Abstract: The Queen's Two Bodies: the Political and the Natural Body in the Portraits of Maria Theresa (1740–1780)

For Maria Theresa, queen of Hungary and Bohemia, archduchess of Austria, the natural and the political body are the two faces of one identity, simultaneously ruler and woman. Maria Theresa's portraits show her roles as ruler, as wife, as mother and as widow. The combination of the two bodies, of „natural" and „political" elements, in the images of the queen offers a discourse of legitimation for Maria Theresa, for her family and for her new dynasty everywhere in the states of the Monarchy. The representation of the queen in her portraits offers a complex combination of „female" elements – beginning with the natural body itself – and „male" ones such as the crowns and sceptre. The posture of the body, for example of the hand, can also be gender-specific. The numerous children of the queen and her husband Francis I also play a very important part in her representation. Over the 40 years of Maria Theresa's rule, „female" virtues are linked in her imagery with „male" ones typically attributed to rulers.