The Interpretation of Environmental Ideal Images Based on Ji Chang Garden's Literary Texts

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Abstract

The creation of literary texts on traditional Chinese gardening was a cultural phenomenon among literati and officialdom; the fictional imagination and personal experience of the garden owner and other literati constructed the ideal images of the traditional Chinese garden environment together with the physical space. Therefore, garden literary texts become a mirror of the built environment that extends it into an idealised space-time through literary rhetoric such as metaphor and metonymy, an important medium for us to interpret the connotations of Environmental Ideal Images that combine physical space and fictional imagination.

We take the Jichang Garden as the research object, the typical Chinese garden during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). By applying the methods of Linguistic Structural Analysis and Hermeneutic Phenomenology, we excavate the space-time hiding in texts and visualise the environmental ideal image inside literature through drawing methods such as diagrams, collages, plans and axonometry. We intervene in the texts as interpreters from the perspective of art and philosophy, question and break through the cognition of regarding the built environment as all of gardening, and ultimately reconstruct the overall Environmental Ideal Images of Jichang Garden that combines the physical space and fictional imagination. Through the research, we have found that the fictional ideal images created by literati involve specific activities in the present and collective memories of the past, which reveal the potential and attractive side of Chinese traditional gardens.

Keywords: texts of Jichang Garden, Ideal-images, architecture drawings, Structure Analysis, Hermeneutic Phenomenology

1. Introduction

It is generally accepted that physical elements of Chinese traditional gardens have similar form characteristics. However, to understand them, people have to perceive the dynamic combinations of elements with the aid of related names, inscriptions, poetic writings, paintings, etc. This indicates the closed relationship between the built environment and texts. During ancient China, especially during the Ming and Qing Dynasties, the garden provided an arena for the cultural activities of literati and officialdom; based on the physical environment, the garden owners did

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not merely compose literary and artistic works in person but also invited friends or engaged celebrities to create poems and paintings. This phenomenon results in generating environmental ideal images that merge into various mental experiences and fictional imagination rather than just being a superficial physical space (Liang, 2013, p.61-65). Therefore, this paper focuses on the environmental images connected to the social and cultural contexts of the built environment and prompts further consideration of the connotations of Chinese traditional gardens. In the research process, the garden literary texts thus became a significant medium for exploring ideal images.

We chose the Jichang Garden as the research object, which is a typical case in the Ming Dynasty, and it focused on the period of Qin Yao (1599-1604), who was the third owner of this garden. We finally selected three kinds of texts from almost thirty previous texts composed during that period (Qin, 2009, p.29-77), including Twenty Poems of Jichang Garden written by Qin Yao, The prose of Jichang Garden written by Zhideng Wang and Fifty Scenery Pictures of Jichang Garden painted by Song Maojin. More specifically, poems are composed respectively for 20 scenes of the garden involving aesthetic and moral ideals of the owner, the prose describes an enjoyable tour as well as supplies sequences of scenes, and literati paintings represent concrete icons of environmental elements.

The research began with these texts and attempted to have a dialogue with authors through drawing methods to analyse and interpret ideal images of Jichang Garden, excavate the space-time hiding in texts and visualise the environmental ideal image inside literature by applying the methods of Linguistic Structural Analysis and Hermeneutic Phenomenology. (Figure 1) Firstly, we used structural segmentation to extract environment ideal images. Second, configurated space-time schema for further discussions about the constituent logic of ideal images. Finally, the overall environmental ideal images of Jichang Garden were refigured using axonometry to merge interpreters' perceptions and imagination into texts more deeply.

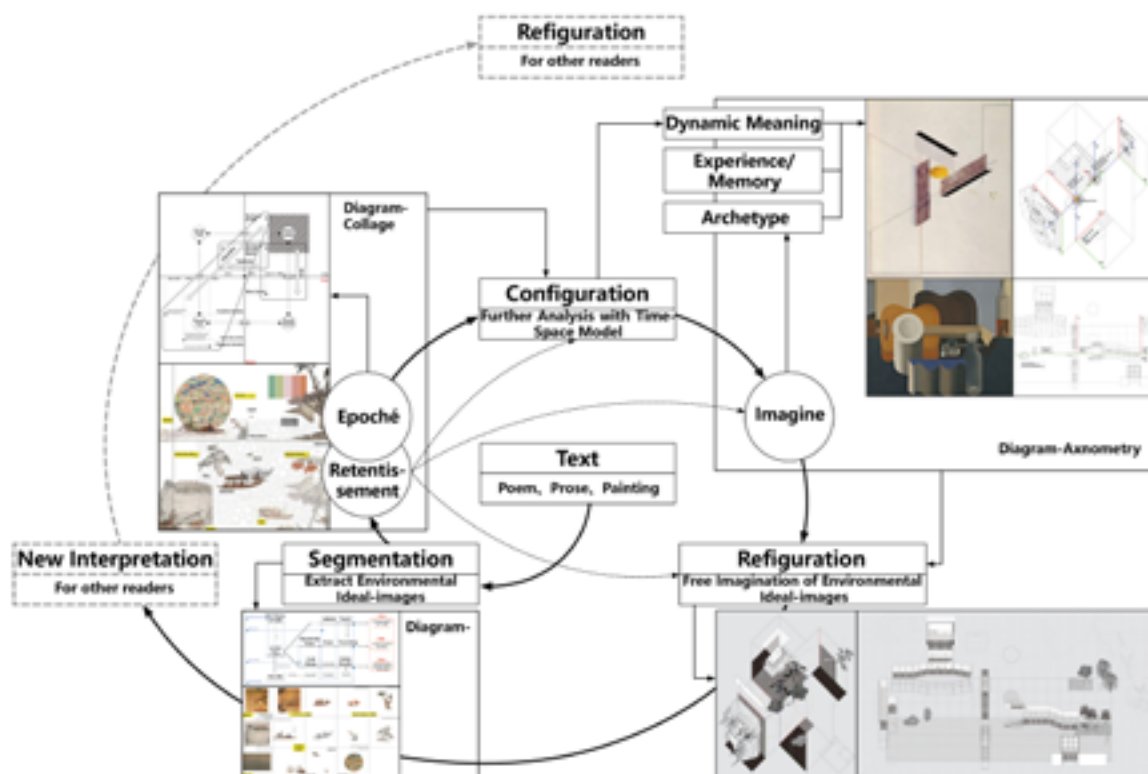Figure 1. Diagram of the process of research with different methods

2. Structural Segmentation: Implied Spatio-Temporal Relationships

Based on the division of the material (physical space) and immaterial elements of the garden environment, we further divide the immaterial ones implied in the text into time, classical allusions, and behaviours. The aspects of behaviours and allusions have different emphases

in different scenes, which is related to the theory of "Bi" (comparison) and "Xing" (incitation) in Chinese classical literature. Among the related poems of the 16 scenes (Table 1), there is one "Bi" type as "The House of Faith" focuses on allusions: Literati put their emotions on the scenery and incorporate the past into the present based on classical allusions to form ideal images. The other "Xing" type is "The Pond of Beautiful Ripples", which focuses on behaviours: The scene stimulates the literati's sensory experience, and its image has no apparent cultural metaphor but is composed of a series of concrete situations related to daily activities.

Table 1. Garden poems, prose and literati paintings describe the same scene during 1599-1604

Scene	Literati Painting by Maojin Song	Poems written by Yao Qin who is the owner of Jichang Garden	Prose written by Zhideng Wang	Scene	Literati Painting by Maojin Song	Poems written by Yao Qin who is the owner of Jichang Garden	Prose written by Zhideng Wang
1		**The Clear Sound House** The house is surrounded by bamboos. It's quiet and tranquil up there. Sometimes you can hear the sound of cold springs. It was a dripping tingling sound.	To the north is the Clear Sound House. As Meng Xiangyang once said, "The dew of bamboo makes a clear sound when it drips." And inside the door are all bamboos beside the water.	9		**The Hall Surrounded by Trees** Strong trees stand around clear streams. Where thatched cottage is above it. It is surrounded by thick woods, which reflected in the middle of the pool.	On the northwest side of the Linton Tower, pine trees stand upright. And the room faces it as described in wang Zhongyun's quatrains.
2		**The Pond of Beautiful Ripples** The peach trees are in full blossoms. And the ripples move towards each other. The red glow shone on the bottom of water. While the sun is rising at the end of the forest.	Below it is a pond, ten acres. People take boats painted with sparrows and dragonflies to drink and fish, sailing among the smoke-like willows and rain-like peach blossoms. The scenery is as splendid as embroidery, hence called "the Pool of Beautiful Ripples", where the tributaries of Huiquan flow into it.	10		**The House of Faith** Touching the lonely pine and loitering around. Thinking Yuanming Tao who lived thousands years ago. Pine also sustains itself in cold winter. I keep the noble quality deeply in my heart.	There is a lonely pine under the steps. This pine can make Zhenbai to hear the sound that wind blowing leaves, and can also let Yuanming to touch it. At the bottom of the pine, there is a gorgeous stone which is similar to the famous stone in Junheang's garden. When the host of garden comes here, he always loiters around.
3		**The Pavilion by the Water** The light scattered coldly on the ground through the bamboo. Roll up the curtain and we can see the green water. Across the dock comes the breeze. The sound is as clear as jade pendants striking.	The long corridor by the pool and the bamboos reflected in the water, after walking more than fifty steps, we can see the Pavilion by the Water.	11		**The House of Xuan** Stay lonely against time. Living in seclusion for a long time. Haven't finished writing Taixuan. I am not same as Ziyun.	In the front of house, there are steps made by stone, and dozen of peonies. When the flowers bloom, the host of garden will hold a banquet here. The colorful and gorgeous flowers make the scene like Jingu garden, which is a famous garden during Xijin Dynasty.
4		**The Knowing Fish Bridge** Mountain stream flowing at autumn. Sounds like cece and fangfang. How do you know I am not a fish? This joy thinking for Zhuang Zhou.	At the end of House, there is a bridge which bears a room, and the middle of the bridge is higher. The name of bridge is created in refer to Zhuang Zhou's words.	12		**The Refreshing Terrace** Looking blue sky in the morning. The sky is clear without dark clouds. Opening the door and two mountains appear. Opening the window and bringing cool.	When coming from the east of house, there is a area of raised ground just like a small mountain. The terrace can accommodate dozens of beds. People in here can see clouds, moon and clear sky.
5		**The Pavilion that Saw Moon First** As the sun sets over the western mountains. The moon can be seen first from this pavilion. I linger in such a scene. sitting here till night without any words.	The corridor faces east, where the moon is the earliest to be seen, the plaque on it is The Pavilion that Saw the Moon First.	13		**The Mountain Stream** The sound of falling mountain stream. Echoing in the quiet stone forests of the mountains. I follow the sound to find its source, walking a long way and resting many times before reaching it.	Climbing up the stairs, the four corners of the pavilion are raised like a bird spreading its wing, and the one among the green is called The Mountain Stream.
6		**The Tower in the air** This tower rises to the sky. It's like nothing down there. If I could knock on the door, then would communicate with God.	In the southeast, there are three storeys of Tower, higher than the trees, called the Tower in the air.	14		**The Flowing Springs** Rain overflows suddenly make the springs flying. Which flowing into deep valleys. I want to go with it, but lifting up clothes and wet the shoes.	The spring water in the mountains is poured into the Pool of Beautiful Ripples called Flowing Springs. It flows East, and then pours into the Xiangjiang River.
7		**The Hall Lying in Clouds** White clouds coming out of mountains. Coming back to valley again. The recluse laying in it. Always sleeping while hugging white clouds.	At the south of the Lingxu Tower, walking along the wall and entering a door, there is a house behind a stone bridge. The recluse laying in East Mountain who is the savior for common people.	15		**The Green Pavilion** Mild streams water stroking the lonely boat. Pavilion without any wall around it. Breeze coming from water. Clothes are as green as cold water.	At the end of Spring, there is a bridge over the lake like a rainbow. The bridge is connected with Green Pavilion which stands in the middle of the lake.
8		**The Tower Adjacent to Temple** Tower is adjacent to the temple. Flower from heaven falling like rain. Sometimes hearing the bell. Just Shakyamuni lives in here.	At the right hand, there is a small tower. At the bottom of the tower, there is a pool which filled water named Asu from Huishan Temple. At the front of the tower, there are many ancient trees. And when standing at the tower, people can see visitors in temple clearly.	16		**The Tower Surrounded by Trees** Climbing the tower. Overlooking the beautiful forest. Sunset shining the balustrade. Through the window mountain is green.	In the east of Green Pavilion, there is a tower stands between forest, when climbing the tower, I can see the high terrace, curved lock, beautiful stones and trees, I can also see flowers in the end of the path, moon reflecting in water near pavilion. All of these are gorgeous and stunning.

2.1. Structural Segmentation of Poems and Prose: Multiple Environmental Imagery

The linguistic structural analysis of poetic writings emphasises restoring the systematised ideal images created through lexical and syntactic usage. In "The House of Faith", the Multiple imaginations of authors lead to the connections among environmental elements and construct the space-time relationships between the present and past world. In the poem by Qin Yao, "Fondling the lone pine and loitering around, thinking of Tao Yuanming, who lived thousands of years ago. Pine also sustains itself in cold winter; I keep the noble quality deep in my heart." The combination of elements has given rise to the multiple dimensions of environmental imagery.

According to the definition of "empty" words illustrated by Chinese Poetic Writing (Cheng, 1977), we have found that the poem involves ellipsis of personal pronouns for verbs "touching" and "loitering". It thus introduces two intertwined dimensions to the language

because behaviours related to the lone pine could be either done by Qin Yao, who withdrew from official life and moved to Jichang Garden in the Ming Dynasty or by Tao Yuanming, who had a cloistered life at Yuantian Garden in Jin Dynasty. Furthermore, the last two sentences of the poem describe the pine enduring cold winter and reveal the author's virtue, which triggers the third dimension of environmental imagery. Additionally, the imagery becomes more diverse when analysing the prose simultaneously. From the perspective of a tourist, Wang Zhideng connected the lone pine with another classical allusion to Zhebai Xiansheng, who lived in Mao Mountain, cultivating pines and listening to the wind during the Northern and Southern dynasties. This can be regarded as the fourth dimension of imagery. Besides the lone pine, the gorgeous stone was mentioned and associated with sober stone in Pingquan Garden belonging to Li Deyu during the Tang Dynasty, which adds the fifth dimension of imagery. Figure 2 illustrates that with the additional allusions, Jichang Garden (present) is related to different well-known gardens (past).

As for the scene of "The Pond of Beautiful Ripples", the poem wrote: "The peach trees are in full blossom, and the ripples move towards each other. The red glow shone on the bottom of the water while the sun was rising at the end of the forest." It mainly depicts the objects, and the owner of the garden creates a well-structured dynamic image with a series of environmental elements in the order of words. The physical elements in the environment, such as peach blossoms, ripples, water bottoms, red glow, forest, and sun, are organised according to the continuous perception of the scene. Therefore, time-related elements such as specific moments and colour tendencies highlight the atmospheric characteristics of the scene, together with physical elements, forming the first dimension of environmental imagery. In addition, the mirrored relationship between the water and the bottom adds a second dimension, creating a dual environmental imagery of the actual space above the water surface and the imaginary space reflected in the water.

Figure 2. Segmentation and dimensions of environmental imagery of two scenes

The description of the pond in the prose describes the daily life of people: "drink and fish, sailing among the smoke-like willows and rain-like peach blossoms", which is the behaviour element in the garden. It shows that the garden owner abandoned himself to nature and lived a leisurely and comfortable life after retiring from his official career,

which has become the third dimension of the imagery. Besides, introducing dynamic activities in the prose further stimulates our imagination and develops the literati aesthetic activities carried by boats in Wen Zhenheng's Superfluous Things (Wen, 2011, p. 132). This evolved into a series of associations and experiences of activities on the pond, forming the fourth imagery dimension.

In the two types of scenes, different physical, time, cultural and behavioural elements are not presented univocally but interact and operate comprehensively. We drew diagrams to express the dynamic relationship between the elements and to clearly sort out and reproduce the construction logic of the image (Figure 2). It is the operation that was initially inside the language system that leads to the proliferation of the Environmental Ideal-images and forms the continuous shaping of the overall environment of the garden by transforming the above-mentioned spatial context.

2.2. Structural Segmentation of Paintings: The Reference System of Icon

The paintings provide direct visual icons and perceptual cognition compared to the poems. However, the garden paintings allude to the artist's subjective idea to a certain extent, limiting the interpreter's imagination. The allusions and behaviours involved in the poems have not been fully presented in the garden paintings. However, these different and unexpressed icons become the "gaps" in the garden paintings, waiting for the interpreter to explore further and supplement. Therefore, drawings beyond the original text were selected within the paintings of the Ming and Qing Dynasties. The icons depicted in these works reflect the general cognition of the scholar-officials at that time to a large extent and bring us as close as possible to the cultural context of the Chinese traditional gardens.

The reference system of icons is finally presented in a table. The first row of icons of the table is the element contained in the environment, which is the corresponding icon extracted from the garden paintings. We extracted similar icons from other paintings accordingly. In this way, each column constitutes a collection of a single element and its associated icon. The cognition of elements is no longer limited to the established icon in the garden. Still, it incorporates a variety of possible interpretations, placing our understanding of the icon in openness and making it possible to derive new insights (Table 2).

Table 2. The Reference System of Icon

The design and scene setting of the garden projected the emotions and ideals of the literati groups. The lone pine and the pond are the real scenes of Jichang Garden, but the related allusions and behaviour are introduced in the text to express the literati's spiritual yearning. The production of the text reveals the meaning of the physical environment,

implicitly triggering the space-time schema of the "here" and "now".

3. Configuration: Space-Time Schema Within Imagination

Texts of the gardens are literary and artistic creations depending on the built environment. However, when the garden is transformed or destroyed, texts will be interpreted and even rewritten by later generations rather than merely as records of the past. In this instance, the "conceptual garden" seems to be a legend leading to the fictional imagination of communicators without the limitation of the built environment, and thus promotes the transformation of the garden as a cultural symbol affecting social interactions and artistic creations of literati and officialdom.

Jichang Garden is currently open for visitors, but since the death of Qin Yao in 1604, the garden has been rebuilt several times. Therefore, we can only comprehend its past appearance through texts and integrate imagination into that disappeared garden. In the following section, we will discuss the constituent logic of ideal images using the Hermeneutic Phenomenology method. The usage of elements and built dimensions reveal diverse space-time relationships. In other words, space-time indicated through texts is no longer limited to the stable state of Jichang Garden but introduces past and fictional situations by different authors. To achieve an intensive study of space-time relationships, on the one hand, we will attempt to construct a schema of space-time, which is an essential tool for excavating the diversity of space-time; on the other hand, we will rearrange icons based on the schema and discuss comparisons between ideal images of the two scene.

3.1 Structuring Space-Time Schema

The space-time schema is composed of four quadrants with two axes (Figure 3). The horizontal axe presents the connections between humans and the environment on the level of time, and the vertical axe presents the connections between the physical and fictional environment on the level of space. We chose the completed year (1599) of Jichang Garden as the crossover point of two axes. Hence, the first quadrant means the period of Qin Yao (1599-1604) of Jichang Garden, named Here and Present, and other quadrants named Here and Past, There and Present, and There and Past, respectively, all of them are generated from texts. This schema aims to break through the limitations of the built environment and realise the possibilities of introducing various moments and places into the garden.
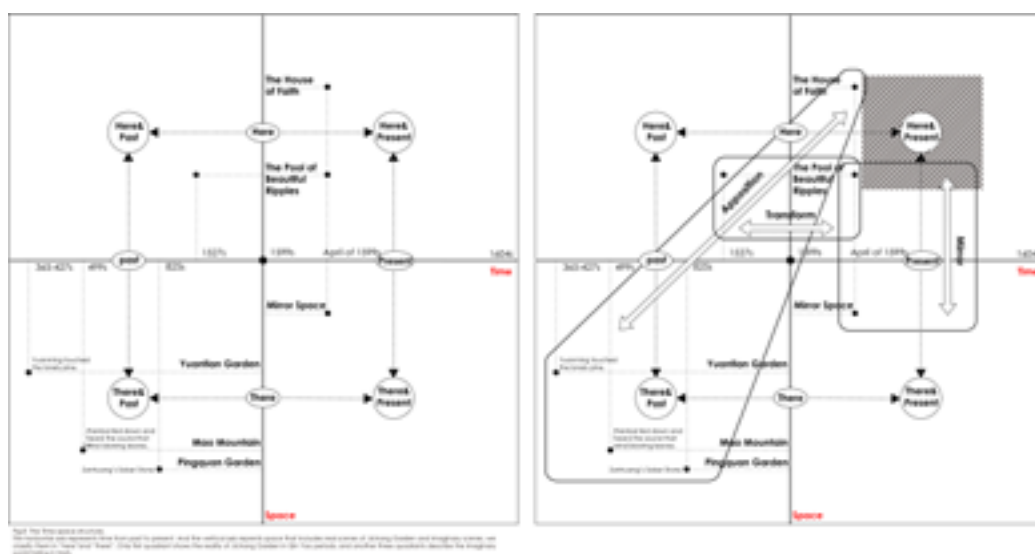

Figure 3. The Space-Time Schema

Descriptions of "The House of Faith" and "The Pond of Beautiful Ripples" were composed in April 1599, when the garden was completed, and Qin Yao invited friends to visit. Thus, two scenes are located in the first quadrant, which means the present time and space for Qin Yao and his friends. The experience and imagination of the authors add other places, including Yuantian Garden (365-427), Mao Mountain (499) and Pingquan Garden (825) in the whole narrative; these disappeared gardens are located in the third quadrant and form a juxtaposition relationship with "The House of Faith" of the first quadrant (Figure 3-a). In the other scene, "The Pond of Beautiful Ripples", the inverted reflection underwater creates a fictional space which belongs to the fourth quadrant and forms a mirrored relationship with the real environment above water (Figure 3-b). Besides, water had always been the core component of the garden; activities related to it, like drinking on a boat and fishing, were also mentioned before the period of Qin Yao. The second quadrant involves the pond in 1527 and reflects the alternation in history with the first quadrant (Figure 3-c).

3.2 Rearranging Icons

Based on the space-time schema, we used collage to discuss further environmental elements that play a crucial role in different space-time quadrants. Through collage, various icons could be combined and superposed freely; this characteristic induced us to fully utilise the reference system of icons for putting elements into the schema. Compared with the previous section, drawings of this section will focus on the visual representation of the "conceptual garden", which is also a question that concerns spatial designers: how to convey poetic situations with appropriate icons?
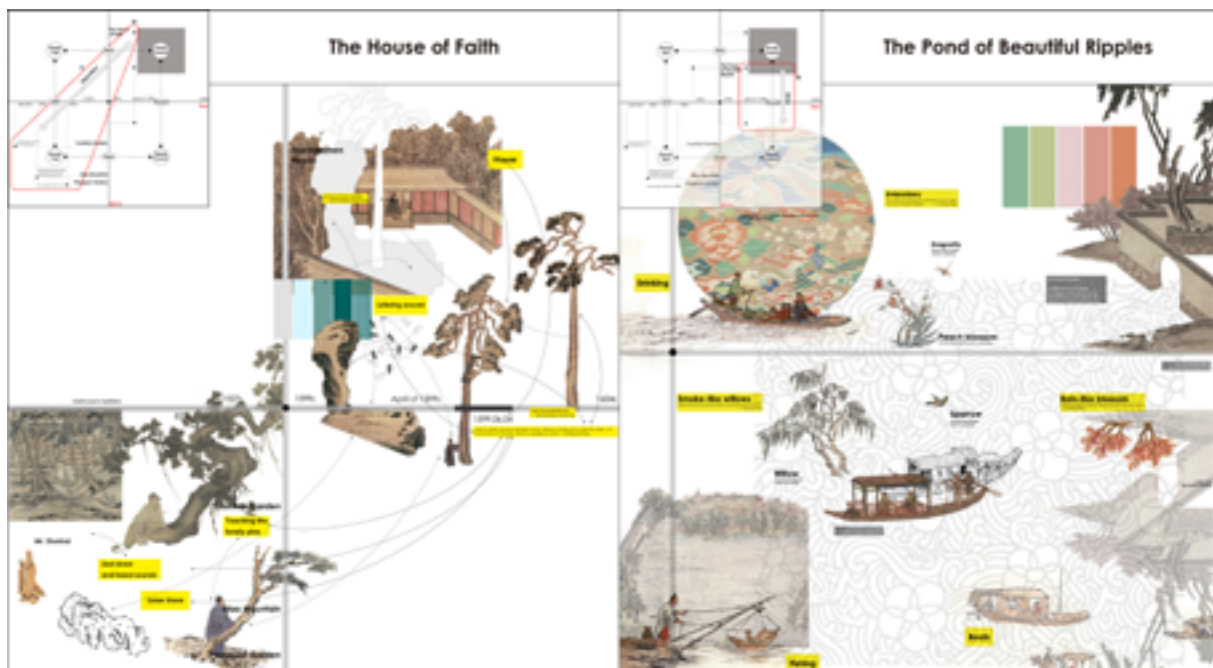

Figure 4. The space-time schema with icons showing relationships among various quadrants

Collages provide a different arrangement of icons from pictures painted by Maojin Song because they incorporate our interpretation and imagination of texts. In "The House of Faith" (Figure 4), classical allusions like touching the lone pine and listening to the wind are crucial elements which connect diverse space-time, and they also represent various shapes of the pine, such as upright or crooked. Both of them are located at different points of the space-time schema but are finally connected by collective creations of literati. In "The Pond of Beautiful Ripples", the analogy between ripples and the finest silk is the most attractive situation in the text. This leads to the fusion of reality and fiction

represented through concrete objects and abstract patterns.

Moreover, collages emphasise the spatial colours of the two scenes. "The House of Faith" in cold winter is inclined to calm colours, while "The Pond of Beautiful Ripples" in the sunrise of spring is inclined to warm colours. Through the above discussion, the icons of the garden were found to be not single or fixed but continuously added new interpretations and imagination with the interaction between the physical environment and texts created by different literati.

4. Re-Figuration: Environmental Ideal Images Based on Space-Time Schema

The space-time schema establishes the universal Ideal-image structure in Jichang Garden's text. It reveals the relationship between the "past" &"there" involved and triggered by the "now"& "here" of Jichang Garden. However, as a framework for analysing textual Environmental Ideal Images, the schema remains in its abstract expression, which is still far from the spatial dimension of the garden environment. Therefore, the spatial archetype was introduced to take us away from the physical environment and allow us to conduct an in-depth exploration of the world of the text to realise the re-figuration of the environmental ideal images.

Axonometry was chosen as the spatial archetype, which places three axes (X, Y, Z) in a specific proportion and can assist viewers in obtaining the form and scale of space intuitively and accurately to realise the objective description of space. Besides, it is also a consolidated method of Chinese painting called oblique parallel projection, which is not a transcription of direct observation of the real but of what the inner eye was capable of grasping. Therefore, the axonometry "... abolishes the fixed viewpoint of the spectator and creates several possible readings of one and the same image" (Bois, 1981, p. 41-58).
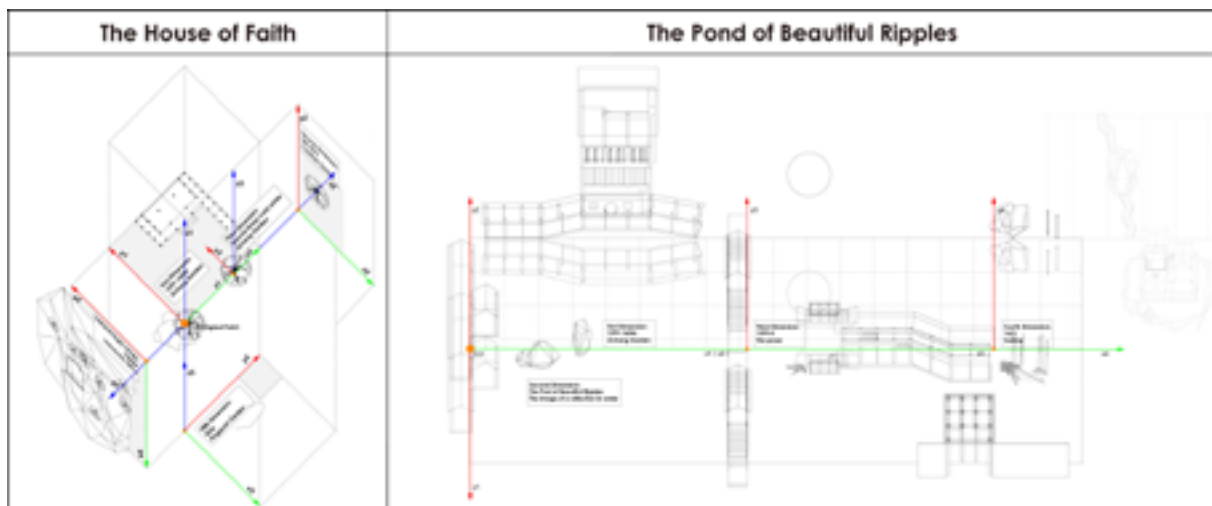

Figure 5. Archetype of Environmental Refiguration

4.1 45-Degrees Axonometry - Multidimensional complexity

The space-time schema of "The House of Faith" reflects the dynamic infiltration relationship between multiple space-time bodies, which is similar to the "description of space in motion" created by El Lissitzky in The Proun. In "The House of Faith", lone pine and stone as physical elements in the environment trigger the association of "past" and "there" and then extend the multiple imagery dimensions. Corresponding to the 45-degree axonometry (Figure 5), the red, green, and blue axes are the x, y, and z axes. The intersection of the three axes forms the imagery dimension schema. The initial origin (0, 0) of the axis refers to lone pine and sober stone, which is also the first imagery

dimension (x1, y1, z1) and the core elements of Qin Yao's secluded residence in Jichang Garden. The new origin and imagery dimension is gradually derived from the original point through the extension of the axis and the displacement of the axial direction. In addition to providing an objective and comprehensive description of space, the 45-degree axonometry can also be regarded as a visual game that generates spatial complexity. What the reconstruction finally presents (Figure 6) is the new connection between the lone pine, the sober stone in the current scene, and the space and human behaviour at that time, forming five-fold ideal images. The environment is no longer stable but can be constantly transformed and generated. Then, the house evolves from a static physical space to a complex of multiple complexus of time and space. In this case, the space carried by the axonometry is no longer limited to the actual physical dimension but also implies the construction of the Environmental Ideal-image system for "The House of Faith" from the psychological dimension of the interpreter.

4.2 90-Degrees Axonometric - Clarity and Ambiguity

Compared with the 45-degree axonometry, the 90-degree axonometry also has its own particularity. Firstly, the 90-degree axonometric drawing is more precise: the front facade and plane of the object or building it depicts are not distorted and rotated, emphasising their relationship more clearly. At the same time, the multiple possibilities of spatial dimensions generated by the superposition of numerous environmental elements also make the spatial description of images more complicated. For example, in Le Corbusier's Still Life in 1920, due to the figures constituting the objects belonging to different reference systems, their positional relationship reveals the uncertainty of "clearly ambiguous" (Rowe, 2008, P.24-55). Based on this, "The Pond of the Beautiful Ripples" applied 90-degree axonometry as its re-figuration archetype. Due to the particularity of the angle, the disappearance of the z-axis in the image dimension makes the side elevation of the axonometric view hidden, and the first, third and fourth image dimensions, therefore, show a parallel relationship (Figure 5). More specially, the mirror relationship caused by the water interface forms the second dimension. The environment of underwater reflection is represented in the axonometric field as the "front facade" of its space, adding a new axis to the original two-dimensional water surface. At the same time, the axonometry eliminates the features of the perspective view, which are near large and far small; the overlapping of environmental elements blurs the primary and secondary relationship of other elements under this structure. It shows the potential dynamic characteristics and uncertainty of the Environmental Ideal-images.
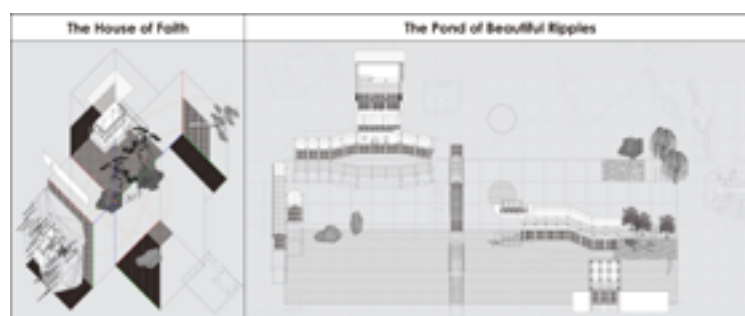

Figure 6. Re-figuration of two scenes with 45 and 90-degree axonometry

Through the final re-figuration of the axonometry archetype, the singleness of the physical garden itself is broken, and the Environmental Ideal images in the mind of the literati are presented as a visual image. In this process, the interpreters' own experience and imagination are added, and the subjective initiative of designers is brought to re-figurate the overall spatial narrative of physical gardens and experiential imagination.

5. Conclusion

The texts and physical environment of Chinese traditional gardens construct a mature system together. Texts are permanent and continued rather than mere or temporary descriptions attached to the physical environment. The increasing texts also realise the over-and-over reshaping of the garden. Using drawings to excavate ideal images hiding in texts is a dialogue between authors and interpreters. The "gaps" of texts and the physical environment bring the resounding which drives us to enter the inner world of texts and allows us to integrate our experience and imagination. That is the reason why we attempted to transform texts into material for spatial analysis and re-figuration. This intervention questions and breaks through the cognition regarding the built environment as all of the gardenings and ultimately reconstructs the Environmental ideal images of Jichang Garden.

Wang Shizhen once said: "The Luoyang Garden in the Northern Song Dynasty has disappeared for more than 300 years. But because of reading Li Gefei's Luoyang Famous Gardens, it is still vivid today" (Wang, 2006). Compared with the disappeared garden, the text can catalyse new cognition, which is even more dynamic than the physical garden itself. As a mirror of the built environment, texts extend it into an idealised time-space structure through literary rhetoric such as metaphor and metonymy, which is an important medium for us to interpret the connotation of Environmental Ideal images that combine the physical space and fictional imagination. The series of images we finally produced may be quite different from conventional gardens, which is the projection of the garden space of the world of the interpreter's imagined self. It becomes a new text about Jichang Garden, which is an active attempt at the traditional garden's Ideal image in a contemporary design context, reflecting the utility of history from another aspect.

Conflict of Interests

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Endnotes

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