

**“Cultural carrying” from the periphery to the  
centre in the transnational literary field: a  
sociological investigation of book translations  
from China to Anglo-American countries**

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## **Abstract**

The international market of book translations is characterised by an asymmetrical and hierarchical structure. Following the works of Johan Heilbron and Gisele Sapiro in the sociology of translation, and Pascale Casanova's notion of the world republic of letters, which were all inspired by Bourdieu's sociology, this thesis understands books in translation as cultural products circulated across borders which are embedded in uneven power relations of languages and nation-states. With the aim of understanding how Chinese books get translated and published from China to Anglo-American countries, this thesis examines the centre-periphery relations between Chinese and English in the international market of book translations, the key players involved, and the networks constituted by various actors which facilitate the transnational transfer process of book translations. By proposing the notion of cultural carriers, it identifies the vital role that China's rights managers play in the exportation of Chinese literature to abroad, demonstrating that their practices are shaped by power relations in the transnational literary field and their national background where state power exerts significant influence in book translation and publishing. The publication journey in the UK of one contemporary Chinese children's novel - *Bronze and Sunflower* - is analysed as a case study of the range of actors (both human and non-human) within an actor-network facilitating the transnational transfer activity. Using mixed methods which combine descriptive quantitative statistical analysis, in-depth qualitative interviews, observations in book fair settings and a case study approach, this thesis, as a whole, highlights the contributions made by agents from the source country (i.e. China) to the translation flow from the peripheries to the centres in the international book market, and demonstrates the difficulties posed for books from the periphery to enter the central fields by the power relations of the centre-periphery world-system of book translations.

**Key words:** Book translation, transnational cultural transfer, sociology of translation, centre-periphery, uneven power relations, copyright exportation

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## **Declaration**

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work, and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References.

## Chapter 1 Introduction

Walking into big bookstores for general readers in China, one can easily find that books written by authors from all over the world are being sold. The Chinese market is especially keen to publish books from the English language. For example, the Chinese translation of *Da Vinci Code* (Brown, 2009), the *Harry Potter* series (Rowling, 2017), appeared immediately after their publication in the Western countries (Chen, 2007; Gu, 2014). In fact, imported titles for translation into Chinese span a wide spectrum from English-speaking countries, especially the US and the UK. Chinese readers thus have a wide range of genres when it comes to English books (either in Chinese translation or in their original version). However, when it comes to the publication of Chinese books in English translation in the US and the UK, it is a completely different story: as Anglo-American publishers are recognised as unreceptive to translated books, Chinese books, along with books written in other languages, have long striven to get access to the English-speaking publishing and book-selling market. Where Chinese books<sup>1</sup> are referred to in this thesis, this means books originally written in Chinese, i.e., Hanyu or Han language (the predominant official language in China). Whilst it has been discussed that some foreign literatures have found their place in the UK or the US, for example Scandinavian crime fiction (Cooke, 2016; Forshaw, 2012; Giles, 2018a; Giles, 2018b), Anglo-American publishers in general have a low track record in translating books from elsewhere in the world (Richardson, 2012; Parkinson, 2013), including from China. Having worked in a UK

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<sup>1</sup> Some Chinese authors choose to write directly in English. Sometimes a Chinese edition of a book is published in China before it is published in English or published in China after the publication of the English edition. Writing or translating directly into English by the author him or herself can be regarded as a kind of self-translation, which is indeed a strategy of bringing a Chinese book to the Anglo-American world, but this type of example is not included in the thesis. Also, publishing systems are different in Mainland China, and in the other two major centres of Chinese-language publications - Taiwan and Hong Kong. My research concerns only Mainland China when it comes to publishing systems and publishers and with respect to national cultural policies regarding publishing. But in the quantitative analysis on books translated from Chinese to English (Chapter 4), due to the limitations of the database, some books from Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau may possibly be included as part of the data.

based publishing house for several years, I realise that translated Chinese books account for only a sliver of annual book production in book markets of US and the UK today, and I understand how eager Chinese writers and publishers are to be translated and published in foreign languages, especially in English by Anglo-American publishers. This contrast triggered my interest in exploring the topic of the transnational transfer of book translations in general, and the translation and publication of Chinese books in Anglo-American countries in particular. My interest inspired me to conduct an in-depth observation of the industry, understanding some of the key actors behind the scenes (such as rights managers), and how they enable books travel from China to Anglo-American countries.

Sociological studies of translation have been witnessing an increase since the twenty-first century (Wolf, 2007, 2010; Bielsa, 2010; Sapiro, 2014a; Munday, 2016). To contribute to this new research area, the thesis aims to generate a sociologically informed understanding of the mechanisms of the transnational transfer of book translations, examining how book translations travel from Chinese/China to English/Anglo-American countries. Under a centre-periphery framework (Heilbron, 1999), translation flows from Chinese to English can be understood as cultural flows from the periphery to the centre. Focusing on China's experience of exporting books in translation to Anglo-American countries, this thesis explores the way in which book translations flow from the periphery to the centre in a broader sense, which hitherto have received little attention in current scholarship.

To set the ground for further discussions in later chapters, in this chapter, I will firstly introduce how book translations will be understood in the thesis. Secondly, I will explain how the flow of book translations is impacted by the centrality of certain languages and introduce the position of Chinese and English in the international market for book translations. Thirdly, I will briefly review the historical background of China's involvement in the international book market, its cultural policies and endeavours regarding exporting books to foreign cultures. Finally, after stating my research questions, I will outline the structure of the thesis and explain how the research questions will be approached.

## **1.1 Book translations as cultural products circulated transnationally**

Cultural products, in the same way as material and consumer goods, are exchanged across the world. Since the 1980s, there has been a growth in terms of the transnational exchange of cultural products (Crane, 2002; Hesmondhalgh, 2002). Within cultural industries, books, as cultural products that are produced in the publishing industry, have been an important feature of modern culture and have underpinned educational and academic life for more than five hundred years (Thompson, 2012). Although the development of digital technologies has changed the way culture is transmitted, the form of the book still remains as an essential way to convey culture, from one generation to the next, and from one area to another. Nevertheless, compared with other cultural products, especially music and painting, the book is one of the most language-bound cultural products. This means that translation becomes the primary way which enables books (and any written material) to travel from their original language and culture to another. Translation, in fact, is more essential for texts in peripheral languages to be able to be circulated across borders. As a lingua franca (Jenkins, Baker and Dewey (eds), 2018), English is used widely across the world, therefore, regardless of their first language, more people can read English original texts without having to be translated. But for writers working in peripheral languages, such as Chinese, “translation becomes the only medium through which their voices can be heard in the English-speaking world” (Huang, 1991, p.39).

Book translations, as explained by Heilbron (1999), a leading author in the field of transnational flow of book translations, represent “an identifiable and broad category”, as “they are published and distributed in a similar manner, they are registered, counted and classified as a particular category of cultural goods and they are destined for a wide variety of audiences” (Heilbron, 1999, p.432). According to Franssen (2015a, p.21), within the publishing industry, globalisation manifests itself most clearly in book translations. However, some scholars in translation studies have argued that the important role of translation in the production and circulation of cultural products across the globe has been overlooked in current debates on

globalisation. Bielsa (2005, 2009) points out that by focusing primarily on the benefit of accelerating instant communication worldwide, accounts of globalisation ignore the role of translation, which is the necessary precondition for achieving communication between different languages and cultures. Similarly, Cronin (2003) argues that information technology leads to “a reticular cosmopolitanism of near-instantaneity” (p.49), as information from Anglophone areas could spread to all over the globe promptly. However, at the same time, the effort and difficulty of establishing and maintaining linguistic and cultural connections between different languages have been devalued or even ignored (Cronin, 2003). In this sense, book translation is an interesting and specific case for studying the dynamics and complexity of transnational cultural exchanges, as well as the role of translation in this process.

In this thesis, book translations will be understood as cultural products that circulate across national borders, responding to Heilbron and Sapiro’s (2007) sociology of translation, which calls for “a proper sociological analysis [that] embraces the whole set of social relations within which translations are produced and circulated” (p.94). Understanding book translations as cultural products enables us to interpret the production of book translations as part of the publishing industry. Consequently, the transnational transfer of books through translation takes place in the international book market, which involves a range of specialised actors (such as translators, literary agents, editors) and organisations (such as publishing houses, prizes, book fairs) working together. In addition, my analysis of book translations as cultural products relies on Bourdieu’s approach to the field of cultural production (Bourdieu, 1993, 1996a) and economy of symbolic goods (Bourdieu, 1980), but on an international/transnational scale. Here, the field of cultural production is conceptualised as an autonomous social space, in which cultural products are resources or, more specifically, symbolic capital (which can be accumulated in the form of prestige and recognition) that different agents seek to mobilise. Book translations as cultural products can therefore be considered as “commodities which are selected and exchanged by social agents to access and accumulate the capital which such resources yield” (Bourdieu, 1980, p.262). Instead of taking place in a

monolingual field of cultural production, book translations are produced and circulated in a transnational literary space, i.e., a transnational literary field (Casanova, 2004), in which actors from different national literary fields gather together (Franssen, 2015a, p.180). Drawing upon Bourdieu's (1977, 1984, 1993, 1996a) sociology, Johan Heilbron (1999), together with Gisele Sapiro (2008, 2014a, 2016b; Heilbron and Sapiro, 2007), and Pascale Casanova (2004), understand translation as embedded in power relations between nation-states and languages. Heilbron and Sapiro (2007) suggest that to understand translation, we need to appreciate that translation takes place in a space of international relations, and can be regarded as an activity of transnational transfer. In this space, nation-states and languages are "linked to each other by relations of competition and rivalry" (Heilbron and Sapiro, 2007, p.95). Casanova (2004) pays attention to the international literary space characterised by different national literary spaces competing for literary capital. The literary inequality between languages means that translation acts as "the major prize and weapon in international literary competition" (Casanova, 2004, p.133). From the perspectives of both Heilbron (1999) and Casanova (2004), the flow of book translations is a presentation of international literary competition between nation-states and languages – and that flow is manipulated by the imbalances of this literary competition.

Building on these notions, this thesis understands book translations as cultural products circulated transnationally, which are embedded in power relations between languages and nation-states. It investigates the transnational activity which takes place in the international book market and the transnational literary field, examining who the key players are and how they interact with each other in order to facilitate the transnational transfer of books through translation.

## **1.2 The centrality of languages in book translations**

Categorising which languages are central or peripheral is a key debate in existing research. Several studies have used the population and wealth of speakers of



languages to estimate the centrality or global influence of a language (e.g., Weber, 1997; Ostler, 2005). It is clear that Chinese as the world's most widely spoken language, with more than 1.4 billion native speakers, is not a small or minor language, if we consider the number of speakers as the primary parameter. Also, from a political or economic view, China/Chinese is shifting the balance of power in the production of world culture. Emily Apter (2006) in her book *The Translation Zone* states that Mandarin Chinese is one of the globally powerful languages. From Apter's (2006) point of view, Chinese is competing with English as a major language of Internet literacy as never before. Nevertheless, researchers nowadays tend to agree that the influence of languages worldwide is not only governed by the number of people speaking a given language, or by the global supremacy and power of the users of that language (Ronen et al., 2014; Arduini and Nergaard, 2011). For example, Ronen et al. (2014) propose a focus on the connections between languages through "mapping their networks of multilingual coexpressions", which includes book translations, edits on Wikipedia and use of Twitter (p. 5616). From this perspective, the export and import of book translations is one of the important indicators for assessing the global influence of languages. Ronen et al. (2014) find that in terms of global significance or influence, languages around the world exhibit a hierarchical structure, with English acting as "a central hub", and other languages such as German, French and Spanish constituting "a halo of intermediate hubs"; meanwhile languages such as Chinese, Arabic and Hindi, regardless of their popularity in terms of the population size and/or wealth of their speakers, "are more peripheral to the world's network of linguistic influence" (p. E5622). Focusing on the world market of book translations, Heilbron (1999) outlines the disparity of translation flows between languages and reveals a similar structure regarding the centrality of languages in the international book market, in which English is a hyper-central language, followed by a few central languages, such as French and German, and the others which are all peripheral languages. Applying the cultural world-system framework by Heilbron (1999) which considers the flows of book translations as an indicator of the centrality of languages, Chinese can be categorised as a peripheral language, and the practice of book translations from Chinese to English flow from the periphery to the centre.

Studies which focus on the international circulation of book translations have provided an indication of the constantly unequal relations between languages and nation-states (e.g., Heilbron, 1999, 2000; Sapiro, 2010b, 2014b, 2015; van Es and Heilbron, 2015). However, the main attention in academic research tends to be on the impact of English on the global culture world, so more research focuses on literary transfer from English to other languages (see for example, Méliz, 2007; Sapiro, 2010b; Zehnalová and Kubátová, 2022) than vice versa. In recent years, a few researchers have begun to focus on the way which books or literature from the periphery enter the central literary world (for example, Heilbron, 2008, 2020; van Es and Heilbron, 2015; McMartin, 2019a; Sapiro, 2016a, 2016b), but overall, the voice from other languages, especially those which are considered as “small” or “peripheral” languages, such as Chinese, have long been ignored. Instead of focusing on the literary field of centres, or following the flow from centre to the periphery, this thesis takes up the question of translation flow from the periphery to the centre in order to contribute to the understanding of the transnational transfer activities as a part of larger power struggles in global cultural production and to provide empirical data from the standpoint of China’s experience.

### **1.3 The exportation of Chinese to English book translations**

The international literary space from the perspective of Casanova (2004) is where national literary fields compete for ‘literary capital’ (a specific symbolic capital in the literary field, as coined by Casanova). As translation is the primary way of international circulation of literature, it therefore becomes “the major prize and weapon in international literary competition” (Casanova, 2004, p. 133). For literary works in the peripheral literary field, getting access to the central literary field is a way of consecration (symbolic recognition) which adds to its literary capital in the world republic of letters (Casanova, 2004). It is therefore important to realise that the book industry and literature have long been a part of national cultural policies, i.e., “the range of activities that governments undertake – or do not undertake – in the arena of culture” (Gray, 2010, p.222). Since the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, there has been an enormous effort within the country to make its

culture known abroad, including introducing Chinese culture through book translations. Publishing and book translations are key components of the Chinese government's external communication endeavours aiming for enhancing the nation's soft power, which according to Joseph Nye (1990, 2004), refers to "the ability to affect others and obtain preferred outcomes by attraction and persuasion rather than coercion or payment" (Nye, 2021, p.1). Translation, which originally was regarded by the Chinese government as an act to import other cultures to China, is mostly mobilised as "a political strategy to export China's culture to the world and to increase China's soft power" presently (Jiang, 2021, p.895). Nowadays, the rapid development of China's national power and influence has driven the urge to translate Chinese culture into English, the global lingua franca (Bai, 2020). To help to understand the circumstances of contemporary transnational transfer of Chinese books from China to Anglo-American countries, in this section, I will give a brief review on the history of China's engagement in the international book market, the models through which books can be translated and exported to English-language world, and the policies and strategies of exporting its national literature to the outside world in a general sense since the founding of the New China in 1949.

### 1.3.1 'Newcomer' of the international book market – the enforcement of IPRs in China

The literary communication through translation between China and the West started at the time of the Age of Discovery, when the European colonial adventurers attempted to conquer other parts of the world in the seventeenth century (Idema and Haft, 1997; Wang and Fan, 1999). At that time, travellers from Spain and Portugal began to report their understandings of China, so knowledge of China began to spread through Europe. By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the great Chinese classic novels, such as *The Water Margin*<sup>2</sup> (Shi, 1963) and *The Journey to the West*<sup>3</sup> (Wu, 1980), and

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<sup>2</sup> The Chinese name of this book is 水浒传, one of the Four Great Classical Novels (四大名著) in China, written by Shi Nai'an in 14<sup>th</sup> century. Other titles of translations are *Outlaws of the Marsh* and *All Men Are Brothers*. The other three great classical novels are *The Journey to the West* (西游记) written by Wu Cheng'en, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (三国演义) written by Luo Guanzhong, and *Dream of the Red Chamber* (红楼梦) written by Cao Xueqin.

<sup>3</sup> The Chinese name of this book is 西游记, one of the Four Great Classical Novels in China. It was originally published in the 16<sup>th</sup> century of China.

the military treatise *The Art of War*<sup>4</sup> (Sunzi, 1963) had been translated into English. And since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, many Western books, especially those by French and English-speaking writers, have been translated into Chinese, ranging from Shakespeare to Dickens and Stendhal (Richardson, 2012).

Contemporary international transfer of book translations is built around the trade in selling and buying of foreign rights, which means, in order to publish a translated book, the publisher must acquire from the rights holder the exclusive rights of reproduction and distribution which are protected by copyright conventions and treaties (WIPO, 2020). The global exchange of books is regulated by international conventions and treaties for protecting Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs)<sup>5</sup>. It is therefore worth reviewing how China has been engaging in this book market regulated by the copyright conventions and treaties.

IPRs have long been recognized within various legal systems: modern initiatives in terms of protecting IPRs through international law started with the Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property in 1883 and the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works in 1886 (WIPO, 2020). The latter, which is known more simply as the Berne Convention, is one of the main copyright conventions of relevance for book publishing today. With regard to digital works, they are regulated by WIPO Copyright Treaties (WCT) (Seeber and Balkwill, 2007). In 1886, the Berne Convention was adopted in Paris and began to organise the international book market, “setting a minimum set of standards for the protection of the rights of the creators of copyrighted works around the world” (CCC, n.d.). Under the Berne

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<sup>4</sup> The Chinese name of this book is 孙子兵法, an Chinese military treatise dating from 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, written by Chinese philosopher, military strategist Sunzi (or ‘Sun Tzu’ in Wade-Giles romanization).

<sup>5</sup> Intellectual property is often divided into industrial property (including patents for inventions, industrial designs, trademarks and geographical indications), and copyright and related rights (including literary, artistic and scientific works) (WIPO, 2020). Of all the intellectual property rights relevant to the book publishing industry, copyright, which can also be called the author’s rights, is the most significant one (Seeber and Balkwill, 2007), referring to the rights that creators own to their literary, artistic and scientific works (WIPO, 2020).

Convention, publishers have to buy distribution or translation rights of books which under the protection of copyright law<sup>6</sup> from the rights holder. And, in 1945, UNESCO<sup>7</sup> put in place a programme which encourages the extension of the market for translation to non-Western countries. From this, the globalisation process in the book market began (Sapiro, 2016b).

China's engagement in the increasingly globalised book market has a rather long history. Historically, the concept of copyright and, broadly speaking, the concept of intellectual property has no equivalent in China<sup>8</sup>. As William Alford (1995) in his book *To Steal a Book is an Elegant Offense* indicates, copying books is not considered an offense in traditional Confucian Chinese culture. The concept of Intellectual property was first introduced in China in the 19th century (Yu, 2004): after China's defeat in the Opium War in 1840, China opened its coastal ports to Western trade, and the West was then in a position to make demands for reform of intellectual property laws in China (Alford, 1995; Yu, 2004).

After 1949, the New China (i.e., the People's Republic of China) withdrew from the international copyright agreements and abolished its own copyright law, and exchanges of literary works at that time were restricted to importing and translating ideological and technological works from the former Soviet Union (Richardson, 2006; 2012). In the late 1970s, when the opening-up policy and market-oriented reforms<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The general rule of the duration of protection is that copyright protection of literary works must be granted until 50 years after the creator's death, but it often varies across countries (WIPO, n.d.).

<sup>7</sup> UNESCO, short for The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, was established on 16 November 1945.

<sup>8</sup> For more detailed historical traces of IPRs in China, see e.g., Yu (2004) and Alford (1995).

<sup>9</sup> The process of China's reform and opening up policy (改革开放) was implemented at the third plenary meeting of the eleventh Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CCPCC) in 1978. Since then, China has "opened up for trade and foreign investment, gradually liberalised prices, diversified ownership, strengthened property rights and kept inflation under control" (Hofman, 2018, p.54). The reform and opening up, which aims for "dismantling the economic straitjacket and unlocking the growth potential" triggers the development of modernization and prosperity in China (China.org.cn, 2014). Over the four

were implemented, China reopened the country to the international community and began to seriously consider IPRs in order to engage within the rest of the world (Yu, 2004; Mercurio, 2012). Since then, China has been formulating laws and regulations for IPR protection and has eagerly entered into international treaties (Bejesky, 2004; Shi, 2006). For example, in 1992, China became a signatory country of the Berne Convention, signed the WIPO Copyright Treaty in 2001, and in the same year joined the World Trade Organization (WTO). To strengthen the protection and enforcement of IPRs, various institutional reforms were also implemented in China – the State Patent Bureau was upgraded to the State Intellectual Property Office, and a ministry-level branch of the State Council was established (Yu, 2004). Training programmes which aim to train experts in the intellectual property area were also developed: Chinese universities started to set up courses, degrees and academic departments devoted to intellectual property laws (Information Office State Council of the PRC, 1994; Yu, 2004). Joining the Berne Convention signified that China’s book trade with other countries was beginning to be standardised under the regulation of Western modes of publication. After joining, China’s copyright laws formally came into line with those of the Western countries, and copyright purchases from the US, the UK and some other Western countries overtook those from the Soviet Union/Russia (Richardson, 2012).

Considering the date when China joined the Berne Convention and other relevant copyright treaties, as well as the WTO, it was only quite recently, in the very late 20th century, that foreign publishers began to participate in the production of Chinese to English translations of contemporary works through copyright trade. Under the umbrella of globalisation, China has become more and more involved in the international book market with its “full panoply of intellectual property rights legislation and institutions” (Shi, 2006, p.2). As shall be seen below, since China began engaging in the contemporary international book market by joining the international

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decades from its reforming and opening up, China transited from a country of economic isolation to be the world’s leading trading economy (Garnaut, Song and Fang, 2018). More interpretations and discussions of China’s reform and development since 1978 can be found in *China’s 40 Years of Reform and Development: 1978 – 2018* (Garnaut, Song and Fang (eds), 2018).

intellectual property conventions (such as the Berne Convention), the mode of exporting Chinese literature to English world has gradually been transformed from state-initiated translation published and distributed by Chinese publishers, to joint patronage translation involving Chinese institutions and foreign university presses. And now, more and more Chinese publishers are actively selling copyrights to English-language trade publishers.

### *1.3.2 From 'source-initiated' to 'cultural carrying' – the transformation of models of exporting Chinese books in translation*

In the beginning, translation projects from Chinese to foreign languages were operated as top-down, state-sponsored undertakings that were principally oriented and initiated by the supply side of the source culture, i.e., China (Jiang, 2021). Such source-initiated translation was started right after the founding of the New China in 1949. The translators involved in the source-initiated translation projects are either Chinese native speakers or English speakers who permanently reside in China, and the translated works have been published in China by state-run publishing houses (Chang, 2017). The Foreign Language Press<sup>10</sup> (外文出版社) in Beijing is one of the primary state-run publishing houses dedicated to publishing foreign translations of Chinese books. Since the early 1950s, an increasing number of English translations ranging from traditional literature, philosophy and history to modern and contemporary works have been published by the Foreign Language Press (McMorran, 2000, p.281). In addition to literary works, the Press also translates and publishes policy documents and works written by Chinese politicians of the central government (Jiang, 2021). In China, the state-initiated translation projects in the early stages showed a strong ideological purpose - they operated under the guidelines for external propaganda by governmental organisations, and both the selection of works for translation and the translation strategies that were used fell in line with the interests of the state's ideology (Jiang, 2021). Take Foreign Language Press for

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<sup>10</sup> The Foreign Language Press was operated under the state's Publicity Department, which was reorganised from the International News Bureau. It then affiliated with another state-sponsored institution - China International Publishing Group, in 1963 (Jiang, 2021).

example: as stated by Xu (2014), the publications of this press were aimed “to broadly introduce the achievements of the New China, the policies of the Communist Party and also the central government, as well as the experiences of Chinese revolution to the world” (p.78).

Since China adopted the reform and opening-up policy in 1978, it has experienced a transition from a centrally planned economy to a socialist market economy, and from a closed or semi-closed society to an open one (Shan, 2014; China.org.cn, 2014). In the 1990s, dispersed and diversified translation practitioners, and multiple non-government participants and agendas have been involved in intercultural exchanges, which have gradually replaced the early institutions of translation (such as the Foreign Language Press) (Jiang, 2021). From the perspective of Bai (2009, 2017, 2020), this is a change in the form of patronage, which in translation studies means “the action of persons or organisations that offer financial support or use their influence to advance a translation activity” (Bai, 2009, p.222). Therefore, since the 1990s there has been an increasing number of joint patronage<sup>11</sup> projects between Chinese government-sponsored institutions and foreign institutions (Bai, 2009, 2017, 2020; Jiang, 2021). For example, from the 1990s to 2012 the China International Publishing Group<sup>12</sup> (CIPG) launched the ‘Culture and Civilization of China Series’ (中国文化与文明丛书) jointly published under the auspices of CIPG and Yale University Press. And in 2014, the ‘CPG China Library’ (中国现当代文化经典文库) was launched, a joint venture by the China Publishing Group<sup>13</sup> and leading Western publishers such as Cambridge University Press (Bai, 2020).

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<sup>11</sup> This is a term used by Liping Bai (2017, 2020), who defines it as translation projects supported by two or more patrons that offer financial support or use their influence to advance a translation activity.

<sup>12</sup> China International Publishing Group was established in 1949 which initially was called the China Foreign Languages Publishing Administration (中国外文局). The Foreign Language Press which was mentioned above is under its regulation.

<sup>13</sup> China Publishing Group is a Chinese national publishing institution, granted by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council (China Publishing Group, 2022).



From the standpoint of initiators of translation projects, there are various modes through which Chinese books can be translated and exported to the English-language world (Huang, 1991; Wang, 2020; Kung, 2009). Source-initiated translation and joint patronage translation are both initiated (or at least partly) by the Chinese government. In addition to these source-initiated projects, Huang (1991) outlines some more modes of exporting Chinese literature to the English-language world, which can be summarised as translator-initiated, author-initiated, foreign-publisher-initiated and literary-agent-initiated. The translator has been the key figure in the exportation of Chinese to English translations during periods when there was no trade market for book translations of contemporary Chinese literature (Huang, 1991). This method of introducing contemporary Chinese literature to the Anglosphere is described by Huang (1991) as “representative of amateurism at its best” (p.39). Author-initiated translation started when authors were allowed more opportunities to meet with foreigners, from the 1980s onward. Zhang Jie<sup>14</sup>, Shu Ting<sup>15</sup> and some writers from Taiwan and Hong Kong have exported their works to the Anglophone world in this way. Foreign-publisher-initiated and literary-agent-initiated are the latest modes through which Chinese literature gets translated into and published in English, and reflect the burgeoning interest of publishers in the English-speaking in contemporary Chinese literature. As Huang (1991) also notes, through the translator-initiated and author-initiated modes, some books get translated but not published, yet publishers and literary agents are those “who can get the translations into the trade book market and who make the decision as to what gets published” (p.40). Translation projects initiated by Anglophone publishers and literary agents<sup>16</sup> are still not common, as shall be discussed further in Chapter 5.

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<sup>14</sup> See: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zhang\\_Jie\\_\(writer\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zhang_Jie_(writer))

<sup>15</sup> See: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shu\\_Ting](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shu_Ting)

<sup>16</sup> Literary agents here specifically refer to western literary agents. As will be explained in Chapter 5, in the Chinese context where literary agents are not well established, Chinese rights managers can be regarded as a type of foreign rights agent specialising in dealing with foreign rights and heavily involved with export contemporary Chinese literature to Anglophone countries.

Within the current literature, a large number of studies of the Chinese context have paid attention to the governmental-level translation programmes mentioned above, especially source-initiated translation projects in the early stage (see for example, Xu, 2007; Geng, 2010; Ren and Gao, 2015) or joint patronage translation projects (see for example, Bai, 2009, 2017, 2020). Both early state-initiated translations and the joint patronage translations have played a role in promoting Chinese literature to foreign countries, including the English-speaking world. From source-initiated translation, Chinese publishers could simply publish books in translation and distribute the books through distributors in the English-speaking world, without selling translation rights to an Anglo-American publisher<sup>17</sup>. In terms of joint patronage translation, as a form of collaborative translation between patrons from both the source and target cultures (Bai, 2020), the needs and expectations of Western readers are well considered in the translation and editorial process, and distribution is often undertaken by the foreign publishers in the target culture; therefore, “the translations are more accessible to Western readers” (Bai, 2020, p.693). However, in both of these modes, trade publishers in English-language countries are not involved. Source-initiated translation projects are published by Chinese publishing houses; and in the current scholarship of ‘joint patronage’ translation projects, the foreign publishers involved are all foreign University presses. As Hung (1991) notes, in the 1980s, publishing a translation from Chinese was hardly considered by trade publishers, it was primarily the university presses which would consider it. Chinese writers began to appear in the catalogues of trade publishers such as Penguin, Faber & Faber and Morrow in the 1990s (Hung, 1991). Nowadays, in response to the ‘Cultural Going Out’ policy (as will be discussed below), Chinese publishers have been striving to enter the international publication market, and are also more and more

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<sup>17</sup> Though this mode of outward translation may be poor in terms of reception by readers in target cultures. As Jiang (2014) criticises, early sole patronage state-initiated translations are operated in “traditional modes of ‘exporting ideology’” (p.50), which is a hindrance to the dissemination of Chinese culture to the Western world. This thesis focuses on one contemporary mode of exporting book translations, which I call ‘cultural carrying’. Reception of books exported through this mode in the target culture is out of the scope of discussion, but future studies might continue to explore in this direction. For discussions on the problematic aspects of source-initiated translation projects undertaken by the FLP, see for example, Jenner, W. (1986), *Insurmountable Barriers? Some thoughts on the reception of Chinese writings in English translation*, *Renditions*, 25, pp.18-37.

engaging with trade publishers in the UK and the US. Huang (1991) described literary agents and trade publishers as newcomers to Chinese to English translation two decades ago. Although Anglophone trade publishers in general are still reluctant to publish foreign literature (Richardson, 2012), as previously mentioned, and the percentage of books translated from Chinese amongst the total number of book translations in the two main English-speaking countries – the US and the UK – has been strikingly low, Chinese publishers are actively participating in copyright selling, so the export of book translations from China abroad has been constantly increasing (as will be shown in Chapter 4). However, the way in which Chinese books are published by Anglophone trade publishers remains significantly unexplored in current academic debates (Wang, 2020). This thesis is an attempt to fill the gap. In this thesis, after a bird’s-eye view of the transnational flow of book translations from Chinese to English (in Chapter 4), in the qualitative strands of my research (Chapter 5 and Chapter 6), I will focus on examining the activities and networks of agents who are involved in facilitating the publication of contemporary literature by Anglo-American trade publishers. As will be discussed in the thesis, I conceptualise this contemporary mode of exporting Chinese literature as ‘cultural carrying’: exporting Chinese literature through selling rights to English-language trade publishers, which is initiated by China’s rights managers. Next, I will introduce China’s ‘Cultural Going Out’ (文化走出去) policy implemented in the 2010s - the contemporary environment which this new mode emerged from and was conditioned by - and discuss different strategies that have encouraged and facilitated publishers to export Chinese books into foreign countries.

### *1.3.3 From ‘cultural trade deficit’ to ‘Cultural Going Out’ – Cultural policies of outward translation*

China adopted an opening-up policy and market-oriented reforms in the late 1970s, with book translations as part of the publishing industry also becoming involved in the market opening up. As mentioned above, China became a signatory country of the Berne Convention in 1992. This signified China’s official involvement in the international book trade. Another turning point for China’s exportation of book

translations happened in the year 2002. In this year, the sixteenth National Congress of the Communist Party of China convened and formally advanced the idea of “cultural industries”, and this year also saw China’s entry into the WTO. Since then, the Chinese government has developed a series of strategies, aiming to encourage and support the exportation of cultural products, including books. However, in contrast to the favourable international economic trade balance China has achieved, there has been an enormous imbalance in cultural exchanges. Specifically, in the book copyright trade, due to the high demand for foreign literature in the national literary field, Chinese publishers have been eagerly purchasing translation rights of books in foreign languages internationally since the 1990s, while the book copyrights selling from China have been stagnant (will be further discussed in Chapter 4). In May 2005, during a high-level round-table conference, Zhao Qizheng, the chief spokesperson of the State Council first mentioned the weak status that China has in terms of cultural production in the global market. This was quickly seized upon by the media as China’s “cultural trade deficit” (Yan, 2007). Governments intervene in cultural markets through policymaking (Hesmondhalgh, 2002, p.108). In response to the cultural trade deficit, the central government of China implemented a set of new policies to promote cultural exports (Yan, 2007). In 2009, China initiated the “Going Out” policy (also referred to as the “Going Global” policy) to promote Chinese investments abroad (Shambaugh, 2013). Soon after that, the parameters of “Going Out” were extended to the cultural domain, encouraging companies within the cultural industry to promote Chinese national culture abroad. Following the “Cultural Going Out” policy, Chinese publishers have been working hard to promote national literary works to the rest of the world.

Xu and Fang (2008) outline a series of strategies that the Chinese government has launched to encourage and facilitate Chinese publishers to export book translations from China to overseas<sup>18</sup>. These national strategies create conditions for Chinese

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<sup>18</sup> As claimed by Xu and Fang (2008), alongside these national-level strategies which create conditions for Chinese publishers to ‘go global’, Chinese publishers also make some entrepreneurial efforts to exploit the global market, including setting up oversea departments and offices, establishing overseas publishing joint-ventures, and looking for strategic partners. My thesis focuses on publishers’ practices in the exportation of Chinese

publishers selling or cooperating with foreign publishers. One of the strategies is described by Xu and Fang (2008) as copyright-as-gift, referring to a programme in which the Chinese government selects books and purchases copyrights from the domestic rights owner, and then authorises foreign publishers to translate and publish them as free gifts to the publishers who publish them and to foreign readers. The programme was found to have gained less interest from the Europe and American publishers than others (Xu and Fang, 2008). For example, in 2002, the *Report Meeting of Chinese Book & Presentation Ceremony of Chinese books and Copyrights* was held during the Moscow International Book Fair and Frankfurt International Book Fair respectively. Several copyright contracts were signed between Russian and Chinese publishers in Moscow but the presentation in Frankfurt was not that successful (Xu and Fang, 2008). The reasons for the unpopularity of a copyright-as-gifts strategy can be complicated. Yet this example manifests the central role of European languages, especially English, and the peripheral role of Chinese in the world of book translations, in what Johan Heilbron (1999) calls a cultural world-system. As Heilbron (1999) points out, the more central a language is in the cultural world-system, the less books it imports from more peripheral languages.

Providing translation subsidies is another key strategy that has been deployed by the Chinese government. Through the copyright-as-gift programme, the royalties<sup>19</sup> that publishers who commission the book need to pay in the traditional way to the author can be waived, as they are paid to the author by the government. But having realised that the cost of translation is one of the biggest obstacles to foreign publishers deciding to publish Chinese books, the Chinese government decided to make a change from copyright-as-gift to translation subsidisation (Xu and Fang, 2008). The China Book International Project (CBI) was one of the key subsidy programmes. This translation subsidisation programme started in 2004 when China was the 'Market Focus' of the 24th Book Salon in France. Subsidised by the State Council Information

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books through selling translation rights, and so these entrepreneurial practices are therefore outside its scope.

<sup>19</sup> The amount of money that the author receives from the book publisher for granting the right to publish the book, is called a royalty (Max, n.d.)

Office (SCIO) of China, seventy titles from China were published by French publishers in the French Language, were exhibited, and received a warm response from French audiences – one third of the titles exhibited at the Book Salon in France were sold (China book international, n.d.). Encouraged by this success, the CBI was put in place with the approval of the SCIO and the State Administration of Press and Publication of China (SAPP<sup>20</sup>) to provide translation and marketing support to publishers entering the global market. In 2006, a working group consisting of many publishing organisations was formed for CBI to promote this programme and to invite more publishers both in China and from abroad to join in by attending international book fairs, organising visit groups to meet overseas publishers and to study similar programmes running in other countries (China Book International, n.d.). As will be shown in the empirical chapters of this thesis, in the ‘cultural carrying’ mode which I am concerned with, the subsidy provided by the Chinese government played an important role in promoting China’s books and culture to the outside world.

#### **1.4 Research questions and thesis outline**

Translation is an unequal cultural exchange that takes place in a strongly hierarchical universe, i.e., a transnational literary field (Heilbron, 1999; Casanova 2004). Starting from this observation, this thesis as a whole is an investigation of the exportation of Chinese to English book translations within the context of a transnational literary field structured by power relations between languages and nation-states. Through the case of China’s exportation of book translations to Anglo-American countries, it analyses empirical material on the functioning of the world market for book translations and the translation flow from the global periphery to the centre.

This thesis aims to explore one overarching question: how do Chinese books get

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<sup>20</sup> SAPP was reshuffled as State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television of China, SAPPRFT, in 2013, and subsequently eliminated as part of government restructuring in 2018 (China Book International, n.d.). After the restructuring, the press, publication and film sectors were now overseen directly by China’s Central Propaganda Department.

translated and published in Anglo-American countries? In order to critically explore this overarching research question, the following sub-questions are asked:

1. What are the publishing trends and priorities of book translations from China to Anglo-American countries since the founding of People's Republic of China (in 1949)?
2. Who are the key players involved in facilitating the translation and publication of Chinese books from China to Anglo-American countries?
3. What are the roles of the key players and how do they enable Chinese books travel from China to Anglo-American countries?

To answer these questions, the thesis uses a mixed-method approach. Drawing upon different primary and secondary datasets, it quantitatively assesses the transnational flow of book translations between Chinese and English over the period from 1949 to now, analysing the publication trends, books that have been translated and published from China to Anglo-American countries, and the publishers involved. And by using semi-structured interviews and observational fieldwork, alongside a case study of the publication of a translated book, it qualitatively investigates agents that are involved in facilitating cultural flows from the periphery to the centre, their practices, and the networks they constitute, which are informed by their specific positions in the transnational literary field.

The thesis consists of seven chapters. Following this introductory chapter, **Chapter 2** introduces the theoretical foundations of the thesis. To set the research lens of this study, I start with scholarly debates in the sociology of translation (Wolf and Fukari (eds), 2007; Sapiro, 2014a), exploring relevant theories, methods and gaps left by existing research, and explaining how my research is situated with respect to this body of scholarship. This chapter then explicates the theories, concepts and methods that inform the analysis throughout the thesis, including the centre-periphery model (Wallerstein, 2004, 2011; Heilbron, 1999), Bourdieu's field theoretical apparatus (1977, 1984, 1993), Latour's actor-network theory (1996, 2005), and their applications by relevant scholars (Heilbron and Sapiro, 2007; Casanova, 2004; Kung, 2009). Finally, I review the findings from empirical studies of transnational cultural

transfer, with a special focus on the flow of book translations; the agents involved in transnational cultural transfer; and book translations from Chinese to English. By engaging with these related empirical studies, I pinpoint the research gaps that my research seeks to address.

**Chapter 3** describes the methodological approach. It firstly introduces the research design, including the motivation for this research and how my research questions can be examined through mixed methods, including both qualitative and quantitative investigations. Since the analysis was developed through various processes of data collection, and the subsequent empirical chapters focus on different sub-questions and draw upon different sources of data, this chapter provides separate explanations of the data collection and analysis. Chapter 4 draws on quantitative data extracted from three main databases: the UNESCO Index Translationum, China's national copyright statistics, and the UK's national publication statistics (the British National Bibliography by British Library). The sources of data that form Chapter 5 are interviews and observations of activities of key agents involved in copyright trade between China and Anglo-American countries at two international book fairs. China's rights managers are the primary subject of study, but I also interviewed and observed other professionals in order to gain a fuller understanding of the industry and the practice of China's rights managers. Chapter 6 applies a case study approach, in which the key players that facilitated the publication of one Chinese book title in the UK, *Bronze and Sunflower* (Cao, 2015), are investigated by a mixture of my own interviews with key actors in this particular book translation, alongside some secondary analysis of key actors who I was unable to interview myself. In addition, ethical considerations of conducting such research are also discussed in this chapter. Before the conclusion to the chapter, I reflect on the methods I adopted, discussing difficulties I encountered during data collection and analysis, and my strategies to minimise the obstacles.

Chapter 4, Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 present the findings of this thesis. **Chapter 4** gives a statistical overview of the flow of Chinese to English book translations. It firstly portrays the asymmetries of China/Chinese and Anglo-American countries/English in



the international exchange of book translations and in copyright trade by using data from the UNESCO Index Translationum, reviewing the centre-periphery relationship between Chinese and English in the international book market. Based on UK national book statistics derived from the British Library, it then illustrates the general picture of the production of Chinese books in English translation in the UK, analysing the publishing trend from 1949 to 2020, and answering the question of what kind of Chinese books have been translated from China to the UK and what kind of publishers have been involved during the period under study.

Due to the fact that different sectors in the publishing field (such as trade or scholarly publishing; literature or social science) may enjoy a relative autonomy and have their specific agents, stakes and rules of functioning (Sapiro, 2008; Thompson, 2012), **Chapter 5** narrows the focus down to the exportation of Chinese contemporary literature to trade publishing in Anglo-American countries. Based on the observation that agents from the source culture (i.e., China) are proactive actors and often are initiators of the transnational transfer of contemporary literature from the periphery to the centre, this chapter focuses on one group of important exporting agents – rights managers – in the context of China. This group of actors facilitate the exportation of contemporary Chinese literature to the Anglo-American world but are often invisible for the end users of books, such as the readers and book sellers, as well as for academic researchers. Through examining their practices of engaging in the international copyright trade with English-language publishers, I conceptualise China's rights managers as 'cultural carriers'<sup>21</sup> who proactively carry their national publications to Anglophone publishers in the first place and consider their activities not as a business but as a duty of sharing Chinese culture to the world. The conceptualization of cultural carriers indicates that the professional practices of China's rights managers are constrained and shaped by their peripheral position in the transnational literary field where the transnational transfer of book translations takes place and by their national background where state power exerts significant

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<sup>21</sup> As shall be explained in Chapter 5, this is a term borrowed from Fathali M. Moghaddam (2002, 2008; Warren and Moghaddam, 2012), but I reconceptualize it in different dimensions.

influence in book translation and publishing.

Publishing Chinese-English translated contemporary literature by Anglophone trade publishers has to include a lengthy and complex process, which requires the activity of a variety of intermediary actors. Using the publication journey of *Bronze and Sunflower* – a children’s book written by Chinese contemporary writer Cao Wenxuan (2015) – from China to the UK, as a case study, **Chapter 6** examines the real-world process of bringing a Chinese book from China to Anglo-American countries. It examines the consequences of being translated into English in the context of Chinese to English book translations, for not only the book and the author, but also for other literary works written by the author and by other authors from China. Drawing upon Latour’s (1996, 2005) actor-network theory as an analytical tool, and extending the idea of “cultural carrying” introduced in Chapter 5, it dwells on the networking and cooperation of different human and non-human actors which constitute a “cultural carrying network” to complete its transnational transfer from China to the UK. By doing so, it sheds light on the different actors that are involved in this process, and the factors that come into play in facilitating the transnational transfer activity. In addition, this case study examines the implication of being translated into English, arguing that the English translation continued to play a role in the ongoing dissemination of the book as a non-human actor. This facilitated the title’s circulation into more language areas, and as English is a lingua franca, the English translation itself circulated into more foreign language book markets without translation. Moreover, being translated into English conferred symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1984) for the producers of the title (the author, the original publisher, the translator), and literary capital (Casanova, 2004) for the original national literary field (i.e., the Chinese literary field), which may facilitate the exportation of more Chinese works to the English literary field and others.

**Chapter 7** is the discussion and conclusion of the whole thesis. I recap the key findings of the empirical chapters which explore how Chinese books get translated and published in Anglo-American countries and conclude that in the movement of book translations from Chinese/China to English/Anglo-American countries, agents from

the source culture (i.e., China) are the proactive agents. Facilitating the transnational transfer of book translations through copyright exportation from China to Anglo-American countries is a 'cultural carrying' activity for these proactive agents from the source. And the practices of agents involved in this transnational literary flow, and the transfer process, are subject to the centre-periphery structure and the power dynamics within the transnational literary field. To reflect on the contribution and implication of this thesis, I engage in a dialogue with two topics: translation as an unequal exchange in the context of cultural globalisation and the role of nation-states in transnational cultural transfer. In addition, this chapter also includes a discussion of the limitations of this research and accordingly provides various suggestions for future research.

## **Chapter 2 Literature review: Book translations as transnational cultural transfer**

This chapter reviews the academic debates that I am engaging with and contributing to in the thesis, which concerns the transnational transfer of book translations<sup>22</sup> (for the consumer market) from Chinese/China to English/Anglophone countries. The book is one of the oldest forms of cultural products. The mobility of books in translation can therefore be regarded as language-bound circulation of cultural products across borders. Since texts cannot be circulated across different linguistic communities and cultures without it, translation is the material precondition for their circulation globally, marking them out from other cultural products, such as music and paintings.

To set up the foreground for discussion of this issue, the chapter will start by engaging with a young but burgeoning research paradigm which connects sociology and translation studies – the sociology of translation (see for example, Wolf and Fukari (eds), 2007; Wolf, 2010; Sapiro, 2014a; Gouanvic, 2010). I will outline the key debates involved in this body of scholarship and situate my own research within it, specifying the focus of my research, which is to understand book translation as a cultural product circulated transnationally, within asymmetrical cultural flows among nation-states and languages. This then leads to the specific theories and concepts that guide the analytical framework of this thesis: to understand how books travel out of their original country through translation, this study examines the practices of key actors and the transnational transfer process as embedded in a larger set of transnational relations, drawing upon concepts and approaches including Wallerstein's (2004, 2011) centre-periphery model of the world-system (and its application in the cultural

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<sup>22</sup> The topic that this research tackles is book translation, referring to translations published in the form of books for a consumer market, as opposed to technical translation (for example translation for industry, publicity, news and media). Yet scholars have used different definitions for technical translations. For example, Venuti (2008) classifies translations from humanistic disciplines as literary translation, and translations from scientific texts as technical translations.

domain by Heilbron, 1999), Bourdieu's (1977, 1984, 1993, 1996a) field theory (and its applications by scholars, such as Casanova, 2004), and Latour's (1987, 1996) actor-network theory. To conclude, I will critically evaluate relevant empirical research on transnational cultural transfer, the actors involved in transnational cultural transfer, and book translations from Chinese to other languages, identifying and summarising the research gaps that my study aims to fill.

## **2.1 The research lens: Sociology of translation**

Translation activity was traditionally subordinated to the discipline of linguistics or comparative literature, which viewed it as an interpretive activity (Arduini and Nergaard, 2011). In the twentieth century, especially the second half, a body of theoretical outputs contributed to the extension of its boundaries and to the development of translation studies as an interdisciplinary field of research (Khalifa, 2014). During the 1990s, there was a paradigm shift, described by Bassnett and Lefevere (1990) as the "cultural turn" in translation studies. Arguing that the study of translation processes should not merely be considered at a linguistic level, Bassnett and Lefevere (1990, p.11) state that "there is always a context in which the translation takes place, always a history from which a text emerges and into which a text is transposed". However, as Khalifa (2014) argues, the cultural turn in translation studies has been still limited to the "hermeneutics of text" (Inghilleri, 2005, p.134), and has not engaged sufficiently with the extra-textual social contexts. The need for a new paradigm which conceived translation as a matter of sociological research, rather than focusing only on the textual aspects of translation, was therefore identified in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century (Wolf, 2012; Munday, 2016).

From the 1990s, social scientists started to engage seriously with the topic of translation and, at the same time, translation scholars became aware of the value that social sciences can offer to translation studies (Heilbron and Sapiro, 2016). As Wolf (2007) argues, translation has never been performed in a vacuum. It is both an enactment and a product, which is embedded within social contexts. Against this

background, a large amount of work from different disciplines has been nurturing the conceptualization of a new research domain – the sociology of translation, which is variously called “translation sociology”, “socio-translation” or “sociology of translation studies”<sup>23</sup>.

In fact, awareness of social issues within translation activities can be traced back to early stages of translation studies as a discipline. When Holmes (1988) first proposed establishing “Translation Studies” as an independent research domain, he identified one branch within this discipline as descriptive translation studies (DTS). He argued that a function-oriented DTS, which pursues questions such as types of texts that were or were not translated and influences that exerted in the final translation, can “lead to a development of a field of translation sociology” (Holmes, 1988, p.177). As leading protagonists of the DTS, Itamar Even-Zohar’s (1990) polysystem theory and Gideon Toury’s (1995) theory of translation norms answered Holmes’ call, highlighting the need to understand translations within the socio-cultural context where they are produced, rather than existing solely at the level of the text. Even-Zohar (1990) proposes the polysystem model to observe literary production and consumption. It regards literature as a system, which is “the network of relations that can be hypothesized for a certain set of assumed observables (‘occurrences’/‘phenomena’)” (p.27). In studying the production of literary works, the polysystem theory suggests that we relate texts to the real conditions of their production (Gentzler, 2001, p.123). As Even-Zohar explains:

*“A CONSUMER may ‘consume’ a PRODUCT produced by a PRODUCER, but in order for the ‘product’ (such as ‘text’) to be generated, a common REPERTOIRE must exist, whose usability is determined by some INSTITUTIONS. A MARKET must exist where such a good can be transmitted. None of the factors enumerated can be described to function in isolation, and the kind of relations*

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<sup>23</sup> A milestone for building a sociology of translation in a systematic way was a conference entitled ‘Translation and Interpreting as a Social Practices’ hosted by the University of Graz in May 2005. For more information about the development of this (sub-)discipline, see for example, Buzelin (2013), Chesterman (2006), Wolf and Fukari (eds), 2007, and Wolf (2010).

*that may be detected run across all possible axes of the scheme.”* (Even-Zohar, 1990, p.34, original emphasis)

Developed from polysystem theory, Toury (1995) considers translation as a “norm-governed activity” and argues that any translation process “involves adjustments, and hence changes, of agreements, conventions and behavioural routines” (pp.13-14). In other words, for Toury, the choices that translators make within a particular cultural context tend to be socially motivated, governed by the norms at work in the target systems (Gouanvic, 1997, p.126).

Even-Zohar’s polysystem theory (1990) and Toury’s norm theory (1995) suggest that we understand the functioning of translations in the context in which they are produced and published, i.e., within the target cultures. This polysystem framework transcends a merely inter-textual level analysis to consider translation as a socially situated activity, which is functioning in a system, but the primary source of data for theoretical investigation of norm theory and polysystem theory focus is still the texts, and not individual and institutional agency and its historical trajectory (Alkhamis, 2012). As Wolf (2007) argues, Even-Zohar (1990) only described the existing relationship between agents and institutions without integrating them into the frameworks of polysystem theory (Wolf, 2007, p.7). In other words, during the process of translation, the importance of social agents and social reality is missing from the polysystem framework (Khalifa, 2014). In Toury’s (1995) norm theory, the role of translators and the manipulative nature of their translation practices are highlighted, yet the focus is on how norms regulate translators’ selections of texts and on translation strategies to the neglect of other agents. As Lefevere (1992) stresses, the cultural, social and literary contexts within which the source text is selected, translated, mediated and reviewed should all be seen as constitutive of the translation process. This means that norms regulate not only translators, but also other aspects of the translation process involving other social agents situated in various institutional contexts (Wolf, 2006, p.10). Building on Sager’s (1994, p.321) notion which sees the translation agent as an “intermediary position between a translator and an end user of a translation”, various research brings into focus a wide

range of social agents involved in the translation process, including translators, literary agents, publishers, and the media (see for example, Milton and Bandia (eds), 2009). Studies which see translation as a complex socially discursive activity involving various stages and agents operating within different institutional contexts have been steering translation studies towards an even more sociological orientation (Inghilleri, 2005). In addition, some paradigms, such as actor-network theory, understand agents to be not only humans, but also non-humans (as further discussed in section 3.3).

Johan Heilbron and Gisele Sapiro are two leading scholars who call for “a proper sociological analysis [that] embraces the whole set of social relations within which translations are produced and circulated” (Heilbron and Sapiro, 2007, p.94). Criticising existing studies following the paradigm of DTS, which understand target cultures as autonomous culture systems operating in and for themselves, Heilbron (1999; 2008) suggests applying a global configuration to the understanding of translation practices, arguing that target cultures are “systems embedded in a larger set of transnational relations”, which can be understood as a world system (2008, p.187). This perspective suggests that to better understand translation practices and the role of translations within languages, we have to consider the position of languages/cultures within this world system (a point I will come back to in the next section). Besides, the question of the relations between the contexts of production and reception, which DTS prompts, inspires us to investigate the role of the agents in these cultural exchange activities (Heilbron and Sapiro, 2007). Heilbron and Sapiro (2007) therefore suggest several aspects that need to be taken into account by a sociological approach to translation:

*firstly, the structure of the field of international cultural exchanges; secondly, the type of constraints – political and economic - that influences these exchanges; and thirdly, the agents of intermediation and the processes of importing and receiving in the recipient country* (Heilbron and Sapiro, 2007, p.95).



According to Wolf (2007), their contribution can be categorised as a sociology of translation as a cultural product<sup>24</sup>- one specific domain within current debates in the sociology of translation, which “emphasizes not only the agents in the production and reception of translation, but also their shaping role in the respective power relations and the relevance of the translation as a cultural product which circulates international/transnational transfer” (pp.16-17). Heilbron and Sapiro’s (2007) understanding of book translations sees translation as a cultural product within wider cultural flows, which broadens the horizon of the sociology of translation. In my assessment, though, translational agents are not only translators, the foci of scholars in the area of sociology of translation agents and translation process are limited to the role of translators and their practices, or their final translation work (i.e., the text). This area of research investigates how translation participates in the dynamics of international cultural/literary exchange (Buzelin, 2013). Thus, the flow of book translations can be regarded as part of the global cultural flow (see Heilbron, 1999), so that translations become subject to international relations in the area of cross-border cultural production. From this point of view, more participants involved in the production, circulation and reception of the translation work, such as publishers, editors, foreign rights agents, critics, can be included within the discussion, focusing on not only their role in the final texts, but also in shaping the translation flow.

In particular, my research contributes to this specific research branch which sees translation as a cultural product circulating transnationally. With the aim of explaining how a book can transcend its original country to a target country through translation, in this thesis, I will not only consider the macro-structure of the world market for book translations where Chinese to English translation flow takes place,

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<sup>24</sup> The other two categories within the research domain of sociology of translation that Wolf (2007) identifies are: sociology of the agents of translation, and sociology of the translation process. Specifically, the sociology of agents pays attention to translation activity from the point of view of institutional and individual agents who are involved in social processes; and the sociology of translation process scrutinises the social environment and constraints affecting the translation process (Wolf, 2006, 2007). Nevertheless, it needs to be noted that the division of these three branches are not as distinct as it seems. As Wolf (2007) argues, the majority of the approaches viewing translation as a social practice should be located in overlapping spaces, rather than exclusively ascribed to only one of the categories.

but also shed light on who the key actors are in the transportation of books in translation and how they interact with each other to make the transnational transfer activity possible. I argue that translators, in the context of my research, are no longer the lonely key participants in the production of translation. Rather, together with other participants, they are part of a wider network that carries cultural discourses between different national contexts (see Chapter 5 and Chapter 6), facilitating the transportation of a book from one place to another.

## **2.2 Theoretical framework**

In this part of the chapter, I will explain how the theoretical framework was formed by combining the world system of translations approach, derived from Heilbron's (1999) account of the cultural world system, with the framework of transnational literary field (Casanova, 2004) which draws upon Bourdieu's concept of capital. These two complementary lines of enquiry have been applied here in order to understand the transnational transfer of book translations from Chinese/China to English/Anglo-American countries. In addition to this, Latour's (1987, 1996) actor-network theory is also employed to help articulate how the transnational transfer process is constituted by various actors.

### *2.2.1 The world system of book translations*

Within the cultural industries, the growth of the transnational exchange of cultural goods since the 1980s has signified the effect of globalisation (Hesmondhalgh, 2002). The transnational exchange of books in translation can be understood as part of the process of globalisation in the cultural industries (Franssen, 2015b) or cultural globalisation, which refers to "the transmission or diffusion across national borders of various forms of media and arts", as opposed to economic, political, or technological globalisation (Crane, 2002, p.1).

Cultural imperialism is the best-known theory of cultural globalisation and can be traced back to the 1960s (Tomlinson, 1991). From the perspective of cultural

imperialism theorists, cultural globalisation describes the process which leads to the expanded dominance of a few Western countries in the cultural domain over other countries weaker than them (Schiller, 1978; Crane, 2002). From this vantage point, the global cultural flow is one-way; the dominant Western countries are the senders of cultural influence and non-Western or less developed countries, viewed as being on the periphery, are the receivers (Crane, 2002; Hannerz, 1997). However, in the 1990s, believing that the polarisation of centre and periphery appeared to be no longer adequate, theorists of cultural flows or networks (for example, Appadurai, 1990; Castells, 2000), argued that a new global cultural economy has emerged with a more multi-directional constellation. Nevertheless, a fruitful body of empirical studies has shown that the centre-periphery perspective which concerns the theme of inequality or dominance in the global cultural economy appears still valuable to describe the hierarchical structure of the global cultural market in various cultural domains. Its plea to pay attention to the interconnections between cultural consumption patterns at the global level and to the hierarchical structure of the world system is, as Lee (1979) argues, the virtue of using the cultural imperialism thesis to guide our understanding. In the area of contemporary art, French sociologist Quemin (2013, p.174) points out that the international art market is “highly territorialised, and controlled by a few national units”, and the art market is structured as “a dual geographical nucleus,” with USA as the centre, a few European countries as the semi-periphery as well as other countries as the periphery. Similar findings have been applied in other cultural domains including the international literary world (Casanova, 2004); the global film market (Moretti, 2001; Crane, 2014); the global circulation of contemporary visual art (Buchholz and Wuggenig, 2005; Buchholz, 2018); and global music production (Brandellero and Pfeffer, 2011).

In the area of the international market for translated books, scholars who examine the global flow of book translations have begun to discuss and demonstrate the existing inequalities and the global dominance of English that has persisted in this area since the 1990s (Venuti, 1995; Heilbron, 1999). In world-system theory, Wallerstein (2004; 2011) uses a centre-periphery model to describe the domination of certain countries within the economic world system. De Swaan (1993; 2013)

argues that the constellation of languages is an integral part of the world system. Drawing upon Wallerstein and De Swaan, Heilbron (1999) applies a world-system perspective in studying the global market for book translations and its dynamics, arguing that the relations and flows of book translations between nation-states and languages share similar characteristics with that of an economic, political or language system on a global level. Drawing on statistics from the *Index Translationum* database, Heilbron (1999; Heilbron and Sapiro, 2007) shows that English occupies the hyper-central position in the global system of translations as half the books translated worldwide are translations from English, followed by French and German as central languages, each with a share between 10% and 12% of the world market of translations; several languages (for example, Spanish and Italian) with a share between 1% to 3% are semi-peripheral or semi-central languages. And all the other languages account for less than 1% each, these languages are considered as peripheral. For Heilbron (1999), international flows of book translations constitute a world system with a centre-periphery structure, in which translations flow from central languages to peripheral ones. He suggests that we approach translation as an unequal exchange that takes place in a strong hierarchical universe characterised by the power relations among national states, their languages and their literature (Heilbron and Sapiro, 2007), rather than as a peaceful linguistic transfer. Johan Heilbron's (2009) understanding of the international book translation market as a cultural world-system is the core notion of his sociology of translation. This approach suggests us to study the circulation of book translations by taking into account the relative positions of source and target culture/language in the cultural world-system. In terms of the transnational transfer of book translations from the periphery to the centre, it provides a perspective to reflect on the likelihood of a book written in peripheral languages being translated into English on the basis of "the relative peripherality of the source language as seen against the hyper-central English language" (Giles, 2018a, p.38).

According to Heilbron (1999, p.432), the share of a language/language group in the total number of publications of book translations worldwide is not simply the reflection of general inequalities of the world economy. Rather, the position of a

language/language group is linked with the particular history and principles of hierarchy that are specific to the field of book translations (Buchholz, 2016). This configuration therefore can be conceived as a relatively autonomous sphere of cultural exchange. In this regard, Casanova's (2007) model of "the world republic of letters" also places translation within the universe of international exchange and helps us to understand the circulation of books through translation. Her model is firmly rooted with Bourdieu's (1980, 1984, 1999) theoretical tools and is an example of the extension of field theory at a global scale. In what follows, I will explore how Casanova's model of the "world republic of letters" can be a useful supplement to Heilbron's model of the cultural world-system in studying the transnational transfer of book translations. But I will first review Bourdieu's field theory and its application in relevant studies.

## *2.2.2 The transnational field of book translations*

### **2.2.2.1 Bourdieu's field theory**

Bourdieu's field approach is his main contribution to the understanding of the publishing world and the global circulation of books in translation. In Bourdieu's sense, the social world is comprised of different fields. A field is defined as "a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.97). In highly differentiated societies, "a number of such relatively autonomous social microcosms" can exist (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.97); for example, an art field and an education field. 'Capital' is one of the key concepts within Bourdieu's field apparatus. In Bourdieu's sense, the structure of each field is determined by the relations between the positions that agents occupy in the field. And the position of agents depends on their possession of different species of power, i.e., capital. There might be multiple forms of capital or whatever the particular field in question may valorize (Bourdieu, 1986). Bourdieu identifies three fundamental guises that capital can present as: economic capital, cultural capital and social capital. Economic capital can be presented and observed through the material goods and property rights that one owns. Cultural capital can be embodied (i.e., in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body), or objectified in the form of cultural

goods, or institutionalised in the form of, for example, education qualifications (Bourdieu, 1986, p.17). Social capital is the aggregate of resources derived from a durable network and membership within a group (Bourdieu, 1986, p.21). Symbolic capital is also a form of capital which is central to the work of Bourdieu, and should be seen as the legitimated, recognised form of the other capitals (Lawler, 2011), as Bourdieu defines it as “the form that the various species of capital assume when they are perceived and recognised as legitimate” (Bourdieu, 1989, p.17). Within any given field, at any given time, none of the agents involved have equal capital. It is the overall volume of capital that agents possess and the relative weight of the different species of capital in the total volume of their assets that determine the positions of power within a field (Bourdieu, 1989, p.17). Social agents therefore struggle over resources or capital and compete for their positions within a field. As Bourdieu wrote, “it is in fact impossible to account for the structure and functioning of the social world unless one reintroduces capital in all its forms and not solely in the one form recognised by economic theory” (Bourdieu, 1986, p.242).

Another key concept of Bourdieu is habitus, which has been particularly influential within the domain of the sociology of translation. This concept has been proven as a tool to account for the actions of translators, and how their “behaviour can be regulated and shared without being the product of conformity to be codified, recognised rules or other causal mechanisms” (Inghilleri, 2005, pp.134–135). Habitus as defined by Bourdieu (1977) is “a system of durable, transposable dispositions” (p.72) of “internalised structures, common schemes of perception, conception and action” (p.86) that “generates meaningful practices and meaning-giving perceptions” (Bourdieu, 1984, p.170). Habitus can be both durable and transposable, as it structures the practices of agents and can be with them throughout their entire lives, but at the same time, habitus can transpose across time and be formed and acted out in more than one field (Khalifa, 2014). Moreover, as Garnham and Williams (1980) point out, although habitus is internalised and operationalized by individuals, it does not “regulate solitary acts” (p.213). As a “unified phenomenon”, habitus regulates “the practice of a set of individuals in common response to those conditions” (Garnham and Williams, 1980, p.213).

Bourdieu's field apparatus constructs his understanding of social practices. According to Bourdieu (1977), practice should be understood within a particular social space, i.e., the field. The field constructs the practice of agents and, in return, the practice of agents reconstructs the field. Bourdieu (1984, p.101) uses a formula to explain the notion of practice: [(habitus)(capital)]+field=practice]. This signifies that the practice of agents is shaped and exercised in a specific field of play and is affected by the constructed habitus and the quantity of capital that has been accumulated. The logic of practice can be flexible, as Garnham and Williams (1980, p.213) argue, "so that it can be applied as the structuring principle of practice across a wide range of situations". Throughout my thesis, the notion of field, and relevant concepts such as capital and habitus, are used in interpreting the translation flow between Chinese and English, and the practices of specific agents involved in the publication journey from China to the English-speaking world.

Sociological investigations relating to the publishing world have engaged Bourdieu's field theory to guide their analysis. John Thompson (2012), in his book *The Merchants of Culture*, analyses the transformation of trade publishing in the US and the UK since the 1960s. Using Bourdieu's field theory, he explores the functioning of the world of trade publishing in the US and the UK, deftly illustrating the practices of various publishing practitioners, such as literary agents and booksellers, and providing an account of how their practices are shaped by the publishing field which has its distinctive structure and dynamic. Thompson (2012) suggests that Bourdieu's field theory provides a helpful tool to understand the world of publishing as a plurality of fields in relational terms, and to interpret the power of any individual agents or organisations involved in the publishing process depending on the resources or capitals they possess. Thompson (2012) proposes five kinds of capitals that are particularly important for publishing houses in publishing fields, which are: economic capital (the accumulated financial resources), human capital (the staff working in the publishing house and their accumulated knowledge, skills and expertise), social capital (the networks of contacts and relationships that have been built up over time), intellectual capital (intellectual property that publishers own or control), and symbolic capital (the accumulated prestige, recognition and respect). Paying

attention to the growing prominence of literary awards and prizes in cultural production, English (2005) presents the practices of awarding as embedded in “a whole system of symbolic give and take, of coercion and negotiation, competition and alliance, mutual disdain and mutual esteem” (English, 2005, p.26). By using Bourdieu’s approach and his concept of capital in particular, English (2005) understands capital as “anything that registers as an asset, and can be put profitably to work, in one or another domain of human endeavour” (English, 2005, p.9), and concludes that literary prizes are the “most effective institutional agents of *capital intraconversion*”, which negotiate “transactions between cultural and economic, cultural and social, or cultural and political capital” (English, 2005, p.10, original emphasis). Another Bourdieu-inspired study which relates to book publishing is Clayton Childress’s (2017) investigation of the lifecycle of a novel. Childress proposes that the lifecycle of a novel is processed within three fields – creation, production and reception. The field of creation encompasses the actual task of writing by authors, the various people who may affect their writing such as friends, family members, economic and social factors related to the place where the writing takes place, and the actions of the people (such as literary agents) who bring the books to the field of production. The field of production involves the acquisition of books (by publishers in most cases), their actual production (including typesetting, cover designing, printing) and distribution, which brings the books into the field of reception. The field of reception occurs where readers, including booksellers and reviewers, give meaning to the books. These three fields of material culture are considered to be separate but interdependent, because each field involves “different orientations, issues at stake, hierarchies of values, and returns on symbolic investment” (Childress, 2017, p.9). Childress (2017) emphasizes the field-spanning role these transitional actors play mediating between each field and facilitating the travelling of a book over the course of its lifecycle. For example, literary agents and acquisition editors link the fields of creation and production, and distributors and booksellers link the fields of production and reception.

It can be argued that Bourdieu’s theoretical apparatus in general can be used to examine the practice of individual and/or organisational agents within the field at



play. As shall be shown, field analysis has been extended by scholars into a wide range of areas to a global level. For understanding the world market for books in translation, Gisele Sapiro's (2015) notion of a transnational literary field and Pascale Casanova's (2004) notion of a world republic of letters, in particular, illustrate the potential for adding field analysis into a centre-periphery model, in order to understand the relations between languages, nation-states, and their literatures, as well as the role of translation, depending on their respective positions in the cultural world-system (Heilbron, 1999) or transnational literary field (Sapiro, 2015; Casanova, 2004).

#### **2.2.2.2 The application of field theory at a global scale - transnational literary field**

Although Bourdieu showed an interest in the international circulation of ideas (Bourdieu, 1999) and briefly touched on the topic of globalisation in the book *On Television* (Bourdieu, 1996b), his discussions are limited to the national level, primarily the French field in the nineteenth century. However, given the fact that fields in Bourdieu's sense are not predetermined, given or static (Go and Krause, 2016), others inspired by Bourdieu have shown the full potential of the notion of field when applied to a transnational setting. For example, recently, Julia Go and Monika Krause (2016), among others, have called for a project of 'fielding transnationalism'. Various scholars have joined in, and the growing body of work building upon and expanding Bourdieu's field theory suggests that it provides useful tools for analysing transnational processes and relations. Empirically, this attempt has been applied in a wide range of cases, such as world literature (Casanova, 2004); television (Kuipers, 2011); Journalism (Christin, 2016); the global field of contemporary visual art (Buchholz, 2018); the global profession of economics (Fourcade, 2006); empires (Go, 2008), and transnational production of social sciences (Krause, 2016).

Applying Bourdieu's theory at a global scale, Casanova (2004) creates an approach relevant for studying the literary field in her acclaimed book *The World Republic of Letters*, which has had an impact on a wide range of research domains, from world literature studies to translation studies, sociology, literary history, and even spread to non-academic intellectual circles (Sapiro and Ungureanu, 2020). Casanova (2004)

believes that there is a literature-world, or a “world republic of letters”; that is “a literary universe relatively independent of the everyday world and its political divisions, whose boundaries and operational laws are not reducible to those of original political space” (p. xii). Sapiro (2020) uses the concept of transnational literary field to designate this “world republic of letters”. The structure of this transnational literary field depends on the volume of literary capital that each national literary space possesses, due to the fact that some languages are historically endowed with more “literariness” – referring to the literary credit that attaches to a language - than other languages (p.135). But literary capital is independent of linguistic capital. As Casanova (2010) explains:

*“This capital depends on prestige, on the literary beliefs attached to a language, and on the literary value which is attributed to it. These factors in turn depend on the age of a language, the prestige of its poetry, the refinement of literary forms developed in it, traditions, the literary ‘effects’ associated, for example, with translations, and their volumes, etc.”* (Casanova, 2010, p.289)

Therefore, literary capital is used to account for power relations within the international literary field, which is characterised by the opposition between national literary spaces endowed with more national literary capital with those endowed with less (Casanova, 2004).

Based on the notion of literary capital and its unequal distribution among languages and national literatures, Casanova (2002, 2010) provides a useful framework to understand the role of translation, which varies for different national literary spaces. In outlining the implication of the cultural world-system, Johan (1999, 2000) suggests that the analysis of the cultural world-system serves as the precondition for understanding the role of translation in specific local or national contexts, as the degree of significance of translation for a language/language group “depends primarily on its position within the international system of book translations” (Heilbron, 2000, p.12). Under the framework of world republic of letters, in which dominant literary spaces and dominated literary spaces compete for literary capital,

Casanova (2004) gives an elaborated explanation of the role of translation for different languages and their national literary spaces, taking into account both the directions of translation flows and their positions in the international literary system. Casanova (2004) sees translation as the major prize and weapon in international literary competitions. She reminds us that to understand the function of translation, we have to acknowledge “the literary inequality of languages”, and accordingly “the inequality faced by participants in the world literary game” (Casanova, 2004, p.133), as the function of translation differs depending on the direction of translation flows and on the relations between what are commonly called “source” and “target” languages (p.133). According to Casanova (2004, p.135), in the movement of translation from dominant to dominated language (for example, the translation from Chinese into English), this translation practice is “a means of annexation, of diverting peripheral works and adding them to the stock of central resources” from the viewpoint of the dominated language communities. While from the point of view of the dominant language groups, it means “acceding to the status of literature, to obtaining a certificate of literary”, i.e., this form of translation is an act of consecration (Casanova, 2004, p. 135). In other words, for Casanova, being translated into central languages is an instrument for peripheral languages or their literature to gain literary capital, which is a specific symbolic capital in the literary field. However, in the context of Casanova’s (2004) argument, translation equals the publication of translation, so her narratives seem to neglect the role of publishers (and specialized agents working for/with them, such as editors, literary agents and rights managers) in ‘consecrating’ a title from the periphery. In practice, this ‘consecration’ is completed when a foreign language edition is released by publishers, therefore, to better understand translation as an act of consecration, it is essential to explore the role of publishers and other actors who facilitate the publication of translated works.

Consecration can be seen as the most definitive form of valorization (Corse and Griffin, 1997; Lamont, 1987; cited by Allen and Parsons, 2006). It involves the use of aesthetic judgement to assign cultural value to cultural producers and products (Allen and Lincoln, 2004). As Bourdieu (1993) points out, consecration is important within the field of cultural production, as it imposes symbolic distinctions between those

individuals and cultural objects deemed worthy of respect within a field of cultural production and those that are not (Allen and Lincoln, 2004; Allen and Parsons, 2006). Translation as an act of consecration means that being translated into dominating fields grants authors and their works from dominated fields “a certificate of literary standing” (Casanova, 2007, p.135). In the case of the translation and production of Chinese books in the UK (which will be examined in Chapter 6), being translated into English not only enables a Chinese book to be received by a larger readership in foreign cultures (English and also other cultures through subsequent translation), but also establishes the legitimacy of a Chinese book and its author in the English-language field, thus illustrating Casanova’s notion that translation is an act of consecration for peripheral players in the “world republic of letters” in translation flow from the periphery to the centre<sup>25</sup>. This thesis (especially Chapters 5 and 6) therefore is an attempt to investigate the mechanisms of this cultural consecration process, examining the role of different agents involved and how they attempt to exert their power to influence this process.

Casanova’s (2004) model also allows us to examine the practices of different levels of actors within the transnational literary field. As Go and Krause (2016) point out, the actors in Bourdieu’s (1977, 1984, 1990, 1992, 2004) standard analyses of fields are individuals, which means that Bourdieu’s usage of field theory focused on the inequality between individuals depending on the volume of resources or capitals each of them possesses. To avoid the risk of “methodological nationalism” (Wimmer and Schiller, 2002; Beck, 2007), Buchholz (2018) revises Casanova’s notion of “national capital” into “macro-capital”, referring to “countries, cities or regions, contingent on the case” (2018, p.21). Due to the existence of macro-capital, it can be argued that the individual and organisational agents that work within the dominant languages/nation-states are endowed with more literary capital than others (McMartin, 2019a).

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<sup>25</sup> Here, I have noted that Casanova (2004) uses the dominating-dominated opposition rather than centre-periphery.

Though Casanova (2004) does not use the narrative of centre and periphery, as Heilbron (1999) does, she highlights the theme of inequality and power struggle by using the dominating and dominated opposition. Casanova's (2004) model of the world republic of letters can be added to the analysis of the cultural world-system (Johan, 1999) by using Bourdieu's (1986) idea of capital to understand the power struggles between nation-states and languages and their literatures. As Sapiro (2015) claims, the centre-periphery opposition (as well as the semi-central and semi-peripheral positions) is a powerful descriptive model for spatial relations. The dominant-dominated opposition, which is grounded on the unequal distribution of capital (Bourdieu, 1984), provides an explanatory framework for the phenomenon of centrality in the centre-periphery structure. For example, when analysing the publication of French literature in the US, Sapiro (2015) argues that the symbolic capital that is accumulated by Gallimard, a French publisher, can be used to explain its centrality in literary exchanges with North American publishers.

By adding field analysis to the centre-periphery model, this thesis understands the activities of exporting Chinese literature into the English literary field as inscribed in an international space of rivalry, struggle and inequality between languages, cultures, and nation-states. From this perspective, translation becomes a mode of accumulating symbolic capital for different agents at the individual and collective levels (languages, nation-states, individual and organisational agents, and books) to pursue in the transnational literary field (see more in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6).

### *2.2.3 The transnational circulation process of a book – the supplementary role of actor-network theory*

The centre-periphery model enables me to understand the structure of languages and countries in today's world market for book translations, and combined with field theory - Casanova's (2004) application in the world literary field - the activities of translating and circulating Chinese literature into the English literary field can be understood as inscribed in an international space. As mentioned, using Bourdieu's (1977; 1990) concepts of field, capital, and habitus in the cultural world-system

perspective can be beneficial to understanding the role of translation for different levels of agents (nation-states, publishers and individuals), and the motivations and practices of individual human agents can therefore be examined and interpreted (see Chapter 5). However, Bourdieu's theory can only be used to interpret actions of human actors, as it neglects the impact of non-human actors and "lacks the clear link required to connect people together and it does not have the strength to examine an agency consisting of multiple different kinds of actor" (Kung, 2009, p.126). The publication of just one book originally written in a foreign language requires the involvement of various actors. To interpret the complex process and the interactions between various actors, another analytical approach is needed to complement Bourdieu's theoretical apparatus.

Actor-network theory (ANT) proposed by Bruno Latour (1987, 2005), Michel Callon (1986), and John Law (1992), can be a useful tool to interpret the functioning of the transnational transfer of book translations. Latour calls actors actants; something that acts or to which activity is granted by others; and defines a network as their relationships with one another (Latour, 1996, p.373). As Latour suggests, 'network' is "more flexible than the notion of system, more historical than that of structure, more empirical than that of complexity" (Latour, 1993, p.3). From the perspective of Latour, both human and non-human actors are active participants for actions. This means ANT has the potential to discover hidden, or bring unexpected, actors into view. According to Buzelin (2005), the main difference between Bourdieu and Latour is that Bourdieu's way of understanding society is through agents' practices and relating their practices to their positions in the fields. Whereas, for Latour, society can only be understood through interpreting "the way humans and non-human actors interact" (p.194). This makes ANT an approach which can draw things together without centering them (Law, 2002, p.2). All actors are considered equally as forming a network without spotlighting one specific actor.

As Latour (1996, p.378) explains, "ANT is not about traced networks, but about a network-tracing activity", which means it does not aim to construct or describe a so called pre-existed network, as "no net exists independently of the very act of tracing

it, and no tracing is done by an actor exterior to the net. A network is not a thing, but the recorded movement of a thing” (Latour, 1996, p.378). Therefore, as Alkhawaja (2014, p.58) argues, ANT is to understand the existing models in the real world represented in the form of relations between human and objects. As Brown and Capdevila (1999) argue, networks emerge out of “a plane of pure action” (p.35). By pure action, it means that action is primitive, which precedes anything else, such as meaning, significance, thought, ordering, or organisation (Cooper and Law, 1995, p.241). ANT might therefore serve as an applicable tool for interpreting the assemblages of all manner of products, including a book in translation (Kythor, 2019). It helps to find connections between elements and actors, and identify a range of factors that facilitate its mobility from one place to another, without centring on one single factor or the impact of one particular actor.

The potential of ANT in studying translation practice was first put forward by Buzelin (2005), who points out that as a tool it enables us to acquire:

*“data on the multiple mediators potentially involved in the translation process, including the way they make or explain their decision (when they are still unsure about the outcome of this process), and the strategies by which they negotiate their place in the process, convince others to participate, etc.” (Buzelin, 2005, p.215)*

As argued by Gonne (2018), Buzelin’s (2005, 2006) application of ANT is the starting point which encourages and inspires scholars in the domain of translation, and can be extended to the analysis of cultural transfer. To date, there has not been much research using ANT to study the transnational transfer of book translations. Gonne’s (2018) work which uses ANT to explore the micro-networks around an intra-national transfer activity, Kung Szu-Wen (2009, 2021) and Wang Baorong’s (2014a, 2014b) works which adopt ANT to examine actors and networks in relation to literary translation production, are rare exceptions in this area of discussion. Using ANT, Gonne (2018) traces actors that are involved in an intra-national and peripheral transfer activity in Belgium. Expanding the idea that ANT serves as an innovative tool to study translation activity raised by Buzelin (2005), Gonne (2008) suggests that it is

well-suited to understanding a set of interconnected discursive mediating activities, such as self-translation, adaptation, and rewriting. Kung (2009, 2021) and Wang (2014a, 2014b) both combine ANT with Bourdieu's (1984) concepts of capital, focusing on the translation of Chinese/Taiwanese literature and its circulation. Kung (2009, p.126) enlists Bourdieu's concept of capital to interpret agents' social power in the field and applies ANT to examine an "agency consisting of multiple different kinds of actor", investigating the role of social agents and networks in exporting Taiwanese novels into a dominant culture, the US. She describes a 'subvention network' - a network with the involvement of a subsidy organisation - which, incorporated by individuals' social power, can increase the possibility of translating from a lesser-known culture. Similarly, Wang's (2014a, 2014b) works study the translation and circulation of Chinese writer Mo Yan's novels in the US, exploring its production and reception network. As Kung (2009) concludes, ANT is a tool that can be used to complement Bourdieu's theory when examining the production process of translation involving multiple agents (such as the translator, the editorial board members, the publishers, and the sponsoring organisation).

The exportation of Chinese books in translation is a cooperative, interrelated, and negotiated process in which various actors come together to constitute a network that leads to the final production in the English literary field. Using ANT (Latour, 1987, 1996) can be beneficial when interpreting the publication journey of a specific book, identifying actors (who are often invisible and less discussed) involved in carrying this book from China to the UK, and the factors that exert influences during the cultural transfer process (as shown in Chapter 6).

My thesis follows Heilbron and Sapiro's (2007) sociology of translation which studies the production and circulation of book translations from their specific position within the world-system of translation (Heilbron, 1999), and studies the practices of book publishing within a transnational literary field (Casanova, 2004, Sapiro, 2020), where national or transnational actors at different levels come together. Actors in the transnational literary field can be languages, nation-states, individuals (such as translators, literary agents, writers) and organisational actors (such as publishers), and individual books. It draws mainly upon Bourdieu's field theory (1977, 1984,



1996a), and its application to the international literary space by Casanova (2004), as well as the model of the world system of translation proposed by (Heilbron, 1999). In addition, in order to elucidate the processes of the transnational transferring of book translations and to trace connections and relations between actors, it also employs ANT (Latour, 1987, 1996) as a theoretical tool to supplement Bourdieu's theory. Such a theoretical framework is an attempt to take up Heilbron (1999) and Sapiro's (Heilbron and Sapiro, 2007) invitation for a more complete sociological analysis of book translations, which seeks to connect "the dynamics of the international translation system with the actual working of the book market and its various segments" (Heilbron, 1999, p. 438). Translation is not simply a practice which can be studied on a micro-level (as traditional approaches of translation studies would do), it is important to understand the production and circulation of book translations as part of the translation flow between nation-states and languages. Starting with Heilbron's (1999) cultural world-system perspective, it explores the translation flows of the nation states or languages on the macro-level, highlighting the positions of Chinese/China and English/Anglo-American countries within the transnational relations. And drawing upon insights and findings from this, Bourdieu's field theory and relevant concepts allows me to step further to investigate the practices of key players. Nevertheless, in order to interpret the complex process and the interactions between various actors, ANT is therefore applied to complement Bourdieu's theoretical apparatus.

In the next section, I will review the empirical research related to my thesis and identify the research gaps that my research could fill in.

## **2.3 Related empirical research and research gaps**

### *2.3.1 Literary exchange between centres and peripheries*

The global flow of book translations is principally from the centre to the periphery, or specifically, is dominated by books that are translated from English (Venuti, 1995; Heilbron, 1999). A large body of sociological studies on literary transfer have focused

on mapping the literary centres and/or large media conglomerates in these centres, as well as the process of importing books in translation from the centres to other places. For example, Sapiro's (2015) study of the literary exchanges between Paris and New York in the era of globalisation, and her historical study focusing on the position of French in the world translation market (Sapiro, 2010a), depicts the shifting balance of power from Paris, a historic capital of the "World Republic of Letters" (Casanova, 2014), to New York, the new centre of cultural production. Jean Marc Gouanvic (1997) studies the importation of science fiction as a genre from the US to France during the 1950s, showing that the massive translation of American science fiction takes place together with the importation of institutional structures (such as specialized magazines and book series), and the naturalisation of the American subcultural model.

Johan Heilbron (1999; van Es and Heilbron, 2015) and Gisele Sapiro (2016a; 2016b) were first to apply the centre-periphery model to the international market of book translations and to put forward the question of translation flows from the periphery to the centre. Drawing upon the centre-periphery model (Wallerstein, 2004, 2011; Heilbron, 1999) and field analysis in Bourdieu's (1983, 1984, 1990) sense, Van Es and Heilbron (2015) explore how Dutch authors are translated into English. They propose that authors from the periphery are confronted with boundaries at different levels when entering the central literary field. The macro level boundary is the result of "the centre-periphery structure of the global translation system and the balance of power between the language groups and countries that form this system". The meso level boundary concerns the "national publishing fields and the strategies different publishing houses use to acquire translation and publishing rights", and micro level boundary concerns "the role of the various actors who are effectively involved in the selection (publishers, editors), translation (translators) and framing (publishers, literary critics) of particular books" (van Es and Heilbron, 2015, p.298). Other scholars also pay attention to the issue of inequality with regard to the translation flow. Through studying the unequal exchanges of book translations between French and Arabic, Jacquemond (1992, 2009) indicates the cultural hegemony that existed in the translation flow between the Global North and the South. By comparing the literary

translation between France and Egypt, Jacquemond (1992) argues that a dominated culture translates more from a hegemonic culture, and these translated works can be received by a mass readership, but not vice versa. Gonsalves (2015) examines the practice of publishers of English language fiction in India at the Frankfurter Buchmesse (Frankfurt Book Fair (FBF)), exploring how these Indian publishers negotiate their position at the book fair and make their way to gain global establishment. She argues that as newcomers or outsiders, Indian publishers negotiate their position at the FBF through a strategy of friendliness in various ways. This strategy used by Indian publishers provides “a counterpoint to the Bourdieusian envisioning of the engagement between the establishment and newcomers” as one of discontinuity and rupture (Gonsalves, 2015, p.441). The study of Amanda Brandellero and Velthuis (2018) examines the ways in which artists from relatively peripheral or emerging regions get integrated into the global field, comparing the way which artists from relatively peripheral or emerging regions are reviewed at home (by Brazilian elite newspapers) and in more central countries (by English and American elite newspapers). The study finds that recognition endowed within the Brazilian art field (recognition by Brazilian institutions or associations of Brazilian artists) does not easily convert to an internationally valued marker of worth. On the contrary, in the UK and the US press, international references to recognition prevail in American and British critical reviews. Such findings, as Brandellero and Velthuis (2018) themselves argue, echo Rawlings’ (2001) study on African contemporary art in New York, and highlight potential bias among gatekeepers from more central art world, who might “afford prestige to artists who more easily fit within a Western cannon”, and “reproduce Western aesthetics in their selections” (Brandellero and Velthuis, 2018, p. 67).

In summary, in my inquiry into the international circulation of books, some research has focused on the flows between particular languages and countries. However, the direction of movement from the periphery to the centre has gained comparatively less attention by comparison. My thesis, which focuses on books translated from Chinese to English and published in Anglo-American countries, exemplifies this counterflow – the way books from Chinese (regarded as a peripheral language in the

global book translation system) enter the English-speaking world. It aims to provide rich empirical data about the exportation of book translations from the angle of China, and aims to fill this gap in current scholarship.

### *2.3.2 Agents working in transnational cultural transfer activities*

With the increasing transnational exchanges between countries, regions, and their cultures in recent years, the role of cultural mediators involved in transnational settings has been brought to the fore of discussions regarding literary or cultural transfer (Roig-Sanz and Meylaertz, 2018). Empirical research has provided detailed accounts of agents, including individuals and institutions that work within national or transnational cultural fields, such as TV (Bielby and Bielby, 1994; Kuipers, 2012; Steemers, 2004) and film (Kokas, 2017; Baker and Faulkner, 1991; Jenkins, 2012). For example, Kuipers (2012) examines the professional practices of television buyers from four European countries, arguing that they are transnational cultural intermediaries, or even a “cosmopolitan tribe” characterised by distinct forms of “cosmopolitan capital”. In the Introduction to the book *Literary Translation and Cultural Mediators in Peripheral Culture* (Roig-Sanz and Meylaerts (eds), 2018) - a collected work which focuses on actors in peripheral cultures - Roig-Sanz and Meylaertz (2018) define the cultural mediator<sup>26</sup> as “a cultural actor actively across linguistic, cultural and geographical borders, occupying strategic positions within larger networks and being the carrier of cultural transfer” (p.3). This book takes into account the direction of cultural flow when examining the role of cultural mediators and focuses on cultural mediators in peripheral culture; that is, in cultural flows between peripheral cultures or between the periphery and the centre. For example, Chen Yehua’s (2018) chapter reveals a transfer route from the periphery to the periphery, by studying the case of *Xiaoshuo Yuebao* (*The Short Story Magazine*) in introducing literary works from (semi-)peripheral languages in China during its reform period. It examines how, in the 1920s, when this most influential journal came to translating literature from small countries, it established a translation pattern and

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<sup>26</sup> The term was first introduced by Taft (1981), who defined it as a “person who facilitates communication, understanding, and actions between persons or groups who differ with respect to language and culture” (p.53).

acted as an important cultural mediator of small literature. Authors from the periphery can hardly be translated by the centre, while in the case of *Xiaoshuo Yuebao*, the peripheral position of authors from small countries, facilitates the succeeding transfer to China, as importing literature from small countries is mobilised as a strategy against prevailing norms of translating mainstream western literature. Lelanie De Roubaix (2018) explores blurred boundaries as being a cultural mediator through the case of Andre Brink, a writer, translator, self-translator, academic, literary critic and political activist in South Africa. Her chapter examines Brink's role as a cultural mediator in South Africa, taking into account "the complexities of identity, culture and language", and his feeling of "social responsibility towards a culture, a country and the world" (p. 311). However, this collected work edited by Roig-Sanz and Meylaertz (2018) focuses on the cultural mediators in the periphery and cultural mediators in the periphery who work in the direction of flow from the periphery to the centre remain unexplored.

This brings to light another gap within the body of scholarship concerning the circulation of books through translation. That is, most studies focusing on the agents of translation are within a "translation-as-import paradigm", to borrow Jamoussi's (2015) phrase, referring to a paradigm which regards translation as an act of import of text aiming to "enrich one's domestic corpus bears directly on the acquisition means of these texts" (Jamoussi, 2015, p.174). This means that the attention of these works under a translation-as-import paradigm is on the role of importing agents, and their act of importing literature from certain languages, nation-states, or authors. For example, in the book publishing field, Franssen (2015a) discusses acquisition editors who buy translation rights of English books into Dutch. Pei Meng's (2010) doctoral thesis studies the translation process (encompassing the selection process and actual translation process) of Chinese autobiographical writings into the British world. As Jamoussi (2015) argues, translating literature is principally and typically regarded as an act from an importing point of view. However, the import paradigm as a medium of circulation of cultural products permeates the world of translation, but "it may coexist with a reverse export paradigm" (Sapiro, 2008, p.163). According to Heilbron (1999), the role of translation depends on the position of languages in the

international system of book translations. For agents (including nation-states, publishers, and individual actors such as literary agents, writers and translators) in the periphery, exporting translation is therefore a strategy to counter the uneven flow of book translations, in order to gain recognition and receive a larger readership in foreign languages and cultures. The gradual liberalisation and unification of the international market for symbolic goods after the Second World War has caused the rise of multinational conglomerates. As a result, it has been argued that the political constraint upon international cultural exchanges has weakened compared to economic constraints (Heilbron and Sapiro, 2007; Sapiro, 2014b). As Heilbron and Sapiro (2007) argue, this shift of power from political to more economic constraints has resulted the weakening on the supply-side and the strengthening on the demand-side of book translations, which means that the predominant role of exporting agents (such as official state organisations, state representatives, and translations institutes) is replaced by importing agents who receive foreign cultural products into the local market, such as publishers and literary agents. This explains why exporting agents such as the literary agents and rights managers I am concerned with in this thesis have been overlooked by researchers. However, though the role of the nation-state has declined, it still remains an active agent in the world market of book translation, especially for nation-states which belong to the periphery in the cultural world-system (Heilbron, 1999) and the world republic of letters (Casanova, 2004), as in the case of China shown from this thesis. Therefore, studying translations under the export paradigm enables us to pay attention to those exporting agents who are important but often neglected in the discussion of the transnational circulation of book translations.

One of the exceptions that considers the exporting agent in the periphery is Ellen Kythor (2019) whose doctoral thesis studies the translation and publication of Danish books in the UK. It argues that the activity of translating and publishing Danish books in the UK is a 'un-business-like business', as it is all about people (their agency) and their relationships. Her thesis provides an in-depth examination of the agents facilitating the entry of books from Danish to the UK, presenting each part of the trajectory of publishing Danish books in the UK and illustrating the key actors involved

in this business, including author, translator, literary agent, editor, funding decision-maker, and bookseller. Jack McMartin's (2019a) doctoral thesis examines agents involved in facilitating books from Flanders to abroad and scrutinises the lifecycle of a translated book from a perspective that can be regarded as an export paradigm. He explores the role of two governmental organisations in the exportation of literature out of Dutch, referring them as "double agents", namely "cultural diplomats working on behalf of a national government who act both as patrimony-minded facilitators of translation and market-minded matchmakers" (McMartin, 2019a, p.21). One of the distinctions between McMartin's thesis and my own is that he explores how books from Flanders travel beyond the Dutch language area, which means his attention is not particularly on the movement from the periphery to the centre. Therefore, it can be claimed that the analysis of agents who are active in the movement of literary works from the periphery to the centre, from an exporting point of view, is missing from current scholarship related to transnational cultural exchange. As Jamoussi (2015) argues, typically, this export paradigm is constituted by source language agents who endeavour to promote the dissemination of literature from their own local area to abroad, and the motives and forces governing the practice of source language agents are worthy of further exploration. This thesis, especially Chapter 5 which focuses on the practices of rights managers from China in facilitating the dissemination of Chinese literature, is an attempt to contribute in this area.

In the area of production and circulation of book translations, as mentioned already, most scholarly literature considers only translators as the object of study in terms of agents (Chung, 2013; Kinnunen and Koskinen (eds), 2010; Berneking, 2017): these works apply sociological approaches to translation, consider the texts as socially constructed, and examine the way socio-cultural factors influence the translation texts. Nevertheless, it is widely agreed that the conditions of book production and dissemination have a profound impact on translation activities, so more sociological approaches to translation have paid attention to the translation process and called for the need to study factors that influence the translation process (Heilbron and Sapiro, 2007; Sapiro, 2016b; Jones, 2009). Some then recognize the significance of various agents and agencies involved in the translation process. For example,

Alkhawaja's (2014) doctoral thesis studies the role of social agents in the translation of one Egyptian writer into English. It identifies the important role that some social agents play to contribute to the structure of the field and its boundaries, and provides an account of how the socio-cultural factors in the field of translation influenced the translators' practices. Another example is Arnold's (2016) study which focuses on reader responses to national identity through books in translation. Drawing upon two Catalan novels in English translation, this thesis examines the role of different agents at each stage of the translation and reception process influence the representations of Catalan culture and identity through the translated books in English context and finally on the responses of readers. However, these studies are still limited to discussing how the relevant agents influence the final product, i.e., the translated work. Little attention has been paid to their mediation roles in configuring the cultural transfer between national literary spaces. Therefore, the role of other agents such as literary agents, publishers, and subsidy organisations who play a role in facilitating the transnational transfer of book translations in general have received little attention by researchers. There is some research within translation studies which identifies that the translator sometimes acts as foreign right agent in selling rights of books to foreign countries (Kinnunen and Koskinen (eds), 2010), as translators are the central object of research. But no empirical research has been found which focuses on specialized foreign rights agents (as Chapter 5 of my thesis does).

In addition, as mentioned above, ANT (Latour, 1987, 1996) as an analytical tool has been seldom used in examining the production and circulation of book translations, though starting from Buzelin (2005, 2006), the potential of applying ANT has been widely discussed by scholars in the area of the sociology of translation (Wang, 2014b; Wolf, 2009; Pym, 2006). Therefore, the role of non-human actors is largely ignored in the debates of agents in the context of book translations. Two rare exceptions are Kung (2009, 2021) and Wang (2014a, 2014b, 2020), who both identify the important role of non-human actors in the publication and circulation of Chinese books in Anglo-American countries. By examining the publication of a translation series *Modern Chinese literature from Taiwan* by Columbia University Press, Kung (2009) argues



subsidy organisations - here the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation - act as important non-human actors which constitute an actor-network which she calls as subvention network<sup>27</sup>, together with other actors from both the source and target culture. Similarly, Wang (2020) tries to develop a translation and dissemination actor-network model for analysing production and dissemination of translated Chinese literature in the West with special reference to Western commercial presses. Using examples of various cases of contemporary Chinese literature in English translation, Wang (2020) provides suggestions on how to adapt both Bourdieu's theory of social practice (1977, 1984) and Latour's (2005) actor-network theory to analyse the processes of the initiation of a translation project, its translation, and its dissemination in target culture. Wang argues that the completion of each process requires the constitution and functioning of a specific actor-network, which rely on conversions of different capitals and the engagement of actors' professional habitus. Combining various case studies, the study identifies the role of different non-human actors in forming the translation and dissemination actor-network, which can be, for example, original texts and movies adapted from the original texts. My study is an attempt to contribute to this area. In Chapter 6, I apply ANT as the analytical tool, identifying more actors, including non-human actors that work in facilitating Chinese literature to Anglo-American countries. However, Kung' (2009) study pays no attention on how Chinese books are translated and published by English-language trade publishers. And in Wang's (2020) study, the role of rights managers is neglected. Therefore, following and complementing both Kung and Wang's studies, my study suggests a mode of exporting contemporary Chinese literature initiated by Chinese rights managers, which is an important force of facilitating the publication of Chinese literature in Anglo-American countries by trade publishers.

My thesis regards translation as transnational transfer activity, understanding it as embedded in power relations between languages and nation-states. It identifies that

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<sup>27</sup> In Kung's study, the subvention network is used to describe the publication of a translation series of Chinese Literature from Taiwan subsidized by the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation (a sponsoring organisation). Key agents studied in this network include the translators, the editorial board members, the publishers, and the sponsoring organisation.

in the circulation of book translations from Chinese to English, agents from the source culture (China, in this case) are acting as the main contributors and initiators who facilitate this direction of translation flow. It therefore pays special attention to these people as exporting rather than importing agents. Moreover, this thesis considers translation activity as involved in the publishing industry, linking two interrelated fields – translation and publishing – together. Therefore, instead of focusing on the agents who produce the texts (i.e., translators and editors), this thesis prioritises the agents who make translation possible (in both Chapter 5 and Chapter 6). More importantly, drawing upon ANT as an analytical tool in my case study chapter (Chapter 6), the thesis scrutinises the transnational cultural transfer process, identifying the role of more invisible human actors, and non-human actors (such as the French and English language), as well as the way they develop the network that facilitate book translations from China to Anglo-American countries. Therefore, as a whole, this thesis provides a new perspective and empirical data in the debates of agents of translation activity.

### *2.3.3 Books in translation from Chinese*

Chinese scholars (for example, Lv, 2001; Wang, 2011; Wang (ed), 2017; Yan, 2006) began to pay attention to the sociology of translation at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Their works introduce the existing debates within the discipline and call upon Chinese scholars to engage with sociological insights into translation studies. As Wei's (2014) review illustrates, these studies were conducive to widening the vision of Chinese researchers, but generally limited themselves to interpreting, reviewing or making comments on scholarship within sociology of translation.

In very recent years, we are witnessing a growing interest in using sociological approaches to study translation activities from Chinese into other languages, especially into English. As already discussed above, within current studies on the English translation of Chinese literature, the majority have been limited to exploring the role and practice of translators and/or to the reception of translated books in the target culture. For example, based on the concept of habitus and capital from

Bourdieu's sociology, Duan Wenpo and Wei Menghua (2019) studied the translation and reception of the English version of a Chinese novel *Life and Death are Wearing Me Out* (生死疲劳) by written by the Nobel Prize Awardee, Mo Yan, and translated by Howard Goldblatt, analysing the translator's habitus in selecting texts and translation strategies and the manifestation of different forms of capitals by the translator, as well as the reception of this novel in the US. Pei Meng's (2010) study focuses on the process and reception of one specific kind of Chinese writing - autobiographical writings by (self-)exile writers in the British context. Through examining activities of people (such as literary agents, publishers and translators) involved in the translation process (including selection and the actual translating process) and critical textual analysis of the press reviews of translated autobiographical writings under study, Pei Meng's thesis argues that the translation process is shaped by the struggles, competitions, negotiations, and collaborations embedded in power relations within the publishing and literary fields. Jiang Mengying's (2018) study focuses on the reception of Chinese female writers in the Anglophone world. She examines the paratexts<sup>28</sup> of these translated works and argues that the seeming interest in the translation of Chinese female writers by Anglophone publishers is due to a voyeuristic gaze that has positioned China as the subaltern other.

In summary, studies have focused on either the production or the reception of translated works, with special attention on the role of translators or certain specific agents, while other invisible agents such as literary agents, funding organisations are neglected. One of the exceptions is Kung's (2009) study which examines the translation of contemporary Taiwanese novels in the US after the 1980s, exploring the role of various agents and networks that they form in enhancing the visibility of a lesser-known literature, and how the agents and networks are reflected in the final products. Yu and Zhang's (2021) recent paper also reveals the network of various

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<sup>28</sup> Paratext was coined by literary theorist Gérard Genette (1997) to refer to the accompanying productions that surround or extend the text itself, which include not only an author's name, a title, a preface, front and back covers, and illustrations, but also reviews, interviews with the author, literary criticism, etc.

agents who act in multifaceted ways and invisibly in the circulation of Mo Yan's fiction and its consecration into the US literary field. Drawing upon Bourdieu's (1984) theory and world literature studies, their article attributes the circulation of Mo Yan's fiction into the US literary field and its ascendancy to the ranks of world literature to the multifaceted roles simultaneously performed by the network of translation agents with various forms of capital, including cultural, social, economic, and symbolic capital. My thesis, which sees translation as a transnational cultural transfer encompassing a network of various agents who facilitate the exportation of Chinese books to foreign worlds, can also contribute to filling the gap by identifying the more important but often-invisible agents in academic research, such as the rights managers, acquisition editors, and translators involved in the production and circulation of book translations.

More generally speaking, there is still a relative lack of thoroughly sociological research on book translations and their transnational circulation in the Chinese context. As already mentioned above, two innovative and prolific scholars who are dedicated to conducting comprehensive research on English translation of Chinese literature drawing upon sociological perspectives are Wang (e.g., 2014a, 2014b, 2017, 2020) and Kung (e.g., 2009, 2017, 2021a, 2021b). Wang is a Chinese scholar in the sociology of translation area. His works not only examine the sociology of translation as a discipline thoroughly (for example, Wang, 2017), but also explore the potential of applying different theoretical tools, especially Bourdieu's theoretical tools and Latour's ANT, into the production and circulation of Chinese books in English translation through case studies (for example, Wang, 2014a, 2014b, 2020). Kung (2009), who has been mentioned several times above, was one of the first scholars to attempt to apply Latour's ANT in corporation with a Bourdieusian framework to examine the production of Chinese<sup>29</sup> books in translation. Kung's (2021b) recent book *Translation of Taiwan Literature in a Cross-Cultural Context* provides a holistic examination of the production and circulation of contemporary

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<sup>29</sup> Written Chinese is presented in two ways: simplified Chinese and traditional Chinese. Kung's (2009) focus is Taiwanese literature, which is written in traditional Chinese characters.

Taiwanese literature in the Anglo-American context through thematic discussions of selected case studies. It considers the translation of Taiwanese literature as embedded in the power relations between languages and cultures, examining the translation process which involves negotiations, interpretations, compromises, and interactions between two cultures and among various translation players, and shedding light on how this dynamic process exerts influences on the final translation products. Both of their works have inspired my own research as represented in the thesis. Nevertheless, my thesis asks the question of how books travel with an aim to investigate what enables books from the periphery to travel to the centre of the transnational literary field, which provides a different angle on examining translation practices. Focusing on the production and circulation of Chinese contemporary literature in Anglo-American countries, my study pays attention to the practices of other key actors who make the transnational transfer possible, such as rights managers, which the other scholars mentioned above pay less attention to.

To conclude, the majority of current works contributing to the sociology of translation with a Chinese focus are concerned with translators as agents, and the translation process, whilst research on the conditions facilitating the circulation of book translations, i.e., what makes translation possible, is sparse. The reasons for this, in my assessment, are that most of the scholars interested in this area come from a background of literary studies or translation studies, and because a traditional paradigm and object of study inherited from linguistics and literary studies still exerts an influence in this area of study. This thesis engages in dialogue with existing scholarship and fills the gap identified by drawing upon various transdisciplinary perspectives within the sociology of translation, understanding translation as not an equal linguistic transfer, but as embedded in power relations between languages and nation-states. Instead of focusing on the craft of the translators or the reception of the translated text in the target culture, this thesis examines agents and processes which make the translation activities possible.

## 2.4 Conclusion

Inspired by literature with regard to the transnational transfer of book translations and that of cultural products in a wider context, my thesis seeks to address how Chinese books travel into the Anglosphere through translation, drawing upon the framework of a cultural world-system, transnational Bourdieusian field analysis, and actor-network analysis. It understands the activity of exporting Chinese literature into the English literary field as embedded in power relations between languages and nation-states, and it examines the role of the often-invisible agents who make transnational cultural transfer possible and the networks that various human and non-human agents form together to facilitate the publication of Chinese books into English-speaking worlds. Technically, books travel through translation to foreign cultures, but this thesis goes beyond a text-level analysis and instead analyses the practice of exporting Chinese literature abroad, focusing on the agents and the processes which make translation possible. In terms of the research gaps that can be identified among existing scholarship related to this topic, it is my intention that the thesis will provide both empirical and theoretical insights into the transnational transfer of book translations, from the perspective of the periphery. In the next chapter, I will move on to discuss how this thesis was conducted methodologically.

## **Chapter 3 Methodology**

This thesis is formed with multiple sources of data and draws upon different methodological approaches. After a review of relevant literature and theoretical tools in Chapter 2, this chapter focuses on the practical side by discussing the methodological issues of this research. This chapter is organised as follows. The first section is an outline of the research design and overall methodological approach that was adopted for this study. I will explain the motivation behind this research, and how my research question can be examined through mixed methods including both qualitative and quantitative investigations. The second section gives an account of how I collected different sources of data by using various methods such as interviews, observations, and case study, and how my analysis was informed through data coding. In the third section I will introduce the ethical considerations of conducting such a research study and how I addressed them. Lastly, before the conclusion of this chapter, I will reflect on the difficulties I encountered during the research process, including problems using certain methods and the change to the research plan caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. I will also introduce my strategies of adaptation to minimise the obstacles encountered.

### **3.1 Research design and overall methodological approach**

#### *3.1.1 Research motivation and my personal connection to the topic*

The starting point of this thesis dates back to my personal experiences in the publishing industry between 2014 and 2018. After working as an intern in the international department of a Chinese publishing house, I became an editorial administrator in a UK-based newly established publishing house looking to facilitate the publication of Chinese literature within the UK. During this time, I liaised and cooperated with many professionals responsible for different stages of the book copyright trade, including rights managers, editors, translators, and printers. However, similarly to most other practitioners, my own experience of exporting

Chinese books in translation to the UK was negative: in contrast with acquiring books from Anglo-American countries into China, a process which resulted in a large amount of published titles, there were few books that could be sold out of China to English-language publishers. Witnessing how much of a struggle Chinese publishers and writers have in exporting Chinese books out of China, especially to the English-language market, triggered my interest in understanding the flow of book translations systematically and sociologically from China to English-language countries.

My previous experience in the industry has provided me with valuable initial insights. I have been able to use this insider knowledge about the production of books in English translation and the industry to flesh out the contextual information necessary to the research. Also, I have used personal contacts developed through my previous job to recruit suitable participants (as will be detailed below). However, it needs to be noted that though my working experience triggered the research idea, I am no longer a practitioner, and as such, my aim was to approach the study as a researcher with insider knowledge. In other words, the study has been conducted from the viewpoint of an academic researcher rather than a practitioner, who might focus more on the craft of the job he or she is responsible for. The position of neutral outsider with an insider view is described by Welch et al. (2002) as the “informed outsider”. Nevertheless, since I have had some on-the-job observations of rights managers’ work, I do have my own understanding of their duties. To avoid the problem of preconception, during the fieldwork I tried to keep a distance from my previous work and acted only as a researcher – I made myself work in an outsider position whose job was to inspire my participants to share their experiences with me, listen to their stories, and then critically analyse their narratives and actions. Participants who were recruited from my personal contacts or through a snowball sampling strategy may already have known me and my previous job in publishing, while for other participants, I chose to not reveal my own knowledge of the field in the first place. But as a strategy to put my participants at ease, I would sometimes introduce or share my own experience with them.



### *3.1.2 A mixed methods approach*

As introduced in Chapter One, in order to develop a full-scale understanding of the translational flow of book translations from Chinese/China to English/Anglo-American countries, I posed the overarching question explored in this study: how do books from China travel into Anglo-American countries? To answer this question, the thesis uses mixed methods combining both quantitative and qualitative methods, including descriptive statistics, semi-structured in-depth interviews, ethnographic observations, and a case study approach. Quantitative and qualitative methods are suited to different kinds of questions. Using qualitative and quantitative methods together can help to understand different aspects of an overarching research question (Pluye and Hong, 2014). Thus, the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods is helpful to have a more complete understanding of the research question than using either method alone (Creswell, 2014, p.4). Quantitative methods enabled me to answer questions include “what are the publishing trend of book translations from Chinese to English since 1949?” “What books from China were translated into the UK, and who published them?”. And qualitative methods helped to investigate the practices and behaviours of the key players involved in facilitating the translation and publication of Chinese books from China to Anglo-American countries.

As detailed in the following three analytical chapters, I firstly used various datasets to describe translation flow from Chinese to English, and to examine books from China that have been translated and published in Anglo-American countries (by taking UK’s statistics for example). Starting with quantitative analysis, the thesis demonstrated the centre-periphery relations between Chinese and English and provided contextual information about priorities of Chinese books that translated into English and key actors that involved. My analysis of these datasets will be the focus of Chapter 4. Drawing upon the insights and findings from Chapter 4, It then informed me to step further to investigate the practices of key players and the process of publishing one single book quantitatively. I analysed the practices of Chinese rights managers who act as cultural carriers to facilitate the flow of Chinese

books from China to Anglo-American countries. This analysis will be addressed in Chapter 5 using interview data and participation observation as the main source of data. In addition, a case study of a Chinese contemporary novel is used to illustrate exactly how a book is translated from Chinese and published in the UK. The analysis of the case study will be addressed in Chapter 6. This methodological framework and each method used enabled me to explore the practice of book translation from different angles, so as to present a comprehensive picture of the practice of book translations from China to Anglo-American countries. As mentioned in Chapter Two, this methodological framework is also designed to connect “the dynamics of the international translation system with the actual working of the book market and its various segments” (Heilbron, 1999, p. 438), in order to take up Heilbron (1999) and Sapiro’s (Heilbron and Sapiro, 2007) call for a more complete sociological analysis of book translations.

A similar structure of analysis was adopted in McMartin (2019a)’s doctoral thesis, which studies the transnational circulation of books from Flanders to abroad. McMartin’s (2019a) analysis is divided into the global level, the national level, and the individual title level. The global level quantifies and analyses the outgoing flows of Flemish books; the national level examines a government institution and the activities of the government institution at the Frankfurt Book Fair; and the individual title level scrutinises the lifecycle of a widely translated book from Flemish. To study translation flows of fiction and poetry books in the Dutch literary field, Franssen’s (2015a) doctoral thesis also adopted such a mixed methods approach, combining large-scale quantitative data with in-depth qualitative data. These two recent studies show that a mixed methods approach combining both quantitative data with qualitative data is well suited to the study of the international/transnational translation flow as a holistic and complex action: it not only enables researchers to analyse the translation flow at a macro-level, but also to focus in on the micro level of the actions of key players underlying the translation flow.

In addition, my plan initially was to focus on the translation of Chinese books in the UK, looking at how contemporary Chinese literature is translated and published in

the UK in particular. As I started to attend book fairs for my fieldwork, I realised that publishing professionals in China do not necessarily distinguish between the UK and the US when they set out to sell into English-language countries, and that the UK and the US were often referred to together by Chinese publishing professionals targeting English-language countries. This means that the strategies they employ are the same for these two countries. Eventually, I decided to study books in translation travelling from China to English-language countries in general but used the UK book statistics (see Chapter 4) and a case study in the UK market (see Chapter 6) to exemplify the transnational production of Chinese books in English-language countries. The utilisation of each method will be explained later in this chapter.

### **3.2 Data collection procedures and data analysis**

The data collection process for this study consisted of three stages. The first stage relied on various different existing datasets of book statistics nationally and transnationally. The second stage of data collection was semi-structured interviews in different places and settings, supplemented with participant observations carried out during the fieldwork at book fairs. Thirdly, focused interviews with key players were undertaken for the case study of the publication journey of one single book in the UK. Accordingly, this thesis consists of three analysis chapters, each chapter relying on a different source of data and methods. The first analytical chapter is a statistical analysis drawing upon various datasets, including Index Translationum, British National Bibliography (BNB) derived from the British Library (BL), and Chinese official statistics on the book copyright trade derived from the National Copyright Administration of the People's Republic of China (NCAC). The second uses semi-structured interviews and observation of activities of key players at book fairs, including Chinese rights managers whose role is to sell translated books within international markets, as well as various other professionals who work with or share similar job responsibilities with China's rights managers, for example Anglophone acquisition editors, literary agents based in the US and the UK (the total number of interviews is 37). The third uses interview data with a wider range of publishing professionals involved in facilitating the example publication – *Bronze and Sunflower*

written by Cao Wenxuan - the aim being to present a case study of a single Chinese book which was translated into English-speaking countries. In the following summary, I will explain in detail how the data have been collected and analysed.

### *3.2.1 Statistical analysis of the translation flow from Chinese to English*

#### **3.2.1.1 The selection and access to databases of quantitative data**

To have a broad overview of the world of book translations and the translation flow from Chinese to English, the datasets I used in Chapter 4 were derived from three different databases.

#### **Index Translationum**

Recorded by UNESCO since 1979, the Index Translationum includes “bibliographic citations of translated books published in more than one hundred countries, in all fields” (UNESCO, n.d.). In Chapter 4, the Index Translationum was the main source for documenting the global flow of book translations from 1980 to 2005. Statistics in this database are often not consistent with national publication statistics, as recognised by many researchers (for example, Donahaye, 2012; Büchler and Trentacosti, 2015). Take the UK’s book statistics for example: in a search for the number of Chinese books translated and published in the UK, the results from the Index Translationum database are only about half the number of those generated by the British Library (BL) catalogue. Previous researchers who used the Index Translationum as a database have not provided an explanation for the inaccuracy of its statistics. Nevertheless, according to a BL librarian<sup>30</sup>, there might be various reasons that can explain this gap, for example, the resource was published in multiple countries, and the Index Translationum lists the resource under the non-UK place of publication; or as the records of the BL have not been submitted to the Index Translationum since 2013, it is quite possible that the BL record was created after the latest update to the Index Translationum. However, although there is an obvious gap between the Index Translationum database and national publication statistics, it

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<sup>30</sup> Personal correspondence through email on 11 July 2018.

is still recognised as the only publicly accessible and relatively comprehensive database on global flow of books in translation (Donahaye, 2012), as it provides statistics on incoming and outgoing translations of all UNESCO contracting countries and their languages. This database can be accessed via <https://www.unesco.org/xtrans/>.

### **Chinese official statistics on the book copyright trade**

It is a pity that China does not have a national database or bibliography in terms of book translations. However, in contemporary society, the flow of book translations is largely related to the book copyright trade. I thus was able to examine China's book copyright imports from and exports to the two main English-language countries by using China's national statistics. These data can be directly found at the official website of National Copyright Administration of the People's Republic of China (NCAC) ([www.ncac.gov.cn](http://www.ncac.gov.cn)) by searching the yearly statistics reports released by the NCAC on the website. I manually extracted the statistics for the purpose of my study from the yearly statistics reports released by NCAC, and listed them in a year order as a dataset for analysing. These statistics are relatively accurate as China's publishers are all under the regulation of NCAC, which means NCAC records every relevant statistic reported by Chinese publishers. As NCAC only stored yearly statistics about China's copyrights trade from 2000 to 2019, in Chapter 4, I set the timespan as such when examining China's book copyright trade with the US and the UK.

### **British National Bibliography (BNB)**

To explore the publishing trend of Chinese to English book translations in the Anglo-American countries over a certain time period and analysing the published translations, I chose to use the British National Bibliography (BNB) by the British Library (BL). Under the legal deposit legislation, the BL is entitled to receive a copy of items published or distributed in the UK within one month of publication, and all the titles received through legal deposit are sorted into the BNB (Donahaye, 2012).

As mentioned above, China's national dataset does not include bibliography information on every title that has been exported into the UK or the US. The UNESCO

Index Translationum does provide bibliography information of each title translated from Chinese to English and published in the UK, but there are gaps between Index Translationum database and the BNB when it comes to UK national publications on translations, and the Index Translationum appears to have incomplete data for book translations published in the UK<sup>31</sup>. So, as the most comprehensive listing of contemporary UK publication (BL, n.d.), the BNB of the BL is demonstrated to be the most suitable source of data for establishing the annual number and percentage of translated books in the UK, according to a feasibility study conducted by Literature Across Frontiers (LAF) (Büchler and Trentacosti, 2015). However, as mentioned earlier, Index Translationum is still valuable as the only available database for the purpose of examining the global flows of book translations.

With the help of the Metadata service of the BL, in May of 2018, I required a dataset that covers all book translations from Chinese to English in history within the BNB through email correspondence, and a BL librarian extracted information from every resource of the BL catalogue that is recorded as being translated from Chinese to English for me. In October of 2021, I acquired the updated dataset to make sure the data used in the thesis were the most recent. The raw material contains: BL record ID, Type of resource, Content type, Material type, BNB number, LC number<sup>32</sup>, ISBN, Name<sup>33</sup>, Type of name, Role<sup>34</sup>, All names, Title, Uniform title, Variant titles, Series title, Number within series, Country of publication, Place of publication, Publisher, Date of publication, Edition, Physical description, Dewey Classification, BL shelfmark, Topics, Genre, Languages, Language of original, Language of intermediate translation,

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<sup>31</sup> A detailed explanation on the gaps between the two databases can be found in Donahaye's (2012) report, *Three Percent? Publishing data and statistics on translated literature in the United Kingdom and Ireland*.

<sup>32</sup> I assume it is the Library of Congress Catalog number. Such information of cataloguing used for libraries is not relevant for the analysis.

<sup>33</sup> It can be the author, the translator, or sometimes other people who are related with the book.

<sup>34</sup> Referring to the job title(s) of the author or the translator.

Language notes, Contents, Abstract, and Notes<sup>35</sup>.

### **3.2.1.2 Descriptive statistical data analysis**

The overall method of analysis in Chapter 4 is descriptive statistics. Data analysis of the datasets from the Index Translationum and NCAC was straightforward. The Index Translationum database was used to represent the big picture of the global flow of book translation. I chose Chinese, English, and two other languages – German and French, which are described as semi-peripheral languages (Heilbron, 1999), to outline the export of book translations from these languages. And from yearly statistics reports released in the NCAC website, I extracted China's imports and exports of book copyright trade with all other countries from 2000 to 2019 (this time period does not align with the date range in BL and Index Translationum datasets, but the NCAC website only provides yearly statistics of these years), and the book copyright imports and exports data with the US and the UK in particular, and then listed them in a chronological order separately.

The main dataset I used in the statistical analysis was from the BL. Although this dataset offers relatively reliable statistics on published translations in the UK as explained above, these statistics needed to be processed further. The data processing had two steps. Firstly, I narrowed the statistics down to the focus of my interest. Under the legal deposit legislation, the BL is entitled to receive a copy of items published or distributed in the UK within one month of publication, and all the titles received through legal deposit are assigned a BNB number. So, the information on the BNB number in the raw dataset enabled me to filter all entries within the BNB database. I retained only entries where the language is English, and the original language is Chinese, so that books originally published in a number of different languages were removed. This raw dataset does not restrict the publication date when extracted from the BL catalogue, so I was able to sort and filter records by using

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<sup>35</sup> It needs to be noted that though this dataset provides sufficient information for each record, when processing the data, it was found that much of the information was missing from the record, especially on book genres and topics.

this information. The raw dataset I received also did not limit the country of publication, so as to avoid omitting any resources where the country is not known on the BL catalogue. Through filtering the information of “country of publication”, I was able to sort books that were published in the UK (including those published in multiple countries). After filtering, the dataset under study comprised in large part Chinese to English translations published in the UK from 1949 to 2020. As a librarian from the BL explained to me, it cannot be guaranteed that the dataset contains an absolutely comprehensive record of the publication of Chinese to English translations, due to, for example, publishers failing to post the published books, or the books going missing over the years. But as mentioned above, the BNB is the most comprehensive listing of contemporary UK publications, so the filtered dataset can fulfil the purpose of presenting the annual number of publications and the publication trend for the timespan under study.

Since the raw dataset is not well-documented – much of the book information is either blank, or mistakenly recorded, so it would be a tremendous amount of work to analyse the whole dataset - for a detailed analysis of the publication of Chinese books in English translation in the UK, I randomly chose 2013 as the sample year and took a second step of data processing, to get rid of duplicable and misclassified entries, and to manually add information of book’s categories and type of publishers. Such book information can be found through accessing the online websites of publishers – a book’s categories can normally be found the introductory page of the certain books by the publishers, if not, I would search some online bookstores such as Amazon for more information; and the type of publishers can be assessed based on the ‘about us’ section on their website. For the purpose of examining which publishers are active in Chinese to English translation and publishing, the names of publishers were sorted manually. Also, as mentioned earlier, some such publications were published by multinational companies operating both abroad and in the UK, so the publishers under study also include some non-UK publishers. To analyse what kind of books were translated and published in the UK, I chose the Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) as an indicator of genre and categorised them as contemporary



books and classics according to the period of time in which it was written<sup>36</sup>. Though there is information on genre and topics in the raw dataset, it is not reliable because not every entry contains this information and as Donahaye (2012) finds, fields for genre classification have been used inconsistently and at times incorrectly. Luckily, the majority of titles in the dataset have been recorded with a Dewey number. In order to identify the category of books, each entry was manually analysed and categorised.

By using different datasets, I was able to present as complete a picture as possible of the publication of Chinese to English book translations from different angles: the Index Translationum is the only available international database which shows the position of Chinese and English in the global book translation flows; while the NCAC provides Chinese official data regarding China's book copyright trade with foreign countries, including the US and the UK; for the purpose of presenting the publication trends and the bibliographical analysis of books translated from Chinese and published in the Anglo-American countries, the BNB is the most suitable database.

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<sup>36</sup> Defining what is classic and what is contemporary literature can be a heated topic. Though age is not the only criteria that makes a book a classic, older books that retain their popularity are considered to be among the classics (Lombardi, 2021). In the context of Chinese literature, modern Chinese literature is often said to have begun in 1917, the year in which Hu Shi and Chen Duxiu published articles calling for the creation of a "new literature", in the columns of the magazine *New Youth* (新青年). As Idema and Haft (1997) illustrate, in these articles Hu and Chen suggested that literature of any subjects or genre should be written in the contemporary vernacular – *baihuawen* (白话文). In the spring of 1918, the magazine *New Youth* published Lu Xun's short story *Diary of a madman* (狂人日记), which is the first novel written in *baihuawen* and in a form from western models in Chinese history. The beginning of modern Chinese literature is also suggested by other scholars (for example, Yuan, 2014) as the year of 1919. In the year of the May Fourth Movement (五四运动), to against China's concessions to foreign powers in the Treaty of Versailles, Chinese higher education students launched a nationwide protest at 4 May 1919. Within this period of time, countless new periodicals were published, and all written in *baihuawen*, which made *baihuawen* soon come into general use (Idema and Haft, 1997). In terms of contemporary literature, it is often defined as literature written after 1949 (Yuan, 2014). In the analysis of chapter 4 of my thesis, I categorised books that were written before 1917 as the classics, and modern and contemporary literature is categorised in short as contemporary literature in Chapter 4, referring to books written after 1917 to the present day. For a full review of the history of Chinese literature, see for example Idema and Haft (1997), Victor H. Mair (ed) (2002), and Yuan Xingpei (ed) (2014).

### *3.2.2 The practices of key agents*

#### **3.2.2.1 Interviews and observations**

To answer my research question, I chose one-to-one qualitative interviewing as the primary method to collect data, supplemented with observations (the rationale for combining these two strands of data will be explained later). The primary locations for my fieldwork were international book fairs. These professional book fairs, which play a vital role in publishing, are ideal venues for researchers interested in this area. Firstly, international book fairs allow people involved in the publishing or the media industry, such as publishers, agents, distributors, and retailers to meet and do business together. Secondly, these book fairs are normally open to public visitors, so that researchers as well as pure book lovers can easily gain access to them. Accordingly, researchers who would like to explore the global book market and the activities of foreign rights trade in particular are able to find what they need at an international book fair. I chose to go to the London Book Fair (LBF) and the Beijing International Book Fair (BIBF), in April and August 2019 respectively. Both of them were a four-day long event. For pragmatic reasons, the fieldwork took place in my own localities – the UK is where I am pursuing my PhD, and China is my home country. And, more importantly, in light of the focus of this research on translation flow from Chinese to English, the two fairs are two of the largest annual book fairs<sup>37</sup> held in these two language areas.

#### **Preparing the fieldwork and recruitment**

In order to investigate key players involved in the production of Chinese to English book translations, when recruiting the participants in this stage, I mainly used the method of purposive sampling. According to Lavrakas (2008), purposive sampling aims to recruit participants who can be logically assumed to be representative of a population. In my study, I prioritised the types of professionals I wanted to recruit, namely those who have been involved in any Chinese to English book translation

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<sup>37</sup> Amongst all international book fairs today, the Frankfurt Book Fair is often considered as the largest in the world. The LBF and the BIBF are both important and large international book fairs among others (International Publishers Associations, 2015).

projects, including acquisitioning editors working in Anglo-American publishing houses or anyone who may have knowledge about the Chinese to English translation in the publishing houses; Chinese rights managers; and translators. At the same time, to avoid preconception, I also kept an open mind about people and activities to interview and observe when going to the book fairs.

When preparing for the fieldwork, I initially chose Anglo-American acquisitioning editors as the primary subject of study, hypothesising that they are the key facilitators in book flows, as they are usually the decision makers on whether to acquire a translation project or not (Franssen and Kuipers, 2013). Therefore, I planned to focus on how Chinese books were chosen by English publishers, investigating their selection strategies. However, as also reflected by the quantitative strand of my research, there are not many contemporary cases that can be investigated and the English acquisitioning editors that I interviewed all told me that though they might have published one or two Chinese contemporary books, they were rare cases and there have been no such projects in the pipeline for a couple of years. Through interviewing Anglophone acquisition editors, and observations conducted in the first round of field work at LBF 2019, I soon realised that China's rights managers played an important and key role in facilitating Chinese literature to the English-language countries – they are the main specialised actors bring Chinese literature to foreign publishers through pitching meetings at events such as book fairs. Therefore, I decided to focus on examining the role and practices of China's rights managers in this thesis.

These initial participants were recruited from three sources. Firstly, I recruited from contacts that I had from my previous work experience. I contacted people I knew and asked about their availability for an interview with me during the London book fair or at other times that may suit them. In this way, I recruited 11 participants. Secondly, based on the publisher analysis in the quantitative strand of research, I was able to generate a dataset which included all publishing houses that have published Chinese to English translations from 1949 to 2020. So, I wrote emails directly to target participants. Email addresses were listed on the publishers' official websites (if any),

sometimes it was a corporate email, and sometimes it was a personal email. In the email, I referred to the Chinese book/books they have published and asked if I could interview someone who had been involved in the project. The London Book Fair began in April, and so I started to approach potential participants in February and March of 2019 by email. I sent emails to 26 publishing houses, but as a result, only three English editors agreed to be interviewed, one of them replied to turn it down as her schedule at book fairs was fully booked (I then met her in person at the London book fair and arranged an interview through email with her); and the others failed to respond. And thirdly, during the book fairs, I also wandered around and visited the exhibition booths to recruit prospective participants. For those I wanted to have an interview with, I would ask about their willingness and availability for an interview. 11 participants were recruited through this way.

From these initial participants, I then recruited more participants through snowball sampling, with a focus on recruiting China's rights managers. As Seale and Filmer (1998) indicate, snowball sampling can be helpful to gain access to sampling populations who might refuse to be interviewed without a personal contact. As just mentioned, in my research area of book translation and the copyright trade, professionals in general are hard to recruit at occasions other than book fairs, so snowballing turned out to be a very effective strategy. When interviewing with participants, I asked if they could recommend me to their counterparts or friends who have similar professional experience as them. Sometimes, the interviewees would quickly point me to another person who they know: "Oh, you should go talk to xyz, he is right there". Some participants agreed to introduce me to their colleagues, but they usually would not come back to me. Finally, through snowball sampling, I recruited 12 more participants.

In a study of television buyers, Kuiper (2012) argues that it is hard to approach practitioners working in highly competitive fields, such as the television industry, as they usually have little interest in talking to sociologists. My experience of approaching specialised agents in the publishing field revealed the same situation. This difficulty was especially evident from the second way I sought to recruit

participants: emailing target publishers chosen from the BL dataset, through this purposive sampling strategy, I only got three responses. As Bakkalbasioglu (2020) finds, purposive sampling may be easier than many other methods, but accessing the sampled individuals becomes a big challenge. I therefore turned to use various other sampling methods, as mentioned above. Overall, my personal contacts from previous work experience and my own (half-)insider position helped a lot in the recruitment process - it helped me recruit many initial participants, in direct way or through snowballing. In addition, at huge exhibition stadiums where the book fairs are held, with their help, I could always easily find the exhibition booths I wanted and acquire information about the events that I was interested in. My fieldwork experience also shows that book fairs are ideal places to recruit participants if researchers are hoping to interview specialised personnel from the publishing industry. At book fairs, prospective participants are assembled together in a public space. As Moeran (2011) relates, people who attend book fairs expect to be approached by strangers and are predisposed to respond politely. Also, everyone who enters the venue of book fairs can be identified by their name tags, and exhibitors tend to offer business cards with their names, job titles and contact information to visitors. Therefore, book fairs provide an excellent opportunity to recruit prospective participants and to gain up-to-date information on the publishing industry.

As a result of using the different approaches of purposive sampling and snowballing, I recruited 37 participants in different occupations, including 16 Chinese rights managers, 4 Chinese editors, 4 foreign rights agents (1 based in the UK and 3 based in China, acting as sub-agents/agency), 5 English acquisition editors (2 from the US, and 3 from the UK), 2 exhibition specialists (one works for a Chinese publishing house and is responsible for organising exhibitions at book fairs, the other works for the exhibition company), 5 literary translators who translate between Chinese and English, and one Chinese writer who writes mostly fiction. These interview participants were interviewed at both the two book fairs and at a later stage (details about the interview places will be discussed later). Though the analysis mostly relied on interview data with China's rights managers, the sets of interviews other than with rights managers helped me to gain a broad knowledge of the book copyright trade

that Chinese rights managers engage in, and some of these interviewees provided data about their relations and interactions with Chinese rights managers which deepened my understanding of the practices of Chinese rights managers from different perspectives.

### **Interviews in the fieldwork**

Before the start of the two international book fairs (London Book Fair and Beijing International Book Fair in 2019), I made a list of people/companies I intended to interview and highlighted those who had confirmed an appointment with me. For those who had not replied to my emails, I went to their exhibition booth directly.

Qualitative interviews are the most typical research tools for researchers who gather information about participants' experiences, views and beliefs (Lambert and Loiselle, 2008). In my fieldwork at the two book fairs, my purpose was to identify key actors involved in the process of bringing Chinese literature to the English literary world and understand the practices of these professionals. More specifically, I chose semi-structured interviewing as the primary data collection method. As Ryan et al (2009) argue, instead of answering a series of structured questions that "do not allow room for veering off the topic in question" (p.310), semi-structured interviews allow the interviewees to tell their own stories by themselves. In my study, semi-structured research questions were designed, aiming to discover their daily routines and their activities at book fairs, and listen to what the interviewees revealed about their work. The reason that semi-structured interviewing is particularly suitable to my study was because of the particularity of my interviewees. According to Bryman (2012), semi-structured interviewing is flexible, as in this type of interviewing (as well as unstructured interviewing), it is the interviewees who lead the direction of the interview, so the emphases in research could adjust at any time during the interview when significant issues or topics emerge. In my study, the people who I recruited and interviewed are all specialised personnel, or experts in the study area, so that they are able to give insightful perceptions and interpretation on the topic I was researching. As Gillham (2000) argues, because this kind of interviewee has their own structuring of their knowledge, "they will not tamely submit to being interviewed

where you direct a series of questions at them” (p. 64). This situation aligns with the discussions of ‘elite interviewing’ (Dexter, 2006; Harvey, 2010; Mikecz, 2012; Liu, 2018), usually referring to the form of interviewing where researchers interview with people who possess knowledge and prestige and are in a senior position of power (Lilleker, 2003). The usage of the term ‘elite’ can be controversial (Harvey, 2010), and in academic literature, the group of people that this term refers to varies depending on the area in which it is being used (Plesner, 2011). I am not defining my interviewees as elite here, but these group of people can be seen as similar to those described in studies of elite interviewing, in terms of their authority and rich experience in the area I am studying. During the interviews, my Interviewees often shared new knowledge with me, and they raised issues I had not previously thought of from time to time during the interview, so the angle of my interview questions changed from one interviewee to another.

In order to have a framework to guide the interview process and reflect the interviewee’s personal experiences of the topic in question, as Bridges et al (2008) suggest, I designed questions around three main areas: the educational and working trajectory of the participant, their personal experience in terms of Chinese to English book translations, and their feelings about their own roles and the overall picture of Chinese to English translated market (the interview guide for different groups can be referred to in the Appendix). During the interviews, I took a responsive approach, in that I responded to and then asked further questions about what I heard from the interviewees. As suggested by Rubin and Rubin (2012), the core of responsive interviewing involves formulating and asking three kinds of questions: the main question, probes and follow-up questions. In the interviews, guided by the three main questions, I used probes to manage the conversation and encouraged the participants to expand on the topics in more detail, and I also asked follow-up questions to explore new topics that emerged during the interview. The interviews lasted between 20 minutes and 2 hours. The reason for the short interviews was the objective condition of the fieldwork venues. As mentioned above, book fairs are in public places, and exhibitors there expect to meet and talk with visitors who come to their exhibition booth. Thus, when we had interviews at the exhibition booth, it was

very likely that the interviews would be interrupted by random visitors, and the interviews could hardly be resumed, especially for participants who were recruited through random visiting.

In terms of the places for interviewing, 16 interviews were conducted during the course of the two book fairs (I interviewed 10 of them during the time of the London Book Fair 2019, and another 6 were interviewed during the Beijing International Book Fair 2019) and the other 21 were arranged at other times, especially for those who were snowballed from my participants. Therefore, in addition to the 16 face-to-face interviews conducted at book fairs and public places nearby during the course of book fairs, I also conducted 9 face-to-face interviews at the workplaces of my participants, or in public places near their working places, such as city street gardens, cafes, or restaurants. A further 12 participants were not able to be interviewed face to face. Instead, I asked their preferred way to be interviewed and used instant communication tools (WeChat or Skype) to conduct interviews with 7 of them, and 5 chose to be interviewed through email correspondence.

For face-to-face interviews, I always took my mobile phone with me as an unobtrusive recording device and asked for consent to record from the participants. Nevertheless, as Blommaert and Dong (2010) suggest, recordings as sensitive material may be viewed as a threat for people. In the end, for face-to-face interviews (25 in total), 10 participants allowed me to record, but 15 of them rejected the recording request, because they felt “uncomfortable” (quoted from one of the participants), though I explained the reason of recording, promised that I would not reveal any personal or commercial confidentiality, and guaranteed the safety of the recorded material. For Skype or WeChat interviews, all 7 participants agreed to be recorded. My assumption is that the remoteness of the interviewer gave them the feeling of release. In order to capture their words as reliably as possible, I jotted down brief notes in my notebook when interviewing, including the key words that could recall the conversation, and interesting or key quotes from the participants. And as these unrecorded interviews were conducted on separate days, I was able to write up relatively full fieldnotes at the very latest by the end of the day. According to my



personal experience, I was only able to transcribe one or two interviews at most per night. Therefore, in order to make sure the memory was fresh, I would give priority to write down those unrecorded interviews, if any, on the days I conducted interviews, and transcribed those records at a later stage.

### **Observations in the fieldwork**

On top of interviews, I also used the method of ethnographic observation. The observation approach can help to directly collect data about a specific phenomenon or situation occurring in a natural context (Silverman, 2006, p.21). In this study, it took the form of covert observation and observation using the go-along technique, during the book fairs. Covert observation is also named as simple observation by Bryman (2012), which is a form of observation in which the observer is unobtrusive and is not observed by those being observed (p.273). This form of observation was conducted throughout my attendance at the book fairs, especially when I went to some relevant events organised at the book fairs. By covert observation, I observed people around me, and sometimes talked with people who either worked in or were interested in this area. Through covert observation, my aim was to understand the functioning of the book fairs and activities of key players in it and their behaviours in general. In addition, at both of the two book fairs, I also conducted the form of overt participant observation in the go-along approach (Kusenbach, 2003) to follow the participants the whole day at the book fairs, observing their activities and behaviours along the way. As Kusenbach (2003, p,463) suggests, “what makes the go-along technique unique is that ethnographers are able to observe their informants’ spatial practices in situ while accessing their experiences and interpretations at the same time”. Such a go-along approach has also been employed by Friedman (2014) in examining the professional practices of comedy scouts at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. As mentioned, I have previously worked in the publishing industry, and due to my (half-)insider position, I got permission from two participants who I previously worked with, separately at each book fair. Both of them are China’s rights managers with rich experience, who are in a senior position of the department they worked in. I asked the two participants to treat me as a colleague or an intern accompanying them, rather than a researcher observing them. As such, they always introduced me

as a colleague of theirs to other people they met, so that the people they met would not feel strange in my presence. During the go-along process, I also observed a range of activities of rights managers at the book fairs, including networking with people who they met occasionally, or they paid a special visit to, 'strolling' around the venue of the book fair, and attending appointments or events. Events or meetings I attended along with them included: 1) 4 pitching meetings with foreign editors or literary agents from Anglo-American countries and other foreign countries, whom my participants intended to sell rights to; 2) events that were held at the book fairs, such as panel meetings, keynote speeches and industrial conferences. I used my mobile phone as the recording device during the shadowing process at the London Book Fair, but when shadowing at the Beijing Book Fair, my participant refused to be recorded. Regardless of whether the recording device was used or not, I would always take detailed field notes immediately – what they did; what they said, with whom and in what situation. When attending the pitching meetings (where my participants persuaded literary agents or editors to buy the rights, or negotiated the dealings), the participant at London Book Fair also wanted me to turn off the recorder and required me not to reveal the data about the negotiation process, as such conversations often contain commercially sensitive or confidential information. Therefore, I did not take field notes of the conversations related to real negotiations as required. In addition, as I interviewed them along the way, the approach of interviewing was often unstructured. Questions were often related to real-time issues, for example, "why did you come to this event?" "What do you think of the pitching meeting that just finished?". As I mentioned, whether it was recorded or not, I wrote their answers down immediately and as verbatim as possible.

Through both covert observation and participant observation using the go-along approach at two book fairs, I was able to observe the behaviour of rights managers, including their dress code, their manner of speaking, their actions at the book fairs and the functioning of the copyright trade in general. This body of information was complemented with the interview data, which helped me to better understand the role of China's rights managers and their working routines, especially at book fairs. As Bryman (2012, p.270) points out, investigating behaviour through methods such

as interviewing, “allows behaviour only to be inferred”. This may therefore incur many problems, for example, there may be gaps between stated and actual behaviour (Bryman, 2012). At the same time, interviews supplement the observations. As argued by Pugh (2013) and Lamont and Swidler (2014), interviewing can reveal issues that cannot be observed through observation, for example, emotional dimensions of social experience. In my thesis, one dimension of my conceptualization of cultural carrier came from their emotion about the nation and the national literature; this interpretation was drawn upon the interview data. Therefore, it can be argued that, in combination, interviews and observations provided more insights than if I had done only interviews or only observations – combining interview data and observation data not only allowed me to understand their behaviours through my own observation, but also enabled me to reflect on their roles and behaviours through their own interpretation on various topics such as past experiences and daily routines.

### **3.2.2.2 The qualitative data analysis**

During my fieldwork, I collected rich data on the professional experience of not just rights managers, but also of other key players in facilitating Chinese contemporary literature to Anglo-American countries, from themselves and other professionals who work in relevant areas. The data included both interviews and observational field notes. I transcribed each interview word for word, but eliminated some redundant utterances, such as greetings and topics that are not related to the research (some interviews were conducted over meals or afternoon teas, such interviews contained many irrelevant conversations). All of the interviews were conducted in the interviewees’ first language, and I transcribed them fully in the language used in the interviews: if the interviews were conducted in Chinese, the data was transcribed in Chinese. After full transcription, for Chinese transcripts, I did not choose to translate them all into English, because this would have been a very slow and time-consuming process, especially when the interview data contained information which was not directly relevant to the research. For quotations used in the thesis that are extracted from the interview transcripts, if they were originally written in Chinese, I then

translated them into English. As I am a qualified translator with a Master's degree in interpreting and translation between Chinese and English, the translation of transcripts was done by myself.

Guided by the thesis research questions, this strand of interview and observation data aims to identify key agents involved in facilitating Chinese books to Anglo-American countries and to investigate their professional practices. I adopted a data-driven inductive reasoning approach to analyse these strands of data. According to Braun and Clarke (2006, p.83), analysis in an inductive approach involves “a process of coding the data without trying to fit it into a pre-existing coding frame”. In Thomas' (2006, p.238) words, this approach “primarily uses detailed readings of raw data to derive concepts, themes, or a model through interpretations made from the raw data”. The process of analysis can be divided into two stages: the first stage is familiarising myself with the data and the context, the second is developing themes iteratively. But these two stages were not strictly in a sequential order, as I went back and forth between these two stages during the coding process.

The tools that I used in the coding process were pen and paper. Starting with an inductive approach, I firstly engaged with all the data transcripts (and other supporting materials, such as existing research or magazine articles about international copyright trade, the development and transformation of publishing industry in China, literary agents in the UK and the US) to familiarise myself with the aspects of the book copyright trade that China's rights manager engaged in, and to enhance my understanding of their jobs. As a complement to the interview and observation materials, at this stage, I also looked up some material (including academic literature and magazine articles) to enrich my knowledge about the evolution of copyright trading between China and the overseas countries, the forming of literary agents in Anglo-American countries, and the work of rights managers in China. In fact, this sort of analysis or understanding had begun to develop even before the interviews and observation were conducted via the knowledge I gained in my review of the existing research. It then continued during the interviews and observations, and the coding process. As Kohlbacher (2006)

claims, qualitative data analysis is used to provide knowledge and enhance understanding about a particular area in the research under study, when the field of research is not well understood. Although I have personally been engaged in some book publishing and translation projects, copyright trade requires specialists with professional skills and experiences, their practices and job responsibilities were not familiar to me. Supplemented with knowledge gained before and during the data coding process, I gained a holistic sense of the empirical data that I had collected from both observations and interviews. At this stage, alongside reading and interpreting the data, I highlighted what was important to the study and made analytic memos about emerging themes relevant to the understanding of the role of China's rights managers and their behaviours. Based on my initial consideration and understanding reached through the first stage of analysis, I found that China's rights managers have similar education backgrounds, and their behaviours in selling rights of Chinese literary works and their own interpretation of their jobs tend to be similar to each other, despite their differences in age, gender, or degree of proficiency. This means that there is collective behaviour among them.

In the second stage of analysis, I read the transcripts repeatedly and searched for recurring themes in terms of the professional activities of China's rights managers, and their strategies that make the translation transfer possible. During this stage, I undertook a relatively detached review of the data collected – new directions of thinking or new interpretations would appear. I categorised two themes to reflect the factors that influence the behaviour of China's rights managers, one is their peripheral status, the other is state intervention. In addition, in this stage of analysis, more queries often occurred. Since my fieldwork was conducted at two different book fairs, and more interviews were conducted at a later stage, I therefore had chances to verify the ideas during the coding process through later interviews and observation. To clarify my queries, I sometimes went back to find a few participants who I had interviewed to ask for more information or clarification through WeChat or email, and most of them were happy to answer my additional questions. The interview excerpts used in the analysis of Chapter 5 were the result of coding the most significant examples to demonstrate the practice of China's rights managers.

### 3.2.3 Publication process of an individual book

#### 3.2.3.1 The selection of the case study and recruitment of key players

To observe the publication journey of a book from China to Anglo-American countries, I chose a case study method, which helps to explain both the process and outcome of a phenomenon (Tellis, 1997). The case study method was chosen to complement the quantitative research and qualitative interviewing and observations, because case studies often can produce detailed qualitative accounts which “not only help to explore or describe the data in real-life environment, but also help to explain the complexities of real-life situations” which may not be captured through other methods, such as experimental or survey research (Zainal, 2007, p.4). By selecting “a very limited number of individuals as the subjects of study” (Zainal, 2007, p.1), the case study method enables a researcher to “closely examine the data within a specific context” (Zainal, 2007, p.1), and “retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events” (Yin, 2003, p.2).

The interview strand of the research which had been done previously also acted as a gateway to recruit interviewees who expressed an interest in discussing projects they had worked on as a potential case study. In the end, I decided to select *Bronze and Sunflower* (Cao, 2015) as my case study. Regardless of the acclaim and prizes it has achieved (see Chapter 6), there were two main reasons for doing so; firstly, I had established contact with the rights manager in the original publishing house of this book from my previous work experience and, in the earlier stage of the research at the LBF, she agreed to be interviewed about this book. Having her as the first participant made it easier to invite and approach other actors involved. Secondly, the English translation of this title was published in the UK in 2015, so the actors involved were likely to have relatively fresh memories about this book’s translation and publication process.

As noted by Yin (2003), a variety of sources of data can be used for case studies, including documents, archival records, artefacts, interviews, and observations (pp.83-96). I relied primarily on interviews with a combination of secondary

documents (such as magazine articles) to conduct the case study. As Gillham (2000) identifies, the major factor in deciding what place interviewing should have in the study is the 'time cost', while in a case study in which only a few key representatives were chosen, "interviewing is practical and probably essential" (p.61). Face-to-face interviewing definitely has overwhelming advantages, however, there are two reasons that I failed to do so for the case study. Firstly, my interviewees were quite dispersed – located in different countries and in different cities. This made it difficult to conduct face-to-face interviews, especially when considering costs of time and money. The other reason is that this round of data collection was conducted between December 2020 to March 2021 during which the COVID-19 Pandemic was raging, so face-to-face data collection was not practical according to suggestions by the University and by both governments in China and the UK. Consequently, all case study-related interviews were conducted through a telephone call, Skype, or an instant communication tool (i.e., WeChat), except one UK based interviewee who preferred to be interviewed through email correspondence.

To invite relevant actors involved in facilitating this book's publication in the UK, as just mentioned, I firstly interviewed the rights manager who turned out to have acted as the initiator of this project. Then based on her introductions, I went on to approach other actors that were mentioned by her as important to the book's publication. Eventually, some key actors that were involved in the publication of this book in the UK were interviewed, including the rights manager, two sub-agents, and the English editor. I approached the interviewees based in the UK via emails, and the sub-agent based in China was contacted through Weibo (a Twitter-and-Facebook-like social network service in China). It needs to be noted that the translator is definitely also a key actor, but I failed to secure her participation after repeated attempts to arrange an interview. However, there are some published interviews with and her own published articles that can be found online. In these materials, she answers a broad range of questions regarding the translation of this book, ranging from how she was involved in the project to her strategies in translating this book. Therefore, although I did not manage to interview her in person, these materials constituted a good source of secondary data which helped to uncover the role of translators in the

cultural carrying process.

In total, 4 key players were interviewed, including one rights manager, two sub-agents (one based in China, and the other one based in the UK), one acquisitioning editor. For the purpose of investigating the publication journey of the selected title from China to the UK, I used the approach of focused interview which, according to Bryman (2012, p.213), refers to an interview using “predominantly open questions to ask interviewees questions about a specific situation or event that is relevant to them and of interest to the research”. During the focused interviews, I encouraged interviewees to recall the publishing story of *Bronze and Sunflower*, in order to understand how they participated in this project and their roles in it. I asked questions from time to time to clarify some issues, for example when I did not understand their answers. And I also tried to probe for more detailed information that may be relevant for the purpose of this study, such as their motivation for becoming involved in the project. Telephone calls (including Skype calls and voice calls through WeChat) varied from half an hour to two hours. Due to the busy schedule of the interviewees, interviews with two of the participants took place over several phone calls, and each phone call was relatively short (around half an hour). After interviews through phone calls, a few interviewees were happy to respond to any additional questions through WeChat for those in China and by email for those in the UK, but there were also several participants who refused to be interviewed again due to busy schedules presumably.

### **3.2.3.2 Data analysis: the case study**

For this strand of interviews, I also transcribed the interview data verbatim. Again, these interviews were sometimes conducted in Chinese, and sometimes in English, so when transcribing, I used the original language the interviews were conducted in. From these interview transcripts, I tried to examine the workflow of the transnational production of book translations, identifying important actors and factors that facilitated its flow from China to English-language countries.



According to Gillham (2000), one fundamental characteristic of case study is that researchers “do not start out with a priori theoretical notions” (p.2), because it cannot be clear what theories/explanations make the most sense until researchers get hold of the data and understand the context. The process of data collection and analysis in case studies, as claimed by Hartley (2004), are developed together iteratively (p.329). During my data collection process and through line-by-line coding of the interview transcripts by hand, key words which indicate the important role of non-human actors such as “the French language”, “the French translation” and “subsidy” “funding” repeatedly emerged which prompted a consideration of the agency of non-human actors in a more pronounced way than the reflections of interviewees on their actions (discussed in Chapter 5). It therefore guided me to use the actor-network theory (Latour, 1996, 1987) as the analytical and methodological tool to understand the process of the specific book’s journey from China to the UK in analysis of the case study. Following the ANT, I reconstruct the step-by-step process of the publication of *Bronze and Sunflower* in the UK. And inspired by Kung (2009) study, which combines both Bourdieu’s sociological concepts and ANT to study the production of Taiwanese literature in the US, this case study was examined through the ANT’s approach of “network-tracing” (Latour, 1996, p.378), combined with Bourdieu’s (1984, 1986) concept of capital to interpret the capacity of each actor and the functioning of the whole network. Furthermore, having followed the actors to map the publication journey of the book, I linked the case study with a wider literature, i.e., the centre-periphery power relations in the transnational literary field, which is the context for previous strands of study (i.e., quantitative analysis on book statistics and qualitative study on rights managers).

In addition, the interview with participants for the case study added more understanding on the wider idea of cultural carriers. Through transcribing and coding interview data for the case study, the role of the book itself and languages on the cross-border travel of *Bronze and Sunflower* from China to the UK emerged. I thus conceptualised the transnational transfer process of this book as a cultural carrying process, and the book and the language were conceptualised as agents in the cultural carrying process. Moreover, the case study interview data supplemented Chapter 5

with more empirical data.

### **3.3 Ethical considerations**

Research ethics is essential to take into consideration when carrying out real world research involving humans (Robson, 2011; Anderson and Corneli, 2018). To make sure the project is conducted in an ethical manner, before doing the fieldwork, an application about research ethics was submitted to the Research Ethics Committee of the University of York and approval for this study was granted. Generally speaking, the interview topics and questions of my study are not sensitive. But as Stake (2000) points out, any qualitative research which collects data about people's personal views and circumstances potentially poses risks, such as loss of employment or self-esteem, to the participants. Also, as most participants in my study were professionals involved in the book trade, topics sometimes related to commercial confidentiality; for example, royalties for copyright, or titles not yet released. So, in my thesis, I was very cautious about revealing any commercial confidentiality, and tried my best to protect personal information and the publishing companies they work for.

As my research applied different data collection methods and relied on different sources of data, I applied different strategies to deal with the issues of informed consent and anonymity and confidentiality. When approaching potential participants of interviews (for both case-study participants and non-case-study participants), I would explain to them in detail the topic and purpose of my research, and how the interview data would be presented in the thesis. Once they agreed to participate, I presented the Letter of Information and the Letter of Consent (copies of these can be found in the Appendix) containing basic information about the research (including the research content, researcher's contact information, and how the data will be stored), specified their rights (including their rights of withdrawal during or after the participation), and the policy of anonymity (or non-anonymity). At the same time, I asked each interviewee if he or she had any questions about the interview or my research, to make sure they fully understand their rights and especially the policy of

anonymity. As Bryman (2012) states such forms give participants the opportunity to be fully informed of the nature of the research and the implications of their participation before they get involved. For face-to-face interviews, I asked the participants to sign the consent form after carefully reading it. For interviews I conducted through telephones, voice calls, and emails, I sent the information sheet and consent form to those participants via email or instant communication tools (e.g., WeChat, and WhatsApp) before actual interviews began, and the interviews would not begin until they replied explicitly that they had read the form and fully understood the content. Due to the different national backgrounds of my participants, I prepared both the Chinese version and the English version of the information sheet and the consent form.

For the two go-along participants, I also presented the information sheet and consent form to them, and go-along participation observation was only conducted after each participant had agreed to the terms specified in the Letter of Information and the Letter of Consent, and returned a signed copy of the consent form. Whereas, for the covert observation, informed consent could not be secured. Covert observation can be a controversial method, especially because of its lack of informed consent, but it can also be justifiable in certain circumstances (Walter and Godbold, 2014). From the perspective of Spicker (2011), “consent becomes morally irrelevant, because the information is beyond the rights of the individual to control” (p.124). In other words, people have implicit consent for their actions in a public space to be observed (Walters and Godbold, 2014). In the context of my research, the observation was conducted at public places – international book fairs, and more importantly, I was very careful to not being involved any issues related to the invasion of privacy in covert observation - I applied covert observation to know the setting, and the collective behaviour of people concerning the research question, so data I collected through covert observation did not contain any personal identifying information.

In terms of the issue of anonymity and confidentiality, I also applied different policies. In short, I used pseudonyms for participants discussed in Chapter 5, yet participants in Chapter 6 were quoted using their real names. In Chapter 5 where both interview

and observation data were used, though some participants of my study were not concerned about remaining anonymous or not, I decided to guarantee the anonymity of all the participants in order to protect those participants who explicitly preferred to be unnamed. In that chapter, I have obscured the participants' identities by using pseudonyms and by not mentioning their workplaces explicitly. For information that might reveal commercial confidentiality, I chose to delete these identifying pieces of information and not to refer to them in my thesis. Whereas, in Chapter 6, which examines one specific book as a case study, the anonymity of my research participants cannot be guaranteed. This is because identifying information about some participants (such as the translator, the publisher) can be easily found in the book's title page, and other participants who are related to the book can also be identified by industry insiders. So, with the permission of these participants, their names are shown in Chapter 6. Besides, all documents in paper, such as signed consent forms, observation field notes have been stored in my personal locker at home. Electric files, such as interview transcripts, records and fieldnotes were stored securely in Google Drive and in my personal password protected computer.

### **3.4 Difficulties and coping strategies**

During the fieldwork, I encountered various difficulties. Below, I will reflect on these obstacles and explain how my methodological choices have been made and adapted to minimise these obstacles.

#### ***3.4.1 Databases for studying the transnational flow of book translations***

In the quantitative strand of the research, the main difficulty came from the incompleteness and inaccuracy of the databases. As mentioned above, the inaccuracy of the Index Translationum database, which unfortunately is the only international database that covers the publication trends of book translations among countries and languages, has been raised by numerous scholars (for example, Donahaye, 2012; Büchler and Trentacosti, 2015 and Büchler et. al., 2011). In addition, to conduct research that offers a clear picture of the publication of book translations

in a specific transnational configuration, the basic information held in bibliographic databases on translation is important and should ideally include identification of the book as a translation, translators' names, details of the original publication, original language, original title, date of publication and place of publication. Through accessing the databases available for this study, I found that all the available databases and their data suppliers failed to recognise the value of comprehensive translation details in their catalogues. Take the British Library's catalogue for example - there are many misclassified entries, and some key information was often incomplete in the BL catalogue. Also, the full details of the original publication, such as the original publisher and the original title were missing from the catalogue record. In my view, this absence may be due to the publishers of the translated books not providing this information in the physical books, and it is also possible because the cataloguers neglect the importance of this kind of information. Without this basic information, the ability to identify a translation, and consequently the ability to analyse the translation trends and characteristics, will be limited. As there is no one comprehensive and reliable database which covers detailed information of book translations in each country and each language, I combined various available databases to present a birds-eye view of the book translations from Chinese to English. Each database served different purposes, and through combining their data, both the structure of the world of book translations, and the publication of Chinese books in English-language countries can be presented.

#### *3.4.2 Fieldwork at international book fairs*

For the qualitative strand of research, I chose the book fairs as the main location of my fieldwork, for recruiting participants, conducting interviews and observation. Generally, international book fairs like the London Book Fair and Beijing International Book Fair can be ideal settings for researchers to gather primary interview and observational data, as already mentioned. However, there were some problems which challenged my experience during the fieldwork. International book fairs offer professionals in the publishing industry opportunities to meet up with peers and competitors from over the world, so preparing and attending book fairs become

important events in publishers' calendars every year. As such, during the course of book fairs, publishers are always busy in all kinds of meetings and events. So, in my fieldwork, except for those I made appointments with in advance, I didn't get as many chances to conduct interviews as I expected. After all, being interviewed by a researcher who may not be helpful to their jobs can be a waste of time, especially when they have more important work to do. So, I would suggest future researchers who are interested in doing fieldwork at book fairs start making appointments with prospective participants at least two months earlier than the starting of the book fair (as I did), because this is when publishers begin to arrange their schedules on the fair, according to my participants' experience. Random visitors may be accommodated, but pre-booked appointments help to secure a time slot for researchers with the participants. However, as I noted earlier, most professionals were very keen to talk with strangers at book fairs, so the main reason that I was turned down was because the schedules of these professionals were fully booked, and they were unable to spare time to talk with a researcher. However, book fairs are still a good venue to recruit new interviewees. As John Thompson (2012) claims, people who work in the publishing industry like to talk because it is an industry of the word. During my fieldwork at the book fairs, all the people I approached seemed happy to talk with me, when they had enough spare time. Even though they were busy, some let me return to them when they were on their lunch break or some of them agreed to set another time after the book fair with me.

Another difficulty in doing fieldwork at book fairs is the noisy environment. I met with some of the participants at their exhibition booth, which is, of course, open to all visitors. During interviews with these participants, we were very often interrupted by visitors. The participants had to spend some time answering enquiries by visitors, sometimes for a few minutes, sometimes for more than half an hour, and on one occasion, our meeting was terminated because the participant had to leave (and the interview was therefore very short). Therefore, I spent plenty of time waiting for participants who left temporarily. Also, another small point worth mentioning is that although the noisy environment would not be a problem for making small talk, when I went back to listen to recordings of interviews, some conversations were very hard

to hear, which added difficulties to the transcribing process.

Due to the practical conditions of book fairs, I eventually chose to use these venues to recruit new participants and to do ethnographic observation rather than to conduct interviews. After realising the problems mentioned above, I started to conduct more interviews in the evenings when the fair closes or after the book fairs. For those participants who could only be interviewed during the opening hours of book fairs, as well as the exhibition booth, a cafe near the exhibition stadium turned out to be a good place to conduct the interview, if the participants agreed. Nevertheless, it needs to be noted that after the book fair, acquisition editors, literary agents and other professionals can be even busier than during the course of the book fair, as they need to consolidate contacts and business conducted during the book fair - for example, chasing up potential projects discussed at the book fair. So, a number of my interviews were moved to a few weeks or months later. In fact, the advantage of conducting interviews at the setting of book fairs overrides its disadvantage. In studying readers' consumption of translated books, Tekgül (2012) chose book-related settings to conduct interviews, such as bookshops and libraries. As he reflected, the contexts helped focus the conversations, and being surrounded by actual books enabled the interviewer to come up with specific follow-up questions. This advantage was also reflected in my own fieldwork experience, in the setting of book fairs, interviewees are in the state of copyright trade, it is easier for them to discuss their jobs and previous experiences in detail.

All in all, though there were some unexpected situations, my fieldwork at the two book fairs was extremely fruitful. Though I had attended book fairs many times when I worked in the publishing industry, these were my first times as a researcher. Talking with people in different job positions provided me with a lens into the world of literary translation and book copyright trade in a broad way and gave me the chance to have a certain distance from the job I was in. Being in an international book fair is like being in a one-stop store, where researchers in the field of publishing, literature or global translation flow can not only meet as many as participants that they may want to interview with, but also gain a lot of industrial knowledge helpful to their

understanding of the field they study.

### *3.4.3 Examining a book translation project as a case study*

When preparing the fieldwork, I initially planned to find projects that were still in development so that I could be involved in observing the projects as they developed in real time, for example being present at every stage or some key stages of the publishing process, such as copyright acquisition, translating and editing. This could have enabled detailed scrutiny of the mediation and negotiation between agents during the publication process. However, the research plan of following an ongoing project eventually had to be altered.

First of all, during my fieldwork at the LBF 2019 and BIBF 2019, I failed to target a current case that could be examined. As shown in Chapter 4, very few Chinese books have been commissioned by English publishers in recent years. Besides, even though the translation rights of some books had been sold to English publishers or had acquired great interest from English editors at book fairs, no one could guarantee whether and when the project might be finally published. In practice, from acquisition to its final publication, the time span can be unpredictable - the publication process of some books could last a few years, and some books may not even be published.

Secondly, there was the obstacle created by the COVID-19 pandemic. In October 2019, I had successfully applied for funding by WUN RMP award, which was intended to allow me to carry out research in two Translation Studies departments in China. I planned to take this opportunity to follow one or two translation projects and collect interview data there. The visit was scheduled for March 2020. However, the funding provider paused all international travelling because of the pandemic, so the plan of visiting then became practically impossible in March, and then the travelling restrictions lasted much longer than anticipated. This therefore caused uncertainty for implementing the data collection and for my research design more broadly. In the end, I had to call off the planned visit and change my research design to adapt to the



situation.

Finally, I decided to choose a book that had already been published as a case study to examine retrospectively through interviewing key participants involved in its translation and publication, and supplemented by other materials, such as media convergence and book reviews and published interviews with the key participants. Fortunately, examining a book translation project in a retrospective way turned out to be a proper choice for my study which concerns the transnational transfer of book translations between two countries/languages. It enabled me to examine the holistic picture of the publication journey of one single book in a more practical and effective way. Nevertheless, when conditions permit, it would still be worth future researchers who are interested in this area trying to conduct a long-term ethnographic observation and following an ongoing publishing project.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

With the aim of providing a full-scale examination of the production of Chinese books in the English literary space through translation, this thesis was conducted as a mixed methods study, combining qualitative and quantitative methods, including statistical analysis, interviews, and observation, as well as a case study following the journey of one Chinese book's publication in the UK market. As reflected in this chapter, a mixed method approach can be well suited to the study of international/transnational translation flow as a holistic and complex action: using quantitative data enabled me, at a macro-level, to present the holistic picture and the historical evolution of transnational flows between China and the Anglo-American countries; and using the qualitative strand of the study helped me to, at a micro-level, examine actions of key players and their interactions and relations which underlie the translation flow. The results of the data analysis will be presented in the next three chapters. In the following chapter, I will begin by providing a statistical analysis of the publication of Chinese books in Anglo-American countries.

## **Chapter 4 The centre-periphery relationship between Chinese and English in the world system of book translations**

The recent focus of globalisation theory on the geographical mobility of persons and de-territorialisation (see for example Lash and Urry, 1994; Appadurai, 1990) tends to emphasise the consequences of speeding up and stretching out the global flows of people, commodities, knowledge, and ideas (Bielsa, 2005). However, such focus overlooks the uneven distribution of power and influence in the global cultural economy. A number of recent studies have demonstrated the hierarchies persisting in various cultural domains, for example the global market of film (Moretti, 2001; Crane, 2014), global contemporary art (Buchholz and Wuggenig, 2005; Quemin, 2015), and the world music (Brandellero and Pfeffer, 2011). These recent empirical studies, which focus on the cultural domain, demonstrate that even in a period of accelerated globalisation, the imbalances between countries and areas are reinforced rather than lessened (Buchholz, 2018).

The status of asymmetrical global exchanges is also reflected in the global flow of book translations. Through examining UNESCO's Index Translationum database, Johan Heilbron (1999) found that the global translation system constitutes a centre-periphery structure: central languages export more books through translation and import less, while countries with peripheral languages import more and export less (Heilbron, 1999). Seeing inter-lingual exchange as a power vector (McMartin, 2019a), Heilbron (1999) proposes that 'book translations constitute a cultural world-system' (Heilbron, 1999, p.433) which is not simply the reflection of the power struggle in the world economy, but has a dynamic of its own. Heilbron's (1999) cultural world-system model provides a structural analysis of the flows of book translations in the globe, which is essential to understand how the production and circulation of book translations works. As McMartin (2019a) argues, the research object of Heilbron is not the world of language, like that explored by De Swaan (1993, 2013), but the world of global publishing.

As the starting point of a thesis which analyses the transnational transfer of book translations from Chinese to English, this chapter draws upon Heilbron's cultural world-system model, examining and understanding the translation flow from Chinese to English within the framework of world-system of book translations. It aims to provide a birds-eye view of the flow of book translations from Chinese/China to English/Anglo-American countries, so as to provide a contextual grounding for further analysis of the practices of book translations from Chinese to English in the following chapters. As Heilbron (2000) argues, understanding this world-system of book translations, and the positions of given languages within it, is "the precondition to understand the role of translations in specific local or national contexts" (p.12). Examining the positions of Chinese and English and its relationship in this world-system is therefore essential to understand the mechanisms of the transnational transfer of book translations from China to Anglo-American countries.

This chapter is divided into two sections. First, by analysing statistics of books translated from Chinese and from English globally, and book copyright trade between China and two main English-speaking countries – the US and the UK - it will give a picture of the global translation system, identifying the position of the Chinese and English languages in it, and the evolutions of book translation flows between these two languages. The second section takes a closer look at Chinese books that have been translated and published in the UK, investigating the publishing trends, and analysing what kinds of Chinese books have been translated and published in the UK and by what kinds of publishers after 1949. While created to serve different purposes, data in this chapter were derived from various different databases, including the Index Translationum, National Copyright Administration of the People's Republic of China (NCAC), and the British National Bibliography (BNB) database of the British Library (as discussed in detail in Chapter 3).

## 4.1 The world-system of book translations

### 4.1.1 An overview of the global flow of books translations

The database I am using is the UNESCO's Index Translationum, which is an international bibliography of translations provided by UNESCO, consisting of "cumulative bibliographical information on books translated and published in about one hundred of the UNESCO Member States since 1979" (Index Translationum, n.d.). As explained in Chapter 3, this is not always reliable, as the statistics in the database are often not consistent with national book statistics (as demonstrated in the following analysis). However, it is the only truly international data for book translations currently available (Donahaye, 2012). Various researchers have outlined the structure of the global book translation system through examining the Index Translationum database (see for example: Heilbron, 1999; Pym and Chrupala, 2004). In this section, I analyse the global flow of book translations, but with a particular focus on two languages - Chinese and English. The database includes data from 1979 and the most recent update year on statistics of Chinese as the original language at the time of my research was 2008<sup>38</sup>, so I set the timespan under study from 1979 to 2008.

According to Index Translationum<sup>39</sup>, the top three original languages in publication since 1979 are English, French and German. Chinese ranks 16th. Figure 1<sup>40</sup> depicts the numbers of books translated from these top three languages and Chinese from 1979 to 2008, comparing specifically English and Chinese publications.

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<sup>38</sup> See <https://www.unesco.org/xtrans/bscontrib.aspx?lg=0>

<sup>39</sup> See <https://www.unesco.org/xtrans/bsstatexp.aspx?crit1L=3&nTyp=min&topN=50>

<sup>40</sup> This figure is extracted through searching "Evolution in time for each original language" on Index Translationum database, see: <https://www.unesco.org/xtrans/bsstatexp.aspx?crit1C=2&crit1L=3&nTyp=min>

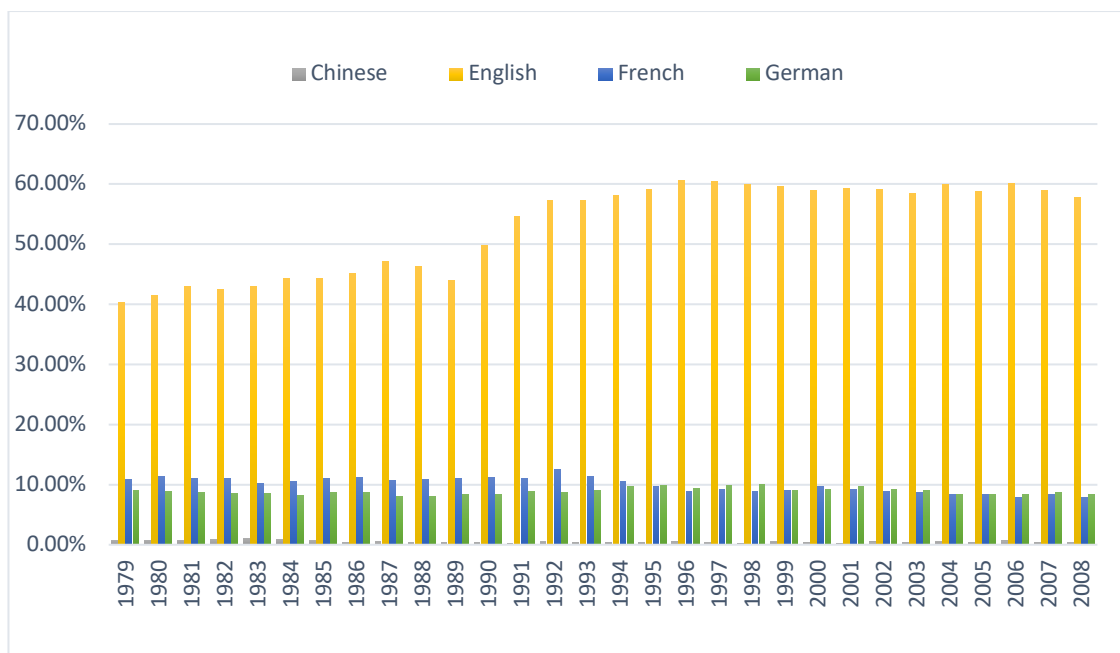


Figure 1. English, French, German and Chinese as original languages in the international market for translations 1979 to 2008. (Source: Index Translationum)

As many researchers including Heilbron (1999) indicate, the international translation system has a three-level structure: English strongly dominates the global market for translation, and a few languages such as German and French occupy a semi-peripheral position, while languages, including Chinese, with a share of less than one percent of the world market belong to the peripheral tier. Figure 1 demonstrates that from 1979 to 2008, as described by Heilbron (1999) in his analysis of an earlier time period, English had a central position, or, to borrow a term from Abram de Swaan (2013), a hyper-central position, accounting for more than 40% of all translated books globally in each year and becoming even more predominant at around 60% from the mid-1990s. The percentage of translations from German and French, as shown in Figure 1, were significantly smaller than books translated from English, which account for around 10% of all translated books globally in each year under study, though German and French are the second and third original languages in the international market for translation. Meanwhile, Chinese as an original language accounted for less than 1% in the global book translation world in most years under study (with the exception of 1.02% in 1982, 1.26% in 1983 and 1.08% in 1984).

Although Figure 1 intentionally depicts only a few languages, it reveals the highly hierarchical structure of the global book translation system over the period, making clear that from 1980 to 2008, it was firmly dominated by English. As Sapiro (2014b, Billiani, 2014) claims, though the translation in the world increases 50% from the 1980s to 2000, the intensification of translation does not necessarily lead to the intensification of international cultural transfer but enhances the domination of English in the global market for book translations, as there is also a concentration of translation around English language. In addition, as Heilbron (1999) argues, this dynamic constellation of global book translations, is a historical system that remains relatively stable. As a result, it is not surprising that the overall number of translations from Chinese has clearly not shown a dramatic change over the period under study.

The central position of English reflects not only the number of book translations from English, but also into English. Allen and Torner (2007) state that English as the world's richest (in economic terms) language is also "one of its most impoverished when it comes to taking in the literary wealth that exists beyond it" (p.190). They argue that English too often ignores whatever is not English, so when it comes to literature, this global language resists and supplants whatever is written in other languages.

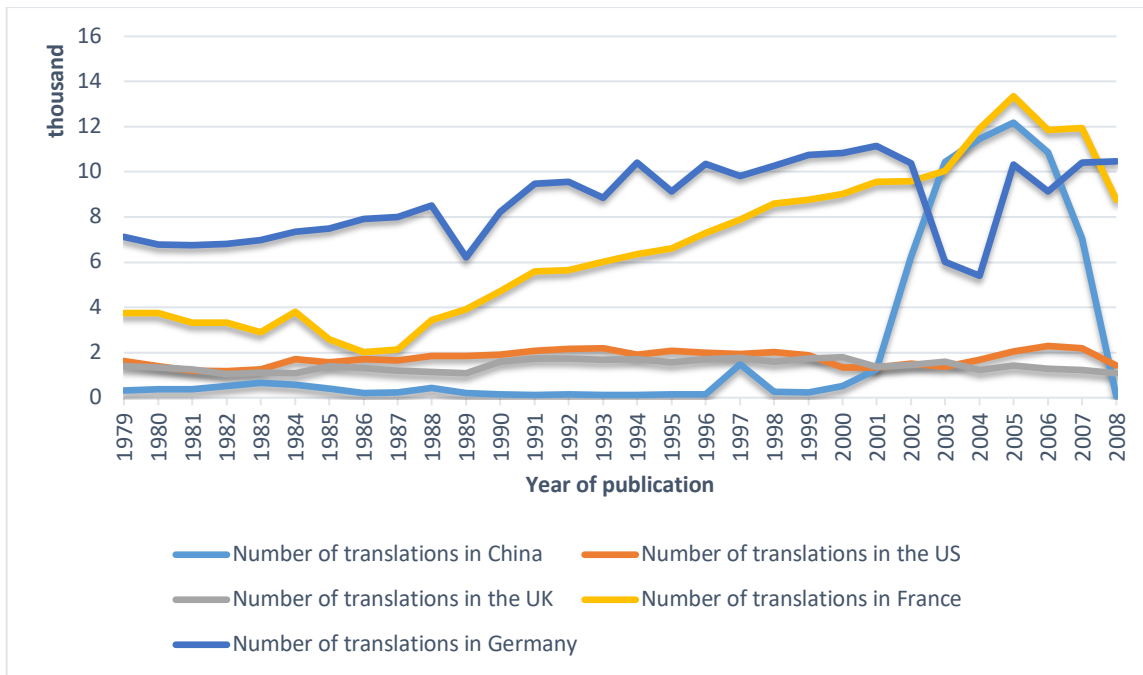


Figure 2. Number of book translations published in China, the US and the UK from 1979 to 2008 (Source: Index Translationum)

Figure 2 shows the evolution of the production of book translations in the UK, the US, France, Germany and China from 1979 to 2008. China’s statistics on publishing book translations were extremely low between 1979 to 2001, however, it experienced a dramatic increase since 2002, and reached its peak in 2005 (with 12,180 books in translation published in China in this year). This reason for this tremendous change since 2002 can be explained by China’s involvement with the international book trade in this period of time. As introduced in Chapter 1, China did not join the international book market until the 1990s. After joining the Berne Convention in 1992 and the WIPO copyright Treaty and the WTO in 2001, China became actively engaged in international copyright trade. This endeavour can be clearly reflected through the statistics. France and Germany, as central languages, have a much higher track record in publishing books in translation than China, the UK and the US, though they have also experienced significant changes during the time under study. However, when it comes to the UK and the US, the numbers of book translations in these two countries have been at a low level, which remains the steady trend.

The low rate of book translations in English countries has been noticed and widely discussed in translation studies, literature and in the book industry. Back in 1995, Lawrence Venuti in his well-known book *The Translator's Invisibility*, revealed the book translation rate in the Anglo-American world: 2.4% books published in 1990 in the UK and 2.96% in the US were translated books, while as comparison, the book translation rate was 9.9% in France in 1985 and 25.4% in 1989 in Italy (Venuti, 1995, p.12). In more recent years, motivated by the small percentage of translated literary works in the US, the University of Rochester launched a website named 'Three percent' in 2007 to help highlight and change this situation. The founders of this website believe that

*'In this age of globalization, one of the best ways to preserve the uniqueness of cultures is through the translation and appreciation of international literary works. To remain among the world's best educated readers, English speakers must have access to the world's great literatures.'* (University of Rochester, 2007)

This 'three-percent issue' is also reflected in the UK book publishing market. Some research regarding the UK's publication of literary translation has appeared in recent years, such as *Three percent? Publishing data and statistics on translated literature in the United Kingdom and Ireland* by Donahaye (2012), and an updated report entitled *Publishing translated literature in the United Kingdom and Ireland 1990-2012 statistical report* in 2015 (Büchler and Trentacosti, 2015). These two reports show that the percentage of literary translation in the UK and Ireland was 2.21% in 2000, 2.65% in 2005 and 2.43% in 2008 (Donahaye, 2012), coinciding with the often-cited 3% figure. The Institut Ramon Llull<sup>41</sup> of Barcelona, together with International PEN<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> It is the 'Ramon Llull Institute' in English, a public body which promotes Catalan language studies at universities abroad, the translation of literature and thought written in Catalan, and Catalan cultural production in wide range of other areas, such as theatre, film and music (Institut Ramon Llull, 2022).

<sup>42</sup> A worldwide association of writers, aiming to promote friendship and intellectual cooperation among writers everywhere. Founded in London in 1921, the association now has autonomous International PEN centres in over 100 countries (Wikipedia, 2022).



Club, published a report in 2007, “To be translated or not to be – PEN/IRL report on the international situation of literary translation” (Allen, 2007). It assesses the global usage of English as a language, and the current state of literary translation in the English-speaking world, arguing that English can truly become a bridge between literature if the English-language cultures open themselves up and increase the number of translations into English. It also illustrates translation-related practices from different countries and regions, which provide good examples for translation-related practitioners and people committed to promoting international cultural exchange. This three-percent issue corresponds with one of the features of the world-system of book translations that Heilbron (1999) outlines. As he indicates, the regularities of importation of book translations can also reflect the structure of the world-system of translation: the more central a language is in the international translation system, the smaller the proportion of translations into this language (Heilbron, 1999, p.439). Therefore, as can be shown in Figure 2, the UK and the US, which use the most central language – English – tend to have the lowest proportion of translations in their own book production. The argument is also in line with what Even-Zohar (1990) states in polysystem theory, that the position of translated literature in a culture which perceives itself to be strong or self-sufficient is likely to be marginal (Even-Zohar, 1990).

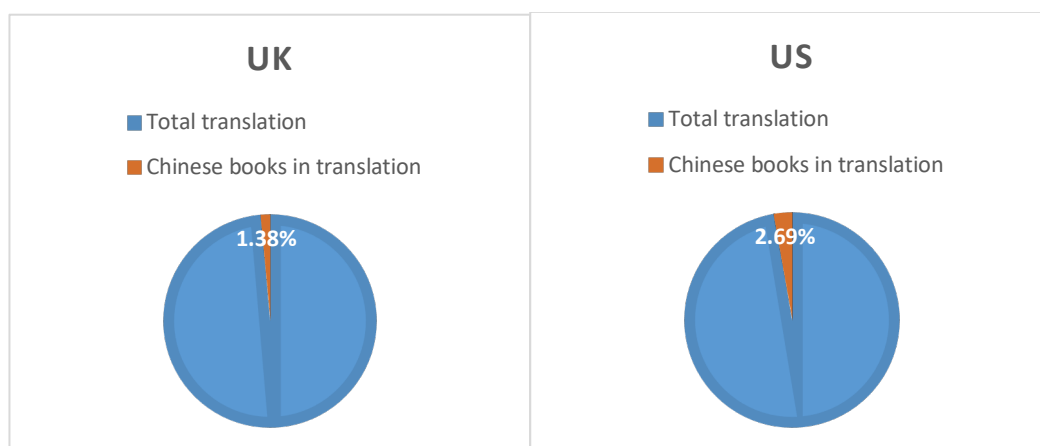
Having recognized that publishers in the UK and the US publish very few books in translation, it is worthwhile examining the number of Chinese books that get translated in the UK. According to the Index Translationum database<sup>43</sup>, the accumulated publication of book translations in the UK and the US since 1979 is 42646 and 52515 respectively, in the whole Index Translationum database. For books translated from Chinese to English in the UK and in the US, the record shows only 587 and 1413 respectively<sup>44</sup>. So, the percentage share of Chinese to English translated

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<sup>43</sup> This data was accessed on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2022.

<sup>44</sup> From these figures, we see that the statistics of Index Translationum are incomplete. In terms of the UK statistics, the data of Index Translationum show a great inconsistency with those of the British Library. But as mentioned earlier, it is so far the only publicly accessible database about global flow of book translations, so it can serve the purpose of examining the

books amounted to only 1.38% of all the translated books published in the UK and 2.69% in the US (as shown in Figure 3).



*Figure 3. Percentage of book translations from Chinese among all translated books in the UK and the US since 1979 (Source: Index Translationum)*

According to the Index Translationum database, from 1979 to 2008, English was much more frequently translated out of than it was translated into: English translations account for more than 40% of the global translation production during the time under study, but publishers in the UK and the US published a very small amount of foreign books in English translation, as suggested by the widely discussed ‘three percent issue’. And among all the 3% book translations that the US and the UK have published, Chinese books in English translation account for no more than 3%. Chinese as an original language had a very low level in terms of book translation exchange, and this peripheral position did not change much over the period under study, especially compared with translations from English. Nevertheless, as Figure 2 suggests, since 2002, China has been engaging more and more with the international market of book translations.

In order to show a more recent development, as well as the evolution of the translation flow between China and Anglo-American countries (which the Index Translationum database cannot satisfy for this purpose), I shall use China’s national

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proportion of Chinese books in both the UK and the US.

statistics to examine the book copyright trade between China and the two main English-speaking countries, the US and the UK.

#### *4.1.2 The flow of book translations between China and Anglo-American countries*

To elucidate the disparity of recent book translations between Chinese and English, given the fact that book copyright trade is the way to acquire and authorise translation rights, in this section I will use statistics on the book copyright trade between China and two main English-speaking countries, the US and the UK. English is the primary language of the UK, the US, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland and more than two dozen other countries, and it plays an official role in government alongside one or more other languages in many countries, such as India and the Philippines (Allen, 2007). The US and the UK are the two main English-language copyright trade partners with China: according to statistics from the NCAC, among all English-speaking countries, China acquires the most English translation rights from these two countries.

The database I am using is from the National Copyright Administration of the People's Republic of China (NCAC, n.d.). As the website of the governmental organisation of China only provides statistics from 2000 to 2019, my analysis below will be limited to this period. Also, it needs to be noted that copyright acquisition does not necessarily secure the translation and publication of certain books, because in reality, publishers who acquire the authorization may not be able to translate and publish the books in due course for various reasons, such as the publisher being unable to find a suitable translator before the authorization is withdrawn. However, the statistics of the book copyright trade can still, to some extent, reflect the flow of book translations.

Before examining China's copyright trade with the US and the UK, I shall firstly give a picture of China's copyright trade<sup>45</sup> globally. As can be seen in Table 1 and Figure 4,

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<sup>45</sup> It is noteworthy that China has also exported copyright in simplified or traditional Chinese to Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan, and some other Asian countries, meaning that some countries and regions have bought only the reprint rights in Chinese instead of the right of translation into other languages.

since the start of the period, China’s copyright trade has by and large been in deficit as measured by ratio of imports to exports. According to the data, since 2000, the total number of book copyright imports has been greater than that of book copyright exports. Nevertheless, starting from 2003, the ratio of imports to exports steadily dropped, until recent years, when it has been relatively balanced. In 2019, the ratio between imports to exports was only 1.15:1, with 13680 copyrights exported and 15684 imported. This phenomenon reflects China’s efforts on cultural exports, especially since the early 2000s, as will be analysed later (in section 2.2).

*Table 1: Number of imported and exported book copyrights from and to China (Source: NCAC)*

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of imported copyrights</b>	<b>Number of exported copyrights</b>	<b>Ratio of imports to exports</b>
2000	7343	618	11.88:1
2001	8250	653	12.63:1
2002	10235	1317	7.77:1
2003	12516	811	15.43:1
2004	10040	1314	7.64:1
2005	9382	1434	6.54:1
2006	12386	2057	6.02:1
2007	10255	2571	3.99:1
2008	15776	2440	6.47:1
2009	12914	3103	4.16:1
2010	13724	3880	3.54:1
2011	14708	5922	2.48:1
2012	16115	7568	2.13:1
2013	16625	7305	2.28:1
2014	15542	8088	1.92:1
2015	15458	7998	1.93:1
2016	16587	8328	1.99:1
2017	17154	10670	1.61:1

2018	16071	10873	1.48:1
2019	15684	13680	1.15:1

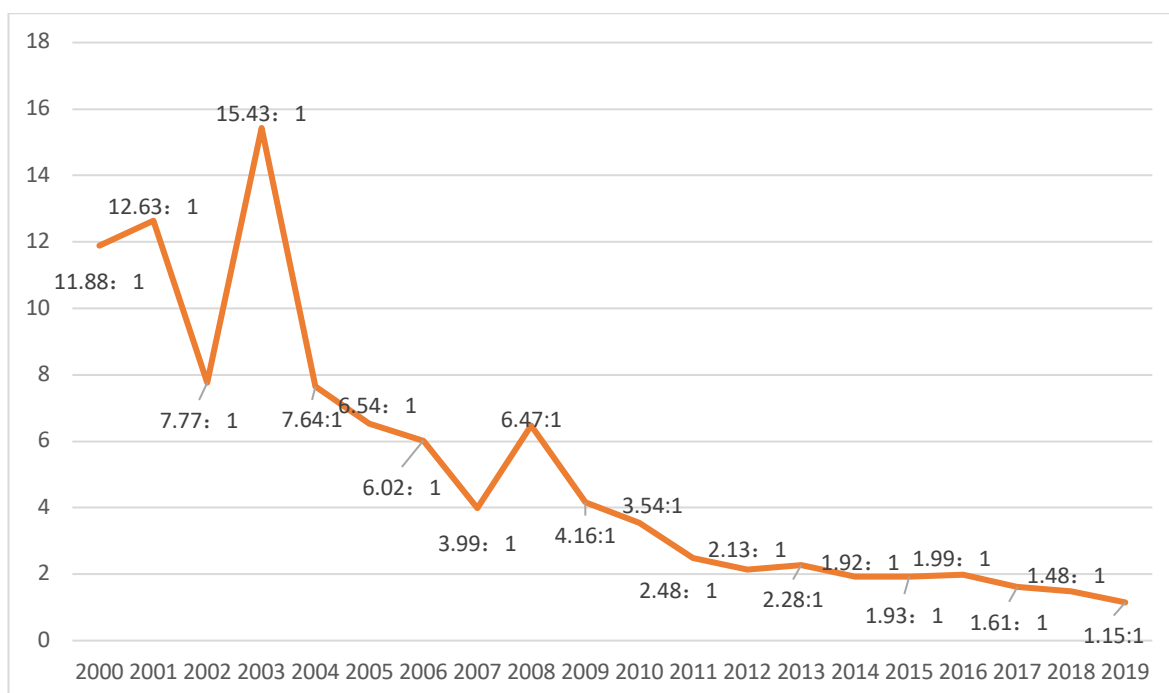


Figure 4: Ratio of book copyright exports and imports from and to China from 2000 to 2019. (Source: NCAC)

Though the total number of book copyright exports has been steadily increasing, and the ratio of imports to exports has been gradually decreasing (as shown in Table 1 and Figure 4), China’s copyright trade with the US and the UK was still in deficit over the analysed period (see Table 2 and Figure 5). Figure 5 shows the trend in China’s book copyright trade with the UK and the US. From 2000 to 2019, the number of imported book copyrights from the US and the UK far exceeded the number of exported book copyrights to the US and the UK. In sharp contrast to China’s substantial rights acquisitions from the US and the UK, these two countries acquired very significantly lower numbers of book copyrights from China. In 2003, the deficit reached its highest – copyrights of 8011 titles from the UK and the US were sold into China, whereas only 7 copyrights of Chinese titles were sold into these two countries. While China’s book copyright exports to the US and the UK show fluctuations over the period and the amount of book exports showed some increases, alongside a

sharp drop in the ratio of imports to exports between 2000 to 2007, there is still an enormous gap between book copyright imports and exports between China and the US and the UK. In 2019, the ratio of imports and exports was still as high as 6.9:1, with 7643 book copyrights imported from the US and the UK, and only 1107 exported to these two countries.

*Table 2. Book copyright trade between China and Anglo-American countries (US and UK) (Source: NCAC)*

Year	Book copyright imports from US and UK		Book copyright exports to US and the UK		Ratio of imports to exports
	US	UK	US	UK	
2000	2937	1224	3	2	832.2:1
2001	3201	1129	6	1	618.57:1
2002	4544	1821	9	6	424.33:1
2003	5506	2505	5	2	1144.43:1
2004	4068	2030	14	16	203.27:1
2005	3932	1647	16	74	61.99:1
2006	2957	1296	147	66	19.97:1
2007	3878	1635	196	109	18.08:1
2008	4011	1754	122	45	34.52:1
2009	4533	1847	267	220	13.10:1
2010	5284	2429	1147	178	5.82:1
2011	4553	2256	766	422	5.73:1
2012	4944	2581	1021	606	4.63:1
2013	5489	2521	753	574	6.04:1
2014	4840	2655	734	410	6.55:1
2015	4840	2677	887	546	5.25:1
2016	5201	2873	932	290	6.61:1
2017	6217	2835	592	421	8.94:1
2018	4833	3317	912	476	5.87:1
2019	4234	3409	614	493	6.90:1

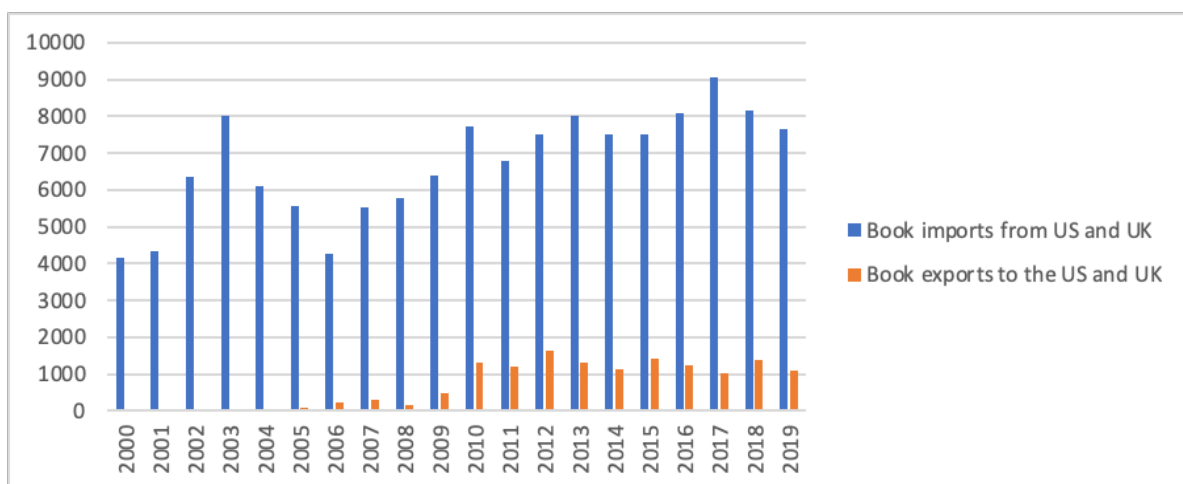


Figure 5. The trend of books exported from China to US and UK and imported from the USA and UK to China (Source: NCAC)

In this section, I have used data extracted from UNESCO’s Index Translationum, to illustrate the evolution of books translated from English and from Chinese in the time period 1979 to 2008, and examine the percentage of Chinese books translated and published in the UK and the US. As shown in Figures 1 and 2, the supremacy of English became more pronounced after the 1990s. This showed that English has dominated the book translation market as an original language, and its supremacy became even more pronounced after the 1990s (see Figure 1). While by comparison, books translated from Chinese were very limited in the global book market (see Figure 1) and in the book markets of the US and the UK (see Figure 3). To highlight the centre-periphery relations of Chinese and English in the cultural world-system (Heilbron, 1999), while revealing a more recent evolution of the translation flows between them, I used more recent statistics derived from the National Copyright Administration of the People’s Republic of China (NCAC), observing the overall evolution of China’s book copyright trade with foreign countries, and book copyright trade between China and two main English-speaking countries - the US and the UK – in particular. It showed that from 2000 to 2019, China’s book copyright exports to abroad saw an overall increase, which grew sharply especially after 2004. This means that China’s book copyright deficit with other countries overall has been levelling off, and book translations from Chinese may recently present a growth in the international book translation market. However, when it comes to book copyright trade with the US and the UK, the deficit in copyright trade has existed throughout the period. Even until

very recently, in 2019, the ratio of imports and exports was still 6.9:1. So, there was still an enormous gap between book copyright imports and exports between China and the US and the UK from 2000 to 2019, and the 'cultural trade deficit' with the UK and the US is still distinct presently.

In the next section, by drawing upon UK national publication statistics, I will move on to provide a more detailed analysis on the evolution of the publication of Chinese to English book translations and bibliographical information (categories of books and publishers) about these publications.

## **4.2 The publication of Chinese literature translated in the UK**

### *4.2.1 The database*

Regarded as the single most comprehensive listing of contemporary UK publications, the British National Bibliography (BNB) lists new books and serials published or distributed in the UK and the Republic of Ireland since 1950 (BL, n.d.). There is no other publicly accessible bibliography or systematic collection of Chinese books which have been translated and published in the UK. Due to the very limited availability of reliable databases, the BNB of the British Library (BL) becomes a suitable source of data, enabling us to explore the annual number and specific characteristics of Chinese to English book translations in the UK.

The raw dataset was acquired through BL's metadata service, which consists of all Chinese books in English translation stored in the British Library since its records began<sup>46</sup>, including: 1) Chinese books in English translation published or distributed in the UK. Under UK legal deposit legislation since 1662, the British Library is entitled to receive a copy of items published or distributed in the UK within one month of

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<sup>46</sup> This dataset was provided to myself by the British Library Metadata Service (<https://www.bl.uk/collection-metadata/metadata-services#>) through email correspondence with [metadata@bl.uk](mailto:metadata@bl.uk).



publication<sup>47</sup>. 2) Any Chinese to English translated books received by the BL through donation or purchasing. In addition to the legal deposit, the BL also selectively purchases publications for the collection in accordance with selection criteria in force at the time and may also acquire collection items through donation or by exchange. These books are normally published in other countries, so they will be removed from the statistics for the purpose of my study.

#### *4.2.2 The publishing trend of books translated from China in the UK from 1949 to 2020*

The extracted data set discussed here comprises all Chinese to English translations published in the UK from 1949 to 2020. As the raw dataset provided by the BL includes the British National Bibliography (BNB) Number<sup>48</sup>, country of publication, original language, year of publication, I am able to extract precisely those books that were translated from Chinese to English and published or distributed in the UK (including those co-published with publishers from other countries). The BNB is based on the BL's legally deposited holdings, so entries in the BNB were allocated a BNB number. The filtered dataset therefore contains a large part of the publication of Chinese books in translation published in the UK<sup>49</sup>.

To process the data, I first deleted all entries without BNB numbers, and filtered for books that were published in the UK (this includes books co-published with publishers from other countries). Some books are collected works translated from various languages, I kept only those books in this category that were originally translated from Chinese. Then I extracted data on books published in the period from 1949 to

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<sup>47</sup> Prior to 2013, this only applied to print, and since 2013, non-print publications have been included.

<sup>48</sup>For more information about BNB, see <https://www.bl.uk/bibliographic/natbib.html>  
Legal deposit has been part of English law since 1662. As explained by the Metadata service, the BNB number was assigned to all books received under legal deposit legislation since 1950, and these books have been recorded in the BNB.

<sup>49</sup> It needs to be noted that, as explained by a librarian from the BL to myself, there are still possibilities of missing information on the record due to, for example, publishers failing to post the published books, or because the books went missing over the years.

2020. Before proceeding with the analysis of the data, it is necessary to make a few remarks. Firstly, due to publishing system differences in Mainland China, and in the other two major centres of Chinese-language publications of Taiwan and Hong Kong, I had intended to exclude books originally published in Hong Kong and Taiwan. But this dataset lacks information about the original publisher, and information on some books is not accessible via other resources, so it is probable that some books under study were originally published not only in Mainland China, but also in other Chinese-language areas. Secondly, China has 302 living languages listed in Ethnologue (accessed in 2019). The most used ethnic minority languages include Mongolian, Tibetan, Uyghur and Zhuang. My focus here is on China's predominant language – Chinese, the official language in China, which is also known as Hanyu or Han language. This dataset contains entries originally written in Chinese minority languages, but since “Chinese” was recorded as their original language by the BL, it is impractical to filter all entries that are not written in Chinese but in Chinese minority languages. Therefore, for analysis of the overall publishing trend, these entries were kept, but in the sample year analysis (in section 2.3.1), books written in Chinese minority languages were removed. Thirdly, some titles have been recorded several times in the BNB dataset as they may be published in various forms. Again, in the analysis of the overall publishing trend I kept these entries, but in the sample year analysis, I only included only one entry per title.

Figure 6 shows the trend in the publication of Chinese literature in the UK between 1949 and 2020<sup>50</sup>. The horizontal axis represents the years, and the vertical axis represents the number of books.

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<sup>50</sup> For serials which publish over several years, I chose to use the starting year as the date of publication.

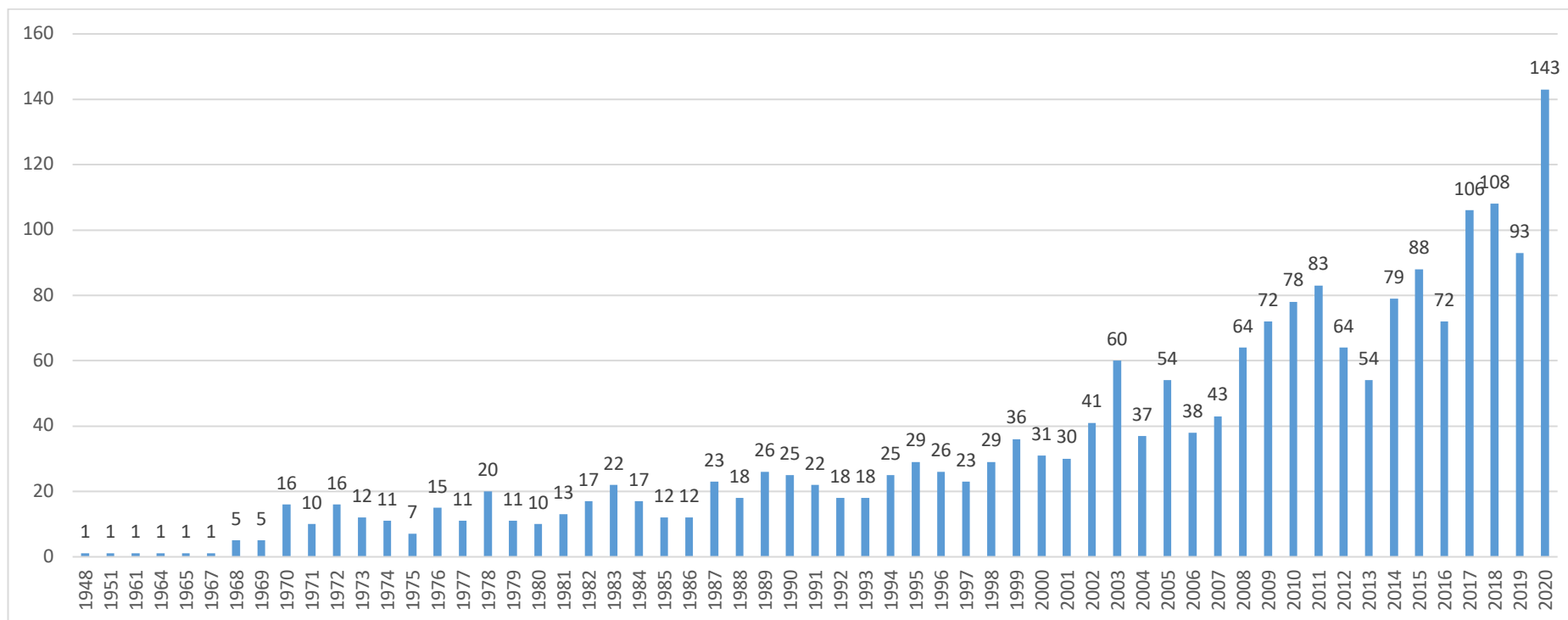


Figure 6. Publication of Chinese to English translated books in the UK from 1949<sup>51</sup> to 2020 (Source: The BNB by the BL)

<sup>51</sup> The analysis aims to show the publishing trend of Chinese translated books in the UK since 1949 (the founding year of “New China”), but the earliest record of Chinese to English book translations in this dataset is in 1948, which happens to be very close to the year of 1949, and there is only one title that was published in this year, so I have kept the record for 1948 in this figure.

As we can see, although there are annual fluctuations, the overall trend is towards an increase in the amount of Chinese to English translated books from 1949 to 2020, even though the numbers themselves are not large. The first shallow peak happened in 1978 when China's Reform and Opening up policy started. Chinese scholars (Wu and Jiang, 2018; He, 2016; Wei, 2012) have divided the history of China's outward book translation into two periods, using 1979 as the dividing line: from 1949 to 1978, China's outward book translation served political diplomacy with the aim of external ideological publicity; from 1979, under the influence of international market forces, China started its reform and opening up with book translation in the publishing industry as part of this (Wang, 2016).

The overall trend after 1993 is an increase compared with the period of 1949 to 1992. This growth could be explained by China's engagement in the international book trade after joining the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works (the 'Berne Convention' in short) in 1992. As introduced in Chapter 1, the Berne Convention established in 1886, requires publishers to buy distribution or translation rights for books under copyright protection from their rights holder (Sapiro, 2016b). Although China did not join the Convention until 1992, which was relatively late compared with other players in the international market, its recognition stimulated China's international book trade with other countries under the regulation of a Western mode (more discussions on China's engagement in book copyright trade with Anglo-American countries can be found in Chapter 5). So, the lack of a legal framework before 1992 partly explains the disparity between Chinese and English in terms of the outgoing of book translations.

From 2006, there was an explicit increase in Chinese translated books published in the UK (see Figure 6), which can be explained by the support of the Central government of China. As introduced in Chapter 1, China's weak position in the cultural glow at the global scale drew attention of the central government in the early 2000s, and a set of new policies was promulgated under the initiative of 'Cultural Going Out', to encourage and stimulate the exportation of cultural goods from China. China Book International (CBI), as mentioned in Chapter 1, is subsidised by the State

Council Information Office (SCIO) of China, and started in 2004. The efforts of CBI are clearly reflected in Figure 6: from 2004, the number of Chinese books in English translation grew rapidly in the UK, though there are a few drops, such as in 2006, 2012 and 2013. The Goethe Institute has pointed out that the translation subsidy provided by a country being nominated 'Guest of Honour' or 'Market Focus' in prestigious book fairs (whatever the book fair calls it) boosts the translation of books from this country to other foreign territories (Schwarz, 2014). Similarly, as 2012 saw China as the "Market Focus" at the London Book Fair, a three-year programme of activity led in the UK by the British Council and the Publishers Association (Bakhshi and Schneider, 2015), we see in Figure 6 an increase in the number of books translated from Chinese after 2013.

Overall, though literary exchange between Chinese and English can be traced back to the seventeenth-century, China's involvement in the international trade of book translations started only in more recent decades. Hence, China remains a relative newcomer in this transnational literary field and the presence of Chinese books in the UK has been very limited in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>th</sup> centuries, despite the fact that China, as the country with the largest population in the world and a long literary tradition, has plentiful writers who produce literary works each year (Chen, 2007). From my interpretation of the statistical data, I find that the internationalisation and modernisation of the Chinese publishing industry give rise to the increase of numbers of Chinese books translated into English. The publishing trend of Chinese to English translations has been influenced deeply by Chinese cultural export policies, including the translation subsidy supported by the Chinese government. The strong link between China's internationalisation and modernisation efforts and the publishing trend also suggests that in the transnational flow from periphery to the centre, the peripheral players work actively and strive to negotiate their position in the transnational field (more discussion of this point can be found in Chapter 5). To support this argument, it would also be informative to investigate the role of subsidy in the publication of Chinese translated books in the UK. Yet it is unfortunate that Chinese subsidy providers do not release information about funded books on their websites, and this information cannot be fully accessed in any other publicly available

database. Nevertheless, I will return to this point in the next chapter, drawing upon interview data with publishers involved in publishing Chinese books in English translation.

#### *4.2.3 UK publication of Chinese books in English translation*

In the above analysis, it has been shown that the global book translation field is dominated by English and that Chinese has had a peripheral place in this field. And as shown above in the overview of the publishing trend of Chinese to English book translations in the UK, though Chinese books published in the UK are very low in number, the translation trend has been growing. This raises further questions: which Chinese books get translated and published? And who are the publishers? In the following section of the chapter, I will provide a detailed analysis of the Chinese books that have been translated in the UK in a sample year, and the publishers who published them, according to the BNB database from 1949 to 2020.

##### **4.2.3.1 Book category analysis**

In the BNB database from 1949 to 2020, information on each book's category or genre is incomplete. Considering that this information is helpful in analysing the translation flow from China to the UK, I have added two types of classification to identify the category of each book. One type of classification is based on the Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) Numbers, through which the general content of certain books can be understood. The other is the classification into either classics or contemporary works<sup>52</sup>. This classification helps to distinguish the symbolic capital of the works: the classics are those works which have earned recognition and accumulated symbolic capital; the contemporary works are potentially in the process of becoming classics, and so their symbolic capital is in the process of becoming. Also

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<sup>52</sup> Scholars of Chinese literary history often define 1917 as the starting point for Chinese modern literature (中国现代文学), and 1949 as the starting year for Chinese contemporary literature (中国当代文学) (Yuan, 2014). I categorised books that were written before 1917 as classics, and contemporary works here include modern literature (after 1917 to 1949) and contemporary literature (after 1949 to present). More details for this classification can be found in Chapter 3.

practically, translating classics does not require translation rights according to international copyright law, which means for English publishers who publish these classics, their economic outlay in terms of copyright trade is minimal<sup>53</sup>.

To look further at the content of Chinese books that have been published in the UK through translation, I have randomly chosen 2013 as a sample year for analysis. When processing the data, I removed one duplicate and one misclassified entry (they may be mistakes in the recording process). And three books with both paperback form and digital form were listed as separate entries, so such books were only counted once. As shown in Table 3, there are 49 titles in total under study. The majority of Chinese books in translation published in 2013 were contemporary works, accounting for 84%, and there were 8 classics translated in this year, which accounted for 16%.

*Table 3. Overview of UK publication of Chinese translated books in the UK in 2013 (The BNB by the BL)*

Classics			Contemporary works		
Subcategory	Number	Percentage	Subcategory	Number (%)	Percentage
Religion	6	12%	Literature	22	45%
Philosophy	1	2%	Social Science	12	25%
Social Science	1	2%	Technology	4	8%
			History and Geography	3	6%
<b>Total classic works</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>Total contemporary works</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>84%</b>
Total:49					

<sup>53</sup> If a publisher acquires a book whose author died over 70 years ago, then according to the copyright law, the publisher does not pay for the translation rights for the book.

In 2013, classics from Chinese were a small proportion of the UK book market. These classics are mainly about religion (classics of Buddhism, Taoism, etc, for example *Tranquil sitting: a Taoist journal on meditation* and *Chinese medical qigong*). There is also one book of philosophy: *The book of Master Mo “墨子”*, and one social science work: *The Art of War “孙子兵法”*, which is an ancient Chinese military treatise. Besides these, there are three books regarding traditional Chinese medicine or health and wellbeing approached through classical Chinese wisdom. But because these books were written by contemporary writers, they were categorised in contemporary works (for example, *Gold mirrors and tongue reflections: the cornerstone classics of Chinese medicine tongue diagnosis*, and *Chinese medical qigong*). The UK publishers' willingness to publish Chinese classics shows that classical Chinese culture is still a focus of interest in the UK, which means that the historical symbolic capital of Chinese literature is still valued by the UK book market.

Of the contemporary works, the majority are literature, amounting to 45%, followed by social science (25%), technology (8%) and history and geography (6%). Most books categorised as social science are academic works featuring China's contemporary social and economic conditions (for example, *Analysis & forecast on China's rural economy 2012-2013*, *China's regional development: review and prospect*); other books address times of suffering in Chinese history (for example, *Tombstone: the untold story of Mao's great famine*, studying the 1958-62 Great Famine in China). Books in the category of technology are either about traditional Chinese medicine (for example: *Chinese medical qigong*) or academic works in the technology area (for example: *Dynamic well testing in petroleum exploration and development*). Of the three books in the category of history and geography, two are about China's social and economic development - *Strengthen the Country and Enrich the People: the reform writings of Ma Jianzhong*, and *China in Ten Words* - and the third is an academic work on relationships between China and the Soviet Union during the 1950s - *Mao, Stalin and the Korean War: trilateral communist relations in the 1950s*. In general, the majority of these works categorised as social science, technology and history and geography are documentary or sociological works (except those about



traditional Chinese medicine or health and wellbeing), examining the economic and/or social development of contemporary China, or studying its history in modern times.

In terms of the category of contemporary literature, through accessing the promotion material of the 22 contemporary fiction books, I found that except for four titles which I cannot find book information for online (it is possible that these books are published by very small independent publishers), 10 of them are about personal trauma at a special historical time in modern China, such as the Cultural Revolution, the Tiananmen Square event. In addition, it is worthwhile to note that nine titles among the 22 contemporary works are censored books - they are either written by dissident writers (for example, Ma Jian) or regarded as controversial or sensitive under Chinese censorship principles (for example, *K: the art of love* was deemed as a defamation of the dead, and it was therefore banned in China). And the sensational nature and the banned status of these books are all highlighted in the promotion materials. Translation is a primary instrument which enables one culture to learn about another, while at the same time, it “constructs its image of that other culture” (Bassnett, 2014, p.32). Studying how China is represented in English translations of contemporary Chinese literature, through a careful examination at the English translations of works by a few Chinese contemporary writers, Lee (2015) argues that literary translation is part of a wider programme of Anglophone textual practices that renders China a repressive, dystopic Other. Through examining the English translation of one of Mo Yan’s novels, Xiao and Zheng (2015, p155) also conclude that “translation is a transformative, constructive and performative action deeply grounded in the cultural and social context of the target language”. We can thus reasonably speculate that the very motivation for Anglo-American publishers to translate and publish these Chinese works is to construct an image of China which conforms to the Western understanding of Chinese history, culture and politics. In summary, through examining Chinese contemporary works published in the UK in 2013, it can be seen that most are either about contemporary Chinese social or economic conditions, or stories or memoirs during specific historical times of China. No matter what categories these works belong to, the English translations of these

Chinese works can all be conceived as social documents for an English readership to understand China as the Other.

Wilt Idema and Lloyd Haft (1997) claimed two decades ago that the interest of Westerners about Chinese literature for a long time was mainly philosophical and historical texts, namely Classical Chinese culture. Through the data presented above, it is reasonable to argue that both contemporary works and classic genres, such as ancient philosophy and regional works have been commissioned to be translated into English in recent times, though the contemporary works are mainly appreciated for their socio/historical interest above their literary quality, with the aim being to construct an image of China which conforms to Western understandings and perspectives of contemporary China. In addition, scholars in China generally agree that whereas Western literature has enjoyed an enthusiastic reception in China, contemporary Chinese literature is known to few scholars and largely unknown to lay readers in the West (see for example Wang and Fan, 1999; Ning, 2008; Gu, 2014; Zhang, 2015). This argument resonates with Richard Jacquemond's (1992) point regarding the phenomenon of hegemony in literary translation; literary works translated from dominated languages are "hardly received beyond very closed circles of specialists and 'concerned' readers", while translations from a dominant language can be received by a much broader readership from the dominated culture (p.139).

#### **4.2.3.2 Publisher analysis**

By accessing the online websites of publishers, the type of publishers can be assessed based on the 'about us' section on their website. These publishers can be classified into five clusters – large conglomerates, their imprints, independent publishers, university presses<sup>54</sup> and academic publishers. After removing duplicated and misclassified entries, a total of 496 different publishers have been engaged in

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<sup>54</sup> Many University Presses also publish trade books, so I distinguish them from pure academic publishers here. But it needs to be noted that some books published by University Presses under study should be counted as academic publishing.

publishing Chinese books in English translation in the UK from 1949 to 2020<sup>55</sup>. As can be seen in Table 4, there are only 29 publishers that have published 10 titles or more. The other 377 publishers (not shown in the table) have published less than 10 titles: 302 of them have published 3 titles or less (28 published 3 titles; 65 published 2 titles; and 209 published 1 title). Within the top 29 publishers shown in Table 4, there are 1 large publishing conglomerates, 3 imprints in large publishing conglomerates, 12 independent publishers, 7 academic publishers, and 6 university presses.

*Table 4. Publishers which have published more than 10 Chinese to English translated books in the UK from 1949 to 2020 (Source: The BNB by the BL)*

<b>Publisher</b>	<b>Number of titles</b>	<b>Type of publisher</b>
Routledge	223	Academic press
Penguin	107	Large publishing conglomerate
Columbia University Press	92	University press
Head of Zeus	60	Independent press
Paths International	52	Academic press
Shambhala	47	Independent press
Vintage	42	Imprint in large publishing conglomerate
Cambridge University Press	39	University press
Oxford University Press	37	University press
Snowflake	33	Independent press
Palgrave Macmillan	30	Academic press
Collins	29	Academic press
ACA Publishing	27	Academic Press
Singing Dragon	27	Independent press

<sup>55</sup> There are 34 entries with no information on the publisher, so they are removed. And some publishers may be recorded as a wrong name, as they cannot be found online. Also, it needs to be noted that some entries in the database contain two or more publishers which are based in more than one country, which means some publishers in the processed data are non-UK publishers, these books are then distributed in the UK, but published in other countries.

M.E. Sharpe	26	Academic press
Carreg <sup>56</sup>	23	Independent press
University of California Press	22	University press
Chatto & Windus	19	Imprint in large publishing conglomerate
W. Dolby	19	Independent press
Bloomsbury	18	Independent press
Yale University Press	15	University press
Brill	14	Academic press
Faber & Faber	14	Independent press
Rider	14	Imprint in large publishing conglomerate
Arcturus	13	Independent press
Princeton University Press	12	University press
Watkins Publishing	12	Independent press
Diamond	11	Independent press
Anvil	10	Independent press

As the top 29 publishers produce around half of the total Chinese books in English translation in the UK, we shall use them to examine what type of publishers produce the most Chinese to English literary translations. As shown in Figure 7, the most common type of publisher engaged in publishing books translated from Chinese was the independent publisher (41%, 12 out of 29), followed by University Presses (21%, 6 out of 29) and Academic publishers (24%, 7 out of 29). Large publishing houses and their imprints together accounted for 14% among the 29 publishers. By examining the number of titles published by each type of publisher (see Figure 8), we find that from 1949 to 2020, among the top 29 publishers, 37% books were published by academic presses, followed by independent publishers (26%), University presses (20%), and large conglomerates (7%) and their imprints (10%).

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<sup>56</sup> The type of 'Carreg' cannot be identified. I categorise it as an independent press by virtue of a guess. Carreg is probably a Welsh language publisher, given that Carreg is Welsh for 'stone'. There is a similarly named Welsh publisher called Gwas Carreg Gwalch in the small town of Llanrwst in Mid-Wales. See: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gwasg\\_Carreg\\_Gwalch](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gwasg_Carreg_Gwalch).

It was found that academic presses and university presses together published the majority of Chinese-English translated books (totalling 57%) between 1949 and 2020. These books were mainly distributed in the academic market segment<sup>57</sup>. In the trade publishing industry<sup>58</sup>, more independent publishers and imprints have been engaged in publishing Chinese to English translated books than large conglomerates (see Figure 7), and independent publishers and imprints also produced more translated Chinese books than large conglomerates (see Figure 8). This result accords with what Sapiro (2015) finds in the US literary field: translations often cannot be sufficiently profitable for the large conglomerates. Therefore, due to the increasing economic constraints on publishing, translations have partly moved to the independent and not-for-profit sector.

As Thompson (2012) analyses in *Merchants of Culture*, the overall development in the field of Anglo-American trade publishing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is increasing commercialization and concentration. The Anglo-American publishing field therefore is dominated by a small number of large corporations and conglomerates, and the publishing business is increasingly impacted by commercial constraints. Whereas, in contrast to large conglomerates, independent publishers are often small, niche market players, “who exploit market niches that are characterized by lower levels of sales and profitability” (Sapiro, 2008, p.157). Publishing foreign books may be their speciality and a tactic which distinguishes them from other publishers.

When processing the data, I also found that many publishers under study, which I assume are independent publishers, are not accessible online (for example, Carreg), which raises questions about their distribution strength. In other words, books published by these independent publishers may not be easy to find by their potential readers. The fact that more academic publishers, university presses and independent presses have published Chinese books in the UK book market, could then support and

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<sup>57</sup> Though some university presses also distribute their books in the commercial book market.

<sup>58</sup> According to Thompson (2012, 2019), trade publishing is the world of general-interest books that are written for a non-specialist readership and sold through the general retail trade, independent booksellers and online retailers.

explain the supposition referred to earlier, that Chinese literature in the West is known to only few scholars and unknown to lay readers (Wang and Fan, 1999; Ning, 2008; Gu, 2014; Zhang, 2015).

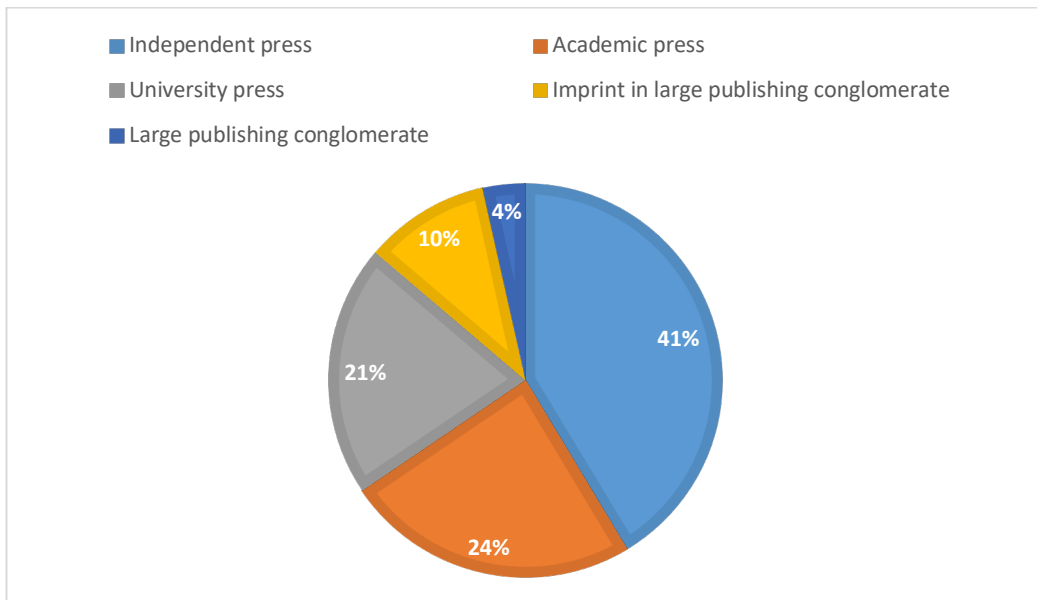


Figure 7. Count of publishers by their type from 1949 to 2020 (among top 29 publishers) (Source: The BNB by the BL)

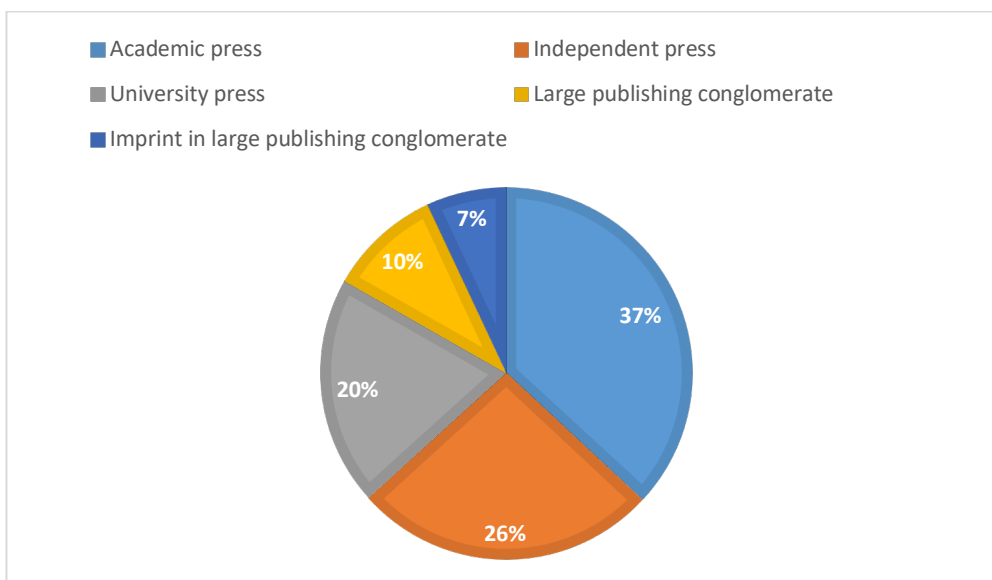


Figure 8. Count of Chinese books that published by each type of publisher from 1949 to 2020 (among top 29 publishers) (Source: The BNB by the BL)

In this section, I have analysed the kind of books that have been published in the UK in a sample year 2013, and what kind of publishers have been involved in translating and publishing Chinese books from 1949 to 2020. Section 4.1 demonstrates that only a very small number of Chinese books have been translated and published in Anglo-American countries. Studying the books that have been published, in this section, it can be found that the topics covered are very limited, and the publishers involved are mainly academic press, university press and independent presses, and large conglomerates which dominate the publishing business in Anglo-American countries are less interested in publishing Chinese books. This finding further demonstrates the marginal position of Chinese books in English translation in the UK market.

### **4.3 Conclusion**

By collating and analysing various datasets, this chapter examined the centre-periphery relations between Chinese and English in the cultural world-system (Heilbron, 1999), revisiting the flow of book translations between China and Anglo-American countries, and illustrating bibliographical information of Chinese books in English translation (by using UK book statistics as the object of study).

Through reviewing the global book statistics provided by Index Translationum, and China's national book copyright trade statistics, it firstly showed the disparity between Chinese and English in translation flows, illustrating the peripheral position of Chinese in the cultural world-system (Heilbron, 1999) dominated by English. Chinese, as an original language, had a small proportion in the international book translation market from 1979 to 2008. Due to the stability of the cultural world-system, it can be reasonably expected that the centre-periphery relationship between Chinese and English will last into the future. Though Chinese is regarded as a peripheral language with regard to the outgoing of book translations, the statistics of China's book copyright trade have shown that the outgoing of Chinese books through translation, especially after the mid-2000s, has been constantly increasing, which indicates its emergence as a trend. Nevertheless, despite the overall ratio of imports to exports of book copyright levelling out, the copyright trade between China

and the two main English language countries has been in constant deficit, meaning that for Chinese authors, it has been always difficult to have their works translated and published in these two English-speaking countries.

In order to depict the publication of Chinese books in English-speaking countries, the second section of the chapter went on to use UK book statistics to further analyse the publication of Chinese books in the UK over recent time. By using the BNB database provided by the BL, it gave a relatively full-scale picture of the publication of Chinese to English book translations in the UK, from the publishing trend over a long historical period, to detailed analysis on book categories and publishers. The analysis revealed that the overall publishing trend of Chinese books in the UK has been growing though with a few drops. A novel finding elicited from my analysis is that such evolution of the publication of Chinese books in the UK has been largely related to China's national endeavour since the internationalisation and modernization of the publishing industry (and broadly speaking, the cultural industry) in this country. I therefore argue that the publishing trend of Chinese to English translations has been influenced deeply by Chinese cultural export policies, including the translation subsidy provided by the Chinese government.

In terms of the categories of books, Chinese classics are still of interest to English publishers, and when it comes to contemporary Chinese books, through analysing the themes of books translated and published in 2013, we can infer that those Chinese books that were translated in English-speaking countries might be more appreciated for their social/historical significance than for their literary/aesthetic value. The second section also examined the publishers who have published Chinese to English translations in the UK and found that the translations were published by a relatively small number of publishers, most of which are a combination of academic publishers, university presses and independent publishers. When it comes to trade publishing, it is independent publishers that publish most Chinese translated books in the UK, while large conglomerates have engaged less in publishing Chinese translated books. The American and British publishing industry has become increasingly concentrated into a small number of large conglomerates, so the



attractiveness of Chinese books for large conglomerates may have lessened and this has possibly led to the small-scale reception and readership of Chinese books on the English book market.

In conclusion, it can be argued that as the number of translations into English from Chinese literature has been on the rise, China can be conceived as an emerging power in the global book translation system, which is currently dominated by English speaking countries. Some contemporary works translated from Chinese have even received wide ranging acclaim within the English literary field as witnessed by prizes given, according to data discussed in the next few chapters. However, these developments and endeavours have not fundamentally altered China's position in the cultural world-system (Heilbron, 1999). The Chinese books that have been published are in a marginal position in the UK book market. Together with the following chapters, this chapter provides empirical data regarding transnational transfer of book translations from a vantage point of Chinese – a language in the peripheral position in this world-system of book translations, but which at the same time is actively engaging in the exchange of book translations and international copyright trade. As we shall see in the following chapters, though the UK and the US are mainly exporters of book translations to China and act reluctantly in terms of importing Chinese literature, there are various players actively facilitating the translation and publication of Chinese literature into English-speaking countries. In the next chapter, I will focus on the practices of China's rights managers in selling Chinese contemporary literature through book copyright trade with UK and US trade publishers.

## Chapter 5 Cultural carriers in the transnational literary field

The international transfer of books, especially of contemporary works, is built around the trade in selling and buying foreign rights: a foreign publisher has to acquire the translation rights<sup>59</sup> before the translated book gets published in the local market. Specialised agents who deal with the copyright trade are therefore vital. In recent years, the role of social and cultural agents in the transnational literary transfer has been brought to the fore of academic debates. However, although some studies have paid attention to agents in the publishing industry such as publishers (Gonsalves, 2015; Sapiro, 2015; Zhu, 2014) and editors (e.g., Franssen and Kuipers, 2013), the role of the translator is still the central object of research (e.g., Abdallah, 2012; Chung, 2013; Sapiro, 2016c). In contrast, specialized agents such as foreign rights agents (literary agents who specialise in foreign translation rights), or rights managers<sup>60</sup>, have so far received little consideration. In practice, these specialized agents play an important role in shaping international literary exchange: as participants who are in the middle of the journey of a book in translation from its original literary space to the target one, they actively engage in the international book trade through the selling and buying of translation rights, promoting titles and authors they represent to foreign publishers, and also by acquiring foreign titles which are deemed suitable for publication in their own countries. However, their names can never be found in the final translated works, so it can be argued that these specialized actors are somehow invisible in this literary transfer activity, not only to the academic

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<sup>59</sup> Foreign rights are equal to translation rights, meaning the right to translate and publish the work in territories regulated by contract. It is noteworthy that China also exports copyright of simplified or traditional Chinese to Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan, and some other Asian countries, which means that instead of the rights of translation into other languages, some countries and regions buy the reprint rights in Chinese.

<sup>60</sup> “Rights manager” (版权经理) will be used throughout this chapter to refer to those specialized copyright staff who are responsible for foreign rights trade in publishing houses. It needs to be noted that job titles of these specialized copyright staff are not consistently used internationally and may also vary in different publishing houses. In some publishing houses which do not have a specific rights department, editors will also be assigned with the task of foreign rights buying and selling. Besides, some publishing houses may have more than one employee dealing with copyright issues, and their titles vary hierarchically. To avoid confusion, they will all be called rights managers in this chapter.

researchers but also to the end users such as readers and book sellers.

This chapter focuses on a group of backstage protagonists – rights managers in China - examining their professional practices in selling the translation rights of Chinese contemporary literature<sup>61</sup> to Anglo-American trade publishers<sup>62</sup>. They are invisible to readers picking up the book, and in academic research, their role is largely neglected. As will be shown below, due to the general hesitation of Anglophone publishers to commission foreign literature, including Chinese literature, rights managers in China are vital for Chinese authors who wish to enter the Anglo-American literary field. They bring books to potential publishers in foreign literary markets and attempt to persuade them that these books are worthy of being translated. In other words, they create possibilities for these authors to be recognised in these target countries.

To capture the specificity of rights managers who work in the transnational transfer from the periphery to the centre, I conceptualise them as “cultural carriers”, and highlight their proactive role in bringing Chinese culture to the world, the difficulties they encounter, and the state interventions that influence their practices. The cultural psychologist Fathali M. Moghaddam (2002, 2008; Warren and Moghaddam, 2012) coined the term ‘cultural carrier’ to refer to objects, political figures, practices, and concepts that sustain the continuity of cultural identity through historical

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<sup>61</sup> In the context of Chinese literature history, contemporary literature refers to literature written after 1949 to the present (Yuan, 2014). This chapter discusses the activity of copyright trade between specialized agents, therefore, contemporary literature, in this chapter, specifically refers to works that are in copyright protection. For a number of countries, such as member countries of the European Union and the US, the Berne Convention stipulates the duration of copyright protection for a literary work as the life of the author plus 70 years after the author’s death (for more other countries, the protection of copyright exists 50 years after the author’s death).

<sup>62</sup> The field of English-language trade publishing, as Thompson (2012, p.12) describes, is “the sector of the publishing industry that is concerned with publishing books, both fiction and non-fiction, that are intended for general readers and sold primarily through bookstores and other retail outlets”. Other sectors of publishing, such as academic publishing are organised in very different ways, so the activities of agents and factors that shape their activities would possibly not be the same. Therefore, in this chapter, I investigate the professional behaviours of China’s rights managers as a whole, but the discussions of their practices in selling rights of Chinese literary works is limited to their interactions with Anglo-American trade publishers.

periods; for example, the Islamic veil and national flags. In Moghaddam's sense, cultural carrier is a conceptualization with a temporal dimension – cultural carriers 'carry' "values, norms, rules, and other aspects of culture that regulate behaviour" from generation to generation, as they sustain and preserve normative systems of cultural identity over time (Moghaddam, 2008, p.891). Given that books are an important medium of cultural exchange, I borrow the term cultural carrier but interpret its spatial dimensions, to specifically refer to certain actors who function as carriers of culture over geographical boundaries or, more precisely, transnationally. More importantly, my conceptualization of cultural carriers takes account of the direction of cultural flow: it specifically helps to shed light on the role of transnational actors from the source field, which is in a peripheral position, in the movement of the cultural item or product from the periphery to the centre.

Drawing upon Bourdieu's (1983, 1984, 1996a) field theory and key concepts such as capital and habitus, this chapter aims to explore the shaping of China's rights managers' professional habitus as what I call cultural carriers. It examines the professional behaviour of China's rights managers and identifies the resources and strategies they deploy in order to facilitate the exportation of Chinese books to the English-language literary field. It demonstrates why the role of China's rights managers can be interpreted as cultural carriers, and how their professional habitus as cultural carriers is shaped by both transnational and national factors. This chapter will be organised into four sections. It will start with a discussion of the conceptualization of cultural carrier in relation to Bourdieu's field theory. Then I will give contextual information on the occupation of rights managers in China, explaining why they are a vital force facilitating the exportation of contemporary Chinese literature to the Anglo-American world. Thirdly, I will discuss two structural factors that shape the professional habitus of China's rights managers as cultural carriers; that is, how their practices are constrained and shaped by China's publishing system and state policies, and by their peripheral position in the international book market. The last section will examine the resources and strategies they deploy as cultural carriers. I shall illustrate the resources or capitals they strive for as cultural carriers

and identify compromise as a strategy they often employ in order to export contemporary Chinese literature successfully to Anglo-American countries.

The discussion in this chapter draws on interviews with various professionals in the area of the international book market, supplemented with ethnographic observations at two international book fairs – the London Book Fair and the Beijing International Book Fair in 2019. Interview participants included a range of different occupations, including 16 Chinese rights managers, 4 Chinese editors, 4 foreign rights agents, 5 English-language acquisition editors, 2 exhibition specialists and 5 literary translators who translate between Chinese and English, and one Chinese writer who writes mostly fiction. The ethnographic observations included the shadowing of two participants who are rights managers at two book fairs in the go-along method (Kusenbach, 2003) separately at two book fairs. As explained in Chapter 3, the sets of interviewees other than with rights managers and the fieldwork observations helped me to gain a broad knowledge base about the book copyright trade that Chinese rights managers engaged in, and to understand the practices of Chinese rights managers from different perspectives<sup>63</sup>.

## **5.1 Professional habitus and the transnational literary field**

As discussed in Chapter 2, Bourdieu's (1977, 1984, 1993, 1996a) field theory has been widely applied to the international/transnational scale in recent years (e.g., Casanova, 2004; Kuipers, 2011; Christin, 2016; Julia Go and Monika Krause, 2016; Buchholz, 2018). Casanova (2004) proposes a world republic of letters to refer to an international literary space, i.e., a transnational literary field. In the notion of the world republic of letters (Casanova, 2004), Chinese and the Chinese national literary field can be regarded as being situated in a dominated position endowed with less literary capital than the dominating languages/fields such as English. Translation is the predominant way by which books travel across borders and can be a major weapon in international literary competition (Casanova, 2004, p.133). Book

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<sup>63</sup> More details about participants and data collection were elaborated in Chapter 3.

copyrights trade as a way to facilitate cross-border translation can therefore be conceptualised as taking place in the transnational literary field.

Field theory and the notion of habitus provide a way to theorise the practices of China's rights managers in copyright exportation to Anglo-American countries, and how they are shaped. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) suggest that habitus is an "open system of dispositions" (p.133), a product of history that is constantly subject to and affected by experiences. Habitus represents the agent's "feel for the game" within a field (Bourdieu, 1990, p.66). The relationality between habitus, the field and capital, as Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) explain, is as follows:

*A field consists of a set of objective, historical relations between positions anchored in certain forms of power (or capital), while habitus consists of a set of historical relations "deposited" within individual bodies in the form of mental and corporeal schemata of perception, appreciation, and action. (p. 16)*

Habitus can therefore be understood as a "socialised subjectivity" (McLeod, 2005), where dispositions are shaped through interactions with the field (p.13). Moreover, as Garnham and Williams (1980) point out, habitus is a "unified phenomenon". Because, by definition, although habitus is internalised and operationalized by individuals, it does not "regulate solitary acts", but "the practice of a set of individuals in common response to those conditions" (Garnham and Williams, 1980, p.213). The cultural carriers I am concerned with here can be seen as sharing a habitus among China's rights managers, which is embodied in their actions of exporting contemporary Chinese literature to Anglo-American countries. I use professional habitus to refer to their habitus as engaging in the copyright trade, and the focus of this chapter is specifically on their habitus in copyright exportation to Anglo-American countries.

As previously mentioned, in the transnational literary field, the Chinese national literary field can be regarded as being endowed with less literary capital (Casanova, 2004). In this sense, China's rights managers as individual or organisational agents (as

representatives of the publishing house they work for) are endowed with less 'national capital' - or in Buchholz's (2018) words, 'macro capital' - than agents from the central national fields. In addition, as China is a relative newcomer to the international book market (as explained in Chapter 1), the transaction regulations and professional skills of the copyright trade are both relatively new for Chinese rights managers. They are therefore much less established, especially compared with their Western counterparts. As will be discussed later, their practices are constrained by their peripheral position in the transnational literary field.

Examining the practices of television buyers in France, Italy, Poland and the Netherlands, Kuiper (2012, p.588) describes these television buyers from different countries as "a highly networked group of transnational professionals with similar standards, values, manners and even rituals", in other words, 'a cosmopolitan tribe'. In the case of Chinese rights managers, though they share a lot in common with other literary agents or foreign rights agents from other national backgrounds, they are still inscribed with their distinct national characteristics. This requires a focus not only on the international book market, but also on the national level environment.

As shall be seen, I suggest that cultural carrier is a set of dispositions and as such is the professional habitus of China's rights managers as they promote contemporary Chinese literature to Anglo-American countries. When it comes to facilitating the transnational transfer of Chinese books from Chinese/China to English/Anglo-American countries, China's rights managers are characterised by two defining roles which together influence their professional behaviour or shape their professional habitus as cultural carriers. Firstly, they are market agents under the state framework; secondly, they are peripheral players in the transnational literary field. These two roles are shaped by both the Chinese publishing system and the power dynamics of the transnational literary field. Before analysing their professional behaviour, I shall firstly provide contextual information about the role of rights managers in China, explaining why they are the key actors in facilitating contemporary literature to the world, including the Anglo-American countries.

## 5.2 The rights manager as a substitute of foreign rights agent in China

As a specialised literary agent, foreign rights agents contribute to the progressive unification of a world market of translation, facilitating literary transfer across the world. Those people responsible for selling foreign rights may vary depending on who the rights holders are and whom the rights holders assign the job to (WIPO, 2020). The foreign rights holder may be the author, the author's agent, or the domestic publisher. Authors who hold the foreign rights to their work may submit their books to a foreign rights agent<sup>64</sup>, or simply assign their publisher to represent the foreign rights of their works. Alternatively, the rights holder may handle the foreign rights of their works themselves (Publishing Trendsetter, n.d.). In reality, it is hard to envisage a writer handling the foreign rights themselves due to reasons such as language barriers or lack of professional expertise, so specialized agents who sell foreign rights abroad are likely to be professional literary agents who specialise in foreign rights or rights managers in publishing houses.

Traditionally in the US and the UK, literary agents handle copyright issues, including foreign rights, for authors. As defined by Coser et. al. (1985, pp.285-286), literary agents refer to people who sell the manuscripts of their clients to publishing houses, working either as freelancers or members of firms, alone or as a team. Literary agents who handle the foreign rights of literary works can be called foreign rights agents. The literary agent is a profession with a long history and has become indispensable in the Anglo-American publishing world: it first appeared in the UK in the 1880s, and was soon followed by American counterparts (Coser et. Al., 1985). A literary agent, or specifically a foreign rights agent, is an ideal actor to approach publishers and persuade them to buy manuscripts, especially when their target market is the English market where the literary agent system is professionalised and standardised. As Li Lan, a literary agent from Hong Kong who handles foreign rights for a few Chinese authors told me in his interview:

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<sup>64</sup> Apart from professional foreign rights agents, sometimes, author's friends, relatives, or translators may also introduce the works they are interested to foreign publishers, acting as foreign rights agents.



*“In the US and the UK, large publishers would not take submission of manuscript seriously unless it comes to them via a literary agent.”*

In contrast with the flourishing of literary agents in the Anglo-American publishing industries, the literary agent is not an established role in China (Mei, 2013). In recent years, some commissioning editors, cultural companies, and literary websites have begun to operate literary agency-like businesses, some of which also deal with foreign rights for Chinese authors, dedicated to finding foreign publishers for Chinese authors and books (Lu, 2013). In the following quote, Xiao Xu, a new independent foreign rights agent who specialises in representing Chinese authors, reflects upon the under-developed situation of literary agents as a professional group in China:

*Me: I know you were an editor and a translator, what made you become a foreign rights agent?*

*Xiao Xu: I am still a literary editor, working in xxx [the name of the publishing house], but I started to represent a couple of authors' foreign rights in these two years. Being a foreign rights agent is more like a hobby. China has good literary works for sure, but we barely have good literary agents who can sell them abroad.”*

Having worked in the publishing industry for several years, Xiao Xu has learnt professional skills and accumulated social networks through his work as an editor. Out of personal interest, he became an independent or part-time agent. Though Xiao Xu has already sold one contemporary novel to the US, which can be considered a great achievement as a foreign rights agent for Chinese authors, he identified himself more as a literary editor than a specialised foreign rights agent.

Whether the system of literary agents is necessary for Chinese authors is a controversial topic, which draws attention among authors and experts in the circle. Some publishing industry insiders believe that literary agents are vital to a mature publishing industry (Guangming Daily, 2013a). Yet this occupation is still not generally accepted by Chinese writers to date. Traditionally, Chinese authors either represent

themselves, or simply assign their friends or relatives as their agents. For example, Mo Yan, China's first Nobel Laureate in Literature, authorised his daughter to represent him in copyright negotiations and other cooperation issues (Mei, 2013). One possible reason for the controversy over whether literary agents are necessary for authors in China is the relatively low payment for authorship in China (Mei, 2013), as Yan Lianke says in *Guangming Daily* (2013b), "my remuneration for writing could not even feed myself, how could I pay for a literary agent?". Therefore, in the Chinese domestic publishing market, there is not much demand for the services of literary agents in China (Mei, 2013). However, when it comes to publishing books abroad, working with a literary agent, or more specifically a foreign rights agent, who is able to sell foreign rights to foreign publishers, seems to be inevitable for Chinese authors. As aforementioned, Chinese author Mo Yan assigned his daughter to deal with copyrights. However, as Mo Yan says in an interview with the *Guangzhou Daily* (2013), most writers of his age (Mo Yan was born in 1955) cannot speak a foreign language, so communicating with foreign publishers is a big hurdle for them individually. In this sense, Mo Yan believes that having a foreign rights agent would make things easier in the wide dissemination of his work globally.

To publish their works in Anglo-American countries, only a few Chinese writers have professional literary agents (normally in the UK or in the US) promoting their works in the English language and selling the rights into English-language territories. My interview data suggest that the main reasons that hinder professional literary agents from countries such as the UK and the US to represent Chinese books is because of the cultural distance and cost of translation, which makes it less economically attractive for foreign publishers. Daniel Smith is a UK literary agent who now represents one Chinese writer's works outside Asia. The following interview quote reveals how he became the literary agent for a Chinese writer:

*"I discovered xxx [a Chinese writer's name] when I was looking through a list of all-time bestselling authors and he was on it, though I'd never heard of him. I asked a young translator (from Chinese to English) to find out if he had an agent outside China. He didn't, we got in touch, and my*

*wife and I flew to Hong Kong to sign an agreement to represent xxx [Name of the title he represented] outside Asia.”*

But Daniel soon explained the difficulty of representing a writer who does not write in English in the Anglo-American market:

*“As you know, I found xxx [a Chinese writer’s name] myself, but that is very rare. I have several authors who live outside the UK, but they all write in English. The difficulty in taking on authors who write in foreign languages is, as I explained, the cost of translation, as well as writing about a culture that English-speaking readers may not be familiar with.”*

Alternatively, sub-agencies<sup>65</sup> operating in China, representing foreign rights of works all over the world and selling them into Chinese language territories, may also represent Chinese writers and help them to sell their works into the English-speaking world. There are four big sub-agencies in China: Big Apple, Grayhawk Agency, Andrew Nurnberg Associates and Peony Literary Agency. The operation of sub-agencies in China facilitates the acquisition of foreign titles for Chinese publishers and the sale of foreign rights into Chinese language territories for authors from all over the world. A recent report entitled *The Publishing Landscape in China: New and Emerging Opportunities for British Writers* (Rochester and Lin, 2015), which focuses on the landscape of the Chinese publishing industry, reveals that any British literary agent or publisher who tries to find a Chinese publisher for the books they represent is likely to end up working with one of the sub-agencies that operate in China. At the same time, these sub-agencies also act as foreign rights agencies who sell the foreign rights of Chinese books into other territories. However, as we can easily discover through their websites, their Chinese clientele, namely Chinese authors, is tiny. Taking one of the ‘Big Four’ agencies, Peony Literary Agency, as an example, as a sub-agent its publishing clients are all over the world including Hachette, Atlantic, and Penguin Random House among others, and together with other major sub-agencies operating in China, it represents almost all the British authors in Chinese language territories

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<sup>65</sup> These sub-agencies are referred to as “bridging agencies” in the cited report. I choose to use the term “sub-agency” as it was more often used by my research participants.

(Rochester and Lin, 2015). As a comparison, through searching their official website, we find that the Peony Literary Agency only represented 10 Chinese authors in 2020. This situation is the same for other sub-agencies in China. Therefore, it can be argued that although the sub-agencies also represent Chinese authors and sell the foreign rights of Chinese works outside of the Chinese territories, this does not account for a large portion of their whole business. The main job of these sub-agencies is to sell foreign works into China, though one of them claims that the company “*continues to expand this part of business*” (interview with an assistant working in one of the sub-agencies).

As we can see, unlike in the Anglo-American publishing world, the literary agent is not an established profession in China and is not widely accepted by Chinese writers, who do not normally have literary agents to help them negotiate with publishers in the local market. Nevertheless, when it comes to selling the foreign rights, due to the language barrier and professional expertise that is needed, most Chinese authors assign their original publishers to represent their works abroad, though a small number of authors may be represented by Western literary agents or sub-agents operating in China. Emily Lincoln is an acquisition editor working for an independent US publishing house, which has published two Chinese contemporary novels. According to Emily, the first step of publishing a Chinese book is “it gets pitched at book fairs or similar by proprietors”. As for ‘proprietors’, Emily continued to explain:

*“Xxx and xxx [the two Chinese books this English publisher have published] were both introduced by Ms. X [the rights manager of the original publisher], she works for xxx [the Chinese publisher]. For foreign works, in general, often projects come to us, usually some will bring us a finished thing [a full translation]. Sometimes, translators also come to us to introduce Chinese books. Anyway, so far, these two books by xxx [the author’s name] are the only two we have ever published from China.”*

Consequently, we can argue that in Chinese context, the job of the foreign rights agent, i.e., a literary agent who specialises in the foreign rights trade, is undertaken

by rights managers working in publishing houses. They are one of the key actors who facilitate contemporary Chinese books to Anglo-American countries.

### **5.3 The shaping of cultural carriers**

#### *5.3.1 Market agents under the state framework – the influence of the nation-state*

To better understand the nature and actions of China's rights managers, the "hybrid state-and-market system" (Yun, 2013, p.19) of China's publishing industry needs to be taken into consideration. Since it adopted the opening-up policy and market-oriented reforms in the late 1970s, China has experienced a transition from a planned socialist economy to a socialist market economy (Shan, 2014; China.org.cn, 2014). Cultural resources were regarded as owned by the state in socialist China; cultural production and dissemination were thus carried out by state-owned institutions (Shan, 2014). In 1992, the 14<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Communist Party put forward a new model of the construction of a socialist market economy. The concept of 'cultural industry' which was distinguished from 'cultural services'<sup>66</sup> (provided by state supported organisations) was starting to take shape (Shan, 2014). As part of the cultural industry, the publishing industry has undergone a significant change since the late 1970s, jump started by the capitalist economy and mode of production (He, 2021), together with other areas of production. At the same time, the state still plays an important role in directing the marketization process of the publishing industry (and other fields of cultural production) (Yao, 2017; Yun, 2013, 2014). Therefore, as Yun (2013, p.19) claims, persistent state control and nascent market forces have turned China's publishing industry into "a hybrid state-and-market system". My data suggest that practices of China's rights managers are deeply influenced by such a national background – in addition to acting as transnational market agents who mediate between national and transnational (see for example Kuipers, 2012), China's rights managers are subject to state regulation.

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<sup>66</sup> Cultural services here are also referred to as 'cultural undertakings' (文化事业) in Chinese context.

In China, all licensed publishers are state-run and the International Standard Book Number (ISBN), which must be allocated before the publication of each book, can only be allocated to state-run publishers (Yun, 2013). Though there are also private publishers<sup>67</sup> in China, they operate with and run as imprints of these state-run publishers (Rochester and Lin, 2015). Therefore, in-house staff working in the rights departments<sup>68</sup> of state-run publishing houses, i.e., rights managers, are the main actors involved in the foreign rights trade and dealing with foreign rights when selling for Chinese authors. Rights managers are thus the key facilitators for Chinese contemporary literature entering into the Anglo-American literary world. As Li Mei, one of my go-along participants who is an experienced rights manager working in a publishing house specialising in contemporary literature introduced:

*“Private publishers may not have copyrights professionals. Their books are all published under the name of state publishers, like us. So we [rights managers working in the state publishing houses] represent the books they published. This book [showing me a book which translation copyrights have been sold to several countries] can be an example – it is actually published by our private-run publisher [referring to a private-run publisher which publish under the name of the state-run publisher], but deals of translation rights were all negotiated and signed by me.”*

When China joined the Berne Convention in 1992, as a response to the nation’s cultural policy in a wider context, Chinese publishers started book copyright trade with foreign publishers and followed principles regulated by international agreements and laws (such as the Berne Convention), working hard to promote the nation’s literary works to the rest of the world. As mentioned above, the profession

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<sup>67</sup> The private sector of publishing was officially recognised by the Chinese government in April 2009 (Liu, 2013). Examples of private publishers in China are New Classic (新经典文化), and Dookbook (读客文化).

<sup>68</sup> These departments, often called “international departments”, “foreign rights departments” or “international business offices”, are responsible for the sales and acquisitions of rights internationally. There is normally only one rights manager in a publishing house, while some publishing houses have a specific team with 4 or 5 rights staff.

of literary agent is not firmly formed in China, so as a kind of substitute for foreign rights agents, Chinese rights managers are amongst the main specialised agents in the international book market, representing not only authors and their works, but at the same time the publishing houses they work for and the state as well. This awareness as representatives of the publishing houses and the nation state can explain why China's rights managers who come to the international book fairs, would in most cases wear dark coloured business suits, which are a bit more formal than those worn by some other professionals at book fairs, even those of some Western literary agents. As Li Mei explained, "we have a few official events to attend, it is required to wear in a formal way". These events are all national-level or held by their publishing house at book fairs, such as new book launch meetings or keynote speeches by Chinese authors. Foreign rights trade can be regarded as a business activity, and specialized agents involved in this business are considered to be market agents. However, given that the publishing industry in China is a state-controlled business and the publishing houses they work for are state-run, the actions of China's rights managers are regulated by national cultural policies and state power. As Yan (2007) declares, the Chinese government has "strategically positioned itself as the ultimate manager of the globalization process by promoting China's integration into the global economy and international community on one hand and carefully controlling this process on its own terms on the other" (p. 173). Drawing attention to the state as the principal organiser of culture, Hannerz (1997) proposes that the state framework is one of the typical manifestations of contemporary cultural flow. As he argues, "to gain legitimate authority state apparatuses nowadays tend to reach out with different degrees of credibility and success toward their subjects to foster the idea that the state is a nation, and to construct them culturally as citizens" (Hannerz, 1997, p.112). As shall be shown next, China's right managers working in the state-run publishing houses are subject to such hybrid state-and-market nature: they are the main market agents responsible for the rights-selling business; but due to the influence exerted by the nation-state, Chinese rights managers act as a group of market agents working in the transnational settings under a state framework, a phenomenon which I will call 'market agents under the state framework' in the transnational literary field.

### **The importance of national translation subsidy**

The state intervention in exportation of book translations is most evidently reflected through translation subsidy. Publishing a book in translation takes more time, incurs additional costs, and requires professional workers (i.e., translators) to be involved. When asked what the reasons would be for them to decide not to commission a Chinese book, all the UK and US editors I interviewed admitted that economic constraint is one of the important reasons. For example, Alexandra Evans, a UK editor, said immediately:

*“Costs are the most commonly prohibitive factor. Overall, the UK is not a particularly welcoming market for books in translation, with few grants available to help publishers cover costs and few publicity opportunities unless the author a.) speaks English, b.) is visiting the UK.”*

For Anglo-American publishers, the possibility of obtaining a subsidy or grant which could cover the translation fee partly or fully would make a difference to their decision about publishing a book in translation. Among all the grants from different countries and institutions, subsidy from Chinese governmental institutions is the most vital one in the publication of Chinese to English translated books<sup>69</sup>. In his interview with me, Tom Brown, a founder of a UK publishing company which specialises in Chinese books in translation, Tom explained that it was because of the subsidy available that he decided to focus on publication of Chinese books in translation and Chinese-related books:

*“When I started to publish books from China was about 9 years ago, it was possible to get support from CBI [‘China Book International’ project], you know CBI? They give support to Chinese publishers [for*

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<sup>69</sup> The titles funded by China’s governmental subsidy organisation are those “dealing with the development of and change in modern China in political, economic, cultural and other fields, helping foreign audiences learn China, promoting Chinese culture, describing the major achievements that have been made in the research of natural and social sciences, and reflecting the Chinese traditional culture, literature and art characteristic of accumulated value.” (China Book International, n.d.)



*exporting Chinese books through translation], so Chinese publishers could give some more to Western publishers.”*

As discussed in Chapter 1, CBI is one of the key subsidy programmes started since 2004 and funded by the State Council Information Office (SCIO) of China. In this sense, the Chinese government provides subsidies to support the translation of Chinese books, which can appeal to foreign publishers and persuade them to acquire titles from China. National subsidies are therefore important for China’s rights managers to meet their task of exporting Chinese books.

### **Copyright exportation as a duty of sharing Chinese literature abroad**

According to my observation and interview data, China’s rights managers working in transnational settings identify themselves as representatives of their nation and their national literature – they have a strong self-awareness of being a kind of state representative, whose role is to share Chinese literature and culture to the world through copyright exportation. Luo Heng, a senior rights manager based in Beijing, put it in his interview:

*“China has good stories and good literary works for sure, but it is not known by foreign readers. Our duty is to share good literature from China with them. Through copyright exportation, books will be published by Anglo-American publishers, and can therefore be read by English-language readers.”*

Rights managers as state representatives is also reflected through the books that they sell. As a young rights manager, Wen Xiaoling described the books for copyright selling:

*“There are some featured books which are selected in particular for exportation. These books are endowed with outward communication value guided by national principles. Nevertheless, basically, all the books published in our publishing houses are our responsibility to sell out.”*

As can be seen, rights managers are responsible for selling the books in their catalogue, i.e., national literature. This characteristic also fits with McMartin's (2019b) description of the grant manager of the Flemish Literature Fund (a government organisation which supports literary production in the Flemish community). McMartin (2019b) shows that grant managers of the Flemish Literature Fund are state agents (but with a dual nature) whose catalogue represents their national literature. In the case of China's rights managers, they are not pure state agents, as they are a kind of substitute for foreign rights managers, who help to find suitable publishers for Chinese literature. Nevertheless, they are also not pure market agents, or as McMartin's (2019a, 2019b) puts it, market-minded matchmakers, as they export the national literature constrained and supported by national policies.

### **Copyright exportation as a national-specific-capital**

Unlike typical foreign rights agents, China's rights managers do not earn commission fees through copyright selling. Li Mei, my go-along participant, felt surprised when I asked her about commission fees, and said: *"Of course not, we don't earn commission fee, it is our job – selling copyrights is just within the scope of our responsibility"*. In fact, other than earning profits from copyright selling, my data suggest that China's rights managers see it as an honour – once they successfully sell rights to an English language publisher, they are very proud of themselves, as they have been able to *"contribute to sharing Chinese culture to the world"* (a quotation from Tang Meng in our interview, as an agent who had sold one title into the UK market). In addition, selling rights into foreign territories, especially into English-language areas, confers cultural carriers with a national-field-specific symbolic capital. One rights manager, Wang Yuheng, has successfully exported two titles into the UK and the US, one of which has been exported to many more foreign countries subsequently. As she said with evident pride and delight:

*"After publishing in the UK, the title has been exported to many countries and regions. For Chinese publishers and writers, exporting to Anglo-American countries and to such a wide range of countries is really an extraordinary achievement. This*

*is rare for the whole Chinese publishing sector.”*

Wang Yuheng confirmed the symbolic capital for Chinese writers, the publishing house and even the whole Chinese literary field, that is gained from successful dealings with international publishers, in particular those working within English language markets. She continued to outline the personal and professional rewards for individuals achieving successful projects in the field, when she told me that:

*Because of this foreign rights exportation case, I've been awarded as the 'National TOP 10 Rights Manager' <sup>70</sup> in succession for a few years, and this year, my publishing house also prepared to nominate me to participate in this competition. I've been interviewed by many magazines and newspapers; I can send you these news coverage and articles if you want.”*

Due to the central position of English as a language in the transnational literary field, it has a great consecration power which enables literature from the periphery to gain access to the central field (Heilbron, 1999; Sapiro, 2010a). In other words, being translated into English is an instrument for peripheral languages and their literature to gain literary capital (a specific form of symbolic capital that Casanova (2004) coins in the context of literary field). Foreign rights exportation is highly sought-after symbolic capital for rights managers, and according to the quotation above, due to the consecration power of English, foreign rights exportation to Anglo-American countries endows a huge amount of symbolic power. As a national-field-specific form of symbolic capital, it helps lift the status of cultural carriers in their national field.

The Chinese government sees it as very important to support the translation of cultural products into foreign languages. As explained in Chapter 1, since the foundation of the People's Republic of China in 1949, translation has become a

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<sup>70</sup> This award is supported by the National Press and Publication Administration (NPPA) of China and is organised by state-run organisations, including the international cooperation committee of the Publishers Associations of China and Chinese Academy of Press and Publication and Journal of Publishing Reference.

significant part of its cultural diplomacy (Jiang, 2021), and is seen as a way to increase its cultural soft power (Nye, 2008). In a study which examines the practices of the grant manager of the Flemish Literature Fund, Jack McMartin (2019a, 2019b) calls grant managers 'double agents': cultural diplomats working on behalf of a national government who act both as patrimony-minded facilitators of translation and market-minded matchmakers (McMartin, 2019b, p.37). In the case of China's rights managers working in state-run publishing houses, their practices are heavily influenced by the nation-state and reflect their dual nature; as specialized copyright agents, their job is fundamentally about finding suitable foreign publishers for the books they represent. However, their aim is to promote national literary productions to the outside world, and they regard exporting Chinese literature as their duty as Chinese cultural workers or simply as Chinese citizens. Therefore, I would argue that Chinese rights managers can be conceived as market agents under the state framework. For them, foreign rights exportation, especially to Anglo-American countries, is not a business but a duty to share Chinese literature abroad, to gain symbolic power for the national literary field, the publishing house they work for, the authors, and for themselves. Their role as market agents under the state framework constitutes part of their professional habitus as what I conceptualise as cultural carriers. An awareness of their status as peripheral players in the transnational literary field is also important to understanding the professional habitus of China's rights managers. As will be discussed next, their professional habitus as cultural carriers is also shaped by their peripheral position in the transnational literary field.

### *5.3.2 Peripheral players in the transnational literary field*

#### **Newcomers to the international book market**

Contemporary literary exchanges changed in major ways after the development of globalization at the start of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Sapiro, 2016b). As reviewed in Chapter 1, in 1992, China joined the Berne Convention, which signifies the point when its book trade with other countries began to be standardised under the regulation of a Western mode of publication. From this point, Chinese publishers began to import foreign books through acquiring the translation rights. However, foreign publishers'

engagement in the production of Chinese to English translations of contemporary works started only in the past two decades (see also Chapter 4). Chinese publishers, as well as the Chinese rights managers who emerged alongside China's engagement in the international book market, are therefore newcomers.

One of my participants, Yin Ying, a rights manager working in a literary publishing house, recalled:

*"It is my first job after graduation. In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, xxx [the name of the publishing house] started copyright imports. In 2009 when I graduated, xxx had just set up the specialized position for copyright trade, so I was lucky to join in.*

Another rights manager, Wang Yuheng, in a publishing house specialising in children's literature, also started her job when foreign rights trade in China was just beginning to flourish:

*"I joined xxx [the name of the publishing house] in 1993. In 1996 when the rights trade in China began to develop, I was picked to engage in this job. Before that, there were no specialised personnel dealing with issues involving copyrights, and the copyright department did not even have a fixed name... It was only myself in this department, and I had to start from scratch, exploring bit by bit slowly. In the beginning, we dealt mainly with copyright acquisition, but we are now actively engaged in copyright exportation works. But in terms of copyright exportation, we are still like road openers."*

The above quotes demonstrate the extent of most Chinese rights managers' experience of selling copyrights. In fact, it is quite common for Chinese rights managers to have never exported a Chinese title following the copyright trade procedure and rules to the Anglo-American countries. This is also often the case for full-blown experienced agents who have been working in the publishing industry and copyright sector for decades, even those that have sold many foreign rights to other

countries/territories, especially Asian countries. It is therefore not surprising that a retired rights manager, Tang Meng, who had just sold the English-language rights of a book to a UK publisher, said in the interview: *“This was my first time to sell a title into the Anglo-American market fully under market rules.”*

### **Big buyer, small seller**

As specialised agents who deal with copyright issues, rights managers are not only responsible for selling the foreign rights of Chinese literary works, but also for buying Chinese translation rights for foreign literary works<sup>71</sup>. In China there is a huge demand for foreign literary works, therefore, during my fieldwork at LBF and BIBF, I repeatedly heard publishing practitioners from all over the world say that “China is the biggest buyer in the market” when talking about the Chinese book market. According to my observation and interviews, Chinese rights managers are busy in dealing with rights acquisition at book fairs and also in their daily routines. However, when it comes to copyright selling, this group of actors are beginners: up to date, there are only a few contemporary instances where Chinese literature has been sold to the US and the UK through copyright trade. As Emily Lincoln, a US acquisition editor confirmed:

*“We don't currently have any books translated from Chinese in the pipeline as novels in translation are facing increasingly tough times, with shrinking review and shelf space in bookshops. Books in translation from all languages into English are feeling the pinch. We could certainly never say never, however...”*

Therefore, when being asked about their experience in copyright selling, a number of my participants distinctly shifted tone from ambitious to dull or reluctant when talking about the work of copyright acquisition. Li Heng, a well-experienced copyright manager who has been working in the field for nearly 20 years, said in the interview that:

*“China is very actively participating in the international book*

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<sup>71</sup> Despite the fact that some publishing houses are specified in publishing foreign literature and have no business handling the rights of original Chinese titles.

*market. As you can see, Chinese publishers are showing up in every big exhibition stand at the book fair [referring to the London Book Fair]. I had loads of appointments with literary agents and sub-agents today ceaselessly. But China is only the biggest buyer. In our publishing house, there are a lot of copyright importing cases that I can share with you, but unfortunately, we don't sell rights well. There aren't many rights selling cases in our publishing house."*

As mentioned above, there are many sub-agencies operating in China representing foreign works to the Chinese-language market. My data suggest that China's rights managers and their editorial teams have been liaising closely with these sub-agencies, intensively buying the Chinese language rights of foreign titles, especially those from the English-speaking world. Rights managers regularly receive newsletters containing selected book information from these sub-agencies, filtering and choosing suitable titles for the publishing house they work in. The following quote is from Yan Ling, who described what her daily practice was like as a rights manager:

*"Most of my day-to-day job is liaising with our editors and sub-agents: the sub-agents send newsletters [with book information of foreign works] to us regularly, we need to filter these titles firstly before handing over to the editors – removing titles which are clearly not what we would publish, and which have been rejected by our editors; in addition, commissioning editors send the book information they want to acquire to us, then we search the rights information: who holds the rights, and if the Chinese-language rights is still available. If it is still available, we make offers and place orders; in addition, my job also includes handling all the contracts, from drafting to archive management."*

It can be argued that China's rights managers are mainly occupied with copyright acquisition. For foreign publishers who wish to open up the Chinese market, sub-

agents/agencies operating in China play an important role. These sub-agents/agencies help overcome the limitations caused by geographical distance for foreign publishers. As Lin Yu, who works in a literary sub-agency operating in China said in the interview:

*“For the overseas publishers who choose us as their agent in China, they have no need to spend a lot of time and money attending Chinese book fairs to reach the Chinese market.”*

These sub-agencies function as ‘book scouts’ for Chinese publishers. According to Thompson (2012), book scouts are “the eyes and ears of foreign publishers in the heartlands of Anglo-American publishing” (Thompson, 2012, p.1). They work for publishers in countries such as Italy, Spain, Germany and France, helping their clients to look for books – in most cases, from the Anglo-American book market – that are suitable to be translated and published in their own national book market. Nevertheless, apart from in the Anglo-American market, where they can be found working as consultants in finding books for foreign publishers, book scouts in general are absent. Anglo-American publishers, due to saturation in their national market, do not tend to hire book scouts to help them find books in foreign markets. For Chinese publishers, these well-developed sub-agencies operating in China search for books from the English-language market and elsewhere, promoting these foreign works to Chinese publishers (but they are not hired by Chinese publishers). However, when it comes to selling foreign rights into the English-language market, there are no such organised sub-agencies specifically aiming to help foreign publishers or authors who wish to enter the English-speaking market. Therefore, information on Chinese literature, especially contemporary books, is not readily available for the Anglo-American publishers, unless it is ‘carried’ over by rights managers and other agents, such as government organisations, translators, or literary agents from English-language areas.

According to the cultural world-system model proposed by Heilbron (1999), China as a linguistically peripheral country imports more but exports less through translation. In Chapter 4, I examined the import and export ratio of China’s copyright trade with



Anglo-American countries. It shows that there is a large deficit on copyright exports for China. The interview data with China's rights managers demonstrate further that China has been actively engaged in international copyright trade, so China's rights managers have become familiar with copyright acquisition, including from English-language areas. However, when it comes to copyright selling, Chinese publishers and rights managers are like 'road openers' (in my aforementioned interviewee Wang Yuheng's words), whose efforts are still in the 'exploratory' period.

As discussed in this section, the practices of China's rights managers are shaped both by the system of the Chinese national publishing field and the power dynamics of the transnational literary field where the copyright trade takes place. The role of China's rights manager therefore has two traits, i.e., market agent under the state framework, and peripheral player in the international book market. Next, I shall turn to elucidate the resources or capitals that competent cultural carriers possess and the strategies they often employ in order to export Chinese books to Anglo-American countries.

## **5.4 Capitals and strategies of cultural carriers**

### *5.4.1 "We treat book fairs seriously"*

As already mentioned in section 3, Chinese publishers and their rights managers treat international book fairs seriously, as book fairs are the main venues for Chinese rights managers to get in touch with western counterparts and to gain professional experience and updated industry information. As Thompson (2012, p.96) suggests, international book fairs like LBF and BIBF can be regarded as "rights fairs". Professionals involved in copyright trade, including rights managers, are thus some of the busiest people. Zhuang Xin is a rights manager I met at the London Book Fair. When I invited him to have an interview, he apologised in a very polite way and said: *"I am heading to my next appointment, but if you don't mind, we can have a talk during my lunch time at 12:00 maybe. It will be my only available time today; my timetable is quite claustrophobic at the London Book Fair."*

My interview with Zhang Jie, a rights manager working in Shanghai was at the first end of the day of the London Book Fair 2019, we made this appointment at 6pm in

the literary copyrights centre of the fair, which Zhang and some other participants described as “*the busiest spot of the whole book fair*”. Located on the second floor of the Olympia Exhibition Centre, the whole floor was the meeting space for the copyright trade where publishers and agents meet face-to-face, pitching or negotiating new or existing contracts. When we met, Zhang had already spent almost the whole day there:

*“I have meetings with different foreign publishers to whom I pitch specific titles every 30 minutes. These meetings start at 9am and last till 6pm.”*

Because of the peripheral position of Chinese publishers and the central position of English-language publishers in the world-system of book translation, as well as the late involvement of China in the international book market, China’s rights managers are peripheral players in the transnational literary field. As specialised copyrights agents in China, they have to carry titles that they represent proactively, flying over to big international book fairs and other occasions to meet with foreign publishers and literary agents, in order to introduce the Chinese books that they carry with them. Due to their peripheral status and less established nature, when exploring potential buyers, China’s rights managers are at a disadvantage compared to their counterparts in the English-language publishing industry. In order to carry Chinese literature effectively to the English literary field, Chinese rights managers build up social networks actively and widely with foreign publishers, literary agents and sub-agents, and also learn conventional standards and international publishing norms from their Western counterparts. The social networks, as well as professional skills and knowledge of copyright rules and standards, are important sources of social capital and cultural capital for these peripheral players. Therefore, attending international book fairs serves two important functions for cultural carriers. On the one hand, international book fairs provide a key venue for them to develop their social network, either alone or as members of firms; on the other hand, international book fairs function as an ‘educational’ venue where China’s rights managers develop the skills that are essential to be credible foreign rights agents.

In order to be involved in the international market and to become familiar with the functioning of the international book market, China's rights managers actively attend book fairs. As Li Yuan, an experienced rights manager working in Beijing said:

*"We treat book fairs very seriously... apart from the book fairs, I don't see many other chances for us to meet foreign publishers, and to try to promote our titles to them."*

The networks of relationships that individual or organisational agents have built up over time is what Bourdieu (1984) refers to as social capital, which is considered one of the most important resources or forms of capitals for publishers (Thompson, 2012). As a UK literary agent, Jason Wood said to me, *"Social networks are extremely important in foreign rights sales, as personal relationships can make a real difference"*. Therefore, according to my observation and interview data, even after the book fairs, copyright specialised agents, including China's rights managers and other professionals in the industry, normally have other events to attend, including formal industry conferences or casual gatherings such as cocktail parties. An experienced rights manager in China, Xue Jun, told me about his understanding of the importance of attending a book fair: *"If you are a copyright seller, you never 'do the businesses' at a book fair, what you do is to meet and know people within the industry, build your network cycle which can be extremely helpful no matter who she/he is."*

As mentioned earlier, China's rights managers mainly deal with copyright acquiring or purchasing in their daily routine. Attending book fairs provides chances to meet with their clients of those book copyright acquiring projects face-to-face. They would thus take these chances to talk about the books they represent, searching for potential buyers of their national publications. As Niu Li, the young rights manager mentioned earlier, said:

*"At the book fairs, I am busy in meeting with foreign publishers and sub-agencies we work with, but you know, mainly about copyright-*

*importation projects. Sometimes I meet with literary agents or sub-agencies of the book that our publishing house has purchased, to talk about some follow-up issues; sometimes I come along with one or two editors to meet with literary agents of the book we are interested in. Or, sometimes foreign publishers or agents would also come to us pitching their titles to us. In these meetings, I would grasp this chance of meeting up to try to pitch our titles to them as well. Pitching to someone you never know is extremely hard, so it can be a chance in their pitching meetings.”*

In the pitching meetings where foreign publishers or literary agents introduce the titles to them, China’s rights managers grasp the chance to promote their title in reverse. As mentioned earlier, China’s rights managers are almost road openers for exporting Chinese literature to international markets, especially to Anglo-American countries, whereas they have had abundant experience of acquiring English-language rights for a few decades. The above quote demonstrates that China’s rights managers have been building up social capital through copyright-acquiring, and they deploy this social capital in their copyright selling activities.

In addition to accumulating social capital, international book fairs have another function for China’s rights managers: acquiring cultural capital, which according to Bourdieu (1986), includes education qualifications, skills and credentials. China is a relative newcomer to the international book market, and so knowledge about transaction regulations and professional skills in terms of copyright trade is also relatively new for China’s rights managers. International Book Fairs become the key venue for China’s rights managers to gain this knowledge and learn the necessary skills. During my shadowing with two participants, both went to various copyrights-related and translation-related events at book fairs, for example, a panel meeting where western literary agents gathered to share experiences of selling rights to specific countries and a key-note speech by Jeremy Tiang, a prolific Chinese to English literary translator, discussing his experience of translating and publishing Chinese literature in English. These events provide them with chances to either meet people

or gain work experience. As one of the participants Li Hui, who I shadowed with at the London Book Fair, explained to me, that she regards international book fairs as learning places:

*“Book fairs for me provide excellent opportunities to study. The value of attending book fairs is not judged by how many contracts you can sign, as you probably can’t sign even one contract. It is what you learn from the book fairs that makes it valuable. Professionals in the publishing industry from all over the world have come here, so, I got chances to meet counterparts from different countries, learning their experiences...There are many chances to meet and talk with people at book fairs, and I find it’s pretty useful to go to events that are organised by the book fair. I can always learn new things from these events - some events are experience-sharing, some events are information-sharing. They are all good.”*

As discussed in section 3.2, China’s rights managers are more like road openers than professional transnational cultural mediators. They seek out their prospective audiences without sufficient experience, and their efforts are still in the ‘exploratory’ period. In this situation, for Chinese rights managers and other players, international book fairs are key venues for them to be involved in the international book market and become competent cultural carriers by accumulating both social capital and cultural capital. As will be shown next, language skill is another key cultural capital for China’s rights manager to deploy to be competent cultural carriers, and their deployment of English-language competence shows the English hegemony that permeates their cultural carrying activities.

#### **5.4.2 “Because I am proficient in English”**

According to Bourdieu (1986), cultural capital includes education qualifications, skills and credentials. Sapiro (2016c) defines linguistic skills as a specific kind of cultural capital invested in international cultural exchanges. Compared to the other skills needed to be a rights manager (such as the professional expertise in copyrights),

English language competence is the most essential skill. Speaking of why she was selected to do a copyright job in the first place, Wang Yuheng recalled:

*“I guess it’s because what I learned in the University was suitable to do this. My major was Business English, so I am proficient in English and I am interested in copyright trade. Also at that time, I was the youngest person in the publishing house, who may study new things quicker.”*

It is clear that English skills were a prerequisite for Wang’s appointment to a copyright staff role. English language competence is also the threshold for recruitment as a rights manager in a publishing house or literary agency, where it seems to be the main entry qualification. Among my interview participants (including the two go-along participants), all the rights managers (n=16) are fluent in English – 12 of them hold an English degree, 2 had majored in Anglo-American literature and, of the other two, one had majored in publishing and the other in French. Two of them are even experienced literary translators between Chinese and English at the same time. This means that these rights managers have strong capabilities to either prepare the English material essential for pitching by themselves (though depending on their workload and the size of the organisation they work in, these jobs are sometimes outsourced to professional translators), or to communicate and negotiate with foreign publishers in English.

Danish critic Gerog Brandes (2009, p.63) has used the term “lamentable necessity” to describe the phenomenon whereby texts in peripheral languages can only become part of the global literary system after being rendered into another tongue. This so-called “lamentable necessity” is also reflected, according to my observations, in the process of copyright trade between China’s rights managers and Anglo-American publishers. Competence in English enables rights managers to communicate and negotiate with English-language publishers. In addition, many of the materials that rights managers need to prepare require a large amount of translation or editorial work: a sample translation which is often one to three chapters and sometimes rights managers would even prepare a full-length translation; a book synopsis prepared by

the rights managers (either written or translated by them), and one or two reader's reports, either written by English-language readers or translated into English. Overall, because of the 'lamentable necessity', English competence is an important form of cultural capital to acquire in order to be a competent cultural carrier in copyright exportation to the Anglo-American countries.

#### 5.4.3 *"Complying with international rules is important"*

According to my interview data, China's rights managers consider "complying with international rules" a very important factor for successfully exporting Chinese literature abroad. Chi Xin is a rights manager who has sold rights to a UK publisher. As she said in the interview:

*"If you want to know other reasons that we can successfully export this book, I would say complying with international rules is important...For example, we firstly obtained authorization by the author before pitching to foreign publishers, and the pitching and negotiation procedures are totally in line with standards; when the translated book was produced, we also reviewed the copyright page and the cover based on copyright rules."*

Chi continued to explain why she believes complying with international rules is important for exporting Chinese literature abroad:

*"When you are complying with the rules, the other party would feel that you and your publishing house are professional and thus reliable. Authorising English rights of xxx [the title that has been sold to the UK] was a good example – everything we did was based on the standard procedures, this is very important."*

In addition, China's rights managers also use a rather standardised procedure in the pitching process. Jiang Peng is a rights manager who has already sold two titles to foreign territories, including the UK and the US market. As he explained:

*"The procedure I carry out to sell Chinese literature's copyright is totally based on industrial standard and market rules."*

On the 'industrial standard' he followed, Jiang Peng continued to say:

*"I've been dealing with foreign publishers for many years, very familiar with their procedures. We should just follow what the western literary agents would do. Firstly, I contact potential foreign publishers and negotiate with them. Normally, I would prepare a proposal and a sample translated manuscript to find publishers who publish literature- it is just something we need to know, because if you want to sell copyrights, you have to go to the right person first of all. Then when I meet with these editors, I would ask: are you interested in foreign literature? – This is important. Those western literary agents would not ask this question if they sell Chinese titles. Don't ask if they are interested in Chinese literature, because for foreign publishers, there is no Chinese literature, there is only foreign literature."*

From the excerpt of the interview with Jiang Peng, we can see that China's rights managers imitate the behaviours of their Western counterparts, following the same rules and procedures that they do.

As China is a relative newcomer to the international book market, the transaction regulations and professional skills of the copyright trade are relatively new to China's rights managers. As argued earlier, rather than transnational cultural intermediaries, cultural carriers are more like road openers, exploring their prospective audiences without sufficient experience. In order to carry Chinese literature effectively to the English literary field, China's rights managers comply with copyright rules already set by various international agreements such as the Berne Convention, and imitate the conventional standards and norms from their Western counterparts. My data therefore suggest that, apart from excellent English skills, being professional, namely mastering professional expertise and complying with the international rules, becomes a form of cultural capital that cultural carriers are endowed with. Gonsalves's (2015) study of practices of Indian publishers at the Frankfurt Book Fair finds that, as newcomers at the book fair, Indian publishers mobilise friendliness as a



strategy to negotiate their positions at the book fair. My data, which suggest that conformity is regarded as an important cultural capital for cultural carriers, echoes with the findings of Gonsalves (2015): newcomers in a field do not necessarily aim for “discontinuity, rupture, difference, revolution” when negotiating their positions with the establishment, as Bourdieu (1993, p.106) suggests. Instead, as my data show, as newcomers China’s rights managers comply with the international standard and regard it as a professional approach, which will help make them seem reliable and more acceptable to Anglo-American publishers.

So far, I have depicted the different forms of capital that are needed to be a competent cultural carrier. My data show that cultural carriers consider international book fairs as important social networking venues to develop their social networking and as educational venues to gain professional skills. Moreover, to become a cultural carrier, English language capacity and complying with international rules are essential. Rights managers’ deployment of these forms of capitals is a manifestation of their professional habitus as cultural carriers: in order to successfully facilitate the copyright exportation of contemporary Chinese literature to Anglo-American countries, they proactively attend book fairs, carrying titles and sufficient English materials to meet Anglophone publishers, learning and imitating behaviours from the western counterparts and during the pitching and negotiation process, they regard complying with rules as a characteristic which makes them professional and thus reliable in dealings with Anglophone publishers.

#### *5.4.4 Compromise as a strategy of cultural carriers*

Shaped by both the national and transnational factors outlined above, I argue that China’s rights managers act as cultural carriers in facilitating the translation of Chinese literature into the Anglo-American literary field. In the negotiation process with Anglo-American publishers, compromise is a key strategy in their work as cultural carriers.

Without exception, all the rights managers I interviewed stated that their aim is not to make a profit for their companies by engaging in copyright selling. Hao Jing, a rights manager in a senior position based in Beijing, highlighted the importance of copyright exportation of Chinese books like this:

*“The final purpose of copyright trade in terms of book exportation is never gaining financial profits, it is to enlarge the influence of authors and the original publishers in foreign worlds. In other words, foreign rights exportation is not a business - it is not for money, it is for reputation.”*

In Bourdieu’s sense, reputation, prestige and recognition can be referred to as symbolic capital. As Bourdieu (1980) suggests, in cultural business, despite seeking economic profit, “there is also room for *the accumulation of symbolic capital*” (pp.261–262, original emphasis). From Hao Jing’s quotation, it can be argued that for China’s rights managers, copyright exportation is a business where purely financial considerations can be outweighed by other factors. They do not see copyright exportation solely as a business for making money, which is often less important than building a reputation and accumulating symbolic capital for the books, the authors, the nation-state, and as argued earlier, themselves.

In order to make cultural transfer activities possible, these cultural carriers tend to sacrifice economic interests (they will, of course, do so under the permission of the author or the rights holder). One of my participants, Liang Bin, a rights manager who had just signed a contract with a famous US literary publisher said:

*“I just sold xxx [a long Chinese novel] to xxx [a famous US independent publisher]. I pitched to xxx [the US publisher] because I knew they are interested in publishing foreign literature – you know, to sell copyright, you have firstly to find the ‘right person’ [i.e., the suitable publisher]. I am acquainted with the international book market and have built up personal contacts with many foreign publishers and literary agents when I was an editor, so I know who*

*the ‘right person’ might be, and I can easily find the way to approach them. Xxx [the US publisher] finally decided to buy the global English copyrights, which means it has the right to authorise the English rights to other territories other than the US. For the maximum benefit of the author, it is better to limit the territory to the US, so that we could sell copyright to other English language territories separately, but sometimes, you have to compromise on something.”*

English-language publishers operate within their respective national publishing fields, (for example, North American, Australian, Canadian, British), so there is a certain amount of competition among English-language publishers (Van Es and Heilbron, 2015). To stand out among English-language publishers, the potential publisher would ask for rights to cover all English language markets across the world and cultural carriers would normally agree to authorise this. Liang Bin again explained why he agreed to do so:

*“In consideration of xxx [the US publisher]’s reputation and international influences, we agreed with that. Xxx [the US publisher] is a good literary publisher, it takes a risk for them to publish such a Chinese author who is famous and recognized in China, but not well known in the West yet.”*

As mentioned earlier, in terms of copyright exportation to Anglo-American countries, rights managers are road openers. Therefore, financial compromise is a strategy for them to ‘open the road’. Nevertheless, though Liang made a financial compromise on this, the result is more than satisfactory in his view:

*“It turns out I made the right choice – after signing with xxx, this book soon attracted other countries’ publishers, except those from France, Germany, Japan and Spain, which I’ve contacted with earlier, there are also publishers from Italy, Norway, Finland contacting me to acquire sample manuscripts, after they heard about the news.”*

In analysing the world-system of book translations, Heilbron (2000) suggests “what is translated from one peripheral language into another, depends on what is translated into the central languages from these peripheral languages” (p.15). In other words, central languages can often act as an intermediary or vehicular language between peripheral languages, and the more central a language is in the translation system, the more capable it is as an intermediary language (Heilbron, 1999, 2000). Liang Bin’s example exemplifies the intermediary role or the consecration power of English: being published by famous UK or US publishers helps the book’s foreign rights sell into other countries (as discussed further in Chapter 6).

## 5.5 Conclusion

Translation is a significant medium enabling foreign books to be read by local readers. Because of the increasing centrality of English (De Swaan, 1993, 2013; Heilbron, 1999; Ronen et al., 2014), being translated into English can be considered a precondition for books written in other languages, especially for peripheral languages, to be introduced to a larger public and to have the opportunity to acquire international recognition. Nevertheless, just as well-acclaimed Chinese author Yu Hua asserts in an article which recalls how his books circulated around the world, “of course, translation is important, but if a publisher doesn’t publish, then it doesn’t matter how good a translation is...” (Yu, 2017). This chapter has explored one of the backstage protagonists – rights managers, who actively bring Chinese literature to the attention of foreign publishers but whose work always happens in the background, arguing that their professional habitus is shaped as cultural carriers in terms of facilitating the exportation of Chinese literature to Anglo-American countries.

Following Heilbron’s (1999) world-system on book translations and Casanova’s (2004) international space of the literary world, I understand the practices of cultural carriers as taking place in a transnational literary field, a social space of rivalry, struggle and inequality between nation-states, their languages and literatures (Heilbron, 1999; Sapiro, 2014a; Heilbron and Sapiro, 2007; Casanova, 2004). From the

perspective of China, this chapter has provided an empirical account of transnational actors who facilitate the cultural flow from the periphery to the centre. English-language markets are considered to be the most difficult to break into for authors writing in other native languages (Rønning and Slaatta, 2011; Richardson, 2012). As a hyper-central language in the world-system of book translations, Anglophone publishers are reluctant to publish Chinese to English translated books (and books in translation in general), or in Venuti's (1995) words, they are "xenophobic at home" (p.17). For authors and literature from the periphery, actors from the source culture/language are the main initiators who proactively bring them to the attention of Anglo-American publishers. These actors are therefore indispensable to understanding the transnational mobility of books. The cultural carriers I study here are by all measures one of the key groups of these actors from the source culture/language.

A rights manager in China is a kind of substitute for a literary agent. Due to China's late involvement in the international book market and peripheral position in the world-system of the book market, China's rights managers are acting, in the words of one of my interviewees, as 'road openers' for copyright exportation to Anglo-American countries. They proactively carry Chinese books to the English-speaking world to the attention of Anglophone publishers at specified events such as international book fairs, imitate professional behaviours from other players in the transnational field, and comply with the rules set by central players. At the same time, reflecting the "hybrid state-and-market system" (Yun, 2013, p.19) of China's publishing industry, China's rights managers show a strong national characteristic: they consider copyright selling not as a business, but more like a duty, and as a result, the primary purpose of their job is not to make an economic profit, but to share Chinese culture with the world. Examining the practices of China's rights managers, I conceptualise them as cultural carriers. The words "carrier" and "carry", on the one hand, highlight the role they play in the transnational transfer of books in translation in a physical way. On the other hand, as I argue above, Chinese rights managers act as market agents under the state framework, facilitating titles within their national catalogues to foreign literary markets, including the Anglosphere. The

conceptualization of cultural carriers thus emphasises their hard work and implies their duty when working in the international book market – sharing Chinese literature with the world.

This chapter has conceptualised China's rights managers who actively and proactively work in the international book market, bringing Chinese literature abroad, as cultural carriers. This conceptualization highlights the specific characteristics of China's rights managers when engaging in their transnational transfer activities. This, I hope, can add to empirical accounts of cultural actors in transnational contexts (e.g., Kuipers, 2012; Roig-Sanz and Meylaerts (eds), 2018) generally from the perspective of China. Nevertheless, rights managers are certainly not the only players who pitch to English publishers, and more importantly, rights managers cannot complete the literary transfer activity solely by themselves. In the next chapter, by examining the publication journey of one individual book, I shall bring actor-network theory (Latour, 1996, 2005) in to supplement the Bourdieusian analysis of the thesis, revealing more other actors involved in the literary transfer process and how they act to facilitate a Chinese book's translation and publication in Anglo-American countries.

## Chapter 6 ‘Cultural carrying’ as an expanding actor-network – a case study of the publication of *Bronze and Sunflower* in the UK

*Bronze and Sunflower*, a children’s novel written by Chinese writer Cao Wenxuan, is one of the very few recent Chinese books that have been published by an Anglophone publisher and that has been well reviewed among an English-speaking readership, as assessed by reviews and literary awards the English translation has received (which will be discussed in detail later in the chapter). As a book originally written in Chinese, the translation and publication of *Bronze and Sunflower* in the UK in 2015 and its worldwide circulation afterwards is truly a rare example, which therefore provides us with a case study to examine how a book written in a peripheral language in the cultural world-system (Heilbron, 1999) successfully travels across national boundaries. In order to give a fuller picture of the publication journey and the logic beneath the transfer of *Bronze and Sunflower* from China to Anglo-American literary space and its subsequent circulations to other literary spaces, this chapter used actor-network theory (ANT) (Latour, 1987, 1996, 2005) as an analytical tool to explore the actors involved and how they interacted to facilitate its publication in the UK. Supplemented with Bourdieu’s (1986) concept of capital and Casanova’s (2004) notion of translation as consecration, this chapter addresses further the consequences of being published in Anglo-American literary space. The previous chapter has shown that China’s rights managers acting as cultural carriers, among others, are important actors who proactively bring Chinese titles to the English literary world. As I shall argue below, a book travelling from China to the UK as presented by this case, can be understood as forming an actor-network (1987, 1996, 2005), or what I shall call a “cultural carrying network”, in which a cultural carrier is one of the important initiators, along with the various human and non-human actors involved and working together to complete the book’s translation and publication in the UK and in more other territories.

In this chapter, before examining the process of exporting *Bronze and Sunflower* to the UK (and elsewhere), I will firstly introduce Szu-Wen Kung’s (2009) study of the

translation of Taiwanese literature in the US, and explain how my research is inspired by this and could complement her study. Then I will trace the actors that facilitated the publication of *Bronze and Sunflower* in the UK, identifying the invisible human and non-human actors that were involved. To better understand the formation and configuration of the cultural carrying network, I will also draw upon Bourdieu's (1984) notion of capital to interpret actors' agency in the formation of the network. After presenting the whole process of the book's journey from China to the UK, this chapter will continue to examine the expansion of the cultural carrying network achieved by the joining of English language/English translation as a non-human actor. As well as identifying various more invisible human and non-human actors involved in facilitating this title's publication in the UK, this chapter demonstrates the role of central languages as non-human actors to facilitate not only the dissemination of books from the periphery of the globe, but also the exportation of more works from the national literary field. The data of this chapter is mainly collected from interviews with the key participants, including Wu Xiaohong the rights manager from Jiangsu Phoenix Children and Juvenile Publishing House (the original publisher in China), Jiang Hanzhong and Peter Buckman who acted as sub-agents, and Emma Lidbury the acquisition editor from Walker Books (the UK publisher). Secondary materials such as interviews in published articles with these participants, as well as Helen Wang, the translator; media releases about this title and its global circulation; and book reviews are also drawn on to complete my analysis.

### **6.1 Conceptualising the 'cultural carrying network'**

In the previous chapter, I argued that Chinese contemporary literature is proactively carried by agents from the source (i.e., China) to the English literary space. I gave specific attention to Chinese rights managers and conceptualised them as cultural carriers, as they play an important role in mediating linguistic, cultural, and geographical borders, and, as a result, they facilitate book translations of contemporary literature from China to the Anglo-American literary world. However, the production of cultural goods such as film, music and books are social activities,



which cannot be attributed to a single actor, but instead are the product of a complex network of social interactions. As Becker (1982, p.1) states in his monograph *Art Worlds*, “all artistic work, like all human activity, involves the joint activity of a number, often a large number, of people. Through their cooperation, the artwork we eventually see or hear comes to be and continues to be”. Entering the English literary world from China is by no means a simple step. As we shall see in this chapter, from its first encounter with UK editors, to its publication by a UK publisher, the cultural carrying process of *Bronze and Sunflower* went through many actors, and the English translation itself became an actor itself as well in much wider circuits of its dissemination. In addition to the conceptualization of cultural carriers in the previous chapter, I conduct a process-oriented analysis to explore how book translation flows from one country to another by focusing on the actors (in ANT’s sense, therefore, both human and non-human) involved in the process and how they got involved and exerted their influence on the cultural carrying process. In other words, the aim is to explore how a project is produced and completed through a network of contacts linking different actors (Latour, 1987), thus making actor-network theory (ANT) a suitable analytic tool to be used here.

ANT is an approach that aims to explain the interactive process as “networks composed of heterogeneous actors, objects, and representations” (Magaudda, 2011, p.4). Originally developed by Bruno Latour (1987, 2005), Michel Callon (1986), and John Law (1992), ANT is a micro-sociological approach which understands the social as constructed by interactions and associations between humans and non-human actors. ANT specifically points out the role of non-human actors in constructing the social, proposing that non-human actors, like human actors, have agency in social processes. Latour (2005) therefore calls us to reset to a “new default position” before starting a study; that “all the actors we are going to deploy might be associated in such a way that they make others do things” (Latour, 2005, p.107). In the cultural carrying process, as we shall see, various human and non-human actors (including rights managers, sub-agents, translators, polyglot readers, funding organisations, as well as the original book itself and its French translation) all play different roles and together make the transnational transfer possible. In addition, in order to interpret

the agency of actors within the network, i.e., how actors exert their power in recruiting other actors and constituting this cultural carrying network, this chapter uses Bourdieu's concept of capital. As Thompson (2012, p.5) argues, the capacity of an agent "to act and get things done is always rooted in and dependent on the kinds and quantities of resources" that the agent possesses. As reviewed in Chapter 2, the three forms of capitals that Bourdieu (1986) identifies include: economic capital (material assets that can be directly and immediately convertible into money); cultural capital (non-material resources emerging through three states: embodied, such as knowledge, skills; objectified, such as books, art works; and institutionalised, such as educational qualifications) and social capital (the aggregate of resources that derive from group membership); and symbolic capital, a form of capital is central to Bourdieu's oeuvre, which is not another different form of capital but should be seen as "the legitimated, recognised form of the other capitals", i.e., economic, cultural and social capital (Lawler, 2011, p.1418). Using ANT enables us to identify factors or non-human actors (for example, languages, knowledge, personal affection) that are involved with and facilitate the cross-border publication of an individual book. And supplemented by Bourdieu's theoretical tools, ANT helps to interpret the agency of individual actors within the network and in a broader sense, it helps to understand the functioning of the cultural carrying network as conditioned by the power dynamics of the transnational field. In the discussion of the translation of Taiwanese contemporary novels in the US, Kung (2009) has pointed out two main modes for translating contemporary Taiwanese novels to the US. Inspired by actor-network theory, Kung introduces these two modes as "the translator-led network" and "the subvention network" and, with the help of Bourdieu's concept of capital (Bourdieu, 1986), she concludes that the subvention network and actors with different capitals participating in this network can work together to translate and export literature more effectively. In translator-led networks, the translation is generally initiated or led by the translators and the translators have to pitch their work to publishers themselves. To exemplify the subvention network, Kung chooses a translation series "Modern Chinese literature from Taiwan" as the core of the study. This translation project was supported by a secure fund from the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation for International Scholarly Exchange in Taiwan and established as a plan to promote

contemporary literature from Taiwan. The formation of this network required the involvement of the translator, the editorial board members, the publishers, and the funding organisation which sponsored the publication.

These two modes of the “translator-led network” and “the subvention network” (Kung, 2009) can also be identified when it comes to translating literary works from Mainland China to Anglo-American countries. However, Kung’s (2009) analysis neglects another mode which publishers in the English context would take for granted; that is, selling translation rights into English countries through professional agents. This oversight may partly be because there are not many cases that can be examined - as Taiwanese literature together with literature from Mainland China belongs to the peripheral language<sup>72</sup>, there are not many books that have been translated into English via specialised copyright agents. However, the circulation of *Bronze and Sunflower* is one example of this mode, with the development of specialised agents during recent decades, such as rights managers and foreign rights agents in mainland China. Chinese contemporary literature gradually was first translated and published in English-language countries through copyright trading via specialised copyright trade agents, and in the meantime, translator and subvention organisations still play important roles in the transnational transfer process. Through my case study, I shall propose a new mode – a “cultural carrying network” – to complement and extend Kung’s (2009) analysis.

## 6.2 Findings and analysis

### 6.2.1 About *Bronze and Sunflower*

Written by China’s contemporary author Cao Wenxuan, *Bronze and Sunflower* is a children’s novel, originally published in 2005 in China. This novel tells a story about two children – one mute boy Bronze living in a village and one city girl Sunflower,

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<sup>72</sup> The language in China (including, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macau) is Chinese, but Mainland China uses a simplified way of writing Chinese characters, while in Taiwan and Hong Kong, traditional Chinese, which is also called complex Chinese, is used. The writing in both is similar, but the traditional Chinese characters are formed from more strokes.

who lives with Bronze's family after she is orphaned. The setting of this story is in the countryside of Jiangsu Province of China, during the period of Cultural Revolution in the 1960s and 1970s. Focusing on simple everyday events and challenges that the family faced, the novel was described by the Freeman Book Awards as "a timeless story of the trials of poverty, hardship, rural-urban divisions, the Confucian values of family and service to the society, and the power of love and loyalty to overcome hardship" (NCTASIA, 2017)

Born in 1954, Cao Wenxuan is a president of Peking University and a member of The Chinese Writers Association. Cao Wenxuan started to publish literary works in 1972, and his works began to gather awards soon after. Though Cao Wenxuan is one of the most prestigious and best-selling children's book writers in China, *Bronze and Sunflower* is his first full-length book to be translated into English (NCTASIA, 2017), and the publication year of the English edition was ten years after its original publication in China. The translation and publication of this title in the UK helped it to take off in other countries, which indicates the central position that English and the UK have in the international literary field. After being published by Walker Books in 2015, it was soon published by Walker's subsidiary publisher in the US – Candlewick Press, in 2017. A year after the book was published in the US, Cao Wenxuan won a prestigious international prize – the Hans Christian Andersen Award, and the book went on to win the Marsh Award for Children's Literature in Translation – the only translation prize in the UK for children's books, which is awarded every two years. At the end of 2017, after its publication in the US, *Bronze and Sunflower* appeared on the bestseller lists of the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal* and *Publishers Weekly*, which makes the author the first Chinese children's literature author who has ever been listed on the annual children's book list by the *New York Times*. Later in the same year, the US edition of the title won the Freeman Book Award for Young Adult/Middle School literature on East Asia. As of March of 2021, the foreign language rights of this title have been sold to 19 countries, including Germany, Italy, Hungary, Slovenia, India and Cambodia. It has been translated into more languages than any other book in the history of the original publishing house, as Wu Xiaohong, the rights manager from the original publishing house of this book in China explained

in the interview.

### *6.2.2 Tracing the actors of 'the cultural carrying network'*

The process of cultural transfer from one national field to another is made up of a series of social operations. The process through which *Bronze and Sunflower* gets access to the English literary field, as illustrated below, reveals how the title passed through various steps and was transported by various actors to be finally published in the UK.

#### **From initiators to the UK publisher**

In this case, as a rights manager in one of the original publishers (Jiangsu Phoenix Children & Juvenile Publishing house) of *Bronze and Sunflower*, Wu Xiaohong can be regarded as the human actor who initiated the idea of promoting this title abroad. Representing the publishing house and authorised by the author Cao Wenxuan, she is the agent who was responsible for authorising the foreign language rights of this book to other countries and language areas all over the world. As Wu said in interview:

*"This book was published in 2005 [in China], I put a lot of effort into promoting it abroad since then. This is purely my personal activity, no one appointed me to do that. I really love this book so much! Since 2005, I've been trying to figure out this book's positioning in the international market. I attended the Bologna Book Fair in 2003, it was the time when I truly reached the international market. Afterwards, I began to attend more and more international book fairs, and gradually have a better and clearer understanding of the international market."*

Attending the Bologna Book Fair in 2003 was the starting point of Wu's encounter with the international book market, when she started to learn more about the dynamics of this market and the rules of copyright trade. And in 2005, when *Bronze and Sunflower* was published in China, because of her personal strong affection for the story and her knowledge of the importance of international book fairs, she began to "persistently recommend it on any occasions, for example, at international book

fairs". Therefore, when the original edition of this title came out in China, it was right at the time when Wu had a strong awareness of how best to be involved in the international market and began to have more and more chances to get in touch with foreign publishers directly. The above quote reveals that in the title's journey to the UK and other countries in the world, Wu was a crucially important human initiator. Nevertheless, according to Wu, selling the foreign rights of this book was motivated by her personal enthusiasm rather than her job responsibility. This means, the prime actor 'recruiting' or 'enrolling' (in ANT terms) her and subsequent actors was the original text itself. As can be shown in the following quote by Wu Xiaohong:

*"There are some similarities of my personal experiences with this book's plots: I also have a brother, and this book portrays the affection between brother and sister. So, when I read these plots, I can always be touched by the affection described in this book."*

Wu Xiaohong's personal childhood experience meant the book resonated with her, hence her personal experience can be regarded as one of the non-human actors that persuaded her to enrol in its cultural carrying network. This personal affection for the book was the foundation of her recruitment and enabled her to invite more actors into the cultural carrying network. As Wu Xiaohong continued to say:

*"As a rights manager, I have to be moved by a book myself. Only if I personally have that sort of connection with the book, can I then possibly convince others to like it as well."*

It can be argued that, in the case of *Bronze and Sunflower*, the text (and the author), the cultural carrier (i.e., Wu Xiaohong, and the original publishing house she works for) were the initiators who then recruited more actors to complete the publication of this title in the UK. As we can see, apart from the unremitting efforts of Wu Xiaohong, there are two other very important intermediaries who participated and eventually brought this title to the attention of Anglophone acquisition editors. One is an independent Chinese foreign rights agent – Mr Jiang Hanzhong - and the other is a British literary agent – Mr Peter Buckman. As Wu said, although she had been promoting this book since 2005, it had only been sold into France, and two Asian

countries – Korea and Vietnam by 2011. Selling into English-speaking countries was always a goal for Wu, and she never gave up on promoting this title. In September of 2011, when Jiang Hanzhong visited the Exhibition booth of Jiangsu Phoenix at the Beijing International Book Fair to meet friends, he met Wu Xiaohong and read the book because she introduced him to it. Wu Xiaohong said in the interview:

*“Mr Jiang firstly read this book at the Beijing Book Fair, introduced by me, as I have been grasping every chance to recommend this book at any possible occasions. I told him that this book already had a Korean edition and a French edition, and we were looking for English publishers who might be interested in this book.”*

Jiang Hanzhong was so personally moved by this book (according to my interview with Jiang), and he decided to help the original publishing house by using his rich personal contacts and extensive copyright working experiences. It is worth noting that French translation, at this stage did not become a non-human actor recruiting Jiang Hanzhong to the network, in fact, the importance of the French translation was not noticed by him until the pitching process with Walker books (as will be discussed later). Before becoming an independent agent, Jiang Hanzhong had been a rights manager in a state-run publishing house in Beijing, and was experienced in the copyright trade and the international book market. Jiang Hanzhong chose to find an overseas rights agent once he decided to help Wu Xiaohong to sell this title into more foreign markets, as he believes “they are the ones who know the most about foreign publishers and readers”. After being explicitly rejected by a US agent who he was familiar with, Jiang Hanzhong decided to turn to the UK market, so he approached Peter Buckman who undertook the task of pitching *Bronze and Sunflower* to UK publishers. Peter Buckman explained in interview:

*“I liked the story – my father used to go to China several times a year and talked about the Cultural Revolution...I was interested in Chinese writers partly because of my father, partly because my friend Toby Eady had successfully represented*

*several, such as Jung Chang, and partly because I didn't want to have only English-speaking writers on our list."*

Peter Buckman read through the materials sent by Jiang Hanzhong, and according to Jiang, Buckman found the writing style (referring to the sample English translation) a little simplistic for an English-speaking readership, but he believed that the subject, period and characters were very interesting, so he decided to give it a try.

As we could see, all of these three human actors had personal affection for the story. In addition, one of the reasons that Peter Buckman could be persuaded was because of his familiarity with China and Chinese literature, due to his father who conferred his knowledge about China and the Cultural Revolution (the historical background of the story), and his friend who is also a literary agent representing works from Chinese authors. Therefore, knowledge about China, Chinese history (especially about the Cultural revolution), and Chinese literature was an important non-human actor enrolling Peter Buckman into the network.

As a sub-agent, Peter Buckman worked as a great broker between the Chinese publisher and the UK publisher. His interest in this title and in Chinese books in general triggered him to help to find English publishers for it. And, for Walker Books, the English publisher of this title, Peter Buckman's participation in the network made the acquisition process much easier. As stated by Emma Lidbury, the acquisition editor in interview:

*"We liked the idea of publishing a Chinese novel, which we had not done before, and the agent provided an easier path as he knew some Chinese translators, including the one who had written the report."*

Peter Buckman in fact developed the connection of Walker Books with Chinese to English literary translators whom they did not have any as prior to this. Peter Buckman's contacts with these translators also lessened the subsequent work for publishers such as finding a suitable translator. As Emma Lidbury reflected:



*“The UK agent [i.e., Peter Buckman] had a translator to recommend [a translator of another Chinese writer who Buckman represented], but she was too busy so she suggested Helen Wang. The network of translators from Chinese was so small that we didn’t have a large number of options; we were glad to have a recommendation.”*

In terms of the success of selling its English translation rights, Peter Buckman emphasised the importance of serendipity. In early April of 2012, Peter Buckman pitched to nine publishers at the London Book Fair, which was obviously a good place for buying and selling foreign rights, especially in and from the English market. Later, in April, he received an offer from one of them – Walker Books. As he described:

*“My pitch for *Bronze & Sunflower* was that it was a story that was both entertaining and educational, dealing with a time and a culture that most western readers didn't know about. But the main factor in Walker taking it was, as I said, they were looking for their yearly translation book, and mine came along at the right time. Timing is as important as talent in publishing.”*

Initiated by the text itself, Wu Xiaohong, the rights manager of the original publishing house of *Bronze and Sunflower*, was first recruited into the network by non-human actors such as her personal affection for the book. She started her unremitting promotion work at specialised events such as book fairs. Soon, two more sub-agents - Jiang Hanzhong and Peter Buckman - with strong social capital (an interpersonal network) and cultural capital (professional experience and skills) joined in. The enrolling of Peter Buckman benefited from a non-human actor - his knowledge of China, Chinese history and Chinese literature. Peter Buckman brought this title at a good time and place to the attention of Emma Lidbury, Walker Books’ acquisition editor. Finally, among several publishers who Buckman pitched to, only Walker Books showed an initial interest. As can be seen next, Walker Books as the English-language

publisher was recruited into this cultural carrying network with the help of several other important actors.

### **French translation**

Before the translation rights were sold to the UK publisher, *Bronze and Sunflower* was published in France and Korea. The French edition turned out to be another important non-human actor in the process of bringing the title into the UK. Ban (2015) in her article focusing on the situation of books of translation in the US, argues that one of the barriers that foreign books face in the US is linguistic, that is to say, in most cases, editors in the US do not read foreign languages, so they have to rely on third party reports before acquiring a title and commissioning a translator. This phenomenon also demonstrates the importance of polyglot readers and translators in the acquisition process, which will be explicated later. When it comes to editors in the UK, the linguistic barrier still exists. Nevertheless, the case of *Bronze and Sunflower* and my interview data with publishing professionals at a wider scale suggest that although it is hard to find an English-speaking editor who is fluent in reading Chinese, there are more editors in the UK who can read French. As Sapiro argues, French plays an important mediating role for literary works written in periphery languages getting into the centre: “beyond the obvious consecrating factor that a previous translation represents for a work, the issue of linguistic competence also comes into play” (2010a, p.314), as English publishing houses generally have editors who know French.

In this case, reading the published French edition helped the English editor to understand the whole text before commissioning a Chinese-English translator. As Jiang confirmed in the interview:

*“By the end of April of this year [2012], he [Buckman] told me that a publishing house was interested in the book, and it was very likely that the foreign rights of this title could be exported successfully. However, the publisher needs to read the French edition of this book. Most English publishers can read French,*

*so reading the French edition could help them understand the spirit and writing style of the book. I immediately wrote back to him and told him how to purchase the French edition of the book. It seems that if the French rights of a title is sold first and the French edition is published, it will help the promotion of the English rights.”*

Since the title had already been translated into French, the acquisition editor, who is a foreign reader for Chinese text, was able to assess the title through the French edition. At the same time, the intermediating role of French also played a part in the editorial process. Helen Wang, the translator of this book has described her translation process in a series of interviews with children’s book translators conducted by an online magazine *Words and Pictures* (Sullivan, 2018):

*“Walker Books sent me a copy of the book in late June or early July 2013. It was published in the UK at the beginning of April 2015, and in the US by Candlewick in March 2017. Walker Books hadn’t published a book from Chinese before, and they didn’t have anyone in the company who could read Chinese, but they had read the French translation of *Bronze and Sunflower*. I suggested that I translate the first chapter very directly (what some people call a literal translation), that the editor edit it, and that I follow her style of editing when translating the second chapter, and so on until we found the right balance. This also enabled us to establish a working relationship at that early stage. I did the translation, sent it in, a few months later the editor sent it back to me marked-up and I went through the edits. Then the editor and I met in person, and went through all of the highlighted areas.”*

From this quote, one can see that the editorial process was intertwined with the translation process, and the editor’s editorial practice was helped by the mediating role of French, as she is not able to read original Chinese texts. So, the French

language, in particular the French translation of this title, acted as a non-human actor in this cultural carrying network.

The importance of French in facilitating the process of translating peripheral literature into English is reflected in this case, and is in line with Sapiro's (2010a) argument about the role that French plays in maintaining cultural diversity in the global market. As Sapiro (2010a, p.318) argues, even though it is in relative decline in terms of its consecrating power, French literary publishing continues to play a mediating role granting literary works written in peripheral languages access to translation into central languages such as English. Therefore, in the case of *Bronze and Sunflower*, the French language and translation of the title acted as one of the important non-human actors enrolling the UK publisher Walker Books into the cultural carrying network.

### **Polyglot readers and their positive reading reports**

Polyglots ensure the communication between speakers of various languages, either through interpreting or by translating from one language to another (Heilbron, 2000). In this particular cultural carrying process, polyglots played a huge role. They are the rights manager, and the Chinese sub-agent, readers<sup>73</sup> hired by Walker Books to provide a report on its quality. In this case, readers who can both read Chinese and provide a reliable review for English editors were not only hired by prospective publishers, but had also been involved in the pitching process, hired by the foreign rights agent. As stated by Jiang Hanzhong, Peter Buckman invited a few Chinese speakers who live in the UK or are British to read *Bronze and Sunflower* title in Chinese:

*“According to his experience, it was very difficult to impress publishers with current materials and sample translation, so he decided to find one or two Chinese living in the UK or British*

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<sup>73</sup> Here, readers mean a specific worker invited in to help editors who cannot read a book in its original language. As explained in an infographic titled “the lifecycle of books in translation”, created by Publishing Trendsetter, readers are “hired by a prospective foreign publisher to read a book in its original language and provide an acquiring editor with a report on its quality before the rights are purchased” (Publishing Trendsetter, n.d.). see <http://publishingtrendsetter.com/life-cycle-book-translation/>

*who can understand Chinese to read it from the beginning to the end and submit a corresponding review report...Peter Buckman told me that a Chinese writer living in the UK read this book and liked it. And he recommended the title to a publisher, and the publisher was going to ask a young Chinese lady to read it."*

Peter Buckman found these polyglot readers through his friends in the publishing industry (such as editors acquainted with Chinese writers). As well as those who were invited to provide a review report, according to Jiang Hanzhong, Buckman also contacted several regular readers including "a little British girl who was learning Chinese" and "a young British lady who was learning Chinese". In the end, Peter Buckman commissioned an Englishman who was studying literature at university and was proficient in Chinese to write a full review report giving his own judgement on the book's value. This reviewer's report, with positive remarks on the story and the author, was used during Buckman's pitching process to Walker Books as well as other UK publishers.

This English reader's report on the title was important material for Emma Lidbury, the acquisition editor at Walker Books, in assessing the title:

*"Our criteria for selecting a foreign title is just the same as for any title in the English language – a good story, well written, that we think will connect with readers. Another English translator had written a report on this book, and it sounded interesting; it also sounded literary and timeless, which is an easier sell for us when a book is from another country. The reader had also provided all the statistics about the book's success in China, which were impressive."*

The reader's report conveyed the reader's own aesthetic judgement on this book after reading the Chinese original. This helped the editor who cannot read Chinese herself to make an assessment on the foreign text. The reader also attached the sales

figures and literary prizes it has achieved in China to indicate its symbolic capital and economic capital in its national literary field, which turned out to be non-human actors within the cultural carrying network, as they are one of the factors that “impressed” the editor during the acquisition process. Nevertheless, although the title is an outstanding achievement both economically and symbolically in its original field, i.e., the Chinese book market, this does not guarantee its success either economically or symbolically in the UK market. Hence the translation subsidy is an indispensable actor in this case.

### **Translation subsidy**

According to my interview data with other English publishers, the cost of translation has always been a hindrance for them in commissioning translated books. As another English acquisition editor said in our interview:

*“Unfortunately, books in translation are still viewed by the trade as separate form, and more challenging or literary, than home-grown titles. As a result, they tend to reach a smaller audience than books originally written in English. The breakthrough can be if the book wins a major prize. Overall, the UK is not a particularly welcoming market for books in translation, with few grants available to help publishers cover costs and few publicity opportunities unless the author speaks English and is visiting the UK.”*

In the acquisition process of *Bronze and Sunflower*, the translation subsidy became a condition for signing the contract, which indicates that Walker Books may have been much less likely to acquire the title without the subsidy. As Jiang Hanzhong, one of the sub-agents of *Bronze and Sunflower* said:

*“On 14th August 2012, the British agent Peter Buckman sent me an e-mail, happily letting me know that he received an offer from Walker Books. However, there was a condition in the draft contract, that half of the translation fee must be settled by*

*applying for a subsidy from the China Book Promotion International Programme.”*

As introduced in Chapter 1, the China Book Promotion International Programme (CBI) established with the approval of the State Council Information Office (SCIO) of China SCIO and the State Administration of Press and Publication of China (SAPP), is one of the main subsidy organisations which provide translation and marketing support to publishers entering the global market. This title finally achieved half of the translation fee from the CBI, which made Walker Books decide to purchase the translation rights of this title.

### **The role of the translator and other forms of subsidy**

Acquisition of translation rights does not secure the final publication. According to my interview data and my own professional experience, it is common for books to not actually get published after acquisition and authorization of translation rights. *Bronze and Sunflower* was purchased by Walker Books in 2012, and it was published in 2015. The production process including translation and editing spanned over three years.

Helen Wang, the translator of this title, was introduced by another translator who Buckman the sub-agent introduced to the editor of Walker Books. As Emma Lidbury the editor said in interview:

*“The UK agent [i.e., Peter Buckman] had a translator to recommend [i.e., Anna Holmwood], but she was too busy so she suggested Helen Wang. The network of translators from Chinese was so small that we didn’t have a large number of options; we were glad to have a recommendation.”*

Apart from a few short stories and essays, *Bronze and Sunflower* was only the second book that Wang had translated (Sullivan, 2018). Before that, she had translated *Jackal and Wolf* by Shen Shixi (2012), another Chinese children’s book author. Anna Holmwood the translator, who Buckman the sub-agent firstly introduced to Emma

Lidbury the editor, knew Helen Wang had translated *Jackal and Wolf*, so she recommended Helen Wang to Emma Lidbury when she herself was occupied by other jobs. In this sense, Helen Wang was approached through Peter Buckman's interpersonal relationship (i.e., social capital), and her previous translation work which endowed her own symbolic capital and social capital.

Before its publication, the English translation by Helen Wang was facilitated by the English PEN<sup>74</sup>, which meant the other half of the translation costs of the book was funded. The subsidy from the English PEN was not a decisive reason for Walker Books to acquire this book, as Emma Lidbury, the UK editor said in the interview:

*We were unable to apply for this grant until the book was contracted, so the decision about whether or not to acquire a book wasn't based on the assumption that we would get this."*

However, the recognition and subsidy from the English PEN reduced the economic risk of Walker Books in publishing this title. As Emma Lidbury confirmed:

*"We were very pleased to get this funding, and it helped make the book profitable, as it meant that together with the Chinese government grant, the full cost of translation was covered.*

With regard to the importance of the funding from the English PEN, Wu Xiaohong, the rights manager from the original publishing house, made a plausible assumption - she believed that it was this award which secured the release of the UK edition:

*"The translation rights [of this book] were sold in 2012, but it was not published [in the UK] until 2015. In 2015, Walker Books applied for the English PEN Awards, with the grant from English PEN, the English edition was then published in the UK. I guess they didn't publish the book until receiving the grant and the*

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<sup>74</sup> English PEN is one of the world's oldest non-governmental organisations, defending the freedom to write and read around the world. It is also the founding centre of PEN International, a worldwide writers association with 145 centres in more than 100 countries (English PEN, n.d.). PEN originally stood for 'Poets, Essayists, Novelists', but now stands for 'Poets, Playwrights, Editors, Essayists, Novelists'.



*award.”*

We can conclude that the subsidy from the Chinese government secured the acquisition of this title, and when the additional funding by the English PEN was obtained, the whole translation fee could finally be covered. Therefore, the CBI and the English PEN worked as non-human actors deploying economic capital within the cultural carrying network, and together with other actors within the network, enabled the final publication of this title in the UK.

In summary, various actors in this cultural carrying network can be identified. The flowchart below in Figure 9 lists some of the key actors. It should be noted that this is not a diagram of the actor-network, but more a descriptive account of the workflow, aiming to visualize the publication process and key actors that involved. Firstly, the original text worked as a prime actor recruiting various following human actors; the rights manager from the original publishing house was the first human actor who joined the network and acted as a human initiator. She recruited a Chinese sub-agent with strong social and cultural capital to join in. And recruited by the Chinese sub-agent, the pitching of this title to English publishers was mainly done by another English sub-agent. Because of this English sub-agent's contacts with Chinese and English polyglots, more actors who acted as readers were invited in to review the book in its original language – Chinese. In the end, a report written by a Chinese-English translator impressed the English publisher. The involvement of polyglots as readers turned out to be very important for the UK editor to justify the acquisition, as she herself could not read the Chinese text herself. For the same reason, the French translation of this title was an important actor, mediating between Chinese text and the English-language acquisition editor. At the same time, the French translation endowed symbolic capital for this title, due to the consecrating power of the French language translation and French literary field. The UK sub-agents also had contacts with experienced translators, so it saved time and effort for the UK publisher in searching for a suitable translator. Moreover, a translation subsidy from CBI supported by the Chinese government half of the translation fee was secured. The book translation project was then contracted by both sides. Once the translation

rights were acquired, the acquisition editor from the UK publisher soon invited a translator who rejected the job due to its time schedule but introduced Helen Wang, who became the translator of this book, to join in the cultural carrying network. The translation work was then awarded by another transnational funding organisation – English PEN - which then facilitated the publication of the title in the UK. It can be argued that the whole network was constituted by actors who deployed different forms of capitals – cultural capital, social capital, economic capital and symbolic capital – to recruit new actors. These actors within the cultural carrying network played different roles who simultaneously facilitated its final publication in the UK.

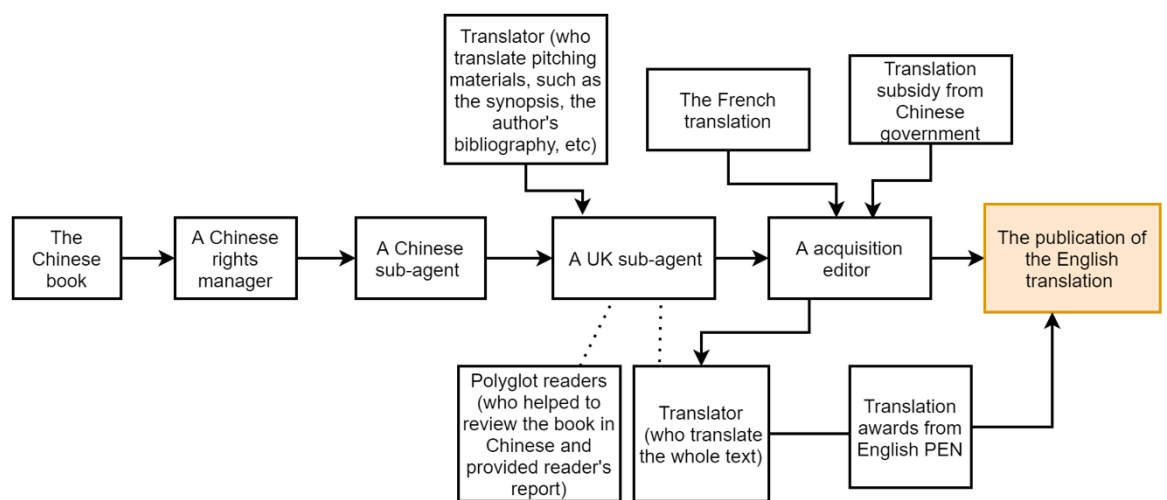


Figure 9. *The workflow of the cultural carrying process of Bronze and Sunflower*<sup>75</sup>

Latour (2005) distinguishes ‘intermediaries’ and ‘mediators’ in the actor-network. In Latour’s vocabulary, intermediaries only “transport meaning or force without transformation”, while mediators “transform, translate, distort, and modify the meaning or the elements they are supposed to carry” (2005, p.39). The configuration and functioning of the cultural carrying network suggest the complexity and degree of difficulty involved in travelling across borders. As a title from the periphery in the transnational literary field, *Bronze and Sunflower* encountered various barriers when travelling to the dominant centre, and actors within the network played different roles in mediating geographical, linguistic, cultural and economic barriers, and finally

<sup>75</sup> This diagram shows only the rough workflow of this book’s publication journey, and it does not imply that the workflow is in a strict linear way.

enabled the publication of this title in the UK. As Latour claims “no matter how apparently simple a mediator may look, it may become *complex*; it may lead in multiple directions which will modify all the contradictory accounts attributed to its role” (Latour, 2005, p.39, original emphasis). During the process of constituting this cultural carrying network, each actor involved tends to be indispensable - without their enrollment, the network could not be formed. In other words, for *Bronze and Sunflower*, the likelihood of getting access to the English literary field was achieved by the collective effect of the whole cultural carrying network, in which various human and non-human actors deployed different forms of capitals and played different mediating roles.

Casanova (2004) sees translating into central languages as an act of consecration for peripheral languages and their literature. As we can see next, due to the consecration effect of being translated and published in Anglo-American countries, the English translation continued to act as a powerful non-human actor which enabled the expansion of the cultural carrying network.

### *6.2.3 An expanding network*

Through ANT-inspired analysis, I have identified the French translation as a very important actor within the cultural carrying network. The French language can be a vehicular language between a peripheral and the hyper-central language – English. Referring back to the agency of the French translation in this particular cultural carrying process to the UK, entering into the French literary field granted literary recognition, which therefore added symbolic capital to the title. This function of French corresponds with its relatively central role in the cultural world-system (Heilbron, 1999). Using Wu Xiaohong’s words, the title began to be regarded as a “international copyright brand” when it was first published in French. Casanova (2004, 2005) considers Paris to be the capital of the international literary world, or the world republic of letters, and believes that being translated into French allows literary works to be circulated to the peripheries. Though it has been discussed that the central position of French has been replaced by English (Sapiro, 2015), this case study

shows that French, to some extent, retains its consecration power in facilitating the circulation of this book from Chinese to English. Nevertheless, being translated into English and being recognized in the English literary field, by literary awards and by readers, marked its real starting point of 'being consecrated' as an 'international copyright brand'.

According to the case study, translation into the hyper-central English language further expanded the cultural carrying network, facilitating the translation of this title into more languages, and due to its function as international lingua franca, English translation itself travelled to more countries, not limited to English-speaking countries. At the same time, due to the success of *Bronze and Sunflower*, its UK publisher enhanced its confidence on other works by Cao Wenxuan, and on Chinese literature in general, more Chinese works therefore obtained chances to enter into the English literary field. Furthermore, as will be shown later, the original publishing house as the rights holder of *Bronze and Sunflower*, gained in reputation through the circulation of this title, so other works published by the organisation for example, *Butterfly Eyes*, also written by Cao Wenxuan (2021) - have been translated and published in the UK. In this sense also, the cultural carrying network can be perceived as being expanded to related works and authors.

### **Subsequent circulation of the title**

The publication of the English edition of *Bronze and Sunflower* opened a door for this title to the international stage. As Wang Yongbo, the president of Phoenix Juvenile and Children's Publishing, said when being interviewed by the *China Publishers Magazine* (2018), the rights exports of this book to Vietnam and France did not have adequate global influence. Whereas, when the UK edition was published by Walker Books in 2015, it really helped *Bronze and Sunflower* to take off in other countries around the world. As already noted, after the rights had been successfully sold to the UK in 2012, it was published by Walker Books (UK) in 2015, and published by Walker's subsidiary publisher in the US – Candlewick Press - in 2017. As introduced in section 2.1, after being published by Anglo-American publishers, *Bronze and Sunflower* and the author Cao Wenxuan soon obtained several prestigious international prizes,

including the Hans Christian Andersen Award, the Marsh Award for Children's Literature in Translation, and the Freeman Book Award for Young Adult/Middle School literature on East Asia. It also appeared on the bestseller lists of the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal* and *Publishers Weekly*, and received good reviews in the UK and the US. The language (translation) and the plot have been described as vivid and accessible, and it has been especially praised due to its mix of specificity and universality, as says in the New York Book Review, "To read their adventures is to be embedded in the Chinese countryside — for good and bad. The daily circumstances of their lives may be different from those of American children, but the emotions and relationships are universal" (See, 2017).

Being translated into English and published by Anglo-American publishers was the precondition for achieving international prizes and obtaining good reviews by English-language reviewers and readers. In this sense, the English translation acted as a non-human actor which recruited international prizes, reviewers and readers to join in the ever-expanding cultural carrying network. All these actors endowed symbolic capital to this title and helped its publication in more peripheral and semi-peripheral languages. To quote Wu Xiaohong:

*"It [i.e., the promotion of this title to publishers in other language areas] is becoming more and more smooth for sure. It is because of their [i.e., other foreign publishers in (semi-)peripheral languages] recognition of this international copyright brand. Of course, the impact of the English edition [on its global circulation] is relatively bigger."*

It can be argued that, by being translated into and published in English, this title was conferred with symbolic capital giving it what I refer to as a "boarding pass" to the international stage, the chance to be recognised in more countries and language areas. As I have identified, translated text (in this case, the French translation) can act as a non-human actor to facilitate a book's circulation in the transnational literary field. In its sequential journey to other language areas and countries, the English translation, as well as good reviews, prizes and awards obtained then became

important actors to convince other local gatekeepers (for example, editors). With the help of the translation of English, the “cultural carrying network” was able to be developed and expanded.

In addition, English translation not only transported the title to more languages, the English translation itself was also exported to more countries. In general, Chinese publishers would not distinguish between the US and UK markets; they tend to describe them as the Anglo-American market, or the Western market. This is partly because English publishers acquire the world English rights, which means that rights holders (in this case, the Chinese publisher) can only sell the English rights of certain titles once to one English publisher, either in the UK or the US. In the case of *Bronze and Sunflower*, Walker Books acquired the World English rights of this title, so the publisher has sole permission to print and distribute English translations of this work anywhere in the world. However, as I found through interviews, the good sales of the English edition were mainly due to its recognition in the US market, and the US also plays a role in the acquisition process of this book, which can exhibit the consecrating power of the US in the literary field. According to Lidbury, the acquisition editor of Walker Books, her acquisition of this book was partly based on her own judgement and that of the sales and export teams, who believed that this book could be worth trying to sell into the Far East and the US:

*“We were not able to pay a very high advance as we had to factor in the translation cost. Our sales team thought the book sounded interesting, and our export team were keen to try to sell the English edition in the Far East. Books in translation can be a hard sell because the author is not able to promote the books on the ground; we didn’t expect the book to be massively successful in the UK, but hoped it would do better in the US and export, which would help to justify the acquisition.”*

As a result, good reviews in the US helped the sale of the English translation in the Far East. As explained again by Lidbury:

*“We did not sell as many books as we had hoped in the Far East. However, this book was very well reviewed in the US, which helped sales there.”*

When acquiring the title, Walker Books, the UK publisher, did not even expect the UK sales of the book to be successful. In this sense, the UK market acted as a precursor to what it was hoped would be the much larger market, i.e., the US. After the publication of the US edition, good reviews in the US market in turn increased the sales in the UK market. As Lidbury, said in the interview:

*“Often novels in translation add breadth to the list without being particularly profitable, so it was good that this one made a bit of money – largely due to the fact that the full cost of translation was covered, and also because of the US reviews.”*

Therefore, though the advance that Walker Books paid to acquire the title was not very high, Wu Xiaohong, the rights manager from the original publisher, would still consider it as a successful example of copyright-selling because the title has been very well reviewed and awarded prestigious prizes, and consequently, has circulated into more countries through the UK market, and then translated into more languages.

There is another detail in the cultural carrying process - Jiang Hanzhong, one of the sub-agents who helped the original publisher to sell the English translation rights, first approached a US agent when his aim was the English-language market. As Jiang explained in the interview:

*“The United States is the country with the most powerful voice in the world. Successful entry into the US will be more convincing for promoting this title in other countries...The US agent eventually refused me. I don’t want to waste time on the US edition, so I decided to concentrate on promoting the title to the UK.”*

It can be argued that the success of the title in terms of the sales of English translation in other countries, and its subsequent translation into other languages should be significantly attributed to its reception in the US market. The fact that sales of this

title (the English edition) was enhanced and influenced by the good reception in the US market, implies the great consecrating power of the US literary field, especially in the context that countries in the Far East share similar cultural and geographical proximity with China.

In the case of *Bronze and Sunflower*, the strong capacity of English translation to function as an actor in the cultural carrying network - which facilitated the title's translation and publication in more countries and language areas – is the result of the centrality of English in the world-system of book translations or the dominance of English literary field in the world republic of letters (Casanova, 2004). As Heilbron (1999, 2000) reveals, one of the key principles of the cultural world-system is that the translation of books from one peripheral language into the other peripheral languages very often depends on the translation of these peripheral languages into the central languages. And the degree of centrality of a language corresponds to “its capacity to function as an intermediary language or a vehicular language” (Heilbron, 2000, p.15). In this case, French first acted as an intermediary language facilitating the subsequent translation of the title into English, at which point the consecrating power of English took over and the title was translated into more languages. And since English is an international lingua franca, the English translation itself enabled the title to reach a wider readership in countries, such as in the Far East.

### **The wider impacts of the UK publication of *Bronze and Sunflower***

This case study demonstrates that the publication of *Bronze and Sunflower* in the UK and the US facilitated the transnational transfer of other works from the author, the translator, the original publisher, and from the original national literary field. As Casanova (2004) argues, translating into English is a way to gain literary capital for peripheral languages and the national literary fields. Due to the success of *Bronze and Sunflower*, this publication project boosted Walker Books' confidence in further titles recommended by Chinese publishers and translators, and especially in works by Cao Wenxuan. As Emma Lidbury the acquisitions editor said:

*“Walker Books is still very cautious about books in translation,*



*but this project showed that if you choose the right book, it can be a success. It has also opened up new networks to us in terms of Chinese translators and publishers, and we have had further titles recommended to us through them. We have just also published a second book by this author, Dragonfly Eyes.”*

In addition, as mentioned above, the original publishing house has been actively promoting this title to more countries in order to build it as an international copyright brand. The positive reception of this title in the English field builds on the publisher’s international image (i.e., symbolic capital). As Wu Xiaohong, the rights manager, stated:

*“Chinese culture is still in a weak position, so it’s always promoted by us to the outside. But I believe, step by step, it will be easier. Now we are gradually achieving some international recognition.*

According to Wu, the publication of this title in the UK and the US and its critical reception made the publishing house more established in terms of its reputation in the international market, which therefore secured their future collaborations with potential co-operators, as Wu Xiaohong continued to say:

*“So, there are more foreign publishers who are willing to cooperate with us. For example, this year, we’ve successfully exported a series of children’s books about fighting against the COVID-19. It is all because of the international recognition we’ve got that makes foreign publishers willing to work with us.”*

Intellectual property, or intellectual capital, in the words of Thompson (2012), is one of the important resources for publishing houses to be competitive in the publishing field. It refers to “rights that a publisher owns or controls in intellectual content, rights that are attested to by their stock of contracts with authors and other bodies and that they are able to exploit through their publications and through the selling of subsidiary rights” (Thompson, 2012, p.6). Therefore, it can be argued that by selling

the worldwide English-language rights of *Bronze and Sunflower* into the UK, the original publishing house accordingly enhanced its intellectual capital, which can be easily converted into symbolic capital, i.e., international reputation, in the transnational literary field. After the publication of *Bronze and Sunflower* in the UK - “the first book in English from China’s most popular author for children” (See, 2017) - more books published by the original publishing house got the chance to be published in the UK and the US, and it also triggered the selling of more foreign rights into other countries.

### **6.3 Conclusion**

This chapter is an attempt to apply both Latour’s (1987, 1996, 2005) actor-network theory and Bourdieu’s (1986, 1993) notion of capital to the study of the cross-bordering of book translations. In the previous chapter, I identified the important role of China’s rights managers and conceptualised them as cultural carriers, arguing that agents from the source (such as these cultural carriers) are proactive actors in the exportation of Chinese contemporary literature from the periphery to the centre in the transnational literary field. Book translations as cultural products travelling from one country to another have to go through a lengthy process, which is an endeavour comprising a wide range of actors, especially when it comes to contemporary literature from the periphery to the centre. In this chapter, I used one Chinese contemporary novel, *Bronze and Sunflower*, as a case study. As Roig-Sanz and Meylaertz (2018) claim, through tracing the actors and the process of their interactions, “ANT offers an adequate tool to discover connections, actors and roles which would remain invisible for traditional, national, and monolingual and monodisciplinary models” (pp.28-29). The usage of ANT as an analytical tool in this chapter has enabled me to pay attention to the role of actors who have long been neglected in the context of the production and circulation of book translations. With the help of Bourdieu’s (1984, 1986) notion of capital to interpret how these actors exert agency over the network, I argue that this cross-bordering process can be regarded as constituting a cultural carrying network configured by various human and

non-human actors. It is the actors who employ different forms of capitals, and conquer different barriers by playing mediating roles, that made such a transnational cultural transfer possible. Examining the cultural carrying network, one can get the sense that there were various actors involved in bringing the cultural carrying project to fruition, and that the reason why this title was published by the Anglophone publishers was definitely not down to a single factor, but instead was the result of the functioning of the whole network. In other words, the likelihood of consecration (hereby referring to its translation and publication in the UK) for this book was achieved by the cultural carrying network configured by various actors. An exploration of the configuration of such a cultural carrying network and its comprising multiple different actors, has also revealed the obstacles this book needed to surmount during its journey. As we can see from this case, none of these actors is indispensable: without one single actor, this book's journey from China to the UK may have been obstructed.

According to Casanova (2004), the literary world can be conceptualised as a 'world republic of letters', i.e., a transnational literary field, and the structure of this transnational literary field depends on the volume of literary capital that each national literary space possesses. Heilbron's (1999) cultural world-system perspective also draws attention to the centre-periphery structure of the world-system of book translations. This case study shows that, as a central language which endowed more literary capital to the book overall, French and the French translation of this title was an important non-human actor, which facilitated its translation in the UK. And after its publication in the UK, in a hyper-central language, the English translation of this book then brought the title to more countries and to more language areas. In this way, the cultural carrying network could be expanded following its subsequent circulation, and more actors have been (and will be) recruited within the network to carry the title into more areas in the world. In addition, as Emma Lidbury and Wu Xiaohong suggested in their interviews, the case study also indicates that the translation and publication of this title in the UK and the US granted symbolic capital for Cao Wenxuan and more Chinese authors, and the original Chinese publisher, which therefore created chances for the transnational

travelling of more Chinese works. Therefore, the English translation of *Bronze and Sunflower* can continue to act as a non-human actor expanding the actor-network which facilitates the translation and publication of more Chinese works. Through this case study, French and especially English, as vehicular languages, showed their consecrating power to facilitate the international circulation of literary works from the periphery into the transnational literary field.

Moreover, the case of *Bronze and Sunflower* also identifies the hierarchies of consecrating power between countries within the English literary field. In other words, it gives prominence to the overriding positioning of the US in granting universal visibility to this title. It is clear that the English translation was not initially published in the US, and even the first translation of this book was not in English, but in French. However, being translated into English and its success in the English literary field, especially in the US, has been a crucial factor in its global circulation. This finding resonates with Bielsa's (2013) study on the reception of Spanish writer Robert Bolaño's work in English, which also identifies the important role that translation into English and especially the US played for consecrating his works around the globe.

The publication journey of *Bronze and Sunflower* is embedded in the uneven power relations between countries and languages. This case study demonstrates the significant role central languages (especially English) play for the translation of books from the periphery, transnationally and globally. At the same time, by examining the cultural carrying network, the complex process of facilitating the publication of a book from the periphery in the central literary field can be articulated. This cultural carrying network was initiated by actors from the source (the original text and the rights manager), and its final publication in the UK was completed by the functioning of the whole network, i.e., the collective work of various human and non-human actors. The configuration of a cultural carrying network composed of various different actors implies the obstacles that a book from the periphery experiences during its journey to the UK; and the rapid expansion of the cultural carrying network after the book's publication in the UK indicates the dominance of English in the international market of book translations.

## Chapter 7 Discussion and Conclusion

In the early 2010s, discussion of a “cultural trade deficit” triggered the implementation of China’s ‘Cultural Going Out’ policy. As a response to the nation’s cultural policy in a wider context, Chinese publishers have been working hard to promote the country’s literary works – as a medium of Chinese culture - to the rest of the world. In this context, the current research was conducted to explore these contemporary activities in the exportation of book translations. My aim in this study has been to answer the overarching question: how do Chinese books get translated and published in Anglo-American countries? Using both international and national book statistics, the thesis analysed the quantitative historical dynamics of centre-periphery relations between Chinese and English in the international book market, and outlined the features of Chinese books in the English-language market (using the UK as the example) and their reception by the English publishers. I have looked at books that have been published in English language markets and the publishers that were involved in the process. Qualitatively, the thesis examined one of the key transnational agents who facilitate the transnational transfer of Chinese books to Anglo-American countries (i.e., China’s rights managers), and scrutinised the transnational transfer process through a case study of a Chinese novel - *Bronze and Sunflower*. In this concluding chapter, after providing an overview of the main arguments throughout the thesis, I will discuss two topics that this thesis is related with and can make contribution to - translation as an unequal exchange in the context of Cultural globalization, and the role of nation-states in shaping translation flows. Finally, before some closing remarks are made, I will discuss the limitations of the thesis and provide suggestions for future research.

## **7.1 Cultural carriers and cultural carrying activity - the main arguments of the study and its contributions**

The flow of book translations as the most common mode of transnational literary exchanges presupposes a space of international relations, which is to say a transnational literary field (Casanova, 2004; Heilbron, 1999, 2000; Franssen, 2015a). This transnational literary field, in which languages and national literary spaces occupy different positions, involves a constant struggle over dominance and status, and is characterized primarily by unequal exchanges between languages and countries (Franssen, 2015a; van Es and Heilbron, 2015). Following the understanding of book translations as embedded in the power relations between nation-states, their languages, and literatures (Heilbron, 1999; Sapiro, 2014a; Heilbron and Sapiro, 2007; Casanova, 2004), this thesis has studied the transnational transfer of book translations from Chinese/China to English/Anglo-American countries.

Using a quantitative approach, this thesis firstly analysed the asymmetrical structure of the global flow of book translations and the positions of Chinese and English within it (see Chapter 4). It was argued that Chinese is located at the peripheral level of the world-system of book translations, which is dominated by English (according to the Index Translationum database from 1979 to 2008). Yet since the 2000s, China has been actively engaging in the international book copyright trade and therefore the number of book translations from China has been constantly increasing. However, despite the overall ratio of imports to exports of book copyright levelling out, when it comes to the translation flow from Chinese/China to English/Anglo-American countries, it has been in constant deficit. In addition, according to the UK national book statistics, the category of Chinese books that have been translated and published in the UK, is limited to only a few genres (literature, social science, technology, history and geography), and the themes of contemporary translated/published works have mostly been confined to investigations of China's social and economic conditions, or stories and memoirs during specific historical times of China. In terms of the publishers involved in translating and publishing Chinese books in the UK, the thesis finds that Chinese books have mostly been

published by academic publishers, university presses and independent publishers, while the large conglomerates and their imprints which dominate the Anglo-American publishing industry have been less engaged in publishing Chinese books in translation. Book markets in the UK and the US are driven by commercialization (Thompson, 2012). The fact that mass market publishers such as the large conglomerates do not invest in translations of Chinese works implies that these books are less likely to be profitable for them, which means they are less likely to be read by a mass audience. Thus, it can be argued that Chinese books occupy a very marginal place in the UK book market.

Due to the dynamics of the transnational literary field, as well as the transformation and the development of China's publishing industry, China's rights managers (together with other source agents) appear to be the main facilitators proactively introducing Chinese contemporary literature to Anglo-American publishers (see Chapter 5). Through examining their professional practices in exporting Chinese literature to the Anglo-American countries, I conceptualised China's rights managers as cultural carriers, and identified two specialities: one is their role as peripheral players on copyright exportation to Anglo-American countries, the other is as market agents under the state framework. Due to their peripheral position and the low volume of 'macro capital' (Buchholz, 2018) they are endowed with in the transnational literary field, and the late entry of China into the international book market, China's rights managers act as peripheral players in the transnational literary field. In terms of copyrights exportation to Anglo-American countries, in contrast to their proficiency in importing books from the Anglo-American world, they are more like 'road openers', to borrow the phrase used by my participants. At the same time, their role can also be identified as a market agent under a state framework, as copyright exportation for them is not a business but a matter of 'sharing Chinese literature and culture to the world', as one of my participants put it. These two factors shape the professional habitus of China's rights managers as cultural carriers: they actively attend international book fairs to accumulate both social capital and cultural capital and deploy capitals which they accumulate through copyright acquisition to navigate suitable buyers; they have to possess high level of English-language

competence; and they follow international rules and imitate behaviours and working standard from their western counterparts. In order to successfully export Chinese books to Anglo-American countries, they tend to compromise on economic interests when negotiating with Anglo-American publishers. Borrowing a phrase from Fathali M. Moghaddam (2002, 2008; Warren and Moghaddam, 2012) but adapting it, I conceptualise China's rights managers as cultural carriers. This conceptualization emphasizes the difficulties they are confronted with as specialized copyright agents and points to the formation of their professional habitus as shaped by the national publishing system and the power dynamics of the international book market or the transnational literary field. From the perspective of China, the conceptualization of cultural carriers provides an analytical lens through which to view my empirical account of the transnational actors facilitating the cultural flow from periphery to centre.

The notion of cultural carrier in this thesis is embodied by a group of specialized agents, who are important but invisible in the transnational transfer process of books from one country to another. To have a more nuanced understanding of the transnational transfer process of Chinese books into Anglo-American countries, the thesis then used the book *Bronze and Sunflower* as a case study, investigating more active but invisible actors who instigated and facilitated the publication of this specific Chinese title in the UK (see Chapter 6). Chapter 6 gave an account of the publication journey of the book and also identified various invisible agents involved in the transnational transfer process, including both human (such as literary agents, polyglot readers, translators) and non-human (such as knowledge about Chinese culture and history, subsidy organisations, vehicle languages and the book itself). More importantly, it illustrated the networks that various different actors constituted and that work collectively to facilitate the publication of Chinese books in Anglo-American countries, and in more other countries and areas. Through examining the publication journey of *Bronze and Sunflower* from China to the UK, and its subsequent circulation, I examined the process of transnational transfer of book translations under a wider set of international relations, i.e., the cultural world-system: as a peripheral language in the world-system of book translations, the publication journey



of Chinese books to the English literary field requires a complex actor-network configured with various human and non-human actors, who play different mediating roles and exert their influence by employing different resources or capitals. Among these actors, French as a central medium in the cultural world-system acted as an important vehicular or intermediary language (and can therefore be regarded as a non-human actor from the perspective of ANT) for the publication and translation of this title into the English-language hyper centre, and English as the hyper central language facilitated its further circulation into more peripheral languages.

Throughout this thesis, I argue that in the movement of book translations from Chinese/China to English/Anglo-American countries, agents from the source (i.e., China) are the proactive agents. Facilitating the transnational transfer of book translations through copyright exportation from China to Anglo-American countries is a 'cultural carrying' activity for these proactive agents from the source. The cultural carrying phenomenon shows the consecrating power of English, or in Bourdieu's concept, symbolic power. Such symbolic power, from the perspective of Casanova (2004), comes from the dominating position that English, the language and English-language literary fields<sup>76</sup> has in the world republic of letters (Casanova, 2004), i.e., a transnational literary field. Translation is a measure of consecration (Sapiro and Bustamante, 2009), as being translated into English (for cultural carriers, it is selling foreign rights into English territories) means the literary work and the author has been consecrated (i.e., recognised) by the English literary field. This therefore grants symbolic capital (i.e., capital that can be achieved in the form of recognition and prestige and that legitimates agents in a given field) to the source culture agents of different levels: the nation-state (pursuing soft power), the organisational agents (i.e., the publishing houses), the individual agents (such as rights managers, literary agents, authors, translators), and the books as cultural products themselves. At the same time, the conceptualization of cultural carriers and the complexity of the cultural carrying network demonstrates the difficulties that are posed by the uneven power

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<sup>76</sup> Though, in Casanova's argument, the French literary field posits the central position and acts as the Capital of the international literary world.

relations of the world-system of book translations and by the dominance of English and English-speaking countries.

The phenomenon of cultural carriers and cultural carrying suggests a form of cultural/literary transfer in the transnational context from China's experience. Its identification herein contributes to studies on cultural actors in the transnational context, and specifically provides a new understanding of the role of key agents involved in cultural/literary transfer related to book translations. The thesis understands the practices and networks of cultural actors involved in the transnational transfer of books translations as conditioned by the power dynamics of the transnational literary field, taking into account the centre-periphery relations between Chinese/China and English/Anglo-American countries in the world-system of book translations. In addition, combining Bourdieu's sociology and ANT as the explanatory tools, the cultural carrying network that is illustrated in this thesis presents a network/process of cultural/literary transfer that helps to produce and disseminate cultural products across borders. The thesis demonstrates the correlated relationships between each actor and the role played by various human and non-human actors in collectively helping to facilitate the final publication of a Chinese book in the UK, and further into other countries and language areas. Previous research in the sociology of translation, inspired primarily by Bourdieu, often regards translators and translation works as the key research objects (He, 2007). Few empirical studies have examined translation as cultural products produced and circulated in a transnational context, and few studies have focused on the practices of other important national and transnational agents such as literary agents, rights managers, publishers, as this thesis does. In addition, the attempt to combine Bourdieu and ANT to illustrate the cultural carrying process, demonstrated its applicability in Chapter 6. Bourdieu's notion of capital helps to interpret the agency of individual actors, and the field framework helps to understand the functioning of the cultural carrying network as conditioned by the power dynamics of the transnational field. Using ANT enabled me to identify factors or non-human actors (for example, languages, knowledge, personal affection) that were involved and facilitated the publication of a Chinese book in the UK, which are inaccessible using

Bourdieu's theoretical tools alone.

## **7.2 The implications of the thesis**

### *7.2.1 Translation as an unequal exchange in the context of Cultural globalization*

My focus on the practice of book translations from the periphery to the centre provides a standpoint from the peripheral side, suggesting original findings and empirical evidence on current literature in a broader sense of cultural globalization.

The increasing global cultural exchange largely relies on translation; as Bielsa (2009) notes, translation is thus “key to understanding current processes of cultural globalization, which are characterised by inequality and asymmetry” (p.14). However, the role of translation has been largely neglected in discussions about globalization in terms of the production and circulation of global cultural flows (Bielsa, 2005, 2009, 2014). It has been discussed that translation can be a clue to the English hegemony in literary fields (Gouanvic, 2010). Such discussions draw on the fact that translations from the English-language fields, especially from the UK and the US, have been largely imported by other countries and cultures. As outlined in Chapter 2, the most important way of analysing cultural globalization is the cultural imperialism theory. This theory implies a one-way process in terms of global cultural flow, and some of the key themes include: “the imposition of western cultural products on the non-west; the potentially homogenising effects of western culture as it spread across the world; the destruction of indigenous traditions by such cultural flows, and the transfer of belief systems from the west to the non-west” (Hesmondhalgh, 2002, p.174). Therefore, from the perspective of cultural imperialism, the popularity of book translations from the UK and the US can be interpreted as a legitimation of the American culture that was imposed upon other countries following World War Two.

This thesis pays attention to the inequality of the world-system of the book translation market but from an unexplored standpoint – articulating the practice of

cultural flow from the periphery to the centre. By examining how books travel from China to Anglo-American countries, it reveals the cultural hegemony that cultural imperialism implies. In the case of transnational transfer from China to Anglo-American countries, exporting Chinese books into the English world is an action against cultural hegemony (Sapiro, 2014b). However, from observing the practice of China's rights managers, it can be argued their behaviour as cultural carriers offers a reflection of the cultural hegemony of English in global networks and practices of cultural production. China's rights managers are one group of principal agents who promote their national literature abroad. As agents from a dominated national literary field, China's rights managers possess less macro-capital (Buchholz, 2018) than those agents from central/dominating fields, they tend to model behaviours and learn professional skills from their Western counterparts, compromise on economic interests, and rely greatly on their national support (such as the translation subsidy) in order to facilitate the flow of Chinese literature to Anglo-American literary field (see Chapter 5). This is a demonstration of cultural hegemony by the dominant literary hubs of the transnational literary field.

Moreover, the hegemony of English' is also reflected in its consecration power (see Chapter 6). Developing on Bourdieu's (1980) idea that publishers consecrate books, Casanova (2004) and Heilbron (1999) focus on the role of translation, suggest the homology between language and book/literature: for the periphery, translation into the centre is a way to gain symbolic capital (or literary capital in Casanova's (2004) sense). The positioning of English as the central/dominant language then further consolidates its consecration power within the transnational literary field and the world-system of book translations. My study provides empirical support for Casanova and Heilbron's studies and shows that publishing in Anglo-American countries facilitates the further circulation of Chinese books to other countries and areas. In addition, this consecration power does not only consecrate books and authors, but also grants symbolic capital to the various agents involved, including the copyrights agents and original publishers. It would probably be correct to say that, to a large extent, whether a book from the periphery can be published in English determines whether it can circulate into other semi-peripheral and peripheral areas. However,

conversely, this means that if one book cannot be published in Anglo-American countries, there is a substantial chance that the door to enter the international literary field cannot be opened.

### *7.2.2 The role of nation-states in shaping translation flows*

The transnational literary field at present is organised primarily by the nation-states (Sapiro, 2008). This thesis has focused on the relations between China and Anglo-American countries in the flow of book translations, bringing the role of nation-states into the discussion. From suicide (Durkheim, 1951), quality of life (Veenhoven, 1990), to even incidence of obesity (Robin et al., 2006), the impact of nationality/the nation-state has been studied in much sociological research (Kuiper, 2013). The phenomenon of cultural carriers discussed in this thesis shows that, in the literary movement from the periphery to the centre, national governments representing nation-states continue to play an active role in facilitating and promoting their national literatures in the world market for translations.

Historically speaking, as Sapiro (2008) notes, the international market of book translation emerged, to a large extent, due to the “cultural construction of national identities” and “the development of the book trade” (p.159). Hence, the nation-states - or, more specifically, the governmental organisations and their deputies - have traditionally played central mediating roles in this market, through ideological means, censorship or cultural diplomacy (Sapiro, 2008; McMartin, 2019a). However, the processes of globalisation and conglomeration since the 1980s have been transforming the publishing industries globally (Hesmondhalgh, 2002; Steiner, 2011; Thompson, 2012). As a result, it has been argued that in today’s international market for book translations, the predominance of state agents has been undermined (von Flotow, 2007; Sapiro, 2008; Heilbron and Sapiro, 2018). In this situation, studies (for example, McMartin, 2019a, 2019b) have found that some state agents or state representatives begin to, as Sapiro indicates, “act as literary agents promoting national authors to be translated by publishers in the target country” (Sapiro, 2008, p.163).

As a peripheral language in the cultural world-system (Heilbron, 1999), the experience of exporting Chinese books to Anglo-American countries, detailed in the thesis, shows that under a specific national publishing system, the nation-state plays a dominant role in its exportation of book translations. The professional habitus of cultural carriers and the functioning of the cultural carrying network, discussed in this thesis, demonstrates an example of how nationality and the nation-state shape the translation flow. Translation has always been part of cultural diplomacy. As a way to gain soft power or, in Casanova's (2004) sense, to gain literary capital in the international literary world, the government initiated the 'Cultural Going Out' policy from the 2000s, with the aim of reducing the deficit in the trade of cultural products and also of enhancing China's 'soft power' (Richardson, 2006). State-run publishers therefore now show more initiative exporting titles to overseas publishers with the support of nation-states. In addition, publishing is nationally or regionally specific, varying at the national level in, for example, history, legislation, language, and social structure. This means that national book markets are specific in their construction (Steiner, 2011). As examined in Chapter 5, the actions of China's rights managers as transnational cultural agents are heavily influenced and guided by the nation-state. Due to the 'hybrid state-and-market system' (Yun, 2013) of China's publishing industry, China's rights managers are market agents with characteristics of state agents, who consider copyright exportation as a duty to 'share Chinese literature and culture to the world', rather than as a business to make money. The role of the nation-state can also be exerted through the way of translation subsidies: as peripheral players, China's publishers are heavily reliant on national translation subsidies to promote their national literature to Anglo-American countries. As further demonstrated by the case study of *Bronze and Sunflower*, cultural carriers are the initiators of the whole network which collectively facilitated the publication of this title in the UK, and the CBI subsidy provided by the Chinese government also played its part as an indispensable actor within the cultural carrying network.

### **7.3 Limitations of this thesis and suggestions for future research**

There are four ways in which the findings of my thesis could be developed by future research.

#### *7.3.1 The reception of book translations in the target field*

For the purpose of this study, the thesis is limited to the transnational transfer process of the production of book translations. It therefore did not include elaborate investigation and argument about the reception of translated Chinese books in Anglo-American countries. Chinese researchers who focus on source-initiated translation have discussed the lack of success of the source-initiated translation in terms of its reception in target countries. For example, He (2007) points out that source-initiated translations published in China or by Chinese publishers based in foreign countries barely reach a Western readership and are read mostly by scholars or ethnic Chinese readers who wish to improve their English proficiency. However, due to the involvement of the source country, this translation practice can enhance the national image, which is a positive move against “Otherness”. The cultural carrying model discussed in this thesis is a mode of transnational transferring which involves both exporters and importers, with the presence of nation-states (either through translation subsidisation or through institutional influence on key agents). But for the purpose of this study, I did not examine the reception effect of this cultural carrying mode, which is an interesting and important topic worthy of exploration. Future studies could study the reception of the books translated through the cultural carrying model by readers in the English culture, examining questions such as the selling figures, the readers (what kind of groups are reading these translated books), what attracted them to read the books, and how the final translations are interpreted by the readers. The qualitative data I collected for this study might also inspire further research in this area. My data shown in Chapter 6 suggests that the Chinese book in English translation under study was mainly read by Chinese migrants living in Anglo-phone countries. Further research could possibly pay attention to this diasporic group. In addition, according to my investigation, agents from the source field (or as I argued in Chapter 6, the initiators of the cultural carrying network), i.e., the authors and representatives of the original publisher (editors and rights managers who work in it),

do not normally take part in the production process of the English translation once the translation rights are sold. This, consequently, might lead to problems such as alteration and deletion from the original text, and as a result change the meaning of the text. Therefore, future research could alternatively use a method of one-to-one interviews or focus groups, in order to explore how the readers (or different groups of readers, for example non-indigenous readers with no necessary experience of Chinese culture vs Chinese migrants living in the English-language society) interpret Chinese culture as accessed through the books under study.

### *7.3.2 Translations in different domains of the literary market*

Book translation is a broad category, which contains all translated literary works presented in the form of a book. As Thompson (2012) reminds us, applying field theory in the publishing industry enables us to understand that the world of publishing is not one world but rather “a plurality of fields” (Thompson, 2012, p.4). For example, based on the type of publisher, there is a field of trade publishing, of scholarly publishing, and of higher education publishing; based on the genre of books, there is the field of children’s books, of literature for adults, of books of social science, and so on. And each field has its own stakes, specialised agents, and has distinctive rules and logics. As Franssen’s (2015a) recent research on the Dutch literary field implies, translation flows are the “outcomes of decisions made by publishers who operate not only within a transnational literary field, but more specifically, in relative autonomous genre-subfields within the transnational literary field” (p.22).

This thesis investigated the transnational transfer of book translations in the context of the transnational literary field. Though it used Anglo-American trade publishing and a contemporary children’s book as the subject of study for the qualitative part of investigation, the discussion of the practices of agents and the transnational transfer process was not limited to a specific genre, or a specific type of publishing. Specifically speaking, in Chapter 6, I did not intend to distinguish *Bronze and Sunflower* from books for adults, discussing the way a Chinese children’s book travels, going abroad in particular. Instead, I analysed it more generally as a cultural product, pursuing how



it has entered the English literary space and beyond with the help of different actors. Nevertheless, it has to be noted that children's books have unique characteristics in terms of content and readership: some children's books have very limited written text, which makes illustrations and graphic design more important than, for example, adult novels and the buyers of children's books are normally adults rather than children - the actual readers of these books. Children's books in translation thus may have specificity in their creation, production, distribution, and reception in Anglophone countries (Tucker, 2006; Parkinson, 2013). Parkinson (2013) argues that there are almost no contemporary children's novels translated into and published in English, as "the Anglophone world is notoriously unreceptive to fiction in translation" (p.151). Yet some Chinese scholars (see, for example, Yu, 2019; Zhu, 2011) and publishers have paid specific attention to the exportation of the children's book, and argue that children's books can be regarded as the main force or leading power among Chinese books to go out. One possible reason for this can be that children's books are easy to translate owing to their smaller word counts (especially in the case of picture books) and plain writing style compared to books for adults. Therefore, translation costs for children's books tend to be lower. Taking into account the complexity of publishing, more fine-grained investigation is required by future researchers, including myself, to explore the distinctions of genre and type of publishers in terms of the transnational transfer of book translations. For example, a further study could go deeper into the area of children's book publishing to learn more about the field by examining the Chinese to English translations or by comparing its production, circulation, and reception into different languages.

This investigation of transnational cultural transfer has focused on the form of books produced through the traditional publishing mode. Yet, today, following the development of a large number of websites on which internet users can create and publish their own literary works online, the traditional publishing mode has been changing. The online literature platforms create new ways for the circulation of Chinese literature. Take *Webnovel* - an online literature platform for Chinese novels in English translation - for example, where the English translation of Chinese online literature (网络文学) has been popular: as reported, there are over 40,000

comments on novels by foreign readers that appear on the platform daily (People's Daily Online, 2020). The phenomenon of online literature platforms has overturned the traditional production and circulation chain of literary works, which therefore provides an entry point for researchers who are interested in the topic of translation and literary exchanges. Future studies could be conducted through methods such as interviews with producers of this online literature (writers and translators), to examine the mechanisms of the sites, or using methods such as content analysis on comments of these sites to examine the readers of this online literature and explore the reasons for its popularity. One of my hypotheses is that the phenomenon of the proliferation and popularity of online literature could be possibly explained from the perspective of actor-network theory - the internet, together with other actors, constitute another kind of transnational transferring network, and the internet becomes a key non-human actor within this specific network.

### *7.3.3 The practices of agents of book translations*

This thesis has focused on often-invisible actors in academic research, and the network that a group of actors constitute to make the publication of book translations possible. As I have argued, the production and circulation of book translations is a complex of collective work, which involves a wide range of actors (individual and organisational, human and non-human). Without the cultural carrying network constituted by various actors in the transnational literary field, contemporary books cannot even be translated, or the translation cannot be published by Anglo-American trade publishers. Due to time and space considerations, this research paid special attention to one group of representatives – rights managers - involved in the transnational transfer process, investigating their practices in copyright trade. The conceptualization of cultural carriers used to describe China's rights managers who actively and proactively work in the international book market, highlights the specific characteristics of China's rights managers when engaging in transnational transfers. Such conceptualization can add to empirical accounts of cultural actors in transnational context generally from the perspective of China. Nevertheless, though China's rights managers appear to be a group of key initiators

of the exportation of Chinese books in translations to the rest of the world, they are certainly not the only players who pitch to English publishers (as well as rights managers and other specialized foreign rights agents, translators appear to be one of the main players who pitch to foreign publishers) and as Chapter 6 revealed, there are many more other agents (such as editors, translators, subsidy organisations) who exert influences on the transfer process. These agents are all key but remain largely unexplored in academia, so their practices are also worthy of further investigation and study. A further study could focus on the subsidy organisations or acquisitioning editors, examining their decision-making process on the selection of books to subsidise or acquire.

The role and practices of translators have been widely researched, especially within the discipline of translation studies (as discussed in Chapter 2). My thesis, instead, sees book translations on an extra-textual level. It considers book translations as cultural products circulated across borders, without investigation at the textual level, i.e., on the actual translation process. This is the novelty of this thesis but could also become a limitation. The practices of translators – how the translation work is produced, is certainly a key factor in establishing whether a Chinese book can be published (and determines its reception after its publication). And the translation process itself is worthy of analysis in terms of power relations between languages and countries. Andre Lefevere (1992) characterises translation as a form of rewriting, which means the translation work offers images of work which the rewriters, i.e., the translators created. Translation, as Lawrence Venuti (1995) argues, is also “the forcible replacement of the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text with a text that is intelligible to the translating-language reader” (p.14). The rewriting and violent nature of translation means translation could bring “the whole relationship between languages and cultures into play and expresses existing inequalities and power structures” (Bielsa, 2011, p.205). For the purpose of this study, the role of translators was only mentioned in passing (specifically in Chapter 6), alongside other actors involved in facilitating the publication of this *Bronze and Sunflower* in the UK. Studies in the future could conduct careful investigation of the translation process or the final translated work, examining, for example, how the actual translating process

was negotiated between translators and other agents such as authors, editors, and subsidy organisations, and how their involvement may affect the way translators translate and the final translations. As mentioned above, my data suggests that agents from the source field are normally absent in the production process of the English translation once the translation rights are sold. Future studies could therefore pay attention to whether issues such as alteration and deletion would happen under the cultural carrying model and how. Including an analysis of the actual translation practices would add to empirical accounts of the role of various actors and their relationships with the translators within the cultural carrying network; and in the meantime, examining translation practices from the perspective of cultural carrying network could help us to understand the translation strategies that translators select and factors that shape the final translation work in a broader sense, by taking into account the power dynamics and the role of other actors within the network.

#### *7.3.4 National comparison studies*

This thesis studies the way Chinese literature gets translated and published in Anglo-American countries, embedded as it is in the uneven power relations between languages and nation-states. Through analysing the practices of key players and the cultural carrying network configured by various actors, it reveals difficulties faced by books in getting published by Anglophone publishers in the US and the UK and the importance of being translated into English for Chinese literature (see Chapter 6). To testify to the difficulties of being translated into English for Chinese literature or for peripheral literature in general, it would be beneficial to conduct more empirical studies in other national literary fields, or to conduct a comparative study which investigates the distinctions between each national literary field and its national and transnational players such as national subsidy organisations, editors, literary agents, translators. In addition, as Basaran and Olsson (2018) argue, the ‘international’ is “a strategy of social positioning and social domination quasi-globally, but it is not recognised everywhere in the same way” (p.96). ‘Being translated’ is the way for literary works (and their various producers and transnational cultural mediators), and the original language, the original literary field to be ‘international’. Chapter 5

showed that being translated into English endows a national-field-specific with symbolic capital for China's rights managers. Further studies could be conducted to compare how 'being translated' helps in social domination (for original producers, i.e., the author and the original publishers and for transnational cultural mediators, for example, the literary agents, the translator) in other national fields, and to compare the differentiation of 'being translated' into different languages for 'consecrating' various players in certain national fields.

#### **7.4 Closing remarks**

The focus of this thesis is to examine the translation flow from the periphery to the centre, in order to contribute to the understanding of the transnational transfer activities as a part of larger power struggles in global cultural production. Instead of concentrating on the craft of the translators or the reception of the translated text in the target culture, this thesis examines the agents and processes which make translation activities possible. Using the example of China's exporting of book translations to the Anglo-American countries, it provides an original empirical account of features of the flow of book translations in a given period and between given places, and the role and networks of agents who are conditioned by the power dynamics of the transnational literary field. As a whole, it identifies the role that translation - or specifically speaking, translation into central languages - plays in facilitating the circulation of books written in peripheral languages globally, and at the same time, demonstrates the difficulties faced by agents on the periphery side. By conceptualising the notion of cultural carriers and cultural carrying, this thesis suggests a mode of exporting contemporary Chinese literature initiated by Chinese rights managers, which is an important force for facilitating the publication of Chinese literature in Anglo-American countries but almost entirely neglected in current scholarship.

Though the examination of transnational transfer of book translations in this thesis draws upon the example of Chinese/China specifically. I would expect that, in a larger

sense, some of the phenomena discussed in this thesis can apply to the cases of other peripheral languages and countries in terms of their endeavour of exporting cultural products towards the centres. It is also my hope that this thesis will spark more discussion, empirical or theoretical, of the issues pertaining to the transnational transfer of book translations or of cultural products more broadly, from periphery to centre, and of the power relations between languages and nation-states.

## **Appendix 1**

### **Information sheet (For non-case study interviewees)**

#### **What is the project about?**

This is a PhD project conducted by Jing Wu from University of York. The research is about the international circulation of book translation from China to the UK, aiming to depict the evolution of Chinese to English translated books published in the UK since 1949. It examines the roles of the agents working in the industry and the factors that trigger and hinder this international cultural circulation through book translation.

#### **What will be involved in participating in this project?**

It will be an honour to have you participating in this project, sharing your professional experiences and insightful views with me. To ensure accuracy of information, our conversation will be recorded with your consent. Please be assured that the research has been ethically reviewed by the ELMPS Ethics Committee in the University of York.

#### **How will my information be used and stored?**

Information collected on this interview will be used for research purposes, including publications, reports, web pages, and other research output. Your personal identity will always be kept anonymous in the dissemination of my research, but please also be aware that as the number of organisations - publishers who publish translated Chinese books – is relatively small, your name might be identified especially by ones who are familiar with the industry. You are free to request a copy of the transcript of this interview if you want me to make some alterations to it before it is used (for instance, removing information). The recording of the interview and any information collected from you will be stored in a secure way on password encrypted devices, where no one will be able to access except the researcher Jing Wu, and her supervisors.

#### **What if I want to withdraw from the study?**

Your taking part is voluntary, you may withdraw from the study up to three months after your interview, without prejudice and without providing a reason. Once withdrawn, relevant data will be then destroyed.

#### **How to contact the researcher?**

If you have any queries or concerns after the interview, please feel free to contact me at:

Email: [Jw2680@york.ac.uk](mailto:Jw2680@york.ac.uk)

Tel: +44 (0)xxxxxxxxxx (UK)

+86 xxxxxxxxxxxx (China)

You may contact my supervisors Dr Laurie Hanquinet and Dr Daryl Martin at:

[laurie.hanquinet@york.ac.uk](mailto:laurie.hanquinet@york.ac.uk)

[daryl.martin@york.ac.uk](mailto:daryl.martin@york.ac.uk)

The Chair of ELMPS Tony Royle, can also be contacted at: [tony.royle@york.ac.uk](mailto:tony.royle@york.ac.uk)

Thanks for taking part!



## **Appendix 2**

### **Information sheet (For case study's interviewees)**

#### **What is the project about?**

This is a PhD project conducted by Jing Wu from University of York. The research is about the international circulation of book translation from China to the UK, aiming to depict the evolution of Chinese to English translated books published in the UK since 1949. It examines the roles of the agents working in the industry and the factors that trigger and hinder this international cultural circulation through book translation.

#### **What will be involved in participating in this project?**

It will be an honour to have you participating in this project, sharing your professional experiences and insightful views with me. Your interview data will be used as case studies where the process of book production is being discussed. To ensure accuracy of information, our conversation will be recorded with your consent. Please be assured that the research has been ethically reviewed by the ELMPS Ethics Committee in the University of York.

#### **How will my information be used and stored?**

Information collected on this interview will be used for research purposes, including publications, reports, web pages, and other research output. Your interview data will be presented anonymously unless you prefer to be named. However, please be aware that as book information would be in the public record, yet though your interview data is being presented anonymously, your name therefore could still conceivably be identified. You are free to request a copy of the transcript of this interview in order to offer factual corrections and share any possible concerns. The recording of the interview and any information collected from you will be stored in a secure way on password encrypted devices, where no one will be able to access except the researcher Jing Wu, and her supervisors.

#### **What if I want to withdraw from the study?**

Your taking part is voluntary, you may withdraw from the study up to three months after the interview, without prejudice and without providing a reason. Once withdrawn, relevant data will be then destroyed.

#### **How to contact the researcher?**

If you have any queries or concerns after the interview, please feel free to contact me at:

Email: [Jw2680@york.ac.uk](mailto:Jw2680@york.ac.uk)

Tel: +44 (0)xxxxxxxxxx (UK)

+86 xxxxxxxxxxxx (China)

You may contact my supervisors Dr Laurie Hanquinet and Dr Daryl Martin at:

[laurie.hanquinet@york.ac.uk](mailto:laurie.hanquinet@york.ac.uk)

[daryl.martin@york.ac.uk](mailto:daryl.martin@york.ac.uk)

The Chair of ELMPS Tony Royle, can also be contacted at: [tony.royle@york.ac.uk](mailto:tony.royle@york.ac.uk)

Thanks for taking part!

## Appendix 3

### Consent form for participants (For non-case study's interviewees)

This form is for you to state whether or not you agree to take part in the study. Please read and answer every question. If there is anything you do not understand, or if you want more information, please ask the researcher.

Please tick the appropriate box of each questions as below:

Have you read and understood the information leaflet about the study? Yes  No

Have you had an opportunity to ask questions about the study? Yes  No

Do you understand that the information you provide will be held in confidence by the researcher? Yes  No

Do you understand that while excerpts from the results may be made part of the final research report, under no circumstances will your name or any identifying characteristics be included in the study? Yes  No

Do you understand that your participation is voluntary, you are free to refuse to answer any questions and you may withdraw from the study for any reason within 3 months of participating? Yes  No

Do you agree to be interviewed again (if needed) within 12 months Yes  No

Do you understand that the information you provide may be used in future research and archived at the University of York? Yes  No

Do you agree to take part in the study? Yes  No

If yes, do you agree to your interviews being recorded? Yes  No

*(You may take part in the study without agreeing to this).*

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Your name (in BLOCK letters):

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Your signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer's name:

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Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 4

### Consent form for participants (For case study's interviewees)

This form is for you to state whether or not you agree to take part in the study. Please read and answer every question. If there is anything you do not understand, or if you want more information, please ask the researcher.

Please tick the appropriate box of each question as below:

Have you read and understood the information leaflet about the study? Yes  No

Have you had an opportunity to ask questions about the study? Yes  No

Do you understand that the information you provide will be held in confidence by the researcher? Yes  No

Would you prefer your quotes to be anonymised? Yes  No

If yes, do you understand that, in the write up of information associated with the specific book, that although I will present your interview quotes in an anonymised manner, your identity may be guessed by readers who decide to look up details of the final book? Yes  No

Do you understand that your participating is voluntary, you are free to refuse to answer any questions and you may withdraw from the study for any reason within 3 months of participating? Yes  No

Do you agree to be interviewed again (if needed) within 12 months? Yes  No

Do you understand that the information you provide may be used in future research and archived at the University of York? Yes  No

Do you agree to take part in the study? Yes  No

If yes, do you agree to your interviews being recorded? Yes  No

*(You may take part in the study without agreeing to this).*

Your name (in BLOCK letters):

---

Your signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer's name:

---

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 5

### Interview Guidance

#### Interview with rights managers:

1. Personal information: job title, years of working, education, and professional trajectories.  
e.g., Can you tell me a bit about yourself? What is your role in the company?
2. Daily routines as rights manager.  
e.g., What is a job as rights manager like?
3. Experiences of copyrights exportation to Anglo-American countries.  
e.g.: - Any cases you can share?
  - What activities would you do? What is the process?
  - What obstacles do you encounter?
4. Opinions on copyright exportation to Anglo-American countries.  
e.g.: - Do you think it is extremely hard to export books to Anglo-American countries, why?
  - What are the differences between exporting books to Anglo-American countries and to other countries?
  - Do you have more and more confidence on exporting books to Anglo-American countries, why?

#### Interview with English editors:

1. Personal information: job title, years of working, education, and professional trajectories.
2. Experiences of importing Chinese literature.  
e.g.: - [If they have published Chinese authors before] How did it (the Chinese book) come to you and what makes you decide to buy it?
  - Have you published any (other) Chinese books in translation, or do you have plans to do so?
  - What is the process of publishing a Chinese book in English translation? difficulties encountered?
  - About the selection process of the Chinese literature projects, can you tell me how you choose (what criteria matters, what genres/authors/topics you are particularly interested in), any examples?

- Can you think of an example where you decided not to commission a Chinese book? What are the reasons you decided not to?
3. Opinions on publishing foreign literature.
- e.g.: - Generally speaking, what kind of foreign books or authors would you prefer to commission?
- Do you think the UK (or the US) is a specific market for translated works, and especially for translated works from Chinese?

**Interview with western literary agents and sub-agencies:**

1. Personal information: job title, years of working, education, and professional trajectories.
2. Experiences of representing Chinese literature.
 

e.g.: - Do you represent any Chinese authors, or do you have plans to do so? Why?

  - Any stories that you can share?
3. Relationship with China's rights managers.
 

e.g.: Have you worked with China's rights managers? Any examples?
4. Opinions on translating and publishing Chinese literature in the UK and US market?
 

e.g., - Do you think the UK (or the US) is a specific market for translated works, and especially for translated works from Chinese?

  - What do you think the obstacles are to publishing Chinese books in translation in the Anglo-American market?



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