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State, Capital Flow and New Wave Chinese Science Fiction as World Literature

Originating at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s, New Wave Chinese science fiction (SF) had kept circulating as a national genre within the territory and remained largely invisible to the rest of the world for nearly two decades. After 2010, it accelerated its pace of internationalization via translation, and several works winning both critical acclaim and popular readership in the anglophone world attested to the success of the project. This paper will thus focus on the genre's change of status and discuss the mechanism that brings about the change.

The translation project, in André Lefevere's terms, takes the three forms of state patronage, institutional patronage and professionals' initiation, of which the agent of state (and its various forms) occupies the central place. Drawing from Pierre Bourdieu's theory of cultural production and matrix of capitals, it is found that the state 1) exploits its own economic capital by directly supporting major SF translation projects financially under national translation initiative; 2) weighs social, cultural and symbolic capital when choosing the works/author to be translated, collaborating translators and partner publisher in the United States; 3) bestows symbolic capital upon institutions and certain professionals by way of policy support and authoritative validation via media reports, which, to some extent, empowers the two parties to undertake translation projects on their own to amplify the impact. The paper concludes that the consecration of New Wave Chinese SF, a dominated literary genre (in Pascale Casanova's terms) to be circulated in the international literary market as world literature, is the result of the Chinese state's active rendering of various capitals in the field.