This is the first full-length study in English of Michel Leiris’s work. Frequently cited as a central figure in contemporary French culture, Leiris was an outstanding writer whose double career as ethnographer and creative writer places him at important points of intersection within French cultural history. Seán Hand explores Leiris’s active participation in some of the most striking intellectual and artistic movements of the twentieth century: surrealism in the twenties, ethnography in the thirties and existentialism in the forties. Hand locates his writing in these different contexts in relation to the major artistic, political and philosophical concepts of the period. He goes on to argue that Leiris’s multi-volume autobiography La Règle du jeu stands as the model form of self-enquiry in the twentieth century. More broadly, Hand explores Leiris’s continuing obsession with the notion of ‘presence’. Informed by recent critical theories, Hand offers a multi-disciplinary approach to this intriguing writer.

Seán Hand is Professor of French and Head of the School of Languages at Oxford Brookes University. He is editor of The Levinas Reader and Facing the Other: the Ethics of Emmanuel Levinas. He has published on Derrida, psychoanalysis and contemporary French writing.
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MICHEL LEIRIS

Writing the Self

SEÁN HAND

Oxford Brookes University
For Maoliosa and Dominic
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Acknowledgements

This book has been a long time in the making, and I am grateful to a great many people and institutions. The School of Languages at Oxford Brookes University, the Department of Language Studies at London Guildhall University, and the Department of European Languages at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth, all encouraged my work at different stages. I have relied a great deal on the facilities of the Taylor Institution library at the University of Oxford. I have benefited from the opportunity to discuss related ideas at the universities of Kent, London, Manchester, Oxford, Paris VII and Reading. Early versions of certain sections have previously appeared in the journals *Aura*, *Paragraph* and *Romance Studies*, and in the edited volume *L’Autre et le sacré* (L’Harmattan). I am grateful to editors and publishers for permission to incorporate material in modified form. For special advice, I am indebted to Dr Vivienne Suvini-Hand. Dr Rima Dapous acted throughout as an expert and encouraging research assistant, and Helena Garnett assisted with indexing. I wish to thank everyone at Cambridge University Press, and especially the commissioning editors Dr Linda Bree and Dr Katharina Brett for unusual forbearance, the editor Rachel De Wachter for guiding the book through production, and Susan Beer for her gentle yet scrupulous copy-editing. Both Professor Malcolm Bowie and Professor Michael Sheringham, as successive General Editors of the series, were generous with their time and encouraging with their advice. Above all, this book is for Maolíosa, who has endured each stage of its intermittent formation, and for Dominic, whose continuing delight in language puts the exercise of reading Leiris into joyful perspective. They are the rule and the game of my work, the law and the love of my life.
### Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Aurora</td>
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<tr>
<td>AF</td>
<td>L’Afrique fantôme</td>
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<td>AH</td>
<td>L’Age d’homme</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bi</td>
<td>Biffures</td>
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<tr>
<td>Br</td>
<td>Brisées</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CE</td>
<td>Cinq Études d’ethnologie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FB</td>
<td>Frêle Bruit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fi</td>
<td>Fibrilles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fo</td>
<td>Fourbis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GFN</td>
<td>Grande fuite de neige</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>Journal, 1922–1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LS</td>
<td>La Langue secrète des Dogons de Sanga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LT</td>
<td>Langage langage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSM</td>
<td>Mots sans mémoire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>Nuits sans nuit et quelques jours sans jour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>Opératiques</td>
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<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>La Possession et ses aspects théâtraux chez les Éthiopiens de Gondar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>‘Le Sacré dans la vie quotidienne’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Z</td>
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