of the present. Simultaneuosly they indicate possibilities to be unlodged within the same present, witness Burroughs' reference to a "Potential America". When taken together with his

[196] It is no coincidence that Burroughs' large scale historical reassemblies have implications for the particular coordinates and life lines of individuals as well, the disorder in chronology also applicable in terms of personal anachronisms and failures to adapt; as if there is a continuum between these scales. Thus inasmuch as anachronism has a crucial transaction with the untimely and inadaptation, Burroughs' particular fascination with the subject of failure also belongs to the same constellation of narrative rewrite: "Failure is mystery. A man does not mesh somehow with timeplace. He has savvy, the ability to interpret the data collected by technicians, but he moves through the world like a ghost, never able to find the time place and person to put anything into effect..." (*Interzone*). Later in his last novel, Burroughs gives an even clearer form to the utopian sense of perturbation introduced by a relation to missed chances and unrealized alternatives, making an explicit reference to "powers they thought long dead, blocked out or blockaded". The long litany of re-s including repay, replay, rewrite is enlarged in *The Western Lands* with a game of Truth and Recompense aiming to extend a sense of value toward "Neglected artists, unrecognized merit, forgotten inventors and ideas and concepts...". Borrowing from the poetry of Louise Bogan, Burroughs announces, "Come drunks and and drug takers...come perverts unnerved. Receive the laurel given, though late on merit. To whom and wherever deserved" (Bogan qtd. in Burroughs).

emphasis on friction, Burroughs' vision is not far from other interesting attempts to think historical (im)possibility and improbability in the medium of speculative fiction: "Alternative futures branch like dendrites away from the present moment, shifting chaotically, shifting this way and that by attractors dimly perceived. Probable outcomes emerge from those less likely" (Kim Stanley Robinson qtd in Wark).

In the end this is a narrative fiction that cannot deny what happened, and erasing the preexistence of facts is not its main resort in rewriting. What Jean-François Lyotard once associated with one form of rewriting —starting the clock from zero and cancelling the "-pre"— undertaken by modernity does not quite fit the whole range of strategies at work in these narratives (Lyotard, *The Inhuman* 26). Accordingly, even seemingly unrelated issues like Burroughs' interest in a universe where magic has an efficacy does not quite find justice when it is labeled as a "preenlightenment" attitude, as Phil Baker suggested (103). While denial is not really at work however, at stake is also a vision of natural history that cannot accept or ratify the existing state of affairs as immune to the corroding effects of doubt (which would be realism), or the promise of another way of seeing, thinking and acting to be invented. In a sense, what Oliver Harris writes about the place of conventional narrative in Burroughs' late career may also apply to the place of historical time itself: when it returns, "it is not a return at all... rather it is a breakthrough" (Harris).

Notation as the technical truth of narrative

So far I have passingly hinted at the role of construction the cut-up plays inside the

narrative sections of Burroughs' work. In a sense this means that formal abstraction or notation does not rest in itself as if it is opposed to narrative, but embraces a wider realm of affordance including certain narrative strategies as well, not being limited to the obvious cut-up sections. Anachronism served as a prime example of this wider realm of affordance.

In the capacity of specialized forms and techniques like cut-up to spill over into larger and fuzzier areas, one can see a redefinition of the kind that was once applied to "fragmentary writing". Just as Maurice Blanchot attempted to separate fragment from its traditional empirical appearance by shifting its sense to a mutual innervation of literary singulars across difference, logics of literary notation, and the associated syntactical novelties are to some extent independent from immediately identifiable aspects like discontinuously linked sentences and action sequences.[197]

Furthermore I have traced certain overarching functional convergences between narrative and notation, most importantly the operation rewrite and its various interventions in a natural history of necessity which is also the story of the emergence of a parasitic word. In the course of mapping this convergence it has even turned out that notation can be provided with a narrative ground, inasmuch as the origin of a certain linguistic power, and its virulent control of human capacities of habituation and willing can be the object of a narrative reconstruction, in epidemiological or anthropological scenarios. These two main overlappings, one resulting from the expansion of notation, and the other from the narrative ground of notation are not the only points of contact between them however.

[197] Blanchot wrote "all literature is a fragment, whether brief or infinite, on the condition that it designates a space of language where each moment takes on its meaning and function by making all others indeterminate or else where some affirmation that is not reducible to any unifying process is at work" (Blanchot 63). For a similar recasting of montage see Boon: "elements are interdependent constructions or fabrications that reciprocally define themselves in juxtaposition" (Boon 167).

Now it is time to discuss this relation from the point of view of notation that is cut-up and its specific strengths, insofar as it lends itself to conceptual movement.

A preliminary entry would be to take up the thread of the natural history of the word as a common point of reference and field of exercise for both narrative and notation. In this respect, it is plausible that narrative is better equipped to provide speculative scenarios of panoramic scale for the genealogy of control, at once cosmological and deep-historical; in fact Burroughs makes virtual phylogeneses into a distinguishing feature of his biological imagination. In contrast with this distant perspective, notation is able to work on a smaller and more circumscribed scale which can convey the struggle against "control" from within the limited point of view of a single individual. If the main form of notation in Burroughs' work can be identified with a controlled experiment of derangement on associations, the necessity of traversing and reshuffling given associations also involves a stronger theoretical emphasis on an elided first person. However it bears noting that whereas narrative makes of the phylogenetic history of the human an object of its discourse, notation has the function of a practice in time that is not bound to a referential object other than the context of its expected action on various forms of malign entrainment. Simply put, cut-up often registers a shift from time as object of narrative description to time as subject of discourse, bringing the natural historical perspective even closer to home. Notation then fulfills an unrealized possibility in the natural history of the human, thoroughly marked as it is by the word— just as narrative predicts. "Format" itself being the message (of unbreakable association), cut-up and notational abstraction otherwise working on language becomes an immediate site of conflict for the individual using it, whatever its status may be (real vs. fictional). This is the reason why cut-up generally takes the form of an inoculation exercise, or exposure therapy, as

Burroughs himself remarked and several critics of his work elaborated.[198]

On the other hand and in correlation, there is a sense in which notation might be the "truth" of narrative from a media archaeological perspective of the means of its production, helping disclose and avow the scene of writing that makes both narrative and notation possible: "Normally, narrative fiction leaps over the technologies… that produce it and represents the external world as if this act of representation did not require a material basis for its production. Burroughs turns this convention inside out, locating the 'external' world inside the technological artifact. The move constructs a completely different relation between fiction and the material means of its production, constituting the technology as the ground out of which the narrative action evolves" (Hayles 216-7). So much for a vision of cut-up as a handmaiden to narrative. Instead, coming full circle to the point where narrative grounded notation, notation too grounds narrative in a literal sense. Hayles continues her words by emphasizing the productive valence a system or technique of writing gains for thought, in further support of the understanding of notation that guides this section, which points to a non-neutrality of the medium of communication: "This technique hints that the technology is not merely a medium to represent thoughts that already exist but is itself capable of dynamic interactions producing the thoughts it describes" (Hayles ibid.). In this capacity a self-aware notation also corresponds to the sign of productivity kept alive in the product.[199]

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[198] Burroughs: "Communication must be made total before it can be ended".

[199] See *Sensitive Skin* Magazine Interview about the film *Naked Lunch*.

> AG (Allen Ginsberg): ...The typewriters were amazing, cause that combined the Talking Asshole and the typewriters.
> WSB: Yes, but I never would have thought of that. That is, the importance, the symbolic importance, of the actual instrument with which you write, the typewriter. Never occurred to me.
> AG: Well, it's already implicit. It's an extension of your idea that the writer writes the future or writes reality or writes what is going to happen. And in that sense, the typewriter "tells the fortune" so to speak. The typewriter imagination tells the writer what to write.
> WSB: Exactly. Yes.

Finally one cannot but raise the issue of the spatiotemporal status of notation vis-a-vis narrative. While it is perhaps easy to assign each to one side of the division between a hypostatized space and hypostatized time respectively, in practice the question is a bit more complicated than that.[200] Earlier I had the opportunity of pointing out the way apparently spatial manipulations of cut-up notation could inform narrative by the transfer of a logic of recombined contiguity to a recombined diachrony. However I also tried to demonstrate that it would be too rash to reproach cut-up with a postmodern flight from historicity just because it involves a manipulation of space, to refer to the pressing fears of a recent period of critical consciousness that seems to have fizzled. Burroughs' own conflicting statements go some way toward indicating the inherent ambiguities involved in this area. He regularly leads his readers to think that space in fact constitutes a figure of exit from a past time understood as a predetermination through the word: "To achieve complete freedom from past conditioning is to be in space" (*The Job*), and cut-up is certainly meant to bring about this deconditioning. However, perhaps for the same reason, in order to achieve a purchase on conditioning, the technique of cut-up becomes the repository of a range of operations bearing directly on time-perception, especially considering how the two strategic and explicit goals of cut-up, namely the unexpected but somehow just connection, and silence, both depend on a work and *process* immanent to language.

Among other things, with cut-up Burroughs puts a greater emphasis on "proximity and its affordances" (Drucker) as deployed on the materiality of the page; by implication he experiments on simultaneity in heterogeneity, in the lineage of Surrealist and Dada techniques of randomized juxtaposition. Notation breaks and replaces the entrainments of

[200] Cf. John Durham Peters' address "Space, Time and Communication Theory".

continuity and linearity with other relationships generally not available to a narrative constrained by the requirements of the coherence of a plot, "breaking the code of compositional conduct" (Drucker). Moreover, as pointed out by Harris (*Ticket 14*) as well as George Lemaire, the way the cut-up interacts with narrative in the extended framework of the cut-up trilogy creates striking effects of deja-vu and shimmering alternations between distance and proximity, mingling and making indiscernible imminence and aftertaste: "when the reader reads page ten he is flashing forward in time to page one hundred and back in time to page one"(*The Third Mind*). Relieving the future of its burden, anticipation turns to the past, and the past is made into a hope—signs switched. In a sense, cut-up allows Burroughs to make good on early desires to manipulate nostalgia through symbolization, arousing or suppressing it at will (*Interzone*). Thus cut-up's success or felicity depends on clinging close to past orientation (by the symbol through the symbol), and scrambling its signs spatiotemporally: remaking both the calendar and the map.[201]

Burroughs makes distance into both a writing strategy and a theme.[202] It is not a coincidence that the sense of distance and spatiotemporal disorientation created by means of cut-up results in an unaccountable sense of loss and "aura" as well: "Naked youths bathed in blue distance...evening blue over swimming tanks reflected ten year old keeping watch—in the kerosene lamp open shirt, erections—shivering knees twisted together—surges of silence ebbing from ruined suburbs… windows people and sky like luminous flakes falling" (*Ticket*). And then "blue evening shadows a cool remote Sunday...dead stars drifting..." (*Wild Boys*). Thus cut-up serves as an aura machine and a

[201] Calendar fulfills control functions in Burroughs, as in The Mayan episode of *The Soft Machine*. On the other hand, cut-up is unthinkable without a dimension and register of orientation, or a mobilization to "shift coordinate points" after a formulation common to the *Nova* novels.

[202] See footnote 190 above on Burroughs' three voices.

synthetic memory machine at once, reproducing the unreproducible, the success of which task implicitly depends on a technical know-how. However, the flipside of this sense of loss and evocation of aura is the induction of a yearning and an attitude of seeking or alertness in the reader. At their best Burroughs positions his cut-ups and the sense of nameless loss they evoke to yield a nameless research, leading to similarly unaccountable finds and discoveries. This is after all what Burroughs' preferred operation "scanning" means, a search with a latitude for a diversity of new purposes.

Across all these different operations repetition certainly plays a crucial role; it is the prototype for all the other re-s (rewrite, repay, recompense) that govern Burroughs' work. If Burroughs finds it necessary to traverse a sclerotic and necessitating repetition he calls "prerecording" in order to be rid of it, this is again through a cooptation of repetition that takes the form of a huge experiment in the use of prose rhythm. The cut-up novels — foremost among them *The Ticket that Exploded*— are perhaps the most clear in the way Burroughs makes a problem of predetermination: "evil insect control forcing my thoughts and feelings into prearranged molds" (*The Soft Machine*); "The past prerecords your future" (*Ticket*), and even more elaborately: "Image past molds your future imposing repetition as the past accumulates and all actions are prerecorded" (*Ticket*). As is Michaux, Burroughs is acutely aware of a determinism of situations and wants a measure of control over it, which he attempts to establish through the resources of rhythm. Since names and "numbers are repetition and repetition is what produces events" cut-up and fold-in aim to render this process at once more deliberate and more open to an inflection by difference. Ideally, prerecording becomes written and redirected into a line of creation through the production of new rhythms that at once dehabituate and create new entrenchments.

The Status of Cut-up as Rigorous Formalization Practice

Chance demands total courage and dedication (*The Western Lands*)

After demonstrating the deep complicity of narrative and notation from both sides of the distinction, now it is time to dwell on what cut-up as a strategy of notation in its own right entails, or the essential features that make up its specificity in various relevant contexts: Burroughs' own career, the relationship between formalization and representation, as well as the context of randomized writing procedures at large. To this end, I will take as guideposts certain organizing headings that will clarify the function of the writerly techniques Burroughs employs; hopefully these interrelated areas can also account for the qualities notation brings to Burroughs' operation rewrite, particularly those which are irreplaceble by any narrative logic.

These headings are supplied by the questions of experience, the status of notation vis-a-vis the neutrality of representation, and finally the skilled nature of notation (the paradoxical requirement of rigor for chance operations). All of these headings bring cut-up into relief as a formalization procedure. This is one reason why a reference to "felicity criteria" might be admissible: the theoretical exposition of the specificity of randomized operations in Burroughs also needs to assess and account for the conditions where cut-up effectively fails, in addition to those where it creates—however modestly— the deconditioning effects that are expected of it.[203]

[203] The term "felicity criteria" finds its source in Austin's speech act theory where it refers to the criteria of success that characterize performative speech acts. The appropriation here however is in a loose sense that does not depend on a knowledge of Austin's discussions; rather the term "felicity criteria" is treated

Insofar as there is a media-scepticism written up to the proportions of a metaphysics of reality in Burroughs, notation is already situated to fulfill unique functions for which narrative is not quite as adapted. As he writes in *The Third Mind*, ""Reality" is apparent because you live and believe it. What you call "reality" is a complex network of necessity formulae...association lines of word and image presenting a prerecorded word and image track". Parallelly, "the Formulae of course control populations of the world—Yes it is easy to predict what people will think see feel and hear a thousand years from now if you write the Juxtaposition formulae to be used in that period..." (The Job). Now the gamble of cut-up in Burroughs is precisely to insist on the literality of this formulation; one cannot see any need for cut-up unless one also accepts the postulate of a reality consisting of "necessity formulae". In other words if reality springs from formulae that effectively "realize" a notation of necessity, then a notation of "you don't have to" and the thinking to go with it is the only remedy in kind. Just as Burroughs dreams of a "new way of thinking" defined as "a thinking you would do if you didn't have to think about any of the things you ordinarily think about", cut-up and notation otherwise are imbued with a deliberate modal index of "not having to do" in their strategic positioning against the so-called necessity formulae.

Perhaps it is not very familiar what an extensive engagement formalization commands in the work of Burroughs, leaving the fascination mathematicians like Gilles Châtelet feel for his work a bit inexplicable.[204] Several examples are necessary to introduce this

as a felicitous term for the criteria of success that would characterize cut-up in particular.

[204] See Charles Alunni's foreword to "Interlacing the Singularity, the Diagram and the Metaphor" by Châtelet, where he discusses how he came to edit Chatelet's posthumous papers: "In agreement with our friends, I decided to collect them to try to reconstitute the final text of the paper that was to become his last fundamental contribution. The task proved to be long and difficult. He who admired William Burroughs so much (and whom he had met during his stay in the United States) proceeded to compose his manuscripts by an operation of textual cut- up" (Alunni 32). Perhaps a comparable status of "literary" inspiration for mathematics characterizes the importance Paul Valéry has for the philosopher

relatively unappreciated strand in Burroughs, as they can help lay the ground for the matter of rigor in chance notation, which is in turn rallied to an end of deconditioning. In this respect it is interesting to note that Burroughs always has a good eye for the conjunctions where abstract formalization claims a power to steer experience: "numbers are repetition and repetition is what produces events" (*Third Mind*). Similarly he writes "change is a function of number...". These passages lead one to think that Burroughs would not be out of touch with the notion of an algorithmic shaping of reality that makes such an essential perspective for coming to terms with the recent technological transformations wrought on the world. Even in all their creativity the algorithmic rationalities also often tend to fashion a reality in the image of a prerecording, or a neutralizing "anomaly detection".

Burroughs' shady brainwashing wizard Dr. Benway "is a manipulator and co-ordinator of symbol systems, an expert on all phases of interrogation, brainwashing and control" (*Naked Lunch*). Later, in the Nova Trilogy, Burroughs repeatedly mentions a Board of conspiracy which exerts its control on the docile bodies of populations through coaxing them to live and embody the symbols prearranged in their board books: "symbol books of the all powerful board that had controlled thought feeling and movement of a planet with iron claws of pain and pleasure to birth and death" (...) written in symbols blighted America:::$$$" (*Ticket*). Already in the early book *Interzone*, Burroughs imagines the dramatic consequences of an imagined—but all too real— addiction to an anti-dream drug, describing the plight of the speculative addict as being "an interchangeble quantity in the political and economic equation" (*Interzone*).

This brings us to what is perhaps the most significant and original of all variations on a

Fernando Zalamea.

sclerotic type of formalization in Burroughs: "the algebra of need". To anticipate, here the superimposition is between the most abstract qua algebra, and the most messily embodied qua the need in the matrix of junk addiction; the form of life and life. Regardless, even this extreme figure belongs to the series of rule-bound formalizations embedded in and constitutive of the structure of reality—a formal structure accomodating and to be negotiated by the organism itself. However, that this is not an objectivist vision of reality which would take algebra to be bound to a neutrally impartial communicational consensus, is suggested by a more pragmatic reminder: "If you wish to alter or annihilate a pyramid of numbers in a serial relation, you alter to remove the bottom number. If we wish to annihilate the junk pyramid, we must start with the bottom of the pyramid: The Addict in the Street" (*Naked Lunch*).

As to what keeps these mainly negative formalizations from making up a panorama of fatalism, it is known that Burroughs situates his experiments in cut-up precisely as a counter-formalization that has a purchase on the algebra of need and necessity: "I can substitute other formulae if I am permitted to do so—No one has given much thought to building a qualitative mathematics—My formula saw to that" (*Nova Express*). Inspired by the contemporary Cybernetic moment in culture but introducing a uniquely sensory experimental slant, Burroughs proceeds to describe the qualitative data he has in mind: "Color for example—I feed into the machine a blue photo passes to the Blue Section...or feed in a thousand novels and scan out the last pages—that is quality is it not? Endingness?" (*Nova Express*). Considering Burroughs intends the manipulations in cut-up notation as a vast sensory, affective and cognitive experiment (as in the aura effects already discussed) it is not a stretch to argue that he requires of his notations to have both the abstraction of necessity formulae they are intended to scramble, and the qualitative

and sensory anchoring of the latter imagined alternatives.

In assessing what in notation is irreplaceable by narrative, it is not possible to ignore Burroughs' transactions with the concept of experience. Here I invoke experience with reference to few precise and historically grounded nuances and not at all as a vague all purpose stuff for a given presupposition of subjectivity. For one thing, Burroughs himself puts the problem in terms resonant with its handling by people like Adorno and Benjamin: "The present-time impasse is less and less qualitative time for more and more people. Finally no qualitative experience, just random time computed on a purely quantitative basis" (Pook 18).[205]

The fact that formalization or formal experiment and a concern for a waning experience overlap in Burroughs' work has serious implications, as this means there is a revalorization of experience that fulfills two elusive requirements: on the one hand defending a qualitative experience that is not equivalent to the undifferentiated or "oceanic organismal subconscious body thinking" (*The Job*), since it is to be tempered by the abstract and the formal; and on the other recognizing a use for the abstract that is not equivalent to cognitive universalism or a formal-experimental style of propositional systematization. In more general but equally applicable terms, a position that steers clear of both a rationality of foundational propositions and a pure and irrational immediacy is at stake.

From the start Burroughs is interested in an inclusive vision that can embrace "facts on all levels of experience" including mystical, "nonbody", sensory deprivation, near-death and

[205] Perhaps the best study of Burroughs' work that exploited this direction of confrontation between Critical Theory (its vision of an administered society) and the question of control in Burroughs, is Timothy Murphy's *Wise up The Marks*, which tends to push its case too far at times.

other kinds of outright nonmodern forms (*The Letters 1945-1959*). Yet his vision is historically honest enough that rarely does it become a nostalgic celebration of a past simplicity, or devolve into a righteousness of the converted (myth as such). Burroughs' investment in an expanded problem of experience finds its most direct explanation in the background constituted by the forms of unfreedom and control his work tackles; after all according to him, these do nothing if not shrink the horizon of possible experience. As he wrote about *Naked Lunch* in particular, his unapolegetic desire is "to extend levels of experience by opening the door at the end of a long hall" (*Naked Lunch*).

Notation is inserted in these antinomies first as an aesthetic phenomenon of course: "getting the characters from here to there, and that will continue, but the new techniques, such as cut-up, will involve much more of the total capacity of the observer. It enriches the whole aesthetic experience, extends it" (*Third Mind*). As an aesthetic experience cut-up is no less an anomalously induced experience than the one afforded by flicker machine and its stroboscopic lights, a technology of consciousness alteration wholeheartedly endorsed by Burroughs himself. This means the effects notation is charged with producing belongs to the same story as Burroughs' desire to disentangle anomalous experience or "consciousness expansion" from the use of drugs, the possibility of which fascinated philosophers like Deleuze and Guattari: "anything that can be done chemically can be done in other ways" (*The Job*). Thus if "flicker is a threshold experience of induced experience" that is capable of inducing "highs", in his optimism Burroughs will claim no less for the cut-up: "I have had pure cut-up highs" (*Rub Out the Word*).

Emphasizing the first person perspective through his writerly activity or production of cut-ups, Burroughs implicitly puts the self-observation of the body in the center, a reason

why cut-up should can be linked to interoception. Burroughs critic Eric Mottram refers in this context to his "conception of the non-verbal experiences of the body used to generate new prose style", underlining that other pursuit of cut-up which concerns a form of silence (Mottram qtd. in Geiger 56).[206] One thing bears noting here however: the space allowed for types of nonmodern experience at home with the ineffable and the uncommunicable is thoroughly modified in Burroughs' case by an emphasis on the transmissable nature of the cut-up notation, or at least the communicability of the skill that can produce it. Thus here Burroughs prefers to have a conceptual arrangement in which the immediate (the high) is attained through mediation (writing) and work opens to an immanent worklessness. To sum up, an aesthetic use of notation in fact engages facts or experience on a diversity of levels, from consciousness altering limit experiences to a dimension of transmissible skilled practice.

The next question is the position of notation vis-a-vis representational neutrality. In a sense it follows from the former point about the centrality of experience, especially in the aspect of its transmissibility. This particular heading depends on the difference between

[206] Here the claim is not for a superiority of cut-up regarding a thematization of interoception or the body's inner sense. It is only that on a conceptual level cut-up requires it as a more immediate criterion than narrative at large does, largely thanks to Burroughs' attempts to marshal cut-up as a transition to the silence of refuge from subvocal speechifying. Paradoxically enough, subvocal speech is a "speech" defined by activity in absence of external articulation, in this sense corresponding to a function of language or a language behavior that has close affinities with "stream of consciousness", or spontaneous thought processes taking form in incipient speech acts or potentials. From snippets of reflection or worry to catchy tunes of the day, anything can provide material for subvocal speech, making up for a certain correlation with Burroughs' close critical engagement with forms of mass culture. Despite the un/or half articulated nature, subvocal speech still makes a good case for taking Burroughs' interest in language or what he calls the "word virus" as performatively oriented, since it always implies a state of preoccupation with an effort or preparation for speech. Subvocal speech is a movement or materialization in the body that is created by a permanent *intention to signify*, without however having to hold this intention to real account. In contrast with a novelist's cherished device, the internal monologue, and less structured than it, the constitutively abortive acts involved in subvocal speech also involve a certain compulsiveness that is not often applicable to monologues. In a way that is largely responsible for the sinister aspect, for Burroughs subvocal speech is a habit insofar as the half-articulations it puts into play are characterized by an insensible facility, attraction and automatism that ultimately deliver *time* itself into the inconsequential domain of unthinking intentions to signify without accountability. In Burroughs often an imaginary of parasitism and alien possession comes to dramatize this form of relation: "Sub-vocal speech is the word organism the 'Other Half' spliced in with your body sounds" (*Ticket*).

the conveying of knowledge in form and formalization (whether nonlinear graphisms or linear propositions) and the carrying out of efficacious experiments in form. According to this distinction an understanding of notation that does not take into account the particular intentions of transformation—extending levels of experience— Burroughs invests in cut-up also falls short of accounting for the most important motives that drive his use and view of language in themselves.

Burroughs frequently expresses his theoretical wariness of the "word virus" in terms that evoke a fidelity to a correspondence theory or representationalism (according to which a map is not a territory, and all assertions otherwise deceptive). His reading of Alfred Korzybski evidently had a influence on the verbal espousal of this doctrine of representational purity, and its prescriptive interpretation. According to Burroughs the pernicious influence organs of mass media can exert goes through a maliciously subliminal disregarding of this central doctrine: the inscription of mass media within economic interest requires that the maps they furnish help to define the territory. Thus the doctrine has a deep link with Burroughs' political positions concerning apparatuses of control. On the other hand however, Burroughs himself would be the first to claim that when it comes to art, making things happen, or creating effects on the territory through mapping, is a precisely legitimate and desirable goal—in other words, his practice inevitably leads Burroughs to a zone where neither territory is just territory, nor the map simply the map. When he writes about art making its "lethal eruption into the real-world", or describes the action of routine in similar terms, he certainly expresses an understanding of form that goes beyond churning out relatively self-contained representations judged by their correspondence value or a neutral conveying of information.

His attitude to formalization proper—at stake in mathematics, physics, information theory— on the other hand, also shows a distinct appreciation of nonlinear and nonverbal forms of notation that demand active training in reading, indicating a rarely acknowledged outgrowth for his suspicions of linear verbality: "We know that physics and mathematics have whole nonverbal communication systems" (Palmer Interview)—It is likely that these communication systems had an appeal based on their particular use of space as well, with pointed independence from compulsory linearity. In keeping with his deep interest in alternative forms of semiosis, it is perhaps not a surprise that Burroughs should arrive at a point of view that doubts the "innocence or neutrality of notation", his concerns about the waning of qualitative experience finding an ally in a fascination with transmissable forms that may both contaminate the operations they describe, and shape the thought of their performers/enunciators (Alexis de Saint-Ours 47, in *Penser par le Diagramme*).[207]

Burroughs has his suspicions about verbal communication because he thinks it contributes to shaping reality in a certain determinate fashion, naturalizing its uneven apportionment through unconceptualized and inherent logical limits (in the case of English for instance, exclusive disjunctions like either/or, or the definite article "the").

[207] Also see Leroi-Gourhan for a possible argument regarding Burroughs' investment in an expansive media ecology including scientific formulae and advertisement on an equal footing. According to this argument Burroughs' suspicion of mass media is so pronounced because it is mixed with deep appreciation. As Harris notes, the novel *Nova Express* mimics the form of a newspaper. Burroughs is concerned with abuse because he is concerned with other possibilities of a medium he deeply appreciates. The abuse in turn is the abuse of a mental capacity devolving on multimodal forms putting a premium on the nonlinear and the simultaneous. In this context Andre Leroi-Gourhan speaks of nonlinear notation as a form "that still prevails in the sciences, where the linearization of writing is actually an impediment, and provides algebraic equations or formulas in organic chemistry with the means of escaping from the constraint of one-dimensionality through figures in which phonetization is employed only as a commentary and the symbolic assemblage 'speaks' for itself. Lastly, it reappears in advertising which appeals to deep, infraverbal, states of behavior" (Leroi-Gourhan 196). Deep and infraverbal is precisely the domain that is the specialty of Burroughs.

According to Burroughs language in this sense is an entrainment deeply rooted in the psychosomatic space, and it determines access to reality by becoming integrated into the capacities of perception—down into the perception of time— and attention themselves; past a certain threshold of facility, otherwise vitally useful media of transmission start shaping the world in the form of what lends itself to them. Thus while Burroughs might not be critical of communication per se, like Proust, he is wary of "truths... communicated to the degree that they occur, and occur to the degree that they may be received" (Deleuze on Proust 21), since the whole chain does not take into account "the bottom number", the possibility of giving birth to a different receptivity. In this sense the spontaneous partisanship of notation, comes from its inherent negotiation of a communicatively buttressed form of life/algebra of need.

The final heading in the engagement with notation entails a stronger focus on the relation between Burroughs' experimental techniques and the skill landscape that underpins them. In other words, here I am concerned with the relationships that result in the paradoxical condition which makes of randomized operation a question of work, rigor and answerability. At the same time, the possibility is also involved that one may discern felicity criteria for the success of the cut-up, especially in its combination with narrative. If Burroughs aims to pitch cut-up against the undesirable influence of forms of ambient communication in a given media ecology and the "scanning patterns" they support, he does not however assert that randomization is sufficient on its own to bring about a modification radical enough to amount to a new "scanning pattern".[208] This last feature or context of notation to be developed here is to a large extent what distinguishes cut-up

[208] Since transforming the brain's patterns of reception—what I take a scanning pattern to be— is a question deeply related to reading in a broad sense, I take cut-up to have a privileged relation to an operation on regimes of reading and/or consumption. However, leaving this aspect for another section, for now I would like to concentrate on Burroughs' avowals concerning the demanding nature of writing with cut-ups.

from other familiar forms of random juxtaposition techniques, from Surrealist cadavre-exquis to cubist montage. As scholars like Robin Lydenberg noted, and crucial for my purposes, "even at his most susceptible Burroughs never romanticizes the role of magic in the creative process. He insists on the necessity of discipline, rigor, control. There is no shortcut to creativity, and there are no guarantees"(432 Lydenberg).

The cultural association of randomization with a loose artistic conscience is a view that Burroughs encountered very often, even from figures he respected highly, like Samuel Beckett. His feeling of being misunderstood on this score has a lot to do with the way he links randomization experiments with the alteration of perceptual "scanning patterns", which in turn is linked to a determinate negation of unfreedom or the "control" of patterns of perception and thought by structures of information that saturate a given environment. Whereas for others like Gregory Corso, cut-up was an artistically clever or interesting remnant from the times of Dada, for Burroughs cut-up was tied up with the serious issue of "considerations that would force thinking into certain lines of structural and environmental necessities" (*The Job*).

Burroughs introduces and justifies the "random factor" first in the context of a diagnosis and as a possible tool of liberation against a technical figure of predestination which he calls prerecording: "Wittgenstein said: 'No proposition can contain itself as an argument' = The only thing not prerecorded in a prerecorded universe is the prerecording itself which is to say any recording that contains a random factor" (*Ticket)*. Burroughs' gloss on Wittgenstein may be very brief and somewhat hasty, serving as a piece of association, but it has a certain logic. In the splicing, Burroughs overlays the position of a proposition which due to a constitutive blindness cannot thematize itself, with a universe which he

assumes to be entirely prerecorded, or submitted to irrationally constraining laws, a universe determined by "the monumental fraud of cause and effect", or "controlled, predictable, dead" (*The Western Lands*). Thus the universe of cause and effect is a whole which is similarly endowed with a constitutive self-evidence, blind to the accident or randomness of its own positing, the disclosure of which therefore gains liberatory implications. To be sure, "random" in this sense is closer to the "undecidable" in the rough sense of a domain of discourse unable to account for its own closure.

However, in the space of such a short formulation Burroughs implicitly introduces another sense for randomization with his reference to "a random factor". There is a difference elided by his hasty juxtaposition, and Burroughs shifts from "random" in the sense of a positing that cannot thematize itself (the whole universe as a proposition), to a sense of "random" familiar from his work otherwise, this time depending on the formal connotations of predictable moves in game theory: "If your strategy is at some point determined by a random factor your opponent will gain no advantage from knowing your strategy since he cannot predict the move" (*The Third Mind*).[209]

Short of giving a full account of the possible inconsistencies between these different senses of the random, pointing out an oversight, if not sleight of hand is necessary. It is hard to ignore the way Burroughs unproblematically equates the (undecidably self-excluding) prerecorded universe itself, and the random in game theory which, since it is random only in the sense of a possible move in a larger game, does not connote much of

[209] As Oliver Harris notes, this slippage is largely due to a Burroughs' characterization of his project in dialogue with an eclectic array of interlocutors: "In his version of 'The Cut-Up Method of Brion Gysin,' Burroughs played the role of guide to his work by mapping it in four ways: one context was art historical...another was that of contemporary science(naming the mathematician John von Neumann, whose 'Theory of Games and Economic Behavior introduced the cut up principle of random action into military and game strategy', and a third was entirely open ended... The final context was a sharp negative: 'The method was grounded on the Freudian Couch.' (Harris, Introduction to *The Soft Machine*).

universal amplitude: as if a mere scrambling of codes could also produce the undecidability of a universe/proposition that cannot contain itself as an argument or part (and only lends itself to the wonder of the feeling *that* it exists as it would be in Wittgenstein). This dubious equation between the unself-contained intrinsic difference of a universe and mere random factor in a given "prerecorded" universe, may go some way in explaining the ambiguous redundancies of Burroughs' prose, as if the associational necessities against which the cut-up is rallied inevitably shape his prose—the exposure therapy risking to turn into exposure only. The point has in fact been made by many of Burroughs' critics, among them Steven Shaviro, who wrote that to "insert randomness is already to prerecord, to escape from control only by reasserting it" (Shaviro). But none is more revealing than Burroughs' own passing expressions of doubt in cut-up novels: "Language of virus (which is these experiments) really necessary?" (Ticket)

Insofar as Burroughs cannot realize a decontamination program for the word as such, he replaces it with another contamination program: thus courting redundancy has the meaning of contaminating better, better being the key. As will be seen later, an undercurrent of value is hard to deny in Burroughs' seemingly neutral and merely diagnostic discourse, becoming especially visible in his reference to "benign associations" (*Nova Express*).

A further reason consistent with Burroughs' dogged pursuit of these experiments is perhaps not formulated by him but active in his prose; this reason is also inextricable from a need for qualititative experience. There is a way chance serves this need throughout Burroughs' long writing career, shoring up effects of sychronicity, inexplicable appositions and what sometimes seem to him to be glimpses into the future.

It is hard not to agree with Ernst Junger in his elaboration of an experience of chance and transfer it to Burroughs' own: "A lucky run on the reds provides the player with more than money; it bestows on him a belief we all have a need for—namely to be in collusion, to have an understanding with the world" (Junger). Burroughs on his part would describe this collusion as a "meshing with timeplace". If chance involves the feeling of being privy to a "most secret material intelligence"[210] as if "the world itself thinks for us", experiencing and bringing it about in terms of writing (the world that is writing) is a crucial aim for Burroughs.

One thing that confirms this interpretation is that randomness is not integrated on the basis of phrase units, but always patterns. A characteristic kind of comment Burroughs makes concentrates in this regard on the care he takes with the delimitation of the cut-up materials: "Remember that I first made selections. Out of hundreds of possible sentences that I might have used, I chose one" (*The Third Mind*). Similarly he writes, "best results are usually obtained by placing pages dealing with similar subjects in juxtaposition" (*The Third Mind*). Notably Burroughs also refers to a principle of personal archiving he calls "associational affinity" (*Adding Machine*), a version of the qualitative data processing discussed above. All of these different formulations of a criterion of affinity-in-difference point to the capacities of judging at the disposal of Burroughs the writer himself, if judging is distinguished from the unilateral imposition of prearranged pattern. Writerly control and answerability are not quite abdicated, and random is differentiated from leaving things to providence. To the extent that this new form of rigor is a dispensation and skill over resonant patterns parsed in ways that are more than just limitedly cognitive, incorporating strange alliances between the voluntary and the involuntary, a radically

[210] Chance has an ancient association with the category of material cause in Aristotle's metaphysics. On this Adorno's lectures on metaphysics are instructive.

open subjectivity and a thinking world, control and surprise, judging is more like an exercise in alert receptivity in a medium of worldly phrases—a field skill that is communicated to the reader.

Burroughs describes another immanent criterion for the efficacy of cut-up as well, in many ways a complementary one with the foregoing. According to this, the tape recorder cut-up aspires to creating "effects of simultaneity, echoes, speed ups, slow downs" that are otherwise hard to obtain from notation in its written form, let alone traditional narrative. Regardless of its achievability in written notation however, this criterion points out a region of strength for cut-up as such that is instructive for the written cut-up as well. In this light, the success of notation depends on the kind of control attained in the creation of these mainly temporal and rhythmic variations, arguably including the rhythmical ratio of novelty and repetition. As Burroughs gives to understand, there may be a way in which cut-up intervenes in habituation as an agent of suspension or acceleration. If it is true that "as soon as something is written, it loses the power of surprise" (*Queer*) cut-up as a mode of rewriting and endless reshuffling can in principle help the maintain "the power of surprise". Yet this also comes with intrinsic limits. Referring to earlier experiments in the vein of Dada, Oliver Harris transferred to the uncontrolled use of cut-ups a remarkably appropriate observation: "where all is surprise, line after line, all sense of surprise is lost" (Harris). Hence Harris' reference to a desirable "dialectic" between cut-up and regular narrative fiction which he thinks Burroughs also came to appreciate.

It can be argued that whenever cut-up or fold-in passages lose the (re)orienting function they are designed to fulfill, they risk lapsing into redundance (such as when they assume the legibility of a didactic intention). The possibility and the task Burroughs

acknowledges in cut-up is at once surprise and a structure and environment where a response of surprise can flourish. There are navigational minima that find their relevance with respect to the way they slowly and patiently alter ways of seeing Burroughs calls "scanning patterns". Overall the difficulty of negotiating these antinomies might in fact confirm Burroughs on the way cut-up requires effort and discipline; and chance demands "total courage and dedication", as it is measured against the long odds of "consistency" or affinity. More importantly, his work ultimately assumes an answerability to a changed scanning pattern or mode of reading.

Cartographies of Habit

Burroughs' dealings with categories and habit and addiction, and the way they intersect with his view of writing matter a great deal to this dissertation. However to begin to address these issues, it is necessary to briefly situate habit and addiction in relation to the wider interest with the living that preoccupies Burroughs' work. There are a few seemingly competing ways of accounting for the living that seem to influence Burroughs. Whereas his strong emphasis on the constitutive importance of technicity as well as his sense of the abiotic in the organic lead him to espouse behavioristic frameworks governed by reflex, conditioning and automatism, the anchoring in need as well as the crucial experiences like sickness or addiction push his discourse in the direction of an implicit reliance on value— in the sense of a vitally irreducible organization by the living of the relation between itself and the environment in the guidance of organic biases or privileges generative of norms.[211] These tensions come to a head around the centerpiece of his

[211] Burroughs seems especially fascinated by the way the inorganic insinuates itself into the living through a circuit of addiction and deviant metabolism: "I felt that heavy metal was sort of the ultimate expression of addiction, that there's something actually metallic in addiction, that the final stage reached

mythopoetic structure, the theme of a trespass on the autonomy of the living that take the forms of control, possession or biological parasitism. Later we will see this tension to have a determining role around the question of addicted perception, and the apprenticeships that can be regained from it. The common perception of Burroughs as a specialist in an addictive form of habit, in Catherine Malabou's strikingly appropriate category, belongs here. It is here that the questions of a habitual need and the search for a mode of action to break its hold come into focus, laying the ground for Burroughs' transactions with behaviorist frameworks of conditioning as well. As we will see, Burroughs ambiguously places writing on both sides of the strategic difference between addiction or conditioning and cure or deconditioning. Especially imperative here is the construction of a framework that can account for Burroughs' perception of verbal activity as thoroughly penetrating of the organism, a penetration that makes semiotic competence seem like a clinical question.

The Respective Scopes of Addiction and Habit

There is no slight benefit in taking Burroughs' long adventure with a "junk habit" as precisely that, meaning only a case among other possible habits of consumption, each

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is not so much vegetable as mineral. It's increasingly inanimate, in any case" (Paris Review Interview). The comment sheds an intriguing light on Burroughs' fictional depictions of the addict, full of elemental imbrications—like the analogy between a dowser's wand and the needle of the addict: "a need without feeling and without body, earthbound ghost need, rancid ectoplasm" or the famous "silent frequency of junk", acting through infra-milieus other than human even if ostensibly in the human. In his comment on the implications of Burroughs' two contrasting experiments with junk and yage, Richard Doyle makes a similar point: "Burroughs' way in was no less rigorous and emerged out of an apprenticeship with both junk, whose addictive potentials pull the user toward the machine state of repetition...and yage, a plant adjunct. In both cases it is the very difference between living systems and machines that is blurred and advanced" (Doyle "Naked Life: William S.Burroughs, Bioscientist").Finally there is a media-theoretical aspect to Burroughs' exploration of the existence of the abiotic in the phyla of the living, an exploration that includes the biomedially activated junk among the modes of this incursion. As Marshall McLuhan registered in an observation on Burroughs' deeply nuanced sense of the milieu: "Junk is needed to turn the human body itself into an environment that includes the universe" (McLuhan 87). It is legitimate to take the universe here in the sense of a sustaining presence of the physical for the biotic, prevital for the vital. Similarly, Burroughs even claims a similar status for sex in the mediation or "interconnection of living matter and nonliving matter" (*The Job*).

with comparable structures of need. Especially in the light of the sustaining metabolic relations between a largely "inorganic" and elemental milieu and the living individual underlined by McLuhan, this perspective has much to recommend it. However, since it is addiction in particular that Burroughs proposes from the start as a singularly illuminating window into life as such, it is necessary to discuss addiction first, taking into account the critical shift of register which makes it a "metabolic sickness" rather than just another habit for Burroughs.

In *Interzone*, Burroughs writes, "junk is a key, a prototype of life. If anyone fully understood junk, he would have some of the secrets of life, the final answers" (*Interzone,* "Lee's Journal"). Elsewhere in the same work he talks about "drug addiction as a microcosm of life, pleasure and human purpose" and formulates a programme of research: "the addict has glimpsed the formula, the bare bones of life, and this knowledge has destroyed him for the ordinary sources of satisfaction that make life endurable. To go a step further, to find out exactly what tension is, and what relief, to discover the means of manipulating these factors..." (*Interzone, "*Lee's Journal"). This is an intuitive picture of his point of departure: addiction is an introduction of an exacerbated dependence to the organism, making the circuit of necessary self-preservation and propagation proper to life even more acute than usual, while the diminishing returns it implies accentuate the sense of finitude proper to death, which dictates that "time is that which ends" (*Pook* 17).

Instead of an indeterminate assertion that makes of addiction an all purpose explanation for life, Burroughs' attribution of a modeling function to it in terms of biology has a number of identifiable components. As suggested earlier, the metabolic consumption and communication that addiction involves is also a mediation between the animate and the

inanimate, as well as between different orders of magnitude such as the cellular and the organism at large. As Marcus Boon wrote, "every place in the human body where there is communication, exchange between the inside and outside, is a potential place of addiction", helping situate addiction as a major figure for metabolic exchanges and relays that take stable hold, such that an alternative regime of sustenance—to begin with, withdrawal — becomes unimaginable. This also has consequences for the vision of biological individuality obtainable from Burroughs' discourse.[212]

Furthermore, casting addiction as a microcosm of life also means putting need itself in the same position, raising questions like the temporality of need, artificial propagation of needs, as well as instrumentality and technics. For instance, *Naked Lunch* assigns a particular temporality to addiction qua need: "The addict runs on junk time. His body is his clock, and junk runs through it like an hour-glass. Time has meaning for him only with reference to his need" (Naked Lunch 180). Repetition and the predominance of the past Burroughs elsewhere describes as a time of "prerecording" typify this temporality, which in turn becomes a driving factor for the randomizing distortions of time which Burroughs pursues in cut-up.

The issue of need and its time also brings with it the question of the multiplicity of needs, and the artificial ways in which they take hold. If addiction as an epitome of need makes up such an important figure in understanding life for Burroughs, this cannot but involve the technical means life fashions to support itself and the new needs it creates along the way. As per the antagonistic vision of reality he holds however, Burroughs firmly limits the acceptance of a new need on the basis of the heteronomous power this would create

[212] On this score, Burroughs also seems to have intuitively appreciated the importance of the question "what sort of a theoretical world we might live in if our primary consideration was not 'the' individual but in its place, interrelationshops and processes" (Lingard and Nyhart 41).

for interest groups. Thus the central concept of need in Burroughs is not to be circumscribed within a biology, if this suggests impartial objective knowledge. In this context, a passage in *Naked Lunch* mentions a parasitic bureacratic apparatus which keeps "inventing needs to justify its existence" (Naked Lunch 112). One thing that applies to need then, requiring its escape from a strictly limited biological context, is its openness to invention and opportunistic cooptation; needs and addictions are pluralist in Burroughs, with the consequence that they are amenable to institutionalization.[213]

Taking addiction as a model of life also identifies a dynamics of instrumentality radically different than an orientation to limited utility. Burroughs writes, "sending can never be a means to anything but more sending, like Junk. Try using junk as a means to something else..." (*Naked Lunch*). In addiction, need shortcircuits the relations between means and ends, dissolving this relation in one colossally repetitive and homogeneous domain of pure and absolute means. If a comment Burroughs made on a book by Brion Gysin—that it reads itself—is remembered, one can describe this situation as junk using itself, excluding any notion of "an other way round". However, this does not mean that junk addiction as a model of life is only formulable in terms of aporia. Instead, it is better to find in the teleological anomaly of junk a development of the telelogical anomalies of life itself, already registered by Kant in his discussion of the organism as a self organizing whole, in which parts also function as ends.

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[213] Burroughs' perspective focuses on the victims and prospective consumers for the malignly induced new needs, and not the producers. Whereas in Marx "historically changing needs" are unthinkable without a reference to "forces of production"; it is hard to find a direct consideration of production or the agents of labor in Burroughs' work, despite its otherwise rich panoply of technicians. The Mayan Caper episode from *The Soft Machine* is an important exception in this regard. In economic terms, technical invention, theft, expropriation and debt are more common categories in Burroughs. A possible hypothesis here is that the question of what Burroughs calls the "bottom number", the destitute subject who nevertheless creates value for others, is absorbed by an overdetermined "reading" and consumption, just as production in turn is absorbed by junk. It is as if a heteronomy and control lived in modes of perception/scanning patterns does the work of a concept of alienation for Burroughs. Hence the last section of this study is a discussion of Burroughs as a theorizer of the "labor" of reading/consumption.

In this context, another promising way to handle the question of the "means" of life, is the relation between need and technicity. Some of Burroughs' pamphlets as well as cut-up books offer interesting apercus in this regard. The explicit introduction of the question of technique to the company of need constitutes a pragmatic adduction to a no-go situation inherent in junk addiction. A common refrain puts a typical form of this relation in these terms: "recorders fix the nature of absolute need", indicating a technologically deepened entrenchment of a habit contracted accidentally. In an interplanetary variant of this scenario, Burroughs establishes an association between organic dependence and its technical modulation through a pairing of two extraterrestrial invasive species on earth: "Minraud technicians to handle the swithcboard and Venusians to make flesh and keep the show on the road" (*Nova*). For the very same reason that technique contributes to the modulation of a dependence however, Burroughs also avails himself of alternative scenarios, where newly emerging techniques like biofeedback, flicker, autonomic shaping as well as the use of rhythmic vibrations take on promising valences in terms of an intervention by/in the body fixated on need.

Finally, as to habit itself and its slow drift to a position to be negotiated by writing, Burroughs endows habit with a capacity for horizontal movement inside a relatively synchronous section of contemporaneity, which it in effect co-constitutes.[214] What this

[214] This does not mean Burroughs' work does not offer any long scale historicity, on the level of phylogenesis of the human species, for instance. In fact, his work has means to mediate between long scale evolutionary drifts and developmental or more directed becomings. The central figure of this mediation is a concept Burroughs borrows from Alfred Korzybski: "time binding", roughly equivalent to a domain of collective significations and their concomitant temporality which makes up an inorganic nature for any individual mind putting it to work. Burroughs summed it up as follows: "What else distinguishes Homo Sap from other animals? He can make information available through writing or oral tradition to other Sap humans outside his area of contact and to future generations. This distinction led Count Korzybski to call man 'a time-binding animal,' and it can be reduced to one word: language"(*Ghost of Chance* 48). Thus, the idea of Time binding is the secret sharer of a statement like "History is history of the word" and its associated ambiguities, as it defines both a yoke (binding) of archival prerecording and the possibility of qualitatively selective and labor-saving contractions in

means is that when he starts to incorporate the theme of habit in its own right to his writings, Burroughs gives it an intrinsically contagious role, modeled on viral transmission. Thus, in contrast with writers like Wendy Hui Kyong Chun who make a distinction between habit and mimetic transmission of affects and traits, in Burroughs these two questions are inextricably linked, without this requiring them to be confounded with each other (Chun 13).

In this regard a crucial passage that Burroughs included in two of his cut-up novels imagines in amusing detail how "control" or historically specific forms of heteronomy may work through spreading habits:

> Nova criminals are not three dimensional organisms...but they need three dimensional human agents to operate—the point at which the criminal controller intersects a three dimensional human agent is known as a coordinate point—And if there is one thing that carries over from one human host to another and establishes identity of the controller it is habit:: idiosyncrasies, vices, food preferences—(we were able to trace Hamburger Mary through her fondness for peanut butter) a gesture, a certain smile, a special look, that is to say the style of the controller—A chain smoker will always operate through chain smokers. (*Nova*)

In addition to the association of habit with one of its traditional determinants such as a repetitive and desensitizing enclosure in a "style", one thing to note here is how Burroughs seems to attribute to habit a power of constitution for communities of taste, anticipating some usual suspects like Pierre Bourdieu, and reiterating earlier visions like

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memory which are factors of speed, exponential growth and difference. See Burroughs: "All dead poets and writers can be reincarnate in different hosts. Cut-up....Raise standard of writer production to a point of total and permanent competition of all minds living and dead". See Korzybski: "a new factor non existent in any other form of life: that we have a capacity to collect all known experiences of different individuals" (Korzybski *Science and Sanity* 374).

Gabriel Tarde's. It would not be wrong to claim here that Burroughs is inclined to a nominalist vision which would tie the creation of universality to these improvisational allegiances, rather than deriving them from a concept of society at large. This is in fact a consequence of his personal appropriation of the Korzybskian idea that a map (the word "society") is not the territory (alliances of habit). Thus a question of the kind articulated by Chun, whether habits are "what endure as society within collectives in which there is no society", would find an affirmative response here, with certain qualifications of course.

Furthermore, in a way that is reminiscent of Burroughs' proclivities for a qualitative mathematics, there is in fact an imaginary of conditioning akin to "virtuality", in the way habits spread and opportunistically locate coordinate points. This sense for a virtual ingression of a dormant but situationally sensitive germ for a conduct, is of course characterized by a logic of virality. Thus virality reconfigures a habit that could be relatively harmless if shorn of this suggestion of unpredictable yet uncontrollable heteronomy.[215]

In consequence then, heteronomy, nominalism and pluralism are some of the natural attributes of Burroughs' vision of habit. A further problem that attends these questions is the relation between the categories of affect and habit. Earlier, we noted in Burroughs' work the complementarity of habits and a viral logic that primarily characterizes affect, despite Chun's reservations. While one would not want to go as far as suggesting an

[215] Numerous thinkers—among them Gabriel Tarde— who wrote on habit have had to engage with its association with attitudinal closure, which seemed to solicit a countervailing conceptual factor of openness to make it a serviceable concept in the study of collectives. Whereas in Tarde desire played this role of modifying the closure inherent in habit, serving as the "open curve" for the closed curve of habit, Burroughs seems to imagine a biologically based model of contagion which works through the insertion of schemas of habitual action in abstract coordinate points residing in individuals. Virality in other words, makes habit a strictly transient and transversal phenomenon, weakening its connection with self-sufficiency and self-regulation thanks to the heteronomy introduced. A question Burroughs once asked, namely, "who owns a voice", is no less relevant for the intrinsic heteronomy with which he charges habit. Habits are possessions, but they are the ones that do the possession.

assimilation between habit and affect, they have remarkable overlaps, most significantly in the capacity of "coordinate points" to exert heteronomous control. As Burroughs would write in terms informative for any conceivable view of life obtainable from his work, "the virus [the word of course] attack is primarily directed against affective animal life—virus of rage hate fear ugliness swirling round you waiting for a point of intersection" (*Nova Express*). The scholarship here also shows a certain hesitation, crystallizing in Robin Lydenberg's reference to "emotional habits" (Lydenberg 418). This picture suggests that making room for truly ambiguous conceptual relations rather than banishing them for the reassurance of stable analytical difference might be truer to Burroughs' work.[216]

Excursus on Habit and Writing in Burroughs

This brief section aims to trace the effects of the problems delineated above on the realm of writing and prepare the discussion of Burroughs' vision of learning in the next section.The central question is how Burroughs hoped to wrench his own writing habit from the characteristics and pitfalls outlined above, such as heteronomy, a temporality of prerecordings and a vicious circle of dead-end instrumentality. In his own words, the problem is shedding some light on how writing can be a "writing one's way out" while it is also liable to turn into an addiction. A guiding thread in this part of my endeavor is thus the rarely acknowledged but unmistakeble associations between the questions of learning, apprenticeship and addiction and how the former couple may be enabled to resist the effects of the latter. Under this heading Burroughs' apprenticeship and experiments in

[216] In a more positive vein, one can also propose the centrality of a thought of rhythm and patterning of perceptual cues as a possible ground of this conjunction. As it makes up both a medium which enables the dissemination of schemes of habitual action, and ensures a certain inflection of affect as in its musical forms, the qualitative scannings established by rhythmic entrainment would be a point of generative indistinction which could offer a differential ground for affect and habit both. Taking Burroughs' work as constituting an intervention on the level of "emotional habits" then would be bringing out its character as an experiment in rhythmic oscillations and (de)synchronizations.

new modes of seeing will hopefully find a favorable foil in his lifelong interest in "truths" of conditioning.

The ambiguity that has been flagged from the beginning of this study applies here as well, meaning however Burroughs might have wanted to break out of language and the patterns of perception it carves out, his operation was always immanent to the limiting structures he identified, structures involving language and habit at once. If silence was the task, it could only be a silence maintained or provoked by means of a specific use of words. As Oliver Harris confirms, in cut-up Burroughs' ambition was "to kick the habit of language by cutting it up", cutting up in turn taking on the character of habit in an antithetical emphasis on skilled accomplishment. Finally, with regard to perception, the idea of a "scanning pattern" which Burroughs borrowed from research in cybernetics, also only made sense in a certain context of habit, witness Lydenberg's reference to "habitual patterns of decoding" (416).

A certain region of overlapping between writing and habit established, the slippages between addiction and habit also finds room for play. Burroughs' declaration in a letter to Ian Sommerville that he has "no habits at all which is the way to live", has the triumphant note of one who has "kicked" (*Rub Out*). However, it does not take Burroughs long to realize that writing itself, entangled as it is with the body that produces it, may lend itself to a "possessive" or addictive sense of habit. In other words, Burroughs' cavalier expressions of superiority to habit and its entrenchments seem regularly to backfire, or find correction in avowals of its various authorial incursions.

With encouragement from Burroughs, critics like David Ingram noted a situation in

which "the act of writing becomes the subject of addictive impulses": "Yes sir, boys, it's hard to stop that old writing arm- more of a habit than using" (Burroughs/Ticket qtd. in Ingram). The specific and quintessentially Burroughsian form of the routine also takes on similar associations in the way it responds to a deep seated need for the author; as the biographer Barry Miles reports, Burroughs once remarked, "routines like habit. Without routines my life is chronic nightmare, gray horror of Midwest suburb" (Miles).

Finally it bears noting that Burroughs often conceives language, and specifically the mother tongue itself very much like a hexis exerting a hold that is hard to break. The scenario in the novel *Dead Roads* of an undercover agent who renounces the use of his first language and is forced to use another is telling in this regard, as he is portrayed very much in the image of junk withdrawal: "You realize that you don't talk with your mouth and throat and lungs and vocal cords, you talk with your whole body...and the body keeps reaching back for the old language—it's rather like junk withdrawal in a way..." (*The Place of Dead Roads*).

Thus language and more particularly writing in a performative sense is inscribed in a constellation of hexis and possession in Burroughs, who sees no incompatibility in placing these cognitive symbolic mediations among the inalienably plural forms of addiction which at once determine the landscape of his thoughts and fictions about the living. However there is an even larger coherence that is possible to locate here, which is the coherence that belongs to apprenticeship as such. If an aspect of writing is hexic dispossession, another must be hexic skill, training and learning, like the skills subject to communicable technical cultivation and learning instanced in the rigorous and non-spontaneous use of the cut-up, which we've seen Burroughs to advocate. After all, if

Burroughs' writing could be entirely encompassed by a dispossessing or addictive sense of writing, a temporality of need and "prerecording" would be sufficient to account for its temporality, a bid that is unlikely to succeed at best, given the effects of time distortion sought and at times achieved by cut-up and fold-in techniques.

At this juncture it is necessary to concur with Eric Mottram, who writes that "Burroughs is obsessed with training organizations", while underlining the simpler implication that, just like Valéry, Burroughs is obsessed with training (Mottram 61).[217] Correlatively, certain questions naturally occur here, such as whether training and addiction are irreconcilable opposites or similarly, whether addiction is really the consequence of an insufficient strength of will power, as a common moral reaction which does not appear in Burroughs' work wants to suppose. Finally, one may ask whether there may be a deep complicity between addiction and learning that would not be acknowledged by straightforward mutual exclusion. This study inclines toward the latter hypothesis, primarily for the support it finds in Burroughs' work.

The task here is to show that addiction and training, along with the various iterations of habit these imply—be it habit as insensibility or habit as training— belong together in a single interest in the matter of apprenticeship and learning. Formulated in this fashion the emphasis is placed on dispositions, exercises and exchanges which may lend themselves to "permanent acquisition" as Burroughs claimed for the particular category of

[217] To give a synoptic picture Burroughs work is populated by scenes of often gratuitous excellence and the figures to go with them: aerialists, shooters, assassins, and cut-up artists. However perhaps the most telling among them are first the short sketch called "Discipline of DE [Do easy]" with its improbable zen-like motor mastery: "He has discovered the simple and basic Discipline of DE. DO EASY. It is simply to do everything you do in the *easiest* and most relaxed manner you can achieve at the time you do it. He becomes an assiduous student of DE...Try for relaxed smoothness taking as much time as you need to perform action. If you drop an object, break an object, spill anything, knock painfully against anything, galvanically clutch an object pay particular attention to retake. You may find out why and forestall a repeat performance" (Exterminator!). Also significant in this regard is the writings known as "the Academy", which are a direct statement of Burroughs' ideal vision of pedagogy (in *The Job*).

"consciousness expanding" experiences (*The Job*). Suspending for now the main difference—value— that makes addiction and training —qua learning to write— two distinct forms of permanent acquisition, I would like to present the justification for this contentious parallelism in the form of an argument informed by insights from neurochemistry, whose consistency with Burroughs' work is demonstrable. The following section aims to articulate Burroughs' own contribution to the relationship Steven Hyman defines in the following way: "Addiction represents a pathological usurpation of the neural mechanisms of learning and memory". (qtd in Clune).

From rewards to significations: the brain as the locus of capture and the role of the dopamine system

For a study on Burroughs, chemical modulation of the organism cannot ever be out of bounds as a theme worthy of interrogation. For this reason, dopamine of the title is meant as the real intracerebral organic chemical/neurotransmitter with some of its identifiable manifestations. The singling out of this agent finds its basis on a foundational tenet in Burroughs' approach to drugs, namely the exigency to attain a well differentiated sense of the chemicals that can affect the human metabolism, thereby avoiding the catch all category of drugs with all their potentially distorting moral freight: "Drug, of course, is simply a generic term for any chemical agent...Unquestionably the term has emotional impact; but, used in such a loose fashion, it has no useful precision of meaning" (*The Job*).

Transposing this still useful insight to the brain's inborn chemical regulators, it may be possible to specify Burroughs' double gravitation around learning and addiction as a story of writing becoming a dopamine-interface, a story which can illuminate in hindsight the fundamental coherence between the problems of addiction and learning in Burroughs' work. I believe this is a far more preferable strategy to getting entangled in a conjunction of the type between Literature and Drugs, a couple made of unhelpfully contentious categories at both ends. Finally, focusing on dopamine is justifiable since it has a proven and crucial role to play in the action of the preparation which was the only one Burroughs admitted to work as a "cure" for junk addiction, and whose champion he became: apomorphine, a substance one cannot ignore in a discussion on Burroughs and addiction.

The willingness to engage the function of artistic research and experimentation as an interface for a neurological system may at first strike the reader as incongruous with the largely conceptual approaches taken throughout this work. However even within the narrow confines of this study, reasons exist for explorations in this direction. In the engagement with Michaux for instance, an artist who has been the subject of many neurologically inspired studies, the situational emphasis fell on Michaux's not sufficiently acknowledged attention to the role of peripheral and extra-neural somatic regions and operations, taking up his references to a logic of the leg, or sensations of endogenous visceral movement. Here the situational emphasis works in a reverse way, in bringing out the coherence of the relations that determined Burroughs' single-minded pursuit of neurological themes (including addiction), with a presentation of the contemporary understandings of the dopamine system. As we will see, dopamine may not be the smoking gun behind, or the ultimate explicator of the relations between apprenticeship and addiction, but it is definitely skulking too suspiciously to let go without some careful

examination.[218] Thus even if one does not commit entirely to the position that addiction is explained by a learning mechanism gone awry, or that dopamine in its turn fully accounts for learning—questions to be left to addiction researchers, neuroscientists and psychologists— it is still possible to appropriate relevant contemporary knowledge to draw attention to the non-coincidental nature of the relations between addiction and formal apprenticeship in Burroughs, inasmuch as these relations can be shown to have organic instantiations.

In other words, while this section does not commit to the absolute power of the dopamine system to account for the regaining of learning and apprenticeship as a part of withdrawal from addiction, it certainly commits to its non-negligible place in the conceptual reconstruction of this configuration in Burroughs. To lay out the aims and strategies of this section: I am looking for what Burroughs specifically seeks in withdrawal, why once becoming an addict he finds withdrawal desirable, or in other words, what he thinks he loses with addiction, how he starts to think it is "important," and the neurological knowledge that can be brought to bear on this valued x. The neurological side of the argument comes down to saying the valued x has a certain link with the dopamine system and its function. To anticipate the coming section without stacking the cards in favor of any opinion: the argument largely depends on a differentiation between the concept of reward and that of signification, insisting on a value dimension in Burroughs' work accompanying what is nevertheless an entirely nonmoralistic approach to addiction at large.

To this end a number of previous explorations serve as interlocutors. On the one hand this

[218] For instance take Panksepp's reference to dopamine's role in inducing "emotional habits", something we earlier encountered with a comment of Robin Lydenberg on Burroughs.

section engages in dialogue the work of certain neuroscientists who took an explicit interest in questions like the neural conditions of art appreciation, learning, the neural modulation of the sense of time as well as addiction (Erik Kandel, Jaak Panksepp, and last but not least Andrew Lees, who wrote on Burroughs). In a unique contribution from this area we will see Eric Kandel's particular revival of "classical conditioning" to offer a perspective with deep resonances for Burroughs' own understanding of conditioning.

On the other hand the section follows the work of humanistic scholars who make the neuroscientific knowledge of addiction a participant in debates concerning writing and the experiences of time it makes possible, this time from within an engagement with specific literary works (Michael Clune on the poetic image; Andrew Lees and Richard Doyle on Burroughs himself). On each side however, it is still the main thematic constants of this study that set up the real framework, namely "formal" apprenticeships which involve (de)habituations and plasticity.

Those readers familiar with the author's long heroin addiction know how much store he sets by the chemical preparation known by the name apomorphine. While this compound has significance as a real metabolic regulator in his work, it also regulates important conceptual relations by establishing connections between seemingly disparate facts concerning Burroughs. Especially noteworthy is the way certain commentators liken the position occupied by apomorphine to the position occupied by cut-up among Burroughs' interests. Referring to Burroughs' publications in pamphlets, Jed Birmingham notes the similarity of expectations brought to bear on these two "technologies": "Burroughs viewed the apomorphine as the cut-up in drug form... For Burroughs, apomorphine regulated the human body just as the cut-up regulated the power of the word"

(Birmingham, Speed Apomorphine...). In support of this claim, Burroughs himself makes splices that intimate this possibility, associating apomorphine with Hasan i Sabbah, who serves as a stand in for cut-up induced silence, thanks to the important link between Burroughs collaborator—and cut-up inventor— Brion Gysin and this historical figure: "I quote from Anxiety and Its Treatment in Grey Room—Apomorphine as a hiccup—Hasan i Sabbah through apomorphine acts on the hypothalamus and regulates blood serum of the world" (*Nova Express*). In a way that demands some scrutiny, here is a claim of a communication between the aid to dehabituation found in an area such as conducts involving language, and the much more directly physiological fixations of addiction. More importantly, if as Steven Hyman writes, addiction is really a "usurpation" of learning as well as memory, then Burroughs' embrace of apomorphine as a cure must also have been his embrace of the restoration of the learning and memory capacities hijacked by his junk dependence— a restoration in which the effects of apomorphine as he thought he experienced them must have had a crucial role. Therefore the reference made to chemicals and neural modulation here is directly guided by the theme of learning and apprenticeship or inversely, their restriction due to addiction.

In Burroughs' oft quoted words, "apomorphine has no addicting properties. It regulates metabolism". Burroughs' physician John Dent who introduced the author to the treatment, on his part writes, "apomorphine acts on the hypothalamus to regulate the brain serum" (Dent qtd in Apo 33). Today with the advent of a neuroscience with cutting-edge imaging technologies, a more specific explanation for these metabolic effects is offered: the stimulation of dopamine receptors, which makes the release of this chemical "count", so to speak. As the neurologist, Parkinson specialist, and Burroughs aficianado Andrew Lees writes, "Apomorphine's molecular structure was much later found to closely resemble

dopamine and on this basis it was predicted that it might be a powerful stimulator of dopamine receptors" (Lees, *Mentored by a Madman*). A basic scheme of relations or cascade of consequences becomes apparent here: Addiction dispossesses the user of certain capacities of learning and a broad basis of apprenticeship, and with its sticky repetitive routines, forecloses any enrichment for subjectivity. Next, apomorphine counteracts and even cures the user of these dysregulating effects that alter the normal metabolism, and finally, dopamine has an important role in this "cure", insofar as it decisively participates in the action of apomorphine on the nervous system. Thus, Burroughs' apomorphine cure for addiction opens up the question of the status of dopamine with regard to apprenticeship and an enrichment of subjectivity beyond the routinized, severely repetitive metabolic operations of addiction.

In a way that consolidates these connections, it is possible to show how dopamine plays a key role in the negotiations between "long term change" (Eric Kandel) and the various modes of fixation/stickiness experienced in most forms of addiction, helping drive both the most desperate organic cravings and the most deeply invested processes of invention, learning and habituation. This polyvalence and even antithetical accomodation is a strong reason why dopamine activity may provide a retrospectively useful point of view for making sense of the heterogenously plural and antagonistic forms addiction and training take in Burroughs' work. In other words, while this section does not aim to traffic in the anachronism—in the unflattering sense—of attributing to Burroughs a knowledge that was not available in his time, it nevertheless sees in the currently available knowledge a possibility of concreteness and coherence that may otherwise not be available. As Andrew Lees writes, Burroughs and even the scientists who were his contemporaries might not have had a detailed knowledge of the dopamine system,[219] but Burroughs nevertheless

[219] On this see Lees' important remarks: "Neither Doctor Dent nor Burroughs were aware that apomorphine

"knew that junk laid down refractory narcotic memories by reigniting processes involved in the normal ontogeny of reward circuits, and that effective treatment (permanent withdrawal) would require neuronal maturation" (Lees). In other words, the remaining task becomes to fill the slot left empty for dopamine—even though it cannot be as mechanical as it sounds— by making it inform Burroughs' specific search for "neuronal maturation", which in Lees' terminology, precisely corresponds to what is meant by a regained apprenticeship here.

Encouragingly for this discussion, when one introduces dopamine's intrinsic modulation of the brain to a discussion of Burroughs and addiction, certain features of his writing find an illuminating convergence. For one thing, the contribution of "dopamine—SEEKING brain networks" (Jaak Panksepp) to addiction and metabolically exacerbated fixation on certain substances and experiences, is widely acknowledged in contemporary neuroscientific discourse. Describing the left hemisphere's "tendency to recur to what it is familiar with", thereby "reinforcing whatever it is already doing", brain lateralization specialist Iain McGilchrist also draws attention to the left hemisphere's domination by dopaminergic neurotransmitters: "dopaminergic neurones are more widely distributed in the left hemisphere than the right..." (McGilchrist). For this reason, for McGilchrist the difference between the hemispheric allotment of neurotransmitters model to some extent the difference between addiction and normal metabolism: "The right hemisphere...is capable of freeing us through negative feedback. The left hemisphere tends to positive feedback, and we can become stuck . This is not unlike the difference the normal drinker and the addict. After a certain point, the normal drinker begins to feel less like another

stimulated dopamine receptors. The important dopamine innervation of the limbic edge of the brain now known important for motivation and reward would not be discovered for another twenty years and the mapping of dopamine receptor reductions in drug addicts was a very recent finding. Dent's method was a rough approximation of the continuous stimulation of he dopamine receptors we had achieved with our apomorphine pumps" (Lees).

drink. What makes an addict is the lack of an off switch—another drink only makes the next, and the next, more likely" (McGilchrist). Burroughs himself is not indifferent to the conceptualization of addiction as a similar type of positive feedback: "Having once experienced this pleasure, the human organism will tend to repeat it and repeat it and repeat it" (Qtd in Lees).[220]

The affective neuroscientist Jaak Panksepp—who has done a lot to shift the weight of emphasis in the neurosciences from calculative cognition to a register more cognizant of affect and its transspecies existence— is another case in point. Panksepp writes, "all unpleasant states of homeostatic imbalance automatically make the SEEKING system more responsive to rewards (and the cues that predict them)". This is all the more significant in that Panksepp's exposition of the dopamine system and the imbalances it may precipitate makes crucial reference to states of acute need and addiction: "when it comes to drugs like alcohol, cocaine, and heroin, it is the SEEKING system that solidifies our addictive desires" (Panksepp).[221] If one notices how clearly Burroughs' defense of apomorphine as a cure for addiction is encoded in a similar register of balance and regulation—Panksepp's homeostasis— the relevance of these remarks may be better appreciated: "Always remember that apomorphine has no addicting properties. It regulates metabolism" (Burroughs, Apo. 33).

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[220] See references to hemispheric difference in Burroughs' *Ghost of Chance*: "'A rift is built into the human organism, the rift or cleft between the two hemispheres, so any attempt at synthesis must remain unrealizable in human terms...Man sold his soul for time, language, tools, weapons, and dominance. And to make sure he doesn't get out of line, these invaders keep an occupying garrison in his nondominant brain hemisphere. How else to explain anything as biologically disadvantageous as a weak hand'" (*Ghost of Chance* 49).

[221] If Panksepp's idiosyncratic use of the term is accepted, [dopamine] seeking has two possible aspects; on the one hand it is responsible for learning, and on the other for its derailments such as found in addiction: "On the positive side, it promotes growth-enhancing engagements with the world, and on the negative side it promotes addictions, obsessive-compulsive disorders...." (Panksepp).

Conditioning as an Image of Learning

If an important lesson of the philosopher of life and pathology Georges Canguilhem can be appropriated for the specific problem of this study, it might look like this: a metabolism that regains its capacities for regulation, not only regains its capacities of learning as a subject, but also reestablishes imperatives and exigencies that set the terms for any possible knowledge about it as an object. It reassumes the demand to be read in a certain way, providing knowledge is not equated with gross reduction. On the other hand, a metabolism that is addictively dysregulated, developmentally incapacitated—such that it needs a restated "neuronal maturation" (Lees)— and whose exhanges with the environment are drastically reduced, also temporarily loses its power to support the demand to be read in a nonreductive way. The addict undergoes a non-propositional and non-epistemological reductionism. The addict, the bottom number, the product of a fundamental metabolic "dysregulation", becomes compatible with a behavioristic framework on the living, regardless of any propositional input from this framework. Generalizing on a similar basis, Michael Clune insightfully observes, "the failure is not in science but in life. Most of the time we are indeed functioning more or less automatically. What needs to be corrected is not the scientific method but the human nervous system" (Clune 59).

There have been scholars like Richard Doyle who have arrived at similar conclusions about Burroughs himself, noting how "The 'junkie' approaches the pure form of habit structure, the human outted as biochemical machine" (Doyle "Naked Life: William S.Burroughs, Bioscientist"). It is reasonable then, if this agreement can become the basis

of a local inquiry into Burroughs' writing as an intervention in/by the nervous system. Following up his tantalising reference to the correction of the nervous system, Clune writes, "through some miracle of art, the ideal work counters habituation" (59) thereby situating writing squarely on the frontier between the contraction of habits, vitiated learnings and reinvigorated learning capacities. In a further development of this position which this section aims to offer, Burroughs is not to be approached as an indifferent case study, but as one of the real pioneers for it, especially considering the relays and cross-fertilizations his work provides between chemicals and experimental formalizations like cut-up.[222]

There is a profound kinship and reciprocal presupposition between Burroughs' interest in conditioning and behaviorist frameworks in psychology and his addiction, and some of the most significant studies of dopaminergic system today are similarly focused on conditioning and "behavior" as a gold standard. Especially significant among these, is one that also carries the insights of "classical conditioning" into a consideration of art, namely the neurologist Eric Kandel's work. Kandel discusses the dopamine network as a "bottom up" system of neural modulation, which is activated to generate signature effects of pleasure on occasions of aesthetic appreciation, writing for instance of "the response of dopamine neurons to anticipated pleasure, physiological basis of pleasure" (Kandel 430). Aside from the possible illumination this can shed on the centrality of pleasure to Burroughs' views on life— to recap, "drug addiction as a microcosm of life, pleasure and human purpose"—Kandel's approach to dopamine is also significant for the way it

[222] However, this framework only becomes complete insofar as the distinction between metabolic regulation and addictive dysregulation/ addiction as a sickness is taken as the basis not only of two modes of being (addicted metabolism vs. normal one), but also of two modes of knowledge (on the one hand behaviorism and biochemical machines and on the other "vital values"). Only this way can the chemical action of dopamine be located along a wider trajectory that moves from a learning that hinges on expecting rewards to one that involves an organization of significations.

connects pleasure with learning.

With Panksepp, Kandel also lays strong emphasis on the participation of dopaminergic system in processes of learning and skill acquisition: "Physiological studies have found that dopaminergic neurons are recruited during various types of reward based learning" (Kandel). However, perhaps exemplifying the main drift of a behaviorist framework, for Kandel learning is not a process of negotiation of instabilities through growth and socialization in a step by step discovery of discontinuous adaptations, but it is dominated by rewards and anticipations in circumscribed contexts. Specifically, for Kandel "learning occurs when an actual outcome differs from the predicted outcome. Many kinds of behavior are affected by rewards, and as a result, undergo long term changes when actual rewards are different from predicted rewards" (Kandel 427). This is "the greater than usual reward" postulate that also appears in Michael Clune's own engagement with addiction research (Clune 80). Thus, what counts as learning here—or the possibility of long term change which Burroughs on his part calls "permanent acquisition"— is the surpassing of anticipation by the "reward", either through a prediction that is proven an error, or "unexpected rewards". In a picture of dopamine system that is relevant to the work of Burroughs then, there are three broad rubrics of effects that may possibly determine writing as a possible dopamine interface: pleasure, learning, and novelty, together offering a zone of significant overlaps between the understanding of addiction offered by Burroughs and that of contemporary neurosciences.

In his discussion of the functions of the dopamine system, Kandel makes a clear connection between art and pleasure, in order to trace this aspect of aesthetic experience to the dopamine system. At the same time however, he is considerably less forthcoming

in extending the idea of a "greater than usual reward", or his idea of learning, to art appreciation and art making themselves. What this means is that here the mediation between art and neuroscience is gaining in pleasure while missing out on learning, although these are never mutually exclusive. It is not only Burroughs' investment in various scenarios of training, and his consistency in thinking about learning which requires a more extensive exploration of this connection. It is also the position of cut-up as an apomorphine of formalization which requires paying attention to this more troubled junction where dopamine activation can be involved in a process of apprenticeship, rather than merely doubling artistic taste and pleasure with their neural correlatives.

The absence of a connection between apprenticeship and art limits the adaptability of Kandel's theory of learning based on classical conditioning to a study of Burroughs. For Kandel formulating the agency of a reward mechanism is sufficient to account for the occurrence of learning, a logic of conditioning for which the kind and "value" of the goals and rewards attained seem to carry no significant weight. In other words, if dopamine's partial manifestations include "pleasure" in novelty, and the sense of a novelty of purpose, Kandel favors the first at the expense of a sufficient treatment of the other.[223]

[223] In this regard, let us note that there is a marked difference between a perspective such as Jaak Panksepp's which comes close to crediting the organism with creating its own goals through processes of "seeking", and this particular vision of learning that Kandel relays. Panksepp at least acknowledges the way "this system [dopamine based seeking system] energizes dimensions of life-span development that are devoted to the human search for self-identity and meaning in life" (Panksepp 436). It is not necessary to conclude there is something intrinsically retrograde in talking about meaning in life, as long as meaning is not taken as a historical = human prerogative outlined against an indifferent nature. Finally, in support of this criticism of a framework of reward-based apprenticeship, one only need refer to Burroughs' own transactions with a dimension of meaning and purpose, a significant but neglected aspect of his experience that spills beyond the confines of his trials with addiction, discrediting any reproach of "junk nihilism": "Then you hit a sag. It is an effort to dress, get out of a chair, pick up a fork" (Junky). Also see *The Western Lands*: "a paralyzing fatigue, an inability to do the simplest thing—like fill out the driver's license renewal form. Each night he tells himself firmly that he will do it tomorrow, and tomorrow finds that he simply cannot do it. The thought of sitting down and doing it causes him the indirect pain that drains his strength, so that he can barely move" (*The Western Lands)*. In Burroughs' work there is a quite detailed phenomenology of 3 o'clock in the morning, in the sense Scott Fitzgerald characterized this specific nightly hour: "in a real dark night of the soul it is always three o'clock in the morning, day after day" ("Crack Up").

More importantly a vision of learning oriented to rewards remains too neutral to break the tie between addiction and learning. Especially considering how the search for "greater than usual reward" is a perfect formula for the curve of an addiction which follows a course of diminishing returns, here learning and addiction are not subject to significant differentiation as two forms of long term change that may interrupt or supersede/superannuate each other, over and beyond their limited overlaps.

In keeping with the real reduction undergone by the addicted metabolism, a reward model in fact may be a perfect model of "learning". Burroughs' various prescriptions for the science of psychiatry are based precisely on the perception of this type of fit between conditioning—Clune's "failure in life"— and behaviorism: "the whole of Western psychiatry has been sidetracked ... It should have gone along the lines of Pavlov and the conditioned reflex" (*Conversations with Burroughs*). Yet, given certain intimations of value concerning the addict's experience, there must also be a learning beyond addiction and reward, as otherwise it would not be possible to account for the place of a desire for cure in a process of becoming that achieves an equlibirium akin to the normal metabolism: "Why do addicts voluntarily take a cure and then relapse? I think on a deep biological level most addicts want to be cured..." (Burroughs, New Statesman)

On another score, a reward-based vision of learning, even when it makes crucial space for unexpected rewards—of the kind which we can expect felicitous cut-ups to elicit—does not make enough provision for the actively organizing capacity of the organism to "render situations metastable" or load them with friction in a way that can precipitate the discovery not only of new pleasures, but also of new purposes.[224] After all, sometimes

[224] Simondon has a definition of plasticity that is germane in this context of learning. According to him, it

only by breaching the hold of those activities and habits that serve as sticky and familiar dispositions, can the organism avail itself of a power to free domains of value and meaning which are otherwise under enclosure. By contrast, in a reward framework, the most that is granted to the organism—addicted or otherwise— is a capacity to make predictions. The problem is not that prediction is a slight achievement however; it is that prediction as a cognitive achievement is compatible with a leeway for practical passivity in accepting the terms of what counts as valuable. A cognitive and affective activity geared to rewards may actually be a passivity compared to an axiological adventure that is more open-ended and empowering. If Burroughs' fundamental dispute with prerecording as a model of time is remembered, it becomes hard to take prediction and reward as a point of reference in a discussion of apprenticeship and its neural underpinnings. It is even imperative not to take them as the main pivoting points for Burroughs' vision of learning, as "reward" has no positive associations in Burroughs. Reward occupies a position of something suspect and to be strictly avoided, thanks to its essential role in what Burroughs calls a "punishment and reward lark" (a variation on the "good cop bad cop" routine): "All control systems work on punishment-reward. When punishment overbalances reward, when the masters have no rewards to give, revolts occur" (*The Soft Machine*; *The Job*).[225]

Moreover, while Burroughs always accepted the condition of the addict as stuck on a given and drastically limited form of satisfaction or reward, humorously imagining his addicts locked on to the next "kick", for him the kick or a hypertrophied reward-seeking

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is the "capacity to render situations metastable" or up for grabs, in a way that can make "problems with multiple solutions" out of them (*L'individu et sa genèse* 237).

[225] On another but related score bearing on this context, Raymond Tallis' scathing criticism of the concept of reward deserves mentioning. For Tallis, reward is too broad a category to be useful, or a "denuded abstraction": "Martians may believe that there is something called “reward” that encompasses the pleasure of food, of drugs, of orgasm and the satisfaction that comes from success or from a life well spent, but for non- Martians they are not the same" (Tallis 283).

did not exhaust what was at stake in the addicted metabolism. To be concise, it is necessary to take Burroughs at his word when he writes, "I have learned the junk equation, Junk is not a kick. It is a way of life" (*Junkie*). Just as a writer like Michaux thinks that new cognitive capacities and an extended range of attention would depend on being able to inhabit "other metabolisms", for Burroughs addiction as a metabolism is also "a way of life and by extension an example and a metaphor of the need and maintenance structure of any way of life" (Mottram 22). As much as the possibility of long term change, it is the kind of long term change that needs to be taken into account, a questioning to which a reward framework cannot respond adequately enough, especially considering Burroughs takes addiction and its native reward framework as a "metabolic illness".

Beyond Conditioning: Cues, Colors and Significations

At this juncture returning briefly to Clune's account is in order, for a particular notion which can serve as a key in helping differentiate what counts as a conditioning in addiction from a transformation of perception in apprenticeship and artistic dehabituation. As Clune's whole account of an artistic dehabituation turns on staging a parallel between this notion and the temporal experience of the literary object, it deserves some explanation. Clune offers a technical definition for "drug cue", the notion in question: "The drug cue is a conditioned stimulus that becomes paired with drug use and consequently acquires physiological and behavioral relevance as a precursor to drug ingestion" (Clune 77).

Drug cue is an important notion, because unlike a concept which would favor pinning the aetiology and course of addiction to a few privileged chemical agents only, it involves an acknowledgement of the causal particapation of *contextual* influences, granting a greater importance to the organism as a locus of need and organization of significations in accordance with these needs. It depends on what carries a value dimension in perception, as part of a polarized opening to the outside at the disposal of the organism, an opening that takes non-indifferent forms. Essentially, a cue corresponds to "salience",[226] and in this capacity it indicates all the various ancillary stimuli which attach themselves to the wanted substance without being that substance: "the addict's interest in drug cues reflects an intrinsic fascination with the circumstances of the drug use itself" (Clune 77). Thus, addiction researchers Berridge and Robinson equate a cue with a "physical reminder of a reward", something that thereby "grabs the attention" (qtd. in Clune 78), in such a way that there is a "subcortical" rush of dopamine powered motivation to use the associated substance: "Drug cues 'grab the attention' because they release dopamine (ibid.).Whereas Clune gives the example of the fascination the smoker feels for a cigarette package — which even supplements the craving for nicotine— in Burroughs' case color largely functions in this way.

What is significant in the notion of the cue for the purposes of this study lies in the fact of a dependence-fostering association, in a way Clune registers with his references to "conditioned stimulus" and "pairing". In the notion of a drug cue, modern neuroscience of addiction makes good on Burroughs' problem with association and his expectation that

[226] For an influential equivalent for the idea of salience see William James' remarks on an "interest" constitutive of perception: "Millions of items of the outward order are present to my senses which never properly enter into my experience. Why? Because they have no interest for me. My experience is what I agree to attend to. Only those items which I notice shape my mind – without selective interest, experience is an utter chaos. Interest alone gives accent and emphasis, light and shade, background and foreground – intelligible perspective, in a word" (Qtd. in Cronin).

psychology pursue a tack that sticks to the "conditioned reflex". In definitions by both Clune and the addiction researchers after all, it is association that seems to be the real reason for a cue's effectiveness to induce a need for whatever dependence-fostering drug is in question. In other words, just as a drug cue works as a circumstance that ensures the stickiness and compulsive force of the substance with which it is associated, Burroughs' main struggle for dehabituation takes as its field of action various forms of "associational lock" —"away from me these association locks" (Ticket)— or associational necessity.

Thus what counts as a work of dehabituation through form can reasonably be effective on this level or locus of capture, whereby the magnetic power of certain cues are subjected to modification and loosening, losing the power to direct attention and rule the responses of the organism with an iron necessity. In terms that have a greater traction in Burroughs, writing and media experiments otherwise become occasions to transform "scanning patterns", or patterns of perception whose habit-bound limitation effortlessly translate the idea of fascinated constraint and limitation of range meant by a "cue".[227]

[227] For Burroughs, every scanning is also a "scanning out" (Nova), just as a cue involves a fundamental power of obscuring outside the zone of attraction it represents. Without using the word "cue" at all, Burroughs' whole thinking about the addict's response to his objects of gravitation was stamped by this sense of a constrained selectiveness or salience: "An old junky selling Christmas seals on North Clark Street. The Priest they called him. Seedy and furtive cold fish eyes that seem to be looking at something other folks can't see" (New Statesman). Naked Lunch makes a reference to a black meat "only visible to meat eaters" (Naked Lunch). In a further outgrowth of this idea, one can inscribe Burroughs' shift from conditioning to apprenticeship in simple terms of —the attitudes to— color, which serves in Burroughs as a frequently used dramatization for this problem: "I'm half crazy all for the love of color circuits" (*Ticket*); "black meat …. hydraulic metal hands proffer a tray of phosphorescent meal yellow brown in color like pulverized amber (*Nova Express*); "The Blue and the Gray, heavy metal drugs so habit-forming that a single shot results in lifelong addiction" (*Red Night*); "pay back the red you stole" (*Nova Express*). Finally, especially of note is the "Penny Arcade Peepshow" episode in *The Wild boys,* where it is exactly a question of making color cue give way to a color training through new associations: A round red Christmas ornament going away...Two round ornaments going away one blue one green...fading train whistles blue arc lights...four ornaments going away red, blue, green, gold...freckles, autumn leaves, smoky red moon over the river..." (The Wild Boys). It is thanks to Phillipe Mikriammos that Burroughs disclosed his intentions in writing this section: "PM: What is, in *The Wild Boys*, the meaning of sentences like “A pyramid coming in…two…three..four pyramids coming in…”? WB: That is an exercise of visualizing geometric figures which I have run across in various psychic writings". ("A Conversation with William Burroughs By Philippe Mikriammos")

When it is the subject of a practice that aims to transform or replace it with new possibilities that breach its limits however, a cue is no longer a cue, but something poised to become a signification. Thus it is finally possible to inquire into aesthetic experience as a matter for apprenticeship beyond pleasure and reward, or an organization of significations with a reference to values instated by the organism. As we have already seen, Clune thinks there is a certain possibility that art works may help counter certain forms of habituation that impoverish the relations with the milieu. Therefore the following proposes to endow Burroughs' scriptural experiments with stakes concerning a movement from conditioning to an active structuring of significations (named otherwise, a dimension closer to a "reading").

To be clear about what signification means in this context, it primarily points to the intimate openness of normal perception which makes it borrow sense from the goals, attitudes and cognitive abilities of its subject at large. Signification intends perception's uncompartmentalized openness to losing its neutrality with regard to contextual valences, affirmations, and affective investments with regard to its context or milieu; at its most immediate it can be taken as a "seeing caringly", carrying out a reactivation of the word "appraisal". For instance, when I feel that what I am doing or attending to is so "insignificant" that it might as well be taken from me in distraction, I take this to be a problem of signification. Signification is what is *in* perception without being narrowly *of* it, intending an exposure of perception which makes it reside with affirmation, value and quality. In the germane formulation of Simondon's lectures on perception, "the reality is the totality of interactions between the organism and its milieu where the qualitative and the affective intervene...the manner of integrating information and of reacting intervenes in perceptive activity itself, modifying and orienting it; perception is not made of a group

of absolute processes" (Simondon, *Cours* 353). What is significant in this passage is that it allows Simondon to establish a role for processes of learning and apprenticeship to immanently inflect perception: "The intersensorial aspects of the perception of objects stabilize complexes of givens, and thanks to apprenticeships, exercise an effect of selectivity for this or that group of stimuli...this significative grouping of qualities depend on the orientation of apprenticeship and the motivations of subjects" (ibid. 354). In other words, the framework of signification allows long term processes of learning other than reward seeking to inflect perception itself, such that "the perception of an object as new or old does not employ the same criteria for the child and a lover of ancient objects" (ibid.), given the selectivity of givens is induced or guided by different criteria—not necessarily formulable of course— in each case.

One can extend Simondon's remarks to the addicted perception itself: the addict's and the withdrawing metabolism's perceptions of novelty cannot be taken to employ the same criteria. Since the framework of signification accounts for the internalization or stabilization of "current or past practical conditions through processes of apprenticeship and conditioning" (ibid. 357), it is an opportune model to bring to bear on addiction. If Burroughs' addiction cure apomorphine is valuable for him partly because he hopes it to restore certain learning capacities, changed criteria for what counts as new must figure largely among these capacities—especially since Burroughs knows how destructive of affective regulation (junk) addiction can be: "affectless, immobile body of the satisfied addict, which only rouses itself to search for more junk" (Tim Murphy *Wise Up the Marks*). As Jaak Panksepp notes, 'to the best of our knowledge, most of the learning in other animals occurs when there are strong feelings involved. Indeed left to our own devices, we are just like animals. We learn best when our interests—our SEEKING- has

been aroused" (Panksepp). More particularly, Burroughs' awareness of "scanning patterns" as subject to extension, modification or steering is more compatible with the perspective outlined here, insofar as it intends the transformation of the criteria of what counts as new.

It is here that the question of the rift between two forms of knowing demanded by two different modes of being (sickness vs. normal metabolism) returns. According to Clune the problem of perceptual salience is not intrinsically a problem of addiction, but already a problem of normal and healthy perception.[228] What addiction brings to this problem is an artificial exacerbation: "For the addict, the addictive object has a special perceptual intensity. This intensity is of a particular kind: the intensity of a novel object. No matter how many times it is seen, the object always looks new" (Clune). Yet as Clune goes on to specify there is something "off" in this novelty, embodied as it is in the vicious circles of addicted metabolism: 'I believe there's reason to think that the addicted brain's novelty detection system is corrupted. For an addict, the 'incentive salience' phenomenon discovered by Berridge and Robinson causes the brain to persistently misidentify visual cues associated with the drug as novel" (Clune). If the critic subtly shifts from the objective language of conditioned stimulus to one that is qualitatively and axiologically weighted like "corrupted", this is more because of a difference in the object rather than one in the choice of locution. It is signification as an induction of selectivity that is "corrupted", rather than a value-neutral "novelty detection system" as he imagines. At the point where a common dopamine activation cannot abolish the parallel between a real

[228] In any environment that can be organized in accordance with situational emphasis and affirmative incitation. In fact psychology has a name for cues that act in the absence of chemical modulation: priming. On this see the work of Massumi, who makes a good case for the pertinence of this notion as a key player in a new chapter of control, "the mechanisms for inflecting outcome" (Massumi, The Power at the end of the Economy). In reverse, one can alternatively describe a cue as a priming established through the aid of drugs.

learning process and addictive conditioning aided by cues, it is the organism and its historically accrued (conditioning and apprenticeship) ways of parsing novelty and signification which ultimately demand a manner of reading that goes beyond a framework of behaviorist conditioning.

Whereas conditioning works by external imposition on a susceptible organism, leaving it at the beck and call of a perception charged with need, as vividly dramatized in Burroughs' latahs and uncritically receptive characters —"Martin's reality film is the dreariest entertainment presented to a captive audience" Ticket— vital values and significations structure environments in accordance with desires that create new patterns or associations, or at least preserve some as desirable or "benign", leaving a room for play to polarization and preference on the part of the organism. In fact it is hard to resist construing the omnipresent difference in Burroughs' work between what is imposed and what is spontaneous in the individual from this perspective of values and signification: "Rhythmic sound, films and and TV impose external rhythms on the mind, altering the brain waves which have been otherwise as individual as fingerprints, at least" (*The Job*); "More to the point would be to discover how the old scanning patterns could be altered so that the subject liberates his own spontaneous scanning pattern" (*Word Virus).*

Therefore a perception that is oriented in accordance with vital values and becomes an active reading makes certain aspects of Burroughs' war against experiences of heteronomy thinkable, in a way a framework of conditioning on its own is powerless to achieve. A discussion of Burroughs' dispute with association locks and addiction can never be complete, without a dimension of value which makes provision for "benign associations" (Nova Express); opportunities of flourishing and attainment not identifiable

with pleasure; as well as new regimes of sensory training that steer one away from prolonged attraction to cue-bound patterns of perception.

CODA

Reading with Burroughs

Thus understanding has two modes of advance, the gathering of detail within assigned pattern, and the discovery of novel pattern with its emphasis on novel detail. The intelligence of mankind has been halted by dogmatism as to pattern of connection. Religious thought, aesthetic thought, the understanding of social structures, the scientific analysis of observation, have alike been dwarfed by this fatal virus (Whitehead *Modes of Thought* 57-8)

This section constitutes an argument for the primacy of reading across the totality of Burroughs' concerns, and aims to situate it as a particularly opportune showcase for his vision of learning. By discussing reading as a matter of apprenticeship in Burroughs I aim to bring a specificity to the previous references I had to make to notions like "skill" and training in Burroughs' work (so far only Burroughs' fiction of motor mastery in discipline of DE [do easy] has been referenced as a particular example for a possible skill). Although the main thrust of the following argument presents reading as a privileged locus of Burroughs's bids to alter established "scanning patterns", this claim itself rests on an appeal to the wider interpretative benefits that can be obtained thanks to the standpoint of reading. In the following, I exhibit the way Burroughs depends on an overdetermined notion of reading in his work—and following from this overdetermination, I set forth

how reading as a skill accrues stakes that link it with apprenticeship, in a specification of my concerns with the questions of learning and training in this chapter. The first stage of this discussion is provided by Burroughs' appropriation of the notion of scanning pattern from cybernetics.

If instead of a linear text processing modeled on the medially still influential Gutenberg configuration, reading is taken in the broader sense of an organization of significations in the environment as well as the body; involving perception, detection and consumption of signs discerned according to irreducible selectivities and biases responsible for "meaning" and "sense", then it becomes possible to situate Burroughs's experiments and reflections as an unprecedented and radical intervention in the problem of reading. The central contrast isolated in the previous section, namely the ambiguity between the truths of conditioning—perceptual and otherwise— and the (re)organization of significations according to values, would certainly play a large part in such an endeavour, carrying over their polarization to the functions the act of reading may assume in Burroughs' work. For this purpose, it is necessary to make a plea for a sense of reading whose implications include but are not reducible to Burroughs' creative engagement with what amounts to new media literacies; a sense of reading that pivots around a vision of habit caught between conditioning and values, and only against this background informs new skills and literacies.

Moreover, a framework of reading formulated in this fashion promises to be fruitful and stands to generate more insights than it ostensibly carries in isolation, because of its catalyzing effects on domains which it can reconfigure. Under its influence, aspects of Burroughs' work that may otherwise stand apart easily enter cross-fertilization, finding a

deep consistency otherwise not possible. Thus forms of conditioning and subliminal influence that belong to the controversial paranoid streak in Burroughs thereby easily find themselves associated with his obsession with invisibility—a making oneself unreadable — and unrevealing facades, as in the strange utopia of *Dead Roads: "*He planned towns, areas, communities, owned and occupied by Johnsons, that would appear to outsiders as boringly ordinary or disagreeable...each place would be carefully camouflaged" (*Dead Roads*).[229]

In Burroughs, just as there is a push and pull with habit's iterations between learning and automatism, there is another and deeply related one between the possibility or ability to read in a new way, and the necessity of being conditioned to read in a determinate way, whether this determinacy refers to a range of objects, the flow and irreversibility of succession, or the direction of the gaze: "we're used to reading from left to right and then back, and this conditioning is not easy to break down" (*The Job*). In fact it is possible to argue that for Burroughs nothing less than reality is at stake in reading, since he defines reality as the "necessity formulae" (*Third Mind*) coextensive with modes of receptivity he calls "scanning patterns": "there is no 'true' or 'real' reality—Reality is simply a more or less constant scanning pattern" (*Nova Express*; cf. "The Electronic Revolution").

Consequently the question of reading in this work presumably goes deeper than the encounter between a pernicious and unilateral "sending" such as subliminal messages and measures for its counteraction. Especially if Burroughs' persistent investment in developing the symbol-making capacities for ends involving apprenticeship is remembered, his work can be better appreciated for its single-minded elaboration of diverse modes of active receptivity, modes of receptivity that also implicate what are

[229] Cf. *Ghost of Chance*

ordinarily taken to be modes of production—like writing for instance. Thus it is imperative to understand the way Burroughs turned to reading for a certain locus of empowerment, making discoveries amounting to an encounter with a reading beyond truths of reflex action/conditioning, and how he conceived of *an apprenticeship in the image of reading*. In fact it is likely that Burroughs' work can be brought to bear as an affirmative anticipation on Maryanne Wolfe's claim that there are "few more powerful mirrors of the human brain's astonishing ablity to reaarange itself to learn a new intellectual function than the act of reading" (Wolfe 5).

What is a Scanning Pattern?

In the scholarship there have been important acknowledgments of Burroughs' interest in transforming not only his readership, but reading as such. While scholars like Oliver Harris and Edward Robinson called attention to the importance of Burroughs' attempts to "establish new forms of readability" (*Third Mind*), Robin Lydenberg emphasized the direct relevance of these attempts to the key problem of habituation: "Cut- up interventions by revolutionary agents are designed to obstruct such habitual and imposed patterns of decoding (that is, decoding information into binary oppositions, hierarchies, or linear sequence), and to replace them with an infinite variety of modes of reception that would open up rather than restrict options" (Lydenberg 416). While this section agrees with these views, it nevertheless insists on meeting the genre-breaking implications of Burroughs' "scanning patterns" with a speculative reconstruction of his sense of reading and the specific ways it goes beyond textuality, traditionally understood.

To make a provisional characterization of the idea of scanning pattern as a step toward an

enlarged understanding of reading, one may note certain interrelated aspects that are prominent. First of all, scanning pattern implies a flexible variability in terms of the scale of the operation of scanning. Depending on the configuration and shape of a text, types of scanning certainly show variations if they are adaptable, indicating the concept's relevance to a discourse on media literacies. As literacy researcher Gunther Kreiss writes, "when we encounter pages or texts of this kind, obviously constituted of distinct modes, we do a kind of modal 'scanning' of the page" (Kreiss 159). However, for Burroughs this scale of scanning does not quite enxhaust the term. When Burroughs writes that "the scanning pattern we accept as reality" is one that is imposed by the interests of control structures residing in corporations and the culture industry, and that hallucinogen drugs can "shift the scanning pattern of reality", he certainly means a broader domain of significations — the influence of language on perception as well as the construction of a sense of historical necessity — including but not limited to media literacy.

Secondly, scanning is unthinkable without the constitutive role for a temporality measured in terms of a latitude of possible relations to goal orientation.The inherent link and slippages between a pattern of search (scanning pattern) and a discovery/recognition of pattern (goal) already implies this aspect. The source from which Burroughs borrows the concept, namely research in cybernetics, and specifically that of the neurologist-inventor Grey Walter, is clear on this score.[230] In Walter's terminology—with which Burroughs is familiar first hand[231]— scanning corresponds to a programmed readiness to

[230] In his work on British Cybernetics serving as a complex narrative of the relations among technological modernity, Post-War world politics and questions of ontology Andrew Pickering examines —among other figures from the dawn of Cybernetics— Grey Walter's early work with artificial perception: "The tortoise's method of finding its targets—the continual swiveling of the photocell through 360 degrees—was novel. Walter referred to this as scanning, and scanning was, in fact, a topic of great cybernetic interest at the time. The central question addressed here was how the brain goes from atomistic sensory impressions to a more holistic awareness of the world" (Pickering 45).

[231] In his letters collected in *Rub Out the Word* as well as in various interviews, Burroughs frequently returns to Walter's work around EEG and the measurement of alpha waves. In comparison, the idea of "scanning pattern" seems to be an appropriation that seems less direct but even more determining.

detect determinate stimuli and objects, whether this readiness is of a machine model or a human. The programming of scanning for a narrow range of objects in effect amounts to a command to "find" and rest when in the registered presence of those objects to be found. Thus, in its immediate sense scanning implies a behavioral orientation of perception and mobility with regard to fixed goals, linking up with Burroughs' suspicion of heteronomously exerted control and necessity in its temporal valence. If in a hypothetical spectrum for flexibility of goal orientation the addict's hang-up on the associations and cues of his fixation would represent one pole, indicating a scanning dominated by a structure of visceral need, another pole would lie in the felicitous effects achieved through the deliberate manipulations of cut-up.

In correlation, in Burroughs the question of scanning as a programmed readiness to register certain perceptual givens fits the context of a sense of finitude and embodied limitation, which in turn means that an understanding of "scanning pattern" is only complete with reference to the constitutive exclusion of other possible modes of scanning, taking into account other qualities or objects.[232] As noted earlier apropos a discussion of the notion of "cue", every scanning is a "scanning out" (Nova). Therefore, the concept has something of a perspectivism embedded in it. For Burroughs, the modes of being that addiction brings certainly carry along their fatefully limited scanning patterns, limitations which are also instructive for perspectives that are not necessarily those of the addict and extend to a broader swath of embodied experience.[233]

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[232] A limitation which not only implies a range of objects and object-scales, but also a range of rates, tempos and rhythms of time, playing across undecomposable experiential qualities: Scanning is an idea that makes provision for the role of variations in speed in the creation of meaning and satisfaction, hence Burroughs' investment in manipulations of frame-rate in the medium of film as well as advertising, manipulations which also inform his cut-up experiments to some extent.

[233] The steps Katherine Hayles helpfully elaborates to describe the transformations of media literacy would take on new circularities in Burroughs' work: "Different technologies of text production suggest different models of signification; changes in signification are linked with changes in consumption; shifting patterns of consumption initiate new experiences of embodiment" (Hayles 28). In fact it is normal to find practices in Burroughs that may fit every different link in this chain, transmitting their

As informed by these contextual determinants—necessity/heteronomy, temporality of prearranged events, and exclusion— of his appropriation, Burroughs does not take scanning in a limitedly theoretical sense, but diverts it into channels of aesthetic experimentation: "More to the point would be to discover how the old scanning patterns could be altered so that the subject liberates his own spontaneous scanning pattern" (*Word Virus)*. Since he attributes such a decisive role to language in organizing and occluding perception, his expectations from formal experiment extend to a permanent alteration or extension of modes of pattern recognition and scanning—including but not limited to an introduction of greater clarity and definition. Thus Lydenberg's reference to "oppositions, hierarchies, or linear sequence" dictated by language and English syntax in particular, as well as Burroughs's own reference to a "constancy" of scanning patterns serve to identify a locus of pragmatic disruption. The idea of scanning serves Burroughs to conceptualize historically determined limits of embodied perception and pattern recognition, but since linguistic co-constitutions and partitionings of perception themselves centrally figure in the determinacy of patterns of perception, capture, and heteronomy Burroughs focuses on in his work—marshaling his writing to achieve a purchase on modes of perception— his interest in scanning directly implies the experimentations with form which he undertakes with cut-up and juxtaposition. The determining arc of intervention at play here is between language and perception, banking on the way a certain contingent order (as logos) is already at work in historically varying modes of perception.[234] For instance, when the

effects to the others. Whereas the embodiments conditioned by (junk) addiction shrinks the junky's milieu, along with the significations that can be gathered from it (*Naked Lunch* mentions an addictive black meat "visible only to meat eaters"), techniques like cut-up and usage of throat microphones, aim to isolate an experience of embodiment and embodied perception purified of verbal overcoding.

[234] As Walter Benjamin wrote in his well-frequented essay on the mechanical reproduction of the work of art, "during long periods of history, the mode of human sense perception changes with humanity's entire mode of existence. The manner in which human sense perception is organized, the medium in which it is accomplished, is determined not only by nature, but my historical circumstances as well" (Benjamin). For reasons of his own, Burroughs would certainly agree with this assessment.

occlusions of the word are checked, Burroughs frequently seems to think, the objects and surrounding milieus might attain a clarity or degree of presence otherwise not possible: "Look at the tree, and you will see the tree not the word tree. You will begin to see everything sharp and clear like after a rain" (*Rub Out*). Most significantly, the valorization of visual and nonlinear modes of inscription and abstraction such as the cut-up –but also hieroglyphs— and their associated values like "flatness", silence, and disjunctive spatial juxtaposition find such a pragmatic backdrop of scanning in Burroughs.

We have now established that the determinacy of a scanning pattern—whether it takes the extreme form of viral "possession" or not— is Burroughs' main departure in pursuing experiments in the alteration of perception, and also the reason why his embrace of chance and randomization as cornerstones of his poetics do not amount to a plea for the indeterminate or the providential; rather, chance becomes an encounter that violates the ranges and structures of encounter endorsed by a given perspective or scanning pattern. Burroughs, we might safely argue, is interested in the notion of scanning not because of its reference to a fixity of goals or the reduction to mechanism it performs, but the determinable transformability it introduces to experience (which would involve the "liberation" of different scanning patterns). It is not a coincidence that Burroughs' interest with reading in an overdetermined sense[235] informs his overarching problem with heteronomy: reading and access to reading have a crucial role to play in situations of domination and control as developed in Burroughs' narratives. Implicit to these situations

[235] I emphasize overdetermination because Burroughs' work requires traveling the complicated nexus of writing and reading in multiple directions, to the point that it tends to become unclear to what extent writing is for reading, and not reading itself, and conversely reading not a writing. This blurring is one of the most characteristic implications of the type of experiments —cut-up and fold-in— Burroughs is famous for. This situation is compounded by Burroughs' reflections on his process of composition: "writers don't write, they read and transcribe something already written" (in the same breath stressing and deactivating the sense of preexistence, since it is ushered into being by writing as a partially voluntary process). Also note that an article included in Burroughs' *Adding Machine* is entitled "Creative Reading", and is intended to serve as a substitute for the less feasible task of teaching creative writing.

are a drive to influence perception along the lines already inherent to scanning— fixity of goals and a time of preexistence/prearrangement of connections—, which suggests that "reading" would not only be the discovery of preexistent signification for Burroughs, in accordance with set scanning patterns, but also the experiential matrix for the transformation of these patterns.[236] Thus, most significant from the perspective of this dissertation is the way the intervention in structures of perception Burrroughs conceives in various forms often takes the form of a *learning to read*.

Particular among Burroughs' concerns is his interest in the development of capacities of novel connections and patterns, already familiar from his use of cut-up and fold-in as strategies of breaking old "association locks". If in reading "connectivity is all, but it has to be learned" (Wolfe), Burroughs raises the stakes of this very connectivity subject to learning, through both variations in scale and his sense of what is to be gained: what is to be gained is a reading beyond the already written, a receptivity that is critical, and a reading which would be the methodical process of creative discovery and constitution of significations, and as we will see, this practice necessarily trails along the question of learning.

Reading in the Narratives and Ports of Entry

Here are a few examples from Burroughs' narratives that will also set the stage for a final foray into Burroughs' radical –and also nonfictional— statements on reading as a problem of education/training in its own right. In the showdown between the control elements and partisans in *Nova Express*, Burroughs writes that "our technicians learn to read

[236] This way the mechanical and machine-like associations that are readily visible in scanning—the human "outted as machine" in Doyle's words— are also complemented with their real contextual relations, like the axiological one involved in the pursuit of a less constrained scanning pattern.

newspapers and magazines for juxtaposition statements rather than alleged content" (Nova), a piece of wisdom that has dual role as a cut-up exposé, and a stage of narrative development. Similarly, Burroughs' scenarios of little con tricks and major conspiracies both dramatize the fundamental importance of alertness, cool headed detachment and a fresh memory for resisting asymmetries of power hinging on manipulations of visibility and misdirection of attention: "Don't talk don't play just watch—fifty a hundred thousand years if necessary until you know all the rules and combos penalties and angles—When you can see all the cards then move in and take it all—Learn to watch and you will see all the cards" (*Ticket*). Even the title *Naked Lunch* has implications to this effect, connoting a banquet of reckless abandonment at the end of which everybody starts seeing "what is at the end of the fork" (*Naked Lunch*). For Burroughs, at stake in reading is the transformation of receptivity, and making this transformation a matter of active training. I believe this is why it is permissible to see an image of ideal reading in Burroughs' version of a spiritual exercise in the beginning of his *Ah Pook is Here:*

> What basic principles can be set forth? Perhaps the most important is relaxed alertness [...] to inculcate a psychic and physical stance of alert passivity and focussed attention. Suspicion, fear, self-assertion, rigid preconceptions of right and wrong, shrinking and flinching from what may seem monstrous in human terms – such attitudes of mind and body are disastrous. See yourself as the pilot of an elaborate spacecraft in unfamiliar territory. If you freeze, tense up, refuse to look at what is in front of you, you will crack up the ship. On the other hand, credulity and uncritical receptivity are almost as dangerous (Pook 15).

Nothing exercises Burroughs' wariness as the fact of an abuse of receptivity; since in his vision as long as there is receptivity, there is also an opening or loophole for an abuse,

ultimately making for fates worse than death. It is in his suspicion for the given and the evidence of the factical that Burroughs makes the induction of an ability to read beyond the written, a goal that is worth keeping for art.

An even more dramatic example of the narrative configuration of reading is the celebrated Mayan Caper episode from Burroughs' novel *The Soft Machine,* with its famous lines "Cut word lines — Cut music lines — Smash the control images — Smash the control machine — Burn the books — Kill the priests — Kill! Kill! Kill!" (*The Soft Machine*). Starting as a scenario of time travel achieved through cut-up, the episode finds its journalist protagonist infiltrating the rigidly hierarchical order of the Mayan civilization, in one of Burroughs' signature episodes/routines of anachronism. A telling aspect of this setting and the protagonist's mission is that its objective is undoing a monopoly of reading enabling the control of the Mayan population: "The Mayans had a calendar...the absolute power of the priests, who formed about 2 percent of the population, depended on their control of this calendar...control system depends on the calendar and the codices which contain symbols representing all states of thought and feeling possible to human animals living under such limited circumstances" (*The Soft Machine*). By dismantling the reign of the priests, and their exclusive access to the control calendar, Burroughs' protagonist also aids in a feat of collective emancipation that is rare in his work, since it involves laborers and not only a characteristic spiritual aristocracy of savvy technicians: "Inexorably as the machine had controlled feeling and sensory impressions of the workers, the machine now gave the order to dismantle itself and kill the priests—I had the satisfaction of seeing the overseer pegged out in the field" (*The Soft Machine*). Thus Burroughs' protagonist ultimately helps the establishment of a continuum between extending access to reading and revolutionary violence.

Earlier I have argued for the position of anachronism as a mediation between narrative and cut-up, showing elements of both modes of discourse; and it is certainly no coincidence that the Mayan episode presupposes a narrative anachronism. Beyond the bounds of narrative however, it seems anachronism (in the sense of a simultaneity of disjunctive scenes or histories) can play a similarly pivotal and organizing role in Burroughs' engagement with reading at large, thanks to its important place in a dialogue between Burroughs and his partner in crime Brion Gysin, regarding the latter's paintings. Thus interestingly, what is possibly one of Burroughs' most central contributions to a characterization of reading as a practice of vigilance and a relation at once critical-creative is formulated in an occasion of his response to visual arts. The idea largely revolves around what Burroughs calls a "port of entry", roughly indicating a relationally parsed point of singularity that orients perception into and through a work. Discussing his appreciation of Gysin's paintings, and Gysin's compression of different landscapes into the frame in a way that requires a sequentially sustained immersion to make sense —"The substance of the painting exists with a double motion in and out"—- Burroughs comments:

> WB: Usually I get in by a port of entry, as I call it. It is often a face through whose eyes the picture opens into a landscape and I go literally right through that eye into that landscape. Sometimes it is rather like an archway…Any number of little details or a special spot of color makes the port of entry and then the entire picture will suddenly become a three-dimensional frieze in a plaster or jade or some other precious material....

Aside from the possible relevance of Burroughs' formulations to the long tradition of temporal differentiation of kinds of art—as in G.E. Lessing and his equation of painting

with a construct of simultaneity or all-at-onceness— the idea of a port of entry offers a very fruitful perspective in discussing Burroughs' work on a few accounts. The first and most obvious of these is the aspect of a temporal decision/judging that is reminiscent of Burroughs' avowals of his authorial control around cut-up (the declaration from *Third Mind* "remember that I first made selections"), this time brought up in a receptive capacity. Port of entry accentuates the contingent and partial encounter which germinates intelligibility for a given aesthetic encounter; there are "monads" in the work which depend for their actualization for a participation on the part of the viewer: "When you see one layer of the picture then you suddenly see it all". More generally, and in marked contrast with the bare repetitions and rewards that seem like novelties to the addicted scanning pattern, a port of entry is one of the clearest instances of a certain power to *organize signification* found in Burroughs' work. This power is shared between the painter and the viewer. The potential link of this notion with a problematic of reading in a traditional sense is not hard to prove either.[237] Inasmuch as a "port of entry" presupposes a qualitative differentiation that pits the neutrality of a relatively indifferent extension against a relational and processual parsing of the right and the apposite—what works like a "key point" for orientation— it is applicable to a range of different contexts, from real landscapes to types of media including print.[238]

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[237] See Simondon's interesting remarks on the rhythm of reading, for instance:

> Most of the time, and most of all in labor, it is impossible to proceed in a monolithic fashion, one can't read every book all at once, neither only one book, from the start to finish according to a cursive process. This would consist in doing the equivalent of basting in tailoring and embroidery. If you read a book from the start to finish without going back, you make a basting of the book, which is to say, nothing much will remain of it, you won't have grasped the construction of the book, and you won't have constructed in yourself an intellectual schema. It is often necessary to return to certain passages which constitute key points...and accept crises in the course of the process of reading (Simondon "Le progrès, rhythmes et modalités" 389).

[238] Here David Alworth's work *Site Reading* deserves mention, as it presents itself among other things as a mode/method of reading that takes spatial "settings" as its object. Alworth devotes a section of his work to Burroughs and the use of setting in his *Naked Lunch.* Burroughs' own remarks on the importance of setting for his work can be found in *The Adding Machine:* "I am very concerned with sets, and objects; with scenic landscapes, and rooms, and streets..."

Perhaps even more importantly however, the port of entry model of reading can also be taken to inform the "felicity criteria" of cut-up itself: a transfer which endows the cut-up with the possibility to organize significations, making for a charged relation where a category of poetics or experimental writing stands to immanently transform categories of perception. The efficacy of Burroughs' work, insisting as it does on the commutability of writing and reading, can thus be taken to turn on the polyvalent notion of reading contained in a "port of entry". Especially significant is the way the qualitative criterion of the port of entry can help clear the pitfalls and ambiguities of cut-up as a technique that is both invested in surprise and which inadvertently forecloses it. On the one hand Burroughs uses cut-up with the hope that it can serve as a remedy for the predicaments of automatism by disclosing conjunctions ruled out by given scanning patterns: "as soon as something is written, it loses the power of surprise" (*Queer*). On the other, his extensive use of cut-up risks cutting any remaning links with the possibilities of a readerly orientation; for in Oliver Harris' astute words, "where all is surprise, line after line, all sense of surprise is lost". A writing in cut-up is viable insofar as it offers a sufficient number of these ports of entry to a given reading process. Thus a port of entry provides nothing less than a way of conceptualizing the *navigational minima* on which depends cut-up's felicity as a manner of writing potentially transformative of perception through an organization of significations.

Wave Forms of Reading and a Technique of the Spontaneous

As already indicated, Burroughs showed a keen interest in the contemporary developments in cybernetics and neurosciences, even borrowing the key idea of a scanning pattern from them; and with immediate relevance for this discussion, he also

relied on frameworks of these forms of knowledge not only to make sense of the act of reading, but also to enlist their support for his convictions about the desirability of training with a range of different formal abstractions and nonlinear forms to liberate qualitatively different "scanning patterns". The continuity of his explicitly neurological speculations—often undertaken in interviews— on reading with his miscellaneous remarks on learning reside in their general thrust which aligns inclinations to critique of heteronomously inculcated/dehabituation with a creative restoration of disenfranchised cognitive capacities— paradoxically making the endgame of training a certain *spontaneity*.

Burroughs' essays and interviews on various subjects from the '60's make continuous reference to modern techniques of inscription and externalization like EEG (electroencephalography) that were helping researchers to come up with an analytically reliable picture of the various brain functions in real time, anticipating today's imaging technologies.[239] Perhaps one of the most significant functional differentiations that found its initial support in the EEG technology was the difference between the frequencies of various brainwaves which enabled the establishment of a *spectrum* model between low frequency states like alpha waves—of particular relevance here— and higher frequency ones. Among the said experiments with EEG, there were also those that attracted Burroughs' attention by taking reading as their subject.

In the context of an inquiry entitled "The Academy"— thereby making direct reference to a problematic of training and apprenticeship— Burroughs considers the act of reading in

[239] As the neuroscientist Stanislas Dehaene suggests, with technologies like EEG, "one can thus obtain a series of snapshots of brain in action". As for the electrical activities of the brain during reading, Dehaene informs, "they are seen as negative voltages that suddenly appear on the back of the head in roughly 170 milliseconds. For words their amplitude is much greater in the left hemisphere than in the right" (Dehaene Reading in the Brain)

the curious context of consciousness expansion through the technology of flicker/stroboscopic lights ("when the flicker is in phase with the subject's alpha rhythms, he sees extending areas of colored pattern.."), and discusses it in the light of findings from the neurosciences regarding brain wave rhythms and frequencies of reading subjects. Here as elsewhere the idea of a scanning pattern is of governing import:

> It has been shown experimentally through the viewing of random white dots on a screen that man tends to find pattern and picture where objectively there is none: his mental process shapes what it sees. The alpha rhythms, at about 13 per second, are our scanning speeds which may vary from one individual to another or according to age and, perhaps, culture. They are the strongest when the brain is unoccupied, searching for pattern which may be aural, traveling at the speed of sound, or visual, traveling at the speed of light... But our alpha or scanning rhythms of the brain are weakest during purposeful thinking, eyes open, studying pattern and slowest of all during reading which is the decipherment of meaningful patterns. (*The Job*)[240]

A few different interests of Burroughs' concerning the matter of reading come to a head in this important passage. First of all—as hinted in the rest of the passage— in the background there is Burroughs' now familiar discontent with the uniformity imposed on brain waves signatures by mass media like TV, continuing his exposés of abuses of receptivity in general: "films and TV impose external rhythms on the mind, altering the brain waves which have been otherwise as individual as our fingerprints" (Ibid.).

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[240] Here Burroughs' likely source is again the cybernetics pioneer Grey Walter, who associates scanning with a loose, mainly visual and floating goal orientation, writing about a "period of visual persistence... which relaxes when a pattern is found" (qtd. in Pickering 47). Thus Burroughs' specific correlation of relaxed alpha wave signatures with the "decipherment of meaningful patterns" that is reading is not without precedents.

In the passage the new addition to this paranoid problematic is the presence of a reference to alpha rhythms. Since Burroughs brings up the question of disindividualizing imposition of brainwaves in a contrast with a state he assumes to be more spontaneous, the low frequency brain waves that are categorized as alpha waves and which Burroughs thinks to be "correlated with a relaxed state of mind" (*The Job*) then would occupy a similar position to what he elsewhere calls a spontaneuous scanning pattern, where spontaneous means unimposed: "More to the point would be to discover how the old scanning patterns could be altered so that the subject liberates his own spontaneous scanning pattern" (*Word Virus*). Thus alpha waves have largely positive associations here, as supported elsewhere by Burroughs' endorsement of "relaxed alertness". They are the neurological or electrochemical placeholders for a state of relaxed attentiveness which can be the outcome of a technique, regardless of Burroughs' emphases on spontaneity. What is not immediately clear is the status of reading, due to Burroughs' particular way of phrasing its relation to alpha waves: that alpha waves are the "slowest of all" in reading may mean they are the strongest in reading, given an alpha wave already corresponds to wave rhythms which are already defined by relative slowness.

The hypothesis of this connection between alpha rhythms and the place of reading as the performative locus of relaxed attention and pattern creation in Burroughs' work is important because it also helps shed light on a rare argument Burroughs made for a reenfranchisement of nonlinear formalisms in education vis-a-vis what he perceived as the linearly verbal, with its vulnerability to subvocal speechifying.[241] Furthermore, in an interview with Eric Mottram, Burroughs makes comments which suggest that it is

[241] The following statement comes from Burroughs' "Hierogylphic Silence": "Learning a hieroglyphic language is excellent practice in the lost art of inner silence. 'It would be well, today, if children were taught a good many Chinese ideograms and Egyptian hieroglyphs as a means of enhancing their appreciation of our alphabet.' If you are able to look at what is in front of you in silence, you will be able to write about it from a more perceptive viewpoint" (*Third Mind*).

configurational abstraction he has in mind for a formalism conducive to the mental presence motivating alpha waves –in turn associated with a valorized receptivity. In the interview, it is again by way of a discussion of Grey Walter that Burroughs and Mottram bring up the pragmatic and pedagogical valence of configurational form, and delve into their early struggles with what Mottram calls the "rigidly linearly logical" (211).[242] With Burroughs' seeming concurrence Mottram emphasizes the gestalt aspect of reading: "reading and like getting the page into your head. It's of tremendous importance for education" (Burroughs and Mottram). Continuing, Mottram complains, "think of all those poor kids who've been like driven to do things, can't do it, and told they're below par, uneducable; kind of stupid. That's wicked" (211). Since these claims are often affirmed by Burroughs, I would argue that behind the amateur engagement with neural models it is possible to find a renewed justification for models and practices of abstraction and graphism that are nonlinear and conducive on the long-term to determinably different functions and cognitive capacities than "rigidly linearly logical".

Although this last aspect of my discussion of Burroughs' vision of reading as a possible form of apprenticeship points to a highly specific historical moment—it is hard to mistake the ebullient, characteristically "sixties" character of Burroughs' fascination with research on alpha-waves— there is nevertheless a certain continuty of problems promising further intelligibility into Burroughs' work: By expounding Burroughs' attempts to align reading with a state of relaxation experimentally verified by

[242] This portion of the interview goes as follows:

> Mottram: Grey Walter was saying that the production of alpha waves, or nonproduction, was very much connected with the kind of way people thought. That one kind had a tendency to think linearly and the other kind tend to think in another kind of logic, spatial logic, to organize hologrammatically (...)
> Burroughs: In other words, the spatial logic would be alpha waves, and the other would be non-alpha waves. Well, I would venture to say that writers and painters would certainly be alpha waves because alpha waves are associated very much with the phenomenon of REM, that is when you're dreaming with visualization. (*Burroughs Live* 211)

neurological inscription, I have approached the pragmatic ends that drove Burroughs' artistic experiments. The brain-as-subject perspective partially espoused for the purposes of this discussion may also undo the impression of exaggeration that necessarily attends Burroughs' frequent slippages between technologies like flicker and the seemingly more modest modes of configurational form like cut-up.

General Conclusion to the Dissertation

In this conclusion, I will sum up the overall trajectory of my work, by trying to give voice to implicitly governing assumptions that do not find expression in the main body of my study as they are. If I can anticipate the purview of this final statement, it is constituted by four elements: a genealogical restlessness, an enfranchisement of abilities beneath assignation to a unitary self, an interplay between work and worklessness, and learning as detour.

This study responds to and tries to determine the nature of the genealogical and generative restlessness which lies behind the works in the focus of its individual chapters. On the face of it it may not be an immediate impression given by these literary works in my focus that they engage a problem pertaining to the historical, understood in a broad sense; yet the genealogical or genetic dimension can be appreciated if they are seen as experimental critiques of the naturalization of everyday dispositions and behaviors, aiming to loosen the semblance of inevitability —however undramatic— that can cling to simple acts like association, verbalization, and reflexes; the sense of dispossession inherent in automatic mechanisms of meaning which make even cognitive achievements of control like "retention, elaboration, integration" (Michaux) a triumph of homogeneity;

and seemingly innocuous compulsions like the inner vocalization of thought. The ambient, the spontaneous, and the native, have a certain temporal freight that raises suspicion for these authors, hence Michaux's reluctance to use a language which owes much to ancestors; Valéry's desire to temper with "ways of thinking — ways of feeling, which have been institutionalized from time immemorial, which are imposed by language and decorum" (*Psych.*) ; and Burroughs's overarching problem with "considerations that would force thinking into certain lines of structural and environmental necessities" (*The Job*).

At its base this study relies on a deep complementarity in the way the authors seem to approach the problem of fact and champion excluded possibilities. For them, there are *faits accomplis* characterizing learned ways of thinking, seeing, and feeling, as well as the compartmentalization of cognitive capacities—and in this respect, the genealogical restlessness raises a suspicion of *fact* in these authors, leading them to make writing and art into strategies to deal with the structures of anticipation that take experience hostage. However the problem of possibility in which their works intervene is not equivalent to judging the present in the name of a lost or future plenum and fulfillment, but clings to the immanent potentials of the present with the specific cognitive inequalities and partitions it trails. At every turn, there are overcodings and dispossessions: often related to the global effects of language on intelligence and perception, but also the effect of body's favored postures, needs, and addictions on thought— therefore the perception of time. One can negate the present certainly, working as if in the service of undoing an alienation, or in the spirit of rediscovering a lost equilibrium and immediacy, but one can also relate to the fait accompli of language by bringing out the experimental already inherent in its facticity.

On a broader level beyond the facticity of language, in the works discussed here—whether they are Burroughs' cut-up narratives, Michaux's account of coming to painting, or Valéry's Cahiers— the restlessness which aims to undo, detach or disengage from the deadend of a self-sustaining present given over to paths of least resistance is correlated with the repetition or reparations of the ordinary and the factical inasmuch as they hold occluded potentials of experimentation. In the unconventional mode in which Valéry speaks of "reflection", repetition takes on another valence: "It is an application of the Re-faculty (Reflecting). It involves going from the known to the unknown" (*Psych.*).

In what does the pragmatism of a writing or drawing enlisted to inform such a dual adventure of disengagement and estranging repetition consist? Could not the formal experiments studied here, be studied without making major reference to learning and apprenticeship as such; in Burroughs' words, "are these experiments necessary"? First, it is important to note that in each writer an observation geared to the development or determination of new capacities has a central place. There is an agitation bearing on "functions": whether they appear in Valéry's implex and philosophy of acts or his view of aesthetic pleasure as a unique mediation between sensation and intelligibility, Michaux's attention to mental "microoperations", or Burroughs' meticulous analysis of the relation between perception and language—unscrambling— as well as the whole imaginary of the monstrous he assigns to the phenomenology of subvocal speech in the throat, faculties as a matter of specialization, and specialization as a condition of communication between cognitive capacities, carry the day. Literary and artistic experiment as a know-how that produces structured stimuli suggests itself as a favorable form of intervention precisely in this domain of relations insofar as it makes new demands from the receptivity of the

author and the reader. This certainly finds support in scientific and philosophical approaches (e.g. Maryanne Wolf's and Marcelle Stroobants') which treat skills like reading as composite and emergent functions which hold instructive valences for cognition as such— taking their seeming naturality of operation to mask an improbability deniable only by the continuity of a historical practice.

Following on from specialization, the self involved in what I call self-transformation, is often a biased composition of functions working beneath conscious steering—leading the authors to pursue broadly analytical procedures, experiments and observations, which prepare the reconstitution of new cognitive relations by formal procedures: restlessness is for the enfranchisement of different links between the specializations of cognition and feeling, and the promotion of these links to subjectivity: this can be as simple as saving the perception tree from the word "tree," or can find form in the more complex avatars dreamed by Valéry— a memory "that has a sensibility" and "an automatism of choice and reflection" (v3 98). Here Michaux's attitude to subconscious which tries to undo its position as a mere object of knowledge, and Burroughs' humorous exercise in the discipline of "Do Easy" are both paradigmatic of what I understand by enfranchisement: "We should leave it [the subconscious] alone. Let it finish. Give a holiday to the conscious. Give up the deplorable habit of doing everything ourselves. What is important (in the order of thought) must, on the contrary, always be left unfinished".

To present the second reason for writing's constitutive role in apprenticeship, it is important that self-transformation often implies but is not necessarily exhausted by the complaints against the heteronomous by what clings to the self-identical. As *techniques*, writing, reading, and drawing, have an indispensable and not merely incidental place in

apprenticeship across these authors, since the sense of heteronomy engendered by a preselection or sifting of experience by rote responses and automatisms is contested in the direction of what artifice can bring. Given the dominant fact of the psychic economies which receive the pragmatic attention of the authors is a certain inequality or bias induced by "prolonged usage," which can be highly artificial, it is the uses of other artifices that are explored, accounting for why questions of writing and poesis themselves jut into automatization, as much as automatization juts into writing for contestation.

Often the authors converge in a sense that language itself may be the process or function which is responsible for a certain impoverishment of experience —as posited by Burroughs— and then it becomes necessary to confront its pre-selections with a different logic like the cut-up. Thus writing, form and signs which expediently allow communication may be the very locus of "training" to be questioned in light of the limitations of the cognitive and affective relations they foster in the long term. The authors' awareness of the implicitness that is wont to characterize the results of learning —present easy efficiency in its contrast with the memory of struggle, hesitation and wavering— translates to gestures toward language itself as an implicit source of world constitution; and novelty in subjectivation gets hitched to innovations in semiotic practice, as in Michaux' *Stroke by Stroke* and its evocation of an as yet nonexistent but collectively cultivable function.

This is to point to the charged co-presence of work, language, form, and abstraction on the one hand, and their surpassing on the other, in the apprenticeships at play across the studies grouped together here. Some of the most important of the cases involved here, often imply an interplay between the spontaneous and the poetically fashioned, aesthetic

work and everyday life, with no simple resolution of their antinomies. If apprenticeship entails the avoidance of a satisfaction with art and experimental writing as autonomous cultural categories, here art and experimental writing themselves offer the means for this avoidance: what is at stake is discovering departures from artistic *autonomy*, through the means of what would otherwise be considered its affiliate: formalization. Here are some key examples of this paradoxical relation: In Burroughs reading becomes a technique of spontaneity as an outgrowth of his concern with spontaneous "scanning patterns," and written and rigorously patterned cut-up responds to ambient cut-up as "a sensory process that is going on all the time anyway" (Third Mind). An artist like Michaux makes the singular and ambient situations in which he finds himself, and which do not necessarily presuppose any making and artifice, into a sign of situation, linked to a capacity for transformation, and even the promise to "free the situations of an entire era" (*Emergences*). Situation as the unrepeatable everyday context on the one hand and the ultimately iterable form of sign which is the result of a poetic fashioning on the other, both exert their claims in the new formation. In Valéry's own brand of surpassing of work through work, the work as a finished product is clearly spurned;[243] yet the idea of self-transformation which becomes Valéry's new goal, and which is encapsulated in the idea of learning called *implexity*, itself returns to language in the end, to endow it with the resources of the complex dynamics of acquisition, latency and responsiveness that characterizes this concept: "A good writer keeps close to his language. Language is within us like a second implex - more or less as if present –i.e. like the system of possible forces and movements that is more or less aroused, in hand " (*Education* 615). Therefore restlessness is genealogical, the self for which a reenfranchisement of development is sought is one of propensities in interplay, and the process of

[243] "A masterpiece seemed to me to be restrictive — a demonstration, an exercise -whose residue and product were destined for others" (Glad. 302).

apprenticeship which absorbs the energy of this restlessness is one that mediates work and worklessness, abstraction and concreteness.

The relation between work and the surpassing of work, is also important because of its coincidence between the relation between the long term sustainment of habits and short term intensity of attention. The polymorphous temporal problem of habit –with implications for both the living and the psychological— is often brought into work as a negative standard to inform new dispositions, and works like *The Ticket that Exploded*, and *Par les Voie Des Rhythmes* become the cruces where operations on temporality are formulated and carried out. A work like Cahiers can have all the elements of a rehearsal for new forms of subjectivation: in its making and genesis, and the circularly causal dynamics of production involved it brings about new structures in subjectivity and attention which demand continuation. Michaux's drawings and rhythmic sequences along with the skills of deciphering they require, Burroughs's cut-up narratives— as Oliver Harris writes "in training us in how to read his text [...] Burroughs is training us to read the culture around us, or the culture *inside* us" ("Intro" to *Ticket*)—and Valéry's reflections in Cahiers develop new experiences of necessity and constraint, qualities of continuity, pattern, and sequence that are claimed for life and not merely for the works which are the repositories of their finished formal remains. Finished works are still the repository of forms, but forms also hold abstract schemes and scripts for performance which can be transposed to other conditions and situations. The work is not necessarily delivering a "dehabituation" to order, or down to the specifications of the sense of necessity that troubles the authors, but it often delivers *something else*, through the sheer act of temporal elaboration with its own constraints. Therefore, here learning and unlearning are also all that actually happens behind one's back when one is obsessively preoccupied

with the thought of unrealized possibility; the work's affordances for learning and unlearning are not teleologically determined by the initial feelings of restriction or poverty of experience, but only set off by them.

The criterion whether they have developed or argued for any fruitful or relatively new motives for reading an author is pertinent for any study that takes on works which have generated vast bodies of secondary literature and criticism. This study's contribution to the question, "what can we read the works of Burroughs ,Michaux and Valéry for" if we are to gain fruitful critical insight, takes the form of a reading for exercises in subjectivation dreamed, designed, and applied formally. Its concerns can be designated as "metapedagogical" rather than metacognitive; if metacognitive evokes the production of knowledge about knowledge, metapedagogical involves a practical negotiation of factors that may condition and values that may inform the generation of different capabilities in thought. As emphasized in the Valéry chapter, the real gesture therefore is not bringing literature in contact with an "epistemology of potentiality," rather it is inquiring into the resources of literature—semiotic, narrative, and temporal— as a practice, in disclosing, mediating, estranging and if possible redirecting capabilities already honed within a variety of limits, from evolutionary to historical, cultural to media-archaeological. Hopefully, this overall intervention can be an enrichment for the possible approaches to the domains which informed the study in the first place: the fortunes of graphic abstraction in the 20th century art and aesthetic theory; philosophical considerations of plasticity and ontogenesis; and finally studies of learning, apprenticeship and psychological development.

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Abbreviations

Cahiers = Notebooks, vol. 3
Attention: Att.
Psychology: Psych.
Sensibility: Sens.

Cahiers = Notebooks, vol. 4
Bios
Science
Time
Education

Cahiers = Notebooks, vol. 5
Philosophy: Phil.
Theta

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