

## HERMENEUTIC TURN IN ANTOINE BERMAN'S PHILOSOPHY OF TRANSLATION: THE INFLUENCE OF HEIDEGGER AND RICŒUR<sup>1</sup>

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FILOZOFIA 68, 2013, No 3, p. 205

The paper aims at explaining Antoine Berman's "hermeneutic turn", as exhibited in his final and posthumous publication *Toward a Translation Criticism: John Donne*, from the perspective of the Heideggerian and Ricœurian hermeneutics. In the first part of this paper, we deal with the overall nature of Berman's hermeneutic turn. In the second part we try to discover the influence of Heideggerian hermeneutics on Berman's reflection. Next, we discuss the key notions of Ricœur's hermeneutics, known as "post"-Heideggerian hermeneutics, with reference to the main concepts proposed by Berman for translation critiques. Finally, we reflect on the significance of Berman's "unfinished" hermeneutic project.

**Keywords:** Translation – Method – Epistemology – Hermeneutics – Heidegger – Ricœur

**I. Antoine Berman, a disciple of Heidegger and Ricœur?** Antoine Berman, one of the leading French translation scholars, is also renowned for his translations of German, Spanish, and English literary works into French. He is also acknowledged as a philosopher of translation who brought the topic of translation to the level of philosophical reflection throughout each of his three books on the subject: *The Experience of the Foreign*,<sup>3</sup> *La traduction et la lettre ou l'auberge du lointain*,<sup>4</sup> and *Toward a Translation Criticism: John Donne*.<sup>5</sup>

Berman rejects the viewpoint that considers a translation as subordinate to its original text. According to the author, translations must be considered the genuine objects of intellectual pursuit, research, and reflection. In this sense, Berman seems to be more like a

<sup>1</sup> This research is an extension of the research published in *Filozofia*, 66 (4), 336-346.

<sup>2</sup> This work is supported by Hankuk University of Foreign Studies Research Fund of 2013.

<sup>3</sup> Berman, A. trans. by S. Heyvaert, State University of New York Press, 1992. (Originally published in France in 1984, *L'épreuve de l'étranger: Culture et traduction dans l'Allemagne romantique*). Quotes are from the English translation.) 'The Foreign' is used hereafter for brevity.

<sup>4</sup> Berman, A. Seuil, 1999. This book consists of lectures delivered at *Collège international de philosophie* in Paris. This work is yet to be translated into English.

<sup>5</sup> Berman, A. trans. by Françoise Massardier-Kenney, The Kent State University Press, 2009. (Originally published in 1995 as *Pour une critique des traductions: John Donne*. Quotes are from the English translation unless otherwise noted). For brevity, 'Criticism' is used hereafter.

‘thinker of translation’ than just a simple ‘theorist of translation’. It is thus not surprising that Berman is frequently cited as one of the most important authors, not only by scholars of translation but also by researchers from disciplines contiguous to Translation Studies, such as literature and philosophy.

For example, Jean-Michel Rabaté, the author of *The Future of Theory*, who explained that Translation Studies is one of the 10 disciplines which would become the “theories” of the 21st century, recognizes Berman’s research as ground-breaking work that has contributed significantly to the field of translation.<sup>6</sup> Paul Ricœur, one of the most important hermeneuticians in contemporary Europe, also mentions Berman’s *The Foreign* throughout his essay, *On Translation*, the only publication in which the French philosopher discusses translation.<sup>7</sup>

This paper stems from a question that arose when reading Berman’s final posthumous publication, *Criticism*, where Berman mentions several times “a hermeneutics of translation”<sup>8</sup> in the three sections of Part I. In this work, Berman refers to Heidegger and Ricœur as the sources of inspiration regarding his translation philosophy. This is unusual in the sense that we cannot see any of these references in his other publications. In his first book, *The Foreign*, Berman mentions Schleiermacher and Steiner, but he never quotes contemporary hermeneuticians such as Ricœur or Heidegger. Berman began quoting from Heidegger a year later, in his second publication, but he still did not make a clear connection between Translation Studies and hermeneutics.

Why then did Berman suddenly begin to cite Heidegger and Ricœur as the origin of his “hermeneutics of translation” in his final publication? Is it possible that Berman had a certain hermeneutic project in mind? If such a project had been in the works, then which direction did Berman intend to take? How would this hermeneutic project fit with his overall work?

To answer these questions, we focus on the following three topics throughout this paper. First, we consider the overall nature of Berman’s hermeneutic project. Second, we discuss the manner in which Heidegger’s hermeneutics influenced Berman’s hermeneutic project. Finally, we investigate the connections and/or analogies between Berman’s hermeneutics of translation and Ricœur’s text hermeneutics, as the post- Heideggerian hermeneutics.

**II. The “Hermeneutic Turn” of Antoine Berman.** Given that Berman barely mentioned hermeneutics in his first and second works, we can define his change of stance in the third work as a ‘hermeneutic turn.’ Elucidating the nature of this hermeneutic turn as exhibited in his posthumous work is a challenging task since Berman never specifies the

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<sup>6</sup> Rabaté, J-M, Wiley-Blackwell, 2002, p.148.

<sup>7</sup> Ricœur, P. trans. by Eileen Brennan, Routledge, 2006.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p. 57, 63, 65. Parts II and III of this work are beyond the scope of this paper as they are applications of the translation theory developed in Part I to the translations of works of the English poet John Donne (1572-1631).

contents of this project clearly. Readers of *Criticism* may recognize that this book is much more 'retrospective' and 'methodological' compared to Berman's two earlier publications. It is retrospective not simply because it is his final work, but rather because Berman expresses regret concerning his past publications in several parts of the book.<sup>9</sup> This also seems methodological since his most systematic and procedural approach to translation criticism can be found in this work, along with an analysis of translation, whereby Berman begins to employ the term "epistemological,"<sup>10</sup> for the first time; it is also in this work that he explicitly expresses his interest in the method<sup>11</sup> of analysis regarding translation.

In his first two publications, by re-evaluating the act of translation itself, Berman endeavors to illustrate that translations can have an equal or even greater value when compared to their original texts. His focus was in consequence the act of translating. But in his third publication, *Criticism*, his focus shifts to translations as both texts and objects of criticism. The notion of 'translation criticism', which he had proposed as the title of his book, and 'translation analysis' both target, as their fundamental objects, translated texts.

Keen readers of his work will point out that Berman had already employed the notion of 'criticism of translation' in *The Foreign*.<sup>12</sup> Nonetheless, in his first publication, Berman simply mentions the 'criticism of translation' without providing any epistemological or methodological reflections regarding the criticism of translation.

Berman was always interested in raising the status of translation and determining its proper function. Therefore, it is not surprising that Berman finally gets to the question of why translation has not achieved the status as an object of criticism and/or analysis, whereas in literary critiques, original texts have long been established as such. We are then led to ask an important question regarding the author's timing. Why did Berman wait until his final publication to consider hermeneutics? In other words, what led Berman to this 'hermeneutic turn' at the final stage of his life? We will attempt to answer this question through the help of Heidegger and Ricœur, the two hermeneuticians from whom Berman frequently quotes in his posthumous publication.

In fact, Berman himself states that his project on translation criticism is related to Heidegger's (and Ricœur's) hermeneutics:

The third section of this first part lays out my own critical project, which uses hermeneutics as developed by Paul Ricœur and Hans Robert Jauss on the basis of Heidegger's *Being and Time*. Like Meschonnic ..., I call on modern hermeneutics. Modern hermeneutics, in the sober version of Ricœur and Jauss, allows me to shed light on my experience as a translator, as a reader of translation, as an analyst of translation, and even as a historian of translation. ... Thus here I am using post-Heideggerian hermeneutics and

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<sup>9</sup> See *Criticism*, p.18, footnote 16; p.68, footnote 68.

<sup>10</sup> *Criticism*, p. 2.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, p. 48 ff.

<sup>12</sup> *The Foreign*, p. 6.

Benjaminian critique to clarify and order (but not to systematize) my experience of the analysis of translation.<sup>13</sup>

What is noteworthy here is that Berman makes an explicit reference to *Being and Time* when he quotes from Heidegger. Even more striking is his public avowal that his critical project uses hermeneutics as developed “on the basis of” Heidegger’s *Being and Time*. Hence, we first look for the influence that Heideggerian hermeneutics had on Berman’s translation hermeneutics. Once this Heideggerian influence is identified, the remainder of this paper focuses on the influence that Ricœur’s hermeneutics, a post-Heideggerian hermeneutics, had on Berman’s work.

**III. The influence of Heideggerian Hermeneutics on Berman.** Even though Berman never quotes *Being and Time* in his first two books, the late Heideggerian hermeneutics of *Kehre* is quoted several times. We can therefore guess that Berman’s hermeneutic turn in *Criticism* had already ripened somewhat during the early stage of his philosophical reflections on translation.

Therefore, rather than limiting our scope of search for Heidegger’s influence to *Being and Time*, we need to focus on the overall influence of the Heideggerian hermeneutics on Berman. We will attempt to take a look at the correlations between Heidegger and Berman by using three concept words: ‘experience’, ‘truth’ and ‘language’. ‘Experience’ (*Erfahrung* in German) can be the first key in our search for the connection between Berman’s work and that of Heidegger:

Translation is an experience that lets one to open up and to (re)capture oneself within one’s own reflection.<sup>14</sup>

Translation Studies is the reflection carried out about translation, based upon the nature of translation experience (*sa nature d’expérience*).<sup>15</sup>

Berman’s reflection on translation as an experience appears even in his first publication. The French title of this first publication, *L’épreuve de l’étranger*, is significant. As Berman reveals, this expression comes from a poem by Hölderlin. The French word ‘Épreuve’ is used synonymously with the English word ‘experience’. The English title of the translation, ‘The Experience of the Foreign,’ makes apparent the nature of this ‘Épreuve’. Berman quotes from Heidegger’s *Unterwegs zur Sprache* in his second publication, when he attempts to explain the nature of ‘experience’ (*Erfahrung*):

To undergo an experience with something – be it a thing, a person, or a god—means

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<sup>13</sup> *Criticism*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>14</sup> *La Lettre*, p. 16.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, p. 17.

that this something befalls us, strikes us, comes over us, overwhelms and transforms us. When we talk of “undergoing” an experience, we mean specifically that the experience is not of our own making; to undergo here means that we endure it, suffer it, receive it as it strikes us and submit to it. It is this something itself that comes about, comes to pass, and happens.<sup>16</sup>



*Martin Heidegger*

This revealing passage from Heidegger determines the goal and object of a translation experience, “the foreign,” as well as the complete relationship between our own language and other languages and literature. For Heidegger, to undergo an experience of the language is to allow it to pass directly through our existence. Berman wanted to apply this existential stance of Heidegger directly to translation, which is defined as an encounter with “the foreign.” The foreign is no longer merely the object that must be domesticated. It is rather the thing that forces *Dasein*, or the translating subject, to question the totality of his/her own existence. Whereas Heidegger argues that “an experience we undergo with language”<sup>17</sup> makes us reconsider “our relation to language,” Berman points out that as we undergo an experience of the foreign, we reconsider our relation to the foreign. In this respect, Berman is a *bona fide* Heideggerian.

Little evidence exists regarding the order of influence. Was Berman influenced directly by Heidegger? Or was it only after developing an interest in German romanticism, including authors such as Hölderlin, that Berman discovered Heidegger? Determining this timeline accurately is a difficult task. However, one thing is clear. Berman, Hölderlin, and Heidegger all share a common view when they reflect on “the foreign,” and they all believe that the reflection on the foreign comes down to the reflection on “the proper.” Hölderlin once remarked that “what is familiar must be learned as well as what is foreign.”<sup>18</sup> Heidegger also stated in his commentary to Hölderlin’s “Remembrance” that “the ‘colony’ is the foreign country, but the foreign country which simultaneously evokes the home country.”<sup>19</sup> This hermeneutic circle between the proper and the foreign fits well

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<sup>16</sup> Berman in his *La Lettre* (p. 16) quotes from the French translation, *Acheminement vers la parole* (trans. by F. Fédier, Gallimard, 1984, p. 143). We quote from the English translation, “The nature of language”, in *On the way to Language* (trans. by Peter D. Hertz, Harper & Row Publishers, 1971, p. 57).

<sup>17</sup> Heidegger, p. 58

<sup>18</sup> *The Foreign*, p.161.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, p. 227.

with the ideal of *Bildung*, which cuts across the whole of German romanticism. Berman also regarded translation as the space in which the translator allows others to affect them. In this space, the logic of difference reigns, and the translator accepts others as they are and appreciates their differences. Translation is, in this sense, a space in which one accommodates the logic of others rather than the logic of sameness. In this regard, it seems difficult to deny that Berman's fundamental source of inspiration was Heidegger.

The second key of our search for the connection between Berman and Heidegger is 'truth'.

Françoise Massardier-Kenney, the English translator of Berman's posthumous publication, remarks that Berman regarded translation as "the core experience of the being-in-language [l'être-en-langue] – that is, of human beings."<sup>20</sup> She then points out that Berman's stance here is relevant to Heideggerian hermeneutics, according to which truth is "an unveiling."<sup>21</sup> This seems to be a valid and accurate point since Berman is perhaps the only translation scholar who speaks of truth as it pertains to translation.

According to Berman, the meaning and the world of an original text are revealed not by general readers but by the translator. As a result, we discover the truth of the original by means of translation and the work of a translator. In *La Lettre*, Berman noted that to translate is "to reveal, to manifest"<sup>22</sup>, rather than just to communicate. This represents "the total surissement" of the world referred to by the text.

When Berman explains that translation is a process through which a hidden meaning within the original text is unveiled or discovered,<sup>23</sup> he strictly follows Heidegger's hermeneutic approach. Heidegger does not apply *Dasein* to a translator or a translating subject. Nor does he specifically mention discovering the original text through translation. In *Being and Time*<sup>24</sup>, however, Heidegger proposed *aletheia*<sup>25</sup> (unconcealment or discoveredness) as a new conception of truth, criticizing the traditional concept of truth as *ade-*

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<sup>20</sup> Massardier-Kenney, Françoise, "Antoine Berman's way-making to translation as a creative and critical act," *Translation Studies*, 2(3), 2010, Routledge, p. 261.

<sup>21</sup> Berman in his *La Lettre* (pp.18-19) clarifies that he considers translation to be an entity within the language, quoting from Heidegger. "Every translation is itself an interpretation. There are within entities translated all grounds for the interpretation, openings, and levels that were found at the origin of translation, making no sound. Indeed, interpretation completes those silent translations. As such interpretation and translation are one and the same, not things different" (Berman re-quotes from *Martin Heidegger*, Les Cahiers du l'Herne, Michel Harr, éd. L'Herne, 1984, p. 456)

<sup>21</sup> See Heidegger, M. *Being and Time*, trans. by Joan Stambaugh, State University of New York Press, 1996, section 44 ff, p. 196.

<sup>22</sup> *La Lettre*, p.76.

<sup>23</sup> *The Foreign*, p.7.

<sup>24</sup> See Heidegger, M. *Being and Time*, p. 202.

<sup>25</sup>The conception of verity not only appears within *La Lettre*, but previously within *The Foreign* albeit in a rough way. "That is to say, in a translation there is not only a certain percentage of gain and loses; alongside this – undeniable – level, there is another level where something of the original appears that does not appear in the source language. The translation turns the original around, *reveal* another side of it." (*The Foreign*, pp. 6-7. Emphasis added.)

*quatio intellectus et rei*. In Heideggerian philosophy, *Dasein* as a finder of “inner worldly beings”<sup>26</sup> in the world assumes great significance. That is, since finding inner worldly beings requires the existence of *Dasein*, *Dasein* take the status of primary truth, and inner worldly objects that of secondary truth. ‘Reflections and questions about language’ are the third key of our search for the connection and/or relevance between Berman’s work and that of Heidegger. The most important and critical link between the two is found here. To reflect upon and raise questions concerning translation naturally leads one to reflect on language. To better appreciate Berman’s reflection on language, we need to mention another author who deeply influenced Berman. Berman was devoted to Benjamin and German romanticism. A thorough discussion on Benjamin’s influence on Berman would require additional research. Here, we focus instead on their shared view of language.

Neither Benjamin nor Berman regards language as a mere means of communicating the speaker’s intention, nor simply as the tool for making references to external objects. Here, the language mentioned by Benjamin is a poetic language elaborated on the basis of concrete natural languages; Berman gives another name to this poetic language: *the language of art*. The following is what Benjamin and Berman have to say about language and translation:

For what does a literary work ‘say’? What does it communicate? It ‘tells’ very little to those who understand it. Its essential quality is not statement or the imparting of information. Yet any translation which intends to perform a transmitting function cannot transmit anything but information—hence, something inessential. This is the hallmark of bad translations.<sup>27</sup>

The task of poetry, then, is first and foremost the destruction of the natural referential structure of language.<sup>28</sup>

If language is not a communication tool or a means of indicating objects, what is Berman’s definition of language?

When referring to language, Berman has in mind the natural languages that appear in the context of translation, the language of the original text and the language of the translated text. Berman seems to believe that translation is better suited to unveil the nature of language. In other words, if translation is “an opening, a dialogue, a crossbreeding, a decentering”<sup>29</sup> among individual languages,” as asserted by Berman, it can open up and clarify a world written in a different language. In *La Lettre*, Berman explains that “a work opens up experiences about a world” and “a world within the work emerges each time

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid, p. 203.

<sup>27</sup> Benjamin, W. “The task of the translator: An introduction to the translation of Baudelaire’s *Tableaux Parisiens*,” in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. by Lawrence Venuti, Routledge, 2000, p. 75.

<sup>28</sup> *The Foreign*, pp.89-90.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, p. 4.

different in its totality.”<sup>30</sup> By work, he justly refers to the work being the object of translation. Berman defines the emergence of a world as the core essence of the work. Accordingly, translation can be defined as ‘the manifestation of a manifestation’ (*manifestation d’une manifestation*) (of the world of a work). In other words, translation “re-reveals” the world revealed by the original work and its language. At this point, we can surmise why Françoise Massardier-Kenney defines Berman as an author who focuses on the fundamental relationships among truth, language and translation. If there is another side of the text that only translation can reveal translation is unveiling or unconcealing a certain world of (other) languages that exists in the form of text. Heidegger would also accept this vision highlighting the non-instrumental nature of language.<sup>31</sup> Heidegger holds that language is not a mere tool. Rather, language opens up human existence and clarifies its different aspects. In Chapter 34 of *Being and Time*, language as ‘discourse’ is presented as one of the “fundamental existentials” of *Dasein*, along with ‘attunement and understanding’. Furthermore, from Heidegger’s statement that “disclosing of existence” can become “the true aim of ‘poetic’ speech,” we see a crucial cornerstone of Heidegger’s linguistic thought. Let’s listen to his words.

“The human being shows himself as a being who speaks. This does not mean that the possibility of vocal utterance belongs to him, but that this being is in the mode of discovering world and Da-sein itself”<sup>32</sup>

After all, it can be said that for Heidegger, language plays a fundamental role of ‘discovering, unveiling and elucidating’ a certain aspect of the world and human existence. This stature of language is strengthened in his later philosophy. A passage from “The Origin of the work of art” (1950), an essay renowned for its ontological analysis of van Gogh’s painting of “A Pair of Shoes (1886),” and another passage from “The nature of language”<sup>33</sup> in *On the way to Language*, which is quoted by Berman and is one of Heidegger’s most important later philosophical works are in total conformity with what we are trying to say.

“To see this, all we need is the right concept of language. According to the usual account, language is a kind of communication. It serves as a means of discussion and agreement, in general for achieving understanding. But language is neither merely nor primarily the aural and written expression of what needs to be communicated. The conveying of overt and covert meanings is not what language, in the first instance, does. Rather, it brings being as being, for the first time, into the open.”<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> See *La Lettre*, p. 70. We argue that ‘each time’ mean ‘each time when we translate’.

<sup>32</sup> Heidegger, M. *Being and Time*, p. 155.

<sup>33</sup> Heidegger, “The nature of language”, in *On the way to Language*, p. 58.

<sup>34</sup> Heidegger, “The Origin of the work of art”, in *Off the Beaten Track*, trans. by Julian Young and



“The decisive experience is that which the poet has undergone with the word- and with the word in as much as it alone can bestow a relation to a thing. Stated more explicitly, the poet has experienced that only the word makes a thing appear as the thing it is, and thus lets it be present.”<sup>35</sup>

Rather than viewing language as a simple tool for communication or reference, Heidegger believes that language “unveils and elucidates” beings and enables objects to look at what they are. Berman and Heidegger share more or less the same fundamental insight into language. From the discussion regarding the three key notions, it is no exaggeration to say that the “hermeneutic turn” that Berman was headed toward had Heideggerian hermeneutics as its fundamental origin.

**IV. The influence of Ricœurian hermeneutics on Berman.** In his third publication, Berman frequently cites Ricœur’s hermeneutics to the extent that his readers may become perplexed, because Berman does not explain in detail the type and extent of influence he received. Therefore, in this section, we attempt to answer the following question: Why did Berman begin citing from Ricœur’s hermeneutics, qualifying it as “post-Heideggerian” hermeneutics?

Berman does make a significant reference to Ricœur’s hermeneutics as “post-Heideggerian” hermeneutics, implying that a missing aspect of Heideggerian hermeneutics was completed by Ricœurian hermeneutics. This makes it necessary for us to bear in mind the differences between Heideggerian hermeneutics and that of Ricœur when researching Berman’s “hermeneutics of translation.” In this regard, we may make the following speculations:

First, Ricœur’s epistemology of text interpretation—prominent in his work *From Text to Action*<sup>36</sup>—may be more appropriate to the text analysis and critique of translation than Heidegger’s conception of truth and language.

Second, Ricœur’s analysis of interpreters (and readers) can be more useful than Heidegger’s analysis of *Dasein* to reflect on the status and proper function of the translator, which was the main theme of his posthumous publication.

The reason for regarding Ricœur’s hermeneutics as “post-Heideggerian” hermeneutics is not only because Ricœur’s is a posteriori to Heidegger’s chronologically, but also because Ricœur’s is more advanced or strengthened compared to Heidegger’s in terms of its method. Nonetheless, it is not easy to verify these main hypotheses only through Berman’s citations of Ricœur.<sup>37</sup> We can only guess the intellectual ties between Berman and

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Kenneth Haynes, Cambridge University Press. 2002, pp. 45-46.

<sup>35</sup> Heidegger, “The nature of language”, in *On the way to Language*, p. 65.

<sup>36</sup> Ricœur, *From Text to Action*, trans. by Kathleen Blamey & John B. Thompson, Northwestern University Press, 1991.

<sup>37</sup> *Criticism*, pp. 5, 37, 51, 63, 64, 70, 71.

Ricœur in that Berman treats the reading of translated texts as a means of critiques of translation, whereas Ricœur treats the reading of original texts as a means of interpretation. This is what is absent in Heideggerian hermeneutics, which gives no epistemological or methodological guidance on how to read/interpret/translate texts. That is because epistemological or methodological questions account for a significant portion of Ricœur's hermeneutics, while Heidegger (and probably Gadamer) considers them derivative questions, which fail to recognize the existential stature of language itself. To illustrate this point, let us briefly consider Ricœur's hermeneutics. To distinguish his own hermeneutics from those of Heidegger and Gadamer, Ricœur states the following:

So we must not expect Heidegger or Gadamer will perfect the methodological problematic created by the exegesis of sacred or profane texts, by philology, psychology, the theory of history, or the theory of culture. On the contrary, a new question is raised: instead of asking, how do we know, it will be asked, what is the mode of being of that being who exists only in understanding?<sup>38</sup>

It is well known that Ricœur identifies his hermeneutics as "methodical,"<sup>39</sup> contrasting it with Heidegger's "ontological" hermeneutics. This is because Ricœur's hermeneutics proceeds within a constant dialogue based on methodological results from various humanities. Nevertheless, ontological hermeneutics, according to Ricœur, is not opposed to methodological hermeneutics. Rather, Ricœur calls his own way 'a long detour' toward ontological hermeneutics, and attempts to mediate the epistemology of interpretation with the ontology of understanding.<sup>40</sup>

In the search for the relation between Ricœur's epistemological or methodological procedure for text interpretation, and Berman's translation critique or translation analysis, we now focus on several key concepts from Ricœur's text hermeneutics.

The first key of our focus is the 'autonomy' of the texts (or translations). In his *Criticism*, Berman divides the procedures for translation analysis into successive stages: "Translation Reading and Rereading," "the Reading of the Original," and "In Search of the Translator," which include "his translating stance," "his translation project," and the "translating horizon (of the translator)".<sup>41</sup> This reminds us of Ricœur's four categories (or *tages*) of text hermeneutics: "distanciation by writing," "the structural objectifications of the text," "the world of the text," and "self-understanding."<sup>42</sup>

If Ricœur's distanciation is to guarantee a semantic autonomy of the text by separating the text from the original author's intention or interpretation, the first stage of translation critique that Berman suggests, "Translation Reading and Rereading," guarantees the

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<sup>38</sup> Ricœur, P. *From Text to Action*, p. 64.

<sup>39</sup> Ricœur, "Langage (philosophie du)," in *Encyclopedia Universalis*, 1971, p. 443.

<sup>40</sup> See the first paper of *From Text to Action*, "On interpretation."

<sup>41</sup> *Criticism*, pp. 48-66.

<sup>42</sup> This point is discussed mainly in *From Text to Action*, particularly in "The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation" (pp. 75-88).

genuine function of the 'text' by inspecting and checking the translation for its immanent consistency outside of its relation to the original text.<sup>43</sup> Thus, if Ricœur tries to set the original text free from the original author, Berman tries to set the translation free from the original text. In a sense, they are doing the same thing with different objects, and their discrepancy is due only to the difference between translation and interpretation. The procedure used by an interpreter to ensure the autonomy of a text strikes a very close resemblance to the procedure used by a translator to ensure the autonomy of a translation. In this regard, "distanciation" may be thought of as the first epistemological and methodical stage of interpretation and translation of a text.

The second key is the importance of a 'structural' analysis of the text. Ricœur, who commented that "to explain more is to understand better,"<sup>44</sup> suggests that the structural objectification of the text is the most procedurally and epistemologically motivated phase of text interpretation. Here, 'structure' refers to a group of formal properties and characteristics inherent to discourses within the text that one attempts to interpret. Ricœur explains several times that identifying these characteristics of discourses within the text is what characterizes most of his methodological hermeneutics.

Berman's "The Reading of the Original" procedure is also an important methodological phase, the goal of which is to provide the "location of all the stylistic characteristics that individuate the writing and the language of the original."<sup>45</sup> It ends up being the search for "translèmes," i.e., "a translation unit with semiotic characteristics."<sup>46</sup> For the purpose of reading the original text, Berman explains that "this reading is concerned with locating types of sentences; types of propositional sequencing; and types of usage regarding adjectives, adverbs, tense, prepositions, and so forth."<sup>47</sup> Berman's view connects with the tradition created by Benjamin, according to whom a genuine translation is not meant to recover the meaning, but is to "[reproduce] the form,"<sup>48</sup> and it "[goes] back to the primal elements of language itself and penetrates to the point where work image and tone converge."<sup>49</sup> This line of methodological suggestion made by Benjamin works hand in hand with Berman's view on translation, according to which we should "pay close attention to the play of the signifiers," as well as to the translation-of-the-letter.<sup>50</sup> The approach adopted by Ricœur emphasizes the importance of a structural analysis of the text. In its

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<sup>43</sup> *Criticism*, p. 50

<sup>44</sup> Ricœur, P.: *Time and Narrative II*, trans. by Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer, The University of Chicago Press, 1985, p. 32. This is repeated in his *Du texte à l'action*, Seuil, 1986, p. 22. Its English translation *From Text to Action*, p. 9 omits the translation of this and some other important sentences.

<sup>45</sup> *Criticism*, p. 51. It is at this point that Berman quotes a passage from Ricœur's *From Text to Action*, in which "[s]tyle is labor that individuates, that is, that produces an individual" is emphasized.

<sup>46</sup> *Criticism*, p. 53

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, p. 51.

<sup>48</sup> Benjamin, W. "The Task of the Translator," p. 21

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, p. 22.

<sup>50</sup> *La Lettre*, p. 14, p. 25. Our translation.

nature, there is no difference between this idea and Berman's "The Reading of the Original."

The third key is Ricœur's notion of 'the world of the text.' This concept can be described as both the goal of the methodological hermeneutics and the content that one gains using this hermeneutics. In most cases, what we call "Plato's World" means "the world referred to by the text" written by Plato himself. Whereas the hermeneutics once strove to find the meaning hidden between the lines or the author's (or the speaker's) intent,<sup>51</sup> the world of the text comes before the meaning of the text in Ricœur's methodological hermeneutics.

It is quite difficult to find an idea corresponding to such a notion in Berman's posthumous publication. Berman cites the notion of 'world' or 'de-and-recontextualization,'<sup>52</sup> but never explains how he understood these concepts. It is in Berman's second publication, rather, that we can find his reflections on the notion of 'world'. As we have mentioned during the discussion of the connection between Heidegger and Berman, in his second book, Berman says that "a work opens up experiences about a world," and "a world within the work emerges each time different in its totality."<sup>53</sup> A striking resemblance can be appreciated here between Ricœur's 'world of the text' and Berman's 'world,' in which the emergence of a new world is the key element of a literary work.

The fourth and final key connection is the relationship between Ricœur's "self-understanding" and Berman's 'In search of the Translator', including "his translating stance, his translation project, and his translating horizon." If the *Dasein* of Heidegger is, by nature, "being-in-the-world," the "subject" of both Ricœur and Berman is defined as "human life in that it is also, and essentially, living in and through the works."<sup>54</sup> It is exactly this passage from Ricœur's *From Text to Action* that Berman quotes. It is not significant that for Berman, the objects were texts to translate, while for Ricœur they were texts to interpret. What is significant here is the understanding that Ricœur and Berman shared about the subject. A subject, according to Berman and Ricœur, manages his/her own life – sometimes as an interpreter, sometime as a translator – within and through the interpreted/translated works, or more specifically, according to the teachings and lessons that the world of the works delivers and explores.

It is important to note that it is in his last publication, *Criticism*, that Berman first uses the expression "a theory of the translating subject."<sup>55</sup> Similarly, in his work *From Text to Action*, Ricœur's notion of "self-understanding" appears as the final objective of the text interpretation process. Although it is fortunate that Berman finally attempts to provide a description of the translator by giving an account of "his translating stance, his translation project, and his translating horizon," it is regrettable that he did so only in his

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<sup>51</sup> Palmer, R, *Hermeneutics: interpretation theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer*, Northwestern University Press, 1969, p. 92

<sup>52</sup> *Criticism*, p. 65

<sup>53</sup> *La Lettre*, p. 70, Our translation.

<sup>54</sup> *Criticism*, p. 27.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*, p. 59

final stage of scholarly reflection. Thus, his explanations remain quite insufficient. This regret grows even larger when we read Berman's passage where he proclaims that one of the tasks of the hermeneutics of translation is to answer "the question of who is the translator?"

Berman makes it clear that the private life of the translator and their mood (*ses états d'âmes*) are not the aspects in which he is immediately interested. However, he explains that "a theory of the translating subject" is possible only when the translation and its horizon are made clear, i.e., when the translating subject's stance and his plan are made clear within the context of the translation, language, and writing *per se*.<sup>56</sup> Trying to answer the question "who is the translator?" is to reflect on the translator's self-understanding as the translating subject.

Ricœur's self-understanding also does not include the interpreter's moods (*ses états d'âmes*) upon reading a text. The reader (the interpreter) "in front of the text" appropriates this through accommodating the new world of existential life that the text affords them. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the interpreter can totally control the text at their own will or intention. Ricœur's phrase, "the self as the disciple of the text (*le soi, disciple du texte*),<sup>57</sup>" truly summarizes the relationship between the text and the reader (the interpreter) in a condensed form. Ricœur's text hermeneutics emphasizes that the world of the text informs the interpreter of a new life, and sets the parameters for any arbitrary interpretations made by the interpreter. After all, in Ricœur's hermeneutics, the interpreter is deemed *sine qua non* in that he serves as an essential passage as a person who learns the teachings of the world of the text in a humble manner and who reads the world. An aspect analogous to this is also found in Berman's translation hermeneutics between the translator and the translated text. Berman explains that the notion of "horizon" or the "world" can be objective and/or subjective, and positive and/or negative, simultaneously. He also states that "they [these concepts] point toward a finitude and infinitude."<sup>58</sup> The world, he believes, is not at the mercy of the intent of the translating subject. Rather, it discourages the translator's arbitrary reading or interpretation and regulates the translating subject. That does not mean that Berman sees the translator (or the translator as a reader) as totally subordinate or passive. His commitment is made more evident when he states, "I want to move away from the reduction of the translator to the role of a 'relay' in functionalism and structuralism."<sup>59</sup> For Berman, within the 'horizon' and the 'world' of the translated work, the translator is not merely an *explanandum* or an *explanans*.

**V. The Unfinished Hermeneutic Project of Berman.** Our goal in this paper is to determine the nature of Berman's hermeneutic turn in his translation philosophy. Discussions of the influence of Heidegger and Ricœur on Berman's reflection on translation

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<sup>56</sup> *Criticism*, p. 57

<sup>57</sup> Ricœur, P., *Reflexion faite, autobiographie intellectuelle*, Esprit, 1995, p. 57.

<sup>58</sup> *Criticism*, p. 64.

<sup>59</sup> *Idem*.

proved to be quite revealing and important in reaching this goal. Berman's statement in his work *La Lettre* is illuminating:

Great translations are *the ones that exhibit thinking [on the translator's part], and every single one of them is sustained through thinking*. A translation may exist without a theory concerning it, but it may not without a thought about it.<sup>60</sup>

We have determined from the textual evidence in Berman's posthumous publication that "thinking" refers to "hermeneutic" thinking. Heidegger's unique hermeneutics concerning truth and language had an apparent influence on Berman's understanding of "translation," particularly his reflection on the "truth" of translation and the revealing capacity of language. We can confidently state that Berman's<sup>61</sup> translation hermeneutics is indeed developed "on the basis of" Heidegger's work.

Ricœur's epistemology of text hermeneutics, on the other hand, helped Berman reflect not only on the methodological procedures and stages in tackling the text to be translated, but also on the conditions under which we can examine the translating subject, regarded as the ultimate objective of all reflections on translation.

In the end, Heidegger, Ricœur, and Berman all share the view that a human is a being-in-languages (*un être-en – langues*), even though the authors differ in their foci and on their views regarding the nature of language; Heidegger considers "general" language as an inclusive one, which can be considered a fundamental *topos* for an understanding and clarification of the world and human existence. Ricœur, on the other hand, focuses on the "text" as a corporate body of linguistic units larger than sentences (beyond phonemes and morphemes).<sup>62</sup> Berman delves further and considers the aspects of "language" as the text for "translation." It is as if the extension of 'language' shrank from Heidegger to Ricœur, and again from Ricœur to Berman, as its intension expanded.

A translating subject is "a specific being-in-languages," distinguished from other beings-in-languages.<sup>63</sup> However, Berman made it insufficiently clear in what respect the translating subject is "specific." Berman's hermeneutic project thus remains to be completed. Nevertheless, Berman's incompleteness does not indicate a failure, nor does it signify a collapse. Rather, it reminds us of the path that Berman should have taken, but could not, and also of the 'remaining path' upon which none of us has yet to travel.

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<sup>60</sup> *La Lettre*, p.17. Our translation.

<sup>61</sup> *Criticism*, p. 65.

<sup>62</sup> "Text" here includes symbols and metaphors as a more general scheme of Ricœur's hermeneutics.

<sup>63</sup> *Criticism*, p. 59. Berman's use of the notion indicates—at least it is certainly reasonable to entertain the possibility – that Berman was headed toward the anthropology of translation in his translation hermeneutics, albeit without having had an ample chance to pursue it.

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