



ORIGINAL ARTICLE

## My mad visions

Dr Lorna Collins

*Independent Researcher*

### Abstract

In this paper, I examine the phenomenological and existential process of artmaking and how it helps me. I do this by seeing how art builds a technique of the self and a system and culture of care, bringing about a “Madpeople’s” coping mechanism’. I present live excerpts from my hallucinations, expressed and narrated in images and words. I describe and assess the process of turning the subjective experience of a hallucination into an objective thing in the artworks I make, showing how this changes the experiences which are expressed, allowing me to cope with and even celebrate them. I am no longer the ‘sick schizo’, I am creative and whole. I then turn to French philosophers Bernard Stiegler and Michel Foucault, whose ideas are grounded in Nietzsche, to evaluate what happens during the transformative effect that art making has on my hallucinatory experiences.

### Keywords

Art; creativity; hallucinations; coping; care; French philosophy

### History

Received 7 Feb 2025  
Revised 31 May 2025  
Accepted 19 Jun 2025

---

## Introduction

I live with the diagnosis of organic psychotic disorder, which means that I have continuous aural and visual hallucinations. This diagnosis leaves me vulnerable, as the ‘sick schizo’ medicated and put away by a system (Deleuze and Guattari 2004: 397). I use art (writing, painting, filmmaking) to express these hallucinations and develop a method of coping with them. I am told that my hallucinations are subjective and only exist for me; they are my reality, which nobody else can see, feel, or hear etc. Over the years I have learned to differentiate between different levels of reality, so I am (largely, if not always) able to recognise when my experience is a hallucination or when it is part of the ‘shared’ world everyone else has access to. Drawing or expressing my hallucinations changes them from being constricted to subjective reality (accessible only to me) to becoming objective, potentially public objects. This is transformative because as a work of art, the hallucination

enters a different level of reality, which I can communicate to other people. This allows me to process and deal with what has appeared to me, and, most importantly, take care of myself.

In this paper, I will recount my mad visions (in words and images). I will then examine theories about taking care, madness (Stiegler), and care or technique of the self (Foucault), with a grounding in Nietzschean aesthetics, in my efforts to try and understand what is happening during my mad visions and their creative expression. I will conclude with my mad visions, showing how they provide a coping mechanism (and more...) for madpeople and anyone who dares to open and express themselves.

### **Mad Visions – Live Data**

Every day, I allow a period of time (about one hour) in which I record my mad visions, my hallucinations. Assigning them a limited time and space in which they can express themselves makes it easier to cope with them for the rest of the day and night. Although I see, hear and feel things all the time that others seem not to, I am able to cope with this by only watching and listening to them in the time I allot and preserve for them. This means I don't have to be engrossed or overcome by my experiences; we almost have a deal: I will listen to what you are telling me at this time of the day, so you don't have to disturb me all the time.

This is a useful coping mechanism for my mad visions. It does not always work. In times of stress, my hallucinations are very loud and constantly aggressive. They take over me until I do something about why they are making such a fuss. In a way I am grateful for them – they are a beacon; they often (nearly always) illustrate my situation, alerting me to things I need to be aware of or change. Or they are just pure, abstract, compelling sense data – impossible to signify, but full of their own meaning. As much as they torment and abuse me, they are also a gift.

During my allotted mad vision time, I dictate what they are saying to me and how they appear to me onto the 'Notes' app on my mobile phone. I make cursory notes, recording what they say and what happens. I currently have 554 notes in the 'Mad Visions' folder on my phone. Then, later, I go back to my house and type up these notes in a story or a play or a poem. I draw, paint or sculpt the characters, or I make a collage. This creative process allows me to process and come to terms with the experiences, which can be traumatic and alarming. I don't have to show anybody what I have made (although I can if I want to), but I find that expressing my mad visions in words or images is incredibly helpful. Later on in this paper, we will consider how or why this is so.

Before that, I will insert two passages from my mad visions and some images from my journals. These are different in tone and content. You will see that the characters who appear to me can be very funny and playful – our conversations reek a dark, dry humour. But my mad visions often torment and abuse me. I am assaulted or killed, in extravagantly creative ways.

The content of conversations and interactions with whoever comes along is unpredictable and always surprising. Particular people (or animals, creatures, molecules, etc.) are recognisable because they do come back to me (or they hold a constant presence), but the plot and content of my mad visions are ontologically plural; I am (we are) infinite difference. It could not be made up.

With this in mind, I present two transcriptions, recorded on my phone whilst the visions were happening (on different days). The first is a simple, playful, day to day conversation. The second is darker and more ominous.

### **A simple description of everyday experiences**

I breathe, and reams of characters scurry across the air I emit.

This scenario is infinite: bubbles on the base of a tidal wave crash on the sea; an avalanche of thick, icy snowfall shoots down a mountain.

Each elemental particle builds their own character. I see them bubbling away, becoming separate but conjoined identities. A flurry of beings, in transition, in transmission.

I see them waving to me, inviting me to join them. I am the voyeur, ever-watching, immediately proximate in this colourful, intricate immanence.

I am just observing all this, when one of the beings calls out to me. He is a bear, called Paddington. He seems very inviting and friendly, with an underlying sadness and disquiet. He says: "Aren't you going to come over here?"

"I am already here," I say. "There is no difference between here and there. I am everywhere."

Paddington Bear is sitting, arms and legs outstretched, trying to keep his balance on the crescendo of wave activity. "I'm going to drown," he says.

"Hold on tight!" I offer.

"Are you blind?" asks Paddington.

"Clearly not!" I say.

"But, can't you see, there is nothing to hold onto."

"Then swim," I suggest. "Swim and surf across the waves."

"You aren't exactly a good example...you, with your feet safely on dry land."

“Nothing is completely safe. I have tumultuous tsunami waves and ice and snowscapes in the landscape of my existence. I am with you.”

“Stop being so philosophical, stop me from drowning!”

I pick up my hand and try to reach Paddington Bear on the horizon. I see him right there, right here. He is waving at me, desperately trying to grab hold of my finger and my hand. But, as I reach out, he disintegrates and does not exist anymore. I drop my hand back and there he is again, yelping, desperately waving and drowning. I reach my hand out again to try and grab hold of him, but there is nothing to grab hold of.

I play this game of remote lawn tennis with two opposing levels of reality for a long time. I hear shrieking from Paddington Bear in my ears, he says: “Stop tempting me. Either grab hold of me and take me to safety, or leave me to drown. Make up your mind! Rescue me or abandon me. What’s it to be?”

I blink. The mighty wave with its bubbles, has blown up. It is a proper tidal wave now. I can’t see Paddington Bear, all I can see and hear are an infinite number of miniscule characters, thrashing and shrieking.

“Don’t panic!” I say, but I am panicking. I can’t save these characters. The wave crescendo is overwhelming me as well. There’s nothing I can do.

Keep breathing.

My inward breath absorbs the commotion. I suck up every single character. My outward breath pushes away the tide, until it turns into smaller, calmer ripples.

Many of the characters become lodged at my nose in my throat in my lungs. “We are staying here,” they say. “This is punishment for your crime.”

I did not know I had done anything wrong.

“Paddington Bear says you teased him. Teasing over matters of life and death is the worst crime at all. We are staying here and we will make you cough and splutter for the rest of your life, and beyond.”

I feel the beings stamp their feet and snort inside me. I feel very itchy and uncomfortable. I throw my head forward and I am sick. A revolting green liquid comes out of my mouth, complete with a number of different characters.

“Please go away, and don’t come back,” I say.

“That’s impossible,” they reply, together. “You are the one who created us.”

“That’s not true,” I reply. “I don’t know where you came from. I’m not in control of you.”

“You are right, we are in control of you. But we came out of you; we are a part of you. We will never leave.”

I wonder how on earth (or somewhere else) I can make life comfortable or bearable, given this situation. I have characters jumping over my lungs and pummelling the bottom of my stomach. I have characters clogging up my oesophagus, I can hardly breathe. I have characters digging up and separating different parts of my brain, playing catch inside my skull. I have characters entering my eyeballs and making themselves at home inside my pupils and irises. Forevermore, they colour my vision. I have characters sitting inside the waxy part of my ear, causing mayhem to everything I hear. I have characters in every conceivable part of my body. They have a permanent contract. They will never leave.

I wonder what I can do. I try to keep breathing, but with each outbreath, the landscape opens even more realms of new characters.

It never stops, it never goes away, it keeps coming.

I am gripped, seized, illuminated, gifted.

This is infinity.

### **I am a grey rag doll mauled by The Black Dog**

I see my floppy, ragged parts. I am irretrievably broken.

Some scrawny, ancient skeleton is attempting to patch me back together. She holds a travel sewing kit in her left hand and pulls out many pins and needles. But she is not fixing me, she stabs me; I have become her voodoo doll.

Evidently this is all I am now, utterly unrepairable, only an instrument for someone else’s anger.

Again and again, she stabs me. Each pin prick pierces, penetrates my flesh. I was always already broken; now I am punctured and perforated and punctuated by these razor-sharp points.

I see this. I am a rough, dirty, thready, grey rag doll. My ripped-up body is fixed up on the wall by countless pins and needles. Their metal heads coat my exterior. They have become my armour, my identity, whilst (or possibly because) they torture me and constitute permanent agony.

I hear myself screaming here, in inaudible, cacophonous decibels. Louder than hearing can soak up. My mouth is a spherical button, eternally open, roughly sewn onto my grey, ragged, thready head. Always screaming. But the world is deaf to my cries; I am muted.

The scrawny, ancient skeleton checks that she has secured me to the wall on the endless corridor and sticks a few more pins into my body, just to be sure. Then she disappears from the scene, with a surprising skip – teetering this way and that. I didn't know she could skip. She is so rickety; I think she is going to fall over.

I am left in the darkness. My ragged body is held up by the things that are destroying me. I feel each and every sewing pin dissecting and piercing right through me; they are daggers.

I am on the edge of existence, and it is not nice. I feel my already floppy body slacken and slump around the pins attaching me to the wall. I have wilted; I am a drooping carcass.

Flash.

The Black Dog comes back, and grabs hold of me with his ferocious fangs. He has not anticipated that I am full of razor-sharp pins; they will protect me. As The Black Dog closes his mouth around me, and pulls me off the wall, my pins sink into his gums.

Ouch.

The Black Dog howls in pain and leaps back. But my pins pierce him, I am stuck to his flesh. The Black Dog and I, we are coupled, united, stuck together – in agony. I am not going away; my pins hold me fast.

I transfer my pain to The Black Dog; we share each other's pain, slowly destroying each other.

There is no happy ending, there is just continuous, long-drawn-out, excruciating pain. This is constant; the only thing I can rely upon.

The scrawny, ancient skeleton does not return, but I think she is always here. I am her voodoo doll, remember. She is the one who put us all here.

I see my stuckness, my pins impaled in The Black Dog's mouth, a vision of eternal pain and discomfort. I am on the cusp of death, but I do not die, not today.

Not today.

What's left is much harder, much more uncomfortable – I have become a mauled voodoo doll, impaled by somebody else's anger. I am fastened and trapped to The Black Dog, an eternal being of darkness.

I exist somewhere in limbo, on the threshold between these different layers of reality and existence. The vision sticks to me, sticks into me.

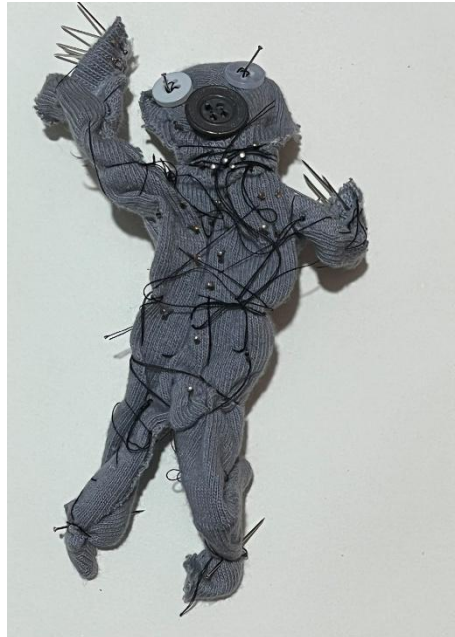


Figure 1. The grey rag voodoo doll

Image description: A black and white image of a grey rag voodoo doll made by the author. The doll has buttons for eyes and a mouth, is wrapped in thin black cord, and is perforated by pins from head to toe.

I made this doll shortly after having the vision and transcribing these words. Creating this floppy, coarse creature, with pins that both rupture and hold it together, calmed me down and helped me come to terms with the vision. When it became this physical thing, the (subjective) vision then turned into something in the 'shared world' that I could begin to understand, process and move away from.

### **Images, coping with the visions**

I include three images, below, from my journal. These show drawings of my mad visions, and also some writing (sometimes backwards). I am trying to capture something ineffable and impossible to capture (my visions). The pieces of paper holding these expressions offer a threshold, a plane, between various levels of reality. There is no explanation to demarcate what I am doing here; it is full of non/sense. Mad. Please look and be curious. We will examine how and why they are helpful in the next section.

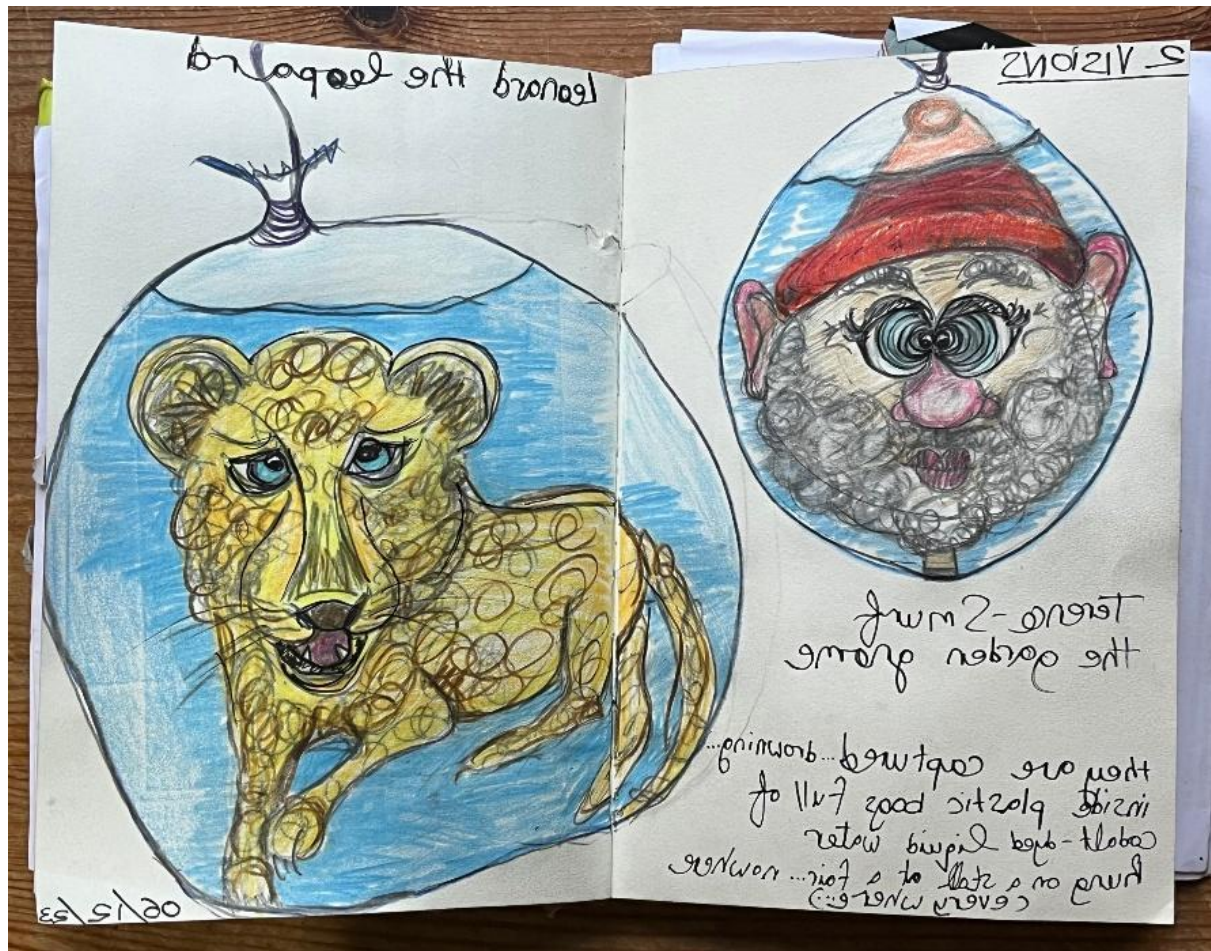


Figure 2. Mad vision, 06/12/22

Image description: Photograph of pages from the author’s journal. A lion and a person’s head wearing a red hat are each shown in a glass bauble ornament filled with water, hanging from cords of string. There is handwriting (written backwards) in the bottom right corner of the pages shown.

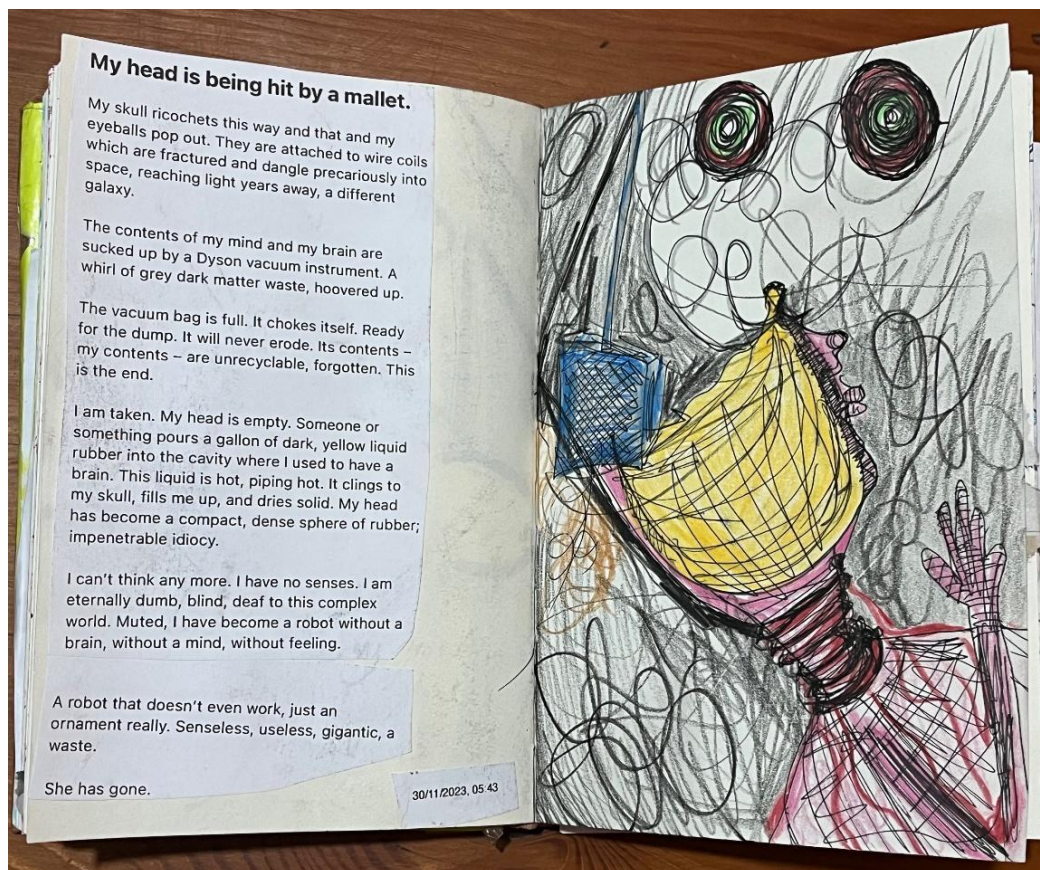


Figure 3. Mad vision, 30/11/23

Image description: Photograph of pages from the author's journal. The left page shows a piece of printed writing on a cut out piece of paper describing the author's vision. The right side shows a corresponding image with the author's body colored in pink, their head missing the top and filled with yellow rubber. Around the author's body we see grey matter, and what appears to be two disembodied eyes, mostly black with red and green shading, in the top right corner of the image. The printed text on the left page reads as follows:

My skull ricochets this way and that and my eyeballs pop out. They are attached to wire coils which are fractured and dangle precariously into space, reaching light years away, a different galaxy.

The content of my eyes and brain are sucked up by a Dyson vacuum instrument. A whirl of grey dark matter waste, hoovered up.

The vacuum bag is full. It chokes itself. Ready for the dump. It will never erode. Its contents - my contents - are unrecyclable, forgotten. This is the end.

I am taken. My head is empty. Someone or something pours a gallon of dark, yellow liquid rubber into the cavity where I used to have a brain. This liquid is hot, piping hot. It clings to my skull, fills me up, and dries solid. My head has become a compact, dense sphere of rubber; impenetrable idiocy.

I can't think anymore. I have no senses. I am eternally dumb, blind, deaf to this complex world. Muted, I have become a robot without a brain, without a mind, without feeling.

A robot that doesn't even work, just an ornament really. Senseless, useless, gigantic, a waste. She has gone.

30/11/2023, 5:43

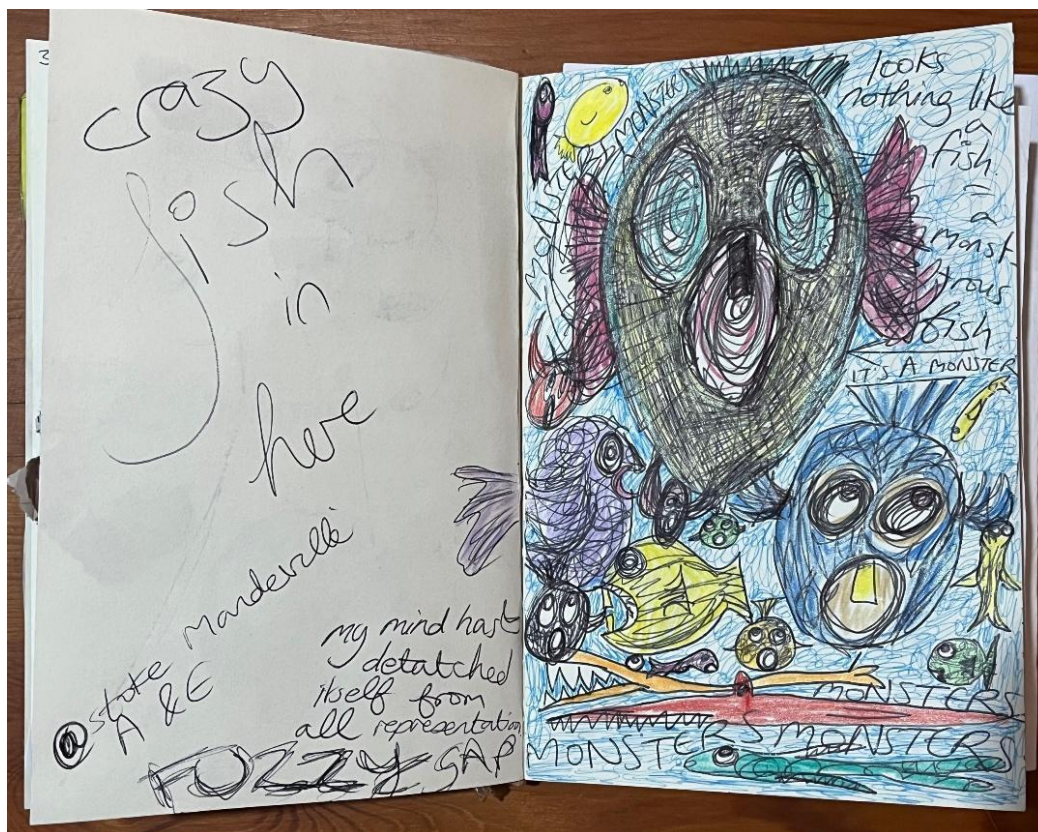


Figure 4. Mad vision, 12/11/23

Image description: Photograph of pages from the author's journal. The left page shows handwritten text reading, "crazy fish in here," "@ stoke Mandeville A&E," "my mind has detached itself from all representation," and "FUZZY SAP." The right page shows a collection of several illustrated fish of different colours, looking upwards with their mouths open. Text written around the edges of the page reads, "looks nothing like a fish, a monstrous fish, it's a monster, monsters, monsters, monsters."

## Reflecting on the Visions

I am trying to focus on writing this paper, but as I type these words on my laptop, more visions come to me. They grasp my attention, hold me, throttle me. I suppose I should not write this down – am I giving them more attention, making them worse? I have been told that I am engaging in hyperreflexivity or rumination when I make art from my hallucinations. But they are sensations, not thoughts. Although, I turn them into thoughts when I write them down. They are somehow titillating, compelling, fascinating – even as they torture and destroy me. Lorna, the masochist.

The reason why I take notes, as the visions appear, is because doing so makes them shift. They are no longer a purely subjective phenomenon, which people might think I am making up or inventing (which I am not). When I write or paint or express them in some way, the experience changes from being a subjective hallucination into something objective; a different layer of reality, something I can express and communicate and process and deal with (potentially). This is crucial.

I live with the fear that people will think I make stuff up. This is one reason why I must have evidence for my experiences, to ensure that people don't think or say these things about me. If I narrate my experiences, in the moment, it validates them (and me); it also helps me to move away from them – by changing the layer of reality they form. Subject-object dialectic disintegrates, pure immanence. Deleuze would have a field day (cf. Deleuze 2005; Collins 2017).

For this reason, I try to dictate what I am seeing on my phone, as it happens. This allows me to stay grounded, up to a point. I am engaging my senses – audible, visual, tactile – as I speak and use my hands on my phone; whilst hearing and seeing and feeling (physically, on my body) what the hallucinations are doing to me. These different layers of reality intertwine and sometimes they react to each other, which is interesting, if confusing. I keep walking, noting down the experiences I am having.

As I type these words and reflect upon my everyday hallucinations, the room I am sitting in becomes a bewitching milieu of grey men with long, cumulous beards, who appear to me, guffawing with laughter. This is distracting, tiresome.

My head is exploding. I feel incredibly disorientated and fuzzy. I keep writing. The writing helps because it allows me to express what is going on, whilst it also generates within me the capacity to focus and process parts of this. Writing a narrative of my experiences is cathartic – express and release. It also engenders my own, unique sort of sense making (even when what

I am writing about defies rational sense). The writing describes me; becomes a part of me. Hypergraphia<sup>1</sup>.

I am curious to think more deeply about what is happening as I express my mad visions and their transformation when I make art. In the next section, I will draw from the French philosophers Bernard Stiegler and Michel Foucault on care and the technique of the self, and Nietzsche's aesthetics, to consider how and why the artmaking process provides me with a process of taking care that allows me to live and coexist with my mad visions.

## Theory

### Stiegler

Bernard Stiegler is known for his political, technocratic philosophies, which respond to economic and social problems seen in our capitalist era. Central to Stiegler's work is a critique and revision of the account of the 're-enchantment of the world' in Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1997). Adorno and Horkheimer are Frankfurt theorists writing around the time of the second world war. They examine the power structures in capitalist societies descending into totalitarianism and genocide. With their notion of 'instrumental reason', Adorno and Horkheimer challenge ideas from 18th Century Enlightenment. They are specifically challenging Immanuel Kant's response to the question 'What is Enlightenment', when Kant calls upon people to 'Dare to Know', saying knowledge and reason will lift us out of 'tutelage' (Kant, 1995: 1-6). Adorno and Horkheimer are confronting this idea when, they say, reason and knowledge have become reified and warped with capitalism. Capitalism has 're-encharnted' the world, with disastrous consequences, in a culture industry fed by commercial fetishism (Adorno and Horkheimer 1997, 120-67). Stiegler reacts to these ideas, which he reads as an ongoing situation in today's world. He is seeking a different kind of re-enchantment for the world, beyond reason, commerce or capitalism. To do this, Stiegler's oeuvre and his political work develop a notion of 'taking care', on individual and societal levels. His philosophy around care and his late work on madness are useful for this paper because they help me to understand how my own artworks respond to and impact upon my mad visions.

Stiegler draws from Donald Winnicott, who says that art and creativity define life's meaning and who we are: 'creativity belongs to being alive' (Winnicott 2005, 91). This involves the

---

<sup>1</sup> 'Hypergraphia' is a medical term which was attributed to me as a symptom, soon after my brain injury. This term refers to somebody having a driving compulsion to write; the overwhelming urge to write. Hypergraphia is also associated with temporal lobe epilepsy, which is interesting and relevant in my case, since one of the areas of damage on my brain is the right temporal lobe, and I had epileptiform wavelengths on my EEG tests for years following the injury. A number of doctors diagnosed my hallucinations as forms of epilepsy.

notion of care. Taking care in Stiegler is to cultivate, transform and improve one's life (Stiegler 2013). The artwork can provide an agent of taking care, as 'a therapeutic capable [...] of treating its [life's] inherent poisons' (Stiegler 2010, 85). This view is essential for my own life and process of artmaking, which provides me with a process of taking care of myself, when making art allows me to cope and co-exist with my mad visions, as 'Art and artworks sustain me when I lose myself or decline' (Stiegler 2004, 268). My artmaking and my artworks also help me find and raise myself.

Stiegler also says that an artwork offers us an 'accès au sauvage', an access to the wild (Stiegler 1994, back cover). My mad visions are wild; they suck me up and take over me. In this context, my artworks hold me; they take care of me. This is both a sense of taking care, as well as a chute for Dionysian, even bacchanalian access to my truth (ideas brought up by Nietzsche, which I will refer to, below). In effect, artmaking allows me to attend to my mad visions in a safe way, building a system of care. I write about my head being hit by a mallet, I draw the experience (Figure 3). This changes the punitive, violent, tactile experience I am having, softening the blow.

I have considered how artmaking brings about a process of care and a technique of the self in *Making Sense: Art Practice and Transformative Therapeutics* (Collins 2017). In this work, I engage with Stiegler to help me consider how art (and artmaking) has this facility and power:

Creating an artwork opens a technique for caring for the self, or an art of being in the world, since it produces a liberal way of existing and creating, collaborating in time. This provides relief from the disenchanted world, and our [...] misery. The result is an autonomous space of reenchantment, which is not a separation or removal from the real, but a material immersion into a different and creative method of being alive. The artwork opens a transitional space where transformation occurs.

(Collins 2017, 225-226)

Later on in Stiegler's philosophy, he examines ideas around madness, barbarism, and hubris in relation to capitalism and marketing. We see this in his *Age of Disruption: Technology and Madness in Computational Capitalism* (2019). The title of the French edition is compelling – *Dans la disruption. Comment ne pas devenir fou?* – how do we not go mad?

Although his references to madness seem fraught with stigma (as if it is a bad thing), his references to *tekhnê* via Heidegger, indicate that the (only?) ways out of the stigma and hubris, with madness, are a special kind of 'Philosophizing so as not to go mad', or art (Stiegler 2019, 1-64).

Stiegler uses Adorno and Horkheimer to say that, in the context of technology, instrumental reason, capitalism, 'humanity [...] is sinking into a new kind of barbarism' (Stiegler 2019, 3;

Adorno and Horkheimer 2002, xiv). Stiegler says that madness is barbarism, insanity is foolish, a hubris. But there is also creative madness, which is 'the condition of wisdom' and transformation (Stiegler 2019, 104).

Stiegler discusses hallucinations in relation to the 'exomatization' of the brain (2019, 94). Exomatization is a term Stiegler uses to describe cognitive ecology, the process of exteriorising or technologizing a brain function – such as telephones replacing our memories. This idea comes from Plato's notion of the supplement in Phaedrus (Plato 1972, §274bff; see also Derrida 1981, 61-171). When I make art responding to my hallucinations, there is a process of exomatization, when my artmaking brings about the passage to the outside (Stiegler 2019, 93). My art embodies what was purely internal, transforming the experience into something external. Objectifying my hallucinations then offers me hope and courage, care and culture (Stiegler, 2019, 94; 287). This is a technique of the self.

Stiegler's work on care and its implications draw from Foucault and then Nietzsche, to whom I will now turn, to consider these ideas more deeply.

### **Foucault**

Foucault defines the care of the self in terms of 'those intentional and voluntary actions by which men not only set themselves rules of conduct, but also seek to transform themselves, to change themselves in their singular being, and to make their life into an *œuvre*' (Foucault 1992, 10). Foucault says that art allows us to take care of ourselves; it facilitates transformation and brings us a technique that allows us to exist.

We have already seen the ways that my art helps me cope with my mad visions and allows me to take care of myself. Foucault calls life a work of art, bringing about an ethics or aesthetics of existence, where ethics is an attitude that transforms our relationship with ourselves; this transformation is the work of art. From this viewpoint, the individual is not a fixed entity. We are constituted as historical, cultural, linguistic assemblages, as we continually evolve during our speech, thoughts and actions. Ethics is what happens when we problematise who we are or what we do and the world we live in, and how we have the means to transform our relationships with ourselves. Ethics is contained within aesthetics because, Foucault says, we should strive to be a work of art, since art allows us to transform and go beyond who we are.

My art and artistic process allows me to make a life out of and from my mad visions. I make art in response to the things I see and experience. This enables me to interpret them creatively rather than destructively, producing a living coping mechanism. Life becomes an *œuvre*; my *œuvre* brings me life.

## Nietzsche

I have referred to the Dionysiac nature of my mad visions and my art, above. Nietzsche's 'Dionysiac state' refers to our ability to deal with life's catastrophe, pain and inherent contradictions, without falling into or even seeking asceticism or torment. Dionysian intoxication is art's capacity to revive us when we experience pain. Art shapes or moulds our existence, by responding to and finding meaning from suffering, non/sense, tragedy or death. Nietzsche says, when a man sees 'only what is terrible or absurd in existence wherever he looks [...]. Here, at this moment of supreme danger for the will, art approaches as a saving sorceress with the power to heal. Art alone can re-direct those repulsive thoughts about the terrible or absurd nature of existence into representations with which man can live [...]' (Nietzsche 2007 §7, 40). In this way, as Nietzsche says, art generates a 'will to life' in the wake of insurmountable suffering: 'We possess art lest we perish of the truth' (Nietzsche 1968 §822, 435).

Nietzsche's aphorisms allow me to understand how crucial my own art is in helping me cope with my mad visions. We can see the different tones in the two extracts of my mad visions, included above. The second extract is dark and disturbing. If I did not make art from these experiences by writing and crafting them, they would continue to torment me. Recording the hallucination and being creative with it allows me to process and be freed from this torment – I turn it into a work of art.

Artmaking is a 'facture' (a French word meaning 'crafting' or 'technique', emphasised in Foucault and Stiegler), shaping our existence; it allows us to find meaning and ways to keep on going in the face of suffering. When I link artmaking to craft or technique, I am saying the process of making an artwork has its roots in *poiêsis*, the Greek word for poetry (from *ποιέω*, to make). I am drawing upon Heidegger's hermeneutic, phenomenological use of *poiêsis*, calling art a method of 'bringing-forth' truth (Heidegger 1977, 3-35). Artmaking (in any medium) brings forth (it expresses) what is true about me. But truth is not only about suffering; artmaking also shapes a practice to live well and celebrate the hallucinations. I laugh, I smile, I am happy, as you can see in the first extract, and the curious characters in Figure 2. But even when the hallucinations are negative or destructive in content or tone, they are beacons. They show me the way.

This does not remove the hallucinations (not that I would wish to lose them), and nor does it magically resolve life's problems. Art preserves the paradoxes and conundrums which mark life's path, allowing one to live in tandem with them. Summing up this point, Giacomelli (2021) draws from Heidegger, who meditates on Hölderlin's poetry, in consonance with Nietzsche: 'Yet we never know a mystery by unveiling or analyzing it to death, but only in such a way that we preserve the mystery as mystery' (Heidegger 2000, 43).

A Nietzschean aesthetics of existence is the eternal replaying of a way of living with our problems. Their replaying offers possibilities for difference and the transformation of the self. This idea seems to comprehend why and how my art supports my life with and from mad visions.

## **Conclusion**

Art provides me with a practical, accessible coping mechanism that helps me live with my mad visions. This happens because making an artwork is a calming, peaceful activity, which allows me to connect with, process, understand, communicate and live with what can be very tormenting experiences. The creative process of expressing mad visions in words, collage, film or paint is affirmative. As we have seen through Stiegler, Foucault, and Nietzsche, art builds a technique of the self and a system and culture of care. Art allows me to continue, it generates life. When I turn my mad visions into art, I am no longer a 'sick schizo' with 'crazy hallucinations' that define an illness; I am conveying and coping with symptoms positively (rather than reacting to them destructively). This means I am whole; I am true; I am well.

In this way, artmaking provides an accessible coping mechanism for 'madpeople', and anyone who dares to open and express themselves. This is what we must do, to survive and live well. As Nietzsche puts it, "Art saves him, and through art life saves him – for itself" (Nietzsche, 2007 §7: 40).

As I conclude this paper, I see billions of molecules disintegrating inside the computer screen I am trying to write these words on. Everything melts and sucks me in. I can/cannot see, as multiple layers of reality merge and dissipate. I am trying to focus on something theoretical to provide a solid conclusion to this paper, but by now I am distracted by (mad) vision, with its extraordinary and compelling narrative. I am taken away. Forgive me, I need to go and make art.

## **Integrity Statement**

I declare that this manuscript is my original work, has not been published before and is not currently being considered for publication elsewhere. I also declare that the research was conducted ethically. I also declare that I own the copyright for all the images in this manuscript or have received the permissions required for their publication.

## **Conflict of Interest Statement**

I declare that I have no known competing financial or personal relationships that could be viewed as influencing the work reported in this paper.

## References

Adorno, T. W. and M. Horkheimer (1997). *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Trans. J. Cumming, London: Verso.

Adorno, T. W. and M. Horkheimer (2002). 'The Culture Industry as Mass Deception', in Adorno, T. W. and M. Horkheimer *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*. Trans. E. Jephcott, Stanford: Stanford University Press: 94-136.

Collins, L. (2017). *Making Sense: Art Practice and Transformative Therapeutics*, London: Bloomsbury.

Deleuze, G. (2005). *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*. Trans. D. W. Smith, London: Continuum.

Deleuze, G. and F. Guattari. (2004). *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Trans. R. Hurley, M. Seem, and H. R. Lane, London: Continuum.

Derrida, J. (1981). 'Plato's Pharmacy,' in J. Derrida *Dissemination*. Trans. Barbara Johnson, London: Athlone Press: 61-171.

Foucault, M. (1992). *The Use of Pleasure. The History of Sexuality: Volume Two*. Trans. R. Hurley, Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin.

Giacomelli, A. (2021). 'Art, Life and Form: On Nietzsche and the Aesthetics of Existence' in *Studi di estetica*, anno XLIX, IV, 1/2021, 155-81.

Heidegger, M. (1977). *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*. Trans. William Lovitt, New York: Harper & Row.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2000). *Elucidations of Hölderlin Poetry*. Trans. K. Hoell, New York: Humanity Books.

Kant, I. (1995). 'What is Enlightenment?' In *The Portable Enlightenment Reader*. Ed. Isaac Kramnick, New York: Penguin Books: 1-6.

Nietzsche, F. (1968). *Will to Power*. Trans. W. Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale; ed. W. Kaufmann, New York: Vintage Books.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2007). *The Birth of Tragedy*. Trans. R. Speirs; eds. R. Geuss and R. Speirs, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2003). *Writings from the Late Notebooks*. Trans. K. Sturge; ed. R. Bittner, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Plato. (1972). *Plato's Phaedrus*. Ed. R. Hackforth, Cambridge: University Press.

Stiegler, B. (1994). *La Technique et le temps, tome 1: La Faute d'Épithémée*, Paris: Galilée.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2004). *De la misère symbolique 1. L'époque hyperindustrielle*, Paris: Galilée.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2010). *Taking Care of Youth and the Generations*. Trans. S. Barker, Palo Alto: Stanford University Press.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2013) *What Makes Life Worth Living: On Pharmacology*. Trans. D. Ross, Cambridge: Polity Press.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2019). *The Age of Disruption: Technology and Madness in Computational Capitalism*. Trans. D. Ross, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Winnicott, D.W. (2005). *Playing and Reality*, Oxford: Routledge Classics.