Edited by Karolina Mroziewicz and Aleksander Sroczyński

Premodern Rulership and Contemporary Political Power

The King's Body Never Dies

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Central European Medieval Studies

The series focuses on the geographical centre of the European continent, but also a region representing various historically changing meanings and concepts. It challenges simplistic notions of Central Europe as a periphery to the medieval 'West', or, equally, a border between barbarity and civilization; an area of a lively convergence of different ethnic groups, and a socially and culturally framed common space; a point where different 'Others' met, or an intermediary 'bridge' between the Roman Catholicism and Latinity of the West, and the Slavic Orthodoxy and Hellenism of the Byzantine East.

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Introduction

Paweł Figurski, Karolina Mroziewicz, and Aleksander Sroczyński

The main objective of the present volume is to investigate the cultural specificity and inner dynamics of premodern rulership and contemporary political power. The initial impulse behind such a broad inquiry came from the work of Ernst Kantorowicz, whose book *The King's Two Bodies*: *A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* offers one of the most influential modern theories for the analysis of political order.[1] Sixty years after its first publication, a group of twelve authors convened to reassess the dichotomy of the ruler's two bodies as proposed by Kantorowicz: the perennial dignity of the royal office and the vulnerable body natural of the king. The present survey was intended to examine a variety of literary and visual sources testifying to different representations of political power in both the premodern and contemporary era.

The authors represented here are among the most recent generation of scholars inspired by *The King's Two Bodies*, a book which was praised as a masterpiece of medieval scholarship almost immediately after its publication,[2] and influenced many other works dealing with royal or papal

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1   Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957).

2   First reviews after the publication of Kantorowicz's book might be found in the preface of William Chester Jordan to the second edition of *King's Two Bodies:* Ernst Kantorowicz, *King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), IX-XVI. There were many more reviews than quoted by Jordan, such as for instance: Joseph F. Costanzo, 'The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology (Book Review),' *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 321 (1959): 203-204; Ewart Lewis, 'Kantorowicz Ernst H., The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology (Book Review),' *Political Science Quarterly* 73, no. 3 (1958): 453-455; Peter N. Riesenberg, 'The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology (Book Review),' *The American Political Science Review* 52, no. 4 (1958): 1139-1140; Morimichi Watanabe, 'The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology (Book Review),' *Church History: Studies in Christianity and Culture* 52, no. 2 (1983): 258-259.

bodies,[3] as well as studies exploring the exchange between theological and political ideas in European civilization.[4]

Nevertheless, in 2009 Bernhard Jussen pointed out that 'a serious discussion of [Kantorowicz's] historical narrative and empirical validity has not taken place.'[5] He adds that 'Kantorowicz's narrative is still there to be discussed; the curiosity in political semantics predating the "State" is as fresh as it was in his day.'[6] How is it that one of the most quoted books of the previous half-century has not yet lost its potential to inspire contemporary debate?

By examining the intersection of political and religious realms, Kantorowicz offers an insight into foundations of the European civilisation. The key issue discussed in *The King's Two Bodies* is the process of secularisation, which led to the emergence of an early modern state created in the

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3   Marie Axton, *The Queen's Two Bodies: Drama and the Elizabethan Succession* (London: Swift Printers Ltd. for Royal Historical Society, 1977); Alain Boureau, *Le simple corps du roi. L'impossible sacralité des souverains français* (*XVe-XVIIIe siècle*) (Paris: Les Editions de Paris, 1988); Sergio Bertelli, *The King's Body: Sacred Rituals of Power in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, trans. Robert Burr Litchfield (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001 [orig. 1990]); David M. Gallo, *The King's One Body: Chronological Development of Louis XIV's 'lever' and 'coucher' and the Theory of the King's Two Bodies, 1655-1702* (PhD thesis, Boston College, 1992); Gunther Teubner, 'Des Königs viele Leiber. Die Selbstdekonstruktion der Hierarchie des Rechts,' in *Globalisierung und Demokratie. Wirtschaft, Recht, Medien*, eds. Hauke Brunkhorst, Matthias Kettner (Frankfurt/M: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2000), 240-273; Frank Fehrenbach, *Die Goldene Madonna im Essener Münster. Der Körper der Königin* (Ostfildern: Tertium, 1996); Agostino Paravicini Bagliani, *The Pope's Body,* trans. David S. Peterson (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2000 [orig. 1994]).

4   Just to mention few examples: Giorgio Agamben, *Homo sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998 [orig. 1995]); Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (London: Penguin, 1990), 334; Victoria Ann Kahn, *The Future of Illusion: Political Theology and Early Modern Texts* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2014); Jaroslav Pelikan, *Jesus through the Centuries: His Place in the History of Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 151; *Political Theology and Early Modernity*, eds. Graham Hammill, Julia Reinhard Lupton (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012); Eric L. Santner, *The Royal Remains: The People's Two Bodies and the Endgames of Sovereignty* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2011); Charles Taylor, 'Modern Social Imaginaries,' *Public Culture* 14, no. 1 (2002): 115. More about the influence of Kantorowicz on historiography: Johannes Fried, 'Ernst H. Kantorowicz and Postwar Historiography: German and European Perspectives,' in *Ernst Kantorowicz. Erträge der Doppeltagung Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität Frankfurt*, eds. Robert L. Benson, and Johannes Fried (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 1997), 180-202. *The King's Two Bodies* made also its impact on political philosophers, Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Allen Lane, 1977 [orig. 1975]) being the most famous example.

5   Bernhard Jussen, 'The King's Two Bodies Today,' *Representations* 106, no. 1 (2009): 105.

6   Ibid., 115.

image of the Church (*corpus Christi mysticum*). This process, shaped by the exchange of political and religious ideas and ideologies, proved to be one of the principal issues in the post-war debate regarding the condition of the Western world.

However, it is Kantorowicz's engagement with political theology, and the author's relationship to the founder of this discipline, that makes *The King's Two Bodies* more than just a compelling historical narrative.[7] Political theology as a field of academic inquiry found its earliest proponent in Carl Schmitt, a supporter of the Nazi ideology that forced Kantorowicz to emigrate to the USA. Indeed, it was Schmitt who made the famous claim that 'all significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized versions of theological concepts.'[8] While Schmitt is never quoted in *The King's Two Bodies*, Kantorowicz was undoubtedly acquainted with the thesis posed by the author of *Politische Theologie*.[9] According to Montserrat Herrero, Kantorowicz 'supports Schmitt's political theology as a research field consisting of the study of the transferences between the theological and the political,' and that '[his] attempt is perhaps the best example of a theological-political work in Schmitt's sense.'[10] One can certainly claim that Kantorowicz was inspired by Schmitt's definition of political theology, but at the same time it is necessary to stress the significant differences between these two German scholars.[11]

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7   Alain Boureau, *Kantorowicz: Stories of a Historian*, trans. Stephen G. Nichols, Gabrielle M. Spiegel (The Baltimore; London: John Hopkins University Press, 2001), 103-107; György Geréby, 'Political Theology versus Theological Politics: Erik Peterson and Carl Schmitt,' *New German Critique* 105, no. 35/3 (2008): 7-11, 30-33; idem, 'Carl Schmitt and Erik Peterson on the Problem of Political Theology: A Footnote to Kantorowicz,' in *Monotheistic Kingship*: *The Medieval Variants*, eds. Aziz Al-Azmeh, János M. Bak (Budapest; New York: Central European University, Department of Medieval Studies, 2004), 31-61; Jennifer Rust, 'Political Theologies of the *Corpus Mysticum*: Schmitt, Kantorowicz, and de Lubac,' in *Political Theology and Early Modernity*, 102-123; Montserrat Herrero, 'On Political Theology: The Hidden Dialogue between C. Schmitt and Ernst H. Kantorowicz in *The King's Two Bodies*,' *History of European Ideas* 41, no. 8 (2015): 1164-1177.
8   Carl Schmitt, 'Political Theology,' in Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, trans. George Schwab (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1985 [orig. 1922]), 36.
9   Boureau, *Kantorowicz,* 103-107; Geréby, 'Carl Schmitt and Erik Peterson,' 33-36; Herrero, 'On Political Theology,' 1174.
10   Ibid., 1176-1177.
11   However, Norman F. Cantor, *Inventing the Middle Ages: The Lives, Works, and Ideas of the Great Medievalists of the Twentieth Century* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1991), 79-118, esp. 112, stresses that Kantorowicz was in fact a supporter of Nazism and, if it were not his birth to a Jewish family, he would have stayed in Nazi Germany and support the regime as did his friend Percy Ernst Schramm. Polemics with Cantor's view in the reviews of his book

Kantorowicz does not follow Schmitt's view regarding the role of the state and the nature of political theology. According to Jennifer Rust, the concept of the Church as the mystical body of Christ – appropriated by Kantorowicz to describe political realms – has sociological implications, since the state could be understood as a horizontally organised collective body. This was meant as an answer to Schmitt for whom authority is concentrated in a single person, the sovereign, who decides in the state of exception, and the body politic, a vertical structure acting on decisions made from above. Kantorowicz, by contrast, proposed that the sovereign was, in fact, the collective institutional body of the state itself. According to Rust, in Kantorowicz's opinion the society is organized horizontally.[12]

This is not the only difference between the two scholars. Schmitt perceived political theology as a one-sided process of secularisation, whereas Kantorowicz was more apt to follow the lead of Henri-Xavier Arquillière, whose book *L'augustinisme politique* was published in the same year as the second edition of Schmitt's *Politische Theologie*. Arquillière argued that the sacralised temporal concepts of medieval political theory served to construct a theocratic order out of a secular one. In Arquillière's view – which is, in effect, the opposite of that proposed by Schmitt – it is the secular concept that is theologised in order to transform a secular society into a supernatural, eschatological one.[13] Although Kantorowicz does not cite *L'augustinisme politique*, his understanding of medieval political theology is not dissimilar to that proposed by Arquillière. *The King's Two Bodies* is not only a narrative of secularisation, but also examines the active role of religion in establishing political order. Kantorowicz deepened Schmitt's definition of political theology and, in doing so, illuminated the different consequences arising from the exchange between political and theological ideas.[14]

The King's Two Bodies thus brings together two opposing approaches to political theology: the first formulated by Schmitt and the second hinted

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written by Bennett D. Hill in *The American Historical Review* 97 no. 5 (1992): 1499 and by Richard W. Pfaff in *Speculum* 68, no. 1 (1993): 124.

12   Rust, 'Political Theologies of the *Corpus Mysticum*,' 102-123.

13   Henri-Xavier Arquillière, *L'augustinisme politique. Essai sur la formation des théories politiques du Moyen Âge* (Paris: Vrin, 1934). Recently on this issue: Michael J. S. Bruno, *Political Augustinianism: Modern Interpretations of Augustine's Political Thought* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), esp. 35-40.

14   More on the relation between Carl Schmitt and Ernst Kantorowicz could be found also in Anselm Haverkamp, 'Stranger than Paradise. Dantes irdisches Paradies als Antidot politischer Theologie,' in *Geschichtskörper. Zur Aktualität von Ernst H. Kantorowicz,* eds. Wolfgang Ernst, Cornelia Vismann (München: Wilhelm Fink, 1998) 93-105.

at by Arquillière, although subsequently developed in a different direction by Johann Baptist Metz.[15] If Schmitt understood political theology as the metaphysics of the theory of state, the latter approach of Metz was focused more on the potential of the Church to de-privatise religion and act as an agent of justice and peace in modern societies. Kantorowicz presents these two approaches to political theology as having played an active role in the historical processes which led to the formation of modern European societies, and which continue to shape the images of contemporary Western civilisation.

Modern liberal democracies are not devoid of political theology – as developed in both directions by Schmitt and Metz. Paul Kahn, in his book *Political Theology: Four New Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, proposes that there is a 'civic religion' in modern democracies which transcends the logic of secular reason. As an example, he cites the obligation to kill and be killed for one's country, which resembles more closely the logic of religious sacrifice.[16] Kahn's conclusions recall the dilemma noted by Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde, who suggested that contemporary liberal states are unable to guarantee their prerequisites.[17] From this, one might conclude that political theology, as envisaged by Schmitt, will continue to endure precisely because it can be used by the state as a substitute for the ideological foundation it lacks on its own.

In recent decades, Metz's understanding of political theology has also been visible in those liberal democracies which seem willing to allow the Church to engage with worldly affairs. In a discussion between Jürgen Habermas and Joseph Ratzinger, the former stated that religious language should be allowed in public debate, and that a religious world-view contains a potential for truth which *a priori* should not be rejected.[18] Ratzinger, in response, suggested that religion and reason should cooperate for their mutual purification; he argued that the primacy of secular reason – and

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15   Johann Baptist Metz, 'Politische Theologie,' in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, eds. Michael Buchberger, and Walter Kasper, 11 vols. (Freiburg: Herder, 1993-2001), VIII (1999), col. 392-394. See also *Political Theology: Contemporary Challenges and Future Directions*, ed. Michael Welker (Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2013), especially the article of Jürgen Moltmann, 'Political Theology in Ecumenical Contexts,' in *Political Theology: Contemporary Challenges and Future Directions*, ed. Michael Welker (Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2013), 1-11.
16   Paul W. Kahn, *Political Theology: Four New Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).
17   Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde, *Staat, Gesellschaft, Freiheit. Studien zur Staatstheorie und zum Verfassungsrecht* (Frankfurt M.: Suhrkamp, 1976), 60.
18   Jürgen Habermas, Joseph Ratzinger, *Dialektik der Säkularisierung. Über Vernunft und Religion,* ed. Florian Schuller (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2005), 36.

faith devoid of reason – have already led to fatal consequences, whether fundamentalist terrorist attacks or the threat of nuclear war. Neither religion nor secular reason can sustain the world on their own; there must be a balance between them arising from the mutual limitations that each imposes on the other.[19] The political theology understood as the active participation of the religious communities in maintaining a just and peaceful social order has thus started to regain acceptance in liberal democracies after a long period of hostility. What brought about this change?

The shift may have been caused by the renunciation of the secularisation theory. Proponents of the theory postulated that contemporary societies must become secular in the process of becoming modern. One of the most significant critics of this model is Peter Berger, who was one of the first to propose a secularisation theory, but later renounced his earlier views.[20] In sociological and political analyses it appears that religion has not receded from the public sphere, but occupies a place in society similar to that of premodern times. Various forms of religious presence are still well attested in the twenty-first century.[21]

The comparative perspective employed in the present volume has allowed the authors to draw a complex picture of the way political entities in the Christian world functioned during the medieval and early modern periods, and the changes they underwent in the twentieth and twentieth-first centuries. Christian border regions, such as the Kingdom of León, the Hungarian Kingdom, medieval Poland and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, have been largely neglected in the scholarly discussions inspired by Kantorowicz, and occupy a place of prominence in the present book. This focus offers an opportunity for the study of political cultures and source materials that are often addressed only in national scholarship and are therefore absent from the mainstream of historiographical debate. The broad chronological scope allows the authors to demonstrate that the medieval image of the king's two bodies provides a means of interpreting the modern cultural practices and political discourses shaping today's societies.

The twelve studies collected in this book offer interpretations of visual or literary artifacts using a variety of methodological approaches ranging

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19   Habermas, Ratzinger, *Dialektik der Säkularisierung,* 57-58.
20   Peter L. Berger, 'The Desecularization of the World: A Global Overview,' in *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics*, ed. Peter L. Berger (Washington: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 2.
21   Monica Duffy Toft, Daniel Philpott and Timothy S. Shah, *God's Century: Resurgent Religion and Global Politics* (New York; London: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2011), 1-12.

from contextual analysis and close reading to iconographic examination. Each chapter, regardless of its source materials, temporal scope or scholarly approach, attempts to answer some of these fundamental questions: How is the relationship between the ruler and his subjects established and maintained? How is the authority and legitimacy of the power-holder negotiated? What role do performances, visual media and literary materials play in political communication? What was the relationship between religion and politics in the practice of governing? What are the divine aspects of rulers? In what way did the physical body of a ruler influence his body politic? How was an imperfect and gendered body natural made to fit the image of a political super-body? How could the dead body of a king continue to exert influence over national history? And finally, why does the idea of king continue to persist in the political cultures of the present day?

The book is arranged chronologically. It opens with 'The Contested Body of the King: Negotiating Power and Authority at Royal Assemblies in León (10th-11th centuries)' by Álvaro Carvajal Castro (University of the Basque Country), which investigates accounts of royal assemblies from tenth- and eleventh-century León to show how the negotiation of power and authority was represented. The author identifies the components through which consensus and dissent could be articulated.

The subsequent chapter, 'The Supreme Power of the Armour and the Veneration of the Emperor's Body in Twelfth-Century Byzantium' by Foteini Spingou (University of Oxford) concentrates on the relationship between the imperial panoply and the emperor's physical body as presented in the encomiastic literature composed for Emperor Manuel I Komnenos (r. 1143-1180). The author examines how different objects, visual arts and literary devices were used to present a series of bridal gifts made for the emperor, and the different meanings conveyed by the objects and the accompanying texts.

The third essay, 'The *Exultet* of Bolesław II of Mazovia and Sacralisation of Political Power in the High Middle Ages' by Paweł Figurski (University of Warsaw and University of Notre Dame) also touches on the representation of a medieval ruler. In examining some of the extant fragments of a largely unknown liturgical manuscript produced around 1300 for the duke of Mazovia, it demonstrates that the concept of sacralised political power present in other areas of Europe was appropriated by those who governed on the frontier of medieval Latin Christianity.

In 'Political Theology and "International" Conflict in Thirteenth-Century Latin Christendom' by Wojciech Kozłowski (The Maria Grzegorzewska University in Warsaw), the author analyses interactions between Christianity

and the 'international' political system through an examination of two different sources: the first, the decisions of the thirteenth-century ecumenical councils, offers the larger perspective of Latin Christendom, while the second, the thirteenth-century annals of Great Poland, exemplifies the local scale of Polish lands. The chapter demonstrates how notions of sovereignty were built, and the ways in which political theology regulated the power-relationships between rulers.

Child rulers form the focus of the subsequent chapter, 'The King's Immature Body: Representations of Child Coronations in Poland, Hungary and Bohemia (1382-1530)' by Karolina Mroziewicz (Jagiellonian University, Cracow). The study explores literary and visual accounts of child coronations in medieval and early modern Central Europe as reflections of attitudes towards the kings and their physical bodies; the author discusses the ways in which the natural limitations of these underage kings were depicted and employed as a strategy to strengthen or contest their authority.

Another chapter focused on literary production in Central Europe is Aleksander Sroczyński's '*We Were the Trojans:* Rhetoric and Political Community in Medieval and Early Modern Sarmatia and Illyria.' The text examines the various forms in which the Trojan myth was used to express notions about the temporality and fragility of political bodies and the different ways in which this appealed to the elites of early modern Poland and Croatia.

'Life and Afterlife of the Pontifical Indiscretions in the Renaissance' by Ágnes Máté (Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest) presents critical responses to papal behaviour between the accession of Pope Pius II (1458) and the conclusion of the Council of Trent (1563). The author analyses Italian and neo-Latin histories, poems and pamphlets in order to reflect on the interaction between gossip and rumours regarding papal offspring and the ideal representation of the Pope.

The problem of the queen's visual representations is tackled by Emilia Olechnowicz (Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw) in 'The Queen's Two Faces: The Portraiture of Elizabeth I of England.' This chapter demonstrates how the realistic portraits from the first years of Elizabeth I's reign were gradually replaced by a 'face mask' image of the ever-beautiful, semi-divine Virgin Queen, and the queen's individual features dissolved into the sanctity of the Crown.

The section of the book devoted to contemporary political power opens with 'Blood, Honour and the Norm: Race Defilement and the Boundaries of Community in Hungary, 1941' by Gábor Szegedi (Masaryk University in Brno / Budapest) who studies race defilement court cases in order to analyse how sexual politics contributed to shape a Christian political community in the

era of Miklós Horthy. The author demonstrates how these past phenomena offer a parallel with the current nationalist trends in Hungary.

The following chapter, 'Dual Approaches to Communist Engagement: Helena Krajewska and Marek Włodarski' by Piotr Słodkowski (Academy of Fine Arts, Warsaw), describes the wide range of tensions between politics, ethics, and modes of artistic representation, using the example of art produced during the communist regime in Poland. The author traces the ambivalent response to social realism and the relationship between art and power in Poland during the mid-twentieth century.

The chapter by Andrzej Probulski (Jagiellonian Univeristy, Cracow), 'The Supermen's Two Bodies: the Body, the Costume, and the Legitimacy of Power in the DC Universe Narratives' analyses the ways in which notions of authority and the legitimacy of power are depicted in DC comics. The author focuses on two well-known figures, namely Superman and Batman, in order to explore the relationship between the agency of a superhero and his sense of belonging to a wider political community.

In the closing chapter, 'And Then They Were Bodies: Medieval Royalties, from DNA Analysis to a Nation's Identity,' Alexandra Ion (Institute of Anthropology 'Francisc I. Rainer' of the Romanian Academy, Bucharest) explores the role that the bones of medieval kings play in the construction of collective identities in the contemporary academic disciplines of archaeology and its related sciences. In offering an archaeological perspective, the author considers how new links between science and history change the interpretation of royal remains and lead towards the redefinition of national identities. The chapter shows that kings never die, as their remains offer a constant challenge to the notions of objectivity, and have the power to reshape how modern societies view the Middle Ages.

In addition to the chronological itinerary, there are different thematic paths which one may follow in reading this volume. One of these paths encourages an exploration of the multi-faceted nature of political theology, specifically the ways in which the exchange of political and religious ideas has developed between the premodern and contemporary era. Wojciech Kozłowski uses the concept of 'international political theology' to discuss relations within the community of lords in the thirteenth century on theoretical level, and to show how those relations played out in practice in Great-Poland; Álvaro Carvajal Castro explores how the power relations between the lay and ecclesiastical elites in early medieval León were articulated; and Paweł Figurski shows how the representation of local dukes in the liturgy was used as a means of underlining the sacrality of ducal power. Yet, the concept of 'political theology' also proved useful outside the medieval context. Gábor

Szegedi, drawing on the works of Carl Schmitt, elucidates the mechanisms of race exclusion in the anti-semitic legislation of Horthy-era Hungary.

Another thematic selection offers insights into the function of visual and literary representations and rituals. Foteini Spingou's chapter is an exploration of how the imperial panoply merged with the emperor's body in both poetry and Byzantine historiography. Karolina Mroziewicz investigates the ways in which the medieval and early modern rituals of coronation were adapted to support the frail bodies of infant kings. Emilia Olechnowicz, in turn, combines an analysis of queen Elizabeth I's visual representation with an examination of her ritual appearances in public. Finally, Piotr Słodkowski demonstrates the strategies employed by artists in mid-twentieth century Poland which enabled them to produce visual representations that met the demands of the state without compromising their artistic autonomy. He shows that there was a thin line between ideological orthodoxy and artistic freedom in a totalitarian state which suggests that power relations were far more entangled than it would appear at the first sight.

Three chapters in particular focus on the rhetoric of power in greater detail. Karolina Mroziewicz examines how the rhetoric of coronation accounts could be used to strengthen or contest the validity of child coronations. Ágnes Máté's chapter analyses the conventions, topoi and commonplaces pertaining to papal family life in the Renaissance. Aleksander Sroczyński uses the literary motif of Troy to illustrate the metapolitical function of rhetoric. These chapters all concern the formation of the public sphere and foreshadow the rise of propagandistic devices used in the early modern era.

A further thematic thread that runs through the book concerns the legacy of the premodern era in contemporary approaches to political power. This legacy acts as a focal point for the chapters by Andrzej Probulski and Alexandra Ion. The superheroes in Probulski's chapter use the costume to mark their relationship to the community they defend. In Alexandra Ion's chapter, connections with the medieval world may be understood literally, namely she maps the link between scientific examination of royal physical remains and the reception of these finds in a contemporary social context.

None of these paths follow the disciplinary, geographical or temporal divisions, but rather cross different fields, lands, and periods in order to expose the numerous links between premodern rulership and contemporary political power. The chapters show how old ways of legitimising authority were supplanted by new techniques of exercising power. They also encourage the reader to explore a central political concept as it appears throughout different geographical areas and historical periods.