

AUGUSTO/HOPKINS TRANSLATION AND THE FOURTH DIMENSION OF A POEM

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Abstract This essay examines Augusto de Campos' translations of Gerard Manley Hopkins under the lens of orality--the production of speech sounds necessary to recite a poem, which M.H. Abrams called the "fourth dimension" of a poem. A close reading of Augusto's translations and reflections on translation demonstrates the special attention he pays to the oral dimension of poetry and the process by which source poems are endowed with new breath in translation. This process constitutes the fourth dimension of Augusto's "verbivocovisual" poetics.

Key words translation, voice, sound, orality, body

Poet, polemicist, translator, critic, and, in the midst of a global pandemic, musical interpreter, Augusto de Campos is a wonder of endurance. "Ready-made" visual poems satirizing the Bolsonaro presidency populate his Instagram profile; in September 2020 he released, in collaboration with Cid Campos, "Amor em vão," a transcreation of the Robert Johnson song "Love in Vain." Cid's vocals bring to life Augusto's superb translation of the song's lyrics, while Augusto's performance on the harmonica forms a lively dialogue with Cid's resonator guitar. "Amor em vão" is, however, much more than a compelling resuscitation of the special genius of Robert Johnson — it is also a testament to the Augusto's artistic stamina and vitality, to the indefatigable *fôlego* that animates a vast body of poetry, translation, and music.

The symbiosis of these three modes of artistic activity is one of the defining characteristics of Augusto's 70-year career and a nexus from which a possible ecology of his influence in Brazilian culture could be extrapolated. Take, for example, his translations of poems by John Donne, which initiated a fruitful exchange with Brazilian popular music: he integrated song lyrics from Lupicínio Rodrigues into his translation of "The Apparition" (Campos, 1986: 81), while fragments of his translation of "Elegy: Going to Bed" were set to music by Péricles Cavalcanti, which were in turn

rendered by Caetano Veloso on his 1979 song “Elegia” from *Cinema transcendental*. In this “chain reaction” of creative interventions, activities ranging from the critical to the musical not only come together to produce each manifestation of the “original” poem or poems, but actively influence each other in shaping those manifestations. An initial act of criticism on the part of Augusto selects Donne as a poet worth translating and selects certain poems to be translated. These selections, (especially the latter) are determined, in part, by the possibilities available in Portuguese to the translator of a poem composed in English; these possibilities can only be determined after initial attempts at translation. The process of setting a finished translation to music is, in turn, determined by a similar set of critical criteria, in which, among other things, the musical potential of words and verses are tested out. Caetano’s “Elegia”—the “final” iteration of Donne’s “Elegy”—heard and sung by hundreds of thousands of Brazilians, completes a process of cultural revitalization characterized by the interpenetration of the popular and the erudite. The “revitalization” of Donne’s poem, the “symbiosis” of poetry, translation, and music, and the artistic “stamina” and “vitality” of Augusto I have outlined are all expressed in biological metaphors whose rich significance I would like to explore. Through a close reading of Augusto’s translations of Gerard Manley Hopkins in *A beleza difícil* (1997), I would like to how the act of translation involves the giving of a new body to the breath of a poem.

The voicing of Augusto’s “Elegia: indo para o leito” draws translation into the realm of music and suggests a link between translation and recitation. This link can be approached through M.H. Abrams’s celebrated lecture on “The Fourth Dimension of a Poem,” which contains a number of reflections on the process by which a printed poem comes to life in the human voice when read aloud. This process is possible only by means of the orchestration of the lungs, throat, and mouth necessary to produce the range of speech sounds encoded in a poem. As Abrams indicates, it is by way of these delicate “oral gestures” that a reader “bodies forth” the words of a poem and makes palpable the materiality of its medium (Abrams, 2012: 3). The same, I want to argue, can be said of translation, since in material terms it involves the translation —literally, the movement — of the speech sounds of the original to different points of articulation and new aural shapes in the target language, into new patterns and relations, as well as the loss and gain of speech sounds available in the phonological inventory of the target language. The complex coordination of the body parts involved in producing speech sounds follows a different but analogous “score” in the translation. Similarly, the myriad ways in which the same poem can be read out loud is analogous to the myriad languages into which a given poem can be translated.

The decisive influence of the “fourth dimension” of a poem on the act of translation is nowhere more evident than in Augusto’s translations of Gerard Manley Hopkins. In the introduction to his translations in *Hopkins: A beleza difícil*, Augusto gives a concise account of the distinctive qualities of Hopkins’s poetry, paying special attention to its unique aural composition. According to Augusto, Hopkins belongs in the company of such inventors of verbal sound as Joyce and Dylan Thomas; as Augusto is quick to point out. Hopkins himself remarked of his own work that it ought to be read “mais com os ouvidos do que com os olhos” (Campos, 1997: 13).² Augusto adds that Hopkins is “um poeta cujos textos ganham muito quando oralizados” (13). Later in the introduction, in the context of a brief discussion of “The Wreck of the Deutschland,” Augusto quotes at length the analysis of F.R. Leavis, who highlights the physical sensations that Hopkins’s long poem evokes in the reader: “suas palavras e frases são ações tanto quanto sons, ideias e imagens, e devem ser lidas tanto com o corpo como com o olho” (Campos, 1997: 22).³ In view of Abrams’s insights into the vocalization of a poem, the “actions” Leavis refers to are, in a literal and material sense, speech actions, and “reading with the body as much as with the eyes” means mobilizing the body in order to vocalize the poem. Leavis points to the way in which Hopkins embodies the spiritual and emotional impetus for the poem in “reverberações físicas, tensões nervosas e musculares que caracteriza o seu melhor verso é aqui explicitamente elaborada na descrição de uma tempestade que é ao mesmo tempo a descrição de um drama interior” (Campos, 1997: 22).⁴ Building on Leavis’s observations, Augusto cites specific verses in which Hopkins foregrounds the materiality of language in order to appeal to the physical act of recitation:

A compressão sintática, aliada a ênfase na materialidade dos vocábulos, da, efetivamente, ao poema o caráter de uma experiência viva, física, imediata,

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all of Augusto’s references to and translations of Hopkins’s poetry are from Campos, 1997.

² I have not been able to locate, with certainty, the source of this quotation. One possible source is Hopkins’s letter of 22 April 1879 to Robert Bridges: “Take breath and read it with the ears, as I always wish to be read” (*The Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins to Robert Bridges*, 2nd edn., ed. Claude Collier Abbott [London: Oxford University Press, 1955], p. 79).

³ “His words and phrases are actions as well as sounds, ideas, and images, and must, as I have said, be read with the body as well as with the eye: that is the force of his concern to be read aloud” (Leavis, [1932] 1964: 172).

⁴ “This poem was his first ambitious experiment, and it is the more interesting in that his technical resources are deployed in it at great length: the association of inner, spiritual, emotional stress with physical reverberations, nervous and muscular tensions that characterizes his best verse is here explicitly elaborated in an account of the storm which is at the same time an account of an inner drama” (Leavis [1932] 1964: 175-6).

tanto no que concerne ao evento propriamente dito (ver as estrofes 13 a 17 que descrevem os embates do navio em meio à borrasca e a morte do marinheiro que tenta salvar alguns náufragos) como a tensão psicológica que envolve o poeta, como se pode perceber desde as primeiras estrofes, nas quais detalhes bio-orgânicos (ossos, veios, diafragma) são trazidos ao primeiro plano, assim como as sensações de vôo e vertigem (estrofes 2 e 4). Na estrofe 8, o sensualismo do paladar é explorado não só em quase-onomatopeias gustativas, mas através de uma cadeia de enjambements e pausas, a partir da estrofe 7, cuja última linha surpreendentemente vai desembocar na seguinte, após um corte abrupto. Outro exemplo desse isomorfismo experiência-expressão está na estrofe 28, em que o poeta justapõe frases entrecortadas, multiplicando o suspense, para descortinar, pouco a pouco, a visão de Cristo” (22).

Of special relevance here is Augusto’s identification of language not merely associated with the body (bones, veins, and the diaphragm) but that calls the body to action and movement, or what Abrams refers to as “oral gestures”: the foregrounding of the physicality of the palate in gustatory quasi-onomatopoeia and repeated enjambments and pauses. In a critical gesture characteristic of Augusto’s engagement with poets across time and space, he “translates” the relation between form and content in the poem into his own critical language, describing the broken verses of the 28th stanza, which culminate in a vision of Christ, as “isomorphic.”

The first stanza of the poem, to which Augusto alludes in the passage quoted above for its explicit references to the body, contains a few key details that clarify the relation between the materiality of language in the poem and the immateriality of its meanings. Here is the original:

Thou mastering me
God! giver of breath and bread;
World's strand, sway of the sea;
Lord of living and dead;
Thou hast bound bones and veins in me, fastened me flesh,
And after it almost unmade, what with dread,
Thy doing: and dost thou touch me afresh?
Over again I feel thy finger and find thee.

The interplay of the various alliterations, so characteristic of Hopkins’s poetry, combined with the alternating rhyme scheme, form the articulations and veins of sound and meaning that are animated by the reader’s breath and voice. The very alliteration of “breath” and “bread” fuses the material and

immaterial. The last two verses stage the divine infusion of grace in the human body, a phenomenon Hopkins reflected on at length in his sermons and devotional writings. One passage in particular from those writings illuminates these two verses and provides a point of entry into Augusto's translation of them. Describing the concept of "elevating grace," Hopkins states that it is "truly God's finger touching the very vein of personality, which nothing else can reach and man can respond to by no play whatever, by bare acknowledgement only, the counter stress which God alone can feel, ...the aspiration in answer to his inspiration" (Hopkins [1986] 2009: 336).⁵ The allusion to the physical act of respiration and the production of speech sounds contained in "inspiration" and "aspiration" echoes the verse describing God as "giver of breath," while the reference to the finger of God explicitly links the stanza and the sermon. In both texts, the breath passing through the human body is the phenomenon in which the material and immaterial come together. In his translation of this stanza, Augusto proves sensitive to this play between the substantial and the ethereal, making it culminate with an act of speech:

Mestre de mim
Deus! doador do ar e da dor;
Fibra do mundo, mar sem fim;
Senhor de morte e amor;
Ligaste ossos e veias em mim, carne criaste-
Me, e quase desfizeste, após, horror,
Teu feito: e ora me tanges com tua haste?
De novo teu dedo doa e dói e eu digo sim.

The phonic density of the stanza is remarkable; since the variety of alliterative words available to Hopkins, composing in English, is far greater than that available to Augusto, composing in Portuguese, the latter organizes the stanza around fewer sounds (four, to be exact): the voiced bilabial *m* (*mestre, mim, mundo, mar, morte, amor*), the nasalized *i* (*mim, fim, mim, sim*), the voiced dental tap or flap

⁵ In citing the relevance of this passage of Hopkins's devotional writings to the interpretation of the opening stanza of "The Wreck," I am indebted to Catherine Phillips's explanatory notes on the poem in her excellent edition of Hopkins's works.

r, often combined with *o* (*doador, ar, dor, fibra, mar, senhor, morte, amor, carne, horror, ora*) and, most conspicuously, the voiced dental alveolar plosive or stop *d* (*de, Deus, doador, do, da, disfiçeste, dedo, doa, dói, digo*). In the new “body” of sound created in the Portuguese translation, the recurring *d*—articulated with the blade of the tongue against the roof of the mouth, just behind the teeth—constitutes the “bones,” while the liquid *r* runs through the stanza like “veins.” Remarkably, Augusto manages to retain one sound that figures prominently in the original, above all in the fifth verse: the *-ast* of *mastering, bast, and fastened* is preserved in *ligaste, criaste, and haste*, with the latter two in rhyming positions. The dense sonic structure of the stanza realizes itself in the final verse—becomes aware of itself, as it were—in the act of speech: *e eu digo sim*. The semantic charge of this verse is transposed from the first line of the second stanza (in the original, *I did say yes*) to the final line of the first stanza (in the translation), a modification that, in tune with the original, foregrounds the physical act of breathing and speaking, which runs through the entire second stanza (three exclamations of *O*), culminating with the verse *And the midriff astrain with leaning of, laced with fire of stress*, which Augusto renders *E o diafragma teso com o peso, ao fogo da tensão sem ar*. Augusto’s critical intuition and craft as a translator combine in these passages to penetrate the very spirit of Hopkins’s reflections on the phenomenology of grace, that “counter stress which God alone can feel, ...the aspiration in answer to his inspiration.”

That the physical act of respiration and the palpable aspects of language should be the privileged locus of union with the divine is, in the case of Hopkins, no surprise, considering his Jesuit education. What is surprising—and rarely examined in critical reflections on Augusto as translator—is that a similar dialectic of the material and the spiritual, the substantial and the ethereal, exists in Augusto’s own reflections on the practice of translation. I will cite two occasions on which Augusto emphasizes an element of poetry and translation that, though determined by its material, formal dimensions, also transcends them. In the first quote, Augusto describes, in quasi-spiritual terms, the

privileged encounter between translator and poet/poem, in which the former labors to achieve a kind of union with the latter:

Eu disse da tradução: é uma questão de forma, mas também uma questão de alma. Acredito que nas melhores traduções ocorre essa fusão que Borges (pensando em Omar Khayam/Fitzgerald) viu como uma espécie de ‘transmigração das almas’. Em outras palavras, deve haver uma profunda identificação espiritual com o poema e uma adesão molecular ao texto para que ele possa reflorir noutro idioma com o viço original. Algo como uma ‘mediunização’ intermídia, uma ‘transempatia’ aliada a uma ‘interportação’ sensível de linguagem, se é que essas palavras conseguem explicar aquela ‘matemática inspirada’ (expressão de Pound) que faz com que uma boa tradução não pareça uma tradução mas um poema e os dois poetas um só. Eu nunca traduzi sob comando ou por encomenda. Só traduzo aquilo que amo profundamente. Assim, sinto-me formal e animicamente ligado a todos os poetas que traduzi, embora não me sinta compelido a escrever como eles quando faço a minha própria poesia. Certamente todos eles me terão influenciado, de um modo ou de outro. Mas acho que posso dizer, como Hopkins, que “the effect of studying masterpieces is to make me admire and do otherwise” (Oseki-Dépré, 2004: 293).

The way in which, for Augusto, the question of translation very quickly becomes the question of poetry itself is evident in his quotation of Pound: the original context of the quotation is poetry, not translation: “Poetry is a kind of inspired mathematics, which gives us equations, not for abstract figures, triangles, spheres, and the like, but equations for the human emotions (Pound, [1968] 2005: 14). The transposition of the Poundian aphorism to the subject of translation is, however, perfectly in tune with Pound’s poetics. The theme of inspiration—which unites the spiritual and the physical—lies at the very heart of Augusto’s reflections on translation in this passage, which include related terms like “transmigration of souls” and “profound spiritual identification.” The quasi-mystical terms in which Augusto couches the practice of translation are themselves a testament to the influence of the poets he has translated, a consequence of the “transempathy” and “interportation” to which he refers: Borges, Pound, and Hopkins are mentioned explicitly, while the translation of Donne is the subject of the interview in which this passage appears and is evidently linked to the notion of spiritual or mystical union. The concerns Augusto raises in this passage add nuance to the study of his work as translator and shed light on his approach to translation. The reflections cited above belie the standard

charges against Augusto: namely, that questions of poetic form are the only ones with which he is concerned and that theoretical formulations can account for all the workings of a poem. In my view, the dialectic of *forma* and *alma* that Augusto mentions suggests the “fourth dimension” of the well-known ‘verbivocovisual’ formula, a dimension grounded in the material sound of poetic language, animating its immaterial meanings and, as Augusto seems to suggest, ultimately transcends those meanings: I am referring to the breath, the shaping of which is encoded in the poem’s form and materialized in the physical act of reading out loud, a process that gives substance to language’s immaterial, referential meanings. What the very best translation demands, in Augusto’s terms, is the translation of the “breath” of the original, which can be achieved only by a “molecular adhesion to the text” and a “profound spiritual identification” with it.

A second example will provide further clarity. In “Donne em dobro,” a critical reflection, in verse, on his translations of John Donne included in *O Anticrítico*, Augusto discusses some of the challenges posed by “The Expiration.” The significance of this poem in relation to the breath and the vocalization of poetry is evident in the various meanings of the word “expiration” that Donne exploits: it gathers within its semantic orbit the erotic union in the act of kissing, the vocalization of language in speech, and the final exhalation before death. It is not, however, this quality of the poem that Augusto seeks to explore; instead, he explains that “chance” afforded him a new insight into the poem in question:

o acaso foi um disco
de música elisabetana
“an evening of elizabethan verse
and its music”,
com o new york pro musica antiqua,
cada canção precedida da leitura do texto
por w.h. auden,
incluindo “a expiração”

Abrams’s “fourth dimension” is, in this case, the very impetus for the act of translation. Furthermore, that the voice of those readings is W.H. Auden’s is significant, considering the well-known influence

of Gerard Manley Hopkins on Auden. Abrams alludes explicitly to this connection in “The Fourth Dimension of a Poem,” in the context of his reflections on the vocalization of poetry in Auden’s “On This Island.”⁶ In “Donne em dobro,” Augusto proceeds to give a detailed analysis of the dense pattern of sound and image encoded in the poem—its “corrente magnética/de microssoons e microimagens”—as well as to describe the ways in which he sought to recreate the poem in Portuguese. He concludes his reflections on the poem in terms that echo the *forma/alma* dialectic cited above, suggesting the presence of some quality both encoded in the form of the poem and transcending it:

valerá a pena
radioscopar assim um poema
mostrar os elétrons pulsando sob o laser?
um poema não é o seu espectro
e nele há sempre algo
que nenhuma análise
(por mais capaz)
consegue captar.
mas como experienciar
a fundo a criação de um poema
sem desvendar o véu da sua oculta
urdidura subjacente? (Campos, 1986: 76-77)

The limits of formal analysis are being staked out here, without, however, discarding it as a means by which to gain a deeper appreciation for a poem’s inner workings. Throughout the passage there is a tension between the vital motion of the poem—its electrons “pulsing”—and the attempt to “capture” its energies, to bring it to a standstill. Ultimately, the poem is meant to be “experienced,” meaning that it can be reflected upon but never immobilized. The “hidden underlying web” of the poem is the air that animates it when read aloud, physically shaped by complex, coordinated movements of the body

⁶ “Most prominent is his use of devices—especially the emphatic repetition of stressed syllables, and the conspicuous patterning of speech sounds—that he had learned from the poet-priest Gerard Manley Hopkins. Almost all of Hopkins’ poems, although written in the high Victorian period, had not been published until 1918, only eighteen years before ‘On This Island’; and Hopkins’ linguistic innovations captivated Auden, as they did other young poets of his generation” (Abrams, 2012: 4).

(not a “specter”) and that escapes the detection of “radioscopic” analysis. The chain of reduplications Augusto identifies in his vocovisual analysis of the poem is embodied in the inspiration and aspiration of the reader, whose speech movements he, as translator, directs.

I would like to conclude with a few examples of how Augusto reshapes the sonic body of Hopkins’ poems. As a general comment, the fidelity of Augusto’s translations is remarkable, especially when it comes to preserving formal characteristics such as rhyme and meter. With few exceptions—such as the occasional lengthening of decasyllabic lines in English to dodecasyllabic ones in Portuguese—the principal formal characteristics of the English original are preserved in the Portuguese translation. Augusto’s translations also show a firm commitment to remaining within the bounds of the semantic fields present in the original. Paulo Henriques Britto (Sussekind and Castañón-Guimarães, 2004) gives a thoroughly detailed study of Augusto’s translation of the sonnet “Carrion-comfort” (“Cadáver-consolo”), remarking the fidelity to both the formal characteristics and semantic fields of the original.

Augusto’s translation of “The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo” is a good example to begin with. The translation was first published in *Verso, reverso, controverso* (1978), accompanied by a short study approximating Hopkins to the *poeti bizzarri* of the Italian mannerist tradition. As its title suggests, sound figures prominently in the poem: “I never did anything more musical” Hopkins remarked of the poem to his friend and fellow poet Richard Watson Dixon. “The thought,” Hopkins explained, “is of beauty as of something that can be physically kept and lost and by physical things only, like keys” (Hopkins, 2002: 368). In his reflections on the translation of the poem, Augusto intuits this double concern with sound and the ephemerality of beauty: “O poema é notável pela requintada ecolalia que responde ao título, mesclando assonância, aliteração e rima, e pelo ritmo icônico (que distende a linha até o limite do alento), em compasso com a reflexão sobre a efemeridade da beleza e da vida, caracterizando aquele ‘encontro nu de sensualidade e ascese’ que escandalizou o poeta Robert

Bridges” (Campos, 1997: 15). In Augusto’s reading, then, the physical challenge of reading the long lines of the poem out loud gives a material dimension to the reflection on the fleeting nature of beauty and life. A close reading of the translation shows that Augusto puts this interpretation into practice by paying special attention to the sonic structure of the English original and his recreation in Portuguese.

In several instances, Augusto manages to preserve, with little or no modification, the sounds of Hopkins’s poem, despite the phonological differences between English and Portuguese: “tombs and worms and tumbling to decay” becomes “tumbas e térmitas até o tombo final” in Augusto’s transcreation, which preserves the density of *t* and *m* in the original. The most remarkable passages of the poem, however, are ones in which Augusto reshapes the sonic “body” of the English original according to the solutions available in Portuguese. The title is the most conspicuous example, which Augusto renders as “O eco de bronze e o eco de ouro” in an attempt to preserve the vocal echo of “leaDEN” and “goldEN”.

Confronted with the extreme difficulty of replicating the alliterative richness of English (and the ways in which Hopkins leverages that richness to build the rhythms of his verse), Augusto responds by leveraging the phonological richness of Portuguese vowels. The distinctive feature of the sonic contour of Augusto’s translation is the recurrence of the open vowel *a* and the diphthong /aw/, which, in the most intense moments of the translation, interact in much the same way as the alliterative consonants of the original. The most striking example of this particular reshaping of the sonic body of the original is in the first section of “O eco de bronze,” in which “no waving off of these most mournful messengers, still messengers, sad and stealing messengers of grey?” becomes, in Augusto’s recreation, “Nenhum sobressalto dos altos álgidos arautos, áridos arautos, escuros e escusos arautos do cinza?” (39). The open *a* and the diphthong /aw/ in the various *au* and *al* combinations interact in

much the same way the alliteration of *m* and *s* interact in the original. In the opening verses of the poem, these two vowel sounds compensate for the emphatic alliteration of /k/ in the original:

How to keep — is there any any, is there none such, nowhere
known some, bow or brooch or braid or brace, lace, latch or
catch or key to keep
Back beauty, keep it, beauty, beauty, beauty,... from vanishing
away?

Como guardar - ha algum algum, haverá um, algum algo
algures, tranca ou trinco ou broche ou braço, laço ou
trave ou chave capaz de res-
Guardar o belo, guardá-lo, belo, belo, belo... do des-
gaste? (39)

The phonic texture of both the original and the translation could be analyzed almost *ad infinitum*, but I will note only a few key correspondences: the extremely high frequency of *a* and /aw/ in the first verse establishes a sonic pattern that will be repeated throughout the poem; the triple /k/ in “catch or key to keep” is echoed in Augusto’s translation by the triple *a* of “trave ou chave capaz”; the recurrence of the plosives *g* and *d* and the open vowel *a* in *guardar* and its variants echo the alliteration of /k/ in *keep* and *back*, which occupy precisely the same places in their respective verses. The very same interaction of the plosives /d/ and /g/, in conjunction with *a* reaches its climax in the final section of the poem, in which *cuidado* and variants of *guardar* leave the reader breathless. “Oh por que sermos tão cavos/no coração” asks the speaker,

Quando a coisa que livres renunciamos e guardada com o mais caro cuidado
Mais caro cuidado guardada do que a poderíamos ter guardado, guardada
Com muito maior cuidado (e nós, nos a perderíamos), mais puro,
mais caro
Cuidado guardada. -Onde guardada? Diga-nos onde guardada, onde.-

When the thing we freely forfeit is kept with fonder a care,
Fonder a care kept than we could have kept it, kept
Far with fonder a care (and we, we should have lost it) finer,
fonder
A care kept. — Where kept? Do but tell us where kept, where. —

That which is kept with care and “lost”—the ephemeral beauty expressed in physical things to which Hopkins referred in connection with the poem—is the very breath of the reader of Augusto’s

translation, a reader who is forced to produce so many plosives in such close contact, together with the open vowel *a*. The occlusive manner of articulation of the plosives *g* and *d* “keep back” the breath, while the open *a* releases it. This aural and oral effect works in conjunction with the numerous instances of enjambment, to reproduce the distinctive rhythm of Hopkins’s verse.

The sonnet “To R.B.” provides a few final examples of how Augusto approaches translation as the fourth dimension of a poem. Dedicated to friend and fellow poet Robert Bridges (who was also the editor of the first edition of Hopkins’s poetry), the poem is a self-ironizing reflection on the process of poetic creation, which—like in “The Oxen of the Sun” episode in *Ulysses*—is likened to human gestation. A preliminary comparison of Hopkins’s poem and Augusto’s translation seems to suggest that the latter emphasizes the visual over the aural and vocal. References to the “breath” of poetic inspiration in the original are transposed to the realm of vision in the translation: the “fine delight” that engenders poetic thought and “breathes once” becomes “a alegre luz” that shines once (“brilha uma vez”); in the final tercet of the poem, “my winter world, that scarcely breathes that bliss/now” is rendered “meu mundo inverno, onde esse júbilo não grassa.” A closer reading of the poem, however, reveals how Augusto subtly reinforces the theme of the breath and the human voice not through semantic means but by reshaping the soundscape of the original. That this strategy should be subtle rather than readily apparent is in keeping with the spirit of the original, in which the speaker questions the quality of his own poem and doubts whether it is really endowed with the “breath” of poetic inspiration:

Sweet fire the sire of muse, my soul needs this;
I want the one rapture of an inspiration.
O then if in my lagging lines you miss

The roll, the rise, the carol, the creation,
My winter world, that scarcely breathes that bliss
Now, yields you, with some sighs, our explanation.

Fogo maior, senhor da musa - uma só graça

Pede meu ser: o arroubo de uma inspiração.
Mas, se por minhas lentas linhas já não passa

A vaga, o vôo, a voz, o canto, a criação,
Meu mundo-inverno, onde esse jubilo não grassa,
É, com alguns suspiros, nossa explicação. (65)

In the center of the final tercet of Augusto's translation stands, in a stressed position, *voz*, composed of the voiced consonants *v* and *z*, consonants which form a vocal thread that runs through the entire poem: *luz* and *vez* mentioned above, *viva e voraz*, also in the first stanza (for "live and lancing"), *viuva de uma visão perdida*, *vive* in the second stanza (for "the widow of an insight she lives"), and, finally, the emphatic alliteration of *a vaga, o vôo, a voz*. The speaker's "explanation" for the imperfections of his verse—i.e. his "winter world"—partakes of the same vocal pattern in the Portuguese, with the *v* of *meu mundo-inverno*. Here, as in so many privileged moments of Augusto's translations, the "underlying web" that animates poetry—that unique encounter of form and soul—is the human voice. The sensitive patterning of speech sounds, the careful orchestration of the body that sets the silences and vibrations of speech in a subtle, vital tension, are at the very heart of *A beleza difícil*, just as they are in the divine inspiration and aspiration of Hopkins's poetry.

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