This thesis investigates a new mode of online literary translation characterized by translator-reader interactions. Its focus is on Internet-mediated exchanges between a non-professional translator Xiao Mao and his readers in the production, dissemination, and reception of his online translations of three novels by E. B. White from 2000 to 2001. By employing the methodological framework of actor-network theory (ANT), this thesis sets out to unearth how interactive dynamics among heterogeneous (human and non-human) actors shape the translations at different stages.

This thesis first unravels how readers in the New Threads online community participated in Xiao Mao’s translation process via a mailing list. Triangulating paratexts, mailing-list archives, and interview data, it reveals multiple translatorship in the translation production. This thesis then uncovers a decentralized and participatory peer-to-peer online distribution network, in which online readers acted as distributors by reposting the translations on social media. Using a quantitative and qualitative analysis of posts from the translator and readers in the discussion forum, Xianxian Shuhua, this study finds that reception is a dynamic process in which evaluations are conditioned by interactional mechanisms in online communities. Translator-reader dynamics pervade the three phases of Xiao Mao’s translations, and his translation mode can be theorized as interactive translation, consisting of interactive production, interactive dissemination, and interactive reception, which foregrounds the participatory nature of online translation. This study is original in unleashing the descriptive power of ANT in researching online translation. It also reconfigures the notions of translation, translator, and reader, and prompts us to reconsider the translation profession in the digital age.