

us place some of this prolific production in perspective by gathering together six separate interviews, along with a few short poetic texts such as "Carnet d'avril" and "Champ-Bretagne" and a number of photographic documents of touching interest for readers of autobiographical, half-lyrical, half-elegiacal 1992 *Suite pour une enfance* or 1997 *Livre du chagrin*.

Always — whether it be the attentive naming or the exquisitely ephemeral, the recollection of spiritual states, the alertness to rhythm and sound, form and meaning's swirl, and their bondness to a purpose "exceeding the sign" — there reigns a sharp, searching, never still and settled sense of the pertinence of poetry, its texts, yes, but more importantly its acts, to everyday experience, the experience of every moment. Poetry less, therefore, as "art [than as] bond," link, to the unconscious, to the Other, to self, or other. The poet: "s/he who maintains the truth of [such a] bond." It is no surprise to find in a Le Dantec's work that every evocation of every line resonates with a most delicate attunement to its ontic mystery, the strangeness of its articulation, its emergence, its retraction. To convince oneself of this, one need only read the 1995 *Strophes*, or, chosen at random, verses such as the following from "Carnet d'avril:"

Les cataphotes s'allument dans les bois

*

Vieilles sagas des fougères.

*

*Il y a des perles et des paniers de feu
— oiseaux qui jasant entre les lèvres:
merveille*

*

Noires les roses.

(Dans la boîte trempée de la mer, tous les bruits.)

The discretions of the *poietic* front upon its fragrances. All remains, despite our surging or faltering gestures of nomination, oddly veiled still in that very pristiness of enigma hat, in the first place, caught our eye, drew our mind, invited our speech. "Ce qui s'entend provient des confins. / L'image vient après."

A writer, happily, of great subtlety and little pretension.

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Henri Michaux. *À distance*. Paris: Mercure de France. 1997. 141 pages. 70FF. ISBN 2-7152-2022-7

We may not have expected any more published poetry from Henri Michaux after immediately posthumous *Déplacements, dégagements* (1985) and *Affrontements* (1986). And, indeed, of the forty-five poems assembled in *À distance* (a title from a 1953 text) by Micheline Phankim and Anne-Elisabeth Halpern, only ten are actual *inédits*, all others having appeared either in periodicals or in short run *plaquettes*. The selection, or better gathering, offered, which spans the entire period of creative production of Michaux, provides, however, some thirteen years after the poet's death, a fascinating

overview of his shifting modes, his teeming fertility and his ever-surprising originality. Little wonder that, in the hearts and minds of those who have long “surfed” the twentieth century, Henri Michaux has a quite special place.

Take for example the earliest text given in *À distance*, “L’étang,” dating back to 1922 and published for the first time in *Europe* (1987). Brilliantly observant, anchored solidly in the real and sensitive to the daily ironies and tragedies of existence, the poem yet attains to a delightful fantasticalness, it is wittily buoyant, inimitably unpredictable yet focussed. Something similar might be said of the remarkable “Quelque part, quelqu’un,” published in 1938 in *La Nouvelle Revue Française*. And yet here Michaux’s imagination breathlessly rolls and tumbles, for seven pages, over its own extraordinary prolificness. Quirky strangeness allies itself to pure simplicity or sheer funniness. Streaming anaphoric rhythm couples either with exemplary syntax or with structural leaps or compactions. Here is a sample chosen at random, for there are no stanzaic parcellings, no convenient pauses in this wild cascade:

*Quelqu’un est difficile sur la poésie
des autres*

Quelqu’un r r r r ...

Quelqu’un tchup... tchup... tchup...

Quelqu’un à cette heure

*voit la mer, sent l’odeur de la mer, baigne dans
l’odeur de la mer*

*Quelque part il est midi, la pupille de
quelqu’un s’étrécit; après la mort,*

l’oreille suffit

Quelqu’un il a trop de remparts

*Quelqu’un il ne sait pas fleurir en
décembre*

*Quelqu’un ne sait pas faire son nid
dans l’acier*

*Quelqu’un croit au primat de l’esprit
sur la matière à l’antécédence de
l’idéal sur le réel*

And, then there are all those endless other tonalities, epitomised by poems such as “Désagregation,” “Les jours, encore les jours, la fin des jours,” “Malades,” “Libéré...,” “Sans mesure,” “Regards d’enfant.” For, whilst so often ostensible seeking infinity, stillness, an unspeakable transcendence felt available within and without, Michaux remains too the poet of multiplicity, movement, ever unfinished business, ever becoming consciousness—of a finiteness shimmering always with potentiality, unseenness, otherness, but a finiteness, ever fresh, ever frustration, ever oddly caressed.

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Pierre Chappuis. Pleins marges. Paris: Corti. 1997. 93 pages. 90FF. ISBN 2-7143-0601-2.

Author of the critical studies devoted to Michel Leiris and André du Bouchet, and some dozen or so volumes of poetry, Pierre Chappuis gives us, no doubt in keeping with his 1992 meditations in *La Preuve par le vide*, a new, at once elegant and aesthetically unpretentious collection