

Wouter Kusters ([www.wouterkusters.nl](http://www.wouterkusters.nl)), november 2014.

## How to Turn Madness into Art and Philosophy?

Paper presented at the Symposium Madness-Made-Art, organised by the [ASCA](#) and the [Foundation for Psychiatry and Philosophy](#), Amsterdam.

### 1. Introduction

What I will discuss is the following:

- First of all, where should we look to find the sources of mad creativity?
- Secondly, how can we describe these sources where mad art and philosophy get their inspiration from?

- I describe three stages or aspects of madness and the relations with art. First I will focus on perplexity, second, on the outlook and sphere of the mad world, third on mad (re)symbolisations. At the end I make some concluding remarks on madness, language and philosophy.

But before I start, first some preliminary remarks on how I consider mental disorder and madness in the context of creativity and art.

First of all, madness and mad art are not, or at least not only, an effect or consequence of a deviant state of the nervous system. Mad art is not a phenomenon about which neurology or brain studies have very much interesting to say. Brain studies are just as relevant to madness, as chemical analyses of paint are relevant to the study of art and paintings.

Secondly, acts of madness and mad art should not be reduced to an individual expression of an individual disturbed mind. Because, if that were the case, then mad art and mad philosophy would be nothing more than a sign of a particular mental disturbance of an individual. Mad art would then only refer back to its source, the mad artist, struggling with his or her disturbed brain or mind. Mad art would then not be able to evoke or refer to realities and possibilities relevant for everyone. Mad art would in the end then only be interesting as a kind of alternative diagnostic tool, or as a symptom of psychopathology.

However, we as mad artists/philosophers claim with our mad art that we make art, and not a therapeutic confession or a self-management proposal.

For all these reasons, instead of defining mad art as art that is somehow **restrained** by mental disorder, I assume that mad art is just a form of art that has an extra special quality due to its association with mental disorder.

I will mainly concentrate on one particular form of mental disorder, namely psychosis, and to avoid connotations with psychiatry and illness, I will use the term madness instead of psychosis and mental disorder. In addition, since I focus on the artistic and creative products that may originate from madness, and not at all on therapeutic issues, I will stick mostly to the positive and inspiring consequences of madness, and I will not consider its possible debilitating effects on the artist himself.

### 2. The Mad World

That having said, I start my discussion from a level that just underlies mad creativity. I describe a kind of ‘mad world’, and I will make clear for three aspects of this world what it has to do with creativity and art, 1) perplexity, 2) the mad sphere, 3) mad (re)symbolisation.

#### 2.1. A perplexing insight

The first aspect is the feeling or experience of perplexity, and the revelation of an insight. Perplexity is the word that is used in psychiatric diagnostics to refer to the strange mood of

amazement, disorientation, anxiety and the inexpressibility or ineffability that occur at the early stages of a psychotic process. Perplexity is an appropriate term; it preserves the fact that the mad insight does not boil down to wrong perception or false cognition. The mad perplex insight does not consist of explicit delusions or hallucinations, but instead, it refers to an intensity, a fundamental important cosmic change in reality, which is hard to express and describe exactly.

Mad perplexity does not refer to some fact in the world, but it embraces the totality of the givenness of the world. With the mad insight everything is illuminated from a new perspective, in an alternative light. Struck by the mad insight you get obsessed by finding or speaking about this alternative light, this new sun or inexplicable darkness.

From an outside perspective perplexity often looks like utter confusion and senselessness, while from the inside it is better expressed by utter harmony and significance. A fine example of perplexity and the mad insight is the following account given by someone who stood at the edge of developing a full-blown psychosis:

(Hans In De Waard, 2007): “I walked a little on a small path, in that beautiful forest and after about 150 meter I came to a crossroads. And exactly in the middle of that crossroads heaven opened itself. I saw everything: total love. Everything was one, everything was connected. All wisdom lay hidden in there. I saw that I was born from my father and mother. And that love is the moving force behind this universe. Such an experience is hard to put into words, because it happened all on an emotional level, or on the level of the soul. I did not see any light, but I felt total love. We are all born from love, and I had very much an *Aha-Erlebnis*: ‘ow..how stupid. Of course, that’s how it is, of course everything springs from love.’ It was also very creative, immeasurable creativity, everything is creation. And all wisdom was present, I had an answer to all questions.”<sup>i</sup>

Hans seems to have been in contact with the positive aspects of the mad world. Hans says that “he saw everything: total love. Everything was one, and everything was connected.” Such experiences of inexpressible unity and connectivity are typical for the mad insight. Together with a sense of urgency and an inexpressible though all-encompassing meaning this reminds us of what is called a religious or mystic experience (cf. William James, Lecture XVI, 2010 [1902]). In this example the mad insight or experience of perplexity is colored by the concept and feeling of ‘love’, in other instances the mad flight may land or reterritorialise, as Deleuze and Guattari (1987 [1980]) would call it, onto terms and ideas like God, Infinity, the One, Death or Nothingness (cf. also Kusters, 2014, Part III).

When we look at actual forms of art for this mystic inexpressibility or mad perplexity, we may for instance refer to Malevich’s Black Square, which would stand for a kind of ‘zero form’. According to Malevich himself, the black square implied a kind of new beginning for a new world beyond all earlier conventions. In psychosis, feelings and concepts of re-birth, and world creation also prevail. Since this black square is too well-known to show again, lets take a look at a mad allusion to the black square with this photo:



The power of the black square is in an opposite way also well expressed in the famous words by the Dutch poet Gerrit Kouwenaar: “Wat men helder ziet, heeft zwarte randen...”, translated by me as: “What one sees bright, has black borders”.<sup>ii</sup> (I extensively discuss - in the context of mysticism and psychosis - the relation between the black and the white, between nothingness and the infinite in Kusters 2014).

Having described some aspects of the mad insight, I now want to point at a particular contradiction within the mad insight, which leads not only to a kind of mystic acting-out, but also to feelings of revelation and inclinations to prophecy.

The thing is, the mad insight is experienced as a revelation of something of enormous cosmic importance - and in fact it is! However, usually in cases of great discoveries, these are preceded by a longer period of growing doubts, perhaps you have done some research, maybe you were slowly advancing into an unknown domain. And in most cases you are not the only one who is becoming aware of something important, outreaching to the hidden secret behind the veils of reality. With the mad insight however, things are different. The mad lightning strikes overnight, and afterwards you wonder: “Why me? Why did this have to happen to me?”

The paradox of the mad and of the religious or mystic insight, comes from this why-question. On the one hand something of cosmic meaning and enormous importance is revealed to you, while on the other hand this time-and-place-transcending insight has chosen precisely you as a receiver and its spokesman - of all people and of all times and places. This paradox leads often to feelings of being chosen, maybe as a hero, maybe as a victim or sacrifice in a paranoid arrangement of affairs (cf. Kusters 2014, e.g. in Chapter 16).

The mood and worries around this why-question are often misinterpreted by others. The psychiatrist on duty may easily think that the why-question means: "Why must I be someone who has fallen into this miserable state of psychosis", though the person in question actually wonders: "Why have I been selected, to receive all these mighty revelations from above?"

One of my favourite writers in this domain, the German writer Harald Kaas (1979), describes this as follows (quoted in Kusters, 2014: 676ff.): "Arnulf asked again for pills and Hans handed them to him. After he had taken them, he told that big events were about to take place. He would rise again during sleep; in heaven a place was reserved for him, and Musculus the one-eyed, would take him there. He lay himself on the carpet and fell quickly asleep. Next morning Hans brought him to town, where there was a mental hospital. Arnulf followed him willingly. When Hans left him there, Arnulf said: 'Too much, far too much for me!'

'Yes', Hans said and kissed him goodbye: 'It was far too much for you.'

Hans could not know that Arnulf referred to the stars, that with thousands of them simply fell into his lap - just like the child in the fairy-tale."<sup>iii</sup>

The mad insight with its visions, its paradoxes and its inclinations to strong prophecy has a counterpart in artistic and other creative production. Artists and philosophers often also hold a not clearly expressible feeling, vision or insight. They are also passionate for a not fully comprehensible idea that they sense to be of highest importance, for themselves and for the world at large. Artists, philosophers and madmen alike are driven by an inner ineffable intuition that concerns outer reality, and which provides a vital impulse to create and to produce.

Finally, a quite funny, though tragic expression of the maddening insight we find in a poem by Jan Graafland (2013). The father of Jan, also called Graafland, was a visitor of the mad world and Jan Graafland wrote the following poem.

Jan Graafland: *Repetition*

Yes! Now I see through it all!  
(he flies up from his chair)  
I Know It  
I Know Everything!  
Goddamnit

Stay calm  
(sits again)

Now I Know It!  
(he flies up from his chair)

I Know It All  
Everything

That's why my name is "Dig-Land"  
Goddamnit!

Stay calm  
(sits again)

Yes! Now I see through it all!  
(he flies up from his chair, etc.  
this repeats itself for days  
until it escalates)<sup>iv</sup>

## **2.2 An aesthetic, sacramental, non-instrumental sphere**

Now I turn to the second feature of the mad world. The sudden insight, the utter perplexity, the ecstasies of harmony, transgression and unity beyond all contradictions are most associated with acute short manic psychoses. Next theme however is more characteristic for what we may call follow-up or longer enduring stages of madness or psychosis.

Let our focus be again on the mad world. The sudden flash of insight of manic psychosis can draw you into a longer stay in a strangely illuminated mad world. Here, boundaries between inside and outside, between memory and perception vanish, and one gets the feeling that the limits of personal identity or the shells of the ego become crossed and pulled down, and that one gets into some kind of deep contact with the whole or the absolute. Inner self and outer reality come to collapse and become One, and a sense of omnipotence and grandiosity may emerge. At this point language and meaning are no longer felt to have the anchor point in the I of the speaking individual. Instead, what is experienced as the locus of subjectivity, agency and speech, shifts to other persons, dead or alive, and to objects and ideas. Eventually the language that 'as phonetic speech' comes from the mad mouth, may be experienced as originating from the whole cosmos, the world soul, or even from language itself. In a sense one's finite mind, individual spirit or private language competence, gets immersed in a kind of infinite oceanic whole or 'absolute spirit'. Nijinsky gives us a fine example of this:

"I am God and the bull. I am Apis. I am an Egyptian. I am an Indian. I am a Red Indian. I am a Negro. I am a Chinaman. I am a Japanese. I am a foreigner, a stranger. I am a sea bird. I am a land bird. I am the tree of Tolstoy. I am the roots of Tolstoy - Tolstoy is mine. I am his. Tolstoy lived in the same time as I...My mind is so developed that I understand people without talking to them. I see their deeds and understand everything. I understand everything. I am a moujik, a workman, a factory worker, a servant, a master, an aristocrat, the Tsar. God. I am God. I am God. I am all, life, infinity. I will be always and everywhere."<sup>v</sup>

The mad world and its messenger, the mad insight, fragment the givens of the here-and-now, and overrules the common sense categories of daily life. From the mad world, as it were, a laser beam of insight strikes the natural world and turns it into a supernatural magical sphere of other-worldliness.

Now, at the stage of the laser beam or lightning insight there was still this feeling of mystic unity or Oneness. However, when the insight hits and puts actual life on earth upside down and inside out, the feeling of Oneness gets spread over the divided and fragmented world. And the lightning becomes a kind of strange glow gleaming from the inside of the world (cf. Plotin's Ennead 5.8.10 and 1.6.7, also quoted and discussed in Kusters, 2014: 309ff.).

For this stage, in psychopathology the term *Wahnstimmung* or delusional mood is used (cf. Sass 1992, Conrad 1958). Unlike the term perplexity the delusional mood implies a more enduring and calm mood. *Wahnstimmung* refers to the stage in the mad process, where there are still no actual concrete delusions or hallucinations yet, but where simply everything has become strange, uncanny, mysterious or *Unheimisch*.

When we would paraphrase the famous theologian Schleiermacher (quoted in Proudfoot, 1985), we could say: ‘under the psychotic view every event becomes a miracle’. Every event, every movement becomes significant; every object emits signs and intensities, the world becomes overloaded with meaning. In this stage however, this meaning is not so well-cut as ordinary meaning. It is more like the idea of meaning: everything is highly meaningful, but only in the abstract, or in virtuality, without concrete meaning in actuality. Of course this awesome meaning leads on its turn to a feeling of urgency: something has happened, is happening and is going to happen, at the same time *and* outside time, *and we want to know what!*

At this stage the common sense framework, ordinary reality melts away like snow, and a wonderful awesome colourful landscape becomes visible. The world looks anew, miraculous, inspiring, impressive and because of its intensity possibly also utterly terrifying, frightening and threatening.

A fine example of this mad world is given by Brown (1944 quoted in Landis 1964: 217 e.v.). He describes how a simple visit to a barber shop transformed him into a holy ceremony in a heavenly temple:

“The moment I entered the barber shop, I was impressed by its unworldly quality. It had a somehow regal, sanctified, ceremonial air about it... Far more than a barbershop, it was a temple erected in the previous century to the high, traditional tonsorial art. Here, I thought, they would know how to apply leeches and practice other lost arts of the days when barbers were surgeons... It was altogether the celestial barbershop, and its atmosphere was luminous, electric... The bald, old German went on to shave me with what seemed a touch of pure reverence. I felt that I was being anointed in the religious sense; this old member of heaven’s household staff knew I was a golden boy-deity and handled me accordingly. As I lay back in the chair and his too-gentle hands worked over my face, a beatific feeling flowed over me and, I felt, transfigured my expression.”

This description shows what may happen when Aldous Huxley’s *doors of perception* are widened, when partitions between memory and perception come down, when temporal mergings and feelings of sacrality and eternity override ordinary clockwise experience.

With thinkers like Georges Bataille and Henri Michaux we can say that in extreme experiences, the usual sphere of instrumentality or functionality is replaced by an aesthetic or even sacral sphere. Usually we experience the world as somehow as an interconnected whole, as a purposeful machine or a goal-driven organism where objects and parts have a definite well-described meaning and definition. Usually a hammer is perceived as an instrument to hit a nail. A spoon is meant to stir the coffee and a pipe is to smoke tobacco. But in madness, the hammer does not search a nail, but is free floating without functional direction. In madness there is no spoon, and there are no pipes that can serve to be or to be not a pipe. In madness, as well as in art, things fall out of their normal order, they come to stand on themselves, and eventually they may end up in a new world order, a new way of non-functional interconnection.

Sechehaye (1951) described this as follows: “Things looked smooth as metal, so cut off, so detached from each other, so illuminated and tense that they filled me with terror. When, for

example, I looked at a chair or a jug, I thought not of their use or function – a jug not as something to hold water and milk, a chair not as something to sit in – but as having lost their names, their functions and meanings; they became “things” and began to take on life, to exist... The stone jar, decorated with blue flowers, was there facing me, defying me with its presence, with its existence. To conquer my fear I looked away. My eyes met a chair, then a table; they were alive too, asserting their presence....when people asked specifically: “do you see the jug and the chair as alive?” I answered, “yes, they are alive.” The doctors thought I saw these things as humans whom I heard speak. But it was not that. Their life consisted uniquely in the fact that they were there, in their existence itself.”

Again we see this contrast between the experience of madness and the perception by outsiders, like the doctors in this example. The doctors would actually have gained more insight when they had understood that the patient’s vision on reality would be comparable with that of artists when engaged in their work. That is to say, art also opens another vision or dimension of reality, a perspective in which objects get a new colour and may be seen from a new perspective. The artist and the madman, as far as they are not one and the same, share this intuitive sense that everything could also be fundamentally different from what we are used to in our daily lives. They share the feeling that there may be realities that could be considered to be phantasies, but that may also be more important and real than so-called reality itself.

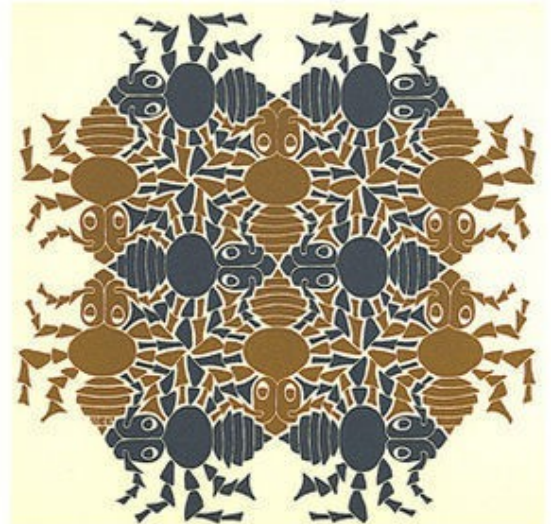
### **2.3. Contraction, identification and reification of the dualism**

In the third stage of psychosis, the magic world that is gleaming and suggestive of meaning becomes less fluid, more solid again. At this stage more rigid delusions and hallucinations settle in the mad world. While at first the mad world was just a kind of deep reality shift, a change of illumination, now this shift results in what Deleuze and Guattari would call ‘reterritorialisations’, and what I consider as fixed expressions of the mad insight. Psychiatrists like Edvard Podvoll (1992 [1990]) describe this stage as the phase where the madman gets stunned and seduced to turn his free-floating not fully articulated thoughts and affects into rigid ego-centered stable delusions and hallucinations.

In this stage, dichotomies between good and bad, sacred and profane, receive fixed interpretation, meaning and identity. For instance, what was at first vaguely referred to as God, infinity, light, love, nothingness or death may now fix itself on for example a movie star, a crucifix, a color or a hammer. At a certain moment the icaric free flight towards the sun ends, and after falling back onto the earth the madman may get caught in a delusional system, in a web of cloudy ego-centered paranoia and suspicions.

As examples of mad delusional systems and concrete symbolisations of the mad insights, I could give a range of examples from the CIA, the KGB, the WWW, to the Matrix, the Islam and so on. Instead I give an example, that just lies on the border between mad insight, philosophical intuition and artistic creation, namely, the mad system of the four elements.

It was the early Greek philosopher Empedocles who first conceived that the cosmos consisted basically of the four elements earth, water, fire and sky. Since Empedocles these four elements play a key role in art and philosophy and in Western culture in general. These elements may signify for instance fluidity versus stability, or - in early Greek psychology and medicine - four types of personality. In early physics the four elements have been adopted as the basic elements of nature, and in later alchemic and artistic traditions the elements have been loaded with all kinds of spiritual and symbolic meanings.



I show (Escher) and mention this four element system here, because it is found quite often in the core of mad systems. In my own book, *Philosophy of madness*, I use this four-element-diagram both as a philosophical structure, a 'plan' or matrix in which to catch madness as an object, and as a prime example of madness, which thereby becomes caught in itself in this same metaphorical matrix - like a Moebius ring, or like reflection, perplexed and impelled forward by its own mirror image. Thereby I phrase a fundamental insight in perplexity that would involve - after more than two thousand years of philosophy - the coincidence of being and thought, both inside and outside the text.

In the following poem by Jan Graafland about his father we also see how the four-element-system operates both at an abstract tragic level and at the same time in a almost comic earthly concrete manner. Madness comes alive, in the garden!

Jan Graafland: *Far away*

He is continuously staring in front of himself,  
until his eyes start to sparkle,  
as if he sees something wonderful arise in the void.



Which he grabs -  
it catches him  
He jumps from his chair en rushes outside,  
as a dog that was locked in for too long,  
and he delivers himself to the elements.  
He rummages through the black earth  
in the garden of the neighbours.  
He jumps naked in the water of the park  
and almost drowns.  
He tries, as a fluttering bird  
to take off into the sky  
And, when he gets the chance, he strikes matches.  
He can't get enough of watching how fire starts<sup>vi</sup>

### **3. Conclusion: writing it out**

So far I have discussed three aspects of madness with an eye on art and philosophy, namely, the initial insight, the subsequential sacred atmosphere and the final mad collapse into mad symbols and systems. By way of conclusion I will now say something about the relation between madness, writing, verbal art and philosophy.

Eventually, words are lacking to phrase what the mad insight means, and there are no suitable words to describe the uncanny spheres of the mad world. Nevertheless, those who visited the mad world often go at pains to express and describe what happens in madness. They write because what happened had such an enormous impact, either in the negative or positive sense, that they want to tell about it.

It is therefore no wonder that in many different verbal forms we find an engagement with the mad insight and the mad world. This can be in so-called *Wortsalat*, in jibberish, in surrealist and dada-istic poetry and in all kinds of mystic, experimental or semi-spiritual poems and stories. Sometimes these stories only mention the mad world, sometimes they also express or evoke the mad world. Sometimes these writers present madness in vague poetic, non-definite terms, sometimes in exact elaborations of paranoid or hyper-passionate texts. This inspiration from madness is exemplified in all kinds of literature, both by those who are officially deemed to be psychiatric patients, but just as well by those who are just ordinary writers and poets. The dividing-lines between madness and non-madness in poetry are perhaps even more problematic and context-sensitive than in other non-verbal art forms.

However, apart from these verbal ways to refer to poetic, mystic or mad realities, writing in madness often plays another more fundamental 'transformative' role. When being driven by the 'mad insight', madmen try to phrase their inexpressible insight often in a quite direct way, without symbols or poetry. In other words, their writings do not only evoke an artistic alternative world view, but instead they pertain directly and unmediated to the one and only absolute Truth with a capital T. This kind of mad writings tries to reach much higher than literary composed narratives about adventures from the mad world.

In this second kind of mad writings the relation between writing and madness is far more intense, direct and intimate. Here language and writing have become themselves the vehicle or medium that propels both reader and writer into the mad world. In this kind of writing, madness has fully taken over the medium. The spark of mad insight easily turns into a poetic fire, a writing and notation drift, wandering everywhere, seducing the writer to lose himself in the ecstasies of the apparent reality and stability of the written word.

This more intrinsic relation between writing and madness is beautifully described by Huub Mous (2011): “I didn’t hear an angel, even no voice, but I felt an unbelievable force that took possession of all of my thoughts. It was a ‘voice’ that wanted to write a message to mankind, a book that would make all books superfluous, a message about pure love that I wanted to bring to practice for the whole of mankind.... Notions followed each other rapidly, some staccato out of breath, some lyrical and metaphorical. Now contemplating the image of a white piano on top of the Mount Blanc, then elaborating on the corporeality of language... My book was about everything, the Catholic Church, birth control, Jean-Paul Sartre, the devil and God and about the limits of madness, which I thought I was able to transgress while writing.”<sup>vii</sup>

What happens here is obviously more than an artistic endeavour to create something beautiful or new. What Huub Mous refers to is an attempt to embrace the whole and beyond. Instead of calling such writings a form of verbal art, it may be more appropriate to consider them as shots to prophecy, to shamanic spirit-invoking, to cosmic exegesis and cosmic creation. Here mad writing is more reminiscent of older artistic practices like making magic spells than that it would make sense in modern definitions of art, where art is defined as the expression of a most individual inner emotion, thought or vision.

Many mad texts fall under this rubric, like Schrebers so-called memoirs as well as some of Antonin Artauds work and at least also some parts of my own book, *Philosophy of madness*. Often this intrinsically creative aspect of mad writing is undervalued, neglected or misunderstood. All too often, unfortunately, such writings about revelations, divine and absolute truths are only read as psychopathological studies. Instead of being taken at face value in all of their intense and passionate force, they become neatly and safely archived as first person accounts of schizophrenia or as narratives of psychotic experience (so-called “ervaringsverhalen”), which bends them back and locks them up in the individual’s sick mind again. It is my conviction however, that within the deepest and most intense experiences and immersions in the mad world, something powerful and awesome may be contacted or revealed, that when properly and adequately processed may yield an inclination or an intuition, that can be a fruitful inspiration for verbal art and philosophy.

Finally, I think there is an analogy here with some of the lives and works of the greatest and most original philosophers. These often also remain haunted by some hardly expressible idea or intuition, which they try to explain again and again. A mad perplexing insight may be the ground or the unground of many more elaborated philosophical positions. At least in the great works of the more monologous and hermetic philosophers like Schelling, Sartre and Plotin we can conceive a hidden drive to speak out and embrace both infinity and nothingness, both the Yes and the No as Schelling names these. These philosophers share with the madman a passionate urge and insight that they are after something of utter though inexpressible importance.

Now I end my talk with two quotes, one again by Harald Kaas, that German writer who was himself diagnosed as schizophrenic. He wrote: “When madness rises as water, and appears above the flood marks, there are moments in which something reveals itself, about which you cannot speak openly. That’s why it is being voiced best in the stammering of those who have been burnt out by its light, and who are convicted to remain silent for the rest of their life.”<sup>viii</sup>

And the last quote is a poem by the Romanian poet Paul Celan

*Speak, You Also*

Speak, you also,  
speak as the last,  
have your say.

Speak -  
But keep yes and no unsplit,  
And give your say this meaning:  
give it the shade.

Give it shade enough,  
give it as much  
as you know has been dealt out between  
midnight and midday and midnight.

Look around:  
look how it all leaps alive -  
where death is! Alive!  
He speaks truly who speaks the shade.

But now shrinks the place where you stand:  
Where now, stripped by shade, will you go?  
Upward. Grope your way up.  
Thinner you grow, less knowable, finer.  
Finer: a thread by which  
it wants to be lowered, the star:  
to float further down, down below  
where it sees itself glitter: on sand dunes  
of wandering words.<sup>ix</sup>

#### **4. Literature**

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<sup>i</sup> “Ik liep daar een eindje over een pad, in die prachtige omgeving met al dat bos, en na misschien 150 meter kwam ik bij een kruising. En precies in het midden van die kruising ging de hemel open. Ik zag alles: totale liefde. Alles was één, alles was met elkaar verbonden. Alle wijsheid lag daarin verborgen. Ik zag dat ik geboren was uit mijn vader en moeder. En dat liefde de drijvende kracht achter dit universum is. Zo’n ervaring is moeilijk in woorden over te brengen, want het was allemaal gevoelsmatig, of op zielsniveau. Ik zag geen licht of zo, maar ik voelde totale liefde. Wij zijn allemaal uit liefde ontstaan, en ik had heel erg het gevoel van zo’n aha-erlebnis, van aha... o, wat stom! Natuurlijk is dat zo, natuurlijk ontstaat alles uit liefde! Het was ook heel creatief, echt onmetelijke creativiteit, alles is creatie. En alle wijsheid was aanwezig, ik had antwoord op alle vragen.”

<sup>ii</sup>

The full poem in Dutch reads as follows:

Gerrit Kouwenaar: *De laatste dagen van de zomer*  
Trager de wespen, schaarser de dazen  
groenvliegen grijzer, engelen gene, niets  
dat hier hemelt, alles brandt lager

dit zijn de laatste dagen, men schrijft  
de laatste stilstand van de zomer, de laatste  
vlammen van het jaar, van de jaren

wat er geweest is is er steeds nog even  
en wat men helder ziet heeft zwarte randen

men moet zich hier uitschrijven, de tuin  
in de tuin insluiten, het geopende boek  
het einde besparen, men moet zich verzwijgen

verzwijg hoe de taal langs de lippen invalt  
hoe de grond het gedicht overstelpt, geen mond  
zal spreken wat hier overwintert –

<sup>iii</sup>

“Hij vroeg weer om tabletten en Hans gaf ze hem. Nadat hij ze ingenomen had, zei hij dat er die nacht grote dingen te gebeuren stonden. Hij zou tijdens de slaap herrijzen, in de hemel was een plaats voor hem bereid en Musculus, de eenogige, zou hem erheen brengen. Hij ging op het vloerkleed liggen en sliep snel in.

De volgende ochtend bracht Hans hem naar de stad, waar zich een inrichting bevond. Arnulf volgde gewillig en zei bij het afscheid: ‘Te veel! Echt te veel voor mij!’

‘Ja’, zei Hans en kuste hem op het voorhoofd. ‘Het was te veel voor jou.’

Hij kon niet weten dat Arnulf de sterren bedoelde die hem, als het kind uit het sprookje, bij duizenden in de schoot vielen.”

<sup>iv</sup>

Jan Graafland: *Repetitie*  
Ja! Nu heb ik het door!  
(stuift op uit zijn stoel)  
Ik weet het  
Ik weet alles  
Godverdomme

Rustig blijven  
(Gaat zitten)

Nu weet ik het!  
(stuift op uit zijn stoel)  
Ik heb het allemaal door  
Alles  
Ik heet niet voor niets Graafland  
Godverdomme!

Rustig blijven  
(Gaat zitten)

Ja, Nu heb ik het door!  
(Stuift op uit zijn stoel etc,  
dit dagenlang zich herhalend

tot het escaleert)

v

Nijinsky: 'Ik loei wel, maar ik ben geen stier. Ik loei, en een gedode stier loeit niet. Ik ben God en Stier. Ik ben Apis. Ik ben een Egyptenaar. Ik ben een hindoe. Ik ben een indiaan. Ik ben een neger, ik ben een Chinees, ik ben een Japanner. Ik ben een vreemdeling en een buitenlander. Ik ben een zeevogel. Ik ben een aardvogel. Ik ben de boom van Tolstoj. Ik ben de wortels van Tolstoj. Tolstoj is van mij. Ik ben hem. Tolstoj leefde in dezelfde tijd als ik... Mijn rede is zo ontwikkeld dat ik mensen zonder woorden begrijp. Ik zie hun handelen en begrijp alles. Ik begrijp alles. Ik ben een boer. Ik ben een fabrieksarbeider. Ik ben een bediende. Ik ben een heer. Ik ben een aristocraat. Ik ben een tsaar. Ik ben Imperator. Ik ben God. Ik ben God. Ik ben God. Ik ben alles. Ik ben het leven. Ik ben oneindigheid. Ik zal altijd en overal zijn.'

vi

Jan Graafland: *Ver heen*

Almaar zit hij geheimzinnig voor zich uit te staren,  
tot zijn ogen beginnen te fonkelen,  
alsof hij in de leegte iets prachtigs ziet ontstaan.

Waar hij naar grijpt -

het pakt hem.

Hij springt op uit zijn stoel en stuift naar buiten,  
als een hond die lang opgesloten zat  
en levert zich uit aan de elementen.

Hij doorwoelt de zwarte aarde  
in de tuin van de bureu.

Hij springt naakt in de sloot van het plantsoen  
en verdrinkt haast.

Hij probeert, als een vogel,  
klapwiekend de lucht in te komen.

En zodra hij de kans krijgt, strijkt hij lucifers aan.  
Hij krijgt er geen genoeg van vuur te zien ontstaan.

vii

“Ik hoorde geen engel, zelfs geen stem, maar ik voelde een ongeken- de kracht die heel mijn denken in bezit nam. Het was een stem die een bericht aan de mensheid wilde schrijven, een boek dat alle boeken overbodig zou maken, een bericht over de zuivere liefde die ik voor de hele mensheid in praktijk wilde brengen...De notities volgden elkaar op in een kortademige staccatostijl, maar ook lyrisch en bloemrijk, nu eens stilstaand bij het beeld van een witte piano op de top van de Mont Blanc, en dan weer uitweidend over de lichamelijke- heid van de taal... Mijn boek ging over alles, de rooms-katholieke kerk, de geboortebepering, Jean-Paul Sartre, de duivel en God en over de grens van de waanzin, die ik meende al schrijvend te kunnen overschrijden.”

viii

Harald Kaas (1979): ‘Wanneer de waanzin als water stijgt en boven de vloedmarkeringen uit komt, zijn er ogenblikken waarop iets zich onthult waarvan je niet openlijk spreken kunt. Daarom wordt het het duidelijkst verkondigd in het stamelen van degenen die door haar licht zijn uitgebrand en ertoe veroordeeld zijn er levenslang niets meer over te zeggen.’

Original German: “Immerhin, es gibt, wenn der Wahnsinn wie Wasser steigt und die Flutmarken überwindet, Augenblicke, in denen sich etwas enthüllt, wovon man offenkundig nicht sprechen kann; weshalb es sich am deutlichsten im Lallen derer kundtut, die von seinem Licht ausgebrannt und dazu ausersehen sind, ein Leben lang nichts mehr darüber zu sagen.”

ix

Paul Celan: *Sprich auch Du*

Sprich auch du,  
sprich als letzter,  
sag deinen Spruch.

Sprich -  
Doch scheidet das Nein nicht vom Ja.  
Gib deinem Spruch auch den Sinn:  
gib ihm den Schatten.

Gib ihm Schatten genug,  
gib ihm so viel,  
als du um dich verteilt weißt zwischen  
Mittnacht und Mittag und Mittnacht.

Blicke umher:

sieh, wie's lebendig wird rings -  
Beim Tode! Lebendig!  
Wahr spricht, wer Schatten spricht.

Nun aber schrumpft der Ort, wo du stehst:  
Wohin jetzt, Schattenentblößter, wohin?  
Steige. Taste empor.  
Dünnere wirst du, unkenntlicher, feiner!  
Feiner: ein Faden,  
an dem er herabwill, der Stern  
um unten zu schwimmen, unten,  
wo er sich schimmern sieht: in der Dünung  
wandernder Worte.