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Infernal Affects

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Abstract

Infernal Affects
By Tiffany Low

In examining three English translations of Dante's Inferno (excerpts from Canto V and Canto XIII), this thesis will find that poetry is a hypersaturation of sound patterns that are heightened by emphatic silences. This thesis thus argues that silence heightens bodily awareness, thematic significance of self-autonomy, and poetic effects of certain sonic tropes. This essay will demonstrate the claim that silence is key to understanding poetry by examining (1) translators' creation of hypersaturated soundscapes in Cantos V and XIII of Inferno, (2) the use of marked silences in Canto V, and (3) the use of unmarked silences in Canto XIII. What will be abundantly clear after this analysis is that sound alone is inadequate to understanding the effects of poetry, and that silence plays a key part in producing the bodily effect that characteristically separates poetry from other uses of language. By the end of this project, we hope to find that when poet-translators discover new arrangements of sounds and silence that produce heightened bodily effects, poetry is not what gets lost. Rather, poetry can be found in translation.

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Table of Contents

Introduction 1
Chapter 1: *Hypersaturation* of Sound 7
Chapter 2: Marked Silences, or the Presence of Absence 14
Chapter 3: Elasticity of Unmarked Silences 23
Conclusion 37
Works Cited 41
Bibliography 43

Introduction

Robert Frost famously says “poetry is what gets lost in translation.” Three words must first be defined: what is poetry, lost, and translation? According to the *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, poetry is defined as “an instance of *verbal art*” where “forms of perception, experience, or meaning” are heightened through heightened “resources” (Preminger and Brogan 938). In other words, a highly impactful poem requires great poetic technique. Something frequently remarked about poetry is that, even more than words, it is composed of sounds. Poems have effects on our bodies long before we understand them.

Western Winds, for instance, recognizes this aspect of poetry, and chooses to start new students of poetry off with the ability to name poetic devices and look at the microscopic aspects of poetry that are meticulously put together to heighten a reader’s sensations. They follow Wallace Stevens in emphasizing that “words above everything else, are, in poetry, sounds,” and Robert Frost in viewing the sounds of poetry as “the gold in the ore” (Nims and Mason 152). Even as small children, we are exposed to poetic uses of language without knowing how and why it affects us. Nims and Mason say that children are “more at home in the world of sound than in the world of sight” (153). If Frost implies poetry as sound, then certainly the sound of one language cannot be displaced and reinstated in another. Yet, sound does not contain meaning entirely. There is an embodied effect of poetry we feel, even in poems we do not understand. This elusive “feeling” is sought after by poets. *What, then, is this “feeling” of poetry that transcends culture, language, and time? If so, can it be lost?*

While it is still uncertain how poets have attempted to handle it, silence gives a clue to the “feeling” many poet-translators attempt to capture in their poetry. In much of the scholarship written about poetry, sound is the focus. Even if the sounds of the original poem are unavailable

in the poet-translator's original language, new poetry is being constructed through a new handling of silence that transcends language, culture, and time. Silence's structuring, emphatic, and thematic properties are often overlooked in discourse about poetry. Although there are different indicators of silence, such as marked and unmarked, silence remains a pause of sound. In recitations of a poem, rests are often breath marks; the reader breathes in the silence. While pauses may have different lengths and placements, they sound the same—they are soundless. So, while translation changes the sounds of a poem, the actual silences share the same soundlessness. Noticing the effects silence English poetry may help readers and writers become aware, and increase their enjoyment, of a poem. *How, then, do poets attempt to use silence in producing bodily experiences common to great poetry?*

One might assume that translations, in response to a great poem, would try to replicate the sonic tropes from the original language. Alternatively, one might assume there would be a single linking factor between the original poem and its translations, whether it be the year the translation was produced; the translator's vocational history; or the poetic devices deployed in a passage. Such assumptions could lead one to believe that great translations come from imitating the sonic tropes of the original poem as closely as possible, or that English poems can produce heightened bodily resonance by using a fixed set of sound patterns alone.

To challenge these assumptions, we turn to a poem that has achieved recognition for its poetic excellence and translatability. Dante's *Divine Comedy* is a globally recognized epic written in medieval Tuscan and has been translated hundreds of times into English alone. Dante's *Inferno* is the most widely translated of the three canticles and continues to capture the attention of great poets such as Seamus Heaney, Jorie Graham, Susan Mitchell, Carolyn Forché,

Richard Wilbur, Alfred Corn, Sharon Olds, Robert Hass, and more. The poem is composed in terza rima, a form almost exclusively used by Dante due to its difficulty in composition. This thesis will look at two of the most commonly translated parts of *Inferno*—Canto V and XIII. The passages identified in this thesis are based directly on sonically intense passages in an Italian performance of the aforementioned cantos. The initial number of translations investigated for this thesis was over twenty, which made clear the breadth of possibilities for sonic qualities in translations of the same text. The initial poetic devices evaluated in each translation included the following: instance, hendecasyllabic lines (stress), terza rima (end rhyme), internal rhymes, anaphora, mimesis, caesuras, assonance, onomatopoeia, polyptoton, alliteration, and enjambment.

Evaluating more than a single English translation allows a greater sample size of writing styles. If this project focused on one poet, it could appraise how that particular writer's use of poetic language was successful. Yet, this would not allow comments on how sound and silence are used by other writers. The works of a particular poet can also be written off as simply an extraordinary writer. Just as it would be disadvantageous to evaluate a single poet, it would be disadvantageous to incorporate existing productions inspired by Dante such as the improv routine "TuttoDante" or the video game *Dante's Inferno* because changing the medium would introduce variations beyond this project's English studies. It is also disadvantageous to evaluate simply English poets without the intervention of translation because we would lack insight of what heightened bodily effects the poet tried to achieve.

By looking at multiple translations of the same text, we control for aspects that may otherwise vary such as subject matter, narrative style, structure, uses of poetic sonic techniques, and more. Interestingly, many translators are not fluent in Tuscan, or even Italian. But to their credit, notable translators are often English wordsmiths. Translations considered in this project include, but are not limited to: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Henry Francis Cary, Jefferson Butler Fletcher, Laurence Binyon, Melville Best Anderson, Lawrence Grant White, Dorothy L. Sayers, John Ciardi, Allen Mandelbaum, Robert Pinsky, Steve Ellis, Mark Musa, Robert Durling, Robert and Jean Hollander, Ciaran Carson, Burton Raffel, Mary Jo Bang, Clive James, Sidney Fowler Wright, John Ruskin, Charles S. Singleton, and others. Part of the hope of this project is to encourage poets to seek out the poetic handlings of sounds and silences, and to produce poems rather than merely semantically accurate translations. In highlighting the silences of prominent sonic passages, we better understand the underlying structure, and explore the different handlings of marked and unmarked silence. In particular, this project focuses on the translations of three poet-translators—Charles S. Singleton, Mary Jo Bang, and Robert Pinsky—who exemplify remarkably different approaches to translating Dante.

Charles S. Singleton's translation is significant to this project because its prose qualities allow us to focus on the narrative of the story without particular concern for sound or silence. In other words, Singleton's prose translation strives for semantic accuracy. Even so, he often incorporates sonically poetic language. Moreover, Singleton was not a poet by vocation. Through Singleton, we gain a better understanding of how sounds of poetry can be unexpectedly found in English prose writing.

Mary Jo Bang, on the other hand, is a verse poet-translator. Bang is known for her "hybrid poetry," which challenges literary categories separating philosophy, sociology, and

poetry, prior to her translation of *Inferno* (Poetry Foundation, "Mary Jo Bang"). In her translation, Bang diverges from semantic accuracy by inserting some contemporary cultural figures while maintaining others originally present in Dante's poem. Her reference to current pop-culture, alongside classic allegories, stitch together a translation of *Inferno* that is accessible to casual, contemporary readers. Her translation tends to deploy silences in a soundscape tailored towards the contemporary sound.

Unlike Singleton and Bang, Robert Pinsky's translation uses a highly rigid verse structure. Pinsky was the Poet Laureate of the United States in 1997 who has produced a sizable body of original work (Poetry Foundation, "Robert Pinsky"). In his introduction to the *Inferno*, Pinsky talks about the importance of sound and how he attempted to preserve the "essence" of the epic. In *Sounds of Poetry*, Pinsky advocates for poetry as a "bodily art" that requires the reader to act as a medium for words (8). Interestingly, Pinsky uses a variation of terza rima for his translation—note terza rima is rarely used, in both Italian and English, due to its difficulty in composition coupled with English's contradicting iambic language structure. Pinsky's translation tends to deploy silences at semantically and structurally disruptive places through enjambments.

Part of what an in-depth analysis of the differences between Singleton, Bang, and Pinsky's translations reveals is that we must not disregard silence in our analysis of sound, and vice versa. Sound and silence must co-exist in poetry. Even though we do not hear silence, it acts upon sounds by creating structure and emphasis. While the same sonic patterns are unavailable, poet-translators can produce heightened bodily effects through different handlings of silence. In closely examining microscopic silences within Dante's *Inferno*, we find that different

translations of silence tend to have different semantic interpretations which, in response, produces different bodily experiences in the reader.

This thesis thus argues that silence heightens bodily awareness, thematic significance of self-autonomy, and poetic effects of certain sonic tropes. This essay will demonstrate the claim that silence is key to understanding poetry by examining (1) translators' creation of hypersaturated soundscapes in Cantos V and XIII of *Inferno*, (2) the use of marked silences in Canto V, and (3) the use of unmarked silences in Canto XIII. What will be abundantly clear after this analysis is that sound alone is inadequate to understanding the effects of poetry, and that silence plays a key part in producing the bodily effect that characteristically separates poetry from other uses of language.

Chapter 1: *Hypersaturation* of Sound

Poetry is not the same as ordinary speech. In *Art as Device,* Shklovsky presents poetic language, which he equates to disruption to the norm, in contrast to prosaic language. By Shklovsky's definition, poetic language can disrupt prosaic language and use language in a new way (14). Shklovsky's claim is useful for evaluating poetry because there is an element of unfamiliarity in both the Tuscan poetic soundscape of *Inferno* and the English poetic soundscape of *Inferno*'s translations. When Brogan says heightened ends require heightened means, we infer that poetic language is more saturated with poetic techniques than common speech (Preminger and Brogan 938). Poets disrupt speech through peculiar uses of words, sounds, and silences. The soundscape of *Inferno* is so intensely saturated with sound patterns that they overlap and produce multi-layered sonic effects.

The sounds in *Inferno* are best described as *hypersaturated*. Whereas sounds saturate most poems, great poems tend to use multiple layers of poetic devices to magnify their effects. Sound patterns in poetry are *hyper*saturated insofar as the sounds accomplish layered sonic effects, varied poetic devices, and use thematically relevant deployments that respond to the original poem. Terza rima and hendecasyllabic lines are the two consistent poet devices of *Inferno*. In the sections to follow, it will be clear that Dante and poet-translators mostly produce hypersaturated sound patterns.

This chapter will utilize the concept of hypersaturated soundscapes to establish the long-standing belief that poetry resides in sound and identify sonic effects that create complex layering in two cantos of Dante's *Inferno*. It will examine Singleton, Bang, and Pinsky's translations to evaluate how they handle poetic tropes in response to Dante's Tuscan soundscape of Canto V and Canto XIII. While sound remains a prominent aspect of poetry, the findings of

this chapter will bleed into a discussion of silence, as hypersaturated soundscapes ultimately illuminate significant points of silence most clearly.

Canto V

In Canto V, Dante illustrates the hopeless conditions for sinners of lust. They are fated to suffer for eternity under the ruthless winds of a hellish hurricane. Because they forfeited their free-will to carnal sins in life, their *contrapasso* is overstimulation of sensation. One notable example where Dante describes this experience is “nulla speranza li conforta mai, / non che di posa, ma di minor pena” (Alighieri V.44-45) While there are many layered poetic devices, three remarkable sonic patterns are Dante’s use of internal rhyme, assonance, and consonance. First, internal rhyme and assonance are deployed to link together “nulla,” “speranza,” “conforta,” “posa,” and “pena.” The broad “A” sound is an exhalation, like a sigh. Sighs normally occur out of exhaustion or relief, which mimics sounds produced by sinners. In addition, the consonance of “n” (a nasal sound) links together the words “nulla,” “non,” “minor,” and “pena.” Even though the lines separate two clauses, “nulla” and “non” both have a nasal consonance that creates a continuity of sound. These connecting points through assonance and consonance create a richly layered soundscape, despite each character’s seemingly little significance. These sounds are less available to English readers, yet the effect of assonance and consonance is captured, more or less successfully, in different translators’ renderings of Dante’s verse.

Charles S. Singleton, for instance, opts for a prose translation as he strives for semantic accuracy rather than sonic replication. In the corresponding sentence, Singleton writes “no hope of less pain, not to say of rest, ever comforts them” (Singleton 49). In this translation, Singleton uses nasal consonance in the first word to connect the independent clause, “no hope of less

pain… ever comforts them," and the dependent clause, "not to say of rest." Additionally, there is a prominent "s" sibilant sound in words such as "less," "say," "rest," and "comforts." The "s" consonance requires an exhalation of air. Coincidentally, these words seem to correspond to a sense of relief—note in Canto V, Francesca and Paolo only experience rest when Francesca is speaking. The sound patterns form complicated layers in prose that have bodily resonance for both the reader and the characters within the story.

In contrast, Bang writes her translation using contemporary sound. The poetic form suffuses contemporary sounds to reinvigorate Dante's medieval poem. She translates the passage as follows: "What is there to comfort them? Neither more peace / Nor less pain, although they beg for both" (Bang V.44-45). Bang's translation uses consonance of the "th" sound (a voiceless dental fricative) and a "n" nasal sound. The fricatives, which use exhalations of air, are present in both lines. They link together the question, the answer, and the desire for "more peace" and "less pain." On the other hand, the nasal sound is most prominent in connecting the clause "neither more peace" and "nor less pain." While one may argue that more peace is equivalent to less pain, the sonic effect further emphasizes this relationship. This connection creates an affinity between the two. Additionally, the words "more" and "nor" rhyme across lines. In other words, the sonic effects in the form of the poem produce a bodily manifestation that mimics the contents when read aloud. This soundscape not only produces an aural effect, but also a bodily experience.

Pinsky's verse translation, set in terza rima, creates connections between words through consonance. For this passage, he writes: "With never ease from pain, nor hope of rest" (Pinsky V.41). This translation again uses consonance of a nasal "n" sound—it recurs three times across one line. The consonance connects the two clauses, which produces a cohesive bond between "ease from pain" and "hope of rest." Pinsky also uses vowels in a prominent manner—there is

some "e" assonance as heard in "never" and "rest." Interestingly, the vowel is pronounced differently each time. In this small passage, we can identify a number of poetic devices. Pinsky's soundscape is comprised of these small sounds that layer and connect to various parts of the poem. In doing so, a dense structure of interconnected sounds emerges as hypersaturated sounds across Canto V. Yet, sound patterns do not stop at the canto alone. Hypersaturated sounds exist in other cantos as well, which connects the cantos of *Inferno* in an interdependent, multi-layered web of sound.

Canto XIII

In returning to the Tuscan poem, we find more sonically hypersaturated passages; this time, with a focus on alliterative and polyptotonic properties. Non-Italian speakers may turn to Italian performances of Canto XIII, such as Vittorio Gassman's reading, to sense where sonically prominent lines lie. For one, the line "Cred' ïo cr' ei credette ch' io credesse" jumps out immediately (*Gassman Legge Dante - Inferno, Canto V*). The exaggerated use of the hard "c" sound, also known as velar plosives, makes the alliterative consonants more prominent; deploying it five times over twelve syllables also brings attention to this line's sonic qualities. In addition to alliteration, the words "cred," "credette," and "credesse" come from the same root word "creder." This figurative device is known as polyptoton, which explores "the differing functions, energies, and positioning that different word-classes are permitted" without sounding overly repetitive (Preminger and Brogan, T.V.F 967). While these are only two literary devices, this passage contains other sonic layering that makes a memorable sound. Such complex usage of sound from a single line is a microcosm of the layering that occurs throughout *Inferno* and makes the poem hypersaturated.

These sonic tropes can be identified in Singleton's prose translation, which will serve as our basis of sonic hypersaturation in English versions of *Inferno* because it controls for consistency in silence. In other words, Singleton's sentences tend to have silences and end stops in accordance with grammatical ends. In Singleton's translation, the narrator says, "I believe that he believed that I believed that all those voices from amid the trunks came from people who were hidden from us" (Singleton 131). From the beginning of the line, there is a clear presence of alliteration. The "b" sound, also known as a bilabial stop, is used three times within the course of eleven syllables. "Believe" is the root word of the polyptoton, which serves as a foundational patterning of speech. While this passage is sonically rich and contains both alliteration and polyptoton, there is a minimization of both alliterative frequency and sonic intensity in the repeated consonant in comparison to Dante's original line. Still, a hypersaturated soundscape is present.

Bang's translation again procures a hypersaturated soundscape, even when she uses different sounds to achieve the effect. For example, Bang alliterates a total of five times over the span of eight syllables in the line "I think that he thought that I thought" (Bang XIII.25). The root word is "think;" Bang capitalizes on the alliterative frequency by placing "think" alongside determiner "that." In doing so, she accentuates the voiceless dental fricatives ("th" sound). The "th" sound is less harsh sounding than the velar plosives used in Dante, but it provides saturation by increasing alliterative frequency. This translation is hypersaturated with both alliteration and polyptoton; the polyptonic root word begins with the same letters as its determiners for greater frequency of alliteration, which heightens the repetition despite a less sonically intense consonant.

Like Singleton, Pinsky uses “believe” (a bilabial plosive) as his root polyptotonic word. He writes: “And so I stopped, bewildered. I believe / my guide believed that in my belief the voices” (Pinsky XIII.22-23). While the use of enjambment is a prominent difference between Pinsky and Singleton’s translation, we will only focus on the sounds in this chapter. The consonant “b” is alliterated four times over twenty-two syllables. Interestingly, the long “I” sound occurs four times as well through “I,” “my,” and “guide.” Pinsky doesn’t use subjects alone: “I” is a direct subject, “my” is a possessive determiner, and “guide” is a noun. The parts of speech introduce greater variance in the subject of the lines that somehow all point to Dante the narrator. It makes the reader more conscious of the narrator’s presence. Additionally, the combined use of alliteration and assonance creates a continuity that tends to a hypersaturated soundscape.

Takeaway

In each translation, the poet-translator deploys sound patterns in addition to the initially identified poetic devices of alliteration and polyptoton. Dante’s Tuscan *Inferno* is a significant starting point for English readers to identify potential tropes that successfully create bodily resonance. It should be remarked, however, that not all sonic effects can be reproduced in English, and there is certainly controversy over which technique is the most effective, but isolating alliteration and polyptoton allows us to compare hypersaturated English translations to Dante’s hypersaturated Tuscan poem.

This chapter demonstrates that Singleton, Bang, and Pinsky use some similar patterns regardless of stylistic (poetry vs. prose), vocational (poet vs. translator), and structural (free verse vs. terza rima) differences. While there are important differences between their uses of sound,

this chapter has shown that many translators are capable of creating successfully hypersaturated landscapes, suggesting that we should move away from sound in order to differentiate how these translations create bodily resonance. In looking at great translations, and subsequently great English poems in response to Dante's *Inferno,* we must further isolate what distinguishes each translation's successful evocation of a bodily response. Importantly, hypersaturated sounds distinguish poetry from ordinary speech—without sonic patterns, and interconnected layering, words would be mere speech.

This is when we should turn to silence. Silence permeates each translation, whether it be through spaces between words, punctuation, or line breaks. Because silence is set as an absence to sound, we tend to conflate variable types and lengths of silence despite their differences. These differences can be found in stylistic, structural, or semantical variations that have profound impact on bodily resonance. For example, Singleton's prose translation uses the same length of space between words whereas Bang uses enjambment, which can shorten the length of silence between two words that are not reaching a grammatical end. Hypersaturated sound, then, is a backdrop for us to examine silence. While silence does depend on sound, inverting the relationship may help us close in on how poems are effective in the soundscape through creative interventions of silence.

Chapter 2: Marked Silences, or the Presence of Absence

Fig. 1 Gustave Doré's "The Inferno, Canto 5"
Fig. 2 On the right is the same illustration, but the colors are inverted.

Marked silences refer to punctuation within a sentence or line, such as commas, colons, long-dashes, semicolons, and periods. Both verse and prose use marked silences, though they are named differently. According to *the Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, a caesura refers to "a break or joint in the continuity of the metrical structure of the line" that is usually signaled by a punctuation (Preminger and Brogan 159). If a period is deployed at the end of a verse line, it will be referred to as an end-stop. Caesuras are a shorter pause than end-stops because the meter continues on the same line, whereas end-stops align the end of a metrical line with its pause. Marked silences are typically longer than the space between words. When poems are read aloud, caesuras tend to correlate with the reader taking a quick breath. Caesuras may also be a stylistic choice of the reader, as found in Gassman's reading, but we cannot account for all performative variations in this project. As a result, we base our findings on the marked silences in the texts.

This chapter will focus on the English translations' uses of marked silences in one passage of Canto V. Tuscan and English tend to use completely different sounds, meaning it would be difficult to draw meaningful comparison between the two poems aside from shared poetic tropes and hypersaturated soundscape. Yet, silence exists in both soundscapes—in fact, it is one of few factors that permeates both language systems. Marked silence tends to not require Tuscan to English translation, cultural familiarity, or precise vocalization. By focusing our attention on marked silences in English, we learn how different poet-translators interpret the narrative and incorporate their interpretation into poetic silences to evoke a bodily effect. Having established that these three translations respond to Dante's hypersaturated poem with their own hypersaturated English sound, marked silences are visible rests in English.

Silence operates on both a poetic level in *Inferno* (the soundscape) and a contextual level in Inferno (the hellscape). In Singleton's prose translation, punctuation creates a microscopic slice of time where a sinner tells their story; Bang's verse translation takes a macrocosmic approach and illustrates the overarching structure of *Inferno*, *Purgatorio*, and *Paradiso* as crescendos of silence; and Pinsky's translation seems to compare the linearity of a verse line to time, whereby the punctuation of silence is akin to the Pilgrim's visit. Each poet-translator uses marked silence in a thematically significant way that creates a roadmap to the overarching structure and its breaks. In closely examining the marked silences of English translations, we learn about bodily effects in silence that interlocks structural, thematic, and semantic content.

Singleton

In a prose translation, commas and periods are not referenced as "caesuras" or "end stops," even though they provide insight into how silence is used to alter and embody meaning.

To reiterate Singleton's hypersaturated passage from Chapter 1, he writes: "no hope of less pain, not to say of rest, ever comforts them" (Singleton 49). Note that "hope of less pain" is one desire and "rest" is another. Like a math equation, the "no" is distributed to "hope of less pain" and also "rest." There is no hope, no lessening of pain, and no rest. These follow the nature of Inferno, as inscribed in the gates that the Pilgrim entered. It is also reflected in the soundscape of Inferno, where one is pummeled by sound without rest. However, the pair of commas (marked silences) form a dependent clause: "not to say of rest." The negation, "not," poses a double negative. Before, there was no rest; now, there is "not" no rest. While the contradiction to "no rest" does not explicitly say there is permanent rest, there is possibility for momentary rest. The pair of commas, or the marked silences, form a shelter. When Paolo and Francesca speak to the Pilgrim, they are allowed to tell their stories away from the roar of the hurricane. The marked silences provide a soundproof booth where Francesca uses three lengthy paragraphs to tell a portion of her story.

While the marked silences may appear to give only a momentary relief from the silence, pairs of marked silences provide shelter of rest that, once entered, stretches to fit the tale that the sinner desires to tell. The conclusion of Francesca's story results in the sinners losing their ability to speak, which reverts to their speech to sounds of misery. This loss of sound parallels the use of the second comma, which marks the conclusion of a dependent clause with silence. In Singleton's translation, the clause following the dependent clause about rest is "[no hope of less pain] ever comforts them." In accordance with the context, it is befitting that Francesca and Paolo return to their suffering under endless sound after the break of silence.

That being said, the overarching structure of the canto still takes precedent, and the Pilgrim inevitably leaves the second circle. Note, though, that the Pilgrim does not leave on his

own accord: “While the spirit said this, the other wept, for pity I swooned, as if in death, and fell as a dead body falls” (Singleton 57). As if to close out his visit in the second circle, the Pilgrim himself (his body) was silent as death; his fainting spell closed out Francesca’s narrative the way a period closes out a sentence. While this may seem to be a stretch of form to the content presented, it should be noted that there are intentional uses of punctuation to frame sounds. *Inferno* itself also has moments within hypersaturated soundscapes where silence plays a significant role in the structure of the story, as interpreted by English verse translators.

Bang

As the Pilgrim moves from one circle to another, he finds that each concentric circle “has a smaller circumference / But much more misery” (Bang V.2-3). This image is consistent across three English translations. Upon arrival in the second circle, the Pilgrim is assaulted by lamentations of sinners flung in all directions by the hellish hurricane. He describes the soundscape as one where sound “hammers” him (V.27). The cries of desperation are endless, violent, and incoherent as human speech. Just as a tool hammers away, or gusts of wind hammer into the body, the Pilgrim is being physically affected by sound. Note, the darkness of this circle in Inferno deprives the Pilgrim and Virgil of sight. Their only sensory input is the sound of endless misery, which one can imagine is disorienting and overwhelming. How can anyone make sense of incoherent, endless sound?

Close examination of marked pauses in a small passage in Bang’s verse translation of Canto V gives insight into this peculiar form of suffering. Dante the narrator remarks on the hopeless situation upon apprehending the eternal torment of these sinners: in Bang’s interpretation, she writes: “What is there to comfort them? Neither more peace / Nor less pain,

although they beg for both." (V.44-45). To mark moments of silence, Bang uses a question mark, an enjambment, a comma, and a period. These syntactic rests accumulate in their length of pause as we progress through the lines. For example, we anticipate a response after a question mark, but not necessarily after an end-stop. The appearance of a comma seems less certain than the line break, but its syntactic use to separate two clauses generally means there will be another clause. Yet, one cannot be certain that another sentence will follow the pause, and a stanza break after this line further emphasizes this uncertainty. Sound may cease altogether.

While many readers may associate the ceasing of sound with death or an end, this is not the case for sinners in Inferno, who are already dead. Sinners can only produce sounds of incomprehensible misery. Here, sound is intricately linked to suffering that is not only unrelenting but intensifying with each circle. Silence juxtaposes sound, as peace juxtaposes pain. Peace and pain are portrayed as an inverse relationship. Similar to how sound intensifies as the Pilgrim descends Inferno, the marked pauses of the line also accumulate silence. Bang points out the juxtaposition of each sinner's eternally painful reality with his impossible wish for peace. The content—a noisy hellscape—contrasts syntactic silence.

Pinsky

Sinners flung about by the hurricane winds produce sounds of anguish: "groaning, tears, laments, / And cursing the power of heaven" (Pinsky V.33-34). While groans, laments, and curses are sounds produced by humans, the generalizations in this passage blend them into one vast, homogenous soundscape. There is no individuality between one sinner and the next—sounds of suffering are incoherent and endless. These sounds are not considered speech because

they are unstructured and, thus, unintelligible. But what is the significance of silence with respect to overwhelming, unintelligible sound?

Perhaps Pinsky's translation of Canto V can give us a clue. He writes: "With never ease from pain, nor hope of rest" (V.41). In this line, Pinsky uses a pair of negations (a syntactic silence) that create a bilateral relationship between the clauses. First, the sinners desire "ease from pain," which is a reduction of a painful sensation inflicted upon them. There is no chance of this being fulfilled, for "never" will these sinners experience less torment. Their suffering is eternal. Next, the sinners want "hope of rest," which is a self-autonomous desire for release. Note that in Canto three, the gates of Inferno instruct those who enter to "abandon all hope" (Pinsky 3.7). The impossibility of having hope is further emphasized by the negation "nor," which stems from the eternal negation "never" from the first clause.

The desires presented are also revealed in the line's structure. Pinsky isolates two opposing ideas on the same line: pain and rest. They are separated by a comma, which creates a bifurcation. While they exist in the same line, they are not made to co-exist within the same clause. The silence of the comma enforces some division between them. In this case, silence is the structuring property that balances sounds and non-sounds. Silence is a natural occurrence in speech, despite the proportional use of sound. Whereas ordinary speech may emerge from foundational silence, the hypersonic soundscape of *Inferno* inverts this relationship. Sound, and thus suffering, forms the basis which silence penetrates. Against the backdrop of eternal pain, the relief of rest is magnified. The comma's small moment of silence causes a break, just as Dante's conversation with Francesca and Paolo imposes a temporary pause from their suffering. Perhaps Pinsky uses the pair of negation, "neither" and "nor," to imply that the two segments are not separate desires, but rather a continuation of eternal suffering. The comma (and the Pilgrim's

conversation) is merely a moment of silence that provides a small relief, even though it does not provide “hope of rest,” per se. While the sounds of suffering in Inferno were momentarily silenced for the sinners to form speech, their suffering continues after the Pilgrim leaves.

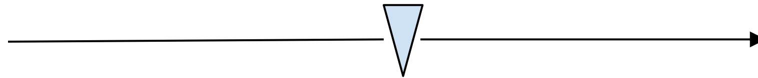

Fig. 3 Visualization of 3.7-line break

Bang and Pinsky

Verse translations deal with poetic silence differently. While both Bang and Pinsky use marked silences, Pinsky’s translation has fewer. But Bang’s translation uses more words—her passage takes up two lines and seventeen words— whereas Pinsky’s translation only takes up one line and nine words. Their difference in approach begs the question: is a passage more silent when there are more marked pauses, or when there are less sounds?

Rather than upholding one translation over another, we will first pick out the shared marked silences. In both translations, the word “pain” is followed by a comma; a pair of negations (“never/nor” or “neither/nor”) connect “pain” with peace/rest; and each concludes the passage with a period. The longest stretch of silence, an end stop, is used in both translations following the notion of “comfort” and “rest.” In Bang’s translation, the period appears after the clause “although they beg for both,” “both” encompassing the comforts of “more peace” and “less pain.” Here, the period is an end stop, meaning it follows the proper grammatical break. End stopped silences are generally considered more significant because the clauses are concluded without expectation of continuation. In Pinsky’s translation, the period appears after

the clause “nor hope of rest.” While “hope” is impossible within the context of Inferno, “rest” occurs when the Pilgrim singles out sinners to talk to. The period, once again, functions as an end-stop. The period following the line creates space for his desire, produced as a living body, to be manifested into rest for the sinners.

The result of ending a line with a period is that it allows the last word to resonate with the listener or reader for a second longer, the way a gong reverberates in the air after it has been struck. Echoes of comfort and rest continue throughout the canto, perhaps priming the scene for the Pilgrim to converse with Paolo and Francesca. The end-stop indicates a structure that enfolds pain and rest/comfort, creating a sort of bubble around the two so they are forced to interact with each other in their entirety. Pain and rest are intrinsically intertwined, but contradictory. Similarly, sound and silence are inseparable oppositions. Even though Bang and Pinsky’s translations have some differences in the content and types of punctuation, they use a similar proportion of marked silences that encompasses two central ideas within an end-stop line. Both end-stops function to further emphasize an impossible, resounding desire for rest.

Takeaway

Marked silences embody both the fear of death and the relief of rest. The inherent complexity and ambiguity of silence creates linguistic cues that lack semantic content and are most comprehensible through bodily effects. Both temporary and permanent silences are present in the story of Paolo and Francesca. Prior to their death, they were reading a book together aloud. Their reading was cut short by a kiss. Then, they were permanently silenced by Caina’s sword (death) and eternally bound to punishment for sins of lust.

In Francesca's story, silence first appears through the bodily pleasure of a shared kiss, or the site of lust. Then, a more final silence is marked by the violent act of Caina. So, Bang's translation seems to parallel both the ascension to Paradiso for the Pilgrim, and the fall of lust for Paolo and Francesca when they were living. Perhaps silence is not only a point of relief and rest, but it is complicated by the bodily effects produced that are simultaneously restful (pleasurable) and violent (painful). When there is a relief of pain, there is also a fear of death. And when the fear of death is removed from the equation for the sinners, relief takes precedence.

The hellscape Inferno is hypersaturated with nonsensical sound, which accentuates momentary breaks in pain that allow a fleeting sense of relief. What, how, and where marked silences are placed alter the emphasis of relief in the narrative, even if the narrative itself does not undergo much change. Singleton uses two commas to create a silence which conceals and shelters the sinners from their torment, whereas Pinsky's single comma creates a silence that offers a quick break in torment. In both cases, silence arises above the hypersaturated soundscape. Bang's translation, however, focuses on the accretion of silence by using different punctuations.

The visible marking of silence tends to draw attention away from the words that produce bodily effects. Silence affects the prominence of sound, and sound affects our bodily reaction to poetry. By isolating marked silence, however, we do not grasp the full chain of effects in a poem. We should turn to unmarked silences that form much of the structure of poems and emphasize different words. Rather than asserting the presence of absence through markings, unmarked silences assert a presence through heightening sounds via a lack of markings. Despite its clear and profound effect, these silences are often overlooked in poetic discourse, and will thus be the main subject of inquiry for the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Elasticity of Unmarked Silences

Fig. 4 Gustave Doré's "The Inferno, Canto 13"
Fig. 5 The figure on the right is the same illustration, but the colors are inverted.

Unmarked silence primarily operates on two levels: the structural and the emphatic. Structural silence includes spaces between words, paragraphs, and margins. Unmarked silences in prose tend to be found between words, sentences, or preceding new paragraphs. They are temporary breaks in sound necessary for differentiating words and meanings. Prose silences tend to have similar, if not the same, pause lengths. However, unmarked silences in verse tend to have more flexible pause lengths. Such instances will be referred to as emphatic silence, or poetic uses of silence. These include enjambments, marked caesuras, and stanza breaks. Whereas organizational silence in spaces and indentations tend to imply the same length of silence, emphatic silence expands or contracts the space it occupies. In doing so, emphatic poetic silences shape the breath—thus forming a bodily art—that brings together the form of the poem with its content. The semantics of a poem can be reinterpreted through prominent, complex, and unusual placements of line breaks and stanza breaks.

The particular poetic unmarked silence examined in this chapter is enjambment. Enjambment, according to *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics,* is known as the

"non-alignment of metrical frame and syntactic period at line-end" that often produces a semantic "overflow into the following poetic line of a syntactic phrase" (Preminger and Brogan 359). The incomplete break of a line produces a metrical and semantic sense of incompletion to heighten a reader's awareness of an end-word. The awareness does not stop at the semantics of the word: sounds of the end-word resonate in the body. Often, the last word also calls attention to sound patterns from earlier in the poem.

Each translator handles unmarked silence differently. Singleton, for one, does not deploy unmarked silences. The unmarked silences between his words are used in the English language to organize words for semantic meaning. Since Singleton abides by conventions of prose, he exercises little bodily effect through unmarked silence, even if his poetic language creates a hypersaturated soundscape. When we pivot to verse translations, unmarked silences shape line length, end-word placement, and semantic grouping. Bang deploys unmarked silences that vary line lengths and accentuate sound patterns within a line, while keeping semantic segmentations mostly cohesive. Pinsky, on the other hand, largely abides by hendecasyllabic line. His deployment of unmarked silence tends to highlight sound patterns across multiple lines and break up semantically complete clauses. In examining unmarked silences, we understand not only how hypersaturated soundscapes are elevated to a reader's awareness, but how the elasticity of silence produces bodily resonance that deepens the meaning of a poem.

Singleton

Word spacing has little semantic significance in the silence itself. While there are exceptions, unmarked silences are generally used for organization over emphatic purposes. For example, Singleton writes in his introduction, "The best 'introduction' to the *Divine Comedy*…

is no *Introduction* at all" (Singleton 371). This sentence illustrates Singleton's awareness of how prose, without hypersaturated sounds or emphatic silences, tend to supply little to Dante's poetry. More importantly, there are no functional or semantic changes in the spaces between "the best" and "best introduction." Each space is read with the same length of pause and functions to organize words into sentences. Even though Singleton deploys poetic sounds in his translation, his use of silence is consistent with prose as we have identified already. The unmarked silences in Singleton's introduction, which is clearly prose, organizes sounds without emphasis.

As the Pilgrim and Virgil traverse into the forest of the Suicides, the Pilgrim hears disembodied voices that perplex him so much he physically stops. The narrator intervenes, saying, "I believe that he believed that I believed that all those voices from amid the trunks came from people who were hidden from us" (Singleton 131) The intervals of silence are used the same in all word spaces that serve an organizational purpose. Additionally, the silences do not call attention to the sound pattern in the sentence, despite its hypersaturated soundscape. In terms of silence, the phrase "I believe that he believed that I believed" is no more significant than the following phrase, "all those voices from amid the trunks" because the unmarked silences are of the same length. Even though the former phrase contains more sound patterning, its silences do not create distinguishable bodily effects. This sentence's heightened effect is largely dependent on its sound patterning and repetition. Even Singleton admits that, in crafting a prose translation, there is a "painful loss of the *poetry*" wherein poetry resides in both the soundscape and emphatic uses of silences (Singleton 373). But this thesis is not interested in mere organizational silence. Instead, we should pivot our attention to verse translations that deploy emphatic silences in the form of enjambment.

Bang

Bang substitutes terza rima for more contemporary sounds which are comprised of "assonant echoes, internal rhyme, alliteration" and occasionally "accentual patterns" such as iambs and anapests (8). In doing so, her lines are inconsistent in meter and length. Thus, the placement of her enjambment tends to target particular end-words and semantic segmentations. Though the passages presented will contain three lines each, we will focus our attention on Bang's first two lines that deploy unmarked silences:

> I think that he thought that I thought
>
> The voices came from people who were hidden
>
> Among the branches that made up the brush– (Bang XIII.25-27)

The first line from the passage above, "I think that he thought that I thought," has eight syllables (XIII.25). Scansion reveals the meter as / - - / - - / - (where / is a stressed syllable and - is an unstressed syllable). While the feet are measured by pairs, the pattern seems most consistent when viewed as a trio. The last foot only contains one unstressed syllable, which forces the reader to stop early and signals an end to the segment. The line contains elements that are complete—such as an even number of syllables to form pairs—and elements that are incomplete—such as the missing unstressed syllable for the final trio. Enjambment creates a forward-driving motion by imposing silence, where the meter and semantic segmentation are both complete and incomplete at the same time.

The end-word "thought" receives the greatest emphasis. The polyptotonic sound echoes in the end-word, which calls attention back to its previous iterations, "I think" and "he thought." The enjambment separates the Pilgrim's act of thinking from the object he is thinking about,

which refocuses the reader on the dense concentration of subjects. When we focus on the subjects, we find that the Pilgrim's thoughts are contained within Virgil's, whose are contained within Dante's in his capacity as narrator. Even though these nestled characters were present in our examination of its hypersaturated soundscape, focusing on the enjambment shows that Bang places all the subjects and their actions on the same line. This line is often confusing upon first read due to an excess of subjects and verbs without an object. At the same time, it is highly organized and presents a somewhat omniscient presence: the line contains the past and present, first and third person. In repetition of "I" and "thought," Bang heightens bodily awareness of the subject "I"—is it the Pilgrim, the narrator, or the reader? While the narrator is prioritized as the first to "think," and effectively contains all the other subjects, the Pilgrim is the last "thought" to occur in Bang's translation. Bang emphasizes Dante, both as the narrator and the Pilgrim. Yet, the bodily effect is produced through our experience of the line and its enjambment as readers.

The next line, "the voices came from people who were hidden," has eleven syllables (XIII.26). This line contains the object that completes the Pilgrim's thoughts. One may expect the line to stop after the end-word "hidden," now that the sentence is semantically fulfilled. The sentence, though, is still incomplete. The short-lived silence of enjambment propels the line forward despite the syntactic close, which creates a forward-driving motion in the body. Such an opposition signals a misalignment of expectation, which is evident later when the Pilgrim realizes he is, in fact, wrong about the origin of the disembodied voices. This misaligned, forward-driving effect is also present in the context of the Suicides' punishment, whose souls suffer eternal separation from their bodies. Even when other sinners are saved by Redemption, the Suicides will have their bodies hung on the tree they were previously imprisoned in. This incomplete reunion of the body with the soul is perhaps the most severe punishment of the

circles. Bang's use of enjambment mimics this fragmentation of the body and the soul. In the next passage, Virgil's dialogue produces a similar mimetic effect with the addition of variations in line length:

> Because he said, "If you break off a little piece
>
> From one of these shrubs
>
> It'll put an end to what you're thinking." (Bang XIII.28-30)

In the first line of this new passage, Virgil begins hypothesizing to the Pilgrim what may happen if the Pilgrim were to break off a piece of the branch. Bang writes "Because he said, 'If you break off a little piece'" (XIII.28). The line contains six feet, or twelve syllables. Compared to the other two lines, which have five syllables and ten syllables respectively, this line is longer. The foot at the end is comprised of the second syllable of "little" and the word "piece." Interestingly, the end word "piece," in reference to the extending branch of the shrub, extends (visually) beyond the last line. The extended poetic line mimics the bush's extended branch. The sibilant end to "piece" echoes a word earlier in the line, "said." What Virgil "said" is broken up by a marked silence, followed by his production of sound. The line containing "piece" is broken up by an enjambment—coincidentally, the bush produces speech when the Pilgrim breaks off a piece of twig later.

The line, "From one of these shrubs," only contains five syllables—it is the shortest line of this stanza (XIII.29). Even though the length is intriguing, the sound patterns are flat. There are some uses of consonance, such as the sibilance of "these shrubs," but otherwise the line sounds conversational in contemporary speech. Without much bodily effect through sound patterns, a reader could easily move through it. However, the shortness of the line calls attention

to itself by contrasting with the long line that came before. The short length directs our attention to an object, the shrub, that appears straight-forward because there are few words to describe it. In following Virgil's suggestion, the Pilgrim assumes the bush is merely a bush. Yet, the fact that the enjambment breaks the line short hints at a misalignment of Virgil's statement and the reality of the bushes. Considering that enjambments generally serve to heighten a reader's awareness, the enjambed line conveys a concealed wrongness to the seemingly honest suggestion. Even though the reader is unaware of what the actual reality may be, there is a discomforting bodily effect in the line's striking length.

Bang creates a forward-driving motion where the unmarked silences halt the pace of the line, even as its syntax and content urge it to continue. The enjambments also call attention to previously stated sound patterns, which are often emphasized by the end-word. The end-words tend to hold sonic and semantic significance that interlinks and foreshadows the narrative. Since Bang writes without metrical or syllabic constraint, her lines tend to vary in length. She has greater control over the structure of the poem and where she places her emphatic silences. Bang uses this advantageously by deploying enjambments, so the line length has some mimetic effect relative to the content of the scene. Yet, Bang's contemporary form permits greater control over her line length and placement of unmarked silences than a poet-translator who attempts a highly rigid rhyme and syllabic structure as found in Dante's original poem. The heightened constraint of rhymes, syllables, and placement of unmarked silences may reveal a different bodily effect. In the next chapter, we will evaluate Pinsky's translation that uses modified terza rima.

Pinsky

Pinsky's translation, written in terza rima, often does not reproduce exact Tuscan tropes or tercets in English. He allows himself the "liberty of enjambment," uses English slant rhymes, or sometimes forgoes rhyme altogether (Pinsky xxiii). In these sacrifices, Pinsky recognizes that Tuscan and English language structures do not easily lend themselves to translation—he, an English poet, does not attempt to reproduce the exact effect as the Tuscan poet. Rather, Pinsky uses unmarked silences in English verses to achieve what he refers to as an "embodiment" of "Dante's formal energy," also known in this thesis as a heightened bodily effect (Pinsky xxiii). In the following passages, Pinsky deploys enjambments to heighten sound patterns and semantically incomplete phrases. We will examine the first two enjambed lines from the following passage:

> And so I stopped, bewildered. I believe
> My guide believed that in my belief the voices
> I heard from somewhere in among the grove
>
> Came somehow from people who were in hiding places— (Pinsky XIII.22-25)

Two major points of unmarked silence alter the stanzaic structure. The longer unmarked silence is the stanza break: the syntactic sentence is broken after the Pilgrim's notices hearing the voices in the "grove," and before the Pilgrim states his belief that the people are "in hiding places." Pinsky places unmarked silence between tercets in the English translation to create longer silences because English readers are generally less familiar with terza rima. The next point of unmarked silence occurs after "I believe," which separates the first polyptotonic

conjunction from the others. In the following paragraphs, we will closely examine how sound patterns are spread across two lines as a result of Pinsky's use of enjambment.

The line, "And so I stopped, bewildered. I believe," has ten syllables in perfect iambic pentameter (XIII.22). The word "believe" ends on an enjambment, which suspends the reader in a momentary pause despite the semantic incompletion of the phrase "I believe." Note the bilabial alliteration and long "ee" sound of "believe" echoes in "bewildered" from earlier in the line. "Bewildered" is set in past tense—so it belongs to Dante the Pilgrim—whereas "belief" is set in present tense—so it belongs to Dante the narrator. We are led to believe that "bewildered" and "believe" belong in two syntactically separate sentences, as signaled by the period. Yet, the pronoun "I" describes both the Pilgrim's bewilderment and the narrator's belief. Additionally, their linear proximity, alliteration, and assonance seem indicative of an underlying bodily connection. Even though Dante occupies both the role of the narrator and the Pilgrim, his body remains consistent between the past and the present tense. The continuity of his bodily presence may explain why Pinsky uses a marked caesura in the middle of this line: perhaps in recalling the effects of his bewilderment, the narrator is so overwhelmed with emotion he stops the story in order to re-establish his temporal distance. Just as the Pilgrim physically stopped in the forest out of bewilderment, the narrator stops his breath in remembering the bewilderment.

The next line, "My guide believed that in my belief the voices," has twelve syllables (XIII.23). It does not comply with a hendecasyllabic line of terza rima, where the last stress should fall on the tenth syllable. In the sounds, we find polyptoton spread across two lines: "I believe" is carried through the next line containing "my guide believed" and "my belief." The word "my" repeats twice and echoes the long "ī" assonance in the previous line, which repeats the word "I" twice as well. The determiner "my" accommodates both Virgil and the Pilgrim's

beliefs. Even though the sentence is broken up over two lines, assonance overflows from one line into the next. Thus, the sound patterns create a connection between Dante of the past (the Pilgrim), Dante of the present (the narrator), and Dante's guide (Virgil). The long "ī" sound centers around Dante's presence.

Despite the hypersaturated sound patterns, Pinsky's use of enjambment creates the most emphasis on the end-word, "voices," which refers to the disembodied sounds of the Suicides. Just as sinners lack bodies, the word itself lacks a subject. To contrast the Pilgrim's self-autonomy (as a living being) to the Suicides' lack thereof, Pinsky places two end-words with "v" consonants , "believe" and "voices," at close proximity. Whereas one phrase contains a subject that lacks an object, the other has an object that lacks a subject. While the Pilgrim self-autonomous because he is alive, he also lacks a conclusive fate for that very reason; on the other hand, the Suicides have no autonomy over their plant bodies, but they have received their sentence. Both cases are faced with a sense of incompletion, which is further emphasized in the text by Pinsky's use of enjambment. In the following passage, Pinsky deploys enjambment to not just heighten sound patterns, but also to develop forward-driving meters and themes of bodily autonomy:

> And therefore my master said, "If you remove
> A little branch from any of these pieces
>
> Of foliage around us, the thoughts you have
> Will also be broken off." I reached my hand (Pinsky XIII.26-29)

The line, “And therefore my master said, ‘If you remove,” has eleven syllables where the end-word, “remove,” adds an additional stressed syllable beyond the hendecasyllabic line (XIII.26). The enjambment following “remove” also deprives the Pilgrim’s hypothetical action of an object to act upon, so the action is incomplete. Coupled together, the syntactic incompletion and metrical overextension results in a forward-driving bodily effect. In a way, the enjambment trips up the reader: the momentum of the line carries the sounds forward, even though the line break indicates a stop. If a reader desires a sense of completion, semantically or metrically, he may move through the unmarked silence rather quickly; this enjambment produces a short pause. The end-word “remove” also denotes a displacement of an object that previously occupied the space. Pinsky’s enjambment creates a temporary silence in the soundscape by imposing a break before continuing the line, which is mimetic of the word “remove.”

The line, “A little branch from any of these pieces,” continues the sentence, but it seems redundant (XIII.27). The image of “a little branch” is sufficient to project an image of a shrub, so “these pieces / of foliage” becomes excess descriptors with a seemingly unnecessary line break. To clarify, the line’s end-word is “pieces.” The long “ee” sound of “pieces” echoes the vowels of “these” and “any.” The usage of these vowels also calls back to “believe” from the previous passage. End-words “believe” and “pieces” share in common plosive consonants. Plosive consonants require a buildup of pressure behind the lips before releasing it to produce the sound. In the context of *Inferno*, the Pilgrim builds up a false idea of where the disembodied voices came from. We later learn, after he breaks the branch, that his belief was wrong. As the branch speaks, the broken portion “Hiss[ed] with escaping air” (Pinsky XIII.39). The air released from the branch resembles air expelled from a reader’s lips. Pinsky heightens his reader’s awareness by mimicking sounds produced in the context of *Inferno*. Considering the lack of semantic value

in using “pieces” as an end-word, Pinsky seems to position words at the end of a line for heightened sonic effects even when it comes at a cost of diluting the line’s semantic value.

The line, “Of foliage around us, the thoughts you have,” follows a stanza break (XIII.28). The end-word, “have,” seems to be a far-reaching slant rhyme to “remove” in that both words end in a “v” fricative consonant. While the end-word “have” adds little meaning when emphasized as the last word, we are again exposed to a forward-driving effect due to a misalignment of syntax and metrical line. Since we do not know what happens to the thoughts when the Pilgrim removes the twig, the unmarked silence is shortened so we could quickly move onto the next line. Note, even though the unmarked silence is short, a marked silence separates the environment from his thoughts. While his body affects the environment—he can remove a piece of foliage—the environment can affect his thoughts, which result in action. For example, the Pilgrim hears the disembodied voices, feels bewilderment, and physically stops. Perhaps Virgil’s statement suggests that the Pilgrim can remove the environment’s effects by silencing his concern for the origin of the voices. The Pilgrim discovers the truth by breaking the branch. Likewise, Pinsky breaks up sounds within the line, framed by unmarked silences, using a marked silence.

The following line, “Will also be broken off.’ I reached my hand,” similarly uses a marked silence to transition from Virgil’s dialogue to the Pilgrim’s action (XIII.29). The transition is marked by a period and closed parenthesis, which separates Virgil’s speech from the Pilgrim’s body. The sentences are semantically fragmented: the object, “hand,” is separated from its subject just as the action, “will be broken off,” is separated from the object. Considering both “hand” and “have” are end-words in close proximity, the similarities of their “ha-” beginnings imply that the body is key to self-autonomy. The emphatic position of the “ha-” sound uses an

exhalation of breath, which points to a bodily presence. Prior to the marked pause, Pinsky writes four stressed syllables in a row with bilabial plosives: “be broken off.” The reader produces a succession of exhalations when the poem is read aloud, similar to the sound of pressurized air being released. Plosive consonants are known for this effect, and they occur in abundance throughout the canto. For example, the alliterative “b” sounds in “be” and “broken” echo the Pilgrim’s “belief” and “bewildered” feelings from an earlier line. As the reader produces a sound effect, they register the bodily resonance even if the contextual event has not occurred. Unmarked silences heighten readerly attention to these thematically significant sound patterns, despite the semantically incompleteness of each line in isolation.

Takeaway

In this chapter, we analyzed how three translators used unmarked silences in both an organizational and an emphatic way. Even though the chapter focuses on silence, we ultimately engage with heightened sound patterns that heighten bodily effects. We began with an understanding that structural (prosaic) silences differ from emphatic (poetic) silences. Note, structural silences are still integral to prose and verse translations.

As we explored unmarked silences in our two verse translations, three distinct categories emerged: end-rhymes, syllabic structures, and semantic coherence of line segmentations. We found that Bang tends to contemporary sounds and imprecise syllabic structures, whereas Pinsky tends to flexible rhymes and precise hendecasyllabic structures. Additionally, Bang often creates groupings by semantic coherence, such as putting all the polyptotonic words in a line; whereas Pinsky tends to group for an end-word effect, even when it sacrifices some of the line’s semantic value.

In reading how these translators chose to interpret unmarked silences, we gain perspective on how they experienced the soundscape of *Inferno*. We learn more about the meaning of a poem by focusing our attention on our heightened bodily effects, which is mediated by sounds and silences. Translations, like any poem, strive to produce a bodily effect. Thus, "feelings" of a poem can be reignited through new deployments of unmarked silences. As Bang remarks in her introduction, "Translation keeps a work of literature alive by simultaneously dismantling and reclaiming it" (10). Through variations of handlings silence, poet-translations create new poems.

Conclusion

This thesis initially sought to understand how poems resonate with readers, even when readers don't understand the poem's semantic meanings. Scholars often return to a masterful poem, time after time, to discover new layers of interpretations. Considering that poetry is a bodily art, it seemed clear that sound is another layer of poetry that could (and has been) analyzed to re-interpret a poem. Poetry is celebrated for its musical qualities, but what differentiates poetry from music is its reliance on words—words, which are generally unintelligible across languages. Yet even when a language is foreign, we pick up sound patterns that provide thin layers of meaning. And where sound exists, silence exists. In poems saturated with sound patterns, silence seems to be heightened or produce a heightening effect. Silence, as present in poetic devices like enjambment and stanza breaks, is often not given proper recognition for its intervention in the structure or heightening effects of poetry.

In reading multiple translations, translators appear to handle sonic tropes, with some variation, in a similar fashion. However, translators widely differ in their structures and emphatic uses of silence. This thesis compares three translations, selected out of a pool of over twenty translations, to approach the following question: *how do anglophone poet-translators from the 20th and 21st century deploy silences—in a sonically hypersatured poem— to elicit bodily experiences?*

We began by determining that the translations we've identified—Singleton, Bang, and Pinsky—did indeed have hypersaturated sound patterns. Even when we focus on silence, sound is not insignificant. The sounds produce some bodily effects because poetry incorporates both sound and silence. We isolated five poetic devices: internal rhyme, assonance, and consonance

in Canto V; and alliteration and polyptoton in Canto XIII. Each translation uses similar sonic tropes as Dante, which signals that the translator is responding to the Tuscan soundscape. Without this step, we would struggle to claim the translator is striving to achieve a level of bodily effect as in Dante's original poem.

Then, we differentiated types of silences by marked and unmarked silences. We found some variation of the types, frequency, and placement of marked silences. In each case, marked silences yielded a new thematic layer to interpreting the canto, but often did not dramatically heighten the soundscape. When we pivoted to examine unmarked silences, we found that there was another split: silences could be structural or emphatic. Whereas prose often uses the same lengths of unmarked silences between words, verse did not. When we used this as our foundation, it became clear that the verse translations (that did have structural silence) used emphatic silences that profoundly impacted the bodily effects and semantic segmentation of a line. Small changes of where a translator placed his or her enjambments, over the course of a canto, may seem insignificant, but they often had great effect on which sound patterns became heightened.

In future research, the work of emphatic silences on bodily effects can be used in Dante studies, translation, poetry workshops, and studies of other culturally significant pieces of poetry. Dante studies could benefit from looking at emphatic silences to draw greater connections between the silences of other canticles and *Inferno*, or between cantos in *Inferno*. Translators could use the study of silence to raise their own awareness of their work, which would produce more translations and cultural exchange. Poetry workshops could use the study of silence to evaluate when students should use more or less rigid forms, and how the structural forms may

impact their own writing. In addition, poets can become more aware of bodily effects that hypersaturated soundscapes produce. Lastly, the study of silence and bodily effects can be a bridge for readers to explore poetry from other language. By focusing on one's bodily experience of a poem, the reader may feel less pressured to "understand" it. This is especially helpful in fostering appreciation for other cultures where readers may be unfamiliar with the language.

Translations, especially translations of poetry, are often viewed as an inferior production. "For many poets, especially formalists, translation is a great bane," Mark Polizzotti empathizes, "They dread that some clunky wordsmith will either run roughshod over their meter and rhyme or else adhere to them so doggedly that the airborne original becomes a leaden, earthbound thing" (Polizzotti). Vladimir Nabokov pugnaciously declares "the only virtue of a good translation is faithfulness and completeness," whereby "any translation that doesn't sound like a translation is bound to be inexact" (Nabokov, as cited in Polizzotti). Yet, Polizzotti argues in favor of translations that transcend form and make their own mark. When a poem is labored by annotations and exact wording, "what we lose in this translation is, precisely, the poetry" (Polizzotti). When translations strive to produce bodily effects, even if at the cost of deviating from the original's syntax or structure, they create new poems. Similarly, Walter Benjamin claims in "The Task of the Translator" that translations should be "recognizable as fragments of greater language" (260). Neither the original nor the translation is held in higher regard.

Frost's quote, "poetry is what gets lost in translation," seems less believable now that we take silence into consideration. While particular sounds are lost in translation, silences persist through translation. Through silence, heightened hypersaturated soundscapes can produce bodily effects in the target language. Heightened silence allows poet-translators to achieve heightened

means, since silence is present in both the original and the translated language. When poet-translators discover new arrangements of sounds and silence that produce heightened bodily effects, poetry is not what gets lost. Rather, poetry can be found in translation.

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