

Commentary

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The Translation and Scholarship of African Literature in China

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Abstract: The translation and scholarship of African literature in China have evolved through three distinct phases: the initial sporadic translations, the rapid expansion following the reform and opening-up, and the sustained growth since the 21st century. By examining the history and current state of the translation and scholarship of African literature in China, it is imperative for Chinese scholars to transcend Western centrism and approach African literature with a uniquely Chinese perspective. Furthermore, the translation and scholarship of African literature in China play a critical role in bridging mutual perceptions between China and Africa. They not only facilitate a deeper comprehension of African society and culture – contributing to a more nuanced and respectful engagement and transforming perceptions – but also enhance cross-cultural communication between China and Africa, fostering a more inclusive and diverse global literary landscape.

Keywords: translation; scholarship; African literature; China

1 Introduction

Since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, 53 African countries have established diplomatic relations with China. Since Chinese President Xi Jinping proposed the Belt and Road Initiative in 2013, and the African Union Commission signed cooperation agreements with China to jointly build the Belt and Road, China-Africa cooperation has shifted from the periphery to the center stage, making Africa a pivotal focus in this initiative.

In the realm of translation and intercultural communication, China-Africa bilateral relations have always emphasized cultural, artistic, and literary exchanges. In this context, the translation and scholarship of African literature in China serve as

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a vital bridge for understanding and studying Africa. African literature not only reflects the social conditions and spirit of the continent across different periods but also acts as the voice of the African soul.

The significance of translation and scholarship extends beyond mere language conversion; they play a crucial role in shaping perceptions and fostering reciprocal relationships. By engaging with diverse narratives that challenge stereotypes, scholars and translators enhance Chinese readers' understanding of African societies and experiences. This dynamic exchange enriches the literary landscape and encourages a more nuanced interpretation of African identities. Furthermore, the translation process itself is an act of cross-cultural interpretation, requiring translators to navigate the complexities of language, culture, and context to render the original text accurately and meaningfully in the target language. Ultimately, this scholarly engagement deepens appreciation for African literature and contributes to a more respectful and informed dialogue between the two cultures.

2 Translation of African Literature in China

The development of African literature in the People's Republic of China can be divided into three distinct phases: the first phase was in the 1950s and 1960s; the second phase was from the 1980s to 1990s; and the third phase was from the beginning of the 21st century to the present.

During the May Fourth Movement, modern Chinese translators such as Dun Mao, Xun Lu, and Zuoren Zhou made important contributions to Chinese readers' understanding of the literature of the African nations. During this period, South African writer Olive Schreiner's *Three Dreams in a Desert* and Afro Caribbean French writer René Maran's novel *Batouala* were successively translated into Chinese and presented to Chinese readers (Li 1986). According to the statistics compiled by Xianlin Ji in 1959, four works of African literature had been translated and published in China during the 40 years following the May Fourth Movement: Ethiopia's *The Roar* in 1952, Nigeria's *African Folklore* in 1955, Cameroon's *Afrique, nous t'ignorons* in 1958, and South Africa writer Olive Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm* in the same year (Ji and Liu 1959).

Following the national liberation movement, the translation of African literature in China after the founding of the People's Republic of China was more ideologically colored and experienced a very tortuous path of development. In the 1950s and 1960s, when the world pattern was changing, with the changes in international relations and international politics, the works of Asia, Africa and Latin America were vigorously translated and introduced. Along with the establishment of the Asia-Africa Writers' Conference, the Asia-Africa Writers' Association, and other literary mechanisms and

venues, writers from China and African countries began to extensively utilize multi-lateral platforms to carry out literary interactions, and the number of translated works from Africa surged, novels, plays and poems from Sudan, Algeria, Cameroon, Mozambique and other countries have been introduced to readers through the Asia-Africa Writers' Association Publishing House and People's Literature Publishing House. For example, *Ancient Egyptian Stories* (1957) and *The Egyptian Book of the Dead* (1957), as well as *Selected Poems of Lilinhu Mikaia* (1962). Because of the similar encounters and destinies of China and Africa in the twentieth century, China's choice of African literature was also limited to books related to anti-imperialism, anti-colonialism and nationalism.

The first wave of African literature translations in the People's Republic of China occurred in the 1980s. There were about 62 Chinese publishers of African literature, including Yilin Publishing House, Foreign Literature Publishing House, and Zhejiang Literature and Arts Publishing House. Before the reform and opening-up, there was little introduction and translation of African literature in China, and many of the translated works reflected themes of colonial oppression and the resistance of the African people. After the reform and opening-up, China sought to enhance its solidarity with developing countries and newly independent countries. With the support of the policies at that time, the Foreign Literature Publishing House expanded the scope of its selection of works to be translated and introduced. The number of translations of African literature increased greatly, and a considerable number of African works, such as the "African Literature Series" (such as Changrong Gao and Hong Jiang's *Selected African Dramas* and Changrong Gao's *Anthology of Contemporary African Short Stories* published in 1983a, b), the works of some important writers have been translated one after another, for example, Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (2005) and *Arrow of God* (2011), Wole Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel* (1990), and *Death and the King's Horseman* (2004), Kenyan novelist Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *A Grain of Wheat* (1984), *Weep Not, Child* (1984), and *The River Between* (1986); Senegalese poet and former president Léopold Sédar Senghor's *Selected Poems of Senghor* (1983), etc.; *Snake God: African Folk Tales* (1981) for children and young adults has also been published. During this period, the largest number of translations was from Egypt, South Africa, Nigeria, Algeria, Tanzania, Sudan, Mozambique and other countries that had good relations with China. Toward the end of the 1990s and the century, the introduction of African literature into China slowed and became top-heavy, with publishers focusing only on star writers who had won the Nobel Prize for Literature and other world-class literary prizes. The translations centered around the four Nobel Prize winners (Nigerian writer Wole Soyinka, white South African writer John Coetzee, South African writer Nadine Gordimer, Egyptian writer Naguib Mahfouz) and Chinua Achebe. Thirty-four of the 57 works translated during this period were into this category, and a large number of

excellent writers with great potential were overlooked. For example, the Nigerian writer Amos Tutola, whose works are rooted in African national traditions, has not yet been translated in China. The group of African women writers represented by Grace Ogot, Flora Nwapa, Mariama Bâ, and Ama Atta Aidoo, etc. Despite significant developments in both quantity and quality, it have received negligible attention in translation. Additionally, many new writers have largely fallen out of the scope of attention, including Caine Prize winner Tope Folarin, Helen Oyeyemi and Noviolet Bulawayo, as well as science fiction writers Nnedi Okorafor, Lauren Bix, etc. From the works of these writers, we could learn more about the current state of African society, the emotional state of the African people, and the future development trends of Africa.

Since the beginning of the 21st century, the increase in economic and political exchanges between China and Africa has objectively promoted cultural exchanges. Especially with the comprehensive implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative, cultural ties between China and Africa have been further enhanced. African literature, as an important manifestation of African culture, is a significant part of Sino-African exchanges. The visit of Wole Soyinka, the first African Nobel Laureate in Literature, to China in 2012 marked a significant step in the history of Sino-African literary exchanges. With the rapid development of China-Africa relations and the gradual rise of African literature, there has been a marked increase in translations of African literature in China. The range of authors translated has expanded, and the number of works translated has substantially increased. The writers introduced are no longer solely focused on prize winners, such as Nigerian writer Chimamanda Adichie and Mozambican writer Mia Couto. Others include Mahfouz's disciple Jamal Hetoni and Nigerian writer Ben Okri. Most of the translated works are novels by representative writers from African countries, though they also include some short story and poetry collections. These translations have provided a better cultural foundation for the Chinese people to understand Africa and have served as models for further cultural and literary exchanges between China and Africa. In addition, most new African works translated in the past 10 years have been direct translations from the original languages (French, Portuguese, Arabic, Hausa, etc.) rather than indirect retranslations from English or Russian. For example, French translator Xiaoming Guan's translation of *Allah n'est pas obligé* (2011), Portuguese translator Xuefei Min's translation of *Terra Sonambula* (2018), Arabic translator Puhao Zhi's translation of *Medaq Alley* (1985), and Hausa translator Chunguang Li and other translators' translation of *The Body Will Tell: Selected Literary Works of Hausa Language in Africa* (2022), and so on. In recent years, international prizes such as the Nobel Prize for Literature and the Booker Prize have continuously recognized African writers, making African literature a new academic hotspot in global literary circles. This has further

propelled the translation and scholarship of African literature in China into a new stage.

In the realm of translating and disseminating African literature in China, the process encompasses three primary modalities: active introduction, active export, and market introduction. Each approach carries its own implications within the frameworks of translation studies and intercultural communication. Active Introduction refers to a scenario where scholars proficient in African languages within China take the initiative to select literature for translation. They then collaborate with publishing houses to bring these works to the attention of domestic readers. This method is akin to what Venuti would term “foreignizing translation,” where the translator intentionally retains elements of the source culture, challenging the target audience to engage with the foreignness of the text. For instance, a scholar might choose to translate a work that is rich in cultural references or linguistic nuances specific to an African region, thus introducing Chinese readers to a more authentic experience of African literature. However, this approach can sometimes result in a higher degree of cultural friction, as the translated literature may not align seamlessly with the expectations and reading habits of the Chinese audience. Active Export involves African writers or translators selecting works to be translated and then promoting them in China. This method often operates within the realm of “acculturation,” where the source culture (in this case, African literature) is adapted to fit the receiving culture (Chinese readership). An example of this is when an African author, possibly through a cultural exchange program or a literary festival, brings their work to the attention of Chinese publishers or readers. The translation might be tailored to appeal to Chinese sensibilities, which could involve simplifying certain cultural or historical references to make the text more accessible. Market Introduction is driven by market forces, where publishing houses select African literature for translation based on perceived market demand. This approach aligns with the concept of “domestication” in translation theory, where the translator aims to make the text as comfortable and accessible as possible for the target audience. For example, a publishing house might choose to translate a popular African novel that has themes and styles that resonate with current Chinese literary trends or popular culture. The goal here is to maximize the market appeal of the translated work, which may sometimes come at the expense of the cultural and linguistic richness of the original text.

In all these methods, the role of translation as a form of intercultural mediation is evident. Translators act as cultural brokers, making decisions about what to retain, what to adapt, and what to omit in the process of translating African literature for Chinese readers. These decisions are not made in a vacuum but are influenced by various factors such as the translator’s own cultural biases, the target audience’s expectations, and the cultural and political context in which the translation occurs.

Moreover, the success of these translation strategies in intercultural communication is often measured by the reception of the translated works. Feedback from readers, sales figures, and critical reviews can provide insights into the effectiveness of each approach in bridging the cultural divide. For instance, the translation of *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe into Chinese was a significant event that not only introduced Chinese readers to Nigerian literature but also sparked discussions on postcolonialism and cultural identity, demonstrating the profound impact that translated literature can have in fostering intercultural understanding.

3 Scholarship of African Literature in China

China's sporadic translations of African literature can be traced back as far as the May Fourth period, but related scholarship emerged in the 1980s. Since the beginning of the new millennium, the study of African literature in China has made some progress, particularly in terms of scientific research projects, academic monographs, dissertations, and journal articles. The obvious problem with related research in academia is that it focuses too much on a few Nobel Prize-winning writers, with more than 10 books and nearly one thousand dissertations on John Coetzee alone. Another problem is that it follows Western critical discourse and fails to adopt local perspectives.

Since 2010, the National Social Science Foundation has sponsored the study of African literature, and as of 2022, nearly 30 related research projects have been established. After 2014, nationwide symposiums on English-language African literature began to be held, and with the establishment of the China Institute of African Studies in 2019, communication between Chinese academia and Africa has become more direct and frequent, signaling that China's African literature research has entered a period of rapid development.

According to the statistics, there are six monographs and translations of foreign monographs of African literature in general.

At the beginning of the opening up, the two volumes of *Modern African Literature* (《非洲现代文学》) (Nikiforova, Jughashvili, and Kudelin 1980, 1981), translated from the 1973 edition of the Soviet Union's Science Press, were published in 1980 and 1981, respectively. The Soviet version of *Modern African Literature* was collectively written under the auspices of the Gorky Institute of World Literature of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR and was divided into two volumes: the first dealing with the literature of North and West Africa, and the second with the literature of East and South Africa. This monograph is relatively rich in information and systematic in its narration, with abundant materials, analysis, and commentary on African Arabic, French, English, Portuguese, and Hausa and Kiswahili literatures.

African Literature in the Twentieth Century (《20世纪非洲文学》) (Klein 1991) is a scholarly work reviewing African literature in the 20th century. It was written by many experts in the study of African literature, based on the information in the *Encyclopedia of World Literature in the 20th Century*, which was highly authoritative in its day. It is also the first time in China that African literature was introduced comprehensively in the form of country-specific literatures, reflecting both the history and the current situation of the development of African literature, as well as the national psyche of the African peoples.

Colorful African Literature: Scattered Essays on the Works of African Writers (《多彩的非洲文学:非洲文学作家作品散论》) (Yu et al. 2012) is a collection of essays on some of the writers selected from college textbooks written and edited by Haodong Yu, his wife Xiuqin Yang, and his daughter Renyuan Yu during their teaching of Oriental Literature in the 1960s and 1980s. The main body of the essays focuses on the writers of Sub-Saharan African literature, including many famous and great writers such as Nadine Gordimer, Leopold Senghor, Chinua Achebe, and others.

Introduction to African Masterpieces of the 20th Century (《20世纪非洲名家名著导论》) (Bao and Wang 2016) is one of the “African Classics Research Libraries on Human Sciences” of Zhejiang Normal University. It introduces 30 African writers by country, describing their upbringing, education, and social activities, as well as their major works and scholarly evaluations. Their works show what people from all walks of life on this continent think and feel from different perspectives. The sorrows and joys of ordinary people are moving stories in these writers’ writings. What we see is the multitude of people in the African literary world, and what we feel is the real state of life for everyone, regardless of national boundaries. It is particularly noteworthy that the book introduces for the first time many African women authors, such as Assia Djebar from Algeria, Nawal El Saadawi from Egypt, and Bessie Head from Botswana.

Compiled by two scholars of African descent, *African Literature: an Anthology of Criticism and Theory* (《非洲文学批评史稿》) (Olaniyan and Quayson 2020) encompasses the most critical texts of African literary criticism and theory. It is the first selection and collection of African literary studies over the years. It includes in-depth reflections by indigenous African intellectuals inspired by the national independence movement – what is African literature? What is the “Africanness” of African literature? Why is the critical function of African scholars being challenged? What kind of identity and sense of responsibility should “African writers” have? What are the critical effects of social realist novels?

The Path of Awakening and Development of African Literature in the 20th Century (《20世纪非洲文学觉醒与发展之路》) (Xia 2021) is also a book in the “African Studies Series” of Yunnan University, written by Yan Xia. Yan Xia follows a

chronological order to show the trajectory of the development of African literature in the 20th century and its achievements, in which the social changes and zeitgeist of Africa in the 20th century can be reflected. Meanwhile, through a review of the historical development of African literature before the 20th century, before the 1960s, and after the 1960s, an overall picture of the vertical development of African literature is drawn. The relationship between the development of literature and social change is studied and summarized according to the important historical periods.

There are quite a number of academic journal papers on general African literature, and only a few representative ones are selected here for explanation. In the field of African literature, the older generation of authoritative scholars includes Yongcai Li, while the newer generation of more authoritative and active scholars includes Zhenwu Zhu, Hui Jiang, Feng Yao, Ying Cheng, Hui Huang, and so on.

African Literature in China (1986) is an overview written by Yongcai Li after attending an annual conference on African literature in the United States. It mainly summarizes the three stages of African literature being translated and introduced to China.

The Current Status of African Literature Research in China (Jiang 2016) is the second preface to the *Review of African Studies in China* (2016). This paper analyzes and summarizes the basic features of African literature scholarship in China.

Holding the Ideal or Westernization: What Kind of African Literature Should be Studied in China: From the Postcolonial Study of Coetzee's Foe (Jiang 2017) points out that one of the challenges facing African literary studies in China today is how it can free itself from the influence of Western literature studies in China.

African Literature and the Diversity of Civilizations (Zhu and Li 2022) points out that although African literature is born out of the colonial history of Africa, it has given rise to a variety of aesthetic expressions, ideological concepts, and historical forms with a sense of community in colonial, anti-colonial, and decolonial writings. It has shown an all-encompassing, diffuse quality in the current context of globalization.

How to Approach the Third World?—The Disadvantages of Postcolonial Criticism and Problematic Colonization in African Literary Studies (Yao 2023) points out that “problematic colonization” has made it difficult for the study of African literature in China to break free from the research horizons and intellectual frameworks set by the West. It has degenerated into a replica of Western studies, treating Africa as an imaginary object, which makes it difficult to independently explore important research topics and weakens the subjectivity of Chinese scholars.

The Politics of the Everyday: African Literary Studies and the Perspectives of Popular Culture (Cheng 2016) points out that, unlike the postcolonial critical orientation that used to dominate Western African literary studies, African studies of popular culture have emphasized the perspectives of everyday life. They focus on

local, grassroots languages, cultures, and art forms, discussing the ways in which culture and art forms construct the emotions, imaginaries, and values of modern Africans, as well as their interactions with deep-seated social mechanisms. This brings new methodological insights to African studies and expands the scope of study.

African Literature Studies in China (Huang 2016) points out that the study of African literature in China can be traced back to the 1960s and has produced a number of high-quality results in terms of case studies of writers' works. However, there are still deficiencies in terms of overall research and country-specific literary studies.

For the representative projects in the field of general African literature scholarship, there are "Study on China's Translation and Interpretation of African Literature in the Context of the Belt and Road" and "Research on the Translation and Interpretation of African Literature in China" by Lin Wang, "Contemporary African Literature and China-Africa Cultural Exchanges," a sub-theme of the Study on China-Africa Cooperative Relations in the New Era, "A Study of the History and Present Situation of the Spread of African Literature in China" by Fengjiao Chen, "A Study of the Development of African Literature" by Hui Huang, "History of African Literature" by Huang Hui, "A Comparative Study of African Nobel Prize Writers' Discourse of Nationality" by Mingying Li, etc.

In addition, *The Review of African Studies in China* (《中国非洲研究评论》) has launched *The African Literature Album* in 2016. The content includes the research on African literature in China, the frontiers of African studies abroad, notes from graduate students, research reports, and literary translations. The research on African literature in China is further subdivided into the state of development of African literature in Chinese colleges and universities, the theoretical vision of African literature research, the research on literary and critical history, the exploration of methodology, the research on specific works, and the study of the phenomenon of African literature.

On the whole, *Modern African Literature*, with its systematic narration and rich materials, laid a foundational framework for understanding the breadth of African literatures. In contrast, *African Literature in the Twentieth Century* and *Introduction to African Masterpieces of the 20th Century* offer more focused and comprehensive insights into individual authors and their works, reflecting the shift towards a more nuanced understanding of African literature. The *African Literature Album* within *The Review of African Studies in China* is a significant development, signaling a commitment to a more diverse and in-depth engagement with African literature. It provides a platform for a variety of voices and perspectives, which is crucial for the development of a robust and self-reliant field of study. Comparatively, the anthological approach of *Colorful African Literature* and the critical theory focus of *African*

Literature: an Anthology of Criticism and Theory demonstrate the multifaceted nature of African literature and its study, with the former offering a broad survey, and the latter delving into the critical discourse, challenging Chinese scholars to engage with the deeper questions of what constitutes African literature and its role in the global literary landscape. The academic journal papers, such as those by Yongcai Li, Hui Jiang, and Feng Yao, provide critical insights into the state of African literature studies in China. They raise important questions about the direction and methodologies of translation and study, highlighting the need for a decolonial approach that breaks away from Western frameworks and fosters a more equitable and culturally sensitive engagement with African literatures.

4 Translation and Scholarship: Bridging Mutual Perceptions Between China and Africa

Translation serves as a bridge between cultures, not only transferring words but also conveying the cultural values, ideas, and contexts that shape those words. The interplay between language, culture, and power in the translation of literature reveals how these processes contribute to a more nuanced understanding of both cultures. As highlighted in the earlier sections, the historical context of Sino-African relations, particularly post-2013 with the Belt and Road Initiative, has created a fertile ground for such exchanges.

Expanding from translation to a transcultural perspective in China-Africa literary relations involves rethinking translation not as a mere linguistic activity but as a transformative process that bridges cultures, histories, and philosophies. Traditionally, translation has been seen as a means of conveying African literature to Chinese readers, providing them with insight into unfamiliar worlds. However, a transcultural approach encourages a more dynamic and reciprocal exchange, where the translation process actively engages with both African and Chinese cultural frameworks, allowing each to inform and reshape the other. In this transcultural context, translators and scholars act as cultural mediators, making thoughtful decisions about what to retain, adapt, or explain in order to foster cross-cultural understanding. These choices are not made in isolation; they are influenced by the translator's cultural biases, the target audience's expectations, and the broader cultural and political context. For example, during the initial phases of translation in the 1950s and 1960s, the ideological underpinnings often led to a focus on anti-imperialist narratives, reflecting the shared struggle against imperialism between China and African nations. Similarly, translations of works by authors like Chinua Achebe and Ngugi wa Thiong'o emphasized themes of colonial resistance and

national identity, resonating with China's own revolutionary history. In the 1980s, as China began to open up and expand its engagement with the global community, translations started to include a broader range of African voices. This period saw the introduction of contemporary narratives that highlighted the complexities of post-colonial life, such as the works of Bessie Head and Mariama Bâ, which explored issues of gender and social justice. More recently, the translation of novels by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Ben Okri has contributed to a richer understanding of modern African experiences, addressing themes of migration, cultural hybridity, and the effects of globalization. These translations not only reflect current realities in Africa but also facilitate discussions about shared human experiences, fostering empathy among Chinese readers. Additionally, the translation of African poetry, such as the works of Leopold Sedar Senghor and Warsan Shire, has introduced Chinese audiences to the lyrical and expressive dimensions of African literature, enriching their cultural perspectives and appreciation for the continent's artistic diversity.

Moreover, the translation and scholarship of African literature in China serve as powerful tools in reshaping mutual perceptions between China and Africa. Translation studies have long emphasized that translation is not a neutral act; it has the potential to shape and alter perceptions. In the context of Sino-African relations, translation is pivotal in constructing and reconstructing mutual understanding. The choices made by translators can either reinforce existing stereotypes or challenge them, thus influencing how Chinese readers perceive African cultures. For instance, the way African proverbs and idiomatic expressions are translated can either exoticize or normalize these cultures, depending on the strategies employed. The success of translation strategies in facilitating intercultural communication can be gauged by the reception of the translation of *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe, which was a landmark event, for it not only introduced Nigerian literature to Chinese audiences but also ignited discussions on postcolonialism and cultural identity.

The translation and scholarship on African literature in China further illuminate the changing dynamics of Sino-African cultural relations. Related monographs and academic articles provide valuable insights into the evolving understanding and growing interest in African cultures. This evolving interest is evident in the establishment of dedicated programs in Chinese universities that focus on African literature, signaling a deepening academic engagement with the role of educational institutions and cultural exchange programs. Furthermore, scholarly efforts have led to the publication of anthologies that compile significant African literary works translated into Chinese, often accompanied by critical analyses that provide essential context for readers, and many cultural exchange initiatives, such as literary festivals and author visits. The influence of scholarship also extends into popular media, where documentaries showcasing African authors help demystify African cultures, and public lectures and symposiums featuring experts in African literature have

heightened awareness and interest, allowing for meaningful discussions that confront stereotypes and illuminate the diversity of African experiences. All in all, the scholarly examination of African literature underscores the critical role that academic and cultural institutions play in shaping perceptions and fostering a more reciprocal relationship between China and Africa.

Moving from translation to transcultural exchange between China and Africa is a journey towards creating an inclusive, empathetic, and dialogic relationship that transcends cultural and linguistic barriers. This evolving relationship, supported by a more localized, culturally sensitive approach to African literary studies, fosters a mutual respect that benefits both regions. It allows Chinese readers not only to understand Africa better but also to see reflections of their own historical and cultural struggles, enriching their view of the world and opening pathways for a genuinely reciprocal China-Africa cultural dialogue.

To further enrich this process, it is essential to move beyond a Western-centric approach to China-Africa literary studies. Transcultural translation involves a shift away from a Western-centric academic model that has historically influenced African literary studies in China. Much of the current scholarship relies on Western frameworks, which can inadvertently impose external interpretive structures that overlook the unique perspectives China can bring to African literature. By developing a localized scholarly discourse, Chinese scholars can build a unique paradigm of intercultural exchange, offering a more inclusive and autonomous model that reflects the distinctiveness of China-Africa relations. This shift from translation to a transcultural perspective enables the literary exchange between China and Africa to become a deeper dialogue that not only brings fresh insights into African literature but also contributes to a more diverse global academic landscape by amplifying voices from non-Western perspectives.

5 Conclusions

In conclusion, the trajectory of translation and scholarship of African literature in China reflects a complex interplay of cultural, political, and academic forces. The journey from the sporadic translations during the May Fourth period to the more systematic and supported research of the new millennium underscores the evolving relationship between China and Africa in the realm of literature and culture. In addition, the emphasis on Nobel Prize-winning authors, such as John Coetzee, indicates a tendency to align with Western critical discourse, which, while it has its merits, also highlights a gap in locally grounded perspectives and a need for a more diverse and inclusive approach to African literary studies.

Translation and scholarship play a vital role in transforming mutual perceptions between China and Africa. In the context of translation and intercultural communication, it is essential to recognize the role of these works and studies in shaping Chinese readers' perceptions of Africa. The choice of texts to translate, the methodologies employed in their study, and the critical discourse surrounding them all contribute to the construction of a particular image of Africa in the Chinese imagination. As China continues to deepen its cultural and academic exchanges with Africa, it is imperative that future translations and scholarly works strive for a more balanced and representative view of African literature – one that acknowledges the diversity of African experiences and voices – and that encourages a dialogue based on mutual respect and understanding.

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