

ALTA

VOIX

White Gloves

André Breton & Philippe Soupault
Traduit du français par Dawson F. Campbell

Avant-propos sur une traduction surréaliste : quelques mots du traducteur

Ma traduction de « Gants blancs » d'André Breton et Philippe Soupault est quelque peu hétérodoxe ; puisque le surréalisme n'est pas un genre littéraire orthodoxe, on doit traduire non seulement les mots et le (non-)sens, mais également l'esprit surréaliste (sinon on risque d'être ostracisé par le spectre d'André Breton !). On traduit l'esprit surréaliste via une traduction qui privilégie le côté inconscient du texte—et qui accepte ainsi les associations libres et erreurs de traduction—tout en minimisant la préoccupation de reproduire la nuance de la langue source. Le traducteur surréaliste doit donc recréer les méthodes qui ont produit la source : dans le cas de « Gants blancs », j'ai dû modifier l'écriture automatique dont Breton et Soupault se sont servis pour imaginer une espèce de traduction automatique. Mais ma traduction est une traduction automatique modifiée : après la traduction automatique initiale je l'ai révisée pour présenter enfin ce que vous avez devant les yeux. J'espère que vous vous profiterez de cette autre manière de lire le surréalisme en traduction.

Cigar smoke is hiding in the desert corridor of the grand hotel. A man descends slumber's staircase and notices rain: the windows are white. We know that a dog is resting near him. All the obstacles are present: A pink cup—an order is given; sluggishly, the servants turn. The sky parts its great drapes. A buzzing indicates a precipitated departure. Who else could run as softly? Names lose their faces. The street is but an empty voice.

Around 4 A.M. on that same day, a very tall man crossed the bridge that unites the separate islands. Bells—or trees?—rung. He thought he heard the voices of his friends: “The office of idle excursions is to the right,” we called to him, “and the painter will write to you on Saturday.” Solitude's neighbours bowed—throughout the night we could hear the whistling of a streetlight. The capricious house is losing blood. We love each blazing fire—when the sky changes colour, death is passing. What more can we hope for? Another man outside the perfumer's boutique was listening to the rollings of a distant drum. Darkness—wheeling over his head—perched swiftly on his shoulder. Conventional folding-fans were for sale: they no longer produced any fruit. We were running toward the seaports without knowing the outcomes. Clocks hopelessly pleaded to holy beads. Virtuous swarms amassed. Nobody passed near those wide avenues—those, the force of the towns. A single storm sufficed. From afar or right up-close, the humid beauty of prisons was misunderstood. Terminals are the best sanctuaries: travellers never know which route to take. From the lines of our palms—we could read that the promises of the most fragrant fidelities have no future. What do we do with muscular children? The warm blood of bees is stored in bottles of mineral water. Sincerity is elusive. It is in the indifference of pretty houses—in which hearts are forced to beat each other—that well-known men lose their life.

These salvaged tides appear too small! Out tumbles a torrent of earthly delights. Each object serves as paradise.

A great bronze boulevard is the most direct route. Magical places aren't good stations. Each step—slow and certain: after a few hours, we notice the pretty nose-bleed plant. A panorama of consumptives lights up. We hear each footfall of the subterranean travellers. But the most ordinary of silences reigns in these narrow spaces. One traveller freezes, uneasy. Amazed, he approaches the tinted plant. He doubtlessly wishes to pluck it, but all he can do is embrace another traveller, shake his hand—heavy with stolen jewels. Their eyes are sulfuric flames and they speak at length of their marvellous screams. We think we hear a dry lunar murmur—but a single look dissolves the most prodigious of encounters. Not a single person knew those pale-skinned pilgrims.

Separated by suburban twilights and the sadness of fairgrounds. The weather's so nice under the tent. An azure mist dispersed throughout the glade where a miraculous plant grew slowly. Long blasts—made by ocean liners leaving the island of adorations for many years hence—met quivering bushes at the militant frontier. Sentimental combinations were no longer ignored—the emigrants had worked it all out. The surrounding forest was cleared. The animals in their dens surveilled their young. The clouds dispersed quickly, leaving the stars to die. The night is desiccated: it wanes.

A carefree traveller says to his friend: “I've walked ahead of myself and have known the fate of perpetual races and of lone orgies. To my right, I killed a friend who knew only the sun. Rays painfully soaked us; ever so parched, I took long gulps of agony. He continued to laugh, confiding in me his final sigh. I couldn't help but grind my teeth while I read in his eyes the passionate resignation of suicides. The wind tightened my throat—I could no longer remember who was speaking to me. I recognized you.”

The obscure silence of metals grazed on their words. His travelmate with the ornate hands responded:

— The three best days of my life left a pale heart in

my chest. The East's odious flavours spawn nightmares. I can remember a man who ran without seeing his hands. Today I see you again.

That's how they received the months ending in *-er*. The day withdraws, forsaking to their lips some very pure utterances. In this epoch of other years, each body—from the domes of observatories—opened to milky ways. There they paled, calculating distances and probabilities. Some infallible dictums—like those of Saint-Médard—return to their memory when required. They rarely discover a celestial body as red as a distant murder—or a starfish.

The entrance to their soul—otherwise open to all winds—is now so well choked that misfortune can take no hold. Men are made based on their borrowed clothes. These are most often two mannequins—devoid of head and hands. Those who wish to portray decorum display their wares. When they return the next day, their fashion had since gone out of style. A false collar—which is, in some ways, the mouth of these shells—surrenders to a large pair of gilded pincers, which, when none are looking, seize the shop-window's loveliest reflections. Evening: she joyously swings her little label, the one on which everyone could read: *LAST NOVELTY OF THE SEASON*. That which inhabits our two friends emerges bit-by-bit from quasi-immobility. It gropes around—its captivating, peduncled eyes encroaching. The body, in full phosphorous formation, remains equidistant between today and the tailor's. It connects to children's dreams by fine telegraphic antennae. Those mannequins out there are cork. Life belts. We are far from those charming conventions.

Dov'è il sangue

Jacob Goldbeck

Jérusalem, Yad Vashem, Mémorial de l'Holocauste.

Son nom n'est écrit nulle part, mais ses lettres sont là pour témoigner de son pouvoir destructif, du plaisir qu'il a éprouvé à exterminer des personnes, un peuple, par tous les moyens possibles, inspiré par Dieu. C'est ce qui était gravé sur sa ceinture.

Et il y a ce puits unissant le présent et le passé, ce puits d'où surgissent des personnes qui racontent leur histoire. Celle d'une famille juive—père, mère et deux enfants—calfeutrée dans l'obscurité pour lui échapper, une famille affamée, terrifiée, suppliante mais qui ne lui a pas échappé. Il leur apporte la lumière, sa lumière. Les premiers vers d'une prière récitée, pure beauté musicale de la langue antique, éveillent en lui un plaisir honteux.

Et puis, au plus profond de ces eaux noires, apparaît l'éternité, telle une étoile, mémoire de l'histoire de ce peuple. Mais peut-on être sûrs que cet homme n'existe plus ?

Yad Vashem, la mémoire, celle de mon grand-oncle.