

Research on Theories of Travel Writing in the Late Ming Dynasty

Hu Haiqin

The Institute for Culture and History, Guiyang, Guizhou Province, China, 550004

Abstract: *With the unprecedented prosperity of travel-note creation, comprehensive theoretical discussion of travel notes emerged for the first time in the history of Chinese literature in the late Ming Dynasty, which was mainly about the relationship between literati and landscapes, reasons for diversified styles, the mentality of creation and methods of creation, involving all stages of travel notes from scratch to completion. Besides creating travel notes, literati in the Late Ming Dynasty had a significant contribution in the study of travel notes, taking travel literature from mere creation to the level of theoretical research, which is of great significance in the history of travel writing.*

Keywords: *The Late Ming Dynasty, Travel Notes, Theories of Travel Writing*

1. Introduction

The creation of travel notes has a long history. From the embryonic form of the Han and Wei Dynasties to the maturity of the Tang Dynasty, from the development of the Song Dynasty to the prosperity of the Ming and Qing Dynasties, countless travel notes were created in this period of more than two thousand years. Compared with the appearance and development of travel writing, related theories were quite lagging. It was not until the late Ming Dynasty that more comprehensive theories of travel writing appeared. The late Ming Dynasty witnessed a rapid development of travel writing. As a main style of writing, travel writing attracted attention from almost all writers. Many writers participated in travel writing, the scale of which was unprecedented. With the rapid development of travel writing, discussions and study of related problems began to emerge, and gradually formed a unique style of theories for travel writing in the late Ming Dynasty. The theories were mainly about the relationship between literati and landscapes, reasons for diversified styles, the mentality of creation, and methods of creation. Among them, there were discussions on traditional topics such as the relationship between men and nature, but also some essential issues such as travel styles and creation, as well as the development of concepts such as "Scene Choosing", "Scene Building", "Unique Interest", "Combining Narration and Creation" and "Capturing Inner Beauty". It was an emergence of comprehensive theoretical study of travel writing in the history of ancient literature, which showed the initial development of theories of travel writing in the late Ming Dynasty, taking travel literature from mere creation to the level of theoretical research, which is of great significance in the history of travel writing. Therefore, it calls for in-depth studies on this topic.

2. The Relationship between Literati and Landscapes

The discussion on the relationship between literati and landscapes has long existed in ancient times, and there are two different viewpoints: "Literati Benefiting from Landscapes" and "Landscapes Benefiting from Literati". The first viewpoint is "Literati Benefiting from Landscapes", as landscapes inspire them in creating literature, which helps them gain fame and status. Liu Xie is the first to put forward this viewpoint:

"Natural landscapes of the mountains and forests is indeed a treasure of inspiration for writing. If the language is too concise, it will be flawed; but if it is too detailed, it will be cumbersome. For instance, Qu Yuan could accomplish the great work of *Lisao* and *Guofeng*, as he benefited from nature!" ^[1]

The other viewpoint is "Landscapes Benefiting from Literati", for literati's great works can make the landscapes famous for thousands of years. As Liu Zongyuan says, "landscapes cannot brag about their own beauty; they need literati's help. We can see that in the case of Lanting Pavilion in Shanyin. If

it were not for Youjun (Wang Xizhi) to attract people to come for a visit, the clear streams and dense bamboo forests there could only fend for themselves in deserted mountains."^[2] On the relationship between the two, literati conducted an incredible amount of studies in the late Ming Dynasty. Generally, they paid more attention to "Landscapes Benefiting from Literati", that is, the influence of literati in spreading the fame of picturesque scenes. This tendency resulted from the wakening self-consciousness of the literati, the meaning of travel, and the self-awareness of travel writing in the late Ming Dynasty. Meanwhile, Literati also recognized the influence of landscapes on literati and the dialectical relationship between the two.

2.1 "*Landscapes Benefiting from Literati*"

Literati in the late Ming Dynasty tended to believe in "Landscapes Benefiting from Literati", which emphasizes the role of literati and their literary works in spreading the fame of natural mountains and rivers. They believed that natural mountains and rivers are far away from people, so if not for the literati's appreciation and the literature, they would not be known to the world. "People are the reasons for the immortality of heaven and earth, mountains and rivers."^[3] People here refer specifically to literati, for worldly people cannot appreciate the joy in travelling, nor can they express the greatness of nature in refined words in their works. Chen Jiru talks about the differences between literati and worldly people: "If a traveller is not a literati, he is just like a drunk dreamer, mistaking bones for hills, hair for vegetation, ears and nose for holes, mouth for a river, tongue for sand, eyes for the sun and the moon, air for the clouds. Because he is in a deep sleep, he cannot wake up; he even talks in sleep. When he is woken up and asked what has happened, he yawns and stretches, but cannot tell others clearly what has happened. When worldly people go travelling, they discover that the mountain road is getting steeper and steeper, so they will change their mind and return home. After returning home, they are dizzy and confused, like a dead person. Why are they so different from before? Some worldly people go against their own will by giving positive comments every time, without ever criticizing. These are hypocritical travellers. Wang Jizhong despised hypocritical travellers. He wrote this travel note to communicate with Wang and Xie and other friends. How can hypocritical travellers resonate with it?"^[4] Worldly travellers who are dizzy and confused, hypocritical travellers who go against their will, cannot appreciate the beauty of landscapes. This kind of travel is not real and does not affect landscapes. Only those literati like Wang and Xie can express the true temperament of landscapes and become close friends of landscapes. About the relationship between literature and landscapes, they believe that "If not for the beauty in the literature, the beauty of landscapes cannot be discovered, and the name of landscapes cannot be spread."^[5] Literati can create a travel note after travelling, which will spread the name of the landscapes, making it famous for thousands of years, making it immortal for generations to come. For instance, Libai made Jingting Mountain famous; Liu Zongyuan made Yongzhou famous. "Famous mountains and rivers are merely ordinary corners of the earth. They rise by windmills. What are the windmills? They are literary works created by literati."^[6] "Landscapes are waiting to be discovered. Stories, poems and articles, these three are like the eyes for landscapes."^[7] "Mountains and rivers are like a person's eyebrows, the function of which is to make one's appearance look cheerful; mountains and rivers are like a person's name, which can affect a person's destiny. The mountains on the north bank of Chushui are just like ordinary mountains in my hometown. However, after Ouyang Xiu and Su Dongpo set foot on them, they became famous all around the country. Isn't it a celebrity effect?"^[8] Emphasizing the role of literati in the development of landscapes is a common tendency of literati in the late Ming Dynasty. It had something to do with their emphasizing self-consciousness, but the direct reason is the literati's consciousness of travelling and travel writing. Literati in the late Ming Dynasty valued travelling with a consciousness of self-awakening different from the predecessors. They believed that "men should travel around, instead of staying at home. Mountain climbing and travelling, to relax and enjoy life, isn't it an important thing for a man with ambitions?"^[9] They also believed that if they did not travel, they would "fall short of their life and waste the beauty of landscapes"^[10]. In the late Ming Dynasty, based on the conscious awareness of travelling, literati raised their consciousness of travel writing. Many writers participated in travel writing, some of which even became famous for their travel notes. At the same time, they often commented on the travel notes of predecessors and literati at that time, so there was a consciousness in appreciation and evaluation of travel notes. Literati in the late Ming Dynasty valued travelling and travel writing. Besides, self-consciousness was awakening in this period. Under this circumstance, Literati naturally tended to emphasize the effect of literati and their creation on spreading the name of landscapes.

2.2 "Literati Benefiting from Landscapes"

Emphasize the effect of literati and their creation on spreading the name of landscapes does not mean that they completely ignored the reverse effect of landscapes on literati and their creation. Literati in the late Ming Dynasty also fully realized the influence of landscapes on inspiring literati and stimulating their creation of travel notes. Tan Yuanchun points out that landscapes "contributing to literature": "When you are in the mountain, you can observe the differences of the mountain at dawn and dusk; you can distinguish the borderlines of rain and fog; you can listen to the water flowing from higher fields to lower fields in the moonlight, you can climb to the top of the mountain, to watch the setting sun disappearing from the river; you can choose a rock to lean upon, to relaxing yourself; you can stroll in a path among pine trees, choose a tree that you love and sit down quietly. All these things contribute to the creation of literature. The latter will, in turn, contribute to the former. Was there any loss?"^[11] Natural landscapes can inspire literati to express their feelings, and thus their works also benefit from landscapes. These three parties can benefit from each other. "Landscapes and literati benefit from each other. Without literati and their works, landscapes are unknown to the world. Meanwhile, without the help of landscapes, literati cannot create great works to make them famous."^[12] "Landscapes become known with the help of literature, and literature becomes famous with the help of landscapes."^[13] All in all, literati in the late Ming Dynasty had a comprehensive understanding of the dialectical relationship between literati and landscapes. However, with awakening awareness of self-consciousness, they tended to emphasize the effect of literati on landscapes, which highlighted the subjective role of people, showing a distinctive feature of the late Ming Dynasty.

3. Theories of Styles of Travel Writing

Mei Xinlin describes travel notes in the late Ming Dynasty in the book *The History of Chinese Travel Writing*: "Mountains in undulation, in various forms, are magnificent." He also points out that "because the writers of travel notes in the late Ming Dynasty generally followed Yuan Hongdao's 'independent expression of spirit and freedom from conformity', they especially emphasized the subjective individualization and their feelings and the originality of describing landscapes". "Generally speaking, the pursuit of the uniqueness of creative style is highly valued in travel writing in the late Ming Dynasty."^[14] The pursuit of individualization resulted in various styles in travel writing in different writers in the late Ming Dynasty, who had a clear understanding of the uniqueness of their travel notes. As Wang Siren says: "The sparseness of Su Changgong, the deepness of Wang Lvdao, the elegance of Wang Yuanmei, the adventurousness of Li Yulin, and the prettiness of Yuan Zhonglang, different kinds of beauty has been captured by different writers."^[15] There were also discussions on different realms in travel notes. For instance, Yao Ximeng divided the styles into several types: "magnificent aerial view, remote narrow path, lively attraction, or lonely forest".^[16] Different writers have different styles, and each style presents a different realm. What are the reasons for these differences? This is an important issue in the creation of travel notes. Literati in the late Ming Dynasty summed up their experience in travel writing, and put forward some style theories such as "Scene Choosing", "Scene Building" and "Unique Interest".

3.1 "Scene Choosing"

"Scene Choosing" means that writers choose a specific scene in the landscape to be the subject of their creation. As different scenes are chosen, the styles of travel notes are different. Even with the same landscape, different writers choose different scenes, resulting in different styles. Literati in the late Ming Dynasty were keenly aware of the effect of "Scene Choosing" on the style of travel notes. As Huang Ruheng says in *Preface to Yao Yuansu's Travel Note of Huangshan*:

"We admire famous mountains as we admire beautiful women. Each woman has a different kind of smile from the other. All of them are slim, but they are slim in different ways. Each of them has a unique way of sitting, lying, walking and leaning. There are many changes. The same is true for mountains. The view of the setting sun is the same, but it is different to different people. In the late spring of 1610, I visited Huangshan and created a travel note, showing the beauty of 36 peaks I had visited. Yuansu visited Huangshan later, and he wrote about the autumn moon, using concise but complete language, different from my travel note, because we chose different scenes from the landscape. Yuansu chose Haizi Peak and Guangming Peak, and showed us a great picture of clouds around Dantai, as well as the peaks around the Stone Bridge. Yuansu could not describe all the

beauty here, but he tried his best. Different people's descriptions of beauty are subjective. Imperial concubines are jealous when they see a beauty enter the court. Can we be jealous when we see beautiful mountains? This article is written to give readers a laugh."^[17]

Huang Ruheng compares appreciating famous mountains to appreciating beautiful women in a joking way. Different people with different tastes see things differently. The same is true for landscapes, that is, people with different interests choose different scenes in the same landscape, and thus they see different kinds of beauty. This is the reason for individualization of writing styles of literati, as well as different styles of travel notes.

3.2 "Scene Building"

In addition to "Scene Choosing", Yao Ximeng puts forward the style theory of "Scene Building". He says in *Preface to a Journey to the West Lake*:

"There are many ways of "Scene Building". When we are happy, we see mountains wearing beautiful clothes; when we are sad, we see mountains shedding tears. It is natural to feel like this, rather than changing our feelings purposefully. Isn't it against the law of nature that we see prosperity when we are sad, we hear lively music when we are saying goodbye to a friend? Liuzhou has been recommended in many ancient travel notes. However, when Zihou (Liu Zongyuan) was degraded and forced to go there, he was undergoing great difficulties in his life. When he saw the water flowing in the mountain river, he saw sadness and coldness; When he heard the wind blowing in the valley, he felt scared as though it were the sound of ghosts for spiritualism. Things agree to each other, without discussion in advance. Miserable and tragic people were bound with broken cliffs and deserted bushes. They created literary works with these negative feelings and left them to future generations. Meanwhile, Yishao (Wang Xizhi) and Yuanliang (Tao Yuanming) showed joy and happiness in their works. If you say people and nature are not bound, landscapes and literature are not connected, I will not believe you."^[18]

Yao Ximeng's "Scene Building" is similar to Huang Ruheng's "Scene Choosing", both of which imply that choosing different scenes in the creation of travel notes will result in different styles. However, "Scene Building" highlights the subjective factors of people, implying that while "Scene Choosing" is also important, people and nature, landscapes and literature are closely connected to each other. In other words, people choose scenes according to their personality and mood, and the scenes they choose will determine the style of their work. For instance, Liu Zongyuan was in a bad mood, so he naturally chose scenes that suited his state of mind; that is why his travel notes showed a state of quiet, tragic, and cold-hearted style. Wang Xizhi and his *Orchid Pavilion*, Tao Yuanming and his *The Peach Blossom Spring*, show that "things agree to each other, without discussion in advance". Combining the subjective state of mind and the objective state of scenes that suit the state of mind produces different styles is called "Scene Building". In other words, "Scene Choosing" is the selection of objective scenes (the realm of things); "Scene Building" is the selection of subjective scenes (the realm of inner self). "Scene Building" explores more deeply the importance of subjectivity among all the factors for the diversity of styles.

3.3 "Unique Interest"

There are many reasons for the diversity of the styles of travel notes, among which there are "Scene Choosing" and "Scene Building". No matter how many different reasons there are, the most fundamental reason is that the writers have different interests in landscapes. In the process of creating a travel note, writers always describe in detail the scenes that they like, and say only a few words about the scenes that they do not like. Even with the same scene, different people observe from different angles, which naturally results in different styles. This is what Tao Wangling calls "Unique Interest": "In the same landscape, there are different scenes in different days, depending on the weather. In the same scene, people have different interests. As people with different interests choose different scenes, different styles of travel notes will naturally appear."^[19] For instance, for the same scene, Yuan Hongdao and Wang Siren show completely different writing styles. With the same scene of Tiger Hill, Yuan Hongdao in his work *Tiger Hill* describes in detail how much he enjoys the journey, showing a cheerful style of travel notes, while Wang Siren in his work *Second Journey on Tiger Hill* describes in detail interesting talks with his friend in the journey, showing a humorous style of travel notes. Another example is with the same scene of Manjing in Beijing. Yuan Hongdao in his work *Travel Note of*

Manjing Mountain expresses his overflowing joy in travelling in the spring, while Wang Siren in his work *Travel Note of Manjing Mountain* describes the variety of life states of ordinary people, as if he was watching a show in Manjing. The difference originates in different interests of each writer. The combination of different interests and different scenes produce different styles of travel notes.

The reasons for the different styles of travel writing have been explored from different perspectives. The style theories are based not only on experience and practice, but also on a profound understanding of social status in that period. Therefore, to a certain extent, the style theories of travel writing of the late Ming Dynasty is an inevitable product of the prominent development of individuation in the late Ming Dynasty.

4. Mentality of Travel Writing: "Nothingness in Mind" and "Harmony of Mind and Landscapes"

When literati finished travelling and started to create a travel note, what kind of mentality were they in? Literati in the late Ming Dynasty believed that "when you travel, there is no need thinking about creating travel notes; otherwise it will spoil your interest in travelling".^[20] Instead, the mentality for travelling should be "free of worries, detached from emotions".^[21] However, when creating travel notes, the writer should relive the memories of travelling, so that the mental state of writing and the mental state of travelling are in line with each other. Only when you relive the experience and see things vividly can you "indulge in your thoughts, and write wherever your thoughts are".^[22] Only in this way can you express all your feelings of travelling naturally. The mentality of creating should be consistent with the mentality of travelling, that is, when you are creating, you should be free of all kinds of worries, detached from emotions, to enter the mental state of "nothingness and harmony".^[23] This is what Yao Ximeng calls "Xuandui", a harmonious state of mind: "When you see something sad, you are detached from this emotion. You feel sad, but you do not show it. Only in this way can you be close to a harmonious state of mind."^[24] Only in this way can you set your mind free, which is vital in travelling as well as in the process of travel writing. "After travelling, literati create poems, which are as good as the landscapes. Are people without 'nothingness and harmony' capable of doing this?"^[25] "If you have sad things in your mind, even when you are in front of beautiful landscapes, with such pleasure just in front of your face, you still do not feel happy, as if you are far away. In this situation how can you create poems to pass down to future generations?"^[26] The best state of mind for creation is "Nothingness in Mind" and "Harmony of Mind and Landscapes", that is, with nothing unhappy in your mind. Dong Qichang says: "With a state of mind that is free from worries, it is easy to build a natural landscape in your mind. In this way, you can easily create a work that will demonstrate the true beauty of the landscape."^[27] Li Rihua also says: "You have to set your mind free of worries. Only in this way, when you see the beauty of clouds and the vitality of nature, you can naturally create extraordinary literary works. If your mind is burdened with worries or troubles, which you cannot forget, you cannot produce great works, even if you work from morning till night."^[28] The mentality of travel writing should be the same as painting. You have to set your mind free of distracting thoughts before you have a great insight into the vitality of nature, so as to capture the true beauty of the landscapes.

5. Methods of Travel Writing

Concerning methods of travel writing, literati in the late Ming Dynasty had three main points of view: "Combining Narration and Creation", "Connecting Emotion and Landscapes" and "Capturing Inner Beauty". This is the theoretical summary of the literati in the late Ming Dynasty after creating a large number of travel notes. It is also influenced by the aesthetic concepts of landscapes and the development of painting theories at that time. It reflects the uniqueness and timeliness of creating methods of travel notes in the late Ming Dynasty.

5.1 Combining Narration and Creation

Narration and creation are two main methods in the creation of travel notes. Narration refers to the reproduction of objective facts, focusing on narration of scenes, facts and the journey itself; while creation is to express subjective emotions, focusing on expressing the writer's emotions and feelings during the journey. Literati in the late Ming Dynasty believed that a balanced combination of narration and creation was essential in creating great travel notes. Zhong Xing clearly expresses this point of view in *Preface to Famous Places in Shuzhong* (Sichuan Province):

"Ancient and modern travel notes of landscapes are either creation or narration. Writers narrated the landscapes with their talents; writers express their emotions through the narration of the landscapes. In this way, travel notes written in ancient and modern times are still consistent with each other.

"The spirit of modern ancient writers is transformed into the spirit of landscapes, to make landscapes and literature become one, and everyone interested will see the same thing. Narration and creation are like the longitude and latitude of the globe. By combining the two, we can create literary works better than mere narration."^[29]

Zhong Xing believes that narration and creation are the two basic creating methods of ancient and modern travel notes. How to deal with the relationship between the two is extremely important in the creation of travel notes. He believes that the talent of the writer and the subject of narration are both important. The former is essential in expressing subjective emotions and demonstrating subjective talents, while the latter is essential to describe objective facts and things that happened. Narration and creation are like the longitude and latitude of the globe. Only by combining the two creative methods, "combining narration and creation as one, combining ancient and modern as one", can we create great travel notes, to even achieve the effect of "unexpectedly better than narration".^[30]

Cao Xuequan also expresses a similar point of view in his work *Preface to Hong Ruhan's Travel Note of Gushan*:

"The most difficult kind of literature is travel notes of mountains. Before you start to write, you read plenty of related literature, so when you write, it's easy for you to just take down what you have read. You are like displaying other people's treasures, which has nothing to do with your journey to the mountain. You can write about a journey elsewhere; you can even write about a journey that other people took. The former is constrained and lacks charm; the latter is vague and not real, both of which have the same flaws.

"Travel writing is just like painting. Painters have to copy the paintings of the ancients, but occasionally they have their own thoughts, making the painting more lively and more natural. However, when they paint in front of a landscape, it is often difficult. Therefore, I think that paintings do not have to be similar, because the distances of the scenes are different, the locations of trees and stones are not the same. If paintings are too similar, it is against the principle of painting. Therefore, you should comply with the principle of painting to create paintings similar to the actual scenes in front of you. These paintings should not be considered defective because they are not similar to ancient paintings."^[31]

Cao Xuequan believes that in creating travel notes, narrating without creating is like counting other people's treasures, rather than express one's own emotions in travelling, which makes the travel note constrained and lack in charm. Meanwhile, creating without narrating, lacking confirmation from previous literature, makes the travel note vague and not real. Therefore, to create great travel notes, it is essential to combine narration and creation; just like in painting, it's essential to combine copying ancient paintings and creating with your own thoughts, to "make the painting more lively and more natural".

5.2 "Connecting Emotions and Landscapes"

The relationship between motions and landscapes is an essential issue in travel writing. Literati in the late Ming Dynasty have done some research on this issue. The most dominant viewpoint is "Connecting Emotions and Landscapes": "Emotions and landscapes are both important. Travel notes with only emotions or landscapes do not make sense."^[32] Emotions refer to the writer's feelings, and landscapes refer to the scenes that the writer has seen. Connecting the two parties can lead to a unique realm of art. Just as Chen Jiru says about a friend's travel note: "Journeys to historical places result in literary works with sad emotions; repeated journeys to a certain place imply drinking wine joyfully, resulting in literature full of elegance and beauty; journeys to mountains with legends of the immortals result in literature with peace and serenity. With a great connection of emotions and landscapes, you can create great literary works naturally, as good as music from angels in heaven."^[33] However, while recognizing the importance of connecting emotions and landscapes, people also notice the contradictory relationship between the two, as well the effect of afflatus that comes suddenly. Just as Tang Bingyin says in his work *Preface to Poems of Guangzhong*:

"Once I was in a mountain with fabulous views, which filled me with great emotions, and

suddenly, an afflatus came to me. I tried hard to get rid of it, but I could not. After a long time of struggling, I decided to comply with it, as if it were sent from heaven above. Inspired by heaven, isn't it as great as the poem itself?" [34]

Tang Bingyin describes the experience of changing the relationship of emotions and landscapes from contradiction to integration. At first, beautiful landscapes on the outside and the afflatus on the inside are contradictory. After a long time of silent communication, the two began to integrate with each other. At that moment, emotions and landscapes are connected to each other, like a message from heaven, resulting in a great poem. The state of being "inspired by heaven" is when afflatus comes suddenly in the integration of emotions and landscapes.

5.3 "Capturing Inner Beauty".

Concerning how to describe landscapes, literati in the late Ming Dynasty adopted the method of "Capturing Inner Beauty". This method requires writers to focus on displaying the inner beauty of the landscapes, such as their temperament, character and charm, instead of describing the objective outside looks. When describing landscapes, you should "overlook the appearance and capture the inner beauty". [35] Literati in the late Ming Dynasty believed that to capture the inner beauty of the landscapes, writers have to communicate with the landscapes, to gain insights into their temperament, before they can capture the inner beauty of the landscapes. Wen Qixiang says in his work *Postscript of Travel Note of Chunfuyuan*:

"Boyu (Xiao Shiwei) has a remarkable insight into landscapes. When he visits a beautiful landscape, he knows at first sight what is good or bad, which might not be known to people who often go there. Let alone being in the mountain for a long time, sitting and lying in it, observing its temperament and character, and the changes, before creating a travel note. It must be of high quality to the smallest detail, making it one of the best in the world. Many travellers are like guests; they barely enter the house; they do not get inside the house, then how can we say he has been to the house? They have no idea of the host's voice or face, let alone his temperament. What's the point of creating a travel note? There is no great landscape without winding. There are no writers who can create great travel notes without visiting great places." [36]

The above statements point out the relationship between travelling and travel writing: Only by capturing the inner beauty of the landscapes can you create great travel notes. Before creating a good travel note, you have to be good at travelling, which means being able to capture "the temperament and changes" of the landscapes while travelling. Only in this way can you create a travel note to show the inner beauty of the landscapes; only in this way can you create a travel note of high quality to the smallest detail, making it one of the best in the world. Wang Siren says in commenting a friend's travel note, "Lv Dalai, a straight-forward literati, lives in Nanming and knows the place to the smallest detail, so when he writes about Nanming, he creates a vivid picture, in which mountains and rivers are laughing, trees and flowers are dancing." [37] "To the smallest detail" means overlooking the appearance and capturing the temperament and character of the landscapes. Only in this way can he make the landscapes lively, and "create a vivid picture". This coincides with what Qi Biaoqia says about "uncovering the temperament of the landscapes": "The personality of Chen Luyan helps him uncover the temperament of the landscape, showing a vivid picture of the nature--the moon, streams, clouds and mountains, with birds singing and flowers laughing. This is called a poem." [38] When the writer can uncover the temperament of the landscapes, which is compatible with his personality, he can create great poems. This is the highest standard not only for creating literary works, but also for assessing the quality of literature. For instance, Jiang Yingke says about Yuan Hongdao's works: "When Zhonglang (Yuan Hongdao) describes a landscape, he shows the temperament vividly--happiness and sadness, movements and stillness. Other people write about the skin of the face, while he writes about the facial expression." [39] "Capturing Inner Beauty" became an essential standard and method in travel writing in the late Ming Dynasty, which is closely related to aesthetic standards and the development of theories of literati painting at that time.

The most crucial thing in aesthetic standards in the late Ming Dynasty is to communicate with the landscapes. Worldly travelling by ordinary people was abandoned. Literati were required to communicate with the landscapes in a spiritual way, to see mountains not only with their eyes, but also with their heart. Only in this way can they capture the landscapes' temperament and to become the "interpreter" of the landscapes. The close relationship of landscapes and inner self became an inner motivation for travel writing in the late Ming Dynasty. At that time, literati paintings became fashionable, and theories of creating literati paintings became a source of reference for theories of travel

writing. The landscape painting school of the late Ming Dynasty abandoned courtyard painting methods since the beginning of the Ming Dynasty; they advocated the freehand method of literati painting in the Yuan Dynasty, focusing on the expression of "morale of the literati", which is different from "environment of the courtyard" in courtyard painting method. Tu Long says in his work *Kao Pan Yu Shi*: "(Literati paintings) are lively. They pursue heavenly interest rather than worldly interest. They should be called writing, instead of painting, for they are so different from courtyard paintings."^[40] Dong Qichang says in *Hua Jue (Painting Tactics)*: "When creating a literati painting, you should paint as if you were doing calligraphy: trees are like iron; mountains are like piles of sand, abandoning traditional ways of painting, so as to create 'morale of the literati'. The first standard in painting is 'Lively Charm'. Charm is like a gift from heaven. However, you can earn it by a great amount of reading and travelling. When you have freed your mind from worldly burdens, you gain insights into nature. In this way, you can create great travel notes."^[41] Dong Qichang points out the importance of describing the temperament, the charm and the character of the landscapes in painting theory. Li Rihua also points out in *Liuyanzhai Essays* the painting theory of focusing on the inner beauty of the landscapes:

When describing something, gestures are more important than appearance; charm is more important than gestures; character is more important than charm. Appearance such as shapes and sizes can be described with words easily; gestures is full of changes, so words only are not enough to describe it; charm is of lively interest, which can be imagined, but hard to understand; character is like a gift from heaven, so only those who are highly skilled can get it."^[42]

"Appearance", "gesture", "charm" and "character" are four levels of describing landscapes. Li Rihua thinks that "charm" makes literature lively, and that "character" makes literature natural. To achieve "charm" and "character" means reaching the highest realm of painting. Many travel writers are landscape painters in the late Ming Dynasty, such as Li Liufang, Yao Ximeng, Li Rihua and Dong Qichang. The atmosphere of creating literati paintings in the late Ming Dynasty positively influenced travel writing, making "Capturing Inner Beauty" an essential theory for creating travel notes in the late Ming Dynasty.

6. Conclusion

To sum up, from the theory of the relationship between man and nature, the theory of style, the theory of mentality for creation, to the theory of methodology for creation, the theories of travel writing in the late Ming Dynasty almost covers all stages of travel writing, from germination to formation, which is quite systematic. This is the theoretical exploration of literati in the late Ming Dynasty, based on creating a large number of travel notes, and it is also a natural result of the highly prosperous creation of travel notes in the late Ming Dynasty. The theories of travel writing in the late Ming Dynasty, as an extended content of creating travel notes, are only lightly mentioned in the existing research of travel notes. For instance, Mei Xinlin and Yu Zhanghua raise this question in *The History of Chinese Travel Writing*, but they have not made any systematic summary or in-depth discussion on specific contents. This is a significant shortcoming in the study of travel writing in the late Ming Dynasty, and it is also a blank point in *The history of Chinese travel writing*. Nonetheless, the first self-consciousness of the literati in the late Ming Dynasty is undoubtedly a vital exploration and breakthrough, which is essential for the establishment of a theoretical system of travel writing. The summary and discussion of the theories of travel writing in the late Ming Dynasty can provide a deeper understanding of the characteristics and development of travel writing in the late Ming Dynasty, and it can also acknowledge the critical position and significance of the prosperity of travel writing in the late Ming Dynasty in the history of travel literature.

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