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Mad studies as a methodology for critical heritage studies

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to develop and discuss mad studies as a methodology and mad reading as a method for critical heritage studies. In doing so, this paper acts on persistent calls to discuss methodologies in critical heritage studies as well as calls to explore the heritage connected to psychiatric hospitals and madness. The text introduces and develops mad studies as a methodology for critical heritage studies, here explained as a way of seeing and analysing heritage from the perspective of mad-centred knowledge productions. The article further develops mad reading as a method for analysing heritage. Mad reading is explained as (1) a situated method, (2) a different way to approach the object of study (3) a method to expose and challenge sanism and (4) a method to reveal madness where it is not clearly visible. The paper is predominantly theory-driven but situates the discussion in relation to previous and ongoing research in heritage studies.

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Introduction

The aim of this paper is to develop and discuss mad studies as a methodology and mad reading as a method for critical heritage studies. In doing so, the paper acts on persistent calls to discuss methodologies in critical heritage studies so as to examine the research practices that shape how heritage is understood (Hølleland and Niklasson 2020; Stig Sørensen and Carman 2009). Methodological discussions have proven to be a challenge for heritage studies seeing that the field is mainly case-study driven (Gould 2016, 6), and even methodological discussions are largely focused around different case studies (e.g. Gould 2016; Hølleland and Niklasson 2020; Stig Sørensen and Carman 2009). Furthermore, methodology has predominantly become instrumental and a means of exploring an issue, so methodologies often remain implicit in heritage research (Waterton and Watson 2015, 23–24). Another reason methodological discussions have not sparked interest in heritage studies is perhaps that new museology and critical heritage studies called for a shift away from methods, and consequently also methodologies, to a focus on the politics of heritage (Vergo 1989, 3; Witcomb and Buckley 2013, 564). Although some argue that the field of critical heritage studies is not only ‘a cultural analysis paradigm’ and indeed provide methods that can ‘mandate for change in the field’ (Kryder-Reid 2018, 692), the interest in the politics of heritage has nevertheless resulted in methodological problems that researchers have not been prepared for. Thus, researchers call for discussions on methodologies to create transparency in research (Hølleland and Niklasson 2020; Witcomb and Buckley 2013).

Another reason for the persistent calls for methodological discussions is that heritage studies is increasingly interdisciplinary. While this results in vibrant discussions, it has resulted in that methodologies are often borrowed from other disciplines (Stig Sørensen and Carman 2009, 4).

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There is a risk that theoretical implications and political inequity are carried uncritically into heritage studies (Gould 2016, 18) and that methods are seldom adapted to, or integrated into, the needs of heritage studies (Stig Sørensen and Carman 2009, 4). Therefore, researchers stress the importance of methodological discussions in order to critically assess data in case-driven studies, discuss knowledge productions, create transparency in research and further develop the field of critical heritage studies (Gould 2016; Hølleland and Niklasson 2020; Holley-Kline and Papazian 2020; Stig Sørensen and Carman 2009; Waterton and Watson 2015; Zarger and Pluckhahn 2013).

This paper acts on this debate and seeks to discuss mad studies as a methodology and mad reading as a method for critical heritage studies. It also acts on calls to investigate the ways that sanism as a norm permeates cultural heritage and how it comes to organise the politics of remembering (Rodéhn 2020, 211), as well as on calls to continue to explore the heritage of psychiatric care (Moon, Kearns, and Joseph 2015, 23). As a response to the critique of methodological discussions being primarily case-study driven in heritage studies (Gould 2016), the present paper is deliberately theory driven.

I begin by briefly introducing mad studies and situating it in relation to heritage studies. Thereafter, mad reading as a method is introduced, and I explore this as a situated reading and in relation to the (im)material heritage that is expressed as a heritage connected to madness. I end by explaining two types of mad reading: reading sanism and mad leakages.

Mad studies

Mad studies is an interdisciplinary field that critically discusses how social and medical systems create mental illness (Stefan 2018, 2). It was coined as a field of studies in 2008 (Ingram 2016, 11) and was broadly recognised in relation to the anthology *Mad Matters: A Critical Reader in Canadian Mad Studies* (LeFrançois, Menzies, and Reaume 2013). However, it builds on a longer tradition of scholarship, theory and activism that focuses on the experience, history, heritage, cultures and politics of people who identify as mad, mentally ill, service users, consumers, patients, neurodiverse and/or disabled (Beresford 2020, 1337). Mad studies seeks to critically discuss how 'deviant' behaviours have been pathologized and silenced, and how some people continue to be marginalised in society (Menzies, LeFrançois, and Reaume 2013, 1, 13). Although mad studies as a field is fairly new, the critique is not. Anti-psychiatry has long been engaged in counter-theory building, discussing the ways that mental illness is dealt with in society. The difference is that the anti-psychiatry movement was driven by clinicians and professionals, whereas mad studies is informed by, and theorises from, the knowledges of people who have experiences with psychiatric services (Beresford 2022, 6; Costa and Ross 2023; Sweeney 2016). Nevertheless, mad studies is not exclusive and includes researchers who do not identify as mad and/or have no experiences of psychiatric care (Beresford 2022, 7; Costa and Ross 2023).

Mad studies seeks to illuminate the systemic and symbolic violence that has been inflicted on people diagnosed with mental illness in society (Menzies, LeFrançois, and Reaume 2013, 3). This includes investigating psychiatric care but also suggests exploring the role that cultural heritage plays in furthering sanism (Rodéhn 2020, 211). Sanism refers to the discrimination of people diagnosed with mental illness as/or neuropsychiatric variation as well as those that are seen as having 'different' social behaviours (LeFrançois, Menzies, and Reaume 2013, 337). The term sanism is here used not only to speak of outright discrimination against mad people but also as a term akin to ableism, which is defined as a process that rejects variations of being (Wolbring 2008, 253). Campbell further defines ableism as 'a network of beliefs, processes and practices that produces a particular kind of self and body (the corporal standard) that is projected as the perfect, species typical and therefore essential and fully human' (Campbell 2001, 44). Thus, sanism can in the simplest way be explained as a norm and as processes that are spatially and temporally conditioned, in which certain subjects are othered.

In mad studies, the term mental illness – an umbrella term used by psy-sciences and health services for psychiatric illnesses, mental disorders, ordinary mental ill-health problems and mild symptoms (Vilhelmsson 2014, 65) – is associated with biomedical terminology and considered as caught within a mental health paradigm (Beresford 2020, 1337). For this reason, mad studies scholars prefer the terms ‘mad’ and ‘madness’ when writing about people and their experiences (Menzies, LeFrançois, and Reaume 2013, 10). These two derogatory terms have been reclaimed by the mad movement as a way to redefine subject positions and identities. The use of these words signals an endeavour to transform the ways mental illness and people are talked about (LeFrançois, Menzies, and Reaume 2013, 337). Hence, the word mad is an alternative to mental illness and deviant social behaviour (Menzies, LeFrançois, and Reaume 2013, 10), and madness can be defined as:

A ubiquitous term for a range of phenomena (e.g., violence, extremity, creativity, excellence, chaos) historically used in the West to indicate irrationality, confusion, or distress in a situation or an individual (e.g., mania, melancholy, lunacy). Madness discourse was formulated into psycho-medical terms (e.g., psychosis, depression, asociality) and psycho-legal terms (e.g., insanity, incapacity), but has recently been reclaimed for broader social, cultural, even liberatory approaches to medicalized experience, especially by people treated involuntarily. Mad people (not the trope of madness per se) provide the grounds for these new discourses, often in tension with dominant explanations of experience. (LeFrançois, Menzies, and Reaume 2013, 337)

Mad studies scholar David Ingram pushes the definition of madness and, consequently, mad as a subject position further and writes that it is not necessary to define madness since ‘trying to pin madness as one thing is, I think, to miss the point: it is a million things’ (Ingram 2016, 15).

Nevertheless, the terms mad and madness have divided the field of mad studies. Beresford writes that some researchers and activists regard the words as positive, whereas others consider it to be too negative to reclaim and suggest that it will come to romanticise distress (Beresford 2020, 1338). Peter Beresford writes that the terminology has been considered offensive to some Black people and other minority groups in the Americas and Europe as well as to people in the Global South (Beresford 2022, 9). The words mad and madness have been considered blind to the ways that colonialism and other racial structures further ideas of colonial subjects as irrational, violent, slow-minded or biologically predetermined for madness – ideas that persist in society today and shape conditions for racialised mad subjects (Gilman 1985, 24–25, 162; Meerai, Abdillahi, and Poole 2016, 22; Beresford 2022, 9). In addition, the terminology has in parts been considered as a way of imposing ideas from the Global North upon subjects and situations (Beresford 2022, 9). Mindful of this critique and building on Ingram’s (2016) statement that madness is a million things I have decided to use the term ‘experiences of madness’ in an attempt to avoid assigning people identities. This emphasises that madness is something that people experience; it is not a static identity but a fluid situation that (some) people can move in and out of. Furthermore, the term emphasises that madness is an experience that varies from person to person, across time and space, and can take very different forms. In addition, I seek to acknowledge that experiences of madness can include someone experiencing another person’s madness, such as friends and relative. Occasionally, and as shorthand, I also use the term mad people for people having experienced psychiatrisation such as patients, ex-patients, service users and survivors.

It is a challenge to adapt mad studies to the field of critical heritage studies, as it was originally developed to address issues pertaining to psychiatric care and/or mad peoples’ life stories. Currently, there are discussions on the similarities between critical heritage studies and mad studies as well as how the two can be combined (Reaume 2022). Geoffrey Reaume explains that a mad studies perspective on heritage focuses on mad peoples’ histories and their perspectives on the world (Reaume 2022, 13–14). It is about service users regaining control of the past and a history that has been controlled by medical professionals (Beresford 2007). Annica Engström and Elisabeth Punzi (2022, 9) emphasise that a mad studies perspective on heritage is concerned with that which has been important for patients, ex-patients and survivors but also for people with psychiatric suffering who have never been in contact with psychiatric care. Cecilia Rodéhn extends this even further and writes that it concerns those who have

experienced madness, such as service users, and also those who have experienced madness second-hand, such as relatives (2022a, 90). It is argued that a mad studies perspective on heritage is a critical analysis of the histories that are being told about mad people in heritage spaces and an examination of the perspectives from which these stories are told (Beresford 2007; Punzi 2022; Reaume 2022; Rodéhn 2020). Furthermore, it is explained as a critique from below, from a mad perspective (Reaume 2022, 17) and a critical analysis of the conventional ways of doing heritage but also an ongoing discussion of how knowledge is produced (Rodéhn 2022a, 90). Developing this discussion further, I suggest that mad studies is a call to think about, produce and analyse heritage differently.

Mad methodology – mad reading

In order to develop mad studies as a methodology for critical heritage studies, I consider (dis)ability studies scholar Julie Avril Minich's (2016) and mad studies scholars Costa and Ross's (2023) discussions on what theories can do in practice. Building on this, I propose that mad studies is a methodology rather than a subject-oriented area of studies. Mad studies is not predominantly about studying mad people's conditions in heritage but how heritage can be approached from a mad studies lens. As a methodology, mad studies seeks to explore the cultural constructions of madness and examine the kinds of heritage that emerge when doing so. It is a shift of perspective from previous psy-sciences-influenced research to a mad-inclusive way of studying madness in heritage. In short, I develop mad reading as a tool for exploring heritage from a mad studies perspective.

Mad reading is a close reading of heritage that seeks to locate dominant discourses about madness. The method was first developed as a textual analysis tool for examining literary work by mad studies researcher and literary scholar PhebeAnn Wolframe (2014), and it has been further developed for game studies (Rodéhn 2022b). The method of 'reading' heritage is a familiar concept in heritage studies and has been used to discuss how (im)material heritage mediates discourses and/or narratives of power and politics (Smith 2006; Waterton, Smith, and Campbell 2006; Watson and Waterton 2010; Wu and Hou 2015). In heritage studies it is suggested that cultural heritage – here defined as a social and cultural process that takes on (im)material expressions (Smith 2006, 1–4) – can be read as texts (Watson and Waterton 2010, 85). A text is not just words on a paper but any heritage expressions or processes intended to be interpreted as a representation. Representations are considered as the production of meaning through language (Hall 2013, 1–4) and cultural heritage is a form of language or text that can be read as a discourse – expressions of politics and power (Smith 2006, 1–4; Watson and Waterton 2010, 85). In other words, heritage is a system of representation (Watson and Waterton 2010) that stands in for that which it seeks to represent (Hall 2013; Smith 2006, 4). Furthermore, discourses do something; they have effects (Smith 2006; Waterton, Smith, and Campbell 2006; Watson and Waterton 2010). Discussing mad reading as a method implies developing this approach in heritage studies further.

In the text that follows I develop mad studies as a methodology for heritage studies. The text can be read as a discussion but also as direction for how to conduct a mad reading of heritage. Under the heading 'A situated reading' I explain that it is first necessary to position oneself in relation to madness and to the object of study. Under the heading 'The ontological politics of heritage' I explore how the material that is chosen to be studied matters for what is considered heritage. In this section, I show how psy-sciences' discourses shape and delimit cultural heritage, and I offer mad studies as a shift of perspective. Under the heading 'Reading sanism' I explain mad reading as a tool to reveal how sanism operates in heritage and discuss different kinds of sanism in cultural expressions. Under the heading 'Mad leakage' I explain how mad reading seeks to turn the gaze around to explore madness in heritage contexts that are not immediately associated with it, and I explore this as a subversion of dominant ways of looking at heritage.

A situated reading

A mad reading begins with observing and describing what can be seen in terms of heritage. This can mean a range of ‘texts’ such as situations, milieus, documents, exhibitions, collections, objects, processes and/or performances. A mad reading is carried out through making detailed accounts of the material, which enables the researcher to locate discourses of madness that are then analysed. However, a mad reading of heritage does not happen after the (im)material heritage is observed and described; it takes place during the material collection process. Therefore, central to mad reading is the awareness of the position from where the researcher reads heritage. This is in keeping with what Donna Haraway (1988) calls ‘situated knowledges’, which deconstruct the seemingly objective god’s-eye view in science. This awareness has become central to heritage studies. Smith (2006) stresses that heritage is a gaze: heritage professionals learn how to see heritage, and that heritage comes into being through the gaze. Smith further suggests that the heritage gaze is imbued with power and knowledge but that cultural heritage often masks, or makes invisible, that there was a gaze in the first place (Smith 2006, 52–54). The heritage gaze often actively works to marginalise subaltern perspectives in heritage (Watson and Waterton 2010, 90), and heritage is habitually used in order to govern groups (Smith 2006, 52). As a method, mad reading recognises that observations and descriptions of heritage are always made from a position of power. Mad reading thus takes seriously the long history of staring at and objectifying mad people, something that is still in practice today in cultural heritage. The method further acknowledges that, in terms of madness, there exists a hierarchal relationship between the observer and the object of the gaze that shapes knowledge production in heritage studies.

A mad reading seeks to turn the gaze around. According to Wolframe, a mad reading entails ‘reading from the perspective of mad experience’ (2014, 12), and Sweeney suggests that people with experiences of madness and psychiatric care should be at the centre of knowledge production. She explains that studies on madness and mad people have been conducted in a context where scientists have abused their power for centuries (Sweeney 2016). Therefore, research needs to be conducted by those that identify as mad (Menzies, LeFrançois, and Reaume 2013). However, a mad identity is not a prerequisite. Wolframe writes that “‘sane’ individuals who have experienced neither madness nor psychiatrization could also learn to think and read from a mad perspective’ (Wolframe 2014, 3–4). Reading from the position of madness does not imply confessing or disclosing whether one has been diagnosed with mental illness (if one does not want to). It does not imply trying to act out madness or imagine that one is mad (Rodéhn 2022b). Instead, it is about adopting a critical perspective on normative discourses of madness. This entails reflecting on one’s situatedness and what definition of, and knowledge about, madness is used in the research. For instance, definitions and knowledge productions found within psy-sciences and mad studies are different and produce different kinds of result. To me, a mad reading is about situating the reading of heritage in relation to knowledges found within mad studies; this field offers a critical approach to madness. It is often, albeit not always, produced by researchers with experiences of madness.

In mad studies, the production of knowledge from a mad position has been discussed. For instance, Ingram (2016) writes that it is

a matter of sense or not to make sense, maybe that’s the question! Or maybe it is a matter of both making sense and not making sense, so that there can be a making sense at times and not making sense at other times, which collectively comprises Mad Studies. In short, could we perform making (non)sense together? (Ingram 2016, 14–15)

Ingram discusses what counts as science and knowledge and the fact that a knowing emanating from a person with experiences of madness may not count as rational and, therefore, not as knowledge. What Ingram’s statement implies is a production of what Foucault (1980, 81–82) calls ‘subjugated knowledges’, which can be understood as a set of knowledges that has been disqualified and therefore not acknowledged as contributing to the understanding of a subject matter. I propose that a mad studies’ situatedness and gaze on heritage entail bringing the

perspective of madness into heritage and enabling what Haraway (1988, 590) calls ‘connections and unexpected openings’. Thus, when I argue that madness is a position from where a reading of heritage can be undertaken, I suggest that mad reading is not only a situatedness, a place from where heritage is observed, described and analysed, but that it is also a situation where knowledge about heritage is produced. It is a place of subversion where knowledge about heritage is potentially produced differently. Yet, having said this, we must always remember Peter Beresford’s (2020, 1338) warning not to romanticise distress and Merri Lisa Johnson’s (2015) cautionary words about not to turn people’s suffering into academic resistance discourse, articulated from a university ivory tower.

The ontological politics of heritage

As argued above, mad reading stresses that the researchers’ situatedness and gaze on the (im) material heritage matters for what is (or is not) considered as the heritage connected to madness. Arguing this I build on the work of heritage scholars who propose that the heritage gaze constructs the idea of heritage (Smith 2006, 12, 53) and that it is therefore necessary to consider how the ontological politics of heritage come into being (Waterton and Watson 2015, 21–22) as well as acknowledge that heritage studies is ‘party to the cultural and political work that heritage does’ (Gentry and Smith 2019, 1149). It is important to recognise that heritage practitioners and scholars alike are constructing and delineating heritages’ ‘proper objects’ when working with heritage, or when doing research, and that this is an expression of power that has material affects (Rodéhn 2022c, 1002; Waterton and Watson 2015, 21–25). Thus, a central aspect of mad reading is what kind of (im)material heritage is considered as representing madness. Below, I will discuss what discourses it connects to as well as what heritage it creates.

In critical heritage research, the built environment and urban development of deinstitutionalised asylums and psychiatric hospitals is one area of studies. In these discussions, scholars explore how buildings have been abandoned, vandalised and subject to demolition. It is suggested that destruction is a strategy carried out by stakeholders in order to rid the landscape of any undesirable memories of psychiatric care (e.g. Franklin 2002; Moon, Kearns, and Joseph 2015; Weiner 2004). Others explore the challenges of adaptive re-use of such buildings during urban development and the negotiations between builders and heritage professionals (e.g. Osborne 2003; Gibbeson 2023). Accompanying these studies are discussions of street names as a heritage process (Rodéhn 2023). Many of these scholars arrive at the same conclusion as Kearns, Joseph and Moon: that the memory of patients and the history of institutions are often forgotten when the past is being remembered. In different ways, this prompts a ‘selective remembrance’ and ‘strategic forgetting’ of the institutions and the people living there (Joseph, Kearns, and Moon 2013, 140; Kearns, Joseph, and Moon 2010, 734; 2012, 180), which can be explained as the ‘tension between the retention of positive memories of the asylum and the simultaneous obscuring of more negative aspects of that past’ (Moon, Kearns, and Joseph 2015, 26). Having said this, it is important to note that researchers challenge Moon, Kearns and Joseph; for instance, Gibbeson (2020) shows how former staff members considered asylums as their homes and remember the areas with affection. Gibbeson (2023) also demonstrated how the built environment is valued as heritage during development processes, and Rodéhn (2023) shows multiple ways in which the patients and institutions are indeed remembered in former hospital areas. Nevertheless, these researchers have in common that they explain the heritage as difficult and thus implicitly also discuss tensions between what is remembered/forgotten due to the complicated pasts.

Cemeteries at former asylums and psychiatric hospitals are another aspect explored in cultural heritage research. Central to these discussions are how dead patients are often forgotten and how lack of memory signifies these spaces (e.g. Lihammer 2011; Sheppard-Simms 2016). Scholars particularly focus on issues of access to cemeteries and the care, preservation and conservation of these places (e.g. Fricks 2007; Harmon 2018; Moore 2019). These texts have in common that the

cemeteries are articulated as tangible reminders of the often-forgotten patients, and these scholars argue that the cemeteries must be better preserved so that people can be remembered.

The installation of monuments and commemorative plaques at former psychiatric hospital areas are other topics of investigation. Researchers discuss what and whose memory is being remembered at former psychiatric hospital areas (Moon, Kearns, and Joseph 2015, 87–130), and many researchers stress the need to erect monuments or plaques to commemorate former patients and their histories (Fricks 2007; Harmon 2018; Moore 2019). Researchers also suggest that commemorative plaques honour the history of patients who have often been marginalised in society (Reaume 2016). Commemorations are considered as a way to connect the past to the present and articulated as a means to combat prejudice (Reaume 2016, 2022). However, Flis and Wright observe that memorials often commemorate problematic pasts and patients' suffering (2011, 102, 112–113). They argue that the past is used for the political aspirations of 'psychiatric survivors' organisations' and 'senior figures of the psychiatric establishment' (Flis and Wright 2011, 102). Although memorialisations of patients result in constructing them as valuable members of society, patients are nevertheless positioned as victims (Flis and Wright 2011, 107).

Museums and their collections and exhibitions are another area of interest in scholarly communications. This includes discussions of collections and exhibitions of patients' artwork (e.g. Bergström 1988; McCollum 2017; Weller 2021) and other material culture such as medical instruments and everyday objects of the institutions (e.g. Andersson and O'Sullivan 2010, 146–147; Beresford 2007; Birdsall, Parry, and Tkaczyk 2015; Coleborne 2003, 2011; Ellis and Coleborne 2022; Lanz 2024; Obermark and Walter 2014; Punzi 2022; Rodéhn 2020). This research explains that many museums that collect and exhibit psychiatric heritage were founded by former staff members of psychiatric hospitals, and they tell the history predominantly from staff members' perspectives (e.g. Beresford 2007; Coleborne 2020, 30–31). Furthermore, museums are often located in former hospital buildings and established at the beginning of the deinstitutionalisation of hospitals (Coleborne 2003, 97–98; Lanz 2024, 1).

Articles exploring museum collections and exhibitions focus on the discussion of problematic narratives in medical history and how they are mediated in exhibitions or through collections (e.g. Birdsall, Parry, and Tkaczyk 2015, 53). For instance, it is argued that exhibitions tend to focus on treatments and instruments, which are used to mediate advances in medical care, resulting in that madness is often equated with medical technologies (Andersson and O'Sullivan 2010, 146–147). As a consequence, patients' experiences and histories are marginalised in cultural heritage (Beresford 2007; Punzi 2022; Rodéhn 2020). Furthermore, it is argued that collecting patients' art often becomes a 'treasure hunt' where 'trophy from contact with the abnormal' are returned to the normal realm (McCollum 2017, iv). Pathology is thus a precondition for these art collections, and pathology is also kept alive as a guarantee for the artworks' uniqueness (Weller 2021, 248). For this reason, researchers propose that collection activities and exhibitions must be produced ethically and in dialogue between service users and heritage practitioners, where asymmetric positions of power and privileges are recognised (Ellis and Coleborne 2022). Emphasising the centrality of mad people's experiences can assist in giving a voice to patients and question dominant narratives (Birdsall, Parry, and Tkaczyk 2015, 57–71), which can help to change the general public's perspectives on mental health (Obermark and Walter 2014, 60).

To summarise, heritage's 'proper objects' connected to madness are, in heritage research, explained as buildings and environments at psychiatric hospitals, memorials, cemeteries, medical or psychiatric museums and their collections and exhibitions, as well as art produced by patients. Building on Smith (2006, 54), who argues that heritage is constituted within the discourse that constructs it, I suggest that heritage's 'proper objects' are constructed in relation to psy-science discourses. This discourse shapes the ontology of heritage, which can be seen in that (im)material heritage is often preserved, collected and displayed by former staff members of psychiatric institutions to tell the history of psychiatry. It is further illustrated in that researchers look to the (im)material heritage of psychiatric care when discussing the heritage of experiences of madness. Even

when researchers have critical ambitions around deconstructing unequal power dimensions in heritage, they, too, are operating within psychiatric discourses. This is reflected in the kind of material that is chosen as the objects of study as well as that deinstitutionalisation – defined here as medical reform that resulted in the closure of psychiatric hospitals, and as a cultural revolution creating new narratives of mental health (Lanz 2024, 46) – prompted an interest into psychiatric heritage. Deinstitutionalisation indeed assisted in creating new narratives about mental health and aided critical perspectives in psychiatry, which also came to influence heritage research. This means that critical perspectives seen in heritage studies research are founded in deinstitutionalisation discourses, which are ironically also rooted in a psy-science discourse.

From a mad studies perspective – one that seeks to critique and oppose the biomedical model of madness as illness and diagnoses – it is problematic that psy-science discourses come to define cultural heritage. It essentialises experiences of madness, inextricably linking people with their diagnoses, and locks cultural heritage in the context of psychiatric care, even when creating new narratives. Seeing that psychiatric care has historically been associated with stigma and patients have been stigmatised, madness runs the risk of being locked in a position of otherness and deviance in heritage studies. I suggest, building on Smith's argument that heritage can be a tool of governance (Smith 2006, 52), that this is a form of ongoing subtle domination of a very diverse group of people who across time and space have experienced madness differently. In this case, domination is executed through the kind of material that is assigned heritage as well as what is selected to be studied as heritage in research. A mad reading thus emphasises a careful consideration of how the researcher gazes at heritage as well as the (im)material heritage that is chosen as the object of study so as to avoid further marginalisation of people.

Although almost all researchers referenced above discuss inequalities in terms of heritage and argue for inclusive representations of mad people, they tend to position mad people as marginalised and experiences of madness as forgotten histories. A mad reading acknowledges that the way heritage is viewed and the way that heritage is articulated is central to how heritage is understood. Although the researchers attempt to work affirmatively, the positioning nevertheless risks rendering heritage connected to experiences of madness as nothing more than the result of marginalisation and oppression. As a result, contesting marginalisation ironically risks reproducing marginalisation, the original object of critique. A mad reading seeks to address this by suggesting that psychiatric care contexts are *only one* aspect of heritage and that there are many other (im)material heritages to be viewed and studied as heritages connected to experiences of madness. The method stresses the importance of considering the choice of material and what is articulated about it in order to contest how sanism as a norm operates in cultural heritage.

Reading sanism

As explained above, mad reading is a close reading of heritage that sets out to explore the 'discursive conditions of madness' emergence' and identify the workings of normative sanist discourses and challenge them (Wolframe 2014, iii, 2, 237). How this reading is carried out depends on the material that is being studied, as there are differences between reading heritage milieus, collections, exhibitions, performances and writings. However, seeing heritage as representations – meaning-making practices – allows for mad reading to be a tool to explore how sanism as a norm operates in heritage. When exploring heritage, it is important to acknowledge that sanism takes many forms; Wolframe shows that madness is always intertwined with other social hierarchies and interlocking modes of oppressions such as sexism, racism, classism, ageism, ableism and transphobia (Wolframe 2014, 12). Therefore, fundamental to a mad reading is the investigation of how different social categories intersect in heritage expressions.

One central aspect of how the norms of sanism operate in heritage can be seen in the intersection of gender and madness. For instance, Lauren Obermark and Madaline Walter note that at a *Glore Psychiatric Museum* exhibition, patients were predominantly represented as women and doctors

were represented as sane and male. The researchers argue that such representation strengthens mad people's position of subordinations by adding a gender hierarchy to it (Obermark and Walter 2014, 67). In an examination of guided tours at a museum of medicine, Rodéhn shows that female patients and staff members were largely made invisible and that patients were predominantly represented as men. Patients were furthermore represented as being violent, dangerous and a challenge for the male staff. Rodéhn suggests that this worked to emphasise a dominant masculine position of staff members in order to explain their superiority (Rodéhn 2020, 206–208). In other heritage processes, such as in street naming at former psychiatric hospital areas, the intersection of gender and class matter for social memory, and Rodéhn shows that heritage is often represented through the image of the male patients from socially privileged groups in society, such as famous artists and poets. This works to exclude female patients as well as histories about male patients from other social groups (Rodéhn 2021). Explorations of gender and madness reveal how positions of subordinations are created and normalised in heritage.

Although gender is discussed, heteronormativity is not explored, which contributes to making nonheteronormative and trans* experiences largely invisible in heritage research on madness. Considering the long history of pathologizing and diagnosing nonheteronormative sexual expressions (such as homosexuality, polyamory and BDSM) and transgender people in psychiatric care, it is surprising that it is not more central to heritage expressions and heritage research.

Race and ethnicity are also vital to mad reading, as stereotypes of madness in cultural expressions are often conflated with that of race and ethnicity. For instance, there is a history of denoting Jewish and African American groups as predestined for madness (Gilman 1985, 24–25, 162). Black women have commonly been portrayed as lazy, slow-minded or angry and/or seductive in popular culture, characteristics that were also used to represent people diagnosed with mental illness (Mollow 2006). Black men have been portrayed as irrational, unpredictable, and violent, which also influenced decision about psychiatric care (Meerai, Abdillahi, and Poole 2016). Therí Alyce Pickens even goes as far as to argue that in cultural expressions, Blackness has historically been equated with madness, and Blackness also became a prerequisite for the social constructions of madness (2019, 4). The intertextuality between heritage and other cultural expressions such as novels, films and new media is central to a mad reading of heritage because, as Coleborne explains, the repressive representations in them often bleed into heritage (2011, 21).

Exploring the way that race and ethnicity intersect with madness is therefore vital to understanding the differential conditions of heritage. Cynthia Prater (2012), Allison Coke (2014) and Zosha Stuckey (2017) argue that cemeteries belonging to psychiatric asylums designated for indigenous groups and people of colour are more likely to be forgotten and subject to destruction than cemeteries where white psychiatrised people are interred. For instance, Stuckey (2017) notes how a cemetery in Crownsville (Maryland, USA) is now located on the same land as a sewage treatment plant and toxic sediment ponds, and Coke (2014) describes how a cemetery in Canton (South Dakota, USA) is now situated in the middle of a golf course. Stuckey (2017) argues for better preservation of these sites and writes that cemeteries exist 'not just to memorialize people who suffered and died under the Jim Crow medical-industrial complex, but also to force consideration of how the past is always a reflection on the present'. In her research, Stuckey makes explicit parallels between racial discrimination in the past and present and shows how this affects how heritage is preserved.

Mad leakage

A mad reading is not only about challenging sanist representations in heritage; it has a more affirmative agenda and entails maddening heritage. Maddening is Wolframe's terminology for discussing how sanism is neutralised in cultural expressions and how it results in that madness is often made invisible (Wolframe 2014, 143). A process of maddening heritage entails an active undertaking by the researcher, where they seek to place madness in the centre (of all kinds) of

heritage. This can be considered a destabilisation of dominant heritage discourses, a familiar concept in heritage studies. For instance, Smith suggests that heritage can be used in subversive and oppositional ways; it can be a means to challenge how heritage is constructed and acts in society (2006, 52).

As a method, mad reading works with the tension of what is visible and invisible in heritage. Above, I discuss the ontological politics of heritage, and I reveal that what is made visible as heritage is the (im)material culture of psychiatric care. I show that when psy-science discourses come to define *the* heritage of experiences of madness, it runs the risk of being marked as a heritage of the other, a heritage of subordination and oppression. Furthermore, when psychiatric care contexts are marked as *the* heritage, it immediately renders all other heritage contexts as unmarked and, by effect, as associated with sanity. This is an expression of what Dan Goodley calls the ‘violence of binarism’, explaining that the authority of the ‘dominant is imagined and maintained through the constant negotiation of the Other’ (Goodley 2014, 58). A mad reading encourages the researcher to interrogate the boundaries of mad/sane (Wolframe 2014, iii, 2, 237) and subvert them.

Reading heritage madly means turning the gaze away from psychiatric care contexts and instead turning it to all other heritage spaces in an attempt to madden it. Rodéhn (2022b) explains that this can be carried out by exploring ‘mad leakage’; she holds that all cultural expressions that appear normative or sane have cracks where madness seeps out. In order to explore mad leakages, it is necessary to shift the perspective away from psy-science’s definition of mental illness and instead work with mad studies’ definitions of madness. As explained above, LeFrançois, Menzies and Reaume suggest that madness can indeed mean psychiatrised experiences as well as violence, chaos, irrationality, confusion and distress, which are often seen in sanist representations, but there are also expressions of excellence and creativity in madness (LeFrançois, Menzies, and Reaume 2013, 137). More importantly, it can mean the ordinary and the mundane. This means that madness can appear everywhere, and as Ingram puts it, madness ‘is a million things’ (2016, 15). Turning the gaze away from psychiatric care does not mean that this context is unimportant for mad people. It means turning the investigation to other contexts that are important too. Other contexts can be homes, workplaces and religious spaces as well as many other places of heritage.

Exploring mad leakage puts emphasis on the ideas that context matters for the reading and that experiences of madness can appear in different ways, depending on the object of study. Therefore, experiences of madness are relationally produced in heritage. For example, in the context of the heritage of psychiatry, people with experiences of madness are represented as patients and as inextricably connected to diagnoses. However, if the gaze is turned to an industrial heritage, then it can mean employees having experiences of madness. The kind of heritage that mad people are allowed to exist in determines what role they are permitted to assume. In other words, are mad people only allowed to be patients and representations of diagnoses, or are they allowed roles such as factory workers, farmers, homemakers, maids, queens, fathers and soldiers? I suggest that madness is an unstable category that only appears as stable in certain heritage contexts. Focusing on mad leakages in heritage is a focus on how contexts create madness. This is a completely different investigation of heritage than one that beforehand decides on what madness is and seeks to examine and critically analyse it in, for instance, the psychiatric care context.

Exploring mad leakages in heritage suggests placing focus on describing the material and the way that experiences of madness appear. This does not entail looking for stories of deviant behaviours acted out by mad people in history. Connecting mad people to deviant behaviour is a common trope in cultural expressions, and upholding it is a process of othering, a way in which sanism as a norm is furthered. Instead, an exploration of mad leakages means seeking out histories that centre on experiences of madness and making it visible in heritage. Here, I am deliberately vague so as not to prescribe or create a frame for what should be found in heritage. Instead, I stress that the reading is a relationship between the text and the researcher, where heritage is created in the act of interpreting the material. A mad reading is a performance; it is

an active undertaking with and for heritage where the researcher not only searches for different meanings beyond the traditional, correct or officially sanctioned version of heritage, but also creates it.

Exploring mad leakages means looking beyond the surface of heritage and reading the hidden stories that leak out of the cracks of sanity. In this sense, mad leakage is not just where madness escapes its container and where it shows up. It is not just where sanity breaks and where madness breaks free. Mad leakage is the acknowledgement of an active and constant presence of experiences of madness in (all kinds of) heritage. A mad reading focusing on mad leakages recognises that heritage is soaked in madness and seeks to make it visible.

Concluding remarks

This paper has outlined mad studies as a methodology and developed mad reading as a method for heritage studies. This is a shift of perspective from psy-science-influenced research to a mad-centred way for studying cultural heritage, allowing for an open definition of madness, not limited to diagnoses and psychiatric labels. Mad reading puts emphasis on the situatedness of the researchers and their gaze on heritage. It further stresses the role of the object of study for how experiences of madness emerge in heritage. Mad reading thus holds the researcher responsible for the kind of heritage that is produced through research. Mad reading acknowledges that different heritage needs different approaches as well as different methods. For instance, a mad reading focusing on reading sanism, exploring dominant discourses on madness, is beneficial for exploring the heritage of psychiatric care. An exploration of mad leakages, focusing on contexts not immediately associated with madness, works best for other kinds of heritage spaces. In conclusion, mad methodology for cultural heritage studies seeks to deconstruct and resist oppressive regimes. It seeks to open up new possibilities for understanding madness in cultural heritage and in society at large.

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