

forming young Italians into perfect embodiments of the regime. The author's overall goal is to demonstrate fascism's totalitarian nature by looking at its educational work through the prism of the Accademia. Alessio Ponzio argues that the history of the Accademia reveals the regime's struggle to identify pedagogical models and ideals that would fulfill its totalitarian project. The Accademia represented a site in which fascism enacted its intent to both reinvent Italian politics and remake the Italians through an "anthropological revolution."

With a thorough and detailed analysis of archival documents and journals of the time, the author begins his account by contextualizing the Accademia within the broader history of physical education in post-unification Italy. We thus learn that already in 1861 the idea of physical education as a tool for the formation of Italian citizens emerged and led to the introduction of physical education in schools. The field of physical education, however, remained quite dysfunctional in liberal Italy, and once fascism came to power the government reorganized the teaching with the goal of creating new Italians. In 1927 the fascist youth organization Opera Nazionale Balilla (ONB) was charged with the task of providing physical education to all students in elementary and middle schools. Eventually, the growing need for trained teachers who could perform the tasks envisioned by the regime required new pedagogic means and structures. The Accademia della Farnesina was founded with this intent and soon became a political tool for the regime to train leaders for the fascist youth organization.

The author persistently underlines the political nature of the Accademia and contextualizes it within the broader goals of "fascistization" undertaken by the regime. He argues that the Accademia's political role appeared even more explicit in 1937, when the ONB lost its autonomy and was incorporated within the Gioventù Italiana del Littorio (GIL). More focused on sport and military preparation, and now under the direct supervision of the Party, at this juncture the Accademia also turned antisemitic and, beginning in 1938, its admission policy required proof of belonging to the "Italian race."

The second half of the book particularly focuses on the transformations the Accademia underwent when affiliated with the GIL. The author directs attention to the totalitarian acceleration visible in the Accademia's changed priorities, its main task now defined as training primarily young fascist leaders and only secondarily teachers of physical education. Although the differences in the way the ONB and the GIL organized the Accademia were significant, the author emphasizes the continuing political role the Accademia played over time. Its students were powerful tools of propaganda and were often showed off, especially during visits of foreign dignitaries; the formal perfection of their performances when engaged in collective athletic tests supposedly testified to fascism's success. The Accademia also became a model of fascist upbringing to be followed and applied in other educational contexts; schools and academies were opened that pursued the

pedagogic objective of endowing youth with discipline and a fascist conscience. Last but not least, the political importance of the Accademia in the pedagogic design of the regime was reaffirmed in 1943 when Benito Mussolini and his government moved to northern Italy. There the renamed Opera Balilla continued the work previously carried out by the ONB and the GIL during the peak years of the regime.

The book ends with an interesting section on post-fascist Italy and the struggle on the part of ex-students to justify their affiliation with the Accademia and deny being active members of the regime in order to keep their jobs as teachers in democratic Italy. The way the students described the Accademia and their own role and participation in it raises very important questions on issues of historical memory, political beliefs, activism, and popular reception. Ponzio, however, again elects to use this discussion to reaffirm the underlying political role of the Accademia. He generally refrains from delving deeply into other themes. All in all, the book sticks to its stated goal of proving fascism's totalitarian project through a historical analysis of the Accademia. It spends little time explaining why physical education was important to train fascist leaders, for example, or what differences the regime saw between sport activities and physical activities. One only wishes that, in addition to providing consistent material to support his thesis that fascism pursued a totalitarian project, the author had helped clarify the content of this project and the question of what meaning physical activity, however defined, held within fascism's view of totalitarian control.

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ROMAN KOROPECKYJ. *Adam Mickiewicz: The Life of a Romantic*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. 2008. Pp. xvii, 549. \$45.00.

Readers hoping to find in Roman Koropecykj's magisterial biography any but the most cursory introduction to the poetry of the great Polish writer (1798–1855) will be disappointed by this book. It is not a study in the life and works genre of literary biography; rather, the author makes it clear in his introduction that he is intent on writing a different kind of poet's biography, one focused on the poet's role in inspiring others to action in the cause of Poland's liberation (variously understood), to which Mickiewicz eventually dedicated his life. Koropecykj introduces Mickiewicz's greatest poetic achievements, for which he is revered in Poland as the national bard—the exquisite *Crimean Sonnets* (1825); the Romantic drama, *Forefathers' Eve, Part III* (1829), with its mysterious prophecy of Poland's redemption by a man born of a foreign mother; *Pan Tadeusz* (1834), Poland's "national epic" with its idyllic mythologizing of gentry life; along with other of his writings—as significant events in their author's evolving belief in himself (and his reception by others) as the inspired, chosen

prophet of Polish liberation. Neither these beautiful poetic masterpieces nor the blatantly propagandistic, biblically stylized *Books of the Polish Nation and Polish Pilgrimage*, in which Mickiewicz proclaimed his theory of Poland as the Christ of nations whose suffering would redeem other nations from bondage, are subjected to literary analysis. The poet's "works" examined here in meticulously documented detail include, instead, the astonishing number of love affairs he pursued with the wives of well-placed Russians and Poles; his several unsuccessful courtships of marriageable young women; his long marriage to a much younger, mentally unbalanced woman who bore him six of his seven known children; his impassioned engagement in Polish émigré politics, including his quixotic attempts to support Poland's liberation by raising a Polish militia to fight alongside Italian revolutionaries in 1848 and a Jewish militia in support of Turkey (and therefore against Russia) during the Crimean War; and, perhaps most shocking, this fervent Roman Catholic's years of self-abasing subservience to a bizarre cult ruled by his "Master," the mystic Andrzej Towiański. Readers interested in Mickiewicz's poetry—an interest that the present biography will no doubt stimulate—should seek out Koropecy's excellent earlier monograph, *The Poetics of Revitalization: Adam Mickiewicz between Forefathers' Eve, Part 3, and Pan Tadeusz* (2001), and Wiktor Weintraub, *The Poetry of Adam Mickiewicz* (1954), still after half a century the best general introduction to Mickiewicz's poetic oeuvre available in English.

If Koropecy occasionally disappoints with his avoidance of stylistic analysis, he more than compensates for this lack with his refreshingly frank discussion of Mickiewicz's chaotic life, "as misguided as it was sublime" (p. xi). Polish biographers of Mickiewicz are intent on the charismatic poet's importance in inspiring his countrymen, through his writings, with faith in partitioned Poland's historic mission and eventual resurrection even in the face of repeated failed uprisings; his extraordinary gift as an inspired improviser in verse; his brilliant lectures as France's first chaired professor of Slavic literature (preferring not to dwell on the fact that the lectures were often ill-informed and used by Mickiewicz to proclaim his Bonapartist-Catholic-Towianist vision); his self-sacrificing ardor; and so forth. As a dispassionate scholar "in whom the figure of Poland's national poet evokes no emotional associations," Koropecy has succeeded in producing an utterly compelling portrait of "the human Mickiewicz, at once victim and beneficiary of tsarist repression, Polish patriot and habitué of cosmopolitan salons, pious Catholic and heterodox sectarian, womanizer and feminist, egotist and devoted friend, Bonapartist, mystic politician, and revolutionist" (p. xi). Koropecy is also refreshingly straightforward in the way he addresses the uncomfortable truths and rumors concerning Mickiewicz's and his wife's partial Jewish ancestry and the poet's incontestable interest in Jewish mysticism and Polish-Jewish relations.

For all his single-minded focus on the Polish nation,

Mickiewicz was well-connected with and admired by many of the leading socialist thinkers and activists in France and elsewhere in Europe. (See, for example, historian Lloyd S. Kramer's discussion of Mickiewicz's influence in Parisian intellectual circles in *Threshold of a New World: Intellectuals and the Exile Experience in Paris, 1830–1848* [1988].) Mickiewicz's interests and influence extended beyond Europe via his friendship with Margaret Fuller to the American transcendentalists, especially Ralph Waldo Emerson. For all his undeniable charisma, his adoration of Lord Byron, his cult of Napoleon, and his Romantic poetry, Mickiewicz was not—or not just—a quintessential Romantic, as the subtitle of this superb biography suggests. And his biographer has given us not just a fully fleshed-out portrait of a single individual, but a vividly detailed picture of Polish émigré politics as conducted in Paris, Rome, and elsewhere, in all its contentious variety, that should be of general interest to historians.

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ROXANNE EASLEY. *The Emancipation of the Serfs in Russia: Peace Arbitrators and the Development of Civil Society*. (BASEES/Routledge Series on Russian and East European Studies, number 50.) New York: Routledge. 2009. Pp. xii, 226. \$160.00.

Despite an abundant and rich literature on the 1861 abolition of serfdom in Russia—covering everything from the legislative process and policy debates to economic impact and peasant resistance—our understanding of the execution of emancipation remains frustratingly incomplete. Therefore, Roxanne Easley's goal of illuminating "the processes by which society ingested and implemented" (p. 6) the emancipation settlement is most welcome. Also felicitous is Easley's choice to center her study on peace arbitrators, the state-appointed noble officials charged with ensuring the legality of land settlements, settling disputes between landlords and their former serfs, and establishing new institutions of peasant self-administration.

The office of peace arbitrator was a short-lived institution: abolished in 1874, its prestige and autonomy were already eroded within three years. Nevertheless, Easley argues, arbitrators played a key role in bringing Russia "one step closer to the development of a public sphere" (p. 7). By creating a local official with broad judicial and administrative authority over rural society as well as independence from the regular bureaucratic hierarchy, the government sought to co-opt the reformist wing of the nobility and thus circumvent the opposition. This "gamble," as Easley calls it, paid off in the short run: the arbitrators succeeded in navigating the twin dangers of noble obstructionism and peasant disappointment. Contrary to much of the historiography that has stressed arbitrators' shortcomings, Easley prudently measures their actions by the government's own immediate goals: peasant disorders declined rapidly,