



## Where is your desire?

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“Where is your desire?” asks Lawrence Venuti in his polemic *Contra Instrumentalism*. Do you want to uphold the status quo by seeing translation as the mere technical transfer of an invariant meaning or effect from one language to another? Or, are you ready to understand translation as a difficult, radically transformative, widespread, and material practice that has the power to change “discourses and institutions?”<sup>1</sup> Hold on to your hat folks, this is quite the journey.

Venuti’s polemic introduces a rhetorical force to many arguments he has made elsewhere about the importance of translation and the need for that importance to gain institutional recognition. At its best, it provides a welcome rebuttal of many myths about translation that remarkably continue to be retold by people who should know better. However, no counter-provocation worthy of the name could consist in praise only, and in this piece I take two issues with Venuti. The first is that at times his eagerness to point out the failings of others’ approaches to translation blinds him to their more positive contributions. As such, Venuti falls prey to a kind of instrumentalism himself in that he seeks a stable invariant failure in others’ missteps that is simply not always there. Secondly, the question of desire is key in that it is used to frame the polemic in both its introduction and conclusion. Yet, bizarrely, the translator’s desire remains almost entirely unaddressed throughout the work. I will come back to these issues further on, but for now let’s look at probably the most important contribution Venuti is making here, which is that of a translation model.

### **Instrumental and Hermeneutic Models of Translation**

Taking his cue from the Foucauldian episteme, Venuti proposes the idea of translation models. Like an episteme, they operate as a structural ground for thinking about translation and give rise to a variety of practices that nonetheless share certain base assumptions. Models, therefore, make certain translation strategies available, while also precluding others, in much the same way as an episteme offers particular avenues for knowledge while closing off others. The instrumental model of translation according to Venuti, is characterised as one which assumes an invariant in the source text that the translation is supposed to transfer or carry across from one language to another. This invariant can be semantic, stylistic, or even the so-called effect of the text on a presumed reader. The problem with this model is that in positing an invariant which a translator must protect in the journey from one language to another, it posits translation as a

failure from the outset. No translation takes place without change – semantic, stylistic, or effective. Translation means change on each and every level.

In contrast, the hermeneutic model understands translation as an interpretative act that changes meaning, form, and effect to produce a text that is “relatively autonomous” from the source.<sup>2</sup> The hermeneutic model is not guided by a presumed holy invariant but rather applies a set of interpretants in translating one text into another. These interpretants can be formal “such as a concept of equivalence or a concept of style” and/or thematic such as “an ensemble of values, beliefs, and representations affiliated with particular social groups.”<sup>3</sup> As a result they can respond to more than a rigid concept of semantic equivalence or simple information transfer and incorporate prosody, genre imagery, and so on. The main point here is that under the hermeneutic model there is no pretence of presenting the source text in translation as unmediated. Rather, the translation produced is openly presented as a new text that, while maintaining interpretative relations with the source, is nonetheless separate. According to Venuti this hermeneutic model often makes itself felt even within an overarching instrumental model, so that translations and translation commentaries may contain internal contradictions. The aim of *Contra Instrumentalism* is to explicitly abandon the instrumental model entirely and embrace the hermeneutic model wholeheartedly.

It is hard to imagine anyone today who devotes serious time to thinking about translation as having problems with the broad-brush strokes of this argument. In summary: translation involves change based on interpretation. This fact is sometimes overlooked by practitioners, and often by people outside the field, leading to the misguided idea that translation is straightforward reproduction. So far so good. However, things start to get confusing here because it seems that for Venuti everyone who writes about translation or who translates is committed to an instrumental model (he might concede two exceptions<sup>4</sup>). From a word for word approach, or Cicero’s sense for sense; to Hatim and Mason’s communicative approach, or Eugene Nida’s equivalent effect; to André Lefevere’s idea of refraction or Keith Harvey’s of compensation – and I could go on – all are approaches to translation that emerge from the instrumental model. How can this be? How can people who spend their life translating or thinking about translating be so bound to a model that undermines their own creative work?

There are two answers. The first is that we all find ourselves in a world already interpreted in a certain way, we inherit understandings from our cultural context and in our various trainings as translators, critics, philosophers; we also inherit particular approaches to certain issues from our academic heritage. These deposited understandings and interpretations often go unnoticed, and so we uncritically repeat ways of thinking. It is undoubtable that translators and those who write about translation repeat certain motifs; it is quite likely that they (or we) are haunted by some version of an instrumental model: that we think there is something of the source text somehow “in” the translation – its story, its rhythm, its sound: Venuti’s invariant. But there is the problem here of how thinking can and frequently does change to disrupt the status quo. This change has been formulated in different ways: an epistemic break for Foucault, an epistemological rupture for Bachelard, a paradigm shift for Kuhn, and so

on. And while Venuti is calling for such a shift or break in translation models, it is not entirely clear what the criteria are for that break having occurred, precisely because at times he falls into the trap of these precursors. Namely, of thinking that shifts in ways of thinking can be decisive, when in fact their breaks are rarely clean. What usually happens is that we find ourselves with a multitude of sometimes contradictory ways of understanding the world and by extension the text. Venuti acknowledges this in the brilliantly forceful introduction “Start/Stop” but then seems to constantly criticize anyone who operates with a multi-layered model of translation. Which leads us to the second answer as to why everyone is an instrumentalist.

By setting up the instrumental model as a structure that inhabits all reflections on translation, but which nonetheless remains “deep seated and unthought,” Venuti has to dig it up using Foucault’s archaeological method, inferring it from “concepts and strategies.”<sup>5</sup> Clues in the hunt for this model are terms referring to preservation or loss, truth or accuracy, or metaphors of translation about clothing and transubstantiation. By spotting these clues, Venuti, and us readers with him, can discover the instrumental model in a variety of reflections on translation. The issue of course here is that this itself is a matter of interpretation. Ironically Venuti sometimes falls prey to an instrumental interpretation of translation commentaries, where the invariant becomes the instrumental model itself, which he is overly committed to finding.

For example, in his discussion of Emily Wilson’s 2017 translation of the *Odyssey*, Venuti notes that Wilson initially seems to be on the side of the hermeneutic model by claiming that all translations are interpretations and that a text can defensibly support multiple such interpretations.<sup>6</sup> Nonetheless, Wilson also claims “I want to be saying, after multiple different revisions: This is the best I can get toward the truth”<sup>7</sup> and with this seals her fate as an instrumentalist. According to Venuti, Wilson’s reference here to “The Truth” reveals that she “has assumed the existence of an invariant, contained in the Greek text, and that becomes the goal she works ‘toward’ achieving.”<sup>8</sup> Even worse, in doing this Wilson has “suppressed” any consideration of whether or not her translation “conforms to or challenges dominant interpretations of the source text” because she is defining the “Homeric text [as] the container of truth.”<sup>9</sup> As such she fails to justify the decision to retranslate an already frequently translated text at all.

Venuti’s sleuthing for the instrumental model is revealed here as overly eager for at least two reasons. The first is that in fact Wilson has commented frequently on the set of interpretants she chose to apply to her translation strategy and her reasons for doing so. In this she would at least seem to be employing the hermeneutic model. In an interview not cited by Venuti, Wilson noted that while some translators understandably chose to translate Homer with archaic English as a means to remind readers that “this is a text not from our era,” she herself chose not to do so because “it can suggest that ancient texts always sounded stilted and Olde Timey, even in their own time.”<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, she is explicit about the decision not to try to recreate the linguistic diversity of the poem (in terms of dialects and words from numerous different eras) that bear testimony to the poem’s history as formed over many centuries. Instead she chose a direct, contemporary, and consistent English with sporadic nods to this diversity through the

introduction of “the occasional odd word (‘ossifrage’) [...] as a way of creating a kind of visibility for the translation process.”<sup>11</sup>

In a discussion of Michael Wood’s commentary on translating Rilke, Venuti claims that the many retranslations of the German poet have failed to justify themselves given their “minimal variation” based on “weak, entropic interpretations.”<sup>12</sup> The reasonable implication being that retranslations must offer something new. In her translator note to *The Odyssey*, Wilson further justifies her new translation by remarking that most modern English versions are in prose and do not maintain a regular line beat. In contrast, she restricted herself to the iambic pentameter as a parallel (not equivalent) to the dactylic hexameters of the source and because it is a meter commonly found in the receiving culture. In this she creates a music deliberately and explicitly “quite different” from Homer’s but one with “its own regular and distinctive beat.”<sup>13</sup> She also chose to use the same number of lines as the source-text in order to maintain a similar if different pace to Homer. She avoids overly bombastic language that she at least feels has inhabited translations of Homer since Alexander Pope. In the explicit use of these interpretants and other strategies, Wilson does not claim to represent the source as unmediated (a mark of the instrumental model), nor does she try to hide the translated status of her text; rather, she presents her work as a distinct interpretation along clearly laid out lines that makes the translation process “visible.” In this way Wilson “considers translation as an interpretative act that varies the source text according to intelligibilities and interests in the receiving culture,” the very definition of the hermeneutic model.<sup>14</sup> She even notes:

“There is often a notion, especially in the Anglo-American world that a translation is good insofar as it disguises its own existence as a translation; translations are praised for being ‘natural.’ I hope that my translation is readable and fluent, but that its literary artifice is clearly apparent.”<sup>15</sup>

The idea then that Wilson has in some way suppressed discussion of the institutional norms in translating Homer seems ill-founded. One would think that her explicit challenge to the many pre-existing retranslations of *The Odyssey* and her extensive commentary on her own translation choices would meet one of the “most important” demands of *Contra Instrumentalism*: ‘translators must be able to give a sophisticated account of their interpretative acts to the various readerships who rely on their work.’<sup>16</sup>

The second issue with Venuti’s verdict on Wilson is with the idea of truth itself. Venuti assumes Wilson’s “truth” to be an invariant – a static or stable thing – when Wilson makes no such claim. I do not know what she meant by this loaded term and possibly she did mean something invariant. But we may also want to think about truth in the way that Martin Heidegger does: as processual rather than static and predicative. For Heidegger, it is us humans who are in truth or untruth, because we are the ones who uncover the world (or text) in a certain way; it is this action of uncovering or revealing that constitutes the primordial sense of “truth” rather than the thing that is uncovered or revealed.<sup>17</sup> Maybe what Wilson meant by saying “this is the best that I can get towards the truth” was that she wanted the translation to reveal certain things that had stood out

to her when she read the source – a certain truth of the text as it revealed itself to her – and that it was this that guided her use of the aforementioned interpretants. This seems to be the case in her own commentary. Elsewhere this idea is lauded by Venuti when he discusses another translator of *The Odyssey*, George Herbert Palmer, who apparently did “assume a hermeneutic model of translation” in his 1886 prose edition.<sup>18</sup> Venuti praises Palmer’s discussion of a translation as an interpretation based on what “the translator finds interesting and intelligible,” which in Palmer’s case was Homer’s “child-like” simplicity in confronting and describing the world.<sup>19</sup> To realise his interpretation Palmer employed a style closer to speech than written text.<sup>20</sup> Wilson too notes that style was key in modelling her translation approach, although for her that style was intimately linked to verse and rhythm.<sup>21</sup>

Palmer is very open about wanting to create a translation based on what “attracted him” to the source.<sup>22</sup> Wilson makes similar claims. But what is it that ever “attracts” a translator? And what role does that attraction play in the production of translated texts? Venuti strangely seems to pass over this when he claims: “It is [institutional] conditions that trigger translations, *never* the source text itself or its ‘singularity’.”<sup>23</sup> It would be naïve to think that institutional conditions have no role to play in the production and dissemination of translated texts. And I think, as Venuti also seems to think, that we must take “institutional conditions” to, yes, mean academic institutions like universities but also – to the extent that those institutions function within broader national structures – socio-political institutions. Nonetheless, we must never forget that institutions are made up of individual people who, while acting within certain structural restraints, are still capable of acting and who can and do instigate change. This seems to be what Venuti is asking us to do in reading his polemic – to trigger desire in us his readers so that we change our way of thinking about translation and thus change the institutional conditions that produce translations.

But what about the translator’s desire? What motivates Wilson to undertake her translation in the first place? Or Wood? Or Palmer? Or anyone who translates? Wilson is again interesting here in that she notes the “institutional conditions” in which she operates were not favorable to *another* translation of Homer; a situation she bemoans as pointing to the undervaluing of translation in academia. In the world of academic Classical Studies, Wilson’s career would have been better served (she was advised) by avoiding translation and writing “the right kind of book.” Instead she translated Seneca, Euripides, and ultimately Homer – projects that were born of “her old desire to ‘spend a little bit longer’ with these authors.”<sup>24</sup>

### **Where is your desire? In the untranslatable.**

There is desire in translation, but what is that desire, where is it, and what is it for? My own response would be that the desire of the translator is a response to the untranslatable.<sup>25</sup> But of course, we have tread carefully here, and think about what the untranslatable might mean. There are certain manifestations or approaches to the untranslatable that Venuti quite rightly abhors as mystifying and stultifying (in much the same way as Barbara Cassin does – despite being a target of Venuti’s polemic).<sup>26</sup>

But sometimes, as with the instrumental model, I think his eagerness to root out these translatory trespasses blinds him to productive pathways or approaches.

In this vein, he provides an excellent account of proverbs and the bizarre way they operate in translation commentaries. Ordinarily proverbs are characterized by a consistent or invariant form with a variant content. The form makes the proverb seem timeless and true, when in fact the variety of its uses reveals this to be an illusion. “A stich in time saves nine” can be applied to so many different situations that the meaning of the phrase becomes so mobile as to be almost nonsensical. As Venuti says: “the formal features of the proverb [...] produce the forceful closure that releases an illusionistic effect of truth, which is undermined by the sheer heterogeneity of countless applications.”<sup>27</sup> In contrast, proverbs in translation, while keeping the characteristic invariant form, tend to also have an invariant meaning, which consistently amounts to “untranslatability, or the impossibility of translation.”<sup>28</sup>

Attributed to Robert Frost via Louis Untermeyer, “poetry is what gets lost in translation” is one such proverb. While perhaps not as forceful as its tiresome sibling *traduttore traditore* (of which Venuti provides a wonderful genealogy), the poetry phrase is repeated by poets and theorists alike almost as often.<sup>29</sup> But what does this ubiquitous slogan really mean? The “loss” here is often conceived as a loss for the source text but this cannot be the case – if there is poetry in the source text to begin with, then there it remains. For those worried that it has gone missing, rest assured translation does not vampirically suck the life from a text leaving it without its original features! The “loss” referred to then really operates as Venuti says, as a “metaphor for non-translation.”<sup>30</sup> If the “poetry” of the source does not show up in the translation, it has not been translated. What we get here, even in the various efforts to temper this proverb, is the claim that poetry is untranslatable, which really belies an implied notion of what translation is or should be. For Venuti, it reveals an instrumental model of thinking, of viewing translation as a transfer rather than an interpretation and thus – since not everything can be transferred exactly as it was – of viewing translation as doomed to failure from the outset.

But does it? Can you reproduce the rhyme of the French language in Japanese? Or of Irish folk songs in English? No, one cannot. Venuti’s point is that the problem lies in thinking that translation *should*, when in fact translation does not mean reproduction. We cannot reproduce a text in another language without significant change. But we can produce “poetry” in all languages – as all the numerous and often wonderful translations of poetry show. The translation is a new text in its own right, with its own rhyme and rhythm, its own prosody and pattern. Poetry is not lost in translation but made anew. So why do so many translators feel like something has been lost? Why do they change and modify a translation over and over again? What are they looking for? Why do they want to retranslate an already often translated text? What makes them go back again and again? Maybe it is down to institutional conditions, but maybe it is also down to this question – Venuti’s question – of desire.

Derrida too has a phrase that has achieved somewhat proverbial status in translation studies: “In a sense, nothing is untranslatable; but in another sense everything is untranslatable.”<sup>31</sup> Venuti’s take on which is that Derrida has succumbed to the instrumental model by assuming the source text is a “container of invariants.”<sup>32</sup> Given Derrida’s numerous texts critiquing the history of philosophy for its presumption of being as presence, its presumption of access to a static and guaranteed invariant, Venuti’s verdict comes as a surprise. The basis for the claim is twofold.

Firstly, Venuti argues that when Derrida talks about translation “without any remainder” he is referring to source text features that do not get translated but apparently *should*, and so Derrida – like so many others – consigns translation to failure. However, this seems like a misrepresentation. When Derrida talks about translation “without any remainder” he is in fact critiquing a view of translation as an operation that does not involve change. The argument Venuti references here is one wherein Derrida notes that translation is subject to a certain economy understood in both a quantitative and a qualitative sense.<sup>33</sup> A translation to qualify as a translation must be quantitatively comparable to the source text – translating a three word phrase with a book of commentary would not really be a translation but a commentary. Equally, a translation must be appropriate to the source text; translating a computer instruction manual with a sonnet – while imaginative – moves us away from translation and into the field of adaptation. Derrida’s point is that traditional accounts of translation think that everything can and should be moved from the source text to the target text “without remainder” when in fact there is necessarily always something extra in the translation or something not translated at all – something gets explained in the translation when it is merely implied in the source or, something is simply left out. Most translations must balance this process of explanation and omission. In this sense nothing is untranslatable, and everything is untranslatable *at the same time* – texts are translated but there are remainders.

Secondly Venuti bolsters his claim that Derrida is an instrumentalist by citing the latter’s argument that translation reaches its limit when it meets a homophonic or homonymic effect. This “event” in Derrida’s terms cannot be translated and so according to Venuti becomes an “invariant” leaving Derrida in the “conceptual parameters of instrumentalism.”<sup>34</sup> Really? Is this not simply the case? Can we translate the French word *arrêt* with a single word that means both “stop” (or “pause”) and “sentence” (or “judgement”) in English?<sup>35</sup> No. Translation reaches its limit in the quantitative sense here: it must expand or explain the double meaning at play. Translation cannot recreate the homonymy: it is untranslatable, it is a remainder.

Derrida’s criticism of traditional accounts of translation is that they think these remainders are meaningless – that once you get the “message” across, or the “content” of the signifier, then the translation is (and indeed *should* be) the *same* as the source. But of course, that is not the case; the form and the content cannot be split off from each other without consequences. To think that they can is in fact to subscribe to an instrumental model of language wherein meaning is merely the content for the clothing

of language. It is an idealist approach to signification that rests on a metaphysical assumption of being as presence.

Venuti seems to agree with these Derridean claims about the economy of translation on at least two occasions. The first is when he describes Richard Carew's 1608 translation of Henri Estienne's *Apologie pour Hérodote* (1566) as "aggressively interpretative", "[exceeding] any equivalence" and so a "mixture of translation and adaptation."<sup>36</sup> In other words, because Carew added more than was in the source text, he exceeded the definition of "translation" on quantitative grounds and moved into the territory of "adaptation" (although Venuti does not say where the border of those territories lies). The second is in his discussion of the subtitles for *Annie Hall* (1977), specifically the play on "did you" and "Jew" by the lead character Alvy Singer. According to Alvy, he asked his colleague Tom "did you eat yet?" and Tom said "No, Jew eat?" The audience does not know if Tom said "Jew eat?" or "did you eat?" The implication is that Alvy is probably being paranoid, but this is implied and remains undecided. How do you translate this pun? Most subtitlers either do not translate it or try to create a different (sometimes strained) pun in the translating language. In attempts to recreate the pun, the meaning necessarily becomes changed as one side of its double meaning becomes explicit, so that Alvy is either correct or paranoid.<sup>37</sup> The pun is untranslatable and translatable at the same time.

When Venuti says that we need to educate the readers of translations (including subtitles) so that they can respond to a translation as "setting up a critical dialectic with the source material whereby they submit one another to a probing critique"<sup>38</sup> he is very close to Derrida. Where he departs is in thinking that the untranslatable plays no role in setting this in motion. What sets up this "critical dialectic" is the remainder or untranslatable; in the above example, in the homophony of "did you?" and "Jew," the undecidability is untranslatable. It is because the translator must decide whether to present Alvy as right about what he heard or simply paranoid, that the other side of the meaning remains in the source untranslated – that remainder is the counterweight that draws the "probing critique" back in. Equally, the translation creates its own "untranslatable" – another double meaning or a cultural reference or a particular possible interpretation – and so creates a second counterweight that keeps the interrogation in motion. Nothing is untranslatable and everything is untranslatable.

There are invariants in the source text – the text itself, the way it looks on the page, the double meanings, the implied cultural nods and winks, the rich semantic layers of each word specific to its given language... These untranslatables in the quantitative or qualitative sense (or both) become translated each time a translator makes a decision to go one way or another or another. This is the difficult, creative, imaginative, interpretative work of the translator. But the untranslatable remains in the source text and because it remains, it can be decided again differently. The untranslatable does not have to imply a verdict of failure: it is often the very thing that attracts us to a text in the first place. It is not merely a text's story, or style, or language, but rather the particularity of how all of these things come together. When the untranslatable is

translated – when a decision is made to make Alvy right or paranoid – the choice does not disappear, the untranslatable remains in the source to be translated again.

Translation cannot translate everything in a source text because it changes everything in the source text – into another language! When Venuti urges us to drop the instrumental model, he is right that we should think of translation as a hermeneutic, interpretative act. He is right that a source text can support “multiple and conflicting interpretations.”<sup>39</sup> He is right that translations are not “identical to their source texts.” But, if the instrumental model expands so far as to also include the claim that the source text is a particular text, a specific linguistic artefact, to which each reader has their own particular response that generates their own particular interpretation(s) – then how can he do away with it? Translators are readers who read texts and sometimes have to translate them for work and sometimes choose to translate them because they like them. Why do they like them? Translators spend time wondering about a particular word, wondering what choice to make about style or meaning or sound, and when they decide they often change their mind. When one translator chooses a word, another translator often chooses differently, precisely because the text can support these different interpretations – as Venuti claims and indeed demonstrates. But what remains in the source is its own particularity which triggers the choice of these specific yet multiple interpretations in the first place. Where is your desire? Right there in that particularity of that specific text, that choice that remains to be made again and again. The untranslatable. The untranslatable does not consign translation to failure – it sets it in motion.

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<sup>1</sup> Lawrence Venuti, *Contra Instrumentalism: A Translation Polemic* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2019), 40, 177.

<sup>2</sup> Venuti, *Contra Instrumentalism*, 2, 69, ff.

<sup>3</sup> Venuti, *Contra Instrumentalism*, 2.

<sup>4</sup> Namely in George Herbert Palmer and José Luis Guarner. Venuti, *Contra Instrumentalism*, 17, 147.

<sup>5</sup> Venuti, *Contra Instrumentalism*, 16.

<sup>6</sup> Venuti, *Contra Instrumentalism*, 17. Venuti references Wilson’s interview with Wyatt Mason, “The first woman to translate ‘The Odyssey’ into English,” *The New York Times Magazine*, November 2, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/02/magazine/the-first-woman-to-translate-the-odyssey-into-english.html>.

<sup>7</sup> Emily Wilson cited in Venuti, *Contra Instrumentalism*, 17.

<sup>8</sup> Venuti, *Contra Instrumentalism*, 18.

<sup>9</sup> Venuti, *Contra Instrumentalism*, 18-19.

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- <sup>10</sup> Wilson in Alta L. Price, “Women Translating the Classics: An Interview with Emily Wilson, Sholeh Wolpé, and Arshia Sattar,” *Words without Borders*, August 22, 2018, <https://www.wordswithoutborders.org/dispatches/article/women-translating-the-classics-emily-wilson-sholeh-wolpe-arshia-sattar>.
- <sup>11</sup> Wilson in Price, “*Women Translating the Classics*,” my emphasis.
- <sup>12</sup> Venuti, *Contra Instrumentalism*, 62-5.
- <sup>13</sup> Emily Wilson, “Translator’s Note” in Homer, trans. Emily Wilson, *The Odyssey* (New York & London: Norton, 2018), 82.
- <sup>14</sup> Venuti *Contra Instrumentalism*, 119.
- <sup>15</sup> Wilson, “Translator’s Note,” 82.
- <sup>16</sup> Venuti, *Contra Instrumentalism*, 176.
- <sup>17</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed. (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1927,), 214 / *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2009), 257.
- <sup>18</sup> Venuti, *Contra Instrumentalism*, 117.
- <sup>19</sup> Venuti, *Contra Instrumentalism*, 117.
- <sup>20</sup> Venuti, *Contra Instrumentalism*, 118.
- <sup>21</sup> Wilson, “Translator’s Note,” 81.
- <sup>22</sup> George Herbert Palmer, cited in Venuti, *Contra Instrumentalism*, 117.
- <sup>23</sup> Venuti, *Contra Instrumentalism*, 67, my emphasis.
- <sup>24</sup> Mason, “The First Woman to Translate *The Odyssey*.”
- <sup>25</sup> I have discussed the idea of the untranslatable as a guard against ethical complacency in “An Ethics of Discomfort: Supplementing Ricœur on Translation,” *Études Ricœuriennes / Ricœur Studies* 6, no. 1 (2015): 25-45, and as the trigger of translation in *Derrida, the Subject and the Other: Surviving, Translating, and the Impossible* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), esp. 134-42 and 245-7.
- <sup>26</sup> Barbara Cassin describes the untranslatable as often part of what she calls an “ontological nationalism” that sacralizes the untranslatable rather than seeing it as a productive moment for interpretation. See for example “Translation as Philosophy,” *Javnost – The Public* 25, no.2 (2018): 127-34. Venuti frequently attacks Cassin’s Derridean approach to the untranslatable; see especially Venuti *Contra Instrumentalism*, 53-67.
- <sup>27</sup> Venuti, *Contra Instrumentalism*, 87.
- <sup>28</sup> Venuti, *Contra Instrumentalism*, 88.
- <sup>29</sup> Venuti, *Contra Instrumentalism*, 111.
- <sup>30</sup> Venuti, *Contra Instrumentalism*, 110.
- <sup>31</sup> Derrida, cited in Venuti *Contra Instrumentalism*, 120.
- <sup>32</sup> Venuti, *Contra Instrumentalism*, 122.
- <sup>33</sup> Derrida, cited in Venuti, *Contra Instrumentalism*, 179.
- <sup>34</sup> Venuti, *Contra Instrumentalism*, 123.

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<sup>35</sup> Derrida comments extensively on this word in Blanchot's work and its translation in "Survivre: journal de bord," *Parages* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1986), 117–218. / "Living On / Borderlines." In Harold Bloom, Paul de Man, Jacques Derrida, Geoffrey H. Hartman, and J. Hillis Miller, *Deconstruction and Criticism*, trans. James Hulbert (London & New York: Continuum, 2004), 62–142.

<sup>36</sup> Venuti, *Contra Instrumentalism*, 96-8.

<sup>37</sup> Venuti, *Contra Instrumentalism*, 147-9.

<sup>38</sup> Venuti, *Contra Instrumentalism*, 149.

<sup>39</sup> Venuti, *Contra Instrumentalism*, 174.