

MADNESS IN THE MIDDLE AGES: AN EXAMINATION OF THE TREATMENT
OF THE MENTALLY ILL IN THE MEDIEVAL ERA BASED ON ORDER AND
GENDER

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the treatment of the mad in Europe during the Middle Ages. I read various primary and secondary sources in the course of my investigation. Several of the secondary sources used quotes from primary sources, so I used some of that evidence as well. My conclusions were that the treatment of the mad varied based on gender and estate. When someone from the third estate went mad, family members tried mostly religious cures, since those were the only resources available to them. When members of the second estate went mad, relatives, other members of the nobility, and the king stepped to either find a cure, or appoint a guardian to care for the mad and their land. If the landowner or monarch was a woman, it seems that people did not attempt to cure them in the same way that they tried for a man. When a member of the first estate went mad, it seems that their bishop would appoint a guardian to assist the mad man in his duties. It seems that no accusations of spiritual weakness were made. The treatment of the mad was certainly varied, but for the most part, the mad seem to have been treated well.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Madness is a flexible concept that means something different in various contexts. In order to understand properly how madness or insanity was defined in the Middle Ages, one must first understand what medieval people viewed as insanity and deviant behavior. This is a complex subject since Europe at the time was made up of several different kingdoms and principalities that changed quite frequently. Different regions had different cultures, which meant different cultural norms. What was normal and acceptable in one place may not have been in another. For the purpose of this thesis, madness will be defined broadly as any behavior that was understood as being abnormal, but carried out without the person's awareness of his or her abnormality. The people who knew the mad person knew that he or she was not actually normal, but the mad people themselves did not know they were not "normal." For the purpose of this thesis, if someone was recorded as being "mad", which they often were, that means that they were mad. The word "furiosus," which translates to mad, seems to be the word most often used by medieval contemporaries to describe people acting out of the norm.

How were those who went mad in the Middle Ages treated? Here treatment refers to any medical or spiritual resources used in order to heal the mad person. Treatment also means how those close to the mad people handled them in their day-to-day life. One possible treatment was spiritual-as mad people were sometimes viewed as being possessed by the devil. Medical treatments were also likely, but those were mostly reserved for the rich and powerful. As will be seen, treatment varied according to time and location.

Europe in the Middle Ages was united under the Catholic Church, which influenced many aspects of life. One aspect was how the mad were viewed, in spiritual terms. For many years historians, such as Gregory Zilboorg in *History of Medical Psychology*, wrote about and emphasized cases in which madness was attributed to demonic causes in the Middle Ages and neglected to discuss the many cases where the mad were treated like sick people who needed help. These historians claimed that priests perceived the mad as being spiritually weak and exorcism as the first course of action. However, that view began to change in the 1970s with a renewed focus on evidence that showed that the mad were treated with care in many instances.¹ In fact, the Church in the Middle Ages was more concerned with helping those who were mad and curing them of their madness. This cure could come from medicine or miracles; the Church was not too concerned. Several cases will show that both medical and divine help were sought in hopes of curing a mad person. It was only in the early modern era that the church leadership became more concerned about the possible spiritual causes of madness, including witchcraft.

As will be seen, the mad could be handled in a wide variety of ways, most of which attempted to help them recover and return to their senses. In most cases, especially among peasants, the mad were simply let be. However this was not always the case. In this thesis, I will consider the experience of the mad in each of the traditional “orders” of medieval society: the first, the clergy; the second, the nobility and the monarch; the third, the remaining people. I will also examine how the gender of the individual affected his or her treatment. In the case of the third order, the majority of the members of society, the

¹ Richard Neugebauer, “Medieval and Early Modern Theories of Mental Illness,” *Arch Gen Psychiatry* 36 (1979): 477-478.

mad were cared for by their families as long as they were not a danger to themselves or others. Their families might take them to shrines of saints or to doctors in hopes of having them cured, but not always. They often were free to wander or beg, but sometimes this freedom to wander concerned the people of their town. In the case of the second order, the nobility and royalty, the problem of madness became more complex, since those people had major responsibilities. It is in these cases that the law became involved. The mad were placed under a guardian, but that often caused issues over who had the right to take care of the person and their land, since being a guardian could be very profitable. Of course, if the monarch went mad, the whole land suffered from lack of decisive leadership, as seen in the cases of Charles VI of France, Henry VI of England, and Joanna of Castile. For Henry VI and Charles VI, almost everyone wanted them to be restored to sanity, so a variety of cures were sought. However, Joanna did not have very many people seeking to cure her, since she was a woman and therefore not essential to ruling. The first order was the clergy and they had little written about them when they went mad. However, it appears that the bishop or archbishop would appoint a guardian over them. This guardian was to protect the mad clergyman from being taken advantage of and to protect his church from being robbed.

The bulk of this thesis will be spent considering what happened when the nobles and monarchs went mad, for the simple reason that they have the most written about them. They were very prominent and visible, so their madness did not easily go unnoticed. The first order was the clergy and they have little written about them when they went mad. However, it appears that the bishop or archbishop would appoint a guardian over them, in a similar manner to the nobility. This guardian was to protect the

mad clergyman from being taken advantage of and to protect his church from being robbed. It is not clear if the lack of sources on them is from records not surviving, their illness not being recorded, or simply a lower frequency of madness among the clergy. The treatment of the mad is not a simple issue that has a simple answer.

Background

The place of the mentally ill in society is a perennial concern. From simply being viewed as cursed by ancient gods and goddesses, to being treated in Muslim hospitals, to being hunted as witches, the treatment of the mentally ill has changed with the time and culture. Some societies mostly left the mentally ill alone, while others tried to cure them, often through drastic measures. Whatever the treatment, people always acknowledged that the mentally ill were not “normal,” whatever normal meant at the time, and that the ill needed to be dealt with in some way. How different societies dealt with the mentally ill gives a glimpse into what the individuals in that society thought about God, medicine, and social order. Each era is really much more complicated than discussed below, where broad conclusions had to be drawn for the sake of simplicity. However, these generalizations give an overview of the dominant mindset and the main ways that the mad were treated and viewed. They help to establish where the Middle Ages falls in history and show the many ways that madness has been viewed, and how some views have not changed drastically.

This background will focus primarily on Western traditions. Some of the first mentions of madness came from the Hebrew Bible. In the Hebrew worldview, being mad was seen as a curse from God, which only God could cure. In the Hebrew Scriptures, two kings are struck mad for disobeying God. Both Saul and Nebuchadnezzar angered God

and therefore were punished with madness. Saul was possessed by an evil spirit, which caused rapid shifts in mood, leading him to attempt to kill his son and heir Jonathan.² Even though Saul repented, it was too late and God did not cure him of his madness. Nebuchadnezzar acted like a wild animal, eating grass and letting his hair and nails grow “like birds’ claws.”³ Later, when he repented of his sin, he was restored to former glory and regained his sanity.

For the ancient Greeks, madness was also seen as coming from the gods, typically because the humans had displeased them. The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* contain several references to the various members of the Greek pantheon causing men to go mad, either in the heat of battle or because they were standing in the way of the hero.⁴ Later in Greek history, physicians such as Hippocrates and Galen attempted to name and categorize mental disturbances in people. They named epilepsy, mania, and melancholia, and attributed them to bodily causes such as a humoral imbalance.⁵ Hippocrates also coined the term hysteria, which was seen as an exclusively feminine problem, caused by a wandering womb. He believed women were more prone to mental illness because their bodies were more easily disturbed by small changes.⁶ While these men’s theories of mental illness might not be correct, they were attempting to find a medical reason, not a religious one, for madness. Many of these ideas were lost in Western Europe after the fall of Rome but survived in the Muslim Middle East, where they were expanded into more elaborate theories on mental illness.

² Andrew Scull, *Madness in Civilization* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 16-18.

³ Scull, *Madness in Civilization*, 19

⁴ Scull, *Madness in Civilization*, 21.

⁵ Scull, *Madness in Civilization*, 27-28.

⁶ Scull, *Madness in Civilization*, 29.

While Western Europe lost the ancient Greek and Roman medical traditions, the Muslims were rediscovering and later adding to them. Ibn Sina, known in the West as Avicenna, was perhaps the most famous Muslim physician. He wrote the *Canon of Medicine*, which was translated into Latin and widely read in Europe. In it, Ibn Sina compiled as much medical knowledge as he could find and sorted this knowledge into different diseases, including mental diseases.⁷ In keeping with this medical approach, Muslims also established hospitals that included wards for the mad. Some of the treatments included being beaten, receiving baths, and taking drugs, including opium.⁸ Other treatments included “music, dance, and reading of marvelous stories.” A physician oversaw all of these treatments and he would decide when a patient was cured enough to return to his or her life.⁹ Of course not everybody had access to these hospitals and the medical treatment offered there. Most Muslims in the countryside believed in possession by demons, and they sought religious healing when confronted with the demons. However, since Muhammad never performed miracles, such as casting out demons, as Jesus did, exorcisms never gained the popularity in the Muslim world like they did in Christian Europe.¹⁰ In the Muslim world, most doctors and other educated men saw madness as another disease to cure, no different from an illness of the body. They drew from Greek and Roman medical texts for this interpretation. However, their influence was limited to the literate, who were in the minority of the population at large. The

⁷ Scull, *Madness in Civilization*, 55.

⁸ Scull, *Madness in Civilization*, 65-66.

⁹ Michel Foucault, *History of Madness*, trans. Jonathan Murphy and Jean Khalifa (London: Routledge, 2006), 117.

¹⁰ Scull, *Madness in Civilization*, 68.

medical view of mental illness was growing stronger, but it was still overshadowed by the religious approaches that were dominant in the majority of the Muslim people.

The era immediately following the Middle Ages the Early Modern Period. It was a time of great learning, but also witch hunts. In this period, many people, including natural philosophers and priests, believed that Satan and demons were ever present, trying to tempt and bewitch the believers.¹¹ An accusation of being in league with the devil could be used as a weapon against enemies. For example, when the Reformation started, Protestants accused the Pope of being the Anti-Christ who based his power on Satan. In return, many from the Catholic Church accused the reformers of being agents of Satan, trying to shake the faithful.¹² In this worldview, it is no wonder that most people attributed madness, something that they could not easily explain, to the work of the devil. However, mental illness did not always have a negative stigma. Melancholia, what modern people would call depression, became a somewhat fashionable disease, after many Renaissance scholars discovered descriptions among the texts of Avicenna and Galen. People with melancholia possessed little to no energy and would act in a very unemotional manner. Physicians at the time wrote about possible causes for this disorder, including black bile, burned yellow bile, the brain, the bowels, and a dry and hot temperament.¹³ Obviously there was no conclusive cause identified for this disease, but doctors did attribute it to physical problems within the body, not to possession or witchcraft. Many scholars thought that “the scholar and man of genius were particularly

¹¹ Scull, *Madness in Civilization*, 88.

¹² Scull, *Madness in Civilization*, 88-89.

¹³ Scull, *Madness in Civilization*, 91.

prone” to developing melancholia.¹⁴ Therefore, many learned men wrote about it, since it was seen as being one of the trials of being wise. Even though melancholia would seem to be madness, it specifically was not seen as necessarily being a bad thing. Treatments included changes in diet, exercise, bleedings, and avoiding anything that would cause one to become passionate. However, many doctors recommended prayers as well as more medical cures.¹⁵ Even though these doctors thought that melancholia came from the body, they also thought that prayers were necessary for the cure to work. God was still prevalent in this worldview, but medical cures were gaining dominance.

In the seventeenth century, a new sort of treatment for the mad began to emerge which was much more secular and institutional than previous treatments had been. Increasingly the mad, as well as the poor and unemployed, were removed from the streets, and confined in madhouses. Some of the first of these institutions were in the United Provinces, known today as the Netherlands, and they were funded by city-hosted lotteries. Many towns, growing rapidly as a result of trade, needed or wanted a way to rid themselves of people they thought were idle beggars. Townspeople thought that they could build houses for the mad, and teach them to work, so that the mad might serve society.¹⁶ The Catholic absolute monarchies of this era, France being the best example, also wanted to move the mad off the streets, but for a different reason. The monarchies viewed the mad as a threat to the proper social order, with the king in absolute control on top. They did not want to risk a mad person stirring up the crowds and causing chaos. Royal governments created publicly funded madhouses to care for all members of society

¹⁴ Scull, *Madness in Civilization*, 92.

¹⁵ Scull, *Madness in Civilization*, 94-95.

¹⁶ Scull, *Madness in Civilization*, 123.

who were deemed disruptive to the social order.¹⁷ England, too, began creating madhouses but English madhouses were private and for profit. Perhaps the most famous of these madhouses was Bethlehem Hospital in London, better known as Bedlam.¹⁸ The wealthy often did not want to bear the burden of caring for a mad relative, so madhouses provided a convenient way to dispose of this burden.¹⁹ It was hoped that mad houses would be able to reform their occupants using moral teachings. Since it was believed that good order followed virtue, the mad were taught moral principles in order to bring them back into the confines of society.²⁰ People at the time believed that they could cure insanity using moral teaching, instead of medical or religious intervention. Of course, this moral teaching was rooted in the Bible, but priests and other members of the clergy were not the majority of the people ministering to the mad.²¹ At the same time as the mad were being taught how to be upstanding members of society, they also became a sort of amusement for the rich. Members of the top social class toured the madhouses, read books about madhouses and view paintings depicting these houses and their occupants.²² The mad were seen as a source of comedy, as long as they remained locked away from the normal members of society, since they were a stark reminder that morality could not cure everything. The rich might enjoy using them for amusement, but they did not want to interact with them or have them in their homes. Social order had to be maintained, and the mad only served to disrupt it. Therefore, society demanded that they be locked up, out

¹⁷ Scull, *Madness in Civilization*, 125.

¹⁸ Michael MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam: Madness, Anxiety, and Healing in Seventeenth Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 4.

¹⁹ Scull, *Madness in Civilization*, 129.

²⁰ Foucault, *History of Madness*, 76.

²¹ Foucault, *History of Madness*, 51.

²² Scull, *Madness in Civilization*, 129.

of sight and out of mind. The doctors at the asylums became known as “responsible guardians of the mad.”²³ This was a continuation of the medieval British idea of the king being a guardian or appointing one for the mad. The mindset of the mad needing a caretaker had not changed, only the execution of it. This medieval concept was important in the historical development in how the mad were treated.

The end of the eighteenth century and beginning of the nineteenth brought a shift in thinking about the mad. It was thought that madness was a result of civilization. As civilization became more advanced, more and more people would go mad, since life was becoming faster paced and less stable. Societal progression meant moving away from the traditional order that included God and king.²⁴ The French and American Revolutions showed a blatant shift away from the time-honored tradition of a divinely ordained monarch to a rule governed by the people for the people. It was thought that all of this change strained the constitutions of people. Those who were already weaker were supposedly those who went mad. At the same time, faith in asylums was waning, as they failed to cure people. The plan of teaching the moral benefits of hard work did not serve to cure the mad. Instead, the mad seemed to lose all will to live, sitting around like “living corpses.”²⁵ It was also discovered that in many madhouses, people had been chained to the wall or to their beds. One woman, when permitted to walk around, had an iron bar between her ankles to restrict movement. These restraints were most likely meant to protect the mad from harming themselves or others if they had a fit or became violent.

²³ Scull, *Madness in Civilization*, 218.

²⁴ Scull, *Madness in Civilization*, 224.

²⁵ Scull, *Madness in Civilization*, 229.

But people later viewed this treatment as cruel and inhuman and demanded a change.²⁶ The rise of psychiatrists in the middle of the nineteenth century meant a change in the treatment of the mentally ill. Psychiatrists built institutions designed to house the mentally ill and hopefully cure them. They called these institutions mental hospitals, to differentiate them from the failed asylums of years past. Psychiatrists were not highly thought of in the medical community, carrying the same stigma that their mentally ill patients did.²⁷ However, they attempted to use medicine to cure the mad. Most of the early psychiatrists lived in Germany, where they attempted to find the root cause of madness. They used many of the same techniques as physicians in finding the root cause of a somatic disease.²⁸ Their work caused psychiatry to be viewed as a legitimate science, leading to its position in today's medical world. The place of the mentally ill had traveled the full arch from being people cursed by God to being simply ill and in need of help.

The Middle Ages occupies an interesting place in the history of the mad in society. Predating the medieval period were both the belief the mad were cursed by God and the medical theories developed by Greek and Roman doctors. After the Middle Ages, ideas about demonology and witchcraft affected the understanding of madness. Consequently in the Middle Ages, people were treated a variety of ways. Seeking a cure from a doctor was seen as a perfectly legitimate approach, but so was going to a priest for an exorcism. If these approaches failed, whispers of witchcraft could potentially start circulating, as seen when Charles VI went mad. All of these answers to the issues of madness will be seen below in the lives of vicars, kings, queens, knights, and peasants.

²⁶ Foucault, *History of Madness*, 146-147.

²⁷ Scull, *Madness in Civilization*, 260.

²⁸ Scull, *Madness in Civilization*, 262.

There was no one size fits all approach to madness. Instead, each case was handled individually, based heavily on the person 's place in society. Their order and to an extent, their gender, determined how necessary it was for them to be sane and a fully functioning member of society. The higher up the social ladder people were, the more important it was for them to be able to carry out their duties and the less replaceable they were. The higher the stakes, the harder those around the mad worked to find a cure for them.

Legality

In order to understand how the mad were treated, it is useful to have a definition of what people of the time thought of them and what made them mad. An example from thirteenth-century England exists in the legal document, the *Prerogativa Regis*. Legally, a distinction between “natural fools” and “*non compos mentis*” was made in the *Prerogativa Regis*. This law established a precedent for the crown possessing the right to protect the land and person of the mentally disabled.²⁹ The “natural fools” were the people who had been mentally disabled from birth and therefore were not responsible for making any decisions. In those cases, the king took custody of the lands, or appointed a non-inheriting guardian who could care for the fool and the land, and then give the lands to the heir when the natural fool died. The *non compos mentis* were the people who suddenly went mad, later in life.³⁰ The law made provisions for them in case they regained their reason, showing that people did in fact believe that there was a chance that people could recover from madness. But as in the case of the natural fool, the king gained custody of the land or appointed a guardian to manage property in the meantime.

²⁹ Neugebauer, “Theories,” 479.

³⁰ King George III, *The Statutes of the Realm, Volume I* (London: Dawsons of Pall Mall, 1810), 226.

The *Prerogativa Regis* came into play when people with property went mad and their land had to be governed. The law was in place to protect the mad men or women from opportunistic relatives who might abuse or kill them in hopes of gaining the land.³¹ However, the crown could profit from the estates of the natural fools when they were under the care of the king. The king could collect rents and profits in order to boost his revenue. Since the mad were never expected to recover, it seemed that the general idea was that they did not need the money so the king was at liberty to keep it for his own benefit. The land would go to the heir when the mad person died. In the case of the *non compos mentis*, the king did not keep any money that was gained during the time in which that man or woman was mad. The king protected the estate and the person but all the profits went back to the non compos mentis for their use on the occasion of their hopeful recovery.³² This was the theory of the law. In practice, the king almost always appoint another person to serve as direct supervisor over the mad person.³³ Of course, the king always had the right to remove a certain person from the position of guardian as necessary. Any money that was earned from the land of a natural fool was be split between the king and the guardian, with the guardian getting a stipend and the king getting the rest, so the guardian had a vested interest in keeping the estate running

³¹ Wendy Turner, "Town and Country: A Comparison of the Treatment of the Mentally Disabled in Late Medieval English Common Law and Chartered Borough," in *Madness in Medieval Law and Custom*, ed. Wendy Turner, (Boston: Brill, 2010), 21.

³² Neugebauer, "Theories," 479.

³³ Neugebauer, "Theories," 479.

smoothly.³⁴ The practice did not always go as smoothly as the law required, but it seems that England had a clear legal code for dealing with mad property owners.

In the case of how people were judged to be mentally incompetent, once again, England seems to have the best established legal code. The Court of Wards was set up to test a person's alleged mental incompetence. This was to ensure that a person was actually mad and a relative or heir was not trying to say they were in order to inherit property. A jury of at least twelve men, sometimes more, was established and government officials questioned the alleged mad person in front of that jury. The person was asked questions such as how many days were in the week, who were their parents, if they were married or had children, and basic monetary questions like how many shillings in a pence.³⁵ The jury was seeking to learn if the person would be able to handle every day interactions and make judgment calls appropriate to their station in life. If they found a person to be insane, then the local royal official would report it to the king, and the king would handle the case as he saw fit. Importantly, the jury would also seek to learn how long the person had been mad, in order to distinguish between the natural fool and *non compos mentis*. As seen above, this distinction was important for the king, since it designated if he would earn any money from the mad person. It seems that the local officials were more eager to label someone a natural fool, since that meant more money and control for the king.³⁶ The case evidence that exists shows a disproportionate number

³⁴Wendy Turner, "Silent Testimony: Emotional Displays and Lapses in Memory as Indicators of Mental Instability in Medieval English Investigations," in *Madness in Medieval Law and Custom*, ed. Wendy Turner, (Boston: Brill, 2010), 85.

³⁵ Richard Neugebauer, "Mental Handicap in Medieval and Early Modern England," in *From Idiocy to Mental Deficiency: Historical Perspectives on People with Learning Disabilities*, ed. David Wright and Anne Digby (London: Routledge, 1996), 28-29.

³⁶ Neugebauer, "Mental Handicap," 32.

of cases assigned as being from birth rather than arising spontaneously. Other records show people being labeled as natural fools, when it could be reasonably argued that they fell more under the category of *non compos mentis*. For the periods 1301-1392 and 1485-1540, roughly eighty percent of all cases were judged to be cases of natural fools. The cases that survive indicates that this percentage of natural fools is unlikely. More likely, the crown wished for more revenue and thus people who became mad later in life were judged to be insane from birth.³⁷ Even though the king was supposed to be helping and protecting those under his rule, he was not above using the law for his monetary benefit. However, it seems that while the king did want monetary profit, he also tried to protect the land, as will be seen in the section on the second order.

Three Orders

The three orders were a common way to divide medieval society in both France and England. Two different medieval writers wrote about this division of individuals by their societal roles. The first, Adalbero of Laon, wrote at the end of the tenth century, “Here below, some pray, others fight, still others work.” Later, in the beginning of the eleventh century, Gerard of Cambrai, wrote, “from the beginning, mankind has been divided into three parts, among men of prayer, farmers, and men of war.”³⁸ The idea of strict rules governing which of three divisions one was born into was not a new idea or at least medieval writers did not think that it was a new one. In a world where upward mobility was rare and sons and daughters typically did the same work as their parents, one stayed in the order one was born into. The exception to this rule was when members

³⁷ Neugebauer, “Mental Handicap,” 32.

³⁸ Georges Duby, *The Three Orders: Feudal Society Imagined*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 13.

of the second and third orders would enter the first order when they became priest or nuns. Members of the second order, the nobility, tended to fill the positions of bishops, archbishops, or abbots, while the lower class members of the third order were more likely to become simple country rectors, vicars, or monks. Thus when entering church service, people were limited by the order that they were born into.

The idea of the three orders is a useful tool for analyzing madness in different social strata.³⁹ These orders had different responsibilities that required different levels of mental thought. These different responsibilities affected how a person who went mad was treated. If he or she could not carry out their duties, then those around them were concerned and tried to cure them. If they could do what they needed to, then no one really cared what sort of mental state they were in, as long as they were not a danger to themselves or others.

The third order was by far the most plentiful in number compared to the other two. The majority of the population was not noble or involved in the church and these non-elites were all lumped together in one group. However, this order was divided into those who inhabited larger towns and those who lived in the country villages. The townspeople were more independent since they often obtained “charters of liberty” which gave them the right to pay a fixed annual rent for their homes and pass them on to heirs, among other things. Not all towns were given the exact same rights by the king, but they all had the two listed above.⁴⁰ Importantly, they had to be given this right by the king; they could not independently assume it. Towns also had guilds, which gave their

³⁹ Julian Goodare, “Estates in the Scottish Parliament, 1286-1707,” *Parliamentary History* 15 (1996), 13.

⁴⁰ Arnold, *A Social History of England*, 381.

members almost a complete monopoly on the production of certain goods in town. Since many members of the larger towns had more rights than those in villages, madness was seen as being more problematic there. Additionally, larger towns seemed to have a lower tolerance for the mad than smaller villages, as will be seen in how the citizens of Frankfurt treated their mad.

Villagers in the countryside possessed far less freedom than their town counterparts. They had to obtain the lord's permission to leave the land, and their land and possessions technically belonged to the lord.⁴¹ Their primary purpose was to work the land so that members of the first and second order would have food. Georges Duby writes, "Toil was the common fate of all men who were neither warriors nor priests."⁴² Life for village peasants was very heavily focused on God and the church, since they had no other distractions. On Sunday and holy days, they would go to church, and listen to a sermon in Latin, which they could not understand. There might be paintings on the wall showing Biblical scenes, especially the Last Judgment.⁴³ Hallowe'en and All Saints Day were both connected with witchcraft and bonfires would be lit to keep spirits and demons away.⁴⁴ Peasants were very concerned with the supernatural. They worked all day and needed some sort of assurance that they would be rewarded for their work. However, the benefit to being a peasant was that not many people were concerned about what one did. Since not much mental thought was required in order to do their duties, there was much more allowance for any madness, more than was given to members of the other orders. Peasants also sought more religious-based cures since that was all they really had. They

⁴¹ Arnold, *A Social History of England*, 393.

⁴² Duby, *The Three Orders*, 159.

⁴³ Arnold, *A Social History of England*, 400.

⁴⁴ Arnold, *A Social History of England*, 401.

did not have access to doctors in the way that those in the other two orders did. Religion was central to their lives, so they went to the only help they knew; God and Mary and the Saints.

The second order was composed of the nobility and the monarch, those who fought. Knights were expected to follow a strict code of chivalry, protecting those who needed help, such as widows and orphans, and defending the church against unbelievers.⁴⁵ Ladies were expected to be chaste and run their households well. The idealized version of courtly life shows how the second order was expected to act. Noble men were supposed to be kind, but brave and fierce in battle. Noble women were expected to behave in a quiet, virtuous manner, and manage their households well. One of the second order's most important roles was to protect the first order, the church. Since the churchmen were not armed, they had to trust the king or local ruler to support them and their teachings. Of course this perfect harmony was not always kept and often the king and pope, or archbishop, would disagree.⁴⁶

When members of the second order went mad, obviously they could not fulfill their role in society, which included protecting the church. This could have grave consequences. The breakdown in papal-monarchical relations can be seen in the case of Charles VI, which will be discussed later. A favorite activity of the second order was hunting, a right that only they possessed. Hunting was supposed to keep men healthy and reverse the effects from over eating or drinking, something the second order was fond of.⁴⁷ As will be seen later in this thesis, hunting was given as a cure for King Charles VI's

⁴⁵ Arnold, *A Social History of England*, 363.

⁴⁶ Duby, *The Three Orders*, 127-128.

⁴⁷ Arnold, *A Social History of England*, 378.

madness, since it was supposed to calm his nerves. Overall, the nobility was supposed to keep order and rule their lands wisely. Since madness would have prevented this, cures were urgently sought when a member of the second order went mad.

The first order, those who prayed, was composed of the churchmen. By and large, this order was mostly composed of men, though there were some women who were nuns. A big shift in the church during the Middle Ages was the scholastic tradition of learning. Previously the only place to get an education was monastic schools, but that changed in the 12th century when cathedral and private schools opened up. The teachers were still “licensed by the church authorities” and taught theology, but they also incorporated the teachings of Plato and Aristotle, pagan philosophers.⁴⁸ This shift to a more secular style of learning is important to the study of madness, since it meant that people were more open to medicine based cures, along with prayers of course, instead of relying solely on religion.

⁴⁸ Arnold, *A Social History of England*, 350-351.

Chapter 2: Third Order, Those who Work

The Third Order was comprised of the peasants and everyone who was not in the clergy or nobility. Quite often, when members of the third order went mad, few really cared since they generally did not own property or had a position that required a high level of responsibility. The general rule seems to be that a person would be given a guardian if their mental abilities prohibited them from fulfilling their duties. Wendy Turner writes, “the duties for a farmer or a merchant were considered to be far less than those of a knight or baron and, therefore, the mental capacities of a person in a more important position in society would be considered differently.”⁴⁹ Since most peasants did not have jobs or duties that required a high level of mental competence, they were given more leeway in terms of forgetfulness that would not be given to members of other orders with more responsibility. With this logic, most peasants were not given a guardian to help them with their duties in life. However, peasants could be appointed a guardian if they proved to be a danger to themselves or others. There were a few cases of peasants needing guardians after they hurt themselves or another, and there were also cases of people killing their guardians in their madness.

The least evidence remains about what specifically happened to peasants when they went mad, since not many people wrote about them. However, there is some evidence based on individual cases, enough to draw broad conclusions. Most of the evidence comes from collections of miracles that saints performed. Since the successful cures were the ones recorded, the Third Order might at first appear to have had the highest rate of recovery from madness. This is skewed, however, since the cases the

⁴⁹ Turner, “Silent Testimony,” 86.

saints failed to heal were not recorded, and we cannot know about the many cases of mad people who did not go to a saint in the first place.

A collection of miracles written around 1500 and ascribed to King Henry VI provides a rich source of stories of cured mad people. After his death, Henry VI (1421-1471) was informally revered as a saint to whom people in England specifically would pray to, in hopes of a cure for madness. When Henry VI's descendent, Henry VII, came to the throne in 1485, Henry VII wanted to gain power and legitimacy for his rule, so he started the canonization proceedings for the mad king.⁵⁰ Part of Henry VII's efforts included having someone record the miracles that were attributed to his ancestor. Not all of the miracles recorded were related to madness; in fact only a small minority were. However, these few cases do offer a glimpse into the lives of the members of the third order who went mad. There are some similarities and differences between them all, allowing a small amount of generalization about causes and treatments. Though the author of this collection is unknown, the stories are a rich source of knowledge about the lives and treatment of peasants who went mad.

The collection of miracles provides examples of people who were cured of madness, but what about the people who were not cured? There are some records of how the people of Frankfurt in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries handled the mad who were not cured. The *Rechenbucher of Frankfurt*, a collection of chronicles, shows how people in Frankfurt and surrounding villages dealt with the mad in their midst who became a problem. These people were not treated as well as formerly mad people

⁵⁰ Lee Ann Craig, "The Spirit of Madness: Uncertainty, Diagnosis, and the Restoration of Sanity in the Miracles of Henry VI," *Journal of Medieval Religious Cultures* 39 (2013): 66-67.

who were cured, since they were viewed primarily as pests that needed to be dealt with, rather than people who needed help.

Since the church was very important to most people of the third order, and it was often the first place they turned when dealing with any crisis, including madness, its views should be discussed first. In the Middle Ages, demon possession was a real threat. It was believed that people could be possessed by demons by no fault of their own. This view of demon possession came from the Bible, with its many examples ranging from Saul in the Old Testament, to Jesus casting out demons.⁵¹ As will be seen below, demon possession was not the only reason people were thought to go mad, but it was a cause that most people would automatically assume, unless proved wrong. However, once most people decided that demon possession was not the cause, they did not necessarily think that God was punishing someone for their sin. Several texts indicate that the mad was a moral and upstanding person.⁵² Madness was not necessarily a sign of being an immoral person and demon possession did not make one a bad Christian. While demon possession was seen as being a possible cause of madness, the mad person was not punished for that possession, since the Church did not see it as being his or her fault.

It seems that in some cases, peasants sought divine help in curing their madness or the madness of their relatives. Since it was the Middle Ages, saints were the most popular source of help from God. Many saints were reported to have helped the mad, but Saint Dymphna of Gheel was best known for curing lunatics and mad people. Saint Dymphna died near a chapel devoted to Saint Martin in Gheel in the seventh century and

⁵¹ Kempe, "Modern Myth and Medieval Madness," 3-4.

⁵² Jerome Kroll and Bernard Bachrach, "Sin and Mental Illness in the Middle Ages," *Psychological Medicine* 14 (1984): 510.

people would send mad relatives there for healing. Eventually, in the thirteenth century, a church was dedicated to her near where she died, and that is where her relics were held.⁵³ Above the altar in this church was a statue of her begging for mercy for several mad people around her feet.⁵⁴ The peasants in the area cared for the mad who were sent there in their own homes, putting them to work until they recovered. The town had doctors who would check in and supervise the care of the patients. Every year on May 15, Saint Dymphna's relics were carried out in public. The mad along with their friends and relatives would crawl around the relics, praying for the saint to intercede on their behalf.⁵⁵ Interestingly, Sabine Baring-Gould records in *Dymphna's Life of Saints* that most, if not all, of the mad were cured. It seems that their care in Gheel was at least somewhat effective or simply reported to be. The mad seem to have been lovingly cared for at Gheel, and their families were hoping for a cure from the saint. The families did not lock up their mad relatives or banish them to the streets. Instead, they were seeking a cure from the only sources they knew of, God, through the help of a saint. The families also did not seem to see their mad friends or relatives as being spiritually inept in any way. They did not call for them to undergo some very intense, difficult treatment. They sent them to get help in a way that seems to be looking out for their best interests. While it is not known for certain that all the mad seeking a cure were peasants, most seem to be, since no specific names were recorded. Several other cases from records of saints include the names of the better-known patients, but not peasants.

⁵³ Eugene Roosens and Lieve Van De Walle, *Geel Revisited: After Centuries of Rehabilitation* (Antwerp: Garant, 2007) 17.

⁵⁴ The original church dedicated to Dymphna burned down in 1489 and was rebuilt and dedicated in 1532. Hence this unusual altar no longer exists.

⁵⁵ Sabine Baring-Gould, *Lives of Saints* (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1914), 209-211.

Dymphna was not the only saint from whom people sought help for madness. A monk at Saint Hugh's tomb in Norwich recorded that a girl was brought, bound, where she lay screaming until the feast of All Souls. The dates did not survive. Her screaming became even worse that night and the worshippers could not celebrate mass. Eventually she fell asleep, and when she woke again, she was cured.⁵⁶ The fact that she was bound is interesting; it is unclear whether this was for her protection or the protection of others. It does show that her family thought she was a danger in some way though and Saint Hugh seemed to be effective at curing her madness.

Another case of someone seeking divine help for madness involved a girl who was reported as to have raged at the tomb of Saint Wulfstan in Worcester Cathedral for 15 days. Once again, dates were not recorded. Since it is not written that she was cured, one can presume that she was not, since chroniclers always recorded when the saints were successful at curing someone.⁵⁷ Seeking cures from the saints did not always ensure a cure, but it did seem to work enough to make the journey worth it. Also most people had no other option for a cure for a mad friend or relative. They were seeking help from the only source that they knew.

In Brittany, a Dominican friar named Vincent Ferrer was proposed as a saint. As part of the canonization process in 1453, all the miracles that were ascribed to him were compiled in one collection. Several of those cases were about one man named Perrin Hervé. One day around 1435, Hervé lost his senses, became agitated, and had to be restrained for the safety of him and those around him. He cursed God, blasphemed, and called upon demons, a clear sign of demon possession in the eyes of his friends and

⁵⁶ Scull, *Madness in Civilization*, 74.

⁵⁷ Scull, *Madness in Civilization*, 74.

wife.⁵⁸ They brought him to the tomb of Ferrer, where he spent the night, bound. The next morning he came back to his senses, with no apparent memory of what had happened the day before. The church rang its bells in announcement of the miracle. He never suffered another attack again.⁵⁹ He reported that Ferrer had appeared to him in a dream and told him, “My son, you will soon be in good health.” Ferrer spoke in the vernacular French, a highly unusual decision for a man who had never spoken French when he was alive.⁶⁰ The townspeople all suspected that Hervé had been possessed by a demon and rescued by the saint. The fact that he had reportedly spat at a picture of the Virgin Mary and “called her a whore,” only confirmed their suspicions. He also recoiled away from Holy Water, when the local priest attempted to sprinkle it on him.⁶¹ The only explanation in their minds was demonic possession, because they could not imagine another reason for someone acting in the manner that Hervé did. Even though Ferrer was not yet officially a saint, most people in the region already believed that he was. In their minds, taking Hervé to him for a cure was the only thing that made sense, since Hervé was almost certainly possessed. It would not have made much sense for them to take him to a medical doctor. In the course of the canonization process of Ferrer, people close to Hervé told their version of what had happened that day.⁶² Their stories are consistent, with minor disagreements about details that would be expected from people telling a story almost thirty years later. The unanimous conclusion was that Hervé was possessed

⁵⁸ Laura Smoller, “A Case of Demonic Possession in Fifteenth Century France: Perrin Herve and the Nascent Cult of Vincent Ferrer,” in *Voices from the Bench: The Narratives of Lesser Folk in Medieval Trials* ed. Michael Goodlich, (Palgrave MacMillan: New York, 2006), 153.

⁵⁹ Smoller, “A Case of Demonic Possession,” 150.

⁶⁰ Smoller, “A Case of Demonic Possession,” 152.

⁶¹ Smoller, “A Case of Demonic Possession,” 153.

⁶² Smoller, “A Case of Demonic Possession,” 152.

and saved by the miraculous intercession of the saint. Since Ferrer apparently cured him permanently, there was no later need of a different cure. Even though religion was often the only option for the third order, it apparently worked at least some of the time.

When townspeople suspected someone of demon possession, they often first sought advice from someone knowledgeable of the subject. A Dominican friar named Felix Fabri wrote about how he was once given the task of deducing the cause of someone's madness. A local nobleman asked Fabri if a young woman who was mad was possessed by the devil and needed to be exorcised. Fabri examined her and said that "she was out of her mind, and therefore fitter to be entrusted to the care of physicians than to that of theologians."⁶³ In this case, those around the girl were not sure what was wrong with her, so they went to someone they viewed as an expert, a man in the church. Fabri made the decision that her illness was medically based and that she needed a doctor more than a priest. The author does not record whether the girl was actually taken to a doctor and got the help she needed. Whatever happened to her, her story shows that often people were unsure about the cause of madness. However, they did not immediately jump to the assumption that an exorcism was needed. They thought that demon possession was the most likely cause, but they still checked with an "expert" who could confirm or deny their suspicions. Sometimes madness was associated with demonic possession, and sometimes it was not.

The next series of cases comes from the collection of miracles attributed to Henry VI, written by an anonymous author. One recorded case concerns the question of madness as caused by disease or possession. In 1486, the wife of Galfrid Brawnston was

⁶³ Craig, "The Spirit of Madness," 65.

unable to speak clearly and reasonably; all she could do was cry out or utter garbled phrases. She was taken to her local church, where the priest prayed to the Virgin Mary and Henry VI. Within three days, she was reportedly cured.⁶⁴ The anonymous author recorded that “he ‘did not know properly’ whether her symptoms were caused ‘by disease or perhaps by the infestation of some spirit.’”⁶⁵ From the author’s point of view, it was just as likely that her madness was caused by some sort of medical disease as it was caused by a possession. Even though there was a possibility that it was caused by a disease, she was not taken to a doctor. Instead she was taken to a church. Since she was poor, no one but her family was really concerned about her. The author did not even write her name, only calling her the wife of Galfrid. However, she was not condemned for her madness either. She was simply taken to a church in hopes of being cured. She was reputedly cured through the intercession of King Henry VI, since she appeared in his collection of miracles.

The next example highlights the tension between madness as caused by disease or possession. A woman named Agnes Green was believed to be driven mad by her weak flesh and either a corrupt humor or demon. The author stated that her passions were weak and thus she was vulnerable, but he was not sure if she had something wrong with her brain or if a demon had pushed her over the edge into madness.⁶⁶ She was cured when she had a vision of a man telling her to visit the shrine of Henry VI; she did and was healed and restored to sanity.⁶⁷ The author stated that he did not know if the man in the vision was actually the king or his angel and that he would leave that judgment to men

⁶⁴ Craig, “The Spirit of Madness,” 60.

⁶⁵ Craig, “The Spirit of Madness,” 61.

⁶⁶ Craig, “Spirit of Madness,” 78.

⁶⁷ Craig, “Spirit of Madness,” 78.

who knew more about such things. He did conclude that the man was certainly sent by God. Agnes Green is a case shows that supernatural healings were sometimes seen to be caused by God directly intervening in the lives of humans. The author does not state whether Agnes had thought to visit the shrine of Henry VI on her own or if this vision was her first idea of it.⁶⁸ It is clear though that the author, and almost certainly the readers at the time, believed that King Henry VI cured her through his intercession with God. Her only hope for a cure was to go to a shrine and hope for the best. Since she was apparently healed, it does not seem to be terrible strategy for success.

Authors sometimes used language that implied both a somatic and spiritual cause of madness. William Barker was a peasant who went mad. The author of his story, part of the collection of miracles attributed to Henry VI, wrote that William was acting violently mad after he was attacked by three men. The author also said that William was acting as if he was possessed by demons.⁶⁹ This shows that people could think that madness was caused by both natural and supernatural reasons. Barker had a legitimate fear since he had been attacked, but that fear was taken to the next level of madness because of demons. However, William went to a religious source, a saint in the form of Henry VI, for healing. It is not recorded whether he tried to go to a doctor or not. Since he was a peasant, most likely he did not have access to one, and a saint was his only source for a cure. Again, the cure probably worked since he was listed as proof of Henry being a saint.

Sometimes, the families of mad peasants struggled to care for them when they proved to be violent. In some cases, the actions of the mad harmed themselves or others.

⁶⁸ Craig, "Spirit of Madness," 78-79.

⁶⁹ Craig, "Spirit of Madness," 69.

A man known only as “the mad son of a Roger” was killed when he was trying to make a hole in the door to his house and was mistaken for a thief. Richard of Upton stabbed himself in the stomach and died three days later. Both of these men would have most likely benefited from a guardian to watch over them and care for them. However, the guardians of the mad were not immune to the mad’s violence. William le Coner of Hordbode suffered from insanity and stabbed his guardian.⁷⁰ When one was the guardian for a landowner, one might have the same occupational hazards, but at least one was able to earn some money or live in more luxurious surroundings. One did not obtain many benefits from being a guardian for a peasant. However, society recognized that often the mad who were poor needed someone to care for them, when they were unable to do so themselves. They recognized that the mad often did not know what they were doing or the difference between right and wrong. Another example involved a mad man who murdered his wife, yet was not held responsible for her death since he was mad. His fellow villagers argued that his madness made it impossible for him to know what he did was wrong. The mad often needed someone to protect them from harming others or themselves.

Jacques Mignon lived in a small village in Poitou, France in 1457. He was considered to be mad and entertained his fellow villagers by doing cartwheels. One day, the townspeople realized they had not seen his wife in a long time. They went out to Mignon’s farm to investigate, and Mignon freely confessed to killing her. The town authorities were uncertain about what to do, since he seemed to not understand his actions, but they also needed to protect others from him. This confusion was compounded

⁷⁰ Turner, “Silent Testimony,” 83.

by the fact that they never found his wife's body, even though they searched the area where he said he killed her. Eventually they wrote a letter of remission to the king, asking him to officially pardon Mignon.⁷¹ Because Jacques Mignon was mad, he was not deemed as being responsible for killing his wife. He confessed to the crime without being tortured, which made the authorities believe even more strongly that he did not know what he did was wrong, and therefore, was not responsible. However, they still had to get an official pardon from the king, since they could not just let a murderer walk free without any sort of punishment. The sources do not mention to what the townspeople attributed his madness. The letter to the king only mentions that people talked about how he had been mad for most of his life. His fellow villagers understood that Mignon's madness made him incapable of being a fully functioning member of society who would be held to the same legal standards as everyone else. The sources do not mention what kind of treatments Mignon received, if he received any at all. Since he was reportedly mad for most of his life, one can presume that his family and friends would have tried some sort of divine intervention. Since he was still mad, one can assume those treatments failed. Since he had been mad for so long, they might have just presumed that his madness was a part of him, and they could not do anything about it. The sources are also unclear about what happened to him after the murder. He was given a pardon, but what happened after that? Did his family try to find some sort of treatment? Was he given a guardian to protect the rest of the town from any potential violence? The sources do not say. All that is known is that he was not held responsible for his wife's death, because of

⁷¹ Aleksandra Pfau, "Protecting or Restraining? Madness as a Disability in late Medieval France," in *Disability in the Middle Ages: Reconsiderations and Reverberations*, ed. Joshua R. Eyler, (Ashgate: Burlington VT, 2010), 93.

his madness. Since he was a member of the third order, most likely not much happened to him. He probably lived out his life in the same town, still doing cartwheels to entertain people.

The people of Frankfurt show a very different attitude towards the mad compared to the previous examples. For the most part, the citizens of Frankfurt simply got rid of the mad, sometimes dropping them off in a field, or sending them down river, so they became someone else's problem. It seems that the main criterion in Frankfurt for the mad becoming a problem was if they caused a ruckus or disturbance of some sort. In 1399, a man started running around Frankfurt naked, so the citizens sent him down the river in a boat. In 1406, a man created a disturbance in the city, so they took him to Mainz in the middle of the night and left him there. Sometimes the mad had enough of their senses to be able to return to the city. A blacksmith's apprentice was sent down the river twice and kept coming back. Finally people bribed him by giving him a new outfit and sent him down the river again.⁷² The bribe must have worked since he was not recorded as coming back. Sometimes the citizens of Frankfurt helped a mad person, but that was only when someone else's life was at stake. In 1427, a poor woman came to the city. She was given money, because people feared that she would kill her child if they did not help her.⁷³ They believed that there were some good reasons to help the mad, when they proved to be an actual danger to someone else.

In contrast to the story of Hervé, as seen above, people in Frankfurt did not take very well to the church being treated poorly by mad people. As recorded by Achilles

⁷² Georg Ludwig Kriegk, *Aerzte, Heilanstalten, Geisteskranke im Mittelalterlichen Frankfurt A. M.* (Frankfurt: Druck von August Osterrieth, 1863), 16.

⁷³ Georg Ludwig Kriegk, *Aerzte, Heilanstalten, Geisteskranke im Mittelalterlichen Frankfurt A. M.*, 17.

Augustus von Lersner, in his second chronicle, a mad man who blasphemed the sacrament was condemned to be beaten with a rod.⁷⁴ It is not recorded exactly why this man blasphemed the sacrament, or even which sacrament he blasphemed. It is also not recorded if this man was given or had been given any other help, aside from the beatings. All that is known is that the citizens of Frankfurt saw his madness as a problem that had to be handled in a more violent manner. They did not want to deal kindly with a man who could potentially anger God.

Members of the Third Order often viewed madness more as a religious matter, rather than a medical problem. Most of these people did not have access to a doctor, so religion was their only hope for a cure. However, they were not necessarily ill-treated if they were suspected of being possessed. In this time, being possessed by a demon might not be the victim's fault. However, turning to religion did not necessarily imply possession. Agnes Green was thought to have had weak passions, which might have combined with demon possession to push her over the edge into madness. But people did not automatically jump to accusations of possession. Felix Fabri was called in to confirm or deny charges of demon possession. But when he said that it was a medical problem, the local ruler seemed to believe him. Most of the time, it seems that the mad members of the Third Order were left alone. Their family members tried to do their best to find a cure, but they were not always successful. Religion may not have provided a definite cure, but people were cured often enough, that it was seen as being a viable option. As will be seen below, going to a doctor also did not mean that one had a certainty of being cured, so religion was not the worst place to turn. For the Third Order, the church was,

⁷⁴ Georg Ludwig Kriegk, *Aerzte, Heilanstalten, Geistesranke im Mittelalterlichen Frankfurt A. M.*, 17.

for the most part, their only option when they went mad. Of course, if they were not cured, their outcome in society could be much worse. If their family was unable to handle them, and they caused a disturbance, other members of the community might step in. They might send them away to another town or beat them. Some members of the Third Order had better treatments than others did, as shown by the geographical differences.

Chapter 3: Second Order and the Monarch, Those who Fight

The Second Order was comprised of the nobility. The monarch technically was his or her own order but will be discussed alongside the Second Order in this thesis. When nobles went mad, circumstances became more complex since these people owned property and had duties that they had to carry out. Obviously, when the king went mad, the situation was much more serious since he represented the whole realm. In the case of both nobles and monarchs, the question of what to do with a mad person seemed to be more about how to step in and fill the role that she or she needed to fill, not as to the origins of his or her madness. Some of the guardians for the mad seemed to be concerned with how they could benefit, and occasionally what they had to do in terms of taking care of their mad charges. People seemed to be more motivated by potential monetary gain and increased power than by concern for the care and well-being of the mad.

Margery of Kempe

Margery of Kempe is an example of a woman who was viewed in two different lights. Some people saw her as truly being chosen by God and wanted her to pray and weep for them directly with God. Others saw her as heretical or just plain hysterical.⁷⁵ To a modern reader, Margery's descriptions of being overcome with devotion to Jesus would seem to be a clear sign of madness. However, her contemporaries did not see her as being mad. The people who supported Margery's visions thought that she was a mystic chosen by God, while those who disliked her said that she was heretical and needed to go back to her normal life. Margery's behavior was out of the ordinary, but not unheard of for

⁷⁵ Roy Porter, "Margery of Kempe and the Meaning of Madness," *History Today* (1988): 42.

someone who was considered to be a saint or mystic. Since people in her time did not call her “mad,” a modern historian cannot either. She is a good example of someone who behaved in an abnormal way but was not considered mad.

Margery was born to a wealthy burgess in fourteenth century England and married young. After the birth of her first child, she had her first bout of visions and hearing voices in which she believed that God told her she was too attached to the world and must flee from it and the temptations it possessed. Unfortunately, as a woman, she did not have the right to make that decision for herself, and her husband did not want to live in chastity.⁷⁶ Thirteen children later, she was able to convince him to sign away his conjugal rights, in exchange for Margery paying his debts. She was then free to go on pilgrimage and worship God as she wished, with fasting, praying, and weeping.⁷⁷

Whenever she was slandered by the townspeople, Margery saw herself as becoming more like Jesus. She writes, “For evyr the mor slawnder and repref that sche sufferyd, the mor sche incresyd in grace and in devocyon of holy medytacyon of hy contemplacyon ...wech owr Lord spak and dalyid to hyr sowle, techyng hyr how sche schuld be despysed for hys lofe, how sche schuld han pacyens, setting all hyr trost, alle hyr lofe, ...in hym only.”⁷⁸

When Margery and her husband took their vows of chastity, they did so in front of the Bishop of Lincoln. The bishop was very interested in her form of worship and interviewed her after the vows. When they met, “[Margery] was steryd to hy devocyon wyth this sygth and gaf God preysyng and worshepyng that he gaf the Bysshop grace to

⁷⁶ Porter, ‘Margery of Kempe,’ 40.

⁷⁷ Porter, ‘Margery of Kempe,’ 41.

⁷⁸ Margery Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. Lynn Staley (Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University for TEAMS, 1996) lines 37-41.

don thes good dedys wyth plentyuows wepyng, in so mych that alle the Bysshopys meny wer gretly merveylyng what hyr eyed.”⁷⁹ The Bishop of Lincoln, along with other bishops did not seem to be severely disturbed by her actions. They instead seemed to believe that her passion for Jesus was real, and was not as a result of madness.

However, not everyone shared this opinion. When Margery went on pilgrimage to Jerusalem, she frightened her fellow pilgrims with her wailing and crying. When she went to Calvary, where Jesus was crucified she “cryed wyth a lowde voys as thow hir hert schulde a brostyn asundyr, for in the cite of hir sowle sche saw veryly and freschly how owyr Lord was crucifyed.... And sche had so gret compassyon and so gret peyn to se owyr Lordys peyn that sche myt not kepe herself fro krying and roryng thow sche schuld a be ded therfor.”⁸⁰ Margery was overcome with inappropriate emotions, which was seen to be abnormal behavior to her fellow pilgrims. They did not know what to make of her, telling her to “to leevyn er seesyn of her wepyng er crying.”⁸¹ She did not cease her crying but instead became even more overwhelmed by other holy places, such as Jesus’s tomb.

When Margery returned to England, she still faced accusations over her crying. A friar preached in her town and he spoke against her crying. Margery wrote that he was a good and holy man who “nevyrthelesse as this day he prechyd meche ageyn the seyde creatur.”⁸² Even though the Bishop of Lincoln did not seem to be disturbed by her passions and tears, some churchmen were. Margery lived the rest of her life in this manner, with some people believing her wailing to be from the Holy Spirit and others

⁷⁹ Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, line 787-790.

⁸⁰ Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, line 1574-1579.

⁸¹ Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, line 1632-1633.

⁸² Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, line 3597.

thinking that she was mad. However, no one took steps to have her formally declared to be mad. Even though she annoyed her fellow pilgrims, she was still allowed to stay with the group and no one tried to remove her from them. In the same manner, the friar who preached against her weeping did not say that she needed to be punished in any way. Instead he just called for her to stop.

There are many interesting things about the case of Margery of Kempe, but perhaps the most interesting is that fact that while people certainly thought she was not acting in a normal manner, no one attempted to appoint a guardian for her or even called her mad. She obviously had money that she had some amount of control over, evidenced by her paying her husband's debts. Wstytdsaehile people thought she was mad, they did not think that she was mad enough to justify needing a guardian other than her husband. Even after he signed away his conjugal rights, he was still legally in charge of her but he did not try to stop her from going on pilgrimage to the Holy Lands. It must be that he husband and fellow villagers judged her level of mental competence to match her level of responsibility. Margery was also allowed, to a certain extent, to let be. Some people in her town thought that her visions were heretical and that she was possessed by the Devil.⁸³ However, no one was concerned enough to try to take serious steps to stop her. The worst she experienced was rumors and people accusing her of being possessed by the Devil, no trials or things of that nature. No one also tried to find a cure for her, though that could be because she thought that she was fine and did not need to be cured of anything. Margery is a very interesting case since she does not seem to follow the norms of when a person with money went mad. Even though she had money, and therefore

⁸³ Porter, "Margery of Kempe," 41.

some power, people seemed to be more annoyed than concerned about her and her visions.

The Mortimer Family

The experience of higher nobles who were male was more restrictive when they went mad. In England, when an ordinary landowner went mad, the king used the *Prerogativa Regis* and appointed a guardian for that person or simply took wardship himself.⁸⁴ The guardian was to tend to the land and take care of the mad person until he or she recovered or died. The guardian was to also protect the mad person from any opportunistic relatives who might try to take his or her land away from him or her or otherwise harm him or her. This came into play in the mid-thirteenth century in response to people being abused by their relatives.⁸⁵ The king often clashed with the local leaders over who had the right to appoint a guardian. By law, the king had this right, but often the local mayor would try to step in, in order to keep control in local hands. An example of how those in power would try to bend the law in order to benefit themselves can be seen in the case of the Mortimer family.

Hugh Mortimer died in July of 1372 and left behind huge tracts of land and knighthood to his grandson, William. However, William was born mentally disabled, considered by law to be a natural fool, and could not properly govern his land. He was considered to be mad. The king, Edward III, stepped in and appointed a guardian who would oversee the property and pay some money back to the crown until William either recovered or died.⁸⁶ Twenty years later, William had not recovered, and King Richard II

⁸⁴ Turner, "Town and Country," 19.

⁸⁵ Turner, "Town and Country," 19.

⁸⁶ Turner, "Town and Country," 17.

needed a knight who would be beholden to him more than he needed the money from the land. He appointed the younger brother of William, Hugh, to be a knight and rule the land. Richard II eventually divided up the land so Hugh got the title and the majority of the property, but William still received a small inheritance and some land. Not much else is known about what happened to William after these events. These events show that the king needed both money and loyal supporters and he was willing to bend the law when it was necessary to gain one over the other. It also shows that the king could be concerned with the welfare of his landed nobility, if it benefited him too.⁸⁷ The king was seen as having a responsibility to protect the people and the land of the people under him when they were unable to do so themselves.⁸⁸ It is unclear if Hugh the younger or the first guardian ever took steps to try to find a cure for William. Why would they? They had land and power to lose if William recovered his senses and came into his rightful inheritance. The law provided a way for a formally mad landowner to regain his land and title if he recovered from madness. It seems that the guardians did not want that to happen, so they did not take extensive steps to help their lord recover. One could speculate that some guardians cared for their charges and might have called a doctor or a priest, but the sources are very silent on this matter. The king did not seem to be particularly inclined to interfere and demand that someone try to cure the William. The land was being tended to and Richard had a knight who was loyal to him. William was not necessary for the kingdom to function properly so there was no reason to go to great lengths to seek treatment.

⁸⁷ Turner, "Town and Country," 18.

⁸⁸ Neugebauer, "Mental Handicap," 24.

What happened when a monarch went mad? When Henry VI, Charles VI, and Joanna of Castile went mad, their respective countries of England, France, and Spain had to deal with this question. Due to Spanish succession laws, Joanna was the heir to the throne, even though she was female and married. In most other cases, the queen going mad would not be a problem since she rarely had real power.

Madness in Monarchy

When a monarch went mad, the country had to deal with several problems, such as who would be the decisive head of state. Interestingly, the three monarchs discussed here- Charles VI, Henry VI, and Joanna of Castile-were not able to rule independently when they first ascended the throne. Both Henry VI and Charles VI were minors-Henry being an infant-and Joanna was a married woman. Henry VI and Charles VI had regents appointed to them who were reluctant to step down when the kings came of age. This created a power struggle as the kings attempted to seize the throne that was rightfully theirs. Joanna was married and first her husband, and after his death, her father, then her son, attempted to rule in her name. She attempted to rule independently, but constantly had power taken from her. In all three cases, power hungry nobles and rivals used the monarchs' madness as an excuse for them not being able to rule independently. One cannot say whether their madness was caused by being denied their right to rule or if that struggle brought out a natural tendency towards madness. Whichever it may be, it is interesting to note how all three had a similar background before they went mad

Charles VI

Charles was king of France from 1380-1422 and the grandfather of Henry VI. Charles VI suffered from mental breakdowns and episodes of raving and madness. Since

he had inherited the throne when he was young, a regency council had already been established, with his uncles ruling for him until he came of age. Later, when one of Charles's episodes of madness would occur, his uncles and younger brother would rule for him. They would try to cure him, but they also enjoyed having the power to rule, and soon different factions formed, each vying for power and money. The different cures for the king also reveal an important aspect of how the mad were treated. At first doctors were summoned since most nobles thought that his madness was just a normal disease. When medicine failed, the regents turned to magical cures since many in the population believed the king to be bewitched. The whole time of the king's madness, the royal family and many peasants turned to God in hopes of curing their monarch. Since Charles was the king, he was never seen to be at fault for what had happened to him. Instead his advisors were told by doctors that he had worked too hard and must be forced to rest. Others spread rumors that someone, specifically his brother's wife, had cast a spell over him. Charles was treated well during his episodes of madness but the various factions used him to gain power. The chronicles of Froissarts give many details of these events, as he was present at court during most of Charles's episodes and interviewed other witnesses for details he was not privy to.

Charles's first episode of madness took place in 1392, when he was traveling with his army from the city of Mans to Brittany to fight the Duke of Brittany. While Charles and his entourage were riding in the heat of the day in the forest of Mans, a barefooted man jumped out and told the king, "King, ride no further, but return, for thou

art betrayed.”⁸⁹ This incident shook Charles and later that day he suddenly started swinging his sword at his companions, convinced that he was being attacked by an army. He took after his brother, the Duke of Orléans, who was able to escape. The king’s men were able to subdue him and he was brought back to Mans where his uncles and brother attempted to discern what had happened to him. The king was feverish and “had lost all knowledge of [his brother and uncles], showing no symptoms of acquaintance or affection, but rolled his eyes round in his head without speaking to anyone.” Charles VI’s uncles and brothers called the king’s personal doctors who said, “the king had, for a long time, been suffering under this disorder; and, knowing that this weakness of intellect oppressed him grievously, it would make its appearance,” but the king, “from his great anxiety to undertake this war, would not listen to any advice on the subject of his health.” Rumors circulated that the king had been “poisoned or bewitched,” and his relatives were anxious to put those to rest and find the root cause of his behavior.⁹⁰ The pope in Rome and all of his cardinals, who were enemies of the king of France, said that God was punishing him by making him go mad and that Charles should pay attention to the affairs of France instead of focusing on church affairs. They were referencing Charles’s support of the anti-pope in Avignon.⁹¹ However, none of the doctors or relatives of the king paid much attention to these accusations. His physicians tried many different medicines but none were effective. Finally they received word of a very talented physician called Master William de Harseley who claimed that the “disorder of the king proceeds from the

⁸⁹ John Froissarts, *Chronicles of England, France, Spain and the Adjoining Countries from the Latter Part of the Reign of Edward II to the Coronation of Henry IV*, trans. Thomas Johnes (London: William Smith, 1839), 533.

⁹⁰ Froissarts, *Chronicles*, 535.

⁹¹ Froissarts, *Chronicles*, 537.

alarm in the forest and by inheriting too much of his mother's weak nerves." Charles's uncles and brother believed that de Harseley was their best hope and he was sent for to attempt to cure the king and bring him back to his sanity.⁹²

Even though many common people spread rumors and speculated about the causes of the king's madness, his uncles and brother sought professional opinions and then believed the doctor who said it was nerves and genes, not any sort of witchcraft or punishment from God. They did seek the aid of various saints by making wax figurines of the king and then taking them to shrines to pray for him.⁹³ However, they also sought the help of doctors. They did not see God as the only hope for a cure for the king. The pope in Rome claimed that this madness was divine punishment but he was an enemy of Charles so it makes sense that he immediately jumped to that conclusion. What is important is that the people in charge of the every day care of the king thought that he suffered from this mental breakdown because of his weak nerves.

The king had been moved to the city of Creil and de Harseley joined him there. De Harseley attempted to cure the king by keeping him sedate and amused in order to calm his nerves. The doctor first lowered Charles's fever and then brought him back to his wits. The king seemed to be cured of his madness. De Harseley warned the king's uncles and brothers that "you must be careful to avoid angering or vexing him, for his nerves have not quite recovered their strength, though they will daily get better." The king was to have time to hunt and hawk in order to stay calm and relaxed, as to not strain his nerves.⁹⁴ De Harseley used non-religious or non-magical means to cure the king, and

⁹² Froissarts, *Chronicles*, 536.

⁹³ Froissarts, *Chronicles*, 538.

⁹⁴ Froissarts, *Chronicles*, 547.

it seems that most people in power accepted his methods of cure as being legitimate. De Harseley was strongly encouraged to stay at court and tend to the king there, but he refused. After being paid very well, he left to go home and died there a bit later.⁹⁵ His death would prove to be very fateful for the kingdom, since he was the only one who was able to cure the king from his madness.

About a year later, Charles went mad again, just as he and his nobles were working on a peace treaty with England. Unfortunately, de Harseley was dead, and no one could find a doctor who was able to cure him. The doctors who attempted to were able to say that Charles's madness came "from the weakness of his nerves, he was naturally inclined to this disorder, which had been brought forward with greater force from the excesses he had indulged in."⁹⁶ They continued to attribute his disorder to non-magical causes, even though this was the second time that he was afflicted by it. The king's health did improve slowly as time went on.

Non-medical cures were attempted as well. The queen attempted to help by giving alms to the poor in Paris and other parts of France.⁹⁷ She apparently thought that using religious means would work to cure the king. Since the king's health did improve, it would have seemed to work. When Charles went mad a second time, the people around him started to branch out into cures other than medicine since the medicine did not seem to work permanently.

None of these cures had a long-term effect, since Charles would reportedly relapse approximately once a year. His uncles and brother would bring in various

⁹⁵ Froissarts, *Chronicles*, 547-8.

⁹⁶ Froissarts, *Chronicles*, 563.

⁹⁷ Froissarts, *Chronicles*, 564.

physicians and surgeons in hopes of curing him, but to no avail. When medical cures failed, they turned to magic. Several sorcerers claimed that the king had either been “poisoned or enchanted by some pernicious herbs” given by the Duchess of Orléans, the wife of the king’s brother. Those sorcerers claimed that they could state the cause of the king’s illness since “they knew it from the devil who reveled it to them.” They said that the Duchess wanted the crown of France for herself and her husband and as long as she was near the king, he would never recover. This was a strong accusation to make against a powerful woman, and some magicians were burned for those accusations. However, enough people believed those rumors that the duchess left court in order to prove that she was not the cause of the king’s madness.⁹⁸ Even though most of the powerful men who were ruling the country while the king was indisposed did not believe that the duchess was responsible, the fear of public opinion was strong enough to cause them to act. Medical cures had not succeeded in curing Charles, and his advisors had to be seen doing something. They decided to try a sort of magical cure since they had no other choice in attempting to heal the king and bring him back to his senses.

The case of King Charles VI’s madness shows the various ways that a kingdom dealt with their monarch going mad. At first Charles’s family and advisors used medical means, but when those failed, they turned to religion and magic. This shows that medicine was the first response, but magic and religion were not out of the question in finding a cure for the mad. Since the king had several uncles and a brother who were able to rule France, there was not the same power vacuum that we will witness when Henry VI went mad. However, those uncles and brother had their own agendas that did not

⁹⁸ Froissarts, *Chronicles*, 633.

necessarily equal the good of France as a whole. The king's madness contributed to instability in the realm. When he died, he left a succession crisis that had to be dealt with, showing just how important the sanity of the monarch was for a kingdom to function well.

Henry VI

The English system of appointing a guardian for the mentally ill was put to the test when King Henry VI went mad in 1453. The solution was simple enough when the king was still a minor. He would have a regent rule, and then he would presumably take over when he came of age. But when Henry never gained his full faculties, the kingdom was at a standstill.⁹⁹ Since Henry occasionally still had his reason, should a guardian be appointed for him? What decisions should the council make on their own, without consulting the king? What actions should be taken to bring the king back to full health? The elite of England faced all these questions, and more when the king went mad and did not quickly regain his senses.

Henry VI's father, Henry V, died when the heir was an infant, so for the first years of his reign Henry VI had a regency council ruling for him. However, even after Henry VI came of age, he still relied on others to rule for him, even into his thirties.¹⁰⁰ He was very pious, and once recoiled at the sight of bare breasts on dancing girls.¹⁰¹ This aversion to sex extended into Henry's marriage to Margaret of Anjou. While aversion to

⁹⁹ Wendy Turner, "A Cure for the King Means Health for the Country: The Mental and Physical Health of Henry VI," in *Madness in Medieval Law and Custom*, ed. Wendy Turner (Boston: Brill, 2010), 177.

¹⁰⁰ Turner, "A Cure for the King," 178-179.

¹⁰¹ Cory James Rushton, "The King's Stupor: Dealing with Royal Paralysis in Late Medieval England," in *Madness in Medieval Law and Custom*, ed. Wendy Turner (Boston: Brill, 2010), 168.

sex would be an admirable trait in a saint, it was not a desirable trait in a king who needed to produce an heir for the stability of the realm. Henry and Margaret produced an heir seven years after their marriage.¹⁰² Ironically, Henry then began to take control and rule more on his own power, until 1453, when he had a complete breakdown upon hearing about losing almost all of his holdings in France during the Hundred Years War.¹⁰³ He shut down completely and no one could get him to respond to questions about issues that the king needed to handle such as the death of the Archbishop of Canterbury and who would be the Archbishop's successor. Chroniclers recorded that the lords "cowede gate noo answeere ne signe, for no prayer ne desire, lamentable chere ne exhortation, ne eny thing that they or eny of them cowede do or sey, to their grete sorrowe and discomfort."¹⁰⁴ Henry also did not react to the news Margaret had born a son and heir. The realm faced a crisis.

Once an heir to the throne was born to Henry VI, doctors began to attempt to cure the king, using whatever means they had available. Alchemy was their best hope for curing the king.¹⁰⁵ Alchemy was ineffective, but the king did spontaneously recover in December of 1454. Upon his recovery he stated that, "he neuer knew [his son] til that tyme, nor whils he hath be seke til now."¹⁰⁶ He apparently had no recall of his madness. However, his recovery was short lived as he relapsed in June of 1455. He never recovered and died in 1471.

¹⁰² Rushton, "The King's Stupor," 169.

¹⁰³ Turner, "A Cure for the King," 179.

¹⁰⁴ Rushton, "The King's Stupor," 149.

¹⁰⁵ Turner, "A Cure for the King," 180

¹⁰⁶ Rushton, "The King's Stupor," 158.

Apparently many in the realm realized the danger of having a child-like king on the throne. John Curtis, a friar, gave a sermon using the Biblical text, “Woe to thee, O land when thy king is a child” (Ecclesiastes 10:16).¹⁰⁷ He could not directly reference the king, but most of Curtis’s listeners knew that he was referring to Henry. Chroniclers also wrote that, “[Henry] is a natural fool and no fit person to govern the kingdom.”¹⁰⁸ Even though Henry VI was grown, he acted like a child and therefore caused many of the same problems that an ordinary child-king would, such as a power vacuum. When Henry VI was unable to govern properly, the door was opened for many other powerful men to step in and rule in his place. One of those was Richard, Duke of York. After Henry’s second breakdown, Richard was appointed by Parliament to be “protector and defender of the realm and church and principle councilor of the king.”¹⁰⁹ Parliament realized that the land needed someone who could take control and rule decisively. They had experimented with the lack of one obvious person in charge when the king was young, but they now had to fill the role that normally the king did in appointing a guardian for the land. The king could not rule competently and the land needed someone who could. They took the idea of the *Prerogativa Regis* and applied it to the king going mad and the realm needing a guardian. When the king went mad, it meant trouble for the land, unless one person was appointed to rule. However, that created its own set of problems, which manifested in a series of civil wars in England, known as the War of the Roses.¹¹⁰ When the king was mad, the whole land faced unforeseen problems.

¹⁰⁷ Rushton, “The King’s Stupor,” 159.

¹⁰⁸ Turner, “A Cure for the King,” 185.

¹⁰⁹ Turner, “A Cure for the King,” 188.

¹¹⁰ Turner, “A Cure for the King,” 194.

After Henry's death, he acquired a saint-like reputation and had over 170 miracles attributed to him.¹¹¹ Even though he was not an effective king, he was believed to be an innocent who was corrupted by the world around him. Henry was not thought to be at fault for his madness, partially because he was king and partially because he was seen as being like a child and therefore not responsible for himself. Henry VI was canonized at the end of the 15th century. Although he was mad himself, as a saint curing madness was not a specialty of his. He was seen as being responsible for curing more cases of drowning, wounds, and blindness than madness. However, a few cases of madness being cured were attributed to him.¹¹² Even though Henry was not seen as being a particularly capable king, he was a person who had the power to cure illnesses, even the one for which he suffered. Henry VI's legacy as a saint was inspired by people's belief in his ability to cure them of their diseases. His child-like reputation helped ensure his sainthood, and gave people hope that he could help them.

Joanna of Castile

A different approach was taken to handling a mad monarch when that monarch was female. Joanna of Castile was treated very differently than her male counterparts. Her gender negatively affected her, since she was perceived as not being needed to rule, being queen instead of king. Joanna was the daughter of Isabella of Castile and Ferdinand of Aragon. At the sudden death of her older sister and brother, she expectedly became heir to the Spanish throne. However, Joanna was never able to rule independently since the men in her life took over, first her husband, then father, and finally her son. She was deemed incapable of ruling since she was seen as being mentally unstable, for being

¹¹¹ Turner, "A Cure for the King," 194.

¹¹² Craig, "Spirit of Madness," 67.

madly in love with her husband Philip, and then mourning him excessively. She was sent away to a small Spanish town where she lived until the end of her life. Even though she was considered mad, no attempts were made to cure her until after the death of her father. A priest attempted an exorcism, which did not work, and then no more attempts were made. This can be contrasted with Henry VI and Charles VI, who had many people trying various mechanisms to cure them. Joanna was mostly left alone in her madness since the kingdom was able to function just fine with a mad queen, even if she was the heir.

Since Joanna had both an older brother and sister, she was never expected to rule her parents' kingdoms.¹¹³ Instead, in 1496, she was sent to marry Philip of Burgundy, son of the Holy Roman Emperor, in order to strengthen the bond between Spain and the Empire at the expense of France, whose power Isabella and Ferdinand wanted to check.¹¹⁴ Philip's younger sister married Joanna's bother, John. Joanna was expected to represent Spain's interests at the foreign court and persuade her husband to enact pro-Spanish policies.¹¹⁵ Unfortunately Joanna was able to claim little influence on her husband as he controlled all her money and filled her household with his supporters. This lack of influence on Philip became problematic when her older brother and sister died and she became the heir to Spain. She and Philip would be expected to jointly rule Spain but Philip had been making treaties with France.¹¹⁶ Joanna was not able to persuade him to support Spain over France and so she failed in her mission to help her parent's kingdom by creating a stronger alliance between the two countries.

¹¹³ Bethany Aram, *Juana the Mad: Sovereignty and Dynasty in Renaissance Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 15.

¹¹⁴ Michael Prawdin, *The Mad Queen of Spain*, trans. Eden and Cedar Paul (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1939), 16.

¹¹⁵ Aram, *Juana the Mad*, 31.

¹¹⁶ Aram, *Juana the Mad*, 51.

Despite Philip's shortcomings as a husband, Joanna was madly in love with him, to the point that many chroniclers commented about it. Pedro Mártir wrote that "there is no doubt that [Joanna] will come if her husband does, for she is lost in love of him...to the man they say she loves with such ardor."¹¹⁷ Whenever he would leave her to attend business elsewhere, she was bereft and fell into a seemingly depressive state.¹¹⁸ One time, she was visiting her parents in Spain and wished to return to Philip. Her mother, who was ill, stalled and made many excuses such as Joanna's pregnancy, to make her stay. Joanna fell into a depressive state at being so far from her beloved husband.¹¹⁹ She fought back in the only ways that she knew how. Isabella wrote how Joanna was behaving in an inappropriate way, to the extent of not eating to show her displeasure at being controlled. Joanna also showed emotional swings in her attempts to persuade her mother to allow her to return to Philip. Her mother frequently mentioned Joanna's "passions," "disposition," and "health" and how they were inappropriate for the circumstances.¹²⁰ To make matter worse, Philip did not seem to care that he and Joanna were separated. Mártir wrote, "it was much harder on his ardent spouse, who is a simple woman, although daughter of so great a woman; she did nothing but cry. Nor did it soften Philip. He is harder than a diamond."¹²¹

However, when Joanna was finally reunited with Philip, things were no happier. Philip had mistresses, and Joanna was madly in love with him and jealous of any other woman who had his attentions. Joanna ordered for the hair of her husband's lover to be

¹¹⁷Peggy K. Liss, *Isabel the Queen: Life and Times* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 334.

¹¹⁸ Aram, *Juana the Mad*, 68-69.

¹¹⁹ Prawdin, *The Mad Queen*, 65.

¹²⁰ Aram, *Juana the Mad*, 72-73.

¹²¹ Liss, *Isabel the Queen*, 337.

cut, an act that was not seen as being very queenly. A chronicler reported that, “so infuriated was the Princess that, like a raging lioness, she sought out her enemy, and it is said, injured and misused her, and then commanded that her hair should be cropped to the roots.”¹²² As a queen, Joanna was supposed to look the other way when her husband had a mistress and instead she acted jealously and impetuously.¹²³ Her obsessive love caused many at court to question her sanity. The news went all the way back to Spain, to the last will and testament of the dying Queen Isabella. In her will, she made Joanna her heiress to Castile, but added a clause stating that if Joanna “should be absent, or unable or unwilling to rule in person,” her father King Ferdinand, not Philip, would rule for her.¹²⁴ In one move, Isabella prepared for the possibility of Joanna not being able to rule, while still protecting Spanish interests. She knew that there was a very good chance that Joanna would not be able to rule independently and did not want Philip ruling, as he had proved that he could not be trusted to work for Spain. However, Queen Isabella did not take steps to cure Joanna so that she could be the ruler. Instead, she made her husband the regent if Joanna proved to be unstable.

Despite Queen Isabella’s wishes, Philip and Ferdinand began to quarrel over who would rule Joanna’s land after Isabella’s death. They eventually came to a compromise, without consulting Joanna, but before he could take complete control, Philip died. After Philip’s death, Joanna was inconsolable. She wished to bury him in Grenada, in southern Spain, in order to establish him as the rightful king of the land that he never visited. She accompanied his body on the journey to make sure that it arrived safely since her father

¹²² Prawdoin, *The Mad Queen*, 79.

¹²³ Aram, *Juana the Mad*, 76.

¹²⁴ Prawdoin, *The Mad Queen*, 70.

did not want Philip to have the recognition of being king in southern Spain. She would reportedly open his coffin and kiss his feet every day, though that is possibly a rumor. She did ensure that no other women were allowed in churches where she left his remains, leading many to speculate about her obsessive love. One of the chroniclers who followed her, Pietro Martire wrote about “the same jealousy that tormented her during her husband’s life.”¹²⁵ It seems that even in Philip’s death his widow still loved her madly. Joanna’s behavior only served to prove to her critics that she could not rule without her father’s help.

King Ferdinand acted quickly to ensure control over his daughter’s lands. He was able to convince Joanna to move to Tordesillas, a small town away from politics. She did not seem to fight the decision, as her only stipulation was that she could have Philip’s remains with her. Ferdinand was able to seclude her and keep her from contacting people in the outside world who might have been able to help her assert her right to rule Castile. She was also separated from her sons and heirs.¹²⁶ From time to time, she would fight her imprisonment by refusing to eat or sleep, but Ferdinand was always able to change her mind and keep her passive.¹²⁷ Joanna increasingly took on a more ascetic life, emulating her grandmother Isabella of Portugal and Saint Claire, “who never had a bed or a mattress or anything soft [and] always went almost naked and barefoot.” Nearby her palace was the Royal Monastery of Saint Claire and Joanna developed a close relationship with this monastery. She visited regularly and donated money and gifts.¹²⁸ Visiting nobles were shocked at how humbly she dressed and lived. That kind of

¹²⁵ Aram, *Juana the Mad*, 89.

¹²⁶ Aram, *Juana the Mad*, 100-101.

¹²⁷ Prawdin, *The Mad Queen of Spain*, 162-163.

¹²⁸ Aram, *Juana the Mad*, 104-105.

behavior was considered very abnormal for a queen of the time and only increased the rumors that Joanna was insane.¹²⁹ Her father seemingly did nothing to help cure her illness, but instead kept her locked away, cared for by servants loyal to him. Ferdinand sent royal finery and a softer mattress to his daughter, which she refused to use. However, he did not send doctors or anyone to attempt to help her.¹³⁰ Either he did not see her illness as being curable or he did not want her to recover, in an attempt to continue ruling her kingdom. His motive was most likely a combination of the two. King Ferdinand did not take any steps to cure his daughter to her apparent madness.

When Ferdinand died in 1516, Joanna's servants attempted to cure her through spiritual means. They called a cleric to exorcise her and pray for her, that she might be healed. Joanna's servant, Diego de Ribera, wrote, "Friday, the first of February, the cure of the queen, our lady, began." The cleric was not able to produce any change in her health, but his presence shows an acknowledgement that she was in need of some sort of cure for her illness. However, when her son Charles V inherited the kingdom as his mother's guardian, he had her placed under guard and kept her isolated.¹³¹ The chief justice of Aragon, Juan Lanuza III, "declared Charles his mother's legal guardian, for the duration of the 'illness, mental alienation, and dementia' that Juana 'notoriously and manifestly' had suffered since 1508."¹³² Not everyone was thrilled with Charles ruling Spain. He had been raised in Burgundy, at his father's court, and he spent little time in Spain. His advisors were all Burgundian and he wanted to rule without his mother.¹³³

¹²⁹ Aram, *Juana the Mad*, 103.

¹³⁰ Aram, *Juana the Mad*, 106-107.

¹³¹ Aram, *Juana the Mad*, 108.

¹³² Aram, *Juana the Mad*, 109.

¹³³ Prawdin, *The Mad Queen*, 190.

Many nobles and clerics in Spain wanted Joanna to rule independently, without her son. They were indignant when Charles declared himself king, and completely left Joanna out of the ceremony. The Admiral of Castile, don Fadrique Enríquez, said that Charles calling himself king was “calling the living queen dead.”¹³⁴ As for Joanna, she refused to condemn her son, even to the people who wished to support her. She instead blamed some of his councilors, saying that they advised him poorly and that is why he acted the way that he did.¹³⁵ She treated him similarly to how she treated Philip. She loved him even when he acted against her own interests. Joanna had the option to attempt to rule her kingdom but she declined to do so for reasons that only she knew. Most likely she really did not know what she had been deprived of, since she was mad at this time in her life.

Joanna spent the rest of her life confined in the palace in Tordesillas. Her household was controlled by servants she did not trust, whom her son appointed.¹³⁶ Whenever her children and grandchildren visited, she always greeted them “with great joy and contentment,” and asked them about events in the world outside.¹³⁷ Even though she seemingly had accepted her confinement, she wanted to know what she was missing. Joanna died in 1555, surrounded by churchmen but no family members. Her last words were, “Jesus Christ crucified, be with me.”¹³⁸ Her life ended in a manner similarly to how she lived it; alone with just her faith to comfort her. When a queen went mad, even if she was the ruler, the majority of nobles and other powerful men did not care. She could be easily pushed aside and the men in her life could rule. Some Spaniards wanted her to rule

¹³⁴ Aram, *Juana the Mad*, 112-113.

¹³⁵ Aram, *Juana the Mad*, 127.

¹³⁶ Aram, *Juana the Mad*, 142.

¹³⁷ Aram, *Juana the Mad*, 144.

¹³⁸ Aram, *Juana the Mad*, 156.

instead of her son, but she did not act on the desires of her people. Her whole life had been dictated by those around her, so I speculate that she did not know what to do when given freedom.

Joanna's madness was different than the madness of Margery of Kempe, William Mortimer, Henry VI, and Charles VI. She was accused of having excessive and passionate love for her husband and allowing that love to sway her judgment. For example, she cut the hair of his mistress, an act that was seen as showing a lack of control. When he died, she entered almost a depressive state and did not assert her right to rule. Instead she allowed herself to be pushed to the side while her father and then her son ruled. She had an opportunity to be heard, but she had grown so accustomed to being told what to do, that she did not seize her chance. Part of her struggle for power was based on her gender, but that was not the only reason. Her mother, Isabella of Castile, was a powerful ruler in her own right and did not let Ferdinand govern her lands in Castile. The Iberian Peninsula was clearly used to having a powerful queen who did not rely on her husband as her source of legitimacy in her rule. As previously mentioned, many Spaniards wanted Joanna to rule instead of her son. They thought that she better understood them and knew how to govern Spain than her Burgundian son. Her gender did not seem to bother them. At the same time, her emotional outbursts and her devotion to Philip were seen as feminine problems that made her incapable of ruling. When Charles VI and Henry VI went mad, they were not sent away to a remote village for the rest of their lives. Instead their doctors attempted to cure them, and the powerful nobles at least nominally supported those efforts. Joanna, however, was sent away, and only later in her life did anyone attempt to cure her and those cures were short lived. Clearly she was not

seen as being essential to the kingdom as the two kings were. It seems to be that her gender was the reason that more attempts were not made to cure her and restore her to sanity. Of course, it is useless to argue what could have been, but if she were a king instead of a queen, most likely she would have not been treated in the manner that she was. Judging from other historical examples, her family and doctors would have attempted to cure her. As it was, since she was female, it was easy for the men who wanted to rule to push her aside and carry on in her place.

Chapter 4: First Order, those who pray

The first order was comprised of the members of the clergy, those who devoted themselves to practicing religion as a profession. Like the third order, there are not a lot of specific cases of churchmen going mad. There is some evidence that suggests convents were a convenient place to dispose of upper class women who were mad or were otherwise mentally incompetent.¹³⁹ Since these women could not be married, the church was a good place to put them, since they were still considered respectable. A monastery or convent might have been seen as a good way to get rid of mad relatives if the family wanted to maintain a high social standing. Most likely this was not an option for the lower classes, since it did take money to enter the church.¹⁴⁰ There are some records of men who were vicars, and other lower clergy, going mad. The bishop of Lincoln, Oliver Sutton's, memoranda rolls provide valuable insight into the lives of many clergymen from his episcopate. The only surviving rolls are from 1290 to November 1299, when Sutton died, but they contain letters, documents, and other records about his relationship with the members of the clergy under his control.¹⁴¹ These allow us to examine what happened when the clergy in thirteenth century England went mad as Sutton carefully recorded all that he did in response. Most of the information that is contained in the rolls shows a bishop who deeply cared about the men under his care and did everything he could to care for their comfort. He had to deal with several clerics going mad and always made provision for them. He never seemed to think that their madness was a moral

¹³⁹ Arnold, *A Social History of England*, 346.

¹⁴⁰ Arnold, *A Social History of England*. 346.

¹⁴¹ James R. King, "The Mysterious Case of the 'Mad' Rector of Bletchington : The Treatment of Mentally Ill clergy in Late Thirteenth-Century England," in *Madness in Medieval Law and Custom*, ed. Wendy Turner (Boston: Brill, 2010), 59.

shortcoming or that they needed spiritual help. Instead, he seemed to believe that they were sick in the same way that a cleric who went blind was and they needed assistance, not condemnation.

Thomas de Capella

On January 22, 1292, Oliver Sutton, bishop of Lincoln, wrote to his supervising archdeacon requesting help for Thomas de Capella, rector of Bletchington. Sutton wrote that de Capella had gone mad. William, the rector of Heyford Bridge nearby, was appointed as de Capella's guardian. On October 29th, Sutton wrote another letter to William describing de Capella as being in a state of "temporary insanity," evidenced by de Capella's wandering through the countryside. William was instructed to search for de Capella and care for him when and if he was found. The bishop's records also show that he paid de Capella's sister and kinsman to search for him and made them swear an oath that they would in fact do their best to find him. No further record exists of their search but, about a year and a half later, de Capella appeared before Bishop Sutton and proved that he was in his right mind and able to fulfill his duties. Sutton then wrote to the archdeacon asking him to "restore the church and its revenues to Thomas."¹⁴²

This episode shows several things about how mad clergy were treated. First, the bishop was very concerned with de Capella's well being and did his best to make sure that he was cared for, even in his madness. He did this by appointing a coadjutor, which will be further discussed below, and paying de Capella's kinsmen to find him when he went missing. But Bishop Sutton did not just simply pay them and let them do whatever they wanted. He made them swear oaths and checked that they were doing what they

¹⁴² King, "The Mad Rector," 58.

were supposed to do. Then, when de Capella, became sane again, the bishop made sure that he was restored to his proper position and gained all the rights that he should possess. He was not going to sit back let anything happen to de Capella under his watch. In this manner, Bishop Sutton acted very much like the king would when the nobility went mad. He appointed a guardian but still checked in on their welfare.¹⁴³ Obviously the appointment of a guardian for the insane was viewed as necessary for their welfare. The main difference between Sutton and the king is that Sutton did not attempt to profit from de Capella's madness in the way a king would. This mostly likely happened because either Sutton was a genuinely pious man who only wanted the best for those under his care or he knew that he would face some sort of punishment if caught and he deemed that it was not worth it. The king was given the right by law to profit from nobles' madness; a bishop was not. It is impossible to tell what Sutton's exact motives were but he does seem to have cared about de Capella and, as will be seen later, other men under him who went mad.

When de Capella went mad, Bishop Sutton immediately appointed a coadjutor for him. These men "were technically assistants for another person and they were appointed whenever that individually was incapable of doing the work for which he was responsible."¹⁴⁴ They would be appointed for many reasons other than madness, such as physical disability or not being able to speak the local language. Their very job depended on the fact that rectors and other churchmen could not be removed from their job just because they could no longer perform their duties.¹⁴⁵ This idea of not being able to

¹⁴³ King, "The Mad Rector," 76.

¹⁴⁴ King, "The Mad Rector," 62.

¹⁴⁵ King, "The Mad Rector," 62.

remove an incompetent man from his position came from the decrees of Gregory IX, who stated, “Since, when one is stricken in body, we cannot know whether in the judgment of God it was for punishment or for his purgation we ought not to add to the affliction of those thus scourged.” Since one could not know the reason for a man’s disability, people should not increase the pain of the man in whom God might simply be making more holy.¹⁴⁶ Because of this, a man would hold church office for life unless a very serious issue came up and would be appointed a coadjutor to assist them in their duties if needed. The bishop would give the coadjutor official documents to prove his authority, called the letters patent. These gave the coadjutor the power and authority over the work of the rector. Within the rolls, men were given coadjutors for reasons as diverse as blindness, physical disability, dementia, old age, or inability to properly manage the affairs of their church.¹⁴⁷ The coadjutors were to help the cleric manage the church, when for some reason, he could not do it himself. Their placement did not mean that the cleric was spiritually weak or incompetent in that way. It simply meant that he needed a bit of help in order to do the job that he needed to do.

Within Bishop Sutton’s rolls, there are several instances of him appointing a coadjutor for rectors and vicars under him who went mad. For example, the bishop writes in July 1292 about a Henry, vicar of Coats “who was said to be out of his mind.” Similarly in March of 1292, the bishop wrote to Robert of Burton and the dean of Wraggoe about Peter of Lound, who had gone mad.¹⁴⁸ He was attempting to find a coadjutor for the man, but needed to delegate the task to Robert and the dean. However,

¹⁴⁶ King, “The Mad Rector,” 63.

¹⁴⁷ King, “The Mad Rector,” 65-67.

¹⁴⁸ King, “The Mad Rector,” 69.

Bishop Sutton did not sit back and let them handle it as they would. He wanted to know the outcome and everything that they did.¹⁴⁹ What is interesting about these two cases is that the bishop seemed to treat madness like another physical disability and made adjustments for it. He did not react in a way that would lead one to suspect that he considered demons or the devil at work. Neither man was incarcerated or institutionalized in any way. He simply handled them like he had handled blind cleric and men who were too old or frail to carry out their duties. He did not see their madness as a moral shortcoming or any other spiritual reason that could hinder them from being Godly men.

Hugh of St. Martin

Hugh was another mad churchman with whom Bishop Sutton dealt kindly. The records indicate people had harmed the vicar in some way, since the bishop ordered the ecclesiastical authorities nearby to excommunicate all who had laid violent hands on Hugh. Bishop Sutton also wrote to the dean of Stamford, telling him to excommunicate all who had stolen goods from Hugh of St. Martin.¹⁵⁰ It seems that the bishop knew that people were tempted to steal from and harm a churchman when he was mentally incompetent. He was trying to take step to firstly punish those who had harmed Hugh and to stop others from attempting it in the future. Naturally a coadjutor was chosen, a different vicar named Hugh. Eventually, Bishop Sutton had to turn the mad Hugh over to the care of the nuns and abbot of Peterborough Abbey. The abbot then tried to use his care of Hugh to take goods belonging to Hugh's church, the church of All Saints. Sutton once again stepped in, ordered the abbot to return the goods, and appointed a man named

¹⁴⁹ King, "The Mad Rector," 70.

¹⁵⁰ King, "The Mad Rector," 70

Walter to be the new coadjutor for Hugh.¹⁵¹ It seems that the bishop had to protect Hugh not only from laymen who would try to harm him, but also from fellow churchmen who were seeking to benefit from the man's madness. Bishop Sutton was not unaware of what was happening and he would immediately step in if he needed to in order to protect Hugh and the reputation of the church.

It is interesting that in only nine years of records from Bishop Sutton, he records four cases of rectors and vicars going mad under his care. It seems to be a fairly regular problem of priests going mad. If one extrapolates, one can assume that at least a similar number of churchmen would have gone mad in this time. The evidence should be there for other churchmen going mad. It could be that no one higher in the church hierarchy went mad, because the ones who had a history of it simply were not promoted. Since positions were not heritable, a certain man was not destined for a church position. It could be that the church did not accept men who had a history of madness, a wise idea considering the trouble that Bishop Sutton went through when dealing with his men and their madness. However, there should be at least one case of some men a bit higher up going mad if they were from noble families and started off as a bishop or even archbishop. Since the second sons of noble families would enter the church at a much higher position than a man from the second order, it seems reasonable to assume that at least one of them would have gone mad at some point. It also could be that such men did go mad and it was handled quietly in house, without records being kept. Even though Bishop Sutton did not believe that the mad men under him were spiritually weak or incompetent, he could be an anomaly in this. It would not be good for the reputation of

¹⁵¹ King, "The Mad Rector," 71-72.

the church if a bishop or archbishop were accused of being possessed. In that case, it would make perfect sense that the church kept things under wraps and did not that knowledge go public. It could also be that Bishop Sutton was simply very methodical and his are the only records that have survived that show the level of detail of what happens when a vicar or rector goes mad. Other bishops might have kept records as well, but those did not survive. Or they might not have written everything down in how they handled the situation, but did in fact care for their men. Whatever, the reason is, there is simply not much that was written down and survived about the care of members of the first order when they went mad. One can extrapolate from the information is did survive though, and draw broad conclusions about specific eras based on what is available.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Even though madness is a very broad term, it is a concept seen throughout the Middle Ages. Although societal norms were different than they are today, people still recognized abnormal behavior and, like today, they often struggled with how best to respond to it. How people were treated and what resources they had in terms of cures varied broadly across their social class as seen in the three orders. The wealthy had doctors and other resources, while the poor had to turn to religion as their only cure. The treatment of the mad really came down to how important that person was to society. The more important one was believed to be, the harder those around them tried to find a cure.

The third order was the largest and therefore should have had the most people go mad. However, since they were at the bottom of the social ladder, they were seen as the least important and therefore were given the least amount of attention from the sources. The information about them that does survive shows that they mostly turned to religion as a cure. They did not have access to doctors in the same way that the members of the second order did, so religion really was their only hope. The sources show a wide range of attributions for their madness, not all of them being spiritually caused. However, even the people whose madness was attributed to more mundane things, such as stress, went to God and the saints for a cure. Since there are stories of people being healed by God through the works of the saints, this hope was not completely futile. Of course, the authors would not have recorded stories about the people who went to the saints for help and were not cured, so one cannot say that the saints have a one hundred percent cure rate. However enough people were seen to have been cured by the saints to make them a viable hope. Even if the saints were not have seen to have healed anyone, people most

likely still would have gone to them for help. After all, they had no other option. If they were not cured, they might have been poorly treated by their neighbors, if their family failed to control them, as seen in Frankfurt. When mad people caused a disturbance or proved to be a danger to others, the city dealt with them by simply getting rid of them. They did not want to deal with the mad, so they sent them down the river or to another town, so they became someone else's problem. The mad also might be beaten if their disturbance was severe enough, such as blaspheming the sacrament. It seems that the way the poor mad were treated varied with geography and culture.

The members of the second order were seen as being crucial for the functioning of the kingdom, so they received the most attempted cures. Noble men like the Mortimers were thought as being very important. The king needed them to rule their land, and be trusted to fight for him when necessary. Hence the idea of the guardian for the mad. The king needed the land to be run, as well as a knight loyal to him. Appointing a guardian solved both of those problems in one fell swoop. The law and the king did also want to protect the interests of the mad noble, so provisions were made if they ever regained their senses. The sources are not clear on how earnestly the guardian tried searching for a cure, if he even did at all. He certainly would have no financial motive to do so. The king did seem too concerned, as long as he had a loyal knight and land being run well. He just wanted everything to function as he thought it was supposed to.

On the other hand, a king like Henry VI or Charles VI was very important for the country to function well. Everyone recognized this need, so those closest to the king would do their best to find a cure for him. This did not always work, as shown in the constant relapses of both kings. The important thing to note is that people were trying to

find a cure for their madness. Joanna was a bit different since she was a woman. While it was recognized and acknowledged in Spain at the time that a woman could rule somewhat independently, as seen in the success of her mother, Joanna was not viewed as necessary to the running of the country. She was the heir to her mother's kingdom and a queen in her own right, but her husband, father, and later son, could rule just fine without her. None of the men ruling in her stead took great measures to cure, simply because she was not necessary for the functioning of the kingdom. She was not very important, so she was almost treated like a member of the third order, with only religion as her potential cure. Margery of Kempe also was never given a cure; though this could be attributed to the fact that she did not think anything was wrong with her. Her contemporaries seemed to think she was either a mystic or heretical, not mad. Margery had money, so she was able to achieve a semi-independent status from her husband, and behave as she felt led by her visions. She was not given a guardian, in fact she gained more independence since going mad, so the people around her must not have felt that she needed protection from herself. The townspeople were annoyed with her, but most did not think that she was possessed or had some other kind of spiritual oppression. For the most part, she was free to live her life and worship the way that she felt lead.

The members of the second order probably received the widest range of treatment compared to the other two orders. Margery of Kempe gained more independence, while Joanna gained less. Charles VI was treated with medicine, exercise, prayers, and attempts to free him from possession, while William Mortimer received no recorded treatment. Since these people had the most power and influence, the most attention was given to them. They have the most sources about them as well. However members of the other

two orders also had people go mad and these were treated differently than the rich and powerful, simply because they were not viewed as being as important for the kingdom to operate.

The first order was the church, and its members. While they were seen as being important, since they communed with God, the sources do not show a major push for curing them. The records of Bishop Sutton show a man who was deeply concerned with the vicars under him and wanted the best for them. He appointed a coadjutor for the men who went mad, to help them with their duties. He treated them no differently than he treated the men who went blind or had dementia, things that were seen to be more somatic in nature. His records do not show accusations of demon possession that might make them unfit for service. Instead he sees the vicars and rectors who went mad as being sick and needing help. Now it is impossible to draw major conclusions from his records simply because they are the records from one man, containing only a few years worth of material, and from England. The actions of a bishop in France who lived one hundred years earlier might have been different. We can say that at least some bishops thought that the mad were sick and needed help, not condemnation. Considering the dearth of materials on this subject, one must make broad conclusions and go from there. Bishop Sutton dealt with four vicars and rectors going mad in only nine years of records, so one can assume that there were many churchmen who went mad, and it was either never recorded or those records never survived. Those records would be very helpful to paint a complete picture. Those sources show that mad members of the clergy were treated like any other member who needed some sort of help. They were not looked down

upon by their bishop in charge or accused of demonic possession, as some members of the third order were.

There is really no single answer for how the mad were treated in the Middle Ages. Like most historical questions the answer is “It depends.” What can be said is, for the most part, people were not treated poorly because they were mad. Often their relatives attempted to cure them using whatever means they had available. Now those resources were different, depending on what order one was in, and how important you were seen as being. Overall, most people were treated like a sick person who needed a cure. In that way, medieval people did not see the mad much differently than we do today.

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