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Chaos out of Order. Translations of American and Canadian Contemporary Poetry into Romanian before 1989 from a Complexity Perspective

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Keywords: literary translators, poetry translation, complexity, chaos theory, network analysis

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Translations of American and Canadian Contemporary Poetry into Romanian before 1989 from a Complexity Perspective

Abstract

This essay dwells on Romanian translations of American and Canadian contemporary poetry in stand-alone collections and anthologies between World War II and 1989 against a complexity theory background that sets out to recognize irregularities (or chaotic phenomena) within what is otherwise commonly perceived as an orderly, predictive literary system. Employing a computational network analysis approach, I examine a corpus of such translations that have been typically considered as part and parcel of a heavily controlled cultural system. The analysis shows that a sizeable part of the corpus were translations projects initiated, carried out, published, and promoted by the translators themselves – the result of a series of interactions in interpersonal and transnational networks of private individuals, rather than the result of established institutional policies and publication agendas. The essay also reflects on the need to carry out agent-oriented research in translation studies within the wider context of the digital social humanities, which present both the theoretical framework and the necessary methodologies for describing translators as agents of change.

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Acknowledging Irregularity and Multiple Centers in Peripheral Contexts and Beyond

Let us think of translations and translators as nodes in a network in which the edges, or the links, are the publication venues. Actually, publishers or literary journals can be nodes themselves, linked to translations by translators, and so on, and each of them can be a center around which other nodes revolve. As Anthony Pym notes in his 2007 essay on intercultural networks, employing a structural model that allows for multiple centers “invite[s] us to grasp the ways in which [translators] have configured their own spaces” (PYM 2007: 746) and provides a context that does not make individual agency fade away against assumptions about economic power or hegemonic cultural policies. It is in such a context that I analyze the corpus of contempo-

rary American and Canadian poetry translated into Romanian before the fall of communism, which has been otherwise only very broadly and scarcely described from a publishing perspective (IONESCU 1981), with little attention paid to those who proposed and carried out the actual translation projects, although actors in translation networks are mutually dependent (RISKU et al. 2016, TANASESCU & TANASESCU 2018). Thus, the chaos-out-of-order perspective proposes to acknowledge the full extent of any lack of patterns whenever order is *a-priori* assumed, and to identify self-regulation and personal initiatives in what may traditionally appear as the realm of order – in our case the heavily censored Romanian cultural field during the Communist regime.

This paper provides a historical overview of the role played by translators and literary journals in the circulation of American and Canadian poetry and outlines the network of translated contemporary author-collections and anthologies before the fall of communism by combining close reading with computational network analysis. The proposed approach allows us to have a better grasp of why and how translation happened and what the role of translators was in shaping a corpus of American and Canadian contemporary poetry. Accounting for the salient role played by translators or even for their *lack* of agency sometimes in proposing a translation project is paramount, for it is, I conjecture, a stepping stone in presenting translation as a highly complex (MARAIS 2014) and sometimes chaotic human endeavor. Essentially based on Bruno Latour's, Michel Callon's and John Law's relationist sociology, which posits that "neither the actor's size nor its psychological make up nor the motivations behind its actions are predetermined" (CALLON 1997: 2), a complexity framework allows us to overcome the deterministic nature of autonomous organizations and offers a fertile ground for further research into the translators' potential to bring about change by means of personal initiative. Instead of seeing translation as a regulated activity only, I propose to approach it as a possibly chaotic enterprise, which in peripheral contexts may be triggered by a wide range of elements, from a press's publishing program to a translator's whim.

Nevertheless, I would like to caution the reader from the get-go that I do not propose to purposefully look for irregularities in the practice of translation. 'Chaos out of order' does not refer to chaos *following* order but *coexisting* with order in any given living system and is a gentle reminder that perhaps we should not *level out* irregularities in a translation system simply because more established practices outnumber such irregularities. Publishing policies do not preclude translators' personal agendas: the two may exist at the same time in any network and may prove to be equally produc-

tive. According to Kobus Marais (*ibid.*), this coexistence is what places the agent and the system in a constant state of tension, without favoring any of them. For this very reason, I find a complexity-informed framework as being much more suitable in the study of translators' agency than any systemic approach and I will address this choice in more detail in the following sub-section dedicated to methodology.

In this context of permanent tension between agents and their environment, the main contention of this paper is that poetry translation in Romania has always functioned according to the rules of an actor-network (LATOURET 2005), whose structure could account for the 'holes', for the lack of institutional representation, as well as for literary translators' initiative, connectivity, and sometimes even their lack of accountability. First, I will point out the importance of literary translation for shaping up Romanian poetry as we know it today, as well as the role played by poet-translators in this process. Contemporary U.S. and Canadian poetry translation before 1989 owes greatly its existence to Romanian poets' work: while the overwhelming majority of author-collections were published by Univers Press (IONESCU 1981), the landscape of poetry anthologies is more varied and emphasizes the essential role translators have always played. Second, and in parallel, this paper underscores the central position that literary journals have always had in the activity of literary translation, alongside translators' initiatives and unpredictable cultural mobility. While it can be argued that journals are institution-like structures that mold the taste of their audiences, in Romania we have witnessed a reversal of this situation: most literary periodicals were founded or changed their orientation according to the taste of their following. Finally, I posit that poetry translation in Romania has followed its own pattern and was not only influenced by the practices of more hegemonic cultures: while foreign models did have a role in modelling the translators' wish to align Romanian culture to the more established ones, patterns were also largely determined by translators' personality, historical circumstances, taste, and personal networks.

The latest research carried out by various scholars on the position of Romanian literature within and as world literature (MARTIN et al. 2017) conjectures that "the emphasis on the nation-state as a "basic unit" of analysis and on nationalism broadly can be defined [...] as the tendency of a system to limit cultural mobility" (GOLDIȘ 2017: 95). As these scholars demonstrate, Romanian literary history, including the translations it contains, has never been subsumed to a static mode of existence, but to a deeply transnational traffic of cultural goods, "no matter how "marginal," stable, all-of-a-piece, and well configured most literary histories picture them" (*ibid.*: 96). This new criticism of the old modes of analysis of Europe's southeastern peripheries

includes the 'original vs. translation' model, which they regard as obsolete and non-reflective of the mergers that cultures establish and of the multiple cultural memberships foreign writers acquire through translation. Alex Goldiș proposes an interactional model for the analysis of literary histories grounded in Stephen Greenblatt's notion of "cultural mobility" (GREENBLATT 2009) and notes that instead of trying to fill the gaps of national literary history by linking the numerous translations from Allen Ginsberg, for instance, to an autochthonous tradition, one may benefit more from an interactional model that unearths those geo-cultural nodes which enabled the meeting of the Romanian and U.S. cultures and stimulated them. Carmen MUȘAT (2017) too goes beyond the imitation stereotype and analyzes the importance of geo-cultural networks in the rise of modern Romanian literature. To her, looking at others does not mean imitation or a derivative body of work, but a highly formative act engendered by new aesthetic protocols, concordance, and kinship, all marked by the idea of exchange and not by mere emulation. Mușat argues that the perpetually shifting borders of that part of Europe have created a more complex literary environment, marked not by one national identity, but by multiple, 'intersectional', and 'nodal' identities. A short relaxation in an otherwise very strict communist ideology during the late 1960s and the early 1970s had French structuralism enter Romanian universities and caused a massive interest in the French *nouveau roman* and in contemporary American poetry. The interest in the latter was furthered by the large number of Romanian writers and professors emigrating to the U.S. and also to Canada after the cultural liberalization (also known as the Thaw) ended in the late 1970s. As we shall see, they were salient in proposing anthologies mirroring their new cultures of adoption and influenced a whole new generation of writers, the so-called 'Generation of the 1980s', whose representatives integrated new American writing in their own postmodern work, as a reaction to a pithy European complex. According to Mușat, this process happened in perfect synchronicity with American postmodernism and took place through a series of translations done in the 1970s, a moment of perfect synchrony with the world's literature.

Translators as Nodes in a Network of Practice

The methodological contributions of sociology to the study of translation are unquestionable. However, these sociological perspectives on translation in the context of globalization have often emphasized hierarchies, power relations, and macroscopic analyses, hardly ever providing more detailed accounts from the translation universe. Although much later than literary studies (HAYLES 1991), translation studies scholars

have recently started to question the idea of translation as a field. As GOUANVIC (2014) noteworthy observed, besides translators that act as political agents or translators that aim at gathering as much literary capital as possible by translating reputed authors, there are translators by necessity, that seldom compete for a certain position and render the solubility of a concept like 'field' problematic in relation to translation studies. Johan HEILBRON and Gisèle SAPIRO (2018) also note that translation is not a field in Bourdieu's sense because it is strongly dependent on various other social universes and these influence to a great extent the composite configuration of the translation practice. Even so, while acknowledging that irregularities exist in the practice of translation, sociologists like Heilbron and Sapiro focused their research on constructing "a *general* approach to translation [...] by focusing on book translations in the field of publishing" (2018: 184), with particular interest in state-enabled policies for shaping up cultural transfers via translation or in translation on the international book market.

In order to capture best the complexity of any translation phenomenon, translators' agency needs to be researched, I suggest, within the digital social humanities, an umbrella-notion that situates any translated text in its context of production, dependent at all levels on the agent(s) producing it and on the medium of circulation (online¹ or offline), and analyzed by computational means. The particular framework of complexity presents itself as particularly suited because of its attention to methodology. It has been argued that complex systems may be modeled and analyzed by means of adaptive networks (SAYAMA et al. 2013) and that, in general, the formal language and the tools of network theory offer a more practical and user-friendly approach than any other. Since translation is not a field in itself and it ramifies into various more homogenous universes, I believe network analysis is a very viable way of describing both its history and the possible mechanisms that drive any translation project. In recent years, the humanities took new computational methods of analyzing and visualizing past events and social relationships at heart, as such approaches complement the close reading of historical texts with further granulated modes of analysis. More specifically, computational historical network research has seen an unprecedented development, while network visualisations have gained ground as a very effective way of mapping out the heterogeneity of historical and social relationships (BLAKESLEY 2020).

¹ Since this research is concerned with translations done well before the advent of the digital in Eastern Europe, the non-human factor has little importance in our study. No other non-human factors have revealed themselves as relevant during the present research.

The complexity of the translation system at the level of agent-based modelling is given by the dynamics of the system, agent interaction, and agent heterogeneity. Unlike traditional social sciences, which are focused on the social average, in complexity theory the analysis and modelling of the complex adaptive systems promise to offer a more complete image of translators' actions, which may range from chaotic behaviours to assumed, intentional agency. Using the example of economic systems, MILLER and PAGE (2007) argue that homogeneity in such a complex system can only account for the proper functioning of institutions, but cannot explain an economic crash. Therefore, complexity theory presents itself as a proper research paradigm to account for translation phenomena outside institutional contexts or for aspects that may be otherwise classified as accidental or unusual. Unlike other systemic models, be they open or closed, networks enable a two-pronged approach: on the one hand, an examination of local, particular, and infinitesimal processes and, on the other, a contextualization of such small-scale processes in the wider transnational webs of connectivity cultures are involved in. In terms of agency, networks emphasize the connectionist mind of translators. The edges that connect the dots in the following graph visualizations do not represent only exchanges between cultures: they may also be lines of flight that translators embark on, they may represent the cooperation translators establish with authors, publishers, and other translators. Thus, these network representations, although perhaps not the most visually clear,² provide a layout of the distances translation sets to cross and of our potential to act through communication. The research methodology I use in this paper echoes Andrew Chesterman's propositions related to deploying a network as envisioned by Latour:

For instance, we might wish to establish what networks exist (in a given context): what the various nodes are, both human and non-human; what the range of the network is; what use is made of each of the nodes; the frequency of links in different directions; the flexibility of the network, the extent to which it remains stable or expands or contracts over time; even the way compromises are born and become necessary. How do translators build and maintain their networks? (CHESTERMAN 2006: 22)

² In a keynote address for the International Seminar on Network Theory: Network Multidimensionality in the Digital Age, Latour complained that network visualizations are “not a pleasant landscape, but [it is] rather like watching lines and lines of barbed wire” (LATOUR 2010: 6). Others call them ‘hairballs’ (Schulz & Hurter 2013).

and is rooted in network analysis (NA), which measures structural and process-related properties at the level of the whole network and of the sub-networks. NA offers computational ways to wrangle large amounts of data and helps us grasp the structure of relationships between actors by offering a unique ‘outsider’ view of any given associations. This qualitative stage of the research starts with data collection (bibliographic research converted into a data matrix) and the formalization of the model (establishing which aspects of the subject will be computable and in what form, cf. FLANDERS & JANNIDIS 2016) and then employs a popular quantitative method: the network consisting of authors and translators as nodes and publication venues as links shall be measured and visualized by means of a dedicated software: the NetworkX libraries in Python, which offers two-dimensional graph drawings (or network diagrams)³. NetworkX is a package for the creation, manipulation, and study of the structure, dynamics, and functions of complex networks. Network studies have gained a lot of traction lately (KAUFMANN et al. 2017) because of the increasing pervasiveness of computational power and because computers are much more able to work in non-linear ways than humans. Furthermore, besides feeding on graph theory, network analysis also uses data mining – the practice of analyzing large databases for the purpose of acquiring new information in computer science –, and information visualization (or visual data analysis) – the study of visual representations of abstract visual or non-numerical data, which take various spatial forms and help users understand intuitively how large amounts of information are organized. Visualizing information as graphs is used “to summarize, present, and enact rich materials visually” (HUGHES, CONSTANTOPOULOS & DALLAS 2016: 160) and is considered to have the potential to generate meaning (LIU 2013) and work hypotheses, followed by more formal analyses. In the context of this particular research, although we deal with a fairly small corpus, visualizations help us see, for instance, if and to what extent anthologists share interest in the same authors.

Aside from measuring the size of the network (the number of nodes and edges) and the clustering coefficient (a measure of the degree to which nodes in a graph tend to

³ Although Latour initially addressed the issue of computational visualizations as too static for the inherent instability of the complex interactions that may exist within a network, he subsequently nuanced his position. In the plenary quoted above, he acknowledges that “the digital expansion given to information techniques is going to have huge and fascinating effects”, (LATOUR 2010: 5) and that computational networks actually enhance the materiality of such structures: “[...] what I like most in the new networks is that the expansion of digitality has enormously increased the material dimension of networks: the more digital, the less virtual and the more material a given activity becomes” (ibid.).

cluster together), I will look into its density – a ratio of the number of edges E to the number of possible edges in a network with N nodes –, as well as into its average degree – the average number of edges attached to a node in the respective network. Connectedness (or connectivity) – how well components of the network connect to one another – is another feature I will examine, as it determines the nature of the structure: full connectedness is a feature of complete graphs (also known as “cliques”), in which a node is connected with any other node in the graph. Connectedness will offer information on the giant component of a graph, which is a single connected component that contains the majority of the links in the network, as well as on weakly connected components—a series of nodes in which there exists a path (a sequence of edges) from any node to any other and on the strongly connected component.

As far as centrality measures are concerned, that is, the measure of the most important vertices in the graph, the analysis will follow four avenues. First, I shall refer to the degree centrality of certain nodes which traditional functionalist analyses would consider to be the most important ones, by analyzing the number of links, or translations, incident on that node, i.e., that particular author or translator. High connectivity may translate into having more resources to attain an objective or to connect in the wider network. Second, I will examine betweenness centrality, which will help me establish the relative importance of a node by measuring the amount of translation traffic flowing through that node to other nodes in the network. This is done by measuring number of the shortest paths that pass through the node and connect other nodes, therefore it quantifies the number of times a node acts as a bridge along the shortest paths between two other nodes. This measurement is relevant for finding the agent that influences the network flow the most. Third, I will look into closeness centrality, to determine the shortest paths connecting that node to others in the network. This count helps me find out the agents that are best placed to influence the network the fastest. Fourth, I will determine the Eigenvector centrality (or the EigenCentrality), which assigns relative scores to all nodes in the network based on the concept that connections to high-scoring nodes contribute more to the score of the node in question than equal connections to low-scoring nodes. That makes this score qualify as the ‘all around’ grade for any agent in the network, as it is considered to quantify the influence of nodes on other nodes in the same network. In order words, the higher the value of the EigenVector, the more prominent a node is in the network.

Contemporary U.S. and Canadian Poetry in Author-Collections and Literary Journals after World War II

The corpus of author-collections (Figure 1 and Figure 2) translated before 1989 which mark the generation's interest in their American counterparts (Diane Wakoski, Frank O'Hara, alongside Pound, Plath, Eliot, W. Stevens, T. Roethke, W. D. Snodgrass, and W. S. Merwin) form a disconnected network dominated by a 'star-like' giant component – Univers Press as a central hub of translations from contemporary poets:

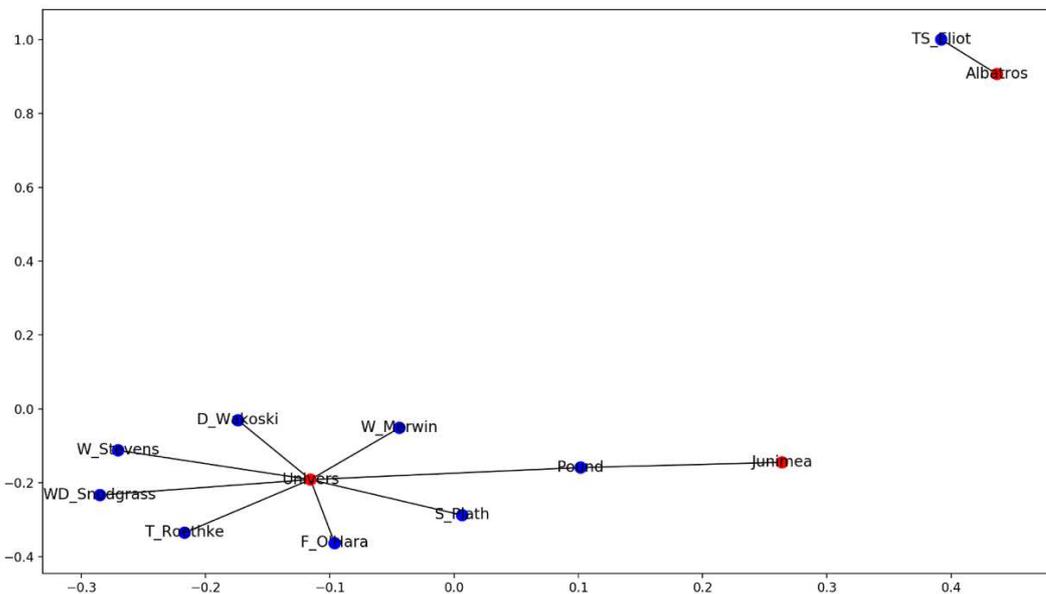


Figure 1. Contemporary U.S. poetry collections translated before 1989.

Legend: red = publishers, blue = authors

The most central and influential nodes are Univers Press and Ezra Pound in both subnetworks. However, it is the disconnected component, the translation published by Albatros, which would be republished after 1989, while none of the other translations have ever been republished. The only poets retranslated by different translators after 1989 are T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound. Moreover, this data visualization alone not point to translators' agency. When translators are factored in the visualization, the resulting graph indicates translators Constantin Abăluță and Ștefan Stoenescu as preferred by Univers Press for contemporary poetry projects and all the others (L. Ursu, I. Caraion, V. Teodorescu, P. Negoșanu, Ioan A. Popa, and V. Nicolescu,) as potentially having a more important role in the decision-making process prior to the publication of these translations:

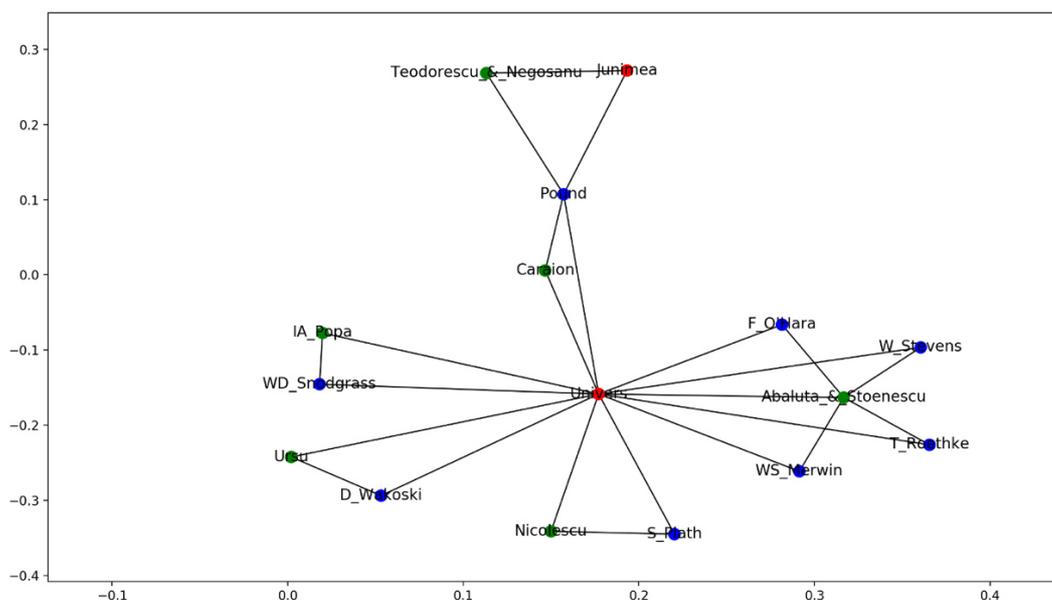


Figure 2. Network of publishers, authors, and translators before 1989.
Legend: red = publishers, blue = authors, green = translators

In this case, the network analysis and data visualisation alone are certainly not very revealing in themselves, although they do show us what exactly American poetry in author-collections looked like during those years. The computational analysis needs to be doubled by close reading, a critical analysis of the paratexts and secondary sources related to these titles. How did these volumes happen? What preceded them and had an impact on the publication decision? Why are the nodes linked the way they are? Although there is no stand-alone translated volume of English- or French-language Canadian poetry published by the state-controlled Univers Press, how did Canadian authors become known in the Romanian cultural system?

The end of World War II brought about a wave of translations from American literature in various cultural periodicals, such as *Revista Fundațiilor Regale* (The Journal of Royal Foundations) or the newly established *Revista româno-americană* (The Romanian-American Journal), founded by a mixed group of intellectuals that were supposed to represent a collaboration between Marxists and Americans. More and more authors, such as Whitman, Poe, Dickinson, Lowell, Cummings, and Frost, are translated by a number of young intellectuals dedicated to opening Romanian culture to the New World. And, “[a]s in previous decades, the most successful translators were writers, especially poets, in their own right” (KOHN 2009: 515). Then, in 1947, Romania entered the Soviet Union’s sphere of influence. Many intellectuals were denied publication, were imprisoned, went under political surveillance, or went into hiding. Some others decided it was safer to collaborate with the proletarian Communist par-

ty, in spite of its anti-intellectual stance. All the basic policies for Romanians, including the cultural ones, were imposed by Moscow (cf. PERRY 2001: 117).

Translation projects started immediately after the end of the war were postponed and books already published were banned. *Revista româno-americană* had been established in 1926 by the Friends of the United States Foundation, under the aegis of Queen Maria of Romania, but was forced to end its activities in 1941, reopened in 1944 and concluded its operations again in 1947, as a magazine whose first objective was “to present Romanians with the true image of America” (CROITORU 1999). As Drace-Francis notes, “[t]he few existing studies on Romanian views of the outside world under the Communist regime tend to treat the early (pre-1965) period and stress the negative light in which the West was portrayed in official propaganda as against an idealised *private* view” (2012: 231, emphasis mine). However, efforts by young writers and academics continued. Most of the people who still had the power to bring American literature to Romania were associated with various academic circles: Petru Comarnescu, Mihnea Gheorghiu, Leon Levițchi, Dan Duțescu, Geo Bogza, Eugen Schileru, Mihail Bogdan, and others. Young academics began taking advantage of various exchange opportunities with universities in the United States and return to their home country, where they capitalized on translating the literature with which they have come into contact.

Literary and cultural journals presented translators with the possibility of publishing frequently selections of the authors they admired and also served a series of other purposes: “The journals serving either to introduce writers not yet published in book form, to test reader response to certain writers, to follow up on authors already introduced in book form, or to provide critical commentary” (PERRY 2001: 134). The main outlets after 1964 were *Secolul XX*, *Steaua*, *România literară*, *Iașiul literar*, and *Tribuna*, which functioned as perfect venues for translation from new contemporary poets, such as Donald Barthelme, Sylvia Plath, Allen Ginsberg, Denise Levertov, Robert Lowell, Robert Bly, James Merrill, W.S. Merwin, Anne Sexton, William Stafford, John Berryman, Reed Whittmore, James Wright, James Tate, Robert Duncan, Robert Creeley, and Louis Simpson. Translators took advantage of the fact that translation was seen as “an ethically sound activity, whereas original literary works were subject to censorship and could only be published if they glorified the totalitarian regime” (KOHN 2009.: 516). Poet-translators used this situation to import cultural capital and to keep an open door to the rest of the world and to undermine the discourse and censorship of the Communist party and poets were joined in their efforts by important scholars, such as dissident philosopher of culture Noica. Katherine Verdery

explains that sanctioned translation was doubled by a parallel activity of subversion via translations carried out by Noica's *Cercul de la Păltiniș*⁴ in the 1970s:

Translations [...] were part of creating a larger public for culture, a sort of raising of the spiritual standard of living, parallel to the state's claims to raise the material standard of living. At the same time, however, they were like "viruses" loosed into the mechanism by which culture was officially transmitted. They were a form of political action. (VERDERY 1991: 294-295)

Such form of political action was too weak to undermine effectively the official discourse and publishing policies, but it was a natural reaction nonetheless, allowed by a short "defrosting" from 1964 to 1971—a "crisis" of Marxist legitimation which partially liberated Romania from socialist propaganda. The declaration of independence from the Soviet Union by the Communist Party in 1964 was the beginning of a period of cultural boom, when

[t]he Romanian man of letters [...] was officially encouraged as nowhere else in Eastern Europe and he made notable progress in recovering synchronization with the West which his forebears had so avidly sought and achieved. This passion to participate in and to contribute significantly to the major literary currents of the day – inspired by an intense nationalism and by a personal hunger in some of the best Romanian literary minds for the broader and more varied world of ideas and art forms, and inspired by the native Romanian genius for experimentation and innovation in art forms and techniques – this passion now returned the Romanian to a meaningful and original participation in the larger literary community. (PERRY 2001: 145)

Policies for cultural, scientific, and educational exchanges between the United States and Romania were put into place, and in 1964 the legations of both nations were promoted to full embassies. As a result, the range of authors and modes broadens, although the publication policies remain basically the same. Contemporary poets, such as Ezra Pound (1975, 1983), were translated and published in book form. A substantial selection from the poetry of T.S. Eliot (1965) translated by Ștefan Augustin Doinaș, Virgil Nemoianu, and Toma Pavel, was included in the first issue of reputed *Secolul XX* (The 20th Century).

⁴ An unofficial philosophy discussion and training circle, commonly referred to as 'the Noica School' in English.

Dan Grigorescu, a well-known Romanian specialist in Anglo-American Studies and a director of the Arts Department within the State Committee for Arts and Culture, published an influential volume of essays titled *13 scriitori americani* (Thirteen American Writers), in which he analysed “writers whose work [he] deemed paramount for modern American literature” and which left aside “writers to whom Romanian critics have been dedicating substantial analyses [...]” (1968: 6). In the 1970s, he is transferred as a lecturer to Portland State University and to the University of California, Los Angeles, where he came in further contact with contemporary American literature. He is also known for having been the founder of the Romanian Library in New York City. Other intellectuals of that time took advantage of the Fulbright Program that had been in place since 1946: Mihail Bogdan received a Fulbright fellowship at the East Texas State University, Virgil Nemoianu – translator of Denise Levertov and Whittiermore in the *Steaua* literary journal – received his doctorate from the University of California in San Diego. In their turn, American poets like W.R. Snodgrass and Diane Wakoski went to Romania through the Exchange Program in 1963 and 1964.

Author collections were usually translated either by Romanian poets alone, or by Romanian poets in collaboration with university professors known for their scholarship in the field of English and/or American Studies and Literature. For example, Wallace STEVENS’ *World as Meditation* (1970⁵), Theodor ROETHKE’s *Selected Poems* (1973), William MERWIN’s *Poems of the Seventies: Selected Poems, 1963-1973* (1977), and Frank O’HARA’s *Meditations in an Emergency* (1980) were all four translated by Constantin Abăluță and Ștefan Stoenescu for the same publisher, Univers Press. A recent interview (MINCAN 2012) with Denisa Comănescu, a former editor for Univers, reveals that pairing a translator with a specialist in British or American Studies was a common practice of that time. Such teams were commonly referred to as “colectiv de traducere” (translation committee) and were meant to be a guarantee for the translation’s accuracy, as well as for the thoroughness of the paratexts. Abăluță and Stoenescu’s background in American poetry translation, mostly grown under the umbrella of Univers Press, influenced Minerva Press’s decision-makers to commission them for the translation of Serge FAUCHEREAU’s *Introduction to Modern American Poetry* (1974). The interest shown by Univers in publishing contemporary U.S. poetry continued with selections from Sylvia PLATH’s work (1980), translated by poet

⁵ This year and the subsequent ones are the years the respective translations into Romanian were published.

and translator Vasile Nicolescu, alongside Diane WAKOSKI's *The Magellanic Clouds* (1981), translated by poet and creative writing lecturer Liliana Ursu.

Although gathered around and largely driven by Univers Press, Romanian translators' own literary profiles and personal biographies had a salient role in shaping the roster of American poets translated after World War 2 and their role becomes more and more apparent as examine the few anthologies put together before 1989.

Contemporary Canadian and U.S. Poets in Anthologies

Canadian English-language contemporary poetry during communism was translated only in anthologies and it owes greatly to Romanian émigré poet Nicholas Catanoy (or Nicolae Cătănoiu by his Romanian name). In his translator's note to the anthology of contemporary English Canadian poetry (1978) – one of the three anthologies of Canadian poetries ever assembled and translated into Romanian – translator and anthologist Ion Caraion explains that the driving force behind that compilation was Catanoy, “this strange enthusiast and hopeless poet” (CARAION 1978: 5). Shortly after his arrival in Canada, circa 1968, Catanoy came up with the idea of such an anthology, which Caraion put together only about ten years later. The description of the Romanian émigré is quite veracious: he has often been characterized as a ‘phenomenon’ that is hardly ever pinned down appropriately; a doctor and philosopher by profession and a globetrotter and a cosmopolitan by nature, he never felt at home in any foreign culture, but always wanted to incorporate these cultures and these languages in his own work: “The wish of this polyglot is to rebuild one single language, an integrating matrix for all things and phenomena, a universal vehicle which would carry his ideas across without any translation hurdles to the farthest corners of the world” (MIȚARIU 2009: 239). Translation is an integral part of his work and reflects his perpetual *mal du pays*: in 1977 he published the second anthology of Romanian poetry in North America (CATANOY 1977), in which he included 53 poets, selected “not on academic grounds, as he confesses, but according to his personal taste” (CATANOY 1977: 244).

For *Walum Olum. Cântecetele și proverbele indienilor din America de Nord* (Walum Olum. The Songs and Proverbs of Native Peoples in North America) (1981), Catanoy collaborated with translators Virgil Teodorescu and Petronela Negoșanu. It opens with a preface and a foreword by Catanoy, who offers the rationale for gathering the 107 songs and proverbs that were representative of 33 tribes, and also the mechanics of assembling the anthology. Although the title refers to a North-American selection, the short preface reveals that most of the texts had been gathered by Catanoy himself

over twelve years and reflect the folklore of natives from various reservations, “either from the north-east coast of the continent, especially from the Canadian Maritimes, or from the north-[western] coast, namely the province of British Columbia” (CATANOY 1981: 5). The eleven-page introduction puts forward an analysis of the texts that mirrors his background as a poet and outlines the history, themes, motifs, and poetic devices and features apparent in native literature in general and in his anthology in particular.

In tackling the limitations of his endeavor, he admits to a *modus operandi* that fits the patterns traced in translations from U.S. poetry in the early 20th century: “Moreover, for this anthology we have only selected those songs that are comprehensible to our sensibility and lyrical universe” (CATANOY 1981: 6). As Mițariu aptly notes, Catanoy had committed to “a courageous attempt at bringing the cultural patrimony of a native population to light” (MIȚARIU 2009: 244), an attempt which was motivated by the fact that Catanoy identified himself in a way with “these outcasts of a hyper-ethnic North-American society, packed in reservations” (MIȚARIU 2009: 244).

Catanoy’s role in creating an awareness of Canadian poetry began the moment he emigrated to Canada. Following his émigré friend’s suggestion, Caraion authored an anthology of English language Canadian poets, in which he played a multiple role: he made the selection, translated the poems into Romanian, and wrote the preface. The anthologist’s preface notes that fragments had been previously published in various literary journals, along with poems by French Canadian poets. Caraion acknowledged two other anthologies from the same literature and qualified his own endeavor as “only quite a modest selection” (CATANOY 1981: 6). His foreword contains a critical apparatus that analyzes the translated poems within the work of the respective author, a natural choice for the literary critic. It also traces a common feature of their work: “[...] the rigorous consistency with which most of Canadian poets insist not on a word, not on a concept, not on an idea, but on a true existential meaning and on a set of gnoseological implications expressed through the term consciousness” (CATANOY 1981: 7). Each batch of translations is preceded by a short biography and analysis of that poet’s work. Caraion’s roster includes poets born at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, some even younger, such as Margaret Atwood. The most generous selection is from Irving Layton’s work, followed by Fred Cogswell, Lionel Kearns, John Newlove, and Michael J. Yates. Leonard Cohen is listed among the poets he did not include, along with Elizabeth Brewster, Clarence Major, Henry Beissel and others. The anthologist confessed that he would like to publish stand-alone collections dedicated to each of the poets he failed to include.

Interestingly enough, the other three volumes – *Înțelegând zăpada. 60 poeți canadieni de limbă engleză* (Understanding the Snow. 60 Canadian English-Language Poets) (TEODORESCU & NEGOȘANU 1977), *Antologie de poezie canadiană de limbă franceză* (An Anthology of Canadian French-Language Poetry) (ANDRIȚOIU & ȘCHIOPU 1978), and *Steaua marilor lacuri. 45 poeți canadieni de limbă franceză* (The Star of the Great Lakes. 45 Canadian French-Language Poets) (TEODORESCU & NEGOȘANU 1981) are published around the same date, done by translators typically associated with contemporary poetry translation, and published by different publishers, which is probably another indication of the personal nature of each of these projects. In each case, the translators are the ones who did the selection, the translations, and put together the preface. However, the anthology published by Univers appears to be one of their 2,007 titles meant to bring valuable world literature into the local literature. This anthology precedes all the projects related to Catanoy, but it includes Catanoy himself among the selected Canadian poets. The 1977 anthology by Teodorescu and Negoșanu does not acknowledge his role, or anybody's role for that matter: the translators' note is simply an overview of the Canadian literature, which aims at establishing whether it brings something new compared to the British one, but Catanoy's presence among the selected authors is perhaps another indication of the latter's involvement in the project.

The beginnings of Canadian contemporary poetry translated into Romanian are presented below (Figure 3) and disclose two different translation programs: one interested exclusively in contemporary poets (Caraion, for Albatros) and one that encompasses both modern⁶ and contemporary poets (Teodorescu and Negoșanu, for Univers). Published only one year apart, thus most probably conceived at the same time, and with different publishers than the anthologists collaborated with for other projects, the selection of the authors reveals two different types of agency. Univers, known for its interest in both modern and contemporary literature and for the effectiveness in carrying out such large-scale projects, most likely commissioned Teodorescu and Negoșanu, translators who otherwise consistently collaborated with Dacia Press, because Caraion was putting together his own selection to be published with Albatros a year later. Furthermore, as I explain further on, Caraion publishes his next anthology (this time of contemporary American poetry) with Univers one year later, which is another indication that the Canadian poetry anthology was his own endeavor and was not commissioned by the publisher.

⁶ I have not included modern poets in the graph.

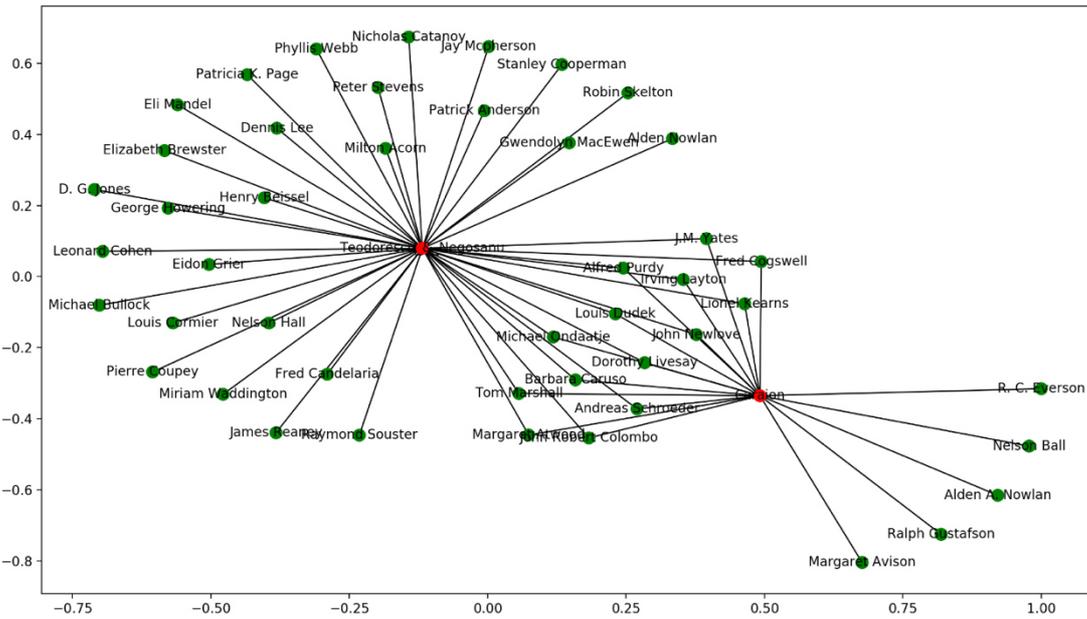


Figure 3. Anthologies of contemporary Canadian poetry before 1989.

There are thirteen Canadian poets included in both anthologies (Figure 4), thus they are central nodes with equal values in all three centrality measurements. The best positioned nodes overall are the ones in the *Univers* anthology due to their more numerous vicinities. The whole graph consists of 48 poets, with 27% of the nodes in both anthologies, a percentage that attests both to the different programs of the two titles, and to the prominence of poets like Romania-born Irving Layton or young Margaret Atwood and Michael Ondaatje in the cultural networks of the late 1970s.

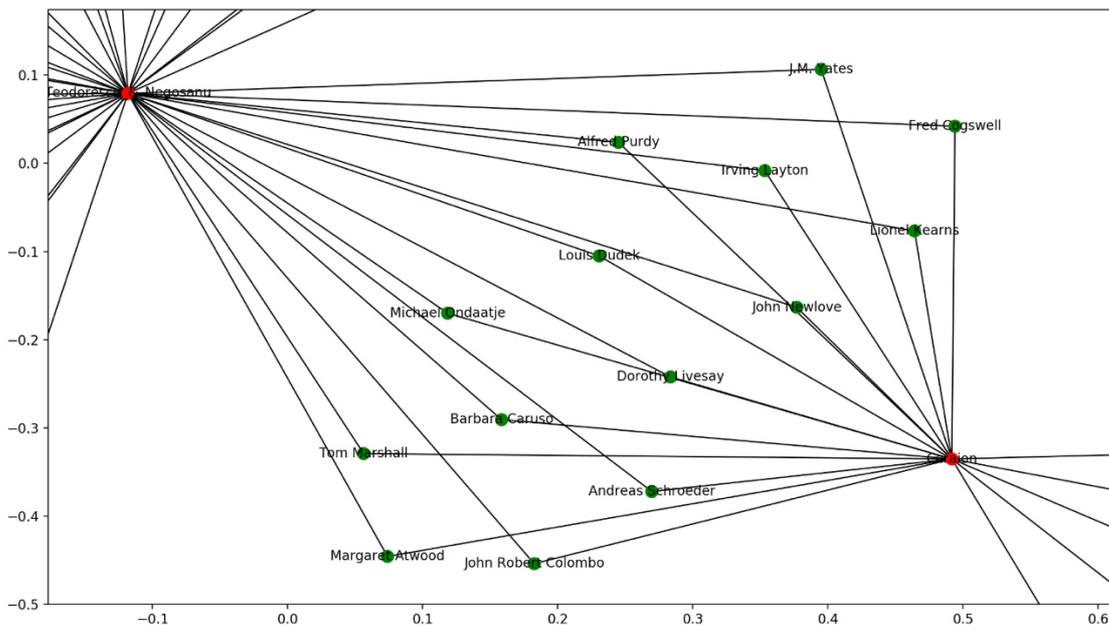


Figure 4. Contemporary Canadian poets selected both by *Univers* and *Albatros*.

The equal values of many of the nodes in this graph result from the equal weight (number of translation occurrences) assigned to the edges. Had I factored in the number of poems selected for each of these authors, the values would have been different. However, since this research focuses on translators' agency, I would have taken a great risk in doing so, especially in the case of the *Univers* anthology, where the involvement of the translators in the selection is not clear, so I compared the EigenVector values (a measurement that indicates the overall most prominent nodes in a network) with the number of poems selected by Caraion for each of the fourteen poets:

EigenVector = 0.1386	Albatros	Univers	EigenVector = 0.1386	Albatros	Univers
Dorothy Livesay	4	3	Barbara Caruso	3	3
John Robert Colombo	2	4	Andreas Schroeder	7	4
Lionel Kearns	17	3	Michael Ondaatje	4	3
Irving Layton	20	5	Margaret Atwood	7	4
John Newlove	16	4	Tom Marshall	11	4
J. M. Yates	13	4	Alfred Purdy	2	1
Fred Cogswell	18	3	Louis Dudek	4	6

Table 1. Number of poems per contemporary author in the *Albatros* and *Univers* anthologies of Canadian poetry

The distribution of poems per author shows great discrepancies between the two projects: while the *Univers* anthology generally contains selections of three or four poems per author, the anthology compiled by Caraion selects as few as two and as many as twenty poems per poet, a clear expression of the anthologist's personal taste. Thus, it is safe to conclude that the two anthologies of contemporary English-language Canadian poetry ever compiled in Romania were as much the result of an institutional cultural agenda as they were the expression of a poet-translator's personal taste and the outcome of a network whose driving force was poet Nicholas Catanoy.

As far as American poets are concerned, anthologies played a salient role in Romanians' becoming familiar with their work and were put together or simply suggested mostly by writers and professors who benefited from academic mobility programs financed by the U.S. government. The first such translation project was curated by Margareta Sterian, translator and anthologist of *An Anthology of Modern American Poetry from Whitman to the Present* (1946). Sterian was also a reputed poet and painter, one of the leaders of the generation of the 1930s. Her anthology was published by the State Press only two years after her own poetry debut, but the whole print run was burnt in 1947 by the pro-Soviet regime. The anthology presents the work of poets that were new to the Romanians, such as Stephen Crane or William

Carlos Williams, and was re-published in 1973 under the title *I Hear America Singing. An Anthology of Modern American Poetry* (1973). This latter revised edition reveals the history of the anthology, which was initially suggested to Sterian by Petru Comarnescu. For this revised edition, the anthologist adds thirteen poets that were born between the two world wars, such as Gary Snyder, Allen Ginsberg, or Gwendolyn Brooks, and confesses in the translator's note that the main criterion was her personal taste, followed by the selected poets' stature in American literature. Sterian also discusses translation proper and explains that her guiding principle was observing the original meter and, as much as possible, the rhyme, without trying to adapt the poems to match "our Romanian poetic spirit" (STERIAN 1973: 11) and admits to revising many of the initial translations that had been published in 1946. The note also acknowledges the role played by the publisher in reviving the translation project and professionally mentions the sources used for authors' biographies. However, the book exudes its translator's personality: its unusual large format recalls that of an art book; the soft, porous paper is reminiscent of that used for watercolor painting; and the text is interspersed by tasteful illustrations selected by the translator herself. Also, the illustration on the cover bears her signature and is titled "The Michigan Brass Band". Moreover, one of the very few analyses dedicated to her work as a translator confirm the personal nature of her projects: "The poet's translations, when not commissioned or requested by her need to practice, follow [...] the road of self-discovery. Technically exact and poetically inspired, their intention was to impose the free spirit of America [...], turning her into a pioneer in this field in 1947" (CRETU 2007: 363). After the 1989 revolution will be republished twice (2005, 2017).

The second anthology presenting contemporary poets in translation—*Din poezia engleză și americană* (British and American Poetry. An Anthology) (1970)—was curated by philosopher, poet, playwright and novelist Lucian Blaga. The edition published in 2012 by Humanitas Press (which contains two older anthologies put together by Blaga in one single volume in 1970) reveals the rationale behind his venture as an anthologist in *În loc de prefață* (Instead of a Preface): "I was not interested in their number. I was interested in their carats" (9), he says of the way he made the selection. "I selected authors from foreign anthologies, however best I could and whenever I had the occasion" (id.), he confesses about his sources. He also explains what translation meant to him and why he selected certain texts and not others:

By translating, I quenched a tremendous thirst. By translating, I became richer in experiences. I wanted to see the extent to which poetry can travel from one language

to another. By translating, I felt myself growing. Because I have been brooding only those poems which delighted me and which, through the act of translation, could become in a way mine, ours, could belong to the Romanians. (BLAGA 2012: 9-10)

Further selections from American poetry appear in Anatol E. Baconsky's *Panorama poeziei universale* (A Panorama of Universal Poetry) (1973), considered by Paul Cernat (2007) and numerous other Romanian critics as "fundamental" for the evolution of recent Romanian literature. Out of the 99 poets selected on the grounds of the "Meridiane lirice" publishing program, eight are American: Eliot, Faulkner, Steinbeck, Caldwell, Sandburg, Dickinson, Miller, and Capote. All translations belong to Baconsky, an effort for which he received the prize of the Romanian Writers' Union the same year. The anthology followed the critically-acclaimed stand-alone volume he translated from Carl Sandburg (1965).

A comprehensive anthology in two volumes appeared between 1977 and 1978, a project edited by Leon Levițchi and Tudor Dorin: *Antologie de poezie americană, de la începuturi pînă azi* (1977, 1978) (An Anthology of American Poetry from the Beginnings to the Present Day). The 84 authors presented in the second volume cover an impressive time span (1912-1977), but the selection of the poems is poor and translation is often improper. Although translated by Leon Levițchi, a reputed specialist in English Studies, along with Tudor Dorin, the excellent translator of Rudyard Kipling, among others, the general impression is that of a hasty execution.

Another example is the anthology curated by poet, essayist and translator Ion Caraion: *Antologia poeziei americane* (The Anthology of American Poetry) (1979), a selection of poems by one hundred and thirty American authors translated by Mihnea Gheorgiu, Petru Solomon, Emil Gulian, Vasile Nicolescu, and Caraion himself. The anthologist belonged to a generation of young poets that had been affected by the war, disillusioned with the old poetic techniques that still prevailed during the Communist years, and animated by an energising rebellion against the Marxist doctrine and values imposed through the formal education system. "My name is Ion Caraion and I am one of those writers that can no longer be ushered away from Romanian literature by any party, dictator, bullets, or scoundrels and toads with the official media" (CARAION, cit. in ȘERBAN 2003), he boldly stated in 1982, bitterly reminiscing about the years spent in Communist detention from 1950 to 1955 and then again from 1958 to 1964. After he was released from prison, he started to publish frantically, trying to make up for the lost time:

Tormented as I was by the years that had been stolen from me, by the manuscripts they had confiscated from me and destroyed, by the heart-breaking complex that I would not have enough time to write, obsessed by the idea that my message might have been stifled again [...] I didn't have any other solution, but to work tremendously, 14-16 hours a day, so that I can leave an oeuvre behind. (CARAION, cit. in ȘERBAN 2003)

As a result, he published twenty volumes of poetry, six volumes of essays and literary critique, and an impressive number of translations. For Masters' *Antologia orășelului Spoon River* [Spoon River Anthology] (1968) he received the Prize of the Writers' Union, then continued with the translation of Pound's *Cantos* (1975) and finished the series of translations from American literature with the above-mentioned anthology. This project, however, may not have been solely his initiative. Published by Univers and bringing together renditions by five translators, the 1979 anthology fit perfectly the publication program the press was committed to, but may have been, in a way influenced, by the similar Canadian project run by Caraion the year before. In any case, all these names associated with translations from American and Canadian contemporary poets form a tightly-knit network of poet-translators committed to connecting these cultures either through projects commissioned by reputed publishers with a consistent program or through their own resourcefulness and extended network of acquaintances.

Unlike Caraion, Virgil Teodorescu did not translate out of a need to react to the political regime and to update poetic techniques that had been in place for too long. One of the most renowned Surrealist poets, he was famous for his "monotonous nonconformism" and for his books resembling "the rich harvest of a peace-loving and thorough cultivator" (ȘTEFĂNESCU 2002). Ștefănescu explains that he combined systematic study with important positions in the Communist cultural diagram: editor-in-chief of the *Luceafărul* journal, president of the Writers Union, vice-president of the Great National Assembly. Interestingly enough, his co-translator, Petronela Negoșanu, was an editor of *Steaua* in Cluj who had spent two years in a correctional facility for "public agitation" at the same time with Ion Caraion. What is even more interesting is that hers and Teodorescu's translation projects are very similar to Caraion's: in 1980 they published *American Contemporary Poetry* (*Lirică americană contemporană*) (1980), followed by Pound's *Cantos* (1983). Their anthology of American poetry was the first one to break with modernism and focuses only on contemporary poets. Although limited by the small format of the *Cele mai frumoase poezii* (The most beautiful poems) series of Albatros Press, the translators dedicated a

one-page presentation to each of the 34 poets. Selections vary between four and eleven pages and are preceded by a clear and comprehensive preface, which outlines the main directions in American contemporary poetry.

The last anthology of American poetry put together before 1989 belongs to poet Mircea Ivănescu, forerunner of Romanian postmodernism. *Poezie americană modernă și contemporană* (Modern and Contemporary American Poetry) (1986) is the most comprehensive and well executed translation project that has ever been published in Romania, a status confirmed by the many republications of his translations. Most importantly, the sole responsibility for a project of such breadth lay with the translator. Influenced by the poetry of Frank O'Hara and other poets affiliated with the New York School, Ivănescu left behind an impressive number of translations from T.S. Eliot, John Berryman, James Joyce, William Faulkner, and many others (exclusively in periodicals), alongside this anthology that gathered relevant samples from the work of 43 poets. In it, he offered generous space to Pound, Eliot, Cummings, Berryman, Lowell, and Plath, and made up to the others through relevant notes and substantial commentaries. The preface signed by Ștefan Stoescu resonates with Mathew Arnold, according to whom "one cannot do informed literary criticism unless, besides mastering your national tradition quasi-exhaustively, you are also familiar with at least one other modern literature in detail" (STOENESCU 1986: 5). He also added that literatures should opt neither for unlimited continentalism, nor for total 'insularization', but for the plural and relative metaphor of the 'archipelago', such as the Anglophone one.

The last interview given by Mircea Ivănescu to poet Radu Vancu in March 2011 (VANCU 2014), only a few months before his passing, revealed the mechanisms that fueled his work as a translator. First, as a student, he took advantage of the fact that one of his relatives was a librarian for the French Library at the University of Bucharest, and he borrowed books that were normally banned by the Party, hidden in "a bookcase with the display window covered in blue paper" (ibid.): Gide, Valéry, Giraudoux, or Cocteau. Later, as an editor for Agerpres, the news agency of the Communist Party, Ivănescu became familiar with various periodicals in Western Europe, especially in France and Great Britain, such as *New Republic*. This is how he came to read Jack Kerouac in French for the first time, for example, but he also brushed up his English and started reading American writers in the original. Finally, a third mechanism that underlined his work as a poet and translator was his network of friends: Matei Călinescu, who received a Fulbright fellowship at the Iowa University and never returned, but maintained a continuous dialogue with him on various top-

ics pertaining to contemporary literature; Denisa Comănescu, an editor for Univers Press at that time, who helped him publish a translation that he had been brooding over for many years: James Joyce's *Ulysses*; George Serafin, his editor-in-chief at Ag-erpress, who would bring him a massive anthology of American poetry when he returned from one of his many trips abroad. Asked by Vancu why he chose to translate American poetry, Ivănescu answered that the trigger had been his friendship with one of the editors of Dacia Press, Vasile Igna (himself also a poet), and further explained:

[Igna] told me at a certain point "Let's do this [an anthology]". They had already published an anthology of modern German poetry, made under similar circumstances, that is, proposed by one single person; so I made a list and I offered to put together an anthology of American poetry and an anthology of British poetry. And he said OK, let's do this. And so it happened that we did both. (VANCU 2014)

Ivănescu also confessed that he strongly preferred American poetry to French poetry, although he had been thoroughly trained in French language and literature, and that all his work as a translator was a matter of circumstances, a happenstance. He revealed in the same interview that he chose to translate poets that resonated with him, confessional ones, like Anne Sexton, John Berryman, or Meryl Moore and disclosed that even Stoenescu, the author of the preface, was surprised by his selection.

Although not an anthology *per se*, Marin Sorescu's *Tratat de inspirație* (1985) (Inspiration Treatise) reunites translations from one hundred twenty poets from all over the world in an attempt to answer a series of questions related to the essence of poetry and to the best practices in poetry writing. Widely translated abroad, Sorescu took part in numerous literary events on all continents, where he interviewed writers on the craft of poetry:

Like a Romanian poetry's "ministry of foreign affairs" of sorts, Marin Sorescu took part in a slew of international literary happenings, and he did not return empty handed. On a paper napkin or in a small notebook, as conditions allowed, the poet wrote down with a diligence almost stripped of any kind of pride, musings that many of today's good poets entrusted him with, be it on a ship, at a café, or on a bus. (PRUTEANU 1986)

The work he put into interviewing poets and making selections from their work was equated by Sorescu to a unique chance for 'landlocked' cultures to connect to others

Eliot, John Ashbery, Denise Levertov, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Theodore Roethke, Gary Snyder, D. Justice, and W.E. Stafford. Of these poets, only W.S. Merwin, T.S. Eliot, and T. Roethke were published in dedicated volumes, which is another proof of translators' attention to the local and foreign literary scene. As far as the anthologists are concerned, their selection of poets influenced their place in the analysed network, with Ion Caraion positioned first (EigenVector = 0.5290) and Ivănescu fourth (EigenVector = 0.2017). However, the anthology put together by Ivănescu is referenced most often even to this day and suggests that the amplitude of an anthologist's persona contributed more to the visibility of the anthology than the selection itself.

Conclusion

I have examined in this paper translations done during a period in the history of Romania typically associated with a quest for national literary identity and with a strong control of the book market by communist ideology. My research showed that, even under such circumstances, many of these translation projects turned out to be nodes in interpersonal and transnational networks of individuals rather than institutional actors. For instance, applying the bottom-up ontological model of computational network analysis to the production of anthologies of U.S. and Canadian contemporary poetry in Romania provides what I think is a new explanation as to why such Canadian poetry anthologies were not as numerous as the American ones and why their publication stopped after 1989. The U.S. policies limiting migration but encouraging cultural and academic mobility bore more fruit for American cultural diplomacy than the more permissive immigration policies and the lack of consistent cultural diplomacy policies did for Canada. While Romanian intellectuals had a chance to travel to the U.S. and returned home with new ideas and aesthetic protocols engendered through translations from American literature, Canadian poetry benefited only from the interest of one émigré, Nicholas Catanoy, who grew a much more limited network with his friends and acquaintances at home. Instead of limiting the discussion to the cultural power America holds, the network approach helped me assess Romanian translators' drive in initiating and growing a series of exchanges between the two literatures, an interpollination that owed private initiatives at least as much as they owed institutional policies.

This essay has also hopefully demonstrated the thoroughness of all translation endeavors and the popularity of translations in anthologies and literary journals before 1989. They were strong arguments made by poets about the need for Romanian culture to open towards world literature, as well as a gesture of defiance towards an op-

pressive political regime. Not only did these titles express their curators' and translators' affinities, but they also, and much more so, were a reflection of these poets' vision for the future of their literature. They are also an argument to reflect on any translation process as turbulence, as a chaotic event that may or may not eventually evolve into a stable system or that coexist with stable, easily mappable practices. No matter how apparently all of a piece, regulated, and masterfully shaped by Univers Press, U.S. and Canadian contemporary poetry translation in pre-1989 Romania was sparse and dependent on its translators' (sometimes chaotic) professional trajectory and personal taste. A networked approach, a more local and fragmented mode of analysis, with boundaries as arbitrary constructs and highly porous membranes, seems to offer a more nuanced approach, in this particular context, as well as in wider ones.

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