

Original Paper

Dissemination and Reception of French New Allegory: A Case Study of the Chinese Translation and Introduction of Tournier's Works

Jiashu Du^{1*} & Jiawei Zeng¹

¹ School of Foreign Languages, Central South University, Changsha, China

* Jiashu Du, School of Foreign Languages, Central South University, Changsha, China

Received: June 5, 2024

Accepted: June 18, 2024

Online Published: July 6, 2024

doi:10.22158/sll.v8n3p8

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/sll.v8n3p8>

Abstract

The New Allegory School originated in France during the 1950s and gained recognition in the literary world due to its distinctive writing style and ideas. Michel Tournier, as the most prominent representative of this school, is also considered one of the most important French writers of the latter half of the 20th century. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, his works were introduced to China, where they have been repeatedly printed and published as classic French literature in Chinese translation. The translations and studies of Tournier's works in China have been locally featured, reflecting the influence of local scholarship, social culture, and contemporary characteristics. Over the past 50 years, there has been a continuous process of recognition and deepening understanding of Tournier within Chinese academic circles. The appreciation of Tournier by Chinese scholars represents a diverse interpretation influenced by national conditions and local academic background. These scholars have demonstrated their unique vision and multiple choices regarding the translation of Tournier's works as well as their evaluation of his writing thoughts and characteristics.

Keywords

Tournier, New Allegory School, dissemination, Chinese translation and introduction, reception

1. Introduction

Michel Tournier is a prominent figure in French and Western literature of the 20th century. In his book "French Literature: Dynamics and History", Antoine Compagnon, an expert in the history of French literature, has compared Tournier to Le Clézio and Patrick Modiano, referring to them as the "great predecessors" of French literature at the end of the 20th century (p. 790). This comparison with two

Nobel Prize winners demonstrates Tournier's significant impact on the French literary world. Tournier gained recognition with the publication of his first novel "Vendredi ou les Limbes du Pacifique" (Friday) in 1967, which received widespread acclaim from readers and won the French College Literature Prize that same year. His novel "Les Roi des Aulnes" (The Alder King), published in 1970, also garnered unprecedented praise and went on to win the prestigious French Goncourt Literature Prize, earning unanimous approval from the jury. Tournier's rare achievement made him one of a select few writers in French literary history to receive both the French Literature Prize and Goncourt Literature Prize. In 1972, Tournier was elected as an academician of Goncourt College and became a judge for the Goncourt Literature Prize, solidifying his position within contemporary French literary circles.

Tournier excels in reinterpreting western myths, infusing them with contemporary significance through the use of ancient texts (Touret et al., p. 324). This distinctive creative approach, often described as "new wine in old bottles" (Liu, p. 323), permeates his entire body of work. With a profound background in philosophy and years of study in the field, Tournier later ventured into literary creation, dubbing himself a "philosophical merchant in the world of literature" (Tournier, p. 174). The seamless integration of philosophy and literature is a defining characteristic of his writing. Spanning over fifty years from the publication of his first novel in 1967 until his passing in 2016, Tournier's extensive repertoire includes novels, literary criticism, children's literature, essays, interviews, photographs and more. His longer works delve into themes such as myth reinterpretation and philosophical contemplation while addressing social issues. In contrast to this complexity, his shorter works are characterized by their straightforward language and vibrant life-like atmosphere. Their plots exude childlike curiosity while conveying profound philosophical insights and reflections on society and life—qualities that Liu Mingjiu aptly describes as "Colorful Wisdom" (pp. 148-153).

Tournier's works have transitioned from academic to popular, gaining widespread acceptance and attracting a diverse readership. To date, his writings have been translated into over 30 languages, including English, German, Russian, Italian, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean. They are well-known among literature enthusiasts worldwide. The introduction and translation of Tournier's works in China began in the late 1970s and has since progressed through three distinct stages: an enlightenment period (1970s-1980s), a systematic comprehensive boom (1990s), and a multidimensional deepening exploration period (the first two decades of the 21st century). Each stage has yielded fruitful outcomes with unique characteristics reflecting the particularities of translation practices, literary studies, and social culture during different periods.

2. Course of Translation of Tournier's Work in China

Different from Western translators who begin with translating novels such as "Friday" and "The Alder King", Chinese translators introduce Tournier's works through short pieces. It is worth exploring the

difference between Eastern and Western readers. Tournier's works are rich in philosophical meanings that resonate with western philosophy, reflecting their unique characteristics. The themes of his works are realistic, profound, and speculative, delving into western religion, World War II, homosexuality, and other pressing social issues. They are regarded as a mirror reflecting the peculiar nature of modern Western society. While the work originates from literature, it is not confined to literary fiction; it encompasses the thoughts of various aspects of modern western society: abandoning traditional novels' intricate plots in favor of pursuing a speculative spirit; forsaking perceptual descriptions for rational discrimination. For Western readers, the philosophical meanings in Tournier's novels evoke memories of existential doctrine, ontology, and phenomenology. The mythical themes involved are more religious and historical legends familiar to Westerners.

For Chinese readers living in different cultural systems, the western philosophical thoughts and mythological plots involved in Tournier's works have become the biggest obstacle to reading comprehension. Theo Hermans once studied the relationship between cultural context and translation from a theoretical perspective. He believed that any culture would feel the need or see the opportunity to introduce text from other languages and use translation to achieve its purpose. In this case, we only need to carefully observe the following points: choose which text to translate from the possible text, and what form the translation takes; such as what choices we have made about the current expectation and practice, and we can learn a lot about this culture. In the late 1970s and 1980s, the introduction of Tournier in China reflected this theory. In the early days of reform and open policy in late 1970s, a specific cultural context was formed. At that time, people were eager for new knowledge and eager to understand the Western world outside their country. However, due to lack of systematic and comprehensive understanding of western culture at that time, Chinese readers were still unable to grasp profound literary thoughts in Tournier's representative works "Friday" and "The Alder King". In such a specific cultural context, Chinese translators found new ways to meet domestic cultural and social needs at that time through finding suitable translation methods.

Tournier's short stories depict everyday life scenes and portray modern social life with vivid language, a childlike quality, and a sense of substitution. Most importantly, these stories are rich in symbolic information. These works, which closely reflect social life and embody a universal humanistic spirit, are more likely to bridge the gap between Chinese and Western cultural understanding and resonate with Chinese readers. The choice of older generation translators for Tournier's works was influenced by the cultural context at that time, aligning with the characteristics of ideological liberation among domestic readers. When a writer creates a work and a translator produces a translation, the translator's choices reflect the social situation and cultural needs of that time period while also setting the tone for how the author's works are disseminated in China. This approach to translation should be commended as it not only considers the actual needs of readers but also helps establish an interpretive image of the writer.

In 1979, the Magazine *Foreign Literature and Art* published several short translations of Tournier's works. These included "The Ending of Robinson Crusoe" and "May Joy Always Be There" (translated by Wang Daoqian), "Old Lady of Christmas" (translated by Xiao Zhang), "The vacant land of lilies of the valley" (translated by Hao Yun), and "Girl and Death" (translated by Chen Le). In 1982, the third issue of *World Literature* published "Veronick's Shroud" (translated by Guo Hong'an), and the first issue of *Contemporary Foreign Literature* featured "The Secret of the Night" (translated by Wang Zhonghua). These translations marked the first appearance of Tournier's works in China, showcasing the contributions made by many famous French literary translators in our country. The French literary translation predecessors, represented by Wang Daoqian, Guo Hong'an and Hao Yun, opened the prelude to Chinese translations of Tournier's works.

In the 1990s, there was a prosperous period for the translation of Tournier's works. His short pieces continued to receive attention and were published together. In 1990, *World Literature* published the writer's masterpieces, "Pierre or The Secret of the Night", and "Amandina or Two Gardens" (translated by Liu Mingjiu), as well as "Tristan Vox" (translated by Tang Zhen). Additionally, in 1990, *Foreign Literature and Art* published three other short translations: "The Legend of Painting", "Rabbit and Fox Skin", "Ghost Car" (translated by Tang Zhen). Furthermore, in 1996, *World Literature* published "The Golden Beard" (translated by Wang Zhonghua) and "The Story of the Donkey" (translated by Jin Longge). In 1998, *Contemporary Foreign Literature* published "The Golden Beard" (translated by Liu Mingjiu) and "Little Buser At Large" (translated by Liu Hua) respectively. Finally, in 1999 a collection of short stories titled "Pierre or The Secret of the Night" edited by Liu Mingjiu was officially released. This collection contains thirteen short translations of Tournier's work which had mostly been previously published in domestic literary magazines since 1979. Many reprints have been enduringly popular thus far.

Another noteworthy aspect of the Chinese translation of Tournier's works that deserves our research attention is the repeated revisions of the same version. Over the 50 years since Tournier was introduced to China, his works have undergone several translations. For example, there are three versions of the short story "Pierre or the Secret of the Night": "The Secret of the Night" was published in *World Literature* by Wang Zhonghua in 1983, and then translated again by Liu Mingjiu in 1990. Similarly, there are two different versions of "May Joy Always Be There" and "Veronick's Shroud". In 1979, Wang Jiarong translated the former as "May My Joy Last Forever", and also translated a collection of novels titled "Pierre or The Secret of the Night" using Wang Daoqian's version. As for "Veronick's Shroud", it has been translated by both Guo Hong'an and Liu Hui. Additionally, "Golden Beard" has two versions respectively translated by Wang Zhonghua and Liu Mingjiu. Overall, these multiple translations highlight an interesting area for further study within Tournier's reception in China.

The writer's renowned work "Friday" has been the subject of extensive deliberation by translators, leading to the phenomenon of multiple translations of a single work, which has caused a stir in the

industry. In 1994, Wang Daoqian's translation of "Friday": "Limbos on the Pacific" was published. Unfortunately, he passed away before completing the entire translation, and Zhou Kexi took over and translated the remaining 278 pages. The original French word "Limbes" in the title carries religious connotations, referring to the space between heaven and hell where unbaptized souls and good people reside—a new definition of human existence. In Wang Daoqian's carefully proposed Chinese translation name "Ling Bo Yu" (The Prison of Limbos), we see his unique interpretation reflecting his originality as a translator. Five years later, Yu Zhongxian retranslated the work as "Friday or Space of Vacuity on the Pacific Ocean". Notably, in 2022, Yu Zhongxian revisited his translation for reprinting in the *Reader of Foreign Novel Library* series with a revised title: "Friday: Limbos on the Pacific", explaining in a postscript that while their earlier translation rendered "Limbes" as "Prison of Limbos", after discussions with editors and publishers they decided to revert back to using "Space of Vacuity" for this reprint edition after careful consideration.

Tournier's works are filled with speculative brilliance, providing the translator with a multi-dimensional expression space. As mentioned earlier, the translation of the French word "Limbes" has undergone a process from "Prison of Limbos" to "Space of Vacuity" and then back to the original version. The translation of such vocabulary is influenced by the times, society, culture, and the translator themselves. The multi-dimensional nature of the writer's work has led generations of Chinese translators to carefully deliberate, refine, and diligently work on their translated works.

3. History and Feedback of the Study of Tournier's Works

"Whether a writer can truly make an impact in a foreign region, especially to have a lasting influence, the most crucial factor is to establish his presence within it" (Xu, pp. 117-127). Translators have played a significant role in shaping Tournier's image in China, thereby establishing him as a speculative literary writer. In 1988, the seventh issue of the magazine *Reading* published an article titled "Tournier: Philosophy and Literature", which marked the earliest introduction of Tournier in China. The article delves into the writer's background and philosophy, and introduces his philosophical literary style. Although brief, the article's conclusion is very precise:

"While many esteemed writers are preoccupied with the opinions of critics and hesitate to challenge their own narrow perspectives, Tournier boldly presents his philosophical outlook on literature, arguably offering one of the most candid displays of wisdom in literary history. Tournier stands apart by consistently emphasizing the role and artistic conception of the novel as a vehicle for interpreting and concealing philosophy. His philosophical approach to fiction is both vivid and concise, allowing readers to directly grasp the true essence of philosophy through his novels" (Chen, pp. 77-78).

With the efforts of early translators and critics, a speculative image of Tournier has been established in China. His witty short stories infuse philosophical thoughts into his novels, vividly portraying the writer himself as an "ideal life leader" and an "analyst of Western civilization".

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, following the publication of Tournier's works, they quickly garnered significant attention from Western critics, sparking a surge of Tournier research worldwide. This wave of research included scholars from France, Europe, North America, and Canada. Each country's unique social and cultural background led to different emphases in Tournier scholarship. European scholars focused on the fusion of tradition and innovation, delving into the writers' distinctiveness and adeptly exploring the origins of myth and philosophical themes in their works. Meanwhile, North American scholars took a bold and radical approach, emphasizing the writers' subversive tendencies while seeking to uncover the zeitgeist within their works. The distinctive speculative nature of Tournier's writing style, his characteristic reimagining of myths, as well as his embodiment of postmodern ideas all contribute to the widespread popularity of Tournier's research in Western academia.

Compared with the prompt response of the Western research community, China's study on Tournier has experienced a relatively prolonged lag period, influenced by historical factors. In the 1990s, with the publication of numerous Chinese versions of his novels, domestic research on Tournier's works emerged. Translators such as Liu Mingjiu, Yu Zhongxian and Tang Zhen actively participated in the study of the writer and analyzed the philosophical literary style, modernist elements and related characteristics of new allegorical literature. These studies originate from the perspective of translators, with accurate and clear directions and deeply explored methods that delve into the foundation of his works' characteristics. This sets a tone for high starting point and strong academic research on Tournier in China.

In the mid to late 1990s, following the release of the Chinese versions of "Friday" and "The Alder King", there was a significant upsurge in the study of Tournier's works. Domestic research on Tournier has been guided by the active involvement of authoritative translators, many of whom have also undertaken research on his works. Their findings have had a considerable impact within the field. Notable figures include Liu Mingjiu, who edited a collection of short stories titled "Pierre or Secret of the Night"; Xu Jun, who translated "The Alder King"; and Yu Zhongxian, who translated "Friday or Space of Vacuity on the Pacific Ocean". These three translators are not only renowned experts in translation but also authoritative scholars in Tournier studies, thus exemplifying a high degree of alignment between translators and academic researchers in this area.

"Between Good and Evil: The Interweaving and Error of Human Nature and Evil Nature—Commentary on 'The Alder King'", written by Professor Xu Jun, was published in the third issue of *Foreign Literature Review* in 2005. The protagonist, Tiffauges, in "The Alder King" is a controversial character. In the eyes of the secular world, he is perceived as an ugly, vulgar figure devoid of moral sense. However, the writer transcends mere moral judgment and delves deep into exploring human potentialities. The concept of good and evil in human society is reinterpreted from this perspective, reflecting a strange brilliance that constitutes the charm of the work but also renders it its most obscure and challenging aspect. The dialectical understanding and analysis of good and evil,

human nature, and demon in “The Alder King” will aid readers in better comprehending the essence and connotation of the novel’s core theme. This commentary was later compiled as an appendix to the Chinese version of “The Alder King” and has been republished numerous times alongside with great academic significance.

With the deepening of domestic understanding of Tournier, many young scholars have also invested in relevant research, gradually forming a situation that echoes the development of various themes of international Tournier research. For example, Xiao Hong’s exploration of the meaning and philosophy of “The Alder King”; Ren Haiyan’s dialectical analysis on the rewriting of the myth of Robinson; Yang Yang’s interpretation of the philosophy present in the writer’s works; Kong Jianping’s understanding and analysis of the religious themes within his works; Yao Dan’s examination on intertextuality in “Friday: Limbos on the Pacific”; Chen Qin’s perspective on narrative understanding; Liao Min’s research on female themes within Tournier’s works; and the author’s discussion focusing on character alienation, androgyny, and new allegory literature. Additionally, “La tentation dans les ouvrages de Michel Tournier” (Exploring the Sacred Road in Michel Tournier’s Works) written by the author was published by L’Harmattan Press in Paris in 2018. It is noted as being the first French monograph to study about Tournier in China.

With the advancement of Tournier’s research, both domestic and foreign literary history experts have gradually come to realize the significant position that Tournier holds in French contemporary literature. Zheng Kelu has systematically introduced Tournier’s works in *The History of Modern French Fiction*, *The History of French Literature*, and *The Course on the History of French Literature*. In Liu Mingjiu’s work *From choose to resist—French literature history in twentieth century*, Le Clézio, Modiano and Tournier are discussed in an independent chapter entitled “Colorful Language Philosophy”. Taking a macro perspective, this work integrates the writings of authors with similar styles from the same period. Regarding domestic textbooks on the history of French literature, mainstream textbooks such as *Introduction to French Literature* compiled by Xu Zhenhua and *Concise Textbook of French Literature* compiled by Che Lin all dedicate a chapter to studying Tournier’s works.

4. Controversy over the New Allegory School

In the 1960s and 1970s, a number of works with similar creative tendencies and writing styles emerged in the French literary world. These works focused on the survival situations of people, delved into the profound philosophy of human diversity, and involved the rewriting of traditional myths, folk stories, and historical allusions to create a series of modern western myths. The various commonalities in writing style attracted significant attention from French literary critics, who took the lead in studying this type of writing as a literary phenomenon. Notable French literary masters such as Marguerite Yourcenar, Julien Gracq, Michel Tournier, Le Clézio, Patrick Modiano have also become associated with the New Allegory school due to their shared writing characteristics.

When it comes to new allegorical literature in Chinese academic circles, Tournier must be mentioned. This research phenomenon exhibits distinct Chinese characteristics. The understanding of new allegorical literature in China has gradually formed with the emergence of Tournier research. In 1988, Liu Mingjiu had a meeting with the writer himself at his residence in the outer suburbs of Paris. Domestic scholars had their first face-to-face interview with Tournier, which held profound significance. Two years later, Liu Mingjiu published an article titled “The Philosopher in the Vacant Land of Lilies of the Valley” in *World Literature*, detailing this experience and describing Tournier’s views on the New Allegory School:

I concur and propose that we be categorized as “New Allegory” writers. Our literary lineage is led by the likes of Yourcenar, Dominique Fernandez, and Julien Gracq, with the inclusion of Modiano and Le Clézio, naturally (pp. 208-223).

“The Philosopher in the Vacant Land of Lilies of the Valley” marks a significant shift in Tournier’s academic research in China, signaling a move away from universal book reviews towards more rigorous academic discussions. Tournier’s pioneering expression of the New Allegory School has opened up new avenues for domestic research into allegorical literature and provided crucial supporting materials for future studies. Liu Mingjiu also adopted the term “New Allegory School” in his subsequent research, further solidifying its importance in scholarly discourse.

Later, Liu Mingjiu published “Colorful Wisdom - New Allegory School’s writer Tournier and his short stories” in *Contemporary Foreign Literature*. The article delves into the allegorical and philosophical nature of the writer’s short works, based on interview results. The reason for labeling it as “New Allegory School” is its resemblance to allegorical literature such as Aesop’s fables and La Fontaine’s works. These short stories do not aim to construct a comprehensive philosophical system or spiritual edifice; rather, they simply reveal nuggets of wisdom within concise and flexible narratives. The title “New Allegory” reflects this similarity to ancient fables. However, there is a distinction between the two: the author uses the comparison between Tournier and Voltaire’s works to analyze the difference in philosophical expression between new allegorical literature and traditional literary philosophy. Enlightenment literature presents clear, predetermined moral philosophies, while new allegorical literature conveys philosophical meanings through storytelling that often requires deliberate arrangement and artificial construction from an external perspective. The commonality among new allegorical writers lies in their conscious incorporation of certain philosophies and fables into their works, sometimes even constructing their narratives around specific philosophical implications intentionally. Overall, these writers may not be closely related to each other but share similar creative tendencies and characteristics in their approach to incorporating philosophy into their work (pp. 150-156).

In 1994, Liu Mingjiu edited the *Classic Library of the World Genre of Fiction*, a collection of translations of several works by four representative writers of the New Allegory School: Marguerite

Yourcenar, Michel Tournier, Le Clézio and Patrick Modiano. This collection was published as *Selected Classic Novels of the New Allegorical Novel*. Yu Zhongxian wrote an introduction to the book titled An Introduction to the Novel of the “New Allegory”, which systematically elaborated on the characteristics of the New Allegory School. The introduction first proposed that writers of this school do not have a common literary declaration or common literary creation activities like surrealist school writers. They also do not form a small literary circle like new fiction writers (pp. 1-2). In fact, their literary creation seems to be independent and each writer goes their own way. However, their works all coincidentally reflect a philosophical implication or tendency. Based on introducing the works of several new allegorical writers, Yu Zhongxian summarizes five characteristics: The “unsystematic philosophy”, “independent particularity” in implied meaning, “profound and rich” implied meaning, “easy to understand” literal expression, and “re-processing and re-creation” themes from ancient myths, legends, and literary classics to give new meanings (p. 4). This is significant as it marks the first time that Chinese scholars have systematically sorted out and summarized relevant literary characteristics of the New Allegory School.

Based on Tournier’s study, the discussion of new allegories remains a prominent topic in the French academic circle in China, with ongoing controversy overshadowing any definitive conclusions. Upon the introduction of the “New Allegory” theory to China, there was an emphasis within the domestic academic community on labeling it as a “New Allegory school”. However, whether this label is appropriate sparked intense debate. It is evident that “New Allegory” literature does not align with traditional literary schools and instead reflects the trajectory of European literature in the 20th century, particularly post-World War II. Even writers from the same era, often referred to as part of the “New Novel”, were primarily engaged in their own writing activities rather than forming a cohesive school akin to those seen in 19th-century romantic salons or *Les Soirées de Médan* (*Nights at Médan*) among naturalist writers. The categorization of French literary schools in the latter half of the 20th century largely stems from shared similarities in writing styles. From this perspective, it can be concluded that factions within new allegorical literature are commonplace.

The second debate revolves around the question of whether philosophical speculation and myth rewriting constitute a tradition in Western literature, which can be studied as a unique literary phenomenon. Just as Liu Mingjiu commented on Tournier: “the expression of implication and the interpretation of the plot” is natural, requiring no external intervention from the writer or divine perspective. The essence of understanding new allegorical literature lies not in whether philosophical implications appear in the work, but rather in whether they are naturally revealed through the development of the plot. This characteristic sets apart the new allegorical novel from traditional speculative literary works because it lacks a clear philosophical intention; instead, interpretation is left to readers who perceive profound connotations behind the works. Similarly,

myths function in this way; as Tournier stated, “upon first reading there is a sense of *d’être vu*, as if one has read it before” (Tournier, p. 69). Ancient myths expressed through text have already formed an enduring archetype consciousness within Western readers’ hearts. For readers, this sense of archetype aids in better comprehending the novel’s plot and actively exploring its modern significance over time.

This conclusion highlights a major trend in the development of Western literature in the 20th century: while literature relies on words for expression, there is also an acknowledgment that language may not always suffice, necessitating a confrontation with our own mindset. In the latter half of the 20th century, Roland Barthes declared “l’Auteur est Mort” (the Death of the Author) to convey the concept of “le Degré Zéro de l’écriture” (Writing Degree Zero). Barthes posited that writers should relinquish subjective control over their work, allowing it to enter into an era of readership and commentary once completed. It is through reading consciousness itself that depth and diversity are created within literary expression. Thus, it can be observed that the distinctiveness of new allegorical literature is rooted in the historical backdrop of 20th-century Western society.

Finally, the controversy centers around whether the concept of “New Allegory” proposed by Liu Mingjiu has gained international consensus. The French academic community has put forth various academic definitions for “New Allegory” novels, and mainstream literary history holds its own merits. The term “New Fable” was first introduced by French literary critic Jacques Brenner in 1979 in his work “History of French Literature 1940 to present” (Brenner, p. 529). In the publication “French Literature since 1968” from 1982, Vercier Bruno categorizes such writers as neoclassical writers (Les nouveaux classiques) (pp. 211-219). Academician Xavier Darcos, who compiled *The History of French Literature*, refers to such literary works as mythological novels (Le roman mythologique) (pp. 375-376). In Michèle Touret’s *Series of The History of French Literature in the 20th Century* from 2008, Professor Bruno Blanckeman chose the term “La parabole” (pp. 172-180) to define the new allegorical novel. According to its etymology, “La parabole” refers to a short allegorical text in a religious context where philosophical meaning is naturally revealed along with the development of the story. Blanckeman’s theory clarifies that “New Allegory” possesses two characteristics: philosophical and mythological, which represents the current understanding of these novels within French academic circles.

French scholars have focused on the content of new allegories, resulting in various titles such as neoclassicism, new fables, and new allegorical literature. However, this diversity does not impact the fundamental essence of this literary phenomenon among Eastern and Western scholars. The French academic understanding of the “New Allegory” can be summarized as: “the rewriting of the *Bible*, ancient Greek mythology, folklore and other myths allows traditional mythological themes to adapt to the experiences, perceptions, and thoughts of modern society” (Touret et al., 431). In his book *From choose to resist—French literature history in twentieth century*, Liu Mingjiu

describes the characteristics of new allegorical literary writing represented by Tournier as “new wine in old bottles”. Here, “old bottles” refer to the classical mythological framework while “new wine” signifies a modern interpretation through myth rewriting. This concise analysis highlights how new allegorical literature rewrites myths to imbue them with contemporary moral significance. Liu Mingjiu comments on Tournier’s works regarding their mythological reinterpretation:

Frequently, artists draw upon the themes, content elements, and character symbols found in classical literature, infusing them with their own creative treatment. By imbuing these traditional motifs with their unique philosophical insights, they breathe new life into old themes, ingredients, and characters. It is not merely a matter of giving them a fresh appearance; rather, it can be said that they have been endowed with renewed vitality (p. 236).

The analysis of Tournier’s works provided here also serves as a summary of the characteristics of the New Allegory School, which focuses on rewriting myths. The process of rewriting traditional stories is seen as a form of secondary creation, breathing new life and meaning into old themes. Whether it is the Western approach to reinterpreting myth in light of contemporary issues or the Chinese concept of “new wine in old bottles”, both East and West have distinct methods of elaboration while maintaining a consistent and accurate understanding of the essence.

5. Conclusion

The translation and academic communities in China have fully recognized the uniqueness and significance of Tournier’s works, as well as the various literary discussions they provoke. These works serve as a window for us to understand and grasp the latest developments in French literature since the second half of the 20th century. However, it is undeniable that there is still great potential for further understanding of Tournier’s works, and many excellent pieces by the author await exploration by translators and scholars. For instance, his collection of essays *Le Vent Paraclet* (*The Wind Spirit*, 1977) contains a plethora of philosophical interpretations and thoughts, through which he also reveals his ideas on literary creation. Novels such as *Les Mââores* (*Gemini*, 1975), *La Goutte d’or* (*The Golden Droplet*, 1986), and *Gilles et Jeanne* (*Gilles and Jeanne*, 1983) are highly readable and rich in meaning; they are not inferior to award-winning works. The writer’s photo album also embodies his philosophical thoughts. Additionally, a large number of children’s literature works by Tournier have not received enough attention in China. The translation, reading, and study of these works are crucial for gaining a comprehensive understanding of Tournier’s creative path. Furthermore, they can help us explore some trends in twentieth-century French literature that have yet to be thoroughly examined by scholars.

References

- Barthes, R. (2002). *Le Neutre, Cours au collège de France (1977-1978)*. Paris: Seuil.
- Blanckeman, B. (2011). *Le roman depuis la Révolution française*. Paris: PUF.
- Brenner, J. (1978). *Histoire de la littérature française de 1940 à nos jours*. Paris: Fayard.
- Chen, D. (1988). Tournier: The philosophy and the literature. *Readings*, 7(1988), 77-78.
- Compagnon, A. (2007). "L'ère du soupçon". Tadie, Jean-Yves. *La Littérature française: dynamique & histoire, tome II*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Darcos, X. (2013). *Histoire de la littérature française*. Paris: Hachette.
- DU, J. S. (2018). *La tentation dans les ouvrages de Michel Tournier*. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Gao, F. (2019). *Studies of novels of Le Clézio*. Nanjing: Nanjing University Press.
- Liu, M. J. (1990). The Philosopher in the Vacant Land of Lilies of the Valley—Impressions of Michel Tournier. *World literature*, 1, 208-223.
- Liu, M. J. (1998). Colorful Wisdom—New Allegory School's writer Tournier and his short stories. *Contemporary Foreign Literature*, 1, 148-153.
- Liu, M. J. (2005). *Transcendence of Absurdity: The Historical View of French Literature in Twentieth Century*. Shanghai: Wenhui Publishing House.
- Smith, P. J. (2001). *Réécrire la Renaissance, de Marcel Proust à Michel Tournier*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Touret, M. et al. (2008). *Histoire de la littérature française du XXe siècle, Tome II, Après 1940*. Rennes: Rennes UP.
- Tournier, M. (1977). *Le Vent Paraclet*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Virat, D., & Bruno, V. (2005). *La littérature française au présent*. Paris: Bordas.
- Xu, J. (2007). The Translation and Reception of Anatole France in China and the Construction of His Image. *Foreign Literature Studies*, 2, 117-127.
- Yv, Z. X. (1995). Introduction to the 'New Allegory' novels. In Liu Mingjiu (Ed.), *Selected Classic Novels of New Allegory School* (pp. 1-9). Taiyuan: Beiyue Literature & Art Publishing House.