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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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The Reconstruction of the Subject-Object Relationship in Ancient *Shanshui* Aesthetics: On Xie Lingyun's "Rhapsody on Dwelling in the Mountains"

Abstract Xie Lingyun's 谢灵运 "Rhapsody on Dwelling in the Mountains" 山居赋 is not only a remarkable literary achievement but also holds significant value in the theoretical discourse on ancient Chinese *shanshui* 山水 (landscape) aesthetics. It expands the subject-object relationship within this aesthetic tradition: Instead of mere contemplation, which became prevalent in the pre-Qin and Han periods, it presents a subject-object relationship that integrates the enjoyment of dwelling and roaming with aesthetic appreciation, reflecting the thoughts on the body-mind relationship and the nature-principle relationship within *shanshui* aesthetics. The aesthetic distance in the "Rhapsody on Dwelling in the Mountains," neither too close nor too far, deviates from the rhapsody tradition and the established custom of mountain dwelling. This rhapsody expresses the viewpoint centered on "attaining intention" 意得 and "delighting the heart" 赏心, pioneering a self-fulfilling space 自得之场 transcending and yet grounded in the mundane world, thus influencing the depiction from the subjective spirit in subsequent *shanshui* aesthetics.

Keywords *shanshui*; landscape; Xie Lingyun; "Rhapsody on Dwelling in the Mountains"; subject-object relationship; aesthetic distance

Xie Lingyun 谢灵运, a renowned poet of the Song of the Southern Dynasties, not only makes significant contributions to *shanshui* 山水 (landscape) literature but also reconstructs the subject-object relationship in ancient Chinese *shanshui* aesthetics, a feat prominently showcased in his "Rhapsody on Dwelling in the Mountains" 山居赋 (hereinafter referred to as Rhapsody). The Rhapsody, fully included in the "Biography of Xie Lingyun" in *History of the Song of the Southern Dynasties* 宋书・谢灵运传 compiled by Shen Yue 沈约, stands as one of Xie Lingyun's monumental works. Boldly innovative in form, this rhapsody employs annotations to depict a beautiful, well-supplied, and habitable mountain-dwelling

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environment that the poet deliberately crafted. In addition, it introduces a new theory of *shanshui* aesthetics, representing the development and innovation of *shanshui* aesthetic conception in the Southern Dynasties and greatly enriching the conceptual underpinnings of the subject-object relationship. Previous studies on Chinese *shanshui* literature often explore the transformation of the subject-object relationship from the perspective of *shanshui* aesthetic independence. For instance, Cheng Yu-yu 郑毓瑜 proposes the idea of aesthetic perception through "direct observation" 寓目 (Cheng 1997, 121–170), Zhang Jiemo 张节末 (2005) unveils the experience of *yijing* 意境,[1] Xiao Chi 萧驰 emphasizes the "original spirit of natural life" (Xiao 2011, 225–270), and Yu Kailiang 余开亮 (2018) advocates the integration of a visual intuition, vivid landscape, and the aesthetic realm. However, regarding "*shanshui* aesthetic independence" as the sole criterion for the transformation of landscape experience is questionable, as it leads to a research approach that emphasizes the prominence of "objects" 物 rather than the subject-object structure. This paper, focusing on the Rhapsody, explores how Xie Lingyun reconstructs the ancient *shanshui* aesthetic experience through his exploration of the *shanshui* aesthetic distance.[2]

1 The Uniqueness of Dwelling in the Mountains from a Body-Mind Perspective

In ancient Chinese aesthetics, the subject-object relationship is a fundamental relationship, which is reflected in aesthetic concepts of mind-object 心物 and emotion-object 情物. The transformation of the subject-object relationship reveals the changing interactions between humans and the external world and reflects human civilization. From the pre-Qin period to the Six Dynasties, the subject-object relationship in *shanshui* aesthetics undergoes three stages of transformation. The first stage is the primitive era. *Shanshui* concepts during this period are influenced by primitive shamanic culture, with landscapes serving as a medium for shamans to communicate with mysterious natural forces. The second stage is the ritual and music era. *Shanshui* concepts during this period are built on a framework of world knowledge and ideological systems, with landscapes serving the practical purpose of expressing the political ideals of Confucianism and Daoism, as exemplified in literary works, such as *The Book of Songs* 诗经, *Ode of Chu* 楚辞, and Han rhapsodies. The third stage is the metaphysical era. *Shanshui* concepts during this period are rooted in the relationship between Confucianism and nature, with landscapes becoming domains for emotional inspiration and rational exploration. This metaphysical approach is not limited to poetry composition but manifests in rhapsody writing. Xie Lingyun's Rhapsody with a form that falls somewhere between grand Han-style rhapsodies and short lyrical rhapsodies, is a crucial demonstration of the subject-object relationship transformation in *shanshui* aesthetics during the Southern Dynasties. It reveals the poet's innovative approach to enriching the traditional Chinese aesthetic attitude and distance in *shanshui* appreciation, as reflected by the new rhapsody form and literary

[1] *Yijing* describes an intense aesthetic experience in which one's perception of an object reaches a realm of perfect union with the implication denoted by the object.

[2] Regarding the *shanshui* aesthetic value of the Rhapsody, see Li Liang 李亮 (1994, 27–35); Liu Ning 刘宁 (2021, 90–115); and David R. Knechtges (2019, 56–104). However, these studies mainly examine the aesthetic value of the Rhapsody from the perspective of "dwelling" 居 and "wandering" 游 without discussing the innovations of the Rhapsody in *shanshui* aesthetic theory. This paper elucidates these unaddressed aspects.

criticism. Aesthetic distance denotes the aesthetic subject-object relationship, while Xie Lingyun's arrangement of the mountain-dwelling space is the external condition for his psychological distance to emerge. According to his biography in the *History of the Song of the Southern Dynasties*, after Emperor Liu Yifu 刘义符 ascended the throne, power was concentrated in the hands of Xu Xianzhi 徐羡之 and others, leaving Xie Lingyun unfulfilled; a year after becoming the Perfect of Yongjia in the third year of Yongchu (422), Xie Lingyun resigned due to illness and returned to Shining County in Guiji, where his ancestors were buried. After returning home to Shining County, Xie Lingyun managed his estate and residences and created the Rhapsody and numerous *shanshui* poetry (Shen 1974, 1753–1754). Shining, within the jurisdiction of Guiji, is abundant in resources and beautiful scenery, favored by northern scholars who migrated south along with the imperial family of Jin. Tang Zhangru 唐长孺 points out, "Northern immigrants settled in the Wuhui region found their hopes of obtaining cultivated farmland frustrated, and thus expanded their feudal land through estate establishments in mountain, forest, and lake regions—a phenomenon particularly prominent in the Guiji area" (Tang 2011, 102). The private estate of the Xie family becomes an independent and self-sufficient economy, supporting the personality ideal of leisurely seclusion in landscapes and facilitating the shaping of a new subject-object relationship within the aesthetic realm.

The spiritual and material significance of Xie Lingyun's dwelling in the mountains is rooted in the aesthetic psychology of healing and seeking uniqueness. First, by contrasting dwelling in the mountains with the traditional reclusive life, Xie Lingyun emphasizes the uniqueness of the former. The preface of his Rhapsody states,

> In antiquity, dwelling in nests and staying in caves is called resting on a cliff. Living in the mountains under a ridgepole and roof is called dwelling in the mountains. Residing in the wooded wilds is called [living in] the hills and gardens, and in the suburbs is called [living] beside the city wall. The differences among the four may be deduced by reason. In one's mind, the yellow canopy may not be different from the north bank of Fenhe River. In actual practice, however, dwelling in the mountains is certainly distinct from [living in] the city marketplace. After resigning due to illness, I now follow my nature and indulge in my pleasures, thus composing this rhapsody. (Gu 2004, 449)
> 古巢居穴处曰岩栖,栋宇居山曰山居,在林野曰丘园,在郊郭曰城傍,四者不同,可以理推。言心也,黄屋实不殊于汾阳;即事也,山居良有异乎市廛。抱疾就闲,顺从性情,敢率所乐,而以作赋。

Xie Lingyun analyzes the four traditional forms of reclusion and extolls the uniqueness of his dwelling in the mountains. Compared to the primitive simplicity of resting on cliffs, the austerity of living in the hills and gardens, and the noise of suburbs, his dwelling in the mountains offers both material abundance and spiritual liberation, allowing him to break free from the constraints of political power while following his nature and convalescing in leisure. Xie Lingyun inherits his ancestors' residence in the Northern Mountain and develops a new residence in the Southern Mountain, building a life in the estate in Shining. Xie Lingyun believes that the ideal aesthetic scene is based on the fusion of practicality and

aesthetics, which is impossible without the combination of natural landscapes and man-made construction, and the creation of the environment for his dwelling in the mountains is exactly a practical manifestation of this philosophy. The Rhapsody says,

> If wind and dew bring distress to nests and caves, then the hexagram Great Strength expels harm with the ridgepole and roof; if palaces and halls are adorned with jade and precious stones, then the hexagram Simple Adornment shows how hills and gardens transcend beauty. Finding solace in the embrace of rocky cliffs and valleys, I am fortunate to harmonize both without hindrance. Though I am away from the court and marketplace, I can enjoy a temperate climate; though constructed, my residence is neither overly ornate nor overly simple. (Gu 2004, 450)
> 若夫巢穴以风露贻患，则《大壮》以栋宇祛弊；宫室以瑶璇致美，则“白贲”以丘园殊世。惟上托于岩壑，幸兼善而罔滞。虽非市朝而寒暑均也，虽是筑构而饰朴两逝。

This is in stark contrast to the earlier instances of living leisurely in the mountains, which often suffered from rough terrain, lacked a sense of reclusive dwelling, or lacked landscape diversity.

Second, Xie Lingyun demonstrates the uniqueness of his dwelling in the mountains by breaking the rhapsody tradition. In the preface of Rhapsody, Xie Lingyun writes,

> This rhapsody is not a description of the grand capital, amusement palace, hunting events, or sound and sight. Instead, it is all about mountains, wilderness, vegetation, water, rocks, and crops. I am lacking in talent compared to those of the past, but my heart is set free from the mundane world. I can strive to write in a literary style, but the ornate style of past masterpieces is far beyond my reach. If you do not pursue the ornate language, as seen in the works of Zhang Heng 张衡 and Zuo Si 左思, and embrace simplicity instead, following the spirit of Tai Tong 台佟 and the Four Graybeards of Shangshan Mountain 商山四皓, you may find this work resonates with your heart. (Gu 2004, 449)
> 今所赋既非京都宫观游猎声色之盛，而叙山野草木水石谷稼之事，才乏昔人，心放俗外，咏于文则可勉而就之，求丽，邈以远矣。览者废张、左之艳辞，寻台、皓之深意，去饰取素，傥值其心耳。

In this preface, Xie Lingyun reveals his admiration for graceful simplicity, withdrawing from the mundane affairs of the world. Unlike the extravagant descriptions of the capital's hunting events in grand Han-style rhapsodies, his Rhapsody seeks profound meanings in the hermit tradition outside the orthodox political perspective, attaining a spiritual appreciation that transcends words. Beyond the grand Han-style rhapsodies, Xie Lingyun specifically responds to the tradition of asking after one's health, as seen in Mei Cheng's 枚乘 "Seven Elicitations" 七发. Addressing the fictional description, "On the left is the river, and the right is the lake. There is one another pleasure like this" 左江右湖，其乐无有, Xie Lingyun comments,

> This refers to the wilderness of Jiangdu, where there are rivers and lakes but no mountains or cliffs. My place is also surrounded by rivers and lakes, but the mountainous landscapes

are what Jiangdu lacks. Accompanied by islets and shoals suggests being surrounded by waters while facing the mountains and backed by hills indicates the presence of mountains to the east and west. This is a scene encircled by water. There is water flowing in and out, implying the existence of a river in the middle. Spanning, crossing, winding, and twining suggest the integration of the landscape. The winding parts are described as stretching diagonally, while the flat and straight parts are described as stretching straightly. (Gu 2004, 452)
当谓江都之野,彼虽有江湖而乏山岩,此忆江湖左右与之同,而山岳形势,池城所无也。往渚还汀,谓四面有水;面山背阜,亦谓东西有山,便是四水之里也。抱含吸吐,谓中央复有川。款跨纡萦,谓边背相连带。迂回处谓之邪亘;平正处谓之侧直。

In "Seven Elicitations," the guest from Wu visualized the inner landscape of ascending a terrace and admiring the view to cure illness, whereas the Rhapsody is an account of a tangible physical space. In the Rhapsody, Xie Lingyun provides a straightforward description of the scenery that is far and near in all directions, admiring the landscapes from a daily life perspective through a practice that engages both the body and mind. This approach is even more evident in Xie Lingyun's response to "watching the waves at Guangling,"

When the giant bore flows full, piled rocks disappear; when clear ripples subside, sunken sands appear; when the wind rises, and waves heave, the water's force races swift and strong. In spring and autumn of the year, during the new and full moon of the month, startling waves in flooding flow, terrifying swells in swirling surges, strike like lighting, crash like thunder, their rapid flow sprays and soaks. They overtop sheer cliffs forming protruding crests; they cut across the mainstream and flow continuously onward. At first, they swiftly swirl and leap into the sky, then upturn the river bottom, revealing deep chasms. With this, the Chu heir had his heart entranced by the guest from Wu, and the River Spirit was put to shame by the Sea God. (Gu 2004, 454)
洪涛满则曾石没,清澜减则沉沙显。及风兴涛作,水势奔壮。于岁春秋,在月朔望。汤汤惊波,滔滔骇浪。电激雷崩,飞流洒漾。凌绝壁而起岑,横中流而连薄。始迅转而腾天,终倒底而见壑。此楚贰心醉于吴客,河灵怀惭于海若。

The guest from Wu compares the rise and fall of the waves to "profound truths and essential principles" 要言妙道 only to use these vivid images as expedient expressions, which ultimately point to meanings beyond words. In the "Autumn Floods" in *Zhuangzi* 庄子·秋水, the god of the North Sea says, "Thinking himself to have a body fromed by Heaven and Earth, and to have received breath from the *yin* and *yang*" 自以比形于天地,而受气于阴阳 (Guo 1998, 330). This statement also incorporates oneself into the Dao of nature. Xie Lingyun's observation of the waves is not about their forms but their adherence to the innate Dao of change and transformation, pursuing a spiritual realm where the subject and object are integrated. Furthermore, Xie Lingyun emphasizes the importance of freeing captive animals, departing from using hunting as a form of therapy in "Seven Elicitations." In the Rhapsody, he writes, "If horse riders and hunters make a recovery, the merciless will be saved by awareness of Dao" 驰骋者倘能狂愈,猜害者或可理攀, and explains in a note, "Those who

harbor malice often have a harmful intent, but they may be talked around once they get to know the reason for freeing captive animals" 猜害者恒以忍害为心，见放生之理，或可得悟也 (Gu 2004, 464). Unlike the exciting activities of hunting, freeing captive animals allows all beings to get to their proper places and coexist harmoniously. The practice of freeing captive animals and understanding Dao conveys Xie Lingyun's hope to liberate himself from a political setback.

Third, Xie Lingyun demonstrates the uniqueness of dwelling in the mountains through his integrated practice of residing and wandering in the landscape. He advocates the concepts of "dwelling" and "wandering in retreat" 嘉遁之所游 in the mountains. These concepts, combining stillness and movement, involve the exploration of the aesthetic distance in *shanshui* appreciation. Since the Wei and Jin dynasties, there have been two classic models of *shanshui* appreciation: One is the secular model represented by Shi Chong 石崇 and Pan Yue 潘岳 in the Western Jin Dynasty, and the other is the pastoral model represented by Tao Qian 陶潜 (courtesy name Yuanming 渊明) in the Eastern Jin Dynasty. These two models reflect different worldviews and aesthetic tastes, revealing the contradictory relationship between official duties and sylvan retreats. Shen Yue points out in the "Biographies of Recluses" in *History of the Song of the Southern Dynasties* 宋书・隐逸传 that true recluses are not merely those who seclude themselves in the wilderness, but rather those whose minds are detached from the secular world.[3] However, it is difficult to grasp the measure of this spiritual distance, as being too close or too far away is not conducive to the material enjoyment of natural landscapes and aesthetic experience. Diverging from the values of scholars since the Wei and Jin dynasties, Xie Lingyun develops an integrated experience of dwelling and wandering in the mountains. His Rhapsody states,

> From the garden, one goes to the fields; from the fields, one goes to the lake. The waters have flooded the riverbank; far and wide, they flow over the watery precincts. I dredged deep streams that wend long and far; I removed twisted tangles from the wild rice islets. Warm springs gush forth in early spring torrents; cold waves dash as autumn rushes onward. The wind stirs waves on isles where thoroughwort grows; the sun refracts its light on the fagara-planted path. A water-soaked terrace soars from an island in the river; there, we take pleasure in the moon reflected in the water. At dawn shadows stretch and everything is cool; at dusk fragrance gathers and the sweet aroma spreads. I reminiscing about the friends permanently parted, and I await the temporary visit of a wandering recluse. (Gu 2004, 455)
>
> 自园之田，自田之湖。泛滥川上，缅邈水区。浚潭涧而窈窕，除菰洲之纡余。毖温泉于春流，驰寒波而秋徂。风生浪于兰渚，日倒景于椒涂。飞渐榭于中沚，取水月之欢娱。旦延阴而物清，夕栖芬而气敷。顾情交之永绝，觊云客之暂如。

[3] "The term 'recluse' 隐 (逸) refers to those whose whereabouts are not revealed and whose wisdom remains unknowable. If, for a thousand years, no worthy ruler has emerged in the world, then great sages will conceal their talents, blending in with the ordinary, with the sole purpose of preserving their own lives and staying away from harm. They do not necessarily reside in caves or on rocky cliffs. Although they hide their traces to avoid harm, they possess profound insights into the ultimate principles, yet the world cannot glimpse their true selves, nor can anyone witness their talents. How would such individuals be willing to act like Xu You 许由, washing their ears at the bank of the Yingshui River, thereby overtly displaying their aspirations to transcend the mundane world" (Shen 1974, 2275).

Xie Lingyun's outstanding literary description of his estate in the mountains is fascinating. These endlessly beautiful scenes are all within his estate in the mountains. In the mindset of fully owning the mountain estate, he derives aesthetic pleasure and attained an aesthetic sense unattainable by ordinary people through dwelling and wandering.

The combination of Xie Lingyun's estate and carefully crafted scenes of natural beauty resulted in a mountain-dwelling aesthetics that transcends utilitarianism, achieving the goal of physical and spiritual cultivation. It not only satisfies the sublimation of the spirit but also exhibites significant physical therapeutic effects, reflecting Xie Lingyun's Dao of preserving health formed by integrating Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism. Unlike Shi Chong and Pan Yue, who pursued social status and fame and derived the pleasures of living in leisure from secular sensual gratification, Xie Lingyun aims to enter a purely aesthetic realm by keeping his body and mind in a clear and unbounded state. In the Rhapsody, he explains in a note, "Bidding farewell to friends means declining the relationship with lifelong companions; going to mountains and streams means rooting in the clarity and boundlessness" 曰与知游别,故曰谢平生;就山川,故曰栖清旷 (Gu 2004, 451–452). He parts with his close friends temporarily to retreat to the mountains, finding solace in his dwelling in the mountains. Also, he differs from Tao Qian, who advocates the concept of "forsaking the physical form." Tao Qian and Xie Lingyun, due to their differences in backgrounds, experiences, life philosophies, and cultural accomplishments, have vastly different aesthetic approaches and standpoints regarding natural landscapes and pastoral scenes. Unlike Xie Lingyun, who inherits the title and wealth from his family, Tao Qian, despite being the great-grandson of Tao Kan 陶侃, a Commander-in-Chief of the Jin Dynasty, belongs to a distant branch of the family. Tao Qian leads a hardscrabble life in his reclusion, whereas Xie Lingyun enjoys wandering across endless breathtaking landscapes. When choosing between the body and mind, Tao Qian depicts a natural environment in society through fragmented images, presenting a realm of being simple yet not boring and the willingness to sacrifice physical comfort for a return to his true nature. Xie Lingyun, however, chooses the aesthetic approach of being neither too close nor too far, contemplating nature in remote landscapes and presenting a realm of being rich yet not overwhelming. In the Rhapsody, he writes, "If palaces and halls are adorned with jade and precious stones, then the hexagram Simple Adornment shows how hills and gardens transcend beauty" (Gu 2004, 450). Xie Lingyun advocates for an aesthetic represented by the hexagram Simple Adornment, which values adorment and naturalness, integrating the seemingly opposing qualities of being "adorned" 贲 and "unadorned" 白 into a unified whole. Later comments on his works also mentioned this aesthetic concept, stating that his works are like "the lotus in its initial bloom, naturally charming" 初发芙蓉,自然可爱 (Li 1975, 881).

2 "Attaining Intention" and "Delighting the Heart"

Beyond the relationship between physical and spiritual cultivation and dwelling in the mountains, Xie Lingyun further explores the connection between metaphysical principles and the aesthetics of dwelling in the mountains. In his Rhapsody, he writes,

> I choose a place of divine beauty in order to realize the aim of living in a lofty retreat. I look up to the lessons handed down by sages of the past, looking down to what suits my basic nature. I devote my humble body to peaceful rest and preserve my pursuits in leisurely times. (Gu 2004, 451)
> 选自然之神丽,尽高栖之意得。仰先哲之遗训,俯性情之所便。奉微躯以宴息,保自事以乘闲。

His choice to build a mountain retreat in a beautiful and unique place is not just for enjoying visual pleasures but, more importantly, for exploring the profound meanings embedded in the landscapes. His grandfather, Xie Xuan 谢玄, rose to a prominent position of power after the victory in the Battle of Feishui River. However, following the death of Xie An 谢安, Sima Daozi 司马道子 gained ascendancy in the court, and Xie Xuan was ousted from the political center, leading him to build a residence at Northern Mountain of Shining, Guiji. Xie Lingyun chooses to dwell in the mountains to avoid political troubles and indulge his interest in *shanshui* appreciation, inspired by the wisdom of his grandfather Xie Xuan. However, the self-sufficient philosophy of "non-action" 无为 in the metaphysical spirit could jeopardize the realization of the ideal Confucian personality. Xie Lingyun is also aware of the theoretical shortcomings of Guo Xiang's 郭象 metaphysics, as expressed in his poem "Departing the West Shooting Hall at Dusk" 晚出西射堂: "Arrangements are merely empty words; Only the music from the *qin* can soothe my lonely, melancholy heart" 安排徒空言,幽独赖鸣琴 (Gu 2004, 82). The poet immerses himself in the sorrow caused by the externalities and cannot find relief even though he tries to comprehend the principle of arrangements and changes. Thus, Xie Lingyun explores the unified foundation of "principles" 理 that transcends time and space.

First, Xie Lingyun borrows from the cosmological model of Han-style rhapsodies, which extends from Heaven to humanity. His comprehensive and intuitive description provides an external basis for the metaphysical ontology of personality. Beyond the macroscopic narrative of the scenery far and near in all directions, there are also microscopic descriptions of flora and fauna, including grasses, trees, bamboos, fishes, birds, and other animals, as well as various activities related to mountains and waters. All of these contribute to the presentation of the cosmic order integrated with nature. Xie Lingyun adapts his disposition to the natural world through his practical experiences of dwelling and wandering amidst mountains and waters, thus achieving the integration of the Confucian emphasis on personal practice and the Daoist advocacy of emptiness and detachment. Therefore, to some extent, he is free from the spiritual constraints of Confucianism and attains the subjectivity of personality. While the literary form of rhapsody stands as a cultural embodiment of the Han Dynasty, the Rhapsody can be regarded as representative of aristocratic cultural forms. As mentioned in the previous sections, while borrowing the external framework of Han rhapsodies, Xie Lingyun fundamentally diverges from the Han approach that regarded rhapsodies as the "grand literature of a prosperous era" 盛世鸿文. He explicitly dismisses the artificial taste found in the rhapsodies of Zhang Heng and Zuo Si, instead admiring the aspirations of ancient sages and recluses who withdrew from the secular world. Regarding aesthetic taste, he abandons ornamentation, embraces simplicity, and expresses his true feelings directly.

Second, Xie Lingyun integrates internal and external phenomena as well as causes

and effects. He inherits Guo Xiang's self-generating independent theory, which opposes "embodying nothingness" 贵无 and "advocating existence" 崇有 with the theory of no cause, eliminating the causality of all phenomena. Meanwhile, he tries to break Guo Xiang's view of Xuan-ming 玄冥 and absorb Daosheng's 道生 thought, which combines Buddhist Prajna's with the theory of nirvana. In the *Compiled Explanations of the Mahaparinirvana Sutra* 大般涅槃经集解, Daosheng comments,

> The truth is inherent and natural, and enlightenment is a profound alignment with it. The truth is without separation, but enlightenment is not easily attained. The immutable essence is a serene and constant illumination. However, confusion and deviation arise from delusion, which lies not within the true self. If one diligently seeks and pursues [the truth], they will return from delusion to the ultimate reality, thereby attaining the original essence. (Shi et al. 2014, 212)
> 夫真理自然,悟亦冥符,真则无差,悟岂容易?不易之体,为湛然常照,但从迷乖之,事未在我耳。苟能涉求,便返迷归极,归极得本。

In Daosheng's opinion, the ultimate principle is not an unchanging entity, but a natural state that is neither being nor non-being and will neither emerge nor disappear. This is different from the identity of "things" 事 and the substantiality of "principles" advocated by Wei-Jin metaphysics. It thoroughly eliminates the temporal and spatial boundaries of internal and external causes and effects. Influenced by Daosheng, Xie Lingyun's "On Distinguishing the Ultimate" 辨宗论 integrates metaphysical and Buddhist thought, advocating the theory of sudden enlightenment. Tang Yongtong 汤用彤 believes that Xie Lingyun distinguishes between sudden enlightenment and gradual cultivation, arguing that Xie Lingyun often refers to Daosheng's thought on "the ultimate and wonderful oneness, with principles transcending the phenomenal world" 宗极妙一,理超象外 but does not elaborate much on "returning to the original nature" 反本, which is the spontaneous manifestation of true nature and enlightenment (Tang 2015, 466). However, Xie Lingyun's writings embody both "nature" 性 and "principles." While drawing inspiration from Daosheng's theories, Xie Lingyun does not rigidly adhere to them and instead demonstrates an exploration that integrates metaphysical and Buddhist thought.

Xie Lingyun introduces the "discussion on words and meanings" 言意之辨 into the experience of dwelling in the mountains, proposing the aesthetic concepts of "attaining intention" 意得 and "delighting the heart" 赏心. He integrates historical aesthetics from the perspective of life, establishing a conscious awareness of life and culture. The preface of the Rhapsody states, "Meanings are indeed expressed through words, but my writing cannot fully capture the meanings. I write this rhapsody to convey my thoughts, hoping that someone will appreciate it" 意实言表,而书不尽,遗迹索意,托之有赏. The Rhapsody reads, "Xiezi [Xie Lingyun], lying ill on the mountaintop, read the ancient writings and found resonance with their thoughts" 谢子卧疾山顶,览古人遗书,与其意合 (Gu 2004, 449). Reading books and comprehending principles can serve as a means of healing. The ancient *shanshui* practices recorded in classics, Xie Lingyun's composition of the Rhapsody, and later generations

appreciation of this work are not connected through written words, but rather through the incomplete expression of thoughts through words and the attainment of meanings beyond words. This allows the attainment of intention to transcend spatial and temporal divides, transforming into synchronic and diachronic beauty delighting the heart. The Rhapsody continues, "It is Dao that should be valued; Thus, material things are unimportant. It is the cosmic principle that should be preserved; Thus, affairs of the world can be forgotten. This has not changed through the ages, with the form and content remaining constant" 夫道可重,故物为轻;理宜存,故事斯忘。古今不能革,质文咸其常. Xie Lingyun explains in a note, "Principles are harmonious when they resonate. The ancient writings resonate with my thoughts, arousing my laughter" 理以相得为适,古人遗书,与其意合,所以为笑 (Gu 2004, 449–450). Although he enjoys worldly possessions, he advocates transcending mundanity by attaining intention and forgetting material things. His poems are also replete with an aesthetic inclination toward meanings and principles. Attaining intention occurs in the context of the successful "comprehension of principles" 悟理, as seen in his "In the Lake on the Way Back from the Stone Wall Hut" 石壁精舍还湖中作.

> Water chestnut and lotus leaves overlap in lush beauty; cattails and barnyard grass intertwine. I brush aside the foliage and make my way toward the south, joyfully leaning against the eastern door. When the mind is calm, things will be done with ease and pleasure, and the ways of living have no dispute. All of you who are seeking the secret of longevity may follow this way in your pursuit. (Gu 2004, 165–166)
> 芰荷迭映蔚,蒲稗相因依。披拂趋南径,愉悦偃东扉。虑澹物自轻,意惬理无违。寄言摄生客,试用此道推。

In the mysterious union of things, the poet eliminated worries and burdens, gaining a sense of joy from comprehending principles, which is the aesthetic experience of attaining intention.

Xie Lingyun also consciously pursues the *shanshui* aesthetic conception and taste of delighting the heart. Wei-Jin metaphysics had already discussed the mind-intention and principle-object relationships, advocating attaining intention through inner comprehension. For instance, Tao Qian's "Drinking Wine" 饮酒 reads, "Whilst the meaning of life therein is found, I attempt to tell, but my tongue seems bound" 此中有真意,欲辩已忘言 (Tao 2007, 293). The meaning of the object is realized through comprehension and discernment. Without such efforts, the meaning of the object becomes a decoration. In the "Pointing out Flaws" in *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons* 文心雕龙・指瑕, Liu Xie 刘勰 writes, "*Shang* 赏 means reward; how is it related to the concept of understanding?" 夫赏训锡赉,岂关心解? (Liu 1958, 638) After the Jin Dynasty, there is a trend of transforming the original meanings of words, with Xie Lingyun's use of the character *shang* as an example. The original meaning of the word refers to a reward given after meritorious service, representing a real relationship between people. However, it later evolves into the concept of "understanding" 心解, referring to an abstract appreciation of the subjective-objective relationship. In the Rhapsody, Xie Lingyun writes,

> There are monks who come from afar, and the nearby *sangha* also are not absent. The

dharma drum loudly sounds, *Gāthā* of praise are clearly intoned. Scattered blossoms profusely fall, streaming fragrance spreads in flying flow. They analyze the subtle words of distant kalpas and explain the residual meaning of the "counterfeit Doctrine." They avail themselves of a hair-breadth of this heart. To aid the myriad innate tendencies of other beings. The teaching on "good destinations" begins with the leader in the south, and the clear and smooth response returns from the northern teacher. This is not merely to my satisfaction, but surely touches the hearts of the virtuous. In the mountains it is quiet and still; here from all entanglements one is cut off. There is not much to hear around, but acquiring principle gives enjoyment. The cold wind soughs and sighs, but facing the southern slopes, one is always warm. The sun's fiery light blazes strong, but toward the northern faces there is frost and snow. Resting in storied terraces, we climb the rocks; sitting by a brook, we pass by the cave of winds. At this "city," we find harmonious appreciation and transmit what has never been extinguished from the past to the present. (Gu 2004, 463–464)
远僧有来,近众无阙。法鼓朗响,颂偈清发。散华霏蔼,流香飞越。析旷劫之微言,说像法之遗旨。乘此心之一豪,济彼生之万理。启善趣于南倡,归清畅于北机。非独惬于予情,谅佥感于君子。山中兮清寂,群纷兮自绝。周听兮匪多,得理兮俱悦。寒风兮搔屑,面阳兮常热。炎光兮隆炽,对阴兮霜雪。愒曾台兮陟云根,坐涧下兮越风穴。在兹城而谐赏,传古今之不灭。

His note reads,

Monks from near and far gather here; the Dharma drum, *Gāthā* of praise, scattered blossoms, and streaming fragrance are matters of Buddhist services and lectures. Analyzing and explaining are discussions during these services and lectures. With a kind heart, one can benefit other beings. The southern advocate is known as the main lecturer, while the northern teacher is referred to as the Dharma masters. The tranquil and still mountains are indeed an ideal place for Dharma lectures. With forests around, the weather is never too cold or too hot as a harmonious and suitable place. (Gu 2004, 463–464)
众远近聚萃,法鼓、颂偈、华、香四种,是斋讲之事。析说是斋讲之议。乘此之心,可济彼之生。南倡者都讲,北机者法师。山中静寂,实是讲说之处。兼有林木,可随寒暑,恒得清和,以为适也。

Xie Lingyun depicts the scene of Buddhist lectures and demonstrates his comprehension of the Buddhist doctrine of liberating all beings with the Four Immeasurables. Embracing the serene landscapes and profound Buddhist teachings, the poet found self-contentment amidst warmth and cold. In such a harmonious way, the subject's appreciation of the object blends with nature, incorporating the principles of the mind (natural principle) and the principles of things (physical principles). After recognizing the truth, one can apply it to everyday life to realize the fusion of the two.

The concept of delighting the heart appears multiple times in Xie Lingyun's poetry, as seen in lines, such as "The obvious marvels find no appreciation, Let alone the tales of the immortals" 表灵物莫赏,蕴真谁为传 ("Ascending the Solitary Islet Mid-River" 登江中孤

屿; Gu 2004, 123), "This wonderful scenery has no other admirer, So with whom shall I share this fragrant wine" 妙物莫为赏,芳醑谁与伐 ("Night Sojourn at Stone Gate" 夜宿石门诗; Gu 2004, 269), and "Beauty lies in sentimental appreciation; I doubt if anyone can discern this obscure matter" 情用赏为美,事昧竟谁辨 ("Grossing Ridges and Following Streams along Jinzhu Gully" 从斤竹涧越岭溪行; Gu 2004, 178). Delighting the heart presupposes the external manifestation of principles and is rooted in the subject's appreciation of the nature of the wonderful things, which perceives that landscapes "possesses substantial forms while exuding spiritual essence" 质有而趣灵 (Yan 1958, 5090). This transforms the theory that equates nature with the material qualities of being and defines nature by the specific sentiments or attitudes of things. Xie Lingyun regards natural landscapes as animate objects, enabling landscapes to actively enter the subject's aesthetic vision and resonate with the subject's heart, thereby infiltrating the subject's spiritual and personal world. Yang Rur-bin 杨儒宾 points out, "Xie Lingyun's theory of delighting the heart points to a consciousness that is not private but reciprocal (appreciation); not based on emotional attachment but on responding to emotions (not eliminating them); not entangled in physical images but characterized by clarity and insight. This is the true subject of landscape appreciation, and 'delighting the heart' can be seen as a special aesthetic subject" (Yang 2014). Delighting the heart also reveals a circular pattern of nature-principle relationship, where the return to one's true nature embodies a dualism centered on the integrated subject-object and mind-object relationships, but development has been seen toward the subtle awakening that involves illuminating the mind and perceiving the nature. Xie Lingyun's *shanshui* aesthetics emphasizes the interaction between the mind and attaining intention in the subject-object relationship, representing a new exploration of the traditional subject-object relationship.

3 Expansion of the "Self-Fulfilling Space"

Xie Lingyun's Rhapsody differs significantly from traditional rhapsodies and forms of reclusion. Additionally, it explores *shanshui* aesthetics from the interactive dimension of poetry and rhapsodies, reflecting the connotations of subjective *shanshui* aesthetics. However, despite the ideal landscape aesthetic experience, Xie Lingyun's exploration still has inherent contradictions related to his aesthetic concept of "self-fulfillment" 自得. Through the deeds of immortal hermits, the Rhapsody shapes an ideal self-fulfilled personality. The term "self-fulfillment" tends toward a return to the spiritual realm rather than the pursuit of secular gains, and the word "self" encompasses the connotations of both spontaneousness and solitude. The "Freedom and Tolerance" in *Zhuangzi* 庄子・在宥 reads, "Possessing the greatest of all things [possessing, that is, men] they should not try to deal with them as [simply] things. And it is he who is not a thing [himself] that is, therefore, able to deal with [all] things as they severally require ... He will go out and in throughout the universe [at his pleasure]; he will roam over the nine regions, alone in going, alone in coming. Him we call the sole possessor [of this ability]; and the sole possessor [of this ability] is what is called the noblest of all." Guo Xiang annotates, "One who uses things should not be used by things. One who is not used by things is not possessed by things. Not being possessed by things, one can govern

all things in the world, allowing each to attain its nature ... Everyone wants to be unique and stand apart from the crowd, and any such person may come and go in solitude. Only a person who possesses spiritual independence can be regarded as one who transcends possessions" (Guo 1998, 225). Zhuangzi aims to reveal the principles behind things, but Guo Xiang leads the discussion toward attaining natural disposition. Xie Lingyun's subjective *shanshui* aesthetics does not center on the subjective will but rather incorporates Guo Xiang's theory and creatively practices it in both transcendental and temporal dimensions.

Xie Lingyun's solitary journeys amidst the landscapes are not about distinguishing himself from the mundane crowd but rather about wandering alone within the cosmos as one who transcends secular possessions. He seeks to expand the self-fulfilling space toward emptiness and solitude. He connects individual loneliness with ancient solitude, forming a transcendental subject-object relationship. In the Rhapsody, he writes,

> I follow the teachings of self-discipline and contemplation, reflecting on texts of nurturing wisdom and transcendence. I fear my retreat from the world is not distant enough and dread the hardships of navigating the secular world. I emulate the ancient sage-kings and loathe the moral decay of this fallen age. I am committed to following the path of noble recluses, seeking to leave my name among the ranks of the virtuous and wise ... They all preserved their lives with an attitude of self-fulfillment; I can only ponder on the profound thoughts they left behind. Here is tranquil seclusion in deep obscurity, quiet solitude in empty remoteness. Phenomena and feelings are at variance; principles and forms are at odds. Since ears and eyes offer no clues, then how could the tracks made by one's footsteps? All of time is gathered in three turns of time, and I await penetrating insight through the Five Eyes. (Gu 2004, 465)
>
> 若乃乘摄持之告,评养达之篇。畏绝迹之不远,惧行地之多艰。均上皇之自昔,忌下衰之在旃。投吾心于高人,落宾名于圣贤。……咸自得以穷年,眇贞思于所遗。暨其窈窕幽深,寂漠虚远。事与情乖,理与形反。既耳目之靡端,岂足迹之所践。蕴终古于三季,俟通明于五眼。

Ancient recluses preserved their lives with an attitude of self-fulfillment, which Xie Lingyun feels inadequate to emulate; instead, he seeks profound meanings from their distant deeds and achievements. Contrary to the transcendental solitude of these recluses, Xie Lingyun retreats to loneliness. Although alienated from the crowd, he repeatedly calls for the one who knows the tone. Believing that individual eyes, ears, and footsteps are limited and cannot reach the infinite realm, he could only rely on the supernatural powers of the Buddhist Three Insights and Five Eyes (*Abhijñā*) to pursue the ancient style, thereby unifying himself with the unknowable infinite universe.

Xie Lingyun also creates a contemporary self-fulfilling space through his dwelling amidst the landscapes. His Rhapsody documents the planning and construction of his estate on Southern Mountain, narrating his personal experiences of finding spiritual delight among springs and rocks after traversing mountains and ridges and attaining the ancient mindset of returning to nature and transcending mundane life. The Rhapsody states,

When I first planned to work on my estate, I set out alone with a walking staff in hand. I entered brooks and waded through waters; I ascended peaks and traversed mountains. I scaled summits and did not rest; I reached the source of the springs and did not stop. Combed by winds and bathed by rain, I intruded upon the dew and was guided by the stars. I examined my shallow ideas and scrutinized my imperfect visions. Without a tortoiseshell or a divination stalk, I chose the excellent and selected the exceptional. I cut through hazel trees and opened up a path; I sought out boulders and searched for crags. With mountains surrounding on all four sides and a pair of streams winding around, facing the southern peaks, I built a scripture terrace; against the northern hills, I constructed a lecture hall. Beside the towering peaks, I erected a meditation room; overlooking the deep river, I arranged houses for monks. Facing lofty trees of hundreds of years old, I take in the fragrance of myriad generations. I hold dear the springs of antiquity; I admire the pure continuity of their rich fluid. I quit the beautiful pagodas in the suburbs and removed myself from the world beside the city walls. With joy, I see simplicity and embrace the uncarved block. Truly, there is sweet dew in the place of Dao. (Gu 2004, 459)

爰初经略，杖策孤征。入涧水涉，登岭山行。陵顶不息，穷泉不停。栉风沐雨，犯露乘星。研其浅思，罄其短规。非龟非筮，择良选奇。翦榛开迳，寻石觅崖。四山周回，双流逶迤。面南岭，建经台；倚北阜，筑讲堂。傍危峰，立禅室；临浚流，列僧房。对百年之高木，纳万代之芬芳。抱终古之泉源，美膏液之清长。谢丽塔于郊郭，殊世间于城傍。欣见素以抱朴，果甘露于道场。

Many aristocrats of the Southern Dynasties build their estates ostensibly for recreational purposes but actually to seize control of mountains and lakes. Xie Lingyun's inspections of farms and lands suitable for cultivation are not merely for appreciating the landscapes. Beyond asset acquisition, Xie Lingyun's greatest pleasure comes from personally climbing mountains to immerse himself in uninhabited wilderness and experience the beauty of solitude and tranquility far from the hustle and bustle. This demonstrates his unique aesthetic perspective distinct from other literati of the Six Dynasties. Self-fulfillment is not only internalized in the subject's mind but also manifested in literary expression. Xie Lingyun lives during a period of gradual decline for the Wang and Xie aristocratic clans. The newly established Liu Song imperial court of the Southern Dynasties, which rose to power through military achievements and from humble backgrounds, both courted and guarded against the Wang and Xie aristocratic clans. Xie Hun 谢混, Xie Lingyun's paternal uncle, perished in the political struggle between Liu Yi 刘毅 and Liu Yu 刘裕, and Xie Lingyun himself was also caught in political strife during the Song of the Southern Dynasties. Feeling deep anxiety, loss, and isolation, Xie Lingyun seeks solace in literary creation and *shanshui* appreciation. Xie Lingyun meticulously composes this rhapsody, regarding it as the transformation and crystallization of his will to live. He contemplates the landscapes and engages in literary creation with a spirit of tranquility and solitude. The Rhapsody states,

So I dwelt in the mountains, passing through the years. Fortunately, I had many idle days to

> seek within myself. I cultivated depth through calm reflection and contemplated the beauty. Embracing autumn, I composed this piece of writing with a smile, presenting my principles. (Gu 2004, 464)
> 爰暨山栖，弥历年纪。幸多暇日，自求诸己。研精静虑，贞观厥美。怀秋成章，含笑奏理。

He then explains in a note, "I have loved literature since my youth. Since I started to dwell in the mountains, other distractions have ceased, and I have sought comfort in literature and poetry during my leisurely days. This allows me to attain spiritual communion with the nature of things and gain perpetual enlightenment" 谓少好文章，及山栖以来，别缘既阑，寻虑文咏，以尽暇日之适。便可得通神会性，以永终朝 (Gu 2004, 464). The "attaining spiritual communion with the nature of things" does not refer to a utilitarian orientation for worldly success but rather an aesthetic orientation of the subjective spirituality.

Unlike "contemplation" 贞观, which requires a self-fulfilling space, "direct observation" 寓目 has a much broader applicability. While contemplation emphasizes the appreciation of the principles of Heaven and Earth, it does not seek a realistic rendition of the landscapes. In his "Recounting Ancestral Virtues" 述祖德, Xie Lingyun writes, "Abandoning worldly attachments, he contemplated the beauty of the hills and valleys" 遗情舍尘物，贞观丘壑美 (Gu 2004, 154). This indicates that contemplation tends toward a spiritual perspective detached from worldly concerns, facilitating an experience of self-fulfillment rather than being constrained by emotional burdens. In contrast, direct observation presents a different perspective. In the Rhapsody, Xie Lingyun explains in a note,

> The Southern Mountain is where I established my dwelling by divination. I walk along the road from the river pavilion, crossing over mountain peaks and over continuous patches of fields and meadows, at times ascending then descending over a stretch of about three *li*. Along the way, what one sees are tall trees and flourishing bamboo, footpaths in the fields traced to faraway hills, straddling billows over spaced-out rocks, side paths, and flying currents—all making a beautiful view for direct observation. (Gu 2004, 461)
> 南山是开创卜居之处也。从江楼步路，跨越山岭，绵亘田野，或升或降，当三里许。途路所经见也，则乔木茂竹，缘畛弥阜，横波疏石，侧道飞流，以为寓目之美观。

Xie Lingyun's new residence is on the Southern Mountain, while the old residence built by his grandfather is on the Northern Mountain; the two are connected through waterways. He refers to his encounter with stunning landscapes in his journeys back and forth as direct observation. This term itself carries no emotional connotation, allowing the subject to ascribe emotional significance to it. For example, Wang Xizhi's 王羲之 "Lanting Poem" 兰亭诗 reads, "I look up at the boundless azure sky, And gaze down at the green waters at the shore. In a vast and serene vista, The truth unfolds spontaneously in direct observation" 仰望碧天际，俯磐绿水滨。寥朗无厓观，寓目理自陈 (Lu 1983, 895). This describes a moment of direct observation of landscapes, which allows the subject to contemplate within by wandering outside, experiencing a sense of carefree self-fulfillment. In contrast, the poetic examples cited by Zhong Rong 钟嵘 in the theory of "direct quest" 直寻 focus on the relationship

between what one sees and emotions. For instance, Xu Gan's 徐幹 "Thoughts in the Chamber" 室思 reads, "My thoughts of you flow like a stream" 思君如流水, Cao Zhi's 曹植 "Miscellaneous Poem" 杂诗 reads, "On the high platform, sorrowful winds often blow" 高台多悲风, and Xie Lingyun's "Year End" 岁暮 reads, "The bright moon shines on the accumulated snow, While the north wind blows fiercely and mournfully" 明月照积雪，朔风劲且哀 (Zhong 2011, 220). It is precisely because of the strong plasticity associated with direct observation that Zhong Rong remarked on Xie Lingyun's poetry with the phrase "writing down whatever he directly observes" 寓目辄书 (Zhong 2011, 201). He suggests that the writings embody the subject's emotions and should not merely be viewed as a display of objective reality. Therefore, direct observation does not negate the tendency toward subjectivity in Xie Lingyun's *shanshui* aesthetics.

Xie Lingyun's creation of a self-fulfilling space in *shanshui* aesthetics is not an individual innovation but is influenced by his ancestor Xie An and Wang Xizhi. According to the "Biography of Xie An" in *History of the Jin Dynasty* 晋书・谢安传, "Xie An dwelt in Guiji, associating with Wang Xizhi, Xu Xun 许询 from Gaoyang, and the monk Zhidun. When going out, they would fish and hunt in the mountains and waters, and when returning, they would compose poems and prose with no intention of dealing with worldly affairs ... His estate at Tushan Mountain [man-made mounds of earth] featured lavish pavilions, forests, and bamboo groves, where he hosted family gatherings with costly feasts" (Fang et al. 1974, 2072–2076). The *shanshui* appreciation here also has dual material and spiritual values, diverging from the practices of ascetic reclusion. However, Xie An deliberately creats a self-fulfilling space away from the secular world, using it to enhance the cohesion of the Xie family and the elite class, which is something Xie Lingyun could not replicate. Facing the decline of his family, Xie Lingyun, although admiring his ancestors' practice of enjoying landscapes, could only return to a lonely self-fulfilling space, as seen in his poem "A View from the Lake as I Go from the Southern Mountain to the Northern Mountain" 于南山往北山经湖中瞻眺:

Embracing change, my heart never tires,	抚化心无厌，
Observing these things, I cherish them even more.	览物眷弥重。
I do not regret that I am far from other men,	不惜去人远，
I only lament that there is none to join me.	但恨莫与同。
Wandering alone, I sigh not out of personal sentiments,	孤游非情叹，
Rather if appreciation is abandoned, who else will understand these principles? (Gu 2004, 175)	赏废理谁通？

The poet, situated in his well-equipped private estate, found it difficult to dispel his inner sorrow despite traversing all the scenic views of the estate. Despite the harmonious landscapes, the poet abruptly changed his tone. The beauty of contemplation suddenly dissipates, tearing apart the carefully constructed self-fulfilling space. Xie Lingyun's landscape practice in the Rhapsody was included in its entirety in the *History of the Song of the Southern Dynasties*, but Shen Yue's "Rhapsody on Living in the Suburbs" 郊居赋 critically inherits the aesthetic interests of Xie's Rhapsody, rejecting the luxurious and

hedonistic aspects of Xie Lingyun's mountain life and instead building a self-fulfilling suburban space, hinting at a shift in political and cultural trends. "Rhapsody on Living in the Suburbs" reads, "Not seeking contentment within oneself but seeking it through external possessions only leads to accumulation of worries. This was once a delusion of scholars, but now it is something I avoid" 不自已而求足,并尤物以兴累。亦昔士之所迷,而今余之所避也 (Yan 1958, 6196). This is his response to the "Preface to Records of Travel to Famous Mountains" 游名山志序, in which Xie Lingyun writes, "Food and clothing are what sustain life; landscapes are what suit one's nature. Nowadays, I am held back by the necessities of life, but I can embrace the landscapes that suit my nature" 夫衣食,生之所资;山水,性之所适。今滞所资之累,拥其所适之性耳 (Gu 2004, 390). Material possessions are burdens on the body and mind, while natural landscapes are more capable of moving the heart. Clearly, Xie Lingyun places greater emphasis on spiritual self-fulfillment beyond material forms. In later generations' *shanshui* appreciation, Xie Lingyun's way of dwelling in the mountains, which features the exploration of natural wonders and physical and spiritual enjoyment, gradually fades away. However, the aesthetic core of his subjective spiritual immersion becomes mainstream. This trend also marks the acceptance and relevant reflection of Xie Lingyun's self-fulfilling space.

Natural landscapes have been a living and viewing environment since ancient times, and the ancient people have explored the subject-object relationship presented in nature and humans at different levels very early on. In the realm of philosophy, there emerges thoughts represented by Confucius, Mencius, Xunzi, Laozi, Zhuangzi, and *The Book of Changes* 周易. The *shanshui* aesthetic taste in *The Book of Songs* and *Ode of Chu* lays the foundation for later literary and artistic creations. Subsequently, the theory of *shanshui* aesthetics continues to evolve, and Xie Lingyun's Rhapsody holds a landmark position and value. The aesthetic conception revealed in this rhapsody changes the concept of natural landscapes since the pre-Qin and Han dynasties, greatly enriches the subject-object relationship in *shanshui* aesthetics, highlights the function of the aesthetic subject, and uncovers the cultural implications of natural landscapes relative to humans. It creates the aesthetic concepts of attaining intention and delighting the heart, opens up a self-fulfilling field transcending and yet grounds in the mundane world, and deeply influences the aesthetic spiritual world of scholars-officials in the Tang, Song, and later dynasties. The "Instructions on Painting Mountains and Waters" in *Lofty Messages of Landscape Painting* 林泉高致・山水训 reads, "According to the world's profound theories, landscapes can be walkable, viewable, explorable, and habitable. Any painting that grasps these features can be considered a masterpiece. However, being walkable and viewable is not as desirable as being explorable and habitable. Why do I say this? Among today's mountains and rivers, which stretch hundreds of *li*, there are only a few places that are both explorable and habitable. One must choose to depict such habitable and explorable scenes. This is why gentlemen yearn for forests and springs, precisely because of their beauty. Therefore, painters should create with this intention, and viewers should seek with this intention so as not to lose the original meaning" (Guo 2019, 7). This passage discusses the beauty of landscapes, but it also reflects different subject-object relationships. Among the four relationships between the subject and the landscapes, there are boundaries between the subject and the landscapes in "walking" 行 and "viewing" 望.

Even if the subject is in the landscape, the landscape is treated as an object and becomes a passerby of the soul. In contrast, in "exploring" 游 and "dwelling," the subject invests both body and mind into the landscapes, making them an endless spiritual source. Although the four relationships already existed in the writings on landscapes before Xie Lingyun's era, the literature world back then had not yet fully created a *shanshui* world that combines material aesthetics and spiritual connotations. Xie Lingyun's *shanshui* literature initiates the interactive relationship between exploring and dwelling, greatly expanding the aesthetic space and spiritual charm of landscapes and influencing the landscape culture of his era and later generations.

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