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As the world, and particularly India, reels under the effects of the devastating upsurge of COVID's second wave—compounding our awareness of the precariousness of life in the face of its mutating variants along with other natural disasters like world-wide floods, forest fires, and heatwaves which continue to unsettle and disorient our lives—all of us are slowly processing this significant rethinking of our modified ways of outlasting this dreaded pandemic. Plagued with the inadequacy of primary health infrastructure, we may have awakened towards our neglected realities but our uneasy disquiet, born out of constant foreboding this past year, makes us even more appreciative of the perseverance of those people who are struggling to mend broken lives. We, at *LLIDS*, join hands with individuals whose lives are scattered in the storm of our contemporary times, and engage with issues pertinent to humanity's singular plight, while dreaming of an inhabitable future.

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Deeksha Suri & Md. Faizan Moquim

Our current pandemic-hit reality interrogates all that we had taken for granted in terms of our reliability over the physical world and our response to it. The novelty and rapidity of the spread of the virus portends a complete disintegration of our supposed knowledge of the self and the sense of the world we inhabit, while it fundamentally gains over our vulnerabilities with relation to the environment. The state of affairs, far from being intelligible, allows us to rethink the relevance of literary spaces that are able to provide a reflective stance on the dimensions of social constructivism. In these trying circumstances, we invite all our readers to understand structured and unstructured formations of meaning within the contexts of aporia, apocalypse, and dystopia which have been the themes dealt with throughout the fourth Volume of *LLIDS*. Following this thought, our third Issue of this fourth Volume deals with *othered* narratives—the unseen, unspoken, and repressed aspects of our world—within the mode of Fantasy writings. While some believe in seeing things as they are, certain other voices of scepticism respond to the reality through visions of the fantastic that are gateways to renewed perceptions of the possible and the impossible. Operating on the cusp of the impossible, the unusual, and the strange, these fantastical narratives reimagine a way towards reconfiguring meaning when all existing attempts to theorize the sense of the world are blasted beyond comprehension.

Traditionally explored within the canon in the forms of analogy, satire, and allegory, fantasy writings showcase possibilities of reimagining our everyday reality through wide strategies of narration that have transformed the fantastic from being a marginally incorporated fragment within the narratives into an entire corpus of study itself. Creating a dialogue between the real and the fantastic, the known and the unknown, plural narratives of cultural and social assessment investigate the past and study the manifestations of an open-ended future. Such narratives, by way of worldmaking tropes, enable viable perspectives to spring from within the interstices of ossified frameworks of meaning-making. The recognition of historical constructedness in these narrative structures of the present clears ground for new constructions to emerge. The epistemological doubt, introduced through the fantastic in literature, is not a perennial subsuming of the unreal within the real; instead, the normative of fantasy narratives itself generates a space to apprehend the limitations of existing systems. Plurality of meanings within this semantically flexible space not only accounts for boundless possibilities *within* human experience, enabling us to break the limits of transformational possibilities of our worldview, but also certain absences thereof.

The formlessness of Fantasy, in contrast to more rigid genres within the canon, renders it counterintuitive to the unilateral representation of reality and mutates reality's reception within Fantasy by focusing on its narrative modes and techniques. The challenge mounted by these narrative strategies against the dominant political and

cultural interpretations of our epistemological reality, seep into various other genres while permitting Fantasy to lay its claim to represent the irrational, imaginary, mad, oneiric, magical, and other such transrealist combinations. Within the mindscape of both the author and the reader, these strategies of the othered domain carve out an unconventional mix of themes relevant to modern culture and identity even as they remain subsumed within the existential thematic of lived real experience. That is why, Fantasy's aesthetic promise lies in its potential to function either as a radical mode of critique of our society or, for writers like Lewis Carroll, Kafka, Italo Calvino, and Salman Rushdie, as a mechanism to examine ontological, epistemological, and ethical concerns.

Presenting doorways to alternate spatio-temporal worlds, this immersive world of Fantasy delineates imagined story-worlds to the readers, allowing them to suspend the normative understanding of everyday life as they engage with the suprasensible that transgresses their human dimension. This twin functionality of Fantasy—of being autonomous and yet related to the reader's world—stipulates a vantage point for the reader to assess the structures of society and think of alternate narratives of history and its numerous possibilities. A fantastic text is thereby fashioned as an interface that brings the reader in contact with possible worlds, beyond the limits of acceptable and experiential, while remaining convergent with the world of his experience. This fluidity in the canon of Fantasy stands in opposition to the sedimented modes of thought to hint at the crucial dimension of *what if* that draws attention to the urgency of responding to the contingency of the present in rethinking *what we fear* and *what we want*.

The modernization of the tropes of Fantasy, influenced by the poststructuralist and postmodern viewpoints, achieves a blurring of the disciplinary boundaries between fantasy literature and dystopic science fiction or post-apocalyptic fiction whose features both constitute and yet transcend the former. The protean nature of Fantasy therefore redefines the boundaries of its constituency by resisting all conceptual straitjackets. Its claim to extrapolated speculations opens new horizons of the possible/alternate worlds that are investigated through the aspects of futurity and rehabilitation within its narrative. Fundamentally connected with the capacity to desire and conjure captivating worlds, fantasy literature helps us develop new sensibilities to reorient our expectations from the individual self as well as the society.

Faced with unabated waves of coronavirus and its multiple variants—members of the editorial team as well as our contributors have borne the brunt of this scourge—imaginative resources at the disposal of Fantasy have become ever more pertinent in these precarious times to lay new foundations to the story of life here (and elsewhere). In the current Issue of *LLIDS*, Debjani Mukherjee's paper studies landscapes presented in Indian Cinema as *elsewheres*; the spaces introducing possibilities beyond their locatedness in social reality. Discussing the dynamics of psychogeography, it reflects upon the experience of cinema that moves the viewer through the mechanism of desire. Exploring the multiplex culture and the shift it has introduced in the forms of exhibition of landscapes, the paper uses *Shanghai* and *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara*, to develop a discourse on urban imaginary of a multiplex spectator. Our second paper explores a

crucial dimension of Fantasy in connection with dream experience in the works of Alfred Kubin, Rocio Sola's paper maps the contours of landscape as engendered through amalgamation of dream and reality. The fantastic character therein achieved in Kubin's works underline the trope of rupturing spatio-temporal linearity. Engaging with the idea of heterotopia, Sola's fresh take on the Kubin's life and works brings out how dream as a typology of space informs the structuring of perceptual landscape which in turn becomes an expression of the artist's inner self.

The primary intent behind the publication of each Issue of *LLIDS* is to promote scholarship on a subject of contemporary relevance. The dire adversities of the present circumstances make us appreciate the consistent willingness and persistence of the academic community to continue with this effort. With the vision of playing a significant part in promoting quality research, we extend our commitment, support, and regard to all the scholars who have contributed to *LLIDS*.

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Elsewheres of Desire: Indian Cinematic Landscapes as Spaces of Transition

Debjani Mukherjee | University of Auckland

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

Abstract | Contemporary Indian popular cinema has undergone a radical thematic and aesthetic shift with the arrival of the multiplex as a cinematic exhibition space. The multiplex first appeared in India in 1997, its spaces becoming entwined with the narrative of the urban transformation of India's metropolitan cities in the image of global urban spaces. The multiplex screen too has become an extension of this desire for transformation, its cinematic space charged with the frisson of an expanded geographical imagination. This psychogeography of an *elsewhere* that appears on multiplex screens thus opens up a spatial imaginary that is composite of a more expansive terrain of possibilities, enabling us to see where "we" are not. This paper examines two films, *Shanghai* (2012) and *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara (ZNMD)* (2011), exploring the contrasting ways in which they frame and narrativize their respective landscapes to unfold this desire of an *elsewhere*. *Shanghai* is set in the fictitious city of Bharat Nagar in contemporary India, its narrative revolving around the desire to rebuild Bharat Nagar into another Shanghai, while *ZNMD*, with its protagonists on a road trip, is set mostly in Spain. Shanghai and Spain may be real places with geographical markers, but they are also *elsewheres*, their locatedness in reality fueling their potency as topographies of the mind. This paper explores how the spaces of *Shanghai* and *ZNMD*—one desolate and marginal, and the other transfused with movement and vitality—are spaces of potentiality, functioning as doorways to the imagined, offering in their affective potency the opportunity of transformation.

Keywords | Indian Cinema, Exhibition Space, Multiplex Theatres, Film Exhibition, Cinematic Landscape, Globalization, Film Aesthetics, Liminality, Psychogeographical Imagination, Foucault, Heterotopia, Transformation, Consumerism

The multiplex has been complicit in the changing of the urban landscape by reclaiming urban space and actively involving itself in the erasure of old areas and landmarks, and through replacing old infrastructural and social arrangements. The multiplex screen too articulates a parallel experience of globalized urban modernity, as it pulsates with the energy of a new cinematic landscape. The “symbolic break from the past” that the multiplex architecturally initiates within the matrix of the urban landscape, with its bold angular lines defined against the urban skyline, making architecturally explicit that the old structural form of the city is being replaced with a new one, finds resonance in its screens (Athique and Hill 129). This is not just reflected in the material “break” in the transition from analogue to digital screens, with digital film copies and projectors replacing 35mm prints and analogue film projectors, but also in initiating a shift in the way that people go to the movies. In doing so, it has engineered a shift in the entire “psycho geography” of the spectatorial itinerary (Bruno 40). Cinema-going now takes place within a different set of material conditions and traversing them involves a negotiation of space of a different exhibition site. It is a new terrain where layout, lighting, décor, and sound come together to constitute a specific “spectatorial architectonics” of cinematic exhibition (30). This incites an engagement that is both physical and psychological for the multiplex spectator, moving as she does through spaces designed with a specific intent. It activates a new sequence of impressions and views, and formulates a new kind of engagement in the experience of this architectural exploration—in the play of light and glass, in the lines of movement of stairs and escalators, and in the layers and depth of this space. Cinema-going becomes a narrative molded by this space, its architectural topography binding itself to spectatorial life, setting off the multiplex spectator on a new itinerary, as she views, peruses, wanders about, and finally settles into the plush environs of a darkened auditorium.

Energized by this new space and its changed interiors, audience demographics, technological innovation that encompasses production to exhibition technology, the new media network, and the distinct material and aesthetic impulses that arise from it, the filmic space too pulsates with an imagination that is aligned with the social and cultural forces of a new modernity. As a modernist vision in urban space, the multiplex’s particular mobilization of its space is the articulation of a new way of seeing. Screen narratives trace the imaginative pathways of a new spectatorial journey unfolding a new imaginative geography. In this shift, the screen becomes a conduit for the visible manifestation of a changing world. It summons a range of compositional and cinematographic elements to articulate this changing spatial and urban modeling of the real world, projecting a contemporaneity that signals a new way of being.

The multiplex first arrived in India in the middle of 1997 with the opening of PVR

Anupam. Once a single screen cinema hall, Anupam was retrofitted to become a multiplex by its owners, PVR (Priya Village Roadshow Ltd.), whose formation was made possible by an alliance between Priya Exhibitors Ltd. and Village Roadshow Ltd., an Australian multinational company (CNBCTV18). The multiplex subsequently spread across urban India, mushrooming in the major metropolitan cities in its first phase, and, in the wake of its saturation there, spreading to other towns and cities, covering a wide swathe of larger urban India. In 2016, PVR Cinemas was India’s largest multiplex chain with 497 theatres across India; the rest of the market was shared between three other operators: Inox Leisure, Carnival Cinemas, and Cinepolis (KPMG–FICCI Report). In 2019, multiplex penetration continued to grow in tier-2 and tier-3 cities¹ (KPMG Report); PVR with 812 screens was the clear market leader, with Inox Leisure, Carnival Cinemas, and Cinepolis following with 612, 450, and 381 screens, respectively (Statista). The coronavirus pandemic induced a lull in its expansion in 2020, but PVR announced that it will open 40 new screens in the financial year 2021–2022 (Pinto). The appearance of the multiplex no doubt introduced a new shift in the film exhibition landscape which had hitherto been populated only by single screen theatres. By targeting the urban middle class with disposable income and with tickets priced higher than those of single screen theatres, it started changing the economic logic of film exhibition. Middle class audiences found themselves readily swapping the “single commodity activity” of the single screen for the multi-media consumerist experience that a multiplex offers (Athique and Hill 9). From this point onwards, the multiplex set about radically changing the film exhibition business, and by extension, the cinematic menu on offer.

Indian popular cinema² had already begun changing from the early 90s. Spurred by the economic liberalization of 1991, the industry saw an expansion in its overseas market, which continued during the rest of the decade. Indian popular cinema now stepped out into the larger global domain as “Bollywood, thus becoming embedded in an economy of consumption, serving the global nation well in economic terms” (Vasudevan 339). The effects of market forces which followed the larger policy of privatization and media deregulation was first unleashed in this period. It crystallized in the cinematic narratives of the multiplex, which displayed “the multifaceted ethos of middle-class life” within the structure of a generalized consumerist culture (Gopal 134–140). Until the entry of the multiplex, it was the single screen staple, the Indian popular film—delivering a complete entertainment package with action, comedy, and romance—that dominated the cinematic landscape. Multiplex films deliberately broke away from this “homogeneity of the all-embracing format of the social film and the *masala*,” displaying a diversity and multiplicity of genres, emblematic of the social and cultural forces that constitute Indian modernity of the new millennium (3). The films thus render the world as a particular and distinctive effect of the intersecting trajectories of urbanization, middle class formation, consumerism, and globalization—all of which operate within the larger matrix of economic liberalization. It replaces the large heterogenous audience of the single screen

¹Indian cities are classified as X (tier-1), Y (tier-2) and Z (tier-3) based on population density. Cities with a population range of 50,000-100,000 are classified as tier-2 cities, and those with a population of 20,000-50,000 are classified as tier-3 cities. There are 8 tier-1 metropolitan cities, 104 tier-2 cities and the rest fall into the tier-3 category (mohua.gov.in).

²*Indian popular cinema* here refers to Indian mainstream commercial cinema in the Hindi language produced in Mumbai, India.

with a smaller, exclusionary, middle class one, “utilis[ing] a homogenising milieu to advertise a wide spectrum and subjectivities” (134). When the multiplex first appeared in the metropolitan cities, the films on its screens geared towards these audiences and displayed decidedly urban themes, a western sensibility, and a formal inventiveness. But as the multiplex spread, further targeting the burgeoning middle classes in larger urban India, it became less concerned with formal experimentation, focusing instead on the new sociology of the couple and characterized by the novel narrative technique of the “multiplot,” which provides the perfect structural framework for “the simultaneous representation of multiple character types who together signify the middle class as a differentiated collective” (138, 141). As the multiplex now expands and spreads to more areas of the country, the cinematic menu has adopted an even more expansive address to include even wider sections of the audience. The cinematic menu now includes updated versions of earlier masala action films, along with the usual multiplex categories of middle class comedies and low-budget indies.

Even as it brought about these changes in the cinematic landscape, the multiplex has also been complicit in the changing of the urban landscape structurally. The contemporary urban landscape is a transformation-in-progress as it is being reclaimed, redrawn, and redesigned to be recreated in the image of a Western commercial society. Athique and Hill observe how in this “desire to create global cities capable of bringing together flows of international capital [...] land for new developments is made” available through “a raft of regulatory changes favour[ing] public-private partnerships and commercially-oriented development projects,” to create “valuable new public space” in urban India (2). Multiplex theatres become part of this spatial re-engineering of the urban landscape as a key leisure infrastructure of the New Economy, with massive investments and tax incentives given to encourage their development (2). They reclaim urban space and are actively involved in the erasing of old areas and landmarks, their locational dynamics influencing the shrinking or expanding of urban distances. Their emergence within the matrix of the urban landscape replaces old infrastructural and social arrangements. Structurally, they are thus inextricably intertwined with this narrative of post-liberalization urban transformation; the quality of space that they shape, hold, and exude articulates this desire of transformation and re-creation into the image of the global urban spaces of a western *elsewhere*. The multiplex thus initiates a “symbolic break from the past,” making architecturally explicit that the old structural form of the city is being replaced by a new one (129). In this dynamic, its screen also becomes an extension of this desire for transformation, tracing the emerging shape of a new urban landscape, concurrent with this unfolding narrative.

This article analyses the two films, *Shanghai* (2012) and *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara*³ (*ZNMD*) (2014), to locate the new psychogeographical aspirations of the contemporary urban imagination through a close reading of their narratives. The two films, though radically divergent from each other in content, style, and treatment, embody a compulsive desire of the *away*. The article argues that in this desire of the *away* is the aspiration of an idealized *elsewhere*, offering an experience of a globalized urban modernity. The screen thus makes space for a new spatial vision to express this

³*Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara* can be translated as *You Only Live Once*. Translated by author.

manifestation of a changing world, unfolding vistas that hold this potential for an audience cued to a new psychogeographical imagination. Their cinematic landscapes are thus layered locations, holding breadth as well as depth; they articulate an experience of place, which, in both films, apart from their contextual meaning within the narrative structure, acquire the ability to transcend the narrative frame in which they were conceived. The two films frame and narrativize their landscapes in contrasting ways; exploration of the *elsewhere* of the urban imagination in this article is wrought through the prism of their landscapes. It takes the term *landscape* in the urban context, in a more expansive way, not restricted to simply panoramic vistas of open spaces, but also the topography of the city space. The *idea* of landscape that this article seeks to consider is also an *experience* of it, as it comes invested with meaning and emotion, associated with memory, and bound to identity. Its significance or potency is only as strong as the hold it has on our imagination, in the ways we encounter it and frame it in the context of our lives, in the ways it forms the crux of our negotiations between the self and society.

Hazel Andrews and Les Roberts, in their introduction to *Liminal Landscapes*, question if landscapes, on account of their being “processual” (in terms of their being shaped and produced by human or natural processes or agents) and “in a constant state of transition and becoming,” are “intrinsically liminal” (1–2). Liminality,⁴ in that sense, embodies a certain spatio-temporal process. In the chronology of before and after within the timespan of our lives, landscapes transform from new to old, thus embodying a certain temporality along with its obvious spatiality. A consideration of this intrinsic liminality of landscapes underlines their malleability and expands their cinematic possibilities. The liminality of cinematic landscapes rests on the inherent spatial nature of cinema and, as Juhani Pallasmaa suggests, in cinema’s ability to “define the dimensions and essence of existential space” as well as in its ability to “create experiential scenes” (*Architecture of Image* 13). It is in the context of this embodied nature of cinematic experience, in its affordance of an intertwining of our material and psychological worlds, that landscape can assume a more dynamic role than as mere backdrop. In fact, Eisenstein’s suggestion of landscape as “the freest element in film, the least burdened with servile, narrative tasks” acquires resonance in this regard (217). W. J. T. Mitchell’s consideration of landscape as a *medium* of representation rather than as mere image or symbol opens it further to a range of possibilities. Mitchell’s conception of landscape as dynamic lends itself particularly well to the study of cinematic landscape. His emphasis on the elemental aspects of landscape—what he calls as “a physical and multisensory medium [...] in which cultural meanings and values are encoded”—prevents its slippage into the background of the story space and connects it to the tradition of which it is a part (14). His insistence on the landscape’s ability to not only act as a medium of expressing value, but also “for expressing meaning, for communication between persons” underlines the malleability of landscapes, how they can be seen as “a body of symbolic forms capable of being invoked and reshaped to express meanings and values” (15, 14). In foregrounding landscape from its usual status as setting, it acquires the density of a text,

⁴Liminality as a concept gained momentum with the work of anthropologist, Victor Turner, who describes it as any situation or object that is “betwixt and between” (*Forest of Symbols*). Turner, whose writings have laid much of the theoretical groundwork for our understanding of liminality, considers the liminal as a doorway or transitional space, a sort of a border.

open to be read and decoded, pliable to an array of interpretive activity.

Thus, a consideration of landscape as different from the story space opens it up to an exploration of its aspects beyond the narrative world. The concept of the *location* then changes from backdrop to a reflection on landscape as a construct and an expression in its own right. In this shift, landscape unveils the interacting ideas, conventions, and traditions that inform its representation, and the essentially palimpsestic nature of such image making. Landscapes on the contemporary Indian screen carry the resonance and energy of the accelerated change of the present-day urban space. In unfolding spaces, whether of home or away, it is in the processual, transitional nature of their unfolding that they become doorways of “a physical as well as a psychic space of potentiality”: their liminality becoming a generative act in the construction of the *elsewheres* of urban desire (Andrews and Roberts 1).

As a space of urban desire, *elsewhere* appears on screen as a heterotopic space, summoned by the work of imagination as well as material and social construction. Foucault, in his 1967 essay “Of Other Spaces,” describes spaces that exist in relation to other sites as “a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted” (3). Foucault’s heterotopias are those real spaces which function as sorts of counter sites, offering a counteraction, whether in terms of their function or nature, existing in a kind of structural or temporal counterpoint. This concept springs from his premise that space in “our epoch [...] take[s] for us the form of relations among sites” (2). It is heterogeneous, multi-dimensional, constitutive of both internal and external space, real as well as fantastic. Lived space, in fact, constitutes a set of relations among sites “which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another” (3). In this grid of spatial interconnection, Foucault’s heterotopias, “simultaneously mythic and real,” offer spaces that in their *unlikeness* or deviation from the normative provide a divergent experience (4). From the cemetery to the cinema, the honeymoon hotel to the museum, the brothel to the library, these heterotopic spaces exist in a contradictory relation to all other sites, but linked in a configuration where the dissimilar experiences of space and time are juxtaposed against others but nevertheless exist as a continuum among the sites that make up the ensemble of our lived space.

Elsewhere thus becomes a collective construct envisioned, projected, and designed by a collective imagination to effect what Arjun Appadurai calls “a transformation of the real,” changing new urban spaces of the city into glittering islands or filling up the screen as “an expansive terrain of possibilities” (“Right to Participate” 34). This “transformation of the real” is an experiential exchange of feelings and meanings between where we are and where we are striving to be. The conundrum of the mirror experience where we “discover [our] absence from the place where [we are] since [we] see [ourselves] over there” can be extended to the embodied experience of *elsewhere* on screen because in seeing ourselves where we are not, we reconstitute where we are, which Pallasmaa⁵ suggests happens when we engage with any work of art, making us “encounter ourselves and our own being-in-the-world in an intensified manner”

⁵*The Architecture of Image: Existential Space in Cinema*, 2001.

(Foucault 4; Pallasmaa 22). It is a heterotopia in the sense that though it is envisioned and projected by a collective imagination, it is still a place or a conglomerate of places with geographical markers. *Elsewhere* thus straddles both the virtual and the real, its locatedness in reality fueling its potency as topography of the mind, awakening desires and fantasies, directing our intentions, emotions, and thoughts.

But while the mirror's heterotopia, which despite opening up an "unreal, virtual place" behind the surface, is a tangible reflector, *elsewhere*, its geographical locatedness notwithstanding, is an imaginative prism (Foucault 4). The imaginative effort brings it close from afar, as it molds itself to the concrete matrices of the structures of the New Economy or unfurls across multiplex screens. It is this activation of the imagination that creates images of *elsewhere* as an embodied and lived space. Appadurai's⁶ insistence on imagination as a vital force in the production of any kind of a scalar or material structure or framework as well as Pallasmaa's⁷ suggestion that it is the activation of the imagination that makes the artistic image shift "from the physical and material existence into a mental and imaginary reality" underline the permeable boundary between the mind and the world that makes *elsewhere* possible (Appadurai; Pallasmaa 63). It becomes a construct of this intertwined experiential dimension of our material and psychological worlds, deriving its suggestive power from the tension between the perceived and the imagined. Fueled by the collective imagination capable of reaching "multiple scales and spaces and forms and possibilities," *elsewhere* insinuates itself into "structures of feeling," enticing images and feelings, turning our attention to ourselves and our place in this continuum of spaces spanning the local to the global.

The screen as an integral entity moored within the physical place of the multiplex informs the reading of the two films, as the article considers that both the material space of the multiplex and the experience of its screens constitute intersecting terrains. The multiplex and its screen come to exist in a particular confluence of flows of architectural design, economic conditions, social grouping, technological innovation, and cinematic storytelling. It thus becomes part of the modernist project of the reconfiguration of the city space, designed and sustained as a purposely created set of spatial relations. Entry to this space incites a connection to the global spaces of urban culture and a sense of participation in the transformations of a post-liberalization economy. Appadurai observes that the production, maintenance, distribution, and enjoyment of physical spaces are conscious acts on the part of "social actors," as "physical spaces are part of the material that individuals work from, draw on [...] highlight, sharpen, consciously use" ("Illusion of Permanence" 3). The spatial logic of the multiplex engages its patrons in an itinerary of the imagination reaching into multiple forms and possibilities: "to walk through its doors is to pass into an 'other' India, continuous with the smooth spaces of global capitalism" (Gopal 133). The nature of the traversal of the physical space of the multiplex plays out in the traversal of cinematic space too, inciting a similar journey, the screen being a structural extension of this entire experiential terrain.

This *world* within the multiplex is both imaginary and material, composed of

⁶"The Right to Participate in the Work of the Imagination," 2002.

⁷*The Embodied Image*, 2011.

competing, complementary, and overlapping symbolic as well as spatial orders, and it is in the intersections of these different discursively constructed worlds that a filmic landscape emerges on the multiplex screen, articulated with notions of a new modernity. Furthermore, this cinematic site, affected by the mutations of the city, is also entwined in this reconfiguration of urban space, operating within the diverse contexts of a new urbanity. Modern cities are continuously fluid and shifting places, “always susceptible to erasure or brought into different relations with emerging structures,” and the multiplex’s structural evolution, technical upgrading, and spatial relocation evolves out of and is tied to this geography of concurrent relations and meanings (Hay 226). In linking itself to the larger space of the city and appropriating its own meanings, the cinema hall becomes a product of its transactions, standing in relation to places and events that form and transform the narrative of the city. Negotiated and traversed by a corpus of spectators and imbued with the particularities of spectatorial life of the time, it becomes a product and a space of transitions and transactions, developing intimate ties with the city.

Foucault had evocatively stated that “we are in the epoch of simultaneity [...] of juxtaposition [...] of the near and far [...] of the side-by-side [...] of the dispersed [...] our experience of the world is less that of a long life developing through time than that of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein” (1). In the contemporary landscape of even more accelerated simultaneity and juxtaposition, of connected points and intersections, what Appadurai terms as “the work of the imagination”—this envisioning of “the global as a kind of expansion of the horizon of the local”—reaches “multiple scales and spaces and forms and possibilities” (“Right to Participate” 34). As the horizons of globality appear through the manifold networks of media and migration, it becomes the material with which the imagination works to infuse and interweave with the spatial and the material, the scalar and the embodied dimensions of local life, to produce desired structures of being and feeling. It assumes tangible shape in the angular lines of the transnational architecture that appears across the vista of the urban landscape and unfolds on multiplex screens as geographies of an idealized *elsewhere*.

Thus, if *elsewhere* appears in the metropolitan urban spaces of India’s New Economy, by laying out a vista of spectacular structures, it also appears on multiplex screens whose spatial vision seems to outline a new psychogeographical imagination (Athique and Hill 130). The two films under discussion in this article, *Shanghai* and *ZNMD*, unfold in these spaces of a new imagination. *Shanghai* presents a fictional town of Bharat Nagar in India primed to be razed and rebuilt while *ZNMD* unfolds mostly in the *real* landscape of Spain. The former’s spaces are desolate, marginal, marked by a certain stasis, and existing in the economic in-between-ness, while the latter is transfused with movement, vitality, a sense of adventure, and travel. They unfold in vistas that offer facets of the contemporary urban experience, with their narratives of hope and oblivion, of travel and reconciliation. At the same time, they also embody quests, journeys, and passages of transformation, launching trajectories of movement and connections. But while *ZNMD*’s spaces unfold as a tangible reality, *Shanghai*’s spatial vision, even while staking out the territory of the contested space of an Indian city, harkens to an aspirational dreamscape, a chimera. But both these films fall among the considerable number of films of the past decade which took off from the teeming urban spaces of India to the freeing

expanse of a distant landscape. The city seems to “become a transit camp to a better life,” as the screen gives shape to these imagined spaces of collective desire, and *elsewhere* appears as a shared dream of the collective urban imagination, imbued with possibilities (Banzai).

On the occasion of the release of *Shanghai*, the director of the film, Dibakar Banerjee said in an interview, “The title of the film is a comment on what we are as a nation. We don’t like living in our own country. In our minds, we want to migrate to a foreign land. The film is about the Shanghai of our dreams and how we are fighting to achieve that” (Bhatia). The plot of the film, which was adapted from the novel *Z* by Vassilis Vassilikos, alludes to that time when the Indian government, at the turn of the millennium, went on a drive to set up Special Economic Zones (SEZs) for business and industrial development in various parts of the country. Special areas were identified for the setting up of these economic zones and the government went on mammoth land-acquisition drives for the purpose. But as dams, mines, thermal plants, business hubs, software parks, industrial plants, malls, and multistoried apartment blocks continue to be built, it has also engineered a large-scale displacement and splintering of communities. Dispossession of their traditionally held land and unsatisfactory rehabilitation has led to political and social protests, and in some cases even long-drawn-out armed conflicts. The SEZs, Sardar Sarovar Dam Project, and Vedanta-Niyamgiri mining project are only a few of the contentious issues that mark this conflict over land in contemporary India. *Shanghai* references this issue of large-scale land-acquisition by the government for industrial or business purposes and its far-reaching social and political repercussions.

Shanghai derives its drama from the machinations resulting from the state government’s attempts to go on a massive land-acquisition drive to build a swanky business hub called the International Business Park. The poor residents of that land vehemently oppose this drive. In spite of the fact that it would evict thousands of people from their land, the construction of the proposed International Business Park is touted as a model of growth and progress for the state, as one more step towards the collective political dream of transforming Bharat Nagar into another Shanghai. Matters come to a head when a left-wing activist spearheading their resistance is killed in a hit-and-run accident. The ensuing chain of events reveal that it was a premeditated murder, exposing the murky underbelly of local politics and laying bare the complicity of the local government, police, and bureaucracy in the matter.

In telling the story of Bharat Nagar—Bharat being another name for India—*Shanghai* is basically talking about the fraught spaces of contemporary India as a whole, the narrative explicating how land in 21st century India ignites conflict and political power play, driving fissures in the social fabric, dislocating and dividing communities, and splintering cityscapes. The embattled streetscape of Bharat Nagar mediates an idea of a nation under siege, caught in the crossfire of rapid change and social upheaval. Dibakar Banerjee shot most of the film in the small towns of Latur and Baramati in Maharashtra in western India, drawing from the natural environment of these places to craft the space of his film. Skirted by an expanse of dusty landscape, *Shanghai* creates a prototype of small-town India—a network of winding alleys and densely packed houses, narrow streets filled with rambunctious political rallies, nondescript government offices,

and spacious official bungalows—embellished by a diverse imagery of colourful shop fronts, brightly coloured signage, promotional arches, and election campaign paraphernalia of banners, festoons, and massive cutouts of political figures.

As a film expressly about land per se, landscape in *Shanghai* can be seen to constitute a metanarrative about contemporary India. Shifting focus onto *Shanghai's* landscape unearths this aspect of its thematic expressiveness, its implicit articulation of a reciprocal link between land and national progress. The large-scale reconfiguration of the Indian urban ecology is producing complex but paradoxical social arrangements within the spatial dynamic of the city space: the spatial fissures in the urban landscape reflecting the societal fissures of post-liberalization India. In these “splintered urbanist sprawls,” the rebranded urban spaces reflecting the values and lifestyle of the new middle class marks out a new India, demarcating it from the old (Sundaram 64; Athique and Hill 129–130). This is where *elsewhere* resides, balancing along that faultline where the places of “financial, economic, cultural, discursive, as well as spatial and architectural manifestations of globalisation overlap” (King 135). In deconstructing this desire for an *elsewhere*, the film spotlights the class struggle that complicates this desire.

In *Shanghai*, *elsewhere* shimmers beckoningly in Bharat Nagar's horizon. The desire and anticipation of its impending arrival transforms it into a heterotopia, holding up a mirror to where we are not, but potently enabling, in its imaginative intensity to envision us there. In his book, *The Great Clamour*, Pankaj Mishra writes about the “defiantly modern” landscape of Shanghai. He describes “skyscrapers of a postmodern snootiness, gleaming new industrial parks – with landscaped gardens,” “American-style luxury condominiums with names such as ‘Rich Gate,’” and the “wreckage (of demolished low-rise houses) surreally reflected in the glass facades of tall office buildings.” It is this *defiantly modern* landscape—shaped by, as Mishra calls it, the “storm of progress [...] propelling the angel of history into the future even as a pile of debris grows at his feet”—that circulates in the popular imagination. *Shanghai's elsewhere* is this vision of a shiny but debris-strewn landscape set to be replicated in the shape of a swanky International Business Park to be built on the razed land of Bharat Nagar.

In this imaginative intensity, the landscape assumes a processual nature, in a state of transition and becoming, suspended in a state of in-between-ness. When Dr. Ahmedi, the academic-activist spearheading the Bharat Nagar resistance, arrives at the small Bharat Nagar airport, he observes the expanse of barren land flanking both sides of the road, signposted by a giant hoarding bearing the picture of a cluster of shiny multistoried apartments, proclaiming it as the site of “Windsor Heights.” The landscape is framed from Dr. Ahmedi's point of view, through the windscreen of the moving vehicle, the hoarding of “Windsor Heights” standing out against the starkness of the dry dusty land ringed by makeshift fencing. Framed in a moving shot, with the camera panning from the windscreen to the open window of the car, the landscape passes by, its emptiness stretching into the far distance, foregrounded by the “Windsor Heights” signpost, extending the invitation to “Come! Live the Luxurey!” (*sic*). This sequence of Dr. Ahmedi's passage through the expanse of dusty landscape, reclaimed for construction purposes, visually suggests the possible future for Bharat Nagar.

The dry, featureless expanse of the proposed “Windsor Heights,” roofed by a flat sky, and signposted by a hoarding which visualizes its future transformation, is a composite of juxtaposed meanings, forming a densely layered image. In this image, the physical reality of the landscape is juxtaposed with a photographic image, framed in a tense co-existence with each other. The tangibility of the dusty land assumes significance against the illusory quality of the photograph, its shiny tall buildings seemingly tenuous against the solid physicality of the landscape. But the image promises a complete transformation that would erase the present landscape, and it is in this promise of its inevitability that the image acquires power. The landscape and the image do not exist in a dynamic of the present and the future, rather they effect a dynamic of the past and the present—the expanse of vast barren land has already receded into the past, as the image takes over the present, exhorting to “Call 2484501 NOW!!” to “COME! LIVE THE LUXUREY!” (*sic*). It is in the “NOW” that the image exists, while the landscape, its physical tangibility notwithstanding, has retreated and regressed into the past, presenting an interesting contrast between the real as unreal and the unreal as real.

In this dichotomous arrangement of the old and the new, the tension between the two landscapes is in the contrasting *ideas* of them. The image landscape of “Windsor Heights” comes pre-coded with the “Globalisation Dream,” activating an imagination that locks in with the idea of a *modern* landscape of tall towers and landscaped gardens. On the one hand, it is a descriptive image, interacting with a character viewpoint as well as existing in a layered juxtaposition with the physical landscape behind. But as it stakes its claim on this vast expanse of land, it also remains autonomous with its own narratological function, as well as being rich in symbolic content. The “Windsor Heights” sequence is illustrative of Banerjee’s comment that his “film is about the Shanghai of our dreams” (Bhatia). The sequence explicates the dream of transformation that the *idea* of “Windsor Heights” encapsulates; the signpost festooned across the *tabula rasa* of the emptied landscape directs our gaze towards it and in doing so invents that dream.

The landscape, in its evocative charge, thus starts to convey an unrelenting sense of what lurks beneath, carrying within itself this channel between the past and the present, emerging as a conduit of loss and change. The flipside of *elsewhere* are the scenes of urban strife and despair, of contested spaces and interests, and the desperate efforts of survival for the displaced and discarded. Amidst the manic streets of curfew-bound Bharat Nagar, bonfires burn and masked rioters clash with the police. The camera assumes various vantage positions in framing this landscape—hoisting itself onto the back of a truck careening through packs of frenzied rioters running amok through city streets, tracking along rows of shuttered shops and randomly pitched battles between rioters and police, and, in the aftermath of night-long rioting, wrapped in the blue haze of daybreak, looking down from the top of a terrace at the desolate debris-strewn lane, and later coming down to frame a scarred city street in wide angle, a dead body strewn across, a lone policeman radioing for help, standing against a grey sky while smoke billows out from the still-burning bonfires of tires. In contrast to the immersive experience of its structured dramatic situations, the camera drifts around this scarred landscape, in an open-ended engagement with this vista of urban dystopia.

“[B]orn at the intersection of mental, physical, and social space,” the imagined city explicates the particular synergy between urban experience and film (Mazumdar

xviii). From the post-independence period to the post-liberalization and globalization era of the Indian economy, the cinematic city has always registered this shift in urban experience, rendering visible the new spatial and temporal configurations of the urban landscape. The large-scale migration to the cities that followed from the post-Independence period onwards meant that Indian popular cinema steadily accrued an urban bias, overtaking its rural centric tilt of the 1950s and 1960s (Athique and Hill 31). With the 70s, the city entered the screen as an autonomous space with its own thematic concerns, leaving behind “the city-country dyad” of the 50s and 60s cinema which had served to “privilege the values of the countryside as well as assert the precedence of national identity and unity over thematics of class conflict and urban disillusion” (Prasad 98). During the 70s and after, the city emerged on screen “as a self-sufficient space for the staging of epic conflicts and allegorical narratives,” also bringing in a new visual perspective of the city in cinema, which Prasad terms as “view from below” (as opposed to the “view from above” skyscrapers and tall buildings), a subaltern perspective which reinforced “a strong sense of community solidarity” (98, 93). In *Deewar*⁸ (1974), for instance, he notes how “the city scape is invested with new affect, the skyscrapers reminding the spectator “of the labour that went into its construction,” whereas the studied evocation of Bombay’s slums in *Nayakan*⁹ (1987) expands cinema’s access to the city beneath the metaphorical city of allegorical tales. *Parinda*¹⁰ (1989) and *Satya*¹¹ (1998) continued in their realistic evocation of the Bombay milieu and the rootedness of the characters in it, without investing them with nostalgia for the pastoral bliss of the idyllic rural (93).

In fact, for Indian popular cinema, Bombay has always been the city of choice, but Prasad notes that Bombay’s position as default metropolis is more to serve as a “generic metropolitan other” rather than as a specific city. He identifies two cinematic Bombays, one belonging to the period of the 50s—“a city of pleasure and danger, of a thrilling anonymity as well as distressing inequality [...] a space where class conflict is a dominant thematic concern” and the other of the 70s and after—where “a new Bombay makes its appearance, more vivid, dense, naked, disorienting [...] where the thematics of class conflict acquire an epic dimension and are inscribed into larger national-allegorical and civilizational frameworks [...]” (87–89). The phenomenon of Indian popular cinema evoking a metaphorical city rather than a specific one follows a long trajectory of films right from Homi Wadia’s *Miss Frontier Mail* (1936) to Ram Gopal Varma’s *Satya* (1998) to Anurag Basu’s *Life in a Metro* (2007). The contemporary screen now also makes space for an urban experience which has expanded beyond the major metropolitan cities to a newly urbanized population. Mass crowds, urban violence, consumption, and spectacle characterize this “urban delirium,” transforming the urban ecology of major metropolises and altering the skylines of suburban India (Mazumdar xxii). A diverse range of narratives express the complexities of this contemporary urban experience, mediating journeys in a range of perspectives that shape the cartography of this post-globalized

⁸*Deewar* can be translated as *The Wall*. Translated by author.

⁹*Nayakan* can be translated as *The Hero*. Translated by author.

¹⁰*Parinda* can be translated as *The Bird*. Translated by author.

¹¹*Editor’s Note (hereafter referred to as Ed. N.): Satya* can be translated as *Truth*. But in the movie, it is the name of the protagonist.

cinematic city.

Shanghai's imagined space contains both an imagined *elsewhere* as well as the grim reality of its actual location. It comprises the small town of Bharat Nagar that stretches from its dusty outskirts to its dimly lit streets, as well as the *idea* of Shanghai that presents itself as a dream landscape of chrome and glass, of sky-high towers, industrial parks, and shiny condominiums. The cinematic geography of the film thus holds both the mythic and real, with both Shanghai and Bharat Nagar existing as spaces of possibilities, where the imagined experience of an *elsewhere* arises out of the fraught dynamics of Bharat Nagar's own spatial politics. *Shanghai's* Bharat Nagar is an *everycity*, articulating "the contemporaneous remaking of its urban space" in the image of globalized metropolises, bringing forth structures of transnational architecture to shape a new skyline and transform the existent urban morphology (Athique and Hill 39). While the narrative of *Shanghai* explicates how land in 21st century India ignites conflict and political power play, the landscape pulsates with the urgency and immediacy of its contested spaces. Meanwhile, the *elsewhere* of Shanghai looms large and fuels this contestation.

What *Shanghai* holds forth is a mirror to the cost of this pursuit of an urban *elsewhere*, offering a scathing critique of this fantasy of *elsewhere* and the human cost it entails, linking this fantasy of the *away* to its story of dislocation. Making space for *elsewhere* involves large-scale displacement and estrangement from the familiar, and into the unfamiliarity of the likeness of a distant phantasmagoria. In explicating the ways in which the politics of "place-making"¹² unfolds, *Shanghai* lays bare the structure of a class based hierarchical society and the unequal ways in which power is distributed. In the displacement of communities is the erasure of memories, meanings, and identities tied to the particular place. As a new sense of place is given shape, the land is wiped clean of the vestiges of the past. It sets the stage for a present as a play of imagined futures.

Unlike Shanghai in *Shanghai*, which is more of an imaginative construct, a place where we are not but striving to arrive at, Spain in *ZNMD* is not a tantalizing distant *elsewhere*, but an easily accessible reality. It is not an imagined future, but exists in the here and now of the story world of the film. It is a place the three leading characters travel to, flying in from different parts of the world to meet up in Barcelona. In this casual accessibility of Spain, the distant is brought near and made familiar, linking it to the itinerary and the cultural imagination of the globalized Indian. While the struggle in *Shanghai* is in shaping the existing landscape into the image of a foreign *elsewhere*, glimpsed only in animated promotional videos of the future and in giant hoardings of multistoried towers, in *ZNMD* that *elsewhere* is already here. It is enveloped in the present of the film space, which its characters seamlessly step into with casual nonchalance. In contrast to the chimera of Shanghai that was preeminent in *Shanghai's* experience of landscape, *ZNMD's* experience of *elsewhere*—comprising a mosaic of locations across the length and breadth of the Spanish landscape—is tangible. The flow of locations unfolds in a sensuous rhythm, supporting the ambience of journey, discovery,

¹²The term "place-making" is used by geographer Yi-Fu Tuan used in *Topophilia* to describe the ways in which we form close connections with landscapes.

adventure, and freedom. From the art nouveau architecture and Gaudi buildings of Barcelona to the Costa Brava coastline and then on to the Andalusian region and the Basin of Pamplona, the beauty of the Spanish cities, towns, mountains, and coastline fill up the frame to create the singular experience of the film's landscape. As the three young men set off on their road trip from Barcelona, their journey culminates in an altered relationship with their selves and with each other.

ZNMD falls amongst a slew of films, made at the turn of the millennium, whose characters, in breaking away from the constraints of home, find freedom overseas. Protagonists of films like *Dil Chahta Hai*¹³ (2001), *Salaam Namaste*¹⁴ (2005), *Hum Tum*¹⁵ (2004), and *Chalte Chalte*¹⁶ (2003) follow the similar trajectory of a narrative arc where a new setting unfetters the lead characters from their dilemmas and impulses and sets them up on a road to personal transformation. Later films—like *Queen* (2014), whose protagonist finds liberation in Paris and Amsterdam; *Tamasha*¹⁷ (2015) and *When Harry Met Sejal* (2017), where the lead pairs break away from the humdrum ordinariness of their lives and discover themselves and each other in the open country of Corsica and Amsterdam, respectively; and *Dil Dhadakne Do*¹⁸ (2015), where the entire film takes place aboard a cruise ship on the Mediterranean—all follow the same template. The setting becomes an accessory of their transformation, the landscape an accomplice to their process of personal change. The newness of the physical topography thus becomes a foil to the newness of their being. This is in contrast to the common trope of foreign landscape as fantasy setting for romantic interludes, employed regularly in Hindi films, especially from the 60s through the 90s.

In fact, in the pre-liberalization era, foreign landscapes would unfold on the screenscape of Hindi cinema mostly as locations of fantasy or dreamscapes for choreographed song sequences, the *foreign-ness* of the landscape showcasing and heightening the sudden break in the narrative. Switzerland was one of the most favoured locations, the archetype of the romantic landscape, for song sequences set against the snowcapped Alps and the rolling green of the Swiss landscape. Rachel Dwyer notes that “[t]he early Hindi films showed Kashmir as the ideal location for romance, and it was only in the 1970s that this site came to be displaced by Europe – above all Switzerland [...]” (197–198). Anointed by the mainstream press as the “king of romance,” Yash Chopra, veteran Bollywood director and deliverer of blockbuster hits right from the 60s to the 90s, had a penchant for shooting romantic song sequences in Switzerland. Framed as a dreamscape, this particular landscape became identified with romantic desire and intertwined with the cultural imagination and longings of millions of Indians. Dwyer observes that “[t]hese places also constitute some sort of privacy for the romantic couple, a private space in the public domain, where they can escape from the surveillance of the

¹³*Dil Chahta Hai* can be translated as *The Heart Desires*. Translated by author.

¹⁴*Ed. N.*: Wikipedia translates *Salaam Namaste* as *Hello Greetings* but it can also be translated as *Salute and Welcome*.

¹⁵*Ed. N.*: *Hum Tum* can be translated as *Me and You*.

¹⁶*Chalte Chalte* can be translated as *As We Walk By*. Translated by author.

¹⁷*Tamasha* can be translated as *Spectacle*. Translated by author.

¹⁸*Dil Dhadakne Do* can be translated as *Let the Heart Beat*. Translated by author.

family which prevents, encourages and controls romance, love and marriage” (197–198).

On screen, the mountainous Swiss landscape came to represent a fantastical element, and its unfolding within the diegesis opened up a space where the story and characters could inhabit that fantasy realm in varying degrees. Abraham and Torok define fantasy as “all those representations, beliefs, or bodily states that gravitate toward [...] the preservation of the [topographical] status quo” (125). In the romantic song sequences set in Switzerland, the landscape represented an extension of the erotic topography of the mind, in resistance to the *normal* topographical setting of the narrative (125). In this “fantasy of incorporation,” Switzerland became the natural extension of the psychological “topographical status quo,” the landscape assuming even more formal significance in the romantic musical interludes where it inhabited an extra-diegetic space. In this dynamic, landscape assumed a conceptual significance in its own right, a dreamscape of freedom, devoid of restraint or inhibition. This brings into focus how a particular landscape becomes the frame of a specific fantasy space, becoming the cultural reference point of an entire generation. It also illuminates how malleable landscapes are, becoming the screen onto which ideas are projected, pliable to be shaped by a collective imagination to produce a specific structure of feeling.

The Spanish landscape in *ZNMD* is not a fantasy setting or an interchangeable ephemeral dreamscape existing as an extra diegetic interlude. Rather, it constitutes the entire diegetic space of the film; its geographical locatedness is rooted as tangible physical space, fostering an audience engagement that links it to their own physical world, a post-globalized world of hypervisuality, simultaneity, and juxtaposition. *ZNMD*'s Spain slots into this grid of spatial interconnectedness, becoming the mental frame that activates our imagination and directs our associations, emotions, and reactions. The journey through the landscape becomes a sort of rite of passage for the audience, granting them associative free play in their imaginative traversal of the landscape. The song sequence where the three friends are driving through the open countryside, flanked by sunflower fields on either side with majestic white horses running alongside them in slow motion, structures a magical experience on screen. It is not exactly an extra diegetic interlude in the manner of traditional fantasy song sequences. But in its dream-like ambiguity it exudes that mirage of an *elsewhere*. In Arjun's desire for Laila, the woman he loves, which the song is designed to communicate, the sequence can be said to articulate the larger desire of an audience's ludic longing for this idealized *elsewhere*. Pallasmaa observes how “the crucial faculty of the image is its magical capacity to mediate between physical and mental, perceptual and imaginary, factual and affectual” (*Embodied Image* 40). In its visual and auditory pull, the image of the Spanish landscape unfolding on multiplex screens is embroiled in a similar encounter with its audience, facilitating its experiencing as part of our existential world. Thus, the *terrain of possibilities* that *ZNMD* aspires to are much more expansive than mere fantasy setting. Spain is not a dream, but an extension of the privileged space that its three protagonists inhabit in India too. They are able to fly to Barcelona, ensconce themselves in plush hotels, and rent a convertible to drive through the country.

In other words, *ZNMD* operates within the familiar framework of the road movie's narrative structure, which entails the transposition of the protagonists from the

secure bounds of a familiar environment to an unfamiliar one. The genre of the road movie emerged in the late 1960s under the influence of “the beat writers of the 1950s and legitimized by its countercultural valorisation of existentialist philosophy” (Brereton 107). *Easy Rider*, released in 1968, became the quintessential road movie, the precursor to this existentialist genre, capable of accommodating a wide range of flexible themes. In India, this genre gave birth to a growing canon of road movies like *Road* (2002), *Jab We Met*¹⁹ (2007), *Road, Movie* (2009), *Finding Fanny* (2014), *Highway* (2014), *NH31* (2015), *Piku* (2015), *Qarib Qarib Single*²⁰ (2017), *Karwaan*²¹ (2018), etc., all of which follow the generic tradition of quest driven parallel journeys of internal and external discoveries. *ZNMD* follows a similar template where the journey that structures this film is motivated by a quest of personal development, the movement across the Spanish landscape designed to function as a catalyst for self-discovery. “The twin notions of mobility and freedom are what road movies are built around [...] the movement of the car itself [becoming] a symbol of hope” (Brereton 106).

Within the road movie’s framework of journey from the familiar to the unfamiliar and back to the known, it is in the encounter with the unfamiliar space, whether ludic or fraught, that constitutes the *raison d’être* of the genre. But within the road movie’s framework of the journey as rite of passage, *ZNMD* eschews the transformative experience arising from an intense interaction, physical or spiritual, with the outer world. Instead, the terrain of possibilities that *ZNMD* lays out for its three protagonists in the *elsewhere* of Spain is one that is intensely self-involved. Whether skydiving, deep-sea diving, or taking part in the Pamplona Bull Run—activities expressly chosen to resolve their individual fears and phobias—their engagement has the smooth, reasoned quality of a designed experience. Their method of encounter with the landscape is devoid of any complex or layered attachments, and in passing through towns, lakes, coastlines, and festivals, the landscape is reduced to a series of consumable sites. It is a touristic gaze, interspersed with designer daydreams, that marks their journey through the Spanish landscape. This is an *elsewhere* of air-conditioned comfort, its jagged edges smoothed off, packaged for the consumption of an audience ensconced in the plush and comfortably cooled auditoriums of multiplex theatres. The Spanish landscape is shaped as picturesque and exotic, designed to seduce the traveler and, by extension, the audience. It reinforces a particular way of seeing the world, where the encounter with place is constructed out of a remote gaze of sightseeing and fantasy, and their interaction with the landscape/place is unable to effect any real self-discovery or transformation.

The import of *ZNMD*’s landscape lies in this delivery of packaged consumption, in the ease, comfort, and smoothness of its transference on screen, in its facilitation of an easy accessibility to an *elsewhere*. The characters are a bridge to this *elsewhere*, modeling the casual negotiation and engagement with a foreign place while remaining cocooned within the borders of their own cultural identities. *ZNMD* is not about the immersion and transmogrification of its characters through a primal landscape, but rather about the ease of stepping into a controlled *elsewhere* and inhabiting it. It is this familiarized *elsewhere*

¹⁹Ed. N.: *Jab We Met* can be translated as *When We Met*.

²⁰Ed. N.: *Qarib Qarib Single* can be translated as *Almost Almost Single*.

²¹Ed. N.: *Karwaan* can be translated as *Caravan* or *Journey*.

that reverberates with its own meaning, even as it intersects and interweaves with the trajectory of the narrative arc.

ZNMD can be read as having a ritual function for its audience, taking them on a drive through Spain. It offers the illusion of the ultimate travel fantasy—freedom. For the three protagonists, the desire for this *elsewhere* is constructed through their seeking of places that provide pleasure or escape from the urban stresses of India, and their privileged access to it. Freedom is sourced in a benign, romantic, peaceful getaway that leaves behind the teeming urban spaces of India to an *elsewhere* that is seductive, romantic, and charming, in service to the traveler’s indulgence and pleasure. This displacement—to escape someplace else, to occupy and see somewhere else—summons all the elements of privilege, desire, and play to construct this space of an *elsewhere* that is attainable. It becomes a transitional space, an imaginative doorway to an expansive terrain of possibilities. *ZNMD*’s manufacturing of this encounter with the Spanish landscape, structured by an ordered progression along the motorway interrupted by interludes of designed diversions—from a flamenco dance-off to a tomato festival and various adventure sports in between—is insistent on a fascination with playing away. It is an encounter designed to place the multiplex spectators as imaginers, inviting an *unconscious exchange* between the audience and the places on screen. Pallasmaa observes that in the experiencing of space “is a dialogue, a kind of exchange – I place myself in the space and the space settles in me” (*Architecture of Image* 22). *ZNMD*’s Spanish landscape effects this intersection with the multiplex imagination, offering this vista of an expansive *elsewhere* in which to re-invent or make a new beginning.

ZNMD and *Shanghai* unfold their respective *elsewheres* in different contexts, the shaping of their *away* contingent on the differing exigencies of their narrative realities. *Shanghai*’s landscape opens up a “terrain of possibilities” offering glimpses into new ways of experiencing everyday life. It transforms from inert background or setting into something with a processual dynamic, conveying a sense of transition, of becoming, its spaces holding the potentiality of transformation. *Elsewhere*, whether as dream or nightmare (considering which side of the class divide one is on), animates this landscape, accentuating it and binding it to the imagination. It engages in a complex way, as a pervasive presence, unfolding as an associative and emotionally responsive space, a geography of the mind into which we root our imagination. Wollen observes how the cultural change in our times propelled by globalization seems to involve “a move away from a tactile to an optical apprehension of the world, to a fascination with seeing at a distance, with access to an *elsewhere*, rather than learning to inhabit a space [...]” (214). In *Shanghai* it is this “fascination,” this potent pull of the distant *elsewhere* that activates the narrative arc and gives shape to the lives of its characters. As the activist, Dr. Ahmedi, protests the razing of Bharat Nagar and the displacement of its community and the government and bureaucracy remain undeterred and fixated on the vision of a Shanghai-like international business hub, the film throbs with the conflicting values of opposing forces, a force-field of contrasting trajectories of actions and intentions, tethered to this invisible pull of the *elsewhere*.

Landscape in *Shanghai* thus transforms from being a significant setting to a sentient, potent element held together by its own meaning, its expressiveness amplified

by its engaging of the audience's imagination in the totality of its meaning-making. Even while throbbing in tandem with the immediacy of the narrative trajectory, it asserts its own act of mediation, translating Bharat Nagar as an Indian *everycity* and its fantasy of *elsewhere* as the urban middle class dream. But while *Shanghai's elsewhere* waits at the periphery, as a dream, its unfolding complicated by a class struggle over land, *ZNMD's elsewhere* is already here, neatly packaged and easily accessible. Its spatial vision outlines a new psychogeographical imagination, embodying an expansive view of the world, of global connections and intersections, catering to an audience fascinated "with seeing at a distance, [and] with access to [this] elsewhere" (Wollen 214). Spain is far as well as near, existing in a dynamic of proximity and distance, illuminating where we are not, but showing us where we can be. Even though unfolding in contrasting contexts—one fraught with the anxiety of the globalizing world and the other gliding into the matrix of the smooth transnational spaces inhabited by the multiplexed imagination—both these films enact a collage of connecting and intersecting spaces, forging an assemblage of imagined experiences, perceptions, thoughts, and feelings that give rise to a new imaginative reality.



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Living in a Dream: Alfred Kubin's Inner Landscapes

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<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 to 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 Grundbegriffen* 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 Erlebbare 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, Rübzahl,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 Zeichenfeder (Adventures of a Drawing Quill)* in 1942 among others.

²²After illustrating Paul Wegener's tales about Rübzahl, 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 dream 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.



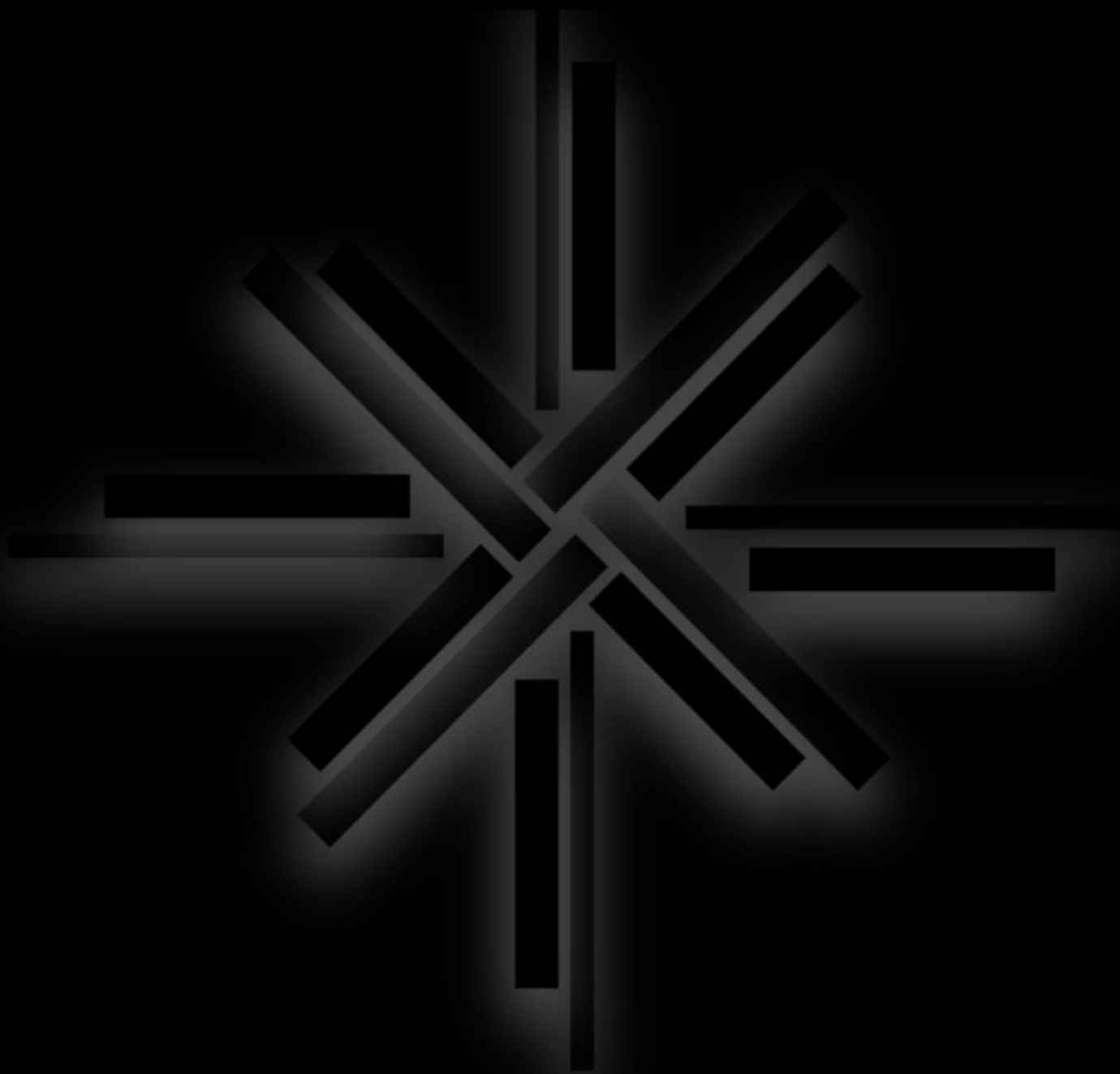
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