Moral gaze at literary places: Experiencing “being the first to worry and the last to enjoy” at Yueyang Tower in China

Xiaojuan Yu, Honggang Xu*

Sun Yat-sen University, 135, Xingang Xi Road, Guangzhou, 510275, Guangdong, China

HIGHLIGHTS
- The moral aspect of literature and literary/cultural tourism is examined.
- The concept of moral gaze characterizes many tourism phenomena.
- Moral gaze is a general way of thinking, feeling and acting involving morality.
- Five aspects are covered: literature, writer, nature, self and society, and place.
- Moral gaze helps explain why a place is attractive and how it is experienced.

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ABSTRACT
This study examined the literary tourism phenomena at Yueyang Tower in China using a multi-method approach. The concept of moral gaze emerged from the analysis of a combination of data about touristic provision and experience at this site and relevant Chinese traditions. The moral gaze can be seen as a general way of thinking, feeling and acting that involves morality. It is reflected in at least five interrelated aspects in the Yueyang Tower case, including: the moral function of literature, the emphasis on the moral character of the writer, the moral inference from nature usually expressed in literature, the moral cultivation of the visitor self and the society, and the place as moral symbolization. This concept of moral gaze contributes to the understanding of literary tourism and the attractiveness of a destination, and may be used to help improve tourism product development and interpretation to create more meaningful experience.

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1. Introduction
Literary tourism involves visits to “places celebrated for literary depictions and/or connections with literary figures” (Squire, 1996, p. 119). Accordingly, there are two components of the literary tourism, one is the touristic place, and the other is the text and/or writer. It is the tourist activities that connect the two (Jiang & Xu, 2016b). It is interesting to explore what kinds of connections there are and what structures and factors influence the connections. Relating to the contents and functions of literature, the most important roles of literature involve aesthetics (Yuan, 2014) and moral development (Nie, 2006, 2014a, 2014b; Carr & Davis, 2007; Carr, 2005, 2014; Gao, 2009; Mejia & Montoya, 2017). However, while morality features sometimes as the purposeful and dominant theme in a literary work, tourism at places with such literary moral connections are yet to be studied.

* Corresponding author.
E-mail addresses: yuxj5@mail.sysu.edu.cn (X. Yu), xuhongg@mail.sysu.edu.cn (H. Xu).

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At a more fundamental level, morality is an essential feature of human societies and humans are encouraged to be ethical and moral beings. The contribution of morality to positive experience, individual well-being and societal flourishing across culture and history has been studied by positive psychologists (Dahlsgaard, Peterson, & Seligman, 2005; Maslow, 1964). Sixteen years of research on moral elevation, defined as “the emotional response to witnessing acts of moral beauty” (p.412), have shown its positive effects, such as pleasant feelings of warmth, feeling uplifted, moved, and optimistic about humanity, as well as motivating affiliation with others and moral action tendencies (Pohling & Diessner, 2016). However, such positive experience of morality has seldom been studied in the tourism context, while studies about ethics in tourism have addressed more “negative” or problematic issues in this field (Lovelock & Lovelock, 2013).

This study proposes the concept of moral gaze and explores in the light of such moral gaze how a literary tourist attraction is formed and what characterizes the tourism provision and experience, specifically with respect to literary tourism at Yueyang Tower in Hunan province in China. Yueyang tower was first built in 214 for watching military training (Zou, Wang, & Li, 2008). It became popular as a scenic tower during the Tang dynasty (618–907) and was visited by many scholar-officials (Tsang, 2011). It also became the center of Confucianism in China, and Confucianism stood at the center of Confucianism and gives structure to personal cultivation and political order in ancient China; in short, it is rule of virtue (德治, Jiang, 2009). Confucianism and its ethical focus still underlies contemporary Chinese society (Xie, 1996), including tourist behavior (Fu, Cai & Lehto, 2016, 2015; Hsu & Huang, 2016; Kwek & Lee, 2010; 2015; Tse & Hobson, 2008; Wang & Lin, 2009) and service provision in the hospitality and tourism industry (Tsang, 2011).

Confucianism teaches influence traditional attitudes toward travel (Wang, 2012). For example, for the purpose of filial piety, “While one’s parents are alive, he should not travel far away. If he travels, he must have a fixed destination (父在, 不远游, 游必有方; Analects)”. Travel should help meet the life goal of a Confucian: “Cultivate individual moral character, harmonize the family, govern the state, and make the world peace (修身齐家治国平天下)”. Hence one should “read ten thousand books and travel ten thousand miles (读万卷书, 行万里路)”. When enjoying the landscape, travelers should enhance their moral character by learning from the virtues of nature (Lin, 2009b; Wang, 2012; Yan, 2014).

Confucianism’s emphasis on morality also plays an important role in writing in Chinese tradition, which may be best summarized in a prototypic literary theory “Writings are for conveying truth” (文以载道, Liu, 2015). This theory had its seed in Confucius but was developed and formalized in the Ancient Prose Movement (古文运动) in Tang (618–907) and Song (960–1279) dynasties, in which certain scholar-officials aimed to revive Confucianism and reform the decadent and pompous style of writing (Chen, 1996a, 1996b). There is a popular misunderstanding and criticism that this theory literally means that literary works are valued as instruments for propaganda, yet Liu’s (2015) structural analysis shows that it has its own distinctive qualities. Firstly, the conveyed truth is the expression of writers’ genuine and courageous pursuit

Human societies share a moral nature and many moral values, while still have their peculiar cultural manifestations (Dahlsgaard et al., 2005; Maslow, 1964). Compared with many other civilizations, morality plays a more important role in social ordering and structuring in China. This is largely due to the influence of Confucianism. As summarized by Lin (2009a, p. 4), “Confucianism stood for a rationalized social order through the ethical approach, based on personal cultivation. It aimed at political order by laying the basis for it in a moral order, and it sought political harmony by trying to achieve the moral harmony in man himself.” Morality stands at the center of Confucianism and gives structure to personal cultivation and political order in ancient China: in short, it is rule of virtue (德治, Jiang, 2009). Confucianism and its ethical focus still underlies contemporary Chinese society (Xie, 1996), including tourist behavior (Fu, Cai & Lehto, 2016, 2015; Hsu & Huang, 2016; Kwek & Lee, 2010; 2015; Tse & Hobson, 2008; Wang & Lin, 2009) and service provision in the hospitality and tourism industry (Tsang, 2011).

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2. Literature review

2.1. Research on literary tourism

Studies on literary tourism have been growing in the recent two decades (Hoppen, Brown, & Fyall, 2014). The related writers, literary genres, works, and the relevance of place to the writer or work are listed in Table 1. Geographically speaking, literary tourism in Europe and North America seems to be developed and researched earlier, while that in developing countries like China is catching up in recent years. Temporally speaking, most studies involved literary figures and works in the modern era, while studies in China like Yu and Xu (2016) provided an extended historical perspective and involved a two-thousand-year history of the everlasting influence of ancient poetry that extends to contemporary tourism. Most studies focused on either the production side or the consumption side, with the exception of Jiang and Xu (2016a) examining both. In terms of the relationship between literary figures/works and place, the writers examined actually lived or traveled at these places, and often used these places as settings in their literary works, which are mostly novels. The authenticity of such associations has been a major topic in research on literary tourism (Fawcett & Cormack, 2001; Herbert, 2001; Robb, 1998; Stiebel, 2004). Further, the duality of the fictive nature of novels and the physical reality of the places has been studied correspondingly in visitor experience (Herbert, 2001). Novels could also be easily adapted into television or film, hence novel reading and film watching may enhance each other and promote the attraction and development of both literary and film tourism (Fawcett & Cormack, 2001; Müller, 2006; Ryan, Zhang, Guo, & Ling, 2009; O’Connor & Kim, 2014). The poetic experiences offered by Chinese classical poetry are also analyzed by Yu and Xu (2016). But the morality nature of literary works and related touristic experiences are yet to be explored.
of Confucian ideals which criticizes and challenges socio-political realities. Fourthly, the theory also reflects Confucianism's emphasis on moral cultivation as the basis of social governance. Scholar-officials play a leading role in this task – they practice their own professed ideas and educate the society by their example. In other words, the character of a literary work is the character of its own professed ideas. In the text, FAN's prose, An Account of Yueyang Tower. This case is a typical example under the influence of Confucian morality discussed above. The prose is short, with only 368 words (an English translation is provided in Appendix 1). It is itself characterized by a typical Confucian moral gaze toward the landscape, which embraces both natural and social phenomena. In the text, FAN first complimented TENG's administrative achievements at Yueyang and the reconstruction of Yueyang Tower. He then described the spectacular view of Dongting Lake looking from Yueyang Tower, and its strategic location for traveling officials and literati to meet. These travelers may encounter two types of scenes, one being rainy and gloomy, which they relate to their own setbacks and worries in political life; the other being sunny and bright, in which they forget their own ups and downs and become carefree and joyful. Respectively, they feel sad, or happy — this is typical Chinese relational thinking whereby Chinese relate a scene to personal life (Li, 2008; Sofield & Li, 2009), but in this case these travelers are considered to be at a lower moral level. In contrast, FAN commented that ancient sages would not react like them—from here he aimed for a higher moral ideal. The happiness or sadness of sages is not related to personal gain or loss ("不以物喜, 不以己悲"). When in high position at court, they worry for the people; when far way,
they worry for the emperor (“居庙堂之高，则忧其民，处江湖之远，则忧其君”). They have the same concern no matter whether they get promoted or exiled. Then when are they happy? They would say: “Be the first to worry for the country and its people; Be the last to enjoy oneself” (“先天下之忧而忧，后天下之乐而乐”); often shortened as “Be the first to worry and the last to care”, “先忧后乐”). In these climactic sentences, FAN expressed a heightened sense of responsibility and concern for his country and its people.

In line with the Confucian moral traditions discussed in Section 2.2, the truthfulness of FAN’s moral ideal has to be testified by his own character and practice. FAN indeed lived up to his words, and was regarded as the moral model of his contemporary scholars and officials and later generations (Jiang, 2009; Qi, 1992; Wang, 2013; Yang, 2015; Zhang & Fan, 2009; Zhuge, 2010). During his 37 years of service, he worked in a diversity of roles (Zhuge, 2010). As local administrator in multiple places, he led the management of disasters and development of economy, education and charity. As a military leader, he successfully defended against the invasion of strong enemies and protected the country. As a deputy prime minister, he started a holistic political reform aimed at improving administration, increasing economic production and rationalizing national defence. Although the reform failed in one year and four months due to strong opposition of entrenched interests, and FAN and his followers (including TENC) were demoted to various places, FAN’s moral prestige peaked. It was in this context that FAN wrote the prose in 1046, expressing a sense of crisis and responsibility for the country and its people, which also persisted throughout his life.

FAN’s prose is an extremely important one in Chinese culture history. It is listed by Liang (2011) as one of the ten most important essays that have influenced Chinese history for three reasons. First, it proposed “Being the first to worry for the country and its people; Being the last to enjoy oneself” as the moral principle of personal conduct and political governance. Second, this principle has become the creed of all progressive politicians after FAN. Third, this prose achieved beauty in form, sentiment, and reasoning. The moral ideal is beautifully and forcefully established through inference from spectacular contrasting natural scenes, which is especially appealing to the Chinese mind that is accustomed to such a moral perspective (Wang, 2012; Yan, 2014) and relational thinking (Li, 2008; Sofield & Li, 2009). Today it is still valued by modern Chinese as a resource to uplift personal and social morality (Dong, 2014; Guo, 2014; Liu, 2014) and to address the problems of modernity (Gong, 2006). Contemporary Chinese communist party and national leaders MAO Zedong, LIU Shaoqi, HYAOBANG, JIANG Zemin, HY Jintao and JI Jinqing all emphasized the spirit of “Being the first to worry and the last to enjoy” as a representation of outstanding traditional culture and national ethos for Chinese people and members of the reigning communist party to inherit and carry forward (Chen, 2013; XI, 2014). The prose is included in middle school Chinese textbook for every student to understand and recite and turns into a common knowledge for Chinese people (LI, 2008). Yueyang tower, for which this prose was written, has become a spiritual shrine that represents the spirit “Being the first to worry and the last to enjoy” in the Chinese culture and exerts wide appeal to the Chinese people, which forms its basis as a tourist attraction.

3. Methods

This study took a grounded-theory approach (Corbin & Strauss, 2015) and used multiple methods to investigate the tourism provision and experience at Yueyang Tower Scenic Area. Yueyang tower stands strategically on the west mound of Yueyang urban area, overlooking the Dongting lake, which flows here northward into the Yangtze River (Fig. 1). A map of the scenic area and pictures of onsite tourism offerings are shown in Fig. 2. Visitors enter from the south gate and walk to the north to view a series of tourism offerings along the route on the map. The current Yueyang tower was built in 1880, renovated in 1980s and designated as a major historical and cultural site protected at the national level in 1988. Except for the tower and the three pavilions and two archways surrounding the tower, other buildings were added during 2006 and 2007 (Zou et al., 2008).

Several types of triangulation are used in order to enrich the understanding of the studied phenomenon and improve validity: method triangulation, data triangulation, interdisciplinary triangulation and investigator triangulation (Jennings, 2010). Specifically, the following methods were used to collect and analyze data to understand the tourism provision and experience at Yueyang Tower.

First, to understand the tourism provision at Yueyang tower, participant observation and documentary research were used. During a four-day field observation in mid-July 2015, the first author acted as a first-time visitor and then an investigator, trying to identify the major themes and motifs in the design and interpretation of the site. Every element of the site was closely examined and pictures were taken as records. Books written by site managers and local researchers about the tower were obtained and analyzed (Chen, 2013; ECLRHP, 2016; Zou et al., 2008), which offers official explanations and interpretations for its history and current offerings.

Second, to understand visitor behavior and experience, three methods/data sources were used: onsite participant observation, face-to-face interview, and online user-generated content (UGC) by visitors. Visitor behavior at various spots was observed and noted for their activities, interactions with the site and with each other. Different types of tourists in terms of gender, age, and group type were approached for a semi-structured interview. They were asked about their general travel plan, their reasons for visiting Yueyang Tower, and their impression and experience of the place. A total of 12 groups of visitors were interviewed, including 5 groups from the local area and 7 groups from different provinces in China. Besides a 2-h in-depth interview with a three-member local group, most of the interviews lasted around 10 min. One reason might be that visitors usually scheduled their stay in the park for about two to 3 h and hence had little time for an interview. Another reason was that few interviewees could verbally express their nuanced experience as found in similar research (Yu & Xu, 2016). Hence relevant visitor UGC online were used as an appropriate data source, where visitors expressed themselves in an unconstrained way (Lu & Stephenkova, 2015). The entire stock of 419 visitors comments (including excerpts from 52 travelogues) regarding Yueyang Tower were retrieved from the largest and most used tourism UGC website in China, www.mafengwo.com, on December 19, 2015.

Third, to understand the cultural traditions behind the current tourism provision and experience at Yueyang tower, a multidisciplinary approach was taken and relevant academic studies in Chinese literature, philosophy and history were synthesized to form a holistic and historical view of tourism at Yueyang tower, which were already discussed in the first two sections.

The above sources of data were combined and ruminated on back-and-forth until a clear theme, that is, the moral gaze, emerged (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). During this process, one part of the data (mainly the UGC data) were content-analyzed in a more systematic way, as will be shown in the results, while the analysis of the other part and the totality of the data relied more on the researchers’ reflection. In order to control the likely biased subjectivity of a single researcher, investigator triangulation (Jennings, 2010) was used and the two authors analyzed the phenomena and discussed relevant issues until reaching consensus.
4. Findings

This section includes two parts. First, the basic information about tourism provision, onsite visitor behavior, and motivation to visit Yueyang Tower is reported, in which FAN and his prose are confirmed to be playing a central role. Second, five aspects of the moral gaze are explicated with respect to tourism at Yueyang Tower, with an emphasis on tourist experience in combination with tourism provision and related Chinese traditions.

4.1. Basics: FAN and his prose at Yueyang Tower

Fan and his Prose are found to play a dominant role in Yueyang Tower Scenic Area. This can be easily observed from the layout of the scenic park, tourist behaviors and their expression of motivations over the internet. Like in many places in China, there is a diversity of historical and cultural elements included in Yueyang Tower Scenic Area (Fig. 2). These elements are presented either collectively or individually. For example, in the collective style, the tablet corridors (Fig. 2.2) and the lakeside poetry promenade (Fig. 2.3) include calligraphic tablets inscribed with hundreds of classical poems and prose about this place; the Five Dynasty Bronze Towers (Fig. 2.6) include models of Yueyang Tower built in various historical periods. In the individual style, Xiaoqiao’s tomb, the DU Fu pavilion (Fig. 2.1), the memorial temple of LV Dongbin are dedicated to respective historical figures related to Yueyang.

Among this myriad of heritage, FAN and his prose clearly occupy a central place both in space and in discourse. Specifically, two wooden plaques inscribed with FAN’s prose are enshrined in the most important building in the scenic area, Yueyang Tower (Fig. 2.4). A memorial temple is built for FAN and TENG (Fig. 2.5) in 2006, which presents the lives, achievements and contributions of the two sages. Further, in official discourse, the national fame of the tower is attributed to FAN’s prose, and the tower is seen as a symbol
of the moral ideal expressed in FAN’s prose (Chen, 2013; ECLRHP, 2016; www.yueyanglou.com, the official website; Zou et al., 2008). For example, ECLRHP (2016, p. 7) commented: “Yueyang Tower is the spiritual sanctuary of the Chinese people….FAN’s notion of ‘Being the first to worry and the last to enjoy’ is the immortal soul and everlasting spirit of the Yueyang Tower culture, which condenses and sublimes the fine spirit of the Chinese people in five thousand years.”

According to interview with onsite visitors and staff member, most visitors spent about two to 3 h in the scenic area. As observed on site, most visitors concentrated at Yueyang Tower, where they spent about an hour. Visitors took plenty of pictures before and inside the tower. They read FAN’s An Account of Yueyang Tower inscribed in wooden plaques in the first and second floor, enjoyed the calligraphic works and listened to interpreters telling various stories about the prose and the tower. They climbed to the third floor for a view of the Dongting Lake, sometimes reciting FAN’s sentences describing scenes at the lake. Due to the limited space in the tower, visitors spent more time in the open air, enjoying the tower and the lake. Often parents with children joyfully recited the prose together. There were also some “purposeful cultural tourists” (Mckercher, 2002; Mckercher & du Cros, 2003) who spent much longer time and inquisitively examined elements on the site as shown in Fig. 2.

FAN’s prose also played a central role in tourist motivation. Among the 419 tourist comments retrieved from mafengwo website, 145 comments (34.6%) noted the fame of Yueyang Tower, among which 43 comments (10.3%) explicitly attributed its fame to FAN’s prose. Further, 147 comments (35.1%) explicitly cited FAN and/or his prose while some others implicitly refer to it. In comparison, the next most important poet related to Yueyang Tower, DU Fu, and his poem, were mentioned only five times. Both the fame of the tower and its attribution seem to be Chinese common knowledge and a matter-of-course reason or motivation for their visit. For example, a tourist commented: “Most people have read An Account of Yueyang Tower, hence the tower has very high popularity” (MC368). This motivation is culturally shared by Chinese and is established in early childhood for every educated Chinese, as one tourists commented: “If one comes to Yueyang, Yueyang Tower is without doubt a must-visit spot. Fan Zhongyan’s An Account of Yueyang Tower is a must-recite text in childhood. Coming here with such childhood memories, the visit can be regarded as a kind of purification” (MC404). Such cultural motivation and knowledge is shared between parents and their children. A young interviewee told that she insisted on this family trip to Yueyang Tower as she just learned FAN’s prose at school and wanted to personally experience the site. Such influence of classical literature on the travel motivation of Chinese is quite common, as one visitor wrote:

“... Here [I] have to refer to Fan Zhongyan, who in his whole lifetime never ascended one step on Yueyang Tower yet left behind an account of the tower that has been spread through the ages. Is it that Yueyang Tower made a name for Fan Zhongyan? Or is it that Fan Zhongyan made a name for Yueyang Tower? No matter what, since then the two names can no longer be detached. This kind of phenomenon is not uncommon in the cultural history of China, just like Cui Hao to Yellow Crane Tower, Wang Bo to Prince Teng Pavilion, Zhang Ji to Hanshan Temple. If you ask me whether Yueyang Tower is worth visiting, I think, just for the poems and prose of those ages, it is absolutely necessary to ascend.” (MTN52)

4.2. The moral gaze at Yueyang Tower

The theme of moral gaze emerged from the data about tourism provision, visitor experience, and related Chinese traditions. Specifically, there are five interrelated aspects under the moral gaze, including: the moral function of literature, the emphasis on the moral character of the writer, the moral inference from nature usually expressed in literature, the moral cultivation of the visitor self and the society, and the place as a moral symbol. While the five dimensions are discussed one by one below, their interrelationships are necessarily involved and presented alongside.

4.2.1. The moral function of literature

Confucianism advocates that the function of prose is to convey the truth or moral values (Liu, 2015). The popularity of FAN’s prose to generations of Chinese is undoubtedly related to its beautiful and forceful conveyance of the moral ideal of “Being the first to worry and the last to enjoy” (Liang, 2011). In the Yueyang Tower Scenic Area, the plaque inscribed with this prose is clearly the central attraction to visitors. The following quote exemplifies the enjoyment or even euphoria a visitor gets from reading the prose at Yueyang Tower.

“Facing [the plaque] of An Account of Yueyang Tower, I read it seriously again word by word. Upon completion, [I] unexpectedly got a ‘can finally relax’ feeling. Writing smoothly, magnificently, and ambitiously, though politically frustrated, [Fan Zhongyan] still cared about the people—in today’s words, he could be called a ‘steadfast revolutionary warrior’. Exquisitely worded, powerful, harmoniously blending scenery and sentiment, gorgeous yet also extremely meaningful—it seems that no adjectives could overstate it. It would be too thick if added to, and too thin if reduced. It is just right and really worthy of savoring bit by bit.” (MC9)

As shown in the quote, the moral enlightenment one gets from FAN’s prose is closely related to FAN’s personal character.

4.2.2. The moral character of the writer

Literary criticism in Chinese tradition emphasizes the writer’s moral character, which reflects a particular cultural mentality under the dominance of Confucianism that pushes personal cultivation toward perfection of character (Wu, 1992). As a Chinese saying goes, “The writing is the writer (文如其人).” When Chinese visitors read FAN’s prose, they are also reading FAN himself. A visitor expressed his/her admiration toward FAN by referring both to his words in the prose and his contributions in reality:

“When in high position at court, he can so and so; when far away in remote place, he can so and so. It is not accidental that FAN can leave behind a good reputation! Beside the Dongting Lake, he can write lyrics: defending the northwest borders, he can ward off [the enemy] Western Xia! [He] is an admirable character!” (MC312)

The moral character is so important that any damage to it seems unacceptable, which is indicated in the exhibition “The life of the two sages” in the memorial temple for FAN and TENG. There seems to be two themes in the exhibition (observation note). One is about the achievements and contributions made by FAN and TENG, which are presented in a positive light. The other theme is a defense against the defamation that TENG was a greedy bureaucrat who embezzled funds and refused to be audited (Chen, 2013). For the first author as a Chinese visitor, this accusation was quite perturbing. TENG was a follower and friend of FAN, who was demoted to Yueyang but actively governed the place, achieved administrative effectiveness, societal harmony and economic development. He then reconstructed Yueyang Tower and asked FAN to write a prose to record the event. Under the moral gaze, the stain on TENG’s
character challenges the validity of FAN's prose and puts at risk the high cultural position granted to Yueyang Tower as a symbol of the spirit of working wholeheartedly for the country and its people without consideration of personal gain or loss. It was then reliving and satisfying to see that the exhibited life stories of TENG and FAN refuted false accusations, validated the ideals advocated in FAN's prose and made them more credible, as the two sages indeed practiced their ideals.

4.2.3. Moral cultivation of self and society
The moral gaze is not just about the prose and its writer but also turns toward the gazer and his/her society. The moral ideal established in the prose and by its author is also recognized by Chinese people to be a goal of self-cultivation and society-improvement. A visitor commented that “Facing the Dongting Lake and Jun Hill, you sure will be moved with deep feelings. Be the first to worry for the country and its people; Be the last to enjoy oneself”, this must be the pursuit of our generation” (MC59). Another one proposed that “Yueyang Tower should host a class for leaders to specifically study FAN Zhoygan’s An Account of Yueyang Tower” (MC412). On the other hand, a visitor criticized that “People are very familiar with the sentence ‘Be the first to worry for the country and its people; Be the last to enjoy oneself’ in An Account of Yueyang Tower, but how many people can actually live up to it?” (MC377). This visitor continued to reflect on whether such appeal to high-standard moral self-discipline is appropriate for governance in modern society. Such critical reflection is actually rare in visitor comments. Above all, FAN’s ideal is recognized by Chinese leadership as a representation of outstanding traditional culture and national spirit for Chinese people to inherit and carry forward (Chen, 2013; Xi, 2014), and FAN’s prose is included in middle school textbook for every young Chinese to learn, suggesting that FAN’s ideal and the general moral gaze continues in contemporary Chinese society. What is applicable here may be a distinction “between the desirable and the desired: how people think the world ought to be versus what people want for themselves” (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010, p. 28). It may be too high a requirement for most people to actually practice FAN’s moral ideal, but they may still be moved by this ideal and FAN’s own practice and would like to pay their respect at the symbolic site of this ideal.

4.2.4. Moral inference from nature
Under the influence of Confucianism with a focus on morality, there is a moral perspective toward nature whereby various moral values may be inferred from natural phenomena. FAN’s prose is clearly an exemplification of this moral gaze toward nature as introduced in Section 2, where he challenged a common person’s joyful/sad response to sunny/gloomy natural scenes at the Dongting Lake and emotional dependence on external things, and argued that one should not worry about their personal gain or loss, but rather take the lead to worry for the country and its people. Such a literary approach is recognized by visitors as a common practice and is echoed in such comment: “It seems that the most famous ancient prose in China all started with a depiction of scenery and then moved imperceptibly into reflections on one’s life and the world” (MTN29). FAN’s moral inference has become so strongly attached to Yueyang Tower and Dongting Lake that modern visitors still gaze at the scenes following his perspective and description. One example is MC59 cited above, who looked at the scene and immediately related to FAN’s ideal: “Facing the Dongting Lake and Jun Hill, you sure will be moved with deep feelings. Be the first to worry for the country and its people; Be the last to enjoy oneself’, this must be the pursuit of our generation”.

It should be noted that FAN’s prose is highly regarded not only for the moral ideal that it conveys but also for its beautiful depiction of the scenes seen at Yueyang Tower, which also guides visitors’ aesthetic enjoyment of the landscape like classical poetry did for Chinese tourists as examined in Yu and Xu (2016). The aesthetic gaze and the moral gaze coexist and blend harmoniously under the guidance of FAN’s prose. For example:

“The third floor is the best position to enjoy the Dongting Lake, which is very beautiful at the sunset. It was once a textbook illustration and is now right under my nose—my little wish comes true” (MC5).

“Standing on the tower and looking into the distance, [we see that] the Dongting Lake is vast and mighty with no end; the waters and sky merge in one color; boats come and go—the descriptions in An Account of Yueyang Tower are very apt” (MC55).

When weather does not permit, tourists may resort to imaginations from the prose:

“[The tower is] listed in the four famous towers of China and has become famous when An Account of Yueyang Tower is handed down to later generations. Though [I] cannot recite the whole text, [I] ascended the tower to enjoy the lake with a mood of appreciating ‘In spring it is warm and everything is bathed in bright sunshine, the lake is tranquil and it merges with the azure sky into one blue reaching far beyond the horizon’ (FAN’S words: 至若春和景明，波澜不惊，上下天光，一碧万顷). Unfortunately the light was poor and [I] only saw the Dongting Lake covered in grayish brown, completely without bright vitality.” (MC414)

“Although it was drizzling the day I went and the lake was covered in a heavy mist, when I looked into the distance, I can still experience grandeur of ‘Be the first to worry for the country and its people; Be the last to enjoy oneself’ ” (MC219).

These online comments were similar to what were observed onsite. During the four days of observation, there seemed no less visitors in rainy days than in sunny days. While visitors interviewed preferred a breezy sunny weather that was physically comfortable and allowed a far-reaching view, some also commented that a gloomy weather also gave a historical and cultural atmosphere as described by FAN in his prose. Thinking of FAN’s transcendence over external vicissitudes seemed to induce in visitors a more appreciative mood.

It is interesting that FAN never visited Yueyang Tower in person. When he wrote the prose at the request of TENG, he was hundreds of miles away. This contrasts with the actual physical relationship between writers and their places, which are reflected in their works, as shown in Table 1. Yet visitors today still saw that FAN’s description of the scenes were very apt. It seems that FAN’s perspective has become a formula for Chinese to readily adopt. Objective authenticity does not matter here as morality reigns. Visitors experienced the physical site of Yueyang Tower in a similar way, as discussed below.

4.2.5. The place as a symbol of moral ideal
The most important architecture in the scenic area is Yueyang Tower. In official discourse, the tower is clearly taken as the symbol of FAN’s moral ideal expressed in his prose (Chen, 2013; ECLRHP, 2016; www.yueyanglou.com; Zou et al., 2008). For visitors, FAN’s prose has clearly established expectations for this tower:

“Yueyang Tower at first sight is a little bit disappointing in my mind. Yueyang Tower should be an imposing skyscraper in textbook and in impression. Yet in front of me: a too rounded roof, not quite high in stature, it is quite different from its should-be image in my
impression. But when I ascend the steps, lean on a railing and look into the distance, the Yueyang Tower described by FAN Zhongyan still come into my eyes and into my heart” (MC307).

Visitors at first seemed to be expecting a high-rise tower. Like MC307 above, another visitor also expressed a surprise: “Yueyang tower is actually so small?! (MC239)” It seems that FAN’s prose has established such a high moral ideal in the Chinese mind that it has created a grand image for Yueyang Tower, possibly a halo effect. Yet the actual physical building can hardly live up to such an image and hence may lead to disappointment on first sight. But visitors may not struggle with such dissonance for long, like MC307 above, another visitor commented: “Comparing with modern buildings, it is not tall, yet grandeur depends not on tallness but astonishing cultural accumulation! (MC243)” Hence visitors move beyond physicality and focus more on the cultural and spiritual values of the tower.

The value of Yueyang Tower as a symbol of FAN’s moral ideal is not attached solely to any specific tower, even not to the one built by TENG and described in FAN’s prose. Rather, the symbolic value seems to be attached to this “place” where it stands. After TENG built his version of Yueyang tower in 1045, it was destroyed 33 years later by fire; since then, it was repaired or reconstructed at least 57 times according to remaining historical records, that is, once every 17 years on average (ECLRHP 2016). This history is represented by the bronze models of the tower from five different dynasties, seated at the entrance of the park (Fig. 2.6), which implicates that rebuilding is a normative practice here. The continuous rebuilding of the tower throughout the thousand years is also a process of reconfirming and solidifying the inheritance of FAN’s literary achievement and moral ideal and its association with this place, generation after generation, well into the contemporary era. This historical process is implicated in the collections of classical poems and prose written by ancient Chinese about Yueyang tower (PCHCTP, 2015; 2016), in which FAN’s prose seems to be a recurrent dominant theme adopted by TENG and FAN’s counterparts in subsequent historical times. Specifically, FAN and his prose was cited in 132 of a total of 926 poems (14.3%; PCHCTP, 2015) and in 52 of a total of 85 prose (61%; PCHCTP, 2016) about Yueyang tower. These writers, like TENG and FAN, were mostly the cultural, social and political elites in traditional China. A quote is provided in Appendix 2 as an example of those literature, written by SHANG Lu (1414 – 1486) at the request of WU Jie. SHANG achieved the top one rank in the imperial examination and became a prime minister in the Ming dynasty, while WU was the then prefecture chief of Yueyang and rebuilt the tower around 1471. The quote may be read with respect to two points. First, it is a harmonious integration of the different aspects of moral gaze discussed above, including gaze toward self/society, literature, writer, nature, and the place. Second, the ideas expressed in the quote are very similar to those in other classical literature in the thousand years following FAN (PCHCTP, 2015; 2016) and the current official discourse and visitor comments online as analyzed earlier in this paper. While the latter usually includes a fragment of the moral gaze, the quote from SHANG offers a more holistic view. It is in this extended history that Yueyang tower has become the symbol of FAN’s moral ideal, which forms the basis of its attractiveness to contemporary Chinese as a tourist destination.

5. Conclusion

A conceptual framework of moral gaze is proposed in Fig. 3 as a summary of both the findings from the empirical research and relevant Chinese social-cultural traditions. Overall, the moral gaze is seen as a general way of thinking, feeling and acting that tends to involve morality. Specifically, this research involves five aspects under the moral gaze as shown in Fig. 3: the moral cultivation of the visitor self and the society, the moral function of literature, the emphasis on the moral character of the writer, the moral inference from nature usually expressed in literature, and the place as a moral symbol. Moral cultivation at the personal and societal levels is the motivator that drives the use of literature for moral purpose, the importance attached to writer’s moral character, and the traditional mode of thinking that infers morality from natural phenomena. In turn, the later three may contribute to the moral cultivation of individuals and society. A writer’s moral character buttresses, and is expressed in, his/her writing. From nature a writer draws moral insights, and in turn, nature is imbued with moral values. This is a relational way of thinking typical of the Chinese mind (Cui, Liao, & Xu, 2015; Li, 2008; Sofield & Li, 2009). Literature plays a pivotal role in this framework, as it serves as the expressive and communicative media for everything else. These factors and processes, as shown in the dotted box in Fig. 3, can occur without any relevance to tourism. But when they are distinctively associated with a particular place, as in the case of Yueyang Tower, which has becomes the symbol of FAN’s widely respected moral ideal, the place becomes an attraction to people, or, a tourist destination, because of such associations. Hence, the framework essentially explains how a tourist attraction is formed and experienced under the moral gaze.

In the Yueyang tower case, FAN established a moral ideal in his prose and through his own life, that is, “Be the first the worry for the country and its people; Be the last to enjoy oneself!”. This moral pursuit exemplifies Confucianism’s emphasis on morality and has become an ideal integrated into the mainstream Chinese culture and respected by Chinese people. This ideal in his writing is inferred based on the landscape appreciation at Yueyang Tower, making this specific place a symbol of the ideal. With the surge of tourism in recent decades, the place has been developed in line with this image, and visitors are motivated by it to personally experience what was written in FAN’s prose. They use the moral gaze—though probably unconsciously and unsystematically—not only to appreciate the literary work, the writer, the landscape, and the architecture, but also to enrich and enhance themselves and ruminate on the functioning of their own society.

6. Discussion

Overall, this study reveals the cultural complexity and historical depth of literary tourism in China and contributes to the understanding of literary tourism in general. Morality is a basic nature of human societies and literature often plays an expressive and educational role with respect to morality. The linkage of the moral teaching in the text to a place can be experienced through literary tourism with the concept of moral gaze. Seeking the good/moral, like seeking the true and the beautiful, is within the human nature. People want to be with a high moral society and may be frustrated by the moral disorder in their social life. Bearing in their mind is FAN’s widely known moral teaching, “Be the first to worry for the country and its people; Be the last to enjoy oneself”. The place which substantiates his teaching and his behavior therefore has great appeal to Chinese people and contribute to their moral experiences.

Moreover, this study resonates with research on moral elevation in positive psychology (Pohling & Diessner, 2016) by revealing the positive experiences in a moral gaze. Pohling and Diessner (2016) reviewed that the moral elevation studies are mostly conducted in labs with strict experimenter control and limited authenticity, and suggested that more studies should be conducted in naturalistic environments. Cases like Yueyang Tower tourism seem to be a good setting for such research. In the meantime, by drawing from
these positive psychology studies, future research about moral gaze in tourism can contribute to the understanding of the moral experience and its outcomes, and help create personally and socially positive and meaningful experience through tourism.

In practice, the moral gaze phenomena present great challenge to tourism providers and the concept may help by providing a focus for tourism provision, interpretation, and creation of meaningful experience. As shown in this study, the moral gaze extends through thousands of years of history to today and is a core value of cultural heritage. Tourism has been developing very fast during the last two decades in China, after the destruction of traditional culture by various political movements including the disastrous Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). It seems easy to build new buildings and add tangible elements, yet it seems more difficult to tap into the intangible cultural values. In the case of Yueyang Tower, many structures including the memorial temples, tablet corridors and bronze towers were added during 2005 and 2007, yet they can hardly offer a deep experience to visitors who usually glanced at these new additions only in passing and some even lamented that they were newly built and hence not worth visiting. At the memorial temple for FAN and TENG, the exhibition about their life was opened and it is unlikely that visitors will be able to understand the life story of these figures. Hence it would be quite difficult for common people to understand. As a place deeply valued for its intangible spiritual culture, there seems a lack of work in this respect. The challenge is how to interpret and transmit intangible cultural values, which is thousands of years old but still lives into the contemporary society, and how to create a meaningful experience for visitors, including the positive experience of moral elevation (Pohling & Diessner, 2016). The concept and framework of moral gaze and findings from this study may be used to organize work in this area.

While Yueyang Tower is a representative case of the moral gaze, the concept tells about a general mentality that widely influences Chinese society and may be applicable to the understanding of tourism phenomena at many places in China. A great many tourism attractions involve inherently a moral gaze as they are valued by people and/or to the country, and left high-quality literary works that expressed their moral pursuit and were well-known and respected by Chinese people. The related places now become tourism attractions to contemporary Chinese. The concept of moral gaze opens a window directly into the spiritual core of Chinese culture, which may contribute to the understanding of the cultural forces shaping Chinese tourism (Li, 2008; Tse & Hobson, 2008; Xu, Cui, Sofield, & Li, 2014; Xu, Ding, & Packer, 2008). Further research could be conducted to examine the validity of the moral gaze in these cases and in Chinese tourism in general. Moreover, as morality is a basic nature of human societies, the concept of moral gaze could be tested in other cultures as well.

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### Appendix 1

An Account of YueYang Tower (English Translation)

In the spring of the fourth year of Qingli (1044 AD), TENG Zijing was exiled to administer Baling prefecture. Through two years of his efficient rule, the local administrative affairs have proceeded smoothly and the people are living in harmony. All that was left undone has now been restarted. Yueyan tower is also renovated and enlarged to exceed its previous scale. Engraved thereon are poems and rhymed prose written by worthy personalities in Tang dynasty (618–907 AD) and the present dynasty (starting from 960 AD). Teng invited me to write a prose to record the affair.

I see that the beauty of Baling lies in the lake of Dongting. It harbours distant mountains and gulsps the Yangtze river, so vast, mighty, and boundless. The morning sunlight and evening glow create a kaleidoscope of spectacles. This is the magnificent view of Yueyang tower, which has been well described by our predecessors. However, the lake leads northerly to the Wu gorge and reaches southerly to the Xiao and Xiang rivers; this is where exiled officials and literati often meet. When they watch the scenes, how could there be no difference in their feelings?

Consider the time when an excessive rain lasts for months. Chilly winds roar fiercely; muddy waves surge sky-high. The sun and stars are dimmed; the mountains disappear. Traveling merchants are stranded, as masts are blown down and oars broken. At the murky dusk tigers roar and monkeys cry. For someone

![Diagram](image_url)

**Fig. 3.** The formation and experience of a tourist attraction under the moral gaze.
ascending the tower at such a time, what emerge are nostalgia for leaving the capital and his hometown, and fears of defamament and criticism. He sees only a scene of desolation, and feels extremely sad.


Appendix 2

A paragraph from SHANG Lu (1414–1486)’s An Account of Rebuilding Yueyang Tower:

“Aha! The material world is not beautiful in itself, but is beautiful because of humans — this is a truth. Building a tower at Yueyang and embracing the fine scenery of Dongting Lake, this is already beautiful. Yet Lord FAN wrote a prose, further describing the wonder of the variation between rain and sunshine, in which he has imbued the spirit of ‘Being the first to worry and the last to worry for the country and the people; be the last to think of sightseeing? It is built because of humans are contented with his governance, and of initiative. In nine years, literati become acceptive of his teachings, desire to follow his footsteps and reach his height. I have heard that the deep admiration for the lord’s character and conduct and the lord. Who is the lord? It is FAN Zhongyan. The re- building of Yueyang Tower: based on the theories of Bourdieu, Danto and Dickie. Journal of Tourism and Tourism Change, 1–16. https://doi.org/10.1080/14766825.2013.1441513.

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商辂(1414–1486)《重建岳阳楼记》节选。

sten. 予不自美，又不愿人问美，此理也。夫以岳阳为楼，据有洞庭之胜，既云美矣。而范公为记，又历叙阴晴变态之状，以寓夫忧先忧后之念，使人诵而味之，非但出户庭而湖山景物尽在目中。凡景有独行，民之念者，自与楼而警之，而游而兴之。然则楼之建，岂为观游之好哉？盖有慕于公之为人，而追光篇，思欲公而及其之青山，子厚实有之，廉模有之，九疑之士，安其政，而更亦恍然于其下，无效然游而自肆者。夫为殿而能仁于其民，无愧于公之心也。建楼而欲复于旧，无愧于公之文也。公，何人也？希文则之。