

vide a platform for a meaningful discussion and debate on Russia's religious heritage. Daniel interprets the new Social Conception of the Orthodox Church (August, 2000) partly as a result of this unfading grassroots urge to foster a new relationship between the society and the church. The latter, due to its traditionally strong moral authority in Russia, has a full potential to nourish self-determination, freedom, compassion, reciprocity and tolerance—the principles that will define Russian civil society in the future.

*The Orthodox Church and Civil Society in Russia* will certainly enhance understanding of the moral underpinnings of Russian society and offer a multitude of profound insights into the essence and problems of Orthodox Christianity to both the specialist and to the general reader. Daniel presents his findings in a skillfully balanced manner without attempting to omit or smooth over the accounts of antagonistic movements within the Orthodox Church, which results in a respectfully objective, engaging, and versatile narration. This volume, minor errors in Russian personal names aside, stands out for its attention to detail and will be of use to those seeking a high degree of understanding of Russian Orthodox sociology and the Orthodox Church in general.

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Roman Koropecyjk. *Adam Mickiewicz: The Life of a Romantic*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 2008. Bibliography. Illustrations. Index. xvii + 549 pp. \$45.00 (cloth).

Posterity is seldom fair to great poets from (relatively) small nations. What constitutes their greatness, the mastery of their peripheral language and the intensity of imagination that is bound to native predicaments of history, deems them “untranslatable,” which is a polite euphemism for “obscure.” If there are rather recent exceptions, as in case of Czesław Miłosz or Constantine Kafavis, the attention they received originated in factors outside the realm of poetry. But even in their own countries, bards are often misread and bowdlerized in order to enhance their role as patron saints of patriotic—if not narrowly nationalist—causes. Such was the case with Adam Mickiewicz, as Roman Koropecyjk remarks in his splendid, meticulously researched biography of Poland's greatest poet, who for over two hundred years inspired every national struggle against foreign tyrants. Koropecyjk writes: “precisely because of Mickiewicz's status as a national icon, there has always been a tendency to mythologize and, concomitantly, often downplay or even suppress certain moments in his life—be it for ideological ends or out of [a] misguided sense of discretion” (21).

With his two aims—to inform the non-Polish reader about this extraordinary figure of European Romanticism and to fill in the gaps in countless but variously biased Polish narratives of Mickiewicz's life—Koropecyjk has written the first biography of the poet in any language that meets the contemporary standards for the genre. His scholarship is impeccable, as he examines every possible source, much of the material scattered in Russian, French, and Swiss archives, in addition to the enormous literature in Polish. And since Mickiewicz's life abounds in dramatic events of the kind none of the period's other Romantics did, or could, experience, the book is a page-turner. To make it more accessible, the author limits the discussion of Mickiewicz's poetry to those features that contribute to a better understanding of his life. The Poles might think otherwise, but for many a reader who finds biographies of nineteenth-century poets (Lord Byron's, for example) more interesting than their poems, the story of Mickiewicz's life would need no embellishment from his work. He was, as is emphasized by the subtitle of the book, a quintessential Romantic: a young devourer of the world's best literature; a rebel against the political oppression in his native Lithuania (where his most memorable childhood experience was to witness the march of Napoleon's army into its war with Russia); an exile—first in

Russia, where he mingled with cultural elites and networks of spies, then in France where he became both a celebrity and a suspect for his revolutionary activities; and a lover of an international cast of women and husband of a much younger one, who was of Jewish descent and became mentally ill while bearing him six children. An ardent Catholic prone to exalted states of religiosity, he literally and poetically “wrestled” with God, insulted the pope, and, as a founding member of the sect “God’s Circle,” preached reconciliation between Judaism and Christianity. He died in Turkey in 1855, when he was there on a mission to create Polish and Jewish legions in support of the Turks in their war against Russia.

Koropecy presents all these events and entanglements with knowledgeable detail in a vivid narrative filled with richly drawn characterizations of everyone who mattered in the poet’s life: some of historic significance (Pushkin, Schlegel, Goethe, Mazzini, Michelet, Hugo, Sainte-Beuve, George Sand, Margaret Fuller—the list is long), others, his many friends and lovers, recognizable only to the native reader.

In accordance with his goal of approaching those areas of Mickiewicz’s life which Polish biographers considered (with the exception of “scandalizing” essays by Tadeusz Boy-Żeleński in the 1930s, and several recent studies) to diminish the poet’s iconic image, Koropecy freely describes Mickiewicz’s love affairs, including the controversial late liaison which added two more children to his impoverished household. He also highlights the poet’s Russian period, stressing the role several of his influential friends in Moscow and Petersburg played in the publication of his early works. But in mentioning Mickiewicz’s strained relations with Pushkin, Koropecy neglects to note the deeply negative impression Pushkin’s poem *Poltava*, which denigrates the Ukrainian national hero Ivan Mazepa and praises Tsar Peter, had made on Mickiewicz. The repercussions of that and other, difficult, encounters, along with gratitude for his friends’ kindness, would continue to inform Mickiewicz’s complex attitudes toward Russia in both his poetry and his actions.

As much as Koropecy’s zeal and skill in bringing Mickiewicz down to earth (in his time and place)—to de-romanticize the true Romantic—is to be admired, in some spots the effort to present the poet as all too human borders on harshness. One example involves the poet’s reluctance to join the 1830 uprising in Poland. In a long chapter devoted to the issue, Koropecy dwells on Mickiewicz’s tormented passivity in response to the call to arms and his subsequent sense of guilt for his failure to participate in the struggle. What’s absent in the biographer’s account of that dark hour is acknowledgment of the obvious—to the poet and all his friends—threat to his life the moment he would have crossed the border, no matter how disguised. Perhaps too often here Mickiewicz is accused of vanity, of “unquenchable need for sympathy and attention” (193).

Among Mickiewicz’s many passions one stands out from those of his fellow Romantics, Polish or not: he strongly believed in the significance of Jews and Judaism. According to a persistent rumor (affirmed by some hints from the poet), Mickiewicz’s mother came from a family of Jewish converts. He grew up in places with as many Jews as Christians, and, as a university student in Wilno, he frequented bookstores owned by Jews who also housed students and helped them with small loans. In Petersburg he immersed himself in the study of the kabala with one of his Lithuanian friends, Józef Oleszkiewicz, and he employed some striking kabalistic symbolism in *Forefathers, Part 3*. In *Pan Tadeusz*, his major work and Poland’s beloved epic, he introduced a Jewish innkeeper who is also a true *national bard* (a musician), a Polish patriot secretly acting as a political emissary while openly advising the local Poles on values of unity and good governance. Clearly, the poet projected into the character of Jankiel such qualities as he saw in himself. Soon after he married Celina Szymanowska, in 1834, he co-founded a peculiar sect that held as one of its tenets a messianic vision of Christian and Jewish Poles joined, by God’s design, in leading the world toward its moral transformation. As a lecturer at the Collège de France Mickiewicz once spoke of himself as not only Polish and Lithuanian, but also an Israelite poet. He thundered at aristocrat Zygmunt Krasiński for his negative portrayal of Jews in the drama *The*

*Undivine Comedy*, which Mickiewicz otherwise much admired. He persuaded his friend and tutor to his children, Armand Lévy, to re-convert to Judaism. The last weeks of his life were devoted to creating a Jewish military unit for the war in Russia. None of it pleased the Mickiewicz hagiographers in Poland. But Koropeczyj, despite his vow to correct the ideological biases of Polish Mickiewiczologists, has also downplayed this astonishing and quite marvelous aspect of the great poet. He does not include in his fifteen-page bibliography Jadwiga Maurer's seminal book on Mickiewicz's Jewish affiliations (*Z matki obcej*, Polska Fundacja Kulturalna, 1990) and disregards the opinions of other scholars on the matter. One respects, of course, the biographer's perception of his subject, but in this regard there is a loss, if only in potentially enlightening Western readers. Beautifully produced by the publisher, Koropeczyj's book features a rich array of valuable illustrations. It is altogether a valiant and most welcome effort.

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Magda Teter. *Jews and Heretics in Catholic Poland: A Beleaguered Church in the Post-Reformation Era*. New York: Cambridge UP, 2006. Illustrations. Selected Bibliography. Index. xxxiv + 272 pp. \$65.00 (cloth).

Joanna Beata Michlic. *Poland's Threatening Other: The Image of the Jew from 1880 to the Present*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2006. Index. xii + 386 pp. \$59.95 (cloth).

A number of years ago, on one of my (all too) many furloughs from work on a different project, I came across Stefan Otwinowski's *Wielkanoc* [Easter, 1946], a play about the Warsaw ghetto uprising of 1943. Drafted within weeks after the ghetto's resistance was broken, it is arguably the earliest attempt to represent the 1943 insurgency in drama. A good deal of scholarly work has been done on the subject of the literary and theatrical representations of the Holocaust, but when I set out to do research on Otwinowski's play, I was surprised to find that it had been overlooked.

*Wielkanoc* is a play in which historical figures find modern counterparts, and events both past and present jostle each other. This in itself is not exceptional, but what still stands out is a puzzling conflation of the Jewish uprising of 1943 with the Polish insurrection of 1794 and the activism of the Polish Brethren (also known as Socinians or anti-Trinitarians) in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This conflation startled me, first by its seeming absurdity, then by its possible implications. I was aware that the author of *Wielkanoc* was a descendant of a sixteenth-century anti-Trinitarian poet, Erazm Otwinowski. I was also aware that he went into hiding in Nazi-occupied Warsaw because he was often mistaken for a Jew. But I could not proceed with my project until I was clear in my mind about what the anti-Trinitarians and the 1794 insurrection were doing in a play about the Warsaw ghetto uprising. *Wielkanoc* was an invitation to search for missing pieces of the puzzle, hidden in libraries and archives. I found myself dealing with buried anxieties, censored traumas, haunting "shadow" themes, endlessly multiplying taboos, and no clear sense of closure. In short, the question about the multiple time-frames in *Wielkanoc* pressed for the exploration of other unduly neglected plays in order to develop a richer and more complex understanding of the history of Polish drama.

It goes almost without saying that the publication of Magda Teter's *Jews and Heretics in Catholic Poland: A Beleaguered Church in the Post-Reformation Era* could not have been more timely for my own research. More importantly, however, her deeply researched and highly nuanced account makes a major contribution to scholarship by bringing a fresh perspective to the study of the conundrum that Jews, both real and symbolic, have long posed to the cultural imagination in Poland. One of the chief strengths of Teter's book lies in her cutting through long-standing assumptions and misconceptions to read archival materials with fresh attention.



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