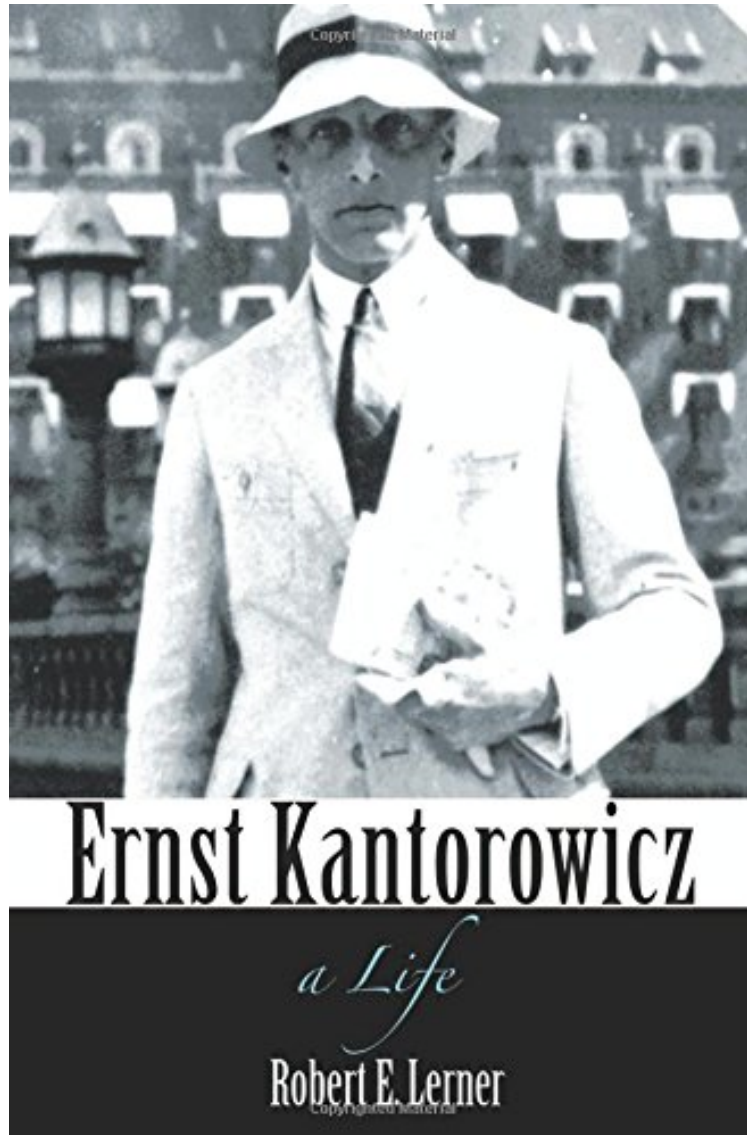


(Free) Ernst Kantorowicz: A Life

Ernst Kantorowicz: A Life

Robert E. Lerner

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Robert E. Lerner : Ernst Kantorowicz: A Life before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Ernst Kantorowicz: A Life:

3 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Opponent of university loyalty oaths and author of "The King's Two Bodies"By Ronald H. ClarkIt is often said that fascinating lives make for superior biographies. This statement is no where more true than as regards this outstanding biography of Ernst Kantorowicz (1895-1963), whom many consider to have been the greatest medievalist of the 20th century. I leave that to the historians to fight out; what is evident is

that EKa (as he preferred to be known) was one of the most insightful and creative intellectual historians that one is likely to come across. I first encountered him in connection with his spectacularly inventive study, "The King's Two Bodies," while in graduate school; I was also aware of him from his courageous opposition to the California loyalty oath requirement while he was teaching at Berkeley in the late 1940's, which ultimately cost him his position. I too had to put up with the oath's foolishness while a student at UC in the 1960's, but it was much weakened and on its way out thanks to the brave battle fought by EKa and others. The author (himself a distinguished medievalist) does a solid job in tracing the evolution of EKa's life, from his birth in Posen (then in East Prussia) in 1895 till his death in 1963 at Princeton where he had become affiliated with the Institution for Advanced Studies. His path through life is just fascinating, as he moves from Posen to fight on the German side in the First War, then to Heidelberg for economic studies and involvement with the mystical Stefan George circle. There while still without a university position, but possessing a doctorate, he wrote his first book on Kaiser Frederick II (published in 1927), who had ruled the Holy Roman Empire during the 13th century. The book either wowed or horrified established historians because of his unique reliance upon medieval chronicles and ceremonial acclamations rather than the more traditional tools of German historical writing. A foretaste of the Two Bodies book to come. EKa then shifted to the university at Frankfurt where he taught history. But the growing strength of the Nazis, especially after 1933, began to make his life uncomfortable, since he was of Jewish extraction. After a brief stint at Oxford, he was effectively separated from teaching, which did allow him more time for research work. By 1938, the situation was impossible and he escaped first to the UK and then the U.S. While he gave some lectures and taught briefly at several institutions, he ended up at Berkeley for a series of one-year appointments during 1940-45. He had managed to write his second book on liturgical acclamations and rituals, but UC press sat on the manuscript for several years. Ultimately he got a permanent professorship, but then the loyalty oath controversy forced him to relocate (fortunately) to the Institute for Advanced Studies at Princeton. It was here that he published the Two Bodies, a work which had been fermenting in his mind for decades. And it is here where he dies in 1963. Several aspects stand out in this bio. First, the author's own distinguished teaching and writing in medieval history render him a sure hand when discussing EKa's books and approaches to history. This is most evident I felt in the author's discussion of the Two Bodies, to which he devotes an entire chapter. Explaining the transition of ideas from Christian theological formulations into political ones to the uninitiated (such as myself) is no easy task, but the author pulls it off. Moreover, like a good European scholar, the author is conversant in multiple languages which allows him to accurately discuss some arcane concepts which EKa has articulated in multiple languages from diverse sources not in English. The reader is always in good hands with Professor Robert E. Lerner. While the biographical material flows smoothly, the intensive discussion of EKa's historical work can be challenging--but that is the nature of intellectual history. I enjoyed the 390 pages of the book because EKa tends to open up your mind to new ideas not elsewhere encountered. And that is always a valuable, and far too rare, experience.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Life of Ernst Kantorowicz By Dr. Jack Kushner I enjoyed my introduction to Ernest Kantorowicz and learned a great deal. He was some man The book is well written but could have been better redacted. But I would not have liked him as a person. He certainly left a great deal of writing for all to admire. Jack Kushner 2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. EKa By Christian Schlect While I previously was not aware of Ernst Kantorowicz, I found reading this nicely written biography both enjoyable and informative. Kantorowicz fought in World War I for Germany; was close to both the mystical poet Stefan George and the Oxford don Maurice Bowra; departed Nazi Germany and found refuge at Berkeley; was a key figure in the Red Scare's oath controversy at the University of California; and closed his days at Princeton's Institute for Advanced Study. He was a brilliant international academic and historian. The author, Dr. Lerner, has written a well-researched book that is enlivened by many words on Kantorowicz's spirited personal life, which included many unconventional love affairs and many deep friendships. His book provides the reader entry into the rarefied world of high intellectual attainment, as set against the backdrop of a violent century.

This is the first complete biography of Ernst Kantorowicz (1895-1963), an influential and controversial German-American intellectual whose colorful and dramatic life intersected with many of the great events and thinkers of his time. A medieval historian whose ideas exerted an influence far beyond his field, he is most famous for two books: a notoriously nationalistic 1927 biography of the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II and *The King's Two Bodies* (1957), a classic study of medieval politics. Born into a wealthy Prussian-Jewish family, Kantorowicz fought on the Western Front in World War I, was wounded at Verdun, and earned an Iron Cross; later, he earned an Iron Crescent for service in Anatolia before an affair with a general's mistress led to Kantorowicz being sent home. After the war, he fought against Poles in his native Posen, Spartacists in Berlin, and communists in Munich. An ardent German nationalist during the Weimar period, Kantorowicz became a member of the elitist Stefan George circle, which nurtured a cult of the "Secret Germany." Yet as a professor in Frankfurt after the Nazis came to power, Kantorowicz bravely spoke out against the regime before an overflowing crowd. Narrowly avoiding arrest after Kristallnacht, he fled to England and then the United States, where he joined the faculty at Berkeley, only to be fired in 1950 for refusing to sign an anticommunist loyalty oath. From there, he fell up the ladder to Princeton's Institute for Advanced Study, where he

stayed until his death. Drawing on many new sources, including numerous interviews and unpublished letters, Robert E. Lerner tells the story of a major intellectual whose life and times were as fascinating as his work.

"A richly illuminating study . . . [and] a timely meditation on the vicissitudes of abstract, purist ideals under the pressure of savage real-world events."--George Prochnik, New York Times Book "[A] finely grained portrait."--Robert E. Norton, Times Literary Supplement "A thorough and fascinating chronicle."--Brendan Simms, Wall Street Journal "Robert Lerner . . . relates this amazing story with both carefully researched detail and engaging verve."--Michael D. Bailey, Montreal "A labour of love inspired by youthful sightings of its charismatic subject. . . . Lerner's admirable study suggests that our understanding of the mind of the 20th century might be enriched by looking back at Kantorowicz's brilliant, if recondite scholarship, alongside this tribute to its author."--Stoddard Martin, Jewish Chronicle "Lerner's accessible, conversational tone and deft use of quotation bring Kantorowicz to life, showing the man behind the scholar and the development of a brilliant mind over a lifetime. Throughout, Kantorowicz's voice is sharply present. Lerner admits that, posthumously, motivations are impossible to discern, but his discernment is a gift in this unflinching treatment of Kantorowicz's legacy."--Letitia Montgomery-Rodgers, Foreword "[Robert Lerner] sets Kantorowicz in the context of his time, uniting heroic archival research, including numerous interviews with Kantorowicz's associates and friends, with discerning judgments to trace his remarkable odyssey. The result is a valuable contribution to modern European and American intellectual history."--Jacob Heilbrunn, The National Interest "The extraordinary story of Kantorowicz's passage from Posen to Princeton via California is admirably told by Robert E. Lerner, and he has undoubtedly written the biography of record."--Hamish Robinson, The Oldie "Lerner's biography is worthy of great praise, and it is very unlikely that it will ever be superseded."--Walter Laqueur, Jewish Books "A lively and authoritative text, which should endear Kantorowicz to many historians of the present day. . . . Ernst Kantorowicz: A Life is a deeply informed and profoundly considered work that should take its place proudly among the other biographies of notable figures brought out by Princeton University Press."--BookPleasures.com From the Back Cover "Ernst Kantorowicz was a magical figure who captivated everyone around him. This biography takes his measure and casts a spell of its own. Emerging from deep within the archives, Robert Lerner shows us precisely how Kantorowicz worked his magic, first in interwar Germany and then again as an immigrant in the United States. This book is also a memoir, preserving precious chains of lore and reminiscence: an inspired labor of love."--Conrad Leyser, University of Oxford "Historian, Stefan George disciple, Germanophile, and bon vivant--Ernst Kantorowicz was a matchless figure in twentieth-century intellectual life. With Robert Lerner's magisterial study, Kantorowicz has at long last gotten the biography he truly deserves."--Richard Wolin, Graduate Center, City University of New York "With forensic archival sense and the sympathies of a subtle historian, Robert Lerner tells the story of a remarkable life against the volatile history of twentieth-century Europe and America. Ernst Kantorowicz: A Life traces the making of the scion of a bourgeois Jewish family into a patriotic soldier, a nationalist intellectual, a refugee, and finally a critic of the Cold War. His life made Eka--as he styled himself--into a most original historian who explored the making of political authority and charisma in the classic *The King's Two Bodies*. Lerner has written a highly readable and illuminating account of living in extraordinary times."--Miri Rubin, Queen Mary, University of London "This amazing biography of Ernst Kantorowicz is the product of a prodigious amount of research undertaken over the past twenty-five years. There is nothing else like this anywhere. Robert Lerner has uncovered materials that I suspect are known to very few others."--John Van Engen, University of Notre Dame "Ernst Kantorowicz, one of the most interesting and influential historians of the twentieth century, has found his ideal biographer in Robert Lerner, who as a medievalist is well versed in the many branches of Kantorowicz's scholarship. Drawing on unique sources, including important collections of unpublished letters and interviews with people who knew Kantorowicz, Lerner presents a lively, vivid picture of the historian's life and writings."--Eckhart Grnewald, author of *Ernst Kantorowicz and Stefan George* About the Author Robert E. Lerner is professor emeritus of history at Northwestern University, where he taught medieval history for more than forty years. The author of many books, he is a fellow of the Medieval Academy of America and the American Academy in Rome, and a former member of the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton.