Szemplińska’s autobiographical triptych, “Accretions” (Zrosty, 1938-39) shows the power and consequences of empathy upon its enigmatic heroine, Daria, who is indifferent to gender codes, naïve and empathic. Krasowka posits a similarity with Szemplińska’s own altruistic predisposition as the source for her involvement with the Polish Communist Party. Naiveté about totalitarianism resulted in disillusionment which destroyed Szemplińska’s life.

The final essays, “Gombrowicz’s Gender Trouble” by Knut Andreas Grimstad and “Inexpressible Desire and Narrative Poetics: Homosexuality in Iwaszkiewicz, Breza, Mach, and Gombrowicz” by German Ritz, explore the homosexual aspect of gender roles and sexuality. The gender role reversal at the end of Gombrowicz’s 1939 Possessed suggests that gender is binary and essentialist. As his Diary articulated, it is impossible to get beyond man and woman. German Ritz traces the persistent strategy in Polish literature of “inexpressible desire” — a group of literary devices to represent homosexual desire locating homosexuality within language rather than as a problem for culture.

Illustrating the long-lived power of traditionally constructed gender roles combined with political exigencies and religion to constrain and confine women and homosexual writers, this volume enables the reader both to understand the belated impact of feminism, women’s liberation, and gender studies in Poland and to explore contemporary gender and sexual representations in Polish literature.

Theodosia Robertson
University of Michigan-Flint


Historians today agree that the first two Kings of Romania laid the foundations of Romanian modern society, by providing political stability, and by promoting economic development and cultural dialogue. It has been argued that their reigns fostered debates about identity and paths of national development, but there are no studies documenting their actual involvement in debates. Shona Kallestrup fills this gap by exploring the role of the dynasty in mediating between foreign and traditional references in architecture, fine and applied arts. She reexamines changes in the concept of “national style” as it evolved from the “Romanian,” “Neo-Romanian,” to “Monumental Neo-Romanian,” stressing its dual-stranded foreign and traditional character. The book is chronologically structured in seven chapters, each focusing on the key participants involved in the shaping and affirmation of a Romanian na-
tional style: the royal family, the Romanian state, individual artists, and cultural societies.

In a brief introduction, Kallestrup traces the slow penetration of Western ideas into Romanian culture during the eventful nineteenth century which culminated in the crowning of Carol, a Hohenzollern, in 1866. To Kallestrup, the King's involvement in arts through the building and decorating of royal palaces was decisive for the beginning of a westwards-looking Romania. For the Peles Castle, the first and foremost royal residence, King Carol I relied entirely on Western architecture and expertise, as described in chapter 2. At the same time, the King viewed the transplanting of foreign art in Romanian soil as a means of bringing stability and legitimization to the new country and dynasty. Shona Kallestrup also refers to Queen Elisabeta and the foreign female artists she hired to decorate the Peles Palace. Royal women were not only Western proponents but anti-Western advocates as well, embracing "vernacularism" in reaction to overwhelming Western influences. An entire chapter focuses on the wife of the future King Ferdinand, Crown Princess Marie, who proposed a Romanian-inspired vernacular style. In her designs, one may clearly distinguish "a potpourri of national and international impulses" in which the vernacular of Byzantine, Nordic, or colonial character, sat comfortably with the latest European trends.

Chapter 4 traces further reactions to the Western presence. Romanian architects, artists, and journalists competed for authority with the royals and foreign experts in the restoration of historical monuments. They hoped to stimulate Romanian art societies, create specialized journals, found local schools of architecture, as well as play an active role in international exhibitions and the design of urban public/private architecture. For example, the architect Ioan Minucu, who pioneered the "Romanian style," distinguished himself in all the above initiatives. Kallestrup argues that international exhibitions, next to palaces, triggered new debates about the "national style" and consecrated new styles. At the royal event of the 1906 Jubilee Exhibition, Western emphasis was secondary to the Romanian vernacular, leading to the latter's widespread imitation in public and private commissions. Not only the Romanian monarchy but those of Serbia and Bulgaria were active participants in the art of their exhibition pavilions, stirring comparisons in favor of a Southeastern architectural variant. Kallestrup's original point is buttressed by commonalities like their mixture of international styles, their "locally-rooted Byzantinism," former Ottoman experience, and similar interwar contexts. Their only divergence, she argues, was their attitude towards Russia, the Romanians, unlike the other two, preferring Western inspiration to a Slavic Russian one.

A look at young artistic societies in a historical perspective reveals familiar beginnings. The early societies like Ileana encouraged the slow penetration of Western ideas mainly in art salon exhibitions. Then, the royalty's involvement in a new young art society, The Artistic Youth, emboldened artis-