



Towards A Poetics of Dwelling

Exploring Nearness Within
the Chinese Literati Garden

Li Lu

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the Chinese Literati Garden

Dissertation

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chair of the Board for Doctorates
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¹ Please note that Chinese and Japanese names are mentioned in the main body of this thesis based on their own linguistic and cultural traditions with the family names placed before the given names, including the author's own name. However, they are left with given names first in the front cover and references to avoid confusion.

personality, unconditional trust, straightforward and productive working style, and uncompromising academic demand consistently inspired me to work harder. I must also thank my co-promotor, Dr Gregory Bracken, for guiding me through the entire thesis process: supervising my progress, editing my texts, cheering me up when I was frustrated, and responding to my incessant silly questions. Without Carola and Greg's help, I would not have been able to reach many of my academic and life goals over the last few years.

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Summary

This thesis starts with a worrisome observation tied to various phenomena across modern built environments: humans today are experiencing a weakened relatedness to and reduced intimacy with the world around them. In stark contrast to the general trend, however, most Chinese literati gardens maintain their traditional rich conditions, enabling their visitors to experience a unique, high-quality experience of relatedness to and intimacy with the world, which may serve as an antidote to the existing disruptive modern condition. Thus, it is important to determine what lessons can be learned from the Chinese literati gardens in order to address this weakened intimacy of relatedness in modern built environments.

Motivated by this pursuit, this thesis takes the Heideggerian notion of Nearness as its foundation. Through a contextually relevant interpretation of the meaning of Nearness in Heideggerian discourse, it establishes a theoretical framework through which to assess how the experience of Nearness—the ontological relatedness to and intimacy with the world—generally occurs within built environments (Chapter Two). Then, it constructs a hypothesis based on materials from various fields to explain why and how conditions that facilitate experiences of Nearness were embedded within Chinese literati gardens over the course of their long-term evolution (Chapter Three). Next, taking the Master of the Nets Garden as a case study, it reveals the various spatial-experiential settings embedded within the garden that facilitate rich experiences of Nearness and explores the complex mechanisms through which Nearness occurs (Chapters Four to Seven). Finally, it reflects on some of the key issues revealed by the case study, including an examination of its practical relevance—in particular what benefits and enlightenments the findings of this thesis could bring to current architectural practices (Chapter Eight).

The thesis employs an abductive and reflexive epistemology, meaning that its four main parts—theoretical research, hypothesis construction, case study, and discussion—inform, support, and enhance one another, making sense as a whole. While each component features an independent argumentation, the thesis also makes a cohesive argument in its entirety. It employs phenomenological reduction as its primary research method, using discourse analysis, participatory observation, and GIS-based spatial-experiential analysis as complements. Overall, this thesis concludes that Chinese literati gardens feature numerous embedded settings that continuously facilitate rich, strong, and multi-dimensional experiences of Nearness.

By exploring this essential aspect of the literati garden, the thesis aims to equip contemporary spatial practitioners with the theoretical and practical tools necessary to recapture the high-quality experiences of Nearness within their works in the modern era.

Samenvatting

Dit proefschrift begint met een zorgwekkende constatering die verband houdt met diverse verschijnselen in de moderne gebouwde omgeving: de mens ervaart tegenwoordig een verzwakking van zijn verbondenheid met de intimiteit van de wereld om hem heen. In schril contrast met de algemene trend handhaven de meeste Chinese literaire tuinen echter hun traditionele rijke voorwaarden en omstandigheden, waardoor de bezoekers een unieke en hoogwaardige ervaring van hun verbondenheid met de intimiteit van de wereld kunnen beleven, die als tegengif kan dienen voor de ontwrichtende moderne toestanden. Het is dus belangrijk te bepalen welke lessen kunnen worden getrokken uit de Chinese literaire tuinen om deze verzwakte intimiteit van verbondenheid in moderne gebouwde omgevingen aan te pakken.

Gemotiveerd door dit streven neemt dit proefschrift de Heideggeriaanse notie van Nabijheid als uitgangspunt van een studie naar de Chinese tuinen. Door een contextueel relevante interpretatie van de betekenis van nabijheid in het Heideggeriaanse discours, wordt een theoretisch kader geschapen waarmee kan worden nagegaan hoe de ervaring van nabijheid—de ontologische verwantschap met en intimiteit van de wereld—in de gebouwde omgeving algemeen voorkomt (Hoofdstuk Twee). Vervolgens wordt op basis van materiaal uit verschillende vakgebieden een hypothese opgesteld om te verklaren waarom en onder welke omstandigheden die ervaringen van nabijheid die de intimiteit vergemakkelijken in Chinese literaire tuinen zijn ingebed in de loop van hun langdurige evolutie (Hoofdstuk Drie). In de volgende hoofdstukken worden, met de Tuin van de Netten als case study, verschillende ruimtelijk-experimentele settings in de tuin onderzocht en blootgelegd die rijke ervaringen van nabijheid mogelijk maken en worden daarna de complexe mechanismen onderzocht waardoor nabijheid ontstaat (Hoofdstuk Vier tot en met Zeven). Ten slotte wordt ingegaan op enkele van de belangrijkste kwesties die uit de case study naar voren zijn gekomen, waaronder een onderzoek naar de praktische relevantie ervan—welke voordelen en inzichten de bevindingen van dit proefschrift zouden kunnen opleveren voor de huidige architectuurpraktijk (Hoofdstuk Acht).

Het proefschrift maakt gebruik van een abductieve en reflexieve epistemologie, hetgeen betekent dat de vier hoofdonderdelen—theoretisch onderzoek, hypotheseconstructie, case study en discussie—elkaar informeren, ondersteunen en versterken, en als geheel zinvol zijn. Hoewel elk onderdeel een onafhankelijke argumentatie bevat, vormt het proefschrift in zijn geheel eveneens een coherent

argument. Het maakt gebruik van fenomenologische reductie als primaire onderzoeksmethode, met discoursanalyse, participerende observatie en op GIS gebaseerde ruimtelijk-experimentele analyse als aanvullingen. In het algemeen wordt in deze dissertatie geconcludeerd dat Chinese literaire tuinen tal van ingebedde settings hebben die voortdurend rijke, sterke en multidimensionale ervaringen van Nabijheid faciliteren. Door dit essentiële aspect van de literaire tuin te belichten, beoogt deze dissertatie hedendaagse ruimtelijke beoefenaars uit te rusten met de theoretische en praktische hulpmiddelen die nodig zijn om in het moderne tijdperk hoogwaardige ervaringen van nabijheid in hun werk tot stand te brengen.

1 Introduction

In his essay 'The Thing', German philosopher Martin Heidegger claims that 'man puts the longest distances behind him in the shortest time. He puts the greatest distances behind himself and thus puts everything before himself at the shortest range'.¹ In this statement, Heidegger expresses his serious concern about modern technology and the modern world, both of which can be seen as triggered by the Industrial Revolution. With the Industrial Revolution as a starting point, during the increasingly fast advancement of modern technology, human beings have made significant changes in almost all aspects of human life over the last two hundred years. However, while humans are making rapid changes, they are simultaneously experiencing a continuous sense of loss in the modern world. American novelist and poet Gertrude Stein sharply reveals this sense of loss in her comments on Picasso in 1938, stating 'everything destroys itself in the twentieth century and nothing continues'.² She goes on to observe that everything 'has a splendour which is its own'.³ Based on Heidegger and Gertrude Stein's observations, a careful examination of modernity as a 'qualitative', rather than a 'chronological', category reveals that everything involved in modernity contains a tendency to destroy relatedness to and intimacy with the world that it has been maintained throughout history.⁴

This situation, I argue, is one crucial aspect of modern loss, the specific manifestations of which have been broadly observed and discussed in the field of architecture. However, due to the lack of an effective theoretical perspective, how this loss occurs within a built environment remains insufficiently explored including, more importantly, how to respond to this disturbing situation. This thesis is motivated by the possibility of revealing how this weakened relatedness of intimacy occurs, as well as finding ways to recapture it in the built environment of today's

¹ Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, Harper Perennial Modern Classics, (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2001), 163.

² David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford: Black Well Publishers, 1989), 10.

³ Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 10.

⁴ Peter Osborne, "Modernity is a Qualitative, not a Chronological, Category: Notes on the Dialectics of Differential Historical Time," in *In Postmodernism and the Re-reading of Modernity*, ed. Peter Hulme Francis Barker, and Margaret Iversen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992).

world by employing Heidegger's notion of Nearness as a theoretical perspective.⁵ Specifically, this thesis attempts to explore possible approaches for recapturing the relatedness of intimacy between human beings and the world within the human-built environment by identifying and understanding how the abundant relatedness of intimacy occurs within the Chinese literati garden.

1.1 Problematique: A Threefold Research Setting

This research is set up based on a threefold problematique. It comprises three major presuppositions that inform, verify, and intertwine with one another throughout the thesis and, therefore, must be understood as a whole. The three primary presuppositions are: A) the original relatedness of intimacy humans have to the world has been generally weakened, and is still weakening, as a result of modernity; B) Heidegger's philosophy, especially his reflection on modernity with the notion of Nearness, reveals the essence of this weakened relatedness of intimacy that is happening in the modern era; and C) a series of spatial-experiential settings that allow individuals to experience this intimacy of relatedness are embedded within Chinese literati gardens in their long-term evolution. Each of these three presuppositions plays a different role in this thesis. Presupposition A addresses the background for the setup of this thesis; Presupposition B addresses the philosophical foundation behind the theoretical framework of the thesis; and Presupposition C addresses the hypothesis for the entire thesis, leading to a potential solution of the problem. Together, these elements form the problematique and the argumentation structure of this thesis (Fig. 1.1). Each of the presuppositions will be introduced separately.

⁵ The term 'nearness' is a translation of the German word '*nähe*'. Heidegger consistently writes '*nähe*' in the form with a lowercase 'n'. Accordingly, in the English version of *Being and Time* translated by Joan Stambaugh, '*nähe*' is translated as 'nearness', also with the lowercase 'n'. However, in this thesis, when the use of this term is based on my interpretation of Heidegger's philosophy, I use the form 'Nearness' (with a capital 'N') to emphasise its role as the subject of this thesis.

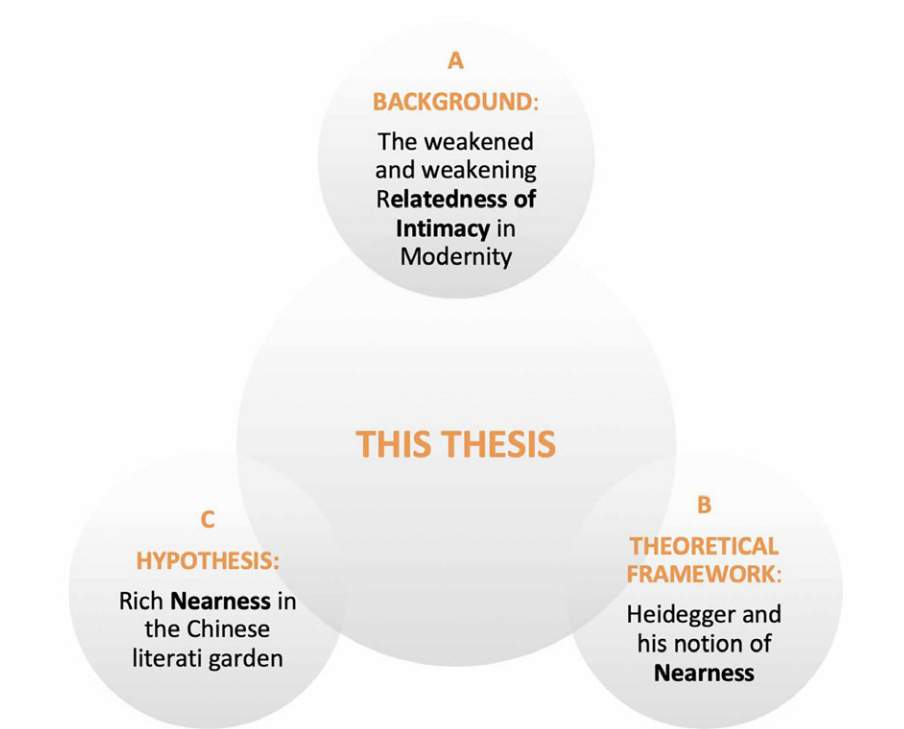


FIG. 1.1 Threefold Research Setting. Source: Lu Li.

1.1.1 Presupposition A: The Weakened Relatedness to and Intimacy with the World in Modernity

Presupposition A concerns modern loss, understood here as the disruptive changes caused by modernity that are generally experienced in contemporary everyday life. Such loss has been noted, interpreted, and described in many different ways. For Heidegger, this loss is an ‘abolition of distinctness’, a sense of ‘homelessness’, or an ignorance of an ‘authentic way of being-in-the-world’;⁶ For Richard Sennett, it

⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit*, ed. Dennis J. Schmidt, trans. Joan Stambaugh, SUNY Series in Contemporary Continental Philosophy, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996); Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*.

is an 'erosion of public life';⁷ for Christian Norberg-Schulz it is a 'loss of place';⁸ for Anthony Giddens, this loss is a 'disembedding', a 'lifting out' of social relations from local contexts of interaction, restructured across indefinite spans of time-space.⁹ Among all the disruptive changes caused by modernity, the weakened relatedness of intimacy between the built environment and humans is noticeable and rather disruptive. Hypothetically, this specific aspect of modern loss was triggered by the Industrial Revolution and goes hand in hand with global modernisation, a process that is still continuing today. The following present some evidence of how this aspect of loss manifests in the modern world.

A Brief Clarification of Terms

In order to discuss modern loss, terms like 'modern', 'modernisation', and 'modernity' need to be clarified. According to American philosopher Marshall Berman, modernity can be divided into three conventional phases.¹⁰ Modern European philosophy scholar Peter Osborne further dubbed these three phases as early, classical, and late modernity. Early modernity is from 1500 to 1789 (or 1453–1789 in traditional historiography), classical modernity is from 1789 to 1900, and late modernity is from 1900 to 1989.¹¹ According to Osborne, 'modernisation' can be defined as a process of realising modernity.¹² However, British historian Christopher Bayly argues that modernity is 'a period that began at the end of the eighteenth century and has continued up to the present day'.¹³ He further points out that modernity is an aspiration to be 'up with the times'.¹⁴ This echoes Osborne's statement that modernity is a qualitative category, rather than a chronological category.¹⁵ I agree with Bayly and Osborne's view of modernity as a unified, global

⁷ Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*, 1st ed. (London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1992).

⁸ Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture* (New York: Rizzoli, 1980).

⁹ Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, 1st ed. (United Kingdom: Polity Press, 1990). 1st ed. (United Kingdom: Polity Press, 1990)

¹⁰ Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), 16–17.

¹¹ Osborne, "Modernity is a Qualitative, not a Chronological, Category."

¹² Osborne, "Modernity is a Qualitative, not a Chronological, Category."

¹³ Christopher Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World 1780–1914: Global Connections and Comparisons* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004).

¹⁴ Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World 1780–1914*.

¹⁵ Osborne, "Modernity is a Qualitative, not a Chronological, Category."

process that has happened and is continuously happening, in order to approach a quality of being current with present time. Modernity is more about the present and the future than the past.

Based on Bayly, Osborne, and Berman's definitions, my discussion on modern loss is restricted to the period when classical modernity starts in 1789 to the present. By 'modern loss', I mean the general loss caused during the process of modernisation, manifested as the consequences of modernity in the present world. I intentionally ignore the usual differentiation between modern and postmodern in my discussion because, as British anthropologist David Harvey points out, postmodern has its own purported relation to modern.¹⁶ Although there are different representations in the so-called postmodern era, the sense of loss that has been triggered by modernisation undoubtedly continues today. In Harvey's discussion on Baudelaire's thinking on modernity, he stresses that modernity tends to elicit a 'conjoining of the ephemeral and the fleeting with eternal and the immutable'.¹⁷ In today's human built environment, this tendency of the 'conjoining of the ephemeral and the fleeting with eternal and the immutable' is significantly noticeable, leading to a sense of loss. With the aim of addressing this kind of loss, this thesis will start by drawing a number of seemingly isolated—but essentially interrelated—observations at different scales of the modern built environment to show the manifestation of the weakened and weakening relatedness of intimacy between humans and the world.

Global Scale: An 'Absolute Deterritorialisation'

Let's start with a general, and critical, situation concerning the human built environment, noticeable on a global scale, that could be called 'a situation of deterritorialisation'.¹⁸ Stemming from industrialisation and advancements in transportation and communication technology, globalisation has radically accelerated since the eighteenth century. That, in Thomas Friedman's word, marks the beginning of 'Globalisation 2.0'.¹⁹ By the second half of the twentieth century, the whole world was more interconnected than ever due to a series of advancements that drastically changed the human beings' general state of being, including the prevalence of online social platforms, the maturity of international financial and

¹⁶ Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*.

¹⁷ Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 10.

¹⁸ Benjamin Noys, "Architectures of Accelerationism," *History and Critical Thinking Debates: Locating the Politics of Architecture Series*, (2 2015).

¹⁹ Thomas Friedman, *The World Is Flat 3.0: A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century* (New York: Picador, 2007).

trading systems, and the establishment of global transportation networks. William Greider's observation sharply reveals what is occurring globally:

The logic of commerce and capital has overpowered the inertia of politics and launched an epoch of great social transformations. Settled facts of material life are being revised for rich and poor nations alike. Social understandings that were formed by the hard political struggles of the twentieth century are put in doubt. Old verities about the ordering of nations are revised and a new map of the world is gradually being drawn. These great changes sweep over the affairs of mere governments and destabilise the established political orders in both advanced and primitive societies. Everything seems new and strange. Nothing seems certain.... Old worlds are destroyed and new ones emerge.²⁰

Although many different aspects of counter-globalisation can also be observed over the past decade, the globalisation process has already profoundly shaped the overall appearance of the world, including the general quality of the built environment where humans live. Without a doubt, the world has become 'flat' and 'even' over the last two hundred years, and this tendency has speeded up since 2000.²¹ This situation has radically changed the human state of being, particularly in the way humans build and inhabit the world. As a result, the future of the built environment can be foreseen, according to Deleuze and Guattari, as 'absolute deterritorialisation'.²² In this deterritorialisation, human culture, technology, language, and many other aspects are ultimately merged into oneness. More directly, as humans, we seem to belong nowhere but, at the same time, belong everywhere. What, then, does this global deterritorialisation mean to us? When thrown into the situation of deterritorialisation, do we all lose the relatedness of intimacy to the diverse local conditions that have always existed in different places of the world?

Region and City Scale: Giant, Generic, and Homogeneous Expansion

At the scale of region and city, the loss of the relatedness of intimacy stems from the continual growth of modern cities—both in terms of size and height—in many regions of the world. As Rem Koolhaas claims, the fact that 'human growth is exponential implies the past will at some point become too small to be inhabited and shared by

²⁰ William Greider, *One World, Ready or Not: The Manic Logic of Global Capitalism* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997).

²¹ Friedman, *The World Is Flat 3.0: A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century*.

²² Noys, "Architectures of Accelerationism."

those alive'.²³ In turns out, Koolhaas' prediction has a time limit. A 2019 UN report predicts that the world's population will plateau at 10.9 billion people by the end of the century, and the growth rate has already been noticeably slowing in many countries.²⁴ Regardless, human habitats at the regional and city scale have been growing increasingly larger and higher over the past two hundred years, the result of population growth, technology progress, and economic development (Fig. 1.2).

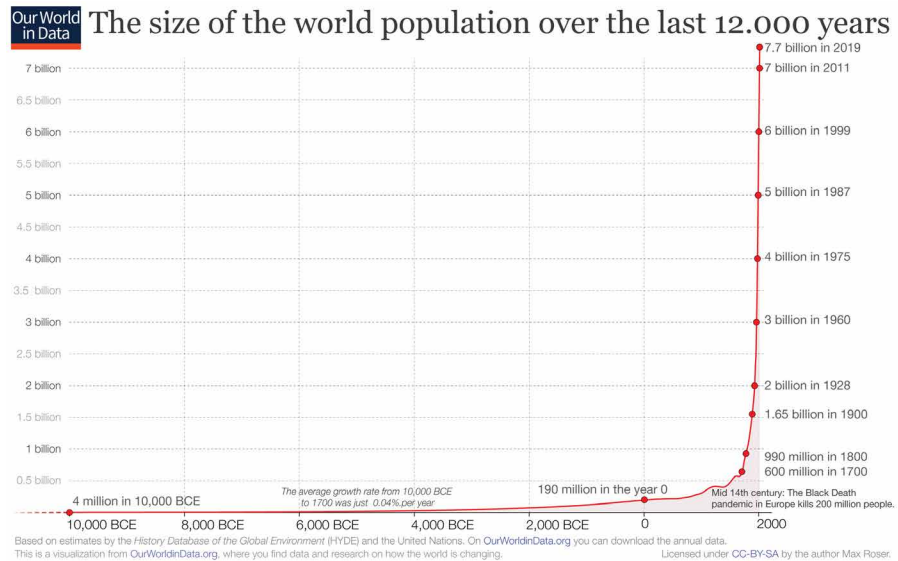


FIG. 1.2 The Size of the World Population Over the Last 12,000 Years. Source: Max Roser et al., retrieved from Our World in Data.²⁵

²³ Rem Koolhaas, *S,M,L,XL* (Rotterdam: 010 Publ., 1995).

²⁴ *Growing at a slower pace: world population is expected to reach 9.7 billion in 2050 and could peak at nearly 11 billion around 2100*, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2019), <https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/news/population/world-population-prospects-2019.html>.

²⁵ Max Roser et al., "World Population Growth," (Our World in Data, 2019). <https://ourworldindata.org/world-population-growth>.

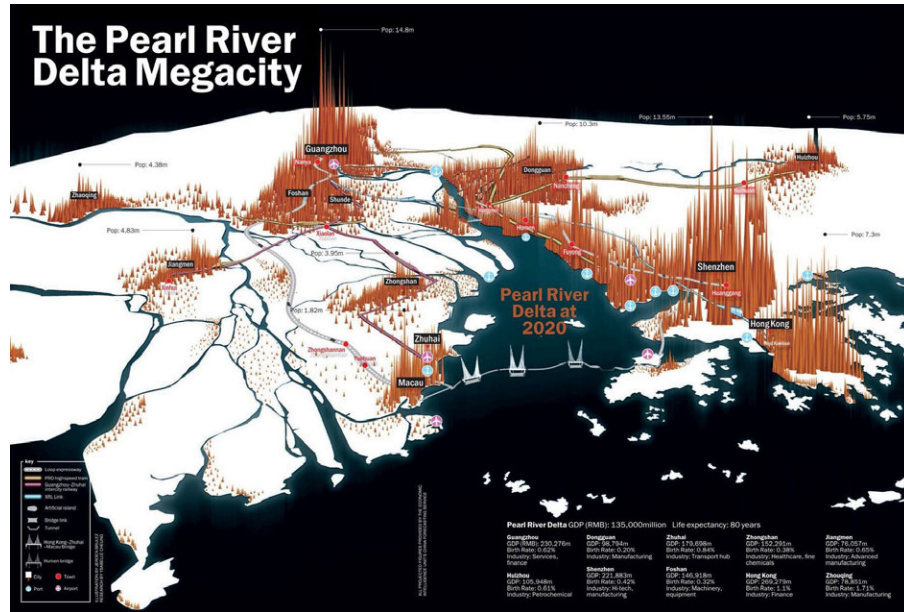


FIG. 1.3 The Pearl River Delta Megacity. Source: Nick Routley, retrieved from Visual Capitalist.²⁶

Moreover, many contemporary metropolitan areas illustrate the possibility of an extraordinary growth in recent decades. As an example, the Pearl River Delta, a vast metropolitan area in South China that includes Hong Kong, Macau, Shenzhen, Guangzhou, and other cities, reached 57.15 million people in 2013.²⁷ As recently as the late 1970s, the vast majority of this fertile river delta was agricultural land. In less than half a century, the area developed into something that goes far beyond what is usually called a ‘megacity’.²⁸ Important cities in this region seem to be integrating into a giant unit through deepening economic activities, coordinating policy orientation, and interoperable transportation systems (Fig. 1.3). Although the

²⁶ Nick Routley, "Megacity 2020: The Pearl River Delta's Astonishing Growth," (Visual Capitalist, 2018). <https://www.visualcapitalist.com/pearl-river-delta-megacity-2020/>.

²⁷ 2013年广东人口发展状况简析 [Analysis on the Development of Population of Guangdong Province in 2013], Statistics Bureau of Guangdong Province (2013), http://stats.gd.gov.cn/tjfx/content/post_1435168.html.

²⁸ According to the 2018 'World Urbanization Prospects' report of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, a megacity is defined as 'urban agglomerations having over 10 million inhabitants'. See: *World Urbanization Prospects, The 2018 Revision*, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2019).

growth of giant metropolitan areas like this seems to have slowed down in recent years, the problems and challenges caused by them will remain in the long run.²⁹ While growing giant in scale, as Rem Koolhaas observes, the contemporary cities are also becoming increasingly more generic and homogeneous, followed by the loss of identity and diversity.³⁰ Given Koolhaas' attitude of embracing reality, he probably would refuse to view this tendency as a pure loss. However, it must be asked again: what does the larger and higher contemporary city mean to us? By growing into something extraordinarily giant, does it become more difficult to perceive and experience modern cities as a whole, unified entity? With such fast and extraordinary growth, is the relatedness of intimacy to an increasingly larger proportion of a city more easily lost in individual's everyday life? Further, by becoming increasingly similar—more generic—and homogeneous, do modern urban environments lose relatedness of intimacy to their original placeness of specific and diverse historical, cultural, economic, and political qualities?

Architecture Scale: More Self-referential, Abstract, and Complex

At the architecture scale, a very general examination is enough to suggest the same loss of intimacy of relatedness. This loss is noticeable in modernist architecture, which, in essence, embraces such a loss. As Harvey points out, modernism is always a 'creative deconstruction' and a representation of the 'eternal and immutable in the midst of all the chaos'.³¹ This modernist tendency is very different from the built environments of the preindustrial era. In preindustrial society, tradition was regarded as an authority with the force of law, usually accepted and obeyed because 'respect for tradition gives collective control, which acts as a discipline'.³² In contrast to this premodern situation, modernist architecture 'often wilfully reveals its own reality as a construction or an artifice'. It represents the 'eternal' and 'immutable' in the chaos, transforming itself into 'a self-referential construct, rather than a mirror of society'.³³ As a result, vernacular architectural languages are often reduced to a superficial level; in many places, they are vanishing rapidly.

²⁹ *World Urbanization Prospects, The 2018 Revision.*

³⁰ Koolhaas, *S,M,L,XL.*

³¹ Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity.*

³² Amos Rapoport, *House Form and Culture* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1967).

³³ Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity.*

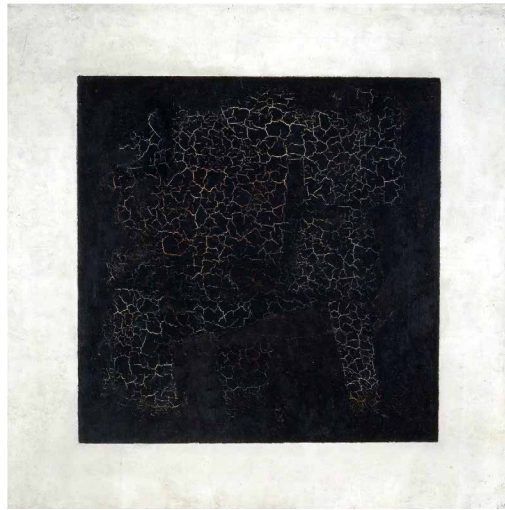


FIG. 1.4 Kazimir Malevich's *Black Square*, Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow. Source: Kazimir Malevich, public domain, via Wiki Commons.³⁴

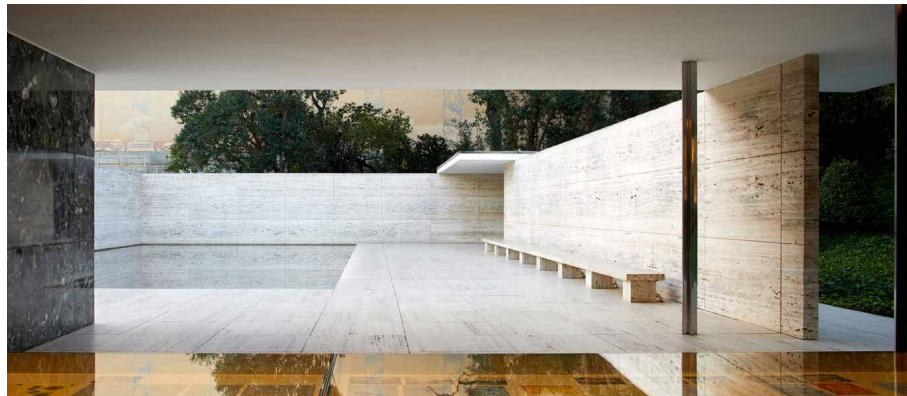


FIG. 1.5 Abstraxtness Barcelona Pavilion, Designed by Mies van der Rohe. Source: Pepo Segura, Retrieved from ArchDaily.³⁵

³⁴ Kazimir Malevich, "Black Square," (Wikimedia Commons). https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kazimir_Malevich,_1915,_Black_Suprematic_Square,_oil_on_linen_canvas,_79.5_x_79.5_cm,_Tretyakov_Gallery,_Moscow.jpg.

³⁵ Eric Baldwin, "Mies van der Rohe Foundation Launches Lilly Reich Grant for Equality in Architecture," (ArchDaily, 2020). <https://www.archdaily.com/941766/mies-van-der-rohe-foundation-launches-lilly-reich-grant-for-equality-in-architecture>.

The tendency to become self-referential usually leads to a sense of abstraction in modernist works. For instance, Kazimir Malevich's painting *Black Square* (1913), generally regarded as a seminal work of modern art, marks a significant moment when abstraction became an essential aesthetic value in the modern condition, the result of its wilfully self-referential construction (Fig. 1.4). This was clearly revealed in a handout that accompanied the first showing of the painting in The Last Exhibition of Futurist Painting 0.10 in 1915, in which Malevich wrote, 'Up until now there were no attempts at painting as such, without any attribute of real life....Painting was the aesthetic side of a thing, but never was original and an end in itself.'³⁶ This tendency towards the self-referential and abstract was followed by modernist architecture and represented directly in many modernist architects' manifestos. It is seen in Mies van der Rohe's manifesto 'Less is More' (Fig. 1.5), in Le Corbusier's notion of 'free plan',³⁷ and in Adolf Loos's 'passion for smooth and precious surfaces' in *Ornament and Crime*.³⁸ Among those realised projects, the self-referential and abstract tendency is seen clearly in van der Rohe's Barcelona Pavilion, where the concept of 'flowing spaces' suggests a strong relation to the graphic composition of *De Stijl*. It is also seen in the Louvre Pyramid designed by Ieoh Ming Pei, whose monumental pyramid form is 'eternal and immutable in the midst of all the chaos', with highly transparent material against a heavy historical context that perfectly demonstrates 'creative deconstruction'.³⁹ It is even seen, much later, in Richard Meyer's iconic preference for purely white buildings. And, perhaps, it is most broadly seen in monotonous, expressionless, and strikingly similar modernist buildings all over the world. What does more self-referential and abstract modern architecture mean to us? With a tendency towards the self-referential and abstract, do we lose a certain degree of relatedness of intimacy to our surroundings, isolated from many previously perceivable, tangible, and legible elements of the world, including the building itself?

The turn to the postmodern is noticeable at the architecture scale. Although the obsession with formal and spatial abstraction seemed to continue in many architectural works, the post-modernist condition that emerged in the mid-1960s turned to the privilege of 'heterogeneity and differences as liberative forces in the

³⁶ Samuel Jay Keyser, *The Mental Life of Modernism: Why Poetry, Painting, and Music Changed at the Turn of the Twentieth Century*, 1st ed. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2020), 163.

³⁷ Le-Corbusier and Frederick Etchells, *Towards a New Architecture* (London: Architectural Press, 1946).

³⁸ Adolf Loos, *Ornament and Crime* (Riverside, Calif: Ariadne Press, 1998).

³⁹ Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*.

redefinition of cultural discourses'.⁴⁰ I argue that this privilege resulted in a tendency towards 'ambiguity' in many postmodernist works, particularly those claiming to be deconstructionist.⁴¹ Meanwhile, isolation between different parts of a building is more commonly seen. As Harvey observes, the late-capitalist condition can be found in the very essence of postmodernism.⁴² Viewing postmodernism architecture as a representation of late-capitalism, it is not strange to see the tendency to create larger, taller, and more complex buildings in contemporary architecture. According to Karl Polanyi's famous description of capitalism as a system of 'disembedding'⁴³, this tendency is almost unavoidable, the result of the self-accumulation and extension of capitalism.⁴⁴

Take MOMA in Beijing as an example. Someone living in the early twentieth century might find it difficult to imagine that a project, usually regarded as a single building, could be as large as 220,000 m², combined with eight high-rises, 135,000 m² of residential space, and 85,000 m² of commercial space (Fig. 1.6). In this context, what do these postmodern tendencies of growing larger, taller, more complex, and even more ambiguous mean? By striving to achieve ambiguity through 'complexity and contradictions',⁴⁵ do those deconstructionist buildings become too open to interpretation, thereby losing the relatedness of intimacy to the specific contexts in which they are supposed to be rooted? By demonstrating the potential to become complex, do these modern and postmodern buildings actually make them more challenging for individuals to sufficiently experience the built environment, as a result of losing the essential mental, emotional, and physical relatedness of intimacy to the environment they inhabit?

⁴⁰ Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 9.

⁴¹ Christopher Butler, *Postmodernism: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 2002).

⁴² Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*.

⁴³ Noys, "Architectures of Accelerationism."

⁴⁴ John Bellamy Foster, "Theories of Capitalist Transformation: Critical Notes on the Comparison of Max and Schumpeter," *Oxford Journals* (9 2 2011).

⁴⁵ Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2002).



FIG. 1.6 The MOMA Complex in Beijing, Designed by Steven Holl. Source: Steven Holl Architects.⁴⁶

Daily Instrumental Scale: Less Physical Interaction and More Waste

Last, at the daily instrumental scale, humans are increasingly encouraged to engage with fewer physical items, thanks to modern technology. In today's world, items such as calculators, watches, paper notebooks, radios, pens, and electric torches are used much less, since most of these functionalities have been integrated into modern smart devices; other things, such as record players and videotapes, have almost disappeared. Fewer physical things in daily life leads to a modern lifestyle with a lower degree of physical interface. On the other hand, even though human productivity and population are both reaching a historical peak, there is more waste being generated than ever before. Daniel Hoornweg warns that the world is currently producing more solid waste than at any other period in history and is approaching the limits of what can be accommodated.⁴⁷ A report from the US Environmental

⁴⁶ Steven Holl Architects, "Linked Hybrid," (2009). <https://www.stevenholl.com/project/beijing-linked-hybrid/>.

⁴⁷ Daniel Hoornweg and Perinaz Bhada-Tata, *What a Waste: A Global Review of Solid Waste Management*, Urban Development Series (Washington, 2012).

Protection Agency shows that from 1960 to 2008, the total amount of multiple solid waste in the United States increased from 88.1 to 249.6 million tons per year, and the per capita generation of multiple solid waste increased from 2.65 pounds to 4.50 pounds per day.⁴⁸ It seems that while we are producing and owning more, we are also producing more waste than ever. What does this paradox mean to us? From engaging less with physical things and throwing away more, do we lose the relatedness of intimacy to tangible physical surroundings in everyday life?

Based on the above discussion, I would like to restate that what is revealed by all of these seemingly isolated manifestations within the modern built environment is essentially a weakened—and still weakening—relatedness of intimacy between humans and the modern world. This also suggests that as a result of this weakened relatedness of intimacy to the world, human beings are increasingly losing the once close connection to many essential living conditions that have been mentally, physically, and socially familiar throughout history. Hypothetically, these conditions are significant for human well-being because they are what allow humans to live, deeply rooted in human instinct. The more relatedness of intimacy to these conditions is maintained, the greater the degree of well-being, sense of belonging, safety, and identity is also maintained. This assumption strongly echoes Heidegger's concern about modern technology and, in particular, his notion of Nearness, which will be discussed in the following section.

1.1.2 **Presupposition B: The Relevance of Heidegger's Reflection on Modernity and His Notion of Nearness**

The second presupposition assumes that Heidegger's reflection on modernity, and in particular his notion of Nearness, is closely associated with the weakened and weakening relatedness of intimacy discussed above. Among the thinkers who have reflected on modernity, Heidegger is undoubtedly remarkable. The problem raised in the first presupposition, i.e., the weakened and still weakening relatedness of intimacy between humans and the modern world, is a significant concern that emerged in Heideggerian philosophy in relation to reflections on modern technology. Specifically, Heidegger captures this essential aspect of modern loss through his notion of Nearness. In 'The Thing', Heidegger observes:

⁴⁸ *Municipal Solid Waste Generation, Recycling, and Disposal in the United States: Facts and Figures for 2008*, United States Environmental Protection Agency (Washington, 2008).

All distances in time and space are shrinking. Man now reaches overnight, by plane, places which formerly took weeks and months of travel. He now receives instant information, by radio, of events which he formerly learned about only years later, if at all. The germination and growth of plants, which remained hidden throughout the seasons, is now exhibited publicly in a minute, on film. Distant sites of the most ancient cultures are shown on film as if they stood this very moment amidst today's street traffic. Moreover, the film attests to what it shows by presenting also the camera and its operators at work. The peak of this abolition of every possibility of remoteness is reached by television, which will soon pervade and dominate the whole machinery of communication.⁴⁹

All of these technological inventions, according to Heidegger, lead to the elimination of Nearness.⁵⁰ Yet, as he sharply points out, 'the frantic abolition of all distances brings no nearness; for nearness does not consist in shortness of distance'.⁵¹ Heidegger goes on to ask: What is 'nearness' if it fails to emerge from the 'reduction of the longest distances to the shortest intervals'?⁵² This is a key question, around which the notion of Nearness appears repeatedly, implicitly or explicitly, in many of Heidegger's essential texts, such as the remarkable treatise *Being and Time* (1927), the essays 'Building Dwelling Thinking' (1951) and 'The Thing' (1950), and in public lectures such as 'Language Speaks' (1950) and 'Poetically, Man Dwells...' (1951). In these texts, the notion of Nearness is discussed in relation to many significant concepts, such as 'being-in-the-world', 'building-dwelling-thinking', 'fourfold', 'being-with', 'being-toward-death', 'enframing', and 'the thing'.⁵³ When Heidegger stresses that the 'the loss of rapport with things that occurs in states of depression', when he asserts that 'all distances in time and space are shrinking' in the modern world, and when he claims that 'today everything present is equally near and equally far', he consistently reminds us that the weakened and weakening relatedness of intimacy behind those phenomena, as described in presupposition A, is essentially a loss of Nearness.⁵⁴ In particular, his concern about Nearness echoes his own characterisation of modernity as a type of 'homelessness', suggesting a

⁴⁹ Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 163.

⁵⁰ Martin Heidegger, "The Thing," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, ed. and trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2001)."

⁵¹ Heidegger, "The Thing," 163.

⁵² Heidegger, "The Thing."

⁵³ Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*.

⁵⁴ Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*.

disturbing relationship between humans and the world within their built environment caused by modernity.⁵⁵ These recurring discussions around the notion of Nearness reveal Heidegger's deep concern that, as a result of the fast progress of modern technology, the original relationship of humans with the world is becoming ambiguous and problematic.

The notion of Nearness begins to appear extensively in Heidegger's texts during the 1950s. For context, three historical developments can be identified during this period. First, new technological inventions, such as radios, movies, microprocessors, telecommunications, and computers—products of the so-called 'third Industrial Revolution'—were becoming increasingly dominant in daily life. Second, most of Europe was struggling to recover from World War II and striving to rebuild a new world. Third, the modernist architecture movement was emerging while at the same time, various problems of modernist architecture were being exposed, such as the monotonous and meaningless aesthetic system, social segregation, and dead neighbourhoods that lacked lively atmospheres.⁵⁶ It is surely not a coincidence that Heidegger frequently mentioned and discussed Nearness in relation to architecture and the built environment in such a historical context. It seems that for Heidegger, an understanding of the notion of Nearness became particularly crucial and urgent at that time, when Europeans were striving to build a new world under conditions that humanity 'puts the longest distances behind him in the shortest time' and 'puts the greatest distances behind himself and thus puts everything before himself at the shortest range'.⁵⁷ In all his discussions, Heidegger seems to be warning us that once the original relatedness of intimacy to the world is disrupted or ruined, humans must confront various severe problems resulting from that loss because there is 'an essential tendency towards nearness' in humanity.⁵⁸

Above all, Heidegger's profound thought around the notion of Nearness provides us with a theoretical perspective for understanding the fundamental challenges of the modern world. It reveals a strong clue among the fragmented puzzle pieces for

⁵⁵ Jeff Malpas, "Heidegger, Aalto, and the Limits of Design," in *Randgänge zum Entwurf Denken Martin Heideggers*, ed. Toni Hildebrandt and David Espinet (Germany: Fink Wilhelm GmbH & Co.KG, 2014).

⁵⁶ One infamous and often cited illustration of the failure of modernism is the Pruitt-Igoe housing project, which was built in 1950s in the US city of St. Louis in Missouri; the project was blamed for creating social problems. See: Alexander von Hoffman, "Why They Built Pruitt-Igoe," in *From Tenements to the Taylor Homes: In Search of an Urban Housing Policy in Twentieth-Century America* ed. John F. Bauman, Roger Biles, and Kristin M. Szylvian (Pennsylvania The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003).

⁵⁷ Heidegger, "The Thing."

⁵⁸ Heidegger, *Being and Time*.

discovering that those seemingly irrelevant phenomena observed in today's world are intrinsically interrelated, exposing the fundamental disruption of humans' original relatedness of intimacy to the world caused by modernity. Despite the elemental power that Heidegger preserves in his notion of Nearness, it is easy to get lost in his abstract, obscure, and enigmatic language before any analysis can be conducted in a more specific field. Therefore, a transferable understanding that bridges Heideggerian philosophy to architecture is essential, even though Heidegger's thought will almost inevitably be simplified in such a process. In order to obtain a transferable understanding of this abstract philosophical notion, this thesis employs a case study to identify, reveal, and analyse the way Nearness occurs within a specific built environment. This leads to the third presupposition. Presupposition B is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two.

1.1.3 **Presupposition C: Spatial-Experiential Conditions of Nearness Within the Chinese Literati Garden**

The third presupposition addresses the spatial-experiential conditions embedded within the Chinese literati garden. The term 'literati garden' is a translation of the Chinese '文人园林'; sometimes this term is translated as 'scholar's garden'. However, a scholar today commonly refers to someone who pursues academic activities and produces knowledge, usually in a particular branch of study—this definition does not capture the multivariant character of the owners of these gardens. In order to avoid ambiguity, the term 'literati' is used here to describe the character of those garden owners. Presupposition C attempts to provide a spatial-experiential perspective. It states that in the formation of the literati garden, a series of spatial-experiential settings were deeply embedded to inspire a rich relatedness of intimacy to various meaningful entities in an individual's world of experience. This presupposition is supported by a transdisciplinary study that identifies the various cultural, historical, and social factors involved in the formation of the Chinese literati garden and its long history, which will be examined in Chapter Three. As will be discussed throughout the thesis, the Chinese literati garden is an excellent example of a built environment that manifests Nearness, in the Heideggerian sense, as an essential spatial-experiential quality. Before going further, I would like to briefly introduce a number of key factors that explain why it is reasonable to draw such a presupposition.

First, scholars agree that the Chinese literati garden was formed under the dominating influence of ancient Chinese culture.⁵⁹ In particular, the three primary schools of thought—Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism—fundamentally shaped the ancient Chinese way of understanding and viewing the world and were considerably involved in the formation of the literati garden.⁶⁰ Despite the fact that these schools of thought held very different worldviews and involved different issues, I argue that they share a common concern about the individual's harmonious ontological relationship to the world. As discussed in Chapter Three, a glance of these schools of thought suggests a common foundation that strongly echoes Heidegger's notion of Nearness. Throughout Chinese history, these three schools of thought permeated many aspects of Chinese society and, as a result, led to a cultural tendency to view one's relatedness of intimacy to various entities as an essential concern of everyday life. How, then, was this cultural tendency of Nearness involved in the formation of the literati garden? This question leads to the second point.

Second, the ancient Chinese literati class were, in general, the cultural and social elite of ancient China. Consciously or unconsciously, they played a crucial role as the creators, disseminators, and inheritors of traditional culture throughout ancient Chinese history. Thus, over a long period of cultural evolution, those thoughts, notions, and values that concern Nearness, influenced and shaped by the three aforementioned schools of thought, were deeply integrated into every aspect of the literati's daily lives—tastes, behaviours, manners, and hobbies. Accordingly, a particular concern for Nearness is noticeably represented in every form of literati creation, such as poems, essays, paintings, and, of course, gardens. In these works, individual's state of being is always carefully depicted in relation to manifold meaningful entities. As John Minford reveals, 'again and again in Chinese culture and literature, the garden has been the symbol and the setting for the endlessly repeated quest for self-knowledge, self-containment, self-transcendence'.⁶¹ This leads to discussion of the third factor.

⁵⁹ Congzhou Chen, *The Chinese Garden [中国园林]*, 2nd ed., The Series of Chinese Tourist Culture, (Guangzhou: Guangdong Tour Press, 2004); Maggie Keswick, Charles Jencks, and Alison Hardie, *The Chinese Garden: History, Art and Architecture*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003); Yugan Dong, *Nine Chapters on Gardening [玖章造园]*, 1st ed. (Shanghai: Luminocity, Tongji University Press, 2016); Qingxi Lou, *Chinese Gardens* (Beijing: China International Press, 2003).

⁶⁰ Keswick, Jencks, and Hardie, *The Chinese Garden: History, Art and Architecture*.

⁶¹ John Minford, "The Chinese Garden: Death of a Symbol," *Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes* 18, no. 3 (1998): 267.

Third, the ancient literati played a crucial role in building their gardens by endlessly questing for self-knowledge, self-containment, and self-transcendence. Examining closely those actors involved in the formation of the garden (i.e., owners, directors designers, users, directors, artisans), it must be noted that most of them either belonged to the ancient literati class or had a close relationship to them.⁶² It can be assumed that the literati class would have been deeply involved in various garden-related activities and, thus, are undoubtedly the most responsible for the quality of the garden, although cooperation among different social actors may often have been involved.⁶³ As a result of this deep engagement, the ancient literati consistently embedded their thoughts, values, faith, notions, and political and aesthetic pursuits in their garden-making. Their concern for Nearness shaped by those cultural forces was naturally embedded as an essential spatial quality within literati gardens.

Together, these three factors form my hypothesis that an essential quality of Nearness is embedded within the literati garden as a result of the literati's collective concern and activity in the garden's long-term evolution.⁶⁴ A Heideggerian interpretation of Nearness, in turn, would help us understand this essential quality that is preserved by the literati garden. For instance, Stanislaus Fung, in his nuanced reading of the ancient garden-making theory book *Yuan Ye*, reveals the profound correlation between the concept of 'borrowing view' in Ji Cheng's garden creation theory and Heideggerian notions like being-in-the-world, de-distancing, bringing near, and Nearness.⁶⁵ Although Fung notices that the borrowing view employed in garden-making is essentially a technique that allows one to bring the views near, he focuses very much on a discourse analysis rather than a spatial-experiential analysis.⁶⁶ In comparison, I would point out that Nearness in the Heideggerian sense is so fundamental and powerful that it functions at an ontological level that transcends cultural and temporal gaps and, therefore, helps explore the spatial-experiential aspect of a garden (i.e., how one's experience occurs within a garden).

⁶² See Chapter Three for more information.

⁶³ Christina Han, "The Aesthetics of Wandering in the Chinese Literati Garden," *Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes* 32, no. 4 (2012): 300.

⁶⁴ Heidegger regards the nature of building as 'letting dwell'. Thus, building and dwelling should not be regarded as separate human activities; they are intertwined and always occur during the same process. See: Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking."

⁶⁵ Stanislaus Fung, "The Garden Designer's Text: A Prolegomenon to Yuan Ye" (PhD Diss., University of Sydney, 2002).

⁶⁶ Fung, "The Garden Designer's Text."

Obviously, Heidegger would not have influenced the formation of the literati garden, since it was created and evolved long before Heidegger developed the notion of Nearness. Likewise, the Chinese literati garden would probably not have been a significant reference for Heidegger to develop his notion of Nearness either, since it never appeared in any of Heidegger's texts as an example. However, it is by no means a coincidence that Heidegger's notion of Nearness can be found nicely manifested as an essential quality in the remote Chinese literati garden, considering that Heidegger's thinking may have been influenced by his explorations of Eastern thought, especially Laozi.⁶⁷ Above all, this presupposition is drawn based on the fact that complex cultural, historical, and social factors were involved in the creation and evolution of the Chinese literati garden, which together resulted in a series of spatial-experiential settings that inspired a rich relatedness of intimacy to the world. Consequently, Nearness became deeply embedded within the literati garden as an essential quality. Presupposition C is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three.

1.1.4 Summary

All together, these three presuppositions constitute the problematique setting of this thesis. A deep correlation among the three must be clearly noted. First, the weakened and weakening relatedness of intimacy has been broadly observed at different spatial-experiential scales, providing the backdrop for a preliminary exploration of possible ways to respond to this problem in the built environment (Section 1.1.1). Next, Heidegger's philosophy, particularly his reflection on modern technology and the notion of Nearness, serves as the cornerstone based on which a theoretical framework for understanding to this problem can be established, even though the meaning of Nearness in Heideggerian philosophy is not clear enough to be adopted as a theoretical framework on its own, requiring further construction (Section 1.1.2). Last, the Chinese literati garden, in which a series of spatial-experiential settings that potentially result in rich Nearness experience had been embedded in its long-term evolution, provides an excellent example to explore how Nearness occurs within a built environment and, further, how the problem of weakened (and still weakening) relatedness of intimacy can be addressed in the contemporary world (Section 1.1.3). These three presuppositions are discussed in greater detail in the following chapters.

⁶⁷ Adam Sharr, *Heidegger for Architects* (London: Routledge, 2007), 86.

1.2 Research Questions

This threefold research problematique leads to four research questions:

- How does Nearness generally occur within a built environment? (Q1)
- How and why did spatial-experiential settings that facilitate experiences of Nearness form in the evolution of the Chinese literati garden? (Q2)
- How do experiences of Nearness occur within the Chinese literati garden? (Q3)
- What lessons can be learned from the Chinese literati garden to address the loss of Nearness being experienced within the modern built environment? (Q4)

These four interrelated questions are discussed in different chapters of this thesis: Q1 is explored through theoretical research, Q2 through an historical and cultural investigation, Q3 through a case study of a Chinese literati garden (The Master of the Nets Garden, Suzhou), and Q4 through a discussion of the modern context. They are detailed in the Layout of Chapters section.

1.3 A Reflexive Epistemology

The four research questions do not seem to be successive and independent. In other words, in the process of investigating one, the answers to the others will probably be informed, verified, and, perhaps, amended. By allowing the processes of investigating these questions to intertwine, this thesis employs a reflexive epistemology, which differs from non-reflective epistemological models in many ways. For instance, in many research fields, induction and deduction are typical epistemological models that are employed with different explanatory approaches. While induction 'proceeds from a number of single cases and assumes that a connection has been observed in all these is also generally valid', deduction 'proceeds from a general rule and asserts

that this rule explains a single case'.⁶⁸ The epistemology adopted in this thesis, however, is different from both, as it uses neither single cases to form a general theory, nor applies a general rule to explain single cases.

As seen in the three presuppositions, this thesis is constructed based on abductive reasoning. Abductive reasoning is iterative and reflexive. With a 'point of departure in empirical data and deduction in theory', it is usually conducted as 'an act of self-reference where examination or action bends back on, refers to, and affects the entity instigating the action or examination'.⁶⁹ In this thesis, the premise of the four questions lies in the tenability of the three presuppositions. In other words, these questions are meaningful only when all three presuppositions are tenable. However, the three presuppositions were drawn from abductive reasoning based on limited evidence, meaning that their tenability can only be verified by exploring the research questions. Although there is no guarantee that the presuppositions are tenable, they will be verified, supported, and enhanced in the process of exploring the research questions. Differing from circular reasoning, this reflexive process does not create a 'circle' but a 'spiral', as in verifying the tenability of each presupposition, a more comprehensive, evidence-based reasoning must be provided.

Throughout the research, all the epistemological components—the theoretical research, the field investigation, the hypothetical construction, and the case study—will inform, verify, enhance, amend, and intertwine with each other. This reflexivity will be seen throughout the whole process: the theoretical research in the early stage, the construction of the hypothesis and the empirical research based on the case study in the middle stage, and the discussion of relevant issues in the contemporary context in the later stage. For instance, while the theoretical research explores presupposition B, it also verifies presupposition A; similarly, while the construction of the hypothesis enhances presupposition C, it also extends a better understanding of presupposition B. Moreover, while the case study employs the result of the theoretical research as the analytical approach, it provides concrete evidence that helps confirm or modify the theoretical framework it employs. Finally, by investigating those research questions, the theoretical research, the hypothesis construction, and the case study all make the presuppositions proposed in the threefold research problematique tenable enough to raise those questions themselves. All the epistemological components make sense as a whole.

⁶⁸ Mats Alvesson and Kaj Sköldböck, *Reflexive Methodology: New Vistas for Qualitative Research* (London: Sage Publications, 2009), 3.

⁶⁹ Alvesson and Sköldböck, *Reflexive Methodology: New Vistas for Qualitative Research*, 3.

1.4 Materials and Methods

Before going further, I would like to briefly introduce the materials and related methods employed in this thesis. There will be no traditional literature review, as this research does not aim to identify and fill a gap in a specific research field. Rather, it aims to build a system that contains a meaningful body of thought, where examples, argumentations, and descriptions intertwine with each other. This thesis employs materials from different research fields whenever necessary for establishing such a system. Therefore, a traditional literature review is pointless. By integrating various materials in such a system, this research provides a methodology for exploring the previously outlined research questions. Overall, each part of this research involves different kinds of materials and, accordingly, employs a number of methods to deal with these materials.

The first part is theoretical research to explore the meaning of Nearness in architecture and the built environment, conducted mainly through an iterative analytical review based on the literature of three categories. The first category involves Heidegger's philosophical thinking, in particular, those moments where the notion of Nearness is discussed in relation to his reflection on modern technology. Specifically, I use ATLAS.ti to search and address those texts related to the notion of Nearness, as well as to analyse what those texts specifically refer to and how they relate to other essential notions of Heideggerian philosophy. My review involves the treatise *Being and Time*, the lecture collection *The Basic Problem of Phenomenology*, and the essays (or speech records) 'The Origin of the Work of Art', 'Language', 'The Thing', 'Building Dwelling Thinking', 'What Are Poets For?', '...Poetically Man Dwells...', and 'The Question Concerning Technology'.⁷⁰ The second category involves other interpretations of Heideggerian philosophy, with a specific focus on the notion of Nearness. In particular, Anna Kouppanou and Angelo Julian E. Perez's

⁷⁰ Heidegger, *Being and Time*; Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problem of Phenomenology*, ed. James M. Edie, trans. Albert Hofstadter, *Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988); Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1977); Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*.

interpretation is of great help.⁷¹ The third category involves architectural theories, studies, and manifestos, where specific issues concerning the notion of Nearness within the field of architecture and the built environment are discussed, regardless of whether the term is directly mentioned.

The second part is the hypothesis construction of the thesis, which involves materials from different fields. The arguably most significant ancient garden-making theory book *Yuan Ye* is unavoidably involved. Relevant historical records, such as *Guo Yu* and *Shi Ji*, which reveal the multiple cultural, social, and political roles the ancient literati played in the history of China, are examined. Following that, a number of philosophical, artistic, and literary creations of the ancient literati, including ancient essays, paintings, calligraphies, poems, and dairies, which often cross-reference each other and suggest the ancient literati's collective state of being, are examined in relation to the literati garden. Meanwhile, studies of the history of Chinese gardens are involved, among which the works of Tong Jun, Liu Dunzhen, Zhou Weiquan, Chen Congzhou, and Guo Mingyou are of great help for understanding how the literati garden formed and evolved throughout history.⁷² Gu Kai's works reveal the paradigm shift in the historical evolution of the Chinese literati garden, suggesting that a literati garden is a historical continuity that evolved through history and, thus, should not be understood as a still object.⁷³ Stanislaus Fung's works, which I have already mentioned, have been a great inspiration throughout this thesis for his nuanced, patient, and profound approach towards analysing garden-related discourse; this has helped me reflect on my subject matter

⁷¹ Anna Kouppanou, *Technologies of Being in Martin Heidegger: Nearness, Metaphor and the Question of Education in Digital Times* (London: Routledge, 2017); Anna Kouppanou, "Technologies of Being in Martin Heidegger: Nearness, Metaphor and the Question of Education" (PhD Diss., University of London, 2014); Anna Kouppanou, "Approaching by Digression: Education of Nearness in Digital Times," *Ethics and Education* 9, no. 2 (2014); Angelo Julian E. Perez, *The Paradox of Nearness: Three Moments of Bringing-Near in Heidegger's Thought*, Ateneo de Manila University (2016).

⁷² Chen, *The Chinese Garden* [中国园林]; Dunzhen Liu, *Suzhou Classical Gardens* [苏州古典园林], 1st ed. (Nanjing: China Architecture and Building Press, 1979); Weiquan Zhou, *中国古典园林史* [The History of Classical Chinese Gardens], 2nd ed. (Beijing: Tsinghua University Press LTD 1999); Mingyou Guo, *The History of Chinese Gardens in Suzhou of Ming Dynasty* [明代苏州园林史], 1st ed. (Beijing: China Architecture and Building Press, 2013); Jun Tong, *江南园林志* [A Record of the Gardens of Jiangnan Region] (Beijing: China Architecture and Building Press, 1963); Jun Tong, *Glimpses of Gardens in Eastern China* [东南园墅] (Changsha: Hunan Fine Arts Publishing House, 2018).

⁷³ Kai Gu, "New Understandings on Jiangnan Gardens: Difference in the Earlier History and Transition in the Late Ming [重新认识江南园林：早期差异与晚明转折]," *Architectural Journal* [建筑学报], no. Academic Article Issue (2009); Kai Gu, "Establishment of Picturesque Principles for Gardens and Transition of Garden-Making in the Late Ming [画意原则的确立与晚明造园的转折]," *Architectural Journal*, no. 1 (2010).

from various meaningful perspectives.⁷⁴ Apart from the above, I have also consulted some general introductory works, such as those by Maggie Keswick, Osvald Sirén, and Lou Qingxi; however, these are less involved in constructing the main argumentation due to their introductory character.⁷⁵ Evidence collected from my site investigation is included as an important reference for verifying what is understood from the historical and cultural research.

The third part is planned as a case study that aims at exploring and illustrating the experiences that occur within the Master of the Nets Garden. This part mainly involves the physical built environment of the Master of the Nets Garden as its material. The case study is an essential step for exploring how the rich experience of Nearness occurs in the literati garden. This thesis employs phenomenological reduction as a primary research method in the case study. As established in the three-fold problematique, this thesis aims to explore how the literati garden facilitates one's experience of Nearness. This, however, cannot be truly understood without careful phenomenological reduction based on individual experience within the physical garden. Most phenomenological approaches are reflexive because, as David Seamon claims, phenomenology is 'a way of study whereby the researcher seeks to be open to the phenomenon and to allow it to show itself in its fullness and complexity through her own direct involvement and understanding'.⁷⁶ Thus, in order to be 'open to the phenomenon and to allow it to show itself', a researcher must be deeply immersed into the research context and, sometimes, conduct the research by taking part in the research object—essentially an epistemological process of reflexivity. Therefore, I visited the Master of the Nets Garden dozens of times during the summer of 2018 to conduct an on-site, iterative phenomenological reduction. I also visited a number of other excellent examples of literati gardens in Suzhou to verify the primary conclusions obtained from the Master of the Nets Garden. Besides phenomenological reduction, GIS-based spatial-visual analysis is also used to analyse the elementary cognition gained from the phenomenological reduction in a more precise way. Historical literature is involved where necessary, which elaborates

74 “Stanislaus Fung and Tian Sun, “Self, Scene and Action: The Final Chapter of Yuan Ye [自我、景致与行动:《园冶》借景篇]” in 传承·交融:陈植造园思想国际研讨会暨园林规划设计理论与实践博士生论坛论文集 [Inheritance and Integration: Proceedings of the International Symposium on Chen Zhi's Gardening Ideas and Doctoral Forum on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Planning and Design], ed. Qingping Zhang (Beijing: China Forestry Publishing House, 2009); Stanislaus Fung, “Here and There in Yuan Ye,” *Design Philosophy Papers* 1, no. 6 (2015); Fung, “The Garden Designer's Text.”

75 Keswick, Jencks, and Hardie, *The Chinese Garden: History, Art and Architecture*; Lou, *Chinese Gardens*; Osvald Sirén, *Gardens of China*, 1st ed. (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1949).

76 David Seamon, “A Way of Seeing People and Place: Phenomenology in Environment-Behavior Research,” in *Theoretical Perspectives in Environment-Behavior Research*, ed. Seymour Wapner et al. (New York: Plenum, 2000).

on how the experience occurred in history, but by no means reveals the occurrence of Nearness itself. The case study enhances the theoretical framework, verifies the hypothesis, and leads to a series of discussions and conclusions that respond to the problem of the loss of Nearness in the modern world.

In relation to the materials and methods adopted in this thesis, I would like to note several important issues. As seen in the above introduction, most of my analysis on the occurrence of Nearness is based on an iterative, on-site phenomenological reduction, meaning it is based on my own experience. This is driven by the fact that it is impossible to analyse another individual's experience at the ontological level, if I am not the subject of the actual experience. Although I have attempted to construct this thesis through intuitive empathy and explore those mechanisms that I believe commonly rooted in human nature, the fact that my analysis starts from my subjective intuition detracts from the objective foundation of the thesis. However, as Michael Sugrue points out, this is a dilemma that is repeatedly encountered by the continental philosophers, and especially phenomenologists, who begin their thinking from the internal state of humans and work outwards.⁷⁷ Regardless, I persist in applying phenomenological reduction as the main method because it is important—and meaningful—to look inward, suspend judgment about the external world, and just focus on analysis of experience. I would even argue that this is perhaps the only possible way to truly understand how the experience of Nearness occurs in a garden, for an understanding of Nearness first requires *cogito*, the knowing-self.

Another two issues I would like to note here are related to my case study. The main analysis of this thesis is conducted based on how experience occurs within a single case, the Master of the Nets Garden. In doing so, I am confronted with two risks. First, it may seem arbitrary to claim that an understanding of the occurrence of Nearness can be gained through a single case study, especially when considering that the literati garden is a type of built environment that contains a wide range of variants. However, because the literati gardens share so many common characteristics, I argue that an in-depth analysis of a single case is strong enough to serve as the example for answering the research questions. As Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben points out, 'the example is characterised by the fact that it holds for all cases of the same type, and at the same time, it is included among these'.⁷⁸ Therefore, the case study serves as 'one singularity among others, which, however,

⁷⁷ Michael Sugrue, "Husserl: Phenomenology and the Life World," (YouTube, January 9 2021).

⁷⁸ Fung, "The Garden Designer's Text," 94.

stands for each of them and serves for all'.⁷⁹ On the other hand, it may also seem insufficient to only study how experience occurs 'here' and 'now' within a literati garden, since most literati gardens changed dynamically throughout history. This can be argued again by taking into account that an authentic understanding of how the experience of Nearness occurs within a garden can only be gained through an on-site phenomenological reduction. An historical understanding of garden creation and garden experience is certainly meaningful, but this must be suspended in the present thesis in favour of focusing on how the real experience occurs in the corporal world.

1.5 **Layout of Chapters**

In general, this thesis consists of four parts, each including a number of chapters. These four parts are: 1) theoretical research (Chapter Two); 2) hypothesis construction (Chapter Three); 3) case study (Chapters Four to Seven); and 4) conclusion and discussion (Chapters Eight and Nine). The following introduces how these four parts are structured and organised.

Part One: Theoretical Research

The theoretical research starts with a theoretical interpretation of the meaning of Nearness in the Heideggerian discourse, based on an iterative review of texts where the notion of Nearness appears explicitly in Heidegger's essential writings, as well as in other interpretations. However, this part attempts to go beyond pure interpretation of Heidegger's philosophy, bridging his philosophical thinking with architectural theories. As a result, a theoretical model is established to describe how Nearness occurs within architecture and the built environment.

Part Two: Hypothesis Construction

Following the theoretical research, Chapter Three identifies and analyses a number of cultural and historical materials involved in the evolution of Chinese literati garden. It attempts to examine various factors involved in the formation of the literati

⁷⁹ Fung, "The Garden Designer's Text," 94.

garden, particularly how those spatial-experiential settings that enable, inspire, or facilitate the occurrence of Nearness were generally embedded as an essential quality throughout history. As the hypothesis of this thesis, this part bridges the theoretical model established in Part One to the case study conducted in Part Three. Specifically, three critical questions are raised in this part: 1) Who built the literati gardens? 2) Why did they build the literati gardens? and 3) How were the literati gardens built? Although these three questions are so complex that they cannot be thoroughly investigated in this part, a basic understanding of them will be enough to construct a hypothesis about the formation of Nearness and enable the case study to be conducted in the following part, exploring the occurrence of Nearness within the Master of the Nets Garden.

Part Three: Case Study of the Master of the Nets Garden

The case study of the occurrence of Nearness in the Master of the Nets Garden is carried out from Chapters Four to Seven. Chapter Four is an elementary study of the Master of the Nets Garden to gain a preliminary understanding. This chapter attempts to provide an analytical framework through which a systematic spatial-experiential analysis can be carried out. It is crucial to extract such a framework, as the experience within a literati garden is so complex a research object that it is incredibly difficult to gain meaningful understanding without first deconstructing it into a number of systems that can be studied. Specifically, this chapter identifies three hierarchical spatial-experiential structural layers in the Chinese literati garden: one's experience that occurs within single lingering spaces, within focused worlds formed by lingering spaces, and within a garden as a whole. The occurrence of Nearness in these three layers are analysed in the following three chapters. Chapter Five explores the occurrence of Nearness in a single focusing space in the Master of Net Garden, the Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind. Chapter Six continues to explore the occurrence of Nearness within the focused world formed by the pavilion. Chapter Seven identifies two key factors, the multi-focused area and the aggregation of focused worlds, as two factors responsible for shaping one's experience across different focused worlds, based on which a number of complex mechanisms involved in the occurrence of Nearness within the entire Master of the Nets Garden are explored.

Part Four: Discussion and Conclusion

After the case study, Chapter Eight brings various relevant issues to the table for discussion, as a reflection of the thesis itself. Based on the previous analysis, this chapter first identifies two kinds of Nearness (i.e., natural Nearness and technological Nearness) and discusses a number of characteristics of Nearness (i.e., the quality, density, and intensity of Nearness). The practical relevance, the

limitation, and the significance of this thesis are also reflected. Particularly, I would like to mention here that the discussion of the two kinds of Nearness—natural Nearness and technological Nearness—is a critical identification that leads to one of the main conclusions of this thesis. Last, this thesis concludes with a number of overall findings gained from the theoretical research, the hypothesis construction, and the case study.

In the organisation of this thesis, I attempt to create a structure that allows it to be read in a way that is similar to the experience of a literati garden. What is a literati garden? It is a labyrinth of experience, a built poem of being, a multi-dimensional landscape painting that engages both time and space, and, as revealed by Chinese architect Wang Shu, a world.⁸⁰ A world never has only one way of being experienced. Thus, exactly like the way a literati garden is experienced, there are various ways of reading this thesis, each leading to a meaningful understanding of Nearness in relation to the Chinese literati garden. Although it still makes an argumentation from beginning to end in sequence, no confirmative linear sequence is suggested for reading this piece of writing. Instead, the reader is invited to create their own path, which is very much like the experience of a literati garden. The introduction and the conclusion serve as, respectively, the 'entrance' and the 'exit' of the 'garden', which cannot be avoided. Besides these two parts, the reader is free to move among chapters to explore different themes and gain different understandings. Sometimes, clues are given in the middle of one chapter that serve as a guide to other interesting theme(s) in other chapters. Hopefully, this thesis can provide a body of meaningful thought that sheds light on various issues concerning the occurrence of Nearness in the human built environment, the fundamental relatedness of intimacy that allows humans to dwell poetically in the world.

⁸⁰ Wang Shu expressed on many occasions, including in writings, lectures, and interviews, his idea that a garden is a world.

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2 Towards the Meaning of Nearness in Architecture and the Built Environment

2.1 Introduction

As discussed at the very beginning of this thesis, Heidegger's reflection on modern loss is an important backdrop for the emergence of the notion of Nearness. His concern about the disruptive impact of modern technology on the original relationship humans have with the world has been observed in various fields. In Presupposition A, I discussed various phenomena that manifest how this original relatedness of intimacy has been disrupted within built environments in the modern era, such as: the irresistible process of globalisation that is making the world increasingly flat and even; the brutal and extraordinary expansion of cities in many fast-developing areas that is generating built environments of uncontrollably large scale, where hardly anyone can maintain a clear, tangible, or distinctive awareness of the city in daily life; the emergence of taller and larger buildings that is increasingly destroying individual's connection to the social life in a city; the self-referential, and abstract, modernist architecture that is making the built environments more difficult

to be meaningfully engaged in one's experience. All these phenomena raise an important question: What is the meaning of possessing the relatedness of intimacy within the built environment?

In order to gain a radical understanding of this question, it seems important to dive into Heidegger's philosophy to grasp the meaning of Nearness and the way it occurs within the built environment. This chapter is the first step towards an explicit understanding of the meaning of Nearness in architecture and the built environment by interpreting various semantic clues behind the notion of Nearness in Heideggerian discourse. Specifically, this chapter deals with three elements: 1) providing an interpretation of Nearness and revealing the multiple meanings that emerge in Heideggerian discourse; 2) based on the above interpretation, clarifying the role of the built environment in the occurrence of Nearness; and 3) inspecting how this notion is related to critical concerns about the human-built environment, and how it suggests solutions, by positioning the notion of Nearness in the architectural discourse. Overall, this chapter establishes a theoretical framework, only based on which the case study of the Master of the Nets Garden can be conducted.

To achieve these goals, I conduct an iterative literature review in three stages. The first-round review mainly involves Heidegger's essential writings and a number of relevant studies involving the notion of Nearness in the Heideggerian sense. This preliminary review suggests that although the notion of Nearness repeatedly appears in Heidegger's writings and is discussed extensively in Heideggerian discourse, an explicit interpretation of its meaning is still lacking. The second-round review mainly focuses on specific Heidegger texts where the notion of Nearness appears implicitly or explicitly. This stage attempts to extract a semantic network for understanding the complex connotation of the notion of Nearness in Heideggerian philosophy. A discourse analysis tool, ATLAS.ti, is employed to help build such a semantic network. This round of review discloses several semantic clues about the meaning of Nearness that are deeply embedded in Heideggerian philosophy. Finally, a third-round review involves relevant architectural studies and theories for understanding the meaning of Nearness in architecture and the built environment by positioning the notion of Nearness in architectural discourse. Important architectural issues are identified and discussed in relation to the notion of Nearness.

This chapter contains three main sections. The first section attempts to provide an overview of the notion of Nearness by discussing its significant role in Heideggerian philosophy and in works of other fields that involve this notion respectively. The second section analyses the semantic network of Nearness in Heideggerian philosophy, extracted from a literature review of Heidegger's essential writings and other interpretations of Heidegger. The last section discusses the relevance of

Nearness to architecture and the human built environment by examining how this notion is interpreted and represented in various architectural theories, studies, and architect manifestos. In general, this chapter has the characteristics of a literature review, yet neither attempts to identify a gap nor cover all the notable references relevant to this research. Rather, this chapter explores the meaning of Nearness in Heideggerian philosophy and attempts to interpret it in the field of architecture by establishing a theoretical framework that can integrate various architectural theories, notions, concerns, and values that are related to this notion. This allows architects, theorists, and historians to employ Heidegger's notion of Nearness as an intellectual tool to analyse, evaluate, or create built environments in the modern world, where the meaning of Nearness is generally lost.

2.2 An Overview of the Notion of Nearness in Different Discourses

Before diving into Heidegger's philosophy and exploring the meaning of Nearness in architecture and the built environment, I would like to briefly examine the role of the notion of Nearness—both in Heideggerian philosophy and in works of other fields that attempt to interpret, understand, or employ it—as a preliminary overview.

2.2.1 Nearness in Heideggerian Philosophy: A Connective Concept

As suggested in presupposition B, Heidegger's notion of Nearness is a reflection of modern loss in many senses. He accurately captured the weakened and weakening relatedness of intimacy as an essential aspect of modern loss and expressed his concern, implicitly or explicitly, through the notion of Nearness. The term 'nearness' is a translation of the original German word '*nähe*'. In the early English version of *Being and Time* translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, '*nähe*' was distinctively translated as 'closeness' or 'nearness'. However, in 1996's version, as Joan Stambaugh annotated, '*nähe*' is consistently rendered as 'nearness'. A sophisticated German-English bilingual user might notice the subtle semantic difference between 'closeness', 'nearness', and the original German word '*nähe*'. Probably, there is no single form of translation can fully convey the meaning of

'*nähe*', especially considering that Heidegger himself never provided an explicit definition of '*nähe*' but just use it with an effort to reveal its most common sense in itself. However, once the meaning of language reveals itself in front of us, it provides a possibility of escaping from the pitfall of translation and becomes the 'house of being'. Heidegger himself argues that 'it is the business of philosophy to preserve the power of the most elemental words'.⁸¹ In Heideggerian philosophy, 'nearness' is certainly one of those elemental words whose power is preserved by just using it in its ordinary sense.

However, among those remarkable ideas in Heideggerian philosophy, 'nearness' is perhaps not the most obvious. In the 2013 version of *Being and Time*, 'nearness' appears 14 times in the main text (excluding notes and references), while in *Poetry Language Thought*, which comprises seven of Heidegger's essential works, the word 'nearness' appears 39 times, of which 31 appear in the essay 'The Thing'. The notion of Nearness also appears indirectly—in the form of 'near', 'nearing', 'nearer', 'nearest', or other relevant forms and concepts—in Heidegger's texts. Although it is not the most obvious, the preliminary literature review suggests that Nearness plays a special, and significant, role in Heidegger's philosophy, as an essential 'connector' between many important Heideggerian notions. In order to reveal this particular role, I start with several specific examples to show how it appears in different forms in Heidegger's philosophy, and how it relates to other Heideggerian notions:

The divine draws the god near.⁸²

Near to us are what we usually call things.⁸³

'Thinging' is the nearing of world.⁸⁴

We come nearer to thinking the same as what the poet composes in his poem.⁸⁵

81 Heidegger, *Being and Time*.

82 Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 179.

83 Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 139.

84 Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 139.

85 Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 217.

Thus, nearness and remoteness between men and things can become mere distance, mere intervals of intervening space.⁸⁶

True, Da-sein is ontically not only what is near or even nearest—we ourselves are it, each of us.⁸⁷

Even a rough glance at these sentences suggests the extremely rich connotations contained in the notion of Nearness and its particular role in connecting different philosophical issues (i.e., the god, the thing, the world, the way of thinking, Dasein, etc.). Many texts concerned with the notion of Nearness in Heidegger's philosophy (including those expressed as near, nearing, or nearer) usually refer to seemingly different things, suggesting an inherent subtlety and complexity that naturally exists in this notion. Nevertheless, if what is hidden behind the subtlety and complexity is carefully examined, it is not difficult to see that this notion continuously suggests an ontological (rather than an ontic) relationship between humans and other meaningful beings in the world. For instance, in the above examples, the notion of Nearness describes Dasein's ontological relationship to the god (as a transcendental being), to the thing (as a kind of being that is always 'ready-to-hand'), to the world, to the way of poetic thinking, and last, to ourselves.

Additionally, Heidegger uses the notion of Nearness, freely and precisely, to describe the ontological relationship to many other beings that are significant for us, including truth, history, art, death, time, and buildings.⁸⁸ Based on Heidegger's concern about Dasein's relatedness to these beings, some other important Heideggerian notions, such as being-with [*Mitsein*], being-toward-death [*Sein-zum-tode*], and concern [*Sorge*], are developed, revealing various Dasein's characteristics in its being-in-the-world. This clue is fundamental, as it clearly reveals the significance of the Heideggerian notion of Nearness in the history of philosophy. As Anna Kouppanou points out, Heidegger is 'the first to pay heed to connectedness—translated as closeness or nearness'.⁸⁹ The notion of Nearness brings the concern for relatedness or connectedness into our thinking of being, reminding us of our original relationship to the world.

⁸⁶ Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 153.

⁸⁷ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 13.

⁸⁸ For instance, in 'The Origin of the Work of Art', Heidegger says, '...still another way in which truth comes to shine forth is the nearness of that which is not simply a being, but the being that is most of all...'. Later, he points out 'the question of the work's createdness ought to have brought us nearer to its workly character and therewith to its reality.' In these two examples, the notion of Nearness appears in relation to his understanding of 'truth' and 'the work of art'. See: Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 60 and 64.

⁸⁹ Kouppanou, *Technologies of Being in Martin Heidegger*.

Heidegger's concern about the relatedness of humans to the world can be traced back to his first published essay, 'The Problem of Reality in Modern Philosophy', much earlier than that when the term was explicitly discussed as a philosophical concept in his text. In this essay, Heidegger briefly reviews Greek philosophy, Neoplatonism, and philosophers from the Middle Ages, considering their approaches as 'a realism manner'. However, he points out that 'philosophy immediately after Kant, eventually culminating in the extravagant idealism of Hegel, moved further and further away from reality and an understanding of how it can be posited and defined'.⁹⁰ Heidegger proposes a philosophical approach that is close to reality and concerns how it can be posited and defined. The concern for individual's ontological relatedness to the world, which later appears as the notion of Nearness, already emerges here in a subtle and implicit way. Later, in *Being and Time*, the notion of Nearness became more noticeable. Since then, the meaning of Nearness has become closely related to the meaning of being. I argue that the notion of Nearness suggests that the interpretation of the meaning of being is only possible when positioning Dasein in the network of other beings: on the one hand, it is from Heidegger's questioning of the meaning of being that the meaning of Nearness emerges, as an ontological relationship between human being and the world; on the other hand, it is in this way of interpreting the meaning of being that the notion of Nearness is needed, as only with that the issue of humans' being is able to be addressed.

2.2.2 Nearness in Works of Other Fields: A Perspective to Examine the Ontological Relatedness

As the original relatedness of intimacy between humans and the world continues to be eroded, Heidegger's reflection on Nearness has raised broad attention. In works of many other fields, it is interpreted, reviewed, or employed as a tool for analysis. Although not too many works have been found that use the concept of Nearness as a subject of in-depth study, a brief review of them suggests that the notion of Nearness provides an important perspective to understand the ontological relationship of humans to the world in the study of various more specific or practical issues.

Anna Kouppanou is one of the few authors who have taken Heidegger's notion of Nearness as the subject of her work. As Kouppanou points out, Heidegger is

⁹⁰ Martin Heidegger, "The Problem of Reality in Modern Philosophy," in *Supplements: From the Earliest Essays to Being and Time and Beyond*, ed. John van Buren (Albany: State University of New York, 2002), 40.

‘the first to pay heed to connectedness—translated as closeness or nearness’.⁹¹ She analyses the meaning of this notion that appears in different stages of the development of Heidegger’s philosophy. Through a careful reconstruction of the meaning of Nearness in Heidegger’s philosophy, Kouppanou reflects on how contemporary education may respond to the challenges brought by fast progressing modern technology.⁹² Angelo Julian E. Perez is another who has worked closely with Heidegger’s original texts, analysing three crucial moments of ‘bringing-near’ in Heidegger’s philosophy, elaborating on the meaning of Nearness in relation to his other interrelated notions, and teasing out a significant temporary clue about the development of the meaning of Nearness in Heidegger’s philosophy.⁹³ In ‘Nearness and Da-sein: the Spatiality of Being and Time’, Peter Sloterdijk recaptures Heidegger’s idea that Nearness is Dasein’s ‘essential tendency’, which he follows with a claim that the nature of Nearness is embedded in Dasein’s spatiality.⁹⁴ These studies suggest the particular role the notion of Nearness plays in Heidegger’s inquiry of the meaning of being. Yet, because of the rich, subtle, and complex connotations embedded within this notion, its meaning remains vague and sometimes ambiguous.

Aside from the aforementioned researchers who dedicate to the notion of Nearness itself as a subject, others employ this notion as a tool for exploring relevant issues in different fields. This body of literature reveals the power of Heidegger’s notion of Nearness for understanding the ontological relationship between humans and the world in the exploration of a variety of specific issues. For instance, in *Inflected Language: Toward a Hermeneutics of Nearness*, Krzysztof Ziarek views the notion of Nearness as Heidegger’s philosophical approach for reflecting on humans being-in-the-world, based on which he proposed a ‘hermeneutics of nearness’ for reading literature.⁹⁵ Later, in ‘Proximities: Irigaray and Heidegger on Difference’, Krzysztof Ziarek points out that the notion of Nearness is the symbol that demonstrates Heidegger’s thinking on ‘relation’ instead of ‘difference’. The notion of Nearness provides a perspective to examine Irigaray and Heidegger’s varying attitudes in

91 Kouppanou, “Technologies of Being in Martin Heidegger.”

92 Kouppanou, “Technologies of Being in Martin Heidegger.”

93 Perez, *The Paradox of Nearness*.

94 Peter Sloterdijk, “Nearness and Da-sein: The Spatiality of Being and Time,” *Theory, Culture & Society*, 2012.

95 Krzysztof Ziarek, *Inflected Language: Toward a Hermeneutics of Nearness: Heidegger, Levinas, Stevens, Celan* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994).

addressing the issue of 'difference'.⁹⁶ In 'Dwelling in the Nearness of Gods', Lin Chenkuo suggests an interpretive turn in Confucianism, from Mou Zongsan's 'moral metaphysics' to Tu Weiming's 'religious hermeneutics', demonstrating an essential relation between ancient Eastern philosophy and Heideggerian philosophy in terms of interpreting the meaning of human dwelling in the world.⁹⁷ In 'Heidegger on *Gelassenheit*', Barbara Dalle Pezze argues, through a close reading of Heidegger's 'Conversation on a Country Path About Thinking', that Nearness lies in the 'meditative thinking' that leads to a real understanding of the truth of being.⁹⁸ In general, this body of literature reveals that the notion of Nearness can help understand manifestations of humans' ontological relatedness to the world in different specific fields, such as literature, art, cognitive science, and religious culture. However, it also shows a lack of deep understanding of the meaning of Nearness in Heideggerian philosophy.

To summaries, as Georges Teyssot points out, there are many instances in Heidegger's philosophical thinking where words appear and remain in their ordinary senses, but 'everything is set back in motion and made to function differently'.⁹⁹ Although it seems that Heidegger's notion of Nearness always means something different in different discourses, its ordinary meaning is well preserved. In short, Heidegger's concept of Nearness exceeds its physical interpretation as a seemingly objective 'distancelessness', revealing a kind of ontological relationship, a relatedness of intimacy, rooted in Dasein's being-in-the-world.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ Krzysztof Ziarek, "Proximities: Irigaray and Heidegger on difference," *Continental Philosophy Review* 33 (2000).

⁹⁷ Chen-kuo Lin, "Dwelling in the Nearness of Gods: The Hermeneutical Turn from Mou Zongsan to Tu Weiming," *Dao* 7, no. 4 (2008).

⁹⁸ Barbara Dalle Pezze, "Heidegger on *Gelassenheit*," *Minerva—An Internet Journal of Philosophy* (10 2006).

⁹⁹ Georges Teyssot, "The Anxiety of Origin: Notes on Architectural Program," *Perspecta* 23 (1987).

¹⁰⁰ In fact, cognitive science research reveals that even the physical aspect of nearness, the sense of spatial distancelessness, also depends very much on individual perception and can never be purely objective. Michael Worboys, 'Commonsense Notions of Proximity and Direction in Environmental Space', 2004.

2.3 The Meaning of Nearness: A Semantic Network Analysis

Since the notion of Nearness always appears in Heidegger's writings in ambiguous, subtle, and adaptive ways, its meaning in Heideggerian philosophy can only be uncovered through a systematic discourse analysis. The instances when this notion appear in Heideggerian philosophy must be analysed carefully, on the basis of which important semantic clues regarding architecture and the built environment can be further extracted. With the help of ATLAS.ti, I conducted an analytical review exploring the potential meaning of Nearness in architecture and the built environment that is suggested by Heideggerian philosophy. By examining the original Heideggerian texts where the notion of Nearness emerges, I attempted to reveal a semantic network of Nearness in Heideggerian philosophy (Fig. 2.1).

Specifically, I searched the keywords 'nearness', 'near', 'nearing', 'nearer', and 'nearest' in Heidegger's essential writings, and reviewed the specific context in which the notion of Nearness emerges in the text. My analysis mainly involved *Being and Time* and *Poetry, Language, Thought*, which includes 'The Origin of the Work of Art', 'Language', 'The Thing', 'Building Dwelling Thinking', 'What Are Poets For?', and '...Poetically Man Dwells...'. Based on an iterative review of these texts, I identified three groups of concepts that appear in these instances of Nearness. The first group, labelled in orange, includes concepts that are directly related to the notion of Nearness as an ontological relatedness among beings, and where the terms 'nearness', 'near', 'nearer', or 'nearing' appear literally. The second group, labelled in green, comprises concepts that Heidegger discusses in relation to the notion of Nearness, such as dwelling, thinking, truth, and poetry. The third group, labelled in grey, identifies those concepts that are related to the second group. In addition to these three groups, the concept of 'being-in-the-world' is identified as an overarching component, highlighted in red.

ontological relationship between Dasein and the world; 2) Nearness as the ontic-ontological relationship between Dasein and its own being; 3) Nearness as the result of Dasein de-distancing the world; 4) Nearness as average everydayness in Dasein's being-in-the-world; and 5) Nearness as a relation between Dasein and things that connect it to the world.

The semantic analysis of Nearness reveals a stable ontological meaning embedded in this notion, despite the fact that it is always used with different subtle, abstract, and elusive senses in Heideggerian philosophy. When using this term, Heidegger sends a reminder to pay more attention to Dasein's ontological relatedness to many different things. Among all the meaningful issues Heidegger attempts to explore with the notion of Nearness, how humans establish a relatedness to and intimacy with the world through built environment is notable. The previously mentioned five semantic layers form a theoretical model that interprets the meaning of Nearness in architecture and the built environment, which will be explained in the following sub-sections.

2.3.1 **Nearness as Ontological Relatedness Between Dasein and the World**

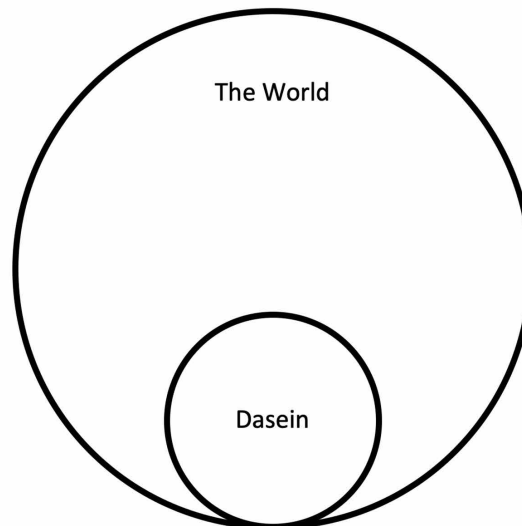


FIG. 2.2 Dasein's Being-in-the-World. Source: Lu Li.

My inquiry into the meaning of Nearness in architecture departs from what Heidegger depicts as ‘the fundamental constitution of Da-sein’, that is, Dasein as being-in-the-world.¹⁰¹ The notion of being-in-the-world serves as the foundation of Heidegger’s thinking on being and, arguably, is the most fundamental concept of Heidegger’s philosophy. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger respectively discusses being-in, being, and in-the-world as three constitutive factors of being-in-the-world, from which he claims that ‘any analysis of one of these constitutive factors involves the analysis of the others; that is, each time seeing the whole phenomenon’.¹⁰² In particular, Heidegger uses the word ‘near’ to explain the meaning of being-in, which somehow implies a relationship between the notion of Nearness and being-in-the-world:

*‘Ich bin’ (I am) means I dwell, I stay near ... the world as something familiar in such and such a way. Being as the infinitive of ‘I am’: that is, understood as an existential, means to dwell near..., to be familiar with. Being-in is thus the formal existential expression of the being of Da-sein which has the essential constitution of being-in the world.*¹⁰³

It is clear that for Heidegger, ‘being-in’ means to ‘stay near’ to the world ‘as something familiar’. The term ‘world’ is interpreted ontologically, meaning ‘those beings and their being which it (Da-sein) itself is not, but which it encounters “within” the world’.¹⁰⁴ For Heidegger, the world is where ‘a factual Da-sein lives’.¹⁰⁵ It is a given condition that is vital for Dasein—‘both in Da-sein and for it, this constitution of being is always already somehow familiar’ (Fig. 2.2).¹⁰⁶ Therefore, the concept of being-in-the-world reveals Dasein’s ‘most fundamental character’ and suggests the ‘a priori necessary constitution of Da-sein’.¹⁰⁷ Because of this, a relatedness must lie between Dasein and the world as a transcendental relationship that involves various necessary beings. The hyphens between the words ‘being’, ‘in’, and ‘the world’ indicate an inseparable correlation between the three constitutive factors, which reveals the essence of Dasein’s fundamental relatedness to the world. Such an a priori ontological relationship between Dasein and the world is the most basic form of Nearness, a transcendental condition inherent to Dasein.

¹⁰¹ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 59.

¹⁰² Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 50.

¹⁰³ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 51.

¹⁰⁴ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 55.

¹⁰⁵ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 61.

¹⁰⁶ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 55.

¹⁰⁷ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 50.

2.3.2 Nearness as Ontic Intimacy Between Dasein and the Being of Itself

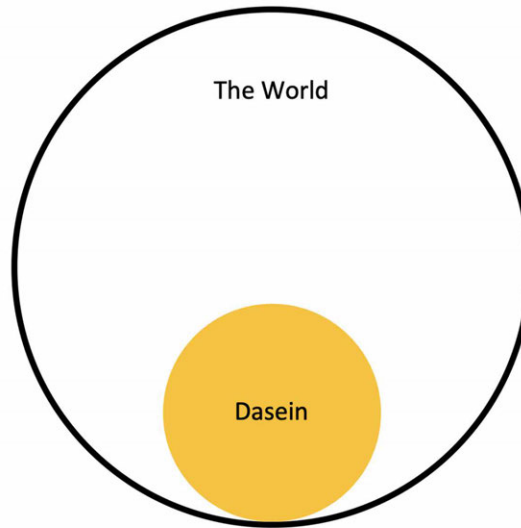


FIG. 2.3 Nearness as an Ontic-Ontological Intimacy Between Dasein and the Being of Itself. Source: Lu Li.

To understand Nearness as a fundamental relatedness between Dasein and the world, an urgent question must be asked first: In Dasein's being-in-the-world, what kind of relationship is there between Dasein and the being of itself? According to Heidegger, the being of Dasein is not Dasein itself, but something near to it. This is Heidegger's departure point for the questioning of being in *Being and Time*, with Heidegger clearly claiming that being [*Sein*] is not something like a being [*Seiendes*].¹⁰⁸ He points out that 'being is always the being of a being'.¹⁰⁹ For Heidegger, it is the being that questions the meaning of being, that owns the priority of questioning.¹¹⁰ Therefore, Dasein (i.e., a human individual's being), as a kind of being that is 'distinctly different from other beings' and 'is concerned about its very being', has the priority for inquiring about the meaning of being. Heidegger further

¹⁰⁸ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 3.

¹⁰⁹ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 7.

¹¹⁰ Heidegger, *Being and Time*.

reveals that it is impossible for Dasein to be separated from its own being because, as seen in the notion of being-in-the-world, the being of Dasein is always already an essential part of its world. In other words, for Heidegger, the ontic being of Dasein is not Dasein itself but something very closely related to Dasein; there is a Nearness between Dasein and its own being (Fig. 2.3). Thus, the role of Dasein in questioning the meaning of being is perhaps the most fundamental clue to understanding the meaning of Nearness. Heidegger points out: ‘*Dasein* is ontically not only what is near or even nearest—we ourselves are it, each of us. Nevertheless, or precisely for this reason, it is ontologically what is farthest removed.’¹¹¹ Further, he claims that ‘Da-sein is ontically “nearest” to itself, ontologically farthest away; but pre-ontologically certainly not foreign to itself.’¹¹² For Heidegger, Dasein has the priority to question the meaning of being because it is ontically near to itself. This is a crucial point that reveals the meaning of Nearness as an ontic relatedness between Dasein and its own being.

2.3.3 De-distancing: Dasein’s Bringing-near the World Tendency

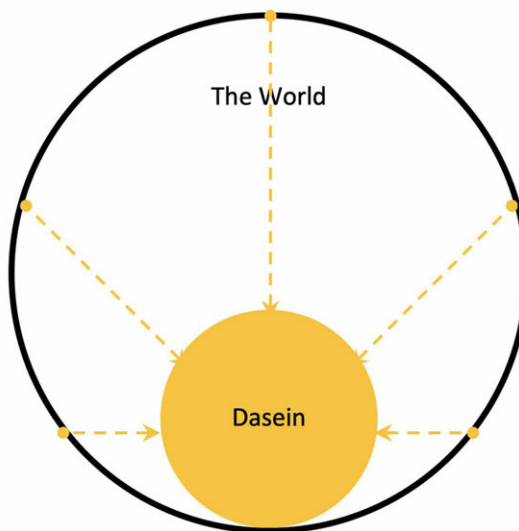


FIG. 2.4 Dasein's Bringing-near the World Tendency. Source: Lu Li.

¹¹¹ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 13.

¹¹² Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 14.

Perhaps the most significant clue concerning the meaning of Nearness found in Heideggerian philosophy is revealed by his understanding of de-distancing as an essential tendency of Dasein in its being-in-the-world.¹¹³ Heidegger claims that 'de-distancing is bringing near' and, further, 'bringing near is the presencing of nearness'.¹¹⁴ In other words, Nearness is the result of Dasein's tendency of de-distancing (Fig. 2.4). I argue that this tendency of bringing-near (or de-distancing), in turn, would consistently engender a world of Nearness for Dasein to maintain its being-in-the-world. By explicitly indicating that Dasein's tendency of de-distancing results in Nearness, Heidegger reveals the essential mechanism through which Dasein establishes and maintains its relatedness of intimacy to the world. In short, Dasein sustains itself through de-distancing. In order to be in the world, every human individual consistently invents, creates, makes, builds, expresses, and perceives. By taking these actions, Dasein maintains its necessary relatedness to the world, and only when Dasein is able to do so, does it survive. In this sense, most human creations, such as technology, architecture, language, art, literature, and many others, are essentially different representations, and results, of humans bringing-near.¹¹⁵

2.3.4 Inner-worldly Beings: A Result of Bringing-near

How does Nearness occur? As already discussed, it occurs through Dasein's bringing-near. As a result of this tendency, Dasein continuously brings essential entities into its world and makes them inner-worldly beings whenever possible (Fig. 2.5). The term 'inner-world' can be understood as the world that is represented in individual consciousness. In this sense, inner-world is neither objective nor subjective. It is a phenomenal world that unavoidably relates to the outer world, but never purely represents the outer world. 'Inner-worldly beings' come to be in such a world. Whenever something is involved in one's experience, it must be seen as an 'inner-worldly being'. By bringing-near those entities that are involved in one's experience and making them inner-worldly beings, Dasein makes the world relevant to itself.

¹¹³ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 98.

¹¹⁴ Heidegger, *Being and Time*.

¹¹⁵ Even if the intention of bringing-near is embedded, it does not mean it is possible. For instance, according to Heidegger, many technological approaches bring a sense of 'distancelessness' instead of 'nearness'. Distancelessness is not always Nearness; sometimes, it eliminates Nearness. However, I would argue that even the technologies that undermine Nearness are always invented with a strong intention of bringing-near. See: Heidegger, "The Thing."

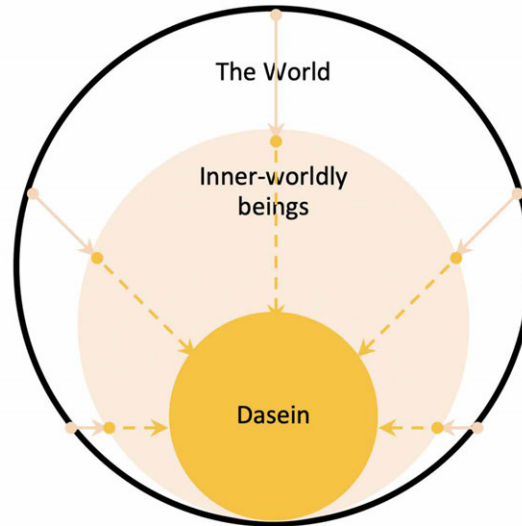


FIG. 2.5 Dasein's Bringing-near Through Modes of Being. Source: Lu Li.

If Nearness occurs through Dasein's bringing-near tendency, how does bringing-near happen? According to Heidegger's well-known example of the hammer, bringing-near always occurs in a certain specific state of being. In the example of the hammer, Heidegger argues that it is through picking up a hammer and using it that a workman is able to understand the hammer as a 'readiness-to-hand', thereby building up a relatedness of intimacy of to the world.¹¹⁶ Indeed, a hammer can hardly become an inner-worldly being without a carpenter using it, a melody can hardly become an inner-worldly being without an audience enjoying it, and children can hardly become inner-worldly beings without parents caring for them. Through the modes of using a hammer, enjoying a melody, and caring for children, Dasein (audience, carpenter, parents) consistently brings beings of melody, hammer, and children into its world. Furthermore, a carpenter can pick up a hammer and use it dozens of times in a day, which represents a specific way of being in the carpenter's being-in-the-world. This reveals that although the way Dasein brings near those desired entities seems dynamical and, sometimes, random, it does tend to follow certain modes. A state of being that repeatedly occurs in Dasein's being-in-the-world forms a mode of being. When a particular mode of being occurs, it consistently

¹¹⁶ Heidegger, *Being and Time*.

brings desired beings into Dasein's world in a similar way, continuously making them inner-worldly beings. Once a mode of being is formed, the bringing-near follows the same pattern and becomes restless. Compared with other randomly occurring states of being, those that follow the same pattern to form a mode are more stable and are more likely to bring near those essential beings in a comfortable, easy, and sufficient way, building up a stronger ontological relationship between Dasein and the world.

If Nearness always occurs as a result of a state of being, it is essential to understand first what a state of being contains. Philosophers and psychologists have devoted significant efforts towards understanding various specific aspects of Dasein and their relationships. Echoing Heidegger's interpretation of Dasein and other Heideggerian notions, such as attune, comportment, concern, and openness, works in different fields suggest that in any identifiable state of being (meaning that a conscious experience occurs), at least four aspects of Dasein (i.e., its behavioural, perceptual, affectional, and conscious states) must be considered as its essential constituents, because these four aspects are indispensable and irreducible constituents in an identifiable state of being.¹¹⁷ Stated differently, these four constituents are always integrated in a state of being, and none can be taken away from any moment of Dasein's being-in-the-world. For instance, while phenomenologists point out that affection lures intentionality of consciousness, some psychological experiments prove that consciousness motivates affection. While psychological researchers find it difficult to verify the reliability of experiments concerning perception without awareness, philosophers also argue that perception without awareness is 'theoretically impossible'.¹¹⁸ While behavioural psychologists claim the unavoidable interplay between human physical behaviour and mental activities, environmental psychologists purport strong correlations between cognitive activities and perceptions of surroundings.¹¹⁹ Researchers in different fields have made great efforts to understand these specific aspects of the state of individual's being, which has demonstrated the difficulty of concluding which aspect is more fundamental. It seems that these four aspects—perception, consciousness, affection, and

¹¹⁷ For more information, see: Fred Dretske, "Perception Without Awareness," in *Perceptual Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Charles Siewert, "Consciousness and Intentionality," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2017). <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2017/entries/consciousness-intentionality/>; David Rosenthal, "Two Concepts of Consciousness," *Philosophical Studies* 49, no. 5 (1986); Tim Crane and Craig French, "The Problem of Perception," in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2015). <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/perception-problem/>; Philip Merikle, Daniel Smilek, and John D. Eastwood, "Perception Without Awareness: Perspectives from Cognitive Psychology," *Cognition* 79, no. 4 (2001).

¹¹⁸ Dretske, "Perception Without Awareness."

¹¹⁹ John A. Mills, *Control: A History of Behavioral Psychology*, 1st ed. (New York: New York University Press, 1998).

behaviour—are all necessary constituents in a human’s mode of being that are not possible to be further reduced. Of course, every single aspect may always be observed, extracted, or described, but an identifiable mode of being must integrate these four constituents as oneness.

The randomly occurring and continuously changing states of being may be difficult to capture, but when some states repeatedly happen in a similar way, the mode of being becomes more identifiable. A number of general modes of being may be easily identified according to our everyday life experience, such as listening, seeing, attending, understanding, and playing. Differing from these general modes of being, others are more space specific. In fact, as a result of Dasein’s spatiality, modes of being are usually space-dependent, meaning that their formation generally relies on specific spatial conditions. In other words, spatial conditions are essential for enabling different states of being to follow the same pattern and become space-specific modes of being. As we will see in the case study, it is these space-specific modes of being (instead of those more general modes of being) that this thesis mainly attempts to address through the notion of Nearness.

2.3.5 The Thing: An Inner-worldly Being that Brings the Fourfold Near

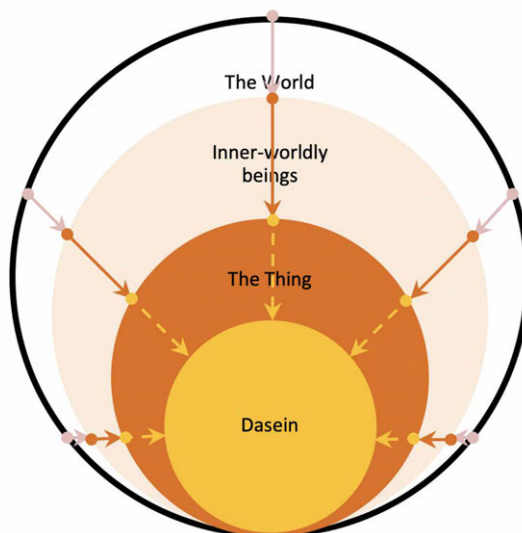


FIG. 2.6 The Role of Thing in the Occurrence of Nearness. Source: Lu Li.

Among those inner-worldly beings Dasein brings into its world, the thing is a significant category through which Nearness occurs. According to Heidegger's statement that 'what is near to us we call it a thing', it is clear that the thing is a category of inner-worldly beings that is near to Dasein.¹²⁰ In Heideggerian discourse, the notion of the thing is intertwined with Nearness—Dasein tends to keep the thing near as a result of its de-distancing tendency. For Heidegger, the thing plays an important role in Dasein's de-distancing—it is not only a kind of inner-worldly being that we keep near, but also that we use to gather other inner-worldly beings that are important to us as humans, keeping them close (Fig. 2.6).

Because of this, Heidegger explores the nature of Nearness by inquiring into the nature of the thing, which leads to a critical reflection on modern technology and its interruption of original Nearness.¹²¹ This discussion, along with other Heidegger texts, reveals his attitude towards modern media and technology.¹²² Heidegger blames modern technology for ruining the sense of Nearness by creating 'distancelessness' between Dasein and its world. As Heidegger points out, in the modern world, 'everything gets lumped together into uniform distancelessness', leading to a world of homogeneity where relationships among beings are generally reformed or disrupted.¹²³ By exploring the nature of the thing in relation to the notion of Nearness, Heidegger intuitively touches on the very essence of the negative effects of modern technology at a fundamental level.

For Heidegger, Dasein preserves its Nearness to the world through the thing. He further identifies two ways Nearness occurs with the thing, each functioning at a different level. On the one hand, Nearness occurs as 'readiness-at-hand' at an everydayness level. A thing is always a readiness-at-hand, a condition that makes it useful in Dasein's daily life. Heidegger claims that 'it is things readiness at hand nearest to us'.¹²⁴ This understanding of nearness distinctively differs from the

¹²⁰ In fact, considering the moments in the history of human civilisation when critical technologies were applied or invented, from the moment when fire was harnessed for the first time to when Facebook, WeChat, and Google Earth appeared, all technologies are more or less invented or applied to bring various entities near. See Chapter Eight for more information.

¹²¹ Heidegger, "The Thing."

¹²² Christian Fuchs, "Anti-Semitism, Anti-Marxism, and Technophobia: The Fourth Volume of Martin Heidegger's Black Notebooks (1942–1948)," *Communication, Capitalism, Critique: Journal for a Global Sustainable Information Society*, 2015.

¹²³ Heidegger, "The Thing."

¹²⁴ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 75.

scientific understanding of nearness as the 'objective presence of distance'.¹²⁵ On the other hand, Nearness occurs as a 'gathering of the fourfold', which, according to Heidegger, contains those essential conditions of being in the world that a thing gathers. Looking closely at a jug as an example, Heidegger identifies fourfold as 'the mirror-play of the simple onefold of earth and sky, divinities and mortals' that constitute Dasein's world. By gathering the fourfold, the thing brings the world near.

2.3.6 The Role of Architecture: An Aggregation of Nearness Conditions

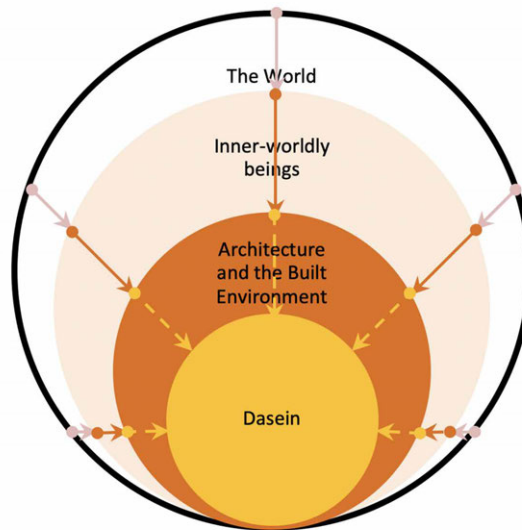


FIG. 2.7 The Role of Thing in the Occurrence of Nearness. Source: Lu Li.

What role, then, does architecture play in the occurrence of Nearness? According to the understanding established thus far, architecture is a kind of thing made for enabling the maintenance of Dasein's de-distancing tendency. If Dasein's pre-given ontological relationship to the world was strong enough and satisfying enough to

¹²⁵ Heidegger, *Being and Time*.

maintain its well-being, then architecture might not have been created. However, Heidegger's concerns about the loss of Nearness in the modern world suggest that Nearness can easily be changed, impacted, enhanced, and disrupted by many factors and, thus, can have very different qualities.¹²⁶ Indeed, both theoretical and empirical research suggests that Nearness, the ontological relatedness of intimacy between Dasein and the world, is not a stable situation. Instead, it is highly dynamic and fragile. The precondition for being-in-the-world can be enhanced, weakened, disrupted, or transformed into other forms at any moment of Dasein's being-in-the-world due to the spatial conditions that are embedded within a built environment.

From an architectural perspective, I argue that a decent quality of Nearness can only be established and maintained through a series of spatial conditions. These conditions lead to a decent quality of Nearness that may be called, accordingly, the Nearness condition. Architecture is essentially an aggregation of Nearness conditions created through, by, and for Dasein's being-in-the-world. Architecture is a mediator of Nearness between Dasein and the world, an inner-worldly being that brings other desired beings nearer to Dasein, while also maintaining a distance from undesired beings—both acts lead to the occurrence of Nearness (Fig. 2.7). Therefore, architecture plays a key role, both as a result and as a reason, in establishing and maintaining a decent quality of Nearness for human beings.¹²⁷

In this sense, an architectural space is always built to enable those essential modes of being and to allow those entities desired by Dasein to be brought into its world. Compared with the continuously changing states of being, the recurring modes of being are not only more identifiable but also more space dependant, meaning that their (re)occurrence is generally related to specific spatial conditions. As suggested by Heidegger's example, a carpenter's daily life may be full of conscious or unconscious states of being, but only with certain spatial conditions can they use a hammer to hit a nail into a wooden board. Therefore, spatial conditions are critical—always necessary, sometimes sufficient—for enabling a mode of being in a built space. In fact, the occurrence of many modes of being is highly space restricted, as will be demonstrated in the following chapters. Depending on the different spatial conditions embedded within the space, the quality of the Nearness experience may vary distinctly. This is why it is so important to understand how a high quality of Nearness can occur in architectural spaces in relation to various embedded spatial conditions.

¹²⁶ Heidegger, "The Thing."

¹²⁷ By saying 'authentic quality' of Nearness, I mean a quality of Nearness that brings a real, accessible, and tangible sense of Nearness, the opposite of the representative, inaccessible, and intangible relationship to the world.

2.3.7 Three Layers of Nearness Conditions

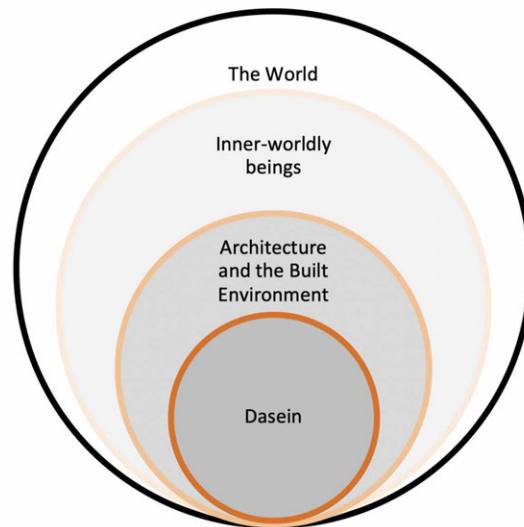


FIG. 2.8 Three Layers of Conditions in the Occurrence of Nearness. Source: Lu Li.

The discussion thus far has revealed a number of important clues for understanding the meaning of Nearness in architecture and the built environment in Heideggerian discourse. From a careful examination of these semantic clues, as well as an analysis of the diagrams that extracted those clues, three layers of Nearness conditions can be identified: 1) the condition between Dasein and the built environment that allows the mode of being to occur; 2) the condition between the built environment and various other inner-worldly beings that allows the occurrence of a mode of being to bring meaningful entities into Dasein's inner-world; and 3) the condition between inner-worldly beings, including the built environment, and the world that allows the inner-worldly beings to gather the fourfold from the world (Fig. 2.8). Specifically, these three layers of Nearness conditions are related to three Heideggerian notions that are important for the theoretical framework of this thesis:

- The first layer relates to 'readiness-to-hand', which enables Dasein's essential modes of being to occur in its 'average everydayness', the nearest kind of being in Dasein's being-in-the-world.

- The second layer relates to ‘poetry’, which enables building-dwelling-thinking to occur and, further, build up the relationship between Dasein and various inner-worldly beings.
- The third layer relates to ‘thingness’, which enables those essential beings that belong to the fourfold to be brought into Dasein’s world through things. Among these, this thesis focuses on building, a specific kind of inner-worldly being of thingness that not only enables Dasein to bring other things near, but also gathers the fourfold.

The three layers of Nearness conditions are detailed in the following.

Readiness-to-hand in Dasein’s Average Everydayness

The first layer of Nearness conditions is the readiness-to-hand of the beings involved in Dasein’s being-in-the-world. The condition of readiness-to-hand enables various modes of being to occur. Heidegger points out that readiness-to-hand refers to ‘Dasein’s ability to let things be involved while Dasein is itself involved in the unfolding of its temporality’.¹²⁸ He goes on to explain:

No matter how sharply we just look [*Nur-noch-hinsehen*] at the ‘outward appearance’ [*Aussehen*] of Things in whatever form this takes, we cannot discover anything ready-to-hand. If we look at Things just ‘theoretically’, we can get along without understanding readiness-to-hand. But when we deal with them by using them and manipulating them, this activity is not a blind one; it has its own kind of sight, by which our manipulation is guided and from which it acquires its specific Thingly character.¹²⁹

In particular, Heidegger points out that things that are near are always beings that are ‘ready-to-hand’, as opposed to those that are ‘presence-at-hand’.¹³⁰ I would argue that readiness-to-hand is both a reason and a result of Dasein’s de-distancing. It is a very strong condition, with which modes of being are allowed to occur. Readiness-to-hand must be understood in relation to another Heideggerian notion: the average everydayness. In Dasein’s everyday practice of bringing-near (de-distancing), it creates and encounters various meaningful inner-worldly-beings (including buildings) and makes them readiness-to-hand in its world. Although Dasein’s states of being may occur dynamically, an ‘average everydayness’ always

¹²⁸ Heidegger, *Being and Time*.

¹²⁹ Martin Heidegger, “The Worldhood of the World,” in *The Phenomenology Reader*, ed. Dermot Moran and Timothy Mooney (London and New York: Psychology Press, 2002), 293.

¹³⁰ Heidegger, “The Worldhood of the World.”

lies in the way of its being-in-the-world. According to Heidegger, it is mostly in this 'average everydayness' that Nearness occurs, and he claims that the 'average everydayness' is 'the nearest kind of being of *Dasein*'.¹³¹ However, what Heidegger means by 'the nearest kind of being' is that average everydayness is not just where Nearness occurs—it also has a strong ontological relationship to *Dasein*. In the expression 'the nearest kind of being of *Da-sein*', Heidegger uses 'of', instead of 'to', to indicate that average everydayness is not only related to *Dasein* but is actually a mode of being of *Dasein*. I argue that it is the readiness-to-hand between *Dasein* and those beings involved in its world that makes the average everydayness the nearest kind of being for *Dasein*.

Poetry

The second layer is the poetry that enables *Dasein*'s building-dwelling-thinking. In the essay 'Building Dwelling Thinking', Heidegger suggests that man builds, thinks, and dwells in the same process, forming a mode of being that may be called 'building-dwelling-thinking'. In 'Poetically, Man Dwells...', Heidegger points out that dwelling and building have the same poetic thinking nature. He further suggests that poetry occurs in *Dasein*'s being-in-the-world as the 'project of the world', where a sense of 'nearness' is found.¹³² Therefore, I identify poetry as a critical condition that leads to the occurrence of Nearness in architecture and the built environment, through which the relationship between *Dasein* and various inner-worldly beings is established.

How can the poetry be created? It seems that for Heidegger, poetry is a result of building-dwelling-thinking. Thus, given that poetry goes hand in hand with Nearness, the occurrence of Nearness within a built environment can be seen both a result and a reason of building-dwelling-thinking, and vice versa. On the one hand, any built environment results from building, dwelling, and thinking, through which *Dasein* attempts to create and maintain its Nearness to the world; on the other hand, any built environment results in Nearness for anyone who encounters it, if it allows building, dwelling, and thinking to occur in a poetic way. Architecture, in essence, is all about the reason, the process, and the result of the human attempts of achieving Nearness through building, dwelling, and thinking.

¹³¹ 'The methodological directive for this has already been given. Being-in-the-world and thus the world as well must be the subject of our analytic in the horizon of average everydayness as the nearest kind of being of *Dasein*.' See: Heidegger, "The Worldhood of the World."

¹³² Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*.

Modes of being belonging to building-dwelling-thinking provides a significant breakthrough for understanding how Nearness occurs within a built environment. It is through this complex mode of being that Dasein develops intimacy with various meaningful entities in its average everydayness. However, not all human activities belong to building-dwelling-thinking. For instance, dining and resting in daily life could be identified as activities that belong to building-dwelling-thinking, rather than dining and resting during travel. Similarly, designing and building a house for oneself makes much more sense as building-dwelling-thinking than designing and building a house for someone else.¹³³ Therefore, as will be demonstrated in Chapters Three to Six, identifying of what modes of being that belong to building-dwelling-thinking can occur within a built environment and, more importantly, how they are allowed to occur is a key to understanding the occurrence of Nearness within the Master of the Nets Garden.

Thingness

The third layer is thingness, which enables the fourfold to be brought into Dasein's world. The fourfold, according to Heidegger, is the mirror-play of Dasein's world that includes four categories of beings from the sky, the earth, the mortals, and the divinities.¹³⁴ It serves the essential structure of Dasein's being-in-the-world.¹³⁵ Heidegger further points out that a thing gathers the fourfold.¹³⁶ In other words, only a being that gathers the fourfold can become a being of thingness. Based on this understanding, I argue that in the Heideggerian sense, Dasein brings the world near through the thingness of the thing. Thingness is a key condition of Nearness.

Buildings belong to a special kind of thing, one that allows human beings to dwell. Following his understanding of the nature of the thing, as a way of bringing the world near, Heidegger notes: 'Things which, as locations, allow a site we now in anticipation call buildings [...] These things are locations that allow a site for the fourfold, a site that in each case provides for a space'.¹³⁷ This analysis reveals the nature of buildings as a category of things that are allowed as a site for the fourfold. However, a built environment becomes an entity of thingness that gathers the fourfold only

¹³³ This may explain why modern spatial production causes problems in terms of Nearness.

¹³⁴ Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking."

¹³⁵ Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking."

¹³⁶ Heidegger, "The Thing."

¹³⁷ Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking."

under certain circumstances. According to Heidegger, the necessary and sufficient condition for any built environment to become a thing and not just an object is the gathering of the fourfold. Meaning, only when a building is able to gather the fourfold, does it become a thing. A building becomes a thing when it gathers fresh air, rain, and sunshine from the sky, trees and grass from the earth, culture from mortals, and spirit from god. By doing so, it makes itself a thing: standing on earth while connecting to sky, inviting mortals to come in, and leading them to a spiritual state of being with god.

As the fourfold is the essential structure—the mirror-play—of Dasein’s world, a building of thingness, in the Heideggerian sense, plays a key role building the relationship between Dasein and the world. However, what Heidegger does not mention is that the degree and quality of Nearness can factually vary from case to case. This potential variation is the main focus of this thesis, which will be discussed in relation to the study of the Chinese literati garden in the following chapters.

The Nearness Conditions Within the Built Environment

Based on the above discussion, it is clear that Nearness occurs through three layers of conditions: readiness-to-hand between Dasein and its near surroundings; poetry between Dasein and the built environment; and thingness between Dasein and the fourfold. These conditions are created by and for Dasein, which also reveal Dasein’s essential de-distancing tendency.¹³⁸ As Heidegger claims, Dasein’s ‘nearing of nearness is the true and sole dimension of the mirror-play of the world’.¹³⁹ This nearing of Nearness, however, depends on how Dasein’s modes of being are inspired, motivated, and enabled by spatial conditions embedded within a built environment, through which various beings in the world are brought near and become inner-worldly beings for Dasein. It is only through these conditions that Dasein brings the world near, thereby maintaining its being in the world.

It should be noted that depending on how these three layers of conditions perform, the quality, density, and intensity of Nearness conditions in an architectural space can distinctly vary from case to case, which may inspire very different experiences of Nearness. As will be shown in the case study, the literati garden provides a series of excellent spatial conditions, within which an extraordinarily rich, multi-dimensional experience of Nearness occurs. In contrast, a prison cell—a bare dark room with

¹³⁸ Heidegger, *Being and Time*.

¹³⁹ Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 179.

only one tiny window—is an extreme situation of a built environment with perhaps the least degree of Nearness. However, since it is built to maintain a prisoner’s basic state of being, the cell is still embedded with two of the most basic spatial conditions of Nearness: a sheltered space and a window connecting to the outside. These two conditions would enable the most fundamental modes of being to occur, such as sleeping and breathing, based on which, the prisoner is allowed to stay near with the most indispensable meaningful beings: shelter, air, light, and the (perhaps very limited) view through the tiny window.

Therefore, a built environment of Nearness is one that, with a number of embedded conditions, allows modes of being to occur, and, further, allows those beings desired by Dasein to be brought into its world. Of course, compared with the prison cell, richer Nearness conditions are embedded within most built environments encountered in daily life, meaning that more modes of being are allowed to occur, and more desired entities are brought into the world through these built environments. However, compared with the Chinese literati garden, where extraordinarily rich Nearness conditions can be identified, many contemporary built environments lack a decent quality of Nearness. In order to inspire, establish, and maintain a decent quality of Nearness, a series of spatial conditions must be carefully set up in an architectural space. Thus, for the discipline of architecture, a significant task is understanding how the necessary spatial conditions that enable those essential modes of being can be created, and how they generate a high quality of Nearness experience. This concern fundamentally shifts focus from abstract philosophical theory to various specific spatial conditions, making a solid architectural analysis possible. Furthermore, I would like to point out that instead of three independent conditions, these layers are actually integrated. A condition of readiness-to-hand that facilitates one’s ability to stay near to things would allow the mode of building-dwelling-thinking to occur at the same time, engendering a sense of poetry. Similarly, the condition that enables building-dwelling-thinking would allow one to turn various inner-worldly beings into things, making them ready-to-hand. The three layers of Nearness conditions are actually an integrated oneness in this process.

2.3.8 Summary

To summarise, in Heideggerian philosophy, the notion of Nearness is used to reveal a kind of ontological relationship among beings, particularly between Dasein and other significant beings in its world. For Heidegger, Nearness is neither like the being of hardness that can be captured through perception nor like the being of a thing that can be analysed through reason. The meaning of Nearness is difficult to grasp without addressing it in the Heideggerian conceptual network, with Dasein's being-in-the-world as its core. The fact that the notion of Nearness repeatedly appears in Heideggerian discourse demonstrates that the relatedness of intimacy to the world is significant for understanding Dasein's being-in-the-world, as Dasein has as an essential tendency to maintain this relatedness. The notion of Nearness also suggests that the different degrees, qualities, and intensities Dasein is related to the world are meaningful issues to explore, as all these factors may have an impact on Nearness and reveal a potential risk that Dasein may fall into the problematic situation where the conditions of bringing-near are interrupted.

As a cornerstone of Heidegger's inquiry into the meaning of being, the concept of being-in-the-world is interpreted by relating to many other significant Heideggerian notions through the notion of Nearness. According to Heidegger, de-distancing, or nearing, is Dasein's essential being-in-the-world tendency;¹⁴⁰ following that, building-dwelling-thinking, as an integrated mode of being of bringing-near, is also a form of nearing;¹⁴¹ the thing, according to Heidegger, brings the world near through its gathering of the fourfold;¹⁴² and poetry occurs in Dasein's being-in-the-world and is regarded as the 'project of the world' where a sense of Nearness is found.¹⁴³ My analytical review suggests that built environment plays an essential role in the occurrence of Nearness. Nearness, as an ontological relationship, can be formed, shaped, enhanced, or limited by a number of spatial conditions embedded within a built space. Architecture, in this sense, is an aggregation of Nearness conditions. With these conditions, architecture has the potential to generate rich Nearness in one's average everydayness. A potential is a capability that can lead to certain consequences, although these consequences do not necessarily happen. Only when a space consistently leads to such a consequence does the potential become a spatial quality. Thus, an architectural space becomes a space of Nearness only when it, through

¹⁴⁰ Heidegger, *Being and Time*.

¹⁴¹ Heidegger, *Being and Time*.

¹⁴² Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*.

¹⁴³ Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*.

a series of spatial settings, consistently builds a relatedness of intimacy between someone experiencing the space and other entities in the world, especially those that are vital for humanity's being in the world. In order to create a space of Nearness, the three layers of Nearness conditions—readiness-to-hand, poetry, and thingness—must be embedded in the process of building, dwelling, and thinking, which in turn may result in more spatial conditions that further inspire and motivate various modes of being.

2.4 Meaningful Concerns About Nearness in Architecture

The above discussion has outlined the great potential of the notion of Nearness, as a theoretical tool, for understanding many phenomena at an ontological level. In the field of architecture, Nearness provides a fundamental perspective that can potentially integrate many issues of broad concern. Various specific manifestations of Nearness in the Heideggerian sense have been frequently discussed in architectural theories, studies, and manifestos, even though the term Nearness is rarely mentioned. This section reviews a few of those influential works.

Nearness, as ontological relatedness between Dasein and the world, has long been an issue of concern for humans, even before it appeared in Heidegger's philosophy as a notion reflecting the loss caused by modernity. The most careful, everyday practice of Nearness can probably be found in vernacular architecture, although the anonymous creators of this architecture may never have claimed such a concern. As Christopher Alexander points out, there is always a distinctive quality created through the 'timeless way of building' in vernacular architecture, which is not experienced very often in the modern world.¹⁴⁴ Such a 'timeless way of building', according to Amos Rapoport, is formed by complex social, cultural, and natural factors throughout history.¹⁴⁵ The formation of this 'timeless way of building', I argue, is a manifestation of Dasein's bringing-near tendency. Consequently, Nearness is always embedded in vernacular architecture as an essential spatial quality. Those natural, spontaneous,

¹⁴⁴ Christopher Alexander, *The Timeless Way of Building* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).

¹⁴⁵ Rapoport, *House Form and Culture*.

timeless ways of building, which can be always found in vernacular architecture, are seriously disrupted by the global modernisation. However, concern for Nearness is still noted, strongly and explicitly, in a number of contemporary architectural works. Many architects, such as Charles Correa, Luis Barragán, Peter Zumthor, Wang Shu, and Dong Yugan, claim to have learned from vernacular architecture. In many of their works, a high quality of Nearness is achieved and a deep relation to vernacular architecture is clearly seen, though in very different ways. I shall discuss a number of ways Nearness is maintained, enhanced, created, and manifested in contemporary architectural work in Chapter Eight with some interesting cases.

Some specific aspects of Nearness have been highlighted in influential architectural theories. For instance, Christian Norberg-Schulz highlights in *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture* that ‘for modern urban man the friendship with a natural environment is reduced to fragmentary relations’.¹⁴⁶ His interpretation of ‘*genius loci*’ is concerned with a place’s distinctive spirit, formed in a ‘concretisation of life-situation’, which, I would argue, is very much a result of the deep fusion of manifold Nearness conditions that enable those context-dependent modes of being to occur willingly in the everydayness of a place.¹⁴⁷ Kenneth Frampton’s six points for ‘critical regionalism’ discusses how to ‘adopt modern architecture, critically, for its universal progressive qualities but at the same time value should be placed on the geographical context of the building’.¹⁴⁸ In the Heideggerian sense, what Frampton proposes with the notion of critical regionalism is the value and approach of representing the region-specific aspect of Nearness in architecture. Aldo Rossi regards ‘type’ as a predetermined condition of architecture, ‘a logical principle that is prior to form and that constitutes it’.¹⁴⁹ Yet, an architectural type is perhaps no more than the structural representation of collectively shared Nearness conditions, formed and evolved throughout history.

Recognition of the significance of Nearness in architecture is generally seen in architect manifestos and thoughts. Norberg-Schulz observes that Louis Kahn’s question of ‘What does the building want to be?’ reveals the existential dimension of architecture. Such an existentialist concern, as seen in many of Khan’s texts, emphasises an ontic-ontological relatedness of architecture to other beings

¹⁴⁶ Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci*, 21.

¹⁴⁷ Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci*.

¹⁴⁸ Kenneth Frampton, “Towards a Critical Regionalism,” in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture* (Washington: Bay Press, 1987).

¹⁴⁹ Aldo Rossi, *The Architecture of the City* (London: The MIT Press, 2002), 40.

potentially involved in its own being. Steven Holl's notion of 'anchoring' highlights the role of architecture as an aggregation of Nearness conditions rooted in its world.¹⁵⁰ BIG's manifesto in *Yes Is More* reveals Bjarke Ingels's faith in the significant value architecture can create when it is given the potential to integrate rich Nearness conditions and enable desired modes of being to occur.¹⁵¹ Liu Jiakun claims that 'now' and 'here' are the two most important issues in his architectural practice, which can be seen as just another way of stressing how important temporary and spatial Nearness is in his methodology.¹⁵² These architects' manifestos and thoughts clearly show that different issues associated with this subtle Heideggerian notion have been addressed to varying degrees, although the architects themselves might not be fully aware of this at the philosophical level.

Scientific research in the field of architecture has also dealt with certain aspects of Nearness, although usually in a way that objectifies the object. For instance, environmental psychology and environmental physics are two subjects that are closely concerned with Nearness. Environmental psychology is concerned with, in a broad sense, how an individual's cognitions, emotions, and behaviours interact with the built environment. Among those interrelationships, Nearness is undoubtedly proven to have a profound impact on individual's well-being. Environmental physics, on the other hand, is concerned with how the physical conditions necessary for a comfortable, pleasant, and sustainable built environment can be created, managed, and maintained, which can be understood as an exploration of various scientific facts that may have an impact on Nearness conditions within a built environment. In order to make a built environment an appropriate readiness-to-hand, these scientific studies are meaningful. However, as Norberg-Schulz points out, 'man cannot gain a foothold through scientific understanding alone'.¹⁵³ While these scientific approaches help gain an understanding of the specific performance of Nearness a built environment can achieve, thereby verifying the significance of Nearness and suggesting ways of improving it in a sense, they never lead to a true understanding of Nearness itself.

Echoing Heidegger's notion of Nearness, these architects, scholars, theorists, and scientists in the field of architecture and the built environment seem to have converged on a common concern about Nearness since the problems associated with modernity became apparent. They have reflected upon various situations

¹⁵⁰ Steven Holl, *Anchoring*, 1st ed. (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1991).

¹⁵¹ Bjarke Ingels, *Yes Is More: An Archicomic on Architectural Evolution* (Germany: Taschen, 2009).

¹⁵² Jiakun Liu, *Here and Now* [此时此地], 1st ed. (Beijing: China Architecture and Building Press, 2002).

¹⁵³ Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci*, 5.

that occur within the built environment, where humans' original relatedness to and intimacy with the world—once strong in the pre-industrial period—has been seriously disrupted in many senses since the Industrial Revolution. However, due to the limited scope of architecture, the occurrence of this aspect of modern loss within the human-built environment has not yet achieved a radical understanding. Despite the fact that so much work has been done to interpret, understand, and discuss different specific manifestations of this relatedness of intimacy (and its loss), how it occurs within a built environment, which must involve complex spatial-experiential mechanisms that effectively build up one's intimacy with the world, seems to be insufficiently explored. Heidegger's notion of Nearness provides us with an important tool for surpassing the limits of architecture and understanding this relatedness of intimacy (as well as its loss) at an ontological level. Only at this level can the ideas, theories, and thoughts that are relevant to this serious challenge of modernity be well integrated, and the spatial practice aimed at responding to this challenge be more effectively conducted.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the rich connotations embedded within the notion of Nearness in Heideggerian philosophy, and its potential to integrate various meaningful architectural issues. Although an explicit definition of Nearness never appears in any of Heidegger's texts, the notion is undoubtedly significant, playing a special role that arguably connects many influential ideas within the conceptual network of Heideggerian philosophy. Nearness reveals the meaning of Dasein by building a referential system that relates Dasein to various entities in the world, essentially unveiling Dasein's state of being-in-the-world. Based on the previous discussion, this chapter concludes as follows.

First, this chapter has extracted several important semantic clues embedded within the notion of Nearness in Heideggerian philosophy. In particular, it is clear that Nearness as an ontological relatedness between Dasein and other entities in its world is a fundamental clue that leads to other connotations embedded within this notion in the Heideggerian discourse. Second, this chapter reveals that Nearness, as human individual's ontological relatedness of intimacy to the world, is very much space-dependent. Thus, identifying the spatial conditions that inspire a mode of being and identifying the potential mode of being that such conditions inspire are

actually the same cognitive process. In order to understand the manifestation of Nearness, those spatial conditions that inspire modes of bringing-near must be given particular attention. This leads to an understanding of the role of architecture from the perspective of Nearness. Third, architecture, as well as any other form of human-built environment, can be regarded as an aggregation of spatial conditions that enable Nearness to occur. Furthermore, architecture is always built for maintaining Nearness of a certain quality. Different spatial conditions can result in different qualities of Nearness. Thus, in order to create a high quality of Nearness in an architectural space, spatial conditions must be carefully established. It is a significant task for the architecture discipline to understand what spatial conditions can lead to high qualities of Nearness. Finally, although a considerable body of work that concerns about Nearness has emerged in the field of architecture, the mechanisms of Nearness through which it occurs within a built environment remain a mystery. It reminds us that the study of specific manifestations of certain aspects of Nearness is far from enough to gain an understanding of its occurrence within the built environment. In order to understand the occurrence of Nearness, one must deal with the experience of Nearness itself. The analytical review of the notion of Nearness in Heideggerian philosophy and the attempt of interpreting its meaning in architecture and human built environment provides a theoretical foundation, based on which the occurrence of Nearness can be further explored in the case study.

As can be seen in many other ideas in Heideggerian philosophy, an unavoidable 'deep division between its philosophical brilliance and its political barbarity' is also detected in the notion of Nearness, a reminder of Heidegger's Nazi involvement from 1933 to 1945.¹⁵⁴ However, it is undeniable that Heidegger's notion of Nearness provides a profound perspective for reflecting on the challenges presented by modernity. Such reflection seems particularly urgent in today's world, where our original relatedness of intimacy to many entities, including ourselves as beings, is increasingly disrupted, distorted, and reformed as a result of the rapid progress of seemingly miraculous technologies. Since this chapter attempts to avoid reduction as much as possible at the level of theoretical thinking, the meaning of Nearness still seems too complex, leading in many different directions. Therefore, instead of staying at the theoretical level, the following chapters will consider the literati garden—a type of classical garden embedded with various conditions that inspire the occurrence of Nearness—as a case study for exploring how a high quality of Nearness can occur in a human-built environment.

¹⁵⁴ Charles Bambach, "Bordercrossings: Levinas, Heidegger, and the Ethics of the Other," *Modern Intellectual History*, 2007, 206.

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3 The Formation of Nearness Within the Literati Garden: A Hypothesis Based on Three Critical Elements

3.1 Introduction

As architectural historian Peter Blundell Jones and Jan Woudstra sharply point out, ‘the temptation for any researcher is to select material that perfectly expresses the mood of the garden, or the designer’s intentions, or the observer’s agenda: but that does not necessarily produce an understanding of why and how it was so designed.’¹⁵⁵ An understanding of why and how Nearness is embedded as an essential quality within ancient Chinese literati gardens, however, is important for this thesis. Therefore, based on the theoretical framework established in Chapter Two, this chapter presents a critical hypothesis for the whole thesis: over the course of the long-term evolution of literati gardens, a set of complex socio-cultural factors

¹⁵⁵ Peter Blundell Jones and Jan Woudstra, “Social Order Versus ‘Natural’ Disorder in the Chinese Garden,” *Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes* 34, no. 2 (2014): 151-52.

resulted in the incorporation of a series of spatial settings that led to mechanisms with the potential to generate rich, multi-dimensional, and extraordinary experiences of Nearness; as a result of these dynamics, Nearness is embedded within literati gardens as an essential spatial-experiential quality. This chapter discusses the evidence in ancient Chinese culture that led to the above hypothesis. Specifically, it explores how and why those spatial-experiential dynamics were embedded within Chinese literati gardens through three questions:

- Who built the literati gardens?
- Why did they build the literati gardens?
- How were the literati gardens built?

Although literati gardens can be examined in many different ways, these three questions are critical to understanding how Nearness was embedded as a spatial-experiential quality within literati gardens. In answering them, I identify various factors behind the formation of Nearness within literati gardens. Figure 3.1 shows how these three elements unfold in this chapter. In the ‘Who Built the Literati Gardens?’ section, I show that two factors were involved in the formation of the literati’s collective state of being. On the one hand, three primary schools of thought—Daoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism—profoundly shaped ancient Chinese society and culture. On the other hand, the ancient literati’s social roles (as scholars and officials) and cultural roles (as inheritors, creators, and disseminators of culture) made them the social, cultural, and political elite throughout ancient Chinese history.

These factors interacted with each other and, together, resulted in a collective state of being generally held by the ancient Chinese literati. In this collective state of being, three of the literati’s significant motivations to build their gardens can be identified: 1) their tendency to practise philosophy in their everyday lives; 2) their collective obsession with poetic dwelling; and 3) their aesthetic pursuits. These motivations, discussed in the ‘Why Did They Build Literati Gardens?’ section, are essential factors behind the literati’s garden-making activities and, in turn, the formation of Nearness within literati gardens. Finally, the ‘How Were the Literati Gardens Built?’ section identifies that the literati’s integration of building, dwelling, and thinking in their everyday lives was the critical factor that enabled the literati to represent their tendency towards Nearness through their garden-making. In short, this chapter discusses various significant factors that explain why and how spatial-experiential settings of Nearness were embedded within this particular type of built environment—the Chinese literati garden.

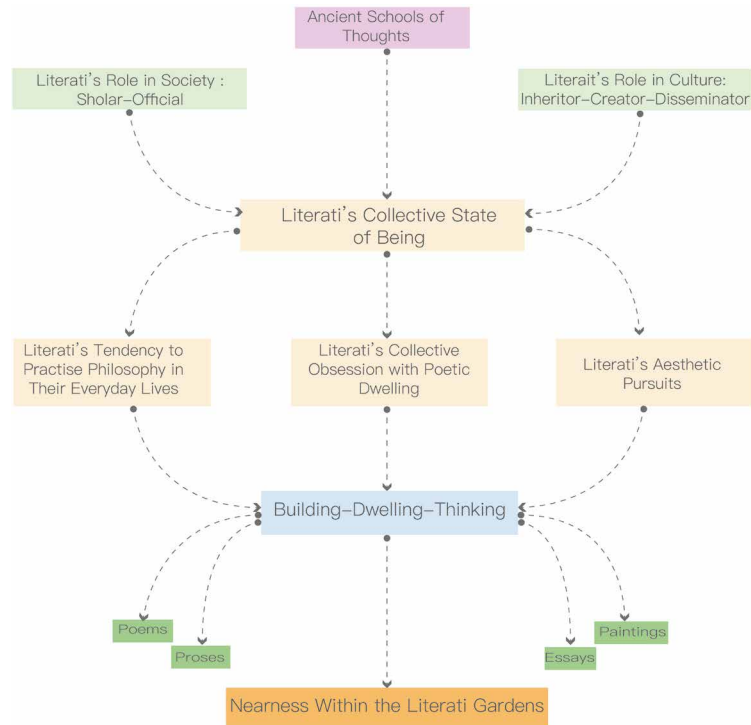


FIG. 3.1 The Formation of Nearness Within the literati garden. Source: Lu Li.

It is important to note that, as these three elements are all so fundamental and complex, a thorough investigation of any of them would exceed the scope of this research. In other words, the task of this chapter is not to provide a thorough investigation of any one element, but to highlight the various social and cultural factors involved in the literati's garden-making process and describe what can be expected from the following chapters on the occurrence of Nearness within the literati garden. Unlike the spatial-experiential analysis based on the built environment of a garden presented in the following chapters, this chapter is largely an analysis based on various materials, such as prose, paintings, poems, literary and artistic theories, ancient philosophical schools, and historical records. As a main conclusion of this chapter, the collective state of being of the ancient Chinese literati played a key role in forming Nearness within the literati garden. Particularly, this chapter argues that the ancient literati's building-dwelling-thinking model (i.e., the complex mode of being that integrates building, dwelling, and thinking into one's everyday life) is a significant factor behind the formation of Nearness within the literati garden. Above all, this chapter provides a hypothetical foundation for the phenomenological analysis in the following chapters.

3.2 Who Built the Literati Gardens?

Who built the literati gardens? This is the most fundamental of the three established questions, as its answer can profoundly influence those of the other two. One may infer from the name that the literati gardens are those that were built, owned, and used by the literati class, as distinct from other categories of Chinese classical gardens, such as those were built and owned by wealthy merchants or royal families. The answer to this question, however, is not as obvious as it initially appears. Beyond the obvious involvement of the literati, a more important question is as follows: What collective state of being did the literati class collectively hold that motivated their garden-making activities and resulted in such a distinct type of built environment? In order to answer this question, this chapter begins with a general analysis of the key actors involved in the formation of the Chinese literati garden (Section 3.2.1), followed by an interpretation of the term 'ancient Chinese literati' in two senses (Section 3.2.2). Then, it discusses three aspects of the literati's collective state of being that significantly shaped their gardens: 1) the origin of the literati class in ancient China (Section 3.2.3); 2) the literati's multiple roles in traditional Chinese society and the evolution of Chinese culture (Section 3.2.4); 3) the literati's collective ideology shaped by three most influential schools of thought (i.e., Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism) (Section 3.2.5).

3.2.1 Key Actors Involved in the Formation of the Literati Garden

A built environment is always the result of human beings' spatial practices. The literati garden, as its name suggests, is a specific type of garden formed by the spatial practices of the ancient Chinese literati class. The literati class shared many common qualities and values that led to a particular lifestyle deeply involved in the formation of this type of garden. However, other actors were also involved in the formation of a literati garden beyond its owner. A brief examination of the social network engaged in the formation of a literati garden suggests an interactive relationship among several key actors, including the owner, director, designer, and users, all of whom collaborated in the garden-making process involving, in the Heideggerian sense, the simultaneous occurrence of building, dwelling, and thinking.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁶ I discuss this notion in greater detail in the section 'How Were the Literati Gardens Built?.'

As a result, the literati's collective states of being are perfectly represented in their gardens. In this section, I introduce the roles that these actors played in the formation of the literati garden and briefly analyse how they interacted and cooperated with one another.

Owner

The owner is the 'stakeholder' of a literati garden, who played an essential role in its formation. As Craig Clunas points out, ownership of a garden was seen as a meaningful and serious matter in the Ming dynasty; this is evident in the fact that many gardens built during that period were named by their owners.¹⁵⁷ Given the significance of ownership, a garden may be viewed as an important representation of its owner and his family's state of being. Their needs, tastes, values, wealth, desires, and social status were influential in the formation of a garden, not only through their initial design and construction, but also through their daily spatial practices later on. A garden often had multiple owners throughout its history. Of course, most literati gardens were owned by members of the ancient literati class. However, not all owners of literati gardens belonged to the ancient literati class, even when using 'literati' in a broad sense. For instance, the Master of the Nets Garden had eight owners in 200 years before it was handed over to the Chinese government.¹⁵⁸ While most of these owners were clearly members of literati class, a few belonged to other social groups, including Da Gui [达桂], a senior general of the Qing dynasty (became owner in 1907), and He Yanong [何亚农], a connoisseur and collector of antiquities (became owner in 1940).¹⁵⁹ Similarly, the Lingering Garden was once owned by Sheng Kang [盛康], a merchant who ran a business in Changzhou and owned the garden from 1873 to 1911. However, while these gardens may not be universally owned by members of the literati class, they have generally had a close relationship with the literati. Many of the non-literati owners, such as He Yanong and Sheng Kang, were born into intellectual families and, thereby, likely shared several intellectual and cultural qualities with the literati.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁷ Craig Clunas, "Ideal and Reality in the Ming Garden," in *The Authentic Garden: A Symposium on Gardens*, ed. Leslie Tjon Sie Fat and Erik de Jong (Leiden: Clusius Foundation, 1991), 197.

¹⁵⁸ Xun Cao, "The History of the Master of the Nets Garden [网师园的历史变迁]," *Architect [建筑师]*, no. 12 (2004).

¹⁵⁹ Cao, "The History of the Master of the Nets Garden."

¹⁶⁰ Cao, "The History of the Master of the Nets Garden."

Director

The director is another dominant role in the formation of a literati garden. Ancient garden designer Ji Cheng claims: 'In fact, the master (director) in charge of constructing a garden residence should really account for nine-tenths of the work, and the workmen he employs for only one-tenth.'¹⁶¹ According to Ji, the director is responsible for a series of important tasks in garden-making, including analysing site conditions, modulating the topography, conceiving the master plan, and supervising construction—all significant tasks for making a garden with decent aesthetic, cultural, and spatial-experiential qualities.¹⁶² As a key actor responsible for the whole project, the director must interact closely with both the owner and various artisans. Although Ji stressed the director's leading role in garden-making, he was not entirely clear about what kind of person can serve as a garden director. One can assume, based on various historical records, that the director needed to be someone familiar with design principles, spatial techniques, construction skills, and knowledge about garden-making. Despite this fairly basic assumption, the role of the director still appears to have been ambiguous. For instance, the rockery piling master Zhang Nanyuan, who may be most appropriately viewed as a capable craftsman, had very likely served as the director for many of his projects, especially those driven by the need of representing natural mountains.¹⁶³ Given Zhang's extraordinary talent and artisan reputation, his role in garden-making was surely able to extend beyond mere technical and constructive craftwork.¹⁶⁴

Designer

The role of designer in literati garden-making appears to have been somewhat ambiguous. In many cases, directors like Ji Cheng were responsible for designing the gardens that they built. I would argue, however, that while the director must be heavily involved in designing a garden, the role of designer in ancient garden-making cannot simply be understood and defined from a perspective of modern professionalism. Stanislaus Fung points out that Ji's *Yuan Ye* highlighted garden

¹⁶¹ Cheng Ji, *The Craft of Gardens: The Classic Chinese Text on Garden Design*, trans. Alison Hardie, 1st ed. (Shanghai: Shanghai Press, 2012). Original Chinese: '第园筑之主，犹须什九，而用匠什一'.

¹⁶² Cheng Ji and Zhi Chen, *园冶注释 [Notes on Yuan Ye]* (Beijing: China Architecture and Building Press, 2009).

¹⁶³ Weiye Wu, "A Biography of Zhang Nanyuan [张南垣传]," in *The Finest of Ancient Prose [古文观止]*, ed. Chucai Wu (Wikisource, 1695). <https://zh.m.wikisource.org/zh/古文观止>.

¹⁶⁴ Xun Cao, "Zhang Nan Yuan's Gardening Works with Stacked Mountains [张南垣的造园叠山作品]," *Journal of Chinese Architectural History [中国建筑史论会刊]* 2 (2009).

designers' *'auctoritas'*—the authority that they wield as professional designers who possess a body of garden-making knowledge and techniques. However, while Fung regards *Yuan Ye* as a garden designer's book, he is also clearly aware of the fact that Ji's role in garden-making was still 'some distance away from modern concepts of professional authority'.¹⁶⁵ In this sense, it may not be appropriate to understand directors like Ji purely as designers. As already stated, the role of designer was somewhat vague in ancient Chinese garden-making. It involved a process of design that was so complex, dynamic, and ambiguous that it could hardly be precisely captured by the concept of 'design' in modern language. In an ancient society, where professional divisions were still very rough, the design work was likely achieved through close cooperation between the director, the owner, and artisans of varying technical skills. This cooperative relationship may have resulted in a garden-making process in which design, construction, and daily life are closely integrated—a model very different from the space-production process developed after the Industrial Revolution. As the last section of this chapter discusses, intimacy between the owner, designer, and director can certainly be viewed as a significant factor that enabled the literati's collective obsession with poetic dwelling to be satisfied and manifested through their gardens.

User

The user of a garden is not as obvious as it may initially seem. Of course, the primary group of users of a garden typically comprised the owner's family members. Still, two facts must be noted. On the one hand, surviving gardens have undergone many generations of ownership before being preserved as built heritage sites. For most of them, therefore, it is not possible to identify a stable and consistent user group. However, later users are observed to have interacted with previous users through a wide range of activities, such as preserving their calligraphy, maintaining their art collections, writing an essay to record the garden's history, and taking care of their plants.¹⁶⁶ In this sense, many literati gardens became a cultural continuity. On the other hand, garden users include other groups of people, as not all gardens were purely private and exclusive throughout their entire history. Some gardens (e.g., The Pavilion of Surging Waves) were partially or fully open to the public for a period of time following their completion, and many were open on festivals and holidays, making them semi-public places, like modern parks, in which citizens can enjoy their leisure time.¹⁶⁷ In any case, users of a garden were involved in its formation through their everyday spatial practices, meaning that they were profoundly involved in its evolution.

¹⁶⁵ Fung, "The Garden Designer's Text."

¹⁶⁶ Cao, "The History of the Master of the Nets Garden."

¹⁶⁷ Keswick, Jencks, and Hardie, *The Chinese Garden: History, Art and Architecture*.

This discussion calls to mind a basic fact: most key actors involved in the evolution of literati gardens either belonged to the literati class or were close to them. Therefore, to understand how their distinct spatial-experiential qualities were shaped throughout history, the ancient Chinese literati's collective state of being must be examined.

3.2.2 Two Ways of Defining Ancient Chinese Literati

Before inquiring into the ancient literati's collective state of being, it is necessary to clarify the meaning of 'literati'. The term 'ancient Chinese literati' can be defined in two senses. In a narrow sense, the term 'literati' refers merely to Confucians because, according to modern Chinese philosopher Feng Youlan, what is now known as 'Confucianism' originated from 'the School of Literati' before Confucianism took shape.¹⁶⁸ Historian Qin Hui points out that Confucians were the earliest literati who compiled and studied classic literature inherited from the early Zhou dynasty, their core contribution being the revival of Zhou's social, political, moral, and cultural order.¹⁶⁹ While there is not yet a historical consensus on this point, it is clear that the terms 'literati' and 'Confucians' have significant overlap. In this sense, early Confucians can be regarded as the origin of the ancient literati class before it became a proper social stratum, regardless of whether Confucianism actually originated from the earlier 'school of literati'.¹⁷⁰ Overall, the general state of being held by the ancient Chinese literati class was either influenced by or related to Confucianism throughout history. Thus, it is not strange to see that later literati devoted themselves to studying Confucianism, especially after it became the official state ideology during the Western Han dynasty (202 B.C.–9 A.D.), when Dong Zhongshu proposed to 'dismiss the hundred schools of thought and revere the Confucian arts'.¹⁷¹ When the imperial examination system was established in the mid-Tang dynasty, Confucianist classics became an essential source for selecting imperial government officials, and the inherent relationship between Confucianism and the literati class became even closer.

¹⁶⁸ Youlan Feng, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy [中国哲学简史]* (Tianjin: Tianjin Academy of Social Sciences Press, 2005).

¹⁶⁹ Hui Qin, "清华大学公开课: 中国思想史 [Qinghua University Public Lecture: The History of Chinese Thought]," (Beijing: Tencent, 2015).

¹⁷⁰ While later Confucianism is broadly known as '儒家' and largely shaped the meaning of '儒' in Chinese, it should be noted that Confucianism may be viewed as a mere branch of '儒家', the origin and meaning of which are complex and debatable.

¹⁷¹ Biao Ban and Gu Ban, "Book of Han [汉书]," (1642). <https://zh.wikisource.org/wiki/汉书>.

However, the term 'literati' can also be understood in a broad sense. Given that Confucianism has deeply shaped Chinese culture, dominated ancient Chinese society, and influenced the ancient literati's spiritual world for more than two thousand years, its content has varied all the time, interacting with other schools of thought (e.g., Legalism, Daoism, and Buddhism) throughout the course of its evolution, absorbing diverse notions, values, and ideas.¹⁷² Consequently, throughout history, individuals who have studied Confucianism have had a wide range of talents, perspectives, and interests, making it inappropriate to simply label them all as Confucians. On the other hand, intellectual and professional individuals emerged across other fields (e.g., painters, playwrights, novelists) who would likely not be strictly considered Confucians but were still justifiably considered literati. Evidently, the meaning of the term 'literati' became rich but sometimes ambiguous. In a broad sense, the literati can be understood as the intellectual, social, and cultural elites in ancient Chinese society who were well educated and often multi-talented due to their persistent self-cultivation, just like the early Confucians.

I propose an understanding of the ancient literati class in this broad sense. Of course, Confucianism had a great influence on the social, cultural, and political elites of ancient China, but professionals and intellectuals who did not strictly follow 'the School of Literati' must also be considered as part of the literati class. In addition to including traditional Confucians, this broad definition encompasses ancient intellectuals and professionals in many other fields, including poets, painters, calligraphers, novelists, playwrights, and scholars of other schools of thought, who were often well versed in the philosophy of Confucianism. This thesis is mainly based on this broad understanding of the term 'literati'. The actors involved in the formation of most literati gardens should not be understood only as Confucians despite many of them having been educated in Confucianist ideology.

3.2.3 ***Shi*: A Significant Identity of the Early Literati**

To understand the literati's collective state of being throughout ancient Chinese history, this section inquires into the origin of the literati class. Historians largely agree that the establishment of the first unified empire (221 B.C.), known as the Qin dynasty, represents the onset of the unified, highly centralised authority that

¹⁷² Qin, "中国思想史."

had lasted more than 2,000 years.¹⁷³ However, the formation of the literati class can be traced back to an era earlier than that. This section identifies *Shi* [士], a social stratum formed during the Zhou dynasty (1045–256 B.C.), as an important social role that the early literati played. According to *Guo Yu* [国语], an early record of the history of eight ancient Chinese states,¹⁷⁴ five hierarchical aristocratic identities emerged during the feudalist Zhou dynasty: *Tianzi* [天子] (monarch, lit. ‘Son of Heaven’), *Zhuhou* [诸侯] (duke and prince), *Qing* [卿] (minister), *Dafu* [大夫] (grandmaster), and *Shi* [士] (serviceman).¹⁷⁵ It is worth noting that *Dafu* played the role of intellectual consultants, collecting information, analysing political situations, and devising strategies for the feudal state. Subordinates of *Dafu* were called *Shi*, who were usually not blood-bonded to the higher classes and whose socio-political status was lower, at least during the early Zhou dynasty.¹⁷⁶ Historian Liu Zehua asserts that a wide variety of *Shi* appeared during the Zhou dynasty, who dedicated to particular skills and specific missions according to *Dafu*’s instructions.¹⁷⁷

However, the boundary between *Shi* and *Dafu* became vague after the Western Zhou dynasty, gradually merging into one identity during the Eastern Zhou period (770–256 B.C.). As a result, *Shi-Dafu* and *Dafu-Shi* emerged as two social strata that combined the two identities.¹⁷⁸ In a broad sense, *Shi* and *Dafu* can be generally understood as a single social class following the Zhou dynasty. I argue that *Shi-Dafu* and *Dafu-Shi* were early prototypes of the ancient literati class, since they were both intellectually involved in the governance of ancient feudal states in a similar manner to the later literati’s involvement in political and social affairs. Considering that the later literati’s socio-political identity was not decisively influenced by blood relations, I view *Shi* as a more precise origin of ancient Chinese intellectuals and professionals. The collective disposition of *Shi* (and *Dafu*) fundamentally influenced the later literati, whose relation to them can be discussed in two senses.

First, the ancient literati appreciated early *Shi*’s qualities. Confucianist classics, as the most influential literature among the ancient literati, discuss repeatedly essential

¹⁷³ The political influence of the Qin Empire continues in contemporary Chinese society in many ways. See: Qin, “中国思想史.”

¹⁷⁴ The historical period covered by *Guo Yu* is approximately 947 to 453 B.C.

¹⁷⁵ Hanmin Zhu, “士大夫精神与中国文化 [The Spirit of Shi-Dafu and Chinese Culture],” 原道 1 (2015).

¹⁷⁶ Zhu, “士大夫精神与中国文化.”

¹⁷⁷ Zehua Liu, “战国时期的‘士’ [The ‘Shi’ of the Warring States Period],” *Historical Studies* [历史研究], no. 4 (1987).

¹⁷⁸ Zhu, “士大夫精神与中国文化.”

qualities of a *Shi*. In Confucianist philosophy, a *Shi* is both idealistic and realistic. According to *The Analects*, a qualified *Shi* must have strong self-discipline in morality, extraordinary capacities to consistently accomplish his mission, loyalty to the truth and justice, and the courage to take on heavy socio-political responsibilities.¹⁷⁹ It is therefore safe to assume that one must have to be able to read and write, learn and reflect, investigate and propose, communicate and negotiate before becoming a qualified *Shi*, which later become the literati's essential qualities. In fact, many literati throughout history proudly regarded themselves as *Shi*, always reminding themselves of the *Shi* spirit.¹⁸⁰ Even today, the Chinese language preserves the original meaning of 'shi'. For instance, in modern Chinese, one says 'bo shi' to mean 'doctor' and 'shuo shi' to mean 'master', both reminding us of the basic meaning of 'shi'—an intellectual capable of taking up responsibilities and being useful to society.¹⁸¹

Second, the ancient literati began to form a stable social class as a result of the social culture of raising and nurturing *Shi* among various aristocracies during the Eastern Zhou dynasty.¹⁸² This may have stemmed from the complicated and inconsistent political situation in which intellectual consultants were particularly important to the survival and success of an aristocracy in governing a feudal state. The tradition of selecting and rearing *Shi* resulted in access to capable individuals willing to take part in political and social affairs. When Zhou feudal institution came to an end (221 B.C.), *Shi* ceased to exist as a socio-political identity and became more of a cultural notion. However, the tradition of rearing *Shi* may be viewed as a prototype of the imperial examination system formed during the mid-Tang dynasty. The imperial examination system, on the other hand, is a significant factor behind the ancient literati being able to form a stable social class, significantly shaping their collective state of being. A number of the *Shi*'s social, political, and cultural tendencies were inherited by the later literati class and maintained with relative stability. In summary, *Shi* may be viewed as the earliest socio-political role of the ancient Chinese literati prior to the Qin dynasty (221–206 B.C.). Following the short and infamous tyranny of the Qin dynasty, the literati played several important roles inherited and developed from the *Shi*, which are discussed further below.

¹⁷⁹ Confucianists, *The Analects: Sayings of Confucius*, trans. D. C. Lau, 1st ed., Penguin Classics Series, (United Kingdom: Penguin Books, 1998), 13:20.

¹⁸⁰ Yingshi Yu, *士与中国文化 [Shi and the Chinese Culture]*, ed. Gucheng Zhou, 1st ed. (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House, 1987).

¹⁸¹ Interestingly, 'Bo Shi' had been an official position since the Eastern Zhou dynasty. Early *Bo Shi* were responsible for keeping documents, managing archives, and compiling historical records.

¹⁸² Zhu, "士大夫精神与中国文化."

3.2.4 The Ancient Literati's Multiple Roles Throughout Ancient Chinese History

This section identifies two groups of roles that the literati played in the evolution of ancient Chinese society and culture: on the one hand, they played a dual role as scholars and officials in ancient Chinese society; on the other hand, they played a tripartite role as inheritors, creators, and disseminators in the iterative evolution of ancient Chinese culture. The ancient Chinese literati seem to have integrated these two groups of roles very early in China's history and maintained them in their collective cultural and social state of being, even during periods of national chaos and turmoil. Their multiple roles profoundly influenced ancient Chinese society and culture and were clearly involved in the formation of Nearness within the literati gardens.

3.2.4.1 As Scholars and Officials in Ancient Chinese Society

Since the Qin dynasty, generations of literati had inherited from the ancient *Shi* class a strong socio-political role as scholar-officials in ancient Chinese society. Modern Chinese philosopher Feng Youlan details a theory, first proposed by ancient Chinese historian Liu Xin, to explain the origins of the 'Hundred Schools of Thought' emerging during the Eastern Zhou period. Liu's theory suggests clearly that the later literati's scholar-official role can be traced back to the early Zhou dynasty. As Feng explains:

[...] in the early Zhou dynasty, before the social institutions of that age disintegrated, there was 'no separation between officers and teachers.' In other words, the officers of a certain department of the government were at the same time the transmitters of the branch of learning pertaining to that department. These officers, like the feudal lords of the day, held their posts on a hereditary basis. Hence, there was then only 'official learning' but no 'private teaching.' That is to say, nobody taught any branch of learning as a private individual. Any such teaching was carried on only by officers in their capacity as members of one or another department of the government. [...] when the Zhou ruling house lost its power during the later centuries of the Zhou dynasty, the officers of the governmental departments lost their former positions and scattered throughout the country. They then turned to the teaching of their special branches of knowledge in a private capacity. Thus, they were no longer 'officers' but only private 'teachers'. And it was out of this separation between teachers and officers that the different schools arose.¹⁸³

¹⁸³ Feng, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*, 53.

This theory suggests that the early literati's dual role of scholar-official was deeply rooted in the early Zhou dynasty's socio-political structure. Although this dual role weakened once the ruling Zhou house lost its power, it was recaptured and inherited by the *Shi-Dafu* (or *Dafu-Shi*) stratum during the Eastern Zhou period as well as by the later literati class. In fact, the later literati's dual role of scholar-official can be explained by the virtues, duties, and qualities held by the early *Shi*. As already mentioned, during the Eastern Zhou period, *Shi* members assumed responsibility for assisting and advising the superior aristocratic classes in the administration of the state. According to *The Analects of Confucius*, *Shi* members appear to have been frequently involved in various critical socio-political issues during the Eastern Zhou dynasty.¹⁸⁴ It is reasonable to assume that, in order to fulfil their duties, they must have been able to read and write, think and learn, investigate and propose, communicate and negotiate. In short, the early literati were expected to function as professionals, officials, and scholars at the same time.

According to ancient historian Sima Qian's record, the literati underwent a dark era of suppression during the Qin dynasty.¹⁸⁵ After the Qin empire perished, their role of scholar-official was gradually revived. During the early Han dynasty (202 B.C. – 220 A.D.), the selection of qualified government officials became an urgent need, leading to the institution of the examination system.¹⁸⁶ This change meant that one needed to take an imperial examination and get a degree before becoming a government official. As Chinese jurist Su Li points out, this examination system would 'select them in a reasonable, equitable, and fairly accurate manner and allow them to participate in the various levels of administration in the state, and in this way it took them from a social level and transform them into a political and cultural elite that would function on the level of the body politic.'¹⁸⁷ While the later literati inherited the spirits,

¹⁸⁴ *The Analects of Confucius* recorded several conversations between Confucius and his students that reveal the Confucianist view of *Shi*. For instance, Zi-gong asked: 'What must a man be like before he can be said truly to be a *Shi*?' The Master said: 'A man who has a sense of shame in the way he conducts himself and, when sent abroad, does not disgrace the commission of his lord can be said to be a *Shi*.' See: Confucianists, *The Analects: Sayings of Confucius*.

¹⁸⁵ According to Sima, Emperor Qin Shihuang (the first emperor of the Qin dynasty) was infamous for 'burning books and burying warlocks' [焚诗书, 坑术士]. Some later scholars argued that these warlocks buried by Qin Shihuang were mainly Confucian literati, as these two groups had significant overlap at that time. However, modern historians have not reached a consensus regarding whether 'burying warlocks' occurred. See: Sima Qian, *The Records of the Grand Historian [史记全译]* (Guizhou: Guizhou People's Publishing House, 2001). Kaiyuan Li, *The Qin Enigma: Rediscovering Qin Shi Huang [秦谜: 重新发现秦始皇]* (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House [上海人民出版社], 2020).

¹⁸⁶ Zhu, "士大夫精神与中国文化."

¹⁸⁷ Li Su, *The Constitution of Ancient China*, trans. Edmund Ryden, ed. Zhang Yongle and Daniel A. Bell (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2018).

duties, values, and thoughts from the early *Shi* class, their socio-political identity was factually institutionalised during the mid-Tang dynasty as a result of the maturity of the imperial examination institution.¹⁸⁸ Under this institution that had ‘run through China’s ancient constitution from beginning to end’, the literati class was officially confirmed as the political and social elite, granting them the dual role of scholar-official.¹⁸⁹ As Su sharply reveals, ‘dynasties throughout history encouraged and recruited—which is a kind of forced request—the scholars of the empire to take part in government and stressed that the political elite should assume responsibility.’¹⁹⁰

Nevertheless, as a social stratum covering a wide range of interests, values, political leanings, fields of knowledge, and professional skills, their role in society sometimes appeared ambiguous. Meanwhile, As modern Chinese historian Gu Yanwu points out, the number of *Shi* who were not bonded to official posts began to rise during the Warring States period (the second part of the Eastern Zhou dynasty, 475–221 B.C.),¹⁹¹ as ancient Chinese society was undergoing a drastic change with feudalist institutions collapsing.¹⁹² Since then, the applicability of the scholar-official role across the literati class has diminished. Regardless, the literati’s collective identity was significantly shaped by this dual role, which had barely changed throughout ancient Chinese history (at least until 1912, when the Qin dynasty came to an end). As Su puts it, ‘ancient China transformed the individual talent hidden in society into a resource for society, something society could share in.’¹⁹³ This dual identity, as discussed later in this chapter, significantly influenced their garden-making activities.

¹⁸⁸ The prototype of the imperial examination system began to take form in the Han dynasty during the time of Dong Zhongshu, who remains well-known for ‘the creation of the institutional basis for this Confucian orthodoxy’. See: Feng, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*.

¹⁸⁹ Su, *The Constitution of Ancient China*.

¹⁹⁰ Su, *The Constitution of Ancient China*.

¹⁹¹ Yu, *土与中国文化*, 18.

¹⁹² Feng, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*.

¹⁹³ Su, *The Constitution of Ancient China*.

3.2.4.2 As Creators, Inheritors, and Disseminators of Ancient Chinese Culture

In addition to the literati's twofold socio-political role, they played three roles in the evolution of ancient Chinese culture. As Chinese historian Yu Yingshi points out, 'the transmission of culture and thought has always been a central mission of *Shi*'.¹⁹⁴ Yu uses the term '*Shi*' in a broad sense, not only including the early members of *Shi* in the Zhou dynasty but also those in the later literati class. Indeed, throughout ancient history, the literati class may have been the most influential force behind the iterative inheritance, creation, and dissemination of ancient Chinese culture.

Early in the emergence of the *Shi* class during the Eastern Zhou period (770–256 B.C.), they naturally became the creators of culture.¹⁹⁵ This period became the Golden Age of ancient Chinese philosophy, when the so-called 'Hundred Schools of Thought' emerged and contended with one another.¹⁹⁶ As the intellectual elite of ancient Chinese society, the later literati naturally inherited this early role, but expanded it to many artistic and literary fields. Many literati followed principles of cultivating aristocracy during the Western Zhou dynasty, devoting years to self-cultivation in the Six Arts (i.e., Rites, Music, Archery, Charioteering, Calligraphy, and Mathematics) to become a 'perfect gentleman' in a Confucian sense.¹⁹⁷ Consequently, they consistently produced poems, essays, and paintings and further developed all of the major ancient schools of thought. Artistic and literary creation became an indispensable daily practice among the ancient literati. These practices were not only hobbies for them but, more importantly, means of approaching a better state of being. Therefore, artistic and literary creators, such as poets, painters, writers, and calligraphers, had considerable overlap with the ancient literati class.

In addition to this drive to create, the ancient Chinese literati had a tendency to preserve and inherit cultural legacies. During the early Zhou dynasty, many schools of thought claimed to be the 'inheritors' of their primitive Chinese ancestors.¹⁹⁸ For instance, early in its emergence, Confucianism was said to be the advocate for

¹⁹⁴ Yu, 士与中国文化, 2.

¹⁹⁵ Feng, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*.

¹⁹⁶ Feng, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*.

¹⁹⁷ Unknown, "Rites of Zhou [周礼]," ed. Liu Xin. The authorship of the Rites of Zhou and the date of its composition is controversial among historians. Despite this uncertainty, the Six Arts recorded within it clearly had a wide impact on the ancient Chinese literati.

¹⁹⁸ Feng, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*.

the great tradition of the Western Zhou dynasty.¹⁹⁹ As already mentioned, Feng asserts that Confucianism originated among ‘the School of Literati’, who ‘were not only thinkers but also scholars versed in the ancient cultural legacy’.²⁰⁰ Viewing themselves as heirs of the essence of ancient culture, they ‘taught the literature of the past and carried on the great cultural traditions’.²⁰¹ Although other schools ‘failed to offer such a combination’, many of them claimed to have been inspired by the spirit, wisdom, and thought of their ancestors, some of which traced even further than Confucianism did. Daoism, for instance, appealed to the authority of remote legendary ancestors, such as Fu-xi and Shen-nong.²⁰² As Feng asserts, the ancient Chinese literati class had a strong tendency to revere the culture created by their predecessors and follow it as orthodoxy. They, thereby, played the role of inheritor in ancient Chinese culture.

Finally, the ancient literati’s roles of creator and inheritor led to their third role: the disseminators of traditional culture. After Confucianism became the official state ideology during the Western Han dynasty (202 B.C. – 9 A.D.), the literati class became the most dominant disseminator of ancient Chinese culture. This point can be argued on two fronts. On the one hand, the ancient literati were not only intellectuals capable of creating works in various forms but also officials possessing mainstream social and political resources to publish their work. On the other hand, as the socio-political elite in ancient Chinese society, their social status enabled their work to be widely appreciated, recorded, preserved, and, thus, disseminated. As disseminators of ancient culture, they usually referenced and quoted one another in their work, often across different forms and generations of creation, sometimes spanning a wide range of time. Many historical studies of the Chinese literati gardens, for instance, are conducted based on cross-references among the literati’s paintings, poems, fictions, and essays.²⁰³ As a result, the essence of ancient culture was interactively created, inherited, and spread through various cultural forms.

¹⁹⁹ Qin, “中国思想史.”

²⁰⁰ Feng, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*.

²⁰¹ Feng, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*.

²⁰² Feng, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*.

²⁰³ Kai Gu, “Cypress Pavilion: Special Construction in Gardens of the Jiangnan Area in Ming Dynasty [‘松柏亭’——明代江南园林中的特殊营造],” *Architectural Journal*, no. Special Topic Historiography and Academic History of Chinese Architecture (2014); Guo, *The History of Chinese Gardens in Suzhou of Ming Dynasty*; Gu, “New Understandings on Jiangnan Gardens: Difference in the Earlier History and Transition in the Late Ming [重新认识江南园林：早期差异与晚明转折].”

3.2.5 The Literati's Collective Ideology Shaped by Three Schools of Thought

What underpinned the ancient literati's collective state of being? Scholars generally agree that their collective ideology was profoundly shaped by the schools of thought that emerged in the so-called Golden Age of Chinese Philosophy during the Eastern Zhou period.²⁰⁴ While the exact number of schools of thought that emerged during this period is not yet known, according to the ancient philosopher Liu Xin, the 'Hundred Schools of Thought' can be sorted into ten groups: Daoism, Confucianism, Legalism, Mohism, the School of Yin-Yang, the School of Names, the School of Diplomats, the School of Eclectics, the School of Agrarians, and the School of Story Tellers.²⁰⁵ Scholars generally agree that Confucianism and Daoism were the two influential schools of thought among the aristocracies of ancient states during the Zhou dynasty, providing the early literati class with a common ideological foundation.²⁰⁶ Later, during the early Han dynasty, Buddhism was introduced into China from India and began to merge with the local culture.²⁰⁷ Since then, Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism have been the three most influential schools of thought among the ancient Chinese literati. Additionally, the school of Yin-Yang, based on the ancient divination manual *Yi Jing* (also translated as *The Book of Changes*), played an important role in shaping ancient Chinese culture. Considering *Yi Jing* is one of the ancient classics promoted by Confucianism, I would argue that its influence can still be roughly attributed to the influence of Confucianism. Thus, I simply focus on the three aforementioned schools in this thesis. Abundant evidence has been uncovered to support the existence of a profound relationship between these schools of thought and the literati class throughout history.

²⁰⁴ Yu, 土与中国文化.

²⁰⁵ Feng, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*.

²⁰⁶ Feng, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*.

²⁰⁷ Historians have not reached a consensus on the exact time Buddhism was introduced in China. One prevalent view asserts that Buddhism was first introduced in China in 67 A.D. during the Han dynasty. See: Feng, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*.

These schools of thought have had varying degrees of social and cultural influence throughout different periods based on political, economic, and cultural factors.²⁰⁸ An examination of the ancient literati's correlation with any one of them individually—even at the most superficial level—would exceed the scope of this chapter. However, a quick glance suggests that humans' harmonious ontological relationship with other beings in and out of the world is a common concern underpinning Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism, though from different perspectives and at different levels. Many notions in these schools of thought precisely echo the essential concern in Heidegger's notion of Nearness.

For instance, Confucianism attempts to weave an exquisite societal network of order by establishing a system of ethics, in which individual is encouraged and regulated to follow a series of rules to maintain sustainable, appropriate, and satisfactory social relationships with other individuals in a set of hierarchical social orders. Daoism, on the other hand, focuses on the relationship between the individual and the transcendental Being, the Dao, exploring ways to understand, follow, approach, and, ultimately, unify oneself with the Dao. In particular, according to Daoism, transcendental Nature is what the Dao follows and, therefore, is highly appreciated.²⁰⁹ Many schools of Buddhism, arguably, seeks ways to break away from samsara, i.e., the endless suffering-laden cycle of life, death, and rebirth, and reach the transcendental pure land. Although it seems to encourage individual to keep a distance away from the secular world, it concerns seriously about one's harmonious ontological relationship with other biological, physical, and spiritual beings because all these are inevitably involved in samsara.²¹⁰ Although Buddhism was not native to China, its influence was no less significant in terms of shaping the literati's ideology. When it was introduced into China during the Han dynasty, the literati class readily accepted many Buddhist ideas, as they align strongly with Daoism and Confucianism. The spread of Buddhism in China was accompanied by significant localisation. Many Buddhist ideas were

²⁰⁸ For instance, during the early Han dynasty, Dong Shuzhong carried out a political act advocating for Confucianism as the only orthodox ideology, prompting Confucianism to prevail and be widely accepted during the Han period. However, it is believed that Daoism did not become widely accepted among the literati class until the collapse of the Han dynasty, as the social order, which Confucianism actively maintained, collapsed at the end of the Han dynasty. Amid this chaos, the literati shifted to Daoism, pulling back from social affairs and pursuing well-being in harmony with nature and the universe. See: Feng, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*.

²⁰⁹ The Dao De Jing says: 'Humanity follows the Earth, the Earth follows Heaven, Heaven follows the Dao, and the Dao follows what is natural.' Original Chinese: '人法地，地法天，天法道，道法自然'. Nature, in Daoism, is discussed in a metaphysical sense, referring to a transcendental Being that dominates the natural course of everything. Laozi, "Dao De Jing [道德经]," (Wikisource, 2017). <https://zh.m.wikisource.org/zh-hans/道德经>.

²¹⁰ Feng, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*.

broadly accepted by the Chinese literati and incorporated into Chinese philosophical traditions, resulting in an indigenous school of Buddhism known as Zen (also spelt as Chan) emerging during the Tang dynasty (618–907 A.D.).²¹¹

While these three primary schools of thought (Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism) differ in certain respects, I argue that they share common ground concerning about one's harmonious relationship to other beings in and out of the world, making them distinct from other ancient Chinese philosophical schools.²¹² Consequently, they were involved in shaping a culture of Nearness in ancient Chinese society. This culture of Nearness shaped the ancient literati's collective state of being and, in turn, a high regard for Nearness in their garden-making activities. David Hall and Roger Ames, in their essay 'The Cosmological Setting of Chinese Gardens', discuss four closely related 'interpretive constructs' of the Chinese literati gardens: enclosure, environs, space (and time), and pattern and perspective.²¹³ While I agree with Hall and Ames on these cosmological constructs, it is important to note that the influence of these three primary schools of thought underpinned the formation of these cosmological dynamics. In these settings, the traditional Western object-subject dichotomy is replaced by a notion of integration. For instance, Hall and Ames notice that 'the modes of the organization of knowledge in Chinese "encyclopedias"—*Lei Shu*—differ profoundly from that which informs Western encyclopedias' (Fig. 3.2).²¹⁴ While the latter are 'dependent upon an exhaustive alphabetic organization', the former positions 'man' in the centre and lacks a clear method of rational categorisation.²¹⁵ To a certain degree, *Lei Shu* demonstrates how ancient Chinese views their relationship to the world, which were deeply influenced by these primary schools of thought. As the subject-object dichotomy was never involved in the ancient Chinese worldview, everything must be understood in relation to individuals' being. This way of viewing the world is rooted in the ancient Chinese concern for Nearness, which can be strongly recognised in the ancient literati's garden-making techniques.

²¹¹ Feng, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*; Laozi, "Dao De Jing [道德经]."

²¹² For instance, Legalism—another influential school—focuses on the instrumental and practical methodology of governing and controlling a state, which, in my view, is not concerned with a harmonious relationship with the world.

²¹³ For a more informative discussion, see: David Hall and Roger Ames, "The Cosmological Setting of Chinese Gardens," *Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes* 18, no. 3 (1998).

²¹⁴ Hall and Ames, "The Cosmological Setting of Chinese Gardens," 176.

²¹⁵ Hall and Ames, "The Cosmological Setting of Chinese Gardens."; Congjie Liang, *Non-congruent circles: A collection of Liang Congjie's Writings on Culture* [不重合的圈：梁从诫文化随笔集] (Tianjin: Baihua Literature & Fine Arts Publishing House [百花文艺出版社], 2003).

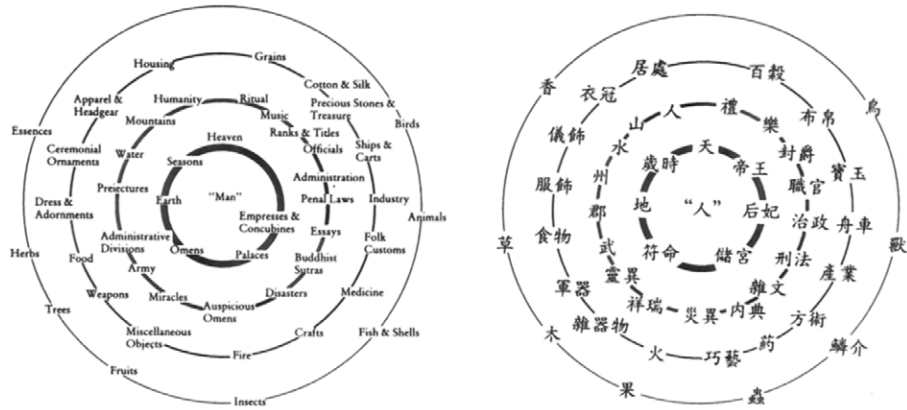


FIG. 3.2 Order of Knowledge in Yiwen Leiju. Source: Liang Congjie, 'Non-Congruent Circles: The Organisation of Encyclopaedic Knowledge in Chinese and Western Cultures'.

3.2.6 Summary

It is tremendously difficult to articulate who exactly the 'ancient Chinese literati' were, as extremely rich connotations have been embedded in the term 'literati' throughout history. The literati class, since its early emergence during the Zhou dynasty in the form of *Shi* and *Dafu*, never carried an identity with a pure, simple meaning. Throughout its historical evolution, 'literati' became a strong symbol with complex social, cultural, and political meanings. The literati class's intellectualism, spiritual pursuits, idealistic tendencies, artistic capacities, and social responsibilities have profoundly influenced Chinese society. As ancient China's social, political, and cultural elite, the literati class played multiple roles: on the one hand, they served as scholar-officials in socio-political affairs; on the other hand, they worked as creators, inheritors, and disseminators of ancient Chinese culture, driving its evolution. Through these multiple roles, their collective ideology was profoundly shaped by several schools of thought (e.g., Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism) sharing a common ontological concern that strongly echoes the notion of Nearness in Heideggerian philosophy. As a result, the pursuit of Nearness is embedded within the ancient literati's collective state of being and, in turn, within their garden-making techniques. In the next section, I discuss how their pursuit of Nearness led to their particular approach to garden-making.

3.3 Why Did They Build Literati Gardens?

Given that the ancient literati class was deeply involved in the formation of this particular garden type, it is reasonable to view the literati gardens as a representation of their collective state of being. Based on this view, this section asks the following question: Why have so many literati obsessively built gardens, reflected on gardens, and lived within gardens since the Jin dynasty (265–420 A.D.)?²¹⁶ Moreover, why were most literati gardens seem to be created with a substantial quality of Nearness despite their garden language having continually evolved throughout history?²¹⁷ To answer these questions, this section identifies three motivations driving the ancient literati class in their garden-making activities.

3.3.1 The Literati's Tendency to Practise Philosophy as a Part of Their Everyday Lives

One motivation for the literati to build gardens was rooted in their tendency to practise philosophy in their daily lives to heighten their state of being. The Chinese literati revered ancient sages, who were regarded as morally, intellectually, and spiritually superior to ordinary people. Discussions about 'the sage's way' [圣人之道] are frequent in Confucianism and Daoism.²¹⁸ For the ancient literati, to be a better individual meant to follow a sage's way. Therefore, to achieve the sage's state of being, they studied and followed philosophies developed by ancient sages, incorporating them into their daily lives. The antecedent schools of thought were never pure objects of learning but also important principles to follow in order to become a sage. This tendency is perhaps best revealed by the ancient philosopher Wang Yangming's notion of 'the unity of knowing and acting' [知行合一]. According to Wu Bofan's interpretation, Wang's notion should not only be understood as a

²¹⁶ According to Liu Dunzhen, the history of the literati garden can be traced back to the Jin dynasty (265–420 A.D.), when the earliest recorded literati garden, the Pijiang Garden [辟疆园], was built.

²¹⁷ For information on how garden language evolved throughout history, see: Gu, "New Understandings on Jiangnan Gardens: Difference in the Earlier History and Transition in the Late Ming [重新认识江南园林：早期差异与晚明转折]."

²¹⁸ See: Confucianists, *The Analects: Sayings of Confucius*; Laozi, "Dao De Jing [道德经]."; Feng, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*; Shuming Liang, *Eastern and Western Cultures and Their Philosophies [东西文化及哲学]*, 1st ed. (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House, 2006).

suggestion for self-cultivation but also as a recognition that 'knowledge and action are essentially oneness'.²¹⁹ One record indicates that Wang once sat in front of a bamboo grove and contemplated it for seven days, ultimately falling ill before achieving any knowledge of the elemental nature of the bamboo. This was his early attempt to practise the well-known theory that 'knowing [is] a result of the careful investigation of things' [格物致知], advocated by the Confucianist Zhu Xi.²²⁰

By practising Zhu's epistemological theory, Wang realised that the investigation of external things does not necessarily lead to an understanding of the truth of the universe.²²¹ In this example, Wang developed his own epistemological theory by practising Zhu's theory. Interestingly, we see in this case that it is through unifying 'knowing' and 'doing' that Wang discovered how important the 'unity of knowing and acting' is and, accordingly, critiqued the theories in which he had previously believed.

It is difficult to know how this tendency formed among the ancient literati. One important factor may have been that many schools of thought, including the three most influential ones, were embedded with practical inclinations. In other words, they needed to be seen as means of everyday practice rather than means of simply understanding the world, as they established clear goals and systematic methods to follow. Hence, by practising these schools of thought in every aspect of their daily lives, the ancient literati cultivated themselves to approach the sage's way. As a result, the ideas, values, notions, faiths, and worldviews prominent in these influential schools of thought were deeply integrated into the ancient literati's everyday lives and represented in their thoughts, behaviours, artistic and literary creations, and political attitudes. In turn, they were represented through the literati's poems, paintings, essays, calligraphies, and, of course, gardens.

The tendency to practise philosophy was perhaps the most fundamental factor motivating the ancient literati to build their gardens in their particular way. In their practice of garden-making, ideas, notions, and worldviews of these schools of thought were integrated and conveyed in many unique ways. In particular, the gardens' naming schemes were evidently influenced by the three schools of thought. As John Makeham points out, 'names are a key conceptual element in the non-physical dimension of the garden', which 'were employed to prescribe very specific

²¹⁹ Bofan Wu, "吴伯凡认知方法论 [Wu Bofan's Epistemology]," (Beijing: Dedao, 2018).

²²⁰ Zhu Xi interpreted '格物致知' as '穷究事物道理，致使理性通达'; based on this, I translated it as 'knowing the truth of the universe is the result of the careful investigation of things'.

²²¹ Feng, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*.

patterns of order'.²²² For instance, the Knowing Fish Balustrade in the Garden for Ease of Mind, the Knowing Fish Bridge in the Summer Palace, and the Pavilion of How do You Know I Do Not Know the Happiness of Fish in the Lingering Garden are all clearly named after the story described in the Daoist classic *Zhuangzi*.²²³ In short, the way in which the ancient literati named these places of interests in their gardens demonstrates the influence of their everyday philosophical practices on their garden-making. In this sense, garden-making may be simply a mode of philosophical practice. However, the relationship between the literati garden and the literati's philosophical practices is interdependent: the literati garden is not only an effect of this tendency but also a cause of it. Through a series of embedded spatial-experiential settings, the garden facilitates the continued occurrence of this tendency. In other words, the literati built a garden world for themselves where they could practise philosophy in their desired manner. Garden-making became a process that revealed the literati's 'average everydayness'—a manifestation of 'bringing near'.²²⁴

It appears that various contradictory notions—'freedom' and 'restriction', 'retreating' and 'engaging', 'individual desire' and 'social order'—co-exist within those most influential schools of thoughts, which may lead to contradictory practices. Interestingly, as a result of literati's practices on these contradictory notions, the literati garden gradually became, over time, an extraordinarily complex and inclusive type of built environment containing all of these seemingly contradictory manifestations. For instance, while Daoist emphasis on 'standing aloof from social affairs' inspired the literati's spatial practice to separate their lives from

²²² John Makeham, "The Confucian Role of Names in Traditional Chinese Gardens," *Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes* 18, no. 3 (1998): 192.

²²³ The popularity of fish among the literati stems from the Daoist book *Zhuangzi*, in which Zhuangzi and Huizi debated whether one could know the happiness of fish without being one himself. The original story goes along the following lines: Zhuangzi and Huizi were crossing the Hao River by the dam. Zhuangzi said, 'See how free the fishes leap and dart: that is their happiness.' Huizi replied, 'Since you are not a fish, how do you know what makes fishes happy?' Zhuangzi said, 'Since you are not I, how can you possibly know that I do not know what makes fishes happy?' Huizi argued, 'If I, not being you, cannot know what you know, it follows that you, not being a fish, cannot know what they know. The argument is complete!' Zhuangzi said, 'Wait a minute! Let us get back to the original question. What you asked me was: "How do you know what makes fishes happy?" From the terms of your question, you evidently know I know what makes fishes happy. I know the joy of fishes in the river through my own joy, as I go walking along the same river.' See: Zhuangzi and Youlan Feng, *Chuang-Tzu: A New Selected Translation with an Exposition of the Philosophy of Kuo Hsiang* (Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press and Springer, 2016); Thomas Merton, *The Way of Chuang Tzu* (New York: New Directions, 1969).

²²⁴ Heidegger, *Being and Time*.

external socio-political chaos,²²⁵ the Confucian emphasis on the responsibility of the literati to maintain socio-political order consistently drew them back to orderly, secular life in their garden.²²⁶ While Daoist proposition of intervening in other beings' matters as little as possible led the literati to build gardens in a naturalistic style,²²⁷ they could not help but actively interject various cultural and aesthetic aspects into the gardens in line with the tastes of the intellectual, social, and cultural elite. As architectural historian Chen Zhihua notes, the contradiction between 'the literati ideal of naturalism' and 'the elaborate styles found in remaining historical gardens' reveals 'the literati class's dual character [...] representing ideal social ethics on one hand and practicing the extravagant life style of the upper class on the other'.²²⁸ There are countless contradictions evident in literati gardens. These gardens are such complex objects that countless seemingly contradictory facts can co-exist within them throughout their evolution.

In this sense, a literati garden may be viewed as a concretisation of Tai Ji, the model describing the essential mechanism of the universe. In Tai Ji, contradictory forces—Yin and Yang—interact and intertwine with each other, reminding us of the seemingly contradictory elements that are integrated into oneness within literati gardens. Thus, it is understandable why Chinese architect Wang Shu thinks that 'building a garden is building a world'.²²⁹ This contradiction, complexity, and inclusivity, formed by the literati's everyday practices of ancient Chinese philosophical thought, resulted in a series of distinct qualities within literati gardens, especially relative to French and Italian gardens, which pursue rigorous geometrical order. The Chinese literati's highly inclusive approach enables those in the garden to experience strong ontological relatedness to various meaningful entities around them that belong to very different dimensions, making the garden a rich aggregation of Nearness condition.

²²⁵ Wangheng Chen, *Chinese Environmental Aesthetics*, trans. Feng Su, ed. Gerald Cipriani (New York: Routledge, 2015).

²²⁶ Confucianists, *The Analects: Sayings of Confucius*.

²²⁷ Laozi, "Dao De Jing [道德经]."

²²⁸ Feng Jin, "Jing, the Concept of Scenery in Texts on the Traditional Chinese Garden: An Initial Exploration," *Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes* 18, no. 4 (1998).

²²⁹ Shu Wang, *造房子 [Building a House]*, 1st ed. (Changsha: Hunan Fine Arts Publishing House, 2016).

3.3.2 The Literati's Collective Obsession with Poetic Dwelling

The literati's tendency to practise philosophy in their everyday lives was naturally integrated into their artistic and literary creations, with their obsession with poetic dwelling emerging as a constant theme. To showcase the literati's obsession with poetic dwelling as a dominant motivation in their garden-making, it is important to understand what is meant by 'poetic dwelling'. While the term can be understood in various ways, I would like to once again reference Heideggerian philosophy to explain its meaning. As discussed in Chapter Two, Heidegger asserts that 'mortals are in the fourfold by dwelling'.²³⁰ For Heidegger, dwelling means to stay near the fourfold. However, in his interpretation of a Friedrich Hölderlin poem, Heidegger reveals that 'poetry is what first brings man onto the earth, making him belong to it, and thus brings him into dwelling'.²³¹ Thus, I would argue that, in a Heideggerian sense, it is by gathering and staying near the fourfold (i.e., the sky, the earth, the divinities, and the mortals) that human beings can dwell poetically. This section identifies three motivations in literati's garden-making rooted in their collective obsession with poetic dwelling: 1) retreating from the socio-political chaos; 2) engaging with the world of *shan shui*; 3) staying near meaningful entities belonging to the fourfold.

3.3.2.1 Retreating from the Chaotic Socio-Political Chaos

The ancient literati's desire to retreat from China's chaotic social-political reality is a strong factor behind their approach to garden-making. Through this retreat, they sought inner peace and freedom, both physically and spiritually. Poetic dwelling likely became a collective obsession of the ancient literati during the early Jin dynasty. According to Feng, China's turbulent political situation put individuals living in that period through great uncertainty and pain, engendering a trend toward escaping from the secular life and chaotic society.²³² Thus, Daoism became a popular ideology among the ancient literati, as its guidance to follow the Dao (i.e., the natural order of the universe) gave them a strong sense of certainty and reassurance in their turbulent times.²³³ It is reasonable to assume that the popularity of Daoism inspired the literati to retreat from the socio-political chaos around them and embrace a life closer to

²³⁰ Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking," 148.

²³¹ Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 216.

²³² Feng, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*.

²³³ Zhou, *中國古典園林史*.

nature.²³⁴ As Tao Yuanming's story 'The Peach Blossom Spring' reveals, the desire to retreat from one's socio-political reality and enjoy a poetic life in a hidden, beautiful, isolated place had become popular among the literati since the Jin dynasty. When they felt unsatisfied, depressed, or frustrated about their reality, they could escape away from it and simply enjoy themselves in their own 'peach blossom springs'. The tendency of retreating from chaotic reality is evident in many forms of literati's artistic and literary creations. Among them, pastoral poem, landscape painting, and garden are three areas where this obsession is found to manifest itself most strongly.

Another socio-political factor that influenced the literati's retreat is what historian Qin Hui calls 'the struggle between Legalism and Confucianism'.²³⁵ As Qin Hui points out, the ideology of Legalism had dominated China's political system since the establishment of the Qin empire in 221 B.C.²³⁶ Its influence is still evident in many aspects of contemporary China. However, the ancient literati were generally not in favour of this ideology on account of various Legalist elements: the excessive use of incentives and punishments; the dramatic centralisation of state power; the severe, pervasive control of the society; the domestic policy of tiring, weakening, and fooling the people.²³⁷ These propositions fundamentally conflicted with Confucianism, which sought to establish a social, political, and moral order based on the institution of feudalist Western Zhou dynasty, where clan-based ethics served as the cornerstone of society.²³⁸ As an example to support his argument, Qin asserts that Tao's story reveals not only a tendency to escape from unsatisfying political realities but also a yearning for an ideal, clan-based, Confucian order.²³⁹ According to Qin, the struggle between Legalism and Confucianism lasted for a very long time, leading to a paradoxical situation: on the one hand, generations of literati were educated with Confucian doctrines to pass the imperial examination, obtain degrees, and become qualified scholar-officials; on the other hand, the Confucian doctrine to which they adhered contained a system of thought that was essentially in conflict with the

²³⁴ For instance, the Daoist notion of the 'integration of the universe and man' [天人合一] encourages individuals to pursue a state of integration with nature.

²³⁵ Qin, "中国思想史."

²³⁶ Qin, "中国思想史."

²³⁷ Haiwen Zhou, "Confucianism and the Legalism: A Model of the National Strategy of Governance in Ancient China," *Frontiers of Economics in China* 6, no. 4 (2011); Qin, "中国思想史."

²³⁸ Qin, "中国思想史."

²³⁹ Qin, "中国思想史."

imperial political system founded on Legalist ideology.²⁴⁰ I argue that the literati's escape from their Legalist socio-political reality was an important factor, consciously or subconsciously, behind their long-standing devotion to garden-making.

Physically retreating from their external reality was not enough for the ancient literati. Once that achieved, they sought absolute spiritual freedom as a response to 'both the chaotic world and the suffering of man'.²⁴¹ In this sense, a garden reveals its strong correlation to Daoist thoughts, particularly those of Zhuangzi (alternatively spelt as Chuang-tzu). For instance, Zhuangzi once described his ideal state of being as 'Heaven and Earth came into being together with me, and the myriad things are one with me', highlighting Daoism's strong pursuit of absolute freedom achieved through integration with the universe. Burton Watson, a translator of Zhuangzi's works, concludes that 'the whole theme of the *Chuang Tzu* may be summed up in a single word: freedom'.²⁴² In summary, the literati's desire to retreat from their chaotic society, escape from the unsatisfying political reality, and pursue absolute spiritual freedom may have constituted a primary factor motivating their garden-making.

3.3.2.2 Engaging with the World of *Shan Shui*

The ancient literati's desire to engage with the world of *shan shui* is another strong motivating factor behind their garden-making. The world of *shan shui* is the destination of the literati's retreat from socio-political chaos. The literati's desire to engage with the world of *shan shui* is evident in many of their landscape paintings and poems as a manifestation of their collective obsession with poetic dwelling. The term '*shan shui*' refers to 'mountains and waters', as indicated by its literary meaning: '*shan*' [山] means 'mountains', and '*shui*' [水] means 'waters'. Following this original meaning, an extended meaning of '*shan shui*' emerges: the landscape. However, the original sense of '*shan shui*' as a primitive, transcendental nature consisting of mountains and waters has never disappeared. In most Chinese contexts, the term '*shan shui*' should not be understood purely as general landscape but as a landscape with various natural entities that are barely intervened by humanity. Throughout China's cultural history, '*shan shui*' has frequently appeared

²⁴⁰ Qin, "中国思想史."

²⁴¹ Tao Li, "Meaning in the Traditional Chinese House and Garden" (Master's thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1992).

²⁴² Li, "Meaning in the Traditional Chinese House and Garden."

as a theme across all ancient Chinese artistic literary forms, with literati gardens, pastoral poems, and landscape paintings showcasing this cultural notion in the strongest manner. In this section, I briefly examine some of these works, providing a deeper understanding of the desire to engage with the world of *shan shui* as a fundamental driver of the literati's garden-making.

Maggie Keswick observes that 'longing for mountains and waters' had become 'synonymous with the life of the spirit' by the third century.²⁴³ The earliest well-known literati who described the ideal life in close relation to the natural landscape is Tao Yuanming (365–427 A.D.), known as one of the most prominent poets during the Eastern Jin (317–420 A.D.) and Liu Song (420–479 A.D.) periods.²⁴⁴ After resigning from the government, Tao spent most of his late life (405 onwards) in the countryside, composing many beautiful poems reflecting on the great joy he derived from living close to nature.²⁴⁵ In most of Tao's poems, his everyday life was described in ordinary but powerful language with a strong sense of poetic dwelling. For instance, in the fifth poem in his series of poems on the theme 'Drinking Wine', Tao says the following:

I pluck chrysanthemums under the eastern hedge,

And gaze afar towards the southern mountains.

The mountain air is fine in the evening of the day,

And flying birds return together homewards.²⁴⁶

These verses exhibit a strong atmosphere of poetic dwelling and identify a series of elements (i.e., chrysanthemums, eastern hedge, southern mountains, mountain air, flying birds) that remind us Heidegger's notion of the fourfold. After his death, Tao became a spiritual and cultural symbol that has since inspired generations of Chinese literati to maintain their independence and integrity, follow their hearts,

²⁴³ Ji, *The Craft of Gardens*.

²⁴⁴ Qian Tao and Yong Yang, 陶渊明集校笺 [*Tao Yuanming Set Annotations*] (Shanghai: Shanghai Chinese Classics Publishing House, 2007).

²⁴⁵ Xiaohui Tian, "From the Eastern Jin through the early Tang (317–649)," in *The Cambridge History of Chinese Literature*, ed. Kang-i Sun Chang and Stephen Owen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

²⁴⁶ These verses are translated by William Acker. See: Tao and Yang, 陶渊明集校笺; Stephen Owen, *An Anthology of Chinese Literature: Beginnings to 1911*, vol. 1, ed. Stephen Owen (1965), 184.

pursue a simple, joyful, and poetic lifestyle, and turn away from the chaotic, cloudy officialdom. Among the admirers of Tao, Su Shi (1037–1101 A.D.) is perhaps the most obsessed. Su composed a series of poems under the title ‘Matching Tao’s Poems’, where he matched each of Tao’s poems by composing a new one using the exact same rhyme scheme. As one of the most multi-talented and famous literati of the Song dynasty (960–1279 A.D.), his poems were broadly spread among his contemporaries. Since Tao, the natural landscape and countryside life were a frequent theme in the later literati’s poems. Literati of different eras, such as Wang Wei, Meng Haoran, Yang Wanli, all held this obsession with poetic dwelling, describing their poetic, peaceful, joyful daily lives across various works.

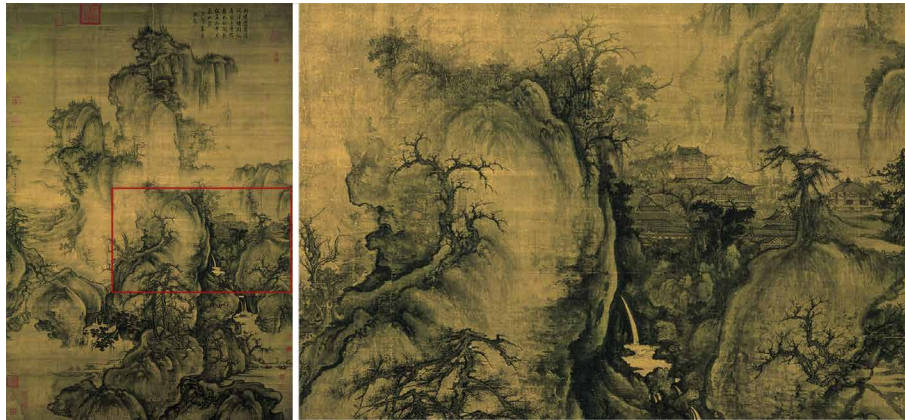


FIG. 3.3 Guo Xi's *Early Spring*. Source: Guo Xi, public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.²⁴⁷

Painting is another art form that showcases the literati’s desire to engage with the world of *shan shui*. According to Fang Wen, the earliest landscape painting by the literati can be traced back to the Wei dynasty (220–266 A.D.).²⁴⁸ What profoundly demonstrates the literati’s desire to engage with nature as a wild state is the fact that their painting always depict human settlements, properly and carefully, in relation to the mountains and the waters. They are always portrayed as embedded within untamed natural environments—for instance, passed by a river or embraced

²⁴⁷ Xi Guo, "Early Spring," (Wikimedia Commons). https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Guo_Xi_-_Early_Spring,_upscaled.jpg.

²⁴⁸ Wen Fang, *Beyond Representation: Chinese Painting and Calligraphy, 8th–14th Century*, ed. Emily Walter (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, Yale University Press, 1992), 71.

by pine trees and grass (Fig. 3.3). Human settlements depicted in landscape paintings give a meaning to nature: positioned on earth and under the sky, they remind us of the poetic way in which man dwells in the Heideggerian sense.²⁴⁹ Guo Xi, the 11th-century painter and painting theorist during the Song dynasty, established four hierarchical qualities with which to evaluate landscape paintings: ‘There are landscapes in which one can travel, landscapes which can be gazed upon, landscapes in which one may ramble, and landscapes in which one may dwell.’²⁵⁰ It is notable that these four qualities are all raised based on the degree to which the viewer can be engaged within the depicted natural environment. In other words, for Guo, an excellent landscape painting must create an accessible world that allows its viewer to stay near those natural scenes as much as possible while still appreciating it. Therefore, the accessibility of these poetic natural scenes constituted an essential concern for painters and gardeners in the literati class. This tendency is demonstrated in Guo Xi’s *Early Spring*, Wang Ximeng’s *A Thousand Li of Rivers and Mountains*, Fan Kuan’s *Travelers among Mountains and Streams*, and many other paintings by literati. Indeed, as revealed by Fang, all Chinese landscape paintings should be regarded as a representation of the Chinese literati’s collective notion of subsuming man into a larger system.²⁵¹ In this sense, Chinese landscape paintings and Daoist philosophy share the same spiritual pursuit: the integration of man into a certain transcendental Being.

The ancient literati’s desire to engage with the world of *shan shui* ultimately led them to garden-making—a way to create a physical world of mountains and waters. According to Dong, landscapes in literati gardens are purposely designed and established to bring one a sense of wild nature.²⁵² It creates a world of *shan shui* that represents the natural landscape, recalling one’s primitive memories. As another form of creation that represents the literati’s obsession with the poetic dwelling, their garden-making naturally intertwines with other creative processes. Many literati have described their beloved gardens in their poems, essays, and paintings, such as Du Fu’s *Thatched Cottage*, Yuan Mei’s *Sui Garden*, and Wang Wei’s *Wangchuan Vila*.²⁵³ Wang Wei, a poet who lived in the Tang dynasty 350 years after Tao’s death, is well-known for incorporating paintings, poems, and gardens into his everyday practices

²⁴⁹ Heidegger, “Building Dwelling Thinking.”

²⁵⁰ Xi Guo, “The Lofty Message of Forest and Streams [林泉高致],” (Wikisource). <https://zh.m.wikisource.org/zh/林泉高致集>.

²⁵¹ Fang, *Beyond Representation*.

²⁵² Dong, *Nine Chapters on Gardening*.

²⁵³ Zhou, *中國古典園林史*.

and creations. Wang, in many of his poems and paintings, describes his satisfying, poetic life within a garden located in Wangchuan Valley.²⁵⁴ In one of his poems, he depicts his hiking experience: ‘I will walk till the water checks my path; Then sit and watch the rising clouds.’²⁵⁵ In another, he depicts the scene he enjoyed in the mountain: ‘The bright moon Shines between the pines; The crystal stream flows over the pebbles.’²⁵⁶ The poetic dwelling and picturesque landscape are perhaps the most frequently appearing theme in Wang’s poems. Interestingly, Wang is also famous for his painting of those poetic scenarios of living in the valley garden, which very much echoed the themes of his poetry. Wang’s paintings and poems were both highly appreciated by many literati, not only for his adept painting skills but also, more importantly, for his pervading poetry—the sense of ‘letting-dwell’—in his work.²⁵⁷ This sense of ‘letting-dwell’ is revealed most clearly by Su’s comments on Wang’s paintings and poetry: ‘There is always a poetry to be seen in Mojie’s paintings;²⁵⁸ while a picturesqueness to be enjoyed in Mojie’s poems’ [味摩诘之诗,诗中有画;观摩诘之画,画中有诗].²⁵⁹

Besides poems, paintings, and gardens, the literati’s obsession with poetic dwelling is evident in many other artistic and literary forms—couplets, sculptures, essays, fictions—as a constant theme. Inspired by significant figures like Tao, Wang, and Su, generations of literati have repeatedly expressed their ideal of living a poetic life among the mountains and waters. They followed earlier literati’s obsession with poetic dwelling and created their own versions, which are far too plentiful to cover in any sort of detail in this chapter.

²⁵⁴ Zhou, *中国古典园林史*.

²⁵⁵ Poem titled ‘Zhongnan Retreat’ [终南别业], translated by Zi-chang Tang.

²⁵⁶ Poem titled ‘Autumn Twilight in the Mountains’ [山居秋暝], translated by Kenneth Rexroth.

²⁵⁷ Heidegger, “Building Dwelling Thinking.”

²⁵⁸ Wei Wang is also known as Mojie.

²⁵⁹ Wei Wang and Dian Zhao, *王右丞集笺注 [Wang Youcheng Set Annotations]* (Shanghai: Shanghai Chinese Classics Publishing House [上海古籍出版社], 2007).

3.3.2.3 Staying Near Essential Entities

The literati's desire to retreat from social-political chaos and engage with the world of *shan shui* is, at the ontological level, rooted in their obsession with staying near entities that are essential to one's being-in-the-world. Poetic dwelling, in a Heideggerian sense, is the result of staying near the fourfold essential categories of beings (i.e., beings that belong to the sky, the earth, the divinities, and the mortals).²⁶⁰ As the following chapters show, a series of spatial-experiential settings are embedded within the literati gardens that allow one to stay near the 'myriad beings' in the fourfold, regardless of where the garden is located—even in crowded, noisy urban areas. In other words, literati gardens are always built to allow one to stay as near as possible to entities that are essential to one's being-in-the-world and, in turn, dwelling poetically. This may be viewed as a tendency to return to the 'matrix', that being 'the environment in which something is developed', etymologically linked to the Latin word for 'mother' and, later, 'womb'. Thus, the matrix is where one came from—where they once comfortably stayed, enjoying the fulfilment of their needs. For the ancient literati, garden-making was a way to return to the matrix—a virtual paradise in which one could achieve constant happiness. Entities that are essential to Dasein, in a Heideggerian sense, are those that belong to the fourfold, like the sustenance provided by the womb. Thus, in building their gardens, the ancient literati made a 'matrix' for themselves where they could gather the fourfold. This motivation is evident in all of the pastoral poems and landscape paintings created by the ancient literati, which ultimately gave way to their collective garden-making activities. Staying near all of the essential entities belonging to the fourfold—and, in turn, achieving poetic dwelling—was the most fundamental motivation for the literati to build gardens.

Put more succinctly, three motivations can be identified in the literati's garden-making activities: to retreat from socio-political chaos and pursue absolute spiritual freedom; to engage with the world of *shan shui*; and to stay near the essential entities from the fourfold. Thus, the literati gardens are embedded with spatial-experiential settings that facilitate one to bring near abundant entities that are essential to one's being-in-the-world. Of course, these key motivations existed in a highly dynamic process of formation. Still, the literati garden, as a type of built environment, was shaped with a certain degree of continuity and stability, since its formation was dominated by the state of being of a particular class with a relatively stable social, political, and cultural status throughout history. For many centuries, the ancient literati's collective obsession with poetic dwelling remained strong and persistent, shaping a quality of Nearness within their gardens.

²⁶⁰ Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking."

3.3.3 The Literati's Aesthetic Pursuits

The above discussion sought to explain why the ancient literati devoted themselves to garden-making from both cultural and ontological perspectives. The culture of practising philosophy and the collective obsession with poetic dwelling, however, cannot fully explain why literati gardens were built with their specific spatial and visual techniques. In *Yuan Ye*, Ji Cheng wrote: 'though man-made, they must be like something naturally created', setting the leading aesthetic principle for garden making.²⁶¹ Approximately 500 years later, modern Chinese garden historian Tong Jun said:

There are three realms of gardening, and this is the order in which they are assessed in terms of ease and difficulty. The first is to have the appropriateness between the sparse and the dense; the second is to have the best twists and turns; and the third is to always have a view in front of one's eyes.²⁶²

The fact that both Ji and Tong have discussed the important aesthetic principles of garden-making reveals a third important factor behind the ancient literati's garden-making: they built gardens to fulfil their aesthetic pursuits, echoing the aesthetic qualities that they sought in their poems and paintings. The literati's aesthetic tendencies can be seen constantly throughout their gardens: in the carefully chosen names of places delicately inscribed on plaques; in the couplets written in beautiful calligraphy hanging on columns and walls; in patterns of pavement that form the wandering paths; and, most importantly, in the carefully composed picturesque scenes. According to Gu Kai, a systematic methodology comprising aesthetic techniques and principles for generating picturesque sceneries in garden-making, which resulted in a series of aesthetic qualities within the surviving gardens, likely formed during the Ming dynasty.²⁶³ These aesthetic qualities that the literati consistently pursued motivated their particular approach to garden-making and, in turn, resulted in the experience of Nearness. A literati garden, in this sense, is a representation of the literati's collective aesthetic pursuits.

²⁶¹ Ji and Chen, *园冶注释*. Original Chinese: '虽由人作，宛自天开'.

²⁶² Tong, *江南园林志*. Translation based on the following original Chinese: '盖为园有三境界，评定其难易高下，亦以此次第焉。第一，疏密得宜；第二，曲折尽致；第三，眼前对景'.

²⁶³ Gu, "Establishment of the Picturesque Principles."

However, such aesthetic pursuits must be considered in relation to their philosophical practices and spiritual obsession. Like the other factors discussed above, the literati's aesthetic pursuits in garden-making can be understood in relation to their other forms of literary and artistic creations (e.g., calligraphy, paintings, poems). In calligraphy theory, the balance between the sparse and the dense is highly valued, just as it is in garden-making. This balance is clearly seen, for instance, in *Shang Yu Tie* by Jin's calligraphy master, Wang Xizhi. The elegant balance in this masterpiece is clear, even to those who cannot read the characters (Fig. 3.4). Similarly, the four qualities of landscapes in Guo Xi's painting theory—that in which one can travel, that which one can gaze upon, that in which one can ramble, and that in which one can dwell—strongly echo Tong's 'three realms in garden-making'.²⁶⁴ Furthermore, it should be noted that these aesthetic pursuits do not only intersect with and complement one another in theoretical terms. The picturesque scenes in literati gardens, for instance, are composed in line with the literati's aesthetic taste of landscape paintings. To achieve aesthetic qualities similar to those of paintings, the literati employed techniques, principles, and skills—such as borrowing views, framing views, screening views—in their approach to garden-making (Fig. 3.5). As a result of the literati's collective aesthetic tendencies, their garden scenes are always exquisitely composed to offer visitors picturesque vistas through frame-like openings. In a sense, these vistas come across more as carefully composed pictures than as landscapes. Similarly, while the scenarios created in a garden are often named after lines extracted from poems and essays that evoke a similar atmosphere, the poetic everyday life of a garden is also a popular subject matter depicted in the literati's novels, poems, and essays. To a great degree, all forms of the literati's artistic and literary creations represent their inherent aesthetic tendencies—but the garden is undoubtedly the most complex and engaging of them all.

²⁶⁴ Guo, "The Lofty Message of Forest and Streams."

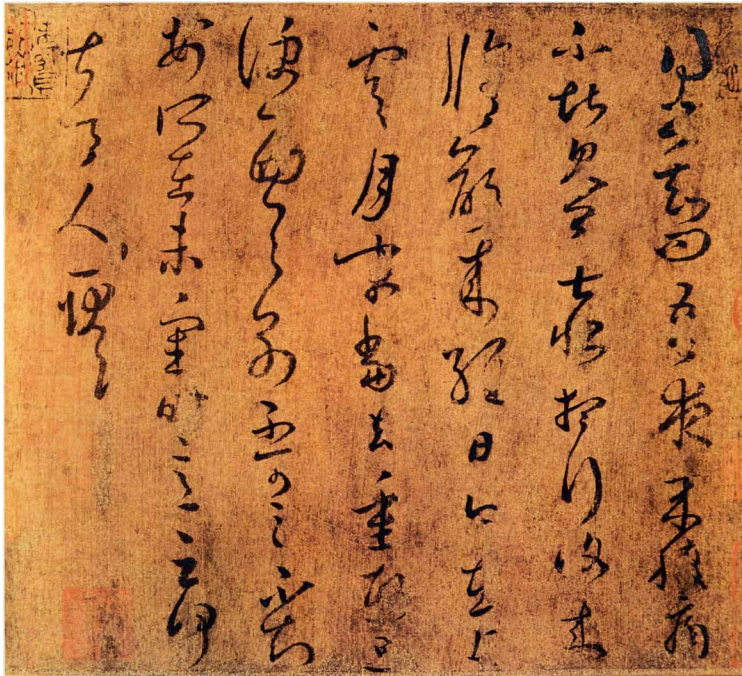


FIG. 3.4 Wang Xizhi's Shang Yu Tie. Source: Wang Xizhi, public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.



FIG. 3.5 A Framed View of the Lingering Garden. Source: Lu Li

3.3.4 Summary

In summary, the literati's collective garden-making approach was primarily motivated by their philosophical practices, their collective obsession with poetic dwelling, and their aesthetic pursuits. These factors resulted in the ancient literati constructing highly unique gardens. The literati's tendency to practise philosophy in their daily lives enabled their collective state of being—which contained many values, thoughts, tastes, and notions absorbed and inherited from Daoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism—to be consistently represented through various artistic or literary forms. Among all of the forms of creation that resulted from their philosophical practices, the literati garden incorporates the most multi-dimensional meanings. Therefore, it can be viewed as representation of literati's cultural, social, political, ontological, and aesthetic tendencies. While specific aspects of the literati garden evolved over time, these factors were deeply rooted in the nature of the literati class throughout history.

3.4 How Were the Literati Gardens Built?

Many of the factors pertaining to who built the literati gardens and why they were built appear to be interrelated. These intertwining factors converge, leading to another question: How were the literati gardens built? This question looks to investigate the ancient literati's actual garden-making practices. Unfortunately, insufficient historical records exist to support an evidence-based analysis of this matter. However, it is important, even at the most superficial level, to understand the operational garden-making model that facilitates Nearness—as both an embedded spatial quality and a potential experience—in the literati gardens. Therefore, despite the limited availability of reliable historical records, this section attempts to provide a theoretical assumption about an operational model that is highly distinct from that of modern space production. Specifically, I borrow Heidegger's concept of 'Building Dwelling Thinking' to form an analytical framework that could reveal the model behind the literati's garden-making process and its facilitation of Nearness.

Heidegger, in his essay 'Building Dwelling Thinking', claims that 'building is not merely a means and a way toward dwelling—to build is in itself already to dwell'.²⁶⁵ Furthermore, he writes that 'building and thinking are, each in its own way, inescapable for dwelling'.²⁶⁶ For Heidegger, human beings' dwelling exists in the same mode of being as building and thinking; in other words, they must all occur in the same process. Accordingly, I refer to this model as the building-dwelling-thinking model: an integrated process involving the three activities that were arguably involved in the formation of Chinese literati gardens. Three stages can be identified in this model: the first stage is collective design thinking, based on the literati's social, political, and cultural tendencies; the second stage is cooperative building under the supervision of the owner and the director; the third stage is reflective dwelling, which entails the literati's everyday practices. I argue that—though based on very limited materials—the literati's building-dwelling-thinking model was a significant paradigm in their garden-making process throughout their history, one that facilitated strong experiences of Nearness. Thus, the preliminary discussion that follows on this model provides a better understanding of the formation of Nearness within the literati garden.

3.4.1 Collective Design Thinking

Design thinking is a manner of creative thinking that aims to conceive of the process of doing something before actually doing it. What makes the literati's use of design thinking unique, however, was the fact that they engaged in it collectively. As demonstrated above, the literati's garden-making began in their imagination of, understanding of, and yearning toward an ideal state of being, which essentially constitute long-term, collective design thinking. Garden-making is discussed, reflected on, and conceived in advance, forming a collective mindset and countless highly detailed concerns. In this process, the matters of what a garden should look like and what experience it should generate are repeatedly considered and depicted prior to construction. This design thinking is perhaps most strongly demonstrated in Ji Cheng's treatise, *Yuan Ye*. Although Ji himself claims that there are 'no fixed rules for designing gardens', he systematically discusses various important rules of garden-making for the first time in history.²⁶⁷ As garden historian Stanislaus Fung

²⁶⁵ Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking," 144.

²⁶⁶ Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking," 158.

²⁶⁷ Ji and Chen, *园冶注释*.

points out, Ji's classic garden-making treatise is essentially a garden designer's text.²⁶⁸ For instance, in the first part of *Yuan Ye*, Ji introduces four key garden-making principles:

The skill of designing gardens lies in interdependence [因] and borrowing [借], and their excellence lies in their suitability [体] and appropriateness [宜]. 'Interdependence' means following the rise and fall of the site and investigating its proper disposition, pruning the branches of obstructing trees, directing streams to flow over rocks so that they are mutually complementary [lit. borrowing and resourcing], erecting pavilions and kiosks where appropriate, not interfering with out-of-the-way paths, and letting them wind and turn: this is what is called 'excellent and appropriate'. 'Borrowing' means even though every garden distinguishes between inside and outside, in obtaining views there should be no restriction on whether they are far or near.²⁶⁹ A clear mountain peak rising up with elegance, a purple-green abode soaring into the sky—everything within one's limit of vision—blocking out the commonplace, adopting the admirable, not distinguishing between cultivated and uncultivated land, making all into a misty scene: this is what is called being 'skillful and suitable'.²⁷⁰

As Fung notes, when reading *Yuan Ye*, 'one gets the sense that the gist of the text revolves around three hubs of consideration: self, scene and action'.²⁷¹ This emphasis reveals an important phenomenological perspective of design thinking in Ji's text, one that incorporates building and dwelling into design thinking. However, *Yuan Ye* is only one of many works (albeit a very important one) that represents the ancient literati's design thinking on garden-making. As Fung notes, 'the vast majority of Chinese writings on gardens was written by owners and visitors'.²⁷² The literati's creations clearly suggest that they consistently conceived, described, discussed, and reflected on their living environment, repeatedly searching for answers about what would constitute an ideal daily habitat. This collective design thinking is evident in many forms beyond their pastoral poems and landscape paintings, such as Shen Fu's autobiographical prose collection, *Six Records of a Floating Life*, Cao Xueqin's

²⁶⁸ Fung, "The Garden Designer's Text."

²⁶⁹ It is common that literati gardens 'borrow' distant views, sometimes from far beyond the gardens themselves.

²⁷⁰ Fung, "The Garden Designer's Text," 114. According to Fung, this translation is cited from a Chinese version of *Yuan Ye* annotated by Zhang Jijai, meaning that the translator of this text is not clear. I use this translation here because it highlights the four key principles of garden-making in a way that is closer to the original Chinese text than other translations.

²⁷¹ Fung, "The Garden Designer's Text," 142.

²⁷² Fung, "The Garden Designer's Text," 150.

fiction, *Dream of the Red Chamber*, and Li Yu's critique collection, *Sketches of Idle Pleasure*.²⁷³ These works enthusiastically discuss methods, notions, principles, and values of garden-making, revealing the literati's collective design thinking.

This design thinking, rooted in the literati's collective state of being, consistently occurred throughout history. It seems to have been inherited by many contemporary Chinese spatial practitioners, such as Dong Yugan, Wang Shu, and Wang Baozhen. They not only appreciate the ancient literati's garden-making traditions but also regard themselves as contemporary Chinese literati. Thus, it is not surprising that Wang Shu describes himself as 'a literatus who happened to become an architect'.²⁷⁴ In fact, many contemporary Chinese architects claim to have been greatly influenced by the ancient literati's state of being and garden-making practices.²⁷⁵ I discuss some of these architects' relevant works in Chapter Eight.

3.4.2 Cooperative Building

The second stage involved a cooperative building process. This phase entailed the conduct of various construction activities (e.g., erecting halls, piling up rockeries, planting vegetation, shaping the water landscape). Engineering technologies and spatial techniques were employed to fulfil the literati's cultural and aesthetic tendencies and obsession with poetic dwelling. As a complex construction process, it involved highly interactive cooperation among the director, the craftsmen, and the owner. Unfortunately, as Tong points out, the actual construction of literati gardens was predominantly carried out by masons and carpenters, whose techniques were not documented or handed down.²⁷⁶ However, one can reasonably imagine a cooperative relationship among influential garden-making actors for the following reasons.

²⁷³ Yu Li, *Sketches of Idle Pleasure* [闲情偶寄], 1st ed. (Nanjing: Phoenix Science Press [江苏凤凰科学技术出版社], 2018); Fu Shen, *Six Records of a Floating Life* [浮生六记], trans. Yanhong Ren (Beijing: China Federation of Literary and Art Circles Publishing House, 2017); Li, "Meaning in the Traditional Chinese House and Garden."

²⁷⁴ Qiuye Jin, "On Wang Shu: Also on the Contemporary 'Literati Architects' Phenomenon, the Modern Transformation of Traditional Architectural Language and other Problems [论王澍——兼论当代文人建筑师现象、传统建筑语言的现代转化及其他问题]," *The Architect* [建筑师], no. 1 (2013).

²⁷⁵ Baozhen Wang, *Craft of Three Gardens: An Architect's Practice in Guangxi* [造园实录], 1st ed. (Shanghai: Tongji University Press, 2017); Wang, *造房子*; Shu Wang, *设计的开始* [The Beginning of Design] (Beijing: China Architecture and Building Press, 2002); Dong, *Nine Chapters on Gardening*.

²⁷⁶ Tong, *江南园林志*.

First, given the long-term nature of the literati's collective design thinking, garden owners must have had various aspirations and concerns pertaining to their gardens. This is clear from the high aesthetic, spatial, and cultural qualities of the surviving literati gardens, despite most of them having undergone renovation or reconstruction many times throughout history. Therefore, to fulfil the owner's aspirations, there must have been a close relationship between the director and the owner during the garden-making process. In the preface of *Yuan Ye*, Ji discusses his experience accompanying the owner of Wu Yuan (the Garden of Awakening) to host a guest together, showing the closeness of their private relationship.²⁷⁷ Second, as the mediator between the owner and the craftsmen, the director undoubtedly played a critical role in garden-making. Ji, a well-known garden designer, claims that the role of 'director' is far more important than that of the 'craftsman' in successful garden-making operations.²⁷⁸ However, Ji also suggests that collaboration with artisans is necessary regardless of the capabilities of a director.²⁷⁹ Moreover, the boundary between these two roles may have sometimes been ambiguous. For instance, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, the rockery-piling master Zhang Nanyuan (1587–1671), a capable artisan and painter with strong artistic and aesthetic flairs, may have naturally shifted into the role of director.²⁸⁰ Third, garden users have played a crucial role in continuously shaping them through their everyday practices following their initial construction. Their influence must be recognised as an important factor in the cooperative process of garden-making, which I discuss in greater detail in Section 3.4.3.

In summary, the key actors behind the development of the literati gardens were culturally, socially, and spiritually interrelated through a cooperative building process. They likely shared a common state of being, i.e., similar philosophical traditions, a mutual obsession with poetic dwelling, and similar values and aesthetic pursuits, all stemming from the iteratively accumulated body of culture created by generations of literati. These commonalities formed strong ties among them, enabling cooperation and, in turn, smooth and efficient garden-making practices. Consequently, their collective state of being—including their shared concern for Nearness—is represented strongly in their gardens.

²⁷⁷ Ji and Chen, *园冶注释*.

²⁷⁸ Ji and Chen, *园冶注释*.

²⁷⁹ Ji and Chen, *园冶注释*.

²⁸⁰ Wu, "A Biography of Zhang Nanyuan."

3.4.3 Long-Term Spatial Practices and Reflective Dwelling

The last stage occurs over the course of generations. It is a process of long-term iterative spatial practice and reflective dwelling that can be disrupted many times by major historical events like wars and natural disasters. As a result of human beings' natural tendency to bring near, spatial practice and reflective dwelling occur across all built environments. However, as the intellectual, political, and cultural elite of ancient Chinese society, the ancient literati class was more enthusiastic about and more capable of fulfilling their ideal, poetic state of being within their gardens than other groups. Thus, while living in their gardens, they consistently engaged in spatial practices: adjusting the spatial layout, adding building components, incorporating interior decorations, cultivating and trimming plants—making the garden a representation of their ideal state of being. Thus, it is not difficult to find evidence of the literati's diligent spatial practices in surviving literati gardens: pavement featuring artistic patterns with rich cultural meaning, elaborately cultivated trees and shrubs, carefully presented literary and art works, and exotic rocks collected from across China, all showing the passionate commitment of the literati to their gardens.

The literati did not merely engage in spatial practices but also continually reflected on their lives while dwelling in the gardens. This reflection constituted an important source of inspiration behind their collective design thinking. Yuan Mei, for instance, a well-known poet of the Qing dynasty under the alias 'the owner of Sui Garden', spent most of his life in his beloved garden, where he composed a number of poems and essays expressing his joy and reflecting on his life in such a place. These poems were later presented in a scroll by Yuan Qi, Yuan Mei's grandson. The literati's continual reflection on their own lives within the gardens may have inspired later generations of literati to build their own gardens in similar ways. Moreover, it seems to have been popular among the ancient literati to invite contemporaries to gather in their beloved gardens, enjoying picturesque landscapes, drinking wine, talking about art and literature, and composing paintings and poems.²⁸¹ After these gatherings, they would usually compile all of their works and publish them as a collection.²⁸² Therefore, their collective state of being in a garden was often preserved and represented in different forms, forming a loop of continuous building, dwelling, and thinking among the literati throughout history.

²⁸¹ Zhou, *中国古典园林史*.

²⁸² Guo, *The History of Chinese Gardens in Suzhou of Ming Dynasty*.

A garden may be decorated, furnished, restored, renewed, extended, or even rebuilt by different owners several times throughout its history. What remains despite these changes is the literati's collective state of being. In this sense, a literati garden is a 'Ship of Theseus'; while components may be consistently replaced, restored, fixed, or amended throughout history, it remains the same garden.²⁸³ In many cases, spatial practices conducted by different generations of owners in the history of a garden were iteratively accumulated. The Master of the Nets Garden, for instance, was originally built as a single building (possibly with a courtyard) named the Hall of Thousands of Scrolls.²⁸⁴ While few reliable records exist on the details of its renovations throughout history, given its current state, one may reasonably imagine how its site was expanded, its landscape integrated and its spatial configuration adjusted. Still, some meaningful legacies were preserved. Today in the Master of the Nets Garden, various meaningful clues remain that demonstrate previous owners' states of being simultaneously: the trace of a stone table on the platform in front of the Study of Late Spring, showing where the painting master Zhang Daqian (one of the later owners) worked in the afternoon; the gravestone engraved 'brother's adopted tiger's tomb' in the outdoor area beside the Study of Late Spring, noting the place where Zhang's brother buried his beloved young tiger (Fig. 3.6); the exquisite spatial arrangement of the Pavilion of Moon and Wind, which is said to have been set up to allow the 'convergence' of three moons in the space at a particular moment, likely conceived and constructed by one of the owners lost to history. All of these remaining clues inform one another, generating a sense of synchronicity and making the garden a place that is deeply rich in meaning.

²⁸³ This 'Ship of Theseus' thought experiment poses the following question: If the ship of Theseus were kept in a harbour and each part of the ship was replaced one at a time, would it be a new ship? Or the same ship? This particular version of the thought experiment was first introduced by historian, biographer, and essayist Plutarch. Original text: 'The ship wherein Theseus and the youth of Athens returned from Crete had thirty oars, and was preserved by the Athenians down even to the time of Demetrius Phalereus, for they took away the old planks as they decayed, putting in new and stronger timber in their places, insomuch that this ship became a standing example among the philosophers, for the logical question of things that grow; one side holding that the ship remained the same, and the other contending that it was not the same'. See: Plutarch, "Theseus " (July 13, 2022). <http://classics.mit.edu/Plutarch/theseus.html>.

²⁸⁴ Daxin Qian, "网师园记 [A Record of the Master of the Nets Garden]," (1796).



FIG. 3.6 The place where Zhang's Brother Buried his Dead Young Tiger. Source: Lu Li.

3.4.4 Summary: The Integration of Building, Dwelling, and Thinking

Unfortunately, there are no sufficient records revealing clear patterns with which the literati built their gardens. Considering that literati gardens continuously evolved over the course of an approximately 2,000-year history (taking the Pijiang Garden built during the Jin dynasty as the origin point), the answer to 'How were the literati gardens built?' is clearly not a simple one. However, the above discussion has demonstrated that literati's garden-making integrated collective design thinking, cooperative building, and reflective dwelling into a single process, calling to mind Heidegger's insightful concept of building-dwelling-thinking as an integrated mode of being.²⁸⁵ The first stage is dominated by design thinking, with dwelling already

²⁸⁵ Heidegger regards the nature of building as 'letting dwell'. Thus, building and dwelling should not be regarded as separate human activities; they intertwine with each other and always occur within a single process. See: Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking."

involved through imaging, describing, and conceiving one's future life within the garden; the second stage is dominated by building as a bridge between dwelling and thinking which essentially acts as a natural extension of design thinking and an operational preparation for dwelling; the third stage is dominated by dwelling, but building (daily spatial practice) and thinking (consistent creative contemplation) always occur simultaneously throughout. In short, a literati garden is always the result of endless building, dwelling, and thinking, allowing the literati's collective state of being to always be optimally represented and reflected. However, this remains an oversimplification of how the literati gardens were built. Additional studies with more concrete evidence and in-depth analysis are necessary to achieve a properly comprehensive understanding of their development. Nevertheless, the identification of the ancient literati's building-dwelling-thinking process is a crucial step in understanding the formation of Nearness within the literati garden.

3.5 Conclusion

Many complex factors were involved in the initial formation of the literati garden. Among many other factors, those discussed in this chapter are particularly important for understanding the formation of Nearness within them: 1) the literati's multiple roles in the evolution of ancient Chinese society and culture; 2) their collective state of being shaped by three influential schools of thought (Daoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism); 3) their tendency to practise philosophy in their daily lives; 4) their obsession with poetic dwelling; 5) their pursuit of aestheticism; and 6) the building-dwelling-thinking model involved in their garden-making practices. These factors drove the literati to embed various Nearness conditions that may inspire Dasein's relatedness to and intimacy with the world in the literati gardens. As discussed in this chapter, these factors were relatively stable throughout history, though certain aspects vary on a case-to-case basis. Therefore, this chapter draws the following conclusion: the involvement of these factors in the formation of the literati garden throughout history has resulted in the embeddedness of Nearness as a stable spatial-experiential quality within them. The case study in the following chapters is not merely a logical extension of this chapter, but also a concretisation of it.

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4 The Master of the Nets Garden: An Elementary Study

4.1 Introduction

Chapter Two developed a theoretical framework through which the meaning of Nearness in architecture and the built environment is interpreted based on an analytical reading of Heideggerian discourse. Next, Chapter Three demonstrated why it is reasonable to assume that Nearness had been broadly embedded within Chinese literati gardens as a common spatial-experiential quality. However, before I move on to a phenomenological analysis of how the experience of Nearness occurs within the Master of the Nets Garden, I must first address the raw research materials. If I were to compare analysing the experience of Nearness within the Master of the Nets Garden with cooking a dish, then the theoretical framework developed in Chapter Two would be the recipe. Of course, a recipe—devised through creative intuition, significant theoretical understanding, and incessant experimentation—is a crucial factor behind any good dish. Still, before a cook starts to bake, boil, or fry, the dish’s ingredients—its raw materials—must be cleaned, cut, or mashed to prepare the meal.

This chapter details the preparation of the necessary elementary components of my phenomenological analysis of the experience of Nearness within the Master of the Nets Garden. As an elementary study, this chapter aims to gain an overall understanding of the garden—particularly its basic spatial-experiential structure.

In this chapter, I answer the following three questions using iterative on-site phenomenological reduction:

- What typical modes of being are enabled by the basic physical setting of the Master of the Nets Garden?
- What spatial systems can be identified, according to these identified modes of being, that constitute the Master of the Nets Garden?
- What spatial-experiential structure shapes the way one's experiences occur within the Master of the Nets Garden?

I investigate these three questions from a perspective that is both spatial and experiential, as only a precise spatial-experiential perspective can facilitate a clear understanding of Nearness. This chapter is divided into three main sections. First, it briefly introduces the historical context of the Master of the Nets Garden (Section 4.2). Next, it analyses the garden's basic physical settings and, in turn, identifies the typical modes of being that may be inspired, enabled, or afforded by them (Section 4.3.1). Then, it identifies eight spatial systems through a precise analysis of the unique spatial qualities of each space of the Master of the Nets Garden, all of which facilitate different modes of being (Section 4.3.2). Finally, the last section details the spatial-experiential structure of the three layers embedded within the garden: 1) experiences within single lingering spaces; 2) experiences within focused worlds formed by lingering spaces; 3) experiences within the garden as whole (Section 4.3.3). This chapter concludes that these spatial-experiential settings play a role in shaping experiences within literati gardens and, therefore, significantly influence the occurrence of Nearness (Section 4.4). Based on the exploration of the aforementioned research questions, this chapter prescribes an analytical path for the next three chapters, in which a series of spatial-experiential mechanisms of Nearness are explored.

4.2 The Master of the Nets Garden: Historical Context



FIG. 4.1 The Central Landscape Area of the Master of the Nets Garden. Source: Liu Dunzhen.²⁸⁶

Most of the literati gardens that still exist today were initially built during the Ming and Qing dynasties.²⁸⁷ However, without exception, they have undergone drastic changes throughout history. Additionally, many of them have been thoroughly restored since the 1980s. The Master of the Nets Garden is particularly remarkable among the surviving literati gardens. It is located in central Suzhou, the area where the ancient town once stood. The Master of the Nets Garden is among the smallest of the literati gardens at just 5,400 m², far smaller than, for example, the Lion Grove Garden (11,000 m²), the Lingering Garden (23,300 m²), and the Humble Administrator's Garden (52,000 m²). Still, its delicate spatial design, finely balanced layout, picturesque landscape, and poetic atmosphere contribute to its outstanding capacity to create an almost infinite experience within a highly constrained area (Fig. 4.1). In this sense, the garden is extremely valuable for exploring the spatial-

²⁸⁶ Liu, *Suzhou Classical Gardens* [苏州古典园林], 403.

²⁸⁷ Tong, *江南园林志*.

experiential mechanism of Nearness. In 1982, the Master of the Nets Garden was made a National Heritage Conservation Unit by the Chinese government. Later, in 1997, it was made a UNESCO World Heritage Site alongside three other literati gardens in Suzhou.²⁸⁸

The current form of the Master of the Nets Garden is the result of a major restoration during the late Qing Dynasty.²⁸⁹ Like most other surviving gardens, its modern state stems from long-term developments rather than a single point of construction. Throughout its history, its owners, scale, and layout have all varied drastically. According to the earliest records on the garden, it dates back to the Southern Song dynasty (1127–1279), when Deputy Civil Service Minister Shi Zhengzhi (1119–1179) constructed its main hall—the Hall of Scrolls—in an alleyway named ‘*Wang Shi*’, meaning ‘the master of fish nets’.²⁹⁰ Shi Zhengzhi originally named this small garden ‘*Yu Yin*’ [渔隐], meaning ‘seclusion as a fisherman’ or ‘seclusion while fishing’. Following his death, the site passed through several different owners and, eventually, fell into disrepair.²⁹¹ In 1765, Song Zongyuan, who referred to himself as ‘the master of the nets’, bought the site, restored the garden, and moved there to enjoy his retirement.²⁹² Interestingly, Song’s alias echoed both the name of the alleyway in which the garden is located and the garden’s early name—*Yu Yin* (seclusion as a fisherman).²⁹³ The garden was likely re-named ‘the Master of the Nets Garden’ at that time of his purchase or upon his death, and it has remained unchanged since then. Thirty years later, in 1795, Qu Yuancun encountered the garden in a largely broken-down state. Qu purchased the site and drastically redesigned the garden, adding and remodelling buildings, planting vegetation, and re-arranging stones.²⁹⁴ Garden historian Cao Xun notes that, at least until Qu was the owner, the garden

²⁸⁸ UNESCO, “Classical Gardens of Suzhou,” (August 17, 2020 2004). <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/813/>.

²⁸⁹ Shuangshuang Li, “The Study of the Historical Evolution and Pattern Characteristics of the Master of the Nets Garden in Suzhou [苏州网师园的历史演变与格局特征研究]” (Master’s thesis, Xi’an University of Architecture and Technology, 2017).

²⁹⁰ This text is engraved on a stone stele in the garden, documenting its early history. See: Qian, “网师园记.”

²⁹¹ Cao, “The History of the Master of the Nets Garden.”

²⁹² The term ‘the Master of the Nets’ was popular among the people of Suzhou at the time, meaning ‘a fisherman proficient in using nets’.

²⁹³ The name of the alleyway where the garden is located today is a phonogram of its early name ‘*Wang Si*’ [王思], which probably came from the name of an influential person who lived in the alleyway. For an unknown reason, the garden’s name was changed to ‘*Wang Shi* [网师]’ at some point, which means ‘the master of the nets’ in Chinese. See: Qian, “网师园记.”

²⁹⁴ Qian, “网师园记.”

featured two entrances: one by land and one by water.²⁹⁵ For some unknown reason, only the land entrance remains today. Following Qu, the garden passed through many generations of owners, including calligraphy master Li Hongyi (who came to own the site in 1868), General Da Gui (1907), painting master Zhang Daqian (1932), and antiquity collector He Yanong (1940). Most of these owners either belonged to the ancient literati class or were in a close relationship with someone belonging to it. Even during the most turbulent period of war and change of power in Chinese history, when the structure of Chinese society was drastically reformed, the Master of the Nets Garden was still owned by someone close to the ancient literati class.

Regarding the garden's spatial layout, two distinctive parts can be intuitively identified: one for managing necessary daily routines and one for enjoying leisurely moments with nature (or, more precisely, with representations of natural environs rooted in Chinese cosmology). The part built for daily routines can be regarded as the 'residence', while that built for leisure can be regarded as the 'landscape'. Importantly, in the Master of the Nets Garden, the central landscape area is carefully arranged to provide essential scenery, while the residence is organised around it. As mentioned in the last chapter, Peter Blundell Jones notices this dichotomy, describing it as a contrast between 'formality' and 'informality'.²⁹⁶ As one may notice from the master plan, this contrast dominates the garden's spatial layout (Fig. 4.2). In fact, this dichotomous layout is common across the Chinese literati gardens that still exist today. The formation of this layout may be attributed to ideas, values, and faiths present in ancient Chinese schools of thought, particularly Daoism and Confucianism. While the residence may represent the social order advocated by Confucianism, the landscape area appears to be strongly linked to Daoism, which calls for integrating oneself into the transcendental Nature.²⁹⁷ An in-depth analysis of the formation of this dichotomous layout would exceed the scope of this thesis.²⁹⁸ Still, I must note that, as will become clear in the following chapters, these two parts intertwine with and permeate each other in many ways, making the distinction between them ambiguous. In fact, they are so well integrated in one's garden experience across various spatial settings that this 'dichotomy' may seem arbitrary.

²⁹⁵ Cao, "The History of the Master of the Nets Garden."

²⁹⁶ Jones and Woudstra, "Social Order Versus 'Natural' Disorder in the Chinese Garden."

²⁹⁷ Laozi, "Dao De Jing [道德经]."

²⁹⁸ See: Li, "Meaning in the Traditional Chinese House and Garden.": Makeham, "The Confucian Role of Names in Traditional Chinese Gardens.": Keswick, Jencks, and Hardie, *The Chinese Garden: History, Art and Architecture*.



FIG. 4.2 The Master Plan of the Master of the Nets Garden. Source: Lu Li.

4.3 Three Key Steps: An Elementary Study

This section details my three-step elementary study of the Master of the Nets Garden (Fig. 4.3). First, I identify architectural and landscape elements that repeatedly appeared in my site investigation. This enables me to deduce how experiences are influenced by these basic setting elements and, in turn, what typical modes of being and corresponding conditions can be derived from them. Next, I identify the eight spatial systems that comprise the garden based on the dominant mode of being in each space. Finally, I extract a three-layer spatial-experiential structure to be used as an analytical path for exploring the occurrence of Nearness in the following three chapters.

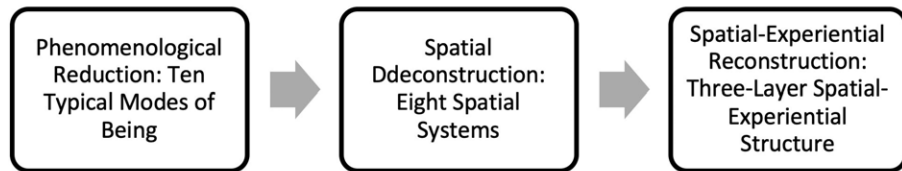


FIG. 4.3 Chapter Four's Three-Step Analysis.

4.3.1 Phenomenological Reduction: Understanding the Typical Modes of Being

During my site investigation, I realised that modes of being—which are always inspired by spatial conditions—are key to understanding the experience of Nearness within a garden, as Nearness is always influenced by the degree of intimacy established in a certain mode of being.²⁹⁹ As detailed in Chapter Two, a mode of being is a state of being that repeatedly occurs in the continuous flow of experience. To have an experience, according to Charles Siewert, is to be ‘in a state that is phenomenally conscious’.³⁰⁰ This statement suggests that experience is a purely conscious phenomenon, which may risk misleading one into ignoring the fact that

²⁹⁹ See Chapter Two.

³⁰⁰ Siewert, “Consciousness and Intentionality.”

conscious phenomena stem from more fundamental states of being. For Heidegger, who often addresses such risks, one's experience is not only a phenomenon occurring in a conscious state but also—perhaps more importantly—the result of the whole state of being: Dasein's being-in-the-world.³⁰¹ In the well-known example of the hammer, Heidegger argues that picking up a hammer and using it, rather than merely looking at it, enables a workman to understand the hammer as a piece of 'equipment', a 'readiness-to-hand'.³⁰² When using a hammer, the 'phenomenally conscious state' occurs as a result of the workman's whole state of being, which involves intimacy with the world around them. The use of a hammer is a mode of being: a repeatedly occurring status of being-in-the-world. This mode of being establishes a relatedness to the world. Therefore, to understand the occurrence of Nearness within the literati garden, we must identify the modes of being facilitated by the basic physical conditions of the garden first.

4.3.1.1 Phenomenological Reduction

It is important to establish how to identify potential modes of being. I do not employ traditional social science research methods (e.g., behaviour observations, questionnaires, interviews) as my primary method for two reasons. First, the occurrence of modes of being is not always observable.³⁰³ Second, a subject in built environments is not always consciously aware of the occurrence of modes of being. Therefore, it is incredibly difficult to extract modes from constantly flowing and evolving state of being through traditional social science research methods, as they are generally based on the objectification of a research object, making them incapable of providing a meaningful understanding of ontological issues.

I employ iterative on-site phenomenological reduction as my primary method to understand how experience occurs within the Master of the Nets Garden. This approach requires a meditative reflection on various phenomena, tracing them back to the state of being and capturing them as precisely as possible. Phenomenological reduction, according to Heidegger, is 'the leading back or re-duction of investigative

³⁰¹ Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*.

³⁰² Heidegger, *Being and Time*.

³⁰³ For instance, the mode of reading may occur in a very secluded manner—in certain circumstances, it can occur secretly without any evident manifestation.

vision from a naively apprehended being to being'.³⁰⁴ His phrasing in 'naively apprehended being to being' echoes Husserl, who defines phenomenological reduction as a process that 'brackets' all judgements making explicit or implicit reference to existence independently of the 'flow of experience', restricting 'myself' to the consideration of phenomena that constitute 'my flow of experience'.³⁰⁵ In principle, phenomenological reduction should be conducted before establishing a theory or hypothesis; as John Cogan explains, it is a process of knowing with 'no knowledge or preconceptions in hand'—an 'experience of astonishment'.³⁰⁶

Adam Sharr highlights the fact that Heidegger did not believe that meticulous analysis can lead to sense-making.³⁰⁷ In this sense, my approach to identifying a mode of being echoes Heidegger's thinking. In this thesis, I do not identify potential modes of being through a meticulous, rational, rigorous analysis; on the contrary, I identify them using iterative on-site phenomenological reduction, incorporating participatory observation and spatial analysis to verify the results.

4.3.1.2 The Principle of Extracting Modes of Being

Before identifying the modes of being stemming from the Master of the Nets Garden's spatial conditions, it is important to clarify my approach to extracting a mode of being from highly dynamic and diverse states of being. In short, I extract modes of being in line with the theoretical framework established in Chapter Two. As established, an identifiable mode of being must integrate four undividable components: perception, consciousness, affection, and behaviour. These four components are indispensable for constituting a mode of being, as none of them can be absent at any moment of Dasein's 'being-in-the-world'. Walking, for instance, is a typical 'comportment' in one's experience of a garden but, as a pure behaviour, should not be regarded as a 'mode of being', as there is always a comprehensive state of being in the background that overshadows it. Reflecting this background state reveals that 'wandering' makes more sense as an appropriate mode of being than 'walking', as 'wandering' entails behavioural, conscious, affectional, and

³⁰⁴ Heidegger, *The Basic Problem of Phenomenology*.

³⁰⁵ Richard Schacht, "Husserlian and Heideggerian Phenomenology," *Philosophical Studies* 23, no. 5 (1972).

³⁰⁶ See: John Cogan, "The Phenomenological Reduction," in *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2017). <http://www.iep.utm.edu/phen-red/#SH5b>.

³⁰⁷ Sharr, *Heidegger for Architects*, 84.

perceptual states. Of course, specific manifestations can always be observed, extracted, and described by our language, but they do not make sense as modes of being until a state of being is identified that can capture the four aforementioned critical components. This restriction is supported by a considerable number of philosophical, psychological, biological, and architectural studies that suggest, from different perspectives, that these four components are indispensable and irreducible constituents in an identifiable mode of being.³⁰⁸

4.3.1.3 Space-Specific Restrictive Conditions

On-site phenomenological reduction facilitates a fundamental understanding of various modes of being potentially occurring within the Master of the Nets Garden. However, it is important to establish some conditions for restricting my analysis to an architectural scope in order to avoid stretching out the research by attempting to understand all modes of being identified during on-site phenomenological reduction. I set up two conditions for screening the modes of being. First, only space-specific modes of being should be included for examination, as only such modes of being can allow for solid architectural analysis. Non-space-specific modes of being, meaning those that are not bonded to specific space condition(s), should be excluded. For instance, ‘chatting’ is a mode of being that is restricted to only a very minor extent by spatial conditions, so it is excluded from my analysis. Second, for modes of being that are not constantly space-specific, only space-specific occasions are included in my analysis. For instance, ‘reading a book’ does not need to occur in a specific place. While it requires certain facilitating spatial conditions, it is less space-specific than ‘reading a painting’, which can only occur in front of the wall on which the painting is hanging. Only the latter is included in my analysis.

As discussed in Chapter Two, a mode of being is more identifiable when understood in relation to the physical settings that may inspire, enable, and afford it. Thus, these two restrictive conditions have enabled me to screen out irrelevant phenomena captured in my on-site investigation and identify space-specific modes of being that are potentially inspired, enabled, and afforded by the Master of the Nets Garden. On

³⁰⁸ See: Merikle, Smilek, and Eastwood, “Perception Without Awareness: Perspectives from Cognitive Psychology.”; Dretske, “Perception Without Awareness.”; Dretske, “Perception Without Awareness.”; Siewert, “Consciousness and Intentionality.”; Rosenthal, “Two Concepts of Consciousness.”; Crane and French, “The Problem of Perception.”; Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith, 1st ed. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1962).

the one hand, to identify modes of being that potentially occur within the Master of the Nets Garden, key architectural and landscape elements related to those modes of being must be identified in the meantime. On the other hand, such architectural and landscape elements must not be considered alone without consciously and physically relating them to the experiences that they potentially inspire, enable, and afford. In other words, the identification of key architectural and landscape elements and the modes of being related to them involves the same complex, intrinsic thought process—the intuitional sense-making based on my on-site experience.

4.3.1.4 Identifying Typical Modes of Being Within the Master of the Nets Garden

Using the above approach to extracting modes of being and the two restrictive conditions, I identify ten typical modes of being within the Master of the Nets Garden: wandering, lingering, resting, reflecting, reading, meeting, crossing, ascending/descending, capturing/releasing, and scenery-enjoying (Fig. 4.4). These modes of being, at most times, may only occur amid certain spatial conditions. As discussed in Chapter Two, these space-specific modes of being are key to understanding how Nearness occurs within the garden. While other modes of being may also occur within the garden, these ten are arguably the most typical ones that repeatedly occur within Chinese literati gardens. Before precisely defining these modes of being, it is important to detail some typical architectural and landscape elements identified during my site investigation, as they constitute the impersonal base of my iterative on-site phenomenological reduction (Table 4.1).

It is important to note that the Master of the Nets Garden is a complex entity in which elements at different scales with different properties are integrated. Thus, phenomenological reduction can be conducted again and again; it is nearly impossible to exhaust all meaningful elements related to the occurrence of modes of being in this table. Therefore, instead of detailing all of the architectural and landscape elements involved in my phenomenological reduction, I only list some relatively typical ones to demonstrate how the ten typical modes of being are identified in the context of their physical settings. Meanwhile, I seek to identify some examples of the architectural and landscape elements and mark their locations, as precisely as possible, on the master plan of the garden (Fig. 4.5). However, some of the elements are too abstract or complex to be precisely mapped on the master plan—this dynamic is indicated by using a hyphen in the table. Most of these elements are discussed in relation to the occurrence of Nearness in the following chapters.

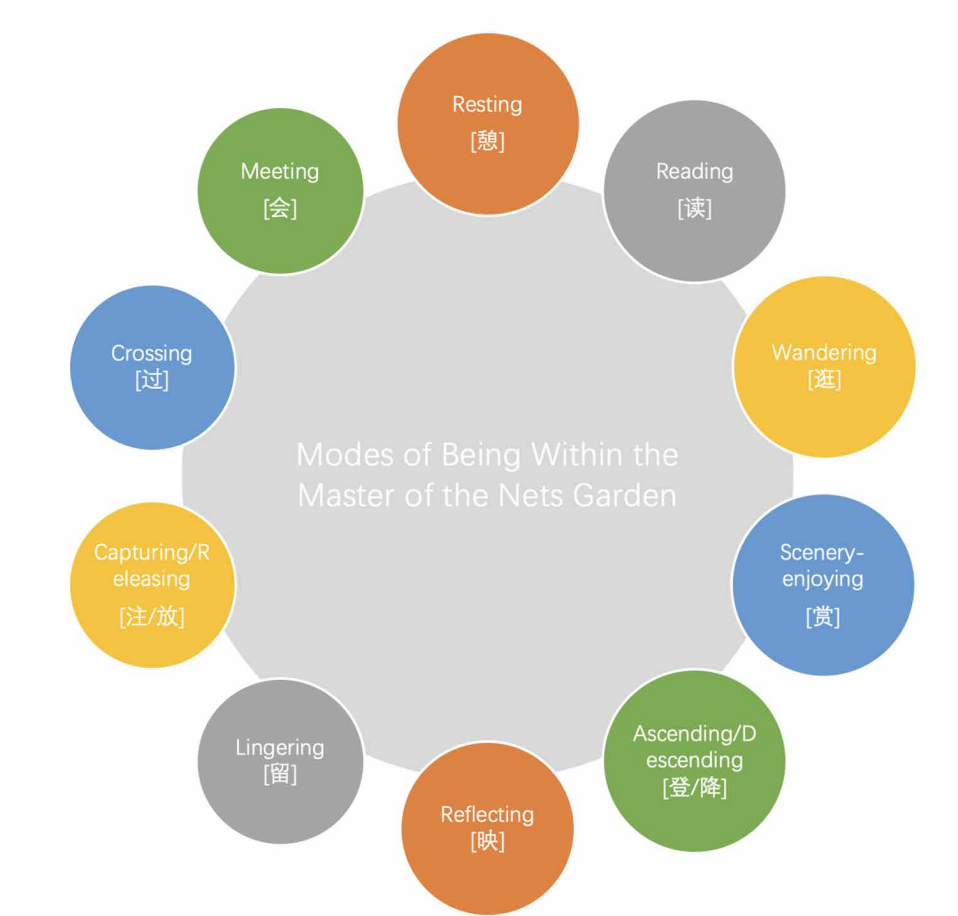


FIG. 4.4 Modes of Being that Can Occur Within the Master of the Nets Garden. Source: Lu Li.

TABLE 4.1 Typical Elements and Their Corresponding Mode of Being Within the Master of the Nets Garden. Source: Lu Li.

Architectural and Landscape Elements	Examples	Corresponding Mode of Being
Beauty's Arm Bench, suitable for one to comfortably sit on	1	Resting
A plaque inscribed with meaningful calligraphic Chinese characters hanging on the beam	2	Reading
An area where one can read the inscribed characters	3	
A courtyard through which one can walk between two halls	4-6	Crossing
A bridge for crossing a corner of the pond	7, 24	
A continuous, covered corridor that allows one to enjoy the view while walking in a relaxed, pleasant, and comfortable mood	8-16	Wandering
A walkway alongside rocks, trees, shrubs, flowers, and grass that facilitates strolls in a relaxed, pleasant, and comfortable mood	17-22	
A mirror on the wall	23	Reflecting
An area where the reflection in the mirror can be consciously perceived	-	
A round stone table surrounded by four stone chairs in the centre of the pavilion	25	Meeting
A hexagonal pavilion floor that generates a centripetal trend	26	
A symmetrical, well-lit hall	27-29	
Two south-facing chairs on a central axis in the hall, with an elaborately painted screen behind them and a table between them	30	
Two rows of four chairs facing each other on both sides of the central axis, with a table between each set of two chairs	54	Scenery-enjoying
A water-focused landscape area arranged relative to various landscape elements, forming a picturesque scene	33	
A place beside the water area where one can stop walking and enjoy the landscape	31, 32, 34, 35, 36, 37	Descending/Ascending
A stairset that guides one to a different level	38, 54	
A place that protects one from natural disruption, allowing them to stay for a while	28, 29, 36, 50, 51, 52, 53	Lingering
An area where an attractive entity of interest can be reached	-	Capturing/Releasing
A carefully designed rock arrangement aimed at attracting visitors' attention	40, 41, 42, 43, 44	
A long wall dividing the garden into sections	-	
A rocky mountainous area disrupting visitors' sights	39	
An eye-catching tree in the corner of a courtyard	45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50	
A picturesque composition that can be appreciated through an opening in the wall	-	

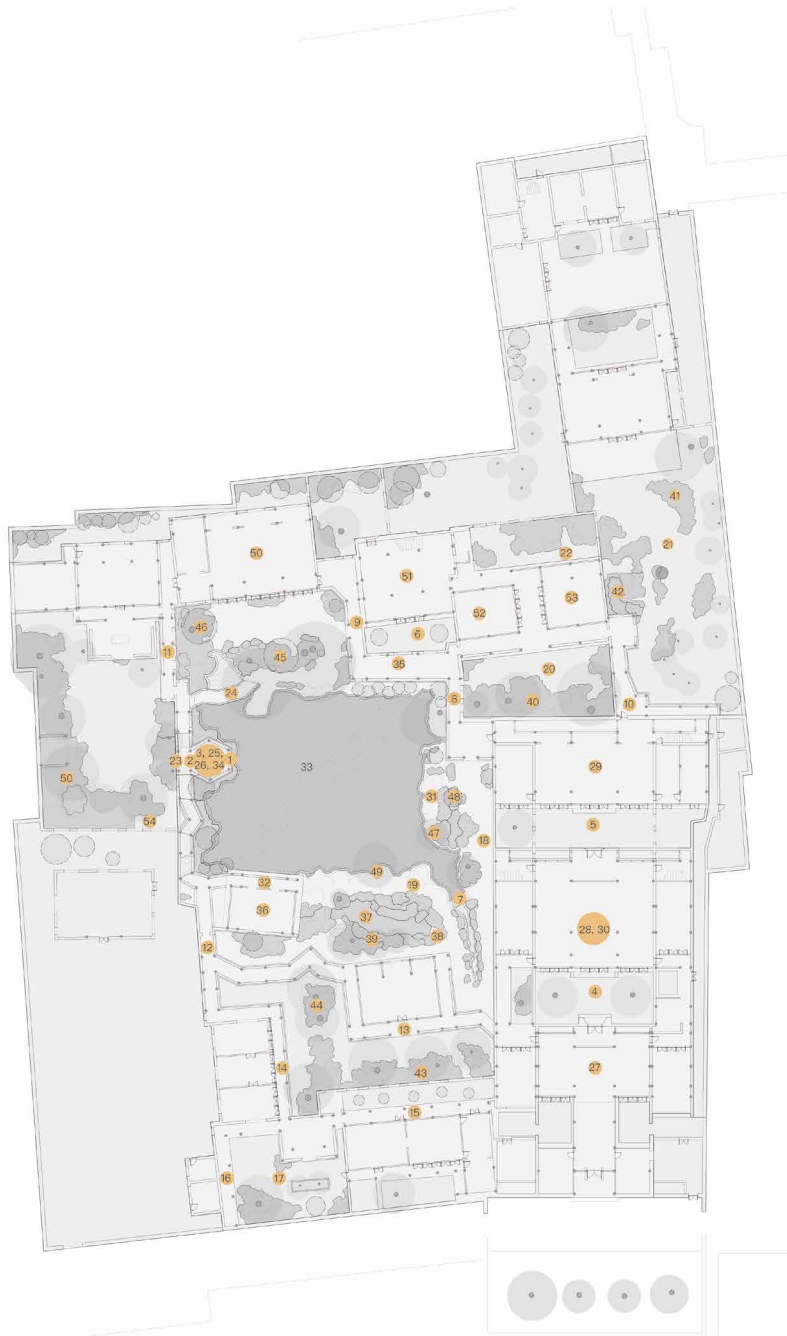


FIG. 4.5 Positions of Architectural and Landscape Elements Identified During the On-Site Investigation. Source: Lu Li.

4.3.1.5 Understanding the Modes of Being Within the Garden

A basic understanding of these modes of being is critical as the foundation of my analysis of the occurrence of Nearness within the Master of the Nets Garden. In the following, I introduce the ten typical modes of being and general spatial conditions that facilitate them. In Chapters Five through Seven, I analyse a series of spatial-experiential settings embedded within the three structural layers of the Master of the Nets Garden, which enable these modes of being to occur in a strong, extraordinary, multidimensional manner.

Resting

Resting is a typical mode of being that occurs when one is physically, consciously, and emotionally relaxed. At the mental level, when resting occurs, one temporarily lets go of their obsessions, goals, and pursuits, allowing one to remain in the background of their consciousness. At the physical level, resting entails a series of behaviours, such as sitting in a chair, lying on a bench, or leaning against a wall. While resting, one lets go of the 'there' and 'then' and enjoys the 'here' and 'now' in a relaxed mood.



FIG. 4.6 Conditions for the Mode of Resting. Source: Lu Li.

Resting is inspired by various conditions embedded within the Master of the Nets Garden. Benches to sit on, walls to lean against, rocks to lie on, and roofs to shelter from inclement weather under all encourage the mode of resting (Fig. 4.6).

Figure 4.6 features a number of persons resting in the Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind, though the young man in the middle is looking at his mobile phone. While this young man is sitting there just like his friends, I would argue that he is not actually 'resting'; instead, he is more like 'reading' or 'chatting'. This is an example of the intrusion of 20th-century technology, which is ruining his enjoyment of the experience of Nearness by disrupting the natural occurrence of resting in the here and now.³⁰⁹

Reading

In a general sense, reading is 'the complex cognitive process of decoding symbols to derive meaning'.³¹⁰ With this definition, reading is not an exclusively linguistic process. Non-linguistic processes, such as recognising a place from a painting, identifying an abstract animal figure in a pattern, or understanding how two architectural components are connected, involve reading as well. In short, any mode of being that involves a cognitive process of decoding can be viewed as reading, and only when it involves such a process can it be identified as reading. This understanding offers a clear distinction between 'enjoying a landscape' and 'reading a landscape', 'seeing a painting' and 'reading a painting', 'appreciating calligraphy' and 'reading calligraphy'. In other words, the occurrence of reading has more to do with the subject's state of being than with the object's form, material, or content.

As a significant manifestation of the ancient literati's collective state of being, reading conditions are embedded within the garden through different forms and materials, such as couplets inscribed in plaques, calligraphy carved in a stela, and paintings drawn on walls (Fig. 4.7). In fact, spatial settings for reading are common in most literati gardens, though their prominence varies.³¹¹ While a text may provide the signifier for those who can read it, the setting of the environment it is in offers the conditions through which the signifying may occur. Some other features (e.g., material, position of the text in a space, character colour and style) may also impact the reading experience.

³⁰⁹ This idea was developed based on Gregory Bracken's early comments.

³¹⁰ Anjali Hans and Emmanuel Hans, "Role of Computers in Reading Skills," *IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science* 15, no. 4 (2013): 15.

³¹¹ For instance, the reading conditions are considerably less dense in the Joyous Garden than in the Humble Administrator's Garden.



FIG. 4.7 Conditions for the Mode of Reading. Source: Lu Li.

Scenery-Enjoying

Scenery-enjoying is a significant mode of being noticed within the Master of the Nets Garden. It occurs when one is enjoying the landscape. In a sense, scenery-enjoying is the key mode of being that gardens are built to facilitate. As Tong Jun suggests, an excellent garden always presents picturesque scenes in front of one's eyes.³¹² There are a few types of spaces built in gardens to allow one to enjoy the surrounding landscapes, among which the pavilion is the most significant that serves the essential landscape of a garden. However, according to Chen Congzhou, scenery-enjoying in a literati garden can be either static or dynamic: when it occurs during one's stay in those places built specifically to facilitate scenery-enjoying, it is static; when it occurs during one's move across different places, it is highly dynamic.³¹³

The spatial conditions necessary for scenery-enjoying are simple: a space capable of 'gathering' picturesque scenery, which lets the scenery 'converge' within the space and allows it to be captured by one's consciousness. Apart from the basic condition, the aesthetic quality of the landscape is a key. Unlike French and Italian gardens, where plants are usually configured along an axis and trimmed into

³¹² Tong, *江南园林志*.

³¹³ See Chapter Five and Chapter Six for more information on this difference in one's experience of the Master of the Nets Garden. Chen, *The Chinese Garden* [中国园林].

geometrical shapes, the landscapes in Chinese literati gardens are dedicatedly designed, cultivated, and maintained to represent their natural forms, never following geometrical rules.³¹⁴ Importantly, cognitive psychology suggests that visual sense covers 80–85% of our sensory perception of our environment, making it the primary factor that shapes our experience of scenery—enjoying more than other senses.³¹⁵ This is supported by both theoretical and empirical research on Chinese literati gardens, where ‘seeing has a psychological value that drives the visitor’s exploration’.³¹⁶ In the following chapters, I shall examine carefully how scenery-enjoying occurs in relation to the corresponding spatial conditions embedded within different structural layers.

Reflecting

Reflecting is a special mode of being that occurs when one is made aware of their environmental surroundings by a reflective surface embedded within the space. Usually, it occurs when the reflection catches one’s attention. The uniqueness of reflecting lies in the fact that its occurrence duplicates the world in which Dasein exists, bringing in an illusionary dimension. It creates a parallel world—a world of reflection (Fig. 4.8). Thus, reflecting allows one to identify oneself within the environment, which, according to Norberg-Schulz, leads to a meaningful experience of dwelling.³¹⁷

This mode of being may also occur with modern technology: the world can be ‘reflected’ through a lens, delivered through electronic signals, and represented through screens. However, reflecting that occurs optically with a mirror and natural light offers a sense of intimacy with the world that modern technology lacks. Evidently, in the digital reflecting process, the actual ‘reflection’ is absent. It effectively results in ‘watching’, a mere behaviour that makes little sense as a mode of being. As a result, one can hardly gain a decent empirical intuition of the reflected world through the electronic signals seen from the screen.

³¹⁴ Dong, *Nine Chapters on Gardening*.

³¹⁵ Steffen Nijhuis, Ron van Lammeren, and Marc Antrop, “Exploring the Visual Landscapes: An Introduction,” *Research in Urbanism Series* 2, no. 1 (2011).

³¹⁶ Andong Lu, “Lost in Translation: Modernist Interpretation of the Chinese Garden as Experiential Space and Its Assumptions,” *The Journal of Architecture* 16, no. 4 (2011): 502.

³¹⁷ See: Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci*.



FIG. 4.8 Conditions for the Mode of Reflecting. Source: Lu Li.

Meeting

Meeting occurs when people gather and enjoy a moment of being with one another. Deeply rooted in Dasein's nature of 'being-with' (in Heidegger's word), 'meeting' occurs frequently in our everyday lives. It is significant to individuals' well-being. While meeting may occur across many different circumstances, it only occurs naturally amid certain spatial conditions. Meeting must feature a certain degree of accessibility and face-to-face orientation that allows one to respond another conveniently and comfortably. While people can always exert effort to facilitate a meeting, the mode of meeting is more likely to be inspired when a built space facilitates its natural occurrence. While modern technologies (e.g., Skype, FaceTime, Zoom) may have allowed meetings to occur more conveniently and instantly without strict spatial limit, they lack the key physical interaction that leads to both the 'quality' and 'quantity' satisfaction.³¹⁸ In this sense, meeting through digital means reduces the behavioural aspects of the mode of being, almost transforming it into another mode of being: chatting. In Chapter Eight, I discuss in greater detail how different degree of engagement in a mode of being affect the quality of Nearness.

³¹⁸ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of judgment* (Hackett Publishing, 1987).

Lingering

Lingering is a mode of being that dominates one's experience within a space. It occurs in both a spatial and temporal sense: on the one hand, it stops one's pace of continuous movement in space; on the other, it allows one to stay for a while and enjoy the company of the surrounding entities. Compared with other modes of being, such as resting and meeting, lingering is far more all-encompassing, providing the basic condition for the occurrence of other modes of being. Interestingly, however, lingering can be both the reason for and the result of the occurrence of many other modes of being. For instance, when a garden visitor feels tired, lingering may occur as a result of their intention to rest in the pavilion. The visitor lingering in the pavilion may, in turn, lead them into other modes of being, such as scenery-enjoying, reading, and reflecting. These successively inspired modes of being would enhance one's experience of lingering, enriching its meaning.

Wandering

In contrast to how lingering dominates one's experience within a space, wandering dominates one's physical movement across different spaces within a garden. Wandering occurs dynamically as a continual physical flow without a clear purpose or destination. It stems from one's intrinsic motivation, reminding us of Daoism's pursuit of absolute freedom.³¹⁹ The spatial conditions that typically facilitate wandering's occurrence are simple: a linear space (such as a veranda or a pedestrian path) with a perceivable orientation that encourages one to move forward (Fig. 4.9). I would argue that this forward-facing orientation is essential for wandering, as it prevents one from needing to worry about where they are headed and, consequently, leads to an easy mood. In contrast, while one may be free to move anywhere in a vast, open space, the lack of orientation leads to anxiety rather than the relaxed mood conducive to wandering.

³¹⁹ Laozi, "Dao De Jing [道德经]."



FIG. 4.9 Conditions for the Mode of Wandering. Source: Lu Li.

Capturing and Releasing

The modes of capturing and releasing are interrelated, as they always occur simultaneously. Capturing occurs when a visitor encounters an entity—the moment in which it becomes a part of the visitor’s consciousness. In contrast, releasing occurs when an entity leaves a visitor’s consciousness. Capturing and releasing are effectively appearing and disappearing, respectively. Capturing one thing generally results in releasing another, and vice versa. In one’s experience, capturing may be done through seeing, noticing, or realising; as capturing’s counter, releasing may occur through vanishing, forgetting, or distracting. Visibility is a dominant factor influencing capturing and releasing, though other conditions may also be involved. Interestingly, the occurrence of capturing and releasing is an important condition for the occurrence of many other modes of being. For instance, reading may not occur if one does not capture a board inscribed with texts and release the scenery next to it. Scenery-enjoying may not occur if one does not capture the picturesque landscape and release the reflection they had previously been gazing at in the water. Resting may not occur if one does not capture the possibility of sitting on a bench and release the worrisome thoughts in their mind. In all the above cases, capturing and releasing occur simultaneously, bringing about conditions for the occurrence of other modes of being.

Crossing

Crossing is a mode of being that occurs when one physically moves across a space. Here, 'space' must be understood in a broad sense that includes spaces formed by a bridge, a room, or even a pile of rocks. In contrast to wandering, which occurs without a clear destination, the mode of crossing only occurs when the start and end of a space are both clearly identified in one's consciousness. In other words, there must be a clear recognition of the space to be crossed before one can cross it. In the Master of the Nets Garden, for instance, a tiny, curved stone bridge—the Three Footsteps Bridge—is an interesting spatial element above an increasingly narrow stream toward one end of the central pond. This bridge is so tiny that it seems almost unnecessary—one could easily walk around the end of the stream or even just hop over it (Fig. 4.10). However, this bridge facilitates intimacy between the water below it and those who walk over it. It brings to mind Heidegger's example of the bridge that gathers elements from the fourfold (i.e., the sky, the earth, the divinity, the mortals).³²⁰ By crossing the Three Footsteps Bridge, I would argue, one is involved in the fourfold in the Heideggerian sense.

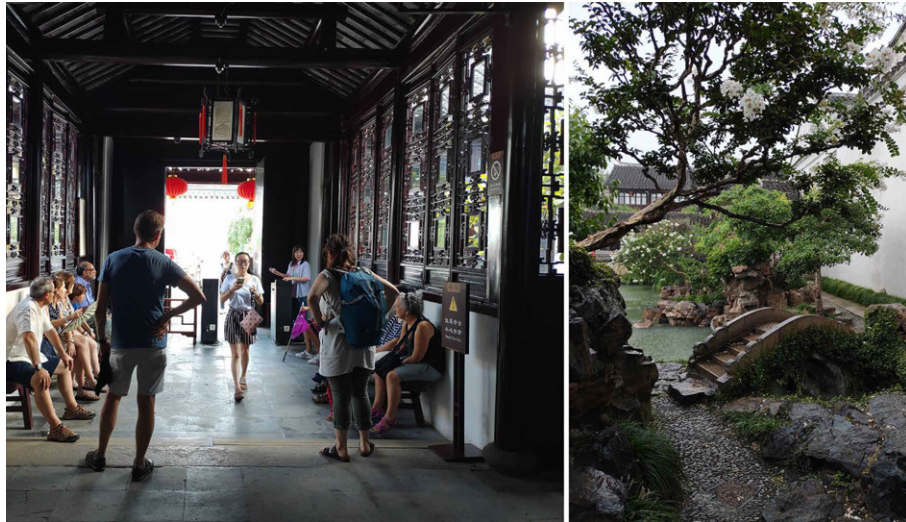


FIG. 4.10 Conditions for the Mode of Crossing. Source: Lu Li.

³²⁰ Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking."

Descending and Ascending

Descending and ascending constitute another cluster of modes of being. They occur when one physically moves in a vertical direction. The spatial condition for descending or ascending is simply a path to follow and a potential height difference that one can make. In literati gardens, however, visitors are usually motivated to ascend or descend through a hint of a wonderful experience that may occur after such a physical movement. In the Master of the Nets Garden, for instance, the spatial condition that most actively warrants ascending and descending is probably the rocky mountainous segment in the central landscape area, standing by the south of the pond. Here, the stairs formed by the rock pile and several vaguely visible plants growing on the top would entice visitors to climb up, where their expectations are fulfilled with a spectacular view of the central landscape area (Fig. 4.11).

These ten modes of being were identified through iterative on-site phenomenological reduction. Each of them was repeatedly examined to ensure that it features the integration of the four essential components (i.e., behaviour, perception, affection, and consciousness). Moving forward, my analysis of the occurrence of Nearness is based on these ten potential modes of being. However, before I can move on to explore the occurrence of Nearness within the Master of the Nets Garden, I must deconstruct the labyrinth-like garden into several systems. This deconstruction enables me to examine how experiences occur within each system and, in turn, to devise an analytical framework for conducting a systematic spatial-experiential analysis of this complex research object.

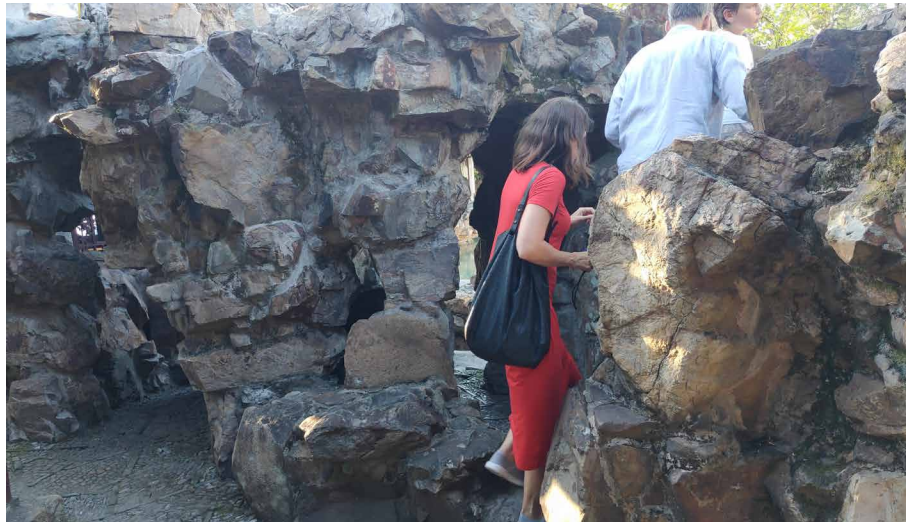


FIG. 4.11 Conditions for the Modes of Descending and Ascending. Source: Lu Li.

4.3.2 Deconstruction: Eight Spatial Systems

The spatial-experiential settings embedded within the Chinese literati gardens are extremely complex, even in relatively small cases like the Master of the Nets Garden. Given this complexity, the labyrinth-like garden must be reasonably deconstructed into several clearly defined spatial systems before conducting any further spatial-experiential analysis. Literati gardens can be deconstructed in various ways. Modern Chinese architect and garden researcher Tong Jun, in his ground-breaking work *A Record of the Gardens of Jiangnan Region*, points out that a classical Chinese literati garden consists of three components: plants and animals (the natural), buildings (the artificial), and rockeries (the mediator between the other two).³²¹ Tong argues that despite rockery stemming from nature, its way of existing in the garden depends on how the rocks are piled up, serving as the mediator between the natural and the built. Importantly, however, Tong's method of deconstructing the garden into three typological systems does not make perfect sense, as the plants and animals in a literati garden are never purely natural; in most cases, they are intentionally configured, arranged, and cultivated in line with the owners' aesthetic and cultural tastes.

Furthermore, in Tong's classification, the garden is understood only at its ontic level, which does not facilitate valid phenomenological analysis, which requires a focus on how experience occurs within space rather than the material and form of space. As Laozi, the founder of Daoism, pointed out more than 2,000 years ago: 'Clay is fashioned into vessels, but it is on their empty hollowness that their use depends'.³²² Laozi's understanding strongly echoes Heidegger's notion of 'thingness', which asserts that 'the jug's thingness resides in its being *qua* vessel... we become aware of the vessel's holding nature when we fill the jug'.³²³ In short, what matters in phenomenological analysis is what occurs in the emptiness of a space. Therefore, differing from Tong's formal and material scope, I propose the deconstruction of the Master of the Nets Garden based on a phenomenological scope. This approach should enable me to view the garden as a 'thing' rather than an 'object' and to focus on its spatial-experiential aspects. Based on my identification of ten typical modes of being, the Master of the Nets Garden can be deconstructed into eight spatial systems from a phenomenological perspective. Specifically, I carried out the deconstruction in three steps.

³²¹ Tong, *江南园林志*.

³²² Laozi, "Dao De Jing [道德经]."

³²³ Heidegger, "The Thing."

First, I identified effective spatial thresholds within the garden where the mode of crossing would occur. As defined by the Cambridge Dictionary, a 'threshold' is 'the level or point at which one starts to experience something, or at which something starts to happen or change'. However, its meaning can be interpreted differently across different research fields. From a phenomenological perspective, I define an architectural threshold as 'a spatial setting that allows one to transition their state of being from one spatial situation to another'. In the Master of the Nets Garden, these transitions are always noticeable: from inside to outside, from the lower level to the higher level, from one room to another. By crossing these thresholds, transitions from one spatial quality to another always occur. These thresholds are always clearly defined in the garden by physical elements, such as a gate, a height difference, or a change in the pavement pattern or ground material. Such threshold markers enable one to transition more naturally across the garden's various spatial systems (Fig. 4.12).

Second, enabled by the identification of these thresholds, I divided the garden into 134 clearly defined spatial units. These spatial units are all clearly defined by thresholds and physical boundaries—they are the most basic spatial units that can be identified within the garden. Third, I deconstructed the garden into eight spatial systems. Based on the spatial conditions and dominant mode of being potentially occurring in each spatial unit, I deconstructed the garden into the following categories: 1) lingering architectural system; 2) lingering landscape system; 3) wandering architectural system; 4) wandering landscape system; 5) transitional architectural system; 6) transitional landscape system; 7) service architectural system; 8) service landscape system (Fig. 4.13). Among the 134 spatial units identified within the Master of the Nets Garden, there are 19 transitory architectural spaces (1–19), five transitory landscape spaces (20–24), 16 lingering architectural spaces (25–40), 30 wandering architectural spaces (41–70), 29 service architectural spaces (71–99), 20 service landscape spaces (100–119), 13 wandering landscape spaces (120–132), and two lingering landscape spaces (133–134) (Table 4.2).

Notably, I carried out these three steps based on the identification and combination of two categories of spatial-experiential qualities: 1) architectural and landscape; and 2) lingering, wandering, transitional, and service. Architectural space and landscape space are two different types of spaces: architectural spaces provide shelter and protection, while landscape spaces are more open to nature; architectural spaces are mainly formed by artificial substances, while landscape spaces are typically formed by natural substances. Lingering, wandering, and crossing are three dominant modes of being that take place in both architectural and landscape spaces: lingering spaces allow visitors to stay for a while and facilitate various modes of being, such as reading, meeting, and scenery-enjoying;

wandering spaces enable visitors to meander comfortably, linking them with lingering spaces;³²⁴ transitional spaces offer a break between two spaces (built for lingering or wandering), generating a sense of rhythm and sequence, like a rest in music. Alongside these three categories, spaces built for service-based purposes (e.g., storage rooms, inaccessible courtyards that let natural light in, windowless staircases connecting two floors) belong to the service-space system. Most service spaces in the Master of the Nets Garden lack a joyful spatial-experiential quality; in fact, some of them are not even accessible under normal circumstances (Fig. 4.14).

TABLE 4.2 Eight Spatial Systems. Source: Lu Li.

System	Spaces	Quantity	Dominant Mode of Being
Transitional Architectural System	1–19	19	Crossing
Transitional Landscape System	20–24	5	Crossing
Lingering Architectural System	25–40	16	Lingering
Wandering Architectural System	41–70	30	Wandering
Wandering Landscape System	120–132	13	Wandering
Lingering Landscape System	133–134	2	Lingering
Service Architectural System	71–99	29	-
Service Landscape System	100–119	20	-



FIG. 4.12 Examples of Different Spatial Systems. Source: Lu Li.

³²⁴ Tong, 江南园林志.



FIG. 4.13 Identifying and Mapping the Thresholds Within the Master of the Nets Garden. Source: Lu Li.

All eight of these systems, however, are neither purely spatial nor purely experiential. They are identified based on the mode of being dominant in each spatial unit. Aside from the two service systems, which are built for different functional purposes, the other six spatial systems are all defined in terms of their corresponding modes of being. I argue that there are always several spatial conditions strong enough to solidify the dominant mode of being in these systems (i.e., ‘lingering’ in the lingering system, ‘wandering’ in the wandering system, and ‘crossing’ in the transitional system). These dominant modes of being are typical and distinctive enough to provide us with a taxonomy that is applicable to most Chinese literati gardens. In a sense, they may also be identifiable in other types of built environments. However, compared with other built environments, they are certainly more prominent and more systematically defined within the Chinese literati garden. This precise applicability enables me to construct the three-layer structure in the next section.



FIG. 4.14 Eight Spatial Systems. Source: Lu Li.

4.3.3 Reconstruction: Three-Layer Spatial-Experiential Structure

The three-step deconstruction method enabled me to break down the Master of the Nets Garden, an extraordinarily complex object, into 134 spaces spread across eight interconnected spatial systems. However, such a deconstruction is insufficient to achieve an understanding of how experience occurs within the garden, as experience cannot be deconstructed in the same way. The structure responsible for shaping one's experience within the garden must be identified through a process of spatial-experiential reconstruction. Thus, this section proposes a three-layer spatial-experiential structure as an analytical framework for further discussion: 1) experiences within single lingering spaces; 2) experiences within focused worlds formed by lingering spaces; and 3) experiences within the garden as a whole. The occurrence of experience follows the same pattern in each layer. In other words, various modes of being occur in a similar way in each layer. These three structural layers are used to analyse Nearness as a spatial-experiential quality in the coming chapters. However, I must first briefly explain these layers, especially the key concepts of 'focused world' and 'focusing space'.

4.3.3.1 Experience Within Single Lingering Spaces

The first spatial-experiential layer consists of experiences that occur within a single lingering space (a space where lingering is the dominant mode of being). Put simply, this layer contains all spaces built to allow visitors to slow down and enjoy the 'here' and 'now' for a while.³²⁵ In Chinese literati gardens, many architectural and landscape types, including pavilions [亭], halls [厅], platforms [台], and stories [阁], are built for this simple purpose, although they may serve for different specific functions. Eighteen lingering spaces—sixteen lingering architectural spaces and two lingering landscape spaces—were identified in the Master of the Nets Garden through phenomenological reduction and spatial deconstruction (Fig. 4.15). For example, as will be detailed further in Chapter Five, the Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind contains numerous spatial conditions that encourage visitors to stay for a while, read the calligraphy, enjoy the landscape, and relax their body. While the specific functions that these spaces serve may vary drastically throughout history, their nature as spaces that facilitate lingering in one's continual spatial-experiential flow is well preserved. Experience within single lingering spaces is the

³²⁵ Tong, 江南园林志.

first spatial-experiential layer in my analysis because such spaces play a significant role in shaping experience within the literati garden. In this section, I explain why experiences within these spaces are significant enough to be considered as the first layer of the spatial-experiential structure.

Rich Spatial Conditions to Enable Visitors to Stay Longer

These spaces generally contain rich spatial elements that encourage their visitors to deeply engage with certain activities, such as meeting a guest, enjoying a landscape, reading a book, painting a picture, or dining with family, shaping one's experience more significantly than other spaces.³²⁶ On the other hand, in a typical literati garden, these spaces are so distinctive that one can positively identify them through categorial intuition. As a result, visitors tend to visit these spaces more and stay longer within them. These spaces, in turn, constitute a significant factor that shapes their garden experiences more than other spaces. I clearly observed this tendency in my on-site investigation despite many of the daily activities that the spaces were built for no longer being allowed in the garden.

High-Quality Perceptual Environment

The design and construction of most of these spaces are meticulously linked to their surroundings, generating a high-quality perceptual environment for their visitors. As Ji Cheng points out in *Yuan Ye*: 'The most important element in the layout of gardens is the siting of the principal buildings. The primary consideration is the view, and it is all the better if the buildings can also face south'.³²⁷ For Ji, the term 'principal buildings' refers to significant lingering spaces, such as the Hall of Scrolls in the Master of the Nets Garden. What Ji suggests here is that setting up lingering spaces to generate high-quality perceptual environments is critical when planning a literati garden. Thus, one can assume that the eighteen lingering spaces within the Master of the Nets Garden form a structural referential system according to which other architectural and landscape elements (e.g., trees, flowers, rockeries, corridors, walkways) are arranged, providing visitors high-quality perceptual environments.

³²⁶ Chen, *The Chinese Garden* [中國園林].

³²⁷ The original Chinese is as follows: '凡園圍立基，定厅堂为主。先乎取景，妙在朝南'. See: Ji, *The Craft of Gardens*.

Predictable and Stable Experience

One's state of being within a lingering space is predictable and stable relative to that in other, more dynamic spatial-experiential settings. For example, as visitors wander along a corridor, they dynamically capture and release various meaningful entities while they move. This dynamic state of being is not predictable, making it difficult to provide a stable basis for phenomenological reduction. In contrast, visitors' experiences within a lingering space are mostly shaped by relatively predictable and stable factors, providing a reliable breakthrough point for solid spatial-experiential analysis.



FIG. 4.15 Lingering Spaces Within the Master of the Nets Garden. Source: Lu Li.

4.3.3.2 Experience Within Focused Worlds

The second spatial-experiential layer consists of experiences that occur within a focused world formed by lingering spaces. The concepts of 'focused world' and 'focusing space' are key to understanding this layer, which is developed based on a fundamental understanding of the relationship between a human being, a built environment, and the world. These two concepts provide a theoretical tool that allows us to investigate the inherent relationship between the perception of the world and the space in which this perception occurs, which then allows my analysis to extend beyond single lingering spaces and explore one's experience across different spaces.

Amos Rapoport's model of the environment helps to clarify what these concepts mean. Rapoport points out that, in a broad sense, 'the environment can be defined as any condition or influence outside the organism, group, or whatever system is being studied'.³²⁸ He asserts that the environment has four layers: the physical or geographical environment; the operational environment; the behavioural environment; and the perceptual environment.³²⁹ More specifically, he defines the behavioural environment as that which 'people are not only aware [of] but [that] which also elicits some behavioural response' and the perceptual environment as that to which 'people are conscious directly and to which they give symbolic meaning'.³³⁰ A similar theoretical understanding of different environmental layers is evident in Lewin's concepts of *Merkwelt*, *Wirkwelt*, and *Umwelt*.³³¹ These discussions aid in understanding how human beings are related to the world through their built environments. While both Rapoport and Lewin discuss these layers broadly, they can be applied to a much more specific context. In this thesis, I propose a more specific scope focused on individuals' state of being within a built space.

A built space is a specific 'behavioural environment' related to a 'perceptual environment'. When a built space allows one to perceive an environment in an attentional way, that space constitutes a 'focusing space'. Accordingly, the perceptual environment associated with that space becomes its 'focused world'. Within this scope, the meanings of 'focusing space' and 'focused world' are fairly

³²⁸ Amos Rapoport, *Human Aspects of Urban Form: Towards a Man—Environment Approach to Urban Form and Design*, 1st ed. (New York: Pergamon Press, 1977), 13.

³²⁹ Rapoport, *Human Aspects of Urban Form*, 17.

³³⁰ Rapoport, *Human Aspects of Urban Form*, 17.

³³¹ Todor Stojanovski and Östen Axelsson, "Typo-Morphology and Environmental Perception of Urban Space" (*Urban Form and Social Context: From Traditions to Newest Demands*, Krasnoyarsk, 2018).

straightforward. In the Cambridge Dictionary, ‘focus’ is defined as ‘careful attention that is given to something’.³³² In a psychological sense, this ‘careful attention’ is linked to the notion of mindfulness. According to Bishop, mindfulness is a ‘process of regulating attention in order to bring a quality of nonelaborative awareness to current experience and a quality of relating to one’s experience within an orientation of curiosity, experiential openness, and acceptance’.³³³ Therefore, a focused world is a phenomenal world that can be mindfully perceived in one’s experience within a given architectural or landscape space, which constitutes its focusing space (Fig. 4.16). Conversely, given a specific space, there is always an identifiable world of perception. However, one can only focus on this world of perception under certain circumstances. In a Heideggerian sense, the focused world is one that includes various ‘inner-worldly beings’ formed by one’s experience within a built space.³³⁴ It is important to note that these two concepts—the focusing space and the focused world—are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, they are so fundamental that both can be widely employed to achieve a greater understanding of various types of human-built environments. Different focusing spaces form very different focused worlds, resulting in different experiences. They offer the theoretical possibility to analyse and compare different architectural spaces based on a common concern, making it a meaningful tool for exploring enlightening differences between spaces of a literati garden and that of other built environments.

In literati gardens, spaces built to facilitate lingering always provide visitors necessary spatial conditions to engage in mindful and conscious perception. In this way, most lingering spaces in literati gardens constitute focusing spaces. Therefore, following the first layer of the spatial-experiential structure (i.e., experience within lingering spaces) is experience within the focused worlds of lingering spaces. I argue this structural layer is particularly important for understanding how a literati garden shapes one’s experience, as concern for individuals’ experience within a focused world is deeply rooted in the ancient Chinese literati worldview.³³⁵ David Hall points out that, according to the ancient Chinese literati, ‘the world is a set of foci

³³² “Focus,” in *Cambridge Dictionary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

³³³ Ying Hwa Kee et al., “Mindfulness, Movement Control, and Attentional Focus Strategies: Effects of Mindfulness on a Postural Balance Task,” *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology* 34, no. 5 (2012): 562.

³³⁴ Heidegger, *Being and Time*.

³³⁵ For instance, in a landscape painting, elements are always arranged carefully in relation to other ‘places’ where man dwells. See: Xi Wei, *Zhao Ye Bai [照夜白：山水、折叠、循环、拼贴、时空的诗学]*, 1st ed. (Beijing: Taihai Publishing House, 2017).

which negotiate relatedness to what at the moment is deemed “centre”³³⁶. With this mindset, one’s experience within a garden is ‘dominated not by its periphery, but by its centre’³³⁷. Accordingly, I refer to the structure connecting the first and second layers as the FS-FW structure. As demonstrated in the following chapters, the FS-FW structure shapes one’s experience of a literati garden to a high degree.

It should be noted that the formation of a focused world involves several senses. Beyond vision, other senses like audition and olfaction are also often involved in forming a focused world in literati gardens. For example, in the Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind, wind from far away can be felt by visitors and, in turn, involved in the formation of its focused world, though this sensation could not be described by spatial-visual analysis. Still, given the critical role of vision in shaping one’s experience of a built environment, visual perception is a dominant factor in the formation of a focused world within literati gardens.³³⁸ Therefore, in the case study of this thesis, GIS-based spatial-visual analysis is decided as the method of mapping. With the help of GIS, one’s spatial-visual experience within the Pavilion can be analysed conveniently and precisely. This analysis is detailed in Chapter Six.



FIG. 4.16 The Concept of the Focused World. Source: Lu Li.

³³⁶ Hall and Ames, “The Cosmological Setting of Chinese Gardens,” 176.

³³⁷ Hall and Ames, “The Cosmological Setting of Chinese Gardens,” 176.

³³⁸ See ‘Scenery-Enjoying’ in Section 4.3.1 for more information. Nijhuis, Lammeren, and Antrop, “Exploring the Visual Landscapes.”

4.3.3.3 Experience Within the Garden as a Whole

The third spatial-experiential layer consists of experiences that occur throughout the entire garden. While literati gardens are complex objects, no spatial-experiential layer is necessary between the focused-world layer and the whole-garden layer. As Chapter Seven demonstrates, there are numerous spatial-experiential mechanisms involved in motivating, orienting, and seducing one's state of being to continually flow from one lingering space to another, flow from one focused world to another, and, finally, form a complex, multi-dimensional experience of the garden.

4.3.3.4 Understanding the Concept of Spatial-experiential Unit

The identification of these three structural layers offers an understanding of the 'spatial-experiential unit', which is involved in the case study of the following chapters. As I define, a spatial-experiential unit is a process that occurs with an identifiable structure that is both spatial and experiential. In line with the above three-layer spatial-experiential structure, three levels of spatial-experiential units can be identified within literati gardens: 1) units occurring in the layer of lingering spaces; 2) units occurring in the layer of focused worlds; 3) units occurring in the layer of the garden as a whole. One's experience within a single focusing space, that from the moment one enters the space to the moment one leaves it, is perhaps the most basic spatial-experiential unit, as it cannot be deconstructed any further into a subordinate unit with an identifiable spatial-experiential structure. The spatial-experiential unit at the focused-world level is a bridge between experience within a lingering space and that within the entire garden. Of course, one's experience within a literati garden is not the result of any single spatial-experiential unit but that of many intertwining units across all three layers. Each of the following three chapters explores one of the three spatial-experiential layers of the Master of the Nets Garden, offering a rich understanding of the experience of Nearness within the garden.

4.4 Conclusion: An Analytical Path for Further Exploration

As demonstrated by the previous chapters, Nearness has a spatial-experiential duality. In other words, it can be both a spatial quality and a phenomenal experience. As such, its occurrence can only be explored within an explicit spatial-experiential framework that understands literati gardens as more than mere 'compositions of courtyards'.³³⁹ My three-step analysis—phenomenological reduction, spatial deconstruction, and spatial-experiential reduction—of the Master of the Nets Garden constitutes a solid spatial-experiential framework with which I can assess the occurrence of Nearness. The occurrence of Nearness within the Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind—a single lingering space—serves as a solid breakthrough point and is analysed in Chapter Five. After that, the occurrence of Nearness within the 'focused world' of the Pavilion is analysed in Chapter Six. In Chapter Seven, I apply the same analytical approach to other important lingering spaces and other focused words across the entire garden and identify numerous phenomenological mechanisms through which Nearness occurs. In short, this chapter's elementary analysis of the Master of the Nets Garden in Suzhou laid the groundwork for the following three chapters. Now, all of the raw materials are cleaned, cut, and cured—ready for cooking.

³³⁹ Keswick, Jencks, and Hardie, *The Chinese Garden: History, Art and Architecture*.

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5 The Occurrence of Nearness Within Single Lingering Spaces

5.1 Introduction

Chapter Two explored a theoretical framework to explain the meaning of Nearness within the built environment. Through this theoretical framework, I argue that architecture is an aggregation of Nearness conditions that allows Dasein to be intimately linked to various meaningful entities in its world. As the framework remains theoretical, it warrants further analysis with solid spatial-experiential materials in the corporeal world in order to reveal how Nearness occurs within literati gardens. Thus, Chapter Four conducted an elementary analysis of the Master of the Nets Garden, identifying a three-layer spatial-experiential structure. In the following three chapters, I investigate how Nearness occurs within each layer of the experience of the Master of Nets Garden in far greater detail. As a critical component of the reflective epistemology, the in-depth case study carried out over the course of these three chapters enhance the theoretical framework established in Chapter Two, while verifying the main hypothesis outlined in Chapter Three.

This chapter explores how Nearness occurs in the first spatial-experiential layer. More specifically, it assesses how the experience of Nearness occurs within single lingering spaces of the Master of the Nets Garden. In the same way that no one can swim before jumping into the water, the only way to understand the occurrence of Nearness within the Master of Nets Garden is to explore it using immersive, multi-dimensional,

and bodily cognition. I use experience within the Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind—a tiny but significant lingering space in the Master of the Nets Garden—as the case study for this analysis. Phenomenological reduction, participatory observation, and GIS-based spatial-visual analysis are employed as my primary methods.³⁴⁰

In this chapter, I first briefly introduce the Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind as the setting for the case study (Section 5.2). Next, I reflect on the modes of being that can occur within the pavilion and examine the spatial conditions that are necessary for their occurrence (Section 5.3). As I already detailed the ten typical modes of being in the last chapter, this chapter focuses only on the specific conditions of Nearness embedded within the Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind. After that, I detail the occurrence of Nearness within the pavilion in three analytical stages: 1) investigate how these modes of being are correlated to one another, followed by a discussion of two structural relationships—diachronicity and synchronicity—among them (Section 5.4.1); 2) examine what entities of different qualities are brought into one's 'inner world', through which a multi-dimensional experience of Nearness involving four worlds—a world of perception, a world of representation, a world of imagination, and a world of reflection—is revealed (Section 5.4.2); 3) explore the potential of a high-intensity experience of Nearness (Section 5.4.3). Lastly, I develop a ripple-like model to describe the occurrence of Nearness within the Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind, synthesising all of this chapter's key findings (Section 5.5).

This chapter concludes that a complex, multi-dimensional, and intense experience of Nearness occurs within single lingering spaces of the Master of the Nets Garden due to a series of densely embedded spatial-experiential settings, generating visitors' rich relatedness to the world. With the methodology explored in this chapter, scholars are enabled to study the occurrence of Nearness within lingering spaces within other types of built environments. The results demonstrate the efficiency of this theoretical framework in identifying, evaluating, describing, and explaining the phenomena of Nearness within built environments.

³⁴⁰ As discussed in Chapter Four, Edmund Husserl uses phenomenological reduction as his main methodology to investigate the transcendental structure of human consciousness. John Cogan explains phenomenological reduction as a process of knowing with 'no knowledge or preconceptions in hand'—an 'experience of astonishment'. See: John Cogan, "The Phenomenological Reduction."

5.2 The Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind

The master plan of the Master of the Nets Garden shows that its architecture is carefully organised around a central water-focused landscape area. One's experience in this central landscape area, however, is dominated by a tiny space west of the water—the Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind. Adjoining the wall separating the central landscape from the west residential part, the pavilion provides a place for one to remain for a while and enjoy the essential landscape of the Garden. Maggie Keswick describes its significance as follows:

Apparently floating out over the lake, its stilts shadowy and half-invisible among the rocks, the pavilion is the focal point for the whole little lake. Setting off south round the water towards it, however, the visitor will find himself diverted from his purpose by many other charming resting places, unexpected groves, and little works of architecture.³⁴¹

As Keswick suggests, the pavilion plays an essential role in shaping one's experience of the central landscape area as well as the garden as a whole. Due to its dominant role in shaping one's experience of the garden, I decided to use this pavilion as the departure point of the exploration of the occurrence of Nearness. The Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind has a hexagonal plan with an area of only about 13 m². One of the six sides serves as the space's entrance, while the other five sides are enclosed with Beauty's Arm Bench, a specially designed linear bench that runs along the boundary of the space with continuous seating and a curved backrest. Six red wooden columns constitute the pavilion's main structure supporting the roof, the six corners of which are all curved up to form an elegant curvilinear shape (Fig. 5.1). The elegant architectural style of the pavilion can be traced back to the Southern Song dynasty, during which the garden was originally built.³⁴²

³⁴¹ Keswick, Jencks, and Hardie, *The Chinese Garden: History, Art and Architecture*.

³⁴² See Chapter Four for information on the history of the Master of the Nets Garden.



FIG. 5.1 An Evening Scene of the Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind. Source: Simon.

It is fair to assert that first-time visitors may not be drawn to the pavilion, as it doesn't have any spectacular features to attract attention or shock visitors. However, I argue that the atmosphere of Nearness is so strongly embedded within the Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind that anyone encountering this tiny space can be easily captured by a mysterious force before any rational thought comes to their mind. Such an atmosphere is resulted from the densely embedded spatial conditions: the picturesque surrounding landscape seduces visitors to approach it for the best view; the plaque hanging on the central beam states its name, encouraging visitors to read; the Beauty's Arm Bench under the roof invites visitors to come in and relax their bodies; the mirror on the wall allows visitors to appreciate the beautiful scenery around them without turning around to face the landscape. All these conditions make the pavilion—as well as the area that surrounds it—an excellent case through which to study the occurrence of Nearness. In the following section, I analyse these conditions in greater detail to assess how they facilitate an unusually rich experience of Nearness.

5.3 The Conditions of Nearness Embedded Within the Pavilion

As established in Chapter Two, identifying the modes of being that are potentially driven by embedded spatial conditions is key to understanding the occurrence of Nearness within a built environment. In a sense, to explore the occurrence of Nearness in architecture is to understand how various spatial conditions inspire, seduce, or afford various modes of being and, in turn, how they establish intimacy with the world. Among the ten typical space-specific modes of being that may occur due to the spatial conditions embedded within the Master of Nets Garden, six are evident in the Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind: lingering, scenery-enjoying, reading, resting, meeting, and reflecting (Fig. 5.2).³⁴³ This section explores the spatial conditions within the Pavilion that drive these modes of being.

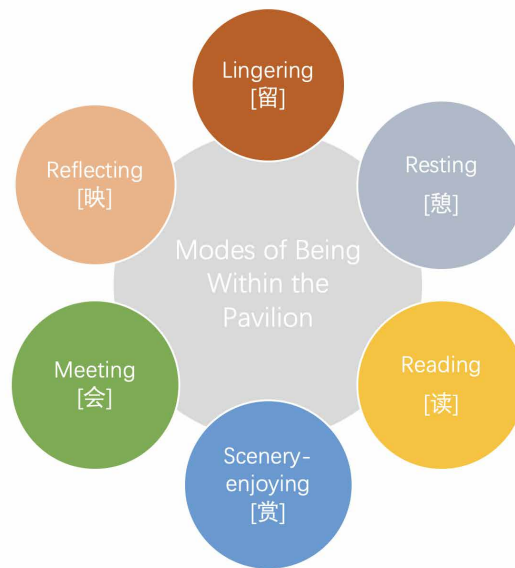


FIG. 5.2 Typical Modes of Being Identified Within the Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind. Source: Lu Li.

³⁴³ The other four modes of being—crossing, wandering, descending/ascending, capturing/releasing—are not notable in the pavilion. As Chapter Four has detailed these modes of being, I won't dive into their definitions again here. See Chapter Four for more information.

Resting Conditions

In Chinese, the character for ‘pavilion’ [亭] shares its pronunciation and component with the character for ‘stopping’ [停].³⁴⁴ This reminds us that, from an ancient Chinese understanding, pavilions are always places to stop, to stay for a while, and to rest. In a literati garden, they are essentially designed as places where visitors can take a joyful rest.³⁴⁵ Thus, pavilions’ resting-focused conditions are probably the most significant. Such conditions are clear within the Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind. Beauty’s Arm Bench covers the edge of the entire space, providing a comfortable place to sit. The bench’s curvature and backrest are specifically designed to allow for relaxed and elegant seating positions. With the wooden material and its curved form, this bench effectively constitutes the necessary spatial condition for resting (Fig. 5.3). Importantly, the bench also encourages other modes of being in the pavilion, including scenery-enjoying, reflecting, and reading, all of which may, in turn, enhance the quality of resting. Compared to resting facilities made of modern soft materials (e.g., sofa, beanbag chair, sponge back cushion), which are specifically designed to produce comfortable, relaxing, and satisfying physical sensations, Beauty’s Arm Bench may seem somewhat simplistic. Its limited constitutive materials may not allow for the same degree of comfort as a modern sofa, yet I would argue that the pavilion’s resting conditions may be viewed as a prototype—one that demonstrates how a built space can neatly and elegantly integrate conditions that enable or encourage one to slow down, take a rest, and enjoy the moment surrounded by nearby meaningful entities.

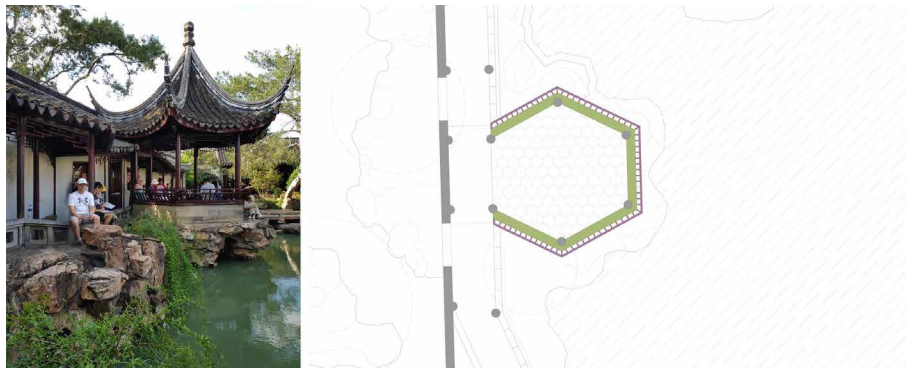


FIG. 5.3 Resting Conditions. Source: Lu Li.

³⁴⁴ Ji and Chen, *园冶注释*.

³⁴⁵ See Chapter Four.

Reading Conditions

As defined in Chapter Four, reading conditions are spatial-experiential settings that enable ‘the complex cognitive process of decoding symbols to derive meaning’.³⁴⁶ The Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind features two such space-specific reading conditions: a plaque inscribed with the pavilion’s name and an area that enables these characters to catch one’s attention from afar. Space-specific reading conditions can be attributed to the literati’s collective trend of giving names to places of interest in a manner consistent with their tastes, pursuits, dispositions, and worldviews while revealing the unique qualities, atmospheres, or scenes of these places as appropriate as possible. As John Makeham points out, ‘names are a key conceptual element in the non-physical dimension of the garden’.³⁴⁷ Regarding the importance and difficulty of naming such places, the famous literary figure Zhang Dai (1599–1684) claims that ‘the most difficult thing about making a garden is naming; it is even more difficult than the physical construction’.³⁴⁸ In a sense, these names reveal the literati’s state of being in each specific location; they constitute a means of bringing visitors near the place and relating them to their surroundings before they have even had a chance to experience it.

Empirical research indicates that reading characters becomes difficult once the viewing angle dips below 30 degrees. Thus, I use 30 degrees as my benchmark for visibility analysis. Notably, the characters inscribed within pavilion’s name plaque are clearly readable throughout almost the entire space, allowing the process of decoding to occur naturally (Fig. 5.4). Of course, the fact that certain practical reading conditions are embedded within the pavilion does not necessarily mean that reading can occur for all visitors. My grandma, for example, cannot read ancient Chinese characters, meaning that the process of decoding cannot occur. Even among those who can read the characters, the same reading conditions may lead to different experiences of Nearness due to varying degrees of individual understanding of the text. However, I would assert that the reading conditions embedded within the space essentially present a ‘door’ to a world of meaning that one can open if they have a ‘key’. While not everyone has a ‘key’ to open this ‘door’, the fact that the space has a meaningful world embedded within it still create an engaging atmosphere, enticing visitors to approach.

³⁴⁶ See Chapter Four.

³⁴⁷ Makeham, “The Confucian Role of Names in Traditional Chinese Gardens.”

³⁴⁸ Makeham, “The Confucian Role of Names in Traditional Chinese Gardens.”

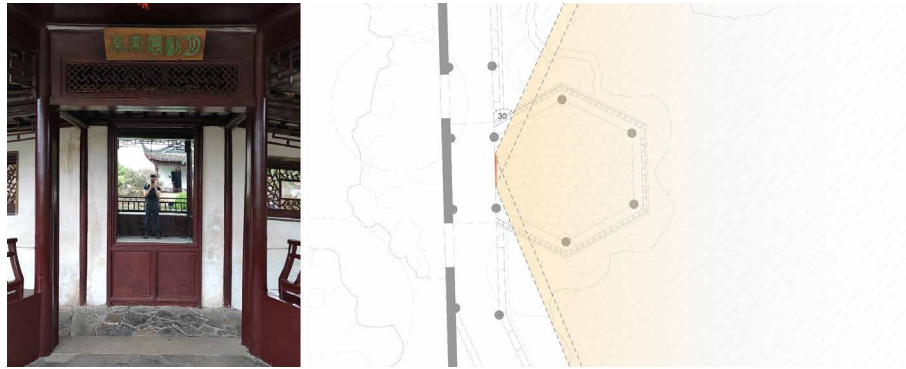


FIG. 5.4 Reading Conditions. Source: Lu Li.

Reflecting Conditions

As discussed in Chapter Four, the uniqueness of reflecting lies in the fact that its occurrence duplicates the world in which Dasein already exists. It creates an illusory version of the corporeal world while the corporeal world presents itself simultaneously. Thus, through reflecting, one establishes a relationship with both the world in which one resides and oneself. Consider the fact that one can observe their back by twisting their head and looking at a mirror. Prior to the invention of the mirror, this simple task was nearly impossible to achieve. This demonstrates the basic fact that Dasein is optically furthest from itself but that reflecting helps bring Dasein closer to itself. Even if reflecting is understood as a psychic state, it is still a way of bringing Dasein near to itself as an internal and meditative process of observing and understanding oneself. The condition for reflecting embedded within the pavilion is somewhat tangible. As demonstrated in Figure 5.5, the reflected area can be conveniently analysed through mapping (Fig. 5.5). With the mirror set on the wall opposite the five-side Beauty's Arm Bench, the reflecting area covers the entire space. In fact, it covers an area far larger than the pavilion itself, as it allows for the reflection of external elements and, meanwhile, allows reflecting to occur in the external area (Fig. 5.6). The reflecting condition in the pavilion creates an illusory parallel world, allowing visitors to reflect on their own states of being by being made aware of Dasein as being-in-the-world.

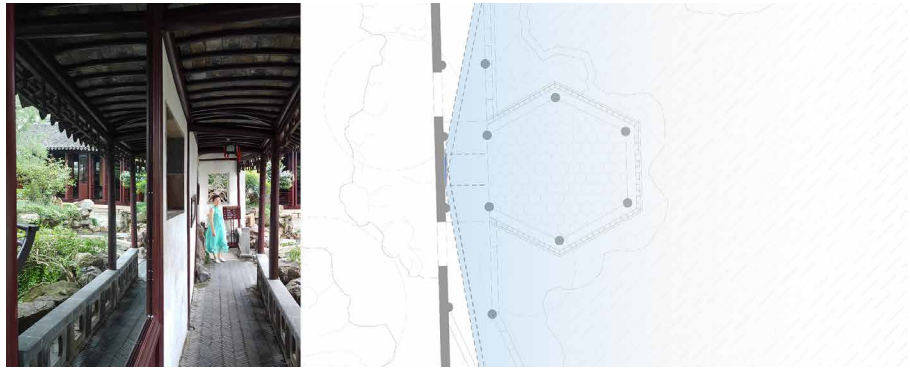


FIG. 5.5 Reflecting Conditions. Source: Lu Li.

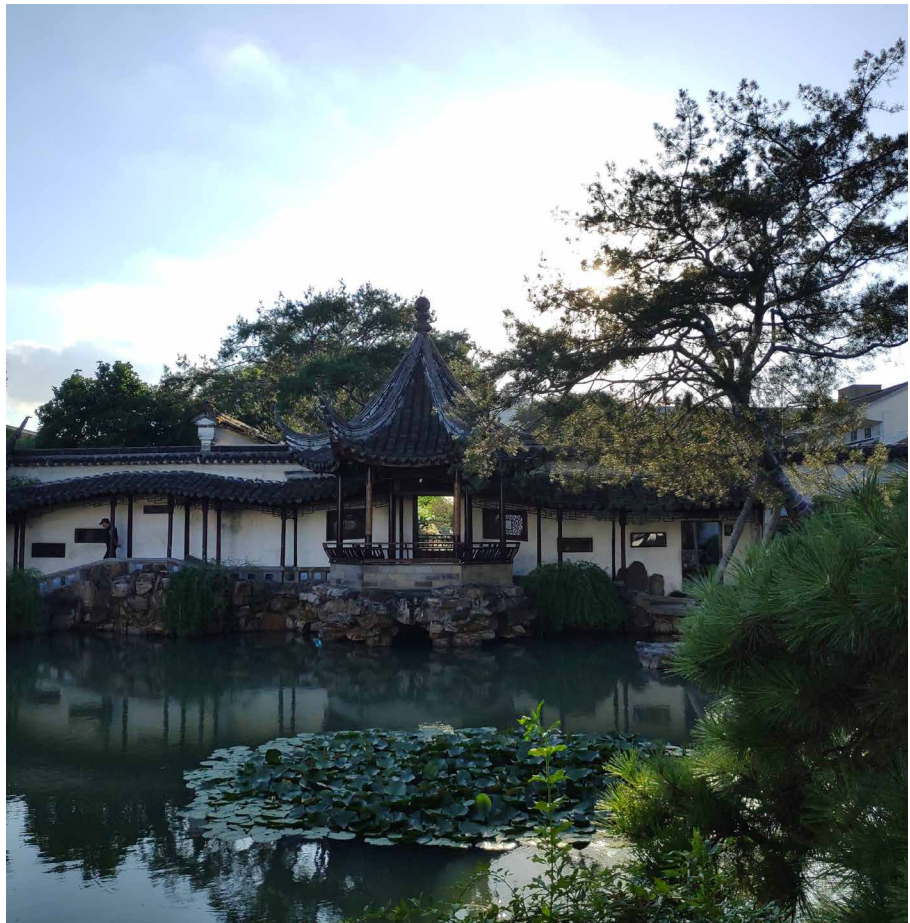


FIG. 5.6 Reflecting Conditions. Source: Lu Li.

Scenery-Enjoying Conditions

Essentially, gardens are built to create and preserve the essence of natural landscapes.³⁴⁹ Thus, scenery-enjoying is likely the mode of being that gardens most earnestly attempt to inspire. A pavilion is built to serve this purpose. In the Master of the Nets Garden, the Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind provides a place for one to enjoy the essential landscape of the central landscape area (Fig. 5.7). In Chapter Four, I discussed two conditions typically involved in the occurrence of scenery-enjoying: the aesthetic quality of the landscape and the visibility of the scenery from a built space.³⁵⁰ When focusing on the occurrence of experience within the pavilion, it is important to note that, strictly speaking, these two conditions are embedded 'around' the pavilion rather than 'within' it. However, considering that these two conditions only make sense as scenery-enjoying conditions from the perspective of a visitor within the pavilion, they should be considered as spatial-experiential settings that facilitate scenery-enjoying within the Pavilion.³⁵¹ GIS allows us to accurately describe the area relevant to scenery-enjoying within a given space. The covered area is a quantifiable factor of scenery-enjoying, beyond which there are many non-quantifiable aspects, such as the landscape's aesthetic composition, the balance between dynamic and static views, and the layers and depth of the scene. As the covered area is an important aspect that can be precisely analysed, it is worth considering as the basis for further analysis. However, as this analysis is closely related to the FS-FW structure (focusing space and focused world structure), which is examined in greater detail in Chapter Six, I do not detail it here. Nonetheless, it is important to note that the occurrence of scenery-enjoying within a lingering space always engages one in a focused world.

Two further points are worth making. On the one hand, the major part of the central landscape area is well suited for scenery-enjoying, with various elements carefully arranged in relation to the pond, such as the rocky area on the banks of the water, the footpath along the edge of the water, the Three Footsteps Bridge at the far end of the water, and the buildings around the water with various trees, shrubs, and flowers growing between them. Evidently, the scenery-enjoying occurring in the pavilion

³⁴⁹ Tong, *Glimpses of Gardens in Eastern China*.

³⁵⁰ As discussed in Chapter Four, cognitive psychology suggests that vision covers 80–85% of our sensory perception of our environment, making it the primary factor shaping our experience. See: Nijhuis, Lammeren, and Antrop, "Exploring the Visual Landscapes."

³⁵¹ On the other hand, as these spatial conditions allow one to extend their experience from a single lingering space to its surroundings, they would overlap with Chapter Six's spatial-visual analysis of the focused world.

dominates the essential view of the central landscape.³⁵² On the other hand, while the central landscape area is well covered by scenery-enjoying, one's vision can extend far beyond it, reaching other parts of the garden through lattice windows, wall openings, or gaps between buildings. This allows visitors to dynamically capture and release various entities in other parts of the garden and, as a result, trigger other modes of being while enjoying the scenery. The role of this spatial-experiential mechanism in shaping one's experience within the garden is discussed further in Chapters Six and Seven.



FIG. 5.7 Scenery-Enjoying Conditions. Source: Lu Li.

Meeting Conditions

Meeting conditions can also be identified within the Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind. Unfortunately, the most prominent meeting condition within the pavilion was ruined at some point in its history. The existence of critical conditions for meeting is only known because of an axonometric hand drawing produced by Liu Dunzhen, which depicts a round stone table and several chairs in the centre of the pavilion. Still, however, the pavilion retains its overhead shelter protecting one from inclement weather, the five-side Beauty's Arm Bench marking the spatial boundary, and its hexagonal shape generating a centripetal trend, which are also meaningful spatial conditions to inspire the mode of meeting (Fig. 5.8).

³⁵² This GIS visibility analysis is carried out in cooperation with Liu Mei, who developed a methodological tool to analyse architectural space with micro-landscapes.

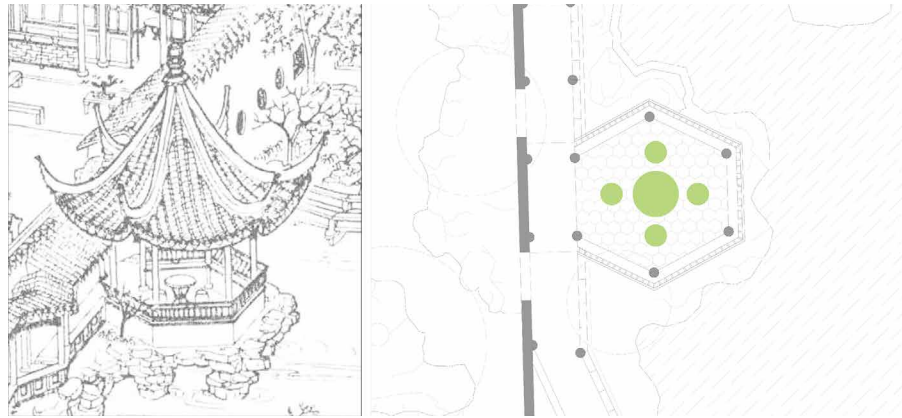


FIG. 5.8 Meeting Conditions. Liu Dunzhen's drawing indicates the previous existence of an important condition—a stone table with chairs. Source: Lu Li.

Lingering Conditions

Lingering is often the cause and the result of other modes of being. Therefore, it is difficult to firmly identify conditions involved in lingering and avoid misleading correlations. In many circumstances, the conditions that inspire lingering intertwine with that inspire others. Within the Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind, for example, the only definitive, identifiable condition for the occurrence of lingering is the overhead shelter that protects one from various disruptions from nature, a 'guardianship' in the Heideggerian sense.³⁵³ However, I would argue that all of the above spatial-experiential settings responsible for the occurrence of other modes of being—particularly those associated with resting and scenery-enjoying—are consistently involved in inviting, inspiring, and enabling one to remain in the pavilion and enjoy the 'here' and 'now'. In other words, the integration of all Nearness conditions makes the Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind an appropriate place to stay in the garden. Once one intuitively registers the atmosphere of Nearness generated by the pavilion's conditions, they may decide to linger there for a while—even before any other mode of being occurs.

³⁵³ Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*.

Summary

The occurrence of a mode of being is driven by many factors, meaning that the conditions identified above may not be sufficient for its occurrence. However, it is also clear that most modes of being cannot occur without certain spatial conditions, meaning that these conditions are generally necessary. I should note that, beyond these six modes of being, others may occur within the pavilion. For example, capturing and releasing are two highly dynamic modes of being that occur randomly. However, I do not carefully analyse the spatial conditions involved in capturing and releasing, as the occurrence of these modes of being is not primarily space-driven. Thus, such an analysis would not offer much insight. For example, visitors may capture an elegant willow across the pond, a pile of rocks arranged in an eye-catching manner, or an attractive adjacent building at any moment, releasing the entities with which their mind was previously occupied—yet the occurrence of capturing and releasing here can hardly be attributed to spatial conditions within the pavilion.

These six modes of being do not always occur simultaneously, and they do not occur among all visitors. As demonstrated in Table 5.1, while the essential conditions for each of them may seem simple, a particular atmosphere is created once the relevant spatial conditions for a mode of being are embedded within a space (Table 5.1). When the 12 spatial conditions are gathered in such a small space (13 m²), a strong atmosphere of Nearness emerges. My analysis of these Nearness conditions reveals how a built environment like the Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind gathers essential 'fourfold' elements and enables visitors to develop intimacy with them. In other words, it outlines the process of 'thinging' (in the Heideggerian sense). An atmosphere of Nearness is a continuous invitation to satisfy one's desire of being. It is through this invitation that one's desires are recalled and leveraged; one follows the modes of being that satisfy their desires, resulting in intimacy between Dasein and the world.

TABLE 5.1 Nearness Conditions Embedded Within the Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind. Source: Lu Li.

Mode of Being	Nearness Conditions	Number of Elements
Resting	Beauty's Arm Bench, a long bench on which one can comfortably sit	1
Reading	A plaque inscribed with the name of the pavilion in calligraphic style	2
	A reading area from which one can read the characters in a relaxed and enjoyable manner	
Reflecting	A mirror on the wall with a reflection that extends far beyond the pavilion	2
	An area from which the reflection can be easily captured	
Meeting	A round stone table in the centre of the pavilion	3
	Four stone chairs surrounding the table	
	Hexagonal area that generates a centripetal trend	
Scenery-Enjoying	A scenic landscape carefully composed with various aesthetic elements to represent the pure state of nature	2
	A place with a best perspective that allows one to enjoy the landscape	
Lingering	A shelter that protects one from natural disruption	2
	An atmosphere of Nearness that suggests the potential of other modes of being	
	All of the conditions that enable other modes of being	10

5.4 The Occurrence of Nearness Within the Pavilion

Nearness conditions are necessary for the occurrence of Nearness, but they do not independently constitute Nearness.³⁵⁴ The actual catalytic mechanism that converts conditions into Nearness, however, remains a mystery. The theoretical framework explored in Chapter Two suggests that Nearness occurs through two acts: 1) the occurrence of mode(s) of being inspired by spatial conditions; 2) meaningful inner-worldly entities reveal themselves in Dasein's world. In short, Nearness occurs when modes of being occur as meaningful entities are brought into Dasein's inner world. As each of these two acts can occur in many different ways, the quality and degree of Nearness vary greatly by case. This section explores the mechanism behind

³⁵⁴ See Chapter Four for a discussion about Nearness conditions.

one's experience of Nearness by investigating how the above acts occur within the pavilion. Specifically, this section investigates two relationships—diachronicity and synchronicity—among the modes of being enabled by spatial settings. Furthermore, by examining the experiential dimensions that can be generated during this process, it explores four dimensions—a world of perception, a world of representation, a world of imagination, and a world of reflection—that collectively form a multi-dimensional experience of Nearness. Finally, it discusses a situation that all these dimensions are together involved in one's experience of the pavilion.

5.4.1 Diachronicity and Synchronicity: A Temporal Structure of Nearness

Modes of being do not occur randomly. Their occurrence is dictated by a temporal structure consisting of various spatial conditions. In our case study, the fact that spatial conditions for multiple modes of being are embedded within such a tiny space suggests that temporal relationships may exist among their occurrences, as each spatial condition can only be involved in one's experience in a period of time. Following this, I identify diachronicity and synchronicity as two deeply embedded temporal relationships among the modes of being in one's experience of Nearness within the Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind.

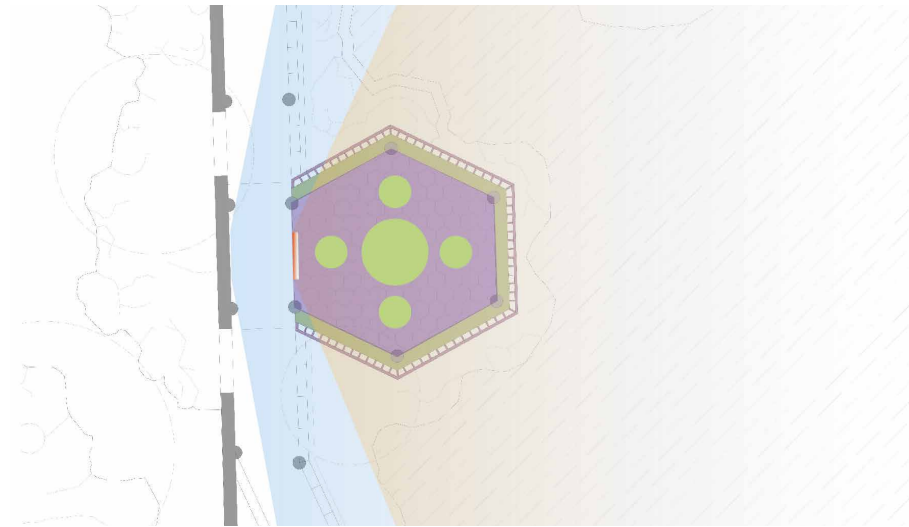


FIG. 5.9 Areas Where Different Modes of Being May Be Triggered. This diagram suggests synchronicity and diachronicity in the occurrence of Nearness. Source: Lu Li.

Diachronicity occurs when several modes of being are sequentially inspired within a space, flowing from one to another. In contrast, synchronicity occurs when these modes of being are inspired simultaneously. To understand how diachronicity and synchronicity occur, it is important to clarify the areas in which each mode of being can be inspired. By overlapping areas covered by different modes of being, it is clear how synchronicity and diachronicity can occur. As demonstrated in Figure 5.9, reflecting is the least space-restricted among the six, as its condition covers a large area, extending far beyond the pavilion. Reading and scenery-enjoying are more space-specific—while reading is limited by the height and angle of the plaque, scenery-enjoying is carefully arranged through the pavilion, which provides the best place for visitors to enjoy the central landscape. Resting and meeting are the most space-restricted, as these two may only occur on Beauty’s Arm Bench or around the stone table. Synchronicity is evident in the Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind, as the areas in which these modes of being—resting, scenery-enjoying, reading, reflecting, and meeting—can occur overlap. For instance, one can read the calligraphy on the plaque while sitting comfortably on the bench; wait to meet a friend while enjoying the scenery; and view the reflection of the surroundings while talking with a friend (Fig. 5.9).

Synchronicity and diachronicity among modes of being profoundly shape the quality of visitors’ experiences. They reveal a temporal structure in spatial conditions, which results in a temporal structure in the occurrence of Nearness. Synchronicity is an important factor in creating a sense of meaningful richness, while diachronicity plays a crucial role in forming a sense of sequence. While these relationships are not quite Nearness, they are involved in shape the distinctive qualities of Nearness. It’s worth noting that these relationships perform very differently across different types of built environments. While the temporal relationships among modes of being in some built environments are carefully structured and organised, that in others are loose and chaotic. When building a space, it is critical to formulate a clear temporal structure embedded within spatial conditions as well as the modes of being that are interrelated in that structure. Thus, the question arises: What distinctive qualities of Nearness with regard to synchronicity and diachronicity are created by the spatial conditions embedded within the Master of the Nets Garden?

5.4.2 Multi-Dimensional Nearness

Diachronicity and synchronicity not only reveal the temporal structure among modes of being but also, more importantly, suggest that multiple ‘inner-world’ dimensions may intertwine with one another in one’s experience of the pavilion. Echoing strongly

the clues discussed in the main hypothesis laid out in Chapter Three, I identify four 'inner-world' dimensions involved in the experience of Nearness within the pavilion: a world of perception, a world of representation, a world of imagination, and a world of reflection. The world of perception is the corporeal reality of the garden as it is directly projected in one's experience. The world of representation is the scene of authentic nature as it is represented by that which is perceived in one's experience. The world of imagination is the poetic atmosphere brought about by that which is represented and perceived in one's experience. Lastly, the world of reflection is the reflection of the corporeal world projected in one's experience. Closely examining the meaningful entities brought into Dasein's inner world through these modes of being, I noticed that these four worlds are deeply intertwined with one another in experiences of the pavilion, forming a rich, complex, and multi-dimensional Nearness. Multi-dimensional Nearness is particularly meaningful in the contemporary Chinese context, as it essentially involves many significant values that are cherished by traditional Chinese culture; this can alert people to the way in which many dynamics cherished in ancient China are being abandoned amid rapid development.

5.4.2.1 The World of Perception: Garden

The occurrence of these six modes of being within the pavilion driven by spatial conditions enables visitors' consciousness to capture numerous meaningful entities. Such entities are directly perceived through these modes of being, making them inner-worldly beings that collectively form a world of perception. For example, resting brings about a sense of comfort and relaxation. Reading brings about the name of the pavilion inscribed on the plaque. Scenery-enjoying brings about an essential view of the garden with various landscape and architectural elements, such as rocks, water, willows, shrubs, grass, bridges, kiosks, which are all carefully composed to form a picturesque scene. Finally, reflecting brings about an illusory form of one's surroundings. These entities—physical comfort, the pavilion's name, the scenery, and the reflection of the environment—are very different, but they all belong to the corporeal world, a world formed through bodily perception. By appearing in one's phenomenal world, they become 'inner-worldly beings', forming a world of perception in one's experience of the garden.³⁵⁵ While one experiences the world of perception in the garden, they experience the three other 'worlds', which are detailed below, within their consciousness.

³⁵⁵ Heidegger, *Being and Time*.

5.4.2.2 The World of Representation: *Shan Shui*

As discussed in Chapter Four, the obsession with ‘*shan shui*’ has been a significant theme across all artistic and cultural forms (e.g., paintings, poems, bonsais, essays, gardens) throughout Chinese history (Fig. 5.10). The term ‘*shan shui*’ [山水] can be translated as ‘mountains and waters’, as indicated by the literal meanings of ‘*shan*’ [山] (mountains) and ‘*shui*’ [水] (waters). While some scholars understand ‘*shan shui*’ as simply ‘landscape’ according to its literal meaning, I argue that the term cannot be condensed into such a basic notion. In cultural terms, however, the ancient Chinese notion of *shan shui* broadly signifies a pure state of nature. It shows ancient Chinese particular understanding of landscape. For them, landscape constituted by natural entities that barely intervened by human beings is, perhaps, the ideal form of landscape. Thus, whether a landscape is arranged in a pot or a garden, it is always arranged to represent ‘*shan shui*’—a pure state of nature.



FIG. 5.10 One Section of *A Thousand Li of Rivers and Mountains*, Palace Museum, Beijing. Painted by Ximeng Wang during the Song dynasty, this famous landscape scroll points to the ancient Chinese literati’s collective ideal of living amid the pure state of nature. Source: Wang Ximeng, public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.³⁵⁶

The world of ‘*shan shui*’ [山水]—the representation of a pure state of nature in one’s consciousness—is a strong, meaningful dimension of one’s experience of Nearness. According to Ji Cheng, the leading principle of building a garden is ‘although made by man, it will be as though it sprang from Heaven’.³⁵⁷ This statement indicates that emulating the pure state of nature was a primary motivation of the ancient literati when building a garden. In our case study, the Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind offers a place to enjoy the essential landscape of the Master of the Nets Garden, which, however, is

³⁵⁶ Ximeng Wang, "A Thousand Li of Rivers and Mountains," (Wikimedia Commons). https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:A_Thousand_Li_of_Rivers_and_Mountains.

³⁵⁷ Ji and Chen, *园冶注释*.

purposely composed to represent mountains and waters of natural form. For example, viewing from the pavilion, one may see the following elements: the seemingly wide, open, natural form water area presenting in front of one's eyes; the faintly visible footpath alongside the water area, twisting and extending among willows, grass, and shrubs; the rockery mountains standing at the edge of the water, in front of which several rocks form a walkway above the water—all these scenes evoke in visitors' minds the image of nature in its purest form that is deeply rooted in humans' primal memory. In other words, the spatial conditions for scenery-enjoying must enable one to enjoy a representational nature of landscape that, in turn, generates a phenomenal representation of the pure state of nature in one's mind. This ideal of existing in a world of '*shan shui*' calls to mind the Heideggerian notion of the fourfold categories of being that Dasein brings about: the sky, the earth, the divinity, and the mortals. In a sense, the ancient literati's ideal of living in a '*shan shui*' world is essentially the pursuit of living in Nearness to these fourfold categories of being. In one's experience of a literati garden, such a representational world of '*shan shui*' continuously fuses with the corporeal world of the garden and, in turn, arouses a sense of Nearness.

5.4.2.3 The World of Imagination: Poetry

While the motivation to enjoy the *shan shui* world is significant, the mode of scenery-enjoying rarely occurs alone in one's experience of a garden. The occurrence of scenery-enjoying usually involves the world of poetry, another hidden dimension in one's experience of Nearness of many literati gardens. In the case study, when one is enjoying the landscape within the pavilion, its name may be captured through the mode of reading. While reading the name 'Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind', the reader gets a mental image of being 'here' in a place with moon and wind through imagination.

However, one can go far beyond the actual text. According to Makeham, 'in naming a scene with words from a poem, by contrast, the garden owner was able to appropriate themes, emotions and experiences that were drawn from a complex and fecund literary tradition and re-deploy them as a vehicle for his own intentions'.³⁵⁸ In our case, the phrase 'advent of moon and wind' could easily bring to mind countless Chinese poems depicting the moon and the wind. The pavilion's name is said to have been derived from a line by Shao Yong, a poet who lived during the Southern Song

³⁵⁸ Makeham, "The Confucian Role of Names in Traditional Chinese Gardens," 193.

dynasty (1127–1279).³⁵⁹ The original verse depicts a scene where a breeze comes across the surface of a body of water while the moon moves toward the midst of Heaven.³⁶⁰ When reading the pavilion's name, one's imagination likely focuses on a sense of Nearness to the moon and wind even without the poetic link ever being central in their mind. If one happens to know the underlying poem (or another relevant poem), their imagination may generate a particularly vivid mental image of their current state of being with moon and the wind, which may then merge with their experience of the garden. In 'Poetically, Man Dwells...', Heidegger argues that humans' building and dwelling activities always occur poetically. In this sense, the poetry world generated through imagination while one's dwelling within the garden is a poetic representation of the sense of poetry rooted in dwelling itself, despite the moon and the wind not necessarily presenting themselves physically during that experience. Even if they are absent, the imaginary world of poetic dwelling and the perceived world of the garden may still fuse into one's experience—the absence would inspire an expectation that merges a sense of 'being there' with that of 'being here'. This dynamic results in the occurrence of a poetic experience.

5.4.2.4 The World of Reflection: Mirror

Thus far, I have examined three dimensional worlds, each generated by a particular mode of being stemming from certain spatial conditions. The world of perception is created through various spatial-experiential settings embedded within the corporeal reality of the garden. The world of '*shan shui*' is created through the representation of a pure state of nature projected in one's experience. The world of poetry is created through the naming of spaces with underlying poetic meanings in order to produce a certain atmosphere in one's imagination. This section tackles the world of reflection, which, unsurprisingly, is generated by the mode of reflecting. The world of reflection enables one to capture numerous entities through a reflective surface. Notably, there are two situations in which the world of reflection is involved in one's experience of Nearness. First, within the pavilion, someone sitting on Beauty's Arm Bench can comfortably enjoy the surrounding landscape without needing to physically twist or turn by looking at the mirror set opposite the five-side bench. This dynamic allows one to interact more easily with the environmental surrounding, making it a

³⁵⁹ There is no convincing source that supports this saying. However, it is common for places in literati gardens to be named after poems by previous literati.

³⁶⁰ The original verse in Chinese is as follows: '月到天心处，风来水面时'.

'readiness-at-hand' in the Heideggerian sense, the first-layer Nearness condition that I discussed in Chapter Two. Second, outside the pavilion, someone can be attracted to the reflection of the mirror from afar. In this situation, the pavilion becomes a 'thing' that continually gathers the fourfold categories of beings. Compared with the other three worlds, the world of reflection seems to be less prominent in experiences of the pavilion. Importantly, however, it is clearly involved in shaping the experience of multi-dimensional Nearness. All four of the worlds are interrelated and merged into one, forming a rich experience of Nearness in the pavilion.

Of course, the ways in which these worlds are generated and fused in one's experience varies greatly from person to person depending on their cultural, intellectual, social, and spiritual background. For instance, for one who cannot read ancient Chinese characters, the mode of reading would not occur and, therefore, the world of poetry probably would probably not be generated. However, my task in this thesis is not to provide a nuanced analysis of every possible unique experience of Nearness. Rather, my task is to understand what spatial-experiential settings have been embedded, carefully and elegantly, within literati gardens to facilitate the experience of Nearness. As emphasised by Peter Blundell Jones and Jan Woudstra, 'the best Chinese gardens are hugely impressive in experience even to the uninformed'.³⁶¹ While agreeing with this statement, it should also be noted that visitors who are fully informed would definitely experience a higher degree of Nearness. The climax of Nearness, for example, is such an experience that warrants a close look.

5.4.3 The Climax of Nearness

Following the above analysis, one may wonder if it is possible for these worlds—the world of perception, the world of representation, the world of reflection, and the world of imagination—to phenomenologically come together, converging in one's experience of the pavilion. This section explores the possibility of an extraordinary experience of Nearness stemming from the integration of all four inner-world dimensions.

During my on-site investigation, the administrative staff highlighted the fact that, when there is a full moon, one may simultaneously enjoy three 'moons' from the pavilion: one in the sky, one in the water, and one in the mirror. While I did not have the chance to verify this extraordinarily romantic scenario, the pavilion's spatial-

³⁶¹ Jones and Woudstra, "Social Order Versus 'Natural' Disorder in the Chinese Garden."

experiential settings—the name of the pavilion and the poem behind it, the mirror on the wall, and five of the pavilion’s six sides being surrounded by water—make this scenario plausible. Additionally, the pavilion being surrounded by water means that it likely features a unique micro-climate, with a mild breeze coming from the pond. All of these settings suggest the possibility that an intense experience of Nearness, which involves all dimensions discussed above, can occur within the pavilion, even if the three-moon scenario is too good to be true. At an appropriate moment with the moon appearing in the sky, the imaginary world of poetry, the ideal world of ‘*shan shui*’, the reflected world in the mirror, and the physical world of the garden may be all merged into oneness to form a multi-dimensional experience. For one who is fully informed, various meaningful entities—the moon, the wind, the poetry, the rockery mountains, the pond, the legend of Chang’e, the friends nearby, and the self-consciousness inspired by sitting comfortably on the bench and viewing one’s reflection in the mirror—may all intertwine with one another, generating a high degree of Nearness, regardless of the number of ‘moons’ one can enjoy. I refer to this unusual, intense, multi-dimensional experience as ‘the climax of Nearness’.

The climax of Nearness is an extraordinary moment in which all of these meaningful entities converge, fusing into one’s experience within a short period of time. Such intense experiences of Nearness may not be common, as their occurrence relies on a wide range of temporal, spatial, psychological, and cognitive factors. However, they certainly do not occur only by chance. As the saying goes, ‘even the cleverest woman cannot cook without rice’. In other words, the pavilion must always already be ready to facilitate such an experience with all the necessary conditions being elaborately designed and implemented before they can occur.

5.5 A Ripple Model of Nearness

To summarise, the experience of Nearness occurs in the Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind through a two-fold process: first, modes of being are inspired by spatial conditions; next, meaningful entities are brought into Dasein’s world by these modes of being to become ‘inner-worldly’ beings. Diachronicity and synchronicity are two temporal relationships that may occur in one’s experience of the pavilion. As entities are brought into one’s experience, interrelating with one another, one may experience an intense, multi-dimensional experience of Nearness—an ‘explosion’ of experience with multiple modes of being occurring in a short period of time. This

'explosion' is the climax of Nearness. In order to visualise these findings, I developed a ripple-like network model. This section elaborates on the meaning of each key element in this model. (Fig. 5.11).

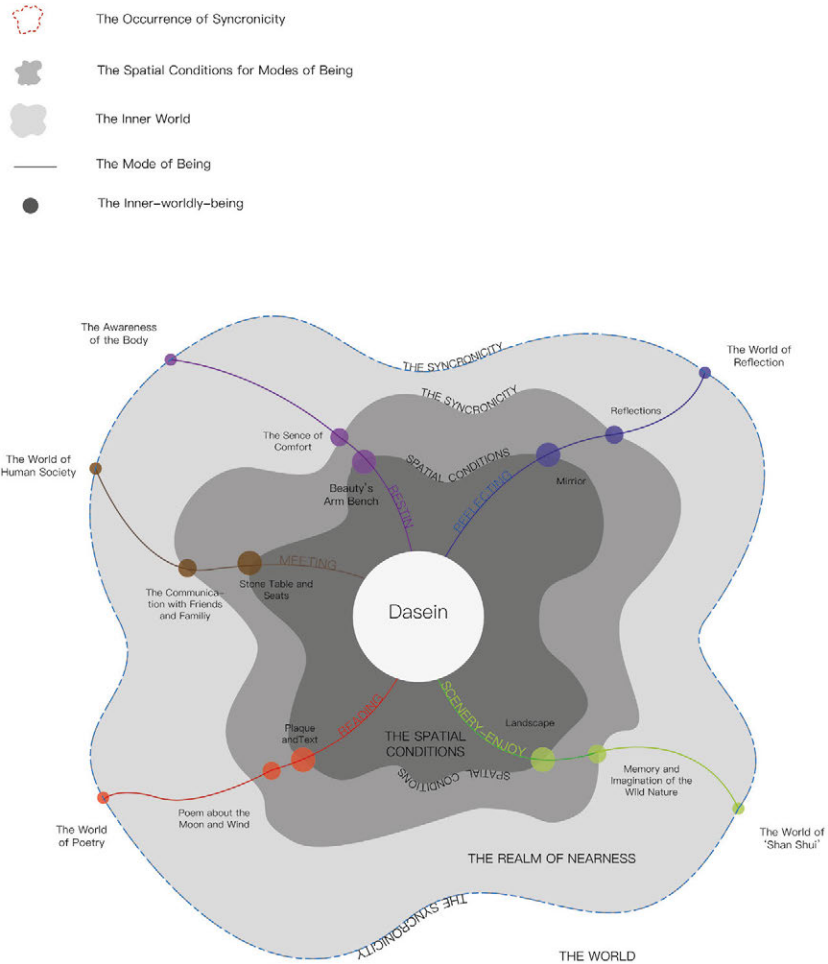


FIG. 5.11 A Ripple-Like Network Model of Nearness. Source: Lu Li.

The Built Environment as an Aggregation of Spatial Conditions

One may notice from the diagram that I position 'Dasein' in its centre to demonstrate the fact that the experience of Nearness always stems from how Dasein is related to the world. Starting from this understanding, as discussed in Chapter Two, a built environment (in the Heideggerian sense) is always an aggregation of the spatial conditions that allow Dasein to build up intimacy with the world.³⁶² Thus, in the centre of the model, the dark-grey area demonstrates the aggregation of solid spatial conditions within and around the Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind.

Typical Modes of Being

Various modes of being may occur while one lingers within the Pavilion due to its spatial conditions. In this model, the solid, coloured lines connecting directly to Dasein represent modes of being that can occur. It is worth noting that this model only shows modes of being that I identified as typical (i.e., resting, reading, reflecting, meeting, scenery-enjoying, lingering), meaning that the model may not be comprehensive.

Inner-Worldly Beings

Once these modes of being occur, they continuously bring various meaningful entities into Dasein's world, making them inner-worldly beings. Notably, this chapter identified two layers of inner-worldly beings. The first layer includes all of the entities from the physical built environment in which one's experience occurs, such as Beauty's Arm Bench, the inscribed plaque, the mirror on the wall, the stone table and seats set in the middle of the ground, and the scenic landscape around the pavilion. The model uses large dots with corresponding colours to demonstrate these entities, as they are physically nearest conditions for visitors within the pavilion. However, modes of being do not stop functioning at these entities. Instead, they continually bring additional entities into Dasein's world, making them the second-layer inner-worldly beings. For instance, sitting on Beauty's Arm Bench brings one a sense of comfort. Reading characters inscribed on the plaque reminds one of the poetry behind it. Looking at the mirror on the wall makes one notice the reflections. Gathering around the stone table facilitates intimate communication with friends and family. Enjoying the scenic landscape prompts one to recall their deep memories and imagine nature in its purest form. All of these dynamics lead

³⁶² Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*.

Dasein from the physical built environment to entities carrying particular meanings. These additional inner-worldly beings are represented by middle-sized dots of corresponding colours in the model.

Dimensional Worlds

Since these second-layer entities all belong to different dimensional worlds, they lead Dasein to a meaningful, multi-dimensional experience of Nearness. For instance, the sense of comfort brought about by resting leads one to greater awareness of their body. The communication with friends and family brought about by meeting connects one to human society. The poetry behind the pavilion's name brought about by reading leads one to the beautiful world of poetry. The view in the mirror brought about by reflecting leads one to an illusory world of reflection. Finally, the memories and imagination of nature brought about by scenery-enjoying lead one to the world of *shan shui*. Each of these modes of being forms a dimension of Dasein's inner world.³⁶³ Therefore, due to these modes of being, a multi-dimensional Nearness occurs in one's experience of the Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind. These worlds are at the furthest ends of one's experience of Nearness, as shown by the small dots in the model.

Synchronicity

When synchronicity occurs, inner-worldly beings of the same layer are simultaneously brought into Dasein's world, creating a multi-dimensional experience involving various worlds. This model uses three curved lines connecting those inner-worldly beings to demonstrate the state of synchronicity.

In general, this model illustrates how one's experience of Nearness occurs within the Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind. It clearly shows how these four worlds are interrelated and merge into one, forming a ripple-like experience. This model employs gently curved lines to suggest that, while the spatial conditions that facilitate these modes of being and the mechanisms through which they occur can be clearly described, the way of their occurrence may vary by case, individual, and moment.

³⁶³ It is worth noting that I also identified another two dimensional worlds—the world of being-with and the world of self—that are involved in one's experience of Nearness, respectively brought about by meeting and resting. While these two dimensions are labelled in the model in line with other dimensions, they are not detailed in this thesis because their occurrence in the literati gardens, in general, is not closely related to the others.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter dove into a basic spatial-experiential unit. It explored the occurrence of Nearness within a single lingering space in the Master of the Nets Garden. Overall, it revealed that the experience of Nearness occurs in an intense, complex, and multi-dimensional manner due to a series of interrelated spatial-experiential settings. From the above analysis, I can make the following conclusions.

First, rich Nearness conditions are embedded within the Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind. The identification of at least 12 spatial conditions that inspire six modes of being in a space as tiny as the pavilion clearly demonstrates the literati's successful intention to create a rich experience of Nearness within the garden. Second, the conditions of Nearness are both spatially and temporally interrelated within the garden, leading to diachronicity and synchronicity among modes of being. Third, the multi-dimensional Nearness created by integrating the four worlds—the world of perception, the world of representation, the world of imagination, and the world of reflection—is a distinctive quality of literati gardens that represents the literati's collective state of being. These dimensional worlds are so well integrated in one's experience of literati gardens—to a degree rarely seen in other built environments—that it explains the special nature of experiences in the Master of the Nets Garden. Fourth, the climax of Nearness, which generates an extraordinarily dense and intense experience, can only occur when large quantities of meaningful entities from different dimensions are involved in one's experience within a short period of time.

This chapter constitutes the first step towards a concrete phenomenological analysis based on the theoretical framework established in Chapter Two. It demonstrated the effectiveness of the theoretical framework in identifying, evaluating, and explaining Nearness. Despite its abstract nature and subtlety, its occurrence in a built space can be understood through the explicit method detailed above. This method revealed a series of architectural and landscape settings that can create a high-quality experience of Nearness. The method developed in this chapter is applied further in my analysis to explore how Nearness occurs within other spatial-experiential structural layers of the Master of the Nets Garden. With some adjustments, it could also be used to explore the occurrence of Nearness in other types of architectural and landscape environments. Still, the essential and timeless values rooted in the literati garden should be understood and inherited to modern human-built environments! Contemporary spatial practitioners (e.g., architects, urban planners, landscape designers) who are interested in conjuring atmospheric magic through their spatial practices would benefit from these discussions.

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6 The Occurrence of Nearness Within A Focused World

6.1 Introduction

Chapter Five explored how Nearness occurs within a single lingering space. While this type of occurrence is an essential ‘ingredient’ of facilitating rich experiences of Nearness within the Master of the Nets Garden, it is far from sufficient for understanding how the ‘dish’ is prepared to garner an extraordinarily delicious experience. Thus, this chapter continues to explore the essential spatial-experiential mechanisms of Nearness embedded within a focused world of the Chinese literati garden, which is contained in the second structural layer. As discussed in Chapter Four, the concept of a focused world refers to the phenomenal world of perception involving all entities that can be mindfully perceived from within a given architectural or landscape space as its focusing space. This chapter poses the following question: How does Nearness, as both a spatial and experiential quality, occur within the focused world formed by a focusing space within the Master of the Nets Garden? Taking the focused world formed by the Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind as its case study, this chapter assesses a series of critical spatial-experiential mechanisms embedded within it that leads to a strong, clearly structured, and multi-dimensional experience of Nearness.

The analysis is developed in five sections. Section 6.2 is a preliminary study on the focused world formed by the Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind. Using GIS-based spatial-visual analysis, it examines four of the pavilion’s important spatial-experiential characteristics: focused boundary, focused layers, focused frequency, and focused area. Section 6.3 explores how Nearness occurs within the focused world through a three-stage process: first, it recaptures the concept of spatial-experiential units established

in Chapter Four, arguing that such units that pass through the focusing space offer a relatively high degree of Nearness (Section 6.3.1); second, employing German playwright and novelist Gustav Freytag's model of dramatic structure, it identifies a five-component spatial-experiential structure in these relatively high-Nearness units within the focused world (Section 6.3.2); third, using the theoretical understanding of Nearness established in Chapter Two, it carefully examines how Nearness occurs within each of the five identified components (Section 6.3.3). Then, three relevant issues are discussed in the following sections: Section 6.4 details the multi-dimensional experience of Nearness within the focused world; Section 6.5 presents a quantitative analysis of the units of Nearness within the focused world; finally, Section 6.6 offers a theoretical analysis of intertextuality between the 'focusing' and the 'focused', a determinant factor responsible for shaping experiences within the focused world.

This chapter concludes that the relationship between one's experience within the focusing space and that within its focused world forms an important spatial-experiential structure responsible for shaping one's experience of Nearness within the garden. I refer to this inherent entanglement between the two experiences the FS-FW structure (i.e., the focusing space-focused world structure). Therefore, this chapter constitutes an exploration of the Master of the Nets Garden's FS-FW structure, which, through a series of relevant mechanisms, enables one's experience of Nearness to extend from single lingering spaces to the entire garden.

6.2 Mapping a Focused World: A Spatial-Visual Analysis

The elementary analysis carried out in Chapter Four revealed a three-layer spatial-experiential structure embedded within the Master of the Nets Garden as well as other literati gardens. Among these three layers, experiences that occur within focused worlds is an indisputably significant element, serving as a bridge between the 'system' (the entire garden) and its 'cells' (single lingering spaces). But what characteristics can such focused worlds within a literati garden possess? The answer to this question is critical, as their characteristics inevitably impact the way one's experience occurs within them. Therefore, before exploring the mechanisms involved in the occurrence of Nearness, this section examines the essential characteristics embedded within the focused world formed by the Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind.

6.2.1 Method

I already mentioned why GIS-based spatial-visual analysis is used in the conduct of effective spatial-visual analysis in Chapter Five when discussing the spatial-experiential conditions embedded within the pavilion that facilitate high-quality scenery-enjoying. Since scenery-enjoying is a special mode of being that allows one to extend experience from a single lingering space to its surroundings, the method to explore the spatial conditions of scenery-enjoying can also be extended to explore the focused world, which consists of all of the focusable surroundings of a lingering space. On the one hand, mapping constitutes a valuable medium with which to associate and visualise information, offering a solid understanding of the complex and abstract aspects of space.³⁶⁴ On the other hand, as discussed in Chapter Four, visual sense is dominant in shaping one's experience of a Chinese literati garden, where 'seeing has a psychological value that drives the visitor's exploration'.³⁶⁵ Therefore, mapping, as a tool that visually bridges spatial reality and spatial experience, enables us to achieve a greater understanding of one of the most critical aspects of the focused world: the spatial-visual relationship between a focusing space and its focused world. Technically, the spatial-visual relationship between a specific focusing space and its focused world can always be analysed through mapping, either manually or digitally. As an effective analytical tool, GIS aids in the precise conduct of spatial-visual analysis and, in turn, phenomenological analysis.

To conduct a solid GIS-based spatial-visual analysis, I employ a raster digital terrain model (DTM), established based on Liu Dunzhen's map in *Suzhou Classical Garden*, as the foundation.³⁶⁶ In this model, two categories of elements, plants and walls, are distinctively addressed according to their heights: canopies and walls above eye level are neglected, with only the area and height of trunks included; vegetation (such as shrubs with dense canopies) and walls below eye level are included as solid masses. Each of these analytical points simulates a spatial-visual experience that one may have at a certain point standing within the pavilion. My analysis of scenery-enjoying conditions in the previous chapter suggested some qualities stemming from the inherent relationship between the pavilion and its focused world. Here, by employing GIS-based mapping, I study the pavilion's focused world in greater detail.

³⁶⁴ Janet Abrams and Peter Hall, *Else/Where: Mapping - New Cartographies of Networks and Territories*, 1st ed., ed. Janet Abrams and Peter Hall (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Design Institute, 2006).

³⁶⁵ Lu, "Lost in Translation," 502.

³⁶⁶ The DTM is based on the garden map drawn by Liu Dunzhen in *Suzhou Classical Garden* and complemented with information on vegetation canopies and buildings derived from field surveys. For the original map by Liu Dunzhen, see: Liu Dunzhen, *Suzhou Classical Gardens [苏州古典园林]*, 1st ed. (Nanjing: China Architecture and Building Press, 1979).

6.2.2 Results

The results reveal some of the most basic aspects of the focused world formed by the Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind. In this section, I examine four essential spatial-visual aspects—focused area, focused boundary, focused layers, and focused attribution—of the focused world formed by the pavilion.

Focused Area

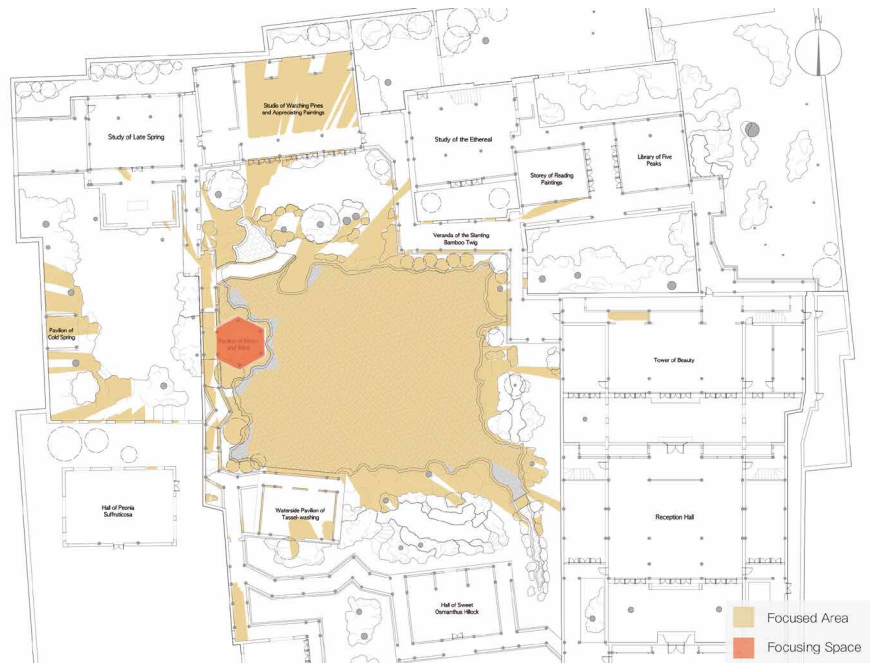


FIG. 6.1 Focused Area Analysis. Source: Lu Li and Liu Mei.

The first result of the GIS analysis reveals the visual zone that a visitor can cover from the accessible area of the pavilion, which I refer to as the ‘focused area’ (Fig. 6.1). As a direct representation of a visitor’s visual experience within the focusing space, this factor provides a basis for exploring other spatial-visual characteristics of the focused world. The red and yellow colours in the diagram indicate the focusing space (i.e., the Pavilion) and its focused area, respectively. The result indicates that the pavilion dominates one’s experience of the entire garden. While the pavilion only occupies an area of 13 m², it covers a focused area of 652 m²—almost the entire central landscape area. Moreover, it is worth

noting that some focused areas extend beyond the central landscape area through intentional openings in walls. For instance, a visitor's sight may penetrate through the lattice window in the west wall of the corridor adjacent to the pavilion and, as a result, generate a focused area that includes landscape settings in the west courtyard, which features the Cold Spring Pavilion. In these 'penetrated' areas, landscape elements are often deliberately arranged to enable visitors to encounter them from afar through these openings. Scholars have passionately analysed the visual effects achieved through spatial-experiential techniques related to this mechanism, such as borrowing views, framing views, and leaking views. However, understanding them as purely spatial techniques to achieve visual or geometric effects would be an oversimplified or misleading interpretation. Underlying these techniques is a deep, dynamic, and complex capture-and-release mechanism that serves to attract, guide, and manipulate one's attention without them being necessarily aware of it. Above all, the analysis of the focused area provides an important base for understanding how one's experience occurs within a focused world.

Focused Boundary

Based on the focused area, my analysis identifies a focused boundary as another essential aspect of the focused world. In short, a focused boundary is the physical boundary that marks where a focused world starts and ends (Fig. 6.2). It is distinct from the focused area, which indicates the horizontal zone that one's vision can cover. Focused boundary, in principle, includes all entities involved in one's perception from within a focusing space. Again, visual accessibility is the dominant factor in the formation of a focused boundary. In other words, the boundary indicates how far one's sights can reach. As shown in Figure 6.2, in our case study, the continuous focused boundary (highlighted by dark purple lines around the focused area) is formed by a series of entities—walls, rockeries, shrubs, and trees—that disrupt vision from the perspective of the pavilion. Despite the relatively small size of the pavilion, its focused boundary contains a wide range of landscape elements, including a water area (1), two crafted rockery areas (2–3), and numerous carefully arranged plants (4–11); architectural elements, including two halls (12–13), a veranda (12), two bridges (13–14), a covered corridor connecting the surrounding buildings (15), a waterside kiosk (16), and a small pavilion (smaller than the Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind) that can be glimpsed through the lattice opening in the corridor's wall (17); cultural elements, including a plaque inscribed with the pavilion's name and a pair of couplets hanging from the pavilion's columns; as well as natural elements that do not belong to the garden, including the moon and the wind. All of these elements belonging to different categories are carefully designed and arranged in relation to the pavilion.



FIG. 6.2 Focused Boundary Analysis. Source: Lu Li and Liu Mei.

Focused Layers

Within the general focused boundary identified above, there are numerous subordinate boundaries. These subordinate boundaries represent visual disruptions stemming from spatial-experiential settings within the focused world. Any visual disruption caused by a physical entity constitutes a subordinate boundary. Consequently, these visual disruptions create a series of spatial-visual layers, which I refer to as 'focused layers'. A focused layer is an area that can be 'focused' without visual disruption. As demonstrated in Figure 6.3, in our case study, the start and the end of each focused layer is highlighted with red and blue lines, respectively, with micro arrows on these lines indicating visual direction. The numbers at the end of each orange line indicate how many focused layers are generated within a focused world once a specific visual direction is set. It is clear from my analysis that more focused layers are generated when a visitor's sight penetrates architectural spaces through certain spatial-visual settings (Fig. 6.3). As suggested by the ancient Chinese painter and painting theorist Guo Xi (1020–1090), a painter should create three senses of distance—the high distance, the level distance, and the deep distance—in landscape paintings. This logic can also be applied to the creation of

landscape layers in a garden.³⁶⁷ Most literati gardens feature a series of architectural and landscape settings (e.g., openings, screen windows, lattice partition doors) to generate rich, flexible, and distinct focused layers, highlighting the shared aesthetic principles between literati gardens and landscape paintings.

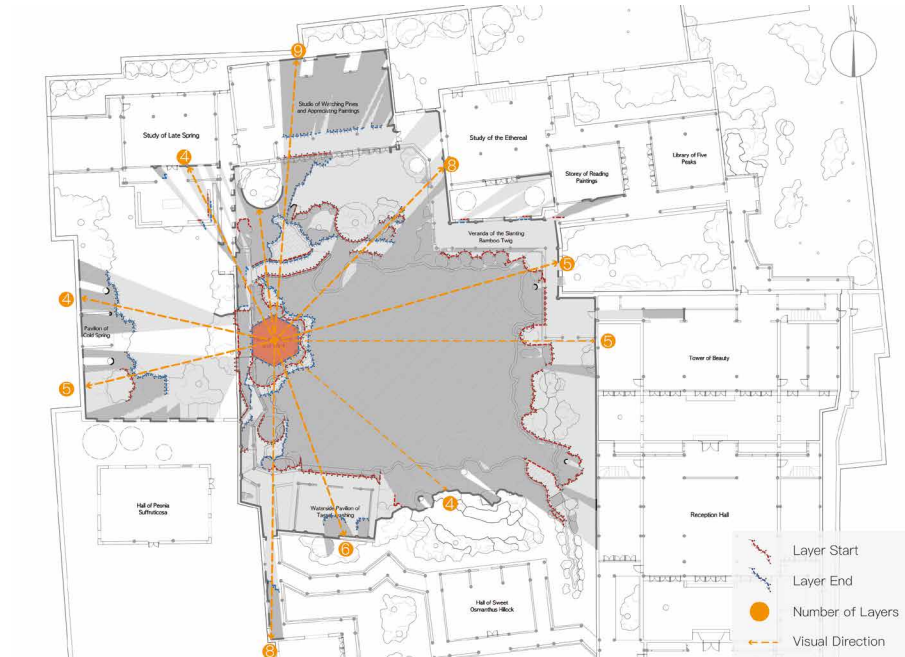


FIG. 6.3 Focused Layers Analysis. Source: Lu Li and Liu Mei.

Focused Distribution

Besides these three characteristics, a fourth one, the focused distribution, can be precisely analysed through GIS. The result shows how many visual points the pavilion contains to cover four quantile areas (i.e., coloured areas of the same size that equally possess one quarter of the entire focused area), revealing the spatial distribution of one's mindful perception (Fig. 6.4). In Figure 6.4, green areas are

³⁶⁷ See: Guo, "The Lofty Message of Forest and Streams.," Dong, *Nine Chapters on Gardening*; Jing Xiao and Charlie Q. L. Xue, "Architecture in Ji Cheng's *The Craft of Gardens*: A Visual Study of the Role of Representation in Counteracting the Influence of the Pictorial idea in Chinese Scholar Gardens of the Ming Period," *Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes* 35, no. 3 (2015).

marked with the numbers 0–28, meaning that these areas can be covered by no more than 28 visual points within the pavilion. Likewise, the yellow areas can be covered by 29–53 visual points, the orange areas can be covered by 54–55 visual points, and the red ones can be covered by 56–64 visual points. Meanwhile, as represented by grey circles, many key landscape elements within these high-frequency visual areas (i.e., areas with a visual frequency higher than 53, shown in orange and red) are carefully designed arranged to form visual foci with aesthetic and symbolic meaning. For instance, the rocky area in front of the Hall of Sweet Osmanthus Hillock on the south side of the central landscape area is a significant visual focus that is thoughtfully designed to symbolically represent natural mountains. At the same time, this rocky area obstructs the view from the pavilion, making the Hall of Sweet Osmanthus Hillock only vaguely visible to someone looking from within the pavilion. As a result of the garden’s high-quality aesthetic composition, these foci are more likely to stimulate aesthetic pleasure in one’s experience.

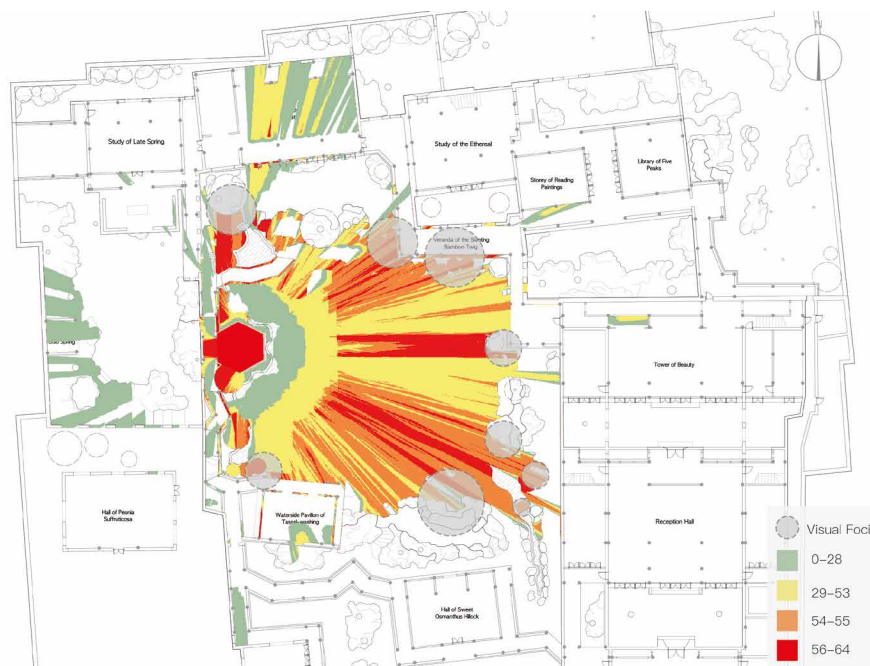


FIG. 6.4 Focused Distribution Analysis. Source: Lu Li and Liu Mei.

6.2.3 Reflection

In order to precisely analyse and represent how one's experience spreads from a single lingering space to its focused world within the garden, I conducted GIS-based spatial-visual analysis. The results involve four essential aspects of a focused world (the focused area, the focused boundary, the focused layers, and the focused distribution), each revealing a few characteristics embedded within the focused world formed by the pavilion. Most of these characteristics are common in Chinese literati gardens and, thus, can be examined in relation to various specific garden-making techniques. These results constitute an important foundation for further analysis of the spatial-experiential mechanisms of Nearness embedded within the focused world of the pavilion. However, before moving on to explore those complex mechanisms, I must first reflect on the results and draw some preliminary conclusions.

First, there is a clear relationship between the focusing space and its focused areas. The pavilion provides a place from which these areas can be focused on; in turn, these areas provide places where one can apprehend the potential for an enjoyable experience within the pavilion. In other words, experiences within the pavilion and that within the pavilion's focused world inform each other. As I will argue later in this chapter, this relationship is key to understanding how experiences of Nearness occur within a focused world. Second, the pavilion's capacity to connect a diverse range of entities to form its focused world is rarely seen in most types of built environments, especially in modern urban environments, where focused worlds are either entirely absent or relatively boring. For example, from a high-rise apartment building, the world of perception is so vast and thin that one can hardly focus on anything meaningful outside. Third, within a focused world, physical boundaries of various entities are decisive in forming and distributing visual frequencies. These physical boundaries are carefully designed to manipulate our mindful perceptions, leading to the generation of multiple spatial layers. Fourth, most landscape elements appearing in high-frequency visual areas, such as the rocky area in front of the Hall of Sweet Osmanthus Hillock, are thoughtfully designed and arranged to form a high-quality aesthetic composition, creating meaningful visual foci that stimulate pleasure among visitors. Above all, these results demonstrate how architectural and landscape elements are organised, interrelated, and distributed under the FS-FW structure. While FS-FW structure is noticed across different human-built environments, the spatial-experiential qualities engendered by this structure vary greatly from case to case. For example, if one were to apply this study's methods to the focused world formed by the Barcelona Pavilion designed by Mies van der Rohe, they would likely get completely different results from my study on the Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind.

The results of my preliminary analysis suggest that, within Chinese literati gardens, experiences are elaborately formed, manipulated, and driven by the FS-FW structure. David Hall and Roger Ames, in 'The Cosmological Setting of Chinese Gardens', suggest that 'for the Chinese, the act of enclosing is most often a means of emphasising the centre rather than the periphery'.³⁶⁸ While this assertion is largely true, I would argue that in addition to setting up physical enclosures in their gardens, the ancient Chinese literati also elaborately arranged the FS-FW structure to emphasise the centre. For the ancient literati, 'the world is a set of foci which negotiate relatedness to what at the moment is deemed "centre"'.³⁶⁹ The next chapter demonstrates that, in the Master of the Nets Garden, the central landscape area is closely related to four different focusing spaces through the FS-FW structure, making the water-focused landscape area the centre of not only the garden but also the universe.

6.3 The Occurrence of Nearness Within a Focused World

This section continues to explore a narrative pattern deeply embedded in one's experience of the focused world. The preliminary study detailed above offered an understanding of how a focused world within a literati garden is formed and how it can shape experiences of Nearness. Notably, the four examined spatial-visual aspects all stem from experiences that occur within the pavilion itself. However, these aspects also impact one's experience when they move into other segments of the focused world. In order to explore that dynamic, I must shift my analytical perspective from one within the pavilion to one within the focused world formed by the pavilion. To make this shift, I must employ the concept of the spatial-experiential unit that I established in Chapter Four.

³⁶⁸ Hall and Ames, "The Cosmological Setting of Chinese Gardens," 175.

³⁶⁹ Hall and Ames, "The Cosmological Setting of Chinese Gardens," 176.

6.3.1 The Spatial-Experiential Unit Within a Focused World

As defined in Chapter Four, a spatial-experiential unit is a 'process of experience that occurs within an identifiable spatial unit'.³⁷⁰ Based on the three-layer spatial-experiential structure, Chapter Four identified three layers of spatial-experiential units: those occurring within single lingering spaces, those occurring within a focused world, and those occurring within the garden as a whole. This section explores how Nearness occurs in a spatial-experiential unit of the second layer—from the moment one enters a focused world to the moment one leaves it. The spatial-experiential unit at this level is a bridge between experiences within a focusing space (as a single cell) and those within an entire garden (as a complex system) (Fig. 6.5).

Numerous spatial-experiential units can be extracted from a given focused world. While some of these units pass through the focusing space, others do not. Those that do pass through the lingering space are special because, as discussed in Chapter Four, such lingering spaces play a significant role in shaping one's experience of a literati garden. Consequently, the spatial-experiential units that pass through lingering spaces enable visitors to enjoy the most elaborately formed experiences of Nearness (Fig. 6.6). In my case study, among all of the spatial-experiential units that can occur within the focused world formed by the Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind, a high degree of Nearness occurs only when one physically encounters the pavilion and stays within it for a while. While units that do not pass through the pavilion can also inspire modes of being and foster intimacy with the world in a dynamic manner, the experiences generated through them are mild relative to those generated by units that do pass through the pavilion. Therefore, those units passing through the focusing space are key to understanding how Nearness occurs within a focused world.

³⁷⁰ See Chapter Four.

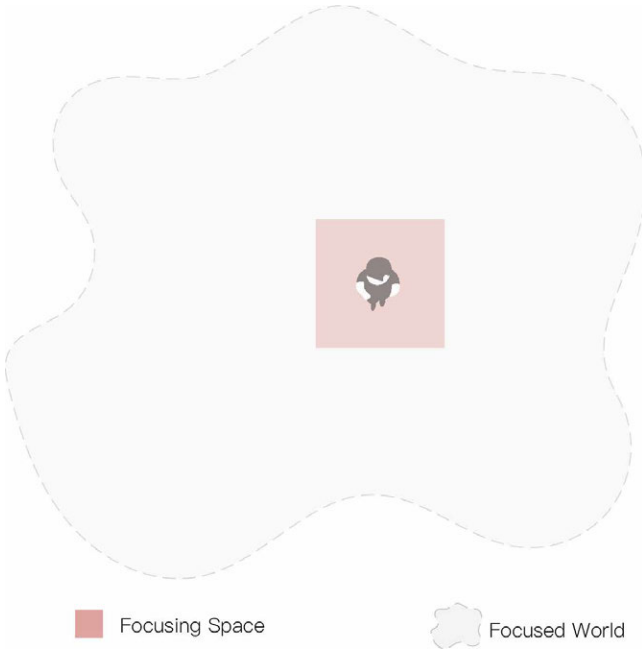


FIG. 6.5 The Concept of a Focused World. Source: Lu Li.

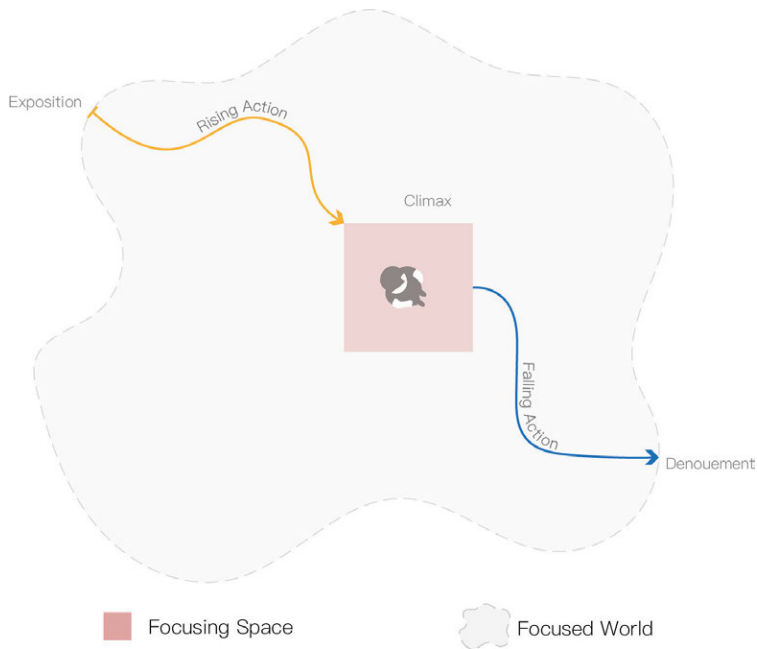


FIG. 6.6 A Unit Passing Through the Focusing Space. Source: Lu Li.

6.3.2 A Five-Act Wave Structure

Given the significant experiential role of units that pass through the focusing space, I closely examined many of them during my on-site investigation. In each of the spatial-experiential units I examined, there appears to be a stable embedded narrative pattern that fundamentally shapes the way in which experience occurs within a focused world. My intuition regarding these narrative patterns echoes John Makeham's analytical approach to the Confucian role of names in Chinese traditional gardens, through which he formulates his analysis 'loosely around the notion of play as an appropriate model for Chinese gardens'.³⁷¹ Further, Makeham claims that 'only in the act of playing can the garden be said to exist'.³⁷² I argue that one's experience in the Master of the Nets Garden comprises acts following a structural narrative pattern—but this pattern has yet to be identified.

Through phenomenological reduction, I identified five structural components—three key moments and two courses—that clearly frame a spatial-experiential unit and repeatedly create similar experiences of Nearness within a focused world. This narrative structure can be aptly described by Gustav Freytag's model of dramatic structure in terms of how these components shape one's spatial experience within a focused world. In *Die Technik des Dramas (The Technique of Drama)*, Freytag lays out what has come to be known as 'Freytag's Pyramid', articulating five structural components that he views as significant in driving the narrative plot: exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and denouement (Fig. 6.7).³⁷³ I would argue that these five components can be clearly identified in any spatial-experiential unit that passes through the focusing space of a literati garden. Among them, exposition, climax, and denouement are three critical moments in the development of relationships with the focusing space, while rising action and falling action are two courses developed between the three critical moments. Freytag's Pyramid effectively describes and interprets the course of one's experience within a focused world as one that is 'subordinated to narrative organisation and to a goal-monitoring cognition of its overall pattern'³⁷⁴ rather than one that is full of randomly and spontaneously generated intentions. Nevertheless, its rigid form is not the most appropriate way to visualise one's smoothly flowing experience in a

³⁷¹ Makeham, "The Confucian Role of Names in Traditional Chinese Gardens," 187.

³⁷² Makeham, "The Confucian Role of Names in Traditional Chinese Gardens," 187.

³⁷³ Gustav Freytag, Eliás J. MacEwan, *Freytag's Technique of the Drama: An Exposition of Dramatic Composition and Art*, 4 ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1904).

³⁷⁴ Lu, "Lost in Translation," 502.

garden. Therefore, I modified Freytag's Pyramid to create a five-act wave structure. With curves instead of corners, this model more precisely describes the spatial-experiential units that go through the focusing space while addressing the more common units, which do not go through the focusing space (Fig. 6.8).

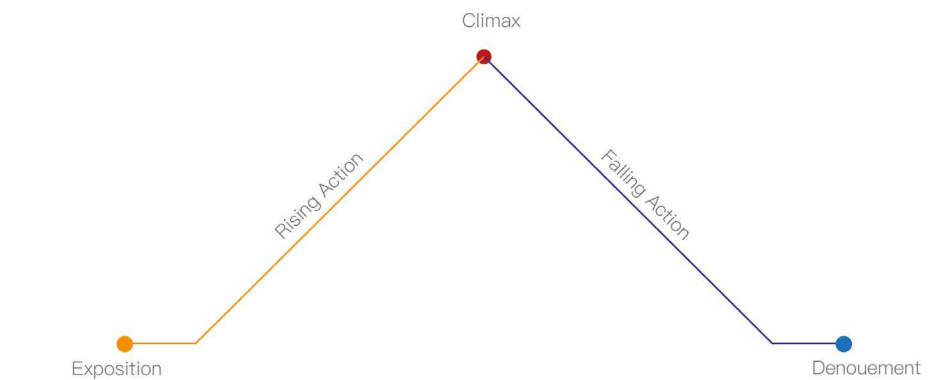


FIG. 6.7 Freytag's Five-Act 'Pyramid' Model. Source: Lu Li.

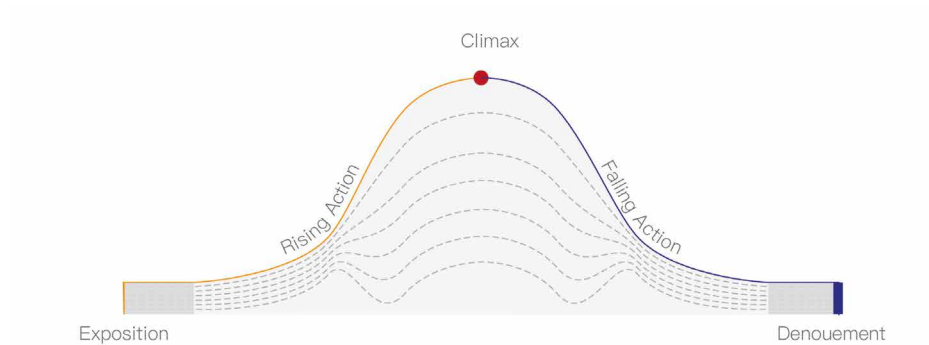


FIG. 6.8 A Five-Act 'Wave' Model Based on Freytag's 'Pyramid' Model. Source: Lu Li.

Freytag's Pyramid enables me to recognise five similar phases in one's experience of the Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind and its focused world. In my on-site investigation, I was able to clearly identify three critical moments before even conducting a rigorous spatial-visual analysis: exposition (the moment one encounters the focused world and becomes aware of being in a world dominated by the pavilion), climax (from the moment one steps into the pavilion to the moment one leaves it), and Denouement (the moment that one leaves the focused world while retaining

its impression in their consciousness for a while before it fades away). Meanwhile, I could also easily identify the two courses between the critical moments. Rising action is the process that begins when one encounters the focused world and ends when one steps into the pavilion. Falling action, inversely, is the process that begins when one steps out of the pavilion and ends when one leaves the focused world.

Many spatial-experiential settings are carefully embedded between the pavilion and entities around it, meaning that these five acts occur smoothly and dynamically. As a result, there is tension throughout this entire process between the visitors and the focusing space, like a string in their consciousness with them on one side and a satisfactory experience on the other. Deeply rooted in the FS-FW structure, this narrative pattern is both spatial and experiential: on the one hand, it stems from a series of spatial conditions that must be embedded within the garden before one can experience it; on the other hand, it describes an experiential framework that shapes one's experience within the focused world. In brief, it reveals not only the structure of one's experience but also the structure of space facilitating that experience. Closely examining each act in this process will enable an exploration of how Nearness occurs within a focused world.

6.3.3 The Occurrence of Nearness Within a Focused World

The above analysis explored the structure embedded within typical spatial-experiential units of Nearness—those that pass through the focusing space—within a focused world. However, how the experience of Nearness occurs in relation to spatial conditions remains a mystery. As established in Chapter Two, one's experience of Nearness always occurs through various modes of being as a result of Dasein's bringing-near tendency. Chapter Two also asserted that numerous spatial conditions are necessary to inspire the occurrence of a mode of being.³⁷⁵ Following this logic and using the focused world formed by the Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind as its case study, this section addresses three questions: 1) What modes of being can occur within the pavilion's focused world? 2) How do modes of being occur within each act of the five-act wave structure? 3) What spatial conditions are embedded within the pavilion's focused world that inspire the occurrence of these modes of being?

³⁷⁵ A mode of being is 'a state of being of Da-sein that repeatedly occurs in the same way', which consistently brings meaningful entities into Dasein's world and makes them 'inner-worldly beings'. See Chapter Two for more information.

6.3.3.1 An Overall Analysis

To address these questions, I first conduct an overall analysis of how Nearness occurs within the pavilion's focused world. With a particular focus on what modes of being can occur within the focused world and how they are related to one another, I developed the five-act model again with greater precision to ensure that it could describe how modes of being occur within each specific act of the five-act wave structure.



FIG. 6.9 Modes of Being that Can Occur Within the Focused World of the Pavilion. Source: Lu Li.

As demonstrated in Chapter Four, ten typical modes of being can occur in the Master of the Nets Garden: wandering, lingering, capturing/releasing, ascending/descending, crossing, resting, reflecting, reading, scenery-enjoying, and meeting. During my on-site investigation, I carefully examined each of these ten modes and found that all of them can naturally and comfortably occur in the focused world formed by the Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind (Fig. 6.9). While a precise outline of the process that identified these modes of being would be complex and, thus, beyond the scope of this thesis, I would like to point out that all of the identified

modes of being were derived from continual and iterative analytical reflection, during which each was examined repeatedly to ensure that it can be explained within the theoretical framework established in Chapter Two. As already established, six of the ten modes of being—resting, reflecting, reading, lingering, meeting, and scenery-enjoying—are involved in the occurrence of Nearness within the pavilion itself, pointing to the pavilion’s dominant role as the focusing space in shaping one’s experience of its focused world.

As already demonstrated, spatial conditions are significant not only for inspiring modes of being but also, at a deeper level, for developing temporal relationships among modes of being. In line with what I uncovered in the case study on experiences within the pavilion, I detected diachronicity and synchronicity in experiences within its focused world.³⁷⁶ Of course, some of the identified modes of being are more dominant than others. In each of the five acts, there is a clearly dominant mode of being motivating the spatial-experiential flow. Without this dominant mode of being, the ‘act’ would be very difficult—or even impossible. The dominant modes of being are as follows: capturing in exposition, lingering in climax, releasing in denouement, and wandering in both rising action and falling action. Other modes of being, such as reading, descending, ascending, resting, and reflecting, are also noticeable, but much less dominant.

Based on this understanding, I developed a more complex model that describes how Nearness occurs within the focused world. As shown in Figure 6.10, under the lead of the dominant mode of being during each act, one’s spatial-experiential flow occurs with a noticeable diachronicity: starting from capturing, developing through wandering, reaching its climax with lingering, fading away through wandering, and, finally, ending with releasing (Fig. 6.10). However, while the overall process is certainly diachronic, there is likely synchronicity during each individual act. For instance, while wandering dominates rising and falling actions, those acts also feature a significant amount of scenery-enjoying. Through this synchronicity, the garden enables an experience of ‘wandering among the mountains and waters’. Similarly, while lingering dominates experiences within the pavilion, reading, scenery-enjoying, resting, and reflecting may occur at the same time. Usually, in the Climax stage, synchronicity occurs to the highest degree. In line with the dynamics of the pavilion as a single lingering space, the pavilion’s focused world features substantial synchronicity and diachronicity among modes of being.

³⁷⁶ While synchronicity describes modes of being occurring simultaneously, diachronicity describes modes of being occurring sequentially. See Chapter Five for more information on diachronicity and synchronicity.

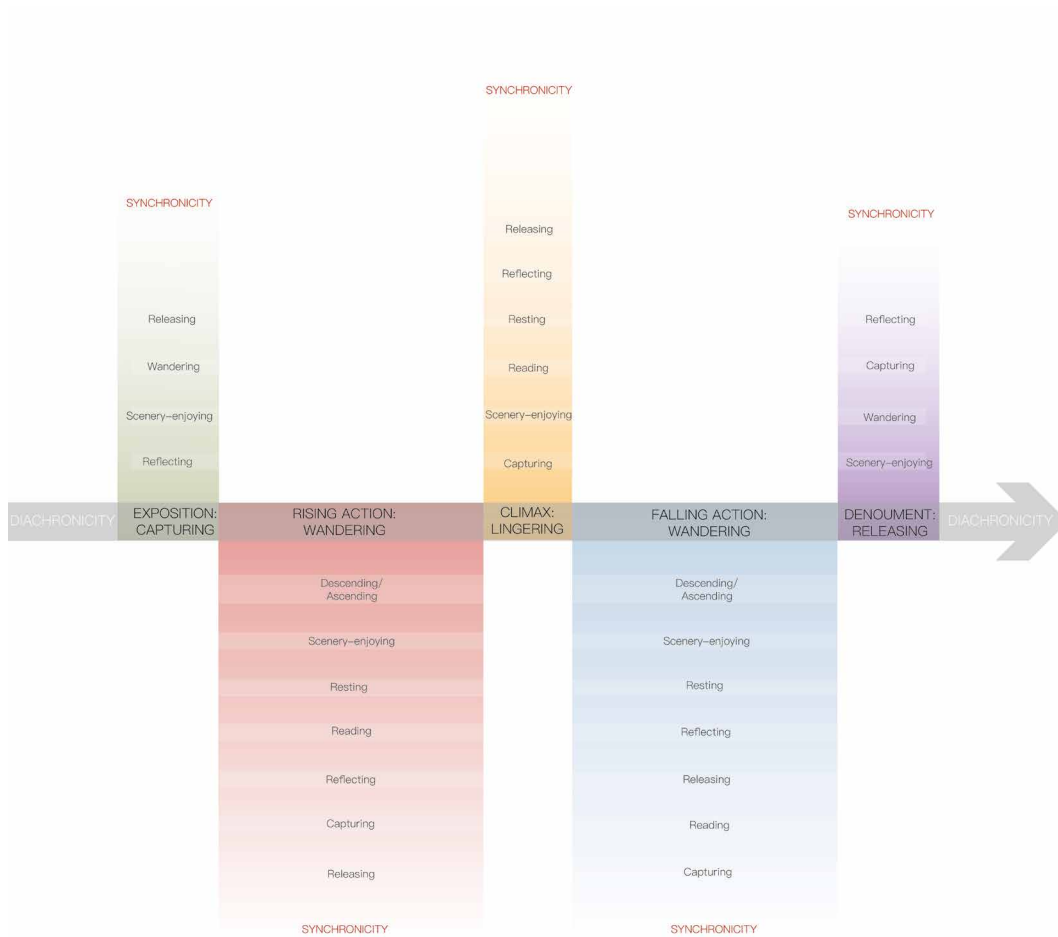


FIG. 6.10 A Model Describing How Nearness Occurs Within the Focused World. Source: Lu Li.

6.3.3.2 Spatial-Experiential Flow in the Five-Act Structure

Within the pavilion's focused world, I assessed the spatial-experiential flow of the five-act structure through iterative, on-site phenomenological reduction. In the following, I investigate each stage of the model to reveal in greater detail how experiences of Nearness occur within a focused world.

Exposition

The mode of being that dominates exposition is capturing. During this act, one encounters the focused world while capturing the presence of the intriguing focusing space and its various surroundings. Consciously or unconsciously, one immediately realises the possibility of having a comfortable and joyous experience within the focusing space due to its related spatial conditions. A thought appears in one's mind: 'I should check out that place over there!' The climax has not yet occurred, but that does not stop one from imagining and expecting it. This moment is important, as it enables one to be aware of the FS-FW structure as well as the underlying correlations among its entities.

In the case study, the spatial conditions for exposition can be precisely identified at the ten entrances of the focused world at the focused boundary, where the presence of pavilion is captured for the first time. At this moment, one immediately apprehends the potential for an enjoyable experience within the pavilion through its relationships with various surrounding entities: the water area around it, the rocky area next to it, the bridges leading to it, and the corridor connected to it, all attracting one to move towards the pavilion in anticipation of the potential climax (Fig. 6.11).

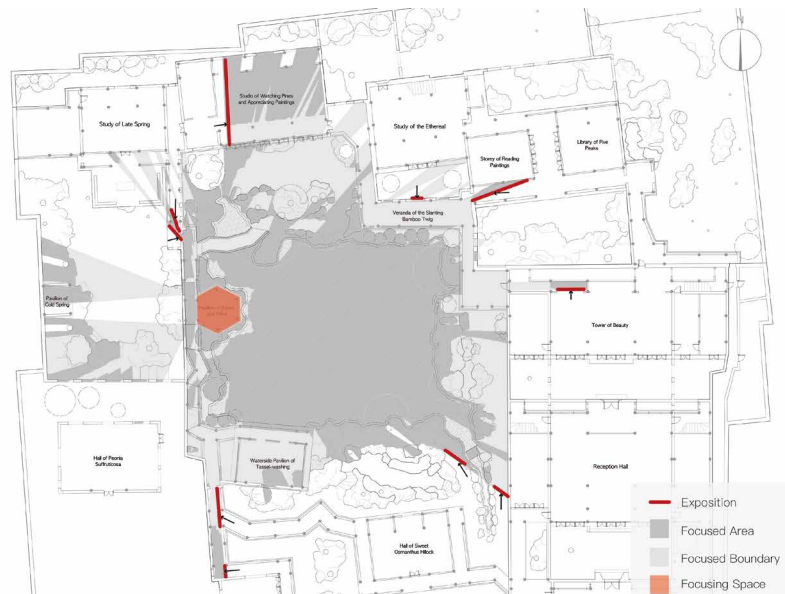


FIG. 6.11 Capturing Conditions During Exposition. Source: Lu Li and Liu Mei.

Rising Action

Rising action begins as soon as one starts to move towards the pavilion, ending only once they have physically stepped into it. During this act, one registers various interesting entities within the focused world while developing a desire to explore it. Wandering is dominant during this act, though scenery-enjoying, descending, ascending, and resting also typically occur. Additionally, capturing and releasing occur dynamically during this act: while many entities are freshly captured, others are randomly released. In fact, many entities may be captured and released several times, repeatedly appearing and disappearing in one's consciousness. Entities captured and released during rising action are generally arranged in spatial-experiential relationships with the focusing space. Thus, their involvement in one's experience continuously enhance this relationship, developing their expectation of the climax that may occur in the focusing space.

In the case study, the spatial conditions for wandering include the pedestrian areas that allow one to wander from the ten entrances of the focused world (at the focused boundary) to the pavilion. Starting from the entrances, one wanders towards the pavilion while encountering various meaningful entities during this act, all of which seducing them to move towards the pavilion for an expected intriguing experience (Fig. 6.12).

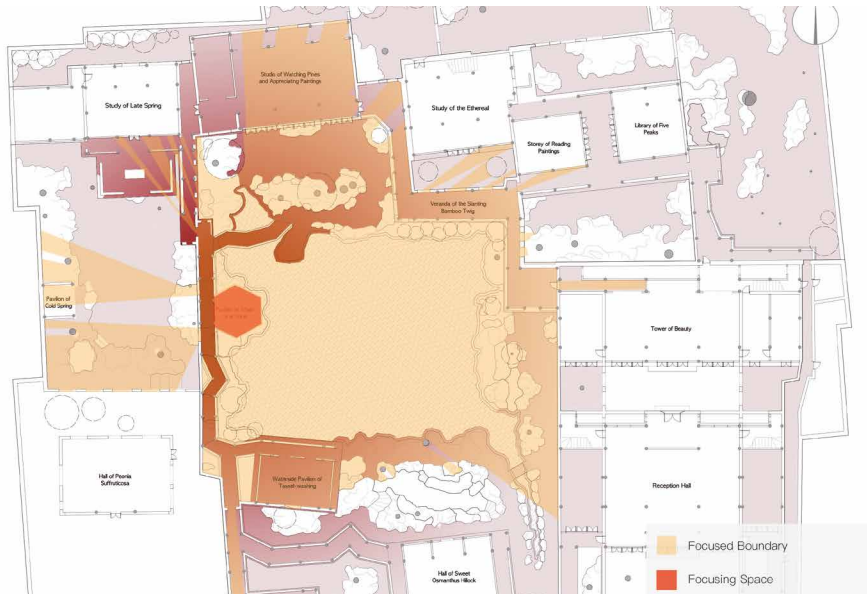


FIG. 6.12 Wandering Conditions During Rising Action. Source: Lu Li and Liu Mei.

Climax

The climax act takes place from the moment one steps into the focusing space until the moment one leaves it. Linger is the dominant mode of being during this act, driven by spatial conditions that allow one to comfortably and pleasantly remain in the space. During this act, one simply enjoys staying where they are, focusing on their present experience rather than being motivated to another destination. While lingering there, what had previously been expected and imagined begins to merge with one's real experience. As a result, one is less drawn to other irrelevant entities while one's 'inner world' becomes more focusable.

In the case study, as discussed in Chapter Five, all pavilion's embedded spatial conditions may result in lingering. While one lingers within the pavilion, reading, reflecting, scenery-enjoying, and resting may occur as well. As a result of lingering, one can read the inscribed plaque, enjoy the picturesque landscape, imagine the scene conveyed by the pavilion's underlying poetry, and view the reflection in the mirror. Finally, the corporeal world of the garden, the represented world of *shan shui*, the imagined world of poetry, and the reflected world in the mirror can all converge to engender a climax of Nearness (Fig. 6.13).

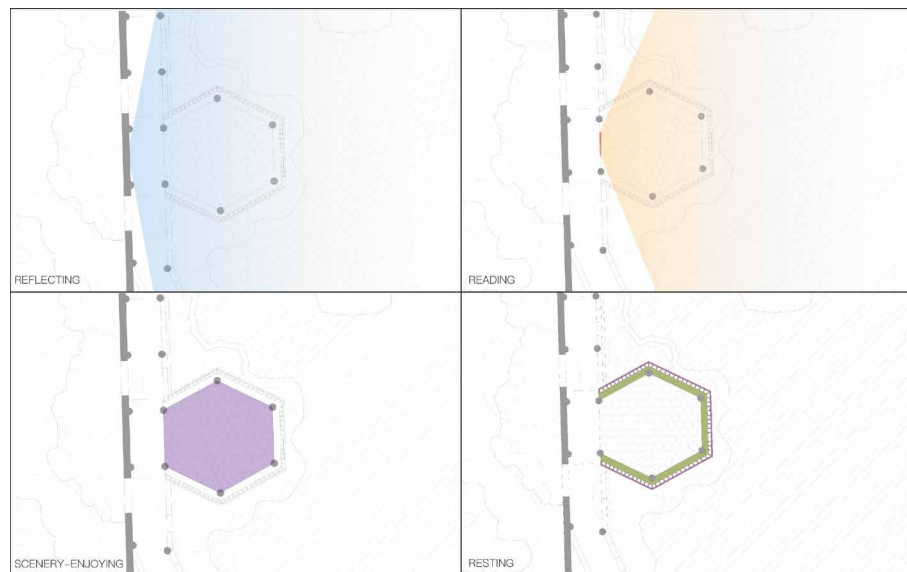


FIG. 6.13 Spatial Conditions for the Four Essential Modes of Being While Linger in the Climax Act. Source: Lu Li.

Falling Action

Falling action begins when one physically steps out of the focusing space and ends when they can no longer recapture it. During this act, one begins to register interesting entities within a different focused world despite still feeling enticed by the one they are already in. Wandering is, once again, the dominant mode of being during falling action, as one begins to move towards another focused world. In line with rising action, scenery-enjoying, resting, reading, descending, and ascending occur alongside wandering, and capturing and releasing are once again dynamic. In contrast to rising action, however, during falling action, increasingly more entities in the current focused world fade from one's consciousness. While many of them disappear from and reappear in one's consciousness for a while, they are ultimately left behind. Like in rising action, entities captured and released during falling action are arranged in spatial-experiential relationships with the focusing space. Therefore, their involvement in one's experience persistently enhance this relationship, deepening one's impression of the climax that one just experienced. In the meantime, entities from another focused world are encountered, triggering another plot of five acts.

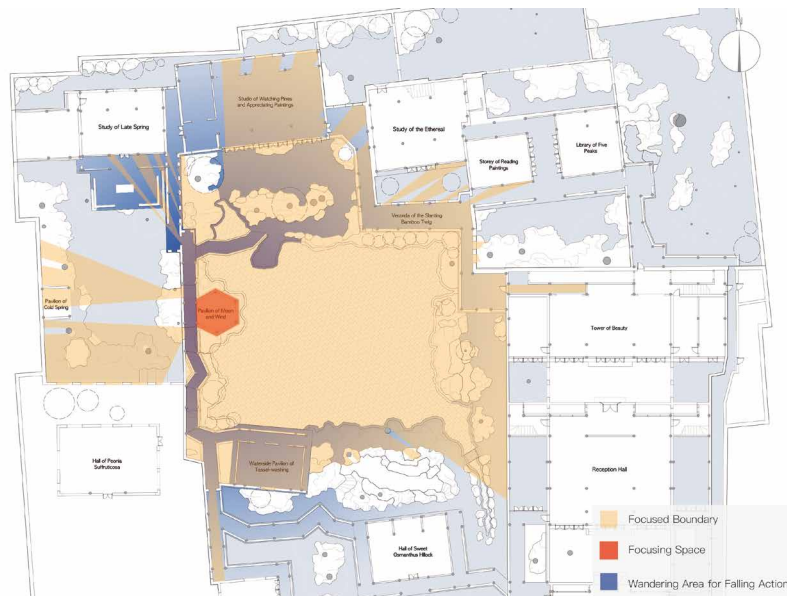


FIG. 6.14 Wandering Conditions During Falling Action. Source: Lu Li and Liu Mei.

In the case study—in line with rising action—the spatial conditions for wandering include the pedestrian areas that allow one to wander from the pavilion to the ten entrances to the focused world (at the focused boundary). Starting from the Pavilion, one wanders consciously or unconsciously towards another focused world, capturing fresh meaningful entities in a future focused world and releasing those from the pavilion's focused world (Fig. 6.14).

Denouement

Finally, one's experience of the focused world ends with denouement as they reach its boundary. In stark contrast to exposition, the mode of being that dominates this act is releasing. During this act, one exits the current focused world while releasing the presence of its focusing space and surrounding entities from one's consciousness. While some entities may remain capturable for a while after denouement, they lose their attraction very fast while one moves away, as their relationships with the focusing space has collapsed at denouement. Upon denouement, one has already consciously or unconsciously entered another focused world, beginning the process again somewhere else at the exposition act. Another climax has not yet occurred, but one may already have been imagining and expecting another comfortable and joyous experience for a while.

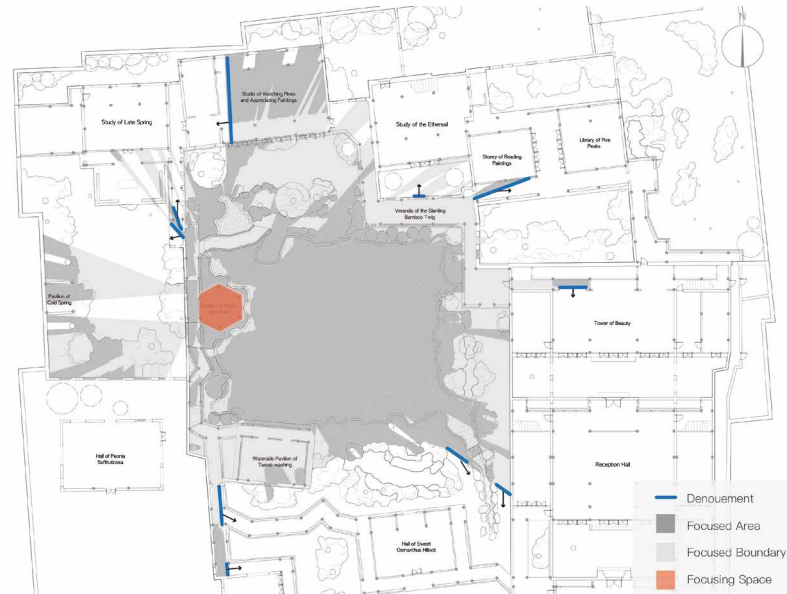


FIG. 6.15 Releasing Conditions During Denouement. Source: Lu Li and Liu Mei.

In the case study, the spatial condition for denouement is opposite to that for exposition, even though they may look identical. Thus, I refer to the ten transitional points at the focused boundary as exits rather than entrances. At this moment, the pavilion and its surrounding entities ever involved in one's experience begin to successively fade from one's consciousness. Of course, one can always recall the experience of the pavilion after this act, which is a form of capturing. However, the fact that space-specific capturing can no longer occur means that, once leaving the focused world, one is not spatially related to the pavilion and its numerous surrounding entities anymore. This stands in stark contrast to what occurs during exposition, when one is spatially related to the pavilion's focused world, capturing its presence as well as its relationships with surrounding entities (Fig. 6.15).

6.3.4 Summary

Among all of the spatial-experiential units that can occur within the focused world formed by the Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind, those that pass through the pavilion are of the greatest significance. The occurrence of these units clearly follows the five-act narrative structure. In this structure, capturing is the driving force of the journey, as it continually generates 'intentionality' in one's consciousness, motivating one to explore further. Next, wandering enables one to capture more entities amid rising action. Then, lingering takes over to dominate the climax, inspiring other modes of being while one stays in the pavilion. Following that, wandering occurs again amid falling action, leading one towards another focused world while the experience of the pavilion and its associated entities fade from consciousness. Finally, the whole spatial-experiential unit ends with releasing amid denouement. This process that I just outlined always occurs in a highly dynamic manner, as the occurrence of certain modes of being (e.g., wandering, descending, ascending) very much depend on physical movements. Maggie Keswick describes her experience in the Master of the Nets Garden 'as if the designer is constantly holding back, enclosing each view, yet always suggesting new delights just behind the further wall'.³⁷⁷ Keswick's observation must be viewed as the result of the meticulous and mindful design of each focused world that aim at creating and enhancing experiences of the five acts. It should be noted that this five-act structure features numerous dynamic mechanisms that shape one's experiences across different focused worlds, which is discussed in Chapter Seven.

³⁷⁷ Keswick, Jencks, and Hardie, *The Chinese Garden: History, Art and Architecture*.

6.4 The Multi-Dimensional Experience of Nearness

Following the above analysis of the modes of being within each stage of the five-act structure, what qualities of Nearness are created through this process? As a result of embedded spatial conditions, the multi-dimensional experience of Nearness that occurs in one's experience of the pavilion can also occur in one's experience of the focused world around it. Notably, one's experience of the four worlds—the world of the perception (garden), the world of representation (*shan shui*), the world of imagination (poetry), and the world of reflection (mirror)—extends from one's experience within the pavilion to that within its focused world.

The world of the garden is experienced in a far more dynamic way within the pavilion's focused world than within the pavilion itself. Generally, one encounters landscape entities more interactively when outside the pavilion itself, as they are far more accessible in this dynamic. For instance, when one enjoying a scenery from the pavilion, the elements that constitute the landscape—such as the lake, rockery, and pines and willows—can only be perceived from a distance. However, when moving around within the pavilion's focused world, these previously distant entities are brought closer through physical behaviours: one can wander along the pond, climb onto the top of the rocky area, or rest under a pine tree. According to Wang Yanming, 'knowing' can only be achieved through 'doing'.³⁷⁸ Thus, behavioural modes of being establish stronger intimacy with the world than perceptual modes of being, as they facilitate greater engagement.

The world of *shan shui*—the representational world generated in one's consciousness—is also noteworthy. The representation occurs far more dynamically within a focused world than it does within the focusing space itself. For instance, within the focused world formed by the Pavilion, the *shan shui* world is not represented as a still scene subtly emerging in our consciousness; rather, it is represented as a continuously evolving experience. As Tong Jun points out, in one's experience of a garden, moving around always results in a dynamic scene in front of our eyes.³⁷⁹ In turn, the *shan shui* world is represented in a dynamic way. Once the

³⁷⁸ See Chapter Three.

³⁷⁹ Tong, 江南园林志.

representational world emerges in one's consciousness, it begins to actively merge with the perceptual world: wandering along the edge of the pond feels like wandering along a flowing river, climbing the rocky area feels like hiking up a mountain, and resting under a pine tree feels like camping out in the wild. This fusion of memory and imagination results in a joyous experience of the Master of the Nets Garden. Put succinctly, when one meanders within a focused world, the represented world of *shan shui* makes the landscape feel more genuinely in line with the pure state of nature, through which one may travel, sightsee, wander, and live.³⁸⁰

Unfortunately, the world of poetry is largely absent in one's experience within the focused world due to its lack of relevant spatial conditions outside of the pavilion. However, I would argue that once the world of poetry is generated by reading the plaque and imagining the scene depicted by the underlying poem, one's experience within the entire focused world is rendered poetic. In this sense, the world of poetry becomes one with each visitor who enters it, even after departing the catalyst of their poetic experience. The world of reflection in one's experience of the focused world is also observable. The south-facing mirror set on the wall of the pavilion reflects natural light from the sky throughout the day, making itself noticeable enough to facilitate mode of reflecting in most of the pavilion's focused areas. Looking towards the pavilion from the other side of the water, the mirror appears to be a window, inside of which is a parallel world.

In general, it seems that while multi-dimensional experiences of Nearness naturally extend from a single lingering space to its focused world, these experiences become more tangible, interactive, and dynamic. This warrants questions regarding the quality of Nearness, which is discussed in Chapter Eight.

³⁸⁰ Guo, "The Lofty Message of Forest and Streams."; Han, "The Aesthetics of Wandering in the Chinese Literati Garden."

6.5 Spatial-experiential Units Within a Focused World: A Quantitative Analysis

The above analysis demonstrated that one's experience within the lingering spaces is a core, not only generating the focused worlds but also significantly shaping one's experience within them. One's experience within a focused world is merely an extension of that which occurs within its focusing space. As a focusing space typically inspires high-quality Nearness, the number of spatial-experiential units that pass through it is indicative of the richness of the experience of Nearness that one can have within its focused world. This section details how this indicator can be calculated.

The entrances and exits of a focused world formed by a given focusing space can be identified as places where exposition and denouement occur. In turn, we can identify two courses—corresponding to rising action and falling action, respectively—as a path in and a path out. While a path in goes from an entrance to the focusing space, a path out goes from the focusing space to an exit. Suppose that m path in and n path out are identified in a focused world; the number of spatial-experiential units that pass through the focusing space within its focused world is as follows:

$$S = C_n^{-1} C_m^{-1} = mn$$

For a focused world, an entrance is always also an exit, meaning that the number of paths in (m) equals the number of paths out (n). If paths in and paths out share identical values of Q , we have the following:

$$S = mn = Q^2$$

Consider a focused world with k entrances (or exits). If the first one has q_1 paths to the focusing space, the second one has q_2 paths to the focusing space, and the k th one has q_k paths to the focusing space, the number of spatial-experiential units within the focused world can be calculated as follows:

$$S = Q^2 = \sum_{i=1}^k q_i^2$$

Technically, the entrances and exits of a focused world can always be identified through manual or digital mapping, as demonstrated in the previous analysis, meaning that the number k can be numerated. Meanwhile, the number q_k —the number of paths from one specific entrance or exit to the focusing space—can be

determined through either manual labour or programmatic calculation. Thus, the number of spatial-experiential units that pass through the focusing space can be calculated in any given focused world. In the case of the focused world formed by the Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind, I use mapping as the primary approach (Fig. 6.16), identifying ten entrances (or exits) and the number of paths to the focusing space from each. (Table 6.1).

TABLE 6.1 Paths Linked to the Focusing Space. Source: Lu Li.

Entrance/Exit	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Amount
Paths In / Paths Out	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	33

Only paths that are not interrupted by expositions or denouements are included in my calculation, meaning that they must be fully included by the focused boundary, as the expositions and denouements always constitute the end of spatial-experiential units. With this rule, I found 33 paths connecting the pavilion to the entrances or exits of its focused world. Therefore, the number of spatial-experiential units can be calculated as follows:

$$S = \sum_{i=1}^k q_i^2 = (3 + 3 + 3 + 3 + 3 + 3 + 3 + 3 + 4 + 4 + 4)^2 = 1089$$



FIG. 6.16 Entrances and Exits within the Focused World. Source: Lu Li and Liu Mei.

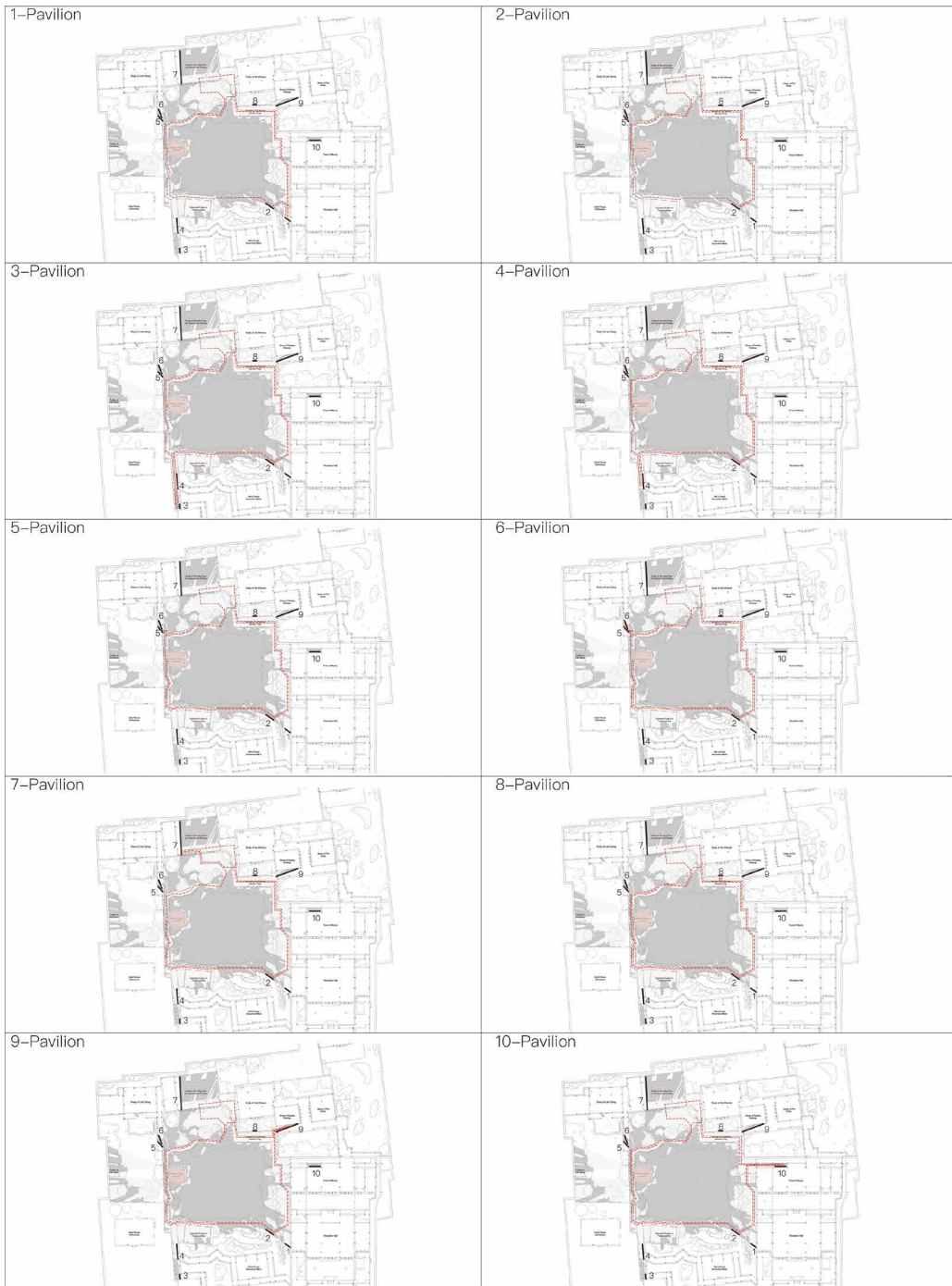


FIG. 6.17 Mapping the Paths Linked to the Focusing Space. Source: Lu Li.

The above calculation demonstrates a potential way through which spatial-experiential units of Nearness (those that pass through the focusing space) within a focused world can be quantitatively analysed. However, this is merely a conceptual deduction to show how it could work. There are certainly more effective tools that could be used to promptly identify, calculate, and map paths, though this would exceed the scope of this research. The number of spatial-experiential units that pass through a focusing space is a meaningful positive indicator of the richness of one's experience within and around it. In the case study, 1089 spatial-experiential units are formed around a single lingering space—the Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind—which is startlingly impressive.

6.6 Discussion: Intertextuality Between the Focusing and the Focused

Another important issue that must also be discussed here is 'intertextuality'. Intertextuality between the focusing and the focused is clearly evident in one's experience within the Master of the Nets Garden. In fact, my analysis in this chapter took intertextuality as a key presupposition: only with strong intertextuality between the focusing and the focused do my previous discussions on the FS-FW structure make sense. While conducting the case study, I was keenly aware that 'being focused' and 'focusing' are intertwined with each other in experiences within a focused world, forming strong intertextuality. This intertextuality plays a significant role in shaping our experience within the focused world; without it, we would not be able to realise that the pavilion offers an intriguing experience before physically entering it. In other words, if there were no strong intertextuality between the focusing and the focused in one's experience, it would be questionable to set the focused world as a structural layer from which the spatial-experiential unit of Nearness is extracted. Therefore, intertextuality is a key factor relating a focusing space to its focused world in one's experience and, consequently, forms the FS-FW structure.

According to Julia Kristeva, the term 'intertextuality' describes a common linguistic phenomenon: 'the shaping of a text's meaning by another text'.³⁸¹ When intertextuality occurs as a linguistic phenomenon, utterances from different texts 'intersect and neutralise one another'. Based on this definition, I use it in an architectural context to describe how one's experience occurs across two or more spatial 'texts' (i.e., built spaces, spatial sequences, or any clearly formulated spatial segments) that inform, suggest, and inspire one another (Fig. 6.18). Empathy plays a critical role in forming intertextuality within the FS-FW structure of the literati garden. A fundamental understanding of empathy was initially uncovered by Husserl. According to Christian Beyer's interpretation, Husserl referred to 'empathy' as the belief that a being that 'displays traits more or less familiar from my own case [...] will generally perceive things from an egocentric viewpoint similar to my own ("here", "over there", "to my left", "in front of me", etc.)'.³⁸² Beyer then states that 'this belief allows me to ascribe intentional acts to others immediately [...] i.e. without having to draw an inference, say, by analogy with my own case'.³⁸³ Empathy is rooted in common sense and leads to intersubjectivity.³⁸⁴

Husserl's interpretation of empathy helps us to understand how intertextuality between the focusing and the focused is established in one's experience of the literati garden. In the scope of this research, intertextuality between the focusing space (the Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind) and its focused world (the area around it) is a crucial mechanism that fundamentally shapes one's experience within the Master of the Nets Garden. Driven by spatial-experiential settings, intertextuality occurs either consciously or unconsciously in one's experience, subtly describing, implying, and suggesting the possibility of 'being there' while one is actually 'being here'. While the pavilion provides a place for one to mindfully perceive the essential landscape of the garden, those focused areas, in turn, allow one to be aware of the possibility of enjoying a pleasant time within the pavilion, generating expectations of such an experience even when one is far from it. Thus, one who is within the focused world formed by the pavilion is continually attracted by and drawn towards it; likewise, one who is physically within the pavilion recalls or imagines their experience

³⁸¹ Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Language and Art*, trans. Thomas Gora and Alice Jardine, illustrated & revised ed., ed. Leon Samuel Roudiez, European Perspectives: a Series in Social Thought and Cultural Criticism Series, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980).

³⁸² Christian Beyer, "Edmund Husserl," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (2018). <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/husserl/>.

³⁸³ Beyer, "Edmund Husserl."

³⁸⁴ Beyer, "Edmund Husserl."

within its focused world in the same way. As a result of intertextuality, utterances from the different spatial segments 'intersect and neutralise one another' —one's experience of 'here' and 'now' continuously fuses with 'there' and 'then' through intuitive empathy (Fig. 6.19).³⁸⁵

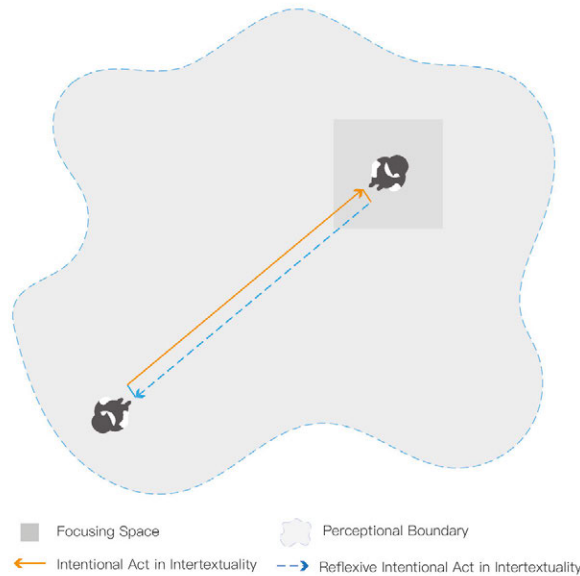


FIG. 6.18 Intertextuality Occurring in a Focused World. Source: Lu Li.

While intertextuality is common across experiences of many types of built environments, it seems to be increasingly neglected in modern era. This neglect can be traced back to the origin of modernist architecture. Consider Le Corbusier's famous statement, 'architecture is the masterly, correct and magnificent play of masses brought together in light', which clearly frames architecture as an entity to be appreciated from 'outside' as a 'play of masses'.³⁸⁶ The statement does not reflect any awareness or concern for intertextuality between the focusing and the focused. However, intertextuality between the focusing and the focused is particularly prominent in Chinese literati gardens. This intertextuality drastically enhances

³⁸⁵ Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Language and Art*.

³⁸⁶ Le-Corbusier and Etchells, *Towards a New Architecture*.

one's experience of Nearness within the Master of the Nets Garden by developing a phenomenal relationship between spatial-experiential units that pass through the focusing space and those that do not. Due to this mechanism, experiences within the pavilion and those within its focused world inform, impact, and shape each other through a clearly shaped FS-FW structure. Therefore, a basic understanding of intertextuality within Chinese literati gardens offers meaningful enlightenment on how to build spaces that are intimately related to their surroundings. This entanglement between the focusing and the focused is an important condition for arousing a '*genius loci*' in a built environment, which reminds us of its subtle relationship with the notion of Nearness.³⁸⁷



FIG. 6.19 Views from the Pavilion and Its Focused World. Source: Lu Li.

³⁸⁷ Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci*.

6.7 Conclusion

The Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind can hardly be regarded as an ‘impressive’ architectural object from most modern or post-modern perspectives (e.g., brutalism, minimalism, plasticism, and deconstructionism). It is difficult to find a striking architectural element within it; it features typical forms, simple functions, a single space, and common materials—nothing special. However, for those immersed within its focused world, the intense, multi-dimensional experience of Nearness is extraordinary and deeply pleasant. The spatial-experiential mechanisms explored in this chapter are fairly typical in Chinese literati gardens. In summary, this chapter can draw the following conclusions.

First, the case study verified that the experience within a focused world identified in Chapter Four is an essential structural layer that shapes one’s experience in a literati garden. It can be viewed as an extension of that which occurs within a focusing space, forming a structure that I now call the FS-FW structure. Second, the GIS-based analysis of the four aspects of the focused world within the pavilion revealed a series of spatial-experiential settings embedded in and around the lingering spaces of Chinese literati gardens. These settings largely determine what kind of focused world is formed by the lingering space and how it is formed. Notably, the focused world formed within a literati garden is distinct from those formed within other types of built environments in many aspects. In particular, the fact that such rich focused layers can be generated within the FS-FW structure of a literati garden is quite impressive. Third, the five-act wave model reveals what may be the most typical narrative pattern through which experiences occur within the FS-FW structure of the literati garden. From the perspective of spatial narration, a Chinese literati garden is built to generate endless five-act narratives, one after the other. Thus, the five-act wave model constitutes a basic syntax that is commonly embedded in Chinese literati gardens. Based on this syntax, a garden shapes one’s experience of Nearness. Fourth, the spatial-experiential units passing through a focusing space are most responsible for one’s experience of Nearness, with Nearness extending from a focusing space to its focused world. For this reason, the number of spatial-experiential units that pass through the focusing space within a focused world is a meaningful indicator of the richness of Nearness. Fifth, the mechanism of intertextuality between the ‘focusing’ and the ‘focused’—stemming from human empathy—plays a crucial role in shaping one’s experience of Nearness within FS-FW structure. Intertextuality enables the essential experience, which mostly occurs within the lingering spaces of a garden, to be extended to other areas within the focused world. Through intertextuality, the focusing and the focused are

integrated. In addition, in one's experience within the focused world formed by the Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind, the phenomenal correlation among the different worlds—the world of perception, the world of representation, the world of imagination, and the world of reflection—is not as strong as that within the pavilion itself, though they seem to be intertwined in a more dynamic way. Thus, the climax of Nearness discussed in Chapter Five, which integrates these four dimensions, should be viewed as the climax of one's experience within the entire focused world.

Most importantly, this chapter proposed an innovative theoretical perspective—one that addresses the relationship between the focusing space and its focused world—to examine how one's experience occurs in relation to a built environment. From this perspective, I identified the FS-FW structure as a significant spatial-experiential setting that is responsible for shaping one's experience within the Master of the Nets Garden and continuously engendering Nearness. Numerous important mechanisms play a role in such a structure, generating a complex, continuous, meaningful experience for those who visit the garden. While a Chinese literati garden is a complex system in which thousands of intertwined spatial-experiential flows can occur, this perspective enables us to extract and analyse some of the most essential spatial-experiential mechanisms embedded within a literati garden.

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7 The Occurrence of Nearness Across Different Focused Worlds

7.1 Introduction

In Chapter Six, I discussed several mechanisms through which a strong and multi-dimensional experience of Nearness can occur within a single focused world. This chapter shifts the focus beyond the scope of a single focused world, exploring how the experience of Nearness occurs across different focused worlds within a literati garden by evaluating the Master of the Nets Garden. In particular, it examines experiences that occur before one enters a focused world and after one exits it, revealing complex mechanisms embedded in Chinese literati gardens to inspire, motivate, and maintain a highly dynamic spatial-experiential flow of Nearness across different focused worlds.

In line with the previous two chapters, this chapter employs the spatial-visual analysis (based on my iterative on-site phenomenological reduction) as its primary analytical approach. As many scholars have pointed out, spatial-visual factors dominate one's experience of literati gardens, and these factors can be precisely captured with the help of GIS. This chapter comprises three main sections. The first section uses GIS-based analysis to demonstrate how focused worlds are formed by different architectural focusing spaces within the Master of the Nets Garden and, in turn, how these focused worlds form a system in which all focusing spaces and focused worlds intertwine. Specifically, it identifies two spatial-experiential

conditions—multi-focused areas and the aggregation of focused worlds—as two critical structural factors that shape one’s experience in the system of focused worlds of a garden. The second section, by closely investigating how one’s experience occurs across different focused worlds, explores a seven-component structure as a complement to the five-act wave structure. The third section reveals a complex, multi-wave spatial-experiential mechanism that continuously inspires, motivates, and maintains spatial-experiential flow in the Master of the Nets Garden. This chapter concludes that these mechanisms are responsible for producing highly dynamic, complex, unique, and intense experiences of Nearness across different focused worlds within Chinese literati gardens.

This is the last chapter pertaining to the case study of the Master of the Nets Garden that I began in Chapter Four. By the end of this chapter, this thesis should have provided a comprehensive understanding of how Chinese literati gardens shape experiences of Nearness at three different spatial-experiential layers through spatial conditions that facilitate multi-dimensional intimacy with one’s surroundings and the world in general.

7.2 Beyond a Single Focused World: Two Spatial-Experiential Factors

As discussed in Chapter Four, spaces that fit well into my definition of ‘focusing space in a Chinese literati garden’ are most commonly found around certain architectural types, such as a hall [堂], a pavilion [亭], a kiosk [轩], a platform [台], or a story [阁]. These architectural types are all built for a simple purpose: to prompt visitors to slow down, remain in place, and enjoy their time with the meaningful entities around them. In a Heideggerian sense, these spaces facilitate one’s intimacy with numerous surrounding entities, which is critical to Da-sein’s being-in-the-world and, in turn, to preserving Nearness in their ‘thingness’.³⁸⁸ While they may have served various specific functions throughout history, their essence as a place for visitors to linger has not changed. In the Master of the Nets Garden, I have identified 17 architectural focusing spaces forming a system that continually inspires visitors to linger and

³⁸⁸ Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*.

enjoy the garden's picturesque, pleasing, and poetic scenes (Fig. 7.1). As revealed in Chapter Five, spatial conditions are carefully embedded in and around these focusing spaces to inspire multiple modes of being. Taking this system of focusing spaces as a foundation, it is possible to identify a system of focused worlds using the spatial-visual analytical approach developed in Chapter Six (Fig. 7.4).

One key question concerning the system of focused worlds naturally arises: How is such a system formed as a functioning whole? In other words, how do these focused worlds interact with one another to form a system that shapes our experiences in Chinese literati gardens? In closely examining how experiences occur across these focused worlds, two spatial-experiential elements immediately become apparent: multi-focused areas and the aggregation of focused worlds. These two elements entail the intertwining relationships in-between focused worlds that continuously shape one's flow of experience across different focused worlds. These elements are identified based on two observations drawn from the case study. On the one hand, most focused areas overlap with others, forming a number of areas where multiple focused worlds can be experienced at the same time. On the other hand, most focused worlds intermingle with one another, forming several aggregations of high degree of overlapping. These two elements are critical in generating experiences that extend beyond a single focused world, shaping a continuously flowing experience of Nearness.

Multi-focused areas and aggregations of focused worlds are both key to the shaping of experiences of Nearness in Chinese literati gardens. However, it is important to note that these two elements are interdependent, meaning that one is both the cause and the effect of the other. Multi-focused areas constitute 'links' in-between several focused worlds, integrating them into an aggregation. Aggregations of focused worlds, in turn, form 'bottle gourds', which, through a series of spatial-experiential settings, enable their constitutive focused worlds to intertwine with one another through multi-focused areas.³⁸⁹

³⁸⁹ For more on the notion of 'bottle gourd', see: Kongjian Yu and Peter Del Tredici, "Infinity in a Bottle Gourd: Understanding the Chinese Garden," *Arnoldia* 53, no. 1 (1993).



FIG. 7.1 The System of Architectural Focusing Spaces. Source: Lu Li.

7.2.1 Multi-Focused Areas: Links In-Between Focused Worlds

As demonstrated in Figure 7.2, the focused areas formed by lingering spaces always overlap with one another in Chinese literati gardens, generating a series of zones covered by multiple focused worlds. I refer to these zones as 'multi-focused areas'. A multi-focused area, in short, is an area that can be mindfully perceived from more than one focusing space (Fig. 7.2). A multi-focused area represents the intersection of multiple focused worlds. These intersections enable visitors to encounter another focused world(s) while physically within one. They play a vital role in orienting visitors across different focused worlds within Chinese literati gardens. Only through such spatial-experiential settings can experiences be inspired to flow across multiple focused worlds within a garden. This section looks at several aspects of multi-focused areas based on the case study of the Master of the Nets Garden: the role of multi-focused areas, focus frequency within multi-focused areas, and multi-intertextuality.

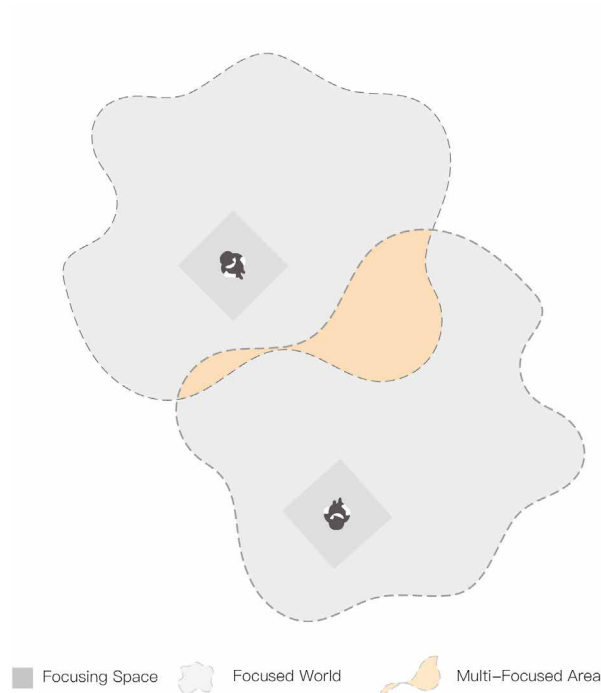


FIG. 7.2 The Concept of a Multi-Focused Area. Source: Lu Li.

7.2.1.1 The Role of Multi-Focused Areas

Multi-focused areas constitute links in-between focused worlds. They enable one to encounter another focused world(s) while already within one. Through these areas, one's experience flows across multiple focused worlds in a single garden. Within the focused world formed by the Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind, for instance, the focused area of the Pavilion (Pa) overlaps with those of seven other focusing spaces: the Studio of Watching Pines and Appreciating Paintings (a), the Study of the Ethereal (b), the Hall of Sweet Osmanthus Hillock (c), the Waterside Pavilion of Tassel-Washing (d), the platform outside of the Study of Later Spring (g), the Veranda of the Slanting Bamboo Twig (j), and the Pavilion of Cold Spring (k) (Fig. 7.3). The overlap between these focused areas means that someone in the focused area of the Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind is bound to naturally encounter other focused worlds.

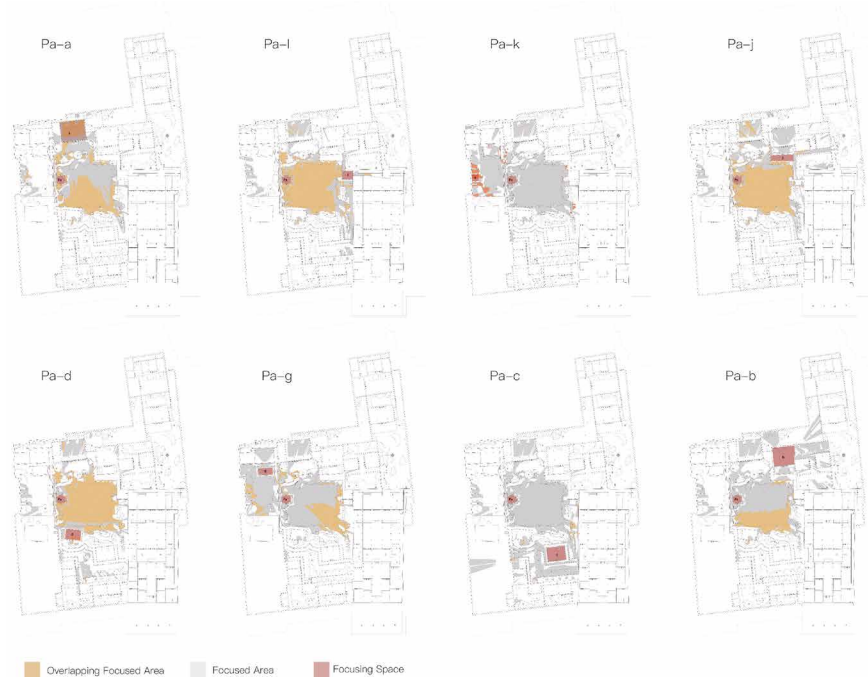


FIG. 7.3 Analysis of Multi-Focused Areas. Yellow-coloured areas represent overlaps between the Focused World of the Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind and other focused worlds. Source: Lu Li and Liu Mei.

Multi-focused areas are critical to orienting visitors in Chinese literati gardens. They give way to the disruption of one spatial-experiential unit and the triggering of another.³⁹⁰ They allow visitors to constantly be aware of the wide range of experiential possibilities in the garden, facilitating dynamic experiential flow. Multi-focused areas are continuously functioning in one's experience of Chinese literati gardens by attracting their attention, inspiring their intentional acts, and, in turn, orienting them through multiple focused worlds.

7.2.1.2 Focus Frequency Within Multi-Focused Areas

Multi-focused areas can comprise different numbers of overlapping focused worlds or, in other words, different focus frequencies. The focus frequency suggests the degree to which this area is focusable. In general, as the number of overlapping focused worlds increases, so too does their degree of spatial-experiential interrelatedness. In the Master of the Nets Garden, as shown in Figure 7.4, the distribution of focus frequencies is determined by how the focusing spaces are spatially and experientially related to one another. The southern central landscape area is, on average, covered by over five focused worlds, meaning that it is simultaneously visually accessible to visitors across over five different focusing spaces.

In particular, the area in front of the rocky hillock—the Hillock of Cloud—embodies true 'focus'—a focused area comprising eight focusing spaces. A relatively high focus frequency can also be found in the west area of the courtyard dominated by the Pavilion of Cold Spring, which comprises four focusing spaces. Aside from these two areas, the rest of the Master of the Nets Garden features relatively low focus frequencies. Interestingly, meaningful entities—fourfold entities in the Heideggerian sense with high cultural, aesthetic, or ontological value—are often arranged in areas with high focus frequencies. This dynamic means that these meaningful entities are exposed more frequently than others, making the areas that house them more attractive and meaningful. As a result, their roles as links in-between focused worlds is more substantial (Fig. 7.4).

³⁹⁰ See Chapter 4 for the definition of a spatial-experiential unit.

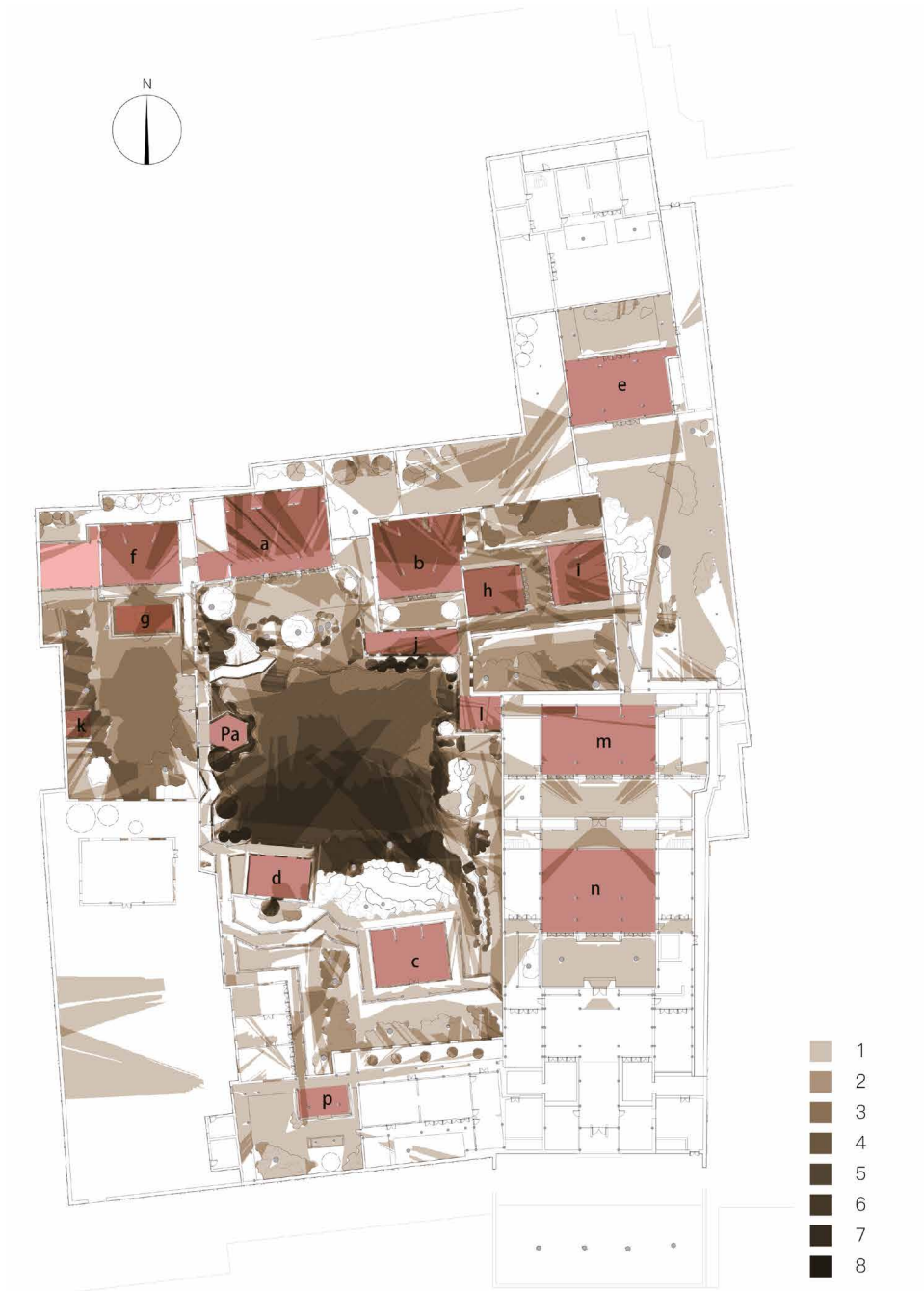


FIG. 7.4 Frequency of Overlapping Multi-Focused Areas in the Master of the Nets Garden. Source: Lu Li and Liu Mei.

7.2.1.3 Multi-Intertextuality

In multi-focused areas, intertextuality between a single focusing space and its focused world may also be accumulated, resulting in multi-intertextuality.³⁹¹ Multi-intertextuality, put briefly, is overlapped intertextuality between a multi-focused area and its related focused worlds. As discussed in Chapter Six, intertextuality enables one to imagine, apprehend, and experience, to a certain degree, the situation of 'being there' while physically 'being here' through the psychological mechanism of empathy. This spatial-experiential setting allows one to be aware of the possibility to enjoy an intriguing moment 'there' (in one focused world) while physically 'here' (in another focused world). If intertextuality is embedded in-between every focusing space and its focused world within a literati garden, then, in multi-focused areas, every instance of intertextuality may overlay with one another, forming multi-intertextuality. Thus, one's experience is unavoidably involved with multi-intertextuality, simultaneously imagining the situations of being within all of the focusing spaces when within these multi-focused areas (Fig. 7.5). As a result, experience occurs in highly dynamic and uncertain ways.

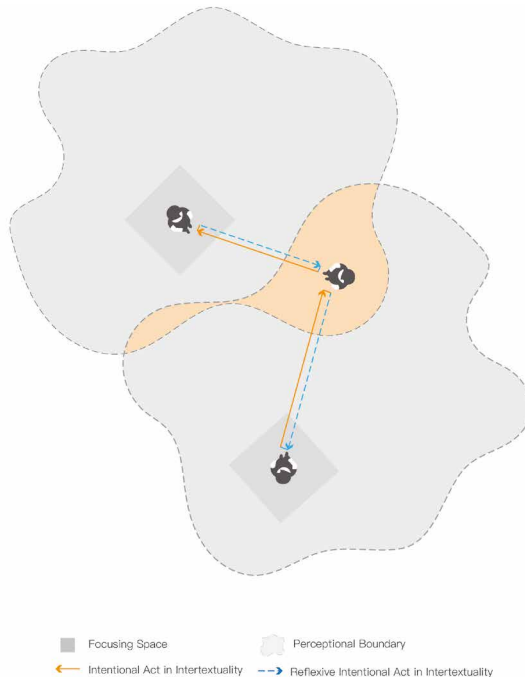


FIG. 7.5 The Concept of Multi-Intertextuality. Source: Lu Li.

³⁹¹ See Chapter Six for the analysis of intertextuality between the 'focusing' and the 'focused' within a focused world.

Since multi-intertextuality enable visitors to encounter multiple focused worlds and apprehend joyous experiences within multiple focusing spaces simultaneously, their experience of Nearness is generally amplified in these areas. For instance, in the Master of the Nets Garden, the focused world of the Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind is intertwined with three other focused worlds shaped by the Veranda of the Slanting Bamboo Twig, the Waterside Pavilion of Tassel-Washing, and the Duck-Shooting Veranda. Collectively, these four focused worlds form a strong instance of multi-intertextuality that dominates the central landscape area of the Master of the Nets Garden (Fig. 7.6). Undoubtedly, in this central multi-focused area, one's experience of Nearness is amplified on account of a strong sense of ontological relatedness with their surroundings. For the ancient literati, this field of Nearness may constitute the centre of the universe.



FIG. 7.6 View from the Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind. This picture reveals how the pavilion is involved with the focused worlds of the Veranda of the Slanting Bamboo Twig and the Duck-Shooting Veranda. Source: Lu Li.

7.2.2 Aggregations of Focused Worlds: Worlds in Bottle Gourds

If multi-focused areas are links between focused worlds, then aggregations of focused worlds are the integration of several focused worlds into a tightly intertwined whole. Notably, focused worlds sharing a significant degree of their multi-focused areas are more interrelated than those sharing a minor degree and, therefore, are reasonably considered as an aggregation. In an early study on the structure of the Chinese classical garden, Chinese landscape designer Yu Kongjian points out that the prototype of the ‘bottle gourd’ is an essential spatial model that is universally embedded in many forms of ancient Chinese art and literature, including the literati garden.³⁹² Yu cements his argument by referencing a well-known Chinese prose poem by Tao Yuanming, a remarkable poet who lived in the Jin dynasty:

A similar bottle gourd space was described by Tao Yuanming (365–427) in his prose poem *Records on the Land of Peach Blossoms* (Tao Hua Yuan Ji).³⁹³ He told [a story about] how a fisherman loses his way as he travelled along an unfamiliar stream. Suddenly he is surprised by a pure strand of peach trees stretching along the length of the streambank. The peach forest ends at the source of the stream, at the foot of a cliff. The fisherman spies a small hole in the cliff. A beam of light shines from it, and he leaves his boat to explore the hole. Narrow and rugged at the start, the passage opens out into the light as he penetrates deeper into it. [...] Over time the Land of Peach Blossoms (the Heaven of Peace) has become the most influential of Chinese models for Utopian society and landscape.³⁹⁴

As Yu reveals, the scenario described in ‘The Peach Blossom Spring’ can be seen as a prototype of Chinese literati gardens given its references to their common cosmological settings. Among these spatial-experiential settings is the aggregation of focused worlds, which reveals the spatial quality described in Tao’s story of Peach Blossom Spring. Spatial-experiential settings that facilitate the aggregation of numerous focused worlds may always generate a ‘world in the bottle gourd’. However, in contrast to Yu’s approach of identifying ‘bottle gourds’ in the Lingerin Garden, which is roughly based on the spatial relationship between the ‘solid’ and the ‘void’, I developed an approach to identify the aggregation of focused worlds while still incorporating the previously discussed spatial-experiential structure (i.e.,

³⁹² Yu and Tredici, “Infinity in a Bottle Gourd: Understanding the Chinese Garden.”

³⁹³ Alternatively translated as ‘The Peach Blossom Spring’, ‘The Peach Blossom Land’, or ‘The Record of the Peach Blossom’.

³⁹⁴ Yu and Tredici, “Infinity in a Bottle Gourd: Understanding the Chinese Garden.”

one's experience occurring within the lingering space and that occurring within the focused world formed by the lingering space). In my case study of the Master of the Nets Garden, the formation of aggregations of focused worlds relies on two critical, yet simple, spatial conditions: 1) a properly arranged physical boundary that encloses several focusing spaces, within which focused worlds intertwine with one another, sharing a significant portion of their focused areas; 2) several thresholds between these aggregations that allow one to pass from one aggregation to another (Fig. 7.7).

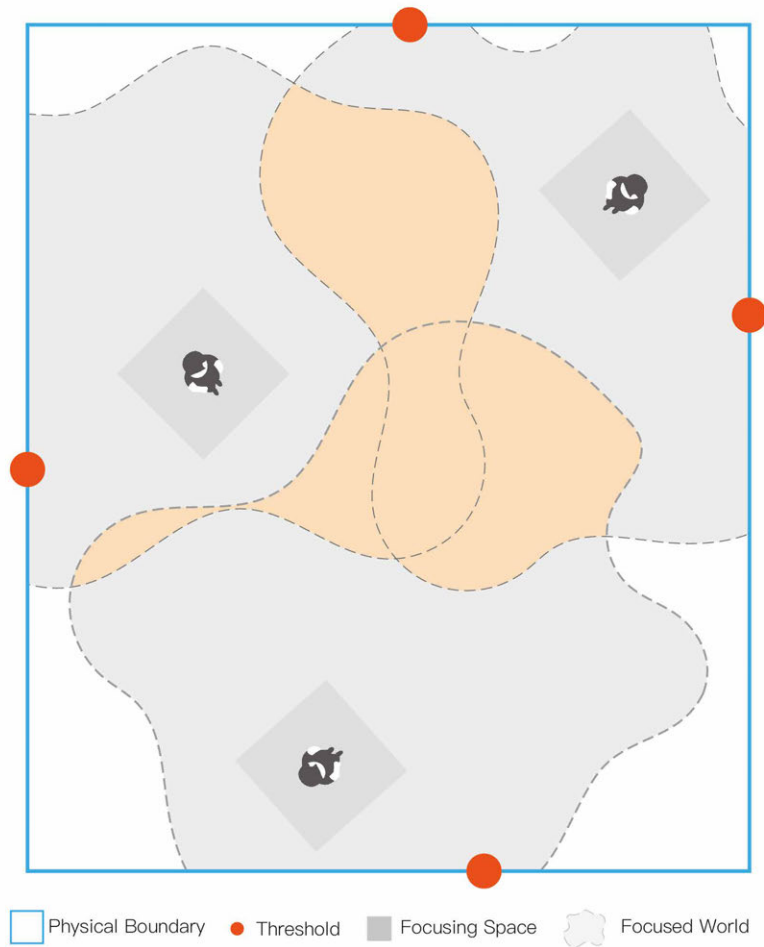


FIG. 7.7 The Concept of the Aggregation of Focused Worlds. Source: Lu Li.

7.2.2.1 Physical Boundaries

Physical boundaries play a vital role in aggregating focused worlds. In contrast to the boundaries of architectural spaces, which separate the inside from the outside, aggregation boundaries form explicit, highly constrained conditions for the occurrence of modes of being: reducing noise from the outside world, preventing visual distractions, and limiting behaviours in a certain 'bottle gourd'. They create enclosed areas with strong atmospheres of Nearness. Within them, visitors are enabled to develop greater intimacy with meaningful entities around them through a group of spatial-experiential settings. Restrictive boundaries housing numerous focusing spaces constitute a necessary physical condition for aggregating focused worlds. Within these boundaries, several focused worlds are phenomenally interrelated with one another, forming an integrated whole. As already mentioned, in the Master of the Nets Garden, the focused world of the Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind is intertwined with three other focused worlds: those of the Veranda of the Slanting Bamboo Twig, the Waterside Pavilion of Tassel-Washing, and the Duck-Shooting Veranda. These focused worlds are all formed by a wall separating the central landscape area from the other parts of the garden. In-between these four focused worlds is a large multi-focused area that integrates the four focused worlds into one unit—an aggregation of four focused worlds. Other aggregations can also be identified within the Master of the Nets Garden in the same way. In a sense, Chinese literati gardens can always be viewed as entities that integrate numerous aggregations of focused worlds, with each aggregation enclosed by internal boundaries while the garden as a whole is enclosed by a general boundary that separates the garden from the external world.

7.2.2.2 Thresholds

In Chapter Four, I defined an architectural threshold as 'a spatial setting that allows one to transition their state of being from one spatial situation to another'.³⁹⁵ Thresholds are used to identify basic meaningful spatial units in a literati garden; they are essentially signs of a meaningful transition, reminding visitors that they are shifting from interior to exterior, from architecture to landscape, or from a place built for resting to one built for wandering. Thus, they also enable us to transition through different aggregations of focused worlds.

³⁹⁵ See Chapter Four for more information.



FIG. 7.8 Thresholds and Boundaries Between Aggregations of Focused Worlds. Source: Lu Li.

It is typically through a threshold—a gate, a stairway, an opening in a wall, a material change, or a corridor—that one moves from one aggregation of focused worlds to another. The most common threshold in Chinese literati gardens may be elegantly formed openings in walls. As shown in Figure 7.8, while boundaries provide the fundamental spatial condition through which aggregations are formed, thresholds enable one to physically transition through them (Fig. 7.8). However, it is important to note that this transition is a course rather than a moment. While a threshold always marks a place in which one's state of being shifts from one space or aggregation to another, the overall transition may begin far before one reaches a threshold and end long after one exits through a threshold. In other words, one's experience always penetrates physical conditions, flowing continuously and coherently across different aggregations of focused worlds. The following section analyses this transitional mechanism in greater detail.

7.2.2.3 Eight Aggregations in Three Patterns

Based on the above understanding of spatial-experiential settings embedded within aggregations of focused worlds, I identify eight aggregations in the Master of the Nets Garden, each involving several focused worlds that share a significant degree of their multi-focused areas. Examining each aggregation closely, I recognise three unique patterns exhibited by aggregations: 1) the aggregation is formed and dominated by a single focusing space; 2) the aggregation is formed by several focusing spaces, the focused worlds of which have considerable overlap with one another; 3) the aggregation is formed by several focused worlds with overlapping focused areas in-between each two (Fig. 7.9). All three of these patterns are evident through my spatial-visual analysis across the Master of the Nets Garden. Figure 7.9 highlights the garden's eight aggregations of focused worlds in different colours depending on the pattern they exhibit.

- The first pattern is the most common in Chinese literati gardens, especially relatively small ones. Nevertheless, even large gardens can be divided into numerous small aggregations dominated by a single focusing space. In my case study, I identified four aggregations (3, 5, 7, 8) that align with this pattern (highlighted in blue in Figure 7.9).
- The second pattern is typical in essential landscape areas of Chinese literati gardens, with focusing spaces arranged in close relation to one another, sharing the landscape but shaping it from various perspectives. In my case study, I identified three aggregations (1, 2, 4) that align with this pattern (highlighted in orange in Figure 7.9).

- The third pattern can usually be found in residential parts of Chinese literati gardens, where progressions of courtyards and halls unfold along a central axis running from south to north. In my case study, I identified one aggregation (6) that aligns with this pattern on the garden's east side (highlighted in green in Figure 7.9).

The identification of these aggregations offers a greater understanding of the roles that spatial-experiential elements (e.g., focusing spaces, focused worlds, physical boundaries, thresholds) play in shaping experiences in the Master of the Nets Garden. Overall, aggregations of focused worlds are formed through the manipulation and combination of these elements. Within an aggregation of focused worlds, different modes of being continuously occur with synchronicity and diachronicity; the focusing and the focused constantly interact with each other, and five acts occur around different focusing spaces in a successive manner. The structure of aggregations of focused worlds is described well by David Hall and Roger Ames, who discuss the 'enclosure' inherent in Chinese literati gardens. They assert that, in the cosmological setting of ancient Chinese gardens, there is a centre of 'magnetic attraction' that, with varying degrees of success, 'draws into its field and suspends the disparate, diverse, and often mutually inconsistent centres that constitute its world'.³⁹⁶ An aggregation of focused worlds definitely incorporates a centre of 'magnetic attraction'. As a result of their attraction, aggregations facilitate strong, multi-dimensional, and extraordinary experiences of Nearness.

Aggregations of focused worlds are critical, as they mould one's experiences of different focused worlds into a single unit. Physical boundaries and thresholds between aggregations not only contribute to the formation of these aggregations but also enable visitors to transit between them. In general, physical conditions are more dominant in terms of forming spatial-experiential units at the whole-garden level than they are at the focused-world and single-space levels. At the whole-garden level, three physical conditions—a general boundary separating the garden from the external world, several aggregations formed by internal boundaries, and thresholds between aggregations—provide an important physical framework under which one's experience occurs. Within this framework, the previously explored spatial-experiential mechanisms are carefully embedded, and various spatial-experiential techniques are employed to generate an extraordinarily rich experience of Nearness among visitors.

³⁹⁶ Hall and Ames, "The Cosmological Setting of Chinese Gardens."

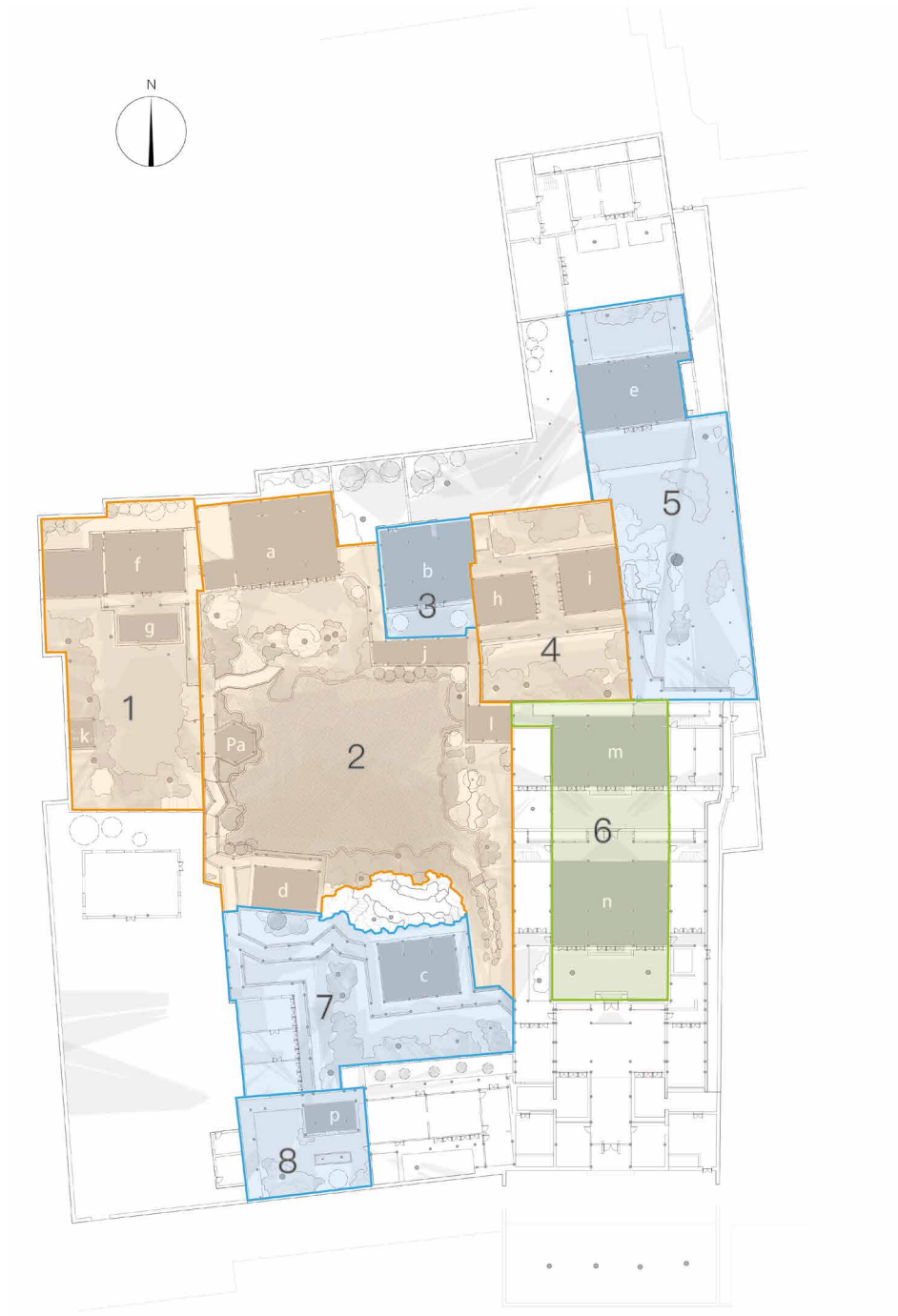


FIG. 7.9 Eight Aggregations of Focused Worlds. Source: Lu Li.

7.3 The Chain Effect: A Seven-Component Sequence

In the Master of the Nets Garden, Nearness occurs at every spatial-experiential level: primarily in a focusing space, then a focused world, then an aggregation of focused worlds, and, ultimately, throughout the whole garden. Thus far, my analysis in this chapter has revealed the spatial-experiential settings that enable the experience of Nearness at a macroscopic scale (i.e., the level of the garden as a whole). Now equipped with a solid understanding of multi-focused areas and aggregations of focused worlds, I can shift my scope from the experience that occurs within a single focused world to that which occurs before and after it. It is clear that some meaningful entities in a focused world are involved in visitors' experience before they ever enter it; similarly, some other entities may be recalled and recaptured in their experience for a while after they leave the focused world, remaining their spatial-experiential relatedness to them. While visitors are physically within a certain focused world, there are always meaningful entities in other focused worlds that continually flirt with their curiosity, expectations, and orientation, leading them into multi-focused areas. Through this understanding, the five-act wave structure established in Chapter Six can be expanded into a seven-component sequence that details one's experience across different focused worlds (Fig. 7.10).

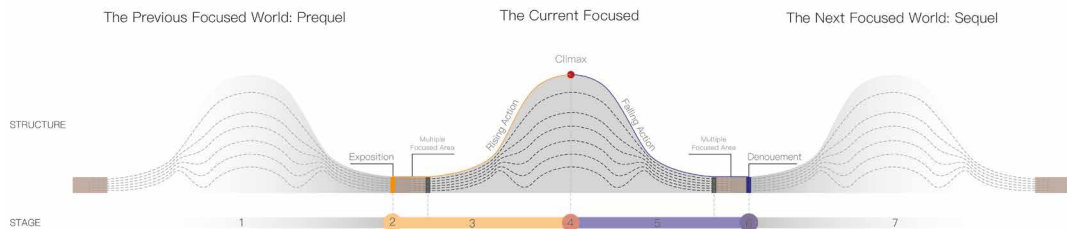


FIG. 7.10 The Seven-Component Spatial-experiential Structure. Source: Lu Li.

7.3.1 Two Additional Components: Prequel and Sequel

As shown in Figure 7.11, two components can be added to the five spatial-experiential components established in the previous model (i.e., exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, denouement) as a supplement. These two components respectively occur before exposition and after denouement, playing roles of 'prequel' and 'sequel'. Prequel begins at the moment one encounters the first meaningful entity within a focused world and ends at exposition, when one captures the focusing space within a multi-focused area. Sequel begins at denouement, when one releases the focusing space, and ends at the moment one finally releases the last meaningful entity within the focused world (Fig. 7.11).

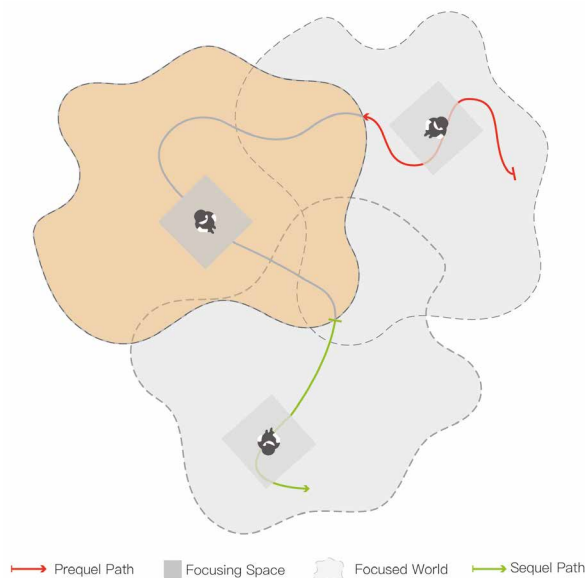


FIG. 7.11 The Concept of a Prequel and a Sequel. Source: Lu Li.

Before encountering the focused world shaped by the Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind, for example, one must first capture a meaningful entity within its focused boundaries from afar, such as the narrow, winding corner of the pond, the small slate bridge across the water, or the stairs of the rocky area in front of the Hall of Sweet Osmanthus Hillock (Fig. 7.12). Typically, one is within a different focused world when they capture this initial meaningful entity. If this triggering entity is sufficiently attractive, one is continuously inspired to approach it. In turn, one captures more and more attractive entities from the pavilion's focused world until they eventually encounter it from a multi-focused area, where they first capture the

pavilion—exposition. This stage, from the moment one captures the first meaningful entity within the pavilion’s focused world to the moment they capture the pavilion, marking exposition, is the prequel.

Within the focused world shaped by the Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind, one’s experience follows the five-act narrative structure, as established in Chapter Six. However, while one is physically within this focused world, they can be attracted to meaningful entities within the focused boundaries of another focused world—such as the Pavilion of Cold Spring dominating the adjacent courtyard or a corner of the Studio of Five Peaks—at any moment. Evidently, one is still within the pavilion’s focused world when they capture that initial meaningful entity from a different focused world. If this triggering entity is sufficiently attractive, one feels oriented towards it, capturing more and more attractive entities until eventually encountering another focused world from a multi-focused area, where one releases the pavilion—denouement. Despite departing the focused world, one can still recall or recapture some of its entities, as they remain a spatial-experiential relatedness to them for a while. This stage is the sequel, and it lasts until one releases the last meaningful entity within the focused world that they just departed.



FIG. 7.12 Meaningful Entities Involved in a Prequel and a Sequel. Source: Lu Li.

7.3.2 A Seven-Component Sequence and Three Focused Worlds

The two additional components, prequel and sequel, describe how one's experience lasts beyond a single focused world. The resultant seven-component spatial-experiential sequence is temporally consistent, always consisting of three major parts in the same order: a prequel, a five-act narrative structure, and a sequel. By carefully examining these two additional components, it becomes clear that one's experience within a current focused world inevitably involves two other focused worlds—the previous one and the next one. This sequence begins when one captures the first meaningful entity within this focused world (from its previous focused world) and ends when one releases the last meaningful entity within this focused world (from its next focused world).

As with the five acts, dominant modes of being can be identified in prequels and sequels. Prequels are dominated by capturing and wandering, while sequels are dominated by releasing and wandering. Amid highly dynamic alternation between capturing and wandering during the prequel stage, one is motivated to approach this focused world (while in the previous one). Similarly, amid highly dynamic alternation between releasing and wandering during the sequel stage, one is motivated to leave this focused world (while in the next one). Overall, the seven-component spatial-experiential sequence can be detailed as follows: 1) prequel dominated by capturing and wandering; 2) exposition dominated by capturing; 3) rising action dominated by wandering; 4) climax dominated by lingering; 5) falling action dominated by wandering; 6) denouement dominated by releasing; 7) sequel dominated by releasing and wandering (Fig. 7.10). Like the five-act wave structure, the seven-component sequence is shaped by numerous spatial-experiential conditions.

The seven components' spatial-experiential sequence is a complement of the five acts' structure. This expanded structure comprises complex mechanisms entailing dynamic alternation between attracting and distracting, triggering and disrupting, capturing and releasing. These mechanisms continually flirt with one's curiosity and expectations, seduce them into in-between areas, invite them to revisit a place, and orient them towards different focused worlds. They continuously generate spatial-experiential flow within which a dynamic 'chain effect'³⁹⁷ occurs; as a result, various modes of being are continually inspired, and high-quality experiences of Nearness are facilitated.

³⁹⁷ Lu, "Lost in Translation," 501.

7.4 A Multi-Wave Mechanism

As demonstrated in the above discussion, the seven-component sequence reveals a structure with a certain degree of linearity embedded within one's experience of a Chinese literati garden. This is evident in the linear temporal sequence that occurs through any human experience in the world—after all, our corporeal body can only experience sequential spaces in the continuous flowing time. However, the way experiences occur in a Chinese literati garden is far more complex than a linear seven-component sequence. In fact, each moment in one's experience of a literati garden is always an integration of three spatial-experiential sequences at different stages occurring across at least three focused worlds. This entails a much more complex mechanism of synchronicity and diachronicity, based on which I developed a multi-wave structure involving three spatial-experiential sequences occurring simultaneously across several focused worlds (Fig. 7.13). This section covers the multi-wave structure in greater detail.

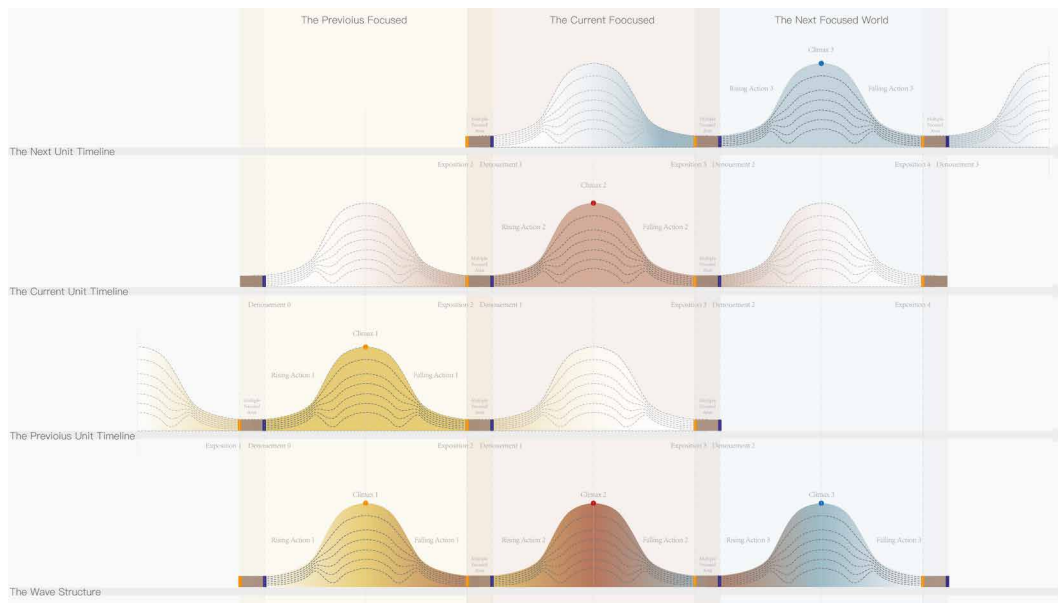


FIG. 7.13 A Multi-Wave Structure. Source: Lu Li.

Unlike the three key moments—exposition, climax, and denouement—the occurrence of which can be precisely located, locations where prequel and sequel occur are difficult to identify, as they are general processes that occur before and after one encounters a focused world rather than specific events. These two components never occur alone. The prequel of a spatial-experiential unit occurring within an objective focused world must occur in a previously experienced focused world; likewise, its sequel must occur in a yet-to-be-experienced focused world. Meanwhile, prequels of any spatial-experiential unit inevitably occur during the sequel of the previous spatial-experiential unit, while sequels of any spatial-experiential unit must occur during the prequel of the next spatial-experiential unit. Consequently, at any moment during one's experience of a focused world, there are always three overlapping sequences taking place in an integrated multi-wave structure.

Of course, while three simultaneous sequences are guaranteed, there are probably more involved, considering that a multi-focused area always facilitates one's involvement of several focused worlds at the same time. However, only three sequences can be firmly identified: the other potential sequences 'collapse' once a visitor decides where to go next. As demonstrated in Figure 7.13, the previous, current, and next spatial-experiential sequences are indicated using three different colours (red, blue, and yellow, respectively) on three parallel timelines. Each of these three sequences involves three different focused worlds experienced over three periods of time, intersecting in multi-focused areas. Within each single sequence, one's intentional relatedness to the objective focused world increases during the prequel and decreases during the sequel. This is shown through the changing colour gradients. Notably, transitional multi-focused areas are represented by the two overlapping areas in-between each pair of focused worlds, marked in light grey. As demonstrated in the bottom timeline, at any moment during one's experience of a garden, these three sequences co-occur and overlap with one another through an accumulated multi-wave structure (Fig. 7.13).

Within this multi-wave structure, experiences occur dynamically through a mechanism of triggering and interrupting. Two typical modes of being, capturing and releasing, are critical to continuously generating intentionality.³⁹⁸ Throughout one's experience of a garden, there is dynamic alternation between the capturing and releasing of various meaningful entities, generating a continuous flow of intentional acts and weaving all relevant spatial-experiential units together. Among these meaningful entities involved in this dynamic alternation, some are strong enough to

³⁹⁸ The term 'intentionality' is used here in the Husserlian sense. For more information on this, see: Siewert, "Consciousness and Intentionality."

manipulate one's intentionality and maintain it until one encounters a multi-focused area; here, the currently occurring spatial-experiential unit may be disrupted by another one being triggered. This alternation may occur frequently and dynamically at any moment within a sequence due to spatial conditions that continuously manipulate one's intentions, orienting them across different focused worlds. The capturing and releasing of meaningful entities has been widely discussed in relation to spatial garden-making techniques, such as the 'borrowing view' [借景], 'framing view' [框景], and 'screening view' [漏景]. The director's skilful use of these spatial techniques facilitates the capture-and-release process and, in turn, continuously fuse the currently occurring spatial-experiential unit with the sequel of the previous unit or the prequel of the next unit (Fig. 7.14).



FIG. 7.14 Examples of Spatial-Experiential Techniques Involving Three Focused Worlds in an Individual's Experience. Source: Lu Li.

While the precise moments in which capturing and releasing occur are impossible to precisely predict, a degree of certainty exists beneath this seemingly uncertain spatial-experiential process. In other words, there is an uncertain certainty in the way that one's experiences occur within the Chinese literati garden. I have already discussed several spatial-experiential components that shape the way one's experiences occur within the Chinese literati garden. Some of these—focusing

spaces and their focused worlds, multi-focused areas, and aggregations of focused worlds—certainly facilitate strong experiences of Nearness by boosting one’s intimacy with the meaningful entities around them, despite the highly dynamic, unpredictable process. Through these components, visitors are attracted, motivated, oriented, disoriented, and re-oriented in the garden, resulting in a continuous and endless flow of experience from one moment to another, from one space to another, and from one focused world to another. Ultimately, this multi-wave structure is what brings about visitors’ extraordinary experiences of Nearness.

7.5 Conclusion

This chapter’s assessment is entirely driven by iterative on-site phenomenological reduction of the entirety of the Master of the Nets Garden. Through a careful examination of how experiences occur across different focused worlds in the Master of the Nets Garden, this chapter demonstrated that two interdependent components—multi-focused areas and the aggregation of focused worlds—shape experiences of Nearness across different focused worlds: on the one hand, as a result of multiple intertextuality, one’s experience of Nearness is noticeably enhanced when physically moving through multi-focused areas; on the other hand, within aggregations of the focused worlds, wide fields of Nearness are formed. These two components play a critical role in forming dynamic spatial-experiential mechanisms that enable one’s experience to flow coherently across different focused worlds. The second part of this chapter revealed that such mechanisms involve three sequences of seven components that intertwine with one another in the timeline, forming a dynamic, multi-wave structure. Finally, this chapter found that the highly dynamic multi-wave structure points not only to how experiences are shaped in the Master of the Nets Garden but also to how extraordinarily rich Nearness involving entities from across multiple focused worlds are generated. Overall, the case study detailed from Chapter Four to Chapter Seven has effectively and systematically demonstrated how one’s intimacy with the world can be strengthened in literati gardens. The methodology that enabled my case study may offer meaningful and inspiring knowledge to contemporary spatial practitioners.

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8 Rethinking Nearness

8.1 Introduction

Starting from a theoretical framework extracted from Heideggerian philosophy (Chapter Two) and a hypothesis on the formation of Nearness within the Chinese literati garden (Chapter Three), this thesis has explored the occurrence of Nearness within individual focusing spaces (Chapter Five), within individual focused worlds (Chapter Six), and across different focused worlds (Chapter Seven). An analytical methodology that enables an exploration of how one's experience of Nearness occurs within the literati garden has been carefully developed. Importantly, however, this thesis does consider a number of important issues and elements pertaining to Nearness that could have constituted distractions from the case study and will therefore be discussed in this section. This chapter is organised as follows: Section 8.2 reflects on the meaning of Nearness, discussing three issues pertaining to the meaning of Nearness; Section 8.3 discusses three issues concerning the qualities, intensities, and densities in the occurrence of Nearness; Section 8.4 discusses the practical relevance of this thesis by examining both Chinese and global architectural cases with the understandings obtained from the previous analysis; lastly, Section 8.5 reflects on the limitations and significance of this thesis. The reflection on these issues is equally as important as the analysis in the previous chapters, as it reveals what this thesis is concerned with on a deeper level.

8.2 Reflection on the Meaning of Nearness

This section reflects on three issues surrounding the meaning of Nearness. First, due to the extremely rich connotations of the notion of Nearness in Heideggerian philosophy, the term 'Nearness' has been used throughout this thesis in various distinctive senses, which warrants clarification. Second, if maintaining ontological relatedness to the world is an essential human tendency (as Heidegger suggests), then many creations of human civilisation such as literature, art, architecture, and technology, in terms of their essence, can be understood as means of bringing near. This understanding leads to a key question: Why does the particular way of bringing near that a literati garden suggests still matter in contemporary society? Third, given that human beings' ontological relatedness to the world has been and is still being dramatically weakened by modern technology, a critical question emerges: What role does technology play in shaping humans' relationship to the contemporary world?³⁹⁹ I argue that modern technology actually leads to a freedom from Nearness more than a loss of Nearness. However, a 'freedom' is perhaps far more dangerous than a 'loss', as it provides an illusion of wellbeing, prompting one to forget about what they have lost. These issues reveal some of the fundamental concerns underlying this thesis and must therefore not be ignored. While they extend beyond the scope of this research, they are worth briefly considering and discussing.

8.2.1 Multiple Senses of Nearness

I used the term 'Nearness' in multiple senses throughout this thesis. As established in Chapter Two, the term 'Nearness' carries rich, though often ambiguous, meaning. This richness results in its meaning intertwining with the meanings of countless other theoretical concepts, such as intentionality, intimacy, propinquity, and closeness. To avoid confusion and maintain a modest degree of simplicity, I have strictly adhered to the term 'Nearness' throughout this thesis. However, this adherence resulted in the use of the term in different, but interrelated, senses. In general, I have used the term in at least three different senses: 1) Nearness as an essential aspect of human experience; 2) Nearness as a relatedness of intimacy with the world generated by human experience; 3) Nearness as a spatial quality that allows the relatedness of intimacy to occur in one's experience of a built environment.

³⁹⁹ I described various phenomena that highlight this weakened and weakening relatedness of intimacy within built environments in the introductory chapter.

First, in a broad sense, most human experiences are experiences of Nearness, as they bring near meaningful entities, making them inner-worldly beings.⁴⁰⁰ From a baby's first cry to an old man's last sigh, no one ever completely stops bringing near the world around them. In this sense, the notion of Nearness reveals an essential aspect of human experience despite it not being an experience in and of itself. To have an experience, according to Charles Siewert, is to be 'in a state that is conscious'.⁴⁰¹ Once experience occurs, a state of consciousness is generated. Consciousness, in a Husserlian sense, is always an intentional act.⁴⁰² In other words, the term 'intentional act' describes how a conscious state of human experience works. While philosophers have not reached a consensus on whether consciousness always comes alongside intentionality, it is clear from my perspective that Nearness, as a conscious state of being that brings near meaningful entities, is necessarily an intentional act. Heidegger's notion of 'being-in-the-world' reveals that Dasein's intentionality is essentially rooted in its fundamental relatedness to the world, which 'cannot be cancelled by any abstention from judgment'.⁴⁰³ Thus, in this thesis, I often use the term 'Nearness' in this broad sense to describe the essential aspect of human experience. For instance, when analysing how Nearness occurs within literati gardens, what I actually explore is how one's experience occurs within them through a series of spatial-experiential settings, as Nearness always occurs as an essential aspect of one's experience.

Second, while most human experiences are essentially experiences of bringing near, Nearness is not in and of itself an experience. Hence, I use the term 'Nearness' in a narrow sense to refer to the particular state of being that stems from the human experience of bringing near: the ontological relatedness of intimacy to the world engendered through human experience. It is notable that this ontological relatedness, as Heidegger points out, is merely an essential tendency that lies in Dasein's being-in-the-world. For Heidegger, being-in-the-world remains a far more fundamental structure.⁴⁰⁴ Therefore, when I say 'the experience of Nearness within the literati garden', I specifically mean 'the relatedness of intimacy established in and through one's experience of the literati garden'.

⁴⁰⁰ Purely internal experiences that occur in one's subconsciousness (e.g., dreaming) may be difficult to identify as bringing near, at least not in the same sense as that discussed in this thesis.

⁴⁰¹ Siewert, "Consciousness and Intentionality."

⁴⁰² Siewert, "Consciousness and Intentionality."

⁴⁰³ Siewert, "Consciousness and Intentionality."

⁴⁰⁴ Heidegger, *Being and Time*.

Of course, there remains a third (perhaps even narrower) sense of ‘Nearness’ used throughout this thesis. As established in Chapter Four, Heidegger’s notion of Nearness warrants an architectural interpretation, as it is closely related to Dasein’s spatiality. In other words, it is up to the architectural field to translate philosophical understandings of Nearness into architectural theory, enabling this essential aspect of human experience to be understood, satisfied, improved, and inspired through built environments. In this sense, I have generally used this term to describe the spatial quality that enables visitors within a built space to develop relatedness to and intimacy with the world in and through their individual experiences.

Throughout this thesis, I have used the term ‘Nearness’ in these three senses without always articulating which specific sense I was referencing. As these three senses are always interdependent and intertwining, this has allowed my analysis to preserve the semantic complexity of the notion of Nearness. The overall theoretical setting, however, is built up based on all three of these senses. The primary objective of this thesis is to explore how one’s experience of Nearness occurs within the Chinese literati garden, which requires the consideration of Nearness in a broad sense (as an essential aspect of human experience). While the analysis goes deeper, it explores how the literati garden builds up ontological relatedness of intimacy to the world in a particular way in one’s experience based on the understanding of a narrow sense of Nearness (as intimacy with the world generated by human experience). Finally, it assesses how ontological relatedness of intimacy is developed through a series of spatial-experiential settings that impact Nearness (as a spatial quality that facilitates intimacy through one’s experience of a built environment). These three senses collectively offer an understanding of how Dasein’s desire of being-in-the-world can be fundamentally fulfilled through a built environment.

8.2.2 Natural Nearness or Technological Nearness?

As Heidegger’s notion of ‘being-in-the-world’ suggests, Nearness is essential to human well-being. This is why Heidegger claims that ‘in Da-sein there is an essential tendency towards nearness’.⁴⁰⁵ Indeed, as an essential tendency, humans’ bringing-near desire never ceases.⁴⁰⁶ In order to sustain in the world, Dasein upholds a necessary ontological relatedness to various meaningful entities, making them its

⁴⁰⁵ Heidegger, *Being and Time*.

⁴⁰⁶ Heidegger, *Being and Time*.

'inner-worldly-beings'.⁴⁰⁷ If it is Dasein's natural tendency to bring-near all these inner-worldly-beings in various ways, why does the particular way of bringing near that a literati garden suggests still matter in contemporary society? Reflection on this issue results in a distinction between two different types of Nearness: natural Nearness and technological Nearness. This distinction offers a new perspective to rethink the meaning of the literati gardens' particular way of bringing near in the modern era.

First, natural Nearness can be defined as the ontological relatedness to the world that occurs as a result of conditions unrelated to or unimpeded by human technology influence. As human beings, we naturally bring the world near in our daily lives: breathing air, eating food, drinking water, understanding the world, talking to others, meeting each other, and resting under shelter. While primitive human ancestors certainly had these same basic needs, they brought their desires near in vastly different ways. Their ontological relatedness to the world was surely achieved through more natural conditions. For instance, they breathed fresh air, drank water from a natural brook, ate roasted meat from an animal struck by lightning, and hid in a wild cave to avoid being attacked by predators. In all these circumstances, the fresh air, the water from the brook, the poor animal struck by natural lightning, and the cave as a natural shelter are natural conditions that are not intervened by human beings. If the world is brought near through natural conditions, then a natural Nearness is established. Thinking mythologically, Adam and Eve surely enjoyed a state of purely natural Nearness in the Garden of Eden. In short, natural Nearness is what human beings are all born with and naturally maintain.

In contrast to natural Nearness, another way of bringing near leads to a different kind of relatedness to the world, technological Nearness. In 'The Question Concerning Technology', Heidegger asserts that the essence of technology is a revealing – a bringing-forth that 'brings hither out of concealment forth into unconcealment'.⁴⁰⁸ When technology reveals that which had previously been concealed, it interrupts (or, in Heidegger's term, enframes) natural ways of bringing near. This interruption can be traced back to the moment at which humans' early ancestors successfully started a fire by igniting tinder for the first time. Archaeological evidence suggests that 'regular, systematic fire production by Neanderthals' dates back at least 50,000 years.⁴⁰⁹ While biologists and

⁴⁰⁷ Heidegger, *Being and Time*.

⁴⁰⁸ Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*.

⁴⁰⁹ Andrew Sorensen, Emilie Claud, and Marie Soressi, "Neandertal Fire-Making Technology Inferred from Microwear Analysis," *Scientific Reports* 8, no. 1 (2018).

archaeologists have not reached a consensus on whether Neanderthals are the same species as modern humans' ancestors (*Homo sapiens*), the example still constitutes the point at which technological Nearness was first engendered. Since then, the ancestors of humanity have invented countless technologies to facilitate enhanced relatedness to the world around them: harnessing fire for cooking, making containers for preserving water, producing weapons for fighting predators, cultivating crops for food, controlling ventilation and lighting through opening, building houses for permanent shelter, and, much later, using industrial machines for mass production. All these seemingly irrelevant technological inventions, which have appeared in an extremely vast time span, are important, as they show that, throughout all of human history, the essence of technology has always interrupted the conditions of natural Nearness. In a Heideggerian sense, these technological means of bringing near are simultaneously means of 'enframing' nature, unavoidably leading to a different type of relatedness to the world – technological Nearness.⁴¹⁰

Since the Industrial Revolution, technological Nearness has increasingly dominated humans' state of being. As Heidegger sharply asserts, humanity 'puts the longest distances behind him in the shortest time'. More specifically, Heidegger describes the dynamic as follows:

Man now reaches overnight, by plane, places which formerly took weeks and months of travel. He now receives instant information, by radio, of events which he formerly learned about only years later, if at all. The germination and growth of plants, which remained hidden throughout the seasons, is now exhibited publicly in a minute, on film. Distant sites of the most ancient cultures are shown on film as if they stood this very moment amidst today's street traffic. Moreover, the film attests to what it shows by presenting also the camera and its operators at work. The peak of this abolition of every possibility of remoteness is reached by television, which will soon pervade and dominate the whole machinery of communication.⁴¹¹

These examples clearly demonstrate how humans' sense of Nearness has been drastically impacted by technology since the Industrial Revolution. Of course, some natural means of bringing near still occur for human beings living in the modern era. For instance, modern humans still breathe natural air rather than processed air.

⁴¹⁰ Heidegger raised his notion of Nearness most strongly as a reflection on modern technology. While I agree that modern technology is very different from that used in the pre-modern era, I would argue that the nature of technology has hardly changed in terms of its intention to 'enframe' natural entities and bring them near.

⁴¹¹ Heidegger, "The Thing."

Still, increasingly more unnatural, technological conditions are involved in most daily activities, resulting in a modern state of being that heavily relies on technological Nearness. It is worth noting that Heidegger could very well disagree with my reference to modern relationships as ‘technological Nearness’; after all, he asserts that ‘the frantic abolition of all distances brings no nearness’.⁴¹² That assessment, however, naturally leads to the following question: If modern humans’ relatedness to the world formed by technology merely constitutes the ‘abolition of distances’, is there nothing they can do to recapture their lost Nearness and gain an authentic state of being aside from abandoning modern technology in their everyday lives?

Through this concept of technological Nearness, I argue that it is possible to preserve a degree of authentic Nearness through technology. Of course, generated Nearness can vary significantly in degree and quality depending on how one employs technology. For instance, a Chinese literati garden is an aggregation of conditions that lead to extraordinary experiences of both types of Nearness. It is important to note that most landscape and architectural elements involved in one’s experience of a literati garden stem from the use of human technology. Even seemingly natural elements (e.g., waterways, rocky areas, plants, animals) are always carefully selected, arranged, processed, or cultivated before visitors encounter them. As a result, these elements are surely technological conditions rather than natural conditions. However, in most Chinese literati gardens, these technological conditions are typically employed to create an experience as close as possible to that of natural Nearness. In other words, Chinese literati gardens achieve an authentic sense of natural Nearness—one that can satisfy humans’ ontological desire to maintain relatedness to the world through natural conditions—through technological means. Below is an excerpt from Hall and Ames discussing what this ‘authentic sense of natural Nearness’ means:

[...] were one to say that the Chinese garden is a ‘rhetorical landscape’, this should not be interpreted to mean that it is an attempt to create an artificial world which mirrors the natural environs. A Chinese rhetorical landscape is a world of its own, in the most profound sense of that term, owning the same ontological status as the ‘natural’ environs. Thus, one may not think of the Chinese garden as an imitation of either the form (Plato) or the functioning (Aristotle) of nature. Nor should one hold, with Western romanticism, that it is a transformation of nature. Certainly, it cannot be viewed as Freudian aestheticians in the West would hold, as a sublimation

⁴¹² Heidegger, “The Thing.”

of nature.⁴¹³[...] If we are to make any brief definitional claim, the best we can say, given the absence of a strong distinction between nature and artifice in the dominant modes of Chinese thinking, is that the construction of a garden as a work of art involves the education of nature. And such education or cultivation maintains the continuity between nature and artifice.⁴¹⁴

This understanding of the literati garden as ‘a work of art involves the education of nature’ that ‘maintains the continuity between nature and artifice’ fundamentally echoes Ji Cheng’s essential principle of making a garden: ‘Although made by man, it will be as though it sprang from Heaven’.⁴¹⁵ This approach of garden-making stands in stark contrast to that of traditional Japanese rock gardens, in which wild nature landscapes is often represented through miniature forms; it also differs from that of French and Italian gardens, in which trees and shrubs are neatly trimmed into regular forms and footpaths are arranged to follow tidy geometrical patterns. In other words, literati gardens always attempt to create an illusion of pure nature through one’s bodily cognition. The pursuit of representing natural Nearness through technological means may be the most significant lesson that modern designers, planners, and architects can draw from the Chinese literati garden, especially in such a contemporary world where our everyday lives within built environments are increasingly dominated by various technologies.

8.2.3 ‘Loss’ of Nearness or ‘Freedom’ from Nearness?

What role does technology play in shaping humans’ relationship with the contemporary world? The distinction between natural Nearness and technological Nearness immediately brings forth another matter to reflect on: the paradoxical role of modern technology in shaping one’s relatedness to the contemporary world from a Heideggerian perspective. I have already mentioned Heidegger’s reflections on modern technology, which suggest that modern humans are experiencing a loss of Nearness (though he never puts it so explicitly). Particularly, in ‘The Thing’, he asserts that, due to modern technology, ‘all distances in time and space are shrinking [...] yet the hasty setting aside of all distances brings no nearness’.⁴¹⁶ On

⁴¹³ Hall and Ames, “The Cosmological Setting of Chinese Gardens.”

⁴¹⁴ Hall and Ames, “The Cosmological Setting of Chinese Gardens.”

⁴¹⁵ Ji and Chen, *园冶注释*.

⁴¹⁶ Heidegger, “The Thing.”

the other hand, Heidegger discusses the essence of technology as means of bringing forth, revealing what had previously been concealed. In this sense, one could say that technological progress is also a result of Dasein's tendency to bring near. It seems that, for Heidegger, humans' constant use of technology to bring entities near has resulted in a loss of Nearness in the modern era. It is worth discussing how this paradoxical situation came about.

This discussion requires reflection on humanity's relationship with modern technology. I agree with Heidegger that, in the modern world, 'everything gets lumped together into uniform distancelessness'.⁴¹⁷ However, looking closely, one may notice that the abolition of Nearness that Heidegger observes may stem from the fact that technology has, in a sense, increasingly liberated humans from the need for natural Nearness. My distinction between natural Nearness and technological Nearness suggests that humanity has always employed technology to generate or improve—rather than hinder—its relatedness to the world. This dynamic does not contradict the essence of technology as a means of bringing forth that which had previously been concealed. Unfortunately, not all technologies result in sound relatedness of intimacy with one's world. Many of them, as Heidegger points out, have led to an 'abolition of distance', which is quite distinct from 'nearness'. However, while modern technology has undoubtedly influenced humans' means of being-in-the-world, I hesitate to describe this dynamic as a true loss of Nearness. In my view, a technology always allows people to be free from one kind of natural Nearness rather than directly depriving them of it. In this sense, modern technology has liberated humans from their original dependence on natural Nearness in a way never previously thought possible. Since human ancestors first ignited a fire, humanity has been increasingly liberated from natural Nearness alongside the advancement of human technology. Consequently, modern humans are increasingly dependent on technological Nearness.

Importantly, this does not mean that modern humans are deprived of their innate ontological relatedness to the world. It only means that they become free to lose part of it, sometimes without any fear. There are countless examples of this heightened freedom: artificial fire freed humans from chewing and digesting raw food;⁴¹⁸ agriculture freed them from chasing and hunting wild animals to get food; machines freed them from incessant, monotonous labour; air conditioning freed them from extreme climates; elevators freed them from low-level dwelling;

⁴¹⁷ Heidegger, "The Thing."

⁴¹⁸ As it allows for food that costs us less time and energy to chew, the use of fire enabled the development of human brains, according to a recent study.

vaccinations freed them from dangerous viruses; virtual and augmented reality freed them, in a sense, from objective reality. However, at the same time, humans in the modern era are becoming so free from natural Nearness that they lose the ability to recapture their original relatedness to the world even if they want to do so. These technologies have changed humans to their core, seducing them and encouraging absolute reliance. In a Heideggerian sense, they constantly ‘enframe’ Dasein’s being-in-the-world, leading to an inauthentic state of being.⁴¹⁹ For Heidegger, ‘enframing’ means efficiently transforming nature into a resource for efficient use.⁴²⁰ Countless impactful technologies have been developed since Heidegger’s generation, making the situation he described even more severe. It is impossible to know what new technologies are coming in the next few decades, but it is likely that they will be ground-breaking. For example, in August 2020, Elon Musk announced Neuralink’s new implantable brain chip, which could lead to a future that is largely free from physical limitations.⁴²¹ Having already enframed the natural world, humanity now begins to enframe itself.

It is difficult to definitively assert which type of Nearness is better for human well-being. Somewhat counterintuitively, most of the Master of the Nets Garden’s conditions of Nearness explored throughout this thesis are technological more than natural – at least in a certain sense. While engendering experiences similar to natural Nearness, they are mostly technological conditions set for enframing. However, as this incessant ‘enframing’ continues, one disturbing question emerges: Will humans ever reach a point in the future when they are so dependent on technological Nearness and so free from natural Nearness that they can hardly identify themselves as humans?

⁴¹⁹ Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*.

⁴²⁰ Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*.

⁴²¹ BBC, “Neuralink: Elon Musk Unveils Pig with Chip in its Brain,” news release, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-53956683>.

8.3 Reflection on the Occurrence of Nearness Within Built Environments

Through a shift in perspective from philosophical thinking to architectural analysis, this thesis focuses on spatial conditions embedded within a built environment that inspire, seduce, or facilitate experiences of Nearness. Through the case study of the Master of the Nets Garden, this thesis provides a systematic methodology, through which the exploration of the occurrence of Nearness within a built environment is possible. However, it is worth noting that in conversations about my research project, many people have asked me whether certain spaces were built with the quality of Nearness. For example: Is there a sense of Nearness within the Orange Hall of the Faculty? Is Louis Kahn's Sulk Institute built to facilitate high-quality experiences of Nearness? Is there a difference in terms of the experience of Nearness between literati gardens and contemporary architectural works that are claimed to have learned from them and designed to create a garden-like experience?

These are all meaningful but difficult questions. As already discussed, a built environment can be viewed as an aggregation of spatial conditions created to enable, inspire, or seduce Dasein to bring meaningful entities into its world and facilitate greater intimacy. In this sense, one may find that all built environments are created with a certain degree of Nearness. However, the intensity, density, and quality of Nearness vary depending on the spatial-experiential conditions embedded within each built environment. For instance, a built environment that may arouse extreme anxiety due to lack of Nearness is the eponymous one in *The Matrix* (1999). The Matrix provides everyone with an incubator in which to lie. By supplying all of the nutrients necessary to maintain one's vital status, it creates a virtual world in which one's consciousness can 'live'. For anyone aware of their true circumstances, the anxiety resulting from the deprivation of Nearness is overwhelming. Differing from that, a dark prison cell with only a tiny opening provides the most basic condition to ensure continued airflow that allows the prisoner can remain alive – this may be the most challenging condition of Nearness that one can imagine in the real world. In stark contrast to those two examples, the Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind in the Master of the Nets Garden provides conditions that facilitate rich and pleasant experiences of Nearness. With the Beauty's Arm bench to sit on, the picturesque landscape to enjoy, and the moon and wind to appreciate, visitors undergo a poetic experience of rich relatedness of intimacy with their environment. The contrast between these three built environments becomes remarkably clear in terms of the different quality, intensity, and quality of Nearness when they are shown side by side (Fig. 8.1). In this section, I discuss these three aspects of Nearness in greater detail.

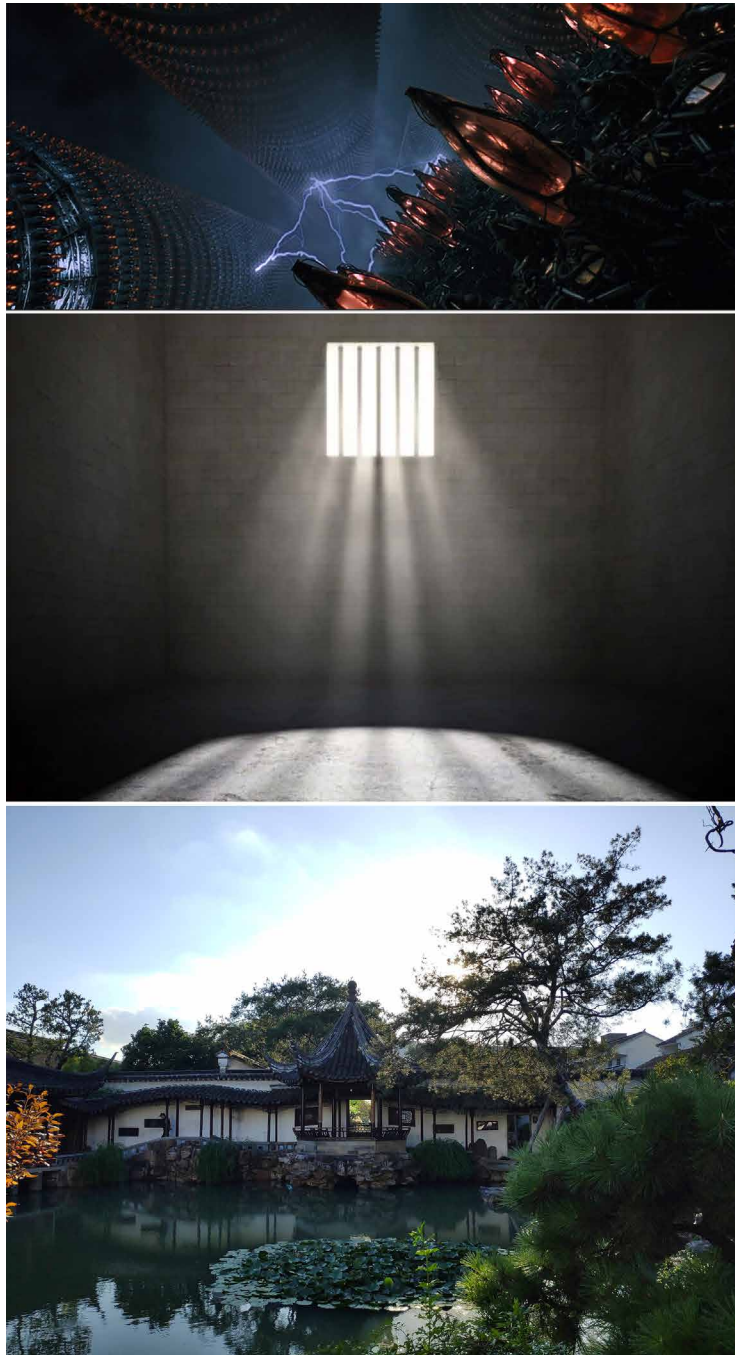


FIG. 8.1 Examples of Different Qualities, Densities, and Intensities of Nearness. Source: Combined by Lu Li based on multiple sources.

8.3.1 Varying Degrees of Intensity in Experiences of Nearness

Nearness varies in intensity from case to case. Based on the theoretical framework established in Chapter Two, the intensity of Nearness is determined by how strong relatedness to the world is established in one's experience. The Chinese idiom 'to quench one's thirst by thinking of plums' [望梅止渴] tells a story of a soldier's thirst being quenched by the mere thought of eating plums.⁴²² When one imagines a plum tree, hydration feels nearer. Still, when one actually sees a plum garden, hydration feels even nearer. Finally, when one grasps a plum in their hand, hydration feels incredibly near. However, the nearest hydration only occurs when one finally bites down on the plum, chews it slowly, and swallows it. This rising ontological relatedness to the plum – at the beginning one imagines the taste of a plum, then sees the plum garden, later on holds the plum in hand, and finally eats it – stems from the increasing extent to which Dasein is involved in its relatedness to the plum. In this sense, the intensity of Nearness is driven by how engaging a built environment is.

The psychological mechanism that leads to varying degrees of intensity in experiences of Nearness is beyond the scope of this research. However, the Buddhist notion of the six senses may aid in understanding how varying degrees of engagement influence one's relatedness to the world. In Buddhism, a human's six sensory organs—eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind—constitute the foundation of one's being-in-the-world, identified as six 'sense-bases'. These six sense-bases, accordingly, lead to six senses: visual sense, auditory sense, olfactory sense, gustatory sense, tactual sense, and consciousness.⁴²³ In any given circumstance, experiences of Nearness become stronger as more sense-bases (and more senses) are engaged in Dasein's relatedness to the world. In line with this understanding, behavioural modes of being appear to generate stronger experiences of Nearness than perceptual modes, as behavioural modes of being require one to use more sense-bases in more engaging ways. For this same reason, perceptual modes of being generate stronger experiences of Nearness than conscious modes. For instance, scenery-enjoying generates stronger experiences of Nearness than reading a poem that depicts the same scenery. In addition, different modes of being can result in varying degrees of experiential intensity even when engaging with the same entity. This dynamic warrants further analysis, as it could enable designers, planners, and architects to construct spaces that facilitate more intense experiences of Nearness.

⁴²² Yiqing Liu, 世说新语笺注 [*Notes on the New Anecdotes of Social Talk*] (Jiangsu: Jiangsu People's Publishing House, 2019).

⁴²³ Chris Kang and Koa Whittingham, "Mindfulness: A Dialogue Between Buddhism and Clinical Psychology," *Mindfulness* 1, no. 1 (2010).

8.3.2 Varying Degrees of Density in Experiences of Nearness

Nearness also varies in density. The density of Nearness is determined by how rich relatedness is established during a period time within a given built environment, which can be influenced by a variety of factors. According to the model established in Chapter Two, the density of experiences of Nearness is driven by several factors: 1) the number of spatial conditions that may inspire space-specific modes of being embedded within the space; 2) the size of the space; 3) the length of one's experience within the space.

First, as demonstrated in the case study of the Master of the Nets Garden, the number of spatial conditions embedded within a space is critical, as this determines how abundant meaningful entities can be brought near into one's experience. Consequently, it is responsible for the density of experiences of Nearness. Second, size has a significant impact on the accessibility of embedded spatial conditions to visitors. As a result, small spaces can easily generate more dense experiences than large spaces even when embedded with the same number of conditions of Nearness, due to their higher level of 'readiness-to-hand', in the Heideggerian sense.⁴²⁴ For instance, as demonstrated in Chapter Four, at least 11 spatial conditions are embedded within a tiny space of the Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind, which easily generates a high density of Nearness in one's experience because they are highly accessible. Notably, a balance between number of Nearness conditions and space size is critical to the creation of a high-quality experience of Nearness. Third, the length of experiences within a space is also important. Many modes of being occurring simultaneously in a short period of time may generate extraordinarily dense experiences. The 'climax of Nearness' discussed in Chapter Four is an excellent example of high temporal density in experiences of Nearness. While this identification of three factors may be somewhat oversimplified and superficial, it is still important, as the density of experiences of Nearness is a so critical factor shaping one's experience of Nearness within a space that must not be ignored. It is worth noting that the density is one of the few indicators through which Nearness that can, to a certain degree, be quantitatively analysed.

⁴²⁴ See Chapter Four for more information on this.

8.3.3 Varying Degrees of Quality in Experiences of Nearness

In this section, I have already discussed two aspects of Nearness: intensity and density. Looping back to my previous example, however, the reason that one's experience within a literati garden is so different from that within a prison cell or a Matrix incubator lies not only in their different sizes, their different number of spatial conditions, or their different levels of engagement. More importantly, it is the quality of Nearness that leads to distinctive experience. The quality of Nearness influences one's way of bringing near, which often depends on several additional factors embedded within the corresponding conditions of Nearness. In previous chapters, I explored many significant factors embedded within Chinese literati gardens, such as multi-dimensional experiences of Nearness, strong intertextuality between the focusing and the focused, and clearly formulated FS-FW structure, that shapes the quality of Nearness. In this section, I continue to discuss two distinct factors that influence the quality of experiences of Nearness—accessibility and interactivity—each of which leads to a particular relationship between Dasein and the world. While these two factors are not particularly strong in Chinese literati gardens, they are still important for facilitating high-quality experiences of Nearness within contemporary built environments.

Accessibility

Accessibility has a considerable impact on the quality of experiences of Nearness. This factor is largely determined by how accessible Nearness conditions are when their corresponding modes of being occur. Following the above idiom of 'quenching one's thirst by thinking of plums', if the thirsty soldier sees the plum garden on the other side of a river while finding a bridge across that river, the quality Nearness generated in this situation would be different from that without the bridge. Regarding one's experience within a Chinese literati garden, a water area with a platform above is more accessible than it would be when it can only be viewed from afar; a rocky area with a path leading to it is more accessible than it would be when it can only be appreciated from a distance; a pine tree with a footpath towards it is more accessible than it would be when it can only be watched through a window. Of course, the platform, the path, and the footpath in these examples are Nearness conditions that may inspire modes of being, but their enhancement of accessibility to the water, the rocky area, and the pine tree, respectively, make one's world nearer before their corresponding modes of being even occur. The accessibility is an additional factor to these conditions that shapes one's experience of Nearness.

Worth noting is that the influence of accessibility on Nearness does not depend on how accessible an entity actually is but rather on how accessible one believes it is. One example of low accessibility is the central rocky area in the Lion Grove Garden, where

visitors can easily get lost on divergent paths—it is a true mountainous labyrinth. In fact, once a visitor gets involved into the rocky area, accessibility to other areas of the garden plummets to a degree that may arouse anxiety among visitors. They may lose their confidence to get out of the rocky area despite the exits being physically nearby. As a result, despite various modes of being (e.g. wandering, descending, ascending, playing) still occurring, experiences of Nearness are drastically disrupted in this area, as visitors easily lose their confidence to maintain a proper connection to the outer world. This rocky area acts becomes a kind of prison cell in terms of its impact on experiences of Nearness, prompting visitors to feel trapped. During my on-site investigation, I overheard visitors complaining about how anxious they were on several occasions despite the playful experience they were having (Fig. 8.2).



FIG. 8.2 The Central Landscape Area of the Lion Grove Garden. Source: Lu Li.

Interactivity

Interactivity is another factor that impacts the quality of experiences of Nearness. This factor is determined by how interactive a Nearness condition is when its corresponding mode of being occurs. As a condition increases in interactivity, the relatedness generated by it becomes stronger. Consider the conditions for the mode of resting. A hard bench with an upright back, for instance, provides a condition for one to sit down and have a rest. However, with its elegantly curved armrest to brace the body and allow for more comfortable leaning, the Beauty's Arm Bench is a far more interactive resting condition, as it adapts to the human body more than a wooden bench with an upright back. Still, a rocking chair with an adjustable back and a flexible armrest covered by soft, porous material would provide an

even more interactive resting condition, as its surface instantly adapts to someone sitting in it. Beyond even that, a cosy beanbag made of memory foam facilitates optimal adaptation and interactivity. Evidently, there is a wide range of degrees of interactivity when it comes to resting conditions. Interactivity is also apparent in Nearness conditions for other modes of being. As Tong Jun points out, in many excellent literati gardens, picturesque sceneries continuously shift and unfold in front of one's eyes while wandering within them.⁴²⁵ These shifts while wandering constitute interactivity between the visitor and the landscape, creating an excellent experience of scenery-enjoying within the Chinese literati garden.



FIG. 8.3 The Diana Memorial Fountain in Hyde Park. Source: Lu Li.

In the Master of the Nets Garden, one may assume that the architectural spaces around the central water area, such as the Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind and the Duck-Shooting Veranda, are built to enable visitors to enjoy and, more importantly, to interact with the water landscape. However, the spatial conditions currently embedded within these spaces do not appear to be strong enough to inspire intimate, positive, and comfortable interaction. For instance, the height difference between the water surface and the revetment is generally too high for one to approach the water surface. In comparison, the Diana Memorial Fountain in Hyde Park (2004) in London is a contemporary case featuring high-quality interaction in a water landscape, inspiring more behaviours among its visitors and, thus, developing greater intimacy between its visitors and their environment. A wide range of modes of being can occur in relation to various spatial conditions along the ring of the fountain (Fig. 8.3). The water serves not only a still scenery to enjoy but, more importantly, a meaningful entity to walk along, sit near, and play in. Various Nearness conditions facilitate strong interaction among its visitors. Compared with the central water area in the Master of the Nets Garden, the Diana Memorial Fountain facilitates far stronger interaction in one's experience of Nearness.

⁴²⁵ Tong, 江南园林志.

In a Heideggerian sense, accessibility and interactivity are significant in generating a sense of readiness-to-hand. Beyond these two factors, however, there must be many other factors involved in one's experience of Nearness with a significant impact on the quality of relatedness established in their being-in-the-world. Further investigation is necessary to identify and assess these factors.

8.4 Reflection on Practical Relevance

As discussed in Chapter Two, since the Industrial Revolution, humankind has experienced the increasingly rapid weakening of its relatedness of intimacy to the world. However, the above understanding of the key factors responsible for shaping different intensities, densities, and qualities of experiences of Nearness suggests that it is possible to improve experiences of Nearness through the mindful construction of built environments. Thus, regardless of whether this weakening is viewed as a loss or a freedom (see Section 8.2.3), it is worth reflecting on the practical relevance of this thesis. While conducting this research, I consciously or unconsciously asked myself two questions: How would an understanding of the experience of Nearness within the Chinese literati garden impact contemporary society? Could it help contemporary spatial practitioners (e.g. planners, designers, and architects) craft a better world? Reflection on these questions may offer some guidelines for how this thesis's findings could be practically applied from a professional perspective. The professional relevance of this thesis can be discussed at two levels: the Chinese level and the global level. Regarding China, this section covers the extent to which and in what ways the Chinese literati garden has served as a cultural source for Chinese architectural practices (Section 8.4.1). Regarding the world at large, this section discusses several well-known architectural works, assessing the different approaches that they employ to address various aspects of Nearness (Section 8.4.2).

8.4.1 Chinese Architectural Practices: The Literati Garden as a Cultural Source

Since the early 20th century, the Chinese literati garden has gradually grown into important reference points for modern Chinese architects. The first generation of modern architects in China is thought to have emerged following the collapse of the country's 2,000-year-old monarchy and the subsequent establishment of

the Republic of China in 1912. Against the backdrop of drastic political, cultural, economic, and social changes, early modern Chinese architects were profoundly influenced by both modern Western architectural styles and traditional Chinese culture. Their fondness of Western design is due to the fact that many of them were trained as architects in the United States, Europe, and Japan.⁴²⁶ Particularly influential among them were those who had trained in the United States using the so-called ‘remission of the Boxer Indemnity’ from 1918 to 1937.⁴²⁷ Most of these architects were trained in the University of Pennsylvania’s Beaux-Arts system, the influence of which is evident in their later work.⁴²⁸ Still, traditional Chinese culture had a substantial impact on this generation of Chinese architects, as this era saw traditional culture constantly being discussed, challenged, and reformed by Chinese intellectuals. Thus, it is no surprise that early modern Chinese architects and architectural scholars were often mindful of traditional Chinese cultural elements, including those in the literati gardens, while working on contemporary designs.⁴²⁹ Some of them (such as Tong Jun, Liang Sicheng, and Liu Dunzhen) were passionately committed to the study of the history and language of traditional Chinese architecture. As highlighted by Lu Andong, the Chinese literati garden ‘remains as a reservoir of creative ideas and design artifices’.⁴³⁰ One examination of the use of Chinese literati gardens as a cultural source in modern architectural practices suggests that early Chinese architects studied, absorbed, and applied the language of traditional literati gardens in many different ways.⁴³¹ In my view, they naturally followed the ancient literati’s role as the creator, inheritor, and disseminator of cultural essence despite many Chinese intellectuals at the time speaking so fiercely against ancient traditions. This section discusses some Chinese architectural works from this era, emphasising how the literati garden is used to establish a national and cultural identity in architectural practices in China.

⁴²⁶ Ming Tong, “A Historical Accomplishment: The First Generation of Architects Trained at the University of Pennsylvania [历史性的归成：受教于宾夕法尼亚大学的第一代中国建筑师],” *世界建筑 [World Architecture]*, no. 2 (2020).

⁴²⁷ Tong, “A Historical Accomplishment.”

⁴²⁸ Tong, “A Historical Accomplishment.”; Tong, “A Historical Accomplishment.”

⁴²⁹ Liang Sicheng, Lin Huiyin, Tong Jun, Chen Congzhou, and Chen Zhi laid the foundation for the discipline of architecture and landscape design in modern China.

⁴³⁰ Lu, “Lost in Translation.”

⁴³¹ Lu, “Lost in Translation.”

Garden Language as a Cultural Symbol

The language of traditional literati gardens is evident in some early works by modern Chinese architects, albeit generally in a subtle, restrained manner. Historian Ruan Xin points out that, as most early Chinese architects were trained in the Beaux-Arts system, their work exhibited 'conscious attempts to incorporate ornamental Chinese motifs':⁴³² For example, the Huangpu Theatre (1933) was designed by the Huagai Office, the three principal architects of which (Zhao Shen, Chen Zhi, and Tong Jun) were all trained in the United States. While the aesthetic composition of the theatre's street façade aligned with standard modernist principles, the patterns used to frame the vertically arrayed windows on the façade were reminiscent of the lattice windows common in Chinese literati gardens (Fig. 8.4).



FIG. 8.4 Window Patterns of the Street Façade of the Huangpu Theatre. Source: Edited by Lu Li based on image obtained via Wiki Commons.⁴³³

⁴³² Xing Ruan, "Accidental Affinities: American Beaux-Arts in Twentieth-Century Chinese Architectural Education and Practice," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 61, no. 1 (2002).

⁴³³ Livelierw, "Huangpu Theatre Shanghai," (Wikimedia Commons). https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Huangpu_Theatre_Shanghai.JPG.

However, the use of garden language remained largely symbolic during this early period. Despite the conscious adoption of some cultural elements from traditional literati gardens, experiences occurring within these buildings would not align with that occurring within literati gardens—and their visitors would certainly not achieve similar experiences of Nearness in any sense.

Garden Language as a Generator of Spatial Layout

Garden language also served as a reference for helping architects generate spatial layouts. The Beijing Peace Hotel (1953), designed by Yang Tingbao, was an early attempt to devise an asymmetric, multi-axis masterplan by learning from literati gardens. According to Ruan, Yang realised that ‘the spatial axis can be turned, twisted, and even slanted in Chinese temples and gardens’, and he ‘criticised some classical examples in Western architecture, such as the *Palais de Versailles*, as having a “what you see is what you get” spatial sequence caused by using straightforward axes’.⁴³⁴ As a result, ‘the ground level of the Beijing Peace Hotel was a complex combination of axes for each spatial “interest centre”, articulated by turning and twisting axes’ (Fig. 8.5).⁴³⁵ Traditional Chinese gardens’ spatial-geometric strategy of ‘turning and twisting axes’ seems to have been an important reference for Yang in this case. By applying the multi-axis strategy, Yang integrated a traditional courtyard—where the well-known Grand Secretary of the late Qing dynasty Na Tong lived—into the masterplan of the hotel.⁴³⁶

Furthermore, I would argue that this work entails a sense of multi-intertextuality stemming from the combination of three building groups around a courtyard in which the interaction between the ‘focusing’ and the ‘focused’ may occur. The courtyard facilitates the occurrence of multiple modes of being, including wandering, lingering, and resting, albeit in a far rougher manner compared to that which occurs within a literati garden. Of course, it is important to note that modernist architectural language is far more dominant than garden language in this building; one’s experience within this building could hardly be called ‘garden-like’. While garden language was used more explicitly in this work, it remained largely marginal, serving more as a cultural symbol than as a core design element.

⁴³⁴ Ruan, “Accidental Affinities,” 41.

⁴³⁵ Ruan, “Accidental Affinities,” 41.

⁴³⁶ Tingbao Yang, *Yang Tingbao’s Architectural Portfolio [杨廷宝建筑设计作品集]*, 1st ed., ed. Nanjing Institute of Technology Institute of Architecture (Beijing: China Building Industry Press, 1983), 181.

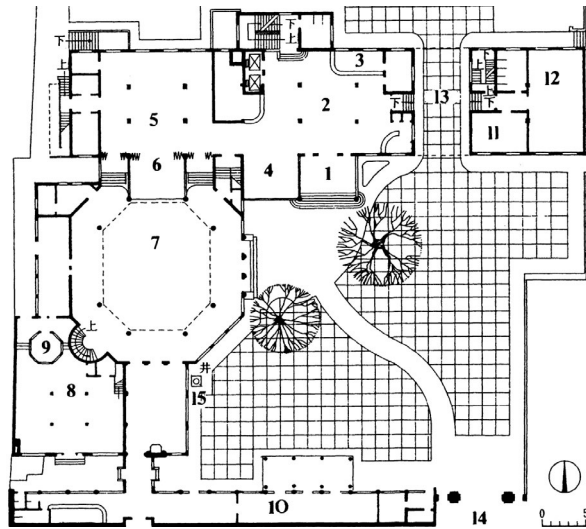


FIG. 8.5 The Ground Floor Plan of the Beijing Peace Hotel. Source: Yang Tingbao.

Facilitating Environmental Intimacy

Early modern Chinese architects also employed garden language neither purely as a symbol to evoke cultural awareness nor as a generator of geometric relationships among spatial components, but to facilitate environmental intimacy among those within the building. One excellent example is the elegant waterfront pavilion in South China Botanical Garden, Guangzhou. This small pavilion, designed by architect Zheng Zuliang in the 1960s, was built to host important guests. It is located at a special geographical position where ‘three water systems of different forms converge’, enabling visitors to enjoy the essential landscape of the garden.⁴³⁷ While sharing some similarities with the Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind in the Master of the Nets Garden in terms of its role in the overall garden, this pavilion shows Zheng’s ambition to mediate between modern and traditional elements, extracting from the literati garden without simply repeating its language at the symbolic level. On the journey from the entrance to the platform above the water area, Zheng carefully arranged nine twists and turns to guide one toward the waterfront in a way that slowly unfolds the full extent of the picturesque landscape.⁴³⁸ In this way, it develops intimacy among visitors with their surroundings, providing a space for them to dynamically enjoy the scenery—very much in line with what occurs in literati gardens (Fig. 8.6).

⁴³⁷ 一条Yit, “致敬经典建筑：广州华南植物园水榭 [A Tribute to a Classic Building: The Waterfront Pavilion, South China Botanical Garden, Guangzhou],” (YouTube, August 13 2017).

⁴³⁸ 一条Yit, “致敬经典建筑.”



FIG. 8.6 The Water Pavilion in the South China Botanical Garden, Guangzhou. Source: im拓海.⁴³⁹

A Combination of Multiple Approaches

In the 1970s, I. M. Pei designed the Fragrant Hill Hotel in the suburbs of Beijing, another well-known case of modern architecture that uses the literati garden as a reference.⁴⁴⁰ Pei's identity as an American modernist architect stands in stark contrast to those of the other Chinese architects discussed in this section, but Pei is still worth mentioning, as his pursuit of referencing literati gardens strongly echoed his Chinese colleagues. The Fragrant Hill Hotel demonstrates the possibility of combining multiple ways of using the garden language. First, Pei leveraged cultural symbols from the literati gardens. For instance, the pervasive rhombic and circular pattern, which he used to form the façade of the main building, resembles a wall opening commonly seen in the literati garden. Second, he designed the building's master plan in line with that of a garden, distributing architectural spaces around a series of courtyards at different scales. Third, he integrated visitors' landscape and architectural experiences in a way similar to that of a garden, enabling one to maintain intimacy with their natural surroundings while walking inside.

⁴³⁹ im拓海, "华南植物园水榭," (Weibo, 2017). <https://m.weibo.cn/1992629130/4083539257659541>.

⁴⁴⁰ Lu, "Lost in Translation."

In an early conceptual collage made by Pei and Calvin Tsao (the project manager), the building was carefully positioned among mountains and bodies of water to demonstrate how well it would be merged into the natural environment. Interestingly, this collage used an ancient 17th-century landscape painting as its base (Fig. 8.7).⁴⁴¹ While the mountains and bodies of water in this painting would in no way accurately capture the real situation of the natural environment in which the hotel is located, the use of this landscape painting served to convey the idea that the design can allow for harmonic integration between the building and the natural environment—just like how literati gardens integrate architectural and landscape elements. This collage is also reminiscent of Pei's childhood in the Lion Grove Garden, where the ancient literati's obsession with poetic dwelling is pervasive. Through this project, Pei's concept of integrating architecture into the natural landscape perfectly complemented his passion for recalling the ancient Chinese literati's obsession with living poetically among mountains and water. Hence, while the Fragrant Hill Hotel remains a modernist work, it facilitates garden-like experiences by successfully employing multiple garden-making techniques. Consequently, according to Lu, this building quickly led to 'tremendous interest' in what the literati garden could offer modern Chinese architecture.⁴⁴²

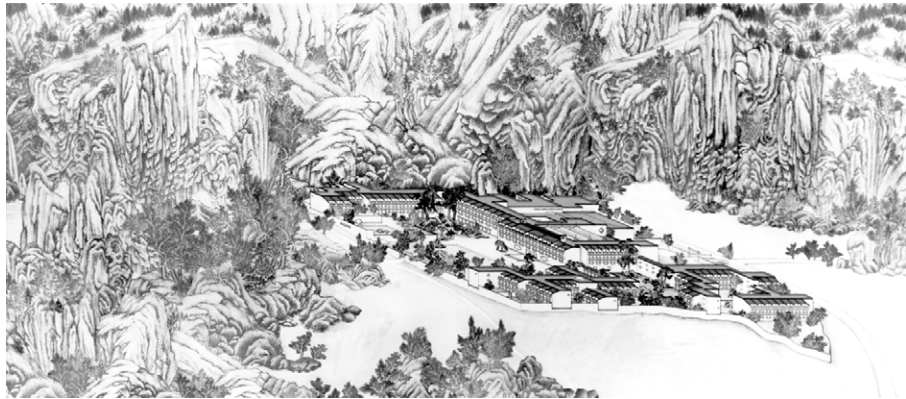


FIG. 8.7 Axonometric Drawing, Fragrant Hill Hotel, Calvin Tsao, 1982. Source: Pei Cobb Freed & Partners.⁴⁴³

⁴⁴¹ Linfan Liu, "Translating the Past: Suzhou Garden as a Generator in Architecture" (paper presented at the RCC Conference, 2018).

⁴⁴² Lu, "Lost in Translation."

⁴⁴³ Cole Roskam, "The Architecture of China's Economic Liberalization," (Yale University Press, 2021). <https://yalebooks.yale.edu/2021/12/03/the-architecture-of-chinas-economic-liberalization/>.

Among these works incorporating garden language into modern architectural practices, few have sought to truly engender an authentic embodied experience of Nearness similar to that which occurs in Chinese literati gardens. Even experiences within the Fragrant Hill Hotel would struggle to reach a point of complex, multi-dimensional Nearness to occur. Some mechanisms of Nearness (e.g., the five-act narrative pattern), are either missing or insufficiently strong in these works to facilitate a high-quality experience of Nearness. A comparative study between the Fragrant Hill Hotel and the Master of the Nets Garden in terms of the Nearness quality that they facilitate would be an interesting subject for future research.

Creating a More Authentic Garden-like Experience

Starting in 1978, as a result of China's reform and opening-up policy, Chinese architects began to embrace an era of creative emancipation.⁴⁴⁴ They were free to explore architecture's potential to express various philosophical trends, among which deconstructionism was particularly popular.⁴⁴⁵ Experimental works emerged in droves. Against this backdrop, the exploration of means of effectively translating and representing the language of traditional literati gardens in contemporary architecture came to a temporary halt. However, since the turn of this century, prominent Chinese architects, including Wang Shu, Dong Yugan, Wang Baozhen, Zhao Yang, and Liu Yichun, have explicitly stated that literati gardens constitute an important inspiration in their work.⁴⁴⁶ For them, the unique literati garden language offered a great opportunity to establish a strong cultural and regional identity for Chinese architecture—an autonomy that is not dominated by modernist principles. Compared with architects from previous generations, who restrictively employed garden language based on modernist principles, this generation of contemporary Chinese architects began to explore more radical means of facilitating authentic garden-like experiences, resisting the 'creative deconstruction' tendency of the contemporary world, where everything seems to be deconstructing where it is from.

Few would deny that the language of traditional literati gardens is evident across most of Wang Shu's projects, including Qianjiang Times, his only commercial residential high-rise (2001). Interestingly, Wang Shu claims to be a literatus before

⁴⁴⁴ Mingxian Wang and Jian Shi, "Chinese Experimental Architecture in the 1990s [九十年代中国实验性建筑]," *Literature and Arts Studies* [文艺研究], no. 1 (1998).

⁴⁴⁵ Wang and Shi, "Chinese Experimental Architecture in the 1990s [九十年代中国实验性建筑]."

⁴⁴⁶ Wang, *造房子*; Dong, *Nine Chapters on Gardening*; Wang, *Craft of Three Gardens*; Atelier Deshaus, *Atelier Deshaus* [大舍], 1st ed. (Beijing: China Building Industry Press, 2012).

he is an architect—‘a literatus who happens to practice as an architect’.⁴⁴⁷ According to many of Wang’s essays, Chinese literati gardens, which involve various ideas, concepts, techniques, and theories rooted in ancient Chinese culture, constitute perhaps the most important source of inspiration for his architectural practices. In an explanation of the library that he designed for Wenzheng College of Suzhou University (2000), Wang clearly expressed his intention to facilitate garden-like experiences:

My purpose was to make people aware that they live between mountains and water, which is the garden style of Suzhou. Backed by a mountain full of bamboo in the north and facing a lake that used to be a disposed brickfield in the south, the sloped site descends southward with a difference of four meters in the level. According to the principles of gardening, buildings between mountains and water should not be prominent, so nearly half of the library is underground. [...] The pavilion-like building in the water—the poetry and philosophy reading room of the library—is from the Chinese literati’s point of view [...] a position where man and nature are balanced.⁴⁴⁸

Among his recent projects, the Xiangshan Campus of the Chinese Academy of Art in Hangzhou is perhaps the most influential (Fig. 8.8). The Xiangshan Campus consists of a group of complex buildings, between which one’s experience of the architectural spaces intertwines with that of the landscape. As Wang explains, the route he constructed through buildings and landscapes is ‘precisely controlled in the design’ to foster ‘different sceneries and allow different positions of viewing’.⁴⁴⁹ This aligns with experiences of Nearness that one could have within the focused world of the Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind: the central landscape can appear again and again from different viewing positions in any of the 1,089 spatial-experiential units that pass through the pavilion.⁴⁵⁰

David Leatherbarrow, in his book *Building Time: Architecture, Event, and Experience*, analyses accurately how Wang Shu’s work shapes one’s experiences in the Xiangshan Campus:

⁴⁴⁷ Wang, *设计的开始*; Wang, *造房子*.

⁴⁴⁸ See: David Leatherbarrow, *Building Time: Architecture, Event, and Experience*, 1st ed. (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021), 126. According to Leatherbarrow, the original source to which he referred was the following: Wang Shu, ‘Build a World to Resemble Nature’, in *Topography and Mental Space, Architecture Studies 2* (Beijing: China Architecture and Building Press, 2012), 202.

⁴⁴⁹ Leatherbarrow, *Building Time*, 134.

⁴⁵⁰ See Section 6.5 in Chapter Six for the definition of a spatial-experiential unit and the means of calculating the number of units passing through the pavilion.

Each of these relocations [in Wang Shu's work] unfolds in time, but not clock or calendar time—intervals of regular length—instead, a time of varying speeds, prompted by desires, guided by anticipations, and recalled by recollections. Every present moment is mid-way between where one has been (but still recalls) and is going (already anticipates). Here is of course positional—where one stands—but also where one is currently, which is to say, no longer where one has just been, and not yet where one is going.⁴⁵¹



FIG. 8.8 A View of Xiangshan Campus, Designed by Wang Shu. Source: Lu Li.

⁴⁵¹ Leatherbarrow, *Building Time*, 137.



FIG. 8.9 The Meandering Exterior Corridor of the No. 11 Building of the Xiangshan Campus. Source: Lu Li.

It is unsurprising to find that Leatherbarrow's description precisely mirrors how one's experience occurs within a focused world of the Master of the Nets Garden. In many of his works, Wang has successfully employed garden language in a way that garners a sense of poetic dwelling through his incorporation of materials, building forms, spatial techniques, and technologies common in traditional garden-making. Nevertheless, the quality, density, and intensity of Nearness vary greatly across Wang's works, which may be a result of lacking a systematic methodology to understand, analyse, and translate the way experiences occur within the Chinese literati garden at an ontological level. Therefore, while one's experiences within Wang's works often mirror the forms of those in literati gardens, they seem to lack the essence of the garden experience. While various modes of being are shaped to reflect those that would occur in a literati garden, visitors do not always experience a continually motivating intrinsic desire to maintain these modes of being due to the lack of sufficient spatial conditions of Nearness. For example, the meandering exterior corridor of the No. 11 building of Xiangshan Campus provides visitors with a strong spatial condition for wandering in a form similar to that which usually occurs in a garden (Fig. 8.9). However, relative to experiences of the corridors in literati gardens, wandering experiences along the No. 11 Building's corridor seem monotonous. Its sustainability is far lower, as it does not boast consistent meaningful entities to facilitate engagement or offer dynamic picturesque views of the landscape. This certainly stems, to at least some degree, from the necessarily

bulky nature of the building, which makes a proper balance between landscape and architecture difficult. Architecture critic Jin Qiuye asserts that Wang's buildings of the Xiangshan Campus constantly remind those around them of their imposing, stubborn presence.⁴⁵² Sometimes, the use of literati gardens' spatial techniques only achieves a superficial effect, failing to facilitate deep, rich, and poetic ontological relatedness to the world.

While Wang Shu's spatial practices have only managed to garner limited experiences of Nearness, other architects have sought to achieve decent quality of Nearness that are comparable to those found in literati gardens. For example, Wang Baozhen's garden-making practices are remarkable in terms of creating uncompromising, high-quality experiences of Nearness. Through a deep understanding of traditional Chinese culture, long-term research into garden-making techniques, and a dedication to excellence in construction details, Wang has completed several impressive works that include many of the mechanisms of Nearness that have been discussed throughout this thesis.⁴⁵³ In *Rong Yuan* (the Garden of Capacity), for instance, Wang embedded spatial conditions that inspire various typical modes of being, making sure that they occur precisely as they would in a literati garden: wandering in a covered corridor along a river, enjoying the scenery from within a pavilion surrounded by bamboo, meeting someone at the water's edge, all inspired through carefully embedded spatial conditions (Fig. 8.10). Wang's works clearly exhibit a strong respect and preference for traditional materials, techniques, crafts, and spatial vocabularies. As a result, they generate extraordinarily rich, complex, and multi-dimensional experiences of Nearness that facilitate relatedness and intimacy. However, given that architects in modern era may unavoidably face the challenge of facilitating a high-quality experience of Nearness while not employing the original garden language, Wang's pursuit may be fragile. Despite his adept garden-making artistry and achievement of impressive quality of Nearness, Wang's persistent use of the authentic traditional garden language in a modern context raises the question of whether his approach is adaptive enough to address the severe challenges inherent to complex contemporary contexts. After all, it is highly difficult to achieve garden-like experiences of high-quality Nearness and address complex modern issues simultaneously.

⁴⁵² Jin, "On Wang Shu."

⁴⁵³ Wang, *Craft of Three Gardens*.



FIG. 8.10 Rong Yuan Designed by Wang Baozhen. Source: Combined by Lu Li based on images from *Craft of Three Gardens: An Architect's Practice in Guangxi* [造园实录].⁴⁵⁴

454 Wang, *Craft of Three Gardens*.



FIG. 8.11 Zhu'an Residence, Dali, Designed by Zhao Yang. Source: Zhao Yang Architects.⁴⁵⁵

Aside from the above examples, Liu Jiakun's Luyeyuan Stone Sculpture Art Museum, Liu Yichun's Passage Garden, Dong Yugan's Red Brick Art Museum, Tong Ming's Courtyard with Lotus, and Zhao Yang's Zhu'an Residence are all excellent examples of inspiring garden-like experiences of high-quality Nearness, though not all of these architects claim to have been inspired by traditional Chinese literati gardens (Fig. 8.11–8.12). To summarise, Chinese literati gardens have clearly had a profound influence on architectural practices in China since the 1920s, though in many different senses. Starting with the first generation of architects trained abroad, Chinese architects have never ceased exploring the use of garden language to heighten the cultural autonomy of their work. Some have engendered experiences similar to those that occur in literati gardens but with different qualities, densities, and intensities. Others have employed spatial techniques, materials, and cultural symbols common in literati gardens. In many cases, however, the employment of garden language seems to have been somewhat superficial due to the lack of a systematic methodology for understanding, interpreting, and analysing how one's experiences occur in Chinese literati gardens. These gardens boast such a strong,

⁴⁵⁵ Zhao Yang Architect, "Zhu'an Residence," (2016). <http://www.zhaoyangarchitects.com/zhu-an-residence-1/ye4n2lu6n2vef4p522dapz77m46dbx>.

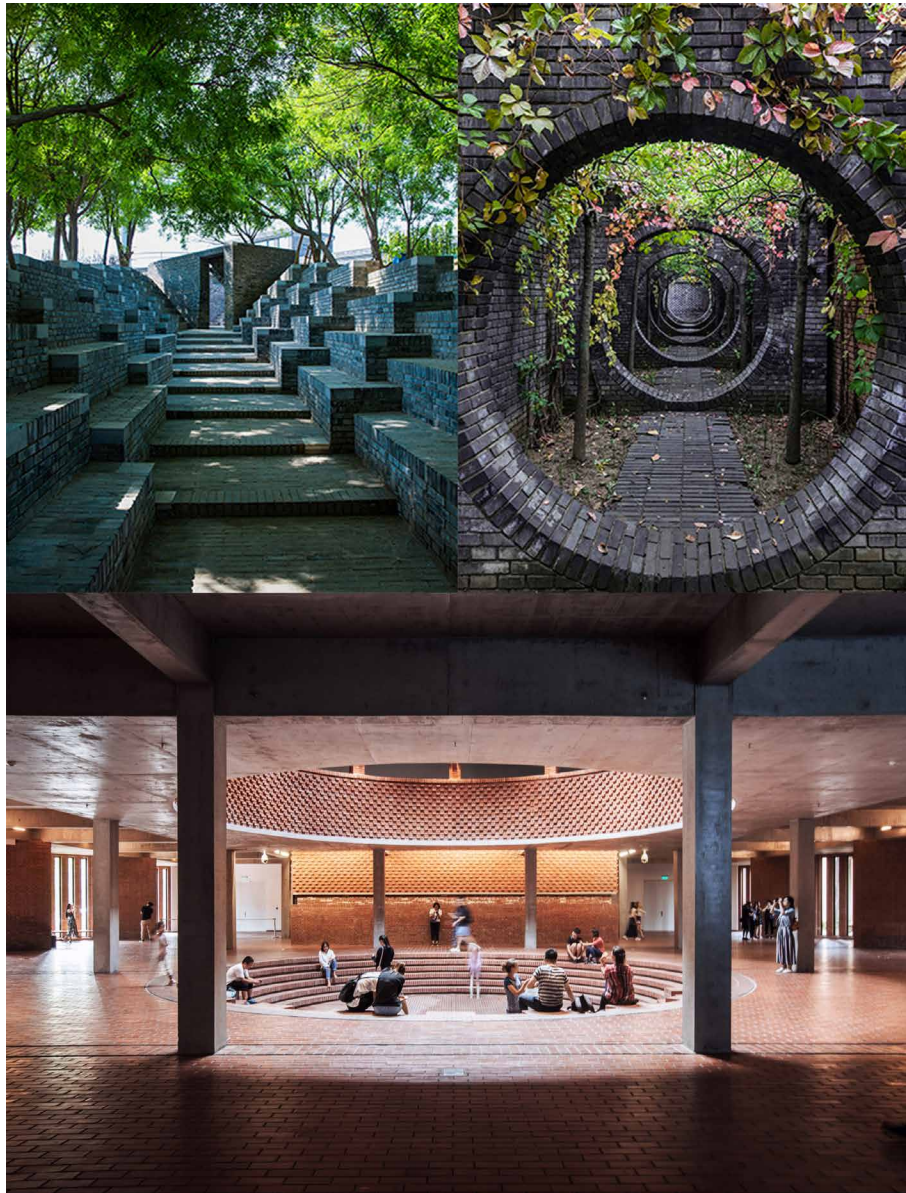


FIG. 8.12 Red Brick Art Museum, Designed by Dong Yugan, Beijing. Source: Combined by Lu Li based on multiple sources.⁴⁵⁶

⁴⁵⁶ Fernanda Castro, "Dong Yugan's Brick Art Museum Through the Lens of He Lian," (ArchDaily, 2017). <https://www.archdaily.com/884521/dong-yugans-brick-art-museum-through-the-lens-of-he-lian>; Red Brick Art Museum, "红砖院子 [Red Brick Courtyard]." <http://www.redbrickartmuseum.org/cafe/>.

prominent existence that is deeply rooted in Chinese culture; their influence is even apparent in works built by architects who do not claim to have been inspired by them. However, even in works that have achieved incredibly authentic garden experiences, the translation of garden language into practical, contemporary architectural language is incredibly difficult. Hopefully, my analysis of the occurrence of Nearness in Chinese literati gardens offers meaningful insight that could enable architects to more effectively incorporate their unique spatial qualities in future works.

8.4.2 **Global Architectural Practices: Addressing the Issue of Nearness**

The fact that modernity has disrupted pre-industrial Nearness—whether considered as a loss or a freedom—has driven broad concerns among spatial practitioners all over the world. In a global context, however, the issue of Nearness must be discussed at a deeper level that extends beyond unique regional and cultural traits. Spatial practitioners have addressed the issue of Nearness in many different ways, three of which are covered in this section.

Ando Tadao is well known as an architect capable of extracting natural elements from the out world and incorporating them into built spaces. In doing so, he facilitates ontological relatedness to the world in a way that is quite distinct from that of literati gardens. Masao Furuyama asserts that Ando's architectural work fulfils the objective of architecture as 'awakening man's sensibilities'.⁴⁵⁷ In contrast to most Chinese literati gardens, which are arguably built to create an experience of Nearness as close as possible to that which occurs in wild nature, Ando Tadao is seemingly obsessed with representing an abstract form of nature. Ando himself claims:

The light becomes glorious only when is lit against the background of the deepest darkness. I wanted to abstract the nature to the fullest extent and, at the same time, to purify the architecture correspondingly. The changes of the transitory light remind us anew of the relationship between humans and Nature.⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁵⁷ Masao Furuyama, *Tadao Ando* (TASCHEN, 2006).

⁴⁵⁸ El Croquis Editorial, *Tadao Ando: 1983–2000* (Madrid: El Croquis, 2005).

This tendency to represent abstract nature in architecture is evident across many of his works, among which the three churches of natural elements—the Church of the Light, the Church on the Water, and the Church of the Wind—are most representative (Fig. 8.13).⁴⁵⁹ Interestingly, his approach seems to be subtly related to traditional Japanese gardens, which typically pursue purified, abstracted, or represented forms of natural elements. Typical Japanese rock gardens, for instance, usually represent elements of wild nature—*islands, waves, and reefs*—as an abstract miniature landscape. This stands in stark contrast to Chinese literati gardens, where embodied experience is considered more heavily.⁴⁶⁰ Ando's approach to incorporating natural elements into architectural spaces facilitates a strong sense of technological Nearness but a highly purified sense of natural Nearness in the meantime. In Ando's works, built space plays a dominant role in framing one's relationship to natural elements.



FIG. 8.13 The Interior of Ibaraki Kasugaoka, Osaka. Source: Hiromitsu Morimoto.⁴⁶¹

⁴⁵⁹ Furuyama, *Ando*.

⁴⁶⁰ Dong, *Nine Chapters on Gardening*.

⁴⁶¹ Gonzalo García Moreno, "Shaping the Light: Church Of Light by Tadao Ando," (Metalocus, 2021). <https://www.metalocus.es/en/news/shaping-light-church-light-tadao-ando>.

Relative to Ando's approach, Peter Zumthor's approach of generating experiences of Nearness seems more fundamental, clearly presenting 'thingness' in the Heideggerian sense. The 'thing', according to Heidegger, always gathers beings from the fourfold, the four fundamental dimensions—the sky, the earth, the divinity, and the mortal—that enable Dasein to be in the world.⁴⁶² Zumthor, in many of his architectural works, created spaces of 'thingness', continuously gathering elements from the four fundamental dimensions. Interestingly, this gathering dynamic is not only evident in his completed works, but also in his construction process. Bruder Klaus Field Chapel, completed in 2007, is an excellent case that perfectly demonstrates his approach to facilitating ontological relatedness to the world through the fourfold (Fig. 8.14). Zumthor used 112 tree trunks to form a frame to cast the concrete walls of the chapel. Instead of removing the frames when the concrete solidified, he burned them out. This process generated a cavity with an odour of burning wood featuring many small holes that were initially used to fix the frame, generating an 'effect reminiscent of the night sky'. By burning the trunks, the essence of the trees infiltrated the concrete surface, lending the cavity essential elements from both the sky and the earth. Evidently, the building has stood as a 'thing' since its completion: people converge in this cavity to communicate with God; light, rain, and wind all come through a tiny opening on the top; the essence of trees lingers in the wall; and God's spirit is preserved in the chapel. The fact that all of these elements are condensed into such a tiny space makes it an excellent case of the Heideggerian gathering of the fourfold, which is evident in many—if not all—of Zumthor's works.

As the fourfold provides the critical conditions for Dasein's being-in-the-world, the desire for this ontological relatedness is deeply rooted in humanity's state of being. This small chapel, to some extent, echoes the Pavilion for the Advent of Moon and Wind's tendency to gather the fourfold. However, as the chapel is almost entirely introverted (without a single proper window visually connecting it with the outer world), the intertextuality between the 'focusing' and the 'focused' is intentionally absent from both the inside and the outside. As Ross Jenner observes, 'from a distance, Zumthor's Feldkapelle at Wachendorf appears as a slab, stele or dolmen: an erect monolith of unlikely interiority'.⁴⁶³ Indeed, this building appears to refuse the establishment of intimacy with visitors from the outside, but it inspires visitors to stay near with various entities once they enter it. Perhaps, for Zumthor, as a space built for communicating with God, intertextuality between the 'focusing' and the 'focused' is not a desired trait.

⁴⁶² Heidegger, "The Thing."

⁴⁶³ Ross Jenner, "Inner Poverty: A Setting of Peter Zumthor's Brother Klaus Field Chapel," *Interstices: Journal of Architecture and Related Arts* 12 (2011).

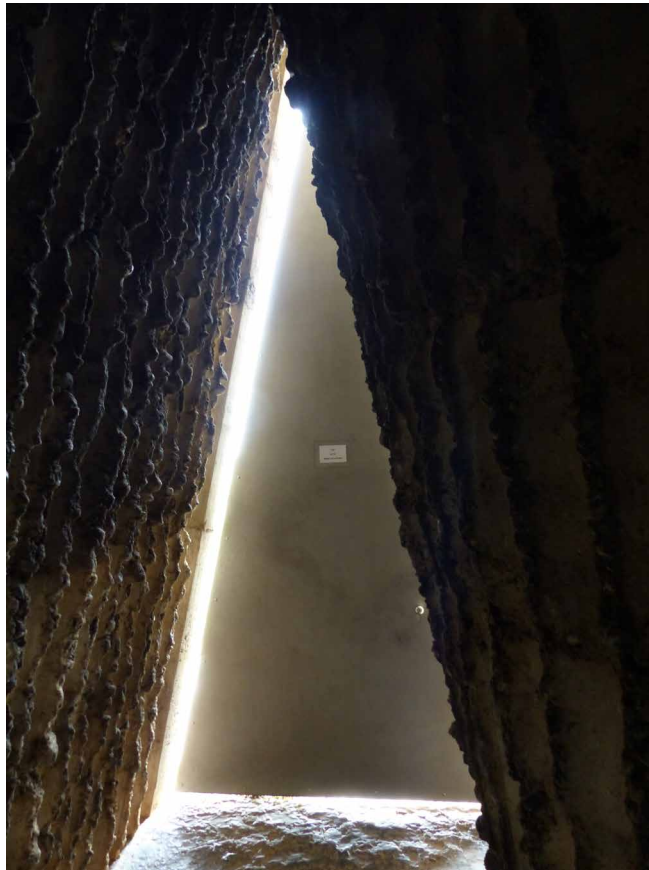


FIG. 8.14 The Interior of Bruder Klaus Feldkapelle, Wachendorf. Source: Whgler, public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.⁴⁶⁴

In terms of featuring a mechanism of intertextuality between the ‘focusing’ and the ‘focused’, Sou Fujimoto’s N House, completed in 2008, is an interesting case. Regarding this project, Fujimoto discussed a degree of multi-intertextuality engendered by three layers of built spaces, where the boundaries between the exterior and the interior, the indoor and the outdoor, the open and the closed, are intentionally obfuscated (Fig. 8.15). In this multi-layer spatial structure, spatial conditions for inspiring various modes of being—some of which commonly occur in literati gardens—can be clearly identified. However, in this interesting work,

⁴⁶⁴ Whgler, "Tür der Bruder-Klaus-Feldkapelle," (Wikimedia Commons, 2022). https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bruder-Klaus-Feldkapelle_T%C3%BCr.jpg.

a series of spatial-experiential settings that allows for the simultaneous visual infiltration of several spaces makes both a sophisticated sequential arrangement of how meaningful entities are encountered and precise manipulation of the five-act narrative pattern impossible. Thus, unlike in the Master of the Nets Garden, there is no clear FS-FW structure embedded in the N House. The lack of an FS-FW structure may result in a loss of the senses of belonging and stability, making the mode of lingering more difficult to achieve.



FIG. 8.15 N House. Source: Combined by Lu Li based on images from ArchDaily.⁴⁶⁵

⁴⁶⁵ Sou Fujimoto Architects, "House N/Sou Fujimoto Architects," (Archdaily, 2011). https://www.archdaily.com/7484/house-n-sou-fujimoto?ad_medium=gallery.

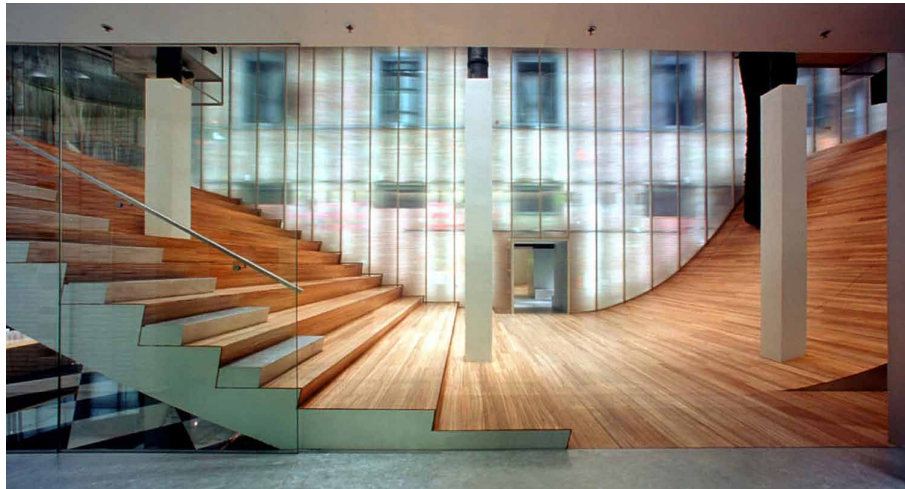


FIG. 8.16 Prada Epicenter, New York. Source: OMA,⁴⁶⁶

In the above cases, the spatial conditions for inspiring different modes of being generally appear to be less dense than those in Chinese literati gardens. As a result, only a few modes of being are possible within a particular space. In terms of inspiring multiple modes of being within a single architectural space, OMA provides us with some excellent cases. In the Prada Epicenter in New York, for instance, different modes of being are potentially inspired across different scenarios within its central space through a series of flexible spatial conditions (Fig. 8.16). On one side of the space, there is a wave-like curved surface, in the middle of which lies a mechanical device that allows a stage to be set up when needed. On the other side lies a bleacher-like set of stairs. These two flexible spatial settings enable the inspiration of various modes of being across different circumstances. On a daily basis, the stairs provide a place where customers can rest. During exhibitions, they are used to display products, allowing visitors to leisurely walk around the area and peruse. During performances, the stairs are used as stands from which the audience can sit and watch the show. This multi-functional space can generate rich experiences of Nearness, as it offers a dense environment of spatial conditions, demonstrating readiness-at-hand that enables a series of modes of being across multiple usage

⁴⁶⁶ OMA, "Prada Epicenter New York," (Büro Ole Scheeren Group, 2001). <https://buro-os.com/projects/prada-epicenter-new-york>.

contexts.⁴⁶⁷ However, as established in Chapter Two, most of these settings belong to the first layer of Nearness conditions. In other words, in stark contrast to Zumthor's chapel, this space hardly serves to gather the fourfold. Consequently, it completely lacks a poetic atmosphere. As a business centre, however, it may disregard the second and third layers of Nearness conditions as useless, resulting in all of the space's potential modes of being leading to nothing but experiences of highly technological Nearness, totally removed from the natural world.

Such neglect of natural Nearness is also evident in several of MAD's projects. In seeking relatedness to nature in his works, MAD's principal architect Ma Yansong claims to pursue a concept that he calls 'the city of mountains and water' (*shan-shui* city), based on an idea proposed by well-known Chinese scientist Qian Xueseng.⁴⁶⁸ Ma claims that he was inspired by traditional Chinese landscape paintings to develop a new typology for urban high-rises. I chose to discuss Ma in this section (rather than the previous section) because I want to discuss his works broadly in a global architectural context. In my view, Ma's concept of 'the city of mountains and water' seems to have little to do with Chinese literati gardens. This concept is very much a formal strategy aimed at generating a superficial representation of natural elements. In contrast to Chinese literati gardens, which invite visitors to have an experience similar to that which would occur amid real mountains and bodies of water, most of MAD's works reduce experiences to a superficial and symbolic level by simply representing mountains and bodies of water through a physical architectural form: high-rise buildings with skeletons of fluctuant curves and landscapes of meandering shapes with some trees and shrubs scattered among them (Fig. 8.17). Ma's pursuit of an urban built environment with a natural form is certainly intriguing and meaningful, as it presents a spectacular, mimetic image of nature in one's experience of a city. However, it completely lacks authentic experiences of mountains and water, which is strange in a setting referred to as a 'city of mountains and water'. Overall, this concept does not result in experiences of Nearness in any sense, certainly not one that is comparable to those driven by Chinese literati gardens. MAD's approach to design completely lacks the facilitation of intimacy and relatedness with nature.

⁴⁶⁷ Tianchen Dai and Li Lu, "Exploring the Mechanism of Spatial Narration: The Representation and Significance of Programming in OMA's Architecture," [空间叙事机制探究：程序设计在OMA 建筑中的表现和意义.] *The Architect [建筑师]*, no. 1 (2020).

⁴⁶⁸ Xiaolin Zhu and Yansong Ma, "View Makes Difference: An Interview with Ma Yansong, Founding Principle of MAD [视角决定不同——访MAD建筑事务所创立人马岩松]," *Architecture Technique*, no. 6 (2011).



FIG. 8.17 Nanjing Zendai Himalayas Centre, Designed by MAD. Source: MAD Architects, retrieved from ArchDaily.⁴⁶⁹

Evidently, contemporary architectural works have responded to the loss of Nearness in different ways. As the focus of this thesis is the occurrence of Nearness within the Chinese literati garden, it would unfortunately be beyond its scope to discuss all of these modern cases in great detail. However, through this limited review, I sought to demonstrate how the understanding established throughout this thesis may help spatial practitioners view contemporary architecture from the perspective of Nearness. Additionally, this review could serve as a springboard for further, more in-depth research. Overall, I hope that spatial practitioners consider the methodology explored in this thesis and apply it to their future work, achieving a high-quality Nearness in contemporary built environment.

⁴⁶⁹ Niall Patrick Walsh, "MAD Architects' Nanjing Zendai Himalayas Center Nears Completion in China," (ArchDaily, 2018). <https://www.archdaily.com/908039/mad-architects-nanjing-zendai-himalayas-center-nears-completion-in-china>.

8.5 Reflection on Limitations and Significance

This thesis has established a methodology that bridges philosophical theory and architectural analysis through the assessment of a very specific subject matter (one's experience within the Chinese literati garden) from a theoretical perspective (the occurrence of Nearness). This methodology has guided me through the entire thesis. With it, I have explored numerous mechanisms through which Nearness occurs within the literati garden and discussed various relevant issues. However, in the final part of this chapter, I would like to briefly reflect on some of this thesis's limitations as well as its significance.

8.5.1 Limitation

Scope

The first notable limitation of this thesis lies in its scope. As this thesis sought an understanding of Chinese literati gardens from an abstract perspective of Nearness, it is necessary to limit its scope in terms of the object of study. Only with a focused scope can one conduct iterative on-site phenomenological reduction and reveal sophisticated mechanisms functioning between space and experience. Therefore, the majority of this research is confined to a single case study and, for the most part, one built environment—the Master of the Nets Garden. As a result, it is unclear if the analytical framework established in thesis is applicable to other Chinese literati garden cases or, more generally, other built environments.

Another limitation pertaining to scope is this thesis's lack of understanding of temporality with regard to the occurrence of Nearness within the Chinese literati garden. The Chinese literati garden, as a type of built environment, has never historically been a static entity. It has evolved over time. Over the course of its evolution, many important aspects have changed considerably. As noted by garden historian Gu Kai, there was a shift toward making gardens more 'picturesque' in the late Ming dynasty.⁴⁷⁰ This shift resulted in

⁴⁷⁰ Gu, "Establishment of the Picturesque Principles."

considerable changes in paradigms of garden-making.⁴⁷¹ Of course, these changes would have significant impacts on the way Nearness occurs within Chinese literati gardens. However, as this research employed a phenomenological lens, it only focused on the current state of the Master of the Nets Garden and the way one's experience occurs within it, meaning it did not examine these temporal dynamics.

Additionally, it should also be noted that most literati gardens, including the Master of the Nets Garden, have been renovated or rebuilt many times throughout history. As mentioned in Chapter Four, the Master of the Nets Garden has undergone drastic historical changes before recently being formally preserved as a heritage site. It is important to understand that the first-hand empirical material that I collected effectively on site constitutes just one single cross-section of this long-evolving entity, meaning it only provides us with limited information on its true essence.

Methodology

As an architectural study rooted in Heideggerian philosophy, this thesis employed a phenomenological approach to explore various mechanisms through which Nearness occurs within the Master of the Nets Garden. Of course, the exploration of how one's experience occurs within the garden seems subjective. In continental philosophy, phenomenology takes humans' internal world as a basic starting point of thought and quests outwards from there.⁴⁷² As a result, a fundamental problem for phenomenological analysis is that it is almost impossible to provide solid facts. As Michael Sugrue points out, this difficulty is evident among continental philosophers, including Edmond Husserl, Martin Heidegger, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. As this thesis employs phenomenology as its philosophical foundation, it undoubtedly shares the same methodological struggles, leading to various additional problems.

One of these problems is a lack of scientific rigour. This thesis did not employ many positivist scientific research methods. While I conducted solid spatial-experiential analysis based on precise, GIS-based calculations, my interpretations of the results were highly theoretical. I intentionally avoided traditional scientific methods like questionnaires and structured interviews to avoid excessive objectification of the

⁴⁷¹ Kai Gu, "To Walk in Painting: Spatial Arrangement and Painterly-idea Pursuit for Shanshui Experience in the Garden Making of Late Ming Jiangnan [拟入画中行——晚明江南造园对山水观游体验的空间经营与画意追求]," *New Architecture [新建筑]*, no. 6 (2016); Gu, "New Understandings on Jiangnan Gardens: Difference in the Earlier History and Transition in the Late Ming [重新认识江南园林：早期差异与晚明转折]."; Gu, "Establishment of the Picturesque Principles."

⁴⁷² Sugrue, "Husserl: Phenomenology and the Life World."

research object, as this would inherently contradict the nature of phenomenology, which serves as this thesis's philosophical foundation. Many scientific approaches, which usually result in data-based calculative analysis, would not help in understanding Nearness because, as I sought to demonstrate in the case study, the occurrence of Nearness is a meditative process—not a calculative one.

Overall, I did not aim to provide an understanding of the spatial-experiential mechanisms embedded within the literati garden based on objective facts. Instead, I sought to offer a subjective interpretation of those mechanisms that may be generally shared among individuals based on my exploration of the intersubjective garden experiences. In other words, while the analysis was mainly centred around my own phenomenological reduction, I believe that the mechanisms explored in this thesis would shape others' experiences of Nearness in similar ways. However, the lack of positivist research methods may still reduce the reliability of the research. Technical limitations should also be noted. For instance, spatial-visual aspects dominated my case study due to the limitations of GIS-based analysis. In truth, one's experience within a literati garden typically involves many other senses, including audition and olfaction, behind which there may be numerous significant mechanisms that warrant further exploration.

Reasoning

In part due to the limitations of phenomenology that I have mentioned above, some points drawn throughout this thesis lack explicit evidence-based reasoning, as they were drawn based on my own iterative on-site phenomenological reduction. For instance, I found it extremely challenging to provide proper reasoning for my identification of 'the four constituents of a mode of being', which was based on my own understanding of human experience as an interpretative framework.⁴⁷³ After reading some profound philosophical studies, such as *The Phenomenology of Perception* by Merleau-Ponty, I realised that 'the four constituents of a mode of being' constitute a highly complex issue involving copious philosophical argumentations. Therefore, it is not possible to offer definitive reasoning on this issue within the scope of this thesis—an in-depth philosophical study of this issue could take a lifetime. Importantly, however, the absence of proper reasoning behind certain points does not mean that there are no reasons to support them; when viewing them as parts of the whole thesis, they are still informed, interpreted, or supported by other components, logically driven by observed phenomena. In a sense, the construction of this thesis involved designerly thinking, which resulted in a self-sustaining

⁴⁷³ See Chapter Four for more information.

argumentation system. This system makes sense in a way greatly resembling that which an architectural design does: while not all the decisions are explicitly reasoned, they all make sense when presenting as parts of a whole. Undoubtedly, many of the points that lack proper reasoning in this thesis could be rationalised from different perspectives, offering substantial avenues for further research.

Language

Another limitation lies in language. The theoretical framework of this thesis was built on the philosophy of Heidegger, a German philosopher. As a Chinese researcher attempting to read the English translations of philosophical works initially written in German and employ them to interpret an ancient Chinese built environment, I undoubtedly misused, distorted, or misunderstood certain elements of Heideggerian philosophy throughout the course of this thesis. However, this muddled foundation also serves to establish a meaningful, complex, and transcultural understanding based on Heideggerian philosophy. Its transcultural nature could be viewed as one of this thesis's most important characteristics.

8.5.2 Significance

The significance of this thesis lies in both its theoretical universality and cultural specificity. On the one hand, this thesis established a methodological tool through which researchers can understand, describe, analyse, and demonstrate various mechanisms of Nearness occurring in any built environment. Its theoretical framework is rooted in Heideggerian philosophy, leading to a fundamentality that potentially integrates various architectural ideas, theories, concepts, and concerns. On the other hand, my analysis was restricted to a single case study of the Master of the Nets Garden, resulting in social and cultural meanings specific to the Chinese context. This section details both of these significant aspects.

This thesis addressed the global weakening of intimacy between humans and their environments, which has been driven by the overwhelming rapidity of international modernisation. More specifically, it offered a methodology with which one can understand, analyse, interpret, and evaluate a built environment based on how it facilitates environmental intimacy through various spatial conditions. With its particular focus on the Chinese literati garden, this research explored a unique type of built environment that establishes uniquely complex and rich intimacy. In doing so, this thesis offers contemporary designers, planners, and architects knowledge and insights on how they might mitigate the woes of modernisation through

addressing various issues pertaining to this ontological aspect (i.e., the occurrence of Nearness) within their yet-to-be-built environments by incorporating elements of premodern built environments.

This thesis also addressed the modern challenges of identifying, preserving, evaluating, and interpreting the essential values of built heritage sites amid China's rapid economic development and urban transformation. The literati gardens wield significant meaning in China's architectural and cultural history. However, while it is well known as a built form that combines architecture and landscape with extraordinary cultural, artistic, and architectural values, its most essential value is rarely theoretically articulated. Chinese literati gardens, at their core, serve to facilitate the maximum degree of Nearness. Through a careful analysis of the meaning and representation of Nearness in the Master of the Nets Garden, this research revealed some of the essential Nearness-driving qualities that have been embedded within Chinese literati gardens throughout history. By exploring the complex mechanisms through which the experience of Nearness occurs, this research demonstrated potential means of extracting, recreating, and inheriting cultural, social, architectural, and ontological values linked to Nearness in contemporary built environments.

Combining these two aspects—theoretical universality and cultural specificity—contemporary spatial practitioners can experiment with means of facilitating experiences of Nearness in modern built environments. This thesis has provided a theoretical perspective and methodology from which to reflect on various issues pertaining to the occurrence of Nearness. As Cellist Yo-Yo Ma once said, 'the best questions are the questions that make us ask even more questions.'⁴⁷⁴ All of the lingering questions concerning the occurrence of Nearness are this type of question; they are inspiring, meaningful, and fundamental, and they always lead to even more enlightening questions. I hope that this chapter has demonstrated the rich and profound meaning surrounding the notion of Nearness despite the lingering questions. The profound nature of these questions warrants further investigation, interpretation, and understanding in order to provide countless fields with greater insight and enlightenment.

⁴⁷⁴ WIRED, "Yo-Yo Ma Answers Cello Questions From Twitter," (Youtube, April 27 2021).

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9 Conclusion

Throughout the four parts of this thesis, I detailed the four tasks underlying my examination of the occurrence of Nearness in human experience. The first part (Chapter Two) established a theoretical model based on Heideggerian philosophy aimed at assessing how Nearness occurs within built environments from an ontological perspective. The second part (Chapter Three) presented a hypothesis to explain why and how certain Nearness-driving spatial conditions had been embedded within Chinese literati gardens in its long evolution. The third part (Chapter Four to Chapter Seven) explored various mechanisms associated with the occurrence of Nearness specifically in the Master of the Nets Garden—my case study. Finally, the fourth part (Chapter Eight) discussed several key issues pertaining to the meaning of Nearness as well as the relevance, limitations, and significance of this research (Chapter Eight). In this chapter, I offer some conclusions on the three main parts of this thesis—the theoretical model, the hypothesis, and the case study—while considering the issues outlined in the fourth part.

9.1 Findings from the Theoretical Research

I draw the following four points from my theoretical research:

- Heidegger’s discussion of Nearness, particularly with regard to its reflection on modernity, reveals not only the essential tendency of Dasein’s being-in-the-world but also the very essence of built environments. In Heidegger’s understanding, Nearness is essential ontological intimacy between Dasein and other entities in its world. In this sense, built environments are created as both reasons and results of Dasein’s tendency to bring near.

- While built environments are always created for, by, and through Dasein's bringing near, the actual process of bringing near can occur in very different ways depending on how the three layers of Nearness conditions are set up within them. In other words, these Nearness conditions can significantly influence the quality, density, and intensity of one's experience of Nearness, resulting in highly diverse experiences.⁴⁷⁵
- As experiences of Nearness are diverse, it is essential to determine the modes of being and their corresponding conditions that inspire, enable, or influence these modes of being to achieve a proper understanding of the occurrence of Nearness in any given built environment. However, it is impossible to achieve any meaningful understanding without investigating the occurrence of Nearness through a specific case study.
- To conduct a solid case study for exploring the occurrence of one's experience of Nearness within a built environment, phenomenological reduction is a key approach beyond traditional qualitative and quantitative research methods, as it enables researchers to make assessments based on one's experience within corporeal built environments rather than historical, cultural, or social materials.

9.2 Findings from the Hypothetical Construction

My primary hypothesis—that Nearness had been deeply embedded within Chinese literati gardens as a result of literati's collective state of being and consistent spatial practices—is derived from literature-based evidence concerning the occurrence of Nearness. While this part of my thesis is purely hypothetical, the consideration of historical, literary, and artistic materials led to the following conclusions:

- While complex and dynamic mechanisms had influenced the formation of the Chinese literati garden as a type of built environment, the ancient literati's collective state of being played a critical role in its formation, which, in turn, shaped the literati gardens' common spatial-experiential settings (e.g., structural components, spatial conditions, experiential mechanisms) that exist in the surviving literati gardens.

⁴⁷⁵ About the quality, density, and intensity of Nearness, see Chapter Eight for more information.

- The spatial-experiential settings pertaining to the occurrence of Nearness within literati gardens are fundamental, as they are deeply rooted in ancient literati's collective concern for individual's ontological relatedness to and intimacy with the world. Thus, the formation of these Nearness-related settings within literati gardens must be explored with regard to the literati's diverse literary and artistic pursuits (e.g., poems, essays, and calligraphies), as they represent literati's collective ontological concern in the same way that literati gardens do. Beyond such assessments, however, the occurrence of Nearness within the literati garden can only be explored through spatial-experiential analysis based on phenomenological reduction.
- Many key factors were involved in the formation of literati gardens that ultimately resulted in literati's concern for Nearness represented and embedded within their gardens as an essential quality. Among factors discussed in Chapter Three, the ancient literati's collective obsession with an ideal life among the *shan shui*; their everyday philosophical practices; and their iterative and consistent integration of building, dwelling, and thinking processes in their daily garden-making activities are particularly important. These factors had led to some key spatial-experiential settings that inspire, enable, or influence experiences of Nearness among their visitors.

9.3 Findings from the Case Study

My case study of the Master of the Nets Garden explored a series of spatial-experiential settings embedded within the literati garden that are responsible for generating rich, meaningful, and multi-dimensional experiences of Nearness. The case study led to the following conclusions:

- Generally, one's experience of Nearness is shaped by how modes of being occur. Thus, identifying the typical modes of being and how they are inspired by various consciously embedded spatial conditions within a literati garden is key to understanding the occurrence of Nearness. However, these modes of being should not be viewed as special states of being that are exclusive to Chinese literati gardens. On the contrary, they are common across many built environments. Therefore, these modes of being are not the only factors driving literati gardens' extraordinary occurrence of Nearness. They possess many other important mechanisms.

- The spatial-experiential structure of three layers—experience occurring within the focusing space, the focused world, and the garden as a whole—is critical in shaping one’s experience within a literati garden. Thus, it offers an effective analytical path that enables this thesis to analyse the occurrence of Nearness systematically. More specifically, the FS-FW structure, the structure that integrates a focusing space with its focused world, is responsible for continuously shaping most of one’s experience within a garden, including the experience of Nearness. While the FS-FW structure influences individuals’ experiences in almost all built environments, its influence is particularly dominant in terms of shaping Nearness experiences of distinctive quality in literati gardens.

- At the level of single lingering spaces, the occurrence of numerous modes of being, as well as their synchronicity and diachronicity, results in a rich, meaningful, and multi-dimensional experience of Nearness. Notably, the four worlds—the world of perception, the world of representation, the world of imagination, and the world of reflection—are essential for shaping such an experience. In particular, when all these four worlds are simultaneously inspired within fairly short periods of time in a lingering space, one may reach a climax of Nearness. At the level of focused worlds, the experience of Nearness occurs in a more dynamic way than that which occurs within lingering spaces. The five-act structure, determined by how modes of being are distributed in a narrative pattern, is highly influential in shaping one’s experience of Nearness within focused worlds. At the level of the garden as a whole, the experience of Nearness is highly dominated by the multi-wave structure, formed by three overlapping seven-component sequences. Its influence is so pervasive that it continuously shapes the visitors’ experience throughout their entire garden journey.

- Intertextuality between the focusing and the focused is a key factor in the formation of spatial-experiential components, such as the FS-FW structure, the five-act narrative structure, the multi-focused area, the aggregation of focused worlds, the seven-components sequence, and the multi-wave structure. Without this intertextuality, experiences of Nearness in literati gardens could not occur as they were described throughout this thesis.

- Importantly, the Chinese literati garden contains a series of spatial-experiential settings that constantly mediate between technological Nearness and natural Nearness, establishing a balanced relationship between them. The balance between these two types of Nearness is a fundamental quality that brings about unique

experiences.⁴⁷⁶ On the one hand, the ancient literati's garden-making process involved various building and landscape elements facilitated by technological intervention, including pavilions, halls, stories, careful cultivated plants and animals, and the dedicatedly constructed rockery mountains. On the other hand, the literati's garden-making process involved purely natural elements—such as the moon, the wind, the sun, and the rain—alongside subtle, poetic, and inspiring means of approaching them, presenting them in visitors' experience and continuously inspiring visitors to interact with these elements through various modes of being. These mutually reinforcing types of Nearness form a third type within literati gardens: technological-natural Nearness. In other words, a literati garden creates a cosmos that preserves a sense of authentic natural Nearness *through* technological Nearness. This type of Nearness maintaining the balance between two dynamics with great scrupulousness and accuracy.

Above all, this thesis provided a methodology to explore how the experience of Nearness occurs within a particular built environment through an understanding of the notion of Nearness as both an essential aspect of human experience and a fundamental spatial quality that facilitates one's relatedness of and intimacy with the world. Through my case study of the Master of the Nets Garden, I revealed how the rich, meaningful, and multi-dimensional experience of Nearness occurs within Chinese literati gardens. Of course, this thesis is merely a preliminary exploration of the occurrence of Nearness within built environments of a particular type. There are many specific issues that this thesis did not sufficiently explore but still warrant in-depth investigation. Still, by exploring such a fundamental spatial-experiential aspect within the Chinese literati garden, I believe that this thesis has provided a meaningful body of thought that will help scholars to understand, analyse, evaluate, and interpret the Chinese literati garden and encourage contemporary spatial practitioners to create high-quality built environments that facilitate excellent experiences of Nearness.

⁴⁷⁶ See Chapter Eight for more information about technological Nearness and natural Nearness.

Epilogue

Over the course of the development of this thesis, numerous technologies have drastically changed the world to a degree far beyond what Heidegger could have imagined. Elon Musk's SpaceX has launched thousands of Starlink satellites into low-Earth orbit (LEO), preparing humans for daily satellite-enabled communication in the near future. 'Metaverse' has become an immensely popular signal of future technological development, inspiring numerous innovations and paving the way for a parallel virtual reality. The human genome has been completely decoded, allowing for countless potential applications in genetic engineering. Finally, ever-evolving artificial intelligence (AI) technologies are increasingly taking over manned tasks. Of course, this list of changes is far from comprehensive, and will inevitably continue to grow.

All of these technological advancements seem to be leading humanity to a highly uncertain and disturbing future like the one described in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), in which humanity is reduced to an unrecognisable level. The questions Heidegger raises and the issues he alerts us to are still critical today and are becoming even more urgent. What bottom line should we guard in our relationship with modern technology to maintain our existence as human beings? If anything can be done to find and hold a bottom line in the relationship with technology while humanity moves towards a highly uncertain future, the issues explored through this thesis must play a role. Built environments are created by and for human beings; they are the manifestations of both technology and humanity. As a type of built environment embedded with numerous conditions, settings, and mechanisms to facilitate humans' intimacy with and relatedness to the world, the Chinese literati garden definitely has lessons to teach in terms of recapturing the possibility of poetic dwelling in the vast homelessness of modernity.

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Curriculum Vitae

Lu Li

Lu Li was born in Dali, China, 1986. His main research interest is to explore the possibility of integrating philosophy, architectural theory, and spatial practices. With an ambition to test the theoretical research through architectural practices, he registered his own architecture studio in his hometown in 2016. However, it turned out that he was a too ambitious—no architectural project has had a chance to be built while doing this PhD.

Education and Training

- 03/2016–Present** Ph. D Candidate, Chair of History of Architecture and Urban Planning, Delft University of Technology, the Netherlands;
- 09/2012–01/2014** Master of Arts in Architectural Design, the University of Sheffield, the UK;
- 09/2006–06/2011** Bachelor in Architecture, Chongqing University, China.

Professional Experience

- 02/2016–Present** Principal Architect, Mufu Studio, Dali;
- 09/2015–12/2015** Project Specialist, BDP (Building Design Partnership Ltd), Shanghai;
- 04/2015–08/2015** Design Assistant, Atelier Deshaus, Shanghai;

Academic Experience

- 03/2020–Present** Academic Translator for *Urban Environmental Design*;
- 09/2022** Guest lecturer in the master course of China Agricultural University 'Frontiers of Landscape Architecture Theory';
- 07/2019** The 11th International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS), 'Asia and Europe, Asia in Europe', Leiden;
- 09/2018** Association of Critical Heritage Studies (ACHS), 4th Biennial Conference 'Heritage Across Borders', Hangzhou;

- 09/2017–12/2017** Teaching assistant of the course 'Building Green: Past, Present, Future' (AR2HA010);
- 07/2017–11/2017** Research assistant in the project 'Teaching History for Design at TU Delft: Exploring Types of Student Learning and Perceived Relevance of History for the Architecture Profession', Carola Hein & Elise van Dooren;
- 05/2016–06/2017** Compilation and coordination assistant for *The Routledge Handbook of Planning History*, ed. Carola Hein;
- 03/2016–07/2016** Member of the organising team of the 17th Conference of International Planning History Society (IPHS), Delft University of Technology, 2016.

Research Output

Writings and Publications

- 1 (2015) Li Lu, The Architectural Design Education in UK from a Learner's Perspective: Reflections on the Architectural Design Study Experience in the University of Sheffield [学习者视角下的英国建筑设计教学——谢菲尔德大学建筑设计学习经历与反思], *Journal of Human Settlements in West China* [西部人居环境学刊], No.3: 55–60
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- 5 (2019) Li Lu, The Role of Early Master Plans in the Formation of Modern Qingdao, the van Eesteren-Fluck & van Lohuizen (EFL) Foundation project, unpublished.
- 6 (2020) Tianchen Dai and Li Lu, Exploring the Mechanism of Spatial Narration: The Representation and Significance of Programming in OMA's Architecture [空间叙事机制探究：程序设计在OMA建筑中的表现和意义], *The Architect* [建筑师], No. 1: 14–21.
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- 8 (2021) Li Lu and Mei Liu, Exploring A Spatial-experiential Structure within the Chinese Literati Garden: The Master of the Nets Garden as A Case Study, *Journal of Asian Architecture and Building Engineering*, under the second-round review.

Patterns

- 1 A Pre-embedded Shell Device for Providing Multiple Usages in Urban Public Space [提供城市公共空间多种使用可能性的预埋壳体装置], Chinese Pattern Certificate No. 10855418;
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- 3 A Separator for Providing Multiple Usages in Urban Public Space [赋予城市公共空间多种使用可能性的分隔装置], Chinese Pattern Certificate No. 10869868.

22#24

Towards A Poetics of Dwelling

Exploring Nearness Within the Chinese Literati Garden

Li Lu

This thesis starts with a worrisome observation tied to various phenomena across modern built environments: humans today are experiencing a weakened relatedness to and reduced intimacy with the world around them. In stark contrast to the general trend, however, most Chinese literati gardens maintain their traditional rich conditions, enabling their visitors to experience a unique, high-quality experience of relatedness to and intimacy with the world, which may serve as an antidote to the existing disruptive modern condition. What lessons can be learned from the Chinese literati gardens to address this weakened intimacy of relatedness in modern built environments? Motivated by this question, this thesis takes the Heideggerian notion of Nearness as its foundation. Through a contextually relevant interpretation of the meaning of Nearness in Heideggerian discourse, it first establishes a theoretical framework through which to assess how the experience of Nearness—the ontological relatedness to and intimacy with the world—generally occurs within built environments. Next, taking the Master of the Nets Garden as a case study, it reveals the various embedded spatial-experiential settings and complex mechanisms that continuously facilitate rich, strong, and multi-dimensional experiences of Nearness. Finally, it reflects on some of the key relevant issues, including what benefits and enlightenments the findings of this thesis could bring to current architectural practices. Overall, by exploring this essential aspect of the literati garden, the thesis equips contemporary spatial practitioners with the theoretical and practical tools necessary to recapture the high-quality experiences of Nearness within their works in the modern era.

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