

The Harmony Past Knowing¹: Research & Experiments in Translating Surrealism

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Abstract

Approaching 100 years of the Surreal, it seems appropriate to return to the beginning. When André Breton and Philippe Soupault conceived Surrealism in 1919 with the creation of the first experiment in automatic writing, *Les Champs magnétiques* (*The Magnetic Fields*), there was no way they could have imagined the prodigious influence that their movement would have on artistic culture up to a century later. Indeed, Surrealism has had a global effect, ergo we must turn our attention to the translators who helped disseminate the Surreal around the world. Scrutinizing Surrealism's translators, however, brings us to an impasse: while they discuss their translations, they provide no theoretical or conceptual model for translating the surrealist experiment. This paper, in conceiving two conceptual models for Surrealism, aims to devise—and, finally practice with a quasi-experimental translation of “Gants blancs” (White Gloves) from the seminal 1920 œuvre *Les Champs magnétiques*—a unifying theory for faithfully translating the experimental *spirit* of Surrealism while crafting a language true to what Breton calls the “convulsive beauty” of the source.

Keywords: French, Surrealism, Automatism, Experimental Translation

¹ Heraclitus. Fragment of Fragment 47 from *Fragments*. Translated by Brooks Haxton.

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Le poète à venir surmontera l'idée déprimante
du divorce irréparable de l'action et du rêve.

–André Breton,

Les Vases communicantes

I/RESEARCH

We are fast approaching the centenary of Surrealism—birthed in 1920 when André Breton and Philippe Soupault published their seminal œuvre *Les Champs magnétiques* (*The Magnetic Fields*). What began as a fascination with neurotics and how their minds work, led Surrealism's progenitor, André Breton, and a number of other poets involved in the Dada movement— Philippe Soupault, Louis Aragon, Paul Éluard, etc.—to develop and implement techniques for uncovering the hidden realms of what Freud, just a few decades prior, had systematized: the unconscious (Chénieux-Gendron, 46). The burgeoning movements attracted artists from several domains and quickly gained in popularity. To this today, surrealist influence remains palpable: writers, artists, and filmmakers are still gaining inspiration from the revolutionary imagery and techniques that its early practitioners established (perhaps most notably in contemporary culture, the work of American filmmaker David Lynch). Indeed, what originated as a French movement quickly spread far and wide, across borders and languages, to inspire artists and reach audiences ranging from Japan to America, Chile to Britain. Thus, Surrealist literature, especially, has its translators to thank. And thank them we must: because Surrealism is a peculiar artifact; it is, in some ways, a language of its own; it must be read, translated, and conveyed in a particularly surrealist way.

Paul Éluard, one of the founders of the French surrealist movement, said of surreal writing, in his 1939 collection of poems, *Donner à voir*: “there is no model for someone looking for what has never been seen.” While Realism had hitherto attempted to meticulously reproduce human notions of reality, surrealists refused

to be constrained by their clichéd notions of what is contained in consciousness. Furthermore, they refused to assume that a subjective experience could be conveyed through the same “vacu[ous]... descriptions” which “are nothing but so many superimposed images taken from some stock catalogue”—of reality? (Breton, 7). Reaching for what is above or greater than (the sur- in *surréalisme*) what we perceive, Surrealism attempted to free us from the prison of our senses. Surrealism, therefore, is the art of the unseen, the unknowable, the unreproducible; the art which “in refusing the world... proposes to”—following sentiments from Marx and Rimbaud, respectively—“both ‘transform the world’... and ‘change life’” (Chénieux-Gendron, 18—my translation). A revolutionary undertaking, to say the least. But that is how one must consider Surrealism: it cannot be seen as anything but revolutionary, *avant-garde*. Through Surrealism, reality is disposed of and consciousness is hijacked. It is safe to say that when dealing with Surrealism we are not dealing with an average text—it is naturally problematic. Indeed, Surrealism naturally poses peculiar problems not only for its reader, but especially for its translator: beginning with the decision of which model or approach to take when looking at what cannot be seen—when confronting a surrealist text.

This paper is an attempt at parsing the possible models for translating Surrealism. When boiled down to its basics, Surrealism can be analysed based off of two equally justifiable conceptions of Surrealism: with, what I have dubbed, the ‘surrealist satisfied’—one who believes in surrealism’s claims to have found the key to the unconscious—on the one hand, and the ‘surrealist skeptical’—one who is dubious of those claims—on the other. These conceptions of Surrealism may be subsequently used to form a model for translating Surrealism. Both models have specific characteristics, both require unique preconceptions when approaching them, and both methods naturally produce their own distinct results in translation. But before we begin considering these two conceptual models of Surrealism, it is necessary to unpack the unconscious according to Freud and automatic writing according to the artists, theoreticians, and scholars of Surrealism so as to build a foundation on which to lay these surrealist translational theories.

Breton wrote, in the second *Manifeste du surréalisme*, “more than anything else, Surrealism attempted to provoke, from the intellectual and moral point of view, an attack on conscience, of the most general and serious kind:” that is to say, Breton’s goal was to free the mind from its “universal fetters”—the conscious-restricted mind (Breton, 123). Considering Freud’s conception of the unconscious one finds that Breton’s claim may itself be more restricted than he would have liked to believe. In his essay, “The Unconscious,” Freud develops his notion of the unconscious mind and reveals that the real thingness of the unconscious is not accessible in its pure form. Freud explains that

the conscious presentation comprises the presentation of the thing plus the presentation of the word belonging to it, while the unconscious presentation is the presentation of the thing alone. The system Ucs. [unconscious] contains the thing-cathexes of the objects, the first and true object-cathexes; the system Pcs. [preconscious] comes about by this thing-presentation being hypercathexed through being linked with the word-presentations corresponding to it. (Freud 510)

Freud’s repetition of words relating to essence, language, and transition elaborates on a kind of translation between psychical systems, and, more importantly, what exactly is lost and gained in the process. Where the unconscious system holds “the *first and true... presentation of the thing alone*,” (my italics) the conscious systems (Cs. and Pcs.) contain the word-presentation which is attached to its corresponding thing-presentation—thereby gaining in language what is lost in substance. When a thought, for example, is in the unconscious it is concerned with sense impressions of the object—crude images; later, that thought may arise in consciousness only when, or if, language is attached to it: “a presentation that is not put into words... remains thereafter in the Ucs. in a state of repression” (Freud 515). Yet, what the conscious presentation gains in language, it loses in subconscious essence.

This revelation from Freud leads one to question what exactly the surrealists could attain from the unconscious. From what Freud suggests, the unconscious is never fully graspable in consciousness, since to become conscious language must first be attached; and, furthermore, once introduced, that language adds a structure and a number of associations that would not have been present had it remained in its original state. If one takes Freud’s insights seriously, then one must

also take the surrealist experiment with a (very large) grain of salt. If what Freud reveals is true, then Surrealism loses the most essential component to automatism—the writing technique they claimed could free them from the “fetters” of the conscious mind.

Early surrealist experiments developed and used a technique of automatic writing which, they argued, gave them access to thoughts uncensored by the ego. Breton goes as far as to give automatic writing the central role in surrealist creation when he defined Surrealism as “[p]sychic automatism in its pure state, by which one proposes to express... the actual functioning of thought” (Breton, 26). Breton and Soupault, inspired by the Freudian ‘talking cure’, attempted to appropriate a similar technique to attain similar results: a transcription of the unconscious. Breton concluded that “the speed of thought is no greater than the speed of speech, and thought does not necessarily defy language, nor even the fast-moving pen” allowing him to capture “a monologue [written] as rapidly as possible without any intervention on the part of the critical faculties, a monologue consequently unencumbered by the slightest inhibition and which [is], as closely as possible, akin to *spoken thought*” (Breton, 23). Surrealists, then, were not so much as *using* these techniques as being *used* by them. Indeed,

Matthews concludes that surrealists, rather than relying on calculated methods to refine inspiration or trusting inspiration to “supply fully satisfying images,” they passively accept the surprises of automaticity, which they “do not employ... so much as place themselves gladly at its disposal, eager to witness its power to precipitate a new image” (Matthews, 27). Thus, the key to surrealist automatic writing is passivity and meditation—the surrealist must yield all possible control of the ego to the technique, allowing the mind to wander beyond the limits of rational consciousness, and trusting the subconscious to be rich in productive and creative material. Whether they succeeded in tapping the creative reservoirs of the unconscious is up to debate: one must—as the surrealists often did—disregard much of what Freud has suggested for automatism to be completely convincing. That is not to say, however, that we should totally dismiss automatism: we should also be dubious of Freud’s, while groundbreaking, now often considered rudimentary insights.

After examining Freud's findings in the nature of the unconscious, and what surrealists have claimed to have done with their own subconsciouses, we may commence our discussion of the two formerly mentioned models for Surrealism. We begin our discussion with the 'surrealist satisfied': one who, I argue, believes in Surrealism's claims that automatism is the "key capable of indefinitely opening the multilayered box called man," the bridge to the unconscious (or, at least, the preconscious) (Breton, 4—my translation). The 'surrealist satisfied' translator must remain faithful to the *spirit* of the surrealist experiment (or risk exile by the ghost of André Breton!) by emphasizing the unconscious-centric aspect of the text—embracing free-association and mistranslation—while downplaying the concern for capturing the nuance of the source language. I would argue that the source text is less important to the 'surrealist satisfied'—similarly to the surrealist writer who is, like Éluard said, "looking for what has never been seen," the translator of Surrealism is looking for what the text unconsciously, rather than specifically, evokes. It is true that the unconscious being picked at is, in the case of the translation, different than the one in the original composition; this however, is often a natural consequence of translation—the author is either no longer here, or is unable to translate themselves—and Surrealists often claimed that the art was of lesser importance than the experiment (Stockwell, 40). This, I argue, justifies the 'surrealist satisfied' translator's protraction of automatism in translation: the 'surrealist satisfied' is, like the source author, a "researcher of the unconscious mind" rather than an artist (Stockwell, 40). Consequently, this technique would be one that attempts to recreate the process that was used in composing the source text: *automatic translation* is the goal. But what is automatic translation? What is *its* goal? Automatic translation is not a concept that is discussed in translation studies; in fact, it is an idea that goes against much of what conventional translation regards as proper. Where conventional translation values attention to detail, nuance, equivalence etc., an experimental automatic translation would, like the original, value surprise, ambiguity, and mistranslation. As Mary Anne Caws proposes, Surrealism "has as its specificity the hatred of what has already been thought" (Caws, 342). This statement positions Surrealism in stark opposition to the very nature of translation itself. Thankfully, this opposition is not irresolvable: returning to Caws, the solution is that surrealism "chooses, lauds and loves both

its own and others' original mistakes or misinterpretations" (Caws, 342); the experimental automatic translator of Surrealism is, then, free and content to do the same. Briefly, the goal of an automatic translation is to create a passive translation: one that moves through the translator as quickly as thought, without consideration for what is being done, accepting words freely as they come, welcoming the mistranslation and interpretations as surreal inevitabilities.

The 'surrealist skeptical', contrawise, is one who does not subscribe to the notion that automatic writing was able to access the unconscious: the 'surrealist skeptical' is more attuned to Freud's insights in the impenetrability of the unconscious. Rather than trusting automatism, I argue that the 'surrealist skeptical' believes that it is simply a consciously performed writing style which creates, to borrow the term suggested by Riffaterre, the "*automatism effect*" (Riffaterre, 42). Rejecting all notions of the unconscious and automatism proposed by surrealists, the translator must concern themselves with the language and meaning of the source text. Easier said than done. Surrealist language is particular: the dream logic, peculiar imagery, and Freudian symbolism makes for difficult translation. Furthermore, the translator is confronted by the reimagining of one of the most fundamental questions of translation: where word-for-word vs. sense-for-sense metamorphoses into its surreal form—word-for-word vs. nonsense-for-nonsense. Furthermore, that which is nonsensical must, simultaneously, make sense—it is a Heraclitian opposition that both is and is not—so as to be legible. It achieves this dichotomy by maintaining a conventional syntax, "in no way different from that of a non-automatic text," while neglecting "the rules of verisimilitude... that is... the automatic text's departure from logic, temporality and referentiality" (Riffaterre, 41-42). As a translator, the departures from verisimilitude are already given in the contents of the text; it is the task of the translator to effectively transpose them into a new language.

Thus, the job of the conventional translator of Surrealism is first and foremost to capture the effect of automatism through the "convulsive, striking, unfamiliar beauty" of surrealist language as effectively as—and by any means—possible (Stockwell, 38). The "convulsive... beauty" to which Stockwell is referring is an allusion to the last line of Breton's 1928 novel *Nadja*—"La beauté sera

CONVULSIVE ou ne sera pas” (“beauty will be CONVULSIVE or won’t be at all”)—which concludes the following assertion on the nature of surreal beauty:

Beauty is a train that ceaselessly roars out of the Gare de Lyon and which I know will never leave, which has not left. It consists of jolts and shocks, many of which do not have much importance, but which we know are destined to produce one Shock, which does. Which has all the importance I do not want to arrogate to myself. In every domain the mind appropriates certain rights which it does not possess. Beauty is neither static nor dynamic. The human heart, beautiful as a seismograph. (Breton, 160)

Breton’s dichotomous definition suggests both movement—and violent, awesome movement at that, depicting the speed of a blaring train, and the destructive tremors of an earthquake—and stagnation—where the train never leaves the station, and the earthquake is measured at points in time. It is a vibration: where the train roars in stasis, trembling on the spot as its pistons fire, full steam ahead. Breton further elucidates (if one can say Breton makes anything clear) “convulsive beauty” with a direct definition in his 1937 novel *L’Amour fou* (*Mad Love*):

The word convulsive, which I use to describe the only beauty which should concern us, would lose any meaning in my eyes were it to be conceived in motion and not at the exact expiration of this motion. There can be no beauty at all, as far as I am concerned... except at the cost of affirming the reciprocal relations linking the object seen in its motion and in its repose. (Breton 10)

Breton notes “the reciprocal relations linking the object seen in its motion and in its repose,” suggesting that we must understand the awesome motion of the train in relation to how it begins and ends: in repose, rest: stationary. Beauty—convulsive beauty—is, then, an aesthetic or effect which illustrates violence, shock, turmoil, vibration, etc. at expiration: when motion becomes repose: when one state becomes another. It is an aesthetic of jarring change, where the “Shock” can only be understood in its contrast with the “repose[d]”, the routine, the common. The language of Surrealism, then, must be equally jarring, it must be the point, “the moment... of recognition” where the blending together of the conventional becomes “defamiliarized” (Stockwell, 172). Therefore, I would conclude that the goal of the ‘surrealist skeptical’ translation is to create a syntactically correct text, as non-sensical, or extra-sensical, and with a language with as much jarring and defamiliarized surreal beauty as the source.

Both techniques succeed in capturing Surrealism in their own ways, and both techniques have their own flaws: while the experimental automatic translation maintains the spirit of Surrealism it has the potential to struggle with creating consistent syntactically sound sentences while maintaining a “passive state of consciousness”; conversely, the conventional method maintains a correct grammar, while betraying the essence of the surrealist experiment. Nevertheless, there is a solution; there can be a unifying theory for translating Surrealism.

II/METHODOLOGY & EXPERIMENTATION

To demonstrate this unifying theory in practice, I have chosen to translate the 1920 prose poem “Gants blancs” (White Gloves) from *Les Champs magnétiques* by André Breton and Philippe Soupault. Not only is *Les Champs magnétiques* of historical interest, it is also a perfect example of automatic writing at its most raw, as it is the first authentic experiment in automatic writing conducted by the surrealists. Because it is surrealist automatic writing at its most unpolished and unedited stage, the works in *Les Champs magnétiques* most readily served my theory for translating Surrealism and automatic writing. Mine is a translation that attempts to unify the two previously explained theoretical notions of Surrealism because both notions of Surrealism hold their value; both deserve due attention; and both can be used to form a theory for translating Surrealism. While devising this theory I practiced both experimental and conventional separately. Neither are enough independently, but together, they hit the mark on the essential aspects of Surrealism: the unconscious foundation, the free-association, the feel of automatism, and the “convulsive beauty” (not to mention being grammatically correct).

For my translation I created a process by which my experimental automatic translation theory was used to inspire an experimental trot of sorts. As we have seen, the theory behind the experimental automatic translation is that it allows the translator to maintain the spirit of Surrealism by attempting to recreate the unconscious image-making that surrealist automatic writing proposes to achieve. I put my theory to practice as follows: First, I recorded a reading of “Gants blancs”;

next, I began to write as quickly as possible, as a surrealist would, to get my thoughts down as they came, without censoring them (i.e. automatically); while I was writing I had an assistant intermittently play and pause the recording of each sentence; this process continued until the end of the recording. When the experiment concluded I had written 6000 words of unpunctuated [automatic text](#), filled with typos, and strewn with 82—equally typoed—automatically translated sentences. The [experiment](#) was a success—with a caveat: while I was able to extract from it interesting imagery and mistranslations that would have otherwise gone unnoticed (for example the corridors in line 1 are “deserts” instead of “deserted”), the translation, as a work of art, fell short.

The ‘surrealist satisfied’ in me assuaged, I moved on to rework the experiment with the theory of the ‘surrealist skeptical’ in mind. As this text is not a cohesive whole, the editing process was performed at the level of the sentence and the word. These automatically written sentences were not only poorly written automatically (it is not easy to translate without breaking stride, so to speak), they also followed a French structure, for the most part. So, I reworked and flipped them; repunctuated; and reworded to satisfy the “convulsive beauty” of the source. I would like to take a moment to pause on my remark about “repunctuating” my translation. I considered Riffaterre’s “*automatism effect*”—the use of language to create the illusion of automatic writing—and reflected on how I could recreate it in translation. I concluded on adding extensive (hopefully not too extensive) use of the em-dash in my translation. I was inspired, at most partly, by a certain influential figure’s convulsive oration, with extensive em-dashing in transcription. This individual has trouble stringing together a cohesive sentence, his remarks are, seemingly, uncensored, and his style, while not at all surrealist, is as non-sensical as anything else. The em-dashes in my translation move the reader from thought to thought, both connecting and sundering images like the French source does with “et”. As a final remark, like a Rotting Donkey², surrealism is stubborn: it resists translation into “practical language” (Breton, 38); in other words, it is naturally prone to foreignization. I cannot think of any examples of domestication in my translation: while I did alter sentences, words, etc., I did not attempt to

² Salvador Dali’s 1928 painting, *The Rotting Donkey*.

explain—that is not my intention and would be grossly beside the point of Surrealism.

In the end, I did what I could to unite the two seemingly opposed conceptions of Surrealism to form a working theory and practice for translating Surrealism: It is quasi-experimental; It is as true to the surrealist spirit as possible while still passing as a readable translation; I hope you enjoy reading it as much as I enjoyed translating it. Without further ado, I present “White Gloves.”

• • •

White Gloves

By André Breton and Philippe Soupault

The grand hotel’s corridors are deserts and cigar smoke is hiding. A man slowly descends slumber’s staircase and notices rain: the windows are white. We know that a dog is resting near him. All the obstacles are there: 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 a deserted voice.

Around 4 A.M. on that same day, a very tall man crossed the bridge that unites the separate islands. Bells—or trees?—rang. 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 the blazing fire—when the sky changes colour, death is passing. What more can we hope for? Another man outside the perfumer’s boutique listens to the rollings of a distant drum. Darkness—wheeling over his head—swiftly perched on his shoulder. Conventional folding-fans were for sale: they no longer produced any fruit. We were running towards the seaport without knowing the outcomes. Clocks hopelessly plea to holy beads. Virtuous swarms amass. 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 read that the promises of the most fetid

fidelities have no future. What do we do with muscular children? The warm blood of bees is stored in sparkling water bottles. Sincerity is elusive. It is in the indifference of pretty houses—in which hearts are forced to beat each other—that men are known to lose their life.

These salvaged tides appear too small! Out tumble 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 praised plant. He doubtlessly wishes to pluck it—but all he can do is shake the heavy hand of a jewel-covered traveller. 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 are no longer ignored—the emigrants have worked it all out. The surrounding forest was cleared. The animals in their dens surveiled their young. The clouds dispersed quickly leaving the stars to die. The night is desiccated: it wanes.

A carefree traveller says to his mate: "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 to 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 ornate hands responded: "The three best days of my life reddened my chest, and paled my

heart. The East's odious flavours colour nightmares. I can remember a man who ran without seeing his hands. Today I see you again."

That's how they received the months with Rs. 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 Sainte-Médard—return to their memory when required. They rarely discover an astral 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, barter their dress upstairs. When they return the next day, it has already 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, grasp the display-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's connected by fine telegraphic antennae to children's dreams. Those mannequins out there are cork. Life belts. We are far from those charming conventions.

Translated by Dawson F. Campbell

III/AFTERWORD

"Gants Blancs" is a surrealist prose-poem from the first book of surreal automatic writing, *Les Champs magnétiques*. It did not sell very well. But that was not the point. Surrealism was never about selling books; it was about experimenting with language, attempting to get deeper into the layers of the human psyche, while recording the efforts. For that reason, Surrealism position itself in an interesting limbo between different states of (pseudo-)science and literature. It is a fun, interesting, and often mind-expanding read. Translating it was an incredibly worthwhile experiment and experience. In the end, the surrealists were artists and

revolutionaries; explorers of consciousness and augmenters of reality; they played with language and fought with each other; and Freud, their idol and patron saint, thought they were crazy. Does that make me crazy by proxy?

Perhaps it does. As far as I can tell, this is the first record of such a technique for translating Surrealism. David Gascoyne—the only English translator of *Les Champs magnétiques*, to date—describes his 1985 translation as an attempt to “maintain a balance between literalness and literacy, and... to allow visual images to emerge as accurately and distinctly as possible” (Gascoyne, 20). Other examples of translators of automatic writing, such as those of the writings of Benjamin Péret or Robert Desnos, either make no note of their translation methodology, or simply comment about the centrality of making the English read as well as the French source (Lowenthal, xxi). Mary Ann Caws is perhaps the only translator on record who comes closest to using a similar technique to my own. “[L]ooking, not straight, but... askance, is part of my translational theory,” she says before adding that translating Surrealism involves “slippage, sometimes slip-ups when you make mistakes, but slippage because you are not confronting something directly but always from another angle” (Caws, 28). Mistakes in translation, or mistranslation played a large role in my ‘surrealist satisfied’ trot, where free-association and free-interpretation—while potentially erroneous—were used to inspire an unconscious reading of the text. I am sure that Caws does not proceed in a similar manner when confronting Surrealism, but she seems to be open to the theoretical ground on which the ‘surrealist satisfied’ operates.

As this paper comes to a close, let us return briefly to the beginning. My point of departure for this research was the sentiment that *Surrealism is always already lost and found in translation*. I believe this sentiment has worn well as we approach the conclusion. Surrealism is always already lost in translation because it is the literature of the unconscious—as Breton would say, “*le fonctionnement réel de la pensée*”. As we have learned from Freud, the unconscious is something that is never completely attainable to the waking human: there is always a translation between the unconscious and conscious states. This loss naturally gives way to some discovery. Thus, Surrealism is always already found in translation. It is the literature of a language that is so often arbitrary and nonsensical that it is forever and completely up to interpretation—in surrealism “no image is tied down... all

are free” (Caws, 71). As the writers of surrealism translate the language of their unconscious, so do we; and as all images are free in a language that refuses to be tied down, so are we free to loosen the bonds that society, consciousness, and we ourselves use to straight-jacket imagination.

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