

# Literary Barter: A Network Science Approach to Agency in Translation

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## **Abstract**

This essay proposes complexity and computational network analysis as fitting paradigm and methodology for studying contemporary literary translators' agency. Grounded in the rhizomatic structure of networks, this approach unearths the importance of translation-based literary barter for the robustness and stability of a translation sub-system, in our case the sub-system of contemporary poetry translation from American and Canadian English into Romanian. Using a mixed-method approach that combines close reading (qualitative analysis) and distant reading (quantitative analysis), the research shows that translators possess an essentially connective mind and that their own interests and network of personal connections are salient in starting and maintaining a substantial exchange of inter-cultural transfers in a transnational context. Complexity thinking provides the premises for demonstrating that translation is highly sensitive to its initial conditions of production, thus is reliant on translators, and the computational network analyses prove consequential for documenting the role of translators in initiating and carrying out literary translation projects.

## **Keywords**

computational network analysis, complexity thinking, agency in translation, digital humanities, literary translation