

From the King's Two Bodies



to the Modern State

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How does *The Madness of King George* help us understand this transition?

- The film dramatizes
 - a shift in perception of monarchy and the monarch
 - affecting how the state is conceived and organized
 - seen through the change in how madness is perceived and treated

Representation of the King's Body Natural

- At first the body of the king is treated as unique, distant, mysterious:
 - His body is arrayed with royal garments by others, striking even his little daughter with fear
 - He (and the queen—by extension part of his own Body Natural) alone sit while others stand
 - No one can look directly at the king

Representation of the King's Body Natural

- Later, as the Body Natural conception dissolves, the king's body is treated differently:
 - George's disruptive body, with uncontrollable impulses and actions, is submitted to control from outside
 - Treatment for madness: stripping and restraining his body, submitting it to pain

Representation of the King's Body Politic

- In the beginning, the king mourns loss of American colonies:
 - Understood as a lessening of England and of his own identity
 - Like a lopping off of a body part
- Later dissolving of Body Politic notion:
 - George's minister Pitt, a proponent of constitutional monarchy, tries to reshape the monarchy to fit a modern state
 - Pitt insists the people in the colonies have formed separate state, are not "cut off" from anything

Madness and the King's Body

- Change from medieval to modern conceptions of monarchy and statehood is reflected in film's portrayal of madness



A Brief History of Madness

- Bethlehem (“Bedlam”) Hospital for the Mad in London:
 - Late Middle Ages: Founded as religious refuge
 - “Bedlam Beggar”: patient discharged from asylum and licensed to beg
 - Madmen “touched by God,” reminders of higher power and ethical responsibilities
 - We must care for them through alms



A Brief History of Madness

- Later: Asylum more prison than hospital: mad people held in chains
- 16th and 17th c: visitors to Bedlam entertained by antics of insane (compare court fools)



A Brief History of Madness

- In 18th century, the treatment of the insane became “medicalized”
 - Physiological and psychological causes ascribed
 - Cures attempted through physical and psychological interventions
- Present-day treatments follow this medical model
 - George’s madness is explained at the end of the film as physiologically based (“porphyria”)

King George's Madness

- The representation of the king's madness in the film traces the transition from early modern to modern in treatments of madness:
 - When does the king's personality (enthusiastic, whimsical), influenced by royal treatment (total deference, no limits placed on kingly desire) begin to be defined as mad instead of normal?

King George's Madness

- When the king is defined as mad, how is he treated? Film traces move from madness as licensed behavior to madness as medicalized:
 - At first his antics amuse
 - Then government begins to fall apart, minority parties trying to take over: disruption in Body Politic follows disruption in Body Natural
 - Ultimately the king is defined as insane, subjected to physicians with various therapies

King George's Madness

- What are these therapies? Again, a progression from early modern to modern:
 - Court doctors use Galenic medicine: bleeding, cupping/blistering, interpreting appearance of excrement, etc.
 - "The King's urine is blue!"
 - External doctor (Willis) uses new psychological technique: internalization of control through behavioral modification: internalization of the Gaze:
 - "I have you in my eye.....I am the King of England...No sir, you are the patient!"

The Gaze

- What is the Gaze?
Las Meninas: King and Queen unseen but organize the space through their gaze as center of power



The Gaze

In reality power is only exercised at a cost. If you are too violent, you risk provoking revolts...In contrast to that you have the system of surveillance, which involves very little expense. There is no need for arms, physical violence, material constraints. Just a gaze.

An inspecting gaze, a gaze which each individual under its weight will end by interiorisation to the point that he is his own overseer, each individual thus exercising this surveillance over, and against, himself. A superb formula: power exercised continuously and for what turns out to be minimal cost. (Foucault)

The Gaze

- The film traces a move of the Gaze:
 - From the king as the authority: he has all subjects in his eye
 - to the king as object of the Gaze: the doctor has the king in his eye
 - to the Gaze as internalized in the king: now a modern subject

