

Interstitial Listening: Hearing “Voices”
in the Scene of Translation

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ABSTRACT

Interstitial Listening: Hearing “Voices” in the Scene of Translation

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This thesis sets out from a partial translation of Willy Apollon’s 1976 book, *Le vaudou: un espace pour les “voix.”* Apollon is a psychoanalyst from Haiti who has been developing the psychoanalytic treatment of psychosis in Quebec since 1981. In addition to the translation, it offers a theoretical reflection on translating that derives from concepts of voice and writing developed in Apollon’s book, which are then brought into relation with Henri Meschonnic’s notion of hearing and Pier-Pascale Boulanger’s notion of an “*érotique du traduire*.” The theoretical section threads a concept of the drive through the work of these three theorists to arrive at a perspective on translation that situates it in alignment with Apollon’s theory of the voice by way of Boulanger’s notion of the erotic. Meschonnic’s demand that the translator hear “the poem”—an inherent quality in a text that indicates the presence of the subject—is considered alongside Apollon’s demand that the “voice” be heard in a text. Finally, with the intention of incorporating Apollon’s concept of voice into a form of writing that reflects key ideas in the book, a research creation section takes the form of associative, intratextual writing that responds to the experience of translating *Le vaudou: un espace pour les “voix,”* while also working from the concept of voice theorized by Apollon, as well as concepts and methods taken from psychoanalysis that reflect Apollon’s later work in the field.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Willy Apollon is a Haitian psychoanalyst who has been engaged in developing psychoanalytic theory for the treatment of psychotics in Quebec City since 1981. His contributions consist of writing, teaching, and the foundation of a center for the psychoanalytic treatment of psychotics. His first book, *Le vaudou: un espace pour les "voix"* (henceforth *Le vaudou*), was published in 1976 by Éditions Galilée. It began as a doctoral dissertation in philosophy written under the direction of Gilles Deleuze at University of Paris 8.

The idea for this thesis originates in the translation of a chapter of *Le vaudou* done in collaboration with a colleague, with the intention of making the book accessible to anglophones who are interested in Apollon's work. We initiated the process without prior analysis of how to proceed, and began by translating pages, sharing them for revision, and occasionally asking for input from others who are familiar with the text. The translation seemed to result in a slightly flattened effect, or perhaps a flattened affect, as a result of the passage from French to contemporary North American English (one of the translators being from the U.S., the other from Canada). Though it is difficult to assess such impressions, which may be imbued with personal experience, the impression of "flattening" poses an interesting problem concerning how such effects are created and from what level of a text they arise. The work was unexpectedly difficult, and it raised issues that went unresolved.

This thesis examines the process of translating another section of *Le vaudou* that treats the same themes, the key concepts being voice and writing. It is an attempt to develop a theory of translation that is informed by the content of the work being translated. The book addresses the relation of oral and written culture and poses difficult questions concerning how to undertake writing that "makes space" for an oral dimension. It is written with a freedom that seems

characteristic of its period and the “place” of its writing—Paris by way of Haiti in the 1970’s. Positioned between theory, psychoanalysis, ethnography, and history, *Le vaudou* is written with a certain poetic flair and confidence that is rare today; influences are evident but there are few citations, and a reader who is saturated in the discourse of the period is implied. The press Éditions Galilée was founded in 1971 for the publication of texts concerned with philosophy, literature, and art. They describe their publishing remit as follows:

Aux interrogations de la pensée s’associent les questions du texte, de la langue, des pratiques de l’art, la permanente recherche de l’acuité pour ce qui met les enjeux de l’homme et du monde en question, ou comme l’aurait dit Derrida : *en effets*. (Éditions Galilée, n.d.)

This description suggests the context of Apollon’s work, following in the wake of deconstruction, concerned with the linguistic turn in French theory, and taking these as an approach to the place of the human being.

Although *Le vaudou* was written before Apollon was a psychoanalyst, one can also trace Freudian and Lacanian inflections through its conceptual development. Of these, the theory of the drive is the most important in *Le vaudou*, and it is therefore the most elaborated in the theoretical section of the thesis. In this complex context, *Le vaudou* attempts to situate itself against the potentially sterilizing effects of writing, understood as a support for a colonizing project of Occidental metaphysics. From this difficulty, the question of how to translate in accordance with the ethos of the book is raised.

Following a Literature Review, this thesis is comprised of three main elements: a theoretical consideration of concepts at issue in Apollon’s *Le vaudou* and how these bear upon

translation; a translation of the Introduction and Chapter 1 of Apollon's book; a creative response that derives both from the work of translating the text and from concepts elaborated by Apollon.

The **theoretical** section examines some of the ideas in *Le vaudou* and brings them into relation with ideas coming from translation studies for the purpose of considering translation within the perimeters of Apollon's thought. The **translation** is undertaken with the intention of rendering the concepts of voice and writing that traverse the text. The **research creation** returns to the concepts in Apollon's text and develops a mode of writing that combines creative and theoretical elements in a response that emerges from the work of translating.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

As there is not a preexisting model for this thesis, the literature review is assembled from related issues in translation studies, and the result is something of a bricolage. The main section of the review addresses work on the intersection between psychoanalysis and translation because psychoanalysis is the field through which I encountered Apollon's work, and it is the context within which I first read and discussed *Le vaudou*. Work on research creation in translation is included to give an idea of different types of experimentation and the justification for it. Because voice is a central concept in *Le vaudou*, and the point of departure for a theoretical approach to translation, some theories of voice from within the field of translation are also included.

i) Psychoanalysis and Translation

Almost every approach to connections between psychoanalysis and translation begins by looking at Sigmund Freud's own writings. Patrick Mahony gives a thorough account of Freud's references to translation, and to the "translational" instances in the theory and practice of Freud's clinic. He works from the conviction that a better understanding of Freud's concept of translation would be invaluable for psychoanalysts, and conversely that Freud is "one of the great thinkers

and innovators in the domain of translation” (Mahony 1982, 63). Concerning the question of origins, what is important here is to note that not only are symptoms and interpretations, translations, and dreams intersemiotic translations, but also that “*the very movement of material in the psychic apparatus as such is understood as translation* [italics added]” (Mahony 1982, 64). Mahony draws out the way in which the diverse phenomena of neurosis insist, against repression, toward becoming conscious particularly via the means of language. He goes so far as to propose that the word translation, in lieu of interpretation, would better elucidate the various forms of “carrying over” involved in the psychoanalytic situation. What we can take from this is that translation in a Freudian sense does not only mean the carrying over from one semiotic system to another but that something unconscious enters a semiotic system to become legible to consciousness, and that entry is itself translation.

Lewis Kirshner writes about the relationship between the translational metaphor and interpretation in the development of psychoanalysis and whether translation as a metaphor has outlived its usefulness. This raises a question about whether metaphor is what is at issue. Mahony does not claim that translation is a metaphor for the intersemiotic transformation of a dream image into language. It is translation. Kirshner seems to attribute to the practitioners of “the translational metaphor” precisely the obsession with origins that writers on this topic, Kirshner included all resist. In this case, the obsession with origins pertains to the idea that there is a key event in the past that must be excavated, and that this process can effect a cure. This idea that the disclosure of a key event was a goal of psychoanalysis was current in the early stages of the treatment of hysteria. Over time there have been shifts with respect to the unearthing and interpretation of a nodal event. While Kirshner makes persuasive arguments against therapeutic strategies that overemphasize interpretation, his argument against the translational metaphor in

psychoanalysis seems to reflect an idea of translation that is also dated. Interpretation has become a limited means of understanding translation as well as psychoanalysis. Where translation and psychoanalysis intersect is through a reliance on the transformative capacities of language itself. There is a moment when Kirshner deploys an account from one of Jacques Lacan's analysands to support his point about translation in psychoanalytic practice:

In the session she recounts in the video, Ms. Hommel reports that she regularly awoke from dreaming at five a.m., the hour when the Gestapo had come to her house. Lacan at a certain moment responded to the repeated term "Gestapo" with a gesture, a caress on Ms. Hommel's cheek – a "geste à peau" that produced (she reports in the video) a transformative effect. His act was apparently a response to the signifiers that in French sound the same (Gestapo and geste à peau). (Kirshner 2015, 74)

I would argue that this instance subverts Kirshner's view that the translational metaphor is not appropriate to what happens in a cure. Here we find both interlinguistic translation and intersemiotic translation working to effect retroaction, or *Nachträglichkeit*, which Andrew Benjamin proposes below as a psychoanalytic concept with which we might rethink the problem of origins in translation.

Andrew Benjamin asks the question, "What has come to be translated?" To complicate the sense in which origin is construed in translation, he proposes the psychoanalytic term *Nachträglichkeit*, *après coup* in French, and in English, retroaction, or sometimes the awkward neologism, afterwardsness. *Nachträglichkeit*, in psychoanalytic theory, describes the way in which an event takes on meaning through interpretations that occur after the time of the event. So, a "primal scene" may be inscribed years later, by another event in the life of the child who witnessed it. It is only with the later inscription that the scene becomes "the cause" of a

symptom. The relevance of this concept to translation is that it implies an “origin” that only becomes original through retroaction. Benjamin suggests that, instead of the habitual thinking of origin as a unity that differentiates, we think what he calls a differential ontology, a reversal whereby a unity is imposed on an idea at intervals that are necessary for the development of thought but understood not to comprise a unified, original state. From this perspective, a translation is a stabilizing iteration of something that is inherently open to contingency.

Ginette Michaud examines varied affective responses to the practice of translation. Looking at statements on translation by Jean Laplanche and Jean Bertrand Pontalis, two of the most important French translators of Freud, she highlights that Laplanche uses metaphors of battle while Pontalis uses metaphors of medicine and mourning. She questions the despair and sadism that she discerns in their views of translation, particularly the oscillation between bellicosity in Laplanche and melancholic depression in Pontalis. She proposes that a fantasy of origin motivates the pathos described by Pontalis.

À entendre les accents plaintifs qui caractérisent la position de Pontalis sur la traduction, on peut en effet se demander si cette « mélancolie du langage » ne serait pas une manière d'entretenir encore, contre l'expérience analytique, une illusion quant à la langue originale/originelle tenue pour une et intacte, non divisée, non entamée par l'Autre.

(Michaud 2007, 23)

For her, the affective states reported by Laplanche and Pontalis are evidence of a kind of straying from a path offered by psychoanalysis; in this she is consistent with Andrew Benjamin and Dennis Porter in proposing that a sense of impossibility is not a necessary response to the loss of a fantasized wholeness.

Lawrence Venuti writes on the necessity of accepting a properly psychoanalytic concept of the unconscious for those interested in examining the unconscious processes of the translator. “Of course, psychoanalysis offers an explanation for the refusal to accept key assumptions like the existence and operation of the unconscious: the resistance to analysis is a form of repression” (Venuti 2013, 56). Venuti situates the translator as a subject caught between Lacan’s “name of the father” and the “mother tongue” and in this triangle he discerns the cause of some of the affects that infuse the task of the translator. A translation, Venuti writes, is a translator’s dream scene where the translator’s desire is implicated.

Anne Quinney examines transference in translation through her own experience of translating a text by Jean-Bertrand Pontalis. She maintains that any theory of translation must consider the effects of ideology, repression, and authority, and that psychoanalysis is key to examining these aspects of the work. She calls for an engagement with Freud’s theory of the drives and to closer attention to the desire of the translator. Going beyond the question of whether translation is a metaphor or an actual praxis, she examines an instance of lapsus in the form of an error in her work, and how it exposes an instance of transference with Pontalis. From this she draws conclusions about her relationship with her own father. By closely examining the role of desire in her own endeavor she proposes that psychoanalysis might expose some of the ways social forces manifest in individual expression. For a translator this means culture plays its role but through the singular form of an individual. Effects of the culture on a translation should be examined at multiple levels and the unconscious desires of the translator can be one of them.

Pier-Pascale Boulanger writes that it is no longer sufficient to conjoin translation and psychoanalysis, or to trace their many parallels, “il faut introduire l’un dans l’autre” (2009, 735). Furthermore, she notes the lack of attention to the later Lacan in the work of those seeking to

bring the two fields into relation. The later Lacan is concerned with language that seems to ooze or fall out of the signifying system. She points to the importance of “Lalangue,” the word Lacan gave to language as spoken by a toddler, an acoustic dimension of speech in which one cannot discern grammar with all of its social implications. The scene Boulanger proposes for this entry of psychoanalysis into translation is erotic: the moments where the materiality of the signifier have their effects on the body of the translator via traces of an acoustic resonance in writing.

La sensibilité signifiante du sujet traduisant correspond à sa capacité de faire sens par les sens de son corps, c’est-à-dire grâce à sa faculté d’éprouver des sensations physiques, notamment à la lecture d’un texte. Cette sensibilité doit passer par la sensibilisation du corps traduisant, donc nécessairement physique, à commencer par l’oreille. (Boulanger 2009, 746)

Boulanger threads together the work of François Peraldi and Henri Meschonnic to articulate the importance of a translational practice that would be attuned to what is in excess of, or outside of meaning. The translator must develop a deeper sense of listening, against what she names otocensure. Otocensure, the censorship of the ear and of the self (through the homophone oto/auto), is the way repression responds to the play of the drives between the text and the body of the translator. She invokes what Peraldi called the “erotic body” (the body as it is inscribed by the drives) as a potential instrument of receptivity to be developed by the translator who means to translate not only the meaning of a text but, as Meschonnic calls for, what a text *does* via its various para-signifying actions.

Daniel Koren also brings Meschonnic into his understanding of what translation might mean for psychoanalysis. He poses the problem of the relationship from the side of the analyst and finds that the “translational metaphor” is not exactly wrong, but inexact. In his view, what an

analyst does, or ought to do, is bring about a shift of registers. Koren stresses that the unconscious cannot be simply viewed as having a content that can be revealed in the mode of language. Different modes of representation are involved. There are image-representations and language-representations but there are also limits to both, a beyond which cannot be accessed, something must be constructed from this void, and it cannot be interpreted or assigned a meaning. Like Boulanger, Koren points to the necessity of attending to what is beyond or outside of meaning. Koren calls for an engagement derived from Lacan's ethics which concern desire, the translator's desire in this case. He reads the analyst as a translator in the mode of Meschonnic, in search of a "personal prosody" and employing what he calls an "effort of poeticity." The analyst's effort is essentially poetic and concerned with resonance, finding its reflection in Meschonnic's demand that attention be given to what language does, not just what it says.

ii) Voice and Translation

Cecilia Alvstad and Alexandra Assis Rosa have proposed a theory of voice as it appears in retranslation. Retranslation enables an analysis of translational choice and style as alterations occur through different translations of the same source. This functions to foreground traces of the translator's discursive presence in a text. Beginning with the premise that the voice (or voices) of the translator is added to the voice (or voices) of the author, they track a multiplication of voices. Intertextual voices might be those whereby narrator and character are redoubled yet differentiated by the cultural or stylistic voice of the translators. Extratextual voices concern introduction, commentary, footnotes, and the like as instances where a translator's voice might appear in a direct form, rather than in the guise of the original author's voice. Intratextual voices include quotations as an instance of the appearance of voice, as well as the translations of

quotations that are likely to be from translated sources produced prior to the text being analyzed. Other voices are contextual. These are difficult to trace voices found in the social networks that condition the production of the text: publisher, editor, audience, etc. These can also include the contextual voices of the source text and any translations of it. The result of these efforts to trace every iteration of voice is a theory that suggests an assiduous researcher might track the multiplying forces involved in the creation, dissemination, translation, and retranslation of a text and thereby create a taxonomy of voices that could become a stable point of reference for further research.

Alvstad and Assis Rosa have conceived of a multiplicity of voices found in an expanded definition of text that accounts for numerous factors that go into the making of a translation. While they have expanded the terrain of the text, and thereby increased the quantity of factors that they identify as voice, the resulting concept of voice is somewhat restricted relative to examinations of it elsewhere. Henri Meschonnic offers a concept of voice that would not be constrained to the text, or to speech, or to sound. For him, voice, an attribute of orality, makes and is made by a subject. “Towards a definition of the voice, which is no longer physiological or psychological but cultural, historical, and poetic, one passes from the duality oral/written to a triple distribution: the written, the spoken, the oral” (Meschonnic 2021, 198). Meschonnic determines orality to be a subjectivizing process within which voice is a force in a co-constitutive relation to a subject. The translator’s subjectivity might be activated by an encounter with the text, and this requires an alert form of listening to the written—beyond a sense of meaning that derives from words—which falls on one side of the binary instated by the sign. This listening involves the body, it means not listening for sound, or for speech, but for the unique rhythm of the subject as it appears in language. Meschonnic rejects the notion of the

voice as an instrument, and he rejects the placement of voice on the side of nature, with speech and writing on the side of culture. It might be said that voice for Meschonnic is in a continual process of circulation between various poles of determination. Voice is active, and he emphasizes that the translator should attend more to what it does than to what it says.

Like Meschonnic, Clive Scott calls for more attention to the paralinguistic aspect of voice. However, he *affirms* the psychological and physiological attributes of voice. For Scott the task of the translator is to return the text to its vocal potentiality. He asks for translations that are concerned with something more than representation and message, but his notion of voice is somewhat less mysterious than Meschonnic's. His psycho-physiological voice is a voice that is concerned with the physiological idiosyncrasies and the expressive capacities of voice, as they appear in writing. He looks to Julia Kristeva's theory of geno-text and pheno-text—pre-systemic and post systemic phases of utterance—to clarify the existence of paralinguistic elements of the written. As a translational strategy he proposes using punctuation to return writing to its acoustic traces and “psycho-physiological” potential. In the translation of a poem for instance, the colon might express the withheld or the “about-to-be-given of erotic experience” (Scott 2010, 57). Suspension points let the poem “fall into the hands of the reader” (Scott, 2010, 8). And the dash “signals the labyrinth of the voice” (Scott 2010, 8). He prescribes a reading that would be an inhabitation rather than an interpretation of the text as a starting point whereby a translator might translate the “music of the unspoken written” (Scott 2010, 59), as well as the “vocality of the spoken written” (Scott 2010, 59). In this way the translator might get closer to exposing the way in which text is constructed by the voice.

iii) Research Creation

Fabio Regattin traces the history of translation studies through several moments of “expansion”, or revision of the boundaries around what can be considered a translation and what sort of elements, phenomena, activities, and results can be said to be a part of this apparently straightforward practice. He starts with Gideon Toury’s contribution, which insists variables across culture and changes over time must be considered as attributes of any translation, then he turns to André Lefevere, who introduces the terms rewriting and refraction as terms for a translational activity that is included in a vast network of writing and publishing practices, including historicizing, anthologizing, and criticism. Katherine Reiss and Hans J. Vermeer broaden the social understanding of translation by focusing on the translator (Reiss) or the intended audience (Vermeer). Sherry Simon writes on the complexities of bilingual culture like Montréal and finds practices that deviate from the norms of translation. Maria Tymoczko looks to “de-Westernize” translation processes and products and finds that cultures throughout the world have words and concepts that diverge widely from what in the West is called translation.

Regattin draws an image of a discipline that necessarily and inevitably expands its domains and definitions. He cites Edwin Gentzler, who would name this breakdown of boundaries “post-translation studies,” which could mean a variety of things such as: the study of what happens after a translation, a new discipline that replaces translation studies, or perhaps an approach that echoes post-modernism as it unfolded in literature. Gentzler finds similarities between what he would call post-translation studies and pre-translation studies, meaning that translation studies as a discipline came into being at a historical moment when its definition was unusually narrow. So, the impression of a small field of operations that is inexorably expanding is deceptive. Translation history shows a much wider range of ideas and practices than those

included in the initial formation of translation studies as a discipline proper to the university. It might be said that the expanding and breaking down of boundaries is also a return to form, or maybe a return to formlessness. In conclusion, Regattin writes, “La possibilité d’un macro-domaine d’études qui comprendrait la traductologie, les études sur l’adaptation, la sémiotique est devant nous: il faut la cueillir” (Regattin 2024, 113).

Yves Citton has written “de ce qu’il est désormais convenu d’appeler, en France, la ‘recherche-création’” (Citton 2024, 1). While his piece does not address translation studies it does justify modes of research that would work toward the expansion that Regattin points to above. In response to critiques of “recherche-création” that claim such a practice tends toward a diminution of both art and science, Citton examines three theses produced by these methods and filed at universities in France. These are projects that combine research of a technical nature, or empirical experimentation, with literary or artistic productions. Citton attempts to outline the minimal requirements of such work as follows: “une pédagogie de l’humilité, un vertige sublime d’agentivité diffractée, un formalisme en émergence, un modèle d’autonomie pragmatique visant à l’écোসoutenabilité” (2024). At several points in his piece, he suggests that there is something inherent to this process that addresses itself to impending ecological disaster. Leaving aside the question of whether this disaster is caused by a lack of creative thinking or an entrenched economic system, it does seem like a lot to expect from these experiments. That said, Citton does give a thorough description of processes that are rigorous, inventive, offer an aesthetic experience, and that result in works that do not have a pre-existing model. In this sense he gives a robust defense of the introduction of this type of procedure into the university.

Lily Robert-Foley has written on what she terms “experimental translation.” She compiles a long, but non-exhaustive, list of practices and people that engage experimentation in

translation and defines these as practices that “work against the norms” of translation. She is a member of a collective called Oulitranspo, a group of translators that take inspiration from the experimental literary movement Oulipo. Like Citton, Robert-Foley believes that experimentation can be a method of undermining dominant paradigms with a view to justice. She describes how, over time, it has been necessary to adjust the group’s assessments of what norms are and how they function. For example, when translating a work from a person or culture that has little representation in the target language, she suggests a “faithful” translation can do more to subvert power structures than an approach that positions any given published text in the position of authority. That is, consideration of provenance, culture, content, etc. must go into any effort to enact social justice in the field of translation, experimental or otherwise. Like Regattin, she acknowledges that what are considered norms in Western culture are not the same globally, so that even the desire to disrupt norms can potentially work from assumptions grounded in a hegemonic discourse. She offers a thoughtful assessment of her goals and activities that might be a starting point for thinking about how to experiment in translation without working from unexamined assumptions about power dynamics.

In *The Experimental Translator*, Douglas Robinson offers an appreciative response to Robert-Foley’s article. He continues her line of thinking, not on the side of the political ramifications of experimentation, but toward an expansion, or deepening, of some of the formal ideas she enumerates. The book is a series of what he calls provocations that point to possible experiments in translation. He makes free use of concepts from outside of the discipline borrowing from Giorgio Agamben, Guy Debord, Donna Haraway, and terms in professional sports, among other sources. He suggests strategies that a translator might use, such as writing oneself as character into a novel as one translates it, translating as a cyborg, or claiming a

translation is a pseudo translation in order to confuse the binary between writer and translator. He calls upon Fernando Pessoa's concept of the heteronym (rather than a pseudonym a fully developed character) to suggest that a translator might position herself as a heteronym for an author or even take an author as her own heteronym. Another model for experimentation he proposes is Vladimir Nabokov's novel *Pale Fire*, in which a form of editorial commentary runs amok over the material being edited. What the book conveys above all is the importance of playfulness and a kind of theoretical audacity that would allow a translator to engage their work as a process of discovery unbound from pragmatic concerns.

Here, I'd like to point out some ideas that are of value for this thesis. Douglas Robinson proposes that an experimental translation might make use of Fernando Pessoa's notion of the heteronym: a character in the name of whom he writes as opposed to a simple pseudonym. I like the idea of bringing this literary device into correspondence with psychoanalysis because in psychoanalytic theory the I is never stable—one might say the ego itself is a heteronym, an imagined character in the name of whom actions are taken. Cecilia Alvstad and Assis Rosa find a multiplication of voices in translated texts that can be traced and quantified. To bring their thinking into correspondence with Apollon's concept of voice, one might identify the multiplying potential of voice without attempting to enumerate each instance of its appearance. Boulanger explicates modes of reading and listening for the excess that inheres in a text, ways of listening that echo the listening of the psychoanalytic situation; Citton identifies an emergent formalism corresponds to the idea of finding the translational approach from within the text being translated; Robert-Foley draws attention to the way norms are not static but must be reconsidered in each case of translation; Koren calls for attention to the ethics of desire.

3. THEORETICAL REFLECTION

As mentioned above, *Le vaudou* is an interdisciplinary work that engages with philosophy, history, ethnography, politics, and psychoanalysis. In addition to drawing out the concepts of voice and writing in the book, because it is the area in which I have done the most research, I focus on psychoanalytic aspects of his theories with the intention of drawing out implications for a translation of his text.

In the introduction to her translation of Henri Meschonnic's *Ethics and Politics of Translating*, Pier-Pascale Boulanger indicates that her approach to the translation is in accord with Meschonnic's thinking, using his concepts as a guide. "I decided to apply Meschonnic's theory of translating to translating Meschonnic's theory. This decision implied doing to English what he did to French, resisting conventional forms in the translation as he does in his writing" (Boulanger in Meschonnic 2011, 30). While Apollon does not theorize translation as Meschonnic does, it is possible to identify an ethics in Boulanger's approach that in some sense parallels a psychoanalytic ethics, one that takes the singularity of each subject as the narrow pathway that must be followed in any effort to "decode" the signifiers of her speech. This work will attempt to follow the threads of key concepts in *Le vaudou*, starting with writing and the voice, to see how these might inform our thinking about the relationship between psychoanalysis and translation, as well as how they might inform a creative response to the work of translating Apollon's text.

The analysis here relies on the two sections of *Le vaudou* that explicate his concepts of *writing* and the *voice*. These are sections of the book that I have translated, one in this thesis and another for publication in *Penumbr(a)*; they are also the sections that offer the most toward reflections on the work of translation and compelling connections to Apollon's later interventions into the field of psychoanalysis. I start by tracing the conflict between voice and writing that

structures the translated section of *Le vaudou* included here, I then engage with the thought of Henri Meschonnic to draw upon ideas from the field of translation theory in an effort to find a bridge to the conceptual frame of Apollon's thought. Looking for a connection between Apollon and Meschonnic's different critiques of the binary inherent in writing on the sign, I enlist Boulanger's notion of an "erotics of translation," and I elaborate her call for an engagement with the body that might be read either through Meschonnic, as a figure of eros, or through Apollon, as a figure of the drive. To resolve the question of how to conceive of writing and translation within the demands of Apollon's text, it is the figure of the drive that comes to cross the divide between the corporeal and the inorganic by way of bodily inscriptions which, for Apollon, trace the erotic pathways where the body and text might be commingled.

i) Writing

"That writing gives voice to nothing" is a problem that circulates through *Le Vaudou: un espace pour les "voix."* In a certain sense, the positing of this irresolvable problem as the opening gesture of the book is an effort to radically unground the act of writing even while engaging in it.

Writing, Apollon writes in *Le vaudou*, "is above all Occidentality" (1976, 19). Seen as a tool for the maintenance of western metaphysics, writing is the foundation for an organization of life and culture that imports a "theological discourse" into whatever it takes up (Apollon 1976, 19). The text becomes the site of an absent authority and it "invites a certain relation to truth and a certain relation to capital or the capitalist mode of production with which Vodou is in constant rupture" (Apollon 1976, 29). Writing is the support from which the notion of God derives: "the locus of this transmission has the objective of theological discourse" (Apollon 1976 19). Subsequent to its religious function, the notion of God continues to take many forms in the

Occident: “civilization, history, the party, the common good, the law, reason, logic, etc.”

(Apollon 1976, 28) Thus, an “elsewhere” and an “Other” are instantiated through writing, and everything in the culture will in some sense refer to an absolute that is a-historical and immaterial. Writing installs a metaphysics that takes precedence over life. Writing conserves discourse, which results in the repetition of the same. “Conservation not only guarantees the constitution of a truth, it guarantees a social order” (Apollon 1976, 23). By conserving, repeating, and representing discourse, writing reproduces civilization. It instills norms, introduces calculation, and facilitates domination through knowledge. Writing is the precondition for ideology. “That which is transmitted by conservation is not directly ideology but, more insidiously, the support and conditions for the production of ideology” (Apollon 1976, 24). As the supposed site of the truth, writing serves a political function: to legitimate power. “Writing represents speech. This representation is constituted as truth. ...from truth to divinity. But what is produced by this metaphysical machinery is a hidden absolute.” (Apollon 1976, 27). Writing inscribes the Law and demands cohesion. Intellectuals and technocrats make up a superior caste that supports itself on this theological-juridical enterprise. Apollon calls writing “the Empire of the sign,” where oral cultures are subjected to domination and violence through the invasion of writing, even to the point of genocide (1976, 28). Where there are no texts in a culture “the anthropologist faced with other cultures has gone in search of texts. He has created them.” (Apollon 1976, 33)

Why are the concepts of voice and writing co-constituted in *Le vaudou*? Isn’t voice something that precedes writing? Apollon insists, “It’s in relation to writing that the concept of voice is first produced here.” (Apollon 1976, 12) Apollon specifies that his concept of voice derives from the crisis of possession in the Vodou ceremony where, “An other voice—simply the

voice— inhabits the faithful” (1976, 2). Vodou is to be conceived in exclusion from writing; what does that mean and why does it need to be specified? For Apollon, orality is a different order of culture, time, and memory than that of writing, which founds, conserves, and reproduces the order of the Occident. We might understand this founding by exclusion in historical terms. Vodou is a historically recent phenomenon that coincides with, and appears in defiance of, colonial extraction and slavery where writing serves the organization of the system while also reproducing Occidental culture, with its image of the human from which the enslaved are excluded. The orality of Haitian culture is not a “naturally” occurring evolution of a culture that simply had no need of writing, but rather an admixture of many cultures whose symbolic supports were methodically stripped away such that Vodou might be considered as something that surges abruptly from its specific coordinates, rather than evolving through processes of preservation and reiteration. Hence, it appears “in exclusion from” writing, “literally” excluded from the concept of the human that was/is operative in Occidental culture and cast into “animality.” “A definition of the human being is thus produced: a reasoning animal, emphasis on reason, that reduces whatever resists it to animality, and thus to demonization and exclusion” (Apollon 1976, 38). Thus, the orality that dominates in Vodou is not to be subsumed in any history that imagines speech, language, and writing as stages of human development with contingently different pathways.

In *Le vaudou*, writing is a machine for the production of individual citizens under the law, through a process that Apollon identifies as subjectivation. Writing produces the individual, “As if the text produced the subject for the sole purpose of illuminating him!” (Apollon 1976, 30). This subject is individualized, counted, and brought into the order of capitalism, where his drives are consumed in the pursuit of surplus value and his desire is misappropriated and directed

toward an image of “the narcissistic illusion of the paranoid ego, and the pursuit of objects created for him by capitalism” (Apollon 1976, 44). The diversion of the drive and of desire is not only to provide energy and material for the operations of capital, but to dissipate the revolutionary potential of the drive, to “forestall history by short-circuiting the strangeness of the drive at the very place of its condition of possibility” (Apollon 1976, 37). Writing smuggles the law into its operations in a process that will “completely orient the idea of the subject of rights and duties, and of citizen as proprietor in the nationalist social formations of the Occident” (Apollon 1976, 40). And it positions the subject as one who is involved in a quasi-legal process where he must “face the test of the text” (Apollon 1976, 44). The text divides individuals according to their access to knowledge, controlling truth through classes or castes of readers. In this way it becomes a multiplier of force in the service of a “theo-logico-juridical enterprise” where “desiring production is diverted from all social investment where it might function as a revolutionary rupture or radical and irrevocable historical transmission.” (Apollon 1976, 36, 45)

ii) Voice

Apollon’s concept of voice is central to the development of this project. In *Le vaudou*, he differentiates voice from the domain of the visible, which includes writing. Voice marks the appearance of the loa, the spirit in the Vodou ritual. It is the site of an alteration in the shared time and space of the social, that which we inhabit through language. In his later, psychoanalytic, writing Apollon identifies voice as the site of an original effraction, something that disturbs the normal function of the organism and instantiates the drive, an event that unleashes the “pure mental representations” that differentiate humans from other animals (2010, 108). What is consistent through these accounts is that the effect of voice escapes, or disrupts, the account of reality that comes about through nomination. Apollon’s early work opposes voice to writing

while paradoxically making a demand that his own writing allow for the subversive operation of the voice. The centrality of voice reappears at several moments in his later work as a psychoanalyst where, for instance, voice interrupts the deployment of meaning that serves to quarantine the “pure mental representations” of the spirit (spirit here is meant in the sense of *zeitgeist* or mind). It is irreducible to speech, or language, or writing, and though he emphasizes the audible, it cannot be said that voice is simply appended to sensorial capacities. This exposition requires some understanding of the way Apollon’s concept of voice differs from notions found in translation, literary studies, and philosophy. Voice is the site of an experience that cannot be located in the time and space of the collective that has been identified by the “mother tongue.”

Of the two key concepts I explore in this section, writing and voice, writing is the more distinct. What Apollon intends by voice here is less amenable to description, for reasons that will perhaps become evident. First, this concept of voice derives from Vodou, specifically the Vodou ritual where the first sign of the arrival of the loa (spirit) is an alteration in the voice of the one who experiences the crisis of possession. Voice in the Vodou ritual is, “an alteration of the relation of the initiate to language and to his own voice” (Apollon 2022, 77). Voice appears as the first change that occurs in the Vodou ritual. In Apollon’s account, voice, Vodou, and the drive are aligned by their subversive capacities, and at times they seem to intermingle as forces, concepts, or metaphors. In *Le vaudou* the voice, the drive, and the space of Vodou are boundless, defying separation, linearity, and all the organizing processes that Apollon attributes to writing: “the enterprise of writing [...] has been unable to [...] reduce the voice, the innumerable and unspoken plurality of nomadic drives, to a role in discourse” (Apollon 2022, 79). There is a commingling of terms, evident in the passage above, wherein boundlessness allows concepts to

overlap—the voice, the plurality of nomadic drive—to the point where the voice and drive are undifferentiated. The question the book poses is how to make a space for the plurality and boundlessness of the voice in the text when writing is a system that derives from, and supports accounting and linearization, whereas voice for Apollon is a plurality that cannot be counted. It is irreducible:

The countable, the unit, is the individual. Its constitution, as we have shown, is for the purpose of control, negation, of nomadic, tribal and asocial multiplicities. The number, at once numeration and nomination — the activity of writing— is found at the center of the social act. It realizes the rationalization of the organization. (Apollon 2022, 84)

Voice is innumerable, the drives are plural, and the space of Vodou is a space wherein all the elements that comprise it cannot be divided or determined. This is perhaps the key conflict between voice and writing, that writing, as conceived here, serves subjectivation which for Apollon means the construction of individuals as private citizens whose energies, drives and desires can be diverted for use by a bourgeois, capitalist culture. This requires smothering “the innumerable of the voice” (Apollon 2022, 73), the plurality of the drive, and multiple space/time of Vodou described as follows:

That which is thus called “ceremony,” after a word taken from writing, is an ensemble of rites where dance, music, gesture, speech, the drink, the drum, and all the other symbolic elements reflect each other without it being possible to identify any one thing as determinant, not the songs, or the drums, or any of the multiple rites ...music, gestures, and dance, like drums, or speech and ritual chants, speak, in the here and now, that which remains hidden in the beyond. A plural space makes survival possible in the mode of a reprieve. (Apollon 1976, 26)

Apollon insists that we not read this conflict between voice and writing as a binary or simple opposition, and it is somewhat difficult not to. Rather than placing writing, the text, and the book, on one side of a conflict with Vodou, the voice, and the drive on the other, perhaps it helps to visualize writing as a densely constructed edifice that is full of cracks and the voice as a liquid that seeps into the cracks, softening the edifice for further degradations.

One initially perceives voice here as a kind of outline of negative space through which we can begin to discern a figure that *might* become familiar. Voice is “the unthought of discourse” (Apollon 1976, 12). It is “untraceable,” not taken up “in dimension,” (Apollon 1976, 2, 12) and not identifiable in language (Apollon 2022, 77). It is excluded from writing and “has no message” (Apollon 2022, 77). Neither an inversion, nor an opposition, it offers nothing to meaning, and is not part of a linguistic machine. Is not a presence or an absence but a lack (Apollon 1976, 11). The voices do not say (Apollon 2022, 90).

Voice might also be perceived through its effects: “voices [...] alter the codes, territories, spaces, languages, and productions where a society seizes up in the anguish of becoming other [...] they clandestinely accomplish irreparable modifications to the social formations where they operate” (Apollon 2022, 90). So, voice here is a kind of disturbance in the social sphere— that which is held together by language and supported by the authority of writing. “What makes a trace in the wake of the voice results from the displacements effected in discourse by the passage of the voice” (Apollon 2022, 79). It eludes capture or description but leaves alterations in its path. Like the drive, “Its passage transforms an organic body into a body of jouissance/suffering” (Apollon 2022, 80). Apollon offers the figure of the stranger as a metaphor for voice. The stranger is “the ceaseless flowing of an unavoidable exteriority.” (2022, 74). The voice always carries something (someone?) in excess of the message, and this irreducible quality is inherently

subversive. The voices are madness or divine ecstasies [*jouissances divines*], according to the case. “They pass, possess, haunt. They are the exteriority of the interior, the depth at the surface” (Apollon 2022, 90). Voice “inhabits the common language, like an outside sense, cries, a multiple *din* [bruit] of bodies that are not organic but erotogenic, fragmented, useless, and without boundaries” (Apollon 2022, 75).

In Vodou, Apollon tells us, “The *loas* (spirits) remain strangers, the cultural and historic figures of the voice” (2022, 74) hence the specificity of the concept of voice. It is a historically based concept in as much as Apollon insists on Haitian Vodou as rooted in *its own* history rather than being subsumed in a notion of syncretism or any analysis that locates it as one site in a globally dispersed Vodou that derives from Africa. It is inextricable from the War of Independence of 1802-1803, and this is important because it is a specifically Haitian concept of voice that carries revolutionary potential, eludes, capture, and subverts official forms of the social. That said, his analysis of Vodou is explicitly not an attempt at a new writing of the history of Vodou, even if it insists on a critique of the kind of ahistorical framings introduced by Occidental writing and the fabulations produced therein. Vodou is “this plurality, without proper name, that destroys all the units of national space” (Apollon 2022, 76).

iii) The Drive

Of the voice, Vodou, and the drive, the drive is perhaps the most enigmatic of the three figures. Let’s look at how some passages in which the drive implicitly or explicitly appears in *Le vaudou*. The *loa* Ogou is described by Apollon as “this figure of death who signals the immeasurability of the drive’s expenditures” (Apollon 1976, 46). Apollon holds that when was is “returned to the individuality of bourgeois law, desire lost the multiplicity of its drive” (Apollon 1976, 43). He describes the Haitians as “this people of the drives without objects or obstacles”

who “ceased to be a plurality without boundary or center” (Apollon 1976, 43). Formulating a critique of modern psychiatry, Apollon writes that “the psychiatrist is this shaman or exorcist who must expel the disorder of the drive—which breaks the relation between individual and society” (Apollon 2022, 88). In the context of psychoanalysis, the problem may be that the unconscious is individualized as ego, and “this individual unconscious, still avoids the rising tide of the drive” (Apollon 2022, 87). In such a limited psychoanalytic setup, “the occultation of the exigencies of the drive is carried out in the mode of the relationship of the individual to society” (Apollon 2022, 80). But finally, according to Apollon “the enterprise of writing...has been unable to...reduce the voice, the innumerable and unspoken plurality of nomadic drives, to a role in discourse” (Apollon 2022, 79).

The drive is a slippery and contested term that begins with Sigmund Freud’s 1920 essay, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. In seeking to understand the human tendency to maintain and repeat behaviors that are destructive and repetitive, even unto death, Freud conceived of a force he named the death drive. The strangeness of his discovery is that the death drive is not compatible with the instincts. He describes it as a force in tension with Eros, understood as an impulse toward life, unification, and reproduction. Freud’s death drive, which he described as the tendency of the organism to return to the inorganic, to repeat this earlier state of things, was later taken up and revised by Jacques Lacan. Lacan identified multiple drives and determined all of them to be “death” drives, with the result that the unifying figure of Eros (elaborated by Freud as a sort of compensatory counter force to the death drive) is elided and “the erotic” is reassigned to the death drive, tending toward what is beyond nature and reproduction. One point of confusion about the death drive is that Freud describes it as a push toward the stillness of the inorganic, yet the drive (or drives) often manifest as agitated, energetic, disturbing, and active. The important

point, to avoid being confused by the apparent contradiction between the frenzy of the drives and the stillness of their purported aim (death), is to think of the drives, as conceived by Lacan, as being unconcerned with the maintenance of an individual life or with the reproduction of the species, even if the outcome is death. This is why they are “beyond the pleasure principle,” which exists to maintain the organism in a state of equilibrium. Pleasure, as Freud described it in writing about the pleasure principle, is perhaps best understood as a lack of tension.

For Lacan what matters about the drives is not their supposed objectives as designated by Freud in the form of death (the return to the inorganic), or eros (reproduction) but rather that in their indifference to life they circle objects that are highly indeterminate, replaceable, and unstable. The objects are meant to cover for a lack that cannot be remedied. For Lacan, the drives are not so much seeking satisfaction in objects as sustaining the ebb and flow of their intensities by circling the lack that an object pretends to fill. Their actual satisfaction would be a sort of death by completion of the subject. This relation of drives to objects can be easily seen in the relationship of individuals to consumer goods, where there is always *one more thing* to buy that will finally satisfy the buyer, and yet it is known to all that this one more thing will *not* satisfy, and furthermore if objects could satisfy, there would be a systemic collapse. Capitalism feeds upon this capacity of the drives to be diverted by an endless array of disposable objects, and upon the drive’s indifference to the maintenance of life.

Apollon describes the diversion of the drives toward objects noting that the objects created by capitalist culture canalize the subversive, even revolutionary, potential of the drives. He understands the virulence [nocivité] of the drive to be a force that is necessary for undoing the metaphysical enterprise of writing upon which the Occident supports itself. Apollon, following the path of the Freudian death drive and its elaboration by Lacan, adds his own

emphasis. In *Le vaudou*, the drive in its plurality and in its capacity to agitate and disturb are foregrounded. The drive's indifference to the maintenance of life might be understood here as indifference to the dominant form of the collective that consists of individuals, subjects of the law, who are counted and organized in the service of perpetuating Occidental civilization.

Le vaudou demands that a space for voices be produced within its own pages: "How can we fold this vital space of possibility into the linearity of writing without, precisely by this very folding, effectuating a radical change—the repression of the space of Vodou through its betrayal in writing?" (Apollon 1976, 27) Another way to put it might be, how can the drive be activated and brought forth in the field of the text?

iv) Translation: Writing or Voice?

Reflecting upon the conflict between voice and writing that Apollon proposes, the problem arises of how to situate translation within this conflict. An initial consideration would lend itself to the idea that translation must necessarily be on the side of writing, which has here been assigned to the side of domination, of the stabilization and reproduction of Occidentality, of colonization, covert theology, linearization, control and diversion of libidinal energies, accounting, the process of individualization— all of these forces and effects that Apollon deplores and hopes to subvert in the writing of *Le vaudou*. Much has been written about the ways that translation is instrumental in the "domestication" of the other (Venuti, 1995), or about reinforcing ideals that uphold the power dynamics of the culture (Chamberlain, 1988), or about the translator's complicity with colonialism or even "epistemicide" (Price, 2023) or about the ways the market marks the territory of who will and won't be published (Boulanger, 2012) (Venuti, 1995).

Seen from another angle, perhaps the process of translation can, or already does, participate in the disturbing energy that Apollon calls upon “to work the closure of the book.” A translation reopens a book to history and to potentially infinite iterations, casting into doubt its status as a completed unity. Translation, whether the translator wills it or not, is a kind of subversion in that it changes the field of semantic associations with unpredictable results. In his later work as a psychoanalyst Apollon stresses that language is the very form of the social link, and that each language carries within it a censorship in the service of the collective. Thus, when one language attempts to represent another, the boundaries of both are somewhat destabilized. Two examples he gives are the words *esprit* and *jouissance*, words that can never quite fit into English, even as calque. Another can be found in both the French and English translations of Freud’s works wherein the word *Seele* [soul] is translated as psyche and mind respectively. Bruno Bettelheim pointed to this obviation of the word *âme*, or soul, as an instance of repression that continues to have effects in the practice of psychoanalysis. There are plentiful examples of the limits of understanding from one culture to another, and the accumulation of shared meanings for words that cannot travel while remaining intact. This limit can be lamented and seen as evidence of what is untranslatable, or it can be seen as an instance of the cracks, flaws, or fissures in meaning that Apollon seems to want to invoke in the service of the voice. For languages to be sites of creativity and becoming, perhaps it is necessary that they cannot be stabilized with meaning or authorized by a distant “truth” in the manner that Apollon points to. Whether it be between separate language systems or within the perimeters of one, the ground beneath our feet shifts geographically, and through time. Furthermore, translation reopens a “completed” text to history and to different body (and drive activity), if only for a period. Translating Apollon’s text in the 21st century is an occasion for trying to hear, not only Apollon

as he was when he wrote *Le vaudou*, but the “voice” of an intellectual milieu in Paris in the 1970’s, as it appears to one’s ear today, with the opacities and idiosyncrasies that are in excess of any content, and the voice’s implied interlocutors who have been displaced by the movement of time. Thus, “working the closure of the book” in the present subjects the text to the limitations, attention, energies, desires, and unconscious processes of another body, history and place, with all of the flaws that are inherent in that reopening.

v) Erotics of translation

Pier-Pascale Boulanger has called for an erotics of translation [érotique du traduire] that would bring a textual body into relation with a translating body. “Peut-on amener le sujet traduisant à découvrir ce corps dans le visée de ce qu’on appellera une érotique de traduire?” (Boulanger 2005, 735). Her notion of a process that crosses between text and body, through the erotic, would seem to align on the side of the voice and the drives, and we would affirm this approach that foregrounds and supports the disquieting textual presence of unconscious desires left in the wake of the translator. What would it mean to consider translation as an activity of the drives? Boulanger asks for a sensitivity to the traces left by desire’s passage through a body; these traces, when they are not erased into smoothness and transparency, can enliven, and complicate, a translated text. Weaving a thread through the materiality of language and the erotic openings in the body, she draws Henri Meschonnic and psychoanalysis together to reflect upon the rapport between body and text where, “la lecture engage le sujet traduisant dans une activité d’écoute du corps textuel” (Boulanger 2009, 745).

Meschonnic’s concept of voice offers intriguing points of agreement and contrast with Apollon’s. Meschonnic’s understanding of voice, as an elliptical, subjectivizing process that moves through the text, might shed light on where and how a space for voice can be discerned in

the written. His emphasis on the translator as one who must train themselves in a different kind of “listening” that includes phenomena beyond content or message, implies an involvement of writing with the drives. The “power of language” he writes of might be understood as the passage of the drives through the apparently inert matter of a text. Furthermore, his emphasis on what language does, its power of action, might be considered alongside Apollon’s desire to write in such a way that there are truth *effects*, rather than a truth posited as an authority in the elsewhere of a foundational text. It also calls to mind Freud’s theorizing of the symptom, in which very real effects occur through an unconscious desire written on and through the body.

Boulanger invokes many elements of psychoanalytic theory in her work on the role of the body in translation, but I will focus primarily on the drive, as I believe it is via the drive that one finds an accommodation with the written—hence a possible opening to translation—in the thought of Apollon. Here again we see the drive as a force that stretches the parameters of the text via the passage of language through the body:

Fondée sur l’analyse des représentations verbales du psychique, la psychanalyse a montré que la parole est l’actualisation d’un langage mue par la force pulsionnelle.

L’investissement pulsionnel dans le langage vient élargir la définition de la parole, hors de sa dimension strictement intentionnelle. Pour le dire autrement : le sens excède désormais le signifié. (Boulanger 2009, 737)

Considering the role of the drives in forging the erotic potential of translation, Boulanger brings our attention to sites of the body that are activated by the materiality of language, foremost among them the ear. With the neologism *l’otocensure*, she links the kind of listening that Meschonnic calls for with notions of the unconscious taken from psychoanalysis to explain “deafness” as a response to the disturbing passage of the drive. In what follows, *pulsion* is the

French translation of Freud's notion of *Trieb*, originally translated into English as *instinct* and later corrected to *drive*:

Le défaut d'écoute en traduction résulte de la censure de l'oreille, que nous proposons de nommer *otocensure*. Le jeu de mots évoque l'oreille par le préfixe *oto-*, qui donne à entendre *auto-*, pour exprimer la censure de soi et de l'écoute. Dans ce double barrage, le sujet traduisant ne se laisse pas aller à entendre la matière sonore du sens, habituellement maintenue dans le secondarité accessoire du signifiant. [...] C'est dans la transgression des limites que se joue le pulsionnel, les traductions normalisantes, banalisent, et appauvrissent la texture textuelle. (Boulanger 2009, 744)

This notion of the transgressive nature of the drives as a force that will enliven or eroticize a text via the body of the translator in its sensitivity to the written resonates with Apollon's desire to write a book where the voice can be heard as "a cry from the body, the panting of the drive" (1976, 11). This way of approaching what writing can do suggests seeking fragile points in a text where writing best achieves itself only by opening to what threatens to destabilize it. For Boulanger, this implies sensitizing the process of translation to the erotic effects of language while de-emphasizing notions of correctness, transparency, and intention.

Apollon calls for a writing that would be capable of "a seizing of the ears" (2022, 79). Let's consider how this call for an opening to audible effects might work in a translation. That "the sense of hearing is the opening of the initiated body that is marked, eroticized," suggests a form of hearing that is as imbedded, or embodied, in reading and writing via the senses of the translator, even when it does not occur as sound (Apollon 2022, 79). Apollon states his wish to "produce a text that lends itself to hearing Vodou." (1976, 6) It is interesting to consider this

sense of hearing, so evident in the experience of reading poetry, as a means of access to a work that is above all theoretical.

Henri Meschonnic theorizes the importance of listening for any practice of translation. Might his notion of listening be brought into relation with Apollon's desire to write a text in which one can hear the voice? Meschonnic writes that "The subject must be translated, must be heard." (2011, 98), implying a concept of translation that, like Apollon's concept of voice, reaches beyond the parameters set by signification, that engages the body via an erotic passage through the ear. Translation here is not simply from one language system to another but from a subject that passes into, or through, language. Likewise, the hearing of this subject requires a listening that is not strictly concerned with audible, or semantic material. We might think of the expression in English, *to have an ear for* something, meaning a kind of attunement to an instrument, a language, or a text that is active in dimensions beyond the expression's derivation in music. Hearing for Meschonnic suggests a figure as enigmatic and flexible as the voice in *Le vaudou*. Listening for the poem in the text, he writes, "is what makes us hear everything that we do not know we are hearing" (2011, 136). We might read this to mean that the translator should resist the temptation to smooth over or cover up what doesn't "sound right" and to allow writing to maintain a certain degree of roughness or opacity.

Meschonnic refuses the idea that a poem belongs to a genre. Instead, it is what can be heard as the power of language, or the body in language, or the subject forming herself through language:

If the continuum is the subjectivization of a system of discourse by a subject inventing itself in and through its discourse, inventing a new historicity, the continuum of the poem does not know the difference between genres. From this point of view, there is poem in

novels, plays and even in a so-called philosophical text if there is invention of the subject, invention of historicity. (Meschonnic 2011, 69)

This suggests that a translator must be able to hear “the poem,” even in the kind of theory that we are working with here. Apollon writes,

Trying to explain the theoretical positions by which we elude writing to *lend an ear to the voice* (italics mine) is at the same time to force ourselves to find out how far focusing on the drive that makes its space in Vodou — rather than on the sign where interpretation constrains possession — can lead us.” (2011, 71)

With Meschonnic, a listening for the poem in the text; with Apollon, a listening for the voice. Both poem and voice can be understood here as making a passage through the erotic body.

Meschonnic wants us to, “make the alteration of identity through alterity be heard” (2011, 98). Something passes through translation that leaves traces of its origin, the kind of traces that a translator might feel obligated to erase in the effort to appear competent. There is a certain similarity with the idea of domestication versus foreignization that has been theorized by Lawrence Venuti. For Meschonnic however, the division between source and target languages is somewhat arbitrary, “Sourcerer, targeteer. Why not sourceteer?” (2011, 103). He might say that rather than an ethics that maintains “foreignness,” one ought to be able to hear “the poem” in the text and transmit it in a translation. “An ethics of translating means translating the maximum subjectivization of a system of discourse created by the poem” (Meschonnic 2011, 55). Can we think of Meschonnic’s notion of poem as being that within a text that lights up the erotic potential described by Boulanger?

While I would not suggest an exact symmetry between Apollon’s voice and Meschonnic’s ear, I “hear” in both a desire to work against the transcendental operations of the sign, and

against the apparent naturalness of the written. It is as if they would both like to set their stakes in the weakest points of the text, where the mechanics of signification are strained by the excess that accumulates in and around the semiotic dimension of language inviting disturbances, bodily effects, lapsus, etc. As Apollon calls for the subversion of, or tearing from, writing by the voice, Meschonnic writes, “the only way to think the limits of the sign is to think the poem as the strongest ethics of language, precisely because the poem is the weak link in the chain of reasoning of the sign: the sign breaks at the poem” (2011, 55).

In *Le vaudou*, this strangeness is an errancy that tears writing. For Meschonnic, the strangeness is included in his understanding of meaning as it is conveyed in writing—there is not a meaning separate from all of the phenomena generated in language, and that is why we must overcome “deafness” — to hear what is happening outside of the realm of the empirical, where linguistics cannot go. In these terms, a translation that is incapable of hearing what exceeds “the frame of the sign” (Meschonnic 2011, 108), will act as an eraser to what it translates. Meschonnic asks us to listen to the continuum between body and language to translate “no longer just *meaning* but power” (2011, 123). He calls for nothing less than a practice of translation that transforms our theories of language. In this transformation, thinking becomes listening.

Between Apollon and Meschonnic, we see two ways of refusing binary oppositions; Meschonnic asserts that there is a continuum that binds writing and the voice through all the processes of language and subjectivity:

Towards a definition of the voice which is no longer physiological or psychological but cultural, historical and poetic, one passes from the duality oral/written to a triple

distribution: the written, the spoken, the oral. The debate is the very question of specificity and historicity of language. (Meschonnic 2019, 198)

In contrast to this image of voice in a continuum that for Meschonnic comes to include ever more features of the subject and language, the voice for Apollon is rather a fracturing power that runs through writing and language but is not captured within it. We can only “glimpse voice in a movement that tears free from writing and deconstructs the very order of the sign” (Apollon 1976, 11). Apollon’s refusal of a binary is thus not a refusal of division or splitting, if we return to the image proposed above of an edifice riven with cracks and fissures, these sites of rupture are where the drives arise and through which they move in a space that is both supported by a body and beyond any common understanding of what a body is. For Apollon, the body appears as a site traversed by the drives which derive from the body (in the sense that they surge from its disruption) but also go far beyond its needs.

vii) Body and/or/as Drive

Perhaps this difference between Meschonnic’s continuum, on the one hand, and Apollon’s web of cracks, on the other, is an indication of how Apollon, in his later work, will commit to the practice and theory of psychoanalysis despite the scathing critiques of the field that pepper *Le vaudou*. Psychoanalysis is to some degree built on a logic of splitting. Freud’s Oedipus complex, where the paternal law intervenes in the fusional relationship between a mother and child—symbolized by the threat of castration—is a foundational assertion of the role of division in the human subject. After Freud, Lacan will introduce other moments of splitting: between the infant and her image in the mirror, named “the mirror stage,” and a split that occurs with the ascension to language, where a part of being is “left out” due to the fact that language will speak in, for, and through us, but is not, strictly speaking, our own. Apollon will introduce

another split, a split that occurs through the effect of the voice on the mother's body when the infant is in utero. He calls this experience "the effraction of the psyche by the spirit" (Apollon 2022, 4) and recognizes in it the first instance of the free drive tearing energy away from the organism in the service of "pure mental representations," an activity of the "mind" that goes beyond, and is indifferent to, the needs of the organism. It "requires more investment of energy than even feeding, which finds itself subverted" (Apollon 2010, 107). In addition to these rather speculative and quasi developmental moments of splitting, Apollon claims that there is always a part of being that is outside of language. Lacan is commonly understood to have placed us entirely inside the domain of language, but this claim is complicated by notions of what he called "the Real," which for Lacan is the dimension of experience that cannot be symbolized and therefore resists language. For Apollon, a binary between voice (or orality) and writing is rejected in favor of a web of effractions in which notions of inside and outside are operative, primarily in what concerns the collective and its incapacity to completely absorb its insoluble subjects. From the period of *Le vaudou* to the present, Apollon is invested in the conflict caused by the effort of the collective to absorb subjects into a common understanding, and the subject's capacity to disturb the machinations of culture.

For Meschonnic, the splitting apart of what he calls the continuum is the operation he refuses to be complicit with as he identifies these divisions as the means that culture deploys to organize itself in its deafness to the subject. The idea that there is an inherent conflict between voice and writing is antithetical to his view of language and subjectivity. It is interesting to note here that both Apollon and Meschonnic figure the subject as a plurality, against the notion of an individual ego.

It is tempting to take Meschonnic's refusal of division as a solution to the problem of how the work of translating Apollon might be situated as a form of writing that is not in conflict with voice, or in service to what he calls the "empire of the sign" (1976, 27). For Meschonnic, translation is an elemental aspect of language, in a continuum with writing and the formation of subjects, and the maintenance of translation within this continuum is part of an ethical disposition to language, resistant to the divisive operations of signification.

By *the voice*, I mean orality. But no longer in the sense of the sign, where all we hear is sound opposed to meaning. In the continuum, orality is of the body-in-language. It is the subject we hear. The voice is of the subject passing from subject to subject. The voice makes the subject. Makes you subject. The subject makes itself in and through its voice. (Meschonnic 2011, 136)

In this view translation would be situated on the side of the voice as opposed to writing as Apollon conceives of it in *Le vaudou*. However, having set out to find a theory of translation from within the parameters of Apollon's thought, it would be somewhat fallacious to claim Meschonnic's continuum, as appealing as it is. How then can a bridge be drawn between voice and writing that would find a place for translation, while not overriding aspects of Apollon's thought?

It is interesting to note that Apollon's later work as a psychoanalyst revisits many themes that are present in *Le vaudou*, but the conflict between voice and writing falls away. Rather, he emphasizes conflicts between the subject and the collective, and the difficulty of the entry of human beings into language. This suggests that some shift occurred in his thinking about writing, and I propose that we might look for this shift toward an accommodation of writing in psychoanalytic theory.

Apollon, in his later psychoanalytic interventions, will follow Lacan's expansion of the drives to theorize a "body" that is not identical to the organism, a body that is a kind of assemblage of inscriptions left by the passages of the drives in their indifference to the maintenance of the organism. In Apollon's framework, if we were to identify an erotic body—with its potential to be activated by language in all of its manifestations, including the reading/writing that is translation—it would be this inorganic "body" of the drives that Apollon calls "*le corps morcelé*." Let us take a closer look at this notion of the body-as-inscription in the hopes of drawing a connection to the erotic potential that Boulanger has indicated.

vii) Letters of the Body

Twenty years after the publication of *Le vaudou*, at which point Apollon was a psychoanalyst in Quebec, he wrote, "Like literature, psychoanalysis passes through writing, the field of the letter. This is a structural necessity" (Apollon 2024, 54). He proposes that what he calls "the Letters of the body" are the support for the kind of truth aspired to in a psychoanalytic setting. Recalling the "truth effects" he hoped to evoke in writing *Le vaudou*, this truth would be not in the order of empirical fact, but in the order of literature where words can, as it is said in English, "ring true," an expression that captures materiality in the resonance between flesh and language where something is sounded in the body of the listener. This truth supported by the Letters of the Body is what the analyst listens for, beyond an ego narrative. Might this be akin to the listening for "the poem" that Meschonnic demands? If writing can ring the body like a bell, for Apollon it is because what he understands as the body is made up of inscriptions of the drive, we can see these inscriptions as a kind of writing of a non-organic body. This body-of-inscriptions is where Apollon locates the erotic, in the passage of drives through openings in the body and between the organic

and inorganic. The drive here is both corporeal, it depends on a body to exist, and extra-corporeal, it extends into the inorganic, exceeding the needs and limits of the organism:

This first aspect of the letter, as the inscription of the primordial division that inaugurates the body as detached from the organism, and the subject as divided from individuality, bears the mark of the universal. It indicates and inscribes in theory the effect of language on the living being. (Apollon 2024, 59)

Here we have the logic of the split, and the notion that the trauma of a primordial division by language is universal. At this stage in Apollon's thinking, this would be the first mark of the Letter. The Letters are inscriptions that affect the organism while not being identical to it, that elude expression, or representation in images, but that insist in us and propel our choices, creations, and actions. He recognizes an attunement to the effects of these letters, and the truth they hold about the desire of the subject, in certain written works:

the writer is sustained in his traversal of the work of the letter by a passion for truth. The exploration of all of the forms of this truth, up to and including their systematic deconstruction through the many turns and detours of the letter, metaphorizes the desire to write." (Apollon, 2024, 69)

The notion of a voice that we read in *Le vaudou*, where it breaks or tears into writing, is still present here in this passage with the idea of a systematic deconstruction, but one finds here that the voice is akin to the form of the Letter of the body— an irreducible, indivisible, unrepresentable materiality, and as such it is no longer in conflict with writing, for which this primordial inscription, the Letter of the body, might be understood as a first mark that acts as a support for the written.

In later years, Apollon will locate the primordial inscription *before* the entry into language, precisely with the incursion of the voice in the womb where it sounds in the body of the mother. “This radical experience of the confrontation with the audible and the management of its effect of effraction in his being is without a doubt at the origin of the constitution of the child’s body” (Apollon 2010, 107). It’s interesting to note that this idea echoes the incursion of the voice in the Vodou ritual that Apollon describes in *Le vaudou* as the first indication that the adherent has been mounted by the loa in the crisis of possession. In this positing of the voice as the first instance of the free drive inscribing the body with “the effraction of the psyche by the spirit,” we are given an image in which becoming human is linked to the surging forth of a capacity of mind that will drive the subject beyond the demands of survival.

In contrast, we might see the body in the continuum with language, as conceived by Meschonnic, as being in sympathy with the notion of Eros that Freud originally theorized as a counter to the death drive, this would be a unifying force, implying an eroticism that accords with nature, the body, and the reproduction of life. As stated above however, in the Lacanian elaboration of the drive, Eros falls away and the drives are multiplied under the sign of the death drive with the result that eroticism, a properly human attribute, is no longer seen as an impulse toward unity or the demand of nature that we reproduce.

I would like to propose that there is a similarity between Meschonnic’s listening for the poem and Apollon’s listening for the voice: on the one side we find an eros aligned with unification, on the other, an eroticism “inscribed” by a series of effractions. In an Apollonian understanding the erotic potential between text and body exists because, in their passage between the organic and inorganic bodies, reading, writing, and thus logically translation, are activities of the drive. This notion allows us to trace, via the effractions of the drive, a movement that derives

in the body and follows the voice through the drives, to a writing that takes us through the text, and then back through the passage of the drives by way of another “body of inscriptions” This movement in and beyond the body is where we are able to situate a version of Boulanger’s erotics of translation that accords with Apollon’s concept of the drive.

It is by affirming Boulanger’s erotics of translation that we can situate translation on the side of the voice. We pass by way of Meschonnic, who gives us a theory of listening that resonates with Apollon’s theory of the voice, and through Boulanger’s notion of the erotic that demands an attention to the rapport between the body of the text and the body of the translator, next we follow Apollon’s elaboration of the drive via the Letter of the Body, a primordial inscription that acts as a support for writing. Thus, we recognize translation as a means of passage between the organic body and the inscriptions of the drive in their movement beyond the organic and through the body of the text. If this understanding situates translation on the side of the voice, in accordance with the demands of *Le vaudou*, how might we both arrive at a theoretically responsible rendering of Apollon’s text *and* pursue a creative response which is attentive to the “voices” of the text and deriving from the work of translation?

4. THE TRANSLATION: AN APPROACH

Rather than indulging in a creative translation of Apollon’s text, which would render its conceptual determinations illegible, I have chosen to pursue a creative *response* to the experience of translating *Le vaudou* while offering a translation of the text itself that sustains the intelligibility of its theoretical claims. In tandem with my translation, I also pursue a conceptual reflection upon how the book’s theoretical framework bears upon ideas about translation. The

experimental and creative response to translating then explores issues pertaining to the agency of the voice as it is described in *Le vaudou*.

What I call an “approach to translation” via the concepts of Apollon’s text should be understood as an engagement with translation on the side of reading, that is, an effort to *think through* translation from within the conceptual space of the work being translated. This does not imply an activist practice of translation that works at the level of diction and syntax to foreground the conceptual apparatus of the text. In the case of *Le vaudou*, I believe it is important that anglophone readers have access to the ideas in the book, which are dense and complex enough to require, in my view, a cautious approach to conceptual transmission. While I make no attempt to “domesticate” the text, or to render it smooth or transparent, I am concerned that the translated text achieves a sufficient clarity, without which my explication of the theories therein, as well as the creative response to the translational encounter with the text, would be groundless. This points to the complexity of trying to translate “the poem” in a theoretical text, something that should be possible, according to Meschonnic. If the poem in a text is where we “hear” the formation of the subject, then certainly in a theoretical text this must include the urgency to make clear difficult ideas and to extract concepts from what feel like opacities, such as the relation between the voice and writing. The translator must make her own decisions about where and how this “poem” of the subject is heard.

The task of translating *Le vaudou* raises some of the same issues that one finds in the text itself. As I have pointed out elsewhere, Apollon undertakes the paradoxical project of setting up a conflict between voice and writing while also making a space within his own book for the voice, which he understands as a disruptive, unwritable force that must be torn free from writing. Whether his venture is successful is for the reader to decide, as “voice” is not a quantifiable

substance that can be tracked through his text. My effort to understand translation on the side of the voice via the passage of the drive poses another dilemma; I can follow a path of reasoning through psychoanalytic concepts to make the argument that writing, reading, and translating are in some sense all activities of the drive, but I cannot point to the passage of the drive in the text or the body to “prove” its existence. Furthermore, one cannot definitively place translation on one side of any conflict. While I affirm Boulanger’s view of translation as an activity with an erotic potential, it must also be affirmed, as she and others have written elsewhere, that there are political and market considerations involved in the choice of what translations will and won’t be published. Ultimately, we cannot extract translation from the history of domination, empire, and capitalism that have made use of it, nor can we deny that it is an activity that employs creativity, compassion, community, and engagement with language at the deepest level. We might say language *is* translation and that translation, like language, cannot be situated on any side of a conflict.

It is through my creative response that I experiment with Apollon’s concept of voice, using a kind of writing that is justified by ideas in the text. For instance, the idea of making a space for voice, or of voice tearing into or away from the text, or the idea of working in the *défaillance* of the book, following upon the meaning of *défaillance* as a lapse or breakdown. In my methodological approach to this creative practice, I also borrow from the field of psychoanalysis, on the grounds that Apollon’s analysis relies on many psychoanalytic terms, even as he critiques psychoanalysis for its complicity in the creation of bourgeois subjectivity. The creative response deploys several psychoanalytic methods and concepts, such as scansion, the unconscious, free association, floating attention, and the drive.

I have also attempted to make use of Meschonnic's notion of hearing, as a response to Apollon's demand that the voice be heard in the text. I began the translation with the idea of trying to "hear the voice" in the text. To this end, I tried reading aloud without thinking about what I read, listening to music while translating, doing "automatic" translation by quickly translating without verifying anything up or making corrections, and allowing mistakes to linger so I could see if they held anything of interest. These exercises were intended to stimulate the rapport between sense and text, and to allow for unconscious manifestations to appear.

The extra-textual phenomena that I attempted to access as dimensions of hearing and voice point us back to the erotic body of the drives, that map of extra-corporeal inscriptions by language without which the idea of listening and voice in a text would not function, relying as it does on immaterial echoes of the audible—the relay between the organic body and its extension into realms where reading, writing, and translating allow us to "hear" where there is no sound.

Just as psychoanalysis operates on a case-by-case basis, with each analysand addressed in terms of the singular logic of her own desire, while the "treatment" is constructed from what emerges in the psychoanalytic setting, my creative response to translating Apollon's text attempts an analogous approach. I make a creative incursion into the text that deploys his own ideas. The supposition is that the text might contain within itself the seed of a creative work that reflects the concepts within it.

One implication of a psychoanalytic engagement concerns interpretation. Though our existence is marked by language even before we are born, language cannot say *all* about us; there is always something fallen through the cracks that thwarts signification. Willy Apollon speaks of this as the "Hors-Langage," Freud describes a point beyond which memory's capacity for representation cannot go, and Lacan talks about "the Real" which cannot be symbolized. What is

important here is to recognize that the chasm beneath the thin bridge afforded to us by language cannot be simply filled in by interpretation. Lacan insists that psychoanalysts not fall into the trap of thinking that they “understand” a patient (it could be said that he developed a pedagogy with a view to undoing the kind of “understanding” he condemns) and Apollon insists there is a point in each human that is entirely inaccessible to the other, and that this separation is what necessitates language for the purpose of communal realizations. Paradoxically, it is important both to respect that there is a point in the other beyond which we cannot go, and to recognize that language is an offering of access to another being. For translation, this ethics implies an emphasis on “the word” somewhat more than on “the spirit.” Not a “word for word” translation that could be accomplished by a machine, but an approach that is cautious about assumptions of meaning. The question is how to make a space for what resists capture by meaning in the act of writing, and whether this space is maintained through the work of translating. The translator must decide whether this space is maintained through minimal interference or through activist interventions. Can the translator be attuned to elements of the text that elide lexical representation? This challenge echoes the psychoanalytic relationship that depends upon transmission through language but must maintain an opening to what, in symptoms or acts, has not found its expression in language.

One may question the practical results of trying to theorize translation by way of the conceptual demands of the text being translated. Such an idea cannot produce a methodology, given that in each instance a translator would have to create her guidelines anew.

I was aware of an oral aspect to Apollon’s writing, despite its academic quality. This was manifest in frequent use of words such as *donc* and *même*, in slightly altered repetitions within the same paragraph, in sentence fragments, and in passages that seemed to rush along into a

nearly impassable density. I tried to maintain these traces while recognizing that they do not necessarily have the same effects in English. I chose not to Anglicize the text, as there was nothing in Apollon's idea of voice that pointed me in this direction. Latinate cognates are mostly left intact unless there is an actual shift in meaning. Occasionally I opted for a more direct and active syntax, which might be construed as conceding something to Anglophone preferences, this I justified by Apollon's comment that "Vodou is a civilization of the verb" (1976, 3) and by what I felt was a kind of urgency of tone that sometimes felt bogged down by passive formulations and numerous subclauses. I mostly resisted the urge to "straighten out" dense, tangled passages and I tried to do so only where I felt there was a risk of losing the thread of an idea.

I would stress that the ideas of hearing and the voice that I explore in the thesis were considered during the work of translation, but that their presence in the translation is subtle, and mostly takes the form of a "light hand" that does not try to convert the text into current norms of "good writing" in English as it is currently understood.

5. TRANSLATION OF *LE VAUDOU*: INTRODUCTION AND CHAPTER ONE

(Numbers in brackets refer to the pages in Apollon's book.)

Vodou: A Space for "Voices"

God demands *constant enjoyment*, as the normal mode of existence for souls within the Order of the World. It is my duty to provide Him with it in the form of highly developed soul-voluptuousness, as far as this is possible in the circumstances contrary to the Order of the World.

— Daniel Paul Schreber, *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness*, Trans. Ida Macalpine, Richard A. Hunter, New York: NYRB, 1995, p. 250

Introduction

[11] It must be possible to go around the text and to find its outside, the depth at its surface. If need be, to violate writing. Nothing of the sort is approached through the act of writing. How then to find the lost space belonging to Vodou? Does writing betray orality to such an extent?

The difficulty that insists here is in some sense the opening and closing of this text. That writing gives voice to nothing, this is a conclusion that necessarily brings the philosophical enquiry of Vodou to its point of departure. What writing on Vodou infinitely misses is precisely that which is produced within it as not "traceable," not "scriptable." In that place is something that is not an absence, nor even a presence-absence, but rather a lack, something that gives itself no more to representation than to presentation.

From Moreau de St. Méry to Laennec Hurbon¹, the discourse on Vodou is habituated to meaning [*le vouloir dire*], speech, and intention. The object of writing and of the book, Vodou is always-already submitted to interpretation, returned to the signifying chain, nevertheless without

¹ Moreau de SAINT-MÉRY, *Description de la partie française de l'isle de Saint-Domingue*, t. I, II, Paris, Société de l'histoire des colonies françaises et Librairie Larose, 1958. Laënnec HURBON, *Dieu dans le vaudou haïtien*, Payot, Paris, 1972.

it being possible to produce it there as presence. [12] It has hence become urgent to attempt a search for “the voice of Vodou” in an operation that tears writing apart and deconstructs the very order of the sign. The closest we can get to that, in this text, is to take seriously all writing on Vodou in hope of glimpsing the order of the voice...a cry from the body, the panting of the drive.

We will have to return to the concept of voice. Its function in this text— and its network of its relations to other concepts that will be simultaneously produced here— evokes precisely what must be identified as Vodou. However, we must start by being suspicious of an expression such as “the order of the voice” that may convey the contradiction wherein the voice itself must be stifled. Which is to say that what we produce as voice here must always be conceived of in advance as not stifled in an order or a dimension, insofar as dimension is the dwelling (house) of calculation and measurement. Nonetheless, it’s necessary for us to refer to calculation insofar as it is the only possible access to the game.

It’s in relation to writing that the concept of voice is first produced here. At the same time, it’s not as an inversion, nor as an opposite. It’s through thinking of “possession,” and in the service of this thought, that this concept is produced. In fact, the voice returns here to what, in Haiti, we call a loa. The spirit (loa) takes possession of the body of its faithful and is first manifested by their voice. An other voice— simply the voice— inhabits the faithful. But this indication of a beginning is seized by writing, that which consists in a certain partitioning of the space of possession: the here and the faithful, the elsewhere and the loa, where what remains unthought is the connection of the new voice (because the possessed changes voices) to the body, that is, so they say, “mounted by the spirit,” like a horse by his knight. The theory of this unthought of the discourse of Vodou is the elusive object produced in this text from one end to the other, I would say, through and through, darting here and there abruptly, in a game that makes

a mockery of writing and sense, even of history, a game in which this text is a calculation. Of course, others are possible, and so many! [13] To calculate the voice *as metaphor of the body and metonymy of the laugh or the cry* this text comes to revolve around the feminine, like Vodou itself, and according to a similar rhythm. It's from this effect of resemblance that I authorise myself to write, here where in fact it's about orality and the voice. Here, the semblant enters into the dance of Vodou and marries the contours of its clandestinity in the very moment of apprehension. This is not so that writing be recognized as power in the sovereign domination of the voice. We would rather that writing, itself possessed, turns inward to open in its bosom, not another center, but a space where the voice can be seen.

Curiously, it's only by determining the rapport of vision with the voices that command its space that writing could, it seems to me, locate its least destructive point of contact with the voice. In fact, isn't vision always already the very space where the voice, coming to the sign (the visible), is alienated into meaning, intention, speech, and history, in a word the horrible neutrality of metaphysics. [14]

[Vèvè Illustration]

This Vèvè is, among others, the very act of "the Vodou operation." It articulates the passage of libidinal wandering, beyond the cultural limits that the writing of history and the political project constrain in the established order.

[17] Part One: Writing

[19] Is it possible to completely tear the thinking of Vodou from what we have submitted it to, that which introduces the violent control of writing into it? In this first part, there is only the repetition of this question in some of its possible forms. That is to say, there are unlimited pathways of signs that ravish our desire to know more about Vodou. We need to examine the

relationship of enchantment between writing and Vodou. We must try to avoid this diversion, this grand detour by interpretation that maintains a rift that is practically uncrossable between Vodou and us.

Writing, we discover, is above all Occidentality. It's the entire metaphysics with its presuppositions and its project of meaning and its function of supporting history against life. We must interrogate writing and the damage caused by its metaphysical machinery, and the extent to which this metaphysical machine plays the most important role in a theology that consists in substituting an elsewhere for here, the sign for life, ideology for conflict, and knowledge for jouissance.

What's important to identify, and simultaneously to circumvent, are all the implications and metaphysical projects transmitted by writing. The locus of this transmission is the objective of theological discourse, and we must identify what role this discourse plays in Occidentality. This critique [20] of writing must reveal the occurrence of this transmission. How is writing the vehicle of the Occidental enterprise? Here is an elucidation that specifically allows the thought of what is occulted by writing.

Everything taken up in writing finds itself inhabited, even erased, by what writing brings into it. When it concerns Vodou or any other event that is not foremost representation, nor even always presentable, the question of this importation by writing becomes preliminary. What is at stake is the possibility of a discourse that is not content to reproduce itself in a mirror or to simply maintain what is already its own import.

[21] Chapter 1: Writing and Representation

Our concept of writing, both before and after the ideological critique that makes the production of the concept possible, is not independent of the idea of representation. We must

somehow seize the concept in its pre-critical representation, where it is still ideological, to underline what maintains it there and reproduces it as ideology and as problematic.

In the Occidental realm, writing represents. It's a system of graphic signs that serve to conserve discourse. To begin with, writing presents itself as, and is thought as, the reproduction and conservation of discourse. At the level of what can be opposed to this writing, we note song, dance, proverbs, myths, and stories, in brief, a whole ensemble that is relevant to the oral-auditory order, whereas writing points to visual perception, at least at first glance.

However, the opposition indicated here is inexact, because it lacks the necessary symmetry that commands all opposition. In fact, what we want to make evident is the fact that writing is representation and thereby conservation of the living word and discourse in general. Yet the oral phenomena referred to above come from memory rather than [22] conservation, from the event rather than representation. The opposition invoked here only maintains itself inasmuch as it puts representation and event (on one side) in a negative symmetry with memory and conservation (on another side). For that, we must produce a concept of orality that evades expressivity and communicability.

This poses an ideological limit for writing that it never completely gets past. It is representation and it stays entirely in the field of expressivity, of the sign, always in danger of being taken up in the logic it never quite surpasses. It figures a movement of hermeneutics riveted to its place of origin: metaphysics as an apparatus for the repression of life within a theological enterprise.

Our worry about interrogating writing in this way is radically supported by the fact that, like the African-ness that inhabits its fantasies, Vodou is a civilization of the verb. It is oblivious to the graphic sign that represents and controls, and that constitutes truth as the background of a

reading that is itself only the infinite repetition of writing. The sign has its own temporality that disarticulates the rhythm of the verb. It has its own meaning and articulation that smother the voice by controlling the speech it carries. It controls and forbids. By the very repetition that constitutes it in representativity, it is the negation of the new and of renewal.

Representation and Conservation

Refusing to give writing the function of cultural memory, we have preferred rather to recognize that of conservation. What is thus to be retained is that memory is dynamic.

Conservation is static, innocent, and irresponsible. What is conserved is redeployed without danger and without modifying the field in which it is redeployed. Memory functions differently. It repeats [23] its own reserve while producing adaptation, assimilation of the new, and even its memorisation.

Furthermore, with the concept of conservation, we must aim for what is conserved. Here, it is of an ideological order. Writing must conserve the word, and this conservation constitutes this word as truth. Ultimately, we must see the constitution of a certain problematic of truth in this passage from living speech to written conservation. This process of constituting truth by the written conservation of speech already participates in what must be designated as a theological enterprise.

Conservation not only guarantees the constitution of a truth, it guarantees a social order. For Occidentality, the written is one of the final references in what concerns the legitimation of authority, the rules of circulation and distribution of powers. The written is law in a social conflict. It is the norm. It reaches through time to connect power in the present to an origin that, in essence, is beyond the power of man. It's the fact of writing as trace and conservation that induces this thought of an origin that is impossible to conceive of or to grasp outside the field of

writing. It is writing that conserves the narrative. It's also that which constitutes this narrative as the primary truth and opens the possibilities and rules of interpretation without which this truth does not manifest. For this reason, we don't see how the idea of God— as ultimate truth and unthinkable origin that thinks itself—could be possible outside of the phenomenon of writing.

Conserving (it hardly matters what) as trace, writing is the very place of Occidental history. In fact, it's the conservation of the word that offers present discourse a past referent in the field of language on which sense is supported. This referral of the trace to the trace, of writing to speech to writing, establishes a peculiar place where history is constituted and the meaning with which the political man knots the event to prevent its loss. Writing, in this sense, is the instrument of the economy in general. Limiting raw experience in its [24] expenditure without limit, it introduces a loss where life infinitely wallows, this link of one event to another, of one experience to another, that denies the frivolous game of life by introducing calculation, the seriousness of sense, the supremacy of history, and the domination through knowledge. Such is the imperialism of the sign at its root.

That which is transmitted by conservation is not directly ideology but, more insidiously, the support and conditions for the production of ideology, by which I mean a certain problematic that we must pursue through a deconstructive critique of representation. It's therefore necessary to interrogate the very structure of representation in its ideological implications. Conservation, or rather the trace, commands representation as a particular order of thought. What is conserved is done so through the trace and the system of the sign. We will start with the implications of the relation between trace and representation. Even below the thought of the sign we must attempt to identify the precondition that stays untouched by the critique inasmuch as it stays in the thought of the sign.

Can the thought of Vodou be distanced from such implications? Must it be? How else to produce an object in the field of writing that won't default to its rule? In fact, we must choose or at least seek the choice if it exists. To produce the concept of Vodou in the field of the text is to bring forth the oral. Thus, to produce a text that makes us hear Vodou. Wouldn't such a text burst from the enclosure of the book, while simultaneously provoking an overflow of writing that would point beyond its limits? Since the "loas" are primarily voice from outer-writing [outre-écriture], or even voices from outside-writing [hors-écriture], the text must be torn from its own boundaries so that Vodou can pass through it. Is this not an impossible dream? We would never renounce it. And that is enough to propel this text to the point of its own overflowing.

What writing conserves risks being the "Loud Voice" that prevents the hearing of the loas, in brief, the voice of conscience and hence of culpability. This [25] conservation is part of the theological enterprise relayed in due course by the bourgeois law. Isn't Vodou always bound up with Christianity and bourgeois "justice?" It's clear that from the beginning it is inscribed as clandestine in the culture and that its destiny there is inevitably repression and potentially suppression.

By questioning the structure of representation, where conservation finds the machine of its own (re)production we find that Vodou is subject to importation when it is taken up in writing. It's therefore necessary to beware this text. It represses Vodou in its own way, over and over. But in this movement is there a place for connotations that would have the effect of truth? What regime can be imposed on writing to make it bring to light what its function must drive to the shadows? The betrayal must be total. It must be brought just to the edge, here, for the violence of writing to give way to connotation. Let us also scrutinize the fact that writing conserves the field

of representation. This enquiry is the very weapon of a radicalized violence that attempts to open a path to connotation and truth effects.

The stakes of writing

To question the stakes of writing is an integral part of the return to Vodou in the heart of Occidentality that makes this interrogation subsequently possible and necessary. In fact, since we must refuse all recourse to origins to think Vodou, it appears in its exclusion from writing. It's not only about opposing oral to written culture. More radically, it's about positioning that which surged as uncontrollable, irritating, and anguishing [26] (but how subtly attractive) from the depths of the Haitian countryside, into the interstices and the boundaries of a writing that stays white, however much it is taken up in the local colour.

From the outset, we must refuse to recount the history of Vodou. The conditions of its simultaneous emergence with the armed struggle for independence from 1791 to 1804 make of it something other than the relation to writing that overdetermines it today. The attempt to make an interior voyage to those who were the ancestors and the elders have quickly brought our hopes to a piercing inquietude. This voyage to the interior reveals we are strangers. Regardless of the official ideology that ultimately maintains the ideology of class, the recourse to origin as cause does not deliver the thrust of what happens in Vodou. We can no longer discuss Vodou in the manner of Métraux and L. Maximilien, as if a history that estranges us from those to whom we attribute an original role hadn't taken place. No more can we continue to write Vodou as if returning to celebrate an origin that would obscure the difficulties, the impotence, and the failures of the present. An entire history of the writing on Vodou would have to be done in order to identify the luring function of an origin that obviates the impossible to realize demands of the present.

The space of Vodou is primarily the “Vodou ceremony.” The faithful see their history take on a rhythm and a sense from one ceremony to the next. That which is thus called “ceremony,” after a word taken from writing, is an ensemble of rites where dance, music, gesture, speech, the drink, the drum, and all the other symbolic elements reflect each other without it being possible to identify any one thing as determinant, not the songs, or the drums, nor the dreams, or any of the multiple rites. An ensemble of cultural signifiers controls that which, for the collective, is unspeakable in the quotidian. Music, gestures, and dance, like drums, or speech and ritual chants, speak, in the here and now, that which remains unheard in the beyond. A plural space makes survival possible in the mode of a reprieve. Death, sickness, socio-economic exploitation, political impotence, police repression, as well as moral and religious repression—all find [27] a meaning in the field of these symbolic practices that makes them tolerable.

How can we fold this vital space of possibility into the linearity of writing without, precisely by this very folding, effectuating a radical change—the repression of the space of Vodou through its betrayal in writing? In its very essence and its function, writing is control and repression of the vocal and the space of the voice. Its linearity isn’t only a betrayal of the space shattered by the symbolic practices that it pretends to give an account of, in the organisation of representation, as in the process of narrative, writing is the importation of the metaphysical project.

This violent importation is a sign that writing plays the serious game of representing the word of truth. It is also where mystification takes cover. The appeal to origin doubles as its divination. Writing represents speech. This representation is constituted as truth. This identification is maintained thereafter through writing, from truth to divinity. But what is produced by this metaphysical machinery is a hidden absolute that, through the imperialism of

the signifier, legitimizes the repression of the voice in the empire of the sign through writing. The theological enterprise thus organized can be seen in literature as a basis for the predominance of intelligibility over life and the call to live [devoir vivre] that is at the root of hermeneutics, and likewise all obsessions with an ultimate meaning (fundamental to Occidentality) as a place of writing where the text is part of all life and the desire for life finds itself offered as a holocaust on the altar of logic and dialectical reason.

Yet Vodou, precisely on the Island of Haiti, is an attempt to escape.

We must suspect any reference to Africa, as with Brazilian *condomblé* or other Vodou practices, of quietly effacing the structural conditions of possibility for Haitian Vodou.

For the same reason we must refuse to make a history of Vodou precisely because it would only be a history of Haiti, seen from the side of the peasants, but [28] neither written nor spoken by them. Likewise, we refuse a comparative study of different Vodou practices, because it would require us to do a comparative study of the historical and social conditions of possibility for Dahomean, Haitian, or Brazilian Vodou.

For Haiti, it seems essential to pinpoint a primordial condition of possibility for Vodou: it's relation to Occidentality. It's what we evoke by critically revisiting the concept of writing.

In effect, there's a of colonisation of Vodou by writing that is the precise mode of its repression. The book: there is the enemy, and above all this one if it does not effectuate its own overflowing.

The Book and Homicide

It's in the book that Occidentality achieves the apogee of its work for the death drive² of which

² Here it's about the work of controlling the death drive and its reduction to eros, the grand enterprise under the sign of unity, the order and measure of all multiple drives. Such a work can't happen without a return of the intensities of the death drive in its most vivid and unspeakable aggressivity.

the most elaborated instrument is God, no matter the substituted names: civilization, history, the party, the common good, the law, reason, logic, etc. The power to kill is always active, whatever the form the killing takes, between the atomic world war and the absolute violence of smiling kindness or the social consensus.

What is it exactly?

The book is the empire of accounting and truth. Writing there attains the pinnacle of its power, but no doubt also its limit. It substitutes itself *here* for that which *there* is speech and/or the wisdom of the ancients, and the pleasure of [29] spirits, the Gods, and their companions. In this way the book is the support of the authority that it carries as legitimisation of a monopoly on (absolute) violence, which is to say, power, that elaborates and maintains itself in the text, and separates the orality of Vodou from Occidental literature. And this relation of opposition to Occidentality seems to me characteristic of the “return to Vodou” as a resistance that belongs to the Haitian realm, that clearly sets Haitian Vodou apart from other forms of Vodou, in particular Dahomian Vodou, Brazilian Candomblé, and all the other forms scattered here and there across the Black Antilles and Latin America. Likewise, the resurgence in Montreal and in New York.

That which a book on Vodou introduces into Vodou is what is at stake in the text and Occidentality. It betrays that of which it speaks, introduces another regime of power, another articulation of violent control. By its intrusion the book invites a certain relation to truth and a certain relation to capital or the capitalist mode of production with which Vodou is in constant rupture. This the book is always more or less, and rather more than less, the Trojan horse of Vodou.

The text, in effect, is the constitution of an elsewhere. It produces this elsewhere as a truth that is violence in the here and now. Through meaning, it controls, worse, it monopolizes

the control, imposing hermeneutics, the search for an ultimate meaning that would deliver the truth bit by bit to interpretation and to obedience. In this game where it separates the initiated from postulants, the text distributes seats of power. It allocates and partitions. It becomes the guarantor of discourse, its rule, even the site of its truth. A culture of intellectuals and technocrats supports itself on this theological-juridical enterprise, in the same way that technology, like the police, refers to the authority of a scientific or legal “writing.”

The domination of discourse by the text, so characteristic of Occidentality, that always reduces discourse to little more than an interpretation or commentary and eliminates the [30] plenitude of any speech that will not be reduced to a subjective resumption of the text—that is what we call the institution of obedience. The goal is to ensure that subjective speech returns to, refines, and polishes a text. Nothing can be said that hasn’t already received the brand of the text. No more would speech be test and trial (from desire to work) in a body, but pure service to the text, pure obedience of the subject. The magnetism thus conferred on the text is what would be most destructive to the desire that is invested in it. In fact, at the point where we must determine how exclusion, or the death-by-text of the subject, is organized, we cannot escape the question already at work in such an analysis: isn’t the very problematic of the subject of desire linked to the situation of the text in the Occident? As if the text produced the subject for the purpose of illuminating it! Or better, so as to deactivate the virulence of the drive. This circle that produces death is even the object of a text: *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*.³ [31] We must be almost

³ Sigmund Freud, *Au-delà du principe de plaisir*. A certain number of texts might contradict this analysis of writing here or there. What they elaborate, in effect, adequately confirms what we identify as the ethnocentrism and countertransference that always inhabits writing on Vodou. Since we have not had recourse to these texts we will not cite them, but how could we not acknowledge them, given the displacements and ruptures that have begun to work irremediably within the theological enterprise, these voices from beyond writing that already possess bodies fragmented by capitalism. They are:

Jacques DERRIDA, *La voix et le phénomène*, P.U.F., Paris, 1972.

—*L’écriture et la différence*, Seuil, Paris, 1967.

—*De le grammatologie*, Ed. de Minuit, Paris, 1967.

grateful to Freud for having let it slip out. That so much work is undertaken by his disciples to erase this text shows sufficient reason to vindicate it. It would be interesting to see by what process the written is established as text by all the commentary and the glosses, the multiple discourses of every genre that open a depth and an elsewhere in it and constitute it as guardian of a truth. This process is that of a culture that leans on texts that state the truth, count the criminals, and separate out the superiors.

This establishment of an order of truth and of accounting certainly couldn't happen without a certain work of death, expenditure, or unlimited consummation of subjectivity in the service of truth and compliance, such is the form taken by the holocaust of life on the alter of reason, the sacrifice of being to a code, and of life to the sign. It is also the place of genocide, where a non-Occidental culture finds itself seized in the work of the book. The toxicity of the text is introduced into it, with all its devices for the theological-juridical enterprise of writing and its ideology of representation-communication. It obviously must be understood that the representation-communication of the truth, and its circulation-distribution, is a method of control by absolute violence.

That which is introduced by the violence of the book remains to be defined. In effect, we must attempt an excavation of ethnology, and psychoanalysis, that will allow us to glimpse what always already works within it as Occidentality. There, we see a chance to overcome the book by

—*La dissémination*, Seuil, Paris, 1972.

Pierre ROTTENBERG, *Le livre partagé*, Seuil.

Julia KRISTEVA, *La révolution du langage poétique*, Seuil, Paris, 1974

Phillipe SOLLERS, *L'écriture et l'expérience des limites*, coll. Points, Seuil, Paris, 1968.

Georges BATAILLE, *La part Maudite*, Coll. Critique, Ed. de Minuit.

Pierre LÉGENDRE, *L'amour du censeur*, Seuil, Paris, 1974.

J.-F. LYOTARD, *Discourse, figure*, Klincksieck, Paris, 1971.

Tel Quel, *Théorie d'ensemble*, Seuil, Paris, 1968.

traversing it or maybe also—it is the wager of this text—to open a fissure in the object—Vodou—that is captured and enthralled by the book, to find there a possibility of escape, something like a lapse. It is a matter of working the closure of the book at its edges and seams. We must crack open this space where the text masters culture, delimits speech, the unspoken and the unheard of, where it defines the visible as the figurable, and where its signposts deceive the work of desire by nourishing it with illusory objects.

We have already identified as a work of the text what writing conserves and reproduces in its own place, the [32] book: the truth and accounting, it would be better perhaps to call it number, or even measure. It is the installation of calculation; in the very space of a plurality that it must control.

The Truth

Before its introduction by the book, a relation to truth is what cannot be found in the reality of Vodou. It's at the level of the text, where Vodou is material for the work of writing, that there appears a problematic of truth, of God, and of morality. Vodou would have had to pass through writing for these theological questions to be “discovered” there without the authors suspecting the cultural importation of which they were the victims. In fact, those who escape the temptation to make a religious, or even theological analysis of Vodou are rare.

The text functions to produce the truth, the other, and the elsewhere that responds here and now. Writing represents it and turns our attention to it. The reader becomes a receiver. He listens to voices. He is referred to the word of someone else. This other for whom the text lends the special status of authority in the Occident. In the wake of the text the book is an authority. And those who write take power and constitute an opinion as a sacred word. Others will refer to him and he will be recognized in the concourse of texts and references. But this game of

recognition constitutes a place for truth, as well as instituting and maintaining the status of intelligibility. This game of writing that creates castes and factions, informs us of a particular function of the text: to constitute the truth as a site of power. It's properly the production of an elsewhere, from where each subject is proposed an ideal to love. This figure of truth, who only yesterday played at being a spiritual and mystic, and today plays the role of the scientist (not only in the human sciences) [33] has, here and there, the same religious function. Another world separate from actual practice is constituted by writing, and it becomes a universe of reference, the criteria by which practice is judged, frozen, and settled. Yesterday it was God, today it's scientific rationality, but it's always the same idea of truth that remains and functions in this constitution of an other and an elsewhere that regulate the investment in the present.

One could certainly say that societies without writing also produce this elsewhere. But in what way? And is it the same mytho-logic elsewhere? And why make of it an "elsewhere?" If these societies do produce difference, do we not reduce it to the Occidental theological-juridical enterprise? The difference that we aim for here is this: the distance introduced by writing in the Occidental world, and what it imports into the analysis of a society like Haitian society or Inuit society, or any other where writing does not have a dominant cultural function.

The text is, in effect, the place where truth is found in the Occident. Other civilizations have been able to constitute myths, and/or the discourse of a generation as a reference point for matters of truth, but the Occident refers itself to fundamental texts. All happens as if the culture didn't support itself on these texts. And the anthropologist faced with other cultures has gone in search of texts. He has created them. He has located and produced the myth, the discourse that functions as a text. But, faced with Vodou, he is disarmed. Vodou offers no support for this type of enterprise. But that is not all.

If the text is central in Occidental culture, it's because, as the site of truth, it has a political function. It is the apparatus that produces the myth of power and love. In fact, truth is only the illusory guarantor of such a myth and God is the name under which it has best resisted the assaults of history, or rather, histories.

The Occidental text founds the veridical, but by having a juridical function. The text indicates the law. It's without doubt why it must be the site of [34] truth or even that it should constitute truth as the site of the law. Here, the entire theological enterprise and the machinery of its metaphysics discover their unspoken rule and all that they ceaselessly obscure: to be in the service of the Law and legitimate power. Yet power is always a phantasm of Total-Power, that is to say, the monopoly of violence, thus Power that is absolute. But it's truth that appears in the text as the ultimate object offered to desire. Precisely, this will to love mankind, to offer desire the most cherished objects of satisfaction: that is what was, and still is, suspect, and has barely begun to be questioned. Desire has no use for the objects and satisfactions that are offered to it. All assistance here is already repression. Desire is not an underdeveloped country. This cavalcade of truth obscures the game of the text, to smuggle in the law under the guise of love. We must briefly note the role played by love in the production of the text in the Occident. It's worth analysing it further for all that it lends to colonization and recuperation of cultures that are outside the text [hors-texte]. Of course, it's not about the simple figure of a personal God, all-powerful and all-lovable. As if the All-Powerful, or absolute power, could be loved! But more profoundly, we must apprehend that such a figure, especially desacralised, can still command us through subtle references and infantilising beliefs. In this sense the text always sets the stage for a sacred Word, which has for us the quality of being ahistorical, of never having been kept by anyone. Which is why it is the word of God. Ultimately, we must affirm that the text is always

biblical. It's always the staging of a revelatory word, whether it's the Veda, The British North America Act, the penal code, or the constitution of the French Republic, we're always faced with a paper transaction that must produce a Sacred Word. There is always an imaginary reference to an Enunciator, whether it be a god, a super-human being, a superior man, an ancestral group, a dominant or hegemonic class, the "people" or democratic "reason." Somewhere, situated and hidden by [35] in the written, there is a loving all powerful issuer of edicts that regulates the law for the reign of happiness, therefore, of the TRUTH.

No less does the text permit and command cohesion by instituting obedience and love. Occidental nationalities and secularisation of the churches, continue to depend on this. And all are religious through and through. By the same logic, the text, as it defines the good and the righteous, designates, without even stating it, the heretic, the traitor, the enemy, the savage, the uncivilised, as well as deceit, error, and madness. It institutes the us and the them, the inside and the outside, the community and the stranger, the police and the war, at the same time that it establishes the monopoly on truth and violence. The central function of the text in occidental cultures is to imply the unknowable: as an instrument of hegemonic politics, juridical discourse dominates writing to the very limits of poetry, prohibiting any escape from the text, always already enclosing desire precisely in the opening that is its lure. It enjoys all the prestige of the rational technocrat and police of the so-called human sciences, imbued with the theo-logico-juridical subtleties of a knowledge that is always and irremediably medieval.

We must note in passing—because of its political importance— the process by which the text constitutes the truth of the book, as the enunciation of a divine Word, in all cases sacred. Linearization of fragmented space of the real by writing immobilises the plural temporality at play in represented reality. This presupposes that writing reports the event. But even pure writing

is not free from this determination. In fact, it is always writing detached, isolated from its socio-economic and politico-historic conditions of possibility. This detachment is what posits that writing-representation (as pure writing marks) is its own place, with its own internal laws of operation. And it's precisely this internal logic of writing isolated from history, that makes possible, and installs, the myth of an absolute referent: the truth. This is in effect produced by the metaphysical apparatus as the rule of writing detached from history, and the [36] absolute condition of possibility for this detachment. Unassailable and impregnable, traditional concepts have designated this mechanism and its place: reason, spirit [esprit], even God, divine thought, etc.

This detachment—the absolute—thus poses the truth of its theo-logico-juridical status, in the manner of an exteriority internal to all reality, from the text around which the culture winds itself around the mineral wherein it finds its structure, its essence, and the very possibility of its being. In the Occident, this universality of logic whereby the text attests to the role of the book remains identical to the thought of the All-Powerful. Logic is the arm of power in its endeavor to control and repress desire by any means, from genocide all the way to obedience and love. We must recognize the entire theo-logico-juridical enterprise that operates in the metaphysical apparatus, haunting the substrate of scientific methods and procedures in the human sciences, where they serve as objects to digest parts of culture that escape writing in their conditions of existence. How true this is for Vodou!

Subjectivity, or a certain problematic of desire

Broadly speaking, this concerns the repression of a plurality without boundary or center for the purpose of constructing a subjective identification that is individual and individualising.

This process of subjectivation can only operate through the work of the text in culture with a mechanism for individual identification, the mask under which the ignoble (ig-noble) advances: the designation of a guilty one. To be able to designate the guilty, the traitor, the sinner, the heretic, is one of the effects of the text that functions [37] to institute the good, meaning the love of the law and the truth as the absolute condition of happiness.

Likewise, the Western notion of the subject and the person is, from its inception, marked by the individual-society relation as the limit where it must be maintained and beyond which no designation or condemnation is rationally or legally possible. There, under the cover of the production of a subject of rights and duties, what is thus identified in Western nationalist societies is nothing other than a mask. What is hidden, its real concern, is elsewhere, in the global enterprise of the theo-logico-juridical proceedings: to control and repress desire while producing another concept—a concept that would be a specific treatment and practice of desire in the field of the social, that aims to circumvent, bypass, and exhaust it in repressive and annihilating forms until it loses its antisocial force. In short, the aim is to forestall history by short-circuiting the strangeness of the drive at the very place of its condition of possibility.

We must identify this process inasmuch as it seems to put in place the points of rupture that are impassable and irrecoverable between Vodou and the Occident. The process of subjectivation is historically and ideologically one of the major obstacles to comprehending what takes place in Vodou, specifically in what concerns the initiation of the Vodou practitioner and the crisis of possession that is its central phenomenon. But on this point, we cannot forget that with Vodou it is the very center of Haitianness that we point to. Likewise, the process of subjectivation with its conditions of possibility and its consequences seems to us to be the very space of religious recuperation and cultural colonisation of the Haitian people. We must follow

this process in its establishment of a fundamental trait of the Occident: the production of the person.

We've often remarked upon the relation between the word "person," and the mask worn by an actor of Greek theater, a type of megaphone that limited the so-called actor to lend his voice to the text. The allusion is pleasing for what it indicates [38] about a connection between the notion of person and a cultural text that dictates his place, his status, his roles, his truth, and his beliefs.

The text, as we have suggested, founded a beyond, another world that is the place of truth. But the truth thus promoted as an elsewhere becomes the rule. It's in relation to it that the subject must be constituted as a subject of knowledge. To know the truth constitutes an ultimate objective. This holds true, not only in an era where access to the text is limited to the initiated, or even a caste of priests, then later clerks, and then to certain classes or factions of social classes, but even as the book loses its sacrality: knowledge is attributed to anyone who "knows how" to read. But then, what is controlled is this "giving of access." From he who knows to he who reads, the path travelled by truth is controlled from one end to another. It is the same for all. It is the only access to attain the status of person.

What is thus put in place is strictly controlled, it is a "rationale." Under the cover of establishing a relation between the person and the truth, what is at stake is at once rationality and its model as an absolute ideal. An order of reasons and of Reason is instituted with all the stages and modalities of access to the truth. A definition of the human being is thus produced: a reasoning animal, emphasis on reason, that reduces whatever resists it to animality, and thus to demonization and exclusion. In the unfolding of this hidden historic process, it is impossible to separate the economic-political stakes, the religious fears, and the cultural ambitions. Animality

is common to politically and economically dominated groups of people, to sinners and heretics, and finally to the uneducated and those who are underdeveloped and left to fend for themselves on the margins of social historical formations. Rationality is both the prerogative of the others and the reason for their “historic success.” Obviously, force cannot take precedence over reason. On the contrary it’s reason that is the multiplier of force. God rewards his faithful. Of course!

[39]

But this historical process that produces bourgeois reason, meaning a certain position of desire in the power relations on which all social conflicts feed— this process of dominant reason culminates in the establishment of the reasonable subject. Unless it produces an ideal subject of knowledge in the form of a rational, individual conscience, this process whereby reason dominates cannot maintain or reproduce itself. The Oedipalisation of genital (family) and social (education) reproduction is merely one of the devices of this enterprise. It’s not a matter of making the production of the dominant, bourgeois rationality into the central enterprise of capitalist social forms. Simply put, it’s a question of grasping that the social historical transformations introduced in the passage from one mode of production to another do not leave untouched our modes of apprehending reality and the production of conceptual instruments for its transformation. But these transformations operate on a raw material that, we have indicated, produces an elsewhere of truth, through the function of the book and the text, that has been manipulated by the castes, factions, and historically dominant social groups. To our knowledge, the historic realization of the passage to socialism, at least in known cases, does not offer a refutation of this analysis.

We need to identify subjectivation in such a historic process. This would require us to trace the concept of intelligence across its emblematic moments. From divine light, it has

become a faculty of adaptation to complex situations passing through all the intermediary stages, according to the historical transformation that imposed the epistemic conjunctures and the conditions of possibility for its production. But what interests us, is that, progressively, it has become the center of individual consciousness. For us, this implies that across the different historical formations that have transformed it, the concept today has come to mean that every individual is subject to an established truth, a rule and system of values, that must become the law for his conscience. To be conscious is to be responsible. [40] The truth not only guarantees the established order, it promises individual happiness. Such a situation turns intelligence into an interior police. Who says truth says judgement and condemnation, and who says conscience says guilt and mortification. This serves to put the subject in a relation of persecution with the truth. The truth is the Judge. Its relation to castration is immediate. Its verdict or its diktat is the face of the forbidden and of repression.

Individuality: the subject of nationalist law

We must determine the process of subjectivation and what takes place in conjunction with it as the process of individualisation. The transformations that are operative in social relations and in the exploitation of the labour force, by the capitalist mode of production have effectively driven individualisation and, in consequence, completely modified the referent for the concept of person. There we find a process that should not be underestimated, for it will completely orient the idea of the subject of law and duties, and of citizen as proprietor in the nationalist social formations of the Occident. There we find an invaluable indicator for recentering the concept of the individual person: citizen subject of (and to) a nationalist bourgeois right. This subjugation has a material origin in the historical conjuncture where the advancing capitalist mode of production finds an opportunity. When we speak of subjectivation we don't speak of a legal

process, even if it is essential to the comprehension of what we would like to say. The production of the subject of this nationalist bourgeois law—that we designate as individual— foregrounds what functions in the mirror of the guilty conscience as the illusion of an I. It is in some sense the “I-me” [moi-je] of the modern conscience in the grip of [41] the norms and models of the nationalist bourgeois law and mass media culture. What is fundamentally in question is the conscience: the induction of guilt in the modern I that induces a paranoid position with respect to money and/or equally truth values put forth by the mass media. In short, the concept of a process such as this one derives from what psychoanalysis puts forth on the subject’s role in the formation of the ego (with reservations). In the process of identification that the social historical formation imposes on subjectivity— to reduce it to a representation of its biological and social individuality— the ego identified by psychoanalysis has the central function of organizing libidinal (narcissistic) investment in the image of the self. In any case, to conclude this clarification on the individualisation of subjectivity in the historic process of the capitalist mode of production, let us note that it concerns the capture and the misappropriation of subjectivity which denies and forecloses the plurality of the drives. It can no longer be historically produced; it is already there in the mold and in the mirror.

We must note certain characteristics that are necessary for our assertions about the function of the “I-me” [moi-je], the individual subject of nationalist bourgeois law. For the individual derived from new social relations produced by the exploitation of the labour force, it’s about identifying with social, moral, cultural, esthetic, or religious models produced by the new social historical formation. The same socio-economic and political process that isolates the individual from his family, village, or clan to make of him a worker or a salaried employee, in short, reducing him to the individual autonomy of his labour power— historically this same

process creates ideological models of subjective identification that allow him to maintain and reproduce himself as citizen, employed father, union man, honest worker, good Duvaliérist, good communist, good Christian, etc. The shattering of the tribe or the clan or the family by the new social formation is unproductive without the ideological relay of the ego, constituting itself through identification with models that [42] assure reproduction. We know to what extent such a process of individualisation, with its pretence of generalising private property, has served as a material base for this ideology of individual-subjectivity. The bourgeois model of private ownership was rooted in the advent of new social relations installed by the course of social historic formations.

Certainly, control of social relations came about through the political control of relations of production, but it coincided with the promotion of a new space for the diversion of desire and all desiring production. It's important to state, if we don't want to project into the analysis of Vodou that which its practices of initiation and possession are either in radical opposition to, or in desperate flight from, but, in any case, and, by any means, the possibility of a destructive, or even at the limit revolutionary, rupture. We must help in this.

In effect, it's the ego as image of the subject of nationalist rights that is constituted as an object for the investment of desire by the machinery of advertising that capitalist society substitutes for what used to be the philosophies and theologies of the dominant classes. The ensuing narcissism that drains all libidinal investments into a product of the ideological machine of the dominant culture is not, however, to the benefit of the subject. This diversion of the libido by advertised truth-models is strictly organized to increase the rate of profit. The entire audio-visual universe that could be opposed to the machinery of writing, and in which we are tempted to seek a space of relation to the space of Vodou, is therefore already possessed from end to end

by the mode of production that made it possible. Furthermore, this space of eye and ear is entirely produced from writing. It is inhabited by the book and always already worked through by texts. Despite Brecht and Artaud, the space of Occidental theater remains prisoner to the Greek mask, always chained to the scenario, haunted by writing, it barely allows itself to be traversed by possession. [43]

The Process of subjectivation

In the Occident, the process of subjectivation is accomplished, it seems to us, under the empire of the book. It results from the work of texts. Here, we must refer to the book as the place of the signifier, this other place, that of the truth, which we understand must not be confused with what Freud called the other scene. On the contrary, it concerns the apex of idealism. We've already said it above. It is with the constitution of such a place— to which the book testifies— that the work of the text in the cultures of writing will be elaborated, principally in the Occident.

That which is thus produced in the mode of a fable, meaning a discourse without its roots in history from which it unfolds, tends to become the guarantor of history as told. An expanding fiction doubles as a space for actual struggles and the power relations that constitute societies. The fabulation is thus promoted as truth through the function of texts— with no conjunctural relation to the truths that it purports to guaranty and illuminate—in the name of which desiring production, jouissance, and the excess that marks all subjectivity, were and are still sacrificed.

Parallel with the historical process that would return all investments of desiring production to the individuality of the subject of the nationalist law, the work of writing, the historical-cultural function of the text, turned the production of desire into the bourgeois subjectivity of an individual “desire” immolated on the altar of truth-fiction. What does this mean? First, the two movements are concomitant. Neither without the other. Returned to the

individuality of the subject of bourgeois law, desire lost the multiplicity of its drive. Without objects or obstacle, this people of the drives ceased to be a plurality without boundary or center. It became, and remains, a desiring subject, [44] a desiring citizen. A subject in relation to an other and in search of an object. The very multiplicity of the desiring production finds itself reduced, denied, and thwarted in what emerges for psychoanalysis as a desire inevitably dedicated to castration, to the lack of its object. The very space determined for the production of the unconscious being nothing more than an ideological space for nationalist individuality, and the only object within devouring distance in such a space being the narcissistic illusion of the paranoid ego persecuted by capital, the guarantor of social recognition, and by reason, guarantor of truth-health, the plurality of the drives loses its social virulence and the production of the real for a subjectivity without reference has vanished with the subversion of history.

Consequently, each individual, incessantly confronted with the demand that he prove his (economic) worth and health must face the test of the text. The Phallus is the aim of the knowledge of truth. The regard of others ceaselessly brings him to this test. He must always give an account of himself. And the relation to truth for which he is accountable is precisely the fable. The universe of fiction produced by the text, and guarded by the book as an ideal, inhabits the culture and its models in diverse forms. That which has the name “value system” or “scale of values” and is positioned as normative, supported by ideological elaboration, legitimized, justified, proven, and argued retroactively through fabulation must be named: the work of the text. This production of fiction-truths ultimately constitutes a whole signifying ensemble that marks desiring production, diverting it from its expenditure and its own investments— to code and over-code it— to in some way feed it into the windmills of the bourgeois ego.

What's important to note here is twofold. On one hand, the plural productions of the formations of the unconscious find themselves conscripted into the sacrificial battle with the ego of bourgeois individuality and captured by the truth-fable that produces the work of the text. It therefore serves to feed the artificial immolation [45] on the altar of reason (economic and political rationality). On the other hand, the desiring production is diverted from all social investment where it might function as a revolutionary rupture or a radical and irrevocable historical transmission. Thus, brought into a relation of desire with an object that is caught in the individual bourgeois problematic, turned away from any historical socio-political efficiency desiring production falls under control is positioned as an innocent object of the psychoanalytic cure, enlisted for the restoration of psychiatry. That is the efficacy of the process of subjectivation.

What is thus reduced to a unity both sacrificial and castrating, and diverted from its socio-historical impact, is what has free rein in the Vodou ceremony. It's the collective expenditure and controlled consumption of a multiple drive, without boundary or center, investing the economic, the social, the sexual, the aesthetic, etc. The initiation brutally dismantles, and seizes hold of, the entire process of subjectivation that has been organized by the work of the text. In the absence of the book, Vodou does not deploy myths (discourses that function like texts), avoids fabulation, and clears the way for subjectivity as an order of the drive that traverses biological individualities—without being reduced to them—rather causing them to burst in the crisis of possession.

[46] Ogou is the very breath of warrior violence. He sets in motion the excesses of tribal multiplicities under all the symbols of iron or of fire where the brotherhood captures and numbers this figure of death who signals the immeasurability of the drive's expenditures. Under

all the flamboyant, irritating, anguishing, bursts of violence and aggressivity, the figure of Ogou
“says” this death that works writing [*travaille l'écriture*] and that is the very life of the drive.

[Vèvè Illustration]

[end of translation]

6. RESEARCH CREATION

Psychoanalysis and art both act beyond a limit that science and technology cannot account for: both point to something singular and unquantifiable that escapes direct observation, but that leaves traces of its existence, traces of what psychoanalysis has named the unconscious. There is ample work on the effects of the translator's unconscious on their work (for instance Antoine Berman (1999) has observed that the unconscious is a force whereby ideology, mistakes, censorship, and other undesirable effects make their way into a translation). I propose flipping the perspective to affirm that the unconscious is also the source of the desire, creativity, and sensitivity that can aid the work of translation. Perhaps the results will not be "good" in the sense that a text finds its realistic representation in an alternate language, but new perspectives might unfold in the process. What if we attempt to take up the unconscious as a positive attribute? An experimental approach deriving from a work of translation might lend itself to an exploration of semiotic disturbances that are central to the psychoanalytic situation. Such an approach requires an understanding of the psychoanalytic concepts in play, hence the necessity for research, as well as an openness to the creative dimension and to the illuminating potential of errors.

When considering both the goals of research creation and the current situation in translation studies, art history offers points of reference. The field of translation studies appears to be in a crisis with respect to machine translation, and this puts pressure on the field to expand or to redefine itself. This situation evokes the invention of photography, which threw representational art into a crisis that required a redefinition of art, an expansion of practices, and urgent responses to the old question: What is art? Of course, this is a reductive account of a complex history, but it seems useful to draw this analogy. Lily Robert-Foley addresses this

history in her book, *Experimental Translation: The Work of Translation in the Age of Algorithmic Production*. About photography and its impact on art she writes:

There is a quiet crisis going on about how meaning happens in language. It is not dissimilar to the crisis that occurred in art with the advent of photography that Benjamin wrote of in “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” (from which this book takes its name), in which he wonders “whether the very invention of photography had not transformed the entire nature of art.” (2021, 8)

There are echoes of the question “What is art?” in translation studies, where the objects of study sometimes appear far afield from what is generally understood as translation, and the question, “Is this translation?” is addressed to an ever-expanding discipline.

The art critic Peter Schjeldal asks how it is possible to distinguish “good art” from “bad art.” To be more precise, how is it possible that two works of art can be superficially similar, but that only one delivers an aesthetic experience? Schjeldal answers that his experience as an art critic has led to the belief that the feeling of excitement we rely on to identify art cannot be ascribed to any formal capacity of the artist but must come from the artist’s unconscious. This idea, that aesthetic experience is activated by traces of the unconscious in a work, is interesting for the consideration of translation and whatever sort of creative process might arise from it.

The use of research as a tool of artistic creation has been active at least since the nineteen seventies when conceptual art attempted to elaborate concepts at the expense of objects. In this instance, the creative work is done within the theoretical framework of psychoanalysis, with translation as the “material.” The idea that the unconscious can be deployed in a creative process has a precedent in experiments carried out by the surrealists in the early twentieth century, in both writing and art, where they explicitly sought to enlist the Freudian discovery into their

work. In his youth, Lacan himself was affiliated with the surrealists, and his first publication on paranoia was published in the surrealist journal, *Minotaur*.

i) Ethics

Research creation requires that one situate a point of departure: either the creation will arise from the research or vice-versa. For translation, it furthermore raises a pre-existing question as to what sort of activity translation is. In fact, it is an extremely flexible practice with many potentialities. It can be done in a mode of scientific research, as in the field sociology or linguistics; it can be pursued as poetic form in its own right, as with practices of homophonic translations (for example, by Louis Zukofsky and by David Meltzer); it can be a site of experimentation, as Lily Robert-Foley has shown; it can be the ground for a theory of language as Meschonnic has it; or it can be an activity from which another kind of writing emerges, as I hope to show here.

Research creation, situated as an art practice, requires a degree of “freedom” to experiment, but also a certain responsibility to pre-existing research that is at odds with the freedom and self-authorization required to make works of art. The wager here is that by taking passages of Apollon’s work as an invitation to creative activity and by taking certain concepts from the field of psychoanalysis, it is possible to find the necessary balance for a creative response to arise from the experience of translation. I should specify that the model of translation I find most productive for this kind of thinking is borrowed from Clive Scott, who understands translation as a kind of reading, rather than a type of product. In this model, the whole experience of translating, which includes an immersion in the ideas of the text, and the kind of responsive listening for what falls outside of “content” (also emphasized by Boulanger and Meschonnic), enters into the creative response, which is to be understood as a creative response emerging from

this singular juncture and not as a “method” that can be put to use in the field. This approach is one that is on the side of “art for art’s sake” that maintains that art is necessary to us *because it is useless*. This approach rejects the notion that research creation must justify itself to the greater good, as Citton suggests in his attempt to create perimeters for research creation that include a concern for ecology. Because, historically, the question of ethics exerts continuous pressure upon both translation and psychoanalysis, it is important to consider ethics in any attempt to bring these fields into relation.

One of the challenges of undertaking a creative response to the translation of *Le vaudou* is how to maintain the subversive ideas in the text without subverting the text itself. An approach that takes great liberty in experimenting with the text at the level of words and syntax would be unethical from the perspective I am developing, though it might be ethical from another perspective. The problem here is to figure out what sort of orientation and parameters this attention to an ethics informed by psychoanalysis will allow.

ii) Method

Apollon writes,

Il y a là une chance de déborder le livre en le traversant ou peut-être aussi, c’est le pari de ce texte, d’ouvrir à l’objet, ici le Vaudou, que le livre capture et captive, une fissure, une possibilité d’échappement, quelque chose comme une défaillance du livre. (1976, 31)

Given this constitutive emphasis upon the force of Vodou, which overflows and escapes the limits of the book, Apollon challenges his writing to open and maintain a space for voice, multiplicity, and drives. Working from my translation of his text, my creative response to that act of translation will attempt to keep this space open. The form it will take is a series of associatively structured incursions made by a “plural” voice that interrupts the body of the translation. The expectation is that unforeseen connections will be activated through an attentive

unintentionality. Lawrence Venuti writes that a translation is “a translator’s dream scene”: rather than inserting a translating I (that counts as one) into the text, the idea is to open a space of dreaming through which unstable subjects, objects, and voices flow intermittently.

Freud theorized what he called “floating attention,” or “evenly distributed attention,” while listening to the speech of an analysand. The idea is to attend to the various phenomena of the analysand’s speech without attempting to follow a narrative. This method might be seen as a kind of mirroring of free association, where the analysand is asked to speak freely of whatever enters their consciousness. The analyst listens without intention in a manner that decenters meaning, while foregrounding other aspects of speech such as word choice, repetition, lapsus, tone, etc. Here, I use a method of reading/ translating that applies floating attention and associative connections, or “free” association, in keeping with the idea of borrowing theory and method from psychoanalysis.

To justify the moments when floating attention and free associations will interrupt the flow of the translation within the body of the text, I turn to Lacan’s theory of scansion. Lacan derives this concept from the literary critical term for the practice of analyzing a poem’s metrical pattern. Here, this concept, having been metamorphosed in the field of psychoanalysis, will be redeployed to the practice of reading. Scansion concerns rhythm, and rhythm is a structuring of time. One might see scansion as a development of Freud’s floating attention. Scansion, as conceived by Lacan, demands a kind of sensitivity to nodal moments: punctuation, rhythm, repetition, homophony, grammar, and logic.

Many of the moments to which these methods of floating attention and scansion call our attention are already within the domain of what a translator must be aware of— hence the richness of bringing psychoanalysis and translation into mutual reflection— however, these last

two terms call for a bit of explication. Lacan points out that grammar concerns the social link, whereas Apollon extends this idea further to claim language *is* the social link. Without attempting to reproduce all that Lacan said about grammar, a simplified explanation might be to think about the I and the me. A psychoanalyst attends to the way the analysand objectifies herself in discourse, and, conversely, where subjectivation appears. The question for reading a text would concern who speaks, of what, and to whom? In translation this movement between subject and object involves the writer, the intended reader, and the translator. So, a method of scansion that involves this sense of grammar might ask, where is the translator in this moment? Who is the writer addressing in this moment? How does the form of the “I and the “we” function here? And these questions should lead us back to the central theme of the book: les “voix.”

As for logic, this concerns paradox, equivocation, or moments of impasse. Scansion that notes impasses in translation might, for instance, seek “untranslatable” words or passages and turn them into points of production. The translator would still look for a means to make the unworkable work, but more importantly, would expand on these impossible passages, to open the cracks and to attempt to learn something from “the failure of the book.”

Finally, scansion justifies the act of *cutting* into flow of the translation. The most well-known aspect of scansion in psychoanalysis is the variable length session. This is a Lacanian innovation that cuts off the analysis at points that act as punctuation. It is done to underscore important moments in the speech of the analysand. The goal of the variable length is to prevent the analysand from running out the clock, avoidance, or covering over, in other words, business as usual. This method of constructing time/space differently through cutting could also be viewed as a form of montage, as if the goal is to recut a film or a text from within. The poem-voice (Meschonnic) can act as heteronym (Pessoa) in the dream scene (Venuti) that arises from

translating. The goal is to activate an *espace pour les “voix,”* where “interstitial voices” enter through cuts that appear in the body of the translation and unconscious effects, or traces, can become manifest.

iii) Practice: Hearing “Voices”

In the following creative response to my translation of *Le vodou*, I have experimented with written incursions into the text according to the ideas of floating attention, free association, and scansion that are described in the section on method, as well as the ideas of listening and the voice that are explored in the theoretical engagement section. I took four different approaches to “listening” to produce brief written responses in the body of the text. I call these interstitial writings “voices.” The first “voice” starts as a response to sound, not as a homophonic translation but as writing that cuts into the text based on phonetic associations. The second “voice” starts with associations that come from the idea of “reading between the lines” where one text is read, and another is “heard” in the background. This might be seen as a kind of loosely interpretive listening that “hears” a subtext. The third “voice” inserts fragments produced from the idea of continuing a thought or a phrase based on a word or words in the text. The fourth “voice,” making incursions into a section of the text in English (done while the translation was in process) does not stipulate an orientation, but simply allows associative and automatic writing to cut into the text wherever the attention is caught by a word or expression.

The writing is done automatically—that is, without being composed and without considering how one incursion follows upon or leads into the next. It is done without a sense of what kind of writing it should be; that is, no genre is kept in mind. It is not meant to offer a “true” or hidden meaning of the text *or* to counter the text in any way.

After cutting into the body of the text, I minimally composed the written incursions on their own, to see what they are like when extracted from the process. They are left in order, with almost no changes, perhaps a word added or subtracted here or there. For the second “voice” I added numbers in response to the importance of numbering and accounting in the book and to the idea of the game, present in the text, which I believe implies both rule and number. For the fourth “voice” I put the incursion into paragraph form as it seemed to occur quite naturally on its own.

I do not consider these samples of experimentation to be complete, nor to be of a particular genre. They are offered to give a sense of how one might combine notions of listening, voice, and scansion to the creation of a work that is immanent to the work of translation. Conceivably, one could “write through” an entire theoretical work in this manner, using associative incursions to compose a new work.

7. CREATIVE RESPONSE: HEARING “VOICES”

“Voice” A

Il faudrait pouvoir (If falsely to see) contourner (come turn me) le texte et lui (and he and she) trouver (through green) un dehors (under outer a mounted horse), une profondeur à sa surface. (face loss see she slide off in-face sleeve slips the lining smooth and thin lisse et tombe glisse au fond) À la limite, violer (violets at the limit ultimately intimately purple) l'écriture (lit creature, lady creator). Comment retrouver alors l'espace propre du Vaudou? L'écriture peut-elle à ce point trahir l'oralité? (Lay creature put ill upon the hour of virility)?

La difficulté (lady-facile cult-ly she inserts calque insinuates glass green hard alias close her in text) qui insiste là est en quelque sorte l'ouverture et la clôture de ce texte. Que l'écriture ne donne (quiet creator not done) voix à rien, voilà une conclusion qui ramène nécessairement ici l'enquête (see here we say what raw men net the air men here at the hunt) philosophique (love so deep) sur le vaudou (sure of vows do) à son point de départ. Ce qu'indéfiniment manque l'écriture sur le vaudou c'est précisément cela qui s'y produit comme non “traçable,” non “scriptable.” Il y a là quelque chose comme, non point une absence, ni même une présence-absence, mais bien un manque, quelque chose qui ne se donne pas plus à représentation qu'à la présentation. (Absence presence-absence lack that ne se donne plus my absent presence I gave to you)

“Voice” B

De Moreau de St-Méry à Laennec Hurbon, le discours sur le vaudou est habité par le vouloir-dire, la parole, l'intention. **Something wants to say word speak intention** Objet de l'écriture, du livre, le vaudou est toujours-déjà soumis à l'interprétation, repris dans la chaîne signifiante, **objectified captured in chains submitted to interior scan produced** sans pourtant

pouvoir y être produit comme présence. Aussi il est devenu urgent de tenter une quête de la “voix du vaudou,” **seek the voice tear open the screen** dans un mouvement de déchirement de l’écriture sur le vaudou dans l’espoir d’entre-voir quelque chose de l’ordre de la voix...du cri du corps, de son halètement pulsionnel. **real cries come from the body and the breath**
urgent intent effort seek hope

Il faudra revenir sur ce concept de voix. **Voice returns first forms unnamed carried back insists us to the place before time weaving before mother tongue voice strike heart strike ear strike future.** Son fonctionnement dans ce texte, le réseau de ses relations à d’autres qui seront ici produits en même temps, **immanent web we see spirit here** évoquent précisément ce qu’il faut indiquer comme vaudouesque. Toutefois il faut déjà soupçonner une expression telle que l’ordre de la voix de véhiculer **not box of voice not buried** la contradiction où la voix elle-même doit être étouffer. **Siren drops free** C’est dire qu’ici ce qui doit être produit comme voix, doit toujours d’avance être pensé comme **snake through** non pris dans un ordre **out of order out of time out of space** ou dans une dimension, **in the big house the counting house she sneaks past, ghostly in the master’s coat** dans la mesure même où la dimension est la demeure (maison) du calcul et de la mensuration. Pourtant il nous faudra bien faire référence au calcul, dans la mesure même où il est le seul accès possible au jeu. **No game without first a rule**

“Voice” C

C’est par rapport à **force** l’écriture **three steps** que le concept de voix with **voice I see** est ici produit **herenowfirstthe limit the boundaryd’abord**. En même temps ce n’est pas comme un envers, ni comme un opposé. **ratherascracksshattersglassgreensheetshebreak** C’est à l’occasion **ofourbirthanddeath** de et pour **outlibations** la pensée de la “possession” **spiritcallshriekshock** que ce concept de voix est

produit. **shearises from these asurfingshellof glass surface of foam** En effet la voix renvoie ici à ce que nous appelons **wecallinterferereconcile tear linear** en Haïti un loa. **Is the first appearance** L'esprit (le loa) prend possession du corps de son fidèle **"body of my faithful I speak you"** et se manifeste par sa voix d'abord. **See the voice appear** Une autre voix alors, simplement la voix, habite le fidèle. **"I voice am in you"** Mais cette indication de départ est prise dans une écriture. **writing winds the living body in thread broods there** Celle qui consiste **she is consistent and certain she cut space and render space** en un certain découpage de l'espace de la possession: l'ici et le fidèle, l'ailleurs et le loa, où n'est pas pensé le rapport de la voix nouvelle **voice carries possessed dear body change course** (car le possédé change de voix) au corps, qui est dit-on "monté par l'esprit" comme un cheval par son cavalier. **Become what rides you** La théorie de cet impensé du discours sur le vaudou est l'objet même **Hold it unthought** qui est produit dans ce texte, **it traverses you** d'un bout à l'autre, (je dirais de part en part), comme un objet **slip hand** insaisissable, **a rabbit from a hat the void pulls laugh if you can** fusant ici et là à l'improviste, **dance game game of chance dunce game** dans un jeu de dérision à l'écriture **the ridden creature smokes the horizon** et au sens, **She saw his story scour the deep way** voire à l'histoire même, jeu **jewels poured like numerals from her mouth** dont ce texte est un calcul. **Innumerable tragedies commingled with laughter names drop like flies** C'est dire qu'il y en a d'autres, et combien ! **It might have been otherwise.** possibles.

"Voice" D

This vèvè is, among others, the very act of "the Vodou [vaudouique] operation." It articulates the passage of libidinal wandering, beyond cultural limits that the writing of history and the political project constrain in the established order.

*voice wanders a la limite marronage of tongue-it listen to the waters drip at the tip of langue
what speaks here?*

Is it possible to completely tear the thinking of Vodou from what we have submitted it to, that which introduces the violent control of writing into it? In this first part, there is only the repetition of this question in some of its possible forms. That is to say, it's about unlimited pathways *unlimited pathways* of signs that delight our desire *delight our desire design our delusions de-lure de-signia detachments of reason* to know more about Vodou. We need to examine the relationship of enchantment between writing and Vodou. *a mal anime trapped in— anima rapt in— langue age delicate cage an enchantment of time immemor* We must try to avoid this diversion, this grand detour by interpretation that maintains a rift that is practically uncrossable between Vodou and us.

Writing, we discover, is above all Occidentality. It's the entire metaphysic with its presuppositions and its project of meaning and its function of supporting history against life. We must interrogate this writing in its harmfulness as metaphysical machine, and to the full extent *I is the token put it in the machine delight and desire the throes the throws the dissipate hiss its coming to motion lights up the old lights* that this metaphysical machine seems to be the most important part of a theology that consists in the substitution of an elsewhere for the here, *we were "never" here once we first made mark tracked our backs trapped our way back slipped into the elaboration of the sign-mirror we made of our trace a place to surpass all pain and live lying in death as insignia inside the lip* of the sign for life, of ideology for conflict, of knowledge for jouissance.

What it's important to identify, and simultaneously to circumvent, are all the implications and metaphysical projects carried by writing, that the locus of this transfer has the objective of a theological discourse, and what role this discourse plays in Occidentality. It's a critique of writing that must reveal the import of this transport. How is writing the vehicle of the Occidental enterprise? *an object extracted and constructed from nothing and the impossible is it real we call it and set it to run through the lines a hunted hare* Here is an elucidation that specifically allows the thought of what is occulted by writing.

Everything taken up by writing finds itself inhabited, even erased by what writing brings into it. When it concerns Vodou or any other event that is not foremost representation, nor even always presentable, the question of this invasion by writing becomes preliminary. *"I" "wrote" the intimate trace of blood-ash on the wall (first mirror) "I" saw/sow then "I" heard voice speak the "eye"* What is at stake is the possibility of a discourse that is not content to reproduce itself in a mirror or to simply maintain what is already its own import.

Writing and Representation

Our concept of writing, both before and after the ideological critique that makes the production of the concept possible, is not independent of the idea of representation. We must somehow seize the concept *somehow seize the concept* there in its pre-critical representation, where it is still ideological, in order to underline what maintains it there and reproduces it as ideology and as problematic.

In the Occidental realm, writing represents. It's a system of graphic signs that serve to conserve discourse. To begin with writing presents itself as, and is thought as, the reproduction of discourse and as its conservation. At the level of what can be opposed to this writing, we note song, dance, proverbs, myths, stories, in short, a whole ensemble relevant to the oral-auditory

order, at least at first glance. *amber first as drip the heart sticky stays eternal amber timestone traps animal voice*

However, the opposition indicated here is inexact, because it lacks the necessary symmetry that commands all opposition. *not an opposition a subversion one side lets go the rope the pillar falls poles collapse black unravelling hair pours down Valhalla* In fact, what we want to make evident is the fact that writing is representation and thereby conservation of the living word and discourse in general. Yet the oral phenomena referred to above come from memory rather than conservation, from the event rather than representation. *comes oozing through the crack in the mirror look at it touch it what we call sickness and exultation* The opposition invoked here only maintains itself in as much as it puts representation and event (on one side) in a negative symmetry with memory and conservation (on another side). For that, we must produce a concept of orality that evades expressivity and communicability.

This poses an ideological limit for writing that it never completely gets past. It is representation and stays entirely in the field of expressivity, of the sign, always in danger of being taken up in the logic *danger in the logic* that it never entirely surpasses. It is a movement of hermeneutics riveted to its place of origin: metaphysics as an apparatus for the repression of life within a theological enterprise.

Our worry about interrogating writing in this way is radically supported by the fact that Vodou is a civilization of the verb, like the African-ness that inhabits its fantasies. It doesn't know the graphic sign that represents and controls, that constitutes truth behind the scenes *truth behind the scenes* of a reading that itself is only the infinite repetition of writing. The sign has its own temporality that disarticulates the rhythm of the verb. It has its articulation and its own *word as cut as cutting a track a track-trap meaning hawk on a trace hound on a track only returning*

how to how to not only return but lapse let fly lose all meaning that smothers the voice by controlling the speech it carries. It controls and forbids. By the very repetition that constitutes it in representativity, it is the negation of the new and of starting over [recommencement].

unsmother voice voice the void voice us

Representation and Conservation

Refusing to give writing the function of cultural memory, we have preferred rather to recognize that of conservation. What is thus to be retained is that memory is dynamic. Conservation is static, innocent, and irresponsible. What is conserved is redeployed without danger and without modifying the field in which it is redeployed. Memory functions differently. It repeats its own reserve while producing adaptation, assimilation of the new, even its memorisation.

Furthermore, with the concept of conservation, we must aim at what is conserved. Here, it is of an ideological order. Writing must conserve the word and this conservation constitutes this word as truth. At the limit it's necessary to see, in this passage from living speech to written conservation, the constitution of a certain problematic of truth. *a place is only a boundary line in or out of let us say desert let us say sea let us say it was already and always known truth is a slide angle approach along a blind unseen in need of palace temple pillar fire* This process of constituting truth, by the written conservation of speech, already takes part in what must be designated as a theological enterprise.

Conservation guarantees not only the constitution of a truth, it guarantees a social order. The written is one of the final references of Occidentality, in what concerns the legitimation of authority and the rules of circulation and distribution of powers. The written is law in a social conflict. It is the norm. It reaches through time *reaches through time* to connect power in the

present to an origin that is, in essence, beyond the power of man. It's the fact of writing as trace and conservation that induces this thought of an origin that is impossible *origin impossible* to conceive of or to grasp outside the field of writing. It is writing that conserves the story. It's also that which constitutes this story as primary truth, as it is that which opens the possibilities and rules of interpretation without which this truth is not manifested. For this reason, we don't see how the idea of God, as ultimate truth and unthinkable origin that thinks itself, *unthinkable origin that thinks itself* could be possible outside of the phenomenon of writing.

Interstitial voices extracted

“Voix” A

(If falsely to see)

(come turn me)

(and he and she)

(through green)

(under outer mounted on a horse)

(face loss see she slides off in-face sleeve slips the lining smooth and thin “*lisse et tombe glisse au fond*”)

(violets at the limit ultimately intimately purple purrrr to peur peel away)

(*lit* creature, lady creator)

(reading, lee-ing, lying)

(Lay creature put ill upon the hour of virility?)

(lady-facile cult-ly she inserts calque insinuates glass green hard alias)

(close her in text)

(quiet creator not done with)

(see here we say what raw men net the air—men here at the hunt)

(love so deep so *fidele*)

(sure of vows doing)

(Absence, presence-absence, lack He *ne se donne plus* her absent-presence I gave to you)

“Voix” B

1. Ça thing wants to *say* word *speak* intention
2. Was objectified captured en chaine submitted to interior scan produced
3. Seek and see the voice *tear* open the screen
4. Over real *cries* come from over real body and over real breath
5. Urgent effort hope
6. Voice returns first forms unnamed carry back insists us to places before time weave
before mother of tongues inserts us to web voice *strike* heart strike ear strike future
7. Immanent web we see spirit here
8. Not box voice not buried
9. Siren drops free
10. Snakes through
11. Out of order out of time out of space
12. In the big house accounting house she sneaks past ghostly in the master’s coat
13. No game without first a rule

“Voix” C

Force three steps

voice I see here-now at limit bound d’abord

unopposed

rather as cracksshatteredglasssgreensheetsshebreak

overourbirthordie

out libations

spirit call shriekshock

she rises from sea-surf shells of glass-sur fausse-of-foam

Is the first appearance

“body of my faithful I speak you”

see the voice appear

“I see am in you.”

writing winds the blood-body in thread broods there she is consistent and certain cuts space and renders

but the new voice tearing carries the possessed “dear body change course”

Become what rides you. Hold it unthought.

Sliphand, a rabbit from a hat the void pulls laugh if you can

dance game game of chance dunce game

The ridden creature smokes the horizon.

she-saw his story scour the deep way

jewels poured like numerals from her mouth innumerable tragedies commingled with a mineral laugh

names dropped like flies

It might have been otherwise.

“Voix” D

Voice wanders a la limite marronage of tongue-it listen to the waters drip at the tip of
langue what speaks here? Unlimited pathways delight desire de-lure a mal anime trapped in—
anima rapt in— langue age delicate cage an enchantment of time immemor

I is the token put it in the machine delight and desire the throes the throws the dissipate
hiss its coming to motion lights up the old lights we-were “never” here once we first made mark
tracked our backs trapped our way back slipped into the elaboration of the sign-mirror we made
of our trace a place to surpass all pain and live lying in death as insignia inside the lip an object
extracted and constructed from nothing and the impossible is it real we call it and set it to run
through the lines a hunted hare “I” “wrote” the intimate trace of blood-ash on the wall (first
mirror) “I” saw so then “I” heard voice speak the ocular “eye” some “one” seized in amber first
as drip the heart sticky stays eternal amber timestone traps animal voice

no opposition a subversion one who lets go the rope the pillar falls poles collapse Black
unravelling hair pours down the great hall come oozing through the crack in the mirror look at it
touch it what we call sickness and exultation danger in the logi truth behind the scenes word as
cut cutting track a track-trap meaning hawk on a trace hound on a line only returning and then
and then how to not only return but lapse let fly loss all *unsmother voice voice the void voice Us*

a place is only a line in or out of let us say desert let us say sea let us say it was already
and always known truth is a slide angle approach along a blind unseen in need of palace temple
pillar fire mouth boundary ear boundary voice dissolve whispers at the gate reaches through time
origin impossible unthinkable origin thinks itself.

CONCLUSION

This thesis began with the work of translating *Le vaudou*. I knew I wanted to think through translation from concepts within the text, to deploy a psychoanalytic framework, and to produce a creative experiment that would be in response to the experience of translating and to the theories encountered in the book. I began the translation with the idea of the relay between the senses and the text, with the hope that I might welcome unconscious processes as they appeared. To this end I tried doing “automatic translation” an idea borrowed from writing practices used by surrealist writers in which I translated quickly without using references or be concerned with corrections. I tried reading aloud from Apollon’s text without thinking about the meaning, to try to sensitize my ear to the phonetic dimension, and I tried translating while listening to music, such as Charles Mingus and Alice Coltrane, that I felt expressed something of the idea of voice that I found in Apollon’s work. These efforts were interesting, and I felt that they did aid in sensitizing my “ear” to the text that in a way that extended beyond the realm of signification. That said, due to the density and complexity of the concepts, as well as the style of writing, I ultimately became most concerned with rendering the text clear enough, first to myself, so that I would feel confident enough to elaborate the concepts in the theoretical section, but also to potential readers. While I did not want to render the text artificially “smooth,” it was important to me that people interested in Apollon’s work would be able to work with the translation. This posed the problem of how the creative part would unfold if not at the level of the translation itself.

To come up with an approach for working creatively from the translation I allowed some of what Apollon wrote to act as a kind of invitation to disturb and interrupt the text, to “overflow” and “unfinish” the book. I wrote these incursions into the text at different phases of

writing the thesis, and found that there were different modes of “listening” and writing that could be activated in the process. Qualities that I felt were latent in *Le vaudou* emerged in this writing, for instance, the intratextual writing reveals a presence of “the feminine,” that I feel is hinted at but unresolved in *Le vaudou*. I was surprised by how difficult it was to write without composition or intention foremost in the mind, as if the effort would almost instantly be exhausted such that I would have to stop very quickly. The experience was curious, as if it combined reading and writing in a way I had not experienced before. If I were to start the thesis over, I might argue that the creative part is, in fact, a kind of second order translation, or at least it points to a process whereby a theoretical text might be “translated” into a poetic text.

While the idea of taking each text being translated as one that demands its own thought or practice of translation is one that does not amount to a method, given that it must be rethought anew in each instance, the creative response to the translation does, in a way, point to a method that produces new work, something between the “voice” of the translator and the “voice” of the text, by writing into a translation. This approach to writing could be used to seed a creative effort and it could also be deployed to engage with reading and writing at different levels of experience than those that we are accustomed to, whether it be as scholars, translators, or as creative writers.

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