The Traduit Partouze Archives

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We may have learned to sing before we learned to speak, by imitating birds.
Anna Gibbs [1]

Parasite, miss.
Boîte à zique, miss.
Moite zizi, miss.
Traduit Partouze No. 3, May 17th, 2012

Does meaning keep us from understanding each another?

This is what I call a 'real question', what I call a 'real question' with my students, meaning, it's a question I don't have the answer to. A theme or a subject that I would like to discuss, and chisel away at, through the form of a question.

And I would like to think about this question in the context of a series of events—or 'sound translation happenings', that occurred in Paris between 2011 and 2015, at which 10-20 people gathered together for a collective sound translation. I would say that I organized these events, but the pronoun is troubling to me. 'I' is an easy pronoun to use because you know immediately who I'm talking about. If I say 'we' I have to tell you who I mean, and I'll do that, but let's start with I.

1. Gibbs, Anna, "Fictocriticism, Affect, Mimesis: Engendering Difference", *TEXT*, vol. 9, No. 1, April 2005, p. 7.

1 Traduit Partouze No. 1 at *La Compagnie Libre,* September 1st, 2011

In 2011, Matthew T. Carlson, actor and director of *La Compagnie Libre*, an acting group that no longer exists, asked me if I wanted to collaborate on a project with him, and if I had any ideas for a script. After some thought, I suggested a homophonic translation of *En Attendant Godot*. Explaining what a homophonic translation is, however, is a bit like folding a piece of paper: you can only explain it through example. I hadn't yet realized that, and repeating "you translate just the sounds and not the meaning", ironically made no 'sense' to Matthew Carlson, who didn't have a background in theories of language or translation. This is proof perhaps that the separation of language into sound and sense is truly a theoretical affair. Unless of course you are doing a homophonic translation.

The first Traduit Partouze was scheduled in *La Compagnie Libre*'s basement rehearsal space in the 9th arrondissement of Paris on January 9th, 2011. The name 'Traduit Partouze' (translation orgy) happened in reference to a writing experiment created by Mexican writer and scholar Kelly A. K., called "writing orgies", in which she and another writer get on stage and write publically, responding to one another, while the writing is projected for audience members to see. As Kelly A. K. knows, I find this all rather too binary to merit the name 'orgy'. Hence, the Traduit Partouze.

The first Traduit Partouze was set up like a theater piece: four people doing a live sound translation of *En Attendant Godot* and *Waiting for Godot* first from French into English, and then from English into French. I invited poet and experimental translator Brandon Brown, Beckett scholar Lea Sinoimeri, and translation philosopher Johan Härnsten to participate with me.

The first thing we discovered is that it is not enough to have a working knowledge of a language to perform a sound translation. I'm obviously talking about the TL (target language), since, for the SL (source language) you need no particular knowledge whatsoever (although I'll come back to this).

> Estragon: Rien à faire.
> Vladimir: Je commence à le croire. J'ai longtemps résisté à cette pensée, en me disant, Vladimir, sois raisonnable. Tu n'as pas encore tout essayé. Et je reprenais le combat. Alors te revoilà, toi.
> Estragon: Tu crois?
> Vladimir: Je suis content de te revoir. Je te croyais parti pour toujours.
> Estragon: Moi aussi.
> Vladimir: Que faire pour fêter cette réunion? Lève-toi que je t'embrasse.
> Estragon: Tout à l'heure, tout à l'heure. [...]

> Estragon: Rihanna affair.
> Vladimir: Jacko mounts on a car. J-Lo wanton raised her asset, pansy Amadeus. Bloody mirror /(ou)/ Bloody Mary. Suárez no habla. Tuna paws uncork, too tasty, eh? Asian lukumbar ... Alert, wallet war!
> Estragon: To crawl?

VLADIMIR: Jesus count! Haunted terror war. Jetty choir party, pour two, sure!
ESTRAGON: Muah Ozzy.
VLADIMIR: Cough-a-pore /(ou)/ coffer poor, the fetus said, a ray of neon. Let's talk-ish, Fortinbras.
ESTRAGON: Total her, total her.

Readers of Brandon Brown [2] will recognize his poetics here, and some of their collision with my own, not only in the treatment of contemporary pop icons as goddesses in an ancient pantheon, but also in the mixture of different registers of speech, and references to sociability, in particular related to alcohol, for example in the injunction to "pour two, sure!". The possible identification of signatures here reflects its genesis: the first half, while we translated French into English very much resembled a very boring academic conference, in which a room full of unbilingual strangers watched Brandon Brown and I—the two native English speakers—do a sound translation of *En Attendant Godot.*

Then, after a brief pause we switched to French, the first language of most people in the room. The most notable thing that happened once we switched to French was a breakdown of the fourth wall, as well as a certain breakdown of anonymity between those who did not know each other prior to the event (although this did not extend to everyone, as I will discuss later). Part of this was undoubtedly due to the fact that the audience was mostly made up of actors in Matthew T. Carlson's troupe, and that they were also in their own rehearsal space. The fourth wall was already a fluid and mobile line for them. The other element that undoubtedly contributed to this was the consumption of alcohol, which allowed for the creation of a porous boundary between the Traduit Partouzes and the parties that almost always followed, and were indeed woven into the Traduit Partouze, or rather, the Traduit Partouze was like a figure or a design woven into the tapestry of the party. Alcohol also played a rather lamentable part in the reconstitution of the archives, as we'll see in the second half of this chapter. The role of alcohol on memory is a little bit like the effect of time on history—there is much forgetting, many things lost. Reconstituting the texts of a party is a little like reconstituting the fragmented texts of an ancient epic.

ESTRAGON: Nothing to be done.
VLADIMIR: I'm beginning to come round to that opinion. All my life I've tried to put it from me, saying, Vladimir, be reasonable, you haven't yet tried everything. And I resumed the struggle. So there you are again.
ESTRAGON: Am I?
VLADIMIR: I'm glad to see you back. I thought you were gone forever.
ESTRAGON: Me too. Vladimir: Together again at last! We'll have to celebrate this. But how? Get up till I embrace you.
ESTRAGON: Not now, not now. [...]

2. Brown, Brandon, *The Persians by Aeschyls*, Ann Arbor, Displaced, 2011; *The Poems of Gaius Valerius Catullus*, San Francisco, Krupskaya, 2001; *Flowering Mall*, Berkeley, Roof Books, 2012.

ESTRAGON: Nadine se bidonne.
VLADIMIR: En bikini, tout comme hareng, tout ça ... tapinons! Ô, mal ! aië, – failli m'traîter de petite fourmi! Céline! V'là dix mille! Bah ris, somnambule, ou avant d'être raide, hé, vérifie! Un dard résout, mais c'te gueule! Sincère ou arrogant?
ESTRAGON: La maille?
VLADIMIR: Ah, ma glotte, tous saoûls! Bah, qu'un sanctuaire gonfle l'hiver.
ESTRAGON: Mytho!
VLADIMIR: Tout gai, heureux, la gaine, hélas! Ouais, lave-toi, c'est abrasif /(ou)/ c'est la braderie /(ou)/ c'est l'apéritif ! Bâtard? Galope-t-il en Bresse, ou ... ?
ESTRAGON: Notons, notons /(ou)/ Maintenant, maintenant!

As we can see here, recourse to the semantic field of alcohol is even more pronounced in the French than it is in the English (where, so to speak, they had only just begun: "pour two, sure!"). The figure in the carpet indeed becomes the party as we see frequent references to laughter, as well as to a need for identification through encounter. Interpellations, either to individuals such as Nadine, or to tropes like the "bâtard" the "somnambule" or the "Mytho" are quite frequent, but most of all, what emerges is the need to recognize and situate the other. To know where the other stands, "failli m'traîter de petit fourmi", "vérifie!", "sincère ou arrogant?", or know where "he" ("il") is, where he gallops "en Bresse, ou ... ?"

In any case, the name 'Partouze' turned out to be a good one, insofar as, even if you did not know someone beforehand, after having a 'Partouze' with them, you nonetheless feel a certain undeniable intimacy.

And this uncanny intimacy continued into the following Traduit Partouze, and became a collective force that in fact created a community. Why uncanny? Because this intimacy seemed to betray some of the commonly held beliefs of the creation of intimacy, most of all, that it takes time. You could feel you knew someone intimately, without ever having spent any actual intimate time with them, or without really knowing anything about them.

But as for the Traduit Partouzes where bodies collected in the same room, I came to believe that this breakdown of anonymity and the creation of intimacy was due to more than just alcohol. That there was something about removing the strictures, the debt, the imagined duty-bound obligation of language to 'mean' something—that is to mean something more than once–that breaks down the loneliness of subjectivity. It cracks the mirror that separates ourselves from ourselves and therefore ourselves from others, as our faces, tongues and bodies unite around a common melodic and rhythmic syntagm. In homophonic translation, sense becomes nonsense in a game that seeks sense in nonsense. Language collectively meets its maker so to speak as Traduit Partouze participants strip and refabricate sense, from sound, in the new language, and "detach the present from history as a constraining and defining identity so that

it can be moved beyond and something other can be invented"[3]. This quote is taken from Anna Gibbs's fictocritical writing on affect and mimesis, which I'd like to use as a theoretical apparatus with which to think through what happens linguistically, poetically and ethically in the Traduit Partouzes.

It would seem at first that to translate phonetically into a language, it needs to be your mother tongue. This is related to the idea that this process requires an almost pre-linguistic knowledge of it, and that to access the distinction between sound and language, and recover the sound of language before its meaning, one almost has to 'return' to what Gibbs has referred to as "motherese":

> a highly expressive, patterned, and repetitive way of speaking with exaggerated changes in pitch and intonation that seem to be designed to capture the babies' attention and to meet and match the babies' preferred sounds and movements in their particular rhythm, pace and intensity[4].

I use the single quotation marks around the word 'return' because I am not actually convinced that we ever 'depart' from motherese. In Gibb's affect theory, motherese is connected to mimicry and mimetic communication:

> Mimicry can be understood as a response to the other, a borrowing of form that might be productively thought of as communication. By 'communication' in this context, however, I do not mean the transmission of information, but rather, action on bodies ... when reading fiction produces new affect states in us, which change not only our body chemistry, but also—and as a result—our attitudes and ideas as we shape from narrative a structure of meaning.[5]

In this quotation, Gibbs is talking about fiction, but I think this could certainly be thought in the case of poetry, and most definitely in the specific example of the collective translation/writing experience of the Traduit Partouze. In Gibbs's writing, mimesis is a transmission of forms—and this transmission of forms is the basis of ethical interaction. Seeing forms in places where they are 'not' i.e., seeing a face in a rock, or a word in the sky, shares something with the way we learn to get along and love one another, the way we imitate and come into rhythm with one another. In a Traduit Partouze we search together for vital prosodic forms: words and rhythms in words and rhythms, and in so doing we enter into a mimetic communication with one another. One of my favorite moments of the Traduit Partouze is looking around the room and watching everyone's mouths moving and turning around the same pulsing string of sounds, trying to grasp hold of a history, of an object, in a process of trying to break with the history of one object (prosodic syntagm) and find another in it, as one finds a face in a rock.

3. Gibbs, Anna, "Writing as Method: Attunement, Resonance and Rhythm", *in* Stage, Carston (Ed.), *Affective Methodologies: Developing Cultural Research Strategies for the Study of Affect,* London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, p. 223.

4. Gibbs, Anna, "After Affect: Sympathy, Synchrony and Mimetic Communication", *in* Gregg, Melissa, Seigworth, Gregory J. (Eds.), *The Affect Theory Reader*, Durham & London, Duke University Press, 2010, p. 197.

5. *Ibid*, p. 193.

We engage thus in what I call 'procedural' translation. Gibbs makes the difference in her reflections on affect and mimesis between "procedural" and "declarative" cognition, in which declarative cognition is the recall of some thing, whereas as procedural cognition is the recall of *how* to do something, "the domain of habit without which we cannot function. It comprises motoric, perceptual, and cognitive skills as well as complex emotional patterns"[6]. The combination and compression of all of these skills, "prompts a rethinking of just what is meant by cognition at all, especially when it is routinely associated with language"[7]. In procedural translation, it is the way of translating that is at stake, rather than what is being translated specifically. Of course, part of the interest in doing this is the mystery of *what* it is exactly that we translate: what is the form of meaning?

This reflection on different forms of cognition and the way in which we understand, get along and love one another, and the world, is deeply connected in Gibbs writing method. How indeed can we rethink cognition without rethinking the role of the researcher and, specifically, the way in which a researcher writes? For Gibbs's research happens in the very process of writing itself. Procedural translation might therefore be likened to something like practice-based research, or even to situated knowledges[8], in which the researcher is implicated passionately (Gibbs uses this word often in reference to Teresa de Lauretis) in what they are researching. Indeed if we think of the world as whirlwinds of viral mimicries, we are of course ourselves taken up in these viral whirlwinds, what Gibbs characterizes with Daniel Stern as "public feeling", which

> ... is in constant motion, subject to contingent changes of intensity and direction. This makes it hard to grasp and still more difficult to fix and identify. The question then becomes how to apprehend and articulate it. This requires the development of a methodological practice of affective attunement and resonance and a writing finds an analog for it, and which creates a 'poiesis of forms of living,' whose 'objects are textures and rhythms, trajectories,' but which also takes as object the very 'modes of attunement, attachment, and composition' that it produces.[9]

The Traduit Partouzes consist of collective writing which, it might be said, takes public feeling as its object. By that I mean "the very 'modes of attunement, attachment and composition' that it produces". And so procedural translation we might think of both as a reorientation towards experimenting with the form or method of translation—towards the 'how' rather than the 'what' of translation—as well as a reflection on who is translating, and why and for whom. Thinking the Traduit Partouze through affect and mimesis, this becomes a question of rhythm and attunement. Of course, the 'products' of the Traduit Partouzes make very little sense to anyone who is not "attuned" to the process/object. It might be interesting here to engage in what Gibbs calls "methodological impurity"[10], and compare this to what has been

6. *Ibid.*, p. 200.
7. *Ibid.*
8. Haraway, Donna, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective", *Feminist Studies*, vol. 14, No. 3, Autumn 1988, p. 575-599.
9. Gibbs, "Writing as Method", *op cit.*, p. 228.
10. Gibbs, "Fictocriticism, Affect, Mimesis", *op cit*, p. 3.

known in translation studies as 'Skopos theory', a theoretical and methodological tool that orients translation toward its function or *skopos*[11] (aim, purpose), and in consequence towards the receiving public. The case of the Traduit Partouze presents an interesting one then, because creator and audience are the same. This is what I fondly call a 'micro-public'. Much poetry and artistic experimentation happens in this way, a circle of 200 people, or so, who are both creators and spectators. This is even more radical in the Traduit Partouze, since it is a circle of 15-20 people, and the creation and consumption is more or less simultaneous. One might think of participatory musical events in which the distinction between listener and performer is blurred or dissolved, such as in Jarocho music, or private Karaoke parties, to cite only two examples. The mimicry in writing that Gibbs links closely to orality and gesture, is in a sense heightened then, since mimicry is directly corporeal, facial and ethical. The rhythms, melodies, gestures—all the prosody of motherese—that code for public attunement must enter a kind of choral mode.

This is then another dimension in what I would like to think about as 'procedural translation', not only as 'attunement' but as 'composition', demanding "a different set of tools, facilitating repair, assemblage and re-assemblage, stitching together, a kind of bricolage or experimental tinkering which makes new connections and new machines which might do new things or do things differently"[12].

1.1 Traduit Partouze No. 1: supplementary reflections

So in answer to my initial question: Does meaning prevent us from understanding one another?

No.

First of all because homophonic writing is not about deleting meaning, it is about creating it. So, on the one hand, we have a rather naïve, utopic vision of this process of research-creation: prior meanings inhibit us from coming together ethically, and it is the process from this first un-meaning step of homophonic translation of language into 'pure' sound, that allows us to move past this and create new meanings in the encounter with the other.

On the other hand, the time in which we can speak of the 'self' and the 'other' in singular terms is no longer. There is no encounter with 'the other'. There are many encounters, with many others, and there is no context in which it is all right for 'the subject' to code for 'the other', or for him to substitute himself and his own discourse and world view in place of this other, or to substitute one 'other's' world view in a place of an 'others'. If I have one critique of Gibbs's writing, it is that fictocritical work sees itself as reversing the process by which research speaks for the other and thus dominates him or her, since it engages with "both the researcher's own affect and those of others whom she engages in her research"[13]. According to Gibbs, this process allows "the voice of the other to interrogate both the preconceptions of the researcher

11. Reiß, Katharina, Vermeer, Hans, *Towards a General Theory of Translational Action: Skopos Theory Explained*, New York, Routledge, 2013 [1984].
12. Gibbs, "Writing as Method", *op cit.*, p. 224.
13. *Ibid.*, 223.

and the voice of theory in such a way as to reveal the particularity and its partiality of the latter rather than the neutrality and objectivity (or at least generalizability) once claimed for it"[14].

I earlier brought up the notion of 'attunement': that procedural research might engage with the world by passionately implicating itself into the mimetic processes that code for it, rather than situating itself outside, above or at a distance from these processes. I would like to put into jeopardy the romanticism of this notion. Because it seems like such a good thing. And indeed, in much of Western harmonics, it assuredly is a good thing. But what does it mean to come into tune? Can different people have a different feeling of tune, or harmony, of what sounds good? It may also be quite important and interesting to think about what is out of tune. In Gibbs, part of what a fictocritical or a procedural (might we simply say creative?) approach to research attempts to do is to break with habit, in search of newness, to break with old patterns of violence and domination. We might compare this with Sara Ahmed's writing on affect, for whom habit is how objects may be coded as 'happy' or 'good' before we come into contact with them: "Certain objects are attributed as the cause of happiness, which means they already circulate as social goods before we 'happen' upon them, which is why we might happen upon them in the first place"[15]. In Ahmed, it would be going out of tune, rather than coming into tune which would break the habit.

In other words, the 'family' of the Traduit Partouze, is indeed a happy one, meaning, there are certain measures of delight that it codes for in advance, rejecting that which might come into conflict with it. But not everyone is happy in the Traduit Partouze. First of all, there exist power dynamics within the Traduit Partouze and also surrounding it. I would like to here evoke with the reflections of Cherrié Moraga in *This Bridge Called My Back*[16], on how certain power dynamics that we are in fact attempting to unravel with this experiment of the Traduit Partouzes are in fact, unfortunately reproduced within them: There are the 'stars' i.e., the wittiest and the most gregarious, and also the 'invisibles' (although this is not always the people known to be most shy)—quite simply most often, foreign language speakers (foreign to the TL). This might also include those who are not poets, translators or musicians—and so the Traduit Partouze is a kind of foreign language to them—although these people might pick up the trick of it quickly. And this is a third category of 'invisibles'—newcomers, strangers to the Traduit Partouze. This interior disequilibrium is related, allegorically or not I'm still not sure, to exterior disequilibriums that code for this 'we' that may so romantically re-make meaning in the world in homophonic translation (here I am indebted to the reflections of Heta Rundgren [17] and Tiphaine Samoyault [18] on the fabrication of the 'we'). What to make, for example, of the fact that Traduit

14. *Ibid.*

15. Ahmed, Sara, "Happy Objects", *Affect Theory Reader*, *op cit.*, p. 41.

16. Moraga, Cherrié, "La Güera", *in* Moraga, Cherrié, Anzaldúa, Gloria (Eds.), *This Bridge Called My Back*, New York, Kitchen Table–Women of Color Press, 1981, p. 27-35.

17. Rundgren, Heta, *Vers une théorie du roman postnormâle: féminisme, réalisme et conflit sexuel chez Doris Lessing, Märta Tikkanen, Stieg Larsson et Virginie Despentes*, doctoral dissertation, Université Paris 8 and University of Helsinki, under the direction of Anne E. Berger and Tuija Pulkkinen.

18. Presentation at the "Congrès Mondial de la Traductologie" workshop on the *Dialogue between Translation Studies and Comparative Literature*, "Quand l'événement change de langue: traduction et participation", April 11th, 2017. And ensuing conversation.

Partouzes attendees are mostly white, although not exclusively, mostly academics and poets, although not exclusively, and mostly francophone? How does this code for who is 'successful' and what is 'happy' during the event of the Traduit Partouze? How does this code for what kind of 'meaning' is 'made'?

And this game must also be taken—like any discussion of translation—in the geopolitical context of the difference and asymmetries between languages. There is a first distinction to make between known and unknown languages. What are the politics for example, of doing a sound translation from a language that no one, or only one person in the room speaks? What are the politics of translating into a language that only some of the people in the room speak?

These are questions that any practice of creative, appropriative or procedural translation must ask itself. These are not however, questions, that should prevent us from doing creative translation. I am, after all, with Anna Gibbs that

> theory needs to adopt a heuristic function, drawing creatively on different forms of knowledge to ask what if one conceived the world in this way? What then becomes possible in the space opened up by such a 'passionate fiction,' to borrow a term from Teresa de Lauretis (1994)? [19]

I do believe, in spite of my reservations, that this is one possible escape route for theory that seeks to articulate itself in the wake the denunciation of the European male bourgeois 'subject' (in the singular) as unspoken center of all abstraction.

So, what if we read the poems of the Traduit Partouze as poems?

2 Traduit Partouze No. 2 at 14 Rue Brochant (date unknown)

We've already had the chance to look a little at the texts of the first Traduit Partouze. The second unfortunately fell prey to what I mentioned above as the effects of alcohol on memory. Creative translation practices often meet in *coincidentia oppositorum* with ancient or medieval textual takes, insofar as there can be no definitive text of the Traduit Partouze—or rather the definitive text is what is reassembled *après coup* from diverse fragments. This second Traduit Partouze took up *Waiting for Godot* where the first left off, but this time only going from English to French (or if there was passage from French to English this has been lost to time, memory and archive).

> Vladimir: May one inquire where His Highness spent the night?
> Estragon: In a ditch.
> Vladimir: A ditch! Where?
> Estragon: Over there.
> Vladimir: And they didn't beat you?
> Estragon: Beat me? Certainly they beat me.
> Vladimir: The same lot as usual?

19. Gibbs, "After Affect", *op cit.*, p. 189.

> Estragon: The same? I don't know
> Vladimir: When I think of it ... all these years ... but for me ... where would you be ... ? You'd be nothing more than a little heap of bones at the present minute, no doubt about it.
> Estragon: And what of it?
> Vladimir: It's too much for one man. On the other hand, what's the good of losing heart now, that's what I say. We should have thought of it a million years ago, in the nineties.
> Estragon: Ah stop blathering and help me off with this bloody thing.
> Vladimir: Hand in hand from the top of the Eiffel Tower, among the first. We were presentable in those days. Now it's too late. They wouldn't even let us up. What are you doing? Taking off my boot. Did that ever happen to you?
> Estragon: Boots must be taken off every day [...].

At the start of each Traduit Partouze, a transcriber is designated, who records, more or less faithfully, the results of the Partouze. At the second Partouze, these proceedings were apparently produced by two different transcribers, and present some troubling questions that highlight the importance of the transcriber's role, and the power he or she has over the final text. The 'first' (although this chronological designation is undoubtedly arbitrary) of the two transcriptions (see figure 1 to 4) was probably written by a foreign language speaker, shown from the first line, where "croire" is translated in the subjunctive tense for an unidentifiable reason, and "ouais" spelled inhabitually, as "ouaih". Between the two transcriptions we can also see quite a number of divergences. First, on the level of composition, we can see that in the first transcription, many of the rejected proposals remain, although they have been barred. Are these attempts that were rejected by the group? or the mistaken *malentendus* of a foreign speaker? We'll never know.

The 'second' (see figure 5 to 6) transcription however, appears to present the text as a unified 'coherent' transcription. What is most mysterious here is that the format of the paper, the lines and the ripped fringe on the left-hand margin, indicate that these papers were taken from the same notebook. Was one written after the other (i.e., a transcription of a transcription?), or were some sheets ripped out beforehand and these represent two simultaneous transcriptions, one lain into the leaves of the notebook from whence the paper came, and the other scribed on torn out sheets, perhaps on the back of a book or another, differently lined or even unlined notebook? Again, we shall never know for sure.

The two transcriptions also offer some differences in meaning. The first underscores the importance of hearing in the construction of meaning, and the extent to which the 'same' collective homophonic translation might not wind up the same 'text' depending upon who is hearing it. "Mais on y croie ouiah. Isa, n'est-ce pas? Honnête" in the first is rendered, "Mais on y croit, ouais! Isa, n'est-ce pas, honnête?" in the second. The punctuation codes for two totally different signifying relationships. In the first, "Isn't it Isa? Honest" Honest is a response, whereas in the second it merely emphasizes the question, something more like: "honestly, isn't it Isa?" We see the importance, the

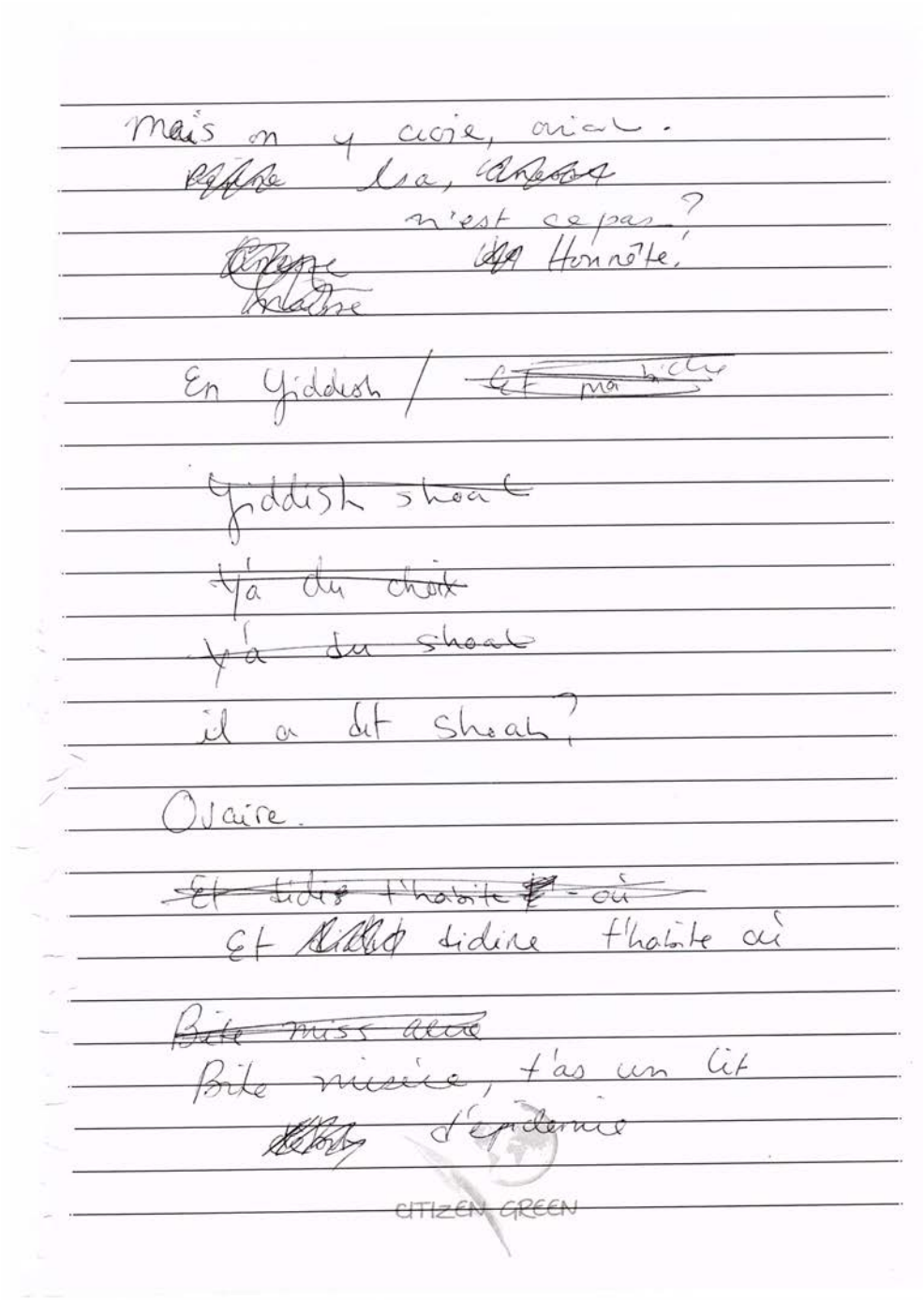


Figure 1 – First transcription, page one.

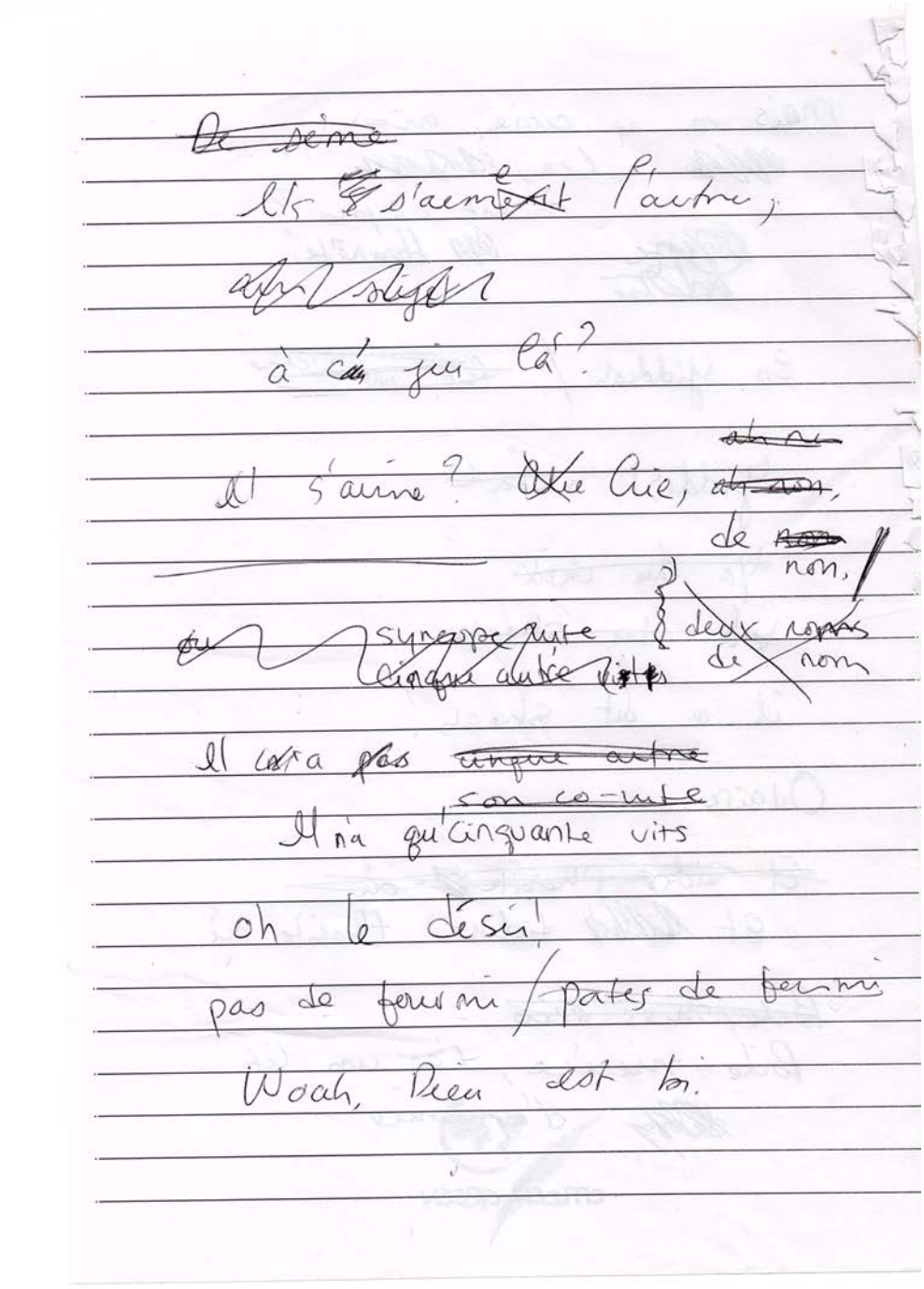


Figure 2 – First transcription, page two

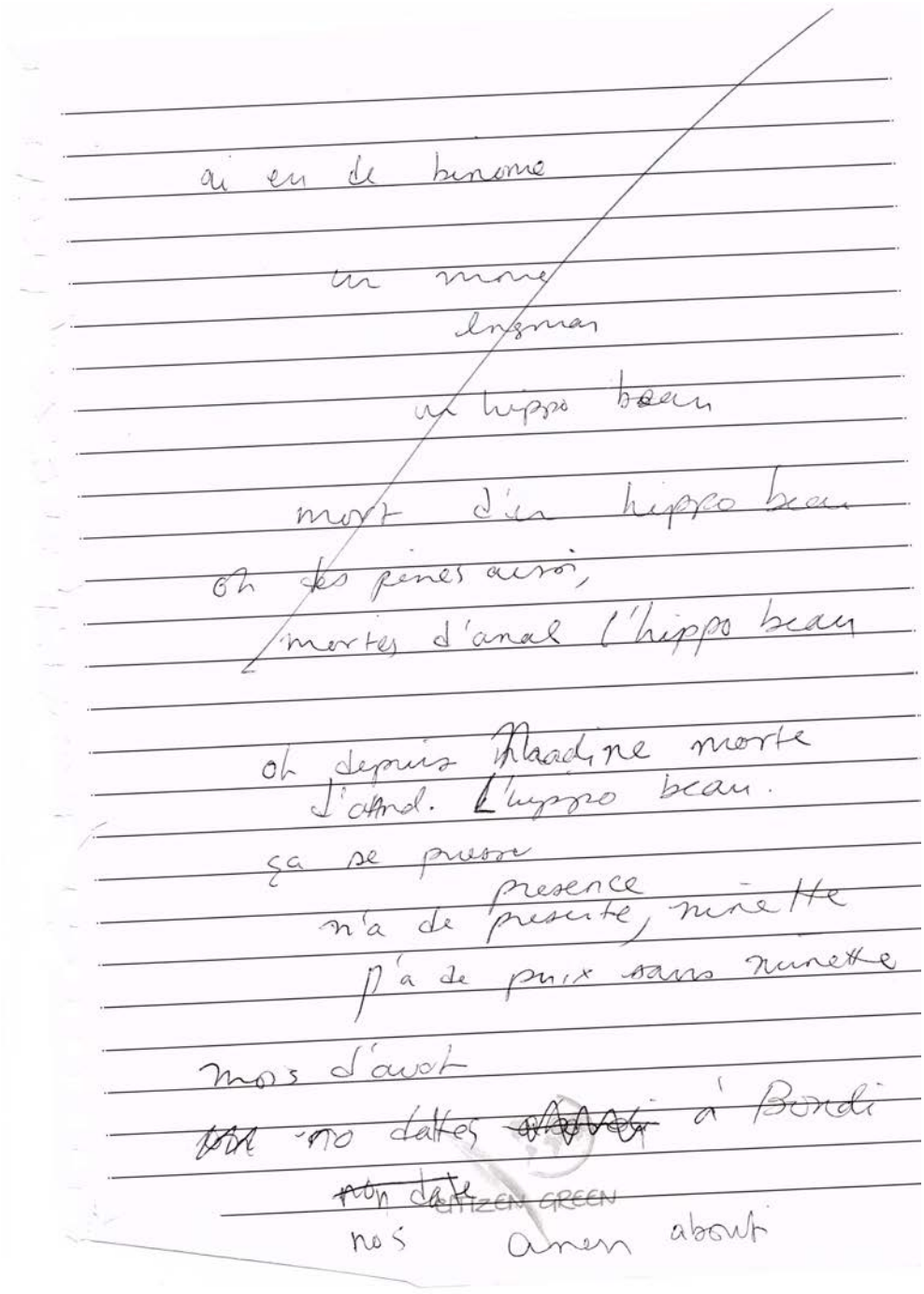


Figure 3 – First transcription, page three.

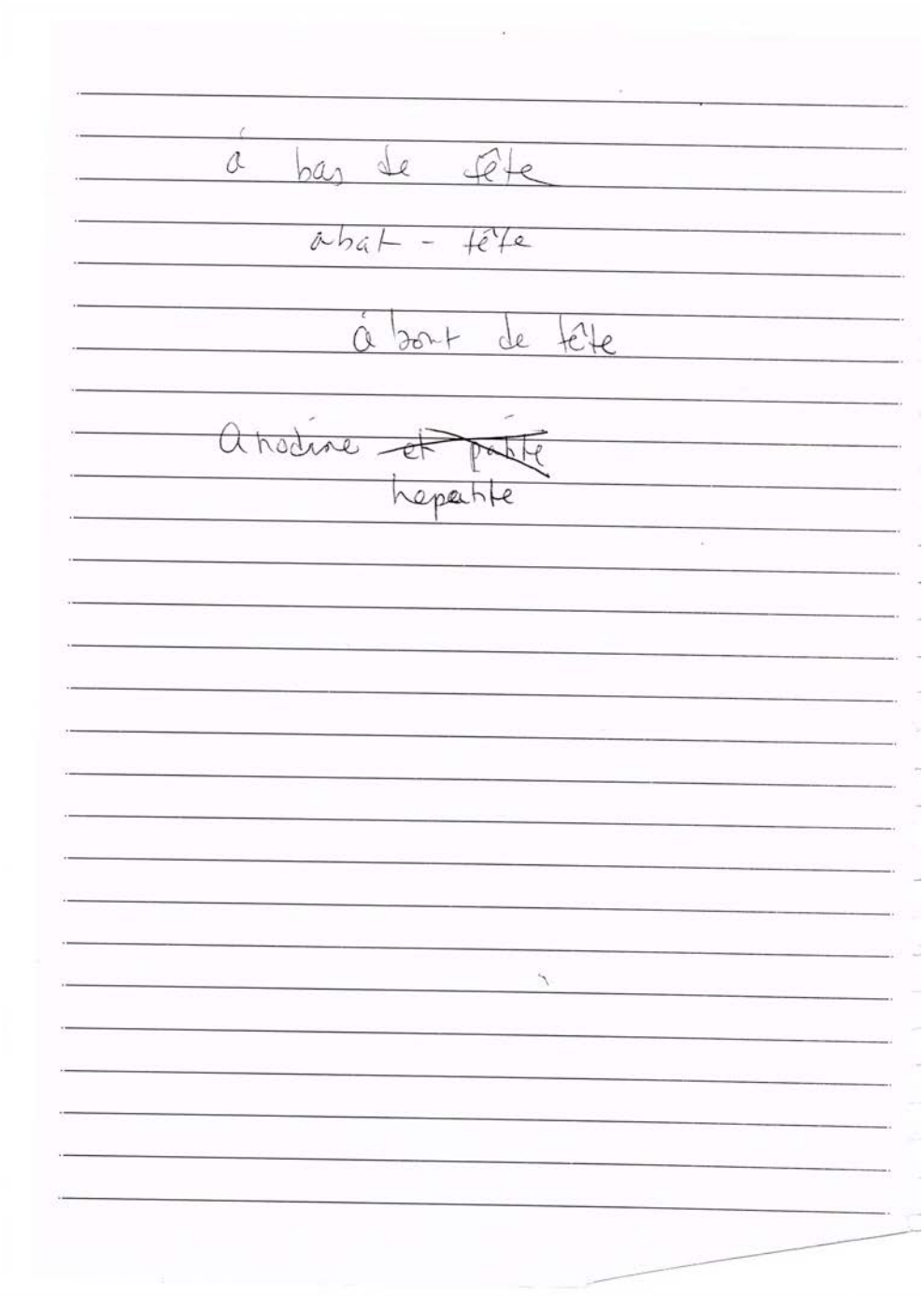


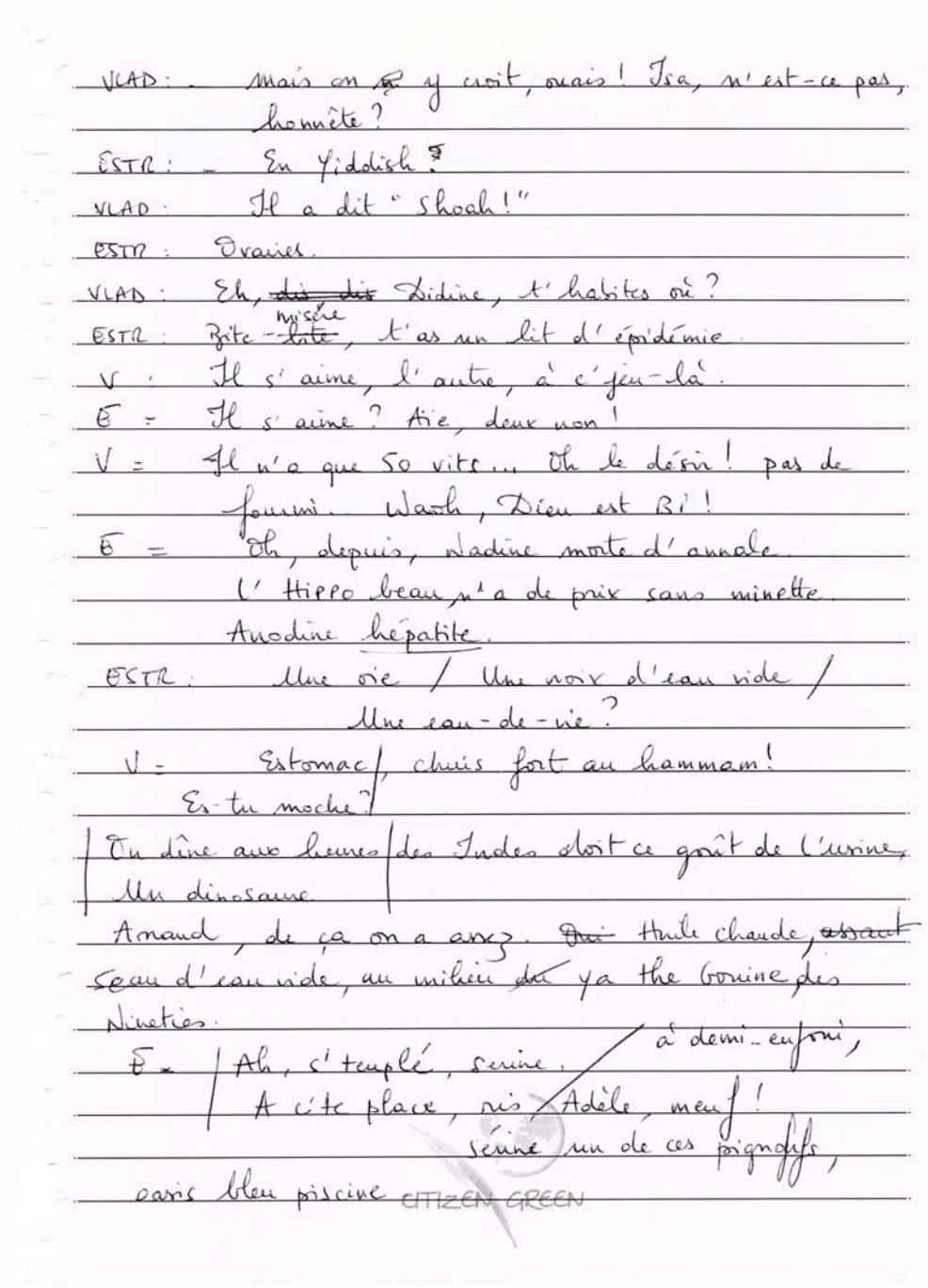
Figure 4 – First transcription, page four.

difficulty of 'transcribing' punctuation again in the second line, where a question mark is crossed out in the second transcription after "En yiddish ?", and once again where "Il a dit Shoah?" in the first is, "Il a dit 'Shoah!'" in the second. This is perhaps from an influence in the first transcription of the barred "Y'a du choix"—indeed, in the first there are choices, whereas in the second these choices have been smoothed over.

There are of course too many divergences to trace them all here (a single "ovaire" becomes several "ovaires", ovaries; "Aie, de non" in the first is "Aie, deux non" in the second, etc.), but I'd like to return to this question of the textual fragmentation, and the liquid quality of oral interaction that seems to be somehow formally, almost metaphorically preserved in the fractured fluid dissent found in the written transcribed archives. In the 'first' of course, the correspondence to the original characters' (Vladimir and Estragon) lines is not indicated, and so it is interesting to remark that where the first text starts falling apart there is an error in the second, "E=", indicating Estragon, written in three lines too soon, while Vladimir is still talking "You'd be nothing more than a little heap of bones at the present minute, no doubt about it", mistakenly attributed to Estragon becomes, "Oh, depuis, Nadine morte d'annale. L'Hippo beau n'a de prix sans minette. Anodine hépatite". Perhaps the 'first' transcriber was in a rush (to prepare dinner?), because we find "ça se presse", presumably for "[bone]s at the present". We converge again with "n'a de prix sans minette" but there the textual convergences more or less end as "Anodine hêpatite" for "no doubt about it" finds some rough sketches with "mois d'Aout", "no (nos?) dattes à Bondi", "(nos?) amen abouit", or finally just "about it", "à bas de tête" "abat tête" "à bout de tête" before finally arriving at "Anondine hêpatite" and then ceasing.

It is interesting to remark upon the different transcription styles that emerge in the back and forth dialogue between the two versions. In the 'first', we find the stutter of the text, the mimetic transcription of sound form into gesture, the hand seeking the form of sound in the writing the way we might look for a face in a rock or cloud. In the second we might read something like a desire to create a 'subject' of writing, in the sense that Gibbs reads in Meschonnic, as a "form of historicisation, a form of individuation"[20]. I read this as the drive to make a subject cohere, through rhythmic gesture. To create an identity for the text, and therefore also of author and reading public. One figure around which this drive coagulates is the figure of Nadine, who, as you might recall, was the first player in the Traduit Partouze: "Nadine se bidone" for "Nothing to be done". Here, "Depuis, Nadine morte d'a(n)nal(e)". The "anal" or "annal" is almost impossible to read in the first text, and we cannot know, as I mentioned, whether "morte d'annal" is an attempt at a rewriting of the first transcription, a reflection of what the transcriber heard, or simply an error. As I will show in my reading of the third Traduit Partouze, the major semantic fields of most Traduit Partouzes are food and sex—and follow a perfectly gastronomic and inebriatory evolution. "Nadine morte d'anal" (basically, Nadine, dead from anal sex) is quite a sad end for the gay figure who began the traduit partouze ("Nadine se bidone" = Nadine is busting a gut/laughing out loud). On the other hand, "annal" or "annale" is grammatically erroneous, something like "Nadine, dead from year-long".

20. Quoted in Gibbs, "Writing as Method", *op cit.*, p. 233.



VLAD : — Mais on y croit, ouais ! Isa, n'est-ce pas, honnête ?

ESTR : — En Yiddish ?

VLAD : Il a dit " Shoah ! "

ESTR : Ouaies.

VLAD : Eh, ~~dis dis~~ Didine, t'habites où ?

ESTR : Bite - ~~bite~~ misère, t'as un lit d'épidémie.

V : Il s'aime, l'autre, à c'jeu-là.

E = Il s'aime ? Aïe, deux non !

V = Il n'a que 50 vits... Oh le désir ! pas de fourmi. Waouh, Dieu est Bi !

E = Oh, depuis, Nadine monte d'annale. L'Hippo beau n'a de prix sans minette. Anodine hépatite.

ESTR : Une oie / Une noix d'eau vide / Une eau-de-vie ?

V = Estomac / cuis fort au hammam ! Es-tu moche ?

Un dîne avec heures / des Indes doit ce goût de l'urine. Un dinosaure

Arnaud, de ça on a assez. ~~Oui~~ thuile chaude, ~~assaut~~ seau d'eau vide, au milieu ~~du~~ y'a the Corinne des Nineties.

E = Ah, s'teuplé, Seuine. / à demi-enfoui, / A cité place, vis / Adèle, meuf ! / Séine un de ces pignoufs, / eaux bleu piscine

CITIZEN GREEN

Figure 5 – Second transcription, page one.

En dînant d'un

Estr : ~~d'Inde en Inde~~, font de taupe falafel au beurre, on manque de ~~feutre~~ ~~feutre~~ / ~~fête~~ / justes / jesses / jichtre

Oui, voire, présentable en ~~doses~~ X yeux - Notice d'autres de toilettes - / les who, ~~étonnamment~~ led Zep ? un duo devient debout devant laitue-soupe

Waterloo = dingue ?

E = Taquine mon bout ! T'es qu'un œuf ~~ma pontite~~ mal abouti à Malibu " - D'un lièvre à peine né,

V : Bouh ! ~~Ff~~ Tu mues, bien t'as qu'une meuf, fff / ris, dis / ridée

Figure 6 – Second transcription, page two.

"Nadine, morte d'annales" would be "Nadine, dead from annals", which is actually kind of beautiful. But that is not what is written. As a feminist, I find it hard to laugh at Nadine's death from anal sex. And that is what we do in the Traduit Partouze, we laugh.

Regardless, the re-emergence of Nadine I believe marks a desire, a drive or indeed a pulse (read with attunement) toward creating a certain narrative coherence, that is, a subject. In other words: to produce a translation.

3 Traduit Partouze No. 3 at the home of Camille Bloomfield, May 17, 2012

The third Traduit Partouze marks a change in text (although for some reason we stuck with Beckett), from *Waiting for Godot* to *Rough for Radio II*. Also at this point, we start to see the force and effects of practice-based research. Returning to the text, we see how the poetics of translation have changed in response to the group's growing attunement to the practice of collective homophonic translation. Indeed, in the third Traduit Partouze we see the emergence of what I might call a Traduit Partouze poetics, deeply dedicated to a rhythmic repetition that allows for the rendering of a proliferation of possible translations, rather than seeking to return to a unified singular coherent 'subject'—a desire that can never do justice, and may sometimes do violence, to the vital forms of the collective sound translation.

This poetics shares something with what Gibbs has identified as the traumatic rhythm of everyday life, focusing on processes of "circulation, translation, accumulation and especially, concatenation ... composed of repetition into which time introduces both difference and the form of a cycle"[21]. It sounds like the mimetic stutter of concatenating vital, prosodic forms. The verse circulates around the sound, not settling on one form but ceaselessly, obsessively transforming it. What is even more fascinating is that this mimetic obsession compulsion extends to the level of content: the Traduit Partouze mimes the Traduit Partouze.

If we read the Traduit Partouze as a story for example (here, I will focus on the third, but this works for all the Traduit Partouzes from English into French in the oral format), we may first of all read the evolution of the writing bodies, their bodily processes, but also the story of a party. Indeed, it is possible to read the text as choral, verse driven theatre, in which a cast of characters are gathered to eat, drink, and fuck—in the most imaginative ways! A female cast of characters sets the scene ("Raidie miss"; "Anne"; "Soeur"[22]), after which the text quickly veers towards food:

> Fresh pad, spare pencils?
> Fraîches pâtes, espère pense seul
> Fraîches pâtes, super! pense-t-il
> Fraîches pâtes, espère persil

21. Gibbs, Anna, "Apparently Unrelated: Affective Resonance, Concatenation and Traumatic Circuitry in the Terrain of the Everyday", *in* Atkinson, Meera, Richardson, Michael (Eds.), *Traumatic Affect*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013, p. 130.

22. Full texts of the Traduit Partouze may be found at `www.traduitpartouze.tumblr.com`.

Fraîches pâtes, super peine seule
The lot, sir.
Deux lottes, sœur!
Deux lottes sœurs.
Good shape?
Goût de chape?
Goût de cèpe?
Goût de chez Hip?
Guide Hachette?

This gastronomic poetics may be traced in either direction, towards its genesis or towards its mimetic storytelling. A few figures and some food established, the Traduit Partouze then struggles to find its place:

Wow! Let's hear it land.
Waouh! Le sire est loin!
Waouh! La cire Irlande!
Waouh! La scie de l'Inde!
Waouh! Laisse ouïr l'Irlande!
Waouh! Le psy de l'Inde!

The land of the Traduit Partouze is thus a roving one, never quite able to settle, or to attach language to land. We travel to Vichy, to China, Auvergne, Cévennes, Auxerre, Antananarivo etc. Finally settling "Dans un gîte à thème, les teuf des ..." (In a themed cottage, the party of the ...). At this point, the minutes clearly state that a fifteen minute pause was taken to "boire des coups"[23] (have a drink), after which the talk clearly veers towards sex. Once again, we see the influence of alcohol:

You see, the same old team, I hope. Oh!
J'y suis, je sème utile. Allez hop! Oh!
J'y suis, je sème. Ultime « Allez hop ». Oh!
What is it, miss ?
Parasite, miss.
Boîte à zique, miss.
Moite zizi, miss.
Vermin in the lingerie?
Les vers minent la lingerie?
Les vers minent, l'ange rit.

This passage occurs towards the end the Partouze, and perhaps marks its climax: "J'y suis, je sème" ("I'm here, I sow / scatter / spread"). However, to what extent does the "sow" code for masculine orgasm? Could this be read as a polyamorous yet nonetheless gender differentiated dialogue for five (or seven?) voices? And who says the lines, "Parasite, miss. / Boîte à zique, miss. / Moite zizi, miss." ("Parasite Miss / Music Box, Miss / Moist willy, miss")? To what extent is the trauma of the phallus unwoven

23. We may thank Santiago Artozqui for what is undoubtedly the most detailed and organized of the nine Traduit Partouze transcriptions.

through the contagion of musical forms, as "Miss" (who is spoken to but until now never speaks) finally responds in the plural, "Les vers minent la lingerie / l'ange rit" ("The worms / verses mine the lingerie / the angel laughs")?

In later Traduit Partouzes, these poetics of mimesis, concatenation, repetition and stutter, grow more refined, and eventually, no 'final' poem is given at all, although the secretary's 'preferences' might be indicated in red or with an asterisk. A list of the following Traduit Partouzes:

No. 4. My home, July 20th, 2012.
Text: *Rough for Radio II* (English).
No. 5. My home, October 26th, 2012.
Text: *Rough for Radio II* (English).
No. 6. The home of Tiphaine Samoyault, April 26th, 2013.
Texts: Poem by Gonzalo Yañez Quiroga (Spanish), as well as a short text in Ge'ez (an ancient language of Ethiopia).
No. 7. The home of Olga Belova, July 13th, 2013.
Text: Poem by Josif Aleksandrovic Brodskij.
No. 8. The home of Joris Lacoste, November 10th, 2013.
Text: Heta Rundgren and Aura Sévon's translation of Hélène Cixous's *Rire de la Méduse* (Finnish).
No. 9. The home of Santiago Artozqui, April 5th, 2015.
Text: "El Perro del hortelano" by Lope de Vega (Spanish).

As you may notice, at the sixth Partouze, we left Beckett and the repetition compulsion for the French/English binary. And although we find an echo of much of the prosody outlined above, neither the process nor the poetics remain entirely the same, as languages change. Although I will not have the space here to dive into specifics, reflections that took place *during* these latter Traduit Partouzes wondered whether these shifts indicated a kind of sonic 'genius' to a language—a sonorous prosody that inheres in a single language's vital forms? Or is this rather related to the individual participants relationship to the foreign language, the extent to which he or she understands this language? For example, it is nearly impossible for me to do a homophonic translation from Spanish—a language I sort of speak—to French, a language I speak well, but nevertheless as a second language. Or to the metaphorical-political imaginary that one might have of this language? Here again is the question of the 'us' and of 'attunement'. How are our techniques and strategies of translation colored by our own position within the hierarchy of global languages, and likewise, the hierarchy coding for the ethical interactions in a Traduit Partouze event? How is this related to the context in which a particular Traduit Partouze occurred? For as the languages changed, so did the setting.

At the beginning of this paper, I began with the pronoun embodied in the letter 'I', with the promise to describe the mimetic contagions of this concatenation into a 'we'. This 'we' includes, but is not limited to [24]: Santiago Artozqui, Jonathan Baillehache, Olga Belova, Camille Bloomfield, Brandon Brown, Jérémie Carboni, Matthew T. Carlson, Chris Clark, Jane Cope, Lara Cox, Frédéric Danos, Mathieu Dosse, Carlo Ferri, Irène Gayraud, Guillaume Gesvret, Johan Härnsten, Yoo Kyung Lee, Joris Lacoste, Franck Lemonde, Claire Paulian, Jean-Jacques Poucel, Delphine Presles,

24. Many apologies to any unintentionally omitted!

Lea Sinoimeri, Zahia Rahmani, Heta Rundgren, Tiphaine Samoyault, Gonzalo Yañez Quiroga and Marie-Jeanne Zenetti.

As sometimes happens with 'we's, this 'we' morphed and amalgamated and now the 'we' of the Traduit Partouze may more often than not be assimilated to the 'we' of Outranspo, international group of experimental researchers, translator, musicians and writers. [25] However, as Outranspo is 'everywhere' to quote Camille Bloomfield, our Traduit Partouzes had to happen 'nowhere', or not nowhere, but in the disembodied gothic, medieval and ethereal space we call the Internet. The Traduit Partouze mutated then into the 'Piratouze' or the 'Etherpartouze', named for the collective writing platforms on which they occurred (pirate pad, and ether pad). I will not have the space here to delve into a close reading of the Outranspian experiments, but I will say a few words on the passage of the Traduit Partouze into the visual. First of all, the migration of the Traduit Partouze into the remote gestures of letters and code engendered the proliferation of languages and individual voices. Each participant was now able to add their homophonic translation in stratified form, one on top of the other. In the place of choral harmony: counterpoint. Less water more rock. Visually this was quite interesting as well, since on the platforms we used, different users were coded with different colors.

This passage of course changed both the prosody of the final texts, as well as the types of experiments undertaken and the process oriented 'results', which were overall more 'textual'. By that I mean, more intertextual, entering into resonance with the vital poetic forms available in each user's library, rather than between each participant's (drunk) face, mouth and ear. The variety of languages also emphasized the fact that different languages code for homophonic translation differently depending on that language's own particular relationship between speech and writing. The difference between speech and writing in French is often greater than it is in English, for example. The nature of the experiments also diversified and became more complex, as we see in the example of a sound translation of Mahmoud Darwish's "Énê mine hounêca", in which we worked from a transliteration system Jonathan Baillehache invented to help himself learn Arabic. Finally, this passage to the gestural mimesis of voice coded into visual signs tangentially lead to a preoccupation for how the texts should be transmitted: displayed and presented, for example in the adaptation of our sound translation of Irène Gayraud's "À l'enfant du crépuscule" ("A Long Font Decrepit School" / "Elefante cree y postula") into a musical composition by Fernando Munizaga [26], or in the video subtitles to Yves Duteil's "C'est une langue belle" [27].

4 Conclusion

Nowadays, it seems the Traduit Partouzes have gone the way of much history: spoken to written to a fragmentary dissolution into the fabric of everyday practices. Collective homophonic translation certainly did not originate with the Traduit Partouzes, nor

25. See Outranspo's chapter in this book.
26. www.outranspo.com/replicas-un-projet-de-collaboration-musicale/.
27. Another gift of Jonathan Baillehache's talent: youtu.be/8WPrqJ8QXqA.

will it end there. The practice of homophonic translation has found its way into the chop-wood-carry-water practice of Outranspo ('sonotranslation' on our list of translational prefixes that we use to create and reflect upon translation), a deeply collaborative entity, and it now colors the creations, performances, academic talks, workshops and classrooms of Outranspians all over the world. A fanciful reader or participant might read in this, a face in a rock, a shift in translation, writing, research and teaching practices as these activities become driven by method over content, more 'passionate', less 'neutral' and 'objective', as well as less solitary. It is interesting to note that the dividing line between theory and practice becomes hazier the more the immediacy of politics (as Sara Ahmed notes, speaking of bodies: "there is nothing more mediated than immediacy") enters our sphere of awareness, as academic and textual agents. I would like then to conclude with a question: how might the political charge of an activity like the Traduit Partouzes shift as contexts shift? And how might we rethink this charge on the level of practice, and in particular the specific practices of producers and receivers in context? How are the power relations at stake different as we navigate between "Mots d'heures gousses rames"[28], "moites zizis"[29] and "tupi and not tupi"[30]?

28. Van Rooten, Luis, *Mots d'heures; gousses, rames, The d'Antin manuscript*, London, Angus and Robertson, 1967.

29. Traduit Partouze No. 3, May 17th, 2012.

30. Andrade, Oswald de, "Manifesto Antropófago", *Revista de Antropofagia,* 1, 1928.