

Emil Jannings, Falstaff, and the Spectacle of the Body Natural

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To say that Emil Jannings dominated the German screen during and after the Weimar period is to allude to his imposing physical size but also to acknowledge the place of the body in the history of modern domination. When Albert Speer, chief architect of the Third Reich, confessed his frustration at having devised an architecture so massive as to dwarf the man it was meant to glorify, he touched on the paradox of state power. This paradox had preoccupied the philosophies of absolutism, which struggled to sustain the centrality of the king's person in the face of ever more abstract and impersonal forms of executive control. For the king to be everywhere at once, he had to be nowhere; his absence was not an obstacle to his authority but its guarantee. As presence yielded more and more to representation, the body grew increasingly prominent as the site of fallibility and corruption. Already at issue during the Middle Ages, the incorporeality of rule evolved into an absolutism of form, a celebration of the very insignias of power. Speer recognized that his architectural icons eclipsed rather than represented the focal personality. Yet the colossal granite eagles he designed were true to the unrelenting asceticism that made stone (and steel) into a human standard. While National Socialism appealed to a medieval synonymy of land and leader, implicating the land as a vast metaphorical body,¹ the German state was nonetheless intent on purging itself of the body's inefficiency. The cinematic enlargement of Hitler's austere gaze only confirmed a lifeless monu-

¹ Francis Barker, *The Culture of Violence: Tragedy and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 7.

mentalism. This radical disembodiment provides a backdrop against which Jannings's irresistible physicality appears to satisfy a general nostalgia. His famous portrayal of Professor Rath in *The Blue Angel* typifies his penchant for Lear-like subjects, and his body—rotund, resonant, vulnerable, and often comical—supplies a palpability that the hollow spectacle of Nazi power could not even simulate.

Der alte und der junge König [The old and the young king (Hans Steinhoff, 1935)], in which Jannings plays Friedrich Wilhelm I of Prussia, father of Friedrich II ("the Great"), culminates in the demise of a king whose growing decrepitude reveals him as sheer body. The ascendant crown prince—sleek, solemn, and tested—emerges by contrast to exemplify the asceticism of the modern military regime. The film thus locates absolutism along an ascending scale of abstraction of which twentieth-century Germany is a more extreme manifestation. In this way it appropriates absolutism as an archaic body, much as the oedipal theory, in describing the disengagement of authority from the physical father, found its imagery in the archaic fates of Oedipus and Hamlet.² Indeed, *The Old and the Young King* adheres to an oedipal plot that reproduces the father's authority in the son yet sacrifices a man whose range of paternal emotions (from tenderness and joviality to rage) seems inseparable from his girth. Beginning with the "old" king's disappointment at his son's refusal to acquire such canonical Prussian virtues as industry, honesty, and frugality, the film centers on the attempt by the young "Fritz," avid gambler and musician, to flee his father's tyranny. Intercepted, the prince is imprisoned and forced to witness the beheading of his accomplice and closest friend, Hans Hermann von Katte. A period of probation follows, during which the prince pledges obedience to his father but refuses him all affection, laying bare the mode of impersonal domination that absolute monarchy had divested of the paternal trappings of feu-

² Sec, of course, Freud to Fließ, 15 October 1897, in Sigmund Freud, *Briefe an Wilhelm Fließ, 1887–1904*, ed. Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson and Michael Schröter (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1986), 291–4.

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Figure 1 Werner Hinz (left) and Emil Jannings (right) in *Der alte und der junge König* (1935). Courtesy Bundesarchiv-Filmarchiv, Berlin.

dalism. Coinciding with the emergence of more a rarified power are the first signs of physical decline (the king is afflicted with gout), and the corresponding ascent of the crown prince marks the advent of an authority freed of bodily support. After years of estrangement, the (prodigal) son rushes home to be at his dying father's bedside. Overjoyed at their reconciliation, the king summons the last of his failing strength to present the crown prince as the new regent. In a final, prolonged close-up, the son turns to face the assembled generals, his lean and severe expression miming an official portrait. Like the icons of absolutism, the image requires an external authentication, which here identifies Friedrich II as exemplar of an abstract category: "Dies ist euer König!" [This is your king!] (fig. 1).

Nested in the reclamation of a rebellious and wayward prince is an older dramatic tradition in which prodigality doubles as a national strategy.³ The conflict between Friedrich Wilhelm and his son closely parallels that between Shakespeare's Henry IV and Prince Hal

³ See Richard Helgerson, *The Elizabethan Prodigals* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976).

(Henry V), who like Fritz is given to riotous behavior and company ill befitting a future king. In Shakespeare's plays, the transformation is a stated calculation on the part of the prince, who deliberately surrounds himself with disreputable companions so that his eventual majestic emergence as king will be all the more unexpected and complete:

And like bright metal on a sullen ground,
My reformation, glitt'ring o'er my fault,
Shall show more goodly and attract more eyes
Than that which hath no foil to set it off.
I'll so offend, to make offense a skill,
Redeeming time when men think least I will.

(1 Henry IV, 1.2.212-7)⁴

Of those companions who threaten to corrupt the prince, the most prominent is Sir John Falstaff. Accomplished in the practice of larceny and notoriously intemperate where food, wine, and women are concerned, "plump Jack" (2.4.479) facilitates a separation of the king into body and role; his ultimate abandonment (2 *Henry IV*, 5.5) marks a consolidation of power that leaves the body behind as discarded ballast. Falstaff's self-characterization alludes to the state of emergency that is the condition of a tyrannical subjugation of the body: "Thou knowest in the state of innocency Adam fell, and what should poor Jack Falstaff do in the days of villainy? Thou seest I have more flesh than another man, and therefore more frailty" (1 *Henry IV*, 3.3.164-8). While the apposition of flesh and frailty is generically applicable to the roles of Emil Jannings, the reference to the biblical fall has particular resonance for his Rabelaisian portrayal of Judge Adam in *Der zerbrochne Krug* [The broken jug (Gustav Ucicky, 1937)] (fig. 2). Following Kleist's comedy of the same title (1807), this film installs corruption as the rationale for replacing the organic and visible bonds of community with legislation to be administered from a distant capital, that is, a streamlined order that has no tolerance for the touch of folly that makes both Falstaff and Judge Adam endearing.

⁴ All quotations of Shakespeare are from *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974). The brackets in the quotations from *Henry V* are the editor's.



Figure 2 Jannings as Judge Adam in *Der zerbrochne Krug* (1937). Courtesy Bundesarchiv-Filmarchiv, Berlin.

What then of the old king, who is himself given to moments of zesty and ribald joviality but likewise takes pains to distinguish even the harshest acts of state from the appetite that would brand him a tyrant?⁵ The apparent incongruity in fact dramatizes Jannings's own awkward transition from the theater to the screen. However appropriate to the stage, his acting before the camera becomes overly theatrical, reanimating the tension between the popular dramatic tradition, with its burlesque and amateurish self-expression, and more realistic practices, in which the actor merges with the "pure naturalism of his role."⁶ That Jannings falls short of the criteria of naturalism only reflects the general denaturing of conventions brought about by the

⁵ Franco Moretti, "The Great Eclipse," in *Signs Taken for Wonders: Essays in the Sociology of Literary Forms*, trans. Susan Fischer, David Forgacs, and David Miller, 2d ed. (London: Verso, 1988), 47.

⁶ Robert Weimann, *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theater: Studies in the Social Dimension of Dramatic Form and Function*, ed. Robert Schwartz (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 3.

cinema. Walter Benjamin wrote that while the stage actor's *person* was essential to his or her portrayal of someone else, film subordinated the actor to the technical apparatus, which became the new medium of identification for the audience. The movie-star cult thus amounted to an attempt to revive the "magic of personality," which the apparatus of cinema had eroded.⁷

In covering for an apparatus to which he is subordinate, the film actor shares in the fate of the absolute sovereign. It is fitting that Jannings, whose body rises to resist, but ultimately records, the afore-said disenchantment, should also have played a king. The growing prevalence of apparatus over personality mirrors the widening rift between the state, a collection of institutions, and the monarch, in which absolutism finds the personalized sum of those institutions (Moretti, 43). Benjamin's analysis of the erosion of bodily authority in the cinema echoes his earlier study of the seventeenth-century *Trauerspiel*, in which he discerns an extreme bifurcation of the world into corporeal and spiritual realms, which converge only in the twin spectacles of martyrdom and tyrannicide. The former inhabits the latter, as torment binds the tyrant to an immanence that renders his existence as king inherently paradoxical: "The enduring fascination of the downfall of the tyrant is rooted in the conflict between the impotence and depravity of his person, on the one hand, and, on the other, the extent to which the age was convinced of the sacrosanct power of his role."⁸ The execution of Katte in *The Old and the Young King* expresses the "stoic technique" with which Friedrich Wilhelm combats the rule of emotion that would define him more as father than as king.⁹ The final scene, in which the dying father tells Fritz that his harshness was born of love, would contradict this point if the king's show of affection did not coincide with the display of his body, all the more imposing for its infirmity.

⁷ Benjamin, *Illuminationen: Ausgewählte Schriften* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977), 150-4.

⁸ Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (London: New Left Books, 1977), 72.

⁹ Benjamin's account of the "stoic technique" conforms closely to the displacement away from the paterfamilias in Steinhoff's film: "The hallmark of domestic devotion is replaced by physical asceticism" (*Origin*, 74).

Like Falstaff, Friedrich Wilhelm serves as the physical antithesis to the hardened power personified by Henry V and Friedrich II. The parallel implicates Jannings in the same tradition of popular drama from which Falstaff is derived. Certain of Jannings's roles make explicit his affinity to the gestural and pantomimic practices that grew out of mystery cycles, street theater, and the carnival: a trapeze artist in *Variété* (E. Dupont, 1925) and the devil-trickster Mephisto in *Faust* (F. W. Murnau, 1926), not to mention the clown in *The Blue Angel* (Joseph von Sternberg, 1930). Silent cinema necessarily entailed a high degree of gesture and pantomime, though with Jannings this is reinforced by the roles themselves and carries over into the age of sound. It is as if Jannings were there to embody, as an alien presence, the popular tradition that early cinema revived but that the naturalistic impulse of cinema was striving to eliminate. The overtly political context of *The Old and the Young King* draws attention to the democratic potential of the popular tradition, the decline of which Jannings's body repeatedly registers. Among those who recognized this potential was Brecht; his notion of an epic theater indicates how the arrival of the cinema forced a fresh examination of the relationship between body and role. It seems appropriate that films in which this relationship is questioned should revive far older (Shakespearean) scenarios, "in which office and person, power and addition, name and execution, are at least conceptually separable" (Barker, 23). Falstaff's heir, Jannings activates a voice that interprets a twentieth-century crisis in light of an earlier shift in power and its representation. If a comparison of Jannings and Falstaff seems ahistorical, it is in part because of the regressive nature of the nostalgia for palpable, embodied authority, which resists the trajectory of abstraction common to both periods. This essay will not account for differences between disparate historical moments, only for Jannings's suitability for entering into them. At the heart of the discussion is *The Old and the Young King*, but because my analysis is tethered to the actor himself, the associations that compose it will be routed through other of his roles in which, typically, the body intrudes on the scene of declining power.

The King's Two Bodies: A Body Too Much

The actor's body, interposed between the spectator and the character portrayed, is as much obstacle as it is medium, even more so in historical fictions based on known personalities. The body filmed is never an imaginary one, and so the character appears as an attribute of the actor's body, not vice versa. Thus contends Jean-Louis Comolli, who ventures suggestively that the actor, when playing an actual historical figure, possesses "a body too much" [*un corps en trop*]. Whereas the real body of the actor need not disappear behind an invented character, the same body poses an interference if the character it supports is recognized as "real." The combined opaqueness of the two bodies strains credibility, raising the stakes in a game in which the spectator's submission to the illusion implies mastery over it. Willing to be fooled but not to appear foolish, the viewer is asked to concede too much of the skepticism that allows for the reasonable suspension of disbelief.¹⁰

The desire to reduce this interference typically produces attempts at simple verisimilitude: an actor is sought whose physical features approximate those left by the historical body on the record of public memory.¹¹ Yet because resemblance is necessarily incomplete, similarities ultimately underscore the nonidentity of actor and character. The solution, Comolli argues, lies not in trying to conceal the discrepancy (the failing of most historical films) but in exploiting it, working the inevitable awkwardness of the excessive body into the substance of the fiction. Actors can use the excess body to their advantage by emphasizing it, turning the surplus into a force, "disturbing the spectator's look with a bodily supplement" (49). The "body too much" ceases to embarrass when the embarrassment surrounding it becomes the film's preoccupation.

As an example of a performance that amplifies the resistance between the filmed body and the residual image of the historical figure represented, Comolli offers Pierre Renoir's portrayal of Louis

¹⁰ Comolli, "Historical Fiction—A Body Too Much," *Screen* 19 (1978): 41–53.

¹¹ Otto Gebühr's striking physical resemblance to Frederick the Great, for example, made him virtually identical with the role, which he played in numerous films, including *Das Flötenkonzert von Sans Souci* (1930), *Der alte Fritz* (1936), and *Der große König* (1942).

XVI in *La Marseillaise* (Jean Renoir, 1937). The actor's body, obtrusive in its rivalry with that of the king, re-creates the uneasiness with which the monarch displays himself amid the revolutionary turmoil. The king is first shown in his *lever*, the dressing ceremony that allows him literally to "appear," to rise like the sun each morning by annihilating, in effect, the body that emerges sleepily from bed, unadorned and helpless. Both king and actor are fitted with the costumes proper to their roles; the actor's bodily excess overlaps with the growing superfluity of the king himself. By making his own body "weigh" (Comolli, 49), Pierre Renoir portrays the king as dead weight, a prisoner of his office, utterly subordinate to the valets and attendants who preside over the dressing ritual.¹² Following his preparation, Louis reluctantly agrees to review his loyal guardsmen and meet his public, whereupon his own appearance disintegrates, his wig slipping to one side. The inspector becomes the spectacle, as unbearable to the assembled troops as to the moviegoer.

Comolli's claim that the discomfited look of the spectator mirrors the embarrassment of the king's subjects at the "untenable place of the royal body" (52) points beyond cinema to reveal a connection between the semiotic gap of body versus role and the political rupture of the French Revolution. The obtrusiveness and drag of the actor's body manifest a historical impulse toward an even greater separation between body and power, a distillation of the latter that casts the former aside as unwanted residue. Physical awkwardness becomes an effective advantage when it duplicates historical junctures at which a diminished authority of the body coincides with the disembodiment of authority as such. Comolli's suggestion that this aporia may be overcome if the actor's body is played as "a paradoxical body, strange to itself" (49) has clear Brechtian implications, which help situate this problematic within the historical disarticulation of roles and individuals.¹³

¹² Norbert Elias, *Die höfische Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1992), 126–9; Hartmut Böhme and Gernot Böhme, *Das Andere der Vernunft: Zur Entwicklung von Rationalitätsstrukturen am Beispiel Kants* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1983), 56–8.

¹³ For a Brechtian take on the dressing ceremony see Wolfgang Sohlich's analysis of scene 12 in *Galileo*, in which Pope Urban VII is dressed during an audience with the cardinal inquisitor: "The process of covering the body with layers of repre-

The movement away from embodied authority is exemplified by absolutism, of which Louis XVI was a later representative and in which the office of the king was formally abstracted from its particular physical occupant. Paralleling the tautology of power implied by the exclusion of morality from politics, this division made it possible, on the authority of *raison d'état*, to replace the king in the name of the king.¹⁴ Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno understand the degradation of everything corporeal in terms of a decline in "specific representability" [*spezifische Vertretbarkeit*]: inaugurated by rituals in which the act of sacrifice retained a high degree of localized representation, the process of abstraction was accelerated when the Reformation instituted an "obedience to the word" [*Gehorsam aufs Wort*].¹⁵ The ability of the sectarian struggle to place the body at the center of debates concerning secular authority is apparent in Schiller's postrevolutionary *Maria Stuart* (1801), in which "the disembodied word" [*das körperlose Wort* (1.6.48)] of the Anglican rite coincides with the virginity of Elizabeth I, who equates power with the denial of her own physical desires and maternal aspirations.¹⁶ It is a renunciation whose eucharistic echo derives the fate of the body in modern politics from a religious Manichaeism that defined absence as the necessary condition of faith. To the extent that the authority of the absolute monarch lies in the ability to reproduce royal power in signs, the historical gesture of absolutism (*L'état, c'est moi*) repeats the miraculous formula of the Eucharist ("This is my body"), establishing the royal body as a universal presence, "a body at once local and translocal."¹⁷

sentative garments gradually increases the distance between the pope's sympathetic (mimetic) understanding of a man, with whom he has certain affinities as scientist and *connaissanceur* of earthly pleasure, and his conceptualization of the 'case' Galileo as an example of heresy. The process of being dressed would, then, also suggest that even the pope has an inherent capacity for mimetic understanding, since the relatively disrobed pope resists the inquisitor's will to force Galileo into submission by threats of torture" ("The Dialectic of Mimesis and Representation in Brecht's *Life of Galileo*," *Theater Journal* 45 [1993]: 44).

¹⁴ Reinhart Koselleck, *Critique and Crisis: Enlightenment and the Pathogenesis of Modern Society* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1988), 25-6.

¹⁵ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung: Philosophische Fragmente* (1971; rpt. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1986), 13, 21.

¹⁶ Schiller, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Jost Perfahl, 5 vols. (Munich: Winkler, 1972).

¹⁷ Louis Marin, *Portrait of the King*, trans. Martha Houle (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 10-1.

Similarly, in what Ernst Kantorowicz has described as a reversal of the coronation sequence, Shakespeare's *Richard II* at once defies and submits to his murderers by removing the accoutrements (crown, scepter, etc.) of his sacred role: "Bit by bit he deprives his body politic of the symbols of its dignity and exposes his poor body natural to the eyes of the spectators."¹⁸ His ritualized divestiture repeats the doctrinal separation of the king into two bodies: the body natural, which is subject to physical and mental decay, and the body politic, which transcends and survives the demise of the body natural. The *corpus mysticum*, which during the Carolingian period signified the consecrated host of the Eucharist, had by the twelfth century come to designate the Church. The semantic migration from corpus to corporation marks a displacement from the literal body onto the ecclesiastical apparatus. The juridical doctrine of the king's two bodies thus represents the secularization of a theological history whose reach extends into *Richard II*, in which the body, stripped of its representational shell (and thus vulnerable in its visibility), is as empty as the *imitatio Christi* to which the king refers:

Nay, all of you that stand and look upon me
 Whilst that my wretchedness doth bait myself,
 Though some of you, with Pilate, wash your hands,
 Showing an outward pity, yet you Pilates
 Have here deliver'd me to my sour cross,
 And water cannot wash away your sin.

(4.1.237-42)

A related idiom of divestment echoes forcefully, if often silently, through a generation of twentieth-century (film) texts in which the empty mantle signifies the replaceability of the body natural, which is subject to decrepitude and on which the uniform does not depend for its force of representation. The iconic striptease of the Weimar femme fatale figures the impotence announced by more somber dis-

¹⁸ Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1957), 36. See also Stephen Greenblatt: "There are moments in *Richard II* when the collapse of kingship seems to be confirmed in the discovery of the physical body of the ruler, the pathos of his creatural existence" ("Invisible Bullets," in *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988], 53).

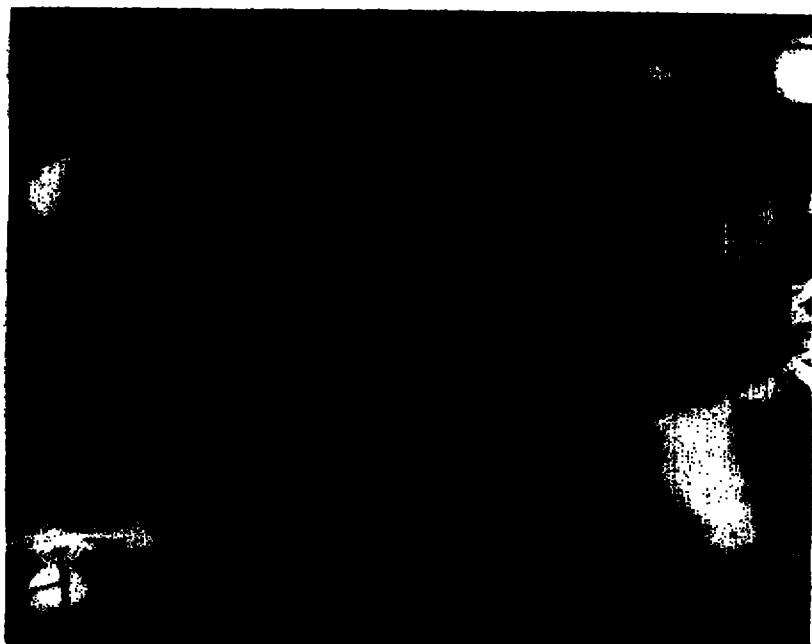


Figure 3 Jannings as the demoted porter in *Der letzte Mann* (1924). Courtesy Bundesarchiv-Filmarchiv, Berlin.

robings, as in F. W. Murnau's *Der letzte Mann* [The last man (1924)].¹⁹ Here Jannings plays a hotel porter, whose large and powerful physique registers at once a former strength and the infirmities of advancing age. Called before the manager, who has decided to replace him with a younger man, the porter seeks to prove his abiding virility by lifting a heavy trunk above his head, only to collapse under its unbearable weight like Christ beneath the cross. In a gesture that evokes Pilate, the manager retreats to an adjacent lavatory to wash his hands while an assistant strips the porter, limp and listless, of his coveted uniform. Deprived of the garment that has caused his neighbors to treat him like a general, the porter is escorted to a wash-

¹⁹ The title of the English release, *The Last Laugh*, is not meant as a translation of *Der letzte Mann* but refers instead to the openly contrived reversal of fortune by which tragedy reverts to comedy.

room, whose location below street level evokes a dungeon. In his new position as towel attendant, he is condemned to look on while the same washing of hands is repeated with brutal indifference (fig. 3). The allusion to martyrdom is reinforced when the dispirited porter, slumped against the wall of the hotel, is caught by the halolike beam of the nightwatchman's lamp.

This motif recurs in Joseph von Sternberg's *Der blaue Engel* [The blue angel (1929)], at the end of which Jannings, in the role of Professor Rath, is found dead in his former classroom, his hands clutching the corners of his desk as if nailed fast, his head framed by a halo projected by the custodian's lantern. Rath's death completes the *via dolorosa* first intimated when the magician Kiepert, also emulating Pilate, avenges his chastisement at the hands of the zealous professor by displaying him from the celebrity box of the Blue Angel, subjecting him to the mockery of the unruly crowd below (*Ecce homo*).

Rath is not Christ, of course. Neither is Shakespeare's Richard II, who invokes the dual nature of Christ as an analogue for the king's two bodies but whose own "wretchedness" names a physical unredeemability at odds with the transcendence of his role. Exposed for all to see is the same body natural that, in absolutism, the dressing ceremony was meant to negate. Allusions to martyrdom aside, *The Blue Angel*, *The Last Man*, *The Old and the Young King*, and *The Broken Jug* are all emphatically about dressing and about the power and prestige that clothing confers. Much of *The Blue Angel* is set in dressing rooms, which become the arena for Jannings's cosmetic metamorphosis into a clown named after an emperor (August).²⁰ The professor's defrocking has its more concentrated correlate in *The Last Man*, which figures the decline of the body through the image of the porter's regal uniform hanging empty and lifeless in the manager's

²⁰ This nomenclature is part of a Shakespearean echo made explicit earlier when the professor invokes, in the form of a punitive essay question, a play that frames the potential for treachery in terms of the ambitions of lean men: "Was wäre geschehen, wenn Mark Anton die Grabrede nicht gehalten hätte?" [What would have happened if Marc Anthony had not delivered the funerary oration?] (Hart Wegner, ed., *Der blaue Engel* [New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982], 25). See *Julius Caesar*: "Let me have men about me that are fat, / Sleek-headed men and such as sleep a-nights. / Yond Cassius has a lean and hungry look, / He thinks too much; such men are dangerous" (1.2.192-5).

closet. Expressionism par excellence, it is the image of its age and of others, a figure of "unredeemed skin" by which, following Rainer Nägele, the modernist stage adopted an idiom of the baroque.²¹ The porter's uniform is itself a hollow vestige of tyranny; its repossession, which leaves the old man figuratively emasculated, has its counterpart in the literal agonies graphically staged in baroque drama. The division between immanence and transcendence, which the *Trauerspiele* radicalized, is already audible when Richard II parades his own "wretched" body before his enemies. His bitter admonition finds its satiric equivalent in the tirade of self-mockery with which Falstaff defends a career of vice. Presenting his purported excess of skin as a sign of emasculation, Falstaff alludes to graver physical torments and hints at a transvestitism (also evident in *The Last Man*)²² that opposes the power of the uniform to the ephemeral potency of the body: "Do I not dwindle? Why, my skin hangs about me like an old lady's loose gown" (1 *Henry IV*, 3.3.2-4).

As the author of the alliterative association of *flesh* and *frailty*, Falstaff uses the fall from grace to designate the body as the repository and carrier of original sin. In *The Broken Jug* Judge Adam inadvertently reminds his clerk of his biblical namesake when, in his attempt to explain an ill-gotten wound as the result of an innocent fall, he claims that everyone carries around their own internal stumbling block [*Stein zum Anstoß*]: "Zum Straucheln brauchts doch nichts, als Füße" [To stumble, all you need is feet (3-6)].²³ Adam's ultimate supersession by a bureaucrat of slight stature marks a decline in the mimetic, which in modern gestural theater reproduces the "body too much" as mimic caricature, "a clown [who] stumbles over his . . . oversized feet" (Nägele, 3). His corruption exposed, Adam flees, scourged in flight by the tail of his own wig while the coat he has left behind is beaten as if he were still in it.²⁴ Like Falstaff, a "stuff'd cloak-bag of

²¹ Nägele, *Theater, Theory, Speculation: Walter Benjamin and the Scenes of Modernity* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 10, 25.

²² See Stephan K. Schindler, "What Makes a Man a Man: The Construction of Masculinity in Murnau's *The Last Laugh*," *Screen* 37 (1996): 30-40.

²³ Heinrich von Kleist, *Dramen (1802-1807)*, ed. Ilsa-Marie Barth and Hinrich Seeba (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1991).

²⁴ Kenneth S. Calhoon, "Sacrifice and the Semiotics of Power in *Der zerbrochne Krug*," *Comparative Literature* 41 (1989): 247. See also David E. Wellbery, "Kleist's *The Broken Jug*: The Play of Sexual Difference," in *Reading after Foucault: Institutions*,

guts" (1 *Henry IV*, 2.4.451–2), Adam is an effigy in which clown and martyr converge. Both Falstaff and Adam appear as sacrificial victims in a process whose telos is the expurgation of the body from paradise, Eden being in either case a political utopia understood as a freedom from appetite. The same teleology informs *The Old and the Young King*, in which the father's death produces a figure of internalized renunciation akin to the severe government official in *The Broken Jug*, for whom Adam's generosity is no less a sign of corruption than his lust and whose refusal of the judge's repeated offer of breakfast is commensurate with the same thrust toward an authority purged of desire. Symptomatic of a sated appetite, Judge Adam's periodic gastric complaints foreground digestion as the object of the law, which subjected the original Adam to an ascetic discipline ("In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread" [Gen. 3.19]). Inheriting the law, Friedrich II and Henry V come to flourish in a state of ordered lack, in which digestion, like childbirth, signifies natural processes excluded from the body politic.

The Offending Adam

In 1 *Henry IV* Prince Hal reveals his waywardness as a Machiavellian strategy for creating modest expectations that, as king, he cannot help but exceed. The opening of *Henry V* attests to the success of his self-staging: Canterbury and his bishop marvel at the discrepancy between the "fair regard" of the present king and the once-raucous prince, whom they liken to a strawberry "neighbor'd by fruit of baser quality" (1.1.22, 62). In a description that could also apply to the final scene of *The Old and the Young King*, Canterbury characterizes Hal's succession to the throne as a purification of the body, compared not only with the expulsion of Adam from Eden but also with the mortification of the flesh usually achieved by torture:

The breath no sooner left his father's body,
But that his wildness, *mortified in him*,
Seem'd to die too; yea, at that very moment,
Consideration like an angel came

And whipt th' offending Adam out of him,
 Leaving his body as a paradise
 T' envelop and contain celestial spirits.
 (1.1.25-31)²⁵

Canterbury's account of Hal's transformation alludes to Falstaff, whose kinship to Adam has been established and whose presence is felt when the same process is repeated in a scene that both thematizes and culminates in literal torture: on the eve of his departure for France, the king, in the presence of three nobles he knows to be traitors, deems to

Enlarge the man committed yesterday,
 That rail'd against our person. We consider
 It was *excess of wine* that set him on,
 And on his more advice we pardon him.
 (2.2.40-3)

The three (as-yet-unexposed) traitors find the king's largesse unwise and suggest that if the man is to be spared, he first should be given "the taste of much correction" (2.2.51). When the king insists on being merciful, he echoes Falstaff, who, in anticipation of his eventual banishment and with reference to his own "excess of wine," exclaimed: "If sack and sugar be a fault, God help the wicked!" (1 *Henry IV*, 2.4.470-1). If the king's subsequent condemnation of the duplicitous Lord Scroop repeats and atones for the banishment of Falstaff, it also shows how assiduously the king seeks to undo the resemblance to his near twin and namesake (Henry), whom he once believed "spare in diet, / Free from gross passion" (*Henry V*, 2.2.131-2), yet in whom he has found a corruption compared to which Falstaff's appetites are but misdemeanors:

If little faults, proceeding on distemper,
 Shall not be wink'd at, how shall we stretch our eye
 When capital crimes, *chew'd, swallow'd, and digested*,
 Appear before us?
 (2.2.54-7)

²⁵ Here and in subsequent quotations from Shakespeare the italics have been added.

What resembles the internalized voice of Falstaff enables the king to invoke those “days of villainy,” that is, the state of emergency that is the condition of his absolute power. Once the treachery has been uncovered, the king represents Scroop as a rebellious Adam whose treason is so entirely out of character that even the king’s most trusted advisers are now suspect:

Such and so finely bolted didst thou seem.
 And thus thy fall hath left a kind of blot
 To [mark the] full-fraught man and best indued
 With some suspicion. I will weep for thee;
 For this revolt of thine, methinks, is like
 Another fall of man.

(2.2.137–42)

Scroop’s fall stages an inversion of Hal’s majestic transformation. And when the king condemns Scroop and his coconspirators to the customary death by torture, he cites the same mortification of the flesh by which, following Canterbury’s metaphor, the prince’s own body was purified:

Get you . . .
 . . . to your death;
 The taste whereof God of his mercy give
 You patience to endure.

(2.2.177–80)

Likewise, the expulsion of the other “offending Adam,” the judge in *The Broken Jug*, constitutes the expurgation of the body from what is constructed as an Enlightenment utopia, in which the arid rule of law has superseded the folly-ridden practices of this most fallible of patriarchs. After his village court has come under the scrutiny of an official from the capital, Adam mimics the new order by asking a witness he has known for years to identify herself to the court; she protests the officious absurdity, to which he responds, “Ich sitz im Namen der Justiz . . . , und die Justiz muß wissen, wer Ihr seid” [I sit in the name of the law . . . , and the law needs to know who you are (578–9)]. It is a caricature of the neutrality cited by both Henry V and Friedrich Wilhelm I in their respective condemnations of Scroop and Katte; both kings are careful to distance themselves from the motive of per-

sonal vengeance, in whose stead they invoke the law and the well-being of the nations they are sworn to protect. In *Henry V* the restoration of the imperial "we" both converts the wrathful king into a dispassionate servant of justice and reduces the errant friend ("That knew'st the very bottom of my soul" [2.2.97]) to a juridical case:

Touching our person seek we no revenge,
 But we our kingdom's safety must so tender,
 Whose ruin you [have] sought, that to her laws
 We do deliver you.

(2.2.174-7)

Through a similar recourse to abstraction, Friedrich Wilhelm, defending Katte's death sentence to the condemned man's father, acquits himself of vengeful passions; while the father pleads for his son's uniqueness [*mein einziger Sohn!*], the king treats him as an exemplum, supported by the prefix of an indefinite article [*ein Leutnant Katte*]: "Der Tod, den hab ich selbst verfügt. Das weiß Er. Glaubt Er, um mich zu rächen, oder weil ich vielleicht wäre blutdürstig? Nein, weil diese verbrecherische Aktion eine so harte Strafe verlangt. Es ist besser, ein Leutnant Katte stirbt, als daß das Recht kommt aus der Welt" [The death sentence I decreed myself. This you know. Do you think it was to avenge myself, or perhaps because I am bloodthirsty? No: because this criminal action demands a punishment this harsh. It is better for a Lieutenant Katte to die than for justice to vanish from the world]. By exonerating himself of the "thirst" for vengeance, the king voids the equally mimetic capacity for human sympathy, to which Katte's father vainly appeals. A petrified shell of a man identical to his own immovable harshness, the king produces, as the emblem of his absolute power, the bloody corpse of the martyred friend. A specter that the prince cannot escape even in sleep, Katte's haunting visage becomes the insignia of an internal emptiness imposed by the law of the royal father, master of frugality. Stephen Greenblatt's assertion that Hal, in contrast to Falstaff, "triumphs in a world of scarcity" (43) also applies to the repentant Fritz, whom the king sends to work in the countryside so that he might learn firsthand the poverty of his subjects [*daß er die Not seines Volks kennenlernen*].

Dismantling the Rococo Body

Duty is the generalizable currency in the regimen of deprivation, whose restriction of plenitude corresponds to the literal disembodiment achieved by the death sentence. That the king treats his son as a member of the army (and, conversely, his grenadiers as his true children) indicates the extreme to which the twentieth-century father had become little more than a channel for extending the repressive mechanisms of society into the family.²⁶ The reformed prince, who resists his father's every overture by declaring himself an "obedient servant" [*gehorsamer Diener*], emerges as a picture of internalized refusal commensurate with a leader—Hitler—with whom, at the time of the film's making, the granite eagle had become interchangeable.²⁷ The ascetic will that converted human beings into architecture elaborated a geometry that would realize a unity of rigid will and immutable principle.²⁸ Behind the "young" king's reclamation is an architectural history that rejected the excess and frivolity of rococo and discovered instead the austere virtues of stone. At the time of the French Revolution these virtues were personified by the *uomo di sasso*, the man of stone who returned from beyond the grave to destroy Don Giovanni, whose unrestrained quest for pleasure mirrored the opulence of princes grown accustomed to spending without counting. Jean Starobinski's analysis of the statue's revenge in effect summarizes

²⁶ Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (Boston: Beacon, 1966), 89.

²⁷ One notes the fluidity with which the stone eagle perched on a swastika substitutes for Hitler in Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph des Willens* [Triumph of the will (1935)]. Eric Rentschler's description of Fritz's transformation is itself evocative of Riefenstahl's film: "The king-to-be forswears ornate circles and aimless motions, salons teeming with gamblers, coquettes and dandies. He resituates himself in a world of straight lines, uniformed masses and unquestioned allegiances, joining the masculine space of the parade ground and the state, assuming its language and order" (*The Ministry of Illusion: Nazi Cinema and Its Afterlife* [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996], 75).

²⁸ Dieter Bartetzko, *Zwischen Zucht und Ekstase: Zur Theatralik von NS-Architektur* (Berlin: Mann, 1985), 51; Lotte H. Eisner, *The Haunted Screen: Expressionism in the German Cinema and the Influence of Max Reinhardt*, trans. Roger Greaves (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 230.

the father-son conflict in *The Old and the Young King*, it further demonstrates how the old order could return to personify the new, which sought an end to despotic authority but whose utopian designs were meant to reflect in stone "the edict of a mind that had left its own massive mark upon things and their duration in time": "Victory goes to the old order, the outraged father, ultimate revenge. But this ethos, which formed part of a long baroque tradition, was not alien to the prerevolutionary mentality. It contrasted unstable desire, discontinuity, and the episodic moments of debauchery with the cold eternity of the statue, which represented good faith, inflexible justice, and a permanent divine order immune to outrage."²⁹

By definition impersonal, the virtues represented by the man of stone resist personification except as architecture, which strove more and more to evince a "cold eternity." The architectural minds of the French Revolution favored a nakedness of geometric and functional simplicity, which contrasted sharply with the qualities of baroque and rococo design that corresponded to the excess (and excessively dressed) body: flaccid and sinuous lines, animated facades, ornamental caprice. Implicated in the struggle between an art of permanence and the passing whims of fashion was the ostentatious clothing of the ancien régime. In *The Old and the Young King* such attire is sported by the prince of Bayreuth, whom Friedrich Wilhelm has invited to Potsdam as a possible match for his daughter. The visitor presents the ridiculous picture of a provincial German noble adorned in the style of a French courtier: luxuriant wig, rouged cheeks, faux beauty mark, frilly clothes, affected gait. When he first sees the king, the latter is busy balancing his books and so is dressed in a leather apron. Mistaking the laboring monarch for a servant, the prince commands him to don a decent jacket and announce his arrival. Dumbfounded, the king obediently exits but returns moments later, having regained his stature, and "dresses down" the embarrassed guest. The king's indignation echoes that of the paterfamilias concerned primarily with keeping his children fed, yet his concern is a sentimental mask for a

²⁹ Starobinski, 1789: *The Emblems of Reason*, trans. Barbara Bray (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1982), 76, 38.

power based on orchestrated scarcity. Bayreuth's comical transformation, which prefigures the truly agonic reclamation of the king's own son, articulates a desire not for a father but for an authority whose totality compensates for the sheer fatherlessness of the military state:³⁰

KÖNIG Ein Kerl, der sich schminkt, wie ein Frauenzimmer, und Locken hat, wie ein Frauenzimmer [*schnüffelt*!—wonach in drei Deibels Namen *stinkt* Er eigentlich so?

BAY Majestät, drei Unzen dieses köstlichen Parfums haben mich in Paris zehn Louisdor gekostet.

KÖNIG Seine Untertanen leben im tiefsten Elend und Er kauft sich Parfums in Paris. So was habe ich gerne. . . . Er kann sich darauf verlassen, daß ich Preußens gute Finanzen nicht durch leichtfertige Schwiegersöhne gefährden werde! Wer meine Tochter heiraten will, der muß sie auch ernähren können.

BAY Gut, dann laß ich mich als Grenadier anwerben in Euer Majestät Armee. Denn für seine Grenadiere, hab ich mir sagen lassen, sorgt der König wie ein Vater.

[KING A fellow who puts on makeup like a woman, and who has curls like a woman [*sniffs*!—what the devil do you *stink* from?

BAY Your Majesty, three ounces of this precious perfume cost me ten louisdor in Paris.

KING Your subjects live in extreme misery and you buy perfume in Paris. That's what I like to see. . . . You can be sure that I won't have Prussia's healthy finances jeopardized by irresponsible sons-in-law! Whoever hopes to marry my daughter must also be able to feed her!

BAY Fine, then I shall enlist as a grenadier in Your Majesty's army. For the king, so I've been told, looks after his grenadiers like a father.]

A reluctant but irrepressible smile reveals that Friedrich Wilhelm has succumbed to this last bit of flattery ("the monarch's plague");³¹ it also suggests that the king is not immune to the vanity so conspicuous in his visitor.³² This vanity is confirmed the same evening in the

³⁰ Alexander Mitscherlich, *Auf dem Weg zur vaterlosen Gesellschaft* (Munich: Piper, 1973).

³¹ Shakespeare, sonnet 114, 2; see also Marin, 89–93.

³² Jannings's facial expression is almost identical to the embarrassed smile with

Tabagie, the smoking circle to which the king routinely withdraws to guzzle beer and trade friendly insults with his generals and ministers. The jovial and indecorous atmosphere is reminiscent of the working-class café where, according to Pierre Bourdieu, "free rein is given to . . . the art of making or playing jokes, often at the expense of the 'fat man.'" ³³ The king emerges as an avid prankster, directing Bayreuth to a chair whose legs have been sawed through. The momentary conflation of king and trickster may signal the resurgence of the body natural; it certainly introduces an aspect of the carnivalesque, an embodied, utopian space in which people speak frankly and abusive language, masking affection, incorporates rather than excludes. ³⁴ As such, the *Tabagie* recalls the tavern scenes in *1 Henry IV*, in which Hal and Falstaff fondly chide each other ("you whoreson round man" [2.4.140]) and, ultimately, perform a double role reversal that makes Falstaff king, only to banish him. ³⁵

Deposing Falstaff, Hal assumes the role of his not-yet-dead father, creating a redundancy of regal representation that privileges the role

which he, as Professor Rath, reacts when Lola Lola (Marlene Dietrich) tells him he is a nice-looking man [*ein ganz hübscher Mann* (Wegner, 71)]. The feminizing potential of *hübsch*—and of her flattery as such—is immediately realized when she blows powder in his face, making him choke and sputter and accomplishing the kind of cosmetic makeover for which Friedrich Wilhelm ridicules Bayreuth.

³³ Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984), 183.

³⁴ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 16; Weimann, 11.

³⁵ Bourdieu's discussion of a ritual mockery that both presupposes and fosters familiarity but also serves "to test out those who show signs of stand-offishness" (183) accurately describes the attitude voiced by the regulars of Auerbach's Keller, into whose midst Goethe's Mephistopheles (prankster in his own right) imports the ever standoffish Faust: "Hinaus mit dem, der etwas übelnimmt!" [Away with anyone who is easily offended!] (Goethe, *Werke: Hamburger Ausgabe*, vol. 3, ed. Erich Trunz [Munich: Beck, 1976], 2087). The carnivalesque tavern scenes in *1 Henry IV* contrast dramatically with the somber moment in *Henry V* in which Hal, now king, sanctions the hanging of one of the tavern's most colorful denizens (Bardolph) and issues an interdiction against the very kind of speech typical of those scenes: "We give express charge that . . . none of the French [be] upbraided or abus'd in disdainful language" (3.6.108–11). Thus King Harry, who as prince pledged to "make offense a skill," contradicts in his ascendancy a utopian social practice that accepts "while seeming to condemn" (Bourdieu, 183) and instead condemns those he once seemed to accept.

over the body and inclines away from the gestural elements of popular theater so prevalent in the tavern settings. A similar improvisation occurs in Friedrich Wilhelm's *Tabagie* when Bayreuth, feigning drunkenness and claiming to be too sad to speak, is commanded by his host to deliver the king's funeral oration [*Leichenrede*]. Under the protection accorded fools, the visitor complies, chastising the king for his refusal to distinguish between his children and his infantrymen (the very trait for which Bayreuth has flattered the king earlier that day). The king's anger brings the jest to an abrupt end and affirms a rarified power that proves incompatible with the evening's conviviality. The mock funeral underscores the king's absence as an essential component of his authority. His power, in being absolute, cannot be a living part of the representation it authorizes. Rather than answer Bayreuth face-to-face, the king instructs his chamberlain to inform the guest that he need not pretend to be drunk to speak the truth to his "future father-in-law." The suspension of festivities corresponds to a legal-bureaucratic mediation. True to the (oedipal) logic according to which a prodigal son is a father's favorite, the king proceeds to convert his own son into a son-in-law, daring the crown prince to desert, such rebellion being prerequisite to the internalization—as law—of the father. The now-familiar equation of will and law subordinates the person of the king to the principles that survive him. Fritz, whom the law of the father has propelled into a world of lack and renunciation, exhibits in the end a gaunt severity that makes him a more adequate representation of absolute power than the increasingly frail flesh of Jannings's Friedrich Wilhelm.

This expression of a power at pains to pass itself off as impartial also echoes the more beneficent voice of the high priest in *Die Zauberflöte* [The magic flute]: "In diesen heiligen Hallen / Kennt man die Rache nicht" [In these hallowed rooms / Vengeance is a stranger].³⁶ Sarastro represents himself as no more than the replaceable agent of a universal order of depersonalized rationality; to this agent is juxtaposed the figure of Papageno, the bird-man whose proximity to the realm of instinct, not to mention his appetite for wine, food, and women, recalls the satyrlike qualities of both Falstaff and

³⁶ Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Die Zauberflöte* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1991), 51.

Judge Adam. (Like Falstaff, Papageno is a denizen of the popular theatrical tradition, of which Mozart and Schikaneder's singspiel is an example.) If these characters have something else in common, it is their ability for reckless fabulation. Papageno is punished for his specious claim of having killed the snake, and when Prince Hal derides Falstaff for his own tall tales of heroism, he puts his finger on a vulnerability linked to physical immanence: "These lies are like their father that begets them, gross as a mountain, open, palpable" (1 *Henry IV*, 2.4.225-6).

Palpability is the salient feature brought by Emil Jannings to those roles in which the erosion of representation is tied to physical processes that make the body irrepressible and restore it to circulation. Professor Rath's fatherlike authority evaporates when his pupils begin to see their own desires (for Lola Lola) mirrored in him, and their derision of him names a body no longer capable of closing itself off.³⁷ The slapstick nose blowing of the otherwise staid professor betrays an excess encoded in his irreverently rhyming nickname, *Unrat* [garbage], and makes the audience complicit in the sadism that climaxes when the comedy of nose blowing gives way to the wrenching pathos of the *Kikeriki!* [Cockadoodledoo!], which reduces the teacher to an egg-laying clown. His grotesque martyrdom, which eventually produces Rath as a man crucified, stages a regression to an irreducible physicality—and sadness—at which the body reverberates with a creatural agony that negates transcendence.

Appropriately, Jannings's excessive body is sufficient to amplify the sound of a blow: the action of Ucicky's *Broken Jug* begins with a maidservant waking the loudly snoring Adam with a resounding slap, delivered full force (and with apparent relish) to his large rump.³⁸

³⁷ "RATH: Was suchen Sie hier? GOLDSTAUB: Dasselbe, was Sie hier suchen, Herr Professor. *Vollkommen die Kontrolle verlierend, ohrfeigt Rath zuerst Goldstaub und dann Ertzum*" [RATH: What are you looking for here? GOLDSTAUB: The same as you, Professor. *Completely losing control, Rath first slaps Goldstaub and then Ertzum* (Wegner, 89)].

³⁸ The slap itself does not hurt, but it arouses Adam to the pain of blows dealt him earlier, so that his comical snoring gives way to groans provoked by the discovery of gashes on his head and legs. No less mimetic is the visible joy he takes at the squeaking sound of the cork against a bottle of spirits, which he pours into his mouth and over his cuts, uttering expressions of pleasure and pain that, as crudely

Meant to announce breakfast, the slap also parodies physical chastisement on the eve of a trial in which public demands for literal torture mask a desire for monetary restitution (Kleist, 494–5, 767–8). Body and law, which in tragedy form the irresolvable paradox of absolutism (Moretti, 46), converge on a purse of gold coins bearing the portrait of the king. The coins lend the king's person the illusion of tangible presence and suspend the opposition, to which both Falstaff and Adam are portly monuments, between palpability and integrity: "Meinst du, daß dich der König wird betrügen?" [Do you think the king would deceive you? (Kleist, 2371)].³⁹ Contrary to the renunciation to which Falstaff's banishment is tantamount ("Banish plump Jack, and banish all the world" [1 *Henry IV*, 2.4.479–80]), *The Broken Jug* subjects Adam to ridicule to reincorporate him, enabling him (like Papageno) to return uncastigated in a comedic alternative to the tragic agon of *The Old and the Young King*. "Zur Desertion ihn zwingen will ich nicht" [I've no wish to force him to desert (Kleist, 1966)].

Conclusion

At a juncture in German history when the name Versailles connoted something far more irritating than the flagrant luster of the house of Bourbon, *The Old and the Young King* foregrounds treason in its reappropriation of a Prussian king famous for his adulation of everything French. Jannings's Friedrich Wilhelm is the agent of an immovable and unsympathetic discipline but is also, paradoxically, a Falstaffian medium through which the elements of the popular theatrical tradition circulate into the historical drama. The actor's "body too much" is an apt vehicle for this paradox. Lotte Eisner's complaint that Jannings's trademark overacting could only baffle audiences accus-

articulated breath, are virtually the same. Minutes elapse before the first line of Kleist's dialogue interrupts the ventriloquy of round and deeply resonant nonverbal emissions. The maidservant's blow thus awakens the body to a strictly mimetic register of pleasure and pain: a pre-oedipal prologue to a trial in which a judge, like Oedipus the King, presides over his own incrimination.

³⁹ Line 2371, which is numbered from the beginning of the play, is from the *Variant*, which was cut from the original published version of *Der zerbrochne Krug* yet appended to that version in the first edition of 1811. The *Variant* is typically excluded from productions as well as from most nonscholarly editions.

tomed to more naturalistic performances (285) enunciates a tension between embodied and disembodied representation, which in this film is reembedded in a political system that makes the discrepancy between body and role a matter of doctrine. The Shakespearean sequence that culminates in the decisive defeat of France (*Henry V*) suspends the absolutist paradox by jettisoning Falstaff, salvaging credibility at the expense of the same palpability that renders the father at once vulnerable and irresistible. Jannings's "unbelievability" should perhaps not be uncoupled from the decline in stature suffered by so many of his characters—the hotel porter, Professor Rath, Judge Adam—whose divestitures expose a "weighty immobility" inconsistent with the transparency of office (Eisner, 221).

Worth mentioning in this context is *The Last Command* (von Sternberg, U.S., 1928), in which Jannings portrays Archduke Sergei Alexander, general and cousin to the czar, who ten years after the Soviet Revolution is discovered, physically and emotionally broken, living hand-to-mouth as a Hollywood extra. Engaged to play a general in a film about the events of 1918, the fallen officer is reunited with the uniform of which the Bolsheviks had rudely stripped him, only to die while shooting a battle scene whose fury ignites a noble charisma long since extinguished. Inconvenient from the standpoint of production, the death prompts a detached lament from the director's assistant: "Too bad. He was a great actor." The director, himself a former revolutionary whom the general once beat and whose prodigality mirrors that of the young Fritz, corrects his assistant, undoing the essentially Brechtian dissimulation of actor and role: "No. This was a great man."

Jannings's old king, whose son eventually acknowledges him as a great man, undergoes a divestiture of his own: his decline coincides with a renewed physicality that counteracts the disembodiment required by the political absolute. Like the dying chamberlain in Rilke's *Malte*, whose bloated body outstrips his uniform and who in commanding his servants to carry him from room to room reenacts an order of localized representation, Friedrich Wilhelm begins more and more to *weigh*. Helpless and crowned with a silvery halo of disheveled hair, the fading king asks to be transported back to Potsdam, where his grenadiers—his *blaue Kinder*—affectionately

implore him never again to leave. This portrayal of the king as tender paterfamilias appeals to a nostalgia for a father whose exercise of authority is grounded in a nexus of immanent and palpable social relations.

The hollowness of the strategy is betrayed at film's end by the barren gaze of the new king, whose internal emptiness is not due to the loss of his father but is the legacy of a father who from the beginning defined his role under the harsh and impersonal sign of duty. Incapable of representing himself, the ascendant Frederick the Great emerges as an allegory of the state whose coming greatness is conjured by the father's dying words: "Mach Preußen groß!" [Make Prussia great!]. Architect Speer described (with respect to his unrealized "Great Hall" of Berlin) how the tension between the giant edifice and the central personality informed the insignias that at once identified and eclipsed that personality: "In such a huge building, the man who is most important . . . shrinks to nothing. One can't see him. I tried to solve the problem but I couldn't. I was going to put a huge eagle with a swastika behind him to say 'Here he is,' but Hitler would really have been invisible in the grandeur."⁴⁰ Heir to the stonelike austerity of the reformed Friedrich II, those granite icons perform a deictic gesture ("Here he is") that reaffirms the deference of the dying father, who points to his son and proclaims, "This is your king!"

⁴⁰ Quoted in Robert Hughes, *The Shock of the New* (New York: Knopf, 1981), 102.

