

The Representation of Madness in a Medieval English Romance

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In the Middle Ages one of the most interesting, entertaining and many-folded genres, in which a more detailed representation of sentimental affairs appeared and could be best followed was romance. These stories were dealing with “the exploits of knights, ladies and noble families seeking honour, love and adventure.”¹ These works also provided the ideology of chivalry, a code of the social construction and, at the same time, were the most important medium of the idea of courtly love – and (noble) audiences defined their social identities accordingly. The figure of the madman appears as a subversive phenomenon in this context and ideology, and his qualities serve as a fair basis for a research on insanity in the Middle Ages.

For the exploration of the experience of madness in the Middle Ages, at first, a theoretical framework should be provided. To begin with, I turned to Foucault’s *Madness and Civilization*,² and for focusing the details I followed Sylvia Huot’s *Madness in Medieval French Literature*,³ which also provided a very strong basis for my interpretations. However, she relied on a theoretical framework that supports an interpretation focused mostly on psychoanalysis and body-theories, while I would like to approach the texts from another interpretative position and to suggest that the madman also had a deconstructive feature. For illustration, two romance heroes are going to be examined with the help of secondary literature: Sir Thomas Malory’s representation of Sir Launcelot and Sir Tristram.

Madness enters as an other world to the Thisworld of people of the romance.⁴ Regarding the events happening with Tristram and Launcelot, it clearly blocks the flow of the knight’s tale and the hero is literally dislocated from the active position. From that very moment on other characters are needed and brought into the plot to drive the story on: the viewpoint is set to theirs, and focus turns to their attitude and reactions towards the madman. Since the madman is followed by this ‘social gaze’ all the time, his figure is set under public interpretation. On the one hand, the madman is judged by the ideology of knighthood: whether he acts according to or against the code. Consequently, a

behaviour that lacks any humane and knighted⁵ features can have harmful effects on the good name of a knight, and denotes a source of shame.

I will also show that in this romance madness affects via love that binds knights to their ladies. However, it has a negative influence, because it obliterates the effect of the emotions raised by love. At the same time, by transgressing their own boundaries, these knights can mobilize such powers that are suppressed and bound by their own limits made up during their socialization.

1. Madness and the subject

The figure of the *fool* or the *madman* as an odd person, in whom the social order and conventions cease bears the freedom of carnival, and an exemption from the regular. Being the one who bore these characteristics the madman held themselves aloof, but at the same time—as “a kind of living metaphor for unspoken tensions that shape communal consciousness”⁶—remained in the social context. As Huot, referring to Judith Butler’s analysis, asserts, the figure of the madman is defined by its difference from society, but still cannot be detached from this distinguishing process: the identity of the community (and of the individual who is part of that group) are also defined by differing from the madman, since civilians did not want to make common cause with them.⁷ Consequently, the figure of the madman was present in society as some sort of a “verging being”, who differed from normal people, but as a human being, cannot be thoroughly exiled from there. At a third reference point they find their own place, undoing the ordinary opposition of nature and community set up by civilized people, and providing a possibility to look *beyond* that opposition. Foucault connected the figure of the madman to water,⁸ to an entity that being part of nature, already bounds human beings to its dimension and, being highly symbolic, to their own nature as well. In this respect the madman stands for some sort of a dividing line, the very boundary of difference, and, at that same time, a chance for transgression: “The madman’s voyage is at once a rigorous division and an absolute Passage.”⁹

Madmen have the characteristics of both sides. On the one hand, they are depicted with (by establishing one “at the zero degree of his own nature”) the

features of *animality*,¹⁰ “which put them in radical opposition to the human domain of reason”,¹¹ and which cannot be suppressed by the madman. On the other hand, as human beings once present in society they still have their relationships, or at least traces of them that link them to the community, since “their socially constructed identity has been masked or damaged, but not irreparably lost”.¹² As a matter of fact, this irreconcilable opposition of reason and animality (that appears focused in them) keeps the figure of the madman in continuous tension, and gives way to a point of view that goes beyond the ordinary nature-civilization opposition.

The very nature of this tension takes the madman into the situation of a “troubling presence” in society. According to Huot, “the mad are severed both from the defining framework of their own lives, their own memories, the governing faculties of intellect; and from the shared framework of the community, of language, of mutual role-playing and interaction,” and they “become so unlike themselves, so absent from themselves that they cannot be recognized, sometimes even by their closest associates”.¹³ That is, the individual once part of the community disappears and gives place to a presence of an Other, a madman, that is no longer familiar in a civilized community. He is rather an *absence*, a gap in the grid of subjects, where only the trace of this identity remains: in the memory of the sane relations.

Following Huot’s chain of ideas, one can realize that madness has a transgressive feature.¹⁴ It is often characterized as a shift from subject to object,¹⁵ as the mad, on the one hand, present “a disturbing confusion of subjecthood and objecthood”¹⁶, as a sort of deviation from the subject, a (re)active, speaking segment of the community towards a state of an-Other, that cannot stand for itself, only exists. With this twofold definition of madness, an abject-quality can also be realized, further enhanced by Huot, who rolls her ideas on towards Kristeva’s theory on *Powers of Horrors*: “madness blurs the distinction not only between waking up and sleep, but between life and death”¹⁷. In the state of madness the subject loses control of language, and language too becomes confused for him;¹⁸ in addition to this, the difference between the ‘I’ and ‘you’¹⁹ becomes blurred as well – the “verging being” of the madman eventually leads to a *crisis* of identity. ‘Crisis’ with its denotation of a turning point or a dramatic upheaval in one’s life is in the form of the trauma, an undesired, unwanted, still

powerful transgression which “disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules.”²⁰ Consequently, “madness is the horror that is everywhere and nowhere: a trauma haunting the outer limits and the inner core of every individual”.²¹ And with the effacement of the identity its approximation towards death is inevitable – so can madness be associated with the concept of abjection. Huot provides, relying upon a carefully chosen theoretical framework, multiple explanations why the body of society ejects madmen, instead of integrating and taking care of them. From that very moment when the state of madness becomes an object of recognition, the existence of madmen is defined by their bodily desires and primary drives (according to the Freudian terminology), which confine them within their own body. Nothing could hold them back; the Other of Reason is what directs every segment of their lives. For the other subjects surrounding him the madman becomes a source of horror and repulsion, and that is why the ritual chase and beating becomes also emphasized beside the tolerance of the medieval community towards the madman.

Reading the chapter “Stultifera Navis” in Foucault’s *Madness and Civilization*, we can realize that Huot approached the figure of the madman similarly to him; however, Foucault’s chain of ideas follows an inverted order. Foucault starts from the prevailing theme of death that was peculiar to the Middle Ages, and that as an ethereal threat pervaded the everyday life of the people. As a solution for the accumulated tension due to this

fear in the face of absolute limit of death turns inward in a continuous irony; man disarms it in advance, making it an object of derision by giving it an everyday, tamed form, by constantly renewing it in the spectacle of life by scattering it throughout the vices, the difficulties, and the absurdities of all men.[...] Madness is the *déjà-là* of death.²²

So to say, Foucault drives our attention to the carnivalization of death that comes to an end in madness. In his view concealing, banishing and laughing at death brought insanity closer to the medieval; however, the precondition of which remained the “*déjà-là* of death” – this did not efface mortality, only distracted the attention and relieved people’s conception of death. On the contrary, Huot asserts that a symbolic death, the death of the subject is a result of madness: death lurks behind insanity²³ as a train of horror and that is why it

elicits abjection from the members of the community. Her view is based on the separating effects of madness, while Foucault's concept of insanity appears as a path that leads to the carnival and to the final exemption of the world the people lived in. However, both theories can come together in a Foucauldian phrase mentioned in connection with Don Quixote's figure: "madness is still the imperishable life of death."²⁴ The end of the identity and the putting off of death is realized in the very same status of madness, that is "to be mad is to be in the presence of death in life."²⁵

2. Folie n'est pas vasselage

In literary representations the cause of insanity can be different acts or events. In this chapter I will examine what sort of change and alteration can happen with two knights of perfection. I will try to track down the most important features of madness, and also try to shed light upon how it can filter through the knight's sublime appearance, and penetrate into their deepest emotions evoking the crisis of identity I mentioned earlier. My interpretation will also show how it will then remove them from their surroundings, relations, and cause the heroes' insane flight into the wilderness. Madness in these texts is caused by some sort of emotional trauma,²⁶ since emotions are the only phenomena against which muscles of steel, armours of wonders and the greatest duelling experience, too, are inert. Since they are knighted subjects, the heroes are bound by the love of a lady and by the determining power of knighthood. Both of these phenomena support a state (of mind) where the knight is powerless against his lady, and becomes vulnerable to the impact of insanity.

For this paper I used Caxton's version Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur*; however, I also paid attention to Eugene Vinaver's literary historical study that deals with the Winchester Manuscript. The whole book focuses on war, and adventures and love of knights, who set off on narrative paths on their own, or along with some of their fellow knights. Although it is often echoed that the themes of love and war are essential elements of chivalric romances, another experience comes into focus concerning the great knights: that of madness. Two of them experience madness in *Le Morte D'Arthur*: Sir Launcelot du Lake and Sir Tristram de Lioness. There is a parallel in *what* happens to the knights;

however, the main difference lies in *how* these events happen to them. In a structure like that of romances not only love, but—as great influencers—ladies also play a central role.²⁷

Sir Launcelot du Lake

Books VI, XI and XII of Malory's work focus on the figure of Sir Launcelot; however, some episodes dealing with other knights also filter into the narrative of these parts showing the typical structure of romance-building. Although he was mentioned earlier, the "flower of all knighthood" is really introduced in Book VI, in which the reader learns of his magnificent features²⁸ as well as in the episodic adventures where he is seeking further fame and honour. As for fighting and knight errantry, in Malory both have a narrative-forming power. These adventures (during the heroic image-building) are often attached to "damosels", who usually function as alibis for Malory to introduce a shorter (sub)narrative.²⁹ The ladies are either looking for Sir Launcelot, encountering him, fleeing from an attacker and asking for help, or are sent to offer, or to turn his attention to a new challenge (where he can prove himself as a knight and earn honour).³⁰ When these chapters run out of challenges offered by damsels, a "cross-armouring" with Sir Kay opens new opportunities for Launcelot for heroic image-building. This cross-dressing and the use of enchantment foreshadows the identity-violating motifs that play an important role in the following books dealing with the circumstances of Sir Launcelot's becoming insane. In addition, the recognition of the knight's real identity (by other knights) is also a returning motif in the course of these stories.

In the first chapters of Book XI a complete subplot is carefully built up to fulfil the prophecy of the conception of Galahad. The hermit's foretelling of the future events already raises certain unease in the reader, which can be associated with the anticipation of insurmountable obstacles – even for Sir Launcelot, which is in his case the promise of treason and enchantment. Two enchantresses are the organizers of the events, and act independently of each other; however, both of them are needed for the set-up of the subplot: Morgan le Fay to arrange the meeting of Elaine and Sir Launcelot,³¹ and Dame Brisen for the dovetailing of the "lovers". The role of the latter is crucial in these scenes, since due to "her

crafts³² she can manipulate the surroundings in order to divert the plot and, at the same time, triumph over the knight, since, as it was mentioned in Book VI, he can only be overcome by “treason or enchantment”.³³ In the scene when Dame Brisen seduces Sir Launcelot from his knighthood and averts him to another lady, magic and delirium³⁴ interweave and affect simultaneously, giving free way to a doubly subversive power in his mind. The realisation of the illusionary circumstances that had cheated on his senses and that he had slept with another lady, were a blow to his reason – which can be an explanation why he drew his sword on Elaine, and later can be seen as the cause of his double shame.

The other determining feature of a knight, love³⁵ is also hurt in this subplot. A courtly knight devotes his life also to the service of one supreme lady and to proving his affection (a true and noble love) to her. The violation of this feeling undoubtedly causes harm – theoretically speaking, especially for a knight’s identity, since it is determined by having a Lady whom he serves. Even if it only seems as a small rift on the image of the self, it offsets him as a knight and affects his identity as well. This little blur lurks for a while in the narrative and remains hidden in Arthur’s court until the very moment when Sir Bors brings word of Sir Launcelot’s adventures at Corbin and of his begetting of a son. Even if Sir Launcelot is excused of his deeds by Guenever, Elaine’s appearance—later at the feast—recalls in the knight that he is doubly shamed,³⁶ and due to the Queen’s playing upon his subjectivity he becomes only the endurer of the following events. Guenever frames the guests’ accommodation and pays particular attention to the dwelling of Launcelot to save him (and herself) from another shameful event. However, Dame Brisen’s crafts turn the situation inside out again, and bring the knight to Elaine’s arms. When the Queen learns of this second cheat on her and meets the knight on the floor Sir Launcelot is forced to an ethical position where he had to face deeds that he has not committed, at least not intentionally; and with harsh words she rebukes the knight and sends him away. The text then depicts a huge emotional trauma: Launcelot “took such a hearty sorrow at her words that he fell down to the floor in a swoon. [...] And when Sir Launcelot awoke of his swoon, he leapt out at a bay window into the garden”³⁷. The seriousness of his state is further enhanced by Dame Brisen’s reply to Elaine: “for I warn you he is clean out of his mind; and yet he shall be well holpen and but by miracle.”³⁸

The reader can follow Launcelot's figure in Book XII through the telling of the narrator or from the point of view of other characters (through the conceptually used 'social gaze') after he had lost his reason. He is depicted as groaning and sighing, and instead of calm approaching, he usually leaps.³⁹ The description usually gives him animalistic features,⁴⁰ and, at the same time, enhances the madman's connection to nature, drawing its figure towards a liminal position: although he remains human in his appearance, he is unable to communicate, flees from other human beings and acts like a wild creature. However, he cannot be part of nature, either. When coming across other knights and companions by whom he is attacked, Launcelot overcomes them with unheard of physical strength, and the reader can get an impression of him becoming even more powerful than earlier being the best knight. Without his armour and clothed in silence, Launcelot is unrecognisable for the other characters; however, there is always someone among them who can identify him, or at least guess that he is a knight of great worship.⁴¹ Although the narrator refers to him as Sir Launcelot, his identity seems to be lost at the very moment of his becoming insane, it only survives as a fragment of remembrance in the memory of other characters and this trace keeps his narrative in the plot as a hiding stream.

The two sorts of treatment applied to Launcelot by his finders may reflect the medievals' attitude towards madmen. Foucault's mentioning of the different attitudes towards madmen in the first chapter of his *Madness and Civilization* (although it is a view closer to the Renaissance than to the Middle Ages) can be traced in Malory's text, with some inconsistencies, however. In the monograph it is asserted that madmen were not expelled in every case, but cared for and enclosed to certain places reserved for them.⁴²

Malory deals with the treatment of a madman in three shorter narratives. The mad Launcelot first comes across Sir Bliant's group. After having found him they take him to the Castle Blank where "they bound his hands and his feet, and gave him good meats and good drinks, and brought him again to his strength and his fairness".⁴³ Launcelot's being bound and held in the castle, in my view, represents a treatment to balance and to give a madman limits again after losing them in insanity. Nevertheless, this "cure" can also be seen as an attempt to approximate the madman from nature (*wilderness*) to social *order*: still the main

cause of failure is that his helpers only tried to heal the body and expected a corresponding mental melioration. Later, when Launcelot encounters a hermit, he is taken to a hermitage, where “the hermit healed him of his wound.”⁴⁴ Since the saintly man’s lore was not thoroughly appropriate for the task, according to the text, he “waxed feeble, both of his [Launcelot’s] body and of his wit; for the default of his sustenance he waxed more wooder than he was aforehand”⁴⁵ and then he flees and disappears in the forest. In my view, the failure to heal Launcelot can be associated with the hermit’s own liminal position. Since he himself is also someone who is separated from society, his attempt to approximate the knight towards order is doomed to fail.

The third story represents both of the main Foucauldian examples of dealing with madmen appearing among the city folk; that is, caring for the insane in a place reserved for them, and on the other hand, the public chase and beating of madmen.⁴⁶ In chapter 3 (still in Book XII) “by adventure” the mad knight got to the city of Corbin where “he ran through the town to the castle; and then all the young men [...] ran after Sir Launcelot, and there they threw turves at him, and gave him many sad strokes.”⁴⁷ Such occasions are considered in the Foucault’s work as a kind of mock race, where the madman is ritually driven out of the city.⁴⁸ However, this scene could not only function as a rite of exclusion, but also as a part of a *rite de passage*. As for Launcelot’s case, he arrived to the city of Corbin as a stranger and, according to van Gennep’s scheme, he came into a doubly isolated status.⁴⁹ Reaching the castle successfully after the chase, he was welcome, provided with clothes and enclosed to a little house,⁵⁰ which shows that he was kept in a liminal position. Still, this implies the schematic attitude towards an alien and a treatment for a madman. In King Pelles’s castle Launcelot is taken care of and seems to be counted as a man: however, the reader could feel as if he was taken as an animal. Despite the fact that he is given clothes, he is enclosed into a little house, the surrounding people put “straw underneath him”, and “then every day they would throw him meat, and set him drink, but there was but few would bring him meat to his hands.”⁵¹ Eventually, Launcelot comes to his senses in the castle: when the king’s daughter, Elaine recognizes her love behind the insane features, she asks her father to help, and then the mad knight is brought to a chamber “where was the holy vessel of the Sangrail”, and putting him into it, “by miracle and by virtue of that holy vessel Sir Launcelot was healed and

recovered” – which refers back to Dame Brisen’s reply on the only way Sir Launcelot can be healed.⁵²

When Sir Launcelot comes to his senses, he gives evidence of feeling shame and regret, even though he was not in control of his own acts and thoughts. In the dialogue of chapter 5, one can realize that the time Launcelot spent in madness slips from his mind completely. His shame can be associated with the sense that he fell to insanity and was a madman, apparently at the far end from his sublime knightly status, one who cannot meet the requirements of the knightly ideas, therefore unable to relate to them and determine himself as a splendid knight.⁵³

The sudden feeling of regret—that Launcelot had done a very reprehensible act when he drew his sword upon Elaine—can be due to either an unauthorized way of thinking, or supreme sensitivity⁵⁴ that is one of the results of the transgression of insanity. The way he refers to himself also supports this idea: he calls himself (and makes others refer to him as well) *Le Chevaler Mal Fet*, ‘the knight that hath trespassed’.⁵⁵ Through the negative connotations of trespassing he faces himself and regrets sinning against knightly behaviour, and at the same time, this sinning suggests the abject feature of madness and losing control of heroic deeds: he virtually came off of the body of knighthood, and dooms himself to live on as a deviant, condemned knight.

Shame cannot be avoided by the other knight of great worship, Sir Tristram, either; however, at him it is not as emphatic as Sir Launcelot’s. Sir Tristram and Isoud are watched and monitored all the time by King Mark (who intends to find infidelity, indeed) to uncover the private dallying of the knight and to cause harm to his public reputation. When he is caught in Isoud’s chamber he “demands that he be given the opportunity to fight to avoid death”,⁵⁶ while he also “suggests that his good deeds in some way outweigh his adultery with Isoud”.⁵⁷ Although he tries to fight for his love, eventually he becomes exiled from Cornwall, which provides another piece to build the background story of his becoming mad.

Sir Tristram de Lionès

Unlike the story of Sir Launcelot, Sir Tristram's tale can be followed by the reader already from his ancestry and birth. Malory adapted and elaborated the main sequences of the French *Prose Tristan* and "shifted the emphasis from the original story of tragic love to the protagonist's adventures in the service of the Round Table."⁵⁸ In the beginning of Sir Tristram's tale Malory seems to follow the style of the *Prose Tristan*: the narrative parts are more frequent than in the other books of his *Le Morte D'Arthur*, and only later (when Tristram starts his knight-errantry to get glory and a name) does the peculiar dialogical technique by which the author usually depicts the knights appear.

The romance plot starts when Sir Tristram is being drawn into a subplot the organizing motifs of which are poison and potion. Getting to the place where the poison on the sword of Sir Marhaus was made can be associated with the initiative rites.⁵⁹ After his recovering he "cast great love to La Beale Isoud,"⁶⁰ became her knight and fought in her name in various other narrative paths;⁶¹ however, Sir Tristram returns once again in the name of King Mark. On their way back to Cornwall they accidentally drink the potion that was intended to raise love between the King and La Beale Isoud, and that determines the main narrative of their tragic love later on, making them unable to separate themselves from each other.

Love, as we mentioned earlier as one of the main determining features of the knight, is hurt in Sir Tristram's Books as well. Cheating appears again, just like in Sir Launcelot's tale, and becomes one of the causes of the emotional trauma that shoves the knight to madness.⁶² However, cheating itself is two-fold here. Another subplot opens when Sir Tristram is exiled from Cornwall, departs to Brittany where he is healed by Isoud la Blanche Mains,⁶³ and whom he eventually weds.⁶⁴ However (even if he acted against the courtly code and left his lady in this sense), Tristram cannot escape from the memory of the love felt towards La Beale Isoud and sets off to Cornwall and takes Sir Kehydus with him. The following "cheating scene" remains hidden in the main text and appears only as an allusion;⁶⁵ that is, articulated only in a symbolic dimension, during a correspondence. Sir Kehydus falls in love with the Queen at first sight and "then privily he wrote unto her letters and ballads of the most goodliest that were used

in those days,⁷⁶⁶ and because of the feeling of compassion the Queen replied secretly, without letting Sir Tristram know it. When he discovers the correspondence he feels great pain and as if they were traitors to him and after an unsuccessful attack on Sir Kehydus, he “armed him in such armour as he had for to fight with them that would withstand him.”⁷⁶⁷

The derangement of Sir Tristram’s does not happen as suddenly as Sir Launcelot’s; however, it can also be attributed to an emotional trauma felt after the discovery of the letters. The “great dole” overcomes him slowly and dismantles his identity, as it is shown textually in Malory’s work. The escaping figure of Sir Tristram can be followed through the view of other characters appearing along his narrative path. At first Sir Fergus (who tells about the knight’s great sorrow to Isoud’s damosel) goes after the knight and functions as the describing gaze for the narrator: “[T]hen upon a night he put his horse from him, and then unlaced his armour, and then Sir Tristram would go into the wilderness, and brast down the trees and boughs”⁷⁶⁸ and he spent there several months, “[a]nd then was he naked and waxed lean and poor of flesh; and so he fell in the fellowship of herdmen and shepherds.”⁷⁶⁹ His insanity is not so sudden, extreme and powerfully displayed as Launcelot’s, with the animalistic features being less emphasized too. However, the strength of his blows let the releasing effect of madness be shown. Although Tristram wanders naked with a sword in his hand and let the shepherds beat him and make “him like a fool,”⁷⁷⁰ he preserves one of his main features: he plays the harp when he gets one in his hands. Admittedly, his connection to the herdsmen and to art is what stabilizes him in a liminal position,⁷⁷¹ and the low-key representation of the animalistic features show that his liminality is focused in his character and is not displayed by the place to which he is confined.

A certain clothing-metaphor can be actuated in the scene when King Arthur’s fool, Dagonet comes across King Mark and tells him about his encounter and fight⁷⁷² with the mad knight.⁷⁷³ Here Dagonet identifies Tristram as a (fellow) fool,⁷⁷⁴ too; however, he also emphasizes the difference between them, by referring to himself as ‘I fool’, while calling the other ‘that fool’. Dagonet determines himself and his subjectivity vis-à-vis the other fool in a way that theoretically speaking, he establishes himself as a subject with an identity he decided to put on.⁷⁷⁵ As a “speaking subject”, Dagonet is able to give account of

the status of a fool, a status the making of which he himself decided to undertake. However, the very subjects of experiencing madness remain the great knights whose identity were determined and built up after being knighted and dismantled at the moment of the onset of madness.⁷⁶

Another telling word is that Dagonet mentions that the fool is naked, which signifies a symbolic disrobing of Tristram's identity. It is like casting his armour off before fleeing to the wilderness, which can be interpreted as a symbolic breakdown of the identity and the (re)appearance of the pure, unmotivated subject that cannot determine itself since it lacks language for it. As a matter of fact, with the scarce usage of language the mad Tristram only refuses to make common cause with other characters.

The duel between the mad Tristram and Sir Dagonet can also be interpreted as a hiding stream-memento, a textual representation of the serious discourse and the comic sub-discourse in Malory's work.⁷⁷ The mad (tragic) knight and "a knight of a fool" encounter, and the "serious side" symbolically triumphs over the comic one.⁷⁸ Ironically, the comic knight is the one that can use language and determine himself, as opposed to Tristram: what is more, their description also show that the comic side carries certain merriment, since Dagonet is denoted (and referred by himself as well) with the word "fool", and not circumscribed with expressions like "wood", "out of his wits", "out of his mind", "wild wood" that signify 'pathological' madness. By the same token, Dagonet's figure has a more subtle and theoretical feature in this scene, although only momentarily. The fool's appearance unbinds the madman's situation that is already beyond (in a third position) the nature-society opposition. Being a third element in another structure, the figure of the fool pushes the insane into another binary opposition: that of the madman and society.⁷⁹

The Books of Sir Tristram represent the treatment of the madman similarly to the Books of Sir Launcelot; however, the Foucauldian examples are not so well elaborated. His first encounter with a caring man is during his ten-day stay at the hermitage, where a symbolic taming is represented in the text.⁸⁰ It does not seem to be successful, since a bit later Tristram comes across a giant and he grabs another sword to fight him and save the life of Sir Dinaunt. King Mark succeeded in finding Tristram, following and tracing back the telling of Dagonet

and Sir Dinaunt, and then he made his knights to *put mantles on*⁸¹ the madman and take him to his castle where “they bathed him, and washed him, and gave him hot supplings till they had brought him well to his remembrance; but all this while there was no creature that knew Sir Tristram, nor what man he was.”⁸² In these scenes, Tristram’s insanity was closer to a sort of melancholy caused by great sadness felt over the loss of his lady’s love for him. The healing method also supports this chain of ideas, since wonderful events or holy devices were not needed for bringing him to his senses; however, the presence of a community obviously plays a crucial role here as well: they recognize the persona of the madman and try to assimilate him again. This (re)approximation is represented in the recognition scene, where the still speechless Sir Tristram lays in the garden and is recognized only by the little brachet, which was given to Isoud as a love-token. Since no one knew “what man he was”, we can see that madness drew off the subject (of dismantled identity) from society and deprived it of all his attachments, and so it can only live on as a sort of absence in the network of relations.

Malory’s tragic knights, as we have seen, both experience madness. Although, the basic points (that is, *what* happens to them) correspond in their stories, there are also differences in *how* does all this befall. The most striking difference is that Launcelot’s insanity is much more powerful, while that of Tristram is somewhat low-key. The animalistic features are also much more emphasized, and the subplot with the hermit is more negative in Launcelot’s story with the reader accompanying him to the deep whirl of madness. His recovery is also due to the holy vessel (and Dame Birsen’s magic); however, the integrating effort of the surrounding people also plays an important role. At the same time, Tristram’s insanity is much more “shallow”. He is more connected to society – his liminal quality is focused in his figure (and not in the place to which he is confined): he plays the harp, fights with a sword and joins the herdsmen. Tristram destabilizes his identity⁸³ from within and the onset of madness is not denoted by one sudden impact of emotional trauma, but is rather a prolonged process. For recovery he only needs human care and can be integrated by being talked to and brought back to his role. Now we can see that the physical plane is more emphasized in Launcelot, as opposed to Tristram, whose madness “takes place” in a symbolic dimension.

Treating Madness

In Malory's text Sir Launcelot did not speak except for two occasions. However, both were accounts of dissociating himself, and were rather like melancholic remarks.⁸⁴ Apart from these he seems to remain enclosed in the text, until the very moment when the maiden of the Sangrail appears and then with the help of the holy vessel he is cured. The other knight of great worship, Sir Tristram de Liones, also remains silent in his madness, except for two utterances, one of which is when he asks his lady to leave him alone.⁸⁵ These utterances show the madman as a subject removed from society. According to Foucault's and Huot's conjoined theories, in the state of madness the subject loses control of language. At the same time, language too becomes confusing for him, just like the difference between the 'I' and 'you',⁸⁶ which signifies that the identity of the subject is dismantled since it lacks the language to determine himself. That is, the 'I' cannot assume itself as a "subject", since it is only possible if the position of the 'I' is evoked by someone vis-à-vis to him, and because, according to Benveniste, the subject itself is formed during speech. This is one of the reasons why the madman should be followed all the time and a shift from 'subject' to 'object' happens in the representation. The mad subject is unable to communicate with and react to his surroundings which leads to a shift in emphasis from self-representation to narratorial and to 'social gaze'. Now the determining feature of self-awareness also belongs to the community, as Huot claimed, so the identity of the community (and of the individual who is part of that group) is also defined as different from the madman.⁸⁷

In these texts the madman was always pushed among boundaries by the caring attention of the community. This and the continuous gaze of the surrounding people and that the mad subjects were called on their names helped in integrating the madman to society. So the identity of the subject was formed from the outside. The main point of this attention is, on the one hand, the interpretation of the madman and the continuous talk where the madman is assumed as 'you' (therefore to raise again his self-awareness and the assumption of the 'I'). On the other hand, taking care of the madman is somewhat similar to pushing among boundaries again and determining his identity from the outside:

just like putting “mantles on him”,⁸⁸ “ordain[ing] him clothes to his body, and straw beneath him, and a little house”.⁸⁹ The knights coming to their senses seem as if they were rewritten: they are “held” in language, brought into discourse and are overseen. And as a result of this the madman becomes assimilated: Launcelot recovers with the help of the holy vessel, Tristram needed care and being called on his name. From that very moment their identities are put back on them and they lose their abject feature.

3. Out of the Wood

The love of the knights “heels up” after returning from the bypaths of insanity and recovering their knightly identity. They remain as strong and mighty as they were, just as if transgression—caused by the experience of madness—had made the boundaries that determined (and at the same time limited) them as knightly subjects permeable. The experience of madness is then the dismantling of identity and the losing of knightly perfection (that ejects the subject from society similarly to madness⁹⁰), with which the heroes’ power that was held inside transgress these limits. After coming to their senses, with this newly gained freedom they can perform acts that lead to even greater worship – along with public interpretation that attributes to the knights more glory and honour.

Their liminal position is the madmen’s most characteristic feature. In their insane flight they offend against their most determining qualities (knighthood and “vertuous love”), which would be interpreted by the ‘social gaze’ as shameful acts. However, the madman is saved, since (with the dismantling of the identity, revealing animalistic features and observing silence) they are hardly recognized and so shame cannot be attributed to them. In those who yet (seems to) recognize them the feeling of the sublime arises.⁹¹ It is evoked, on the one hand, by the knights’ perfection and their extraordinary abilities that raise the (uneasy) feeling of the spectator’s own limits. At the same time, the “great dole” and suffering that caused madness affects via empathy and attracts the spectators. However, abjection is also a sort of reaction that is given to the madman’s appearance, and has an effect similar to that of the sublime: by sharing the same attributes as human beings the members of the society cannot become estranged from the madman despite their repulsive features. The

community reacts by keeping them in a liminal position: Launcelot was kept in a reserved place⁹²; Tristram lived with the herdsmen.⁹³

The figure of the madman is endowed with deconstructive features. Madness dislocates the knights from the center of the story and then they are followed from the point of view of the narrator and other characters in the romance. They are also removed from their ladies and fail to perform as knights, which means that the frames of the romance plot are also stirred up. As we can see, madness affects mostly these two determining features of romances, with the subversion of which it only reinforces the importance of them. The frames become perceivable only by the madman's transgression, and when the hero comes to his senses, these frames figuratively withdraw and lurk in the background.

Secondly, madness dissolves the binary opposition of nature and society. The figure of madman bears the features of both sides and, by differing from them, he embodies a third point of view that points beyond this opposition: he is continuously on the move (and since he lacks language, therefore cannot stand for himself) and the reader can only follow him through the gaze of the narrator or of other characters. The reader is at the same time a fellow-interpreter of the community who also becomes subjected to the feelings raised by events and hardships that the figure of the madman has to endure. Thus the binary opposition is stolen into the narrative paths wherever the madman runs: that of the reader and the audience. This is how these deconstructive features test the frames and peculiarities of the romance plot.

Only the trace is what is left behind (in the grid of intersubjective relations) by the subject that dismantles its identity. It is signified by the absence that is left after the disappearance of the knight, and the memory of his acts that are still held in high respect. This trace and characters that are on the track of the mad knights (e.g. Sir Bors, Sir Ector and Sir Lionel; Sir Palomides) also drive the narrative on and open new paths for other subplots – and other stories for which the madness-plots provide a crossroad.

Another determining feature, love, remains untouched. It serves as a(n unmoved) mover of the romance and is present as a basis of the relations among the characters. In the texts I examined, madness was caused by a sudden impact

of emotional trauma that is invoked by the lady's deviation from this sentiment: either by powerful rebukes and doubting the knight's worthiness;⁹⁴ or by a hidden (symbolic) cheat on the lover.⁹⁵ So affects madness via love that bounds the knight to his lady. And as central characters, the knights become dislocated, removed from the body of knighthood and cut off the sentiment felt towards the lady, which would both divert the main stream of the narrative. They can only come to their senses with the help of the caring audience, who were at the same time the other important gaze that practiced a continuous interpretation on them.

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¹ Roberta L. Krueger, "Introduction" In. Roberta L. Krueger, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 2.

² Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1967).

³ Sylvia Huot, *Madness in Medieval French Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003).

⁴ My idea is based on: Jeff Rider, "The other worlds of romance," In: Roberta L. Krueger, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 115-131.

⁵ Nagy uses the term 'knighted' in his article "as a parallel to the widely used term 'gendered' to suggest that knighthood determines the identities of the figures in Malory's narrative similar to the way gender determines subjects. Nagy, Gergely, "A Fool of a Knight, a Knight of a Fool: Malory's Comic Knights," *Arthuriana* 14.4 (2004): 59.

⁶ Huot, *Madness in Medieval French Literature*, 3.

⁷ Huot, *Madness in Medieval French Literature*, 5.

⁸ "It is for the other world that the madman sets sail in his fools' boat; it is from the other world that he comes when he disembarks." Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, 11. On the one hand, water was considered in the Middle Ages as an impassable boundary for supernatural beings (e.g. demons and witches), so playing an important role in the belief can emphasize its confining feature. See: Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 156-165. On the other hand, the triad of water, the Otherworld and the figure of the madman turns out to be closely connected following this chain of ideas. Water also symbolizes a power that filters through and corrodes every kind of boundary, and since it was considered as a gate to the Otherworld it already foreshadows the boundary-feature of the madman.

⁹ Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, 11.

¹⁰ In Foucault's view (that animals symbolically bore "the values of humanity"), with a sudden change of this relation these symbols became the signifiers of the insane qualities that are present in the depth of the human mind. In my opinion it is the animalistic feature that drives the madman away from society and that "reveals the dark rage, the sterile madness that lie in men's hearts." Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, 21.

¹¹ Both quotations: Gary Gutting, "Foucault and the History of Madness" In Gutting, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 53.

¹² Huot, *Madness in Medieval French Literature*, 3.

¹³ Quotations: Huot, *Madness in Medieval French Literature*, 1.

¹⁴ For further support I used Sutyák's monograph in which he takes account of Foucault's theory on transgression and associates it with madness. By applying his theory we may realize that insanity is not like disregarding of boundaries at all: by violating limits and boundaries, it forces them to exercise their controlling power through which they can reveal themselves. Although madness impugns, it never negates the existence of these boundaries. It rather confirms them, while, at the same time, validates its own limitless source as well. This quality of madness also refers to the phenomenon of the *carnival*, the function of which is quite the same, since it does not resolve, but subverts social order, and, at the same time, it confirms the authority of these boundaries. Sutyák, *Michel Foucault gondolkodása*, 21-23.

¹⁵ Concerning the subjects being examined later in primary literature, we will see that in the representation of madness there is a shift in point of view which can be traced back to the subject's coming off the body of society and that he is unable to communicate with and react to his surroundings. The mad knights can be followed through the narrator's and other character's view: the continuous relay makes it possible to follow the insane heroes who are lost in the endless paths of their own confused mind. As a result of this, the public interpretation plays an important role, although the identity of the mad knights most of the time remains hidden except for one or two recognizers. This public view (or 'social

gaze', so to say) is important, because it has (according to ideology of the knighted world) a continuous determining and interpreting effect on them and it calls later the knights' regret of their madness and also a feeling of shame.

¹⁶ Huot, *Madness in Medieval French Literature*, 1. The corpse haunts death, signifies the end of the 'I' and a state/us from which the 'I' wants to withdraw continuously, that is "the utmost of abjection." The corpse signifies the shift between subjecthood and objecthood: it is "the most sickening of wastes, is a border that has encroached upon everything. It is no longer I who expel, »I« is expelled. The border has become an object." At the corpse a boundary appears: it is part of the I, some sort of a limit that binds the (body of the) I to death – the end of the identity also reveals and "death infecting life" is what makes the 'I' be convulsive, and what disseminates the subject to both parts of the boundary: abjection haunts the boundaries of subjectivity. Quotations: Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (Leon S. Roudiez transl., New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 3-4.

¹⁷ Huot, *Madness in Medieval French Literature*, 4.

¹⁸ One can realize a parallel between the unwanted separation from language and not being subjected to social order, and Foucault remarks on the madman: „He is a prisoner in the midst of what is the freest, the most open of routes: bound fast at the infinite crossroads. He is the Passenger *par excellence*: that is the prisoner of the passage". Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, 11. Since the mad do not know the way how to take steps on this road and not even the direction, they become completely lost and bound in a state of a being that cannot express himself, that has lost its surroundings, and is confined to insanity.

¹⁹ Émile Benveniste, "Szubjektivitás a nyelvben." In: Bókay Antal, Vilcsek Béla, Szamosi Gertrud, Sári László eds. *A posztmodern irodalomtudomány kialakulása* (Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 2002), 60.

²⁰ Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, 4.

²¹ Huot, *Madness in Medieval French Literature*, 10.

²² Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, 16.

²³ Trying to approximate Foucault's conception about the connection of death and madness to Hout's, in my opinion madness is "the *déjà-là* of death". On the one hand, because for the late medievals (and for the people of the early Renaissance) it was the mocking of death that helped to unburden the fear from the ever-present boundary with irony and derision. On the other hand, madness is what dismantles the identity and brings it to a symbolic death, like an ephemeral transgression of the lurking end of the individual. Death as a boundary of existence is always present in the conscience of the others even without the experience of having transgressed it; however, by transgression (experiencing the 'other' side of it as well) its presence becomes even more deepened in other individuals. Therefore, it can trigger the feeling of abject and sublime in them, since death is an experience that awaits everyone. Madness is the wraith of the end, in which one can feel the lack of the one passed away and left traces behind. My thoughts were based on: Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, 15-17, and Sutyák, *Michel Foucault gondolkodása*, 24.

²⁴ Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, 32.

²⁵ During, *Foucault and Literature*, 33.

²⁶ According to the Freudian terminology, trauma has an effective impact on the subject when he/she is forced to a situation in which a proper reaction (e.g. 'retention') to the experience is restrained or objected. On trauma: J. Laplanche, J. B. Pontalis, *A pszichoanalízis szótára* (Budapest: Akadémiai kiadó, 1994), 486-489.

²⁷ My thoughts were mostly based on: Helen Moore, "Introduction," In: *Le Morte Darthur* (London: Wordsworth Classics, 1996), v-xiii.

²⁸ "[B]ut in especial it was proved on Sir Launcelot du Lake, for in all tournament and jousts and deeds of arms, both for life and death he passed all other knights, and at no time he was never overcome but if it were by *treason* or *enchantment* [...], Queen Guiniver had him in great favour above all knights, and in certain he loved the queen again above all other ladies damosels of his life." (italics – mine) Sir Thomas Malory, *Le Morte D'Arthur* (Janet Cowen ed., Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), vol. 1, 194.

²⁹ They can also be interpreted as nodes of chance during a knight's adventure. According to Jill Mann, "The adventure is beyond the knight's control; it is something that comes to him." Jill Mann, "Malory: Knightly Combat in *Le Morte D'Arthur*" In: Boris Ford ed., *The New Pelican Guide to English Literature. Medieval Literature: Chaucer and the Alliterative Tradition* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1982) vol. 1, 333.

³⁰ And since these requests are of ladies, they should not be turned down in accordance with the ethical code of knights. (cf. the Pentecostal Oath, Malory, *Le Morte D'Arthur*, vol. 1, 115-116.) Consequently, the damsels are devices used for continuing the story and play an important role in the heroic image-building, that is how different identities are established, formed and become knights of great worship (in Malory's knightly world). Cf. Andrew Lynch, *Malory's Book of Arms: The Narrative Combat in Le Morte Darthur* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1997), 1-15.

³¹ The meeting of "the fairest lady of the world" with the "best knight of the world" in the "fairest tower that ever he [Launcelot] saw." However, this arrangement is not as clearly intentional as Dame Brisen's, since Launcelot seems only a fitting link of the scene. Malory, *Le Morte D'Arthur*, vol. 2, 188-189.

³² Malory, *Le Morte D'Arthur*, vol. 2, 191.

³³ Malory, *Le Morte D'Arthur*, vol. 1, 194.

³⁴ "And then Dame Brisen brought Sir Launcelot a cupful of wine; and anon as he had drunken that wine he was so assotted and mad that he might make no delay; [...] and he weened that maiden Elaine had been Queen Guenever." Malory, *Le Morte D'Arthur*, vol. 2, 192.

³⁵ According to R. T. Davies's article on Malory's "Vertuose Love", the four essential features that determine a knight's (true) love are: stability, loyalty and the rejection of promiscuity and of impetuosity. Another important 'criterion' is that "[t]he knight must serve God first and the lady the second"; however, this subordination is not so rigid, since the order can be inverted. R. T. Davies, "Malory's »Vertuose Love«" In *Studies in Philology*, 53 (1956), 461-462., cf. Malory, *Le Morte D'Arthur*, 18.25, 425-426.

³⁶ The feeling of shame is the most emphatic in Sir Launcelot. Firstly, he felt shame because he drew a sword upon Elaine (a lady) in his first anger over the treason, and so he violated the Pentecostal Oath. Secondly, when he cheated on Guenever and the affair became uncovered before the Queen (that is, ironically, an adultery in adultery, since Launcelot effectively assumes himself as a lover to “the Queen to whom he is as faithful as if he were committed to her in marriage”), he offends, according to Davies, the “criteria” of “vertuose love”. Davies, “Malory’s »Vertuose Love«”, 461-462.

³⁷ Malory, *Le Morte D’Arthur*, vol. 2, 202.

³⁸ Malory, *Le Morte D’Arthur*, vol. 2, 204.

³⁹ Malory, *Le Morte D’Arthur*, vol. 2, 205, 216-220.

⁴⁰ In Foucault’s view, this sort of *animality* is what hides in men’s hearts and that represents the dark rage and chaos for other subjects living in the social order. Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, 21.

⁴¹ “‘Sir,’ said the dwarf, ‘it is not worship to hurt him for he is a man out of his wit; and doubt ye not he hath been a man of great worship [...], and me beseemeth [...] he resembleth much onto Sir Launcelot, for him I saw at the great tournament beside Lonazep.’”; “And when they saw so many wounds upon him, all they deemed that he had been a man of worship”; “And when she beheld him, anon she fell in remembrance of him, and knew him verily for Sir Launcelot.” Malory, *Le Morte D’Arthur*, 216, 220, 221.

⁴² Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, 9.

⁴³ Malory, *Le Morte D’Arthur*, vol. 2, 217.

⁴⁴ Malory, *Le Morte D’Arthur*, vol. 2, 219.

⁴⁵ Malory, *Le Morte D’Arthur*, vol. 2, 219.

⁴⁶ Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, 10.

⁴⁷ The expression “gave / lashed him many sad strokes” appears in Malory’s work more than fifteen times and generally used in the description of knightly combat. This implies that it could be used as a further enhancement for the

feeling of the sublime, on the one hand, for the audience, while, on the other hand, for the spectators in the story. Malory, *Le Morte D'Arthur*, 220.

⁴⁸ Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, 10.

⁴⁹ On the one hand, such a person is weak, since he is left out of society, while, on the other hand, he is strong, since he is taken to be part of the sacred world, while the members of society remain in the profane. The purpose of these rites was to neutralize or to make him benevolent. There are usually three stages of the rites of passage: first, the *rite of separation*: one of the realizations of this rite, according to van Gennep's work, corresponds to the description of the chase of Launcelot by the citizens. In the *marginal stage* the stranger was given clothes, a separated accommodation and some foodstuff. While the rite of passage ended with the *rites d'agrégation*, when the alien is received to the members of society. This way, as van Gennep asserts these liminal rites were for the preparation of alliance. Arnold van Gennep, *Átmeneti rítusok* (Budapest: L'Harmattan, 2007), 48-49, 55, 59-61.

⁵⁰ Malory, *Le Morte D'Arthur*, vol. 2, 220.

⁵¹ Both quotations: Malory, *Le Morte D'Arthur*, vol. 2, 220.

⁵² Both quotations: Malory, *Le Morte D'Arthur*, vol. 2, 221.

⁵³ In her article, Angela Gibson shows that Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur* "evinces a strong ethic of shame that values the public display of loyalties" and which is strongly connected to the defamation of one's reputation. She also mentions Mark Lambert's claim that "[t]he desire to avoid shame rules [...] the characters in the book," so plays public interpretation an important role in each knight's life concerning their acts according to knighthood and "vertuouse love". When experiencing madness the knights are always followed by an outer view (let it be the narrator's or other characters' point of view): they are seen as running into the wilderness leaving behind their weapons and armour, fighting without art and leaping like an animal, and as they cannot meet the requirements of being a knight "of great worship" and leaving their ladies. In the light of Gibson's views, madness is like an 'unintended infidelity,' because when experiencing it, the knighted subject turns inside out almost at each point of its determining points. Shame cannot be avoided: the knights' actions are always

followed, and if they are identified in their madness, it can cause a disturbance in the social world and would ultimately lead to their defamation. That is why each of them has a feeling of shame right after coming to their senses and being told about their insanity. However, Malory saves his knights: they remain unidentified almost throughout their madness – just like the mad subject the sane identity of which has faded out of the memory of his relations. My thoughts were based on: Angela Gibson, “Malory’ Reformulation of Shame” In *Arthuriana*, 11.4 (2001).

⁵⁴ Sir Launcelot is now (due to the emotional trauma, and Guenevere’s words that tore him away from her) free of his lady’s, authorizing gaze, which makes him possible to reflect on himself in a much more independent way.

⁵⁵ Malory, *Le Morte D’Arthur*, vol. 2, 224.

⁵⁶ Gibson, “Malory’s Reformulation of Shame”, 68.

⁵⁷ Gibson, “Malory’s Reformulation of Shame”, 68.

⁵⁸ Eugene Vinaver, ed, *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), vol. 3, 1443.

⁵⁹ According to Celtic tradition, crossing rivers, lakes and seas can be associated with the crossing of the boundaries of the Otherworld, which can have a result of initiation or getting supernatural power. Sir Tristram’s travel to Ireland can be in connection with this concept, since the chapters dealing with his stay tell about his recovering from a mortal wound, finding his lady and becoming (and establishing an identity as) a sterling knight. Proinsias Mac Cana, *Kelta Mitológia* (Budapest: Corvina Kiadó, 1993), 125., Malory, *Le Morte D’Arthur*, vol. 1, 317-318.

⁶⁰ Malory, *Le Morte D’Arthur*, vol. 1, 317.

⁶¹ As Vinaver points out: “Tristram’s first duty is to knighthood, and his fidelity to Isoud only serves as an occasional illustration of his chivalrous conduct.” Vinaver, *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, 1447.

⁶² Sir Tristram also offends against Malory’s conception of “vertuous love,” since he did not remain faithful to La Beale Isoud. Cf. Davies, “Malory’s »Vertuose Love«,” 462. Malory, *Le Morte D’Arthur*, vol. 1, 368-369.

⁶³ Isoud la Blanche Mains seems to be the Other of La Beale Isoud: a replacement (simulacrum) for the object of desire, the access to which seems to be lost for Sir Tristram when he is exiled from Cornwall. The similar features provide connection between them: both ladies have the same name (however, with different adjectives by which they differ from each other), both of them healed Tristram's mortal, otherwise incurable wounds. Although Isoud la Blanche Mains is present rather as a paper figure (unable to satisfy the absence of La Beale Isoud) without any considerable utterance, La Beale Isoud remains a determining character of the narrative, especially that of Tristram's madness.

⁶⁴ Malory, *Le Morte D'Arthur*, vol. 1, 367-368.

⁶⁵ The correspondence may illustrate Gibson's theory on infidelity and shame. A knight "is better off not knowing about his lady's faithlessness because [...] love for a woman can distract from rather than inspire a knight's social loyalties." She also claims that a knight should react on the given situation or "risk what amounts to death". However, Malory, again, saves his knight and reduces the damage of reputation by pushing his hero to madness, a symbolic death, in which he (his identity) disappears from the surrounding people's memory and leaves only dim traces. Gibson, "Malory's Reformulation of Shame", 69.

⁶⁶ Malory, *Le Morte D'Arthur*, vol. 1, 410.

⁶⁷ Malory, *Le Morte D'Arthur*, vol. 1, 412.

⁶⁸ Malory, *Le Morte D'Arthur*, vol. 1, 413.

⁶⁹ Malory, *Le Morte D'Arthur*, vol. 1, 414.

⁷⁰ Malory, *Le Morte D'Arthur*, vol. 1, 414.

⁷¹ Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, 11.

⁷² Another interesting feature is that although the fight between the two 'fools' takes place just like a knightly combat (e.g. on Tristram's side to protect the herdmen, while on Dagonet's side to avenge the his squires), it lacks an appropriate challenge, and the asking for the knight's name to identify him after the fight. On the one hand, Dagonet's behaviour can be illuminating, since "he does not even *try* to act very much like a knight." (Italics – N. G.) Nagy Gergely,

“A Fool of a Knight, a Knight of a Fool: Malory’s Comic Knights,” *Arthuriana* 14.4 (2004): 63.

⁷³ “[B]eware, King Mark, that thou come not about that well in the forest, for there is a fool naked, and that fool and I fool met together, and he had almost slain me.” Malory, *Le Morte D’Arthur*, vol. 1, 416.

⁷⁴ Vinaver, *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, 1472.

⁷⁵ According to Benveniste’s theory, “subjectivity” itself is an ability of the speaker to assume himself as a “subject”. Self-awareness is only possible if the position of the ‘I’ is evoked by someone opposite to him. Therefore the subject itself is formed during speech, and the identity can give the boundaries among which the subject suits to the role. Benveniste, “Szubjektivitás a nyelvben,” 60.

⁷⁶ After their recovery, on the one hand, they preserve a somewhat sedimentary residuum of their identity as a knight, which is recalled with the help of the integration of the surrounding subjects. Still, the experiencing is what causes the change and restructuring of the subject, and, in addition, with the recurrence of changing the reader can be a witness not of the repetition of situations, but of the alteration/transformation of characters. My thoughts on the subject of experiencing madness were based on Sutyák’s review on Foucault: Sutyák, *Michel Foucault gondolkodása*, 10.

⁷⁷ My parallel is based on Nagy Gergely’s theory. Nagy, “A Fool of a Knight, a Knight of a Fool: Malory’s Comic Knights,” 62.

⁷⁸ As a parallel to the ruling serious discourse that provides basis for Malory’s opinion of knighthood, and to the subversive comic sub-discourse, when appearing together. The description of Dagonet’s figure is based upon the tragic representation of madness. These two figures appear to bring some relief to the tragic view and experience of madness, and further enhance the feeling of sublime in those who are watching the mad knights within or outside the text. The public interpretation of madness of the great knights (even if they remain unidentified for the ‘social gaze’) is basically tragic, and the use of fool characters provides a momentary relief to the audience. Nagy, “A Fool of a Knight, a Knight of a Fool: Malory’s Comic Knights,” 61-62.

⁷⁹ For Dagonet possesses the characteristic features of both sides: he has an identity (and decided to put on the role of a fool), however he is a somewhat deranged element in the Arthurian society. Later with Sir Dinadan's appearance after Sir Tristram's coming to his senses, their adventures will be the continuation of the discrepancy emphasized by Nagy. Nagy, "A Fool of a Knight, a Knight of a Fool: Malory's Comic Knights," 62.

⁸⁰ "[S]o he came to an hermitage, and there he laid him down and slept; and in the meanwhile the hermit stole away his sword and, and laid meat down by him. Thus was he kept there ten days; and at the last he departed and came to the herdmen again." Malory, *Le Morte D'Arthur*, vol. 1, 417.

⁸¹ As a certain treatment, this expression shows a symbolic identity-constituting action.

⁸² Malory, *Le Morte D'Arthur*, vol. 1, 418-419.

⁸³ Huot, *Madness in Medieval French Literature*, 56.

⁸⁴ Malory, *Le Morte D'Arthur*, vol. 2, 215, 219.

⁸⁵ When the herdmen ask Tristram to help a knight ("'Help ye him,' said Sir Tristram.") and when he stays away from La Beale Isoud: "'O madam,' Said Sir Tristram, 'go from me, for mickle anger and danger have I escaped for your love.'" Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*, vol. 1, 418, 420.

⁸⁶ Benveniste, "Szubjektivitás a nyelvben." 60.

⁸⁷ Huot, *Madness in Medieval French Literature*, 5.

⁸⁸ Malory, *Le Morte D'Arthur*, vol. 1, 418.

⁸⁹ Malory, *Le Morte D'Arthur*, vol. 2, 220.

⁹⁰ Huot, *Madness in Medieval French Literature*, 34.

⁹¹ According to Schiller, although it belongs to the nature of the sublime object to raise the (uneasy) feeling of our limits, we do not flee from it, but—on the contrary—it attracts our attention with irresistible power.

Friedrich Schiller, "A fenségesről" in *Válogatott esztétikai írásai* (Budapest: Magyar Helikon, 1960), 92.

⁹² Malory, *Le Morte D'Arthur*, 220.

⁹³ Malory, *Le Morte D'Arthur*, vol. 1, 414.

⁹⁴ Malory, *Le Morte D'Arthur*, vol. 2, 199, 202.

⁹⁵ Malory, *Le Morte D'Arthur*, vol. 1, 410-411.