

## An Analysis of Textless Back Translation of *Fifth Chinese Daughter*

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### Abstract

Based on acculturation theory as well as both English and Chinese texts of *Fifth Chinese Daughter*, this paper aims to study the textless back translation in terms of the four most typical acculturation strategies—assimilation, integration, separation and marginalization. This paper holds that assimilation and integration strategies are the mainstream regarding the textless back translation of *Fifth Chinese Daughter*. In translating China-themed works, the employment of assimilation strategy—a significant indicator of works for textless back translation—prevails and can be further divided into “accurate assimilation” and “imprecise assimilation” according to the degree of restoration. With regard to the translation of English-specific expressions or expressions that are unique to the English culture, the integration strategy marked by annotations and the separation strategy marked by foreignization are respectively adopted to some extent. The employment of marginalization strategy may result from either the translator’s misunderstandings or the culture gap between two cultures and should be avoided as much as possible.

**Key words:** *Fifth Chinese Daughter*; Textless back translation; Acculturation; Chinese version; Imprecise assimilation

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### INTRODUCTION

Textless back translation here refers to the kind of back translation in which the translator retranslates China-themed works written in English language back into the Chinese language. Wang (2009, p.236) first proposes the concept of “rootless back translation” and later on rectifies it as “textless back translation” (2015, pp.1-9). In recent years, the phenomenon of textless back translation has begun to attract a closer attention among scholars and experts for its hybridity in terms of language and culture.

As “the mother of Chinese American literature” (according to Maxine Hong Kingston) and the first widely recognized Chinese-American writer in the white American society, Jade Snow Wong was known as the author of two biographical novels—*Fifth Chinese Daughter* (first published in 1950 by Harper & Brothers) and *No Chinese Stranger* (published in 1975). Her first autobiographical novel *Fifth Chinese Daughter* gained millions of readers and was selected in the junior and senior high school textbooks in America and also in *California Literature* together with the works of Mark Twain, Jack London, John Steinbeck as well as Fitzgerald, which is a huge recognition for American Chinese writers in the 1940s. Known as the precursor of Chinese American literature, *Fifth Chinese Daughter* has been researched by a number of scholars from the perspective of literature. These researches tend to center on the writer’s philosophy as well as identity construction in the novel. The most heated argument over Jade Snow Wong’s works is the so-called “whitened” tendency. A number

of critics, represented by Chinese American critics Chin (1985), Wong (1993) and Korean American critic Elaine Kim (1988) tend to believe that “whitened” writers are accepting values and philosophy of the white. On the other hand, Zhang (2006), in support of Jade Snow Wong, proposes that Jade Snow Wong and her works should be treated fairly and that it is also inappropriate for critics like Frank Chin to use their philosophy in the 1980s to blame Jade Snow Wong’s behavior and works in the 1940s. Xiao (2006) points out that the so-called “whitened” is a projection of the characteristics of the times in *Fifth Chinese Daughter*. Yin (2010) suggests that Jade Snow Wong’s attitude towards the Chinese and the western cultures cannot be simplified as “whitened” or “orientalized” as such elements as culture, power, hegemony and ideology are involved behind the text. However, compared with researches on Amy Tan’s *Joy Luck Club* and Maxine Hong Kingston’s *The Woman Warrior*, it is a pity that little attention was given to *Fifth Chinese Daughter* and no previous studies on the novel’s Chinese translation have been made. This paper, starting from the perspective of acculturation, aims to study the textless back translation of *Fifth Chinese Daughter* in terms of the four most typical acculturation translation strategies.

## 1. FIFTH CHINESE DAUGHTER AND ITS CHINESE VERSION

*Fifth Chinese Daughter* describes the autobiographical and personal growth story of Jade Snow Wong, who grows up in an American Chinese family in San Francisco with a fairly strict upbringing. Jade Snow’s father starts teaching her Chinese characters and ancient Chinese poetry since her early age and is very much concerned with her manners and behaviors. In the Chinese community where Jade Snow lives, traditional Chinese customs are well-preserved. Jade Snow gets to learn about sewing, laundering and cooking—chores normally done by traditional Chinese women like her mother and grandmother. She gets to celebrate the lunar Chinese New Year and worship ancestors on Tomb-sweeping Day. In the meantime, she gets to meet white friends and receive education from white teachers, bringing her different Western outlook on life. In the novel, Jade Snow experiences direct conflicts with her parents over the choice between individuality and obedience. She boasts that every man has the right to live for him- or herself and to seek for personal and independent development.

The State Department of the United States funded the project of translating *Fifth Chinese Daughter* into various languages, including Japanese, Chinese, Urdu, Bengali, Tamil, Thai, Burmese, etc in 1951 and sent Wong on a four-month speaking tour of Asia in 1953. Besides, the novel was serialized on *Sing Tao Evening News*,

creating much of a stir. In mainland China, *Fifth Chinese Daughter*, translated by Zhang Longhai into *Hua Nü A Wu* (华女阿五), was published by Yilin Press in 2004 and was collected in *Book Series on Chinese American Literature* (华裔美国文学译丛).

## 2. ANALYSIS OF TEXTLESS BACK TRANSLATION OF FIFTH CHINESE DAUGHTER

According to the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, “acculturation” refers to “cultural modification of an individual, group, or people by adapting to or borrowing traits from another culture” or “a merging of cultures as a result of prolonged contact”. According to Yu and Zheng (2005), J. W. Powell was the first man who put forward the term to depict certain culture phenomenon. However, now when we talk about “acculturation”, the definition posted by Redfield, Linton and Herskovits (1936) are the one that seems to be better-received. According to their definition, acculturation refers to the constant and direct culture contact between two groups, which consists of individuals and boasts different cultures. Specifically speaking, the researches on acculturation nowadays mainly focus on acculturation’s influence on ethnocultural groups and individuals, rather than larger and mainstream society.

As the research on acculturation deepens, many psychologists such as Berry (2002), Ward (1999), Bourhis (1997) and Flannery (2001) have come up with their own theoretical frameworks. According to Berry, the ideas on “how they want to live following contact” in fact vary from individual to individual. In this logic, various strategies on acculturation are adopted. Berry draws distinctions among different strategies and comes up with four categories, i.e. the strategies of assimilation, integration, separation and marginalization. This paper, by referring to Berry’s framework, takes into consideration the four strategies mentioned above.

### 2.1 Assimilation in Textless Back Translation of *Fifth Chinese Daughter*

The strategy of assimilation is often adopted by those who feel reluctant to hold onto their original heritage, culture and identity and in the meantime are willing to partake in the larger society and prefer cultural interaction among different cultures. In terms of textless back translation, the assimilation strategy stresses that in translating certain cultural elements, translators are obliged to restore these elements as much as they can and reach out to the host cultural readers by catering to their needs better, thus making the translation better-received in the host culture. In translating China-themed topics and stories written in English, the assimilation strategy is most commonly applied, resulting from the frequent appearances of

Chinese cultural elements—the significant indicator of works for textless back translation.

With regard to the difficulty and necessity of text restoration, this paper classifies the assimilation strategy of translation into “accurate assimilation” and “imprecise assimilation”. To be specific, “imprecise assimilation” in *Hua Nü A Wu* can be further divided into three categories, namely, “visualization in translating vague expressions”, “abstraction in translating specific expressions” and “synonymous replacement”.

### 2.1.1 Precise Assimilation

Example (1) “Confucius said, ‘He who is filial toward elders and fraternal toward brothers and is fond of offending his superiors is rare indeed; he who is not fond of offending his superiors and is fond of making revolutions has never been known.’” (Wong: *Fifth Chinese Daughter*)

Chinese version: “孔子曰: ‘其为人也孝悌, 而好犯上者, 鲜矣. 不好犯上而作乱者, 未之有也.’” (张龙海: 《华女阿五》)

The most remarkable employment of assimilation strategy is embodied in translating quotations from Chinese classics and Chinese proverbs. In the source text, such expressions in quotation marks usually appear in dialogues between Father and Jade Snow. These expressions originate from the traditional Chinese culture and have long been familiar to the Chinese readers. In Example (1), Father educates Jade Snow by quoting a piece of Confucius’s saying, excerpted from *Xue Er of Confucian Analects*. The quotation stresses the importance of filial piety and fraternal duty, boasting that these two qualities are vital for maintaining national and social stability. In translating expressions of this kind, translators are obliged to look up the Chinese classic in the original where the quotation originates and use that exact quotation in their translation. By restoring the expression’s original appearance that is the most familiar to the host cultural readers in the host language, the translation may well convey the Chinese complex and spiritual world of the Chinese Americans, and arouse resonance among host cultural readers to the full.

Example (2) “The Heavens do not heed, and the Earth does not answer,” she remembered a Chinese proverb. (Wong: *Fifth Chinese Daughter*)

Chinese version: “叫天天不灵, 叫地地不应,” 她想起一句中国谚语. (张龙海: 《华女阿五》)

Example (3) LEARNING CAN NEVER BE POOR OR EXHAUSTED—CHINESE PROVERB (Wong: *Fifth Chinese Daughter*)

Chinese version: 学而不厌 (张龙海: 《华女阿五》)

In terms of proverb translation, since Wong has mentioned in her writing that the quoted sentence is supposed to be a Chinese proverb, it is the best for the translator to restore the expression’s original appearance

that is known to the host cultural readers. In Example (2), Wong is supposed to refer to the Chinese proverb “呼天天不应, 叫地地不灵”, which may well be considered a derivation of “呼天不闻, 叩心无益” excerpted from *Book of Later Han*. The proverb literally means that “You ask the Heaven for a favor but hears no reply; you ask the Earth God for a favor but he never arises”, which is used to express the helpless state of a man. In the novel, Jade Snow thinks of a Chinese proverb to express her despair, which is perfectly restored by the translator as “叫天天不灵, 叫地地不应”. In Example (3), Wong is supposed to refer to the Chinese expression “学而不厌”. In the Chinese context, this expression is considered to be part of the saying “默而识之, 学而不厌, 诲人不倦, 何有于我哉!” Excerpted from *Shu Er of Confucian Analects*, the expression literally means that “the silent treasuring up of knowledge; learning without satiety; and instructing others without being wearied: —which one of these things belongs to me?” (Legge, 1893). The expression “学而不厌”, in the Chinese context, is used to express the idea that one should always be eager and tireless towards learning. In the novel, Jade Snow gets to know various part-time activities and uses the expression to express the idea that learning is delightful, which is also thoroughly restored by the translator as “学而不厌”.

Example (4) “Yes, Uncle Bing; have you met my inferior woman?” (Wong: *Fifth Chinese Daughter*)

Chinese version: “是的, 宾叔. 你见过我的内人吗?” (张龙海: 《华女阿五》)

Example (5) “Thank you, I have. Brother Hong, your **Thousand Gold** [daughters] are certainly growing fast,” replied Uncle Bing. (Wong: *Fifth Chinese Daughter*)

Chinese version: “谢谢, 吃了. 洪兄, 你的千金 (女儿) 长得很快.” 宾叔回答道. (张龙海: 《华女阿五》)

There are some address terms that appear to be unique to the Chinese culture, with no counterparts that can be found in the English context. In writing down these culture-loaded address terms in English, Wong goes through a certain stage of transformation.

As her family migrates from Canton in China, it is natural for Jade Snow and her family to use the Cantonese language on a daily basis in the Cantonese community where they live in. And owing to the fact that the novel is an autobiography (Jade Snow Wong, 1989, p.XIII), this paper assumes that most of the stories did happen for real. In writing the source text, especially the China-themed stories as such, Wong is most likely to depict her stories on the basis of real scenes in the past happening in the Chinese context. In the Chinese context, “内人” is literally known as “person in the house” and is either used to refer to the maid in an imperial palace or used by the married man as a self-abasing term to refer to “my wife”. In Example (4), Wong, in writing a conversation between Father and Uncle Bing, uses “inferior woman” in the tone of Father to refer to Mama, signifying the self-abasing connotation and also revealing Mama’s relatively obedient

status in the family. In translating it, the translator restores the term as “内人”, bearing the connotations that are similar to “inferior woman”. And “千金” in the Chinese context is literally known as “a thousand pieces of gold”, meaning a large sum of money. The term was originally used to refer to “outstanding teenage men” and was later evolved into an honorific title referring to “your daughter” in the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368). In Example (5), Wong adopts “Thousand Gold” in the tone of Uncle Bing to refer to “your precious daughter Jade Snow” and further adds the expression’s actual meaning “daughters” in square brackets in case the readers do not understand. In translating it, the translator restores the term as “千金” with success. In translating the terms of this kind, it is imperative for translators to restore the terms’ appearance in Chinese context so as to enable host cultural readers to understand the cultural implication behind the words.

### 2.1.2 Imprecise Assimilation

#### 2.1.2.1 Visualization in Translating Vague Expressions

Example (6) He did manage to save some money, but a swindler assured him that he could invest his savings to bring in big dividends, and with these Uncle Kwok hoped to be able to establish the little school where he could teach **the Chinese classics**. (Wong: *Fifth Chinese Daughter*)

Chinese version: 他确实尽力攒钱, 但是一个骗子骗他说, 如果他的存款拿去投资, 会给他带来巨大的分红, 郭叔叔指望用这些分红建立一间小私塾, 在那里教四书五经。(张龙海:《华女阿五》)

In the novel, Uncle Kwok is a man who is deeply obsessed with the traditional Chinese literature and culture. He spends almost a lifetime studying the Confucian classics and always has a satchel with him carrying these classics. However, the term “Chinese classics” in English sounds rather vague and general, referring to classic works in different styles written in Chinese for thousands of years. In translating this seemingly vague term “Chinese classics”, the translator, with regard to Uncle Kwok’s situation, visualizes the concept by employing “四书五经” in Chinese. As a matter of fact, “四书五经” in Chinese specifically refers to nine books (*The Four Books* and *The Five Classics*), which are widely recognized as the essence of Confucian classics. *The Four Books* are *The Great Learning*, *The Doctrine of the Mean*, *The Confucian Analects* and *The Works of Mencius*, and *The Five Classics* refer to *The Book of Songs*, *The Book of History*, *The Book of Changes*, *The Book of Rites* and *The Spring and Autumn Annals*. Such visualization in translation highlight the scholastic image of Uncle Kwok and may well enable the host cultural readers to understand this image better.

Example (7) Generations of sons, bearing our Wong name, are those who **make pilgrimages** to ancestral burial grounds and preserve them forever. (Wong: *Fifth Chinese Daughter*)

Chinese version: 使用黄姓的儿子会前往祖先的墓地上香、祭拜, 永远记住他们的先祖。(张龙海:《华女阿五》)

In the Chinese culture, blood relatives who bear the same family name would visit and sweep their ancestors’ tomb, so as to pay respect and cherish past memories on such specific days as Tomb-Sweeping Day (April 5), the Winter Solstice (around December 21), etc. However, in Western culture, there are no such things as visiting tombs and worshiping ancestors. So it is hard to find an expression in the English language that bears exactly the same meaning with this Chinese festival. The word “pilgrimage” that Wong uses in her writing is known as a religious activity that is closely related to people’s belief and faith. In translating it into the host culture, if the translator merely follows its meaning in the guest culture and interprets “pilgrimage” as “朝圣”, it would be a loss because its cultural connotation in the host culture is not successfully reproduced. The translator thus abandons the religious connotation of “pilgrimage” in the guest culture and translates it as two specific actions in Chinese Tomb-Sweeping culture “上香” and “祭拜”, making the seemingly vague expression clear to host cultural readers at once. Such translations remove the obstacles in the cross-culture transformation (between the host and guest cultures) and restore Wong’s original intention.

#### 2.1.2.2 Abstraction in Translating Specific Expressions

Example (8) It was also a common superstition that the carp could, after long meditation and practice, develop into that king of creatures, the **fiery dragon**. (Wong: *Fifth Chinese Daughter*)

Chinese version: 很多人迷信地以为, 鲤鱼经过相当长的沉思和练习之后会变成鱼中之王——龙。(张龙海:《华女阿五》)

The Chinese dragon and the European dragon are the two most renowned cultural traditions of dragon. Originating in Greek, Germanic, Slavic and medieval mythology, European dragons are malevolent poisonous creatures under Christianity context and are able to emit fire from their mouth. On the contrary, Chinese dragons, often used by Emperors of China in feudal society as totems, tend to represent supremacy and royal authority. These two types of dragon evolve separately and are different in many ways. With no direct culture experiences in China, Wong’s depiction of China’s culture in the novel may not always be fair and objective, but often mixed with distortion and misunderstandings. In the English context, the “fiery dragon” is often used to refer to the Western fire-breathing dragon. However, according to the text, Wong depicts one of the rituals on lunar Chinese New Year and a widely-believed superstition that is related. In her depiction, the “dragon” is a fish-like creature and is considered to be the king of creatures. Accordingly, this paper assumes that Wong

uses “fiery dragon” to refer to the Chinese dragon here. In translating it, the translator weakens the very image “fiery dragon” in the source text that is most likely to lead to misunderstandings, and translates it into “龙”, avoiding unnecessary confusion among the host cultural readers.

### 2.1.2.3 Synonymous Replacement

Example (9) “It is as useless for you to tell me such ideas as ‘**The wind blows across a deaf ear.**’ You have lost your sense of balance.” Daddy told her bluntly. (Wong: *Fifth Chinese Daughter*)

Chinese version: “你把新知识告诉我们没用, 就像对牛弹琴. 你已经失去平衡感.” 爸爸单刀直入. (张龙海: 《华女阿五》)

In the novel, Father is a scholastic figure who has deep love for traditional Chinese culture and uses Chinese idioms and proverbs from time to time. In this conversation, Father criticizes Jade Snow for allowing personal desires to come before her duty and upholding foreign ideas of “behaving like an individual” while ignoring organized Confucian philosophy of manners and conduct. He specifically uses “the wind blows across a deaf ear” to defend his argument and express his dissatisfaction. Wong, in the source text, uses quotation marks to quote the expression, suggesting that the expression quoted is supposed to be an existing and widely-accepted expression in the Chinese context. In translating it, the most ideal translation is to come up with the exact expression that Wong is referring to and achieve precise assimilation. The translator may employ idioms that depict similar scenes in translation, such as “秋风过耳” and “充耳不闻”. Besides, it is also acceptable to employ terms that embody similar meanings but rather in different forms. In Zhang’s translation, he employs another traditional Chinese idiom “对牛弹琴” in translation, meaning “play the harp to a cow”. Such an attempt of assimilation, though imprecise, is still effective in enabling the host cultural readers to understand the situation and is well acceptable in translation.

Example(10) Grandmother and Jade Snow would start one of their favorite pastimes, either folding squares of white paper into miniature pagodas, mandarin hats, airplanes, long-legged cranes, dragon boats, or playing a wonderful string game called “**making baskets**” (**cat’s cradle**). (Wong: *Fifth Chinese Daughter*)

Chinese version: 外婆和玉雪便开始她们最喜爱的消遣方式, 如用方块白纸折成小塔、中国官帽、飞机、长腿鹤、龙船等, 或者玩一种精彩的橡皮筋游戏, 叫做“挑绷子”. (张龙海: 《华女阿五》)

“Making baskets”, a wonderful string game, is popular both in the host culture and the guest culture. In translating it, the word-for-word translations of “玩篮子” and “猫的摇篮” would inevitably make host cultural readers puzzled and confused. Therefore, the translator chooses a synonymous expression “挑绷子” —a word

that bears similar connotation in the host culture, which is a manifestation of assimilation strategy. However, it is worth noticing that “挑绷子” is an expression that comes from a northern Chinese dialect while Wong’s family migrates from southern China (Canton) to the United States. Using an expression in northern dialect to depict a daily activity of Southerners seems to be inappropriate. In this case, the translator ignores the regional differences between the northern dialect and the Cantonese, and thus ends up in misinterpretation. Had the translator translated the English expression into “翻线游戏” or “翻花线” that has no regional color or other Cantonese expressions, the target text would have been more reasonable.

## 2.2 Integration in Textless Back Translation of *Fifth Chinese Daughter*

The strategy of integration is adopted by those who, on the one hand, keep upholding their original heritage, culture, identity and “some degree of culture integrity”, and, on the other hand, are willing to embrace the larger dominant society as “an integral part of the larger social network” and seek cultural interaction among diverse culture groups. In terms of textless back translation, translators who adopt the integration strategy seek to address themselves to both restoring host cultural elements and preserving guest cultural elements at the same time and without any letup.

Example (11) That was the Presbyterian Home around the corner on Sacramento Street. She was told that women “**in difficulties**” sought refuge there, but curious stares yielded only disappointment, for the heavy red-brown brick building always stood in closed silence. (Wong: *Fifth Chinese Daughter*)

Chinese version: 惟一个长着植物的地方是位于萨克拉门托街角落处的长老派之家. 大人们告诉她, “有困难”<sup>①</sup>的女人去那里寻求保护. 但是好奇观望之后只会失望, 因为那栋棕色砖房总是静悄悄的.

这是一个委婉语, 指那些未婚先孕的女子. —译者(张龙海: 《华女阿五》)

The Presbyterian Home around the corner on Sacramento Street is a place where unmarried pregnant women can seek refuge. Wong uses a euphemistic phrase in the guest culture—“in difficulties”—to depict the plight of unmarried and pregnant women. In translating the text, the translator first faithfully translates “in difficulties” as “有困难” in the text, preserving the euphemistic tone of this expression that is unique to the English language. Yet in view of the fact that not all the host cultural readers are familiar with the connotation of “in difficulties”, the translator, while reproducing the euphemism faithfully, also uses annotation to serve as the means of cultural compensation. Such a translation may well be considered a manifestation of integration strategy. In translating the text, the translator integrates his translation with footnotes, noting that “这是一个委婉语, 指那些未婚先孕的女子”. Footnotes of this kind could reduce misunderstandings

that may arise from interactions between the host culture and the guest culture, and in this way could remove blocks for host cultural readers.

Example (12) Every day she read one book from cover to cover while with one ear she listened to her teachers. Temporarily she forgot who she was, or the constant requirements of Chinese life, while she delighted in the adventures of the Oz books, the Little Colonel, Yankee Girl, and Western cowboys, for in these books there was absolutely nothing resembling her own life. (Wong: *Fifth Chinese Daughter*)

Chinese version: 她每天一边听老师讲课, 一边看完一本书, 暂时忘记自我或者华裔生活的各种要求, 陶醉在书中的各种探险, 如奥茨®系列探险小说: 《小上校》、《美国女孩》和《西部牛仔》等, 因为在这些书中绝对没有什么东西和她的生活相似。

奥茨指的是一片神话土地, 出现在美国作家 L 弗兰克·伯姆专门为儿童创作的14本小说中。(张龙海: 《华女阿五》)

Reading is Jade Snow's greatest source of joy and escape. Through reading English novels featuring fascinating adventures, she gets to know a world which is totally different from that of her own. Wong employs the world "Oz" to refer to this special category of adventure novel that Jade Snow reads. In translating this expression, the translator first adopts the method of transliteration, which retains the exotic charm of this kind of novel that is unique to the Western culture and may sound unfamiliar to Chinese readers. Besides, the translator adds in the footnote that the word "Oz" in the English language refers to a mythical piece of land created by L. Frank Baum in his book series that begins with *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. The word was later used to express a specific category of books. By doing so, the translator makes sure that the book's category is clear to the target readers, thereby allowing these readers to figure out why this particular category of books is so attractive to Jade Snow.

### 2.3 Separation in Textless Back Translation of *Fifth Chinese Daughter*

Yet at the opposite pole of assimilation, separation strategy is often adopted by those who still cherish their original heritage, culture and identity, but show no interest in partaking in the larger society or interacting with other different culture (including the host culture). In terms of textless back translation, translators, when adopting the separation strategy, make the guest culture their top priority. To be specific, translators try their best to preserve the guest cultural elements as well as linguistic features of the guest culture. To understand the text, host cultural readers are supposed to make more efforts so as to get closer to the author.

However, it is worth noticing that the integration strategy is not a mainstream strategy regarding the textless back translation, which is usually confined to translate English-specific expressions or China-themed topics

written with expressions that are unique to the English culture.

Example (13) The round Chinatown moon cakes which Jade Snow knew were about four **inches** in diameter and an **inch** and a half thick. (Wong: *Fifth Chinese Daughter*)

Chinese version: 玉雪所知道的月饼直径长四英寸, 厚一点五英寸。(张龙海: 《华女阿五》)

Example (14) Now, every day after school she reported immediately to Mama, who gave her the usual fifty **cents** to purchase groceries for that evening's dinner and tomorrow's breakfast. Lunch was composed of leftovers. With prudent management, it was possible to get a small chicken for twenty **cents**, three bunches of Chinese greens for ten **cents**, three whole Rex soles or sand dabs for ten **cents**, and about a half pound of pork for the remaining ten **cents**. (Wong: *Fifth Chinese Daughter*)

Chinese version: 从此, 她每天下午放学后马上向妈妈报到。妈妈总妈妈总是给她五十美分, 让她去买当天晚上和第二天早上要吃的东西。午餐主要是吃些剩菜剩饭。经过精打细算, 可以花二十美分买一只不大的鸡, 十美分买三小捆中国蔬菜, 十美分买三条菜克斯鲷鱼或者比目鱼, 剩下十美分大约可以买半磅牛肉。(张龙海: 《华女阿五》)

Example (15) When the Wongs were dipping into their last fifty **pounds** of rice in the rice barrel, it was a signal for Daddy to go to his favorite rice dealer, who imported his merchandise from China. (Wong: *Fifth Chinese Daughter*)

Chinese version: 当黄家从米缸中舀最后五十磅大米时, 这是一个信号, 要爸爸去找他经常光顾的大米商。这位大米商从中国进口自己的货物。(张龙海: 《华女阿五》)

The metrology in the Chinese and English cultures evolves separately, marked by different units of measurement. According to Example (13), Example (14) and Example (15), it is worth noticing that the translator consistently chooses to preserve the foreign unit of measurement in his translation and translates "inch" as "英寸", "cent" as "美分" and "pound" as "磅". Despite the possibility of making it difficult for the host cultural readers to understand, such translations remind us that Jade Snow is a Chinese as well as an American.

The whole novel narrates many China-themed stories that arouse strong resonance among the Chinese readers. However, growing up in San Francisco, Jade Snow gets to study in Christian Sunday school, play with the whites and is therefore much influenced by the Western culture. Chinese culture that Jade Snow is exposed to be supposedly second-hand and to some extent not fully presented. To be specific, there is much that Jade Snow doesn't know or doesn't use in the Chinese culture, including the Chinese units of measurement. If the translator employs the Chinese units of measurement to replace the original expressions, he may lose a chance to present the exotic elements in the novel. On the

contrary, by preserving the foreign units of measurement in translation, the translator makes this kind of influence visible and again stresses the “immigrant” identity of Jade Snow.

Example (16) The delicious tidbits exchanged at New Year’s varied according to the pride and custom of individual households. Some prided themselves on **steamed sweet puddings**, made of brown sugar and special flours, and decorated with red dates or sesame seeds. Others specialized in **salty puddings**, made with ground-root flour (something like potato flour), fat pork, chopped baby shrimps, mushrooms, red ginger, and green-topped with parsley (baby coriander leaves). (Wong: *Fifth Chinese Daughter*)

Chinese version: 春节期间所交换的好吃的东西因价格和各家的风俗而异。有的家庭擅长用红糖和精制面粉做甜布丁，其中点缀着红枣或者芝麻。有的家庭则擅长做咸布丁，原料有初粉（类似土豆淀粉）、肥肉、虾仁、香菇、红姜和欧芹（嫩茺萎叶）。（张龙海：《华女阿五》）

In the Western society, pudding is popular as a sweet and savory dessert. In the example above, the translator, affected by Western food culture, translates “steamed sweet puddings” as “甜布丁” and “salty puddings” as “咸布丁”，retaining the guest cultural elements involved. On the one hand, as Western food culture is not that familiar to the target readers, this practice may attract the target readers’ attention to Chinese dishes and its culture involved, and thus inspire their curiosity to some extent. On the other hand, such a complete maintenance of the guest cultural element without any explanation may fail to strike the same chord between the source image and its target readers. That is to say, target readers may fail to connect the translation with the very image that already exists in their mind, resulting in the loss of image. The “pudding” here, however, does not refer to what it really is in the Western food culture, but rather a traditional Chinese cuisine produced by Chinese American families to celebrate lunar New Year. If such misunderstandings do exist among some of the target readers, the translator may well edit his translation and insert some additional annotations.

#### 2.4 Marginalization in Textless Back Translation of *Fifth Chinese Daughter*

There is a chance that individuals from non-dominant and ethnocultural groups adopt a passive attitude towards both preserving their original heritage, culture and identity, and interacting with other culture groups. Berry (2002) owes the first case to the enforced cultural loss and the second case to exclusion and discrimination. Within this context, the strategy adopted is called “marginalization”. In terms of textless back translation, the adoption of marginalization strategy would often end up in failure of translation, which may well lead to obscurity in language and unsuccessful acculturation. In order to produce a well-

received target text, translators are obliged to avoid the adoption of this strategy as much as they can.

Example (17) At the Wongs’, the New Year week got a good start at the “Opening of the Year” with an extra-bountiful dinner which featured Daddy’s special chicken dish and a huge roast duck. The celebration also had a good wind-up on its seventh and last day called “**The Day Man Was Made,**” with another feast. (Wong: *Fifth Chinese Daughter*)

Chinese version: 黄家的新年在“开年”时有个好的开端。这顿丰盛晚餐的特色是爸爸的拿手好菜：鸡肉和一只大烤鹅。整个庆祝活动在第七天的，即最后一天的，也叫“走运”的那一顿晚餐中圆满结束。（张龙海：《华女阿五》）

The seventh day of lunar Chinese New Year is called “The Day of Man” (人日, “Ren Ri”) in Chinese. According to the Chinese myth, having created roosters, dogs, pigs, goats, oxen and horses respectively on the first six days of the year, the Goddess of sky-patching “Nüwa” (女娲) created the man on the seventh day. Therefore, the seventh day of the lunar Chinese New Year is considered the birthday of man. In the traditional Chinese culture, people visit Earth Temple and put lamps in front of the statue of Earth God (Tu Ti Kung) on this day. And people who do not have any child would go and steal the lamp, for it will bring their children in the future. Besides, people cut paper into the form of flower and man, signifying the family’s prosperity. With regard to this custom, it is easy to understand what Wong means by saying “The Day Man Was Made”. However, in translating the text, the translator uses “走运”— an expression that is neither making any sense according to the Chinese custom nor in English cultural context. Making his own sense of the words totally in isolation, the translator makes up this translation himself, which can be considered a manifestation of marginalization strategy. To avoid such a random marginalization, it is advisable for the translator to follow the traditional Chinese culture and translates “The Day of Man” into “人日(节)”, “人胜日” or “人庆(节)”.

Example (18) Bye lo, baby bunting,

Daddy’s gone a-hunting,

Gone to get a rabbit skin,

To wrap his baby bunting in.

Bye lo, baby bunting, bye. (Wong: *Fifth Chinese Daughter*)

Chinese version: 再见，婴儿睡袋，爸爸去打猎，

去猎取兔皮，

来包婴儿睡袋。

再见，婴儿睡袋，再见。（张龙海：《华女阿五》）

In Example (18), Jade Snow sang the song so as to lull her baby brother Forgiveness from Heaven to sleep. English nursery rhyme in the source text has already spread far and wide in the English world and is marked by its catchy rhyme with five “in/ing’s” in a roll at the end of five sub-sentences. According to Ren (2013), there are

three rules for the Chinese translation of English nursery rhymes, namely “faithfulness, simplicity and sense of rhythm”. However, in translating the text, the translator completely abandons the catchy rhyme in the original. By doing so, the target text does not sound like a piece of nursery rhyme to the host cultural readers at all and turns to be less attractive to target readers. Such a translation will inevitably make the host cultural readers confused. Given this situation, the adoption of marginalization strategy is somewhat questionable. On the contrary, if the translator took content, register and rhyme into consideration, he would be most likely to reproduce a well-received nursery rhyme in the host culture. To this end, the writer of this paper finds another Chinese version for it that has been widely circulated among the target readers:

睡吧睡吧胖娃娃，  
爸爸打猎顶呱呱；  
剥下一张兔子皮，  
回家好裹胖娃娃。 (<http://www.websaru.com/bunt.html>)

On the one hand, this version faithfully conveys the information of the English text and end rhymes with three “a’s”. Such faithfulness in content and similarity in text-formation have effectively conveyed the guest cultural elements of the nursery rhyme. On the other hand, such special “ABB” structures as “胖娃娃” and “顶呱呱” in the translation are catchy in the host culture and easy for the host culture readers to memorize, paving the way for popularization and public recognition of the target version in the host cultural society.

The employment of marginalization strategy regarding textless back translation often result from two conditions: (a) the translator’s unilateral misunderstanding of the source text, which is the translator’s personal problem; (b) the cultural gap that lies between the source text writer and the translator, which is the problem of two culture systems. By referring to relevant books and materials and asking senior experts that are familiar with the area for help, mistakes that result from the first condition is easy to be solved. On the contrary, mistakes that result from the second condition is much more complicated, concerning minor differences between two similar cultures.

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## CONCLUSION

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By analyzing the English work *Fifth Chinese Daughter* and its textless back translation *Hua Nü A Wu*, this paper holds that translation strategies of assimilation, integration, separation and marginalization are respectively employed in different situations and for different reasons. Of the four strategies, assimilation and integration strategies are the mainstream regarding the textless back translation of *Fifth Chinese Daughter* while the strategies of separation and marginalization are not that common. In

translating China-themed topics and stories, the translator gives priority to the assimilation strategy. In translating English-specific expressions or expressions that are unique to the English culture, the integration strategy and the separation strategy are employed, but not that often. Marked by annotations that further justify the translation in the main text, the use of integration strategy is aimed to restore the host cultural elements and preserve the guest cultural elements at the same time. With a view to preserving the foreignness of guest cultural elements, the separation strategy is sometimes adopted otherwise. The employment of marginalization strategy usually results from either the translator’s misunderstanding or the culture gap between two cultures, which may lead to misinterpretations and comprehension barriers for the target readers. To meet the need of the target readers, the translator is obliged to spare no efforts to avoid adopting the marginalization strategy.

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