
Living in a Dream: Alfred Kubin's Inner Landscapes

Rocío Sola | Pompeu Fabra University

<http://ellids.com/archives/2021/07/4.3-Sola.pdf>

Abstract | This paper seeks to provide an overview of the importance of dreams in the work of the well-known multidisciplinary Austrian artist, Alfred Kubin, through the prism of an aspect not so often addressed: Landscape. From an explanation of how Kubin understands dreams and the perception of images generated by them, the aim here is to create a parallelism between the spatial-temporal rupture within the dream experience and a similar rupture present in Kubin's written and drawn landscapes. This rupture, corresponding to Michel Foucault's concept of heterotopia, emphasizes the importance of perception when signifying spaces, thus, creating a strong sense of multiplicity and liminality. The paper dwells in depth on his 1909 novel, *Die andere Seite* (*The Other Side*), where these landscapes are described in detail. The novel is understood as an impasse within Kubin's work, especially as far as the confection of imaginary spaces is concerned. Thus, concepts such as space, landscape, dream, imagination, memory, and fantasy are gathered under the umbrella of Kubin's creations—always halfway between literature and drawing—elaborating upon a series of works that develop this theme and extend almost until the end of his life.

Keywords | Alfred Kubin, Space, Landscape, Dream Realm, Oneiric, *Stimmung*, Imagination, Perception, Inner Self, Inner Imaginary, Limits of Consciousness, Individual Unconsciousness, Foucault, Heterotopia

Almost every definition of the word *imagination* is rooted in vision, in the *imago*.¹ Imagining has traditionally been associated with a vision and an individual configuration of perceived images. This experience, while private, inner, and unique, can also be shared and communicated. This calls for a definition of imagination that considers it as another tool to approach perceptual reality, to analyze how visions, feelings, and experiences reorganize by assimilating and reformulating the information captured by the senses. Thus, imagination and perception involve moods, memories, and affections which are referred to in Aesthetics as *Stimmung*² (Wellbery 6). This convergence of the evocation of images coming from inner processes together with the sensorial knowledge of our surroundings is what gives rise to intermediate images and places, leading to the mechanisms on which theories about fiction, fantasy, and other manifestations of creativity are based.

The Austrian artist Alfred Kubin (1874–1959) is well known for his works³ approaching themes like dreams and the fantastic imagination, which appear as the basis for nearly all of his creations. Although he is mainly known for his work as a draughtsman and illustrator, as well as for being one of the founding members of the expressionist group *Der Blaue Reiter* (*The Blue Rider*) together with Wassily Kandinsky and Franz Marc, Alfred Kubin was also a writer. Studies and research on his career agree that his first and only novel, *Die andere Seite* (*The Other Side*), was the early culmination of his artistic production.⁴ The novel is considered the cornerstone on which Kubin builds a complex imaginary that comprises the experience of city, space, and landscape as a modern phenomenon, and examines how it affects artistic creation. The novel narrates the journey of an anonymous draughtsman—Kubin’s alter ego—and his wife to a faraway kingdom, the Dream Realm, built by the protagonist’s mysterious childhood friend called Klaus Patera. While staying in this place, the protagonist becomes aware that things work under a strange logic, very similar to that of a nightmare. However, the real nightmare comes with the arrival of Herkules Bell, Klaus Patera’s nemesis, who wants to start a revolution against the master of the Dream Realm. This dispute ends with

¹From Latin *imago*, *imaginem* (image, copy, likeness).

²*Stimmung* is an untranslatable word. A translation into French might consider *humeur* (mood) or *atmosphère* (atmosphere). Yet “mood,” in English, refers more the subject’s interiority than what the word *Stimmung* does. The word “attunement” is also considered as a suitable translation, regarding the musical dimension rooted to the origins of the word (Wellbery 6–7).

³Certain works of Alfred Kubin are [available here](#).

⁴See Petriconi, Hellmuth, *Das Reich des Untergangs; Bemerkungen über ein mythologisches Thema* (1958); Hewig, Anneliese, *Phantastische Wirklichkeit. Kubins ‘Die andere Seite’* (1967); Lippuner, Heinz, *Alfred Kubins Roman «Die Andere Seite»* (1977); Cersowsky, Peter, *Phantastische Literatur im ersten viertel des 20. Jahrhunderts* (1989); Rhein, Philipp H. *The verbal and visual art of Alfred Kubin* (1989); Geyer, Andreas, *Alfred Kubin. Träumer als Lebenszeit* (1995); and Brunn, Clemens, *Der Ausweg ins Unwirkliche* (2010).

the total destruction of the realm's capital, the city of Pearl, in a series of fantastic and macabre events on par with other twentieth century writings of fantastic literature. In addition to this novel, Alfred Kubin also wrote other minor texts, generally gathered in wider collections, which either deal with aesthetic and philosophical concerns—as autobiographies and scattered memories of his life—or are brief fantastic stories following the style of Edgar Allan Poe or E.T.A. Hoffmann—two of Kubin's main sources of literary inspiration (Cersowsky 101–103).

For Kubin, creativity is based on the search of the *image* (*Aus meiner Werkstatt* 13; emphasis in the original)—an image that can only be achieved by those artists capable of living between this real world and the world of dreams, possessing a special consciousness resulting from a deep sense of belonging to the materiality of existence. This argument can be found in several of his later texts, but it is especially well explained in his 1922 essay, “Die Befreiung vom Joch” (“The Liberation from the Yoke”),⁵ where Kubin elaborates it in more detail: “Our most sober everyday life sinks into the event of dreaming, and dissolves the rough “clarity of the head” into the feeling of being lost. [...] All one can do is to see through this fate and turn it around, and discover the silent grounds of the dreaming nature, the primordial mother of us all”⁶ (*Aus meiner Werkstatt* 12). The source for Kubin's inspiration is this “dreaming nature,” in which he as an artist could see far beyond the materiality of things. For him, both artists and dreamers are gifted with the ability to separate their perceptions of real objects and spaces from a preconceived (and cultural) elaboration of meanings. This special consciousness, thus, consists of being able to apprehend how images and forms are empty vessels that can be filled with different and fantastic things and beings, moving in what Kubin calls “regular, pulsating, and in-between spaces”⁷ (*Aus meiner Werkstatt* 12).

Regarding this search for the *image* as the middle ground between dream and wakefulness, appears the concept of *Stimmung*, one of the most prominent themes in Alfred Kubin's writings. This concept, often translated as “mood,” “affinity,” or “state of mind,” arises halfway between the contemplation and communication of a feeling. Through *Stimmung*, certain affections can be made visible and apprehensible, as it is endowed with memory since other bodies, feelings, visions, and remembrances converge in it. This configures a symbolic substratum that, despite coming from past times, can be applied to the present moment in which contemplation takes place.⁸ Kubin uses the

⁵This essay, together with “Über mein Traumerleben” (“Concerning my Dream Experiences”), was published in the 1922 book, *Von verschiedenen Ebene* (*From different Stages*), but the source used in this article is the compilation of Kubin's essays gathered and edited by Ulrich Riemerschmied in 1973, *Aus meiner Werkstatt* (*From my Workplace*).

⁶Unless otherwise stated, all the translations from German to English of Kubin's work are by the author. Original in German: “unser nüchternster Alltag versinkt in jenes Traumgeschehen und löst die Härte, die »Klarheit des Kopfes« in die Stimmung der Verlorenheit auf. [...] Alles, was man tun kann, ist, dieses Schicksal zu durchschauen und umzukehren, die stillen Gründe der Traumnatur unser aller Urmutter.”

⁷Original in German: “regelmäßig pulsierenden Zwischenräumen.”

⁸Although the word *Stimmung* was first used in connection with musical tuning during the Baroque period, the term reappeared and strengthened in German aesthetics mainly through the figures of Immanuel Kant and Johan Wolfgang von Goethe. In Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, we can find the idea of finding pleasure in communicating the beauty of an object, while Goethe, in *Falconet*, goes a step further, attributing this capacity exclusively to the artist and calling it *Stimmung*. It was German poets and philosophers who continued to develop this concept throughout the nineteenth century, although the highest point in which the transversality of *Stimmung* was mentioned and began to be applied to the perception of space and art

concept of *Stimmung* throughout his works,⁹ even going so far as to affirm that, for him, *Stimmung* is everything (*Träumer als Lebenszeit* 115). Kubin talks about it as a “balm of memories” and the *raison d’être* of the most wonderful things, capable of making the soul “flutter inside the body like a caged bird.”¹⁰ This quality of “being everything” is peculiar for Kubin, because it also acquires a spatial dimension; the *Stimmung* is, hence, something inhabitable (Sola 211). According to Kubin’s novel, *The Other Side*, people can live in *Stimmungen* or “in moods,” thus considering every external appearance as the raw material that nourishes and organizes emotions (*The Other Side* 15–16). For this reason, and despite the fact that Kubin’s works may appear as the consolidation of a bizarre and fantastic inventiveness, the images created and narrated by the artist cannot be detached from the appearances, forms, and objects of the world in which he lived, thus making contemplation and observation two fundamental mechanisms for Kubin’s creative work.

The idea of contemplation alludes to both the empirical and the oneiric world. For Kubin, the oneiric and hallucinated component within the contemplation of forms becomes the main substratum of his art, often finding himself as an inhabitant of two worlds, both being equally true and real. The confluence between these two realities would be what finally traced the worlds through which Kubin moved—his “twilight worlds” or *Dämmerungswelten* (*Aus meiner Werkstatt* 39–42). The “twilight worlds” are understood by Kubin in a way that corresponds with what Michel Foucault later theorizes as heterotopias in *Des espaces autres* (*Of Other Spaces*), which are defined as spaces located both in nature and in the interior of the individuals, spaces that are at the same time one and many, therefore enjoying a certain sense of liminality (23). The word “heterotopia” comes from the familiar concept of “utopia,” but “whereas utopias are unreal, fantastic, and perfected spaces, heterotopias in Foucault’s conception are real places that exist like “counter-sites,” simultaneously representing, contesting, and inverting all other conventional sites” (Sudradjat 29). An anachronistic reading of Kubin’s writings converges with Foucault’s definition of heterotopia, but there is an

was at the beginning of the twentieth century. The works of Alois Riegl and Georg Simmel are the most important ones regarding this aspect and, together with the essays of Ernst Mach, set the base for Kubin’s personal meaning of the concept. The aesthetic category of *Stimmung*, however, fell into oblivion after World War II. This development of the concept can be found in depth in David Wellbery’s essay, “Stimmung,” published in *Historisches Wörterbuch Ästhetischer Grundbegriffe* in 2003.

⁹The first time that the concept *Stimmung* appears in Kubin’s works is during his first years in Munich (1889–1904). He writes about it in his diaries in relation to the publications of his writer friends in the satiric magazine, *Simplizissimus*. Some of Kubin’s most important references on that are those of Arthur Schnitzler’s *Anatol*, Kurt Martens’ *Die gehetzten Seelen*, and Richard von Schaukal’s *Intérieurs aus dem Leben der Zwanzigjährigen* (*Träumer als Lebenszeit* 114). However, it is in *The Other Side* that Kubin first shows how important the concept of *Stimmung* is for him. The first chapter of the novel describes a world where all his inhabitants “dwelled” in moods. The translation in English is not as precise as the German one, but it sheds some light to this argument by saying: “The word that probably comes closer to describe the core of our world is ‘mood’” (*The Other Side* 16), thus referring to *Stimmung* in the original. In this sense, for Alfred Kubin the “core” of the dream world, as well as the real world, is *Stimmung*—an aspect that we can further find in other writings such as *Über mein Traumerleben* (*Concerning my Dream Experiences*) of 1922.

¹⁰These words come from Kubin’s diary entry for December 11th 1923 (qtd. in *Träumer als Lebenszeit* 115). The original in German goes as follows: “Manchmal kömmt es mir durch den Kopf: Stimmung ist alles. Sie will der Gott im Busen – und sie ist der Erinnerungsbalsam – ja der Sinn der Überwunders – wo die Seele im Körper flattert wie ein gefangener Vogel.”

aspect that Kubin considers which does not appear in Foucault's essay: the consideration of dreams as another typology of space (Sola 292). Based on Kubin's writings and drawings, dreams possess de facto a spatiality—they are creators and organizers of the perceived and experienced space; they help in shaping our inner geographies (our internal landscapes) while multiplying spatial and temporal dimensions through their relations with memory, myths, and folklore in a very similar way to how Foucault describes heterotopias (24). Thus, dreams are not only a way in which space is perceived, but also a way of constructing it. Kubin transfers this way of constructing space through dreams to his narrative and drawings, finding a whole series of scenarios and spaces through which ghostly figures from the artist's memories, fairytales, mythology, and popular legends parade.

It is unthinkable to talk about Kubin without mentioning the vitality of dreams, which are the backbone of his entire work. Through his writings, specifically the novel *The Other Side* (1909) and the essay "Über mein Traumerleben" ("Concerning my Dream Experiences") (1922), Kubin introduces valuable testimonies about his conception of creativity and the different imaginative processes linked to dreams. For Kubin, there is no clear division between daydreaming and night-dreaming. In his artistic procedure he unites the two oneiric moments: he abandons himself to the uncontrolled unconscious in his nocturnal dream episodes to later pass the resulting images of this process through the filter of consciousness in a daydreaming-like state, using his own body and mind as an instrument to measure, organize, and finally translate them to paper (van Zon 144). Art and literature are the dimensions in which Kubin amalgamates his inner universe by using symbols and images coming both from his dreams and his past experiences. This is similar to what Wolfdietrich Ratsch writes about the disintegration of the boundaries between literature and art, since literature is capable of re-establishing the relationship between the fractured realities of image and word in order to turn this union into a symbol (qtd. in van Zon 60).

When awakening, often only traces of [my dreams] remain in the memory; these debris and scraps are then all one can hold on to. Let us consider the dream as a picture; as it is composed, so I wanted to draw consciously as an artist, and I only found great satisfaction when I decided to put together these delicately emerging fragments in such a way that they resulted a whole. The hardly determinable laws of dream now became more and more palpable and tangible to my deepened sensuality—turned away from the day—by means of representation.¹¹ (*The Other Side* 7)

Dream and reality carry equal weight and are equally important to Kubin, who finds both categories perfectly interchangeable. However, he sees himself as a dweller of the space between these two realities, carrying what he refers to as a "hermaphroditic existence" (*Aus meiner Werkstatt* 55–60). This middle ground where Kubin dwells is the same territory of art, literature, and fantasy, which is why Kubin, when writing about

¹¹Original in German: "Beim Erwachen bleiben oft nur Spuren davon [meine Träume] im Gedächtnis haften; diese Trümmer und Fetzen sind dann alles, woran man sich halten kann. Betrachten wir den Traum als Bild; so wie er komponiert, so wollte ich wissend als Künstler zeichnen und fand erst größere Vefriedigung, als ich mich entschloß, die zart auftauchenden Fragmente so zausammenzufügen, daß sie ein Ganzes ergaben. Die kaum bestimmbaren Gesetze wurden nun meiner dem Tag abgewandten vertiefen Sinnlichkeit immer fühlbarer und faßbarer und endlich Mittel zur Darstellung."

himself and his life, often fantasizes and elaborates upon all kinds of masks that prevent us from seeing where the person ends and the character begins. Dreams, however, have a more significant role for Kubin who sees them as “mediators” between the primordial *image* and his works of art. It is located between the void and the being (following Salomo Friedländer/Mynona’s philosophy), between life and death, and between past and present as a fracture of linear temporality (Friedländer 509).¹² The conjunction of all these binaries within the spaces in which the artist dwells is a key element in order to better understand the configuration of Kubin’s landscapes and fantastic scenarios present in both his graphic and literary works (*Träumer als Lebenszeit* 109).

Philipp H. Rhein, in *The Verbal and Visual Art of Alfred Kubin*, discusses dream as a “turning point” (23) between these two realities, but most importantly between the *image* and the work of art. Like dreams, art is also a constant state of becoming, a process of self-awareness which can be related with Carl Gustav Jung’s principle of individuation (*Les rêves* 210). The limits of consciousness in these kinds of artistic expressions force the artist to enter into a dream-state and the work of art explores this dream-state and materializes as the dreamer’s vision. This process, however, calls for its own end. The creation that materialises in the artist’s mind in this process is destined to disappear and return to nothing. Thus, the route leads from nothingness to dream, from dream to materialization, and from materialization to nothingness again that is inscribed in a sort of “endless cycle”—one of the most recurrent themes in Kubinian imagery. A specific paragraph in *The Other Side* elucidates this:

The world they created by their imagination had to be wrested from the void and then serve as a base from which to conquer the void. The void was unyielding and resisted, but the imagination started to hum and buzz, shapes, sounds, colours, smells emerged in all their variety and the world was there. But the void returned to eat up all creation, the world turned dull and pale, life felt silent, rusted away, disintegrated, was dead once more, a lifeless void. Then it all started from the beginning again. (136)

This reflection, based on the concept of opposition, is present throughout the novel. From this allegorical formula arise sequences of images that belong simultaneously both to reality and to the realm of the supernatural, which Kubin connects with the mechanisms of his imagination. The picture resulting from this process can be understood as a protean entity in which each image and passage in the novel constitutes a true commotion that affects the very entrails of the soul and body of both the author-character and the reader. This commotion leads us directly to the philosophy of Ludwig Klages for whom the experience of the human being lies in the *pathos*¹³ (Klages 8). The subject, the “I,” becomes a patient body, and suffering therefore becomes the most relevant aspect of life.

¹²As other great philosophers who follow German Idealism, Salomo Friedländer understands reality as something subject to oscillations between two extremes (the One and the Many, life and death, being and the void, etc.). Friedländer’s writings go a step further, as he proposes a nexus between the opposites situated in a kind of “creative nothingness.” For him, the artist had to acquire the attitude of “indifference” in order to experience this “creative nothingness” and the unity of the opposites and, hence, reach the fundamental creative dimension of reality (27). Both Kubin and Friedländer understand creativity as something coming from the private realm of imagination and the unconscious, in a personal (and indifferent) approach of the artist to his work and to the world around him.

¹³*Pathos*, translated from Greek as “suffering” and “experience,” appealing to emotion.

Pain and anguish have, in Klages' philosophy, a quasi-messianic and heroic tinge, finding in the myth of Prometheus the representation par excellence of this *pathos*, due to his longing to achieve something that, once achieved, triggers the eternal punishment of the gods. Drawing from Klages' insight, it can be argued that Kubin's works show that both the author and the viewer "suffer" these images produced by imagination, dreams, and art. At the same time, with the materialization of these images and forms, they suffer from the fatalistic fate that awaits them. According to this argument, some researchers such as Peter Cersowsky see a certain parallelism between the Klagesian Prometheus and the character of Klaus Patera in *The Other Side*—the master and creator of the Dream Realm, who is predestined to fail in his endeavor to maintain this place intact out of the reach of time and Modernity (Cersowsky 81).

Comparing the novel with a later essay from 1932, entitled "Fragment eines Weltbildes" ("Fragment of a World's Vision"),¹⁴ it is possible to draw some parallelism between the role of Kubin as a creator and the role of Klaus Patera as the *demiurge* of the Dream Realm, resulting in a complex usage of the *Doppelgänger* figure (Cersowsky 82). Kubin's persona is doubly present in the novel: on the one hand as protagonist and narrator and, on the other hand, as a reflection of the *demiurge* Klaus Patera (Sola 143). In "Fragment of a World's Vision," Kubin writes that the individual is like an adventurer, whose activity as a creator consists in giving meaning to every word, melody, and image in its widest sense. The artist's creations thus become the fruition of the conjunction of Chaos and Being—two poles of the same reality as void and creation in *The Other Side*; the creator, the true artist, is the one who, watching over the void of his unconscious, examines and arranges the forms, giving shape to all kinds of symbolic constructions (*Aus meiner Werkstatt* 35). The idea of observing the limits of the unconscious is closely linked to what Kubin means by "dreaming," an activity in which his creative process is rooted. Gabrielle van Zon argues that the subject of Alfred Kubin's art is always "the duplicity of experiences," seeing "the individual as a being of sovereignty who partook of both the logical and the mysterious part of existence" (70).

It is common to see Alfred Kubin reflected in his own creations,¹⁵ giving shape to an intricate game of mirrors and reflections that matches what Tzvetan Todorov writes in his 1971 text, *Poétique de la prose (The Poetics of Prose)*, about the phenomena that he calls the "narrative-men" or *homes-récit* (30), as well as André Gide's concept of *mise-en-abyme* or Lucien Dällenbach's "mirror in the text." Todorov writes about these "narrative-men" (30) as those authors whose artistic or literary works of fiction are difficult to separate from their real life. The line between the author and character then is blurred, and in Kubin's case, this is not an uncommon practice. His diaries, texts, and drawings are full of references to past experiences, to landscapes from his childhood or the surroundings of his house in Zwickledt am Inn, making it difficult to discern how much of the text of his autobiographies¹⁶ is real and how much is fictional—which also applies to the rest of his works. This way of self-referencing, and therefore creating a

¹⁴This essay is also included in the collection of Kubin's works *Aus meiner Werkstatt* (29–38).

¹⁵A close look at the illustrations of the novel, *The Other Side*, reveals the figure of the protagonist is a self-portrait of the artist. Similarly, Kubin's self-portraits are everywhere in his drawings and lithographs, as well as in his diaries and letters. The short texts of the early Munich period (1898–1904) also feature characters named after their author or with a "K.," in a similar style to that of other authors of the time.

¹⁶All of Kubin's autobiographies are collected in chronological order in *Aus meinem Leben* (1974).

distorted reflection of the author within his work, coincides with the premises of Dällenbach, who states that any enclave that bears a resemblance to the work it contains (and vice versa) is *mise-en-abyme* (16), a French expression first introduced by André Gide, that designates an infinitely recurring sequence within a work or, in other words, a story within a story.

A good example of *mise-en-abyme* in Kubin's work is his already cited novel, *The Other Side*, in which the reader can find past impressions and anecdotes of the artists as well as scenarios and characters coming from the author's real life. However, this does not happen in a completely true sense. The filter of the dismal and murky atmosphere of the dream state is present in every mundane representation, hindering the final composition with a sense of decadence. The same happens with the main character of the novel. The difference between character and persona in Kubin's writings and drawings is not always easy to discern, since a dream-like *Doppelgänger* is always lurking behind the narratives of his own creations; thus, a sense of uncanniness develops throughout Kubin's fictional worlds. In this creativity, he seeks some kind of inner relief, but far from reconciling with his own fate, Kubin creates a double "hermaphroditic life" or *Zwitterleben* (van Zon 44) that he compares with the dream life—a life as real as the one happening when he was awake. According to this "hermaphroditic" existence, Kubin always sets himself between two different spheres of consciousness, the same two spheres in which the creation of forms and the search of the artistic image operates. Thus, the person, the character, and the creative process—where dreams and imagination intervene—are mixed together, giving rise to a correlation in which one thing is the product of the other, and vice versa. This correlation is reminiscent of the questions that Henry James asks himself about literary characters in *The Art of Fiction*: "what is character but the determination of incident? What is incident but the illustration of character? What is either a picture or a novel that is *not* of character? What else do we seek in it and find in it?" (qtd. in Todorov 33).

In this regard, Arthur Schröder argues that *The Other Side* is nothing but a "symbolic narrative of a graphic artist who, by means of a dream, descends into the depths of his subconscious mind and returns to consciousness [...] with [...] a new insight into the creative process and a new graphic style" (142). Indeed, the novel is a turning point in Alfred Kubin's career in many senses, but what only few researchers have pointed out is that this novel also signals a turning point in Kubin's understanding of multiplicity of space in relation to the concept of *Stimmung* (Cersowsky 92). His interest in *Stimmung* is clearly based on Romantic premises, where landscape resonates the states of the soul (Thomas et al. 448). This transcendental reading of *Stimmung* overlaps with the importance that Kubin finds in the direct experience of forms and images. Thus, Kubin argues that we always approach what we see from an inner, affective, and spiritual inclination—although not all the value of these forms and images lies solely in the subjective or the unconscious (Sola 230). In *The Other Side*, *Stimmung* is expressed both in the way the inhabitants of the city of Pearl live, and also in the way the city is described.¹⁷ The city seems to be stuck in time and filled with a "strong aversion to all

¹⁷Experts like Annegret Hoberg, Andreas Geyer, and Heiz Lippuner argue about the origins of the different monuments and geographical aspects displayed in Pearl and they convey that a big part of them comes from Alfred Kubin's memories. There are scenarios from Munich, Zell am See, Salzburg, and Litoměřice (Kubin's homeland) that are easy to identify in the streets of Pearl.

kinds of progress" (*The Other Side* 15)—a progress that also refers to temporal progression. Beginning with his novel, Kubin's works—both written and drawn—started to play with the connection between space and time, anticipating Foucault's concepts of heterotopia and heterochrony.

In his essay, "Of Other Spaces," Foucault explains different types of heterotopias. Connecting with the idea of *mise-en-abyme*, the mirror is one of the examples given by Foucault to better explain the concept of these spaces. However, heterotopias become more complex when they carry intersections of space and time (Sudradjat 30). This is what Foucault calls heterochrony. Heterochronies are more complex and complete heterotopias, as they are "more fleeting, transitory, and precarious spaces of time" (30), functioning in a similar way to dreams, and thus breaking with the traditional experience of space and temporality in different ways. Foucault writes about the accumulation of time in concrete spaces such as museums or archives, but the sense of heterochrony can also be found in places with a great memorial ground. Foucault points out that cemeteries are a good example of where this happens, as there is an accumulation of bodies anchored in space, time, and memory while there is a need for a specific space to gather them. Kubinian worlds create a rip in the linearity of time and space as they come straight from the artist's dream experience. In these worlds, he also plays with the images and their meanings, making everything perceived something fantastical. These spaces are filled with memories, dreams, and images coming from his personal experience together with folklore and fairytales.

Kubin's work is devoted to break with the linear idea of time through the insertion of memory and dreams within his compositions. Jung found a good example of the works of the individual unconsciousness in *The Other Side*, as it is based in the author's own dreams and imaginary (Stevenson 35–36). However, this affirmation can be tricky, as this "example of the individual unconsciousness" does not mean that the novel follows what Jung calls "process of individuation." The concept of "individuation" can be found in several of Jung's essays, but the most commonly referred to is his 1926 essay, "The Relations between the Ego and the Unconscious." According to Jung, the process of individuation consists of becoming a self-realized individual by recognizing one's uniqueness. Nevertheless, this self-realization is far from an ego-centered perception. As "the most complete expression of individuality," psyche for Jung embraces both the conscious and the unconscious (qtd. in Schlamm 866). Andreas Geyer challenges this argument and writes that the way in which Kubin understands dreams and the imaginary, he could not have followed this Jungian idea of "individual unconsciousness." Kubin sees dreams as a yoke for individuality: our dreams carry with them our ancestor's dreams, understanding the word "collective" from Jung's "collective unconscious" as a burden more than as a grounding (*Les rêves* 210). In this sense, Kubin is cautious of dissecting the "individual" from all that surrounds him, even though he thinks that everything experienced is always and exclusively personal:

The most important thing remains that one does not lose the basic feeling: *everything that can be experienced is experienced exclusively as personal*. [...] But we should be careful not to dissect the individual phenomena, for example, according to some interesting moral or psychologizing system in order to get

behind the secret of their interpretability.¹⁸ (*Aus meiner Werkstatt* 8; emphasis in the original)

This is especially visible in *The Other Side*. Although it speaks of an individual dream (of the protagonist's experience), the scenario in which he moves seems to be anchored in the past, like a "sanctuary for those who are unhappy with modern civilisation" (*The Other Side* 15) where images and myths of the collective imaginary collide. This aspect can lead to confusion, for Kubin defends the individuality of the dreamer and his dream (as Jung presents it), this dream is made up of fragments of what the dreamer perceives, reads, and experiences in his waking life—where memories, stories, and myths from the past come into play. In *The Other Side*, for instance, there are several narratives coming from the history of literature that are parallelly developed with the protagonist's story. For example, the murder of the two brothers who own the mill in the city of Pearl leads us to Cain and Abel; the rebellion of Herkules Bell against Klaus Patera reminds us of Euripides' *The Bacchae*; the female figure of Melitta Lampenbogen seems to give a twist to Salome's story. The same goes for the scenery where we find elements that respond to the artist's childhood memories—such as the clock tower or the mill (Hoberg 120)—and other elements that appeal to the imaginary of what is understood as a city in Euro-Western terms: Pearl has a castle, a temple, a plaza, a theater, and a railroad station; however, the suburbs of Pearl present a scenery more alike to eastern fairytales and myths.

Landscape becomes one of the most important and interesting aspect of Kubin's work considering how waking perceptions affect his writings and drawings. In 1907, just before starting work on his novel, Kubin left his busy life of Munich and replaced it with the isolated borderland of Zwickledt am Inn, where he bought a castle also known as "his Arch," in which he dwelled with his wife, Hedwig, until the very end of his life. His close relation with landscape in Zwickledt triggers other reflections about nature in the background of his dreams and writings. Kubin's texts usually mention the sensations transmitted by landscape—from his diaries written in 1907 on a trip to the Dalmatian coast through the letters he wrote from Zwickledt to his friend, the architect and writer, Fritz von Herzmanovsky-Orlando, and to the autobiographies and diaries in a later stage of his life.¹⁹ These impressions are also reflected in some of his most important collections of drawings, like the lithographs from the 1922 portfolio called *Traumland* (*Dreamland*) and the ones from 1951, *Phantasien im Böhmerwald* (*Phantasy in the Bohemian Forest*).

Throughout Kubin's writings, it is possible to perceive an increasing attention to nature over cities. In case where cities gain some kind of relevance, they do it in a

¹⁸Original in German: "Das wichtigste bleibt dabei, daß man das Urgefühl nicht verliert: *alles Erlebbares wird ausschließlich als ein persönliches erlebt*. [...] Die einzelnen Erscheinungen werden wir uns aberhüten zu zergliedern etwa nach irgendeinem interessanten moralischen oder psychologisierenden System, um hinter das Geheimnis ihrer Deutbarkeit zu kommen."

¹⁹We can find a beautiful example of this in a letter written on May 6th 1925 to his friends, Reinhold and Hanne Koepfel, where Kubin writes: "The Forest [...] for me it lies even closer and more intimate than my homeland, the Salzburg Alps. I would like to see this marvel one day after another, both beside you and alone." Original in German: "Der Wald [...], mir noch weit intimer und näher liegend als die Erhabenheit meiner Heimat, die Alpen Salzburgs. Ich möchte diese Wunder alle noch oft und oft sehen, auch an Ihrer Seite, wie allein" (qtd. in Boll 44).

mnemonic way, that is, by appealing to the author's memories and consciousness. In this sense, the essays, "Aus halbvergessene Lande" ("From a half-forgotten Land") from 1926 (*Aus meiner Werkstatt* 19-24) and "Besuch in der Heimat" ("A visit to Homeland") from 1928 (*Aus meinen Leben* 179-184), stand out, giving clues about the construction of the imaginary city of Pearl. In both texts, Kubin traces an approach to space and landscape from a totally intuitive point of view, passing through different places that awakened in him a sinister sensation of *déjà vu*—a sensation of having contemplated them perhaps for the first time a long time ago: "And then, a clear feeling told me: You have absorbed all of this before! Was I still awake at all then? I felt like I had been changed! Completely surrendered to this magic of images long thought to have vanished from memory, I felt myself again quietly aroused by them in an indescribable way"²⁰ (*Aus meinen Leben* 182-183). The encounter with landscape here becomes almost totemic. In both texts, we see how Kubin feels: as if he was walking through the scenery of a fairytale. This may have been motivated by his strong link with his childhood, found in both the places featured in the essays: the region of Dalmatia and the Bohemian city of Litoměřice. The link with the Dalmatian landscape came from Theodor Schiff's illustrated book *Aus Halbvergessene Lande* (1875)—of which Kubin's text is homonymous—a present from Kubin's father when he was still a child, and one of the most important books that Kubin treasured. Litoměřice was Kubin's place of birth and, despite having spent only the early years of his life there, he found a kind of phantasmagoric link with it. There are traces of Pearl in both the Dalmatian coast and Litoměřice (Hoberg 120), as Kubin explains in his writings. However, he claims that this must have been something out of the unconscious, out of a primordial link that memory has with the places we dwell in and with the places we imagine, as we do with the fantastic forests of tales and legends. His arrival in Zwickledt after some years living in Munich also awakened this bond that Kubin felt with nature and with the popular imaginary of the forest.

After publishing *The Other Side* and experiencing World War I, Kubin's drawings became more and more narrative and full of symbols, increasingly showing how landscape around the village of Zwickledt inspired and fed his imagination. This is especially clear in the portfolios of lithographs that he published after the novel, which mark the transition from the urban imaginary of Pearl to the encounter and fascination with the Bohemian Forest. The bond between Kubin and his space became so important that Wolfgang Schneditz, in the foreword of Kubin's last portfolio from 1952, *Der Tümpel von Zwickledt* (*The Swamp of Zwickledt*), comments that the representation of village of Zwickledt and its surroundings are just another side of Kubin's self-portrait (qtd. in *Tümpel von Zwickledt* 5).

Landscape becomes Kubin's reflection of his inner self. It is conceived as a mirror of his soul, a representation of the *Stimmung* in which a series of characters and symbols express the author's fears, longings, and feelings (Sola 513). After the publishing of *The Other Side*, his drawings gain a more introspective nuance yet showing more elements of

²⁰Original in German: "Und dann doch sagte mir ein deutliches Gefühl: Das hast du alles schon einmal in dich aufgenommen! War ich denn überhaupt noch wach? Ich fühlte mich wie verwandelt! Völlig hingegen an diesen Zauber längst dem Gedächtnis entsunken geglaubter Bilder, spüre ich mich wieder von diesen auf unbeschreibliche Art leise erregt."

his everyday life.²¹ This allows the observer to locate these scenes in real spaces like, for example, the steep profile of the Alps, the Inn River that flows behind the village of Zwickledt, on the border between Austria and Germany, the castle that Kubin lived in, or the Waldhäuser pass, a forest area not far from Zwickledt, where the artists Hanne and Reinhold Koeppel established an artist community in which Kubin also participated. As Kubin approached old age, his interest in fairytales and folk legends of the Upper Austrian and Bohemian region increased, which is noticeable in the drawings and memories which display characters such as witches, mermaids, goblins, vampires, the Pied Piper of Hamelin, Rübezahl,²² and Perchta²³ in the environs of his own house. At the same time, in these artistic and fantastic spaces of Kubin's drawings and writings, Kubin depicts figures that, by paying attention to the stories of his autobiographies and to his brief fantastic tales, can be identified with real people from the artist's memories.²⁴ In these works, the significance continually shifts between the landscape to the characters, finding that the interpretative and affective power ultimately lays in the observers' point of view. Through the contemplation of the relations between the characters in these works with the environment in which they move, Kubin seeks to convey the feelings and sensations that he himself experienced with landscape, bringing the communicative aspect of *Stimmung* into play here. Kubin found in the images of the collective imagination not only a container of meaning for his own thoughts, but also a tool to communicate them easier.

What can be observed from Kubin's artistic and literary evolution after the publication of *The Other Side*, is that his commitment to telling stories and to telling his own truth, became increasingly clear, in both his writing and drawing. As Kubin wrote in the 1939 text, *Der Zeichner (The Draughtsman)*²⁵:

Even though I have always been considered a good narrator, I have always been rougher about putting memories and thoughts into writing than about expressing them with the pen and the brush, which seems more natural to me in my actual

²¹This aspect can be seen especially clear in his portfolios, starting from *Sansara, ein Zyklus ohne Ende* (*Sansara, a neverending cycle*) in 1911, *Traumland (Dreamland)* in 1922, *Heimliche Welt (Secret World)* in 1927, *Am Rande des Lebens (On the Edge of Life)* in 1930, or *Abenteuer einer Zeichenpfeder (Adventures of a Drawing Quill)* in 1942 among others.

²²After illustrating Paul Wegener's tales about Rübezahl, a spirit from the Giant Mountains or Riesengebirge (located in the border between Poland and Germany), Kubin included the character and his imaginary in the compendium of his art, as a part of his personal *bestiarium*.

²³Perchta is a goddess from Alpine paganism that was said to roam the villages and the countryside in winter, entering the houses during the Twelve Nights of Christmas or *Rauhnächte*. In Kubin's works, Perchta is often related with other female figures of German folklore, especially after the Christianization of the territory, such as *Frau Welt* or *Frau Hölle*, also present in Jacob Grimm's *German Mythology* (Sola 403).

²⁴A common figure in Kubin's drawings is that of the boatman. This boatman often appears as Charon or as a figure who fights with sea monsters or pulls corpses from the depths of the water. In *Aus meinen Leben*, Kubin's autobiography, he talks about his fascination with corpses and how this came from his early childhood in Zell am See, where he liked to play and talk with the fisherman, Hölzl—an old man who sailed the waters of the village lake and often returned to land with the corpse of a suicidal person immolated in the waters (13).

²⁵See *Aus meiner Werkstatt* pp. 55–60.

profession as a draughtsman. [...] For I hope that my writing will reveal the inner truth as well as my drawing.²⁶ (*Aus meiner Werkstatt* 191–192)

This can also be seen in how more and more of Kubin's works that deal with the nature of his dreams come closer to a hybrid form that lies between a book and a portfolio. The images that Kubin captures in these works portray the figures of his own past as a child and, at the same time, of his present as an adult. Kubin mixes the spaces of his childhood with the spaces of his daily life in a sort of timeless heterotopia where several layers of stories and meanings are superimposed. Foucault describes this as the "third principle" of heterotopia, saying that it juxtaposes "in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible" and that "heterotopias are most often linked to slices in time" (25–26). Kubinian imaginary worlds are "on the other side," where the sense of time is vague²⁷ and references from many different places are mixed in the same scenery. Some good examples of this are found in the 1911 portfolio, *Sansara. Ein Zyklus ohne Ende* (*Sansara, a neverending Cycle*), which, still using themes and characters from *The Other Side*, speaks about the idea of the eternal return in images that incite the circular movement from one side to the other of the Kubinian spectrum: from city to nature, from life to death, from dream to reality, etc. Following the *Sansara* portfolio, there was *Traumland* (*Dreamland*), finally published in 1922.²⁸ This piece is especially interesting because, although it was published only as two issues of eleven drawings each, it was preceded by a series of essays and stories about Kubin's dreams experiences, among which was the aforementioned "Concerning my Dream Experiences." *Traumland* marks a profound impasse in Kubin's spatial imaginary, for it speaks about the world of dreams as an inhabitable space—a space that also bears a strong parallelism with the landscapes of his past and present.

Rauhnacht (translated both as *Rough Night* or *Twelfth Night*) (1925) takes Kubin a little further in achieving a hybrid between children's storybooks and a portfolio of drawings. This leporello,²⁹ composed of 13 plates, shows different scenes linked together through landscape, whose contemplation links two different characters that observe it—a bourgeois gentleman in a modern city and an old woman coming out of a cabin in the woods. This work masterfully presents a passage from the modern city to the forest, developing at the midpoint of this polarity a whole series of scenes and characters that draw deeply from German folklore and are inspired by the parade of different spirits that takes place during the Twelve Nights of Christmas or *Rauhnächte*. The images that are assimilated in the different plates of the leporello are inspired by the feverish visions that Kubin experienced during a night—this idea of being awake during a stormy night relates the name of Kubin's work to the time of the Twelve Nights of Christmas, which, in

²⁶Original in German: "Galt ich auch stets als gutter Erzähler, so wurde mir doch das schriftliche Festlegen von Erinnerungen und Gedanken jederzeit saurer als die mir natürlicher scheinende Äußerung mit Stift und Pinsel in meinem eigentlichen Beruf als Zeichner. [...] Denn ich hoffe, daß meine schriftliche Gestaltung die innere Wahrheit ebenso erkennen läßt wie meine Zeichnungen."

²⁷Some drawings for the satirical magazine *Simplicissimus*, as well as some plates from the *Sansara* portfolio, present sceneries where images of contemporary technology (such as cars, cameras, etc.) coexist with characters dressed as medieval or romantic period, and with figurines like genies or chimerical animals that transport the observer to a past and fantastical period.

²⁸Although the date of publishing is 1922, Kubin was working on the plates of this portfolio since 1908, as found in a letter to his friend, the architect and writer, Fritz von Herzmanovsky-Orlando (Klein 11).

²⁹Book format printed on a large continuous sheet that folds several times in the form of an accordion.

southern Germany and northern Austria, is characterized by the ghostly parade of ancestral specters that come out of the forests to stroll through the streets of the villages in southern Germany and northern Austria. The narrative of the images dives deeply into folklore to culminate in, what seems to be, Kubin's return to the written word: the portfolio *Phantasien im Böhmerwald* (*Phantasy in the Bohemian Forest*), published in 1951.

The magical and gloomy aura of the Bohemian Forest kept Kubin busy for decades, especially after the experience of World War II and the subsequent disenchantment with humanity and politics, causing him to seek spiritual refuge in the depths of the forest. Kubin describes the Forest of Bohemia as a sort of dream realm and a source and object of fantastic projections. In *Phantasy in the Bohemian Forest*, the written word and drawn line are closely related. In its foreword, Kubin describes this landscape as the real homeland of his soul and also as the place where all the spices of his soul finally found grounding (*Phantasien* 8). The Bohemian Forest is described here as the place where the unbelievable flows in the wind, fog, and smoke. It is where luck and restlessness stream with each other growing into dream-like figures and becoming the dream themselves. Through the eighteen plates of this portfolio, which present text and images together, Kubin proposes a journey by foot across the forest, paying attention to certain landscape landmarks such as the vampire's house or the hunters' path. This work, despite looking like an illustrated booklet of the forest and its legends, displays a journey through Kubin's inner imaginary, through the landscape of his soul. It is striking to observe how this journey through Kubin's inner landscape coincides with a period of global crisis as significant as World War II, in a similar way to how the novel *The Other Side* and the subsequent portfolio *Sansara* coincide with the moment of escalating tension prior to World War I. This leads us to find a relation between the experience of traumatic moments within history and the search for a balm in inner imaginaries that, coincidentally, are also linked to collective history, folktales, and legends that offer a kind of escapism from rough moments in a similar way to what happens when we open our eyes to wake up from a nightmare.

"Everything is like a dream," claims Kubin in his diary in 1924 (qtd. in *Träumer als Lebenszeit* 107), and all his works are the result of his continuous reflection upon himself, and the way in which he perceives the world—both the external and the inner ones—where dreams play a significant role, and wherein he feels like sliding through the cosmos (*Träumer als Lebenszeit* 107). Sliding or wrestling with the cosmos, or even the void, and to later conquer them by creating shapes, words, and images is often described by Kubin himself as a sinking into the tangled mess of dreams and self-cognition. The depiction of imaginary cities in Kubin's dreams and drawings often ascribe the image of a doomed entity destined to sink. The chaotic structures of these dream narratives, comparable to the chaos and absurdity of the war period which he experienced, always come to their end by fading away. This idea of fading away parallels in Kubin's return to nature, the world of tales and legends, as his oneiric portrayal of these landscapes serves as a mirror for mankind which, he finds, is doomed to disappear and fade away.



Works Cited

- Assmann, Peter, and Annegret Hoberg. *Alfred Kubin, das lithographische Werk*. Oberösterreichische Landesgalerie & Hirer Verlag, 1999.
- Boll, Walter. *Die Wilde Rast. Alfred Kubin in Waldhäuser. Briefe an Reinhold und Hanne Koepfel*. Nymphenburger, 1972.
- Brunn, Clemens. *Der Ausweg ins Unwirkliche: Fiktion und Weltmodel bei Paul Scheerbarth und Alfred Kubin*. Igel, 2010.
- Cersowsky, Peter. *Phantastische Literatur im ersten viertel des 20. Jahrhunderts: Untersuchungen zum Strukturwandel des Genres, seinen geistesgeschichtlichen Voraussetzungen und zur Tradition der „schwarzen Romantik“ insbesondere bei Gustav Meyrink, Alfred Kubin, Franz Kafka*. Wilhelm Fink, 1989.
- Dällenbach, Lucien. *The Mirror in the Text*. Translated by E. Hughes and J. Whiteley, U of Chicago P, 1987.
- Foucault, Michel. "Of Other Spaces." *Diacritics*, vol. 16, no. 1, 1986, pp. 22–27.
- Friedländer, Salomo. *Schöpferische Indifferenz: Gesammelte Prosa*, edited by Detlef Thiel, Waitawhile, 2009.
- Geyer, Andreas. *Alfred Kubin. Träumer als Lebenszeit*. Böhlau, 1995.
- . "Les rêves et l'Empire du Rêve." *Revue Europe. Karl Kraus – Alfred Kubin*, no. 1021, 2014, pp. 198–213.
- Gide, André. *Journals: 1889-1913*. Translated by Justin O'Brien, U of Illinois P, 2000.
- Hewig, Anneliese. *Phantastische Wirklichkeit. Kubins 'Die andere Seite.'* Wilhelm Fink, 1967.
- Hoberg, Annegret, et al. *Alfred Kubin 1877-1959*. Städtische Galerie Lenbachhaus, 1991.
- . *Alfred Kubin. Drawings 1897-1909*. Neue Galerie & Prestel Publishing, 2008.
- . "Souvenirs d'un pays à moitié oublié." *Revue Europe. Karl Kraus – Alfred Kubin*, no. 1021, 2014, pp. 301–317.
- Jung, Carl Gustav, and Craig E. Stevenson. *On Psychological and Visionary Art: Notes of C.G. Jung on Nerval's Aurélia*. Princeton UP, 2015.
- . "The Relation between the Ego and the Unconscious." *Two essays on Analytical Psychology*. Translated by R. F.C. Hull. Routledge, 1966, pp. 123–227.
- Klages, Ludwig. *Cosmogonic Reflections: Selected Aphorisms from Ludwig Klages*. Arktos, 2015.
- Klein, Michael. *Fritz von Herzmanovsky-Orlando. Die Briefwechsel mit Alfred Kubin 1903 bis 1952*. Residenz Verlag, 1983.
- Kubin, Alfred. *Aus meinem Leben: gesammelte Prosa*. Spangenberg, 1974.
- . *Aus meiner Werkstatt: gesammelte Prosa*. Nymphenburger Verlag, 1973.
- . *The Life and Art of Alfred Kubin*. Translated by Gregor Sebba, Dover, 2017.
- . *Mein Traumwelt / Traumland*. Gurlitt, 1922.
- . *The Other Side*. Translated by Mike Mitchell. Dedalus, 2017.

- . *Phantasien im Böhmerwald*. Josef Heindl, Schärding, 1951.
- . *Rauhnacht*. Volksverband der Bücherfreunde, 1925.
- . *Sansara. Ein Zyklus ohne Ende. In einer Auswahl vor vierzig Blättern*. Georg Müller, 1911.
- . *Der Tümpel von Zwickledt*. Österreichische Staatsdruckerei, 1952.
- Lippuner, Heinz. *Alfred Kubins Roman Die Andere Seite*. A. Francke Verlag, 1977.
- Petriconi, Hellmuth. *Das Reich des Untergangs; Bemerken über ein mythologisches Thema*. Hoffman und Campe, 1958.
- Raabe, Paul. *Alfred Kubin. Leben. Werk. Wirkung*. Rohwolt, 1957.
- Rhein, Philipp H. *The Verbal and Visual Art of Alfred Kubin*. Ariadne Press, 1989.
- Schlamm, Leon. "Individuation." *Encyclopedia of Psychology and Religion*, edited by David A. Leeming, Springer, 2014.
- Schröder, Richard A. *Alfred Kubin's Die andere Seite: A Study in the Cross-fertilization of Literature and the Graphic Arts*. Indiana UP, 1970.
- Sola, Rocío. *El País de los Sueños de Alfred Kubin. Cartografías del paisaje interior del artista*. Universidad Pompeu Fabra, 2020.
- Sudradjat, Iwan. "Foucault, the Other Spaces and Human Behaviour." *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, no. 36, 2012, pp. 28–34.
- Thomas, Kerstin, et al. *Stimmung. Ästhetische Kategorie und künstlerische Praxis*. Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2010.
- . "Stimmung in der Malerei. Zu einigen Bildern Georges Seurats." *Pathos, Affekt, Gefühl. Die Emotionen in den Künsten*, edited by Klaus Herding and Bernhard Stumpfhaus. De Gruyter, 2004.
- Todorov, Tzvetan. *The Poetics of Prose*. Translated by Richard Howard, Cornell UP, 1977.
- van Zon, Gabriele. *Word and Line: A Study of the Double Talent in Alfred Kubin and Fritz von Hermanovsky-Orlando*. Peter Lang, 1991.
- Wellbery, David. "Stimmung." "Memory, territory, moods." *new formations: a journal of culture/theory/politics*, vol. 93, 2018, pp. 6–45.