

Spatial Reconstruction and the Evolution of the Scholar-Official Image in the English Translation of the Grand Canal Section of Rushu Ji: A Sociology of Translation Study Based on Grand Canal, Great River

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How to cite this paper: Cao, H. (2025). Spatial Reconstruction and the Evolution of the Scholar-Official Image in the English Translation of the Grand Canal Section of Rushu Ji: A Sociology of Translation Study Based on Grand Canal, Great River. *Literature, Language and Cultural Studies*, 3(2), 47-60. ISSN Print: 3079-5095; ISSN Online: 3079-5109.

<https://doi.org/10.63313/LLCS.9108>

Published: 2025-11-24

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Abstract

This study examines the English translation of Lu You's Southern Song travel diary Rushu Ji (A Journey to Shu) in Philip Watson's Grand Canal, Great River: The Travel Diary of a 12th-century Chinese Poet, focusing specifically on its de-piction of the Beijing-Hangzhou Grand Canal and Zhejiang Eastern Canal sections. The research aims to reveal how Watson's translation strategies and par-atextual manipulation systematically reconstruct the original text's narrative, spatial, and cultural significances. Through detailed textual comparison and discourse analysis informed by André Lefevere's rewriting theory (1992), Gérard Genette's paratext theory (1997), and cultural geography's production of space theory, this paper demonstrates how the translation enacts a profound act of cross-cultural domestication. The analysis reveals three key dimensions of reconstruction: narratively, through systematic omission of official records and scholarly verifications, Lu You transforms from a scholar-official fulfilling imperial duties to a poet-explorer; spatially, by filtering hydraulic engineering terminology while enhancing scenic descriptions, the functional canal, an imperial lifeline, becomes a scenic waterway conforming to western picturesque ideals; paratextually, through title, maps and preface, readers are guided toward expecting a romantic journey through an exotic land. While this creative treason successfully introduced Rushu Ji to English readers, the reconstruction inevitably simplified and obscured the text's rich historical information concerning Southern Song governance, scholar-official ethos, and infrastructure complexity. The study concludes that the translation, despite its dissemination merits, represents a significant case of cultural filtration, offering critical insights for reflecting on image construction and cultural representation in translating Chinese classics for global audiences.

Keywords

Rushu Ji; Grand Canal; Translation and Reconstruction; Paratext; Scholar-Official Image; Production of Space; Travel Literature

1. Introduction

Rushu Ji (A Journey to Shu) is a diary-style travelogue written by the great Southern Song poet Lu You (1125-1210). Following his appointment as the Assistant Prefect of Kuizhou (present-day Fengjie, Chongqing) in late 1169, Lu You embarked on his journey from his hometown, Shanyin (present-day Shaoxing, Zhejiang), in the early summer of 1170. Travelling upstream along the Yangtze River for nearly half a year, he composed this work upon reaching his post. Celebrated for its documentary spirit of recording observations in a diary, its rigorous approach to verifying ancient sites, and its poetic style for expressing emotion, *Rushu Ji* is widely regarded as a landmark work in the history of Chinese travel literature. Qian Zhongshu praised it as not only a literary heritage but also historical material (1984). Particularly valuable are its opening sections, which provide detailed records of the Beijing-Hangzhou Grand Canal and Zhejiang Eastern Canal stretch. These offer a dynamic scroll painting that allows us to glimpse the transportation networks, hydraulic management, local societies, and daily life of officials within the core economic zone of 12th-century China.

However, the reception of this classic in the English-speaking world largely hinges upon the selected English translation by the British sinologist Philip Watson, published in 1991: *Grand Canal, Great River: The Travel Diary of a 12th-century Chinese Poet* (2007). This translation is a rendition of the travel diary of Lu You (1125-1210), a renowned Chinese poet, statesman, and historian. The diary documents his journey from east to west China in July 1170, covering approximately 1,800 miles along the Grand Canal and the Yangtze River. Lu You's detailed observations of the landscapes, people, and historical sites he encountered provide a vivid panorama of twelfth-century China. Lu You's diary is notable for its literary merit and historical value. It is considered one of the earliest extended travel diaries in Chinese literature, characterized by its rich descriptions and critical observations. Scholars have extensively studied this work for insights into the social, political, and economic conditions of the time, as well as cultural practices and natural phenomena. Philip Watson's modern translation made this significant work accessible to contemporary readers for the first time (2007). Watson's translation is accompanied by detailed commentary and enhanced by contemporary paintings and photographs of the locations described, bringing the historical narrative to life. The translation has been well-received for its fidelity to the original text and its ability to convey the spontaneity and richness of Lu You's writing. It serves as a valuable resource for those interested in Chinese history, literature, and culture.

This book offers a fascinating exploration of a pivotal period in Chinese history, providing readers with a unique glimpse into the life and thoughts of a twelfth-century poet navigating the complexities of his world. With its fluent readability and careful composition, Watson's translation has become the primary window for Western readers to understand Lu You's journey. A thought-provoking

phenomenon is that the English title does not literally translate *Rushu Ji* but instead defines the journey through the grand geographical imaginaries of the Grand Canal and the Great River (the Yangtze River). This suggests the activation of a profound mechanism of reconstruction from the very inception of the text's cross-cultural journey.

Existing research on the English translation of *Rushu Ji* has either focused on macro-level discussions of overall cultural dissemination strategies or concentrated on analyzing the translation techniques for scattered culture-loaded terms. There remains a lack of a precise analytical model capable of penetrating the surface to systematically reveal its reconstructive mechanisms. Most importantly, the Grand Canal section, which establishes the narrative tone and spatial experience for the entire book, has not yet received specialized and in-depth scrutiny regarding its translational transformation. In the original text, this segment sets a public-private fusion tone; it is simultaneously an imperial official's journey within the state transportation system and an investigative trip by a poet and scholar. How, then, is the qualitative nature of this space altered in the English translation? Based on this, this paper poses its core research question: In Philip Watson's English translation, through narrative choices, spatial representation, and paratextual packaging of the Grand Canal section, how does the translator systematically reconstruct the generic nature of *Rushu Ji*, the spatial imagery of the canal, and Lu You's authorial identity to align them with the generic conventions of travel literature in the late-twentieth-century English-speaking world and its readers' romanticized expectations of the oriented world?

2. Theoretical Framework and Research Approach

2.1. Theoretical Framework

(1) Research on *Rushu Ji* as a Source Text

Domestic scholarship on *Rushu Ji* is substantial, primarily focusing on its literary value, historical value, and analyses of Lu You's inner world. The chronological biographies and critical biographies by scholars such as Yu Beishan and Ou Xiaomu have provided detailed investigations into its creation background. Numerous papers specifically explore its artistic techniques in landscape description or its value for historical verification. These works provide a solid foundation for understanding the original text in this study.

(2) Rewriting and Reconstruction in Translation Studies

This study is grounded in the lineage of the cultural turn in translation studies. André Lefevere's rewriting theory posits that translation is profoundly constrained by the dual factors of ideology and poetics (1992). The translator, as a rewriter, invariably adjusts the source text to align with the dominant concepts and literary styles of the target culture. Lawrence Venuti's theory of domestication/foreignization further reveals the translator's tendency to employ fluent, transparent domestica-

tion strategies, seamlessly embedding the foreign text into the target culture, thus inevitably diluting the cultural otherness of the source text (1995). This study adopts these theories as the core framework for analyzing the motivations behind the translation's reconstruction.

(3) Paratext Theory

Gérard Genette's concept of the paratext refers to the elements that surround a text and control its reception, such as titles, subtitles, prefaces, postscripts, annotations, illustrations, and covers (1997). He aptly likens the paratext to a threshold that can provide a specific (consistent) atmosphere for the text and guide the reader's reception. In translation studies, the paratext is a crucial site for revealing the translator's intentions, the publisher's strategies, and even the cultural trends of the era.

(4) Space and Place Theory

Drawing on cultural geography, particularly Yi-Fu Tuan's theories of space and place (2017) and Henri Lefebvre's concept of the production of space, we conceptualize the Grand Canal as a social space. It is not merely a physical entity but also a carrier of power relations, social activities, and cultural meanings. From this perspective, translation can be viewed as a process of representation and re-production of space, which necessarily involves selection, emphasis, and omission.

2.2. Research Approach and Paper Structure

This paper takes the Grand Canal section of *Rushu Ji* (from the start of the journey around the 6th day of the 12th month of the 5th year of the Qiandao era [approximately early January 1170 in the Julian calendar] to the arrival in Zhenjiang around the 18th day of the 6th month of the 6th year, approximately mid-July 1170) and its English translation as the precise objects of analysis. It employs a methodology combining close reading, comparative analysis, and theoretical interpretation. The main body of the paper will proceed through three progressive layers.

First, it's made from a narratological perspective. It analyzes how the translator, through the omission of official duty records and geographical verifications, achieves a narrative reconstruction from a scholar-official's Itinerary to a poet-explorer's account. Second, it's made from a combined perspective of cultural geography and translation studies. It analyzes how the translator, through lexical choices and the filtering of imagery, accomplishes an imagistic reconstruction of the canal space from an imperial engineering project to a gallery of scenery. Third, when it's made from the perspective of paratext theory, it analyzes how the book title, maps, and preface function collectively as a navigation guide, steering readers towards the reception of a pre-configured and simplified version of Lu You and his journey.

Through this tripartite, cross-referenced argumentation, this paper aims to holistically reveal the complex and profound mechanisms of cultural filtration at work in the westward translation of *Rushu Ji* and to provide a critical assessment of the gains

and losses in its cultural dissemination.

3. Narrative Reconstruction: From Scholar-Official's Itinerary to Poet-Explorer's Account

Lu You's canal journey was, in essence, a standard official duty within the Southern Song bureaucratic system. In his diary, his triple identity as an official, a scholar, and a poet is seamlessly interwoven, collectively constituting a complete scholar-official persona. However, through systematic narrative filtering, the English translation amplifies his role as a poet and traveler while diminishing or even erasing his public identity as an official and scholar, thereby accomplishing the first major reconstruction of the text's core nature.

3.1. The Dilution and Deletion of Official Itinerary Records: The Recession of Public Identity

In the Grand Canal section of *Rushu Ji*, Lu You maintained nearly formulaic records of his movements as an official, which constitute the authentic backdrop of a Southern Song scholar-official's official travel. These primarily include the following aspects.

(1) Official Handovers and Bureaucratic Engagements

The frequent entries of official handovers and bureaucratic engagements, such as those detailing Lu You's moorings and meetings with figures like Assistant Prefect Wang Junming and newly appointed Instructor Lu Dexing of Taiping Prefecture, clearly delineate his trajectory within the imperial bureaucratic network while confirming and reinforcing his official status. For example, entries like "10th day [of the 6th month, Qiandao 6th Year]: Moored at Xiuzhou..... Met Assistant Prefect Wang Junming" and "15th day... Met Lu Dexing, newly appointed Instructor of Taiping Prefecture", holding the title of Left Activated Merit, appear frequently, clearly delineating Lu You's trajectory within the imperial bureaucratic network. Each mooring and meeting confirms and reinforces his official status.

(2) Precise Records of the Courier System

Lu You meticulously recorded mooring at specific courier stations (yi), postal relays (pu), and patrol and inspection offices (xunjiansi), using terms like moored at Duan'an, lodged at the Canal, and lodged at Yinshan. These are not idle notes but reveal the transportation, communication, and security infrastructure underpinning imperial rule. These place names hold significant historical value for researching the Song dynasty courier system.

In *Grand Canal, Great River*, such records are systematically and extensively omitted. The translator evidently judged these details too trivial, repetitive, and dull for the general Western reader seeking a fluent narrative and exotic scenery. They do not contribute to crafting an appealing traveler image and would instead

slow the narrative pace. This strategic deletion yields a dual consequence:

(3) Recession of Lu You's Public Identity

The image of Assistant Prefect Lu, an official carrying out duties according to regulations within the bureaucratic system, is significantly downplayed. The official and mandatory aspects of his travel motivations are weakened, making the journey appear more like a personal, voluntary exploration. His identity shifts from imperial official towards solitary wayfarer.

(4) Extraction of Historical-Institutional Context

The crucial historical backdrop of the Southern Song's vast bureaucracy, its tight courier network, and its official travel management system is quietly removed from the narrative. Readers cannot perceive through the translation that Lu You's journey is embedded within a highly efficient state apparatus. Consequently, the journey becomes de-historicized and de-politicized, presented as a timeless, personal adventure story.

3.2. Omission of Geographical Verification and the Recession of the Scholar Image: Flattening the Intellectual Dimension

Lu You was not only a poet but also an erudite scholar. His journey was accompanied by continuous geographical and historical inquiry, embodying the Song scholar-official's spirit of investigating things to extend knowledge. For instance, his diligent investigations into the historical evolution of place names and the authenticity of ancient sites along the route form a distinctive part of his diary. He verified the location of Zuili and questioned the stele related to the legend of King Wu shooting Xiang, demonstrating his rigorous evidential spirit and profound historical learning. Such verificative texts are typically omitted entirely in the English translation or reduced to their conclusions with the reasoning process removed. For example, a passage of several hundred characters debating the historical attribution of a place might be omitted entirely or simplified to we passed a place with ancient history. While this treatment is based on considerations of readability, its deeper impact are listed as follows.

First, if it's viewed from the dimension of filtering out the scholar, Lu You's image is flattened from a learned scholar-official to a perceptive poet. The absence of his intellectual activities confines his observations more to the sensory level, diminishing the depth and criticality of his thought. Second, if it's viewed from the dimension of weakening the text's intertextuality and historical value, part of the value of *Rushu Ji* lies in its dialogue with and refutation of numerous earlier texts (e.g., *Commentary on the Water Classic*, *Jingzhou Record*). Omitting these verifications severs these intertextual links, reducing a work in dialogue with the entire history of Chinese culture to a mere record of immediate observations. This caters to a curiosity for experience at the expense of transmitting knowledge.

3.3. Shift in Narrative Focus and Establishment of the Exploration

Framework: Generic Domestication as Travel Literature

Through the deletion of these two core elements, official duties and verification, the narrative focus of the translated text undergoes a fundamental shift. The narrative impetus of the original is composite: the imperial appointment and personal fondness for landscapes act together. In the translation, the narrative impetus becomes singular and clear: primarily driven by curiosity and the desire to explore the unknown world.

The commencement of the journey is shaped in the translation as the beginning of an eagerly anticipated adventure. The preserved content, complaints about the weather, descriptions of food, curiosity about natural scenery, visits to temples, is integrated into a powerful narrative framework: a sensitive individual's poetic passage through a grand and ancient land. This framework perfectly aligns with the generic paradigm of Travel Literature as established in the modern West. The core conventions of this genre include: emphasis on personal experience, display of exotic scenery, encounter with cultural difference, and an inherent exploratory spirit moving from the familiar to the unfamiliar.

Therefore, the translator's reconstruction is, in essence, a form of generic domestication. He successfully transformed a uniquely Song Chinese scholar-official's travel record that blended official document, historical writing, and poetic sentiment into the travel literature genre familiar and beloved by twentieth-century English readers. In this process, Lu You is effectively recruited into the tradition represented by Western travel writers like Marco Polo and Robert Byron, while the native specificity of his text is largely homogenized.

4. Spatial Reconstruction: From Imperial Engineering Project to Gallery of Scenery

The Grand Canal was, first and foremost, a monumental infrastructure project, which is the lifeline of water transport that sustained the centralized imperial rule, a grand testament to human transformation of nature and resource allocation. Although Lu You's records are informal in style, they objectively reflect this essence. However, through deliberate lexical choices and the filtering of imagery, the English translation profoundly reconstructs its spatial quality, transforming it from a political-economic space imbued with marks of power and technology into a scenic space for aesthetic contemplation.

4.1. Translation of Core Concepts and the Evolution of Imagery: The Dissolution of Engineering Terminology

Vocabulary is the building block of spatial imagery. The translation's treatment of a range of key engineering and administrative terms clearly reveals its reconstructive intent.

(1) The Translation of 运河 (Yùnhé, canal) and its De-functionalization

The translator consistently uses the Grand Canal or the Canal, which is geographically accurate. However, within the overall context of the translated text, the connotations of state project and economic artery carried by this term are deliberately or inadvertently diluted. It appears more as a geographical coordinate and a carrier of scenery, while the vast operational system, the thousands of canal workers, and the strict management protocols behind it fade into the background.

(2) The Blurring and Generalization of Hydraulic Facility Vocabulary

For key terms such as 闸 (Zhá, lock/sluice gate), 坝 (Bà, dam), 堰 (Yàn, weir), 埭 (Dài, damming facility/Low Earth Dam), and 斗门 (Dǒumén, water gate/Check Gate), which reflect the wisdom and managerial sophistication of ancient Chinese hydraulic engineering, the translation tends towards simplification and blurring. For instance, lock might be used generically for various types of boat-passage facilities, or mention of these facilities might be omitted entirely when it doesn't directly impact narrative comprehension. When Lu You records the perilous scene of crossing a weir where the boatmen pulling and towing were all suspended in mid-air, the translation might convey only the sensory experience of peril while omitting the explanation of the 堰 (Yàn, weir) as a specific engineering structure. This prevents the effective communication of the technological connotation and managerial precision of the canal as a complex artificial water conservancy system.

The Invisibility of 漕运 (Cáoyùn, Water Transport /Tribute Grain Transport) and the Severing of Economic Context: In the original text, the sight of grain-transport boats, troop-transport boats, and tribute envoys shuttling back and forth on the canal, though not heavily emphasized, forms the basic backdrop of activity. Due to the omission of numerous interactions with official boats, market towns, and merchants, the canal's core function as the national economic lifeline becomes blurred in the translation. The economic attribute of the canal space is significantly weakened; it no longer appears as an artery flowing with grain, goods, and taxes, but rather resembles a quiet waterway bearing a solitary boat and a poet.

4.2. Selective Amplification of Scenic Description: The Highlighting of the Picturesque

In stark contrast to the deletion of functional records, the translation faithfully preserves, and in some places rhetorically enhances, scenic descriptions that are pictorial, poetic, or exotic.

The first is the presentation of urban landmarks. Descriptions of historic cities like Shaoxing, Hangzhou, and Suzhou are translated completely or even prominently. These cities, as symbols of civilization and history, align with the Western imagination of ancient Oriental capitals. Then, it is followed with the conformity with the picturesque aesthetic. Pastoral scenes rich in poetic charm, such as mulberry fields on both banks, flowers of knot-weed and reeds, fishing boats in the evening glow, and wine shop banners fluttering, are meticulously reproduced in the translation.

These images collectively construct a flowing long scroll of an Oriental landscape painting that conforms to the Western aesthetic ideal of The Picturesque. The Picturesque emphasizes the composition, light, shadow, and emotional effect of a scene, pursuing a view that is beautiful like a painting, slightly wild, and evocative of contemplation. The translator's choices undoubtedly align the visual image of the Grand Canal with this aesthetic tradition, making it more readily acceptable to the Western reader's aesthetic sensibilities. Moreover, it's hard to avoid the exoticism of religious sites and monuments. Records of visits to temples, ancient pagodas, and Daoist monasteries along the route are typically retained. These elements add mystery and spirituality to the journey, satisfying Western readers' curiosity about Eastern religious culture.

4.3. The Reconstructed Spatial Attribute: From Functional Artery to Aesthetic Spectacle

After the careful filtering and reshaping at the lexical and imagery levels described above, the Grand Canal space in the English translation undergoes a fundamental qualitative transformation.

To begin with, it can be sensed with a transformation from functional space to aesthetic space. A piece of infrastructure that was primarily functional and political, used for water transport, military mobilization, water control, and official travel, is reconstructed into a scenic object and aesthetic spectacle primarily for visual appreciation and personal reflection. Second, it also transforms from political-economic space to cultural landscape space. The canal, which carried the operation of imperial power, the flow of goods, and the redistribution of wealth, is transformed into a cultural landscape bearing the culture, philosophy, and pastoral ideals of ancient China. It no longer speaks the logic of imperial governance but chants the poetry and timelessness of the East. This reconstruction is undoubtedly highly effective for dissemination; it creates an image of China that is easy to understand and appreciate. However, the cost is a de-materialization of history. A real canal, a massive systematic project that consumed immense human and material resources and profoundly shaped the social ecology along its route, is replaced by a beautiful canal image that has lost its material foundations and cultural complexity. This resonates with what Edward Said revealed in *Orientalism*: the Orient is often aesthetically and essentially reconstructed by the West within its own discursive system (1999). The Grand Canal in this translation is a microcosm of that process in the field of translation..

5. Paratextual Reconstruction: The Title, Map, and Preface as Navigation Guide

If the translation of the main text is the primary battlefield of reconstruction, then the paratext constitutes the navigation system deployed by the translator. It con-

tinuously guides, explains, and qualifies the text before, during, and after the reader encounters the main text, forming a powerful synergy with the translation strategies to collectively shape and solidify the reconstructed image of Lu You and his journey.

5.1. The Positioning Function of the Title: Presetting an Epic Framework

The title “Grand Canal, Great River” is itself the most powerful paratext, performing the initial and most crucial positioning function.

This is the naming of a geographical epic. It immediately establishes an epic geographical framework for the entire narrative by defining the journey with two grand geographical imaginaries, the Grand Canal and the Great River, hinting that this will be a magnificent journey through the heartland of Chinese civilization.

(1) Evocation of Imagery and De-territorialization

The words “grand” and “great” are filled with a sense of awe and admiration, instantly directing the reader's expectation towards a geographical discovery style of travel, rather than a trivial official report. It completely abandons the specificity and regionality implied by the original title *Rushu Ji* (Entry into Shu), which suggests entering a specific cultural region Shu. Instead, it adopts universal, easily understandable physical geographical markers, thereby achieving a degree of de-territorialization, making it more accessible to readers unfamiliar with Chinese geography.

(2) Profiling the Authorial Identity

The subtitle, “The Travel Diary of a 12th-century Chinese Poet”, explicitly anchors Lu You's identity as a poet and the author of a travel diary. This positioning echoes the downplaying of his official and scholarly identities within the main text, finalizing the qualification of Lu You's image.

5.2. The Simplified Visual Representation of the Map: Erasing Complexity

If the translated edition includes a map (almost a necessity for this genre of travel literature), its method of depicting the canal section is highly analyzable as a form of visual paratextual reconstruction.



Figure 1. The Route of Lu You's Journey

The first highlighted point is the selective labeling of nodes. The map most likely prominently marks only major urban nodes like Shaoxing (Kuaiji), Hangzhou, and Suzhou, while completely omitting the numerous small market towns, courier stations (e.g., Chongde, Xiuzhou, Pingjiang) mentioned in Lu You's diary. This visual simplification reinforces a clear, purposeful point-to-point travel route but utterly erases the daily, mundane, networked reality of the geographical experience of canal travel. It presents a simplified geographical map prepared for the modern tourist, not the detailed linear space experienced by a 12th-century official.

The second notable point is the linearization and de-networking of space. The map presents the canal as a clear line or curve connecting major cities. This representation obscures the complex transportation network formed by the canal, its connecting lakes, tributaries, and land routes, as well as the canal's function as a link for regional socio-economic activity. It is simplified into an isolated line meant solely for navigation; its status as the core of an areal economic region disappears.

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5.4. The Qualifying Role of the Preface: Establishing the Reading Contract

The translator's preface or introduction is the space for direct dialogue with the reader, where the "reading contract" is established. Its discursive strategy is crucial. The first one is the final qualification of Lu You's identity. How is Lu You's life and the background of this journey introduced in the introduction? Is the emphasis on his political setbacks as a hardliner against Jin and the circumstance of his relegation, or is it placed on his talent as a poet and his curiosity as a traveler? It is almost certain that the latter will be emphasized. The introduction might begin: "Lu You, one of China's greatest poets, embarks on an extraordinary journey...". Such an opening predisposes the reader to perceive a romantic wayfarer before encountering the main text; the disappointment of his political career is transformed into the occasion for a poetic journey.

The second is the final qualification of the journey's nature. How is the journey itself described? Is it termed a journey of exile, an official assignment, or a remarkable journey through the heart of China? The choice of words directly determines the tone through which the reader interprets the text. The latter clearly aligns more with the marketing discourse of travel literature, successfully packaging an intra-system official transfer as an exploration and discovery with universal human significance.

In summary, the paratextual system and the translation strategies of the main text form a tight, self-consistent network of reconstruction. Together, they guide the reader to bypass the historical authenticity and cultural complexity of the text and enter directly into a pre-configured myth of reading concerning the Orient, poetry, and adventure.

6. Conclusion

Through a three-dimensional analysis of the "Grand Canal section" in Grand Canal, Great River, examining its narrative, spatial, and paratextual dimensions, this study clearly reveals that the Western translation of Rushu Ji is far from a transparent interlingual transfer, but rather a profound and systematic cultural reconstruction.

This reconstruction is a multi-layered, collaborative process.

On the narrative level, by systematically downplaying records of the official itinerary and scholarly verification, it reshapes a complex travel record deeply rooted in the cultural traditions of the Southern Song scholar-official into a linear, personally-focused work of travel literature in the modern sense.

On the spatial level, by filtering out engineering vocabulary and amplifying aesthetic descriptions, it reconstructs the Grand Canal, an imperial engineering project and economic artery imbued with the imprints of power and technology, into a scenic travel gallery conforming to the Western aesthetic ideal of the Picturesque.

On the paratextual level, through the combined navigation of the book title, map, and preface, it pre-configures and solidifies a reading framework for Western readers that aligns with their cultural expectations and literary conventions, effectively recruiting Lu You into the Western tradition of travel writing.

The success of this reconstruction is undeniable. It skillfully bridges vast cultural and temporal divides, using domestication strategies to vividly introduce a 12th-century Chinese classical text into the view of contemporary Western readers, sparking their interest in Chinese geography and culture. Philip Watson's translation has made an invaluable contribution to popularizing classical Chinese literature.

However, the cost is significant and worthy of critique: historical complexity is simplified; the presence of the state and the public nature of the scholar-official are obscured; a canal that was a massive material entity is hollowed out into an aesthetic image. We lose a precious opportunity to observe the daily workings of the Southern Song state apparatus through Lu You's eyes, and we lose a dimension for understanding the complex tension between "Dao" (the Way) and "Shi" (worldly power), between the public and the private, within the scholar-official's spiritual world. The canal ceases to be a key for understanding the governance logic of imperial China and instead resembles a picturesque backdrop in a theme park.

The significance of this study lies in demonstrating, through a precise case study, that the translation of classical Chinese non-fiction for foreign audiences constitutes a deep cultural contestation over how to narrate China and shape its image. Against the backdrop of China's current active promotion of international cultural heritage dissemination, this research offers a strong reflective value: it reminds us that while pursuing the accessibility of the story and the effectiveness of dissemination, we must remain vigilant against the excessive erosion of historical authenticity and cultural complexity. Future translation practices may need to seek a more reflective, culturally non-reductionist balance, a wiser equilibrium, between compelling narratives and the faithful transmission of historical depth and cultural uniqueness. Perhaps, appropriate foreignization strategies, more comprehensive annotation systems, and a more critical use of paratexts could become feasible paths for us, in this post-colonial era, to introduce China to the world in a more responsible and profound manner.

Acknowledgements

This paper is a phase result of the Shaoxing Philosophy and Social Sciences Research 14th Five-Year Plan 2024 Key Project, “Collection and Narrative Evolution Research of Overseas Original Texts on the Culture of the Zhejiang Eastern Canal” (Project No.: 145423).

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