

PREVIEW SAMPLE EDITION
NOT FOR SALE OR PUBLICATION

100 SCENES 景色



“This is an open novel, for you to project your mind into. Every page is a stimulating field for your imagination...”

这是一个开放式小说，你投射你的头脑之中。每个页面都是一个刺激现场为您的想像.....”

(Tim Gaze)

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100 Scenes

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INTRODUCTION by Robert Cettl

The gentle, peaceful inner calm which Gaze reveals in person befits his patient, resourceful intelligence. Decidedly non-violent and humanistic, he has forged an independent career as an artist/author/musician since his emergence on the Adelaide, South Australian underground scene in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Moving from loosely satiric performance prose through what he termed “glitch poetry” and experiemental electronic drone music, Gaze was one of the first Australian authors to explore the print-on-demand (POD) options offered by self-publishing pioneer LuLu.com when he released his debut anthology of abstract black and white “visual noise” *Noology* (Asemic Editions, 2008):

(on) *Noology*... I enjoy the far-out photocopier art by the likes of Reed Altemus & Billy Mavreas. In the back of my mind, I'd wanted to attempt something similar with my scanner, but only got around to it less than 2 years ago... What I now call “glitch poetry” comes from leaving the scanner's lid open, & moving pages around as the scanner beam is moving. This might be shaking a page from side to side, sliding it back & forth, lifting it up, rotating it, or swapping between different pages. Then, I might splice together my favourite bits, using a paint program. The shaking process feels musical, similar to bending a string on a guitar. I should mention that the best results come from scanning pages full of truncated marks. I prepare a few pages of simple marks, like half-formed symbols, using a marker pen. Short straight line segments & curves. It's amazing how much richness you can generate from such sparse starting material. As well as the similarity to electronic glitch music, my scanner method could be likened to distortion or reverb, as well. Overlaying or assembling parts of images in a paint program is similar to multi-track recording. (as quoted in Jacobson, 2008).

With his radical works greeted with dismissive, condescending indifference by the South Australian Arts establishment (and its related arts-grant funding appartus), Gaze launched his own imprint, Asemic Editions, and the flagship journal *Asemic Magazine*, seizing on the Internet to disseminate his work and those of a loose clique of like-minded author/artists, including Gary J. Shipley and future collaborator Michael Jacobson. According to Jacobson, Gaze “is the calm Buddhist sage of the movement” (as quoted in SampleKanon, nd.).

The editor of *REM Magazine* remembers Gaze's early period thusly:

Back in the days of Word for Windows 2.0, Tim Gaze used to write short programs in the bug-ridden language WordBasic, to mangle words & letters in various ways. These days, he is more inclined to make abstract prints, using \$2.50 tubes of paint on ordinary A4 paper. He believes that writers & poets need not be sedate middle-class animals that drink wine. (Editor, *REM Magazine*, 2011)

Gaze explains:

A few years ago, roughly 2000 to 2004, I did a lot of raw calligraphy, using a Chinese brush & bottled ink, on ordinary office paper. Consciously trying to achieve a sense of balance, & an Asian sensibility in these... I'd been experimenting with copying Chinese characters with a pencil, & didn't know if they were legible. It felt naughty: did I really have permission to use Chinese writing, having never studied it?... (but) In Tang Dynasty China, ca. 800 c.e., 2 men pushed cursive brush calligraphy to the point of illegibility. “Crazy” Zhang Xu used to get excited after drinking wine, & write exuberant but illegible cursive. The younger “mad monk” Huai Su also found renown as a writer of loose cursive calligraphy. These men are still famous. (as quoted in Jacobson, 2008).

The idea of a process/poem is that it is open to any interpretation by the reader. The poem, as written, is incomplete, to be completed by the act of interpretation. This strikes me as being co-operative, democratic & honest, in contrast to literary theory, which seems like a cold-hearted dissection of a text, ignoring an individual reader's personality & mood when reading. The usual modes of literary analysis taught at Universities strike me as being similar to the way animals are judged at an agricultural show. (as quoted in Jacobson, 2008).

An increasingly fervent critic of post-modernism, especially of Derrida's literary analyses, Gaze extended his Chinese calligraphy inspired drawings and the “visual noise” of *Noology* to embrace a fledgling genre, “asemic writing” and delineate the fusion of aesthetics and ideology. According to Gaze:

...It looks like writing, but we can't quite read it. I call works like this “asemic writing”. Asemic writing seems to be a gigantic, unexplored territory. Asemic writing has been made by poets, writers, painters, calligraphers, children, and scribblers, all around the world. Most people make asemic writing at some time, possibly when testing a new pen. Educators talk about children going through distinct stages of “mock letters”, “pseudowriting” and so on, when they're learning to write. Many of us made asemic writing before we were able to write words. Looking at asemic writing does something to us. Some examples have pictograms or ideograms, which suggest a meaning through their shape. Others take us for a ride along their curves. We like some, we dislike others. They tend to have no fixed meaning. Their meaning is open. Every viewer can arrive at a personal, absolutely correct interpretation. Asemic writing has been presented by means of books, paintings, scrolls, single pages, mailed envelopes, walls, cinema, television and computers, particularly via the internet. (Asemic.net)

Gaze's second long form work, *100 Scenes*, consequently experimented with narrative possibilities in an ambivalent riposte to Derrida et.al. Insisting his work here not be confused with the Rorschach ink-blot psychological tests, Gaze ironically embraced the post-modernist concept of reader, not artist, as the meaning constructor forced to respond to a sequenced series of ink blots, the progression of which, while determined by the artist, simultaneously denies intention, destabilizes semantic meaning and faciliates pscyhological projection as much as interpretation.

To achieve this ambitious effect, Gaze made the individual pieces comprising 100 Scenes using the decalcomania technique first invented by Surrealist artist Oscar Domínguez in 1936. The images in the book are raw scans of original pages made using cheap acrylic paint on sheets of ordinary office paper. The pages were made over a period of 4 to 5 years. It took several weeks to assemble them in order prior to the novel's first digital publication, in Australia, in 2010, and the first Asemic Editions print version in 2011.

100 Scenes prompted a re-appraisal of asemic writing and its origins as an art form, genre and even erstwhile movement within which to begin to contextualize Gaze's work. While the Eastern tradition of asemic writing that inspired Gaze began with the so-called “crazy, drunken style” of illegible Chinese calligraphy practiced by Tang Dynasty (800 CE) figures Zhang Xu and Huai Su, the Western tradition effectively began with poet and artist Henri Michaux in the 1920s. Michaux created 4 works containing several pages of hand-drawn symbols: *Mouvements* (“Movements”, 1951), *Par la voie des rythmes* (“By Way of Rhythms”, Fata Morgana, 1974), *Saisir* (“Seizure”, Fata Morgana, 1979) and *Par des traits* (“Through Lines”, Fata Morgana, 1984). The last 3 are included in his *OEuvres complètes*, volume III (Gallimard, 2004), while *Mouvements* is in volume II (Gallimard, 2001). Michaux also painted many abstract inkblot paintings, anticipating Gaze's style.

Two surreal collage novels by Max Ernst - *Une semaine de bonté* (“A Week of Plenty”) (1934) and *La femme 100 têtes* (“The 100 Headed Woman/The Headless Woman”) (1929) - and the works of the French avant-garde group known as the Lettristes (in English, “Lettrists” or “Letterists”) established

the “hypergraphic novel” as an asemic genre: a novel which uses letters, symbols and images. Isidore Isou, Gabriel Pomerand, Maurice Lemaître, Roland Sabatier and Anne-Catherine Caron all wrote hypergraphic novels, often using pictures as rebuses, to spell out French words.

Alain Satié’s *Ecrit en prose* (PSI, 1971) particularly influenced Gaze, who cited Satié’s “open-mindedness” as distinguishing the author’s work. Amongst his contemporary peers, Gaze cites the symbolic novella *The Giant’s Fence*, by Michael Jacobson (Barbarian Interior, 2006) as “the yang to my yin creation.” Nevertheless, the increasing, creative embrace of the graphic novel format by Gaze parallels that of Andrei Molotiu’s “abstract comics” oeuvre as evident in Molotiu’s *Nautilus* (Fahrenheit, 2009). While completing the artworks that would eventually comprise *100 Scenes*, Gaze was solicited by Molotiu for a contribution to the seminal *Abstract Comics* (Fantagraphics, 2009). It was in this Fantagraphics volume that Gaze and his co-contributors linked the asemic tradition to the graphic novel format.

While not overtly acknowledged, or analyzed as such, initial reviews of *100 Scenes* skirted around the connection, Eileen Tabios noting:

Now, one can certainly do ekphrastic readings on the individual images. But key to reading them is also paying attention to the procession of images. (Tabios, 2011)

Domingos Isabelino elaborated:

The drawings in *100 Scenes* result from various tensions, then (to use another Kandinskyan word): human made / machine reproduced; line / texture; black / white; positive space / negative space; centered / decentered; stillness (the basic plane) / movement (the drawings); chaos / order; regular rhythms / irregular shapes; etc... From page to page we witness a restless, lively world. It’s like a godless theogony (another tension?) in which trial and error coexist. I’m on the verge of denying the abstract nature of this graphic novel, so, I’ll stop now... (Isabelinho, 2012)

The international community familiar with Gaze’s prior work were duly intrigued. 6 pages from *100 Scenes* were reproduced in *Tuli&Savu-kirja Tekstitaide (Fire & Smoke)*, Finnish poetry journal’s yearbook for 2012, titled *Text Art*, including one on the front cover. Meanwhile, ethnographic filmmaker / author-publisher Robert Cettl used the images of *100 Scenes* in a moving slideshow overlain with Gaze’s experimental drone music for the experimental short digital film *Ballet Asemique* (2012). Following an exhibition of Gaze’s work in Russia, amidst the booming visual poetry renaissance analyzed in *The Outer Circle: Russian Visual Poetry*, Gleb Kolomiets comprehensively delineated the artistic challenge posed by Gaze’s work:

T. Gaze is drawn to the most archaic writing type-hieroglyphic, breaks the inherent linear coupling letter characters (even in elementary school we naučauit think and write the Word as an indissoluble unity, thereby denying the aesthetic and symbolic unity of separate letters). Each of the “scenes”, thus becomes a complete “reality”, a distinctive phenomenon-unity conditionally (as, for example, the unity of all works of art). Therefore, when reading (I will not zakavyčivat’ this word) “100” feeling gross incoherence: various forms of asemičeskikh marks (spots, “hieroglyphs”, divorces, tree structures, etc.) are resisting synthetic strength, spaâvšej them into a single piece (cycle) that defines the system reading (read the book from beginning to end, not read a book backwards, not flip it upside down, don’t start reading from the Middle, not the withdrawal of part of a context). Each of the “scenes” tries to speak their own language, each striving to grow into a separate story, novel, space ... T. Geise invents s oglifičeskuû alphabet, consisting of an infinite number of characters, each of which in turn contains its own unique expression system. The author showed only a hundred of them, but the rest of the invisibly present in the writing system, which received work from this book. Ultimately, technology etc. Gejza implements interpretation letters as trace (meeting in the works of j. Derrida and g. Deleuze-Guattari). Speaking in the abstract, freed from the standards, forms, it reveals not only the structure of consciousness, but statistical regularities, administering the world at the most fundamental level. In “100

scenes” reflects a very important modern culture’s deep of human resistance and peace, unity of totalization, constantly producing breaks, glitches, breakdowns, about perfection and completeness, at the micro level, becoming a chaotic multitude of partial objects. Thus, the “100” implement more ambitious task than simply creating artworks-search access to what makes the reality of real. But this is just one of the possible interpretations of the book, absolutely open to all readers. (Kolomiets, 2012)

Happily based in the Adelaide, South Australian Hills township of Mt. Barker and espousing simple living, Gaze continues to edit the online *Asemic Magazine*, distributing it online and through local POD. Just as it was this publication that brought Gaze to the attention of The New Post-literate editor Michael Jacobson, the duo subsequently co-edited the multi-author graphic novel *A Kick in the Eye*. Here, Gaze furthered the concerns evident in *100 Scenes*, using a multi-author contribution format to further destabilize the reader and inherently problematize the simultaneous projection-and-interpretation dynamic now integral to the appreciation of Gaze’s asemic writing.

Thus, in July 2015, Gaze was briefly interviewed on the subject of asemic writing, reflecting on the movement he had inaugurated initially through zines and mail art, but conclusively with *Asemic Magazine*:

Yes, I agree that there is a movement. (I would also comment that I’m sure the well-known historical art movements were much more fuzzy at the time than later histories would have us believe.) I’m partly responsible, having published 3 issues of an e-zine titled asemic movement. Carlos M Luis of Miami was probably the first person to describe it as a movement, in a letter or email to me. In my mind, the movement is not just about examples of asemic writing; it also has potential to ask us to rethink some fundamental questions such as: What is writing? and What is reading? I hope also that the implications of asemic writing can knock holes in some of the currently accepted literary theory, especially Derrida’s ideas about writing... It depends on how you want to use the term “asemic writing”. Personally, I am the most interested in newly invented symbols, but can’t deny the other approaches to making wordless writing or illegible writing or writing-like images. Eventually, someone will attempt to separate these into distinct categories, and apply some sort of systematic nomenclature. James Elkins’ book *The Domain of Images* gives a sense of how this might be done. Hopefully, creators will continue to confound any labels or boundaries which arise. (Gaze, quoted in Giovenale, 2015)

As Gaze’s research interests have shifted from visual poetry to the experimental graphic novel, and the related narrative potential within abstract asemia, *100 Scenes* can be considered a bridging work. It is here that he realizes his challenge to Derrida, imposing his own authorship while denying the construction of meaning. To achieve Gaze’s desired attack on post-modernism’s adoration of sign-and-simulacrum, *100 Scenes* invites the deconstructionism inherent in its enemy to firstly destabilize and finally radically subvert it. That is ultimately the definitive enigma of the work: its paradoxical, abstract meta-textuality.

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FOREWORD
by Tim Gaze

This is an open novel, for you to project your mind into. Every page is a stimulating field for your imagination. The images are raw scans of original pages made by me, using cheap acrylic paint on sheets of ordinary office paper. The pages were made over a period of 4 or 5 years. It took a few weeks to select which hundred to assemble into this book, and a few more weeks to decide on which order to put the pages. One page has a black line on the right hand side, which I left there.

Most of the marks were made using a technique known as *decalcomania*. You spread ink or paint on a surface, then print off that surface, which results in chaotic, organic, blotty shapes. The Surrealist artist Oscar Domínguez invented this technique in 1936. Max Ernst made several paintings which used decalcomania along with other techniques. One example is *Landscape with Lake and Chimeras* (ca. 1940). To the best of my knowledge, nobody has attempted a whole novel in this style before.

Two surreal collage novels by Max Ernst, *Une semaine de bonté* (“A Week of Plenty”) (1934) and *La femme 100 têtes* (“The 100 Headed Woman/The Headless Woman”) (1929) inspired me. By means of strange collaged pictures, he gives hints, which the reader must somehow make into a story. They give a sense of atmosphere, and leave you wondering, rather than telling a typical story.

There are other published works, both in the realm of literature, and coming from graphic novels or comics, which are related to mine. *The Giant’s Fence*, by Michael Jacobson (Barbarian Interior, 2006) is a novella full of symbols invented by the author. The symbols are very precisely drawn or written. His book could be held to be the yang to my yin creation. as it were, by Rosaire Appel (Press Rappel, 2010) is full of abstract graphic short stories.

Nautilus, by Andrei Molotiu (Fahrenheit, 2009), is a series of abstract comics sequences. He works with similar shapes to me. Most of his images are arranged in comics frames, and appear to be manipulated by computer. His earlier mini comics *BLOTS* (self-published, 2003) is also full of inkblot shapes, one per page, sometimes superimposed on other images such as drawings by old masters such as Degas. The science fiction novel *Golem¹⁰⁰*, by Alfred Bester (Sidgwick & Jackson, 1980) has some graphic sequences among conventional chapters. Chapter 17 includes some folded inkblot shapes (technically known as *kleksographics*), although there are words accompanying them, which is different to my intention. Some of Maurice Roche’s novels include odds and ends of graphics. A designer named Françoise Rojare made a graphic translation of parts of Maurice’s novel *Compact* (Éditions du Seuil, 1966), titled *Mnémopolis*, which was published in the review *Change #5* (1970). You can see her full translation at <http://avance.randomflux.info/Mnemopolis.pdf>.

The novels *The Goalie’s Anxiety at the Penalty Kick*, (English translation of *Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter*) by Peter Handke (English edition: Methuen, 1977) and *The Battle of Pharsalus* (English translation of *La Bataille de Pharsale*), by Claude Simon (English edition: Jonathan Cape, 1971) both have a page or two which incorporates pictogrammes among paragraphs of words. Donald Barthelme’s short stories *The Flight of Pigeons from the Palace* and *At the Tolstoy Museum* use pictures as a basis for spinning silly stories. *The Explanation* includes some large black squares. All of these are included in Barthelme’s *40 Stories* (Penguin, 1987).

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The French avant-garde group known as the Lettristes (in English "Lettrists" or "Letterists") invented the *hypergraphic novel*: a novel which uses letters, symbols and images. Isidore Isou, Gabriel Pomerand, Maurice Lemaître, Roland Sabatier and Anne-Catherine Caron all wrote hypergraphic novels, often using pictures as rebuses, to spell out French words. Alain Satié's *Écrit en prose* (PSI, 1971) is the most open-ended, and closest in idea to my own.

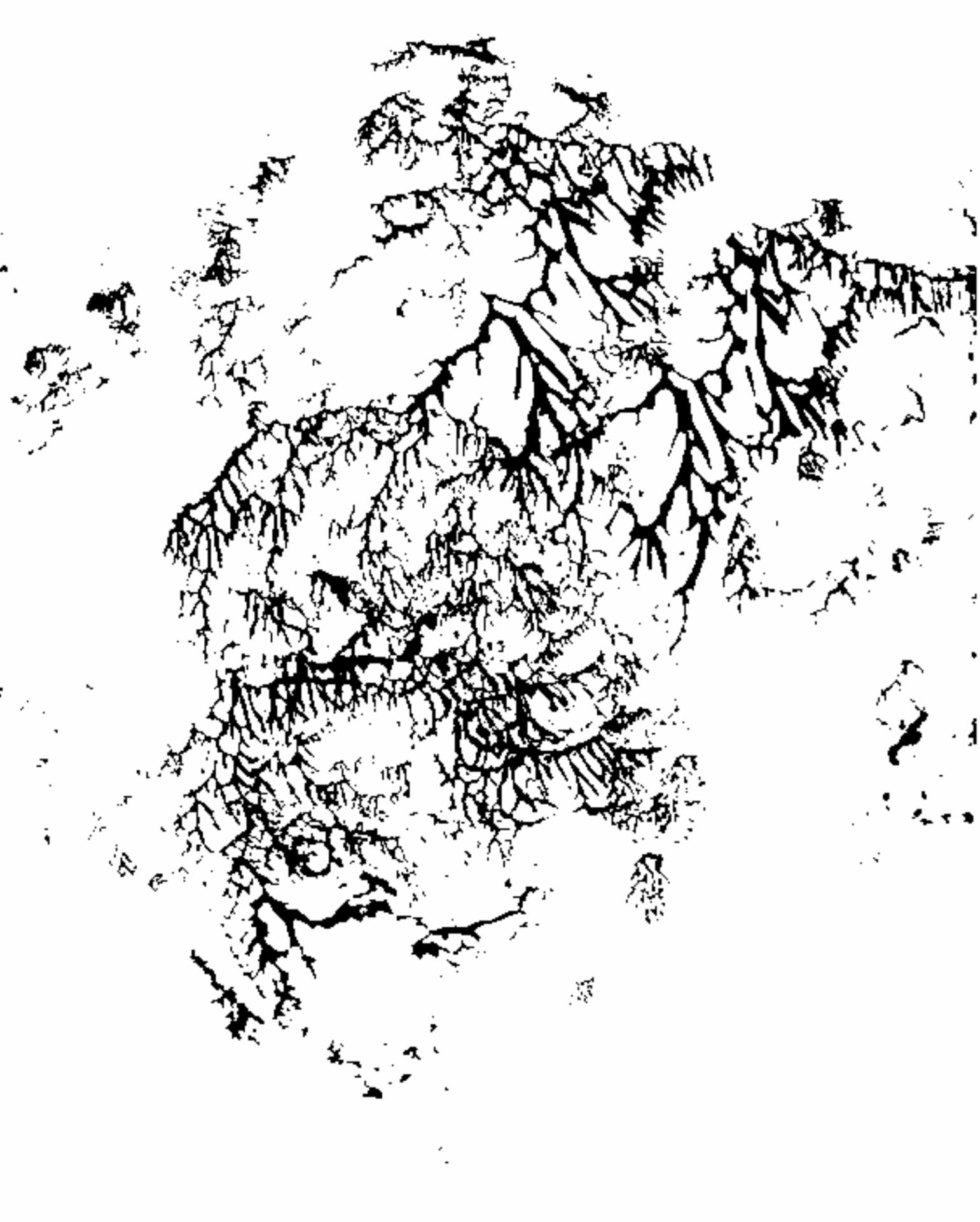
The poet and artist Henri Michaux created 4 works containing several pages of hand-drawn symbols: *Mouvements* ("Movements", 1951), *Par la voie des rythmes* ("By Way of Rhythms", Fata Morgana, 1974), *Saisir* ("Seizure", Fata Morgana, 1979) and *Par des traits* ("Through Lines", Fata Morgana, 1984). The last 3 are included in his *Œuvres complètes, volume III* (Gallimard, 2004), while *Mouvements* is in *volume II* (Gallimard, 2001). His books are closer to Jacobson's *The Giant's Fence* than to *100 Scenes*. However, Michaux also painted many abstract inkblot paintings, which are much closer to my style.

The first edition of Laurence Sterne's classic experimental novel *Tristram Shandy* (Volume 3, 1761) included a single page of an abstract marbling design (examples can be seen at http://www.tristramshandyweb.it/sezioni/sterne/biography/sterne_portraits/marblepage_gallery/index.htm). This could be interpreted to represent Tristram's state of mind. Victor Hugo used to have fun with inkblots, which he would use as the starting point for illustrations. As far as I am aware, he didn't ever use these in his fiction. Inksplash shapes are also often used for decoration in books and magazines published in China, Japan and Korea. Please don't confuse my open-ended abstract shapes with the inkblots used in the Rorschach psychological test. The Rorschach inkblots are a small, copyrighted set, which have been tested on thousands of people as analytical tools. Mine are intended to stimulate the imagination of healthy people, for pleasure.

100 Scenes touches upon two emerging areas: *abstract comics* (known in French as *bandes dessinées abstraites*, or *bds abstraites*) and *asemic writing*. These areas transcend languages, and offer the possibility of inter-cultural communication without words.









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