

Writing the unreality

Madness as an affective worlding in the fiction of Anna Kavan.

Final Thesis for the Research Master Gender Studies

by

Kirsten Bitter

Student number 3360393

Department of Media and Culture Studies – Faculty of Humanities

Supervisor: Dr. Kathrin Thiele

Second Reader: Dr. Susanne C. Knittel

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Universiteit Utrecht

Abstract

In this thesis I consider madness not to be an endpoint of signification where all meaning shatters, and to show this I will focus my research on the fiction of British writer Anna Kavan. Kavan writes stories that are based on her own experiences with madness, and in her work she shows that madness inhabits affective creative connections. These connections relate to literary tropes that inhabit extensions *from* the self towards the more-than-human world. My thesis works within the fields of mad studies, *écriture féminine*, autofiction and queer studies. By working in these fields I am engaging in a critical perspective regarding the influence of psychiatry whilst simultaneously illuminating the potentiality inherent in the writing of madness. I will work with a complex and ambiguous phenomena that is *the unreality*. The unreality is the co-existence of multiple consciousnesses in a non-hierarchical composition. By considering the unreality the worlding of madness, I will engage in a close-reading of two stories by Anna Kavan. The story ‘A Changed Situation,’ works with the trope of the house in which the house represents more than an inanimate pile of bricks. The house shows its agency to the fictional “I,” thereby subjecting the “I” to its agential will. The second story, ‘A Visit,’ explores an interspecies relationship between the fictional “I” and a leopard that is shaped through love and loss. In this thesis I address the multiplicity of affective potentialities that arise from the writing of the experience of madness. I establish the worlding of madness as an affective co-making, a becoming-together, an eternal thinking through difference, by which the rational singular fixed dichotomous structures are being challenged. By result an awareness arises for the embodied knowledge within the fiction of Anna Kavan.

Keywords: Anna Kavan, autofiction, becoming-together, *écriture féminine*, mad studies, gender studies, literary animal studies, architectural phenomenology, critical psychiatry, queer studies, the uncanny, the unreality, worlding.

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Introduction

I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.

Matthew 13:35

Like women everywhere, we speak in code...

Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz¹

A house watches and torments its inhabitant whilst constantly undergoing change in form subjecting its inhabitant to its agential will. A leopard enters a woman's room and lays down beside her thereby establishing an intimate relationship. These two examples are found in the stories of British writer Anna Kavan and will be the foundational direction of this thesis. My goal is to show that madness is not an endpoint of signification, but an affective force that constantly makes connections from the self towards the Other. The imagined reality of madness is shaped by affinities and potentialities, situated in an eternal force of becoming that is shaped by an affective outward-bound push. In the fiction of Anna Kavan I identify a writing that encompasses the experience of madness. I take note of the sensitivities that are experienced when the words "mad" and "madness" are used, and further on in this introduction I will justify my use of these terms. The understanding of madness that I suggest does not consider madness as an endpoint of signification. I therefore provide an alternative to the classical understanding of madness that is primarily shaped by the "scientific-rationalist tradition of the Enlightenment."² In the fiction of Anna Kavan, madness is not a state where all meaning shatters. Instead, it is a starting point to theorize *from*, a point of departure to contemplate the range of affective connections in Kavan's fiction. For Kavan the writing of fiction is a way to live with the experience of madness, as she uses language to structure her experiences. Her objective, besides the embodied urge to write as a means to survive, is to

¹ Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands La Frontera The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987), 59.

² Peter Sedgwick, *Psycho Politics: Laing, Foucault, Goffman, Szasz and the Future of Mass Psychiatry* (London: Unkant Publishers, 2015), 119.

emancipate others who live in madness and/or psychiatric structures, a point I will elaborate on in later this introduction.

Kavan writes stories that feature creative interactions, and affective alliances as her stories inhabit tropes that signify an extension *from* herself towards the world around her. Key in her fiction is that she writes both the objective reality *and* the imagined (in madness) reality simultaneously. There is no hard divide between reason and madness, both exist together and must be analyzed as such. The stories of Kavan that I will investigate are not about *overcoming* madness. Her stories do not consider madness an aberration that needs to be cured or fixed, neither is her fiction reinforcing a healthy mind and body as a key goal. Rather, Kavan's stories challenge the reader by countering the singular framework of rationality, to imagine an *otherwise* and an *elsewhere* as her stories consist of affective relations that stem from *within* the experience of madness, inhabiting affective forces such as horror, alienation, loneliness and love.

Madness, in particular living with and theorizing with madness, is often enclosed by a shroud of silence. Even within the critical studies field, limited attention is being paid to the study of (the writings of) madness. It appears to be difficult to talk about neurodivergence, neurodiversity and madness. This could be the case because neurotypical people are afraid of madness, or they are afraid to offend and stigmatize. Perhaps neurotypical people cannot imagine madness as a creative force, due to its invisible nature of being *in* the mind and not directly materially distinguishable. This illegitimately signifies an absence of agency and creativity. Another explanation could be that there is not much knowledge about madness, aside from the psychiatric framework, whose pitfalls I will discuss in chapter one. There is awareness of *some* mental illnesses due to their manifestation in public discourse, such as depression and anxiety, yet madness remains mysterious, clouded in a psychiatric narrative that is hard to overshadow.

In this thesis, I work with two stories that signify a diverse and heterogenous experience of madness. The story 'A Changed Situation' from the short story novel *Asylum Piece*³ deals with the experience of horror due to the unfolding agency of an inanimate space. The second story 'A Visit,' from the collection of stories titled *Julia and the Bazooka*,⁴ engages with the interspecies relationship between a woman and a leopard, and describes the affective sensations of love and loss. By engaging with these stories in my thesis, I want to show how writing the imagination of madness inhabits a wide-reaching creative potential by

³ Anna Kavan, *Asylum Piece* (London: Peter Owen Publishers, 2001).

⁴ Anna Kavan, *Julia and the Bazooka* (London: peter Owen Publishers, 1970).

establishing affective connections. As a collector of Kavan's work, I have access to almost her entire oeuvre in print, and the choice of these two stories is eclectic. There are two reasons why I have chosen these two stories. First, as some of her work is hard to get access to (for instance *Eagle's Nest*⁵ and *A Bright Green Field*⁶ are only available second-hand for steep prices), I have chosen two stories from books that are easy accessible, and available for purchase at most (online) bookstores as they have been re-printed recently by Peter Owen Publishers. Second, I had to limit myself regarding the scope of this thesis, and these two stories speak to the diversity within the experience of madness, extending to both the inanimate and to the animate/animal. This *perceived* binary inhabits a contrast by which the scope of the worlding of the experience madness comes to light.

Becoming Anna Kavan

Anna Kavan was born as Helen Emily Woods in Cannes, France in 1901. Kavan's young life was shaped by many sorrows. As Jeremy Reed tells in *A Stranger on Earth*, she experienced a childhood full of neglect. Her mother send her to a boarding school when she was very young, and she lost her father when she was only fourteen when he committed suicide by jumping off a ship.⁷ When Kavan was nineteen years old, she was married off, by her mother, to thirty year old Donald Ferguson, a former lover of her mother.⁸ Ferguson worked for a railway company in Burma, and took a position there and Kavan moved with him. Life in Burma greatly influenced her work, as the narratives of Burma being both a tropical hell and a lush imagining of nature run through Kavan's work, most prominently in the novel *Who Are You?*⁹, and in the story 'A Visit,' from *Julia and the Bazooka*. By 1928 Kavan had divorced Ferguson and married Stuart Edmonds, whom she divorced in 1938. The end of this marriage coincided with Kavan's admittance to a clinic in Switzerland after a suicide attempt as told by David Callard in *The Case of Anna Kavan*.¹⁰

As Callard argues, Kavan's incarceration in a mental hospital triggered the re-invention of herself. During this time, Kavan deliberately and actively transformed from Helen Emily Woods into Anna Kavan. This transformation was evident through a change in

⁵ Anna Kavan, *Eagle's Nest* (London: Peter Owen Limited, 1957), 9.

⁶ Anna Kavan, *A Bright Green Field* (London: Peter Owen Limited, 1958).

⁷ Jeremy Reed, *A Stranger on Earth: The life and work of Anna Kavan* (London: Peter Owen Publishers, 2006), 16.

⁸ Reed, *A Stranger on Earth*, 17.

⁹ Anna Kavan, *Who Are You?* (London: Peter Owen, 2001).

¹⁰ David Callard, *The Case of Anna Kavan: A Biography* (London: Peter Owen Publishers, 1992), 61.

name, dress, weight, and mannerisms. The name Anna Kavan was not an incidental choice. It was the name of a character that featured in her 1930 novel *Let Me Alone*,¹¹ and her adaptation of the name in 1938 may have been fueled by her fascination with author Franz Kafka, as Kavan wrote in a letter: “Why does the K sound in a name symbolize the struggle of those who try to make themselves at home on a homeless borderland?”¹² Most prominent in her change from Woods to Kavan was the change in her appearance. Rhys Davies, a close friend of Kavan and fellow writer remarked that “she had changed not only her name and her mode of living, but also, somewhat remarkably, her personal appearance,” transforming from a curvy brunette to a platinum blonde slender woman.¹³ Rhys Davies furthermore notes:

Helen Ferguson had vanished. This spectral woman, attenuated of body and face, a former abundance of auburn hair shorn and changed to metallic gold, thinned hands, restless, was so different that my own need to readjust to her was a strain.¹⁴

Reed considers the portrayal of the protagonist Anna Kavan in the novel *A Stranger Still* by Helen Woods representative of Woods’ discovery of her true self. Woods seems to have found the image of who she truly wanted to be in the fictitious character Anna Kavan. She wrote the following on the character of Anna Kavan:

The sense of unreality has left her: she felt clear-headed as never before. She stood there in absolute honesty, looking into herself. She was suddenly, objectively, aware of the girl Anna Kavan, an individual human being, alive in the world, alone, without support, without obligations, capable of intelligent thought and responsible for her own destiny.¹⁵

In the above quote we see how Helen Woods allows the fictional Anna Kavan to reflect on what it means to be (come) an intelligent and independent woman. In the transformation from Woods to Kavan there is the materialization of the desire to become somebody else. The girl who Woods created in fiction, was the girl she admired and most desired to be.

¹¹ Anna Kavan, *Let me Alone* (London: Peter Owen Publishers, 1974).

¹² Callard, *The Case of Anna Kavan*, 61.

¹³ Francis Booth, *Among Those Who Left: The British Experimental Novel 1940-1980* (lulu.com, 2012), 63.

¹⁴ Reed, *A Stranger on Earth*, 48.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

The appearance and materialization of Anna Kavan gave rise to a different style of writing, when compared to her earlier work under the name Woods. According to her biographer Reed, Kavan became part of the European avant-garde movement of writers that used a confessional mode of expression, in which madness was considered a legitimate subject matter for art.¹⁶ Furthermore, Reed emphasizes how her work under the name Kavan shared the common themes of “breakdown, rehabilitation and the paranoia that comes with being locked up and ejected into a world where most people appear minatory.”¹⁷ Reed considers Kavan’s style to be inhabiting a “new minimalism.” This is a style in which stories are told from the first person perspective and by which “[Kavan] [made] the subjective autobiographical element in her life the focal point, and the fictionalized reportage of her confinement [a way] of owning up to madness in both herself and others.”¹⁸ Thus besides working with autobiographical elements, Kavan’s work also represents and defends those situated in madness that cannot express themselves as they do not inhabit her position of power, to write and to be read. Kavan becomes concerned and occupied with paying attention to, and creating awareness for, the practices that psychiatric patients endure. As Reed writes:

Anna turned her life around by converting institutionalization with its implied social stigma and clinical regime into a writing in which small gestures of compassion and defiance compensate for the neglect or indifference in the patients experience on the part of the staff and those who have them confined.¹⁹

A similar remark regarding Kavan’s ability to create awareness for psychiatric suffering is made by Sir Desmond MacCarthy in a review for *Asylum Piece* in the Sunday Times captured in Reed’s biography of Kavan:

If *Asylum Piece* is not based on actual experience it is certainly an astonishing achievement... What is remarkable is that the subject of these stories not only kept the lamp alight in the fog of, at any rate, impending insanity, but was able to project dramatically the experience of fellow sufferers. That is just what the really insane can never do... There is beauty about these stories which has nothing to do with their

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 50.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 49.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

pathological interest, and is the result of art. There is beauty in the stillness of the author's ultimate despair.²⁰

In this lengthy quote, we read the admiration for the writing of the experience of madness that Kavan participated in, whilst simultaneously noticing the (common) conception that people, in madness, cannot express themselves or form affective alliances (“that is just what the *really* insane can never do”). Even though MacCarthy’s review inhabits a hierarchical constitution of what madness can and cannot do, it still shows how Kavan managed to create awareness and lay bare psychiatric suffering. When we combine the perspective of Reed, Callard and Kavan herself, we get the impression of Kavan as a woman who focused to uncover the silencing of women and address the silence and absence of language in psychiatry. She does this by writing stories comprising of the experience of women who experience madness and are (in certain stories) locked up or threatened with that prospect. In her novels from then on, Kavan focusses on the lived experience of the mad individual. She does this by implementing autobiographical elements into her stories and by creating narratives that revolve around the experience of madness in which madness constitutes an entire world in its own accord. This world of madness is constantly challenged by the neurotypical world, and by the practice and dogma of psychiatry. Kavan shows the struggle of trying to balance life in *both* objective reality, *and* in the fictitious inner world of madness. Kavan acknowledges her need for psychiatric help, but in her work from then on, she also criticizes the inhumanity and the suffering of mad patients in mental institutions. She explicates the inability of those situated in madness to break through the psychiatric narrative in which the practice of psychiatry talks *about* those considered to be mad, but never *with* them, on which I will elaborate in chapter one. This top-down construction of power that the psychiatric apparatus holds over the individual creates an alienation and loneliness for each patient, which is exactly the concerns that Kavan captures in her work, whilst simultaneously worlding the experience of madness as an affective force in her fiction.

Mad studies and madness

The act of writing by a person who is situated in madness engages in an unfolding that speaks to the emancipation of people living in madness. The narratives of madness bring forth a

²⁰ Ibid., p. 64.

situated knowledge that facilitate knowledge for literary studies, feminist studies, critical psychiatry and the relative new field of mad studies. Writing the lived experience of madness shows the potential of people situated in madness to represent themselves as subjects that are not merely mute and subjected to inner terror. It is important for people who experience madness to participate in the undoing of the silencing and the one-sided psychiatric victim narrative. The field of mad studies incorporates activism with publishing work by scholars who live with madness, analyzing and facilitating literature and art by mad people, and working against the oppression of mad subjects.

The term madness is often met with misunderstanding, as people consider it an offensive term as the term historically dismissed a person of their right to speak and be heard. However, activists of psychiatry have long reclaimed the term. Mel Starkman, Canadian activist and psychiatric survivor wrote in 1981: “An important new movement is sweeping through the Western world... The ‘mad,’ the oppressed, the ex-inmates of society’s asylums are coming together and speaking for themselves.”²¹ Menzies, LeFrancois and Reaume, representing the discipline of mad studies, are of the opinion that “mad people and mad culture occupy the analytic core, and they/we embody the very spirit, of Mad Studies.”²² Taking on mad as an identity, and madness as a label, is working with the “rich history, the collective identity, ideological commitments, repertoire of discourses, and politics of resistance and change,”²³ that mad studies incorporates, and that above all should not be forgotten or clouded in vague terms such as “chemical imbalance,” or “mental illness”. Bonnie Burstow explains that despite critique, psychiatry remains hegemonic: “The average person in the street speaks of ‘schizophrenia,’ of ‘mental illness’ of symptoms’ of this or that ‘mental disorder’. When we talk this way [...] we are performing our designated role in the work of psychiatry.”²⁴ The words we utter, and the words we *do not* utter, can potentially be revolutionary. To Burstow, it is exactly the cryptic terms that obscure the facts that “mental hospitals are in fact prisons” and that “psychiatric treatment is a form of social control.”²⁵ Burstow explains that reclaiming words such as “mad, lunatic, psycho, crazy, nutter, madwoman, madman, disability,” means that the community is turning these words around,

²¹ Robert Menzies, Brenda A. LeFrancois and Geoffrey Reaume, “Introducing Mad Studies,” in *Mad Matters A Critical Reader in Canadian Mad Studies*, edited by Brenda A. LeFrancois, Robert Menzies, and Geoffrey Reaume (Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press Inc., 2010), 2.

²² Menzies, LeFrancois and Reaume, “Introducing Mad Studies,” 14.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Bonnie Burstow, “A Rose by Any Other Name: Naming and the Battle against Psychiatry,” in *Mad Matters: A Critical Reader in Canadian Mad Studies*, edited by Brenda A. LeFrancois et.al. (Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press, 2010), 82.

²⁵ Burstow, “A Rose by Any Other Name,” 84.

using them to “connote [...] alternate ways of thinking and processing, wisdom that speaks a truth not recognized.”²⁶ An additional reason to use “mad” is that it facilitates “celebration and pride. Using “mad” gives permission to explore the forbidden regions of our mind. It promotes acceptance of difference.”²⁷ This is in line with my goal in this thesis, to unfold mad language through the notion of difference as a creative force, which I will elaborate on in chapter one. Mad people still produce language and writing, yet due to this epistemic violence they are not heard. It requires a special framework to take notice of their work, and this framework cannot be found within a system that values reason as a key force, as reason fuels a framework of human exceptionalism, modernity and progress.

The problem of society’s valuing of rationality goes back to a historically designed complex and intertwined system that I will elaborate on more in chapter one with regard to its connection to psychiatry. The appraisal of reason is intrinsically connected to Western Enlightenment, a dogmatic system that considers the world an objective “known” through the proliferation of science and its presumed rationality and neutrality. Humanism, on a similar note, is considered to be a singular system, yet it is in fact a muddle of various dogma’s from Western Enlightenment that includes disenchantment (secularism), rationality, reason, modernity and progress. Western societies consider progress to be that which moves towards modernity, which requires the classification of those who do not fit this progress-dogma, and who are thus left behind. The problem of modernity and progress is also addressed by queer scholar Heather Love in *Feeling Backwards*. She explains how the idea of modernity, with its suggestion of progress, rationality and technological advance is intimately bound up with backwardness. She engages with Dipesh Chakrabarty who argues that “if modernity is to be a definable, delimited concept, we must identify some people or practices as non modern.”²⁸ Love shows, when we look at the rise of dogmatic modernity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, that this is done by “perfecting techniques for mapping and disciplining subjects considered to be lagging behind.”²⁹ The subjects who stayed behind were “sexual and gender deviants but also women, colonized people, the nonwhite, the disabled, the poor and criminals,”³⁰ who were marked as inferior due to their deposition of being “backward”. Taking this argument to the current age, we see that advances such as gay marriage and media

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 85

²⁸ Heather Love, *Feeling Backward. Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 6.

²⁹ Heather Love, *Feeling Backward*, 6.

³⁰ Ibid.

visibilities of gays, lesbians, queer and transgender people portray an image of mainstream success and mainstream acceptance, but this does “obscure the continuing denigration and dismissal of queer existence. One may enter the mainstream on the condition that one break ties with all those who cannot make it.”³¹ Love’s argument speaks very much to the method and goals of mad studies. Mad studies pays attention to how this discourse of modernity, and hegemonic heteronormative futurity inhabits a track record of suffering. Dreaming of a homogenous future is thus a dogmatic process that is founded on a history of violence towards those who were regarded as deviant.

I now return to mad studies, and provide an in depth account of what mad studies is, and how it works with and around the hegemonic discourse of psychiatry that separates the mad subject from the rational subject. Mad studies is a relatively new discipline that looks at mad utterances not as something that is the opposite of normal but as something that exists in its own right and creates a worlding, a specific narrative of its own, that inhabits the mad lived experience. Coming forth from the anti-psychiatry movement of the 1960s and 1970s, mad studies inhabits an activist purpose.³² The purpose is to take up matters of psychiatrization, the disavowal of the agency of mad people and the battle against psychiatric discourse. Mad studies concerns itself with the power of the pharmaceutical industry who create a narrative in which the mad needs fixing. It counters the biological determinism within the pharmaceutical industry whilst “respecting, valuing, and privileging the Mad thoughts of those whom conventional psychiatry would condemn to a jumble of diagnostic prognostications based on subjective opinions masquerading as science.”³³ Mad studies is an interdisciplinary critical discipline that connects to queer studies, disability studies, post-colonial studies, gender studies and literary studies and it is likewise this intersection that concerns my thesis. Brenda LeFrancois, a key figure in Canadian mad studies, defines the objectives of mad studies. Since her characterization is very broad, many fall beyond the scope of my thesis, yet I consider the following to be relevant for my research. LeFrancois considers mad studies to be a “project of inquiry, knowledge production and political action devoted to a critique and transcendence of psy-centered ways of thinking, behaving, relating and being.”³⁴ Mad studies thus inhabits a certain curiosity for knowledge that derives from minds that are usually left unheard. Mad studies attains to rise above the judgement of

³¹ Ibid., p. 10.

³² Menzies, LeFrancois and Reaume, “Introducing Mad Studies,” 4.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 13.

psychiatry by listening to mad people and considering their words valuable sources for knowledge production. It is an interdisciplinary field and it is multivocal in its praxis. It takes as a source and inspiration the “subjectivities, embodiments, words, experiences and aspirations of those among us whose lives have collided with the power of institutional psychiatry.”³⁵ Thus, instead of the top-down structure of psychiatry, mad studies aims to enable a movement from the grassroots, to facilitate understanding and change, by which mad subjects are no longer regarded as passive and without knowledge, but free-acting subjects that have been silenced in psychiatry and its accompanying culture.

Mad studies is a tool to consider how writers write on their own madness. Relating this to Kavan, I argue that she is writing her own experiences of madness, and she allows this creative potential to work *for* her, to construct a narrative that offers insight in the worlding of madness, a worlding that I will engage with in chapter one. Going back to Kavan’s ambition for her writing as formulated by Reed and Callard, it becomes clear that Kavan tries to illuminate *how* she experiences the world, as someone whose imagination is situated in a double consciousness, being both in the objective reality *and* in the imagined (mad) reality. With mad studies in mind, we as her readers, can learn to see madness not as a negative side effect to rationalism, or as rationalism’s anti-thesis, but rather as a source of specific knowledge that opens up meanings that remain hidden to us if we would merely consider the rational approach. In writing fiction from her own lived experience, Kavan shows that the psychiatric narrative is not all-knowing and all-encompassing, but that she has the ability to make her own reality material, to write her fictionalized experiences, and to engage in a worlding. We, as scholars and readers, need to be thinking *with* madness, instead of rationalizing it through normative frameworks. When we think with madness, we allow ourselves to re-imagine human corporeality, to address the diversity in minds and bodies and allow ourselves to acknowledge the creative capacities of the human mind.

Kavan is not the only female writer engaging in a writing that re-imagines human corporeality. I want to provide insight and a background in this act of writing by providing examples of female writers that also practice this active worlding. These writers, like Kavan, are thinking and writing *differently* and thereby dislocating fixed structures. Their approach of writing very much speaks to my interests as it contemplates a creative imaginative worlding that is simultaneously unsettling, magical, political and otherworldly. These female writers are similar, in their objectives and style, to Kavan and thereby I can clarify in what fabric

³⁵ Ibid., p. 14.

Kavan is entangled. German writer and artist Unica Zürn is, like Kavan, writing her own madness through the capturing of internal dialogues in *Dunkler Frühling*³⁶ and *Das Haus der Krankheiten*.³⁷ Zürn writes autobiographical fiction that covers topics such as depression, schizophrenia, domestic violence and abortion. Besides graphic accounts of topics such as incest and bestiality, her work also inhabits a magical worlding, where the notion of fear is combined with an enchanting description of events: “Who knows whether or not the skeleton will crawl up the twines of ivy that grow on the wall below her window, and then slip into her room. His mass of hard and pointed bones will simply crush her inside her bed.”³⁸ Like Kavan, Zürn is an artist, creating paintings and drawings. This is also the case for British-Mexican artist and writer Leonora Carrington. In her autofictional novel *Down Below*³⁹ and her fictional novel *The Hearing Trumpet*,⁴⁰ she creates an otherworldly account of madness as a force that is both deviant to the norm, and imaginative and creative, surrealist and comforting. In both novels, there is attention given to small affective gestures between patients when they are incarcerated. In *The Hearing Trumpet*, the elderly protagonist is sent off to an institution, however, this institution defies all expectations: “The main building was in fact a castle, surrounded by various pavilions with incongruous shapes. Pixielike dwellings shaped like toadstools, Swiss chalets, railway carriages, one or two ordinary bungalows, something shaped like a boot.”⁴¹ Similar to Kavan, Carrington takes notice of spatial tropes, and creates a magical world fueled by the loneliness of being sent to an institution. Carrington’s stories behold a very calming and reassuring sensation in the midst of misery. Like Carrington, British writer Barbara Comyns writes comforting dream-worlds in *The Vet’s Daughter*.⁴² This is a tale that borders on the fantastic in which a child, abused by her father, retreats into a dream world where she discovers she inhabits the power of floatation. Besides the shock, and the hurt of living amongst abuse, Comyns’ protagonist expresses a sense of relief: “I comforted myself with the knowledge that at least I wasn’t earthbound like most people,”⁴³ as she transcends the objective reality and is comforted by an otherworldliness. All these writers write fictionalized experiences, and corporeal dream-worlds that inhabit affective potentialities. The worlding that these writers engage with, contain experiences that

³⁶ Unica Zürn, *Dark Spring* (USA: Exact Change, 2008).

³⁷ Unica Zürn, *Das Haus der Krankheiten* (Berlin: Brinkmann und Bose, 1986).

³⁸ Zürn, *Dark Spring*, 52.

³⁹ Leonora Carrington, *Down Below* (New York: The New York Review Of Books, Inc, 2017).

⁴⁰ Leonora Carrington, *The hearing trumpet* (London: Penguin Books, 2005).

⁴¹ Carrington, *The hearing trumpet*, 29.

⁴² Barbara Comyns, *The Vet’s Daughter* (London: Virago Modern Classics, 2013). E-book.

⁴³ Comyns, *The Vet’s Daughter*, e-book location 1621.

would not fit the narrative of reason and progress. Madness, following the example of Love, is considered to be regressive and therefore it should be left behind. Cherishing and doing research on mad language is thus a political emancipatory undertaking where we avoid condemning the mad subject to non-being. The mad woman who is aware of her potential and actively rejects hierarchical dichotomous language and psychiatric language, attacks the system that is responsible for her subjugation. With mad studies, we can move beyond this silence.

Autofiction in the Feminine

Kavan implements the personal into her written fiction. Primarily she focuses on the subjugated position and the unique perspectives of her fictionalized “I,” who is a woman experiencing madness. Kavan’s notion of writing herself into a narrative, into an existence where she is heard (through fiction) speaks both to the notion of *écriture féminine*, the writing of the feminine, a term coined by Hélène Cixous in *Le Rire de la Méduse*, “The Laugh of the Medusa,” published in 1975, and to autofiction, a literary term created by Serge Doubrovsky in 1977. Thinking through *écriture féminine* and autofiction as a methodology allows me to uncover what is hidden in the text by Kavan and unravel affective connections that are invisible to dogmatic rationality.

Cixous considers the uncovering of female knowledge the way to reconsider and deconstruct all we know about language, philosophy and psychoanalysis.⁴⁴ To feminists of sexual difference, or “French feminists,” sexual difference is integral to all cultural practices and all forms of knowledge production. It is thus of importance to think about the relationship between the feminine and the creative act of writing. Cixous considers the act of writing to be the space where creative thought and difference work together through the process of thinking and creating, a process she refers to as *making meaning*. By deconstructing the power of the Cartesian duality, which is intertwined with Western Enlightenment thinking that considers there to be a split between mind and body, there is an opening for embodied thinking and thus embodied writing. In the act of writing through the feminine, the creative productive force of feminine thought is emphasized. To think through the feminine, write through the feminine and thereby create a specific situated meaning, means to employ a process of meaning-

⁴⁴ Ann Rosalind Jones, “Writing the Body: Towards an Understanding of ‘L’Ecriture Feminine’,” *Feminist Studies* 7 no 2 (1981), 247.

production that is embodied, instead of re-producing the Cartesian split. Abigail Bray in *Hélène Cixous, Writing and Sexual Difference* identifies in Cixous' work that writing is considered a creative move towards difference. This move "capable of mastering a fear of the abyss," is feminine because it is "productive, generative, radiant with affirmation".⁴⁵ Cartesian writing repeats sameness and hierarchies as it is against mastering the fear of the abyss, the Other, the feminine and the dark unknown, by keeping difference deliberately in the dark. Cartesian writing, according to Cixous, constitutes itself as "a type of anti-thinking."⁴⁶ Cixous considers women to always have been on the side of that what has been repressed. Women are that what is absent, what is different yet unacknowledged, and what is rendered to be dead, buried, decapitated and alienated.⁴⁷

In "The Laugh of the Medusa," Cixous speaks of women's writing and what it will do. The mere act of writing by women is revolutionary, as women have historically been silenced and moreover, women silence themselves. Cixous encourages women to write themselves, to write about women and bring other women to writing. Women have been detached from their bodies. This has been done in a violent matter by patriarchal oppression, causing women to be in the dark and to be unaware of their imaginary abilities which, according to Cixous, are "inexhaustible, like music, painting, writing: their steam of phantasms is incredible."⁴⁸ "The Laugh of the Medusa," is a call to women to write their own "tumult of drives," their "shameless sickness," and women must demand their place in writing and in literature because for too long women believed that writing was only for the greatest of men. The subjugated position women experience is, according to Cixous, a deliberate act of the patriarchal construction by which women learn to hate other women, to "be their own enemies, to mobilize their immense strength against themselves."⁴⁹ This position of women is a place that offers strength, as women "are precocious, we the repressed of culture, our lovely mouths gagged with pollen, our wind knocked us out, we the labyrinths, the ladders, the trampled spaces".⁵⁰ Cixous proposes that women write individually, and return to the body that has been stolen from them, so that they are no longer an "uncanny stranger on display," and end their own censorship.⁵¹ Women must add to written and oral history, and their return will be a formidable force because "when the 'repressed' of their culture and their society

⁴⁵ Abigail Bray, *Hélène Cixous. Writing and Sexual Difference* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 7.

⁴⁶ Bray, *Hélène Cixous*, 7.

⁴⁷ Elaine Marks, "Women and Literature in France," in *Signs* 3:04 (1978), 841.

⁴⁸ Hélène Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," *Signs* 1:4 (1976), 876.

⁴⁹ Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," 878.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 880.

return, it's an explosive, utterly destructive, staggering return, with a force never yet unleashed and equal to the most forbidden of suppressions."⁵² There is thus a great sense of urgency when it comes to ending women's (self-inflicted) censorship. Taking Cixous' theory to Kavan, we see the emancipatory and political engagement that is inherent in the writing of madness, especially when we combine this to the objectives of mad studies that stands for the reclaiming of madness as a legitimate source for knowledge. Kavan, as a woman situated in madness, is ending her censorship by writing fiction that inhabits affective potentialities. She engages in a writing of difference, in which she constitutes, through a fictional "I," narratives of women whom are not singular beings, but who are in a constant interplay and affective relation with the world, both inanimate and animal.

To further clarify *écriture féminine*, I will provide an example by turning to Audre Lorde, a writer who also practices *écriture féminine*. In "Poetry is not a Luxury," she addresses the writing and speaking from an embodied position. In Lorde's case we speak of an embodiment as an African American lesbian woman active in the civil rights movement. Although her position and lived experience is different from that of Kavan, and I am careful to not make an analogy, they both reveal a need and a necessity to write to stay alive. Both women write from a place of survival, Kavan from being incarcerated and being confronted with the limits of psychiatry, Lorde as a lesbian woman living in the racially segregated USA. Even though their experiences are not to be captured under a single umbrella term, their female corporeality allows for multiple forces and connections to arise that signify a common theme by being born a woman. Lorde illustrates the notion of *écriture féminine* when she writes: "This is poetry as illumination, for it is through poetry that we give name to those ideas which are – until the poem – nameless and formless, about to be birthed, but already felt."⁵³ What Lorde describes here is the corporeal force ("to be birthed") that is inherent in (her) poetry. It is a force that moves *through* the feminine body. The necessity to write is captured when she writes: "For women, then, poetry is not a luxury. It is a vital necessity of our existence. [...] First made into language, then into idea, then into more tangible action. Poetry is the way we help give name to the nameless so it can be thought."⁵⁴ In this quote Lorde is connecting the action of writing, to an activist potentiality. Hereby Lorde is bringing together, like Cixous desires, a force that will illuminate the "abyss" and unleash a force that cannot be contained. Lorde shows the urgency in writing, and the need to release that what

⁵² Ibid., p. 886.

⁵³ Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider. Essays and Speeches* (Berkeley: Crossing Press, 2007), 35.

⁵⁴ Lorde, *Sister Outsider*, 35.

has been brooding in silence for too long, silenced and unheard. When Lorde writes: “These places of possibility within ourselves are dark because they are ancient and hidden; they have survived and grown strong through that darkness,”⁵⁵ she speaks to the power to rise from the darkness, from the depths of subjugation, after being trampled on in apathy, and she speaks to the resilience to rise again, that even in the dark, women stand strong and tall. Lorde writes the silenced body into existence, she writes from the place of hurt and pain, not as a self-pity, but as a way to shape a new reality, a new narrative, a way to rise above the masculine Enlightenment narrative of rationality that silenced subjects, locked them up and regarded them as irrelevant. Lorde’s poetry as a writing that is necessary to survive, bears similarities to the corporeal force that is also present in Kavan’s work. Kavan does not write autobiography in the classical sense, or poetry like Lorde, but her “I” is always fictionalized. To understand Kavan’s double positionality better, one foot in fiction and one in autobiography, I turn to the concept of autofiction to help us analyze her fiction.

Autofiction is a term composed by Doubrovsky in 1977 when he published his novel *Fils*. The back cover of his book defined autofiction as “fiction of strictly real events.”⁵⁶ Hywel Dix in *Autofiction in English* argues that Doubrovsky created the term autofiction to separate his work from creative writing and from autobiography.⁵⁷ Doubrovsky saw autofiction as the absence of any strict demarcation between autobiography, autobiographical novel and fictional biography. He considered his own autofictional novels as fictional novels, yet containing a narrative that is based in reality. Key in autofiction is the reconfiguration of narrative time. Even though the narrative departs from a linear, sequential, chronological time frame, it delves into temporal experimentation. This results in literary techniques like stream of consciousness, that features radical shifts in narrative perspective, inhabiting a loose or open-ended causality and open-ended symbolism by which singular meaning becomes disjoined making it opaque and elusive. These literary techniques, that were present in autofiction, were deemed to be inappropriate for autobiography, hence the rise of a new genre.⁵⁸ In *Writing the Self*, Karen Ferreira-Meyers explains the relationship of autofiction to truth. In autofiction, writing the truth “is always an intention, never a reality,” because the autofictional story is embedded in, what she names, “hoaxes,”⁵⁹ and what I consider to be a

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 33.

⁵⁶ Hywel Dix, “Introduction,” in *Autofiction in English*, edited by Hywel Dix (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 2.

⁵⁷ Hywel Dix, “Introduction,” 1.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 2.

⁵⁹ Karen Ferreira-Meyers, “Autobiography and Autofiction: No Need to Fight for a Place in the Limelight, There is Space Enough for Both of these Concepts,” in *Writing the Self. Essays on Autobiography and Autofiction*,

subjective positionality that does not necessarily describe reality as an objective known, but rather as an embodied interpretation. Within its own narrative, autofiction speaks the truth. Ferreira-Meyers quotes writer Chloé Delaume who says, “the autobiographer writes *about* his own life. The autofictional author writes *on* his own life. The use of fiction gives the author total freedom.”⁶⁰ I consider this to be the case for the autofiction of Kavan. Kavan takes her life, and her imagined reality, and turns this into fiction. She works *with* her own experiences to conduct a writing *on* the self that is embodied fiction. What is most prominent in the fiction of Kavan is the internalized state, an internal worlding of lived experience, without attention to the every-day practicalities of madness, such as taking medication, or therapy. Her writing is thus an account *on* her life, where the real is interweaved with the imagined. In writing autofiction, an author is not condemned to existence in, and repetition of, what is commonly referred to as objective reality, a state Cixous would consider to be a Cartesian illusion. This is why Kavan’s fiction speaks to autofiction as it gives Kavan the freedom to fuse the writing of reality *with* the writing of madness in a entangled chord, an entanglement hidden to neurotypical appreciation.

To give a better understanding of the writing of these two worlds in autofiction, I turn to Chicana lesbian activist and writer Gloria Anzaldúa. Anzaldúa writes “autohistoria-teoría,”⁶¹ (autoethnography) and her book *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, is a semi-autobiographical book that combines prose, poems and theory, addressing living on borders and in the margins, “keeping intact one’s shifting and multiple identity and integrity, [...] like trying to swim in a new element, an “alien” element.”⁶² Interesting to the notion of autofiction, is Anzaldúa’s statement: “This book, speaks of my existence.”⁶³ Here we see the distance that autofiction incorporates, not an *about*, but an *on* or *of* the self. Anzaldúa incorporates, similar to Kavan, *écriture féminine*, writing *through* her embodied position, and autofiction. Another fruitful link to Kavan, is Anzaldúa’s ability to write from a double position. As I explained earlier, Kavan writes both from the perspective of the objective reality, *and* the imagined reality. Anzaldúa’s work is centered around the notion of borders, bridges, that signify an in-between, existing on the border between both. Anzaldúa writes the following on the in-between state: “Those of us who live skirting otros mundos, other groups,

edited by Kerstin W. Shands, Giulia Grillo Mikrut, Dipti R. Pattanaik, Karen Ferreira-Meyers (Sweden: Elanders, 2015), 211

⁶⁰ Ferreira-Meyers, “Autobiography and Autofiction,” 211

⁶¹ Andrea J. Pitts, “Gloria E. Anzaldúa’s Autohistoria-teoría as an Epistemology of Self Knowledge / Ignorance,” *Hypatia* 31:2 (2016), 352.

⁶² Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands La Frontera The New Mestiza*, preface.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

in this in-between state I call nepantla have a unique perspective. We notice the breaches in feminism [...] the breaks in our discipline.”⁶⁴ Living in this double perspective, this ambiguity, which I will address in chapter one as I identify this ambiguity in Kavan’s fiction, inhabits knowledge and a unique perspective. AnaLouise Keating in *EntreMundos/AmongWorlds* considers nepantla to be an indication of “temporal, spatial, psychic, and/or intellectual point(s) of liminality and potential transformation. Boundaries become more permeable and begin to break down [...] [and] while intensely painful, can create shifts in consciousness and opportunities for change.”⁶⁵ Autofiction and *écriture féminine* exist in a harmonious cordial exchange, where not being situated in merely one literary tradition opens up potential for crossings, as it is not pure autobiography, and not pure fiction. This allows for an enrichment and a transference to take place between disciplines. With this in mind, we see how Lorde writes the self through embodied poetry that inhabits a revolutionary potential. Anzaldúa shows how embodying a multiplicity signifies a double stance, always being in-between what is rendered to be fixed. Kavan writes fiction from an embodied perspective, standing with one foot in the objective reality and one foot in the imagined reality, writing the experience of madness as an embodied and ambiguous force. All these examples feature writers who play with their double stance, and by not conforming to fixed categories, they undo the mirroring of Cartesian voices, as being not-fixed disturbs and reveals what has been silenced. This is a revolutionary force, as it is writing difference, writing the in-between, writing the abyss into the light.

Research and chapter overview

In this thesis I will conduct a close-reading of Anna Kavan’s work, and I will focus on the two stories ‘A Changed Situation,’ from *Asylum Piece* and ‘A Visit,’ from *Julia and the Bazooka*. As mentioned before, I am familiar with almost the entire oeuvre of Kavan, but have chosen these stories due to scope, accessibility for inspired readers and their variation in themes through which the broad spectrum of creative imagination within madness can be explored. The overall research question that I will engage with is: How does the creative force of madness, in the work of Anna Kavan, inhabit the ability to create a movement beyond the self towards new outward relationships by which the human is participating in an active

⁶⁴ AnaLouise Keating, “Introduction: Shifting worlds, una entrada,” in *EntreMundos/AmongWorlds: New Perspectives on Gloria E. Anzaldúa*, edited by AnaLouise Keating (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 1.

⁶⁵ Keating, “Introduction: Shifting worlds, una entrada,” 1.

entanglement with the more-than-human world? How are these creative forces materialized by affective connections between the human and the inanimate, and the human and the animal?

The first chapter titled: “Subject formation in the unreality,” will function as my theoretical framework. In this chapter I will engage with a phenomenon that is mentioned by Kavan, and other writers of madness such as Leonora Carrington, Janet Frame and Clarice Lispector, that is named *the unreality*. I acknowledge that this is a complex and vague term, yet when tackled with the right framework, it will show the affective connections in Kavan’s fiction. In chapter one, I will first give a critical overview of psychiatry, showing that it is an ambiguous practice as it is both a necessity for the patient *and* an oppressive force. Then I will provide an alternative to psychiatry by turning to French feminism as French feminism considers the subjugated position not a dead-end but a positionality to think *from*. Furthermore I will show how ambiguity is present in Kavan’s fiction, as she constructs the unreality and in-between-spaces. To untangle this notion of ambiguity, I will propose a theoretical framework, which is a theoretical entanglement of my own making, that I have named *ambiguous living*, to show how the ambiguity in Kavan’s fiction is an active worlding of madness.

The second chapter named: “The house as a transgressive animate force ‘A Changed Situation’” revolves around a house that, through its agential will, deconstructs itself as a symbol of safety. In this chapter I will address the power of transgressing that what is rendered to be fixed, and I will provide a close-reading of the story that is signifying this transgression. The research question that I will answer in this chapter is: How does the story ‘A Changed Situation,’ through Kavan’s narrative of madness, transgress the fixed objective inanimate implications of the house and by result create new knowledge and expand connections? I will provide a theoretical base on the notion of the house working with the theory of the uncanny and architectural history. Then I will provide a close-reading of the story ‘A Changed Situation,’ to show how inanimate agency is established by the construction of de-linear timelines and labyrinthian spaces.

The third chapter titled: “Loving a leopard: Interspecies affect in ‘A Visit,’” engages with the story of a relationship between a woman and a leopard that is shaped by both love and loss. After working with a presumed inanimate force in chapter two, in chapter three I will turn to the trope of the animal, to show how Kavan produces interspecies affect by the entanglement of the human and the animal in an affective relationship. I will provide an understanding of affective possibilities beyond the singular rational dichotomous conception

by engaging with affect theory and queer theory, to establish that human corporeality is always *already* an entanglement with the more-than-human world. The research question that I will answer in this chapter is: How does the story ‘A Visit,’ via its story-telling of an interspecies relationship, generate new affective possibilities for the subject through both the force of love (in that relationship) and loss (of that relationship)? I will engage with the act of story-telling of multispecies entanglements, to capture what Kavan achieves when she is writing this multispecies narrative. Then I address love and loss, to show what happens when a mutual signification is established and what happens when that mutual signification shatters. Finally I want to think with the notion of loss and failure, to end the chapter with a hopeful stance.

The conclusion will re-visit the important findings of my research and provide the reader with a clear and concise overview of the aim of this thesis. My goal with this thesis is to show that madness is not an endpoint of signification. It is not a place where meaning shatters and only an empty abyss remains. Within madness there *is* creativity, there *is* (an entangled) life, and there *is* a sensitivity that speaks to an affective exploration of connections beyond the self. Moving beyond the binaries that psychiatry, fueled by the Enlightenment-dogma, has set up for subjects, allows me to analyze the multiplicity of affinities that arise. Kavan’s writing of the experience of madness, provides a narrative that breaks relentlessly through the binaries that the Cartesian dichotomies renders to be fixed. By illuminating the connections in Kavan’s work I can show the dependency that arise between the human and the inanimate, and the human and the animal world. I aspire to do my research on the writing of madness from an non-fixed and entangled theoretical positionality countering the normative rational dogma, and thereby I will cherish the words a mad subject speaks and writes, as I refuse to repeat the (epistemological) silence.

Chapter One: Subject Formation in the Unreality

*I can feel that other day
running underneath this one
like an old videotape.*
Anne Carson, *The Glass Essay*.⁶⁶

*Reality is too delicate, only reality is delicate,
my unreality and my imagination are heavier.*
Clarice Lispector, *The Passion According to G.H.*⁶⁷

1.1. Introduction

My research on the creative potential in the writing of madness is heavily intertwined with the question of who can speak, create and add to the canon of the art produced by those in madness. The force of literature inhabits a imagination that travels beyond the constraints of objective reason because it works with imaginaries and potentialities that are not reduced to the objective or the positive, in other words, that what we can see or touch. However, the subject formation regarding people situated in madness is subjected to multiple dichotomous forces and these forces restrict the ability of the mad subject to speak and create in accord with their own terms. One of the leading forces of this silencing power is psychiatry, which comes forth from a dogma of rationality, objectivity and hierarchical dichotomous thinking. It is therefore key to provide a background of psychiatry's constitution, narrative and ideology to implement understanding in the overall dominant rhetoric regarding people situated in madness. My research will depart from (the limits of) psychiatry and I want to offer an alternative approach of considering madness and its creativity freed from the psychiatric perspective of silence and submission. In order to provide a full and in depth understanding of Kavan's work, I will engage with a phenomenon that cannot be seen from the rational

⁶⁶ Anne Carson, *Glass, Irony and God* (New York: New Direction Books, 1995), 8.

⁶⁷ Clarice Lispector, *The Passion According to G.H.* (New York: New Direction Books, 2012), 26

perspective, but inhabits an ever-present force to a subject who is situated in madness. This phenomenon is named by Kavan, and other writers of madness, *the unreality*. It is a complex and vague term, rooted deeply within the embodied experience and situated knowledge of a person in madness. It is however key to tackle the experience of madness and its intrinsic ambiguous nature. In this chapter I will provide an understanding of the writing of madness and the interlinked worlding of madness that Kavan engages in, by creating a narrative of the unreality. To understand what this narrative of the unreality does, it is important to unpack the practice of psychiatry. First, I will engage in a critical assessment of psychiatry because it inhabits a puzzling position being both a necessity to the patient whilst simultaneously carrying out an oppressive and silencing power over the subject. This silencing power of psychiatry is tied in with dichotomous dogmatic thought having its roots in the objective sciences that extend their power to all subject that do not fit the singular narrative of what makes a worthy human. Second, I will present an alternative to this singular framework of psychiatry by turning to French feminism. Thinkers of French feminism actively re-think the potentiality of expression for the subjugated person. The subjugated position is not considered to be a dead-end but rather a place to write and theorize *from*, into existence. By casting aside this hierarchical constructed singular “I,” a space opens up for a heterogenous “I” that does not consider psychiatry’s limits as definite but rather sees implied potentiality. I thus re-think what language can do when it moves beyond pre-conceived limits. Third, I will demonstrate how ambiguity inhabits Kavan’s writing of madness, exercised through her construction of the unreality and the in-between-spaces in her work. I will provide an explanation on ambiguous spaces, drawing from Kavan and other writers of madness, relating it to the notion of inhabiting a double consciousness. Subsequently I will propose my theoretical framework, that I named *ambiguous living*, to show how the ambiguity that inhabits the double consciousness in Kavan’s writing of madness, is an active worlding of madness through the concept of the unreality. To materialize this comprehensive force I will draw from Freud, Braidotti, Deleuze and Guattari and Barad to establish a theoretical entanglement that lays bare the open-ended-ness present in the writing of the experience of madness. Psychiatry’s silencing has long rendered mad subjects as “simple,” totally disregarding the creative potentialities and the extensive worlding that is inherent in the experience of madness. The affective forces that originate from this worlding will open up relationalities and connections that are not singular or a reflection of the same. As I will perform a close-reading of two of Kavan’s stories in the consecutive chapters, it is essential to draw attention to the affective forces that are present in madness, and its open-ended nature. Thinking through ambiguity

provides a “thinking differently,” regarding the forces in the world that people render to be static.

1.2. Psychiatry and the limits of expression

Psychiatry is the medical study and treatment of mental illness. Patients of psychiatry, like myself, will claim that it inhabits an ambiguous position. Psychiatry is a necessity for those suffering from mental illness, to relieve the patient of their internal pain, however, it also carries out an oppressive science of presumed objective labelling that constructs an inescapable lived reality to the patient. By labelling the patient, the patient experiences both the benefits of the label through psychiatric help that becomes available,⁶⁸ but also the stigma when the patient is required to mention the diagnosis at government instances and job interviews.

Psychiatry has its roots in a scientific dogma that erases individual voices and regards patients a collective known, thus homogenizing people suffering from mental illness by erasing their individual voice thereby rendering mad subjects unable to speak and unable to be heard. This elimination of individuality of mad subjects took a rise in the twentieth century when psychiatry came to reflect the “rise in the power of medicalized explanations in the world,” and psychiatry acquired the authority to “explain, categorize, treat, detain and prognose,”⁶⁹ situations and people when they were considered to be inhabiting a mental illness. This development meant an expansion of the scope and the scale of psychiatry’s authority. It is effortless to enter the realm of psychiatry, but increasingly difficult to exit: once diagnosed, once labelled, the stigma will linger forever. In *Psychiatry and the Business of Madness*, Bonnie Burstow works with Foucault’s postmodernist discourse analysis when she considers psychiatric language to be “performative.”⁷⁰ Burstow considers psychiatry to be born through discourse, exert its power through its own discourse, through language and through speech. What this characterization implies is that the words that psychiatry speak

⁶⁸ Maxfield Sparrow, “Labels are Valuable Tools,” Wednesday, November 8, 2017, <http://www.thinkingautismguide.com/2017/11/labels-are-valuable-tools.html>

⁶⁹ Derek Summerfield, “Does psychiatry stigmatize?” *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* 94 (2001), 148.

⁷⁰ Bonnie Burstow, *Psychiatry and the Business of Madness: An Ethical and Epistemological Accounting* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 4.

have the force of law and are “true” because someone in the profession utters them. In this regard, it is in many ways akin to the speech of kings in earlier eras. Just as a nobleman or peasant in a bygone era would have been exiled by the sheer fact of the reigning king stating they are in exile, someone is officially “mentally ill” or “of danger to self or others” by virtue of the fact that they have been pronounced so by psychiatry.⁷¹

Psychiatry’s labelling of people with terms as “schizophrenia,” and “mentally ill,” comes forth from a hegemonic structure, which indicates that they “are dominant, are accepted far and wide as valid [and] have become so much part of everyday life, that the fact that they are intrinsically ideological escapes detection.”⁷² This means that mad people are confronted with an eradication of their cultural representation on their own terms. This relates to what Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak names “epistemic violence.”⁷³ In psychiatry this epistemic violence appears in the shape of the DSM, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders that represents a normative, universal and presumed objective standard. Institutions such as the mental hospital, the prison, the psychologist and the school, reproduce, affirm and control this standard, functioning as the gate-keepers of this normative system. Deviations are caught by this institutionalized hierarchy of normality in which signals of possible deviations are noticed and passed on from school to GP, from GP to psychiatrist and from psychiatrist to the mental hospital. This system of control linked to a constant observation and scrutinization is deeply entrenched in Western society since the Enlightenment, resulting in the repression of mad language by historically framing madness as deviant and undesirable to the homogenous structure of a rational society. Reason in Western culture functions as a criteria of truth, but it also shapes the understanding of what it means to “be a person,” inhabiting requirements of what it takes to be a “good person,” and “proper relations between our status as knowers and the rest of our lives.”⁷⁴ Philosophers, situated in Western culture and Enlightenment, concerned themselves with defining what was so distinctive about human rationality, and linked the essence of a proper adequate human to the idea of reason and its universal and neutral essence.

⁷¹ Burstow, *Psychiatry and the Business of Madness*, 4.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak,” in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* edited by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Hampshire: Macmillan Education, 1988), 24.

⁷⁴ Jane M. Ussher, *The Madness of Women: Myth and Experience* (London: Routledge, 2011), 5.

Psychiatry manifests itself as an objective scientific known in the present day, however, the objectives, focus and scope of psychiatry have shifted dramatically in the last centuries. In the seventeenth century, the Bedlam hospital in England had fewer than thirty patients. Mad people were mostly looked down upon and considered to be a walking and talking morality lesson. But in a world where rationality had not yet extended its dogmatic claws, mad people also took on the role of a “wise fool” whom inhabited a certain specific situated wisdom. A mad person was considered to be an unsettling figure, yet always considered fully human requiring and deserving love and compassion.⁷⁵ The eighteenth century signified a dramatic shift fueled by the development of the positive and objective sciences, that in turn was shaped by the access to the bodies of the deceased for scientific research. This access comprised that scientists were able to *see* (a key step in the shift towards the dogma of objectivity) where organs were situated in the body, and how these organs functioned. This ability to see stimulated the act of observation which progressed the developing sciences in incorporating these measures of objectivity.⁷⁶ In the nineteenth century, psychoanalysis offered something completely new to the sciences: a language was developed for the psychological processes of the mind, and the patient’s words, thoughts and dreams were considered to be valuable codes that were to be interpreted by someone with authority.⁷⁷ Michel Foucault in *Madness and Civilization*, likewise illuminates the importance of language to the creation of a system of objective reason and a practice of control over the subject that inhabits non-reason. To Foucault the rise of psychiatry is interlinked with the birth of the asylum. The asylum proliferated, strengthened by the binary construction of language and discourse in which subjects inhabited either reason or non-reason. Reason was considered to be a sovereign and objective force that was executed through discourse, making language a ruthless signifier of rationality. This implies that non-reason was shrouded by the absence of language. The mad subject was subjugated to a system of a perceived objective truth, that Foucault names “reason’s subjugation of non-reason.”⁷⁸ Foucault identifies a silence that shrouds madness as modern man no longer communicates with the madman. This bears a stark contrast to the figure of the “wise-fool” that roamed in the seventeenth century. In the tentacles of rationality, madness is considered an abstract, universal known that

⁷⁵ Burstow, *Psychiatry and the Business of Madness*, 29.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

⁷⁸ Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization* (New York: Vintage Books, 1988), xii.

presents itself in broken language. This broken language effectuates a fissure from reason, as the following quote by Foucault emphasizes:

[the constitution of madness as a mental illness] thrusts into oblivion all those stammered, imperfect words without fixed syntax in which the exchange between madness and reason was made. The language of psychiatry, which is a monologue of reason about madness, has been established only on the basis of such silence.⁷⁹

On a similar note, psychiatrist Thomas Szasz claims the psychiatrist robs the patient from all language to articulate their own victimization, making the patient a captive deprived of an escape from the psychiatric discourse.⁸⁰ This forced silence confirms madness as a minority status that does not have a right to autonomy, tolerated only when implemented, as a scientific objective known into the world of reason. To achieve this subjugation, madness is made into an infantile force representing childhood. Foucault identifies that the insane are transformed into minors, considered to be child-like, only worthy of a paternal punishment or reward,⁸¹ and this construction of madness as child-like is a sign of psychiatry's authority of the mad subject. The marginalization of mad subjects relies on presenting madness as a biological difference that requires correction.⁸² The argument of inferiority within the subject connects to the construction of the Other all throughout history. In this way, madness made the Other relates to other patterns of racism and sexism that in turn inform psychiatric thought. This Othering is present in mental illnesses such as "drapetomania," that specifically affected runaway slaves and meant that a slave that ran away from service had a "disease of the mind [and a sign of] mental deterioration."⁸³ On a similar note is the mental illness "bad nerves," that exclusively inhabited women as a by-product of their biology. To illustrate further, black women were due to their sex and their race considered to be inherently more promiscuous and sexually charged, a pathologization most prominently represented in Western imagination through the figure of Sara Baartman. All these things considered we see that the foundations of psychiatry's labelling of mental illness is thus partly founded in certain structures of Western Enlightenment that also underlie the structures of colonialism, expansion and the appetite to subject all humans to the narrow description of rationality.

⁷⁹ Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, xii.

⁸⁰ Shoshana Felman, *Writing and Madness* (New York: Cornell UP), 38.

⁸¹ Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, 239.

⁸² Burstow, *Psychiatry and the Business of Madness*, 71.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

Nowadays, these structures are present in the DSM, as the DSM constructs a specific subject position, legitimizing the rights of experts to speak and treat a condition and defining what diagnostic truth is relevant for a patient. In *The Madness of Women* Jane M. Ussher likewise draws on Foucault's work on discourse analysis. She discusses his analysis regarding language and power as presented in Foucault's seminar *Mental illness and psychology*, and she works with Foucault's argument that power is connected to knowledge that in turn exerts itself in a regulatory way through categorizations. Ussher writes:

Discourses produce identities, subject positions, and 'institutional sites' from which a person can speak or be addressed, as subjectivity is not conceptualized as coming from within, but rather as constructed within language and cultural practices. Therefore, representations of madness encapsulated within the DSM not only define the boundaries of what it means to have a 'disordered' mind, but also function to construct the subject position 'mad woman', legitimizing the right of particular experts to speak about and treat her condition, and defining which particular 'truths' are accepted as explanations for her disordered state.⁸⁴

Ussher makes clear that medical categorizations reciprocally influence, and are the result of, a psychiatric discourse that in turn produces certain identities and subject positions from which a person speaks. This makes the absence of language within madness so intrinsically linked to subjugated and shows the emancipatory need to transcend this hierarchically constructed discourse.

As a long-time patient in psychiatry, I share many of the sentiments expressed by Burstow, Foucault and Ussher. The dependence upon authority figures who can render every word an indication and signifier for potential illness and further diagnosis can decrease feelings of autonomy and agency. Yet, at the same time, we need to consider that critique on psychiatry through the postmodernist lens also shows an important problem found in postmodernism. The critique of these thinkers seems to be inescapably deconstructive and pessimistic. By their interpretation of psychiatry as a system that offers no means of refuge, and thereby rendering the psychiatric framework all-knowing and all-encompassing, they render the patient within psychiatry as subservient to the realm of discourse. Yet, many people, turn to psychiatry precisely *because* they feel they have no escape from the internal

⁸⁴ Ussher, *The Madness of Women*, 5.

pain without it. Many people situated in madness seek a language that describes their inner world that actively undermines their freely acting self. It is thus difficult to unbiasedly trace and untangle how the developments within Western Enlightenment are interlinked to this dual nature of psychiatry. Psychiatry is both loyal to its patient and strengthens them by empowering the patient with psychiatric help, yet it also weakens the subject position by its homogenizing nature.

1.3. Re-thinking the potential of language.

Because of the dual position of psychiatry, I address an opportunity for a different kind of language on madness that provides a lens to emphasize and emancipate the subject status within madness. Therefore I turn to feminist writers [of e.g. sexual difference] that are part of French Feminism and contribute to a post-structuralist philosophy of language as well as feminist theory.⁸⁵ French Feminism concerns itself with the philosophy of language that actively re-thinks opportunities in communicating differently. In “French Feminism and Philosophy of Language,” Andrea Nye identifies the task of thinkers such as H  l  ne Cixous, Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva as one

to carve out a locus for feminist speech and writing against the confines of post-structural theory of language. This count only be done by reinstating the possibility of expression and of communication. It is in this context that Cixous’ *  criture feminine* and Irigaray’s *parler-entre-elles* can be examined fruitfully by philosophers, both as a feminist strategy and as a contribution to philosophy of language.⁸⁶

Nye identifies in French Feminism the desire to recover from their “post-structuralist fathers,” in both the possibility of expression and also the capacity to communicate in language.⁸⁷ These fathers, Lacan and Derrida, see no means of communication. What feigns as communication is to Lacan, “an acceptance of the patriarchal authority represented by semantic order,” and for Derrida, “the license to embroider the text of another.”⁸⁸ Both fathers portray a gloomy perception of communication offering no hope to the subjugated subject. It

⁸⁵ Andrea Nye, “French Feminism and Philosophy of Language.” *nous* (1986): 46.

⁸⁶ Andrea Nye, “French Feminism and Philosophy of Language,” 46.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

displays the same problem I identified in Foucault's work, and the works inspired by him, where the subject is locked in psychiatric modes of thought without a possibility for an escape. Correspondingly, Lacan and Derrida situate the mad subject with no opportunity of communication outside the patriarchal authority. Mad writing will therefore always reflect that authority. French Feminism does not accept this inescapable status of subjugation, making it a key perspective for the illumination of the mad subject and their writing.

Cixous formulates another possibility for speaking and writing. She considers writing an act that is not dominated by sexist structures that prevent free expression – as opposed to speaking, which is. Nye discerns Cixous' style as poetic rather than philosophical, yet this is part of Cixous' "radical thesis [where] a different kind of knowledge is possible and preferable. Expressive language, so long an embarrassment to linguists and semanticists, is the medium for this new knowledge."⁸⁹ This poetic method is key in Cixous' work to abandon the masterful, unitary, self or "I" of language.⁹⁰ The same poetic abandonment is present in *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* by Kristeva: "But when I seek (myself), lose (myself), or experience jouissance—then "I" is heterogeneous. Discomfort, unease, dizziness stemming from an ambiguity that, through the violence of a revolt against, demarcates a space out of which signs and objects arise."⁹¹ Not only is the unitary "I" pushed aside, it is furthermore used for a new manner of subject construction. This new formulation takes on the Lacanian notion of the inability to stand outside of the patriarchal and symbolic order, but takes it as an epithet of identity, a point of reference to work *from*, a new beginning, situated in a perceived impossibility. Kristeva writes: "If abomination is the lining of my symbolic being, "I" am therefore heterogeneous, pure and impure, and as such always potentially condemnable. I am from the very beginning subject to persecution as well as to revenge."⁹² This "I" that is able to write the subjugated subject status is an "I" that is empowered by the awareness of the suffocating structures, and by this awareness the "I" basks in opportunity and potentiality. Through the expulsion of the unitary *I*, an heterogeneous "I" arises and a new opportunity arises for subject formation and its correlated writing. Cixous regards this new opportunity for writing a change for locating a new truth, and according to Nye, Cixous

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 47.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay of Abjection* (Columbia: Columbia UP, 1982), 10.

⁹² Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 112.

attempts to work through, in the medium of language, not to a truth she already knows, but to a truth yet to be discovered. Such a writing and knowledge is only possible if words can carry the expression of those who speak them.⁹³

Cixous is thus aware of the epistemic violence affecting the opportunity to write. Her intention is to offer a base for a subject position where the subjugated gain the opportunity to write themselves. The creative language of madness can never flourish in a framework that wants to contain or diminish it and Irigaray rightfully says: “Hers are contradictory words, somewhat mad from the standpoint of reason, inaudible for whoever listens to them with ready-made grits, with a fully elaborated code in hand.”⁹⁴ The approaches that are indebted to the hierarchical and the patriarchal semantic order do not accommodate the illumination of the mad subject’s creativity, but they can signify points of reference where the mad subject can develop from. This thought-process that works with subjugation as a meaningful subject position and as a strength creates awareness for the potential and creativity within the mad subject, who, even if they are not able to speak, can write or express themselves in other embodied ways.

1.4. Theoretical Framework: Ambiguous Living

Essential in my framework of *ambiguous living* is approaching the imaginative quality of madness as an open-ended configuration instead of a closed off “psychiatric” singular structure. Open-endedness speaks to a multiplicity of possibilities and potentialities which is represented in the ambiguous consciousness that is invoked in Kavan’s stories. Kavan’s stories are shaped by a double awareness, in which her protagonists live in both the objective reality and the imaginative reality. This double-bind is also what shapes the notion of the unreality, as it is complement to the objective reality, and within the experience of madness both worlds exist simultaneously. This double consciousness, this *here* and *there* existing concurrently, is what shapes the stories of Kavan. Therefore thinking with double consciousness provides a better understanding of which affective forces are active in the worlding of madness, and thus active in the unreality.

⁹³ Nye, "French Feminism and Philosophy of Language," 47.

⁹⁴ Sandra Almeida, “The Madness of Lispector’s Writing,” in *Brazilian Feminisms* edited by Sandra Almeida and Regina Goulart (Nottingham: University of Nottingham Press, 1999), 101.

Without making a direct analogy, I turn to the work of W.E.B. Du Bois on double consciousness as it provides a better understanding of double consciousness in lived experience. Du Bois formulated double consciousness to fit his very specific and situated lived experience, yet it inhabits an intriguing wisdom that shows how to theorize on living in a dual coupled awareness, similar to Kavan's narratives. Du Bois developed double consciousness in regard to the internal conflict that arises when one lives as a black person in a white (supremacist) society. Double consciousness inhabits a dual quality as is explained by Brent Hayes Edwards in the foreword to *The Souls of Black Folk*:

[it] is at once a deprivation (an inability to see oneself except 'through the eyes of others') and a gift (an endowment of 'second-sight', that seems to allow a deeper or redoubled comprehension of the complexities of 'this American world'). In this reformulation, we are reminded that 'alienation – raised to a conscious level, cultivated and directed – has revolutionary potential'.⁹⁵

What translates from this quote to the experience of madness is the recognition of the simultaneous existing duality of "deprivation," and "gift," that speaks to the inherent epistemological loneliness for mad people within a psychiatric framework, *and* the capability for a specific creative potential. In a similar way, Homi Bhabha in the foreword to Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, addresses this double consciousness and names it a "liminal reality." The liminal reality is the in-between that constitutes the figure of colonial otherness. In this liminal space, the black man emerges as a liminal problem of colonial identity and its alteration. In a liminal identity and reality, the colonized person is never whole, but always a negation towards the dominant other, and the body is an ever present uncertainty because it is existing and present and tolerated yet sanctioned, considered abject and excessive. Because the colonized is never whole, but always a negation, the self becomes ambivalent, representation is always split, and the self becomes a temporal identity, an always elsewhere."⁹⁶ Thinking through liminality definitely inhabits a revolutionary possibility, and *ambiguous living* also speaks to this in-between, this middle space where no hierarchical inside or outside can be established. Before I elaborate on the theoretical entanglements that

⁹⁵ Brent Hayes Edwards "Introduction," in *The Souls of Black Folk*, by W. E. B. Du Bois (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), xiv

⁹⁶ Homi K. Bhabha "Foreword to the 1986 edition," in *Black Skin, White Masks*, by Frantz Fanon (London: Pluto Press, 2008), xxx.

make my framework named *ambiguous living*, I will first address two key phenomena in the fiction of Kavan that speak to the notion of double consciousness and liminal existence. I will engage in an analysis of the notion of unreality and in-between-spaces, to show what affective forces occur in Kavan's fiction. These forces are the ambiguous spaces in which the worlding of Kavan takes place, the space that arises within the double consciousness of madness that allow us to conceptualize the worlding of madness.

1. Ambiguous Spaces: The unreality and in-between-spaces.

The term unreality is often employed by writers that write their own madness. The term is very intuitive, yet shrouded in vague sentiment and it feels counter-intuitive to our ratio-driven need for explanations. Is the unreality the undoing of reality? Is it the opposite of reality? Is it similar to a dream, or similar to a schizophrenic consciousness? All of these suggestions do not quite grasp the essence of the unreality. The descriptions of the unreality given by writers such as Kavan cannot be simplified to a dream or reduced to fragments of a psychiatric illness. The unreality is complex and ambiguous. It is the co-existence of multiple consciousnesses simultaneously in a non-hierarchical composition. It is the undercurrent to the experience of madness, on mute but never turned off, a sleep modus with one eye open. It is challenging to get an account of the unreality that commits to rationality's wish for objective science. This confirms the silencing that is placed upon the knowledge coming forth out of the experience of madness. Because the unreality is primarily theorized upon by those situated in madness, the expertise goes unnoticed or becomes silenced.

Kavan in her novel *Eagle's Nest*, using a fictional "I," writes extensively and theoretically (it reads like she is explaining the concepts to herself) about her own reality within the experience of madness. In *Eagle's Nest*, she exercises the narrative of madness beyond the mere benefit of a story-line, but rather she provides an extensive world-view, a worlding of madness, by writing the unreality. The unreality is ambiguous because it is composed of two worlds existing simultaneously, or as Kavan herself explains it in her novel *Eagle's Nest*: "I seemed to be living two lives at once."⁹⁷ In this novel, Kavan names the unreality a peculiar unsettling state, and by doing this, she is positioning it against objective reality which she names the "concrete reality."⁹⁸ This double stance emphasizes Kavan's

⁹⁷ Anna Kavan, *Eagle's Nest*, 9.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

awareness that objective reality is that what can be seen with the eye, and felt with one's hands, whilst the unreality is a force that is veiled in uncertainty and internally lived. Due to the unreality's obscure nature, writings that contain narratives regarding its worlding are often interpreted according to the "ready-made-grits," of which Irigaray speaks, causing narratives of madness to remain underexamined and/or misinterpreted. The unreality is difficult to understand, and Filip and Susanna Radovic in "Feelings of Unreality," provide insight to why that is:

(1) the vague and ambiguous philosophically orientated key terms, such as self, world, and unreal, which often accompany depersonalization reports; (2) the uniqueness and strangeness of depersonalization experiences; and (3) the fact that they often have no discernible psychological causes.⁹⁹

Essential in their analysis of the unreality is the affirmation that psychiatry is not the space for the enactment of the experience of madness. After all, the terminology used by people who experience unreality remains vague and non-practical, non-singular. A person is narrating from his/her own truth and each person has a different perspective on and in the unreality. Because it is a very personal experience, the unreality is hard to map out, and therefore there is an absence of an objective overview. Considering the unreality as an internally lived state, subjects find it hard to observe their own experiences from an objective distance, making their words meaningless to psychiatric power.

Besides Kavan, other writers too write the unreality as a split that is interlinked emphasizing its ambiguous double nature. New-Zealand writer Janet Frame, whose prose bears thematic similarities to Kavan, recalls the unreality in *Faces in the Water*. In this novel, Frame, who has been forcefully incarcerated in a psychiatric hospital, shows that objective reality and the unreality, co-exist simultaneously even though they inhabit a completely different experience:

I will put warm woollen socks on the feet of the people in the other world; but I dream and cannot wake, and I am cast over the cliff and hang there by two fingers that are danced and trampled on by the Giant Unreality.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Filip Radovic and Susanna Radovic, "Feelings of Unreality: A Conceptual and Phenomenological Analysis of the Language of Depersonalization," in *Philosophy, Psychiatry, & Psychology* 9:3 (2002), 278.

¹⁰⁰ Janet Frame, *Faces in the Water* (London: Little Brown Book Group, 2009), 7.

Here an affective sentiment is invoked that speaks to compassion between the two interlinked worlds. The approach of care is being applied for people in the other consciousness (“the other world”) yet simultaneously there is the sense of powerlessness regarding the inability to exercise power over the dominating madness (“[being] trampled on by the Giant Unreality”). Again, there is a dual existence, a dual consciousness, situated in ambiguity where there is joy through affect, but also agony due to the subjection to madness. Brazilian writer Clarice Lispector in *The Passion According to G.H.* in like manner captures the indefiniteness of the unreality in a single sentence: “I was living all that reality with a feeling of the unreality of reality.”¹⁰¹ Objective reality and the unreality are thus merged in one’s consciousness, yet completely different in experience with different affective forces.

What frequents the writing of madness is a world-building that is based on the descriptions and experiences of the unreality in which the protagonist shows an awareness of his/her double consciousness. By living in a double consciousness, the writers, who participate in this worlding, show awareness of the world as it is commonly and objectively perceived whilst simultaneously recognizing the internal world. By making the experience of madness the force behind world-building, an alternate reality is opened up that co-exists with objective reality. Bringing this alternate reality into writing, and thus *into* the memory and canon of the world, is an act that I consider the worlding of unreality. This worlding is captured by surrealist painter and writer Leonora Carrington in *Down Below*:

I was transforming my blood into comprehensive energy – masculine and feminine, microcosmic and macrocosmic – and into a wine that was drunk by the moon and the sun. I end up believing that I was in another world, another epoch, another civilization, perhaps on another planet containing the past and future, simultaneously, the present.¹⁰²

This quote inhabits recurring themes that narratives of the unreality contain. There is the attention to another time-lines (“another epoch”) and another whereabouts (“another planet”), that suggest a thinking differently. This thinking differently speaks to a non-conformity when it comes to valuing merely the objective measures in which the world is regarded as a singular

¹⁰¹ Lispector, *The Passion According to G.H.*, 101

¹⁰² Carrington, *Down Below*, e-book location 74.

entity, but rather, to take notion of multiple temporalities existing simultaneously. On this note, Kavan shapes the narrative of the unreality in *Eagle's Nest*:

It was as though I had parted company all at once with my usual reasoning self, which had withdrawn into the shadows, leaving me no means of communicating with it; while another "I" took command, functioning at a different, more mysterious level, where all outer appearances were deceptive, and even the thoughts in my head shot with ambiguity.¹⁰³

Here Kavan invokes the notion of ambiguity by describing concurrent realities through the "reasoning self," and "another [mysterious] I". She also locates the space of that ambiguity, which is "the thoughts in my head". The self is thus divided in multiple experiences, one inhabits the objective world, the other resides in the shadows of the mind. Anaïs Nin, who was a great appreciator of the work of Kavan,¹⁰⁴ also identifies the writing of the unreality as being prominent in Kavan's fiction. Regarding *Asylum Piece*, Nin wrote: "Anna Kavan made a significant beginning as a nocturnal writer with [...] *Asylum Piece[s]* in which the nonrational human being caught in a web of unreality still struggles to maintain a dialogue with those who cannot understand him."¹⁰⁵ Nin emphasizes the notion of the double consciousness as the "web of unreality" that is a place where a consciousness resides that is out of reach for those who are situated in pure rationality, or non-madness. Here we see the situated knowledge that madness inhabits, as it is a dual consciousness for those living with it, but absent and unimaginable for those living in non-madness.

In the novel *Eagle's Nest*, Kavan communicates to the reader information about the *in-between-spaces* that exist in the unreality. *Eagle's Nest* is a work that most explicitly gives a theoretical account, an extensive explanation, of the unreality and its *in-between-spaces*. In this work of fiction, the male protagonist works a nonsensical job when he is unwillingly discharged and he takes on a job for a mysterious Administrator at *Eagle's Nest*, a large castle in an unnamed lush and sweltering city. When the protagonist arrives in the city, which he experiences as suffocating for its hotness and its flowery smell, he is overwhelmed by episodes where the unreality intervenes, leaving him bound to his guest-room. The

¹⁰³ Kavan, *Eagle's Nest*, 9.

¹⁰⁴ Nin send Kavan letters, but Kavan never wrote back. See: "Anna Kavan: Letter," Red Mood, accessed May 24, 2019, <http://www.redmood.com/kavan/letter.html>

¹⁰⁵ Anaïs Nin, *The Novel of the Future* (London: Peter Owen, 1969), 171.

unavailability of the Administrator to settle the protagonist into his job and his eventual rejection by this authority figure generate a complete break-down of the protagonist where there is no meaning in reality anymore and the protagonist retreats to his unreality. Before this break-down happens, Kavan explains extensively both worlds and what the mind experiences when it experiences this double consciousness:

Some more significant connexion seemed to exist between them in the mysterious world of which I was newly aware: where I too was somehow concerned with them, not in my everyday self, but in that other identity outside my control, obscurely related to me.¹⁰⁶

Kavan constructs the idea of a surrogate self that exists supplementary to the rational self and inhabits a mysterious conceptualization of a self that is aware of a different world whilst living simultaneously in both realities. It is a self “outside [the “I”] control” as it is a presence situated in madness hence the “mysterious world” that arises from its imagination. From this imagination new memories arise, and whilst being in the “concrete” reality, memories interrupt the singular conception of reality:

Today for the first time the other aspect of things had revealed itself fully, with a reality far beyond that of dreaming, so that I seemed to be living two lives at once. I noticed, though, that I never seemed fully aware of them both together; for now the concrete world regained the ascendancy, excluding the dream world beyond, but not obliterating my memory of it completely.¹⁰⁷

More and more the unreality is conceptualized as being more than a dream, but reminiscent of an additional life. The protagonist oversees his double consciousness by the emancipation of his perception due to otherworldly memories to break through presumed boundaries. The deconstruction of rational dichotomous boundaries, makes the protagonist become more and more aware of the duality in himself:

Suddenly beginning to see things differently, at the secret dream level [...] I was still fully conscious of the daytime world: and, for the two realities to exist like this

¹⁰⁶ Kavan, *Eagle's Nest*, 11.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

contemporaneously, seemed most disconcerting. Since the everyday life of work, sleep, food, etc. had to go on, I'd accustomed myself to thinking of the other dream life as episodic, and limited in its appearances to the absence of the so-called real – either the dream world must be real, or the facts of life were; yet here they were, both together...¹⁰⁸

The unreality and *in-between-spaces* inhabit many names and affective terms in Kavan's novel. The sentiment that arises from her numerous descriptions is that no word captures its essence fully. It is dream-like, so-called-real, establishing through vague memories and being "episodic". Most prominent of all is that it is "secret," and this speaks to the internal and inherent seclusion that a subject in madness experiences. Kavan describes how reality will never understand and due to being eternally misunderstood, she interprets those internal forces as a wound. In her work there is a lot of loneliness and solitude, however, there is also a lot of beauty. There is an intimacy, and love found in the connections that spring from venturing into the unreality. Without idealization, and without being blind for the sorrow that underlies madness, we can still pay attention to a magical realm that is represented when dichotomous barriers disintegrate and affective connections, forces and potentialities come to light. Writing the unreality beholds the capacity to establish connective relations that inhabit a world of fear, but also a world of love and beauty, themes that I will discuss in the forthcoming chapters.

2. Theoretical Entanglements

I established that *Eagle's Nest* provides a highly theoretical execution of the internal forces that are present in madness by Kavan, and it shows insight in the ambiguous forces that are present in the mad experience. Experiencing madness is not merely the practicalities but it is a lived-reality that is hard to grasp *as* madness as it remains internalized knowledge, internalized affective sensations and intuition. Madness is being familiar with the shadows in the hallway: it is a private constitution of terrorization. The experiences of madness can be perceived as mundane to the outsider, yet they often harbor intense magical thinking and creative potential. For example, your trusted house-cat deceives everybody but you. You know when you turn around the cat will change his shape into something unnamable. Yet

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 24.

everyone around you seems oblivious to that fact so you keep quiet and keep the truth to yourself. Or the birds that land on your balcony have a message to tell you from another world, that only you understand, because you inhabit an intuition for the otherworldly. Kavan addresses these affective forces and desires, yet realizes that no one would ever understand her worlding, as their imagination is not up to par with hers. This is why in the story ‘A Visit,’ (discussed in chapter three) the protagonist promises to keep her experiences private as “simple people”¹⁰⁹ can never understand. Even though there is a lingering presence of loneliness, Kavan establishes a mundane world to become inherently magical. She re-envisions a space between dream and reality that – when one is situated in madness – is a place that is home, whether or not that home is a hostile home. However, there is no existing foundation in research that unfolds this space and still commits itself fully to respect the autonomy of the mad subject, respect for their agency and their capacity of knowledge production. The dominant framework does not allow a devotion to that what is perceived as non-reason. This epistemological loneliness, in which the mad experience is inherently lonely, is also addressed by the fictional “I” in *Asylum Piece*: “In this impersonal garden, all neatness and vacancy, there is no arbour where friends could linger, but only concrete paths along which people walk hurriedly, inattentive to the singing of birds.”¹¹⁰ It is thus of importance, for the emancipation of the mad subject, to listen to the singing of birds and wander away from concrete paths.

Ambiguous living as a theoretical framework consists of an array of theoretical compositions that are interlinked, entangled and provide a fruitful base for the unfolding of the forces at work in the language of madness. The tropes Kavan uses in her work are mostly in service of the temporal experience. In her experience, time is not measuring up progressively from *a* to *b*, and therefore subject identities are not fixed and singular. Kavan explores connotations of child-hood signifying a non-linearity in the mind and a non-sequential progression of adulthood and aging in which the subject internally constantly shifts between different time-zones and identities through which unusual affective relationships develop. *Ambiguous living* will consist of a collective of theoretical approaches that *together* grasp the complexity and the ambiguity of the experience of madness working with opening up the temporal and the spatial, the materialization of the imaginary and the affective forces of the non-human/inanimate. To achieve this entanglement of theory, I will first discuss melancholia by Freud as this lays the foundation for exploring transgressions in reality, space

¹⁰⁹ Anna Kavan, *Julia and the Bazooka*, 27

¹¹⁰ Anna Kavan, *Asylum Piece*, 212.

and time. Because of the ambiguity in (non)synchronic time in the work of Kavan by her writing of the unreality, I will work with Freud to Deleuze and Guattari to develop the temporal foundation to their notion of becoming. After establishing what these temporal forces do, I move to Braidotti who works with the Deleuzian perspective to consider what these forces connote for the subject status beyond the self towards others and towards new connections. I will address these new connections with the theory of diffraction by Barad, as this allows me to rethink Western epistemology and ontology by opening up attention to new connections that are affective in nature and stem from the internal worlding of madness. *Ambiguous living* embodies the duality that exists in the unreality and its *in-between-spaces*, as it is based on the ambiguity of living both in the objective “concrete” reality and the imagined reality. This theoretical framework takes notion of that transition, that mystical passage between different yet intertwined consciousnesses that stems from one subject. In Kavan’s fiction, the subject is always aware of this double stance, being able to oversee both at the same time, aware of their position in ambiguity.

My theoretical entanglement will start with the concept of melancholia. Anne Enderwitz in “Modernist Melancholia and Time: The Synchronicity of the Non-Synchronic in Freud, Tylor and Conrad” pays attention to the notion of non-synchronic and non-linear temporal realities manifesting in modernist literature presenting itself through the concept of melancholia. Psychoanalysis regarded melancholia as a sensitivity towards time and change, but melancholia *in itself* was considered a temporal disorder as a mental illness. Melancholia was perceived to be an inability for subjects to “[synthesize] an objective order of time with individual experienced time” and the inability to perceive the “co-existence of objects and desires from different time periods in the present self.”¹¹¹ Here we see a “standstill of becoming,” in which the “continuity of time crumbles,” and the future appears to be foreclosed,¹¹² previously determined or unable to be reached. Melancholiacs thus inhabit a homelessness in the linear conception of time because even when one lives in the past, that living is merely theoretical as one lives in a time that does not linearly exist.¹¹³ This inability to live in present time means that a melancholic is constantly thrown back to a past that is gone and empty causing the melancholiac to live in an *in-between-stage*. It means living in a place where one never arrives and where the subject is always thrown back in-between the

¹¹¹ Martin Middeke, *The literature of melancholia: Early Modern to Postmodern* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 174.

¹¹² Middeke, *The literature of melancholia*, 174.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

past and the future unable to become grounded in the rational present day. Freud allows for a non-linear perspective regarding melancholia. He considers the relation between the past and the present in melancholia a complex temporal framework that he describes as the “synchronicity of the non-synchronic.”¹¹⁴ This incorporates the co-existence of objects and desires from different time periods in the present self. What is so relevant to *Ambiguous Living* is Freud’s attention to co-existence of different time-zones, which we also find in Kavan’s theoretical description of the unreality from where the *in-between-spaces* come, as Kavan is able to see the concrete reality *and* the dream-space *simultaneously*. This open-endedness that Freud allows in the melancholic becoming of the subject helps us to understand living in ambiguity.

To understand this dual becoming in synchronic time as well as non-synchronic time that is present in the work of Kavan, I move to *Logic of Sense* by Deleuze where he lays the foundation for becoming. He writes: “Becoming does not tolerate the separation or the distinction of before and after, or of past and future. [...] Pure becoming is without measure, a veritable becoming-mad, which never rests. It moves in both directions at once.”¹¹⁵ Pure becoming is unlimited, it is an infinite identity embedded in language that transcends the limits and fixity of language. Hereby this identity rests in a language that reinstates infinite and unlimited becoming. The language of becoming and the unlimited subject/identity construction, present in the writings of madness, thus create and strengthen each other, meaning that the non-linear and non-synchronic utterings can be endowed in a succulent enrichment that opens up specific experiences at the borders of non-being. Becoming reverses cause and effect, it leads to one contesting identity and the loss of the proper name, the effect is not fixed, but the effects are events and results of actions. By inhabiting this contradiction, and in transcending what is on the inside and what is on the outside, what is before and after, and placing knowledge in the *in-between*, the result is the acknowledgement of the effects that are produced, and not so much *if* there is a distinction between the imaginary and the real.¹¹⁶ Humanist psychiatry conceptualizing madness as something that is imaginary, or as something that exists outside of reality, is irrelevant. What is relevant are the effects that are produced in the *in-between-stage*, the forces that construct multiplicities, intensities, assemblages, and are mapping “realms that are yet to come.”¹¹⁷ In *A Thousand Plateaus*

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Gilles Deleuze, *Logic of Sense* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 1.

¹¹⁶ Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*, 217.

¹¹⁷ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (London: Bloomsbury: 2013), 3.

Deleuze and Guattari name this system of multiplicities *rhizomes*, and they speak about “an acentered, nonhierarchical, non-signifying system.”¹¹⁸ The rhizome takes place in the middle, or in the *in-between-spaces* and this is not a space for the average, rather, “it is where things pick up speed.” For Deleuze and Guattari, the middle, the in-between, is the place where things stop being localizable, and that signifies a “transversal movement [...] a stream without beginning or end that undermines its banks and picks up speed in the middle.”¹¹⁹ This middle place of the rhizome, as a non-signifying system, makes it non-singular and inhabits a potentiality for extension outwards, causing it to expand in its relationality towards “the animal, the vegetal, the world, politics, the book, things natural and artificial [...] all manners of becomings.”¹²⁰ There is thus no signifying power in defining a hierarchical inside and outside, or past and present, to the imagination of Kavan, as both together constitute an fluid stream of movement and connections that the experience of madness brings into being.

Because subject constitution of the mad subject is subjected to the dominance of the psychiatric framework, I want to consider how the notion of becoming and the endless ebb and flow of connections expand to subject construction. To do this, I will work with feminist philosopher Braidotti and connect her theory of becoming to the theory of diffraction by theoretical physicist Karen Barad to clarify how Kavan’s subject position in her fiction expand through the affective connections made. In Kavan’s fiction, the fictionalized “I” expands itself to multiple others. These others are primarily animals (birds, leopard), nature (landscapes, temperature, flowers, fog) and spaces (churches, castles, houses, asylums). Braidotti expands on the notion of becoming by Deleuze and Guattari and she indicates that processes of becoming are not based on a stable central self that supervises its own unfoldings. Rather, becomings rely on a non-unitary, multi-layered and dynamic subject construction.¹²¹ Braidotti connects to the field of French Feminism when she argues that “the process of becoming-woman/animal, in fact, is not about signification, but rather the opposite: it is about the transcendence of the linguistic signifier.”¹²² She suggests to take the end-point of linguistic signification, as formulated by Lacan, as the starting point for a new subject construction and she indicates the transcendence of the stable rational self in becoming. This implies transcendence from the dominant Cartesian subject formation, and limitations that Kavan imagines as the *in-between-spaces* where she moves between “concrete” reality and

¹¹⁸ Deleuze and Guattari, *A thousand Plateaus*, 27.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Rosi Braidotti, *Metamorphoses. Towards a materialist theory of becoming*. Cambridge: Polity, 2002), 119.

¹²² Braidotti, *Metamorphoses*, 119.

imagined reality. In the *in-between*, there are no dichotomous boundaries and singular fixed identities, but like a nomadic subject, the subject position is undergoing fluid internal change and movement. Braidotti argues that the “nomadic subject,” is “a non-unitary entity [...] simultaneously self-propelling and hetero-defined, or outward-bound.”¹²³ This speaks to the connections Kavan makes from the self, the fictionalized “I,” to all others. There is an external push from the human to undo its boundaries, its fixed status, and make alliances with all others in the world, whether they are animal or inanimate. This affective push, is what Braidotti calls the “re-territorialization”¹²⁴ of all the Others of classic dualism. Through this conception of the nomadic subject we can imagine how the fiction of Kavan extends itself towards all others creating new connections and new knowledge by thinking differently. This grasps the essence of what the fiction by Kavan does, and what it achieves, as it addresses temporal tropes to signify transcendence from all that is fixed, and it moves beyond the signifiers of practicalities and extends towards the unreality where the internal forces of the mind represent multiple creative connections.

Kavan’s worlding is always shaped by outwards connections that never act as they would in the narrative of Cartesian dualism, but rather these connections transcend singularity. Because Kavan creates stories that engage with matter, in which the “I” constitutes an outward connection to that matter, I want to turn with Braidotti to Barad. In “Diffracting Diffraction: Cutting Together-Apart,” Barad works with Donna Haraway’s perception of diffraction and Barad argues the following:

Diffraction does not produce ‘the same’ displaced, as reflection and refraction do. Diffraction is a mapping of interference, not of replication, reflection, or reproduction. A diffraction pattern does not map where differences appear, but rather maps where the effects of difference appear.¹²⁵

Key in the theory of diffraction is the notion of difference. The same is not reproduced as if one looks into a mirror (“reflection”) nor does it engage with difference to construct an hierarchical Other, but it looks at the effects of difference as an open-ended configuration. Hereby Barad’s theory of diffraction lets us imagine new alliances, new relationships beyond the dichotomy of species, animacy and temporality. Key in diffraction is its non-hierarchical nature as it is not a set pattern but rather “an iterative (re)configuring of patterns of

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Karen Barad, “Diffracting Diffraction: Cutting Together-Apart,” in *Parallax* 20:2 (2014), 172.

differentiating-entangling.”¹²⁶ Barad does not create a temporal hierarchy between the new and the old, “there is no absolute boundary between here-now and there-then,”¹²⁷ but all time is a configuration in which time does not progress linearly but has twists and turns and moves like a circle full of webs, after all says Barad, “time can’t be fixed. The past is never closed, never finished once and for all, but there is no taking it back, setting time aright, putting the world back on its axis.”¹²⁸ Matter, like Barad says, “itself is diffracted,”¹²⁹ just because matter is presumably inanimate and sedimented, does not mean that it is closed off from affective action and agency. Matter is never involved in a closed off configuration as it is always acting with the world by affecting it.

Key in *ambiguous living* is thinking through difference because to repeat sameness is to stand at the end of the linguistic signifier and rest one’s head. Kavan’s fiction works *beyond*, she works in difference by thinking beyond the self and exceeding hierarchical limits. When we analyze the fiction of Kavan, we can pay attention to the affective forces that arise by the extension of the self. This is why diffraction adds to the understanding how we are in the world’s becoming but how the world’s multiplicity is also in us. We are always entangled in, and with, the world.¹³⁰ *Ambiguous living* troubles the fixed binaries and hierarchical dichotomy that is present in the dogma of psychiatry that comes forth from Western Enlightenment. *Ambiguous living* shows a movement forward *from* that singular subjugated position, by which the mad subject’s narratives is emancipated by listening to the utterings of an entangled imagination.

1.5. Concluding Remarks

I started this chapter raising the question on who has the ability and authority to speak about madness. The framework of psychiatry thinks from a position of hierarchical and singular power by which any divergence is meant to be found and fixed. As my goal is to illuminate the full potential in the fiction of Kavan, psychiatry’s narrative will only hold up a mirror of sameness, eradicating the opportunity to think in difference and in multiplicities of capacity. French Feminism considers the subjugated position a place to start *from* which allows for the words and other embodied expressions of a person in madness to penetrate through the wall

¹²⁶ Barad, “Diffracting Diffraction,” 168.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 183.

¹²⁹ Ibid., p. 168.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

of rationality. However, in Kavan's fiction I identify a complexity that is centred around the notion of ambiguity. In her fiction a double consciousness arises by which the fictional "I" is experiencing both objective reality, and the imagined reality, simultaneously. Because of this complex configuration I have created my own theoretical composition that I have named *ambiguous living*. Most theoretical assemblages have a cut-off point but due to the fluidity in Kavan's writing and her active undoing of any affective boundary, I composed a framework that works with undoing singularity in temporality and extends towards the acknowledgement of agency in the inanimate. Most specifically, my goal was to show that there is a fluidity and entanglement in my framework, where the framework does not consist of a mere combination of different perspectives, but that there emerges an entanglement, a coming-together, a fluidity of intertwined and interlinked theories through which this specific knowledge in the experience of madness is illuminated. Due to the illumination of the multiplicity of opportunity and affective forces the writings of madness can be understood in their complexity. No framework bound to the rational modes of knowledge-production can grasp this complexity and will thus forever participate in the silencing of the mad subject.

In the following two chapters, I will participate in a close-reading of two stories by Kavan. In both stories the fictionalized "I" is experiencing an affective force that forces the self towards an extension approaching the other, inanimate and animal. In these stories Kavan invokes the unreality by creating the space within the double consciousness. We will venture with the fictional "I" in an internal exploration of madness, not so much with the practicalities of madness, like taking medication or going to therapy, but with the internal worlding, the shaping and creation of new knowledge. I will address Kavan's fiction that deals with the inability to create meaning in the practical application of real life experience. Instead, meaning is found in its theoretical implication shaped by temporal and spatial encounters, reminiscent to the protagonist in *Let me Alone* who says: "She wanted to appreciate things, to understand them, but all in the abstract, so to speak, without actually experiencing them,"¹³¹

¹³¹ Anna Kavan, *Let me Alone*, 66.

Chapter Two: The house as a transgressive animate force in ‘A Changed Situation.’

*My earliest memory is of a dream.
It was in the house where we lived when I was three or four.
I dreamed I was asleep in the house in an upper room and that I awoke,
came downstairs and stood in the living room.
The lights were on although it was hushed and empty.
The usual dark green sofa and chairs stood along the usual pale green walls.
It was the same old living room, I knew it well, nothing was out of place.
And yet it was utterly, certainly, different.
Inside its usual appearance,
the living room was as changed as if it had gone mad.*

Anne Carson¹³²

2.1. Introduction

A house is a symbol of safety, where we feel at home and find comfort and quiet. Any violation of that space through crime (a break in or a home invasion) or calamity (becoming homeless) sends shivers down our spine and the mere idea fills us with dread. Houses symbolize more than a mere pile of bricks as they have a cultural significance and signify safety and wellbeing. Owning a house is one of the biggest achievements that human beings attain to and, due to this ideal that encompasses the house, art and media create narratives that disturb this safety for entertainment purposes. Literature and movies frequently unsettle the space that we desire to be safe and quaint. In literature, the house is employed in narratives of the fantastic and the decadent, where the house is presented as a source of terror for its inhabitants or the safe-keeper of beautiful indulgent interior collections and people.¹³³

¹³² James Pollock, *You Are Here: Essays on the Art of Poetry in Canada* (Ontario: The Porcupine’s Quill, 2012), 45.

¹³³ Examples of fiction that work with this trope are *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë, *The Yellow Wallpaper* by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *House of Leaves* by Mark Z. Danielewski, *Bluebeard* by Charles Perrault and *Against Nature* by Joris-Karl Huysmans, but there are many more pieces of fiction beyond my suggestion.

Feminist literature likewise works with the notion of the house, and feminist criticism considers the house to be an enclosure where the dogma of the woman as a housekeeper and homemaker is materialized. The idealized status of a woman as a homemaker connects to her localization *within* the house, as a captive where she is reduced and simplified to a homemaker. The feminist work *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar explores feminist literary criticism and focusses on how women, in 19th century literature, are linked and reduced to the domestic enclosure of the house. Gilbert and Gubar show how women are culturally and symbolically intrinsically connected to the house and that the incorporation of women and the house, bring about the maturation of a house to a home. Gilbert and Gubar show that men historically, through literature, write women captive in the house. Gilbert and Gubar furthermore articulate a desire for a female “writing beyond,” in which women write a narrative of their own that reaches beyond their domestic confinement and thereby unravel their narrative and symbolic captivity. This desired “writing beyond” speaks to the Cixous-ian notion of writing the feminine (*écriture féminine*), where women write a truth of their own instead of repeating masculine points of view. The masculine imagination has described women “or imagined them as houses,”¹³⁴ implying that women have been linked to and reduced to their domestic role within the house as a homemaker. Gaston Bachelard, in like manner, makes the point that women inhabit the “protective asylum of the house,” connecting the house to women and “the maternal,” and Erik Erikson claims that domesticity is inherent in womanhood as little girls already show an interest in domestic enclosures.¹³⁵ To be a woman is thus to be imagined as a homemaker, and in contrast to men who build houses out of bricks, women inhabit those houses and turn houses into homes.

In chapter one of this thesis I showed the considerations present in the process of subject formation regarding those experiencing madness, and explored other ways of theorizing about this experience and its creative implication and execution. This chapter will engage in a close-reading of the story ‘A Changed Situation,’ in which Kavan employs the trope of the house to execute this “writing beyond” that Gubar and Gilbert desire. My goal is to show that the experience and narrative of madness cannot be captured into a singular all-knowing psychiatric framework, but that it should be theorized as an account of entanglements and connections that speak to an awareness of an imagined yet lived

¹³⁴ Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (USA: Yale UP, 2001), 88.

¹³⁵ Gilbert and Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, 88.

experience. Through Kavan's writing of her own experience of madness, there is an embodied intervention into the singular psychiatric framework, and this "writing otherwise" is a way to escape a predetermined psychiatric narrative and create potential for emancipation and survival through a creative enterprise for the individual immersed in madness.

In 'A Changed Situation,' Kavan re-works the idea of the domestic homemaker that lives happily ever after in her safe enclave of the house. Instead of turning the house into a home, the protagonist, the fictional "I," is forced to abolish this ideal because the house prevents her from achieving it. 'A Changed Situation' is part of the short-story novel *Asylum Piece* that, as a whole, is influenced by Kavan's experiences in the sanatorium, and is the first novel under her chosen name Anna Kavan. It signifies the rise of Kavan as a woman who decided to participate in an emancipatory undertaking, to give people, whose voices are silenced through psychiatry, representation. *Asylum Piece* features a collection of short stories that all share the theme of breakdown, rehabilitation and paranoia that come with the experience of being committed into an asylum / sanatorium. The stories draw upon personal experiences but are centered around a fictional "I," representative of the method of autofiction as discussed in the Introduction of this thesis. The stories in *Asylum Piece* are about everyday struggles of madness in the experience of daily life. In this experience of madness, an alternate experience of reality is offered to the reader, the experience of a reality within the mind of the "I," and invisible to the rest of the world. The story is exemplary of, what Jeremy Reed considers to be Kavan's use of her own experiences of madness as a source for her art.¹³⁶ Kavan pursues the writing of the self, and her writing is indicative of letting madness speak for itself. Kavan brings this forth by defining her own world, her own struggle, in her own words. She allows the creative potentiality of madness to meander through her fiction, an undertaking the field of Mad Studies considers to be crucial in uncovering and de-mystifying the experience of madness.

In 'A Changed Situation,' the house in which the "I" lives is more than an inanimate pile of bricks. Instead of the house conforming to that status as a mute and dead inanimate object, it inhabits a disquieting will of its own as it is showing the protagonist that it is able to exercise its agency, locking the "I" in its webs and traps. In the story the "I" has bought a home, against the advice of her immediate family as she comes from a family of rolling stones, and she experiences a house that rejects her. Through the house's rejection of its inhabitant, the story overturns all universal truths about what makes a house and what a

¹³⁶ Jeremy Reed, *A Stranger on Earth*, 49.

house's ability can extend to. The house is transgressing its implied inanimate status whilst simultaneously Kavan deconstructs the notion of domesticity as the "I" cannot transform the house into a beacon of safety. The nature of the house is not eligible for symbolic change from a house to a home. The story is indicative of the "writing of madness," as Kavan constructs a world that centers around and takes place in the realm of the double consciousness. The worlding of madness can be read as a "queer other state," a term that Kavan uses in *Eagle's Nest*, as that which co-exists with, what she defined as, "concrete reality".¹³⁷ Kavan's description of the worlding of madness as "queer," is to be assessed as it speaks to the imagination of an otherwise, or an elsewhere. At first glance one could argue that Kavan's usage and intention of the word "queer" is not synonymous to the definition in the lexicon of gender studies, however, due to the imaginative quality in the term "queer" and in Kavan's writing it demands our attention, especially because its affective force speaks to temporality and thus relates to the notion of the house. In the time of Kavan's writing, "queer" would have most likely meant "strange, odd, peculiar [and] eccentric".¹³⁸ Considering the etymology of the word "queer," it shows that the word has always inhabited an ambiguous and imaginative nature. The Irish *cuair* means "crookedness, state of being bent or hollow," and the semantically related High German *dwerach* means "slant, inclined, oblique, aslant [and] transverse."¹³⁹ This terminology is very similar to the descriptions that Kavan gives of that what materializes in the experience of madness. When taken to the academia, queer, and specifically queer studies in the realm of gender studies, is a methodology of cultural critique. Alike mad studies, queer studies engages in the act of thinking differently about structures seemingly set in stone, focusing especially on exigent binaries regarding gender and sexuality (and in the intersectional framework connected to the critique of binaries across the entire spectrum of the animate and the inanimate). José Esteban Muñoz in *Cruising Utopia* imagines another futurity through which queerness is the way of structuring a desire for a queer future, he writes: "Often we can glimpse the worlds proposed and promised by queerness in the realm of the aesthetic. The [queer aesthetic] frequently contains blueprints and schemata of a forward-dawning futurity." To Muñoz queerness is the insistence of a "potentiality for another world,"¹⁴⁰ and queerness is a way to think differently, to think outside of and beyond dichotomies. This produces a productive alternative to the homogeneity and singular narrative

¹³⁷ Anna Kavan, *Eagle's Nest*, 9.

¹³⁸ William Sayers, "The Etymology of Queer," *ANQ: A Quarterly Journal of Short Articles, Notes and Reviews* 18:2 (August 2010): 17.

¹³⁹ Sayers, "The Etymology of Queer," 18.

¹⁴⁰ José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (NY: NY UP, 2009), 1.

that has long been considered to be all-encompassing. In a similar objective, queer philosopher J. Halberstam considers queer to inhabit a potentiality to formulate a new temporality, and therefore, a new alternative mode of corporeality. Halberstam suggests thinking through the notion of queer as “a way of life that will encompass subcultural practices, alternative modes of alliance, forms of transgender embodiment, and those forms of representation dedicated to capturing these willfully eccentric modes of being.” In the words of Halberstam, queerness has the “potential to open up new narratives and alternative relations to time and space.”¹⁴¹ All in all, the usage of the word “queer” by Kavan could be related to the linguistics of her time of writing, however, it does speak to a larger imaginative force that connects strongly to the objectives of this thesis. Kavan queers the narrative on psychiatry, through her fiction she creates an ambiguous world where the singular narrative no longer suffices, and she shapes another world, another potentiality, a transgressive force, that relates closely to the objectives of queer studies.

The happenings in ‘A Changed Situation,’ are indicative of a world where the objective rules of reason have no signifying power. Reason is merely there to provide the theatre and the props on which the imaginative world exercises its action. The house transgresses its objective nature by becoming animate. It is showing agency as if it were a living thing, affecting the “I” by rejecting her, but also making itself unable to be known objectively as the house is fluid in nature, in form and in age. These transgressive forces of the house make it cross the boundaries of objective reality. They allow the house to undo all rigid and dichotomous constructs of what is considered to be (in)animate and thereby raise the question of what is allowed, within these constructs, to constitute an affective force upon the world. This chapter will address this power of transgressing what is rendered to be fixed, and will engage with the narrative of madness that is charging this transgression. The research question is: How does the story ‘A Changed Situation,’ through Kavan’s narrative of madness, transgress the fixed objective inanimate implications of the house and by result create new knowledge and expand connections? I identify the shift of inanimate to animate nature of the house the main transgressive force in the story. This main force inhabits two interlinked consequences which are, de-linear timelines and the construction of labyrinthian spaces. These forces of transgression provide another way of looking at dichotomous boundaries that we render to be fixed in an objective truth. When theorizing from the lived experience of madness, the re-writing of domestic implications of the house uncovers new

¹⁴¹ J. Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: NY UP, 2005), 1.

affective connections between the animate and the inanimate. The house does not adhere to linear aging but decides for itself what age it presents itself to the protagonist. The house also constructs its own labyrinthian space and does not adhere to a pre-determined floor-plan. It is thus impossible for the “I” to objectively know the house as the house is fluid, ever shifting and ever-changing. This fluidity makes the protagonist dwell in fear and in ambiguity as there is no solidity to trust in.

This chapter will be divided into two parts. First I will provide a theoretical background on the notion of the house. The protagonist’s experience of ambiguity regarding the house speaks to the transgressive unsettling of what falls into the realm of the known which relates to the theory of the “uncanny”. To provide an understanding of how the uncanny is present in the story, I will look at architectural historian Anthony Vidler’s engagement with Ernst Jentsch and Sigmund Freud, as Vidler connects the uncanny to both literature and architecture. Furthermore I will discuss a feminist reflection on the Freud’s “uncanny,” by Cixous and connect this to Braidotti to show how thinking through ambiguity opens up an force by which we can think productively about relations that stem from the self towards difference. By thinking through difference, and not sameness, we can extend towards an affective relationship with the world. The second part of this chapter will provide a close-reading of the story ‘A Changed Situation,’ to show what it reveals to us when focusing on inanimate agency becoming visible through the construction of de-linear timelines and labyrinthian spaces. My goal for this chapter is to show how the world that is captured in Kavan’s story is indicative for the creative implication found in madness, when mad people are able to represent themselves and exercise creativity accordingly. In Kavan’s story, spaces are not bound to their singular identity as they transgress their pre-conceived limits. This implies that new connections are build that provide new knowledge and new outlooks that can be found in this narrative space where we can theorize about potential limits and transgressions of what we traditionally render to be static.

2.2. The House: Uncanny disturbances of domesticity

In my research on the house, and the literary imagination of Kavan on this subject, I will turn to the notion of the uncanny to illuminate the transgressive implications of unsettling the objective connotation of the house. Architectural historian Anthony Vidler considers the house to be the place par excellence for uncanny disturbances due to the house’s “apparent

domesticity, its residue of family history and nostalgia, its role as the last and most intimate shelter of private comfort sharpening by contrast the terror of invasion by alien spirits.”¹⁴² Alike Kavan’s story, Vidler mentions that tension between domesticity and the re-working and undoing of that domesticity sets forth a feeling of dread because it is beyond safety. Looking at a house “objectively,” as Vidler calls it, one sees the stones and the tapestries. But, in a story of the uncanny, the atmosphere of the house is altered causing the house to becoming difficult to describe and to pin down, as the house exudes “vague sentiments” that are reminiscent to the “products of a dream.”¹⁴³ In the story of Kavan I likewise identify this dream-like quality that is due to the transgression of the objective qualities and aspects of the house. I identify the house in Kavan’s story, as a space where there is an intrusion of terror due to the deluge and the disruption of presumed normalcy and its boundaries. This intrusion makes the house stand outside rationality, as its true nature and pure essence are unable to be understood, making it into an uncanny entity, an entity that Vidler identifies as being “beyond knowledge,”¹⁴⁴ as objective measures cannot ensnare its meaning. So implementing the uncanny in relation to ‘A Changed Situation,’ allows me to move *beyond* yet *with* the domestic qualities of the house, as the domestic is still ever present, just distorted and transgressed.

In *The Architectural Uncanny*, Vidler explores the uncanny and its relation and implementation in literature that uses the spatial trope of the house. In the literature that engages with this trope, the house is reworked into a narrative that features spatial transgression and distortion, influenced by the protagonist’s mind but manifesting in the house. The uncanny, according to Vidler who builds on the theory by Sigmund Freud who in turn builds on Ernst Jentsch, is a difficult term to grasp, and easier described in terms of what it is *not* than in essential terms of its own. Following the explanation by Vidler, the uncanny is not simply a feeling of terror, it is not the paranormal or the magical, not the supernatural or the mystical, nor is it present in everything that appears to be strange to us.¹⁴⁵ It is however,

¹⁴² Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (Massachusetts: Institute of Technology, 1992), 17.

¹⁴³ Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny*, 39.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

sinister, disturbing, suspect, strange, it is “dread” rather than terror”, it is a “sense of lurking unease” rather than “clearly defined source of fear” and it is “uncomfortable sense of haunting” rather than a “present apparition”.¹⁴⁶

The uncanny is thus not a easily identifiable manifestation but it is an ambiguous force that hides in the gloom of that what we render familiar. It is the shadow in the corner of our eye that moves quickly into the void when we turn around. It is always lingering, ever festering in the domestic and the everyday, yet consisting of such a slight atmospheric difference that we cannot conceptualize naming it. The uncanny is thus not clear-cut, it is more a sensation, a feeling that something is off, making it hard to pin down into a singular definition, which is reminiscent of the fluid nature of the house in the story by Kavan. Ernst Jentsch whose text *Zur Psychologie des Unheimlichen* influenced Freud, argues that this “feeling of uncanniness is attributed to a fundamental insecurity brought about by a lack of orientation, a sense of something new, foreign and hostile invading an old, familiar, customary world.”¹⁴⁷ What is happening in the uncanny is thus a destabilization of the domestic, a disturbance of that what is rendered to be familiar. This destabilization is what the fictional “I” in the story of Kavan equally experiences when she is treated like an invader in the house she owns, as the house prevents her from making it into a home.

The uncanny can be present both in literature and in architecture and consequently also in literature that concerns itself with houses. The house is the cause and source of terror making the architectural aspects of the house relevant to the uncanny experience. In *The Architectural Uncanny*, Vidler explains how architecture has been connected to the uncanny ever since the 18th century. The house inhabits multiple levels that signify its uncanny potential. At one level, the house signifies a space for endless uncanny representations, hauntings, doublings and other terrors present in literature and art. A second level however, links the uncanny to modernity and the emergence of labyrinth spaces of the modern developing city. This latter point constructs the uncanny as a modern anxiety, influenced by revolutions, epidemics and fueled by feelings of alienation and social phobia in the emerging modern city.¹⁴⁸ Vidler takes his examples from E.T.A. Hoffmann and Edger Allan Poe to show how the uncanny was executed in their work so that it created a contrast between the secure homely interior and the invasion of an alien presence. Interestingly, the figure of the

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 23.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p. ix.

double was also frequently employed, not as the alien, but as an endless reflection of the same,¹⁴⁹ possibly signifying the mass-production and endless doubling within the design and architecture within modernity. These examples make Vidler regard the uncanny to be a corporeal force that allows for interpretations of the relationship of the psyche and the place where the psyche dwells, signifying the connection between the body and the house, and the individual and the homogenous modern city. Taking this focus on corporeality to Kavan, we see that she works with the notion of the house in a literal sense. It is the house itself that shifts, it is the house that forces its will onto her. She reworks the classical trope of the haunted house, a trope of which Vidler says: “As a concept, the uncanny has, not unnaturally, founds its metaphorical home in architecture; first in the house, haunted or not, that pretends to afford the utmost security while opening itself to the secret intrusion of terror.”¹⁵⁰ In Kavan’s story, the “I” buys the illusion of domesticity, the utmost presumed security, yet is cheated by the hidden terror that hides in the house. The cryptic and obscure nature of the house, changing at will, not conforming to building plans, speaks to the architectural place where the uncanny presents itself. Vidler considers the architectural space to reveal the “deep structure of the uncanny in more than analogical way, demonstrating a disquieting slippages between what seems homely and what is definitely unhomely.”¹⁵¹ Vidler allows for a corporeal reading of the body’s experience immersed in architecture, and the story of the body when absorbed by transgressive powers. Feminist literary critic Hélène Cixous also engages with the uncanny in “Fictions and its Phantoms,” and she inquires what happens in a text when it is analyzed with the uncanny as an overarching perspective. Cixous considers the uncanny to inhabit a disquieting strangeness which is transferred to the reader, as nothing is more uncanny, or less assuring for a reader, than the pursuit of “something,” in a text that is not specified, impossible to determine, variable in form, intensity and content.¹⁵² Cixous considers the uncanny to be connected to “labyrinthian spaces,” and also connects it to the spatial trope just like Vidler. She argues:

That what unfolds without fail before the reader’s eyes is a kind of puppet theater in which real dolls or fake dolls, real and simulated life, are manipulated by a sovereign

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 3.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 11.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p. x.

¹⁵² Hélène Cixous. “Fiction and Its Phantoms: A Reading of Freud’s *Das Unheimliche* (The “Uncanny”),” *New Literary History* 7:3 (1976), 525.

but capricious stage-setter. The net is tightly stretched, bowed and tangled; the scenes are centered and dispersed; narratives are begun and left in suspension.¹⁵³

The setting described by Cixous is reminiscent of the atmosphere in ‘A Changed Situation,’ where labyrinthian spaces are opened up through the experience of the uncanny, and the reader gains access to a place that should have remained hidden, as its content will unsettle the dichotomous rational constructs. The uncanny opens up what exists at the other side of the border, at the other side of reason. This by definition is inaccessible from a rational point of view as rationality only reflects sameness, instead of providing access to the Other, or another world. The access to another world undoes the structures of objectivity and connects to the expansion of the human self and his/her reach out to non-human Others. Cixous, engages in literary criticism and she discusses the work of Clarice Lispector, an artist and writer who bears many thematic similarities to Kavan, in whose work she observes forces of non-human materiality. According to Cixous, attention and engagement with non-human materiality will fuel a diverse post-human imaginary.¹⁵⁴ It is this confrontation between the human and the non-human that will constitute an expansion between our awareness of materiality and subjectivity. To reach out to the non-human, the inanimate, the material, means a reaching out towards the Other, without desiring a reflection of the self as if one were looking in a mirror, but to seek out the Other with an open mind. Braidotti embraces this notion of reaching out to argue for a forgetting of a mere “human-centered perspective”¹⁵⁵ as the central dominant dogma but rather to think through overarching embodied differences so that we can find each other without restraints. This way it is possible to theorize about the embodied expansion from the human towards the non-human Other. In Kavan’s story it is exactly this expansion through transgression of presumed fixed dichotomies that takes place. Due to its uncanniness, this unfolding provides feelings of unease, but simultaneously is significant of these new connections and creative entanglements that provide new knowledge regarding the affective extension beyond the self. Through these new affectations, an awareness and theoreticalization of alternate modes of being and connecting emerges.

¹⁵³ Cixous, “Fictions and Its Phantoms,” 525

¹⁵⁴ Abigail Bray, *Hélène Cixous: Writing and Sexual Difference* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 133.

¹⁵⁵ Bray, *Hélène Cixous*, 136.

2.3. Inanimate agency in ‘A Changed Situation’

The story ‘A Changed Situation,’ opens with the sentence: “When one has lived for seven years in the same house some strange things are apt to take place.”¹⁵⁶ Kavan constructs an unsettling atmosphere, she connects the notion of strange happenings and spatial transformation of the house to both the uncanny (“strange things”) and the temporal (“seven years”). The strangeness of the house is mostly due to the “I” inhabiting the house, she writes: “when somebody like myself, a person who is by nature a wanderer, through a chain of accidental circumstances becomes attached to a certain building, the consequences may be very surprising.”¹⁵⁷ Inhabiting a house, especially when one is not inclined to a domestic propensity, is a cause for dramatic spatial shifts and consequences. The message is given to the reader that something is not quite right with the house and its inhabitant, and that the presumed security of the domestic enclosure of the house never even existed. There is already a shadow lurking over the page that shows the reader another world, another epoch taking place in Kavan’s imagination executed through the experiences of the fictionalized “I”. Being distinctive for the uncanny, Kavan works with the domestic notion of the house as something “canny,” the house as a home, the house as a beacon of hope, working with what is familiar and then completely alienating it. This shift of the house towards alienation is expressed by Freud, as quoted in Vidler: “The uncanny, is nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind. [...] The uncanny is something which ought to have remained hidden but has come to light.”¹⁵⁸ The shifts of the house are influenced by the phantoms of the inhabitant’s past, activated by unveiling that what had to stay hidden and which revelation provides the uncanny unsettling disturbing shift in consciousness and awareness. Gaston Bachelard, on a similar note, argues how a house, due to the metamorphosis that occurs when we inhabit it, both exists in and exceeds our imagination. He argues that a house is not merely an object on which human beings project their daydreams and imaginative capabilities. The house, by being affected by the human constitution of meaning, exceeds itself. The house rises and swells inhabiting more meaning than its mere inanimate shell, which contains “a hidden universe within our imagination that is hidden behind walls of impalpable shadows.”¹⁵⁹ A house is thus not merely an object. The meaning

¹⁵⁶ Kavan, *Asylum Piece*, 37.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny*, 14.

¹⁵⁹ Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1994), 84.

and constitution of a house is a becoming-together, a co-making, of both the house and its inhabitant. The house provides a space for the uncanny to take place, but simultaneously it helps shape the uncanny by its active role in human imagination and spatial disturbances. The house in ‘A Changed Situation,’ as a presumed inanimate object, exercises agency and by doing so, it is unsettling the power-balance of what humanist constructs render as living and non-living. Unsettling these dichotomous structures is what creates this uncanny feeling, of an *Other* world that is hidden beneath our rational one, one that we are purposefully blind to, or that is simply beyond our ability to access. I want to make productive the notion “expansion outwards,” which can be read as the making of new connections, that Mel Y. Chen refers to in her work on animacies, where she examines how matter is considered inanimate but actually inhabits agency and awareness. Chen argues that this expansion outwards from humanness to Others that we render to be live-less,¹⁶⁰ will re-write conditions and relationalities between the human and non-human world. Focusing on animacy activates “new theoretical formations that trouble and undo stubborn binary systems of difference, including dynamism/stasis, life/death, subject/object, speech/nonspeech, human/animal, natural body/cyborg.” According to Chen, taking animacy as a positionality has the capacity to “re-write conditions of intimacy, engendering different communalisms and revising biopolitical spheres.”¹⁶¹ The agency, and thus expansion from non-living to living, of the house in the story manifest itself in two ways. The first is the disturbance of linear time-lines by the house. Time for the house does not move linear from one to hundred, but the house decides at will how old its parts are. The second aspect of the house’s agency manifesting is the construction of labyrinthian spaces by the house within itself. A house in our rational construction has a map and a floor-planning, yet the house in the story does not cohere to these rules of human making.

1. (In)animate agency

The house in ‘A Changed Situation,’ inhabits and shows numerous faces to its inhabitant. It manifests as a harmless animal to the outside world who pass it by, and a complete peculiar contrasting face to the protagonist who is inside the house. The following quote from the story captures the ambiguity of the house inhabiting a dual intention:

¹⁶⁰ Mel Y. Chen, *Animacies. Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect* (Durham and London: Duke UP, 2012) 11.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

Lying peacefully curled up on a sunny day, the new house looks like a harmless grey animal that would eat out of your hand; at night the old house opens its stony, inward-turning eyes and watches me with a hostility that can scarcely be borne.¹⁶²

This double face of the house relates to Bachelard's argument on the multiple faces of a house. He argues that a house has multiple ways of manifesting itself. The house rises upwards from cellar to attic, but it also divides between what is outside of it, and what is inside of it. The house is thus a heterogeneous force as it shows itself through numerous faces, the most evident being one face to the inhabitant of the house, and another to the passer-by.¹⁶³ These multiple faces correspond to multiple meanings and multiple experiences of a house, making the house inhabit a multiple nature, deconstructing it as a singular entity that can be rationally captured and known. The multiplicity of the house also implies that it is ambiguous, making it a source of terror when considered with the notion of the uncanny. This multiple of the house relates back to the uncanny as a representative force that Vidler calls "a dimension [...] that elides the boundaries of the real and the unreal in order to provoke a disturbing ambiguity, a slippage between waking and dreaming."¹⁶⁴ The experience of the house is thus susceptible to uncertain representations and a multiple of explanations as there is no objective measure to its constitution.

As the house uses its agency to construct a space that is hostile to the protagonist, the house begins to signify a prison in which the "I" is undone of her humanity and established as a parasite, a plague, that by its nature is unwanted and unfit for domestic assimilation: "Coiling itself around me it knows I cannot escape. Imprisoned in its very fabric, I am like small worm, a parasite, which the host harbours not altogether unwillingly."¹⁶⁵ Concurrently this suggests an observing of the inhumane and large-scale treatment of mad people in the twentieth century, where "not altogether unwillingly," suggests a dynamic relationship between the house (the institution) and its inhabitant, implying that the house rather enjoys torturing its inhabitant. Moreover it suggests that the agency of the house is dependent on the presence of an inhabitant. Another illustration of this contingent relationship between the house and its inhabitant reads: "Like a beast of prey the house lies in ambush for me, the victim it has already swallowed, the intruder within its ancient structure of stone."¹⁶⁶ Here

¹⁶² Kavan, *Asylum Piece*, 39.

¹⁶³ Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, 84.

¹⁶⁴ Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny*, 11.

¹⁶⁵ Kavan, *Asylum Piece*, 39

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

again is emphasized how the house is not passively waiting for an inhabitant but actively seeks out its victims acting out a long-term planned arrangement: “A few more months or years the house will nourish me in its frozen bowels before it spews me like an owl’s pellet into the arches of infinite space through which my husk of skin and crushed bones will fall for ever and ever.”¹⁶⁷ Presented here is the experience of dehumanization fueled by the power of the house, reducing its inhabitant to a pest, akin to the excretion of animals.

Kavan’s biographers relate her narrative of the house to her life in the insane asylum, after all, the story is part of the novel *Asylum Piece* and some analogy is justified. The clear-cut explanation of her biographers is feasible but does not take into account what happens when Kavan is writing herself, as a woman subjected to madness into existence. Kavan is very much critiquing psychiatric constructions but furthermore she shows an awareness of another world behind this rational singular explanation. This world becomes illuminated through her perspective as a woman living with madness. She works with the ambiguity of the house to construct an in-between-space that is the heterogenous nature of the house that executes its agential will. This ambiguity is part of the writing of madness and the worlding of madness, which is an emancipatory force against dominant truths. Kavan shows how through ambiguity, multiples can exist next to each other, and how two worlds can simultaneously exist. These two worlds do co-exist in a relationship of tension and the rational world has no access to this other world which stems from a place of lived madness. Kavan emphasizes her access to this queer unfolding, on which I elaborated earlier in this chapter, through her situated knowledge by showing that the “I” regains hope in restoring faith in a singular rational house: “Perhaps I do not catch a single glimpse of the ancient for days at a time. Only the tame grey animal confronts me, and seems as if it has rolled itself into a ball and is about to purr like a cat.”¹⁶⁸ In ‘A Changed Situation,’ the wish for a singular world is always futile, the experience of madness is not pushed aside so easily, and the “I” is pushed back into, and confronted with, ambiguity and multiplicity: “Sooner or later, sure enough, there, beyond the new innocuousness, is the old head rearing up like a hoary serpent, charged with antique, sly, unmentionable malevolence, waiting its time.”¹⁶⁹ There is an emphasis on unpredictable nature of ambiguity being a source of horror for the “I” and a wish for a singular world. Through the trope of the inanimate house, what is emphasized is the internal fight of desiring an implementation into a singular world, instead of the solitude experience of madness. The

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 40.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

access to these creative multiplicities inherent in madness comes with a very lonely existence. It is a life that is mostly theoretical and embodied, and cannot be grasped, proven and multiplied to others, it exists on the borders of what is real, as it works *with* the real but simultaneously transcends it. In ‘A Changed Situation,’ the tables are turned, where a person normally rejects the house by changing the interior or moving out, the house has the power to reject or accept its inhabitant. The story emphasizes this by two consequences to the house’s inanimate agency; disturbing linear time-lines and the construction of labyrinthian spaces.

2. Disturbed linear time-lines and labyrinthian spaces

The agency of the house and its related shift from inanimate to animate matter constitute two effects that feature the essence of the house and affect the “I”. The house is established as an open-ended composition, specified by Barad’s theory of diffraction as I elaborated on in chapter one. In the composition of the house, which must be read as an open-ended configuration, linear time is reconfigured into multiple extensions that deconstruct the linear progression of time to multiple temporal constructions existing at once. Singular time is synchronically succeeded by a multiplicity in potentiality. The house is no longer fixed and one, but it is defined by its internal differences: “It is a house of no definite architectural design, half old, half new. The lines of the new part are straightforward and easily read like a sum in simple arithmetic; the old part is complicated and oblique full of treacherous angles, with a roof that sags like the back of a worn-out horse and is blotched with scabrous patches of lichen.”¹⁷⁰ Looking at this from the standpoint of reason would imply that the new part of the house is built recently, and that the old part will be dismantled soon, however, Kavan problematizes this naïve interpretation by reason as she adds: “the old part has only been added recently.”¹⁷¹ These non-linear constructions of the house, and its multiplicity in time can be understood with guidance of Braidotti’s notion of nomadic affectivity. According to Braidotti this nomadic affectivity is outward-bound, and it is based on “complex relations with a multiplicity of others, including non-human others.”¹⁷² Thinking with nomadic affectivity shows that an outward-bound force is inherently defiant of singularity, and that this force is always establishing new connections resulting in new knowledge. The reciprocity of

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 38

¹⁷¹ Ibid., p. 39.

¹⁷² “Rosi Braidotti,” Affirming the Affirmative: On Nomadic Affectivity, *Rhizomes*, Issue 11/12 Fall 2005/Spring 2006, <http://www.rhizomes.net/issue11/braidotti.html>

affectations between the house in its multiplicity and the “I” makes productive these outward bound entanglements, materialized through Kavan’s art and through her contribution to thinking differently through the embodiment in madness. Considering the house’s multiplicity as an outward-bound force establishes new connections to its surroundings. The house’s agency executed through non-linear time provides the house with the ability to exceed its materialist constraints that it would have had if it were to submit to rationality. In ‘A Changed Situation,’ the agency of the house is very much dependent on its inhabitant, making evident the exchange of affective forces. Due to the presence of the “I” the agency of the house accelerates:

When I first came to live here it was an entirely new house – that is to say, it had certainly not been standing for more than ten or fifteen years. Now, at least half of it must have been built many centuries ago. It is the old part which has grown up during my occupation that I fear and distrust.¹⁷³

In the years that the “I” has lived inside the house, the house has transformed and split in two. There is a new part that ages according to linear time and is part of the façade held up by the house in order to project a gentle character outwards, part of the house’s double face of which Bachelard speaks. The old part of the house is the part that has “grown up,” during the “I” residence and has matured into centuries old.

The house, by defying linear time, is deciding for itself how it presents itself to the inhabitant and what its identity is. Rational humanist planning, such as floor plans or building plans, have no power over the shape and identity of the house. The shifted time-lines and the deviated architectural design of the house are both coming forth from the inanimate agency of the house and are interlinked. The disturbed time-lines are that what bring forth labyrinthian spaces. As the house has no linear quality, it simultaneously has no rational nature regarding its design. The result is a house that is half and half new, where the new house is “straightforward” and “easily read” and the old part is “oblique” and “full of treacherous angles”. The new part of the house reads like a modernist play-ground, where a person oversees a space immediately synonymous with new buildings that are indicative of transparency. New buildings do not hide secrets from us, they do not have hidden family secrets, disasters, terror and doom as their inheritance. They do not inhabit pests, mold or

¹⁷³ Kavan, *Asylum Piece*, 39.

secret overpainted rot. They provide safety and security due to their transparency. In ‘A Changed Situation,’ the old part is the affective inversion of the new part of the house. The old part is “treacherous,” with sharp corners in which the identity of the house “lies in ambush”¹⁷⁴ for the “I”. The old part is not transparent and lies in waiting to surprise its inhabitant with its transgressive power. At first the house appears to be harmless but then, “beyond the new innocuousness, is the old head rearing up like a hoary serpent, charged with antique, sly, unmentionable malevolence; waiting its time.”¹⁷⁵ Present here are forces of the uncanny, in which the house has too much history to ever be considered a safe enclave as the house inherits the sentiment of doom. The interesting thing about the house in ‘A Changed Situation,’ is that through its own transgressive potential it no longer solely depends on the human to make it uncanny. The uncanny in the house is no longer the human mind that haunts it. The house has decided for itself, by transgressing its inanimate design, to disturb linearity and to shape its own identity with its own history and subject the human to it.

2.4. Concluding Remarks

In this chapter I started from the premise that a house is generally thought of as a safe beacon of domesticity and that a transgression of this space fuels feelings of dread. ‘A Changed Situation,’ by Kavan works with the notion of desired domesticity of the “I” and the inability to follow up on this ambition because the house transgresses its inanimate status. The house is not just a merely accumulation of bricks but it affects its inhabitant by becoming animate, exercising agency and establishing a will of its own. Thinking with feminist theory helps us to unsettle domestic narratives, whilst theorizing the house through the lens of the uncanny opens up these transgressions that happen when the house exceeds its inanimate status. The house’s transgression causes it to inhabit an ambiguous identity and this establishes what is traditionally considered to be beyond knowledge, and what Vidler argues as being key in constituting an uncanny sensation. The house inhabiting a place beyond knowledge creates knowledge that does not conform to the framework of rationality, and this new awareness destabilizes what is traditionally thought of as rational and objective. Kavan’s story shapes a narrative around an uncanny space, which can be read as a reworked haunted house. In this house, the fictional “I” is imprisoned. The house does not conform to preconceived rational

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 38.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 39.

limits about what a pile of bricks can do. Transgressing these limits and undoing dichotomous structures is key to both establishing an uncanny sensation and for illuminating the creative power that is present in Kavan's imagination. Kavan is living within the experience of madness, and from that madness, she writes. Madness comes inherently with the encounter of a crippling loneliness, as one experiences the world as a completely different narrative than people who are neurotypical. However, it also comes with access to a rich internal imagination and the extension of life to an imagined reality. Kavan names this imagined reality, the unreality, as opposed to concrete reality, which is objective reality.

In this chapter I showed how this imagined reality fuels new external forces, from the self to the world, undoing binary structures of what is rendered to be animate and inanimate, or human and non-human. Rationality is singular, and in the connections that Kavan shapes for the "I", there is an expansion outwards, also theorized upon by Chen, Cixous and Braidotti. This powerful force of expansion of relations outward from the self are about extending the human self to the non-human and the inanimate world. These connections open up new affinities across pre-conceived borders. In 'A Changed Situation,' the "I" is confronted with a house that casts her out, but who is also dependent on its inhabitant to execute its agential power. The "I" and the house are co-making and shaping this relation together, as they are dependent upon each other in a relation of rejection, hiding and materialized madness. Madness materializes by inhabiting a dual awareness in both the real rational world that co-exists with the imagined world. In the objective world, madness is the low hum that is always there and never on mute, always on stand-by to become rambunctious. In the world of madness, the objective world sets the stage, and is the background to the monumental power of transgressive forces. Theorizing from this place of madness brings to light this dual place, this ambiguous place, shaping stories of transgression as they take place in a canny backdrop, but by nomadic forces become transgressed, establishing an unsettling capability.

Reading with Kavan, and taking into account the knowledge that arises from thinking through difference, especially the connections from the self towards the Other, gives a glimpse of another world that exists as an undercurrent to the world we traditionally consider to be rational and objective. Due to rational dichotomous thinking being dominant, a lot of potential knowledge and imaginaries of a worlding otherwise, are not implemented into the imaginaries that affect the main body of thought of the rational world. We cling so resolute to the rational consideration of that what is objectively *seen*, that we close our eyes to the knowledge that dwells out of our sight. I therefore argue for a thinking through and with difference. Homogeneity erases differences and it creates an universal body of thought that

does not implement that what it considers divergent, as those who are situated in madness. Thinking with difference thus allows for a multiplicity of embodiments to arise into the pool that inhabits the knowledge of the world. This knowledge comes forth from actual matter-ization, as Kavan's worlding inhabits material consequences, evident in 'A Changed Situation.' In the lived experience of madness, and in the fiction of Kavan, the inanimate is an affective force upon the lived experience of the fictionalized "I". Through this "I" we experience that, when we think with transgressive forces, we see how the non-human and inanimate authorities co-exists with and affect the lived experience of the human. Aspects of life that seem mundane through the experience of universal rationality, such as the house, become enchanted with potentiality and they affect our existence. Reading these narratives by Kavan, allow a new imaginary to take hold, and allows us to listen to the forces that exist beyond the human. Humankind has merely been trained to ignore the murmurs of the earth, and to ignore the affectations felt in inanimate spaces. If we think through difference, with human and non-human Others, a new narrative could arise in the dominant domain that does not reduce those who inhabit difference to silence or pathologization.

This chapter has focused on the agency of the inanimate, and the relation between the human self and what is rendered lifeless. In the next chapter my focus will be on Kavan's storytelling of the relation between the human and the animal. Where 'A Changed Situation,' was very much a tale of despair and fear, the story 'A Visit,' will be centered around a desired mutual signification, through love and inevitably, loss. Moving from the inanimate to the animal will show how multilayered the worlding of madness is, and how this worlding is centered around affective forces participating in a co-making, an entanglement, with all Others around it.

Chapter three: Loving a leopard. Interspecies affect in ‘A Visit.’

*My young brother asked forgiveness of the birds:
it seems senseless, yet it is right,
for all is like an ocean, all flows and connects;
touch it in one place and it echoes at the other end of the world.*
— Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*.¹⁷⁶

3.1. Introduction

‘A Visit,’ tells the story of a relationship between a woman and a leopard, shaped by love and loss through their mutual affective interaction. In this chapter I want to unfold interspecies dynamism and discuss the production of meaning that is found in the entanglement between the human and the animal. This follows after chapter two in which I have explored Kavan’s entanglement with(in) a non-living entity, the house, that transgresses its inanimate nature yet also instigates terror. This chapter will focus on the exchange of affect and agential interaction between the human and the animal that Kavan produces in her literary text. According to Stacy Alaimo, thinking through contact between the human and nature, leads to ethical and political possibilities. She argues that human corporeality must be imagined as “always intermeshed with the more-than-human world,”¹⁷⁷ making the human inseparable from nature. Nature is thus not merely the background to the human experience, but it is entangled with the human, it is part of the human experience already. Nature is also not a blank empty space designated for human colonization or extraction of resources but it is, “a world of fleshy beings, with their own needs, claims and actions.”¹⁷⁸ In *Material Ecocriticism*, Iovino and Opperman argue that the material world, in contrast to the human world that includes inanimate matter as well as non-human forms of living, has always been considered as “passive, inert, unable to convey any independent expression of meaning.” The

¹⁷⁶ Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov: A Novel in Four Parts with Epilogue* (London: Vintage Books, 1992), 271

¹⁷⁷ Stacy Alaimo, “Trans-corporeal feminisms and the ethical space of nature,” in *Material Feminisms*, edited by Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 238.

¹⁷⁸ Alaimo, “Trans-corporeal feminisms and the ethical space of nature,” 238.

material is therefore essential to think with, as it allows for the reimagining of the notion of agency, by which agency is not something reserved that is exclusively human, but something that assumes many forms, all of which are material. Every force in the world, whether it is human, non-human or inanimate, produces meaning and produces an effective influence to all around it by its interaction. Agency is thus not to be exclusively associated with humans, human interaction or human intentionality, but it is a part of the “generative dynamism,” in which “reality emerges as an intertwined flux of material and discursive forces, rather than as a complex of hierarchically organized individual players.”¹⁷⁹ Thinking with matter allows for an opportunity to break through the mind/matter, culture/nature divide that is dominant in humanist thought. Thinking with the body, whether it is human or non-human, shows how humans are located in a larger “collective,”¹⁸⁰ where the human communicates to all other beings in the world, and with the world itself. Reading ‘A Visit,’ through the notion of matter and embodiment as matter in play with the world, uncovers new knowledge that leads to a perspective of literature that is less focused on human exceptionalism. Connecting the shared worlding of the human and the non-human generates new narratives and discourses by which complex levels of co-existence unfold. Alaimo similarly argues that by emphasizing movement across bodies we can “[reveal] the interchanges and interconnections between human corporeality and the more-than-human.”¹⁸¹ These revelations and connections will acknowledge that epistemologies must be formed that do not consider the humans and the non-human as separate.

One of the forces that fuels such an epistemology, that is more in tune with the connections beyond the human to the Others in the world, is (the writing of) madness, as it creates an internal imaginative embodied narrative that has worldly consequences. Kavan is making these imaginative narratives material by engaging in story-telling. Story-telling is a way for the circulating of affective forces that in Kavan’s stories, inhabit oppressive forces (see chapter two) but also connections that center love. In this chapter I will focus on the corporeal storytelling by Kavan, in which she pays attention to the leopard’s embodiment, his beauty and his non-verbal understanding of the fictional “I”. I will thereby show the entanglement of the human and the non-human, explaining an ongoing interspecies dynamism and an interspecies production of meaning and relationality in the literary text.

¹⁷⁹ Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann, “Stories come to matter,” in *Material Ecocriticism*, edited by Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), 3.

¹⁸⁰ Iovino and Oppermann, “Stories come to matter,” 6.

¹⁸¹ Alaimo, “Trans-corporeal feminisms and the ethical space of nature,” 238.

In what follows, I conduct a close-reading of the story ‘A Visit,’ from Kavan’s story novel *Julia and the Bazooka*. In this story I identify two main themes: first that of interspecies love and second, that of interspecies loss. ‘A Visit,’ is a story that tells the joy of communicating with the Other by an instinctive *knowing* without verbal communication. Yet simultaneously the story also tells of an inevitable loneliness that comes with not being able to communicate this loss to other humans, and thereby being doomed to bear the burden alone, in isolation. ‘A Visit,’ is a story that shows an entangled way of interacting with the world wherein the natural world is not a separate entity but an extension of the fictional “I” and an affective force that deconstructs the hierarchical ordering of the human and the animal world. What I aim to argue for in this chapter is that by thinking with the story of Kavan we can think differently about the relationship between the human and the animal, a relationship that is normally found in a hierarchical dichotomy. This dichotomy has no signifying force in the story of Kavan. The fictional “I” and the leopard shape the relationship together, by creating affective alliances where humanist ideology would see limitation and separation. While in chapter two the transgression of the inanimate was met with the sensation of fear, in this chapter I claim that the author is able to see, imagine and construct interspecies connections through the notion of affect. As I already introduced in the progression of this thesis, Kavan is writing her literary oeuvre from her own subjugated position as a woman situated in madness, a place that is not an end in itself but a place to think *from*. The practicalities of madness are again not made explicit in the story, yet she produces affective relationships and entangled subjectivities by going through the waves of love and loss that exemplify madness as a force that undoes singular dichotomous structures. It emphasizes an extension outside the singular self towards the other, in the case of ‘A Visit,’ the leopard.

Kavan’s story of love between the fictional “I” and a leopard constitutes a particular force in literary theory and the act of story-telling. The agency of the animal, and the love and the bodily connection between the animal and the “I” are actions that move beyond clear humanist boundaries of what an human-animal relationship can be or should be. The question that I will address in this chapter is: How does the story ‘A Visit,’ by Kavan, via its story-telling of an interspecies relationship, generate new affective possibilities for the subject through both the force of love (in that relationship) and loss (of that relationship)? This chapter will have four objectives. First, I will address the act of story-telling of multispecies entanglements, of human-animal relationships and their effects and affects. I want to unfold what Kavan achieves when she is writing this multispecies narrative around interspecies affect. My second objective is to address *love*, its corporeal consequences, its bodily affect

and outwards connections. To do this I will turn to affect theory to show that there is an exchange of the force of love through the extension of the self towards the Other. My third objective is to address *loss*. The fictional “I” is not able to reciprocate the leopard’s desire to join him in the jungle, which means that she is not able to follow the leopard, the Other, into a shared future. Loss is also invoked due to the inability of the fictional “I” to communicate to other humans about her experiences with the leopard. As the final and fourth objective I want to think *with* failure, in order to propel towards hope, to provide a hopeful prospect for life after failure.

3.2. Telling the stories of multispecies entanglement

‘A Visit,’ starts with a leopard entering a woman’s, the fictional “I,” bedroom and laying down next to her. The fictional “I” is intoxicated by his fur and his smell as he smells like feral nature and the moon. The leopard understands her emotions without ever uttering a word. During the day the leopard leaves, but he returns every night and they spend many nights together. He is aware of the need for their secrecy, never showing himself to other people. During the rainy season the leopard suddenly leaves. He gestures that the “I” should follow him, but she is unable to due to the cold and the rain and her body not being made for the jungle. The hot season returns and when she walks on the beach she sees a red-cloaked man standing in the sea with a string of pelicans around him. They cannot communicate due to the noise of the waves. Back home, there is a pelican on her roof. The “I” reads this as a sign that the leopard is trying to communicate with her and she regains hope for his return. Later, she returns to the beach and she sees the young cloaked man standing in the waves accompanied by the leopard. They move away from the shore and the “I” tries to approach them but she is unable to swim to them. The leopard senses her and looks at her one last time before he and the cloaked man move further out to sea. The “I” refrains from speaking about the leopard to anyone and blames herself for this, what she regards as a, preventable loss.

Telling this story of the love and loss between a human and an animal is not a neutral move with the act of story-telling. Instead, it implements the attention to and opening up of new relations through narratives. Thom van Dooren, who writes stories of extinction in his research, engages with “philosophical, ethical, cultural, and political issues that arise in the context of species extinctions and human entanglements with threatened species and

places.”¹⁸² In *Flight Ways: Life and Loss at the Edge of Extinction*, van Dooren tells extinction stories that are centered around avian entanglements or the multispecies relationship between humans and birds, where he is focusing on the “webs of interaction in which living beings emerge, are held in the world, and eventually die. Life and death do not take place in isolation from others; they are thoroughly relational affairs for fleshy, mortal creatures.”¹⁸³ These multispecies relationships exceed the rational science of biology and in the knowledge arising from these relationships there is a “learning and development [and] social practices and cultures.”¹⁸⁴ Essential about van Dooren’s work to this thesis is that he unfolds, in his philosophy, how humans are not isolated from other creatures and thus neither are our stories. Van Dooren works with extinction narratives, and stories of extinction speak to the cultural position of the leopard in ‘A Visit.’ A leopard is an animal threatened by extinction and known for being very shy. On a similar note, in ‘A Visit,’ the relationship between the “I” and the leopard is one of secrecy, a secrecy that connects to an animal that is out of scope for human interaction, rarely seen and considered to be close to mythical in the wild.

Van Dooren considers narrative to be a way into the multispecies complexity because it allows for “simultaneously a range of points of view, interpretations, temporalities, and possibilities.”¹⁸⁵ He connects his notion of multispecies entanglement to Haraway’s curiosity in philosophical engagements that exceed the human world, engagements through which we strive to learn and know more. Stories exceed their descriptive function as they shape our lives and the culture we live in. Van Dooren argues that we as humans live by stories, so they shape our shared world, and thus we cannot differentiate clearly between the so-called real world, and the narrated world. Stories arise from the world, and they are at home in the world, and to show this van Dooren engages with Haraway who calls this worlding a verb, which means that stories are “of the world, not in the world. Worlds are not containers, they are patternings, risky co-makings, speculative fabulations.”¹⁸⁶ Stories are never *just* passive narratives that merely exist in an imaginative “outside” but instead they are part of the world and participate in the becoming of the (our shared) world. Telling stories implies certain consequences by which we, as humans, are drawn into new connections. By telling stories we are able to fuel our imagination and desires for an “otherwise,” a “thinking differently,” by which we are able

¹⁸² Thom van Dooren, “About,” accessed February 11, 2019, <https://thomvandooren.org/about/>

¹⁸³ Thom van Dooren, *Flight Ways: Life and Loss at the Edge of Extinction* (New York: Columbia UP, 2014), 4.

¹⁸⁴ Van Dooren, *Flight Ways*, 4.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

to world and imagine by engaging in an external force that works against singular hierarchical closed-off embodiments that see all Others as the end of (our) signification. These expansive connections are creative ones, also drawn up by Kavan as she created a story in which the fictional “I” extends herself towards the leopard by which the humanist dichotomy of human/animal is troubled. The strength of Kavan’s fiction is her ability to speak for another position, that of embodied madness, which allows for a thinking and speaking from a dual consciousness or ambiguity, and thus defying the humanist desire for rational stories that fit in a clear system of binaries. Pushing beyond these boundaries, creating new knowledge, creates an affective space for love where the new relationships that emerge defy the singular humanist framework.

Literary scholar Roman Bartosch argues in his essay on “Storying Creaturely Life,” that within literary animal studies there is a notion of a becoming “with,” that is related to the Haraway-ian notion of making kin and making kind,¹⁸⁷ that materialize through the writing of anthropomorphisms. This becoming-with is a way to make alliances that transcend species binaries and closed-off relationalities. This becoming-with or multispecies-becoming is not static. It is a Deleuzian process in which humans are connected to the creaturely in an ongoing configuration. Bartosch argues that anthropomorphisms, like the leopard’s capability for intimacy with a human, provide the opportunity in literature to bridge the conceptual barrier that separates humans dichotomously from animals. Bartosch says, alike to van Dooren, that this bridging is doing by stories that inhabit narratives and aesthetics by which anthropomorphic thinking can be exercised. This undoes human exceptionalism but it also engages in thinking through entanglements that are not situated in a humanist narrative but are intertwinings of action (between the human and the non-human), loss, failure and love. After all, as van Dooren argues, humans live by their stories, they shape our shared world. This shaping of a world speaks to the worlding process that according to Bartosch is key to the notion of relationality of “ontologically heterogenous partners,”¹⁸⁸ to become what they are, in and through a relationality. Worlding is thus an entangled intertwined process, and natures, cultures, subjects and objects do not pre-exist their “entangled states,”¹⁸⁹ as if they inhabit some “neutral” state, but we are always already entangled. Worlding is already a relationality

¹⁸⁷ Bartosch, Roman. “Storying Creaturely Life” In *Beyond the Human-Animal Divide*, edited by Dominik Ohrem and Roman Bartosch (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 154.

¹⁸⁸ Bartosch, “Storying Creaturely Life,” 156.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

that inhibits heterogenous creatureliness, not as a trope but as a way of relating to the world, a world where humans negotiate that relation by narration.

Worlding through interspecies entanglement, like Kavan in ‘A Visit,’ and this chapter, is participating in a thinking through difference. This is connected to Haraway’s concern with a “critical engagement with misleading dualisms and binaries, i.e. the human exceptionalist bifurcation of nature all too characteristic to the still determining ‘modern times’.”¹⁹⁰ Nowadays we still live in dualist modern times where difference is regarded as both the source of unjust subjugation, or, a sign that another is inferior. Thinking through multispecies entanglement facilitates in the need for the “practicing and acting with-in this world,” and thinking with difference.¹⁹¹ Not just as a philosophical undertaking, but as a force that matters politically, as it matters to counter the dualist thinking inherent in the world, and thus also in psychiatry, that is very much based on the naturalization of the “dialectical Western thought tradition.”¹⁹² Key in this multispecies undertaking is the idea that because we are always already entangled with-in everything, with the world and all the others, we have never been an innocent bystander, there has never been “an innocent starting point,”¹⁹³ and thus we have to take responsibility for the narratives we bring into the world.

3.3. Love

‘A Visit,’ portrays the story of an intimate relationship between the fictional “I” and a leopard, that materializes both corporeal and incorporeal. Corporeality is invoked by the attention the “I” gives to the leopard’s body due to the absence of a shared language. The “I” constantly attempts to read him, smell him, and thereby gaining an understanding and appreciation of him: “A wild primeval smell of sunshine, freedom, moon and crushed leaves, combined with the cool freshness of the spotted hide, still damp with the midnight moisture of jungle plants.”¹⁹⁴ Besides the “I” intoxicating account of the leopard’s body, there is a reliance on what cultural theorists Seigworth and Gregg name the “incorporeal (events, atmospheres, feeling-tones).”¹⁹⁵ This incorporeal affect is present in the notion of *knowing*

¹⁹⁰ Kathrin Thiele, “Ethos of Diffraction: New Paradigms for a (Post)humanist Ethics,” *Parallax* 20:3 (2014), 204.

¹⁹¹ Thiele, “Ethos of Diffraction,” 204.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Ibid., p. 213.

¹⁹⁴ Anna Kavan, *Julia and the Bazooka*, 20.

¹⁹⁵ Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg, “An inventory of shimmers,” in *The Affect Theory Reader*, edited by Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (Durham and London: Duke UP, 2010), 2.

and *feeling* without uttering a word. The “I” expresses this incorporeal affect towards the leopard when the leopard senses her presence from the greatest distance. The leopard knows when the “I” watches him, and he reciprocates this love by looking at her with a full understanding: “His head turned in my direction, though I couldn’t possibly have been in his range of vision”.¹⁹⁶ The story relies heavily on an invoked atmosphere by descriptions of the density of the jungle, the suffocating heat and the leopard’s touch and proximity as the “I” remembers his warm wild breath on her skin and the smell of his wet earth-smelling fur. Affect is found in these constant interactions that exceed the boundaries of speech. Seigworth and Gregg argue that affect is:

the name we give to those forces – visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally other than conscious knowing, vital forces insisting beyond emotion that can serve us towards movement, towards thought and extension, that can likewise suspend us across a barely registering accretion of force-relations, or that can even leave us overwhelmed by the world’s apparent intractability.¹⁹⁷

Focusing on affect draws attention to emotions and the body, however it also signifies a shift of perspective that illuminates “our power to affect the world around us and our power to be affected by it, along with the relationship between these two powers.”¹⁹⁸ The narrative created by Kavan is therefore an affective play between the “I” and the leopard, in which the “I” affects the leopard and vice versa. This thinking through affect as an interplay of power and relationships between matter (bodies) *matters* as affect turns “into a site for rethinking theoretical concerns ranging from dualisms of the mind and the body to critiques of identity politics and practices of critical reading.”¹⁹⁹ Reading ‘A Visit,’ through affect lets us rethink ontologies and differences in such a way that the hierarchical boundaries between bodies and between dichotomous positions (such as animal-human) are challenged. Ahmed considers affect to be that “what sticks,” where emotions are central to the creation of affect as they

¹⁹⁶ Kavan, *Julia and the Bazooka*, 21.

¹⁹⁷ Seigworth and Gregg, “An inventory of shimmers,” 1.

¹⁹⁸ Michael Hardt, “Foreword: What Affects Are Good For,” in *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social*, edited by Patricia Ticineto Clough and Jean Halley (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2007), ix.

¹⁹⁹ Marianne Liljeström and Susanna Paasonen, “Introduction: Feeling differences – affect and feminist reading,” in *Working with Affect in Feminist Readings: Disturbing differences*, edited by Marianne Liljeström and Susanna Paasonen (London: Routledge, 2010), 1.

shape how our bodies “are moved by the worlds they inhabit.”²⁰⁰ What speaks to the consideration of interspecies affect is her view of affect not as something that exist autonomously in the world, but that affect is implicated in the messy “unfolding of bodies into worlds,” and how we are affected/touched/influenced by that what comes near.²⁰¹ Affect is thus interlinked with the force of encounter. To move this back to the literary text we see this force of encounter as explicated by Ahmed, alike what Seigworth and Gregg name an “accumulative beside-ness.”²⁰² Kavan illustrates this beside-ness in the following quote:

One hot night a leopard came into my room and lay down on the bed beside me. I was half asleep, and did not realize at first that it was a leopard. I seemed to be dreaming the sound of some large, soft-footed creature padding quietly through the house, the doors of which were wide open because of the intense heat.²⁰³

In this first encounter between the leopard and the fictional “I,” humanist boundaries that traditionally exist between the human and the animal are overthrown. The undoing of human/animal boundaries, and their spatial designations, of sharing a bed, lead to a new reality of beside-ness. In ‘A Visit,’ the leopard and the “I” meet in a together-ness: the leopard enters in the “I”’s room. He lies down next to her and she does not question why, nor is she afraid. Thus there is an immediate sense of connection, of safety, a feeling of fate, nearly a destiny. Due to their new connection in their togetherness they stop being either human or animal when they are together. In this togetherness they are not belonging to an either/or, but they exist on the borders of signification, in an *in-between-ness* on which I elaborated in chapter one. The “I” and the leopard live together as equals, and the “I” is not afraid by this animal that is usually portrayed to be a predator. Instead, she describes him very lovingly:

It was almost too dark to see the lithe, muscular shape coming into my room, treading softly on velvet paws, coming straight to the bed without hesitation, as if perfectly familiar with its position. A light spring, then warm breath on my arm, on my neck

²⁰⁰ Sara Ahmed, “Creating disturbance. Feminism, happiness and affective differences,” in *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social*, edited by Patricia Ticineto Clough and Jean Halley (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2007), 32.

²⁰¹ Ahmed, “Creating disturbance,” 33.

²⁰² Seigworth and Gregg, “An inventory of shimmers,” 2.

²⁰³ Kavan, *Julia and the Bazooka*, 19.

and shoulder, as the visitor sniffed me before lying down. [...] [I] was confirmed in my conviction that the leopard is the most beautiful of all wild animals.²⁰⁴

The “I” affectionally describes the leopard as strong, muscular, soft-footed, with a warm breath. The way the “I” describes him incorporates a corporeal relationship full of desire, creating a worlding wherein the “I” and the leopard live separate from the rest, separate from classical binary signification. This is emphasized as the “I” does not communicate to other people about her relationship with the leopard, nor do they ever appear in public together. The “I” anticipates that other humans will refuse to understand her reality: “It would be difficult to describe him to these simple people, who can never have seen a creature even remotely like him.”²⁰⁵ The “I” assumes that “simple people” will react with hostility to her relationship with the leopard, and she refuses to let these common and anticipated dismissive judgements about interspecies relationships signify the relationship between her and the leopard. In the sphere of dismissive judgement, not surprisingly, the interspecies relationship has been interpreted differently by scholars on Kavan’s work. For example, on the website “The Sitting Bee,” the writer illustrates this by saying: “some critics might suggest that the leopard is symbolism for male companionship,” before elaborating on an perspective of missing masculinity in the “I”’s life: “the narrator lacks the balance that masculinity might bring.”²⁰⁶ This point refers back to the article by Thiele wherein is argued that thinking with difference matters because ever too often the standard humanist perspective is re-enforced. This shows the importance of emphasizing the “ethico-political perspectives”²⁰⁷ that arise from the establishment of new affective connections. After all, most literary readings will continue to re-produce human exceptionalism even when confronted with a narrative that participates in a thinking differently.

What I want to emphasize instead in my reading, is to illuminate the corporeal affective relationship that originates through a common exceptionality, as the “I” and the leopard are established as equals in an interplay of desire yet are both marginalized in society. In this place of desire and love the “I” is overcome by admiration for her partner: “His movements were always silent, graceful, dignified, sure: and his large, dark eyes never failed

²⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 19.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 27.

²⁰⁶ “The Sitting Bee,” Short Story Reviews, accessed February 14, 2019, <http://sittingbee.com/a-visit-anna-kavan/>

²⁰⁷ Thiele, “Ethos of Diffraction,” 202.

to acknowledge me.”²⁰⁸ The jungle is the backdrop of the story and of their love, as the “I” has a home inland and the leopard retreats to the jungle during the day. The jungle inhabits a double meaning in the story: It is the background to the awakening of their love but it also signifies the inability of the “I” to follow the leopard to her destiny, which I will address later in this chapter. However, to the “I,” the leopard is intrinsically connected to the jungle, and the leopard signifies an extension of the natural world to the human world, that is hidden to most people. The “I” however, gains access to this secret world: “I was all the time breathing his natural odour, a wild primeval smell of sunshine, freedom, moon and crushed leaves, combined with the cool freshness of the spotted hide, still damp with the midnight moisture of jungle plants.”²⁰⁹ In this quote an idealization arises in the way the “I” perceives the leopard. This idealization is inherent in love according to Ahmed, as she argues that love is a force that is “crucial to how individuals become aligned with collectives through their identification with an ideal.”²¹⁰ The creation of a collective of the “I” and the leopard in their togetherness is thus achieved by the force of love which inhabits the identification with an ideal, and the idealization of the Other. For the “I,” the leopard signifies freedom and closeness to nature, which remains an ideal as she can never become-him, she can only become-with-him.

The descriptions of the leopard by the “I” borderline the erotic language of love, when she longingly thinks: “I found this non-human scent, surrounding him like an aura of strangeness, peculiarly attractive and stimulating. The close proximity of this powerful body of another species gave me a pleasant sensation I am at a loss to name.”²¹¹ Here, as opposed to the loss of language through failing to continue the relationship with the leopard, an aspect that I will address later in this chapter, the loss of language in this quote speaks to an unnamable pleasure. A pleasure that one cannot put into words speaks to the notion of *jouissance*, a Lacanian term re-imagined by Cixous. Gilbert explains *jouissance* as following: “*Jouissance* is a virtually metaphysical fulfillment of desire that goes beyond mere satisfaction. It is a fusion of the erotic, the mystical and the political. It implies a sense of empowerment.”²¹² Whilst the “I” reflects on the loss of language, Kavan is writing the unspeakable by confronting the fictional “I” with these affective interactions that are unable to be captured in language. Writing the unspeakable means a rupture from coherence that

²⁰⁸ Kavan, *Julia and the Bazooka*, 22.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

²¹⁰ Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 124.

²¹¹ Kavan, *Julia and the Bazooka*, 20.

²¹² Sandra Gilbert, introduction to *The Newly Born Woman*, by Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), ix.

exist in the hierarchical singularity, and it is a revolutionary force of writing through the feminine as I elaborated on in chapter one, there an end of signification is considered to be position to write *from*. ‘A Visit,’ can therefore be read as a writing that honors the celebratory aspect of marginality, a force that Bray considers *jouissance* to be as it is celebrating the “pleasures of marginality, exile, being a stranger to oneself.”²¹³ In ‘A Visit,’ there is a loss of the pure humanist self, but in that loss, there is an extension towards the other in a becoming-together where this new strange identity brings out affective forces as love, desire and eroticism. The “I” experiences pure love towards the leopard’s viscerality, by a corporeal togetherness.

Through the “I”’s togetherness with the leopard, she has an ability to enter a secret world that is opened up by this becoming-together and would be closed off in singularity. The configuration of the leopard and the “I” is only apparent when they are alone and no other human beings are in the proximity: “If I walked through jungle to visit someone, or to buy food from the neighboring village, he would appear from nowhere and walk beside me, but always stopped before a house was in sight, never allowing himself to be seen.”²¹⁴ Both the leopard and the “I” are not extending their relationship to the confinements of the human world, but they are merely in a becoming-together that signifies an exchange of encounters which Seigworth and Gregg consider to be characteristic of affect, in which “ambiguous or mixed”²¹⁵ encounters push and pull from and to each other, creating an in-between. The leopard never speaks to the “I” and their contact is shrouded in silence. This silence is not oppressive, not uncomfortable: “I must emphasize that there was no hint of obstinacy or hostility in his silence, and I did not resent it.”²¹⁶ Even though the leopard remains silent, “he always appeared to listen and understand me.”²¹⁷ Within rational frameworks the power of language is to designate things, to name them, and place them. The “I” and the leopard not communicating traditionally through language speaks to an active undoing of the framework of humanist exceptionalism that considers the humanist culture of language as all-knowing. As Nye argues on this topic of language in service of humanism: “To speak a rational language is to kill the things, to refuse to hear them or look at them.”²¹⁸

²¹³ Bray, *Hélène Cixous*, 58.

²¹⁴ Kavan, *Julia and the Bazooka*, 20.

²¹⁵ Seigworth and Gregg, “An inventory of shimmers,” 2.

²¹⁶ Kavan, *Julia and the Bazooka*, 21.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*

²¹⁸ Bray, *Hélène Cixous*, 59.

Kavan's writing of a relationship of love that is not focused around language but around corporeal contact is thus actively engaging in an alternative to the conceptions and writing of the humanist narrative on love.

3.4. Loss and failure

While the love between the "I" and the leopard makes up the first half of 'A Visit,' in the second part of the story the tone of the narrative changes drastically. With the sentence: "Then without a warning, he suddenly left me,"²¹⁹ Kavan introduces the concept of loss to the reader. The leopard leaves the "I" behind, which causes the "I" to fall into depression due to her inability to participate any longer in a becoming-together with the leopard. This second half encompasses the foundational inability of a human being to follow the leopard into his nature. Whilst the leopard could relocate his presence to her bedroom, the "I" is unable to reciprocate this change of environment. A new narrative arises that inhabits a tone of helplessness and incompetence, a stark contrast to the first half of the story.

The notion of loss is exemplified by the following quote: "I stopped and told him I couldn't go on any further. [...] [T]he beautiful head turned away, [...] and he launched himself in a tremendous leap through the shining curtain of raindrops and was instantly hidden from sight."²²⁰ The "I" is swamped by the torrential rain when the leopard wants to leave with her into the jungle. Her inability to follow him due to the incompetence of her human body to handle the rain and heat, causes an end to their relationship and thus the failure of their shared future. Halberstam in *The Queer Art of Failure* considers failure to be an fruitful concept to think through. Success and failure are based upon the criteria of a "heteronormative, capitalist society," that combines "reproductive maturity with wealth accumulation." Success then specifically, is linked to hierarchical forces of power, as capitalism and the accumulation of wealth are hierarchical by definition. Halberstam argues that failure on the other hand, "offer[s] more creative, more cooperative, more surprising ways of being in the world."²²¹ These creative ways of being in the world are also addressed in 'A Visit.' Due to failing in following the leopard, the "I" at first falls into despair, into feelings of depression, but gradually she begins to gain an awareness, she begins to notice an undercurrent in the lives of animals, finding secret messages in their actions. When she sees a

²¹⁹ Kavan, *Julia and the Bazooka*, 22.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

²²¹ J. Halberstam, *Queer Art of Failure* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011), 3.

red-cloaked man in the sea who is trailed by a flock of pelicans, and later finding a pelican upon her roof she thinks: “It suddenly struck me that the bird must be something to do with the leopard, perhaps bringing a message from him.”²²² This magical thinking that is generated by the crucial moment of loss, makes the affective force of failure rewarding, as it is bringing about a new determination in the “I”’s mind. Halberstam argues on the productive force of failure that it “allows us to escape the punishing norms that discipline behavior and manage human development with the goal of delivering us from unruly childhoods to orderly and predictable adulthoods.”²²³ Reading Halberstam together with Kavan, establishes failure as a force that creates a more open-ended future. Success designates us for a singular heteronormative and homogenous life, yet failure opens up more possibilities for affective relations and connections as there is more uncertainty in failure. This uncertainty is not necessarily negative according to Halberstam: “[W]hile failure certainly comes accompanied by a host of negative affects, such as disappointment, disillusionment, and despair, it also provides the opportunity to use these negative affects to poke holes in the toxic positivity of contemporary life.”²²⁴ After all, what we render to be positive, is merely actions in the service of the production of the same for everyone (progression from child to adult, from school to work etc.), yet thinking through difference, and thus considering failure not an end but a potentiality, expands the connections from the self to the other due to its inherent multiplicity in opportunity and possibility.

As mentioned earlier, there is a sensation alike to depression that arises in the “I” due to the leopard’s departure. Depression manifest itself in ‘A Visit,’ by inhabiting a sense of disquieting limbo: “Nothing of any interest took place after the leopard’s visit. My life resumed its former routine of work and trivial happenings.”²²⁵ After this limbo, the “I”’s feelings gradually progresses into depression: “I was gradually losing hope.”²²⁶ Similar to failure, depression is not an empty sensation, even though it is frequently described as non-being, however, Cvetkovich considers depression to be an affective force. She describes depression as: “Slow steady work of resilient survival, utopian dreaming and other affective tools for transformation.”²²⁷ It is an affective force because when a subject is in depression they have the capacity of imagining an elsewhere and an otherwise. Reading depression in

²²² Kavan, *Julia and the Bazooka*, 25.

²²³ Halberstam, *Queer Art of Failure*, 3.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Kavan, *Julia and the Bazooka*, 23.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Ann Cvetkovich, *Depression A Public Feeling* (Durham&London: Duke UP, 2012), 2.

this way, shows that depression accommodates a certain level of hope. Just like good feelings, Cvetkovich says, “feeling bad might, in fact, be the ground for transformation.”²²⁸ For Cvetkovich, feelings are important and essential towards affective potential. Feelings are “intentionally imprecise,”²²⁹ they thus do not comply to that what is rational or fixed, and depression, in this respect, is a very ambiguous force. The subject experiences a sensation of utter sorrow, but is simultaneously dreaming and imagining an elsewhere which is a hopeful position to inhabit. Hope in feelings of depression is also addressed by Kristeva when she reflects the following on her depression: “Absent from other people’s meaning, alien, accidental with respect to naïve happiness, I owe a supreme, metaphysical lucidity to my depression. On the frontiers of life and death, occasionally I have the arrogant feeling of being witness to the meaninglessness of Being.”²³⁰ Kristeva presents here the ambiguous position that a person in depression inhabits, that is simultaneously sadness but also an imaginative hope. Taking this back to writing of madness done by Kavan, Kristeva’s point relates to the imaginative potential of writing through madness and the unfolding of that perspective that this thesis aims to do. Due to the worlding present in madness as a powerful affective force, it is actively working to overcome the psychiatric narrative that silences and renders madness as anomalous.

Re-thinking both loss and its related feeling of failure and depression from a nihilist force to one that inhabits hope and potentiality for thinking otherwise and thinking differently, I turn to ‘A Visit.’ When the leopard leaves the “I,” she is no longer able to understand him. As I previously explained, there was a non-verbal communication between the “I” and the leopard, but when the “I” cannot follow him, this non-verbal capacity dissolves immediately: “He turned his head and for a long moment his limpid eyes looked at me fixedly, with an expression I could not read.”²³¹ Connected to her inability to communicate with the leopard is the remaining distance between her and the other humans: “The leopard was never mentioned in our conversations.”²³² Other humans are made into singular close minded people that do not encompass the ability to think beyond and with new connections. Thinking with and engaging in the same (as opposed to life with the leopard that signifies thinking / engaging through difference) shuts down the creativity of outside entanglements and it forces the “I” into silence and solitude. What Kavan is engaging with in ‘A Visit,’ is presenting to the reader two

²²⁸ Cvetkovich, *Depression*, 3.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

²³⁰ Julia Kristeva, *Black Sun. Depression and Melancholia* (Columbia: Columbia UP, 1989), 4.

²³¹ Kavan, *Julia and the Bazooka*, 23.

²³² *Ibid.*, p. 23.

types of language. The first is the non-verbal affective communication that she shared with the leopard which she loses. The second type of language is the spoken language that she shares with other humans. When she encounters the red-cloaked man who stands in the sea trailed by pelicans, she tries to communicate with him but nature intervenes: “As he got nearer, I shouted to him, called out greetings and questions, to which he replied. But because of the noise of the waves and the distance between us, I could not understand him.”²³³ In ‘A Visit,’ there is thus emphasis on communication without language, *and* the failure of language to facilitate communication. Barad is critical on the value that society gives language, she wonders: “How did language come to be more trustworthy than matter?”²³⁴ Her argument speaks to the affective non-verbal forces that inhabit ‘A Visit,’ as she critiques the way all academic “turns” (linguistic turn, semiotic turn and so forth) turn matter into a form of language. Matter is considered to be passive and immutable, whilst language is seen as a force that inhabits agency. Colebrook on a similar note argues: “The idea that the world is constructed through language merely repeats a centuries- old privilege of the formal and logical over the material.”²³⁵ In ‘A Visit,’ there is great attention to the affective forces of the material, non-verbal love and the loss of language, however, I agree with Hekman that it is not an either/or: “Language *does* construct our reality. [We need] a more complex theory that incorporates language, materiality, and technology into the equation.”²³⁶ Hekman’s point here is essential when engaging with Kavan’s work, as Kavan’s writing of madness *creates* new relations. It makes what is in the mind material, by engaging in a worlding. This worlding is situated in ambiguity, as it takes place in both the lived reality and in the imagined reality. Kavan is putting this matter into a writing, a language of madness. Writing is engaging with matter, and this is why the writing of both embodied love and loss create such affective embodied forces in ‘A Visit.’

3.5. From love and loss to a hopeful future

In the final part of ‘A Visit,’ I identify in the narrative a way to live *with* failure and simultaneously return to hope. The “I” sees the red-cloaked man one more time standing in

²³³ Ibid., p. 24.

²³⁴ Karen Barad, “Posthumanist Performativity: Towards an Understanding of how Matter comes to Matter,” in *Material Feminisms*, ed. Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2008), 121.

²³⁵ Claire Colebrook, “Constructing the Ballast: An Ontology for Feminism,” in *Material Feminisms*, ed. Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2008), 52.

²³⁶ Susan Hekman, “On Not Becoming Man: The Materialist Politics of Unactualized Potential,” in *Material Feminisms*, ed. Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2008), 92.

the sea and to her surprise, the leopard is with this mystical man. She calls out to the leopard, but the waves are so loud that he cannot possibly hear her, yet, just like when they were engaging in a becoming-together, the leopard senses her presence and he “turn(s) his splendid head and gave me a long, strange, portentous look, just as he had that last time in the jungle.”²³⁷ The “I” wants to join them in the ocean, but she is unable to: “I was half-blinded by the salt spray, the whole beach was a swirling, glittering dazzle, in which I lost sight of the two sea-born shapes.”²³⁸ It is at this moment that the “I” finds solace in her realization that there exists another layer to life that she has access to. It is where love, loss, failure and a resurfaced sensation of hope interact. In the final paragraph of ‘A Visit,’ the “I” remembers vividly:

Very occasionally he still enters my dreams, which disturbs me and makes me feel restless and sad. Although I never remember the dreams when I wake, for days afterwards they seem to weigh me down with the obscure bitterness of a loss which should have been prevented, and for which I am myself to blame.²³⁹

In this final paragraph there is a way to return to love, and to hope. Entanglement with matter, and its affective interaction, do not stop when the matter has disappeared from our touch, or from our sight. The “I” is still affected by the leopard’s love in her dreams. In this space of the dream, there is a re-living of love, a re-living of loss, making this dream-space a space for mediation, for engaging with a sensory love that exceeds the material. The memory of love is inscribed into her body and in her mind. The notion of temporality is invoked here, where time is not a linear construction from a to b, but it is entangled in and through dreams and memories. Time, in this affective state of *remembering*, is constantly out of flux. What arises in this space of remembering the leopard, is the notion of the double consciousness, being both connected to a here and a there, wherein the “I” can reflect upon herself. It is a situatedness *in-between* the clear demarcations of time, forever intertwined in what was, and what will be, being affected by the eternal lingering of memories. In the space of memories, there is no objective notion of time, memories linger forever and they play the same affective sensation over and over again. Memories are constantly connecting themselves to new present information, transcending rational time as they are adaptive and inhabit an ever changing

²³⁷ Kavan, *Julia and the Bazooka*, 26.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

relationality to current events. Deleuze regards memory to be “the co-existence of all degrees of difference in multiplicity,”²⁴⁰ which speaks to all the encompassing forces present in re-living and remembering and re-mattering through dreams. The final paragraph, even though the “I” experiences sadness, is also quite soothing. It shows closure that is inherently open. The “I” is still extending towards the leopard, tellingly explained when the “I” says: “he enters my dreams.” The leopard and the “I” are still bound in an deliberate affective configuration of matter-memories via dreams. When we take into account that Kavan described her experience of madness as “queer” (see chapter two) we find in Halberstam the idea that queerness is the outcome of “strange temporalities, imaginative life schedules,” that speak to a way of life that forms “alternative methods of alliance.”²⁴¹ Even though Halberstam speaks from a specific position, queer time and queer imagining are present in Kavan’s work by the constant disturbance of progressive timelines, inhabiting a temporality that speak to potentialities not yet explored, and former alliances that have passed yet still inhabit dreams. It is a constant flux of retrospection and progression, a force Kaji Amin, considers to produce “continuity in the face of change.”²⁴² In the dream of the leopard, through which his presence haunts the “I,” it is love that arises again. “Love subsists in memory,”²⁴³ argues Cixous, and it is definitely the enormous territory of memory composed by Kavan in ‘A Visit,’ that executes these affective forces, where the life of the “I” with the leopard echoes through memory, where the affective forces are jostled together, in the words of Cixous: “[It echoes] through our body, through foreign memories with which we communicate through subconsciouses.”²⁴⁴

3.6. Concluding Remarks

The corporeal love between a woman and a leopard in the story ‘A Visit,’ is an example of how human corporeality is always interconnected with the more-than-human. Human beings are not singular and separated from nature, but they are embroidered in the fabric of the world. Nature is not a passive platform for the unfoldings of the human, but nature and the human are interwoven. In ‘A Visit,’ Kavan practices a story-telling of an interspecies

²⁴⁰ Bray, *Hélène Cixous*, 105.

²⁴¹ J. Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place*, 1.

²⁴² Kadji Amin, “Temporality,” *TSQ* 1 (2014), 219.

²⁴³ Hélène Cixous, *Rootprints: Memory and Life Writing* (London: Routledge, 2003), 33.

²⁴⁴ Cixous, *Rootprints*, 68.

relationship, thereby telling a story of love and loss. This story and its tropes speak to meaning-making and matter-i(al)ization as writing the stories of multispecies entanglement shape our lived world because we live by (telling) stories. Van Dooren and Haraway consider the telling of these interspecies stories to be a worlding, a worlding that Haraway considers to be a verb as it is an active participating in the becoming of our shared world. Writing the stories of the intertwinement between the human, the animal and the natural world, opens up a narrative that inhabits the potentiality for transcending species binaries.

In 'A Visit,' I have identified the forces of love and loss as affective tropes in the story. In love, I identify a corporeality that is invoked by the absence of a shared spoken language. The communication between the "I" and the leopard is non-verbal, the "I" constantly engages in "reading" the leopard's bodily signals by smelling him and gazing at him. The "I" and the leopard communicate by looking at each other, what establishes a sensation of feeling understood without a need or desire for verbal confirmation. In the presence of love, there is an invocation of feeling-tones, which implies that there are affective connotations of *knowing* and *feeling* without uttering a word, by which affect is executed by appeal of an atmosphere. In 'A Visit,' these feeling-tones are present when the leopard senses the "I" watching from a great distance, which signifies a magical bond between them that transcends rational presumed capacities. Focusing on affect when it comes to interspecies love, is a way to unfold the becoming-together of two entities that reason considers to be separate individuals. It is precisely the corporeal interplay between the body of the "I" and the leopard that is traditionally examined as a hierarchical shaped relationship, yet by thinking of them as one, we can challenge this dichotomous position. The encounter of two bodies that transcends the boundaries of the human/animal divide, creates affect and a together-ness, exemplified by the "I" who never questions *why* the leopard came to *her*. It is also an encounter in a common marginality, as the leopard signifies an animal on the brink of extinction, and the "I" is a woman with little desire for human companionship. Bringing this to Kavan, as an author who writes the experiences of her madness, this can be read to a celebratory stance of marginality, a force that invokes *jouissance*, as there is a loss of the humanist singular self, and an extension of the self toward all Others in the world.

The force of loss in 'A Visit,' signifies a failure to participate any longer in a becoming-together with the leopard. The "I" is unable to follow the leopard into the jungle which invokes a feeling of depression by this failure. Working with Halberstam's theory on failure, we can see that success is a homogenous force, whilst failure opens up a potentiality by its multiplicity in opportunity. The road to success is singular and pre-determined, but

failure inhabits endless possibilities. In 'A Visit,' we see this open-ended notion of failure when the "I" begins to notice magical messages from the animal world, establishing in her an awareness for the undercurrent to the lives of animals. Loss by failing in 'A Visit,' thus signifies a force that lays bare an open-ended future with a multiplicity of others. Even though the effect of depression is established through the loss of mutual signification with the leopard, this still establishes an affective force that composes of an *otherwise* and an *elsewhere*. Failure and depression are not end-points of signification but affective forces that inhabit new potentialities for connections beyond the self.

Thinking with hope provides a way to establish how we are being haunted by memories. In this way, dreams are an affective force of re-living with love, making a dream a place where one can mediate what happened. It is a place where love exceeds the material. In the affective state of remembering, time is out of joint and the mind constantly returns to the past to bring it to the present. Memories adapt themselves and re-invent themselves to new information, a new present time, whereby the now is constantly in an affective contact with the past. I present this engagement with hope after failure, as a hopeful stance, to counter the idea that failure leads to a dead-end, and that the only road worth travelling is that of success. By thinking with hope, the "I" lives in an in-between-stage, in-between binaries, in-between dream and past. Hereby the "I" is constantly in a movement *from herself outwards*, due to the entangled knowledge she is aware of because she loved a leopard and she was loved in return.

Conclusion

In this thesis I have engaged with two stories by the British author Anna Kavan titled ‘A Changed Situation’ and ‘A Visit.’ My goal was to show that madness is not an endpoint of signification. Madness is not a force that primarily subjects a person to non-being. Within madness there is a potentiality for affective affiliations. Kavan is creating specific situated knowledge from the experience of madness. Madness is a term that is often shunned as it inhabits negative connotations. However, I have situated my research in the field of mad studies, and I trust upon the judgement of the scholars of mad studies, that using the term madness, as opposed to mental illness, will provide an emancipating force to subjects who are situated in the silencing narrative of psychiatry. After all, mental illness is a term coined by psychiatry, therefore using madness is actively reclaiming of a term that is key in understanding the silencing of mad people done by psychiatry.

The fiction by Kavan that is shaped around her experiences of madness inhabits affective forces that expand from the self towards all others in the world. This thesis therefore engages with the creative affectations that inhabit the ethos of madness. For Kavan, writing fiction was a way to live with the experience of madness, and her novels and stories are the materialization of that experience. In this thesis I wanted to undo the silence that surrounds madness, to undo the fear of madness and show readers that madness is an affective diverse force. This diversity is visible in the stories I have engaged with in this thesis. ‘A Changed Situation,’ deals with the feelings of horror that arise when an inanimate space shows its agency. In this story the house showed that it has an agential will, and it surpassed its designated role as a mere pile of bricks. The story ‘A Visit,’ on the other hand, is about an interspecies relationship between a woman and a leopard, showing what affective forces are at play when love exceeds the boundary of the human. As my introduction on the writer Kavan has already shown, her identity was based upon a fictional character of her own design. Hereby she transcended clear demarcations of the real and the fictional, as Kavan took on the mannerisms, looks and name of a theoretical creation, by which she made the theoretical material.

To analyze the work of Kavan, I have engaged in the act of close-reading of two stories, whilst simultaneously relating her fiction to applicable theory. I performed the close-reading from the angle of *écriture féminine* and autofiction. When these two approaches are combined, we can see how writing difference by writing the self in fiction through the writing

of the feminine, is an act of meaning-making that deconstructs the Cartesian way of thinking. The writing of the self in *écriture féminine* and autofiction complement each other. Autofiction has one foot in reality and one foot in fiction, by which the fictionalized writing of the self can be explored. This method supports the work of Kavan, as her fiction engages with a writing of the affective space in madness that I have named the unreality. The unreality inhabits in-between spaces that exist simultaneously in objective reality and the imagined reality. It is this double layer, this duality, that is captured through autofiction. Autofiction, or writing hoaxes, writing the embodied interpretation, allows for a freedom to write reality when that reality is an entanglement between the objective and the imagined. This double stance, this ambiguous force, opens up knowledge that transcends the singular Cartesian construction. The research question by which I wanted to disentangle the knowledge coming forth from the fiction of Kavan was: How does the creative force of madness, in the work of Anna Kavan, inhabit the ability to create a movement beyond the self towards new outward relationships by which the human is participating in an active entanglement with the more-than-human world? How are these creative forces materialized by affective connections between the human and the inanimate, and the human and the animal?

In chapter one I have presented my theoretical framework that I have named *ambiguous living*. First I outlined the limits of psychiatry to offer an alternative way to approach madness when it is freed from psychiatric constraints. I have also presented the reader a complex term titled: The unreality. This term is key to understanding the experience and worlding of the ambiguous nature of madness. My theoretical framework was titled “Theoretical Entanglements,” as I found that no singular theory captured the experience of madness in its complexity. It took an intertwinement of various, related theories to truly capture madness, the unreality, and the ambiguous nature of the worlding of madness. After having outlined the problems and limits of psychiatry, I have turned to an appreciation for a different kind of language that emancipates the subject status in madness. In French feminism there is no unitary “I,” rather, the I basks in ambiguity and potentiality by considering subjugation and the presumed end-point of language a place to theorize *from*. Very much related to *écriture féminine*, opening up this potentiality within language re-thinks agency within subjugation and it allows the woman experiencing madness to write herself into existence refusing psychiatry’s singular narrative. I showed that the unreality and in-between spaces are ambiguous spaces that are composed of two worlds existing simultaneously: the objective reality and the imagined reality. The novel *Eagle’s Nest*, using a fictional “I” presents, almost theoretically, the unreality to the reader. Kavan presents an awareness of a

double consciousness. One exists in objective reality that can be seen, and the other, the unreality, exists in the imagined reality and is internally lived. Kavan's writing of madness revolves around a world-building that is based on the descriptions and experiences of the unreality, an act that I named the worlding of unreality. In these descriptions of the unreality, there are suggestions to other ways of thinking, that will present themselves in the case studies I have chosen for this thesis. *Ambiguous living* as my theoretical framework helped to unfold the forces at work in the language of, and the worlding of, madness. Key in *ambiguous living* is thinking through difference, and constituting an extension from the self towards all others in the world. *Ambiguous living* is about unfolding the experience in Kavan's fiction, where she constructs the notion of "thinking beyond." This thinking beyond the self creates a force that allows for the exceeding of hierarchical limits. *Ambiguous living* guides us to understand how Kavan's fiction troubles the fixed binaries that are normatively composed.

In chapter two I have engaged in a close-reading of the story 'A Changed Situation.' The research question I wanted to answer was: How does the story 'A Changed Situation,' through Kavan's narrative of madness, transgress the fixed objective inanimate implications of the house and by result create new knowledge and expand connections? In this chapter I worked with architectural historian Vidler to show how houses are not mere pile of bricks, but agential spaces. In the close-reading I focused on two themes, that of inanimate agency, and disturbed time-lines and labyrinthian spaces. The conception that a house is a domestic beacon of safety is transgressed in the story as Kavan works with desired domesticity but transgresses it. By transgressing what is traditionally rendered fixed, knowledge is opened up that is, through a rational lens, considered to be beyond knowledge and therefore establishing an uncanny sensation. In this story, Kavan draws up connections, executed through the experiences of the fictional "I," that inhabit an expansion outward from the self towards the inanimate world. In these connections madness is materialized by establishing the in-between, between the real world and the imagined world. What is rendered to be fixed and inanimate and lifeless is made into an affective force.

In chapter three I have engaged in a close-reading of the story 'A Visit,' through the themes of love and loss. I have worked with affect studies and animal literary studies to show that the human is always intermeshed in a more-than-human world. The research question that I wanted to answer in this chapter was: How does the story 'A Visit,' by Kavan, via its story-telling of an interspecies relationship, generate new affective possibilities for the subject through both the force of love (in that relationship) and loss (of that relationship)?

‘A Visit,’ tells a story that is about the joy of communicating with the animal other by an instinctive *knowing* without verbal communication. Yet at the same time, the story tells a tale of an inevitable loneliness that comes after mutual signification shatters. My aim in this chapter was to show that by theorizing with the story of Kavan, we can engage in a thinking differently about the relationship between the human and the animal, a relationship that is usually found in a hierarchical dichotomy. This hierarchy has no signifying force in Kavan’s story as the fictional “I” and the leopard shape the relationship together by creating affective alliances where reason would only see limitation and separation. Telling this story of love and loss between a human and an animal is not a neutral move within the act of story-telling. It shows that new relations arise through the creation of narratives. ‘A Visit,’ is about a becoming-with which is a way to make alliances that transcend species binaries and closed-off relationalities. Worlding is an entangled process, and natures, culture, subjects and objects do not pre-exist those entangled states. Thus, worlding through interspecies entanglement is participating in a thinking through difference. Thinking through multispecies entanglement is a way to illuminate the corporeal affective relationships that originate from a common exceptionality as the “I” and the leopard are both marginalized subjects. Halfway through the story the notion of loss is invoked as the “I” is unable to follow the leopard into the jungle as her human body cannot handle the rain and humidity. Hereby their shared future comes to an end, through the notion of failure. To show what affective forces are present in the notion of failure, I worked with Halberstam to show that within failure there arises a force that creates a more open-ended future. Success designates us for a singular linear path, and a normative life, yet failure opens up more possibilities for the future as there is more uncertainty in failure. Due to being unable to follow the leopard, the “I” falls into despair, into a depression, but gradually she begins to notice an undercurrent in the life of animals. Depression is hereby established as an affective force, by which a subject in depression has the capacity to imagine an elsewhere and an otherwise. Reading depression in this way, shows that it inhabits and provides a certain level of hope for the future. In the final part of chapter three I have identified in ‘A Visit,’ a state of remembering, something that I consider to be hopeful. In this there is a way to think with failure and return to hope as something that is still an engagement with matter, as affective interactions do not stop merely because the matter has disappeared from our physical touch. Here I have argued that remembering is an affective state that is de-linear as there is a constant in-between the clear demarcations of time. The “I” is interlinked simultaneously in what is, what was, and what will come to be as memories transcend time and entangle themselves constantly to a new reality.

My goal was to show that madness is not an end-point of signification. Madness is not state of non-being. The fiction of Kavan shows that writing through madness inhabits many affective forces. These affective forces transcend binaries, binaries of what is rendered to be fixed and inanimate, and binaries of what is human and animal. The affective forces within madness constantly think beyond what normative science renders to be static. Psychiatry has historically condemned the mad subject to silence. Yet, this silence is not the end of potentialities. By taking this subjugated position and working *from* that position, a force is awakened that is able to create entanglements across borders, limits and binaries. Unfolding Kavan's fiction as a writing that participates in this undoing of normative limits, shows us what creative potentialities are present in the writing of madness. It establishes a human corporeality that is in tune with all the beings, all the others, of the world. It beholds beauty, creativity and sorrow, not as an exclusive human condition, but as affective forces arising out of a becoming, an entanglement, *with* the world.

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