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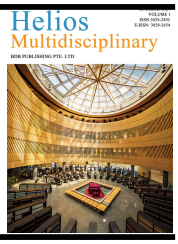

"Africanness" and "Britishness": Pedigree and Research of African English Literature

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ABSTRACT

As an intersection of African literature and English literature, Afro-British literature has become a common carrier of "Africanness" and "Englishness", not only upholding the thick tradition of African local culture, but also powerfully supporting and expressing "Africanness" through its potential discourse of resistance and emancipatory demands. Not only does it hold on to the thick African local cultural tradition and strongly support and speak of "Africanness", but it also intervenes in, subverts and reshapes "Britishness" through its potential discourse of resistance and demand for liberation. Afro-British literature has made an important contribution to the mutual understanding and appreciation of the two literary traditions and to the connection of cultures, ethnic groups and societies in two different regions across the oceans, providing an excellent and realistic blueprint for the construction of culture in the post-imperial and post-racial era, and shaping a paradigm for the construction of community in the context of globalization and pluralism nowadays.

1. Introduction

In the context of the great practice of a community with a shared future for mankind and the mutual learning of world civilizations, the paradigm of foreign literature research in China is gradually shifting toward non-Western regions and ethnic literatures. Since the inception of China's "Belt and Road" initiative and the deepening of Sino-African cooperative exchanges in the 21st century, African literature has emerged as a significant area of study in China, prompting a re-examination of world African literature within academic circles (Wang Zhuo 2023; Wang Zhuo, Sun Xiaomeng 2023). The awarding of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2021 to Abdulrazak Gurnah (1948—), a Tanzanian-born British author, has further heightened attention on both African literature and African British literature.

When categorized by individual or ancestral geographic origins, national backgrounds, racial and cultural identities, as well as life experiences and literary intentions, writers such as Buchi Emecheta (1944—2017), Ben Okri (1959—), Jackie Kay (1961—2019), Diran Adebayo (1968—),

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Helen Oyeyemi (1984—), Bernardine Evaristo (1959—), who won the Booker Prize in 2019, and Gurnah himself can all be included among African British authors.

Distinct from the concept of "black British literature," which is characterized by high inclusivity, strong contextual dependence, and considerable controversy, "African British literature" represents an organic composition and intersection of African and British literatures. Its authors not only "document the rich history and unique culture of Africa... but also celebrate the African spirit" (Zhu Zhenwu, Han Wenting 2017). They present a narrative characterized by "Africanness" at its core, reflecting a "cultural community identity" (Zhu & Han 2017, Li Dan 2022; Cao Yujie 2023). Furthermore, through shared political identity claims and diasporic experiences, they expose the fictional myths of "Britishness," subverting and reconstructing these concepts in the post-Empire and post-ethnic era.

African British literature possesses immense potential, has achieved remarkable accomplishments, and continues to gain increasing recognition. It addresses and explores themes related to regional civilizations, colonial histories, diasporic conditions, traumatic memories, racial identities, marginalized groups, and multiculturalism. Such literary explorations provide effective textual frameworks for constructing a community with a shared future across races, regions, and cultures, offering significant insights into the lineage and study of this literature.

2. Debate and origin of African English literature

The research and criticism of African British writers and their works is not a new phenomenon, yet it has consistently remained overshadowed by the framework of British Black literature, occupying a highly marginalized position. A comprehensive research domain and critical paradigm have yet to be established. The concept of "British Black literature" itself has always been difficult to define and has been subject to considerable debate since its inception.

Focusing on its political attributes, Stuart Hall argues that it emphasizes the shared experiences of non-white minorities "in facing racism and marginalization in the UK" (Hall 1989). Thus, the term "Black" subverts the logic of racial discourse and becomes a political label, encompassing all writers of color with similar circumstances and common aspirations, including Indo-British authors like Salman Rushdie and Hanif Kureishi. This emphasis on political stance and a high degree of racial inclusivity has naturally drawn considerable criticism. Writers like Rushdie and Fred D'Aguiar argue that this concept contrasts with "British white literature," marginalizing Black voices and excluding them from the essence of British identity (D'Aguiar 1989). Furthermore, it poses the risk of homogenization, overgeneralizing the cultural diversity of authors without considering racial identity (Upstone 2010). Consequently, some scholars distinguish between African and Afro-Caribbean writers, as well as Asian or Indo-Caribbean authors (Jansen 2018).

Secondly, the category of British Black, as a marker of identity, has been subject to dynamic changes based on race and skin color. The concept of "Black British" emerged in the late 1960s through the Caribbean Artists Movement. Anne Walmsley asserts that this movement "transformed the British West Indian community from exiles and immigrants into Black Britons" (Walmsley 1992). At this time, British Black primarily referred to West Indian immigrant groups from Trinidad, Jamaica, Guyana, and Barbados (Stein 2004). In the 1970s, a series of institutionalized racist policies, initiated by the Immigration Act of 1971, exacerbated racial hatred in British society, leading to increasingly tense racial relations. Consequently, the term "British Black" transformed into a political symbol of resistance against racial oppression (Pirker 2012), becoming a broad collective

term for African, Caribbean (West Indian), and Asian immigrants and their descendants. By the 1990s, multiculturalism began to reshape political and cultural values in British society, emphasizing ethnic diversity and cultural subjectivity. This shift meant that British Black and British Asian identities could no longer be unified under a single category, with British Asians being classified separately. At this point, British Black encompassed both African and Caribbean peoples of color. It is evident that the concept of "British Black" is continually redefined in response to changing societal contexts, rendering the literary category it embodies highly dependent on context.

In summary, the broader scope of British Black literature includes works by authors from African, Asian, or Caribbean backgrounds, while a narrower definition focuses solely on the contributions of African-Caribbean writers (Stein 2004). Regardless of whether examined through a political lens or based on racial distinctions, the positioning of African British authors and their works within the definition and developmental process of British Black literature remains ambiguous. Furthermore, from a historical perspective, "the post-war history of Black Britons often centers on Caribbean-descended Black migrants," while "the history of African Britons has largely been forgotten or overlooked" (Adi 2019).

Like the awkward positioning of African British literature in relation to the history of Africans in Britain, it has consistently occupied a marginal space compared to Afro-Caribbean literature. Indeed, although African British writers and Afro-Caribbean writers share similar racial appearances, ancestral cultural backgrounds, multicultural environments, memories of slavery, diasporic experiences, and marginalized circumstances, significant "experiential and cultural differences" (Stein 2004: 15) exist within these two groups. Unlike Afro-Caribbean literature, which often addresses themes related to plantation politics, nostalgic ties to the British homeland, distant memories of African cultural heritage, and mixed Creole literary expressions, African British literature tends to engage more with imperial colonial actions and historical legacies, the decolonization process, the transmission of African cultural heritage, struggles for independence, civil unrest, ethnic conflicts, and political asylum.

The varying regional experiences and cultural backgrounds result in different forms of thought and expression, influencing how writers position their identities and navigate their circumstances in Britain. Hence, African British literature should not be overshadowed or substituted by the similar racial and regional literary categories, nor should it be overlooked. Moreover, as the global trend emphasizes racial diversity in discussions of multicultural integration, British Blacks have increasingly experienced "internal cultural fragmentation," with the term "Black" no longer serving as a defining category for British Africans, Caribbeans, and Asians (Hall 2000). The strongly political identity of "British Black" should be downplayed, while the subjective identity of African British people deserves greater attention. Furthermore, since the 1970s, a remarkable number of outstanding authors, such as Okri, Evaristo, and Gurnah, have emerged, garnering various literary awards and enhancing the reputation of African British literature. Consequently, its research domain and critical paradigms should be defined and assessed.

Based on the understandings of relevant conceptual frameworks surrounding British Black literature by scholars like Stein (2004) and Dabydeen & Wilson-Tagoe (1987), African British literature can be defined as the literary works of writers of African descent and their descendants in Britain, which are published or disseminated within the UK, and exist in parallel to the works of Afro-Caribbean writers and their descendants. African British literature first appeared in the 18th

century, with the history of African Britons dating back even earlier, to the Roman period when some Africans served as soldiers in the Roman Empire (Stein 2004).

From the mid-16th century to the 18th century, colonial expansion and the slave trade led to the capture, sale, and enslavement of a significant number of Africans. African British literature emerged within the context of the brutalities of slavery and the deprivation of human rights, arising from the testimonies and denunciations of enslaved Africans against the institution of slavery, as well as their calls for liberation. Such "slave narratives" began to appear in the late 18th century. Due to stringent institutional constraints and a tense political atmosphere, these works primarily took the form of autobiographies, letters, and diaries, reflecting the conscious literary creations of African enslaved writers. Notable examples include *Letters of the Late Ignatius Sancho, an African* (1782) by Ignatius Sancho (1729–1780) and *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano; or, Gustavus Vassa, the African, Written by Himself* (1789) by Olaudah Equiano (1745–1780). These works convey strong nationalist sentiments and an awareness of abolitionism, serving as a counter to stereotypes and the hierarchical traditions of racial superiority through self-affirmation, and they became precursors to themes of anti-racism and identity.

During the period from World War I to World War II, Britain recruited a large number of soldiers and laborers from the Caribbean and Africa. In the aftermath of World War II, as the crumbling empire faced numerous challenges, it became increasingly dependent on labor to rebuild. In 1948, over 400 Caribbean immigrants arrived in England aboard the *Windrush*, marking the beginning of large-scale post-war immigration. The *British Nationality Act 1948* granted legal status to non-white immigrants, leading to a significant increase in the number of immigrants from Africa and South Asia. At the same time, this influx of immigrants triggered widespread social rejection and rising tensions in race relations, leading to several racial riots, such as those in Nottingham and Notting Hill in 1958. Enoch Powell's "Rivers of Blood" speech linked immigration with racial violence, prompting a series of increasingly restrictive immigration laws (in 1962, 1968, 1970, and 1981) that limited the rights of former colonies and Commonwealth residents, effectively stripping Black and Asian British citizens of their civil rights (as noted by Rushdie, cited in Jansen 2018).

Against this racial backdrop, African British writers began to emerge prominently in the 1970s and 1980s. Buchi Emecheta has been regarded as "the first successful African Black female novelist in Britain since 1948" (Dawson 2007). She focuses on the living conditions of African British women while often reflecting on her African homeland and writing about the atrocities of slavery and colonialism. Her semi-autobiographical novels, *In the Ditch* (1972) and *Second-Class Citizen* (1974), are exemplary works. Nigerian novelist and poet Ben Okri is celebrated for his African themes, with his novel *The Famished Road* (1991) winning the Booker Prize in 1991. Since the 1990s, as the population of African immigrants and their descendants has increased, the trend of cultural diversification in British society has become increasingly apparent, with significant occurrences of multicultural integration. The anniversaries of landmark events, such as the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act (1807) and waves of immigration, have invoked a sense of British liberalism, cultural exchange, and inclusivity, contributing to the evolution of a culturally diverse "New Britain" (Jansen 2018: 8). This open socio-cultural environment has fostered the development of African British literature.

The 2021 Nobel Prize in Literature winner, Abdulrazak Gurnah, has published ten novels to date, providing detailed depictions of Africans from pre-colonial to post-colonial periods, the

experiences of African migrants and refugees in England and East Africa, as well as the lives of their descendants in England. Nigerian-born writer Sade Adeniran's debut novel, *Some Kind of Black* (1996), and Nigerian author Helen Oyeyemi's novel *The Icarus Girl* (2005) explore the internal divisions and complex genealogies within the Black community in Britain against a backdrop of multicultural integration. Since the dawn of the new century, avant-garde writers have shifted their focus toward discussions of globalization and multiculturalism. Novels such as Evaristo's *Lara* (1997), *The Emperor's Babe* (2001), *Soul Tourists* (2005), and her Booker Prize-winning *Girl, Woman, Other* (2019), as well as Scottish-Nigerian writer Jackie Kay's debut novel, *Trumpet* (1998), delve into themes of transnationalism and the narratives of marginalized groups.

Although situated within the broader spectrum of British Black literature, African British literature continues to stand out distinctly. Tracing its development reveals that since its emergence in the 18th century, African British literature has been closely intertwined with historical themes of slavery, colonialism, racial integration, and multiculturalism. It encapsulates the traumatic memories and identity constructions of African British individuals while also reflecting upon and elucidating the existential circumstances of different racial and cultural groups, thereby providing significant insights for the study of both African and British literature.

3. Upholding "Africanness" and reconstructing "Britishness"

African British writers reflect on their ancestral homeland, exploring indigenous cultural traditions, the history of colonization and independence, and the complexities of cultural hybridity. Through a perspective of "Africanness" and an Africa-centered attitude, they engage in textual practices that narrate anti-imperialist resistance and the liberation of Africa. At the same time, they actively integrate and adapt to British society. Their works reveal a historical consciousness that addresses anti-racist oppression, identity confusion and construction, as well as racial blending and multiculturalism, thereby achieving an engagement with, challenge to, and redefinition of "Britishness."

The concept of "Africanness" has evolved in its connotations alongside scholarly discussions. Jacques Maquet defines "Africanness" as the unique cultural visage that Africa presents to the outside world (Ayaga 1973). He compares it to the concept of "blackness," noting that the former emphasizes African culture itself, whereas the latter is shaped by the alienation and influences of other cultures. To some extent, Maquet highlights the racial logic of othering and homogenization inherent in the concept of "blackness." However, he limits the scope of "Africanness" to "sub-Saharan Africa" (ibid.: 95), a stance that has drawn criticism from other scholars. Bernth Lindfors includes North African Arab culture (Arabism) in this discussion, arguing that the two regions—North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa—are geographically adjacent and their cultures can form a symbiotic alliance (Lindfors 1970: 6). Additionally, Luo Hong posits that "Africanness" represents "the totality of African culture and its characteristics disseminated throughout the world" (Luo Hong 2021), which clarifies the features of "Africanness" in the works of the African diaspora. Zhu Zhenwu, focusing on African literature, further asserts that "Africanness" is represented through the "cultural community identity" (Zhu Zhenwu ; Li Dan 2022). Thus, it is evident that the connotation of "Africanness" has expanded with the progression of time and shifts in consciousness. Overall, "Africanness" refers to the shared cultural characteristics of both indigenous African cultures and those of the African diaspora. It emphasizes the inheritance and promotion of traditional African cultural practices while also addressing the historical traumas of colonialism and

subsequent decolonial attempts, and it recognizes the cultural diversity present within the African continent itself.

The exploration and utilization of native African cultural traditions in African British literature are closely linked to the diasporic experiences of the writer community. African British writers in the 1970s and 1980s generally shared diasporic backgrounds; however, British society failed to fulfill their need for a sense of belonging. The sentiment expressed by Brathwaite in 1989—"I found myself rootless upon arriving in Britain" (Brathwaite 1989:)—reflects a shared experience among this group of diasporic writers. In their quest for a sense of home and their longing for their native land, nostalgia and imagination regarding their homeland became significant themes in their work. The evocation and recollection of African cultural traditions provided these writers, who faced dual cultural conflicts, with pathways to identity affirmation. Elements such as African artistic heritage, fantastical imagery, ancient stories, and primordial myths became vital nourishment for their literature, serving as important motifs in their creative expressions. As Okrent posits, "Africa itself is our dreamscape, our spiritual homeland; if we are to be whole again, we must heal our inner Africa" (quoted in British Council 2024). Okrent's works are replete with images of African tribes and representations of traditional African culture, intertwining them with European literary traditions to form a unique literary landscape. His novel The Road of Hunger adeptly combines Yoruba mythology with modern artistic techniques of magical realism, recounting the cyclical struggles of Africa through the perspective of the ghost child Azaro. This writing style and the associated thematic imagery are continued in his subsequent novels Songs of Enchantment (1993) and Infinite Riches (1998), as well as his poetry collection An African Elegy (1992).The poet and playwright Gabriel Gbadamosi (1961–) attempts to integrate Yoruba mythology, music, and dance into his drama, actively experimenting with the fusion of African and Western theatrical traditions in his play Eshu's Faust (1992). Furthermore, the rise of rap and performance poetry during this period, exemplified by artists like Rauf Adu, emerged in urban settings, utilizing distinctive African rhetorical styles, oral forms, and live performances as a unique means for African Britons to express their identities.

The potential discourse of resistance within "African identity" brings forth an "English identity" crisis for Afro-British writers who have experienced diaspora or spent a significant portion of their lives in the former colonial power. The concept of "English identity" originated in the early 19th century and can be understood as the cultural and national identity of the English people, based on the geographical and historical traditions of England (Zhang Feng, Zhao Jing 2018). "English identity" is always in a state of flux, closely mirroring the large-scale immigration to England after World War II, as well as the subsequent decades of racial demographic shifts and changes in social and cultural thought. As a post-imperial nation that has undergone the collapse of its empire, mass immigration from former colonies, the women's movement, the Black Power and nationalist movements, the institutionalization of racism, Thatcherism, and multiculturalism, the issue of "English identity" has remained a subject of intense debate. Simultaneously, Afro-British literature has experienced a process of questioning and challenging "English identity," leading to its reconstruction and redefinition. This evolution is manifested in Afro-British literary works, which reflect a historical representation transitioning from anti-racism and identity issues to racial integration and multiculturalism.

Firstly, the negotiation and construction of anti-racism and identity is a significant theme in post-war African British literature, which challenges and deconstructs the conservative and exclusionary myth of a singular "British identity." After World War II, the surge in immigration and

the ensuing social issues and incidents of racial terror sparked widespread panic. This led to a resurgence of "patriotism and racial authoritarianism" (Gilroy 2005). Right-wing parties emphasized the national consciousness and essentialist characteristics embedded in the discourse of "Britishness," which harkened back to a colonial era centered on whiteness and celebrated a singular culture and homogeneous "British identity." Institutionalized racism exacerbated racial discrimination and hostility within British society, with issues of racial and social inequality, ethnic and cultural identity, Black empowerment, gender, and human rights troubling minority immigrant communities.

The novels by Buchi Emecheta, In the Ditch and Second-Class Citizen, epitomize the struggles of African diasporic women who navigate the dual marginalization of race and gender. The term "Black" emerged in the 1970s as a strategic political symbol and collective identity encompassing a broad racial category. Discourses of "Pan-Africanism" and "Afrocentricism" became ideological strongholds for the UK's minority diasporic communities, allowing them to question "Britishness" and challenge it within the cultural sphere. By portraying phenomena of racism and the identity confusion and construction processes of minority groups, African British literature unveils the fictitious nature of the "British" myth and elucidates its essentialist logic that divides "metropolis and colony, white and non-white" (Schwarz 2015). For instance, Gurnah's Pilgrims Way (1988) depicts the struggles of Tanzanian immigrant Daud as he faces difficulties integrating, experiences rootlessness, lacks a sense of belonging, and grapples with identity confusion. Through ideological interactions with various racial groups, he ultimately finds a sense of community among the pilgrims of the former colonial power, achieving identity negotiation and construction in affirming his confidence in African indigenous culture. This narrative presents a clear consciousness of political resistance and negotiation. Thus, in the context of questioning and resisting "Britishness," the function and role of "Africanness" should not be overlooked. It provides a space for the African diasporic community in Britain to retreat to a sense of belonging rooted in their origins through cultural characteristics. Furthermore, it celebrates the heterogeneity of "Britishness," drawing marginalized diasporic groups into a collective community, thereby contributing a prototype for the trend of cultural diversity.

Since the late 20th century, racial integration and cultural pluralism have become dominant themes in the literary production of Afro-British authors. Immigrant communities, traversing multiple social and cultural identities, have gradually recognized the fluidity of identity, community, and even the nature of the nation. They aspire to employ various strategies and voices to compel the entrenched British society to maintain an open and accepting stance, while simultaneously attempting to transform the cultural landscape of British identity (Leusmann 2010). The internal racial diversity and integration among minority groups in late 20th century Britain served as a focal point for altering the image of Britain. In Adébáyọ̀'s Some Kind of Black, the Black student Dele combines his Nigerian heritage with West Indian diasporic culture, using his mixed-space residence to challenge the absolutism and singular identity politics reflected in the north-south divide of London. It is evident that Afro-British writers begin their reflections and reconstructions from the diversity within their own communities, negotiating and navigating symbolic boundaries across different races and cultures. The resulting plural space draws its energy from its own diversity rather than homogeneity, representing a proactive attempt by marginalized races to resist the cultural hegemony of Britain. This form of "racial politics based on ethnic difference and diversity" (Hall 1988) significantly undermines the concept of "Britishness," with the "re-invention of Britain" becoming a shared creative mission among contemporary avant-garde writers. Simultaneously, the increasing transnational connections within the context of globalization inject new perspectives

into cultural production, pointing towards the notion of multiculturalism that transcends boundaries of ethnicity, race, class, generation, gender, language, and cultural identity. This notion has also become a means of reconstructing "Britishness." In Evaristo's poetic novel Lara, historical threads interweave between London, Lagos, and Rio, revealing the transnationality centered on London and challenging political and psychological boundaries, as well as nationalism. Her novels, such as Mr. Loveman (2013) and Girl, Woman, Other, along with Kaye's The Dissenting Voice, address issues concerning marginalized groups, including narratives of homosexuality, gender fluidity, and transgender experiences. By emphasizing the complexity of subjectivity, Afro-British writers subvert essentialist categories of race and politics, imbuing "Britishness" with post-racial and multicultural significance. Furthermore, these avant-garde writers, often born as descendants of immigrants in Britain, possess life experiences distinct from post-war immigrants, leading to a home identity that leans more towards being British. Consequently, they actively engage in debates concerning the geopolitical ethics of Britain, social critique, and visions for Britain's future. Such creative works have also become an integral part of the redefinition of "Britishness." For instance, Adébáyọ̀'s novel My Once Upon a Time (2000) serves as a modern parable set against the backdrop of a future London, presenting perceptions and critiques of an imagined London complex through a dreamlike sequence of fairy tales and detective narratives.

4. African British Literature Studies

Although the origins and evolution of Black British literature have a relatively long history, the field of research and academic work in this area is just beginning to emerge, akin to the rising sun. Academic studies focusing on Black British literature began to appear in various journals and anthologies in the 1980s. At that time, the research was primarily descriptive or promotional, emphasizing impressionistic interpretations with limited results. Collections and anthologies of authors' works were significant subjects of study during this period. With the emergence of a number of outstanding writers in the 1990s and the exponential increase in high-quality works, scholarly monographs related to this literature began to proliferate, such as David Dabydeen's Reader’s Guide to West Indian and Black British Literature (1997). However, during this period, research on Black British literature did not develop into an independent field with its own paradigms and methodologies.

Since the 21st century, "African-British Literature" has been proposed and utilized as an independent literary category in academic literature. In Douglas Killam and others' The Companion to African Literatures (2000) and Student Encyclopedia of African Literature (2008), the term "African-British Literature" is listed and explained independently, alongside "African-American Literature," "African-Canadian Literature," and "African-Caribbean Literature," presenting a parallel relationship among these categories. The research in these two works indicates that "apart from rap and performance poetry that exhibit connections to the oral traditions of Africa, the literature of Afro-Caribbean Britons is more appropriately categorized under West Indian-British Literature" (Killam & Rowe 2000). This clarification highlights the differences between the literary traditions of Africa and the Caribbean/West Indian regions and distinguishes African-British Literature from African-Caribbean British Literature. However, while African literature research can differentiate the diverse traditions within its field, the study of British literature has not achieved similar distinctions. Since the new century, African-British literature research has continued to be subsumed under the discourse framework of British Black Literature. For instance, Mark Stein's Black British Literature: Novels of Transformation (2004) exemplifies this trend. As R. Victoria Arana

points out, in the 21st century, "literary works and their creators are increasingly characterized by hybridity. Britons are shifting from the label 'Black' to more specific markers of cultural or ethnic heritage" (Arana 2009: xvii). At this time, there is a tendency for internal categorization within British Black Literature, primarily juxtaposing Asian-British Literature with Black British Literature, as seen in Deirdre Osborne's The Cambridge Companion to British Black and Asian Literature (1945-2010) (2016) and other similar works. Despite the lack of independent emphasis and exploration of African-British Literature within the scope of British literary studies, most academic works have not conducted a historical and comprehensive comparative analysis of its complex genealogy. Consequently, structural factors such as the development motivations, literary characteristics, and significant contributions of African-British Literature to postcolonial, post-racial, and globalized African and British literature remain underappreciated. Nevertheless, with the substantial emergence of African-British writers and notable works since the new century, scholars' attention to African-British literature has markedly increased. There is now a considerable number of analyses and studies focusing on individual authors, specific texts, and particular genres. A comprehensive review of various literature reveals the following characteristics in current African-British literature research:

Firstly, there is a strong awareness of cultural studies and political consciousness. Since the mid-20th century, a series of cultural movements and political connections among minority ethnic groups in the UK have promoted the creative work of Black British writers. The transnational and transcultural characteristics of Black British literature have become a powerful political strategy for anti-racism and the expression of multicultural demands. Cultural theorist Stuart Hall's works, such as "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" (1990) and "New Ethnicities" (1996), along with Paul Gilroy's "The Black Atlantic" (1993), highlight various cultural issues including race, ethnicity, nationhood, identity, history, memory, diaspora, colonialism, transnationalism, globalization, and hybridity. These works provide cultural theoretical support and entry points for scholars studying Black British literature both domestically and internationally. For example, Hall argues that the cultural and artistic practices of minority communities with a shared identity are a signifier of the oppressed "margins" and serve as a "cultural politics that aims to challenge, resist, and, where possible, change dominant institutions" (Hall 1988: 28), emphasizing the political characteristics of text practice that decentralizes the margins. Based on this foundation, domestic studies related to Black British literature, such as "Research on Contemporary British Diaspora Novels" (Zhang Feng, Zhao Jing, 2018) and "Research on Identity Issues in Contemporary British Black Novels," elaborate on the subversion and reconstruction of "Britishness" from two different cultural perspectives: diaspora and identity, as well as the role of these texts in transforming the concept of "Britishness". Similarly, Gilroy's concept of the "Black Atlantic" argues for the European structures of minority British literature while also highlighting its close connections with other cultural domains across the Atlantic, including Africa and the Americas, through a "trans cultural perspective" (Gilroy 1993). Adina Campu (2016) explores the cultural position that, under globalization, ethnic cultural differences and post-racial pluralism are not contradictory but should coexist, discussing the inevitable trend of multiculturalism in British culture.

Furthermore, the research is characterized by a strong theoretical foundation. Feminist criticism and postcolonial criticism occupy significant positions in the study of Afro-British literature. Since the 1970s, there has been a substantial emergence of Afro-British women writers such as Buchi Emecheta, Oyeniyi Adebayo, and Bernardine Evaristo. These authors integrate their personal experiences and female perspectives into their works, attracting extensive attention from researchers. When examining texts from the pre-colonial to post-colonial periods within Afro-

British literature, scholars often adopt a dual critical framework that incorporates both postcolonial and feminist perspectives. O'Brien (2001) discusses the issue of the "African predicament," highlighting how the roots of feminism and Western political culture are inherently imbued with imperialistic undertones and colonial language. Consequently, African feminism must not only address issues of racial and gender oppression but also navigate cultural differences and discursive structures. In the context of globalization and cultural diversification, feminist critics of Afro-British literature emphasize the multifaceted attributes, political demands, and significant contributions of marginalized gender groups to the global discourse. Sánchez-Palencia (2022) elucidates the polyphonic nature of Evaristo's novel Girl, Woman, Other, focusing on the experiences of minority gender groups such as lesbians and transgender women within a non-linear temporal framework. This work reveals the diasporic experiences and bodily politics of queer identity groups and underscores their critical role in constructing minority ethnic identities in the UK, as well as their cross-boundary (transgender, trans-temporal, etc.) modes of existence. In addition to these perspectives, social historical criticism, magical realism, eco-criticism, modernity, and object-oriented narrative theories also serve as focal points for both domestic and international scholars engaged in Afro-British literature research. The field is characterized by a cacophony of diverse research perspectives, with an increasing prevalence of interdisciplinary studies and a growing research community that is progressively delving deeper into these subjects.

The concept of "Black British" has not been eliminated or disregarded from public discourse; rather, it points to the political and ideological connections and identity categories formed by the minority ethnic groups in Britain in the mid-20th century as a means to deconstruct and resist the remnants of colonial influence and racist discourse. This concept possesses historical dependency and contextual relevance. Research must recognize this concept to avoid confusion regarding the history of specific periods in Britain. However, in the current context of globalization and multiculturalism, the differences in cultural heritage should be acknowledged and protected. At the same time, cross-regional, cross-racial, and cross-cultural attempts at integration and diversity should also be emphasized. The adherence to "Africanness" and the reconstruction of "Britishness" in Black British literature provide an excellent practical model for cultural development in the post-racial and post-imperial era. This literature has significantly contributed to the connection between African literature and British literature, as well as to the cultural, racial, and social connotations of the two regions across the ocean. The diversity and integrity of the African continent itself have also shaped the trends toward diversification in Britain. It can be said that Black British literature offers an effective literary solution for constructing a literary community, a cultural community, and even a community of shared human destiny characterized by "unity in diversity."

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I have traveled a long journey, endured numerous hardships, and encountered many setbacks before finally presenting this academic paper to you. Reflecting on my sixteen years of study, I have experienced the twists and turns, witnessed the sunrise at five in the morning, and seen the moonlight at midnight. Along the way, there have been both rain and shine, but what has sustained me is my faith in academia.

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