

Wspomnienia z Zakopanego (The Navel of the World: A Memoir of Zakopane). Łomianki: Wydawnictwo LTW (www.ltw.com.pl), 2010. Rafał Malczewski (1892–1965) was the son of Jacek Malczewski, a noted Polish painter. Enamoured of the village of Zakopane in the Polish Tatras, he became an intellectual guide to this unique place and to the influential group of writers, philosophers, and artists who resided there. The remarkable thing about his memoir is its detachment from ideology: this is a diary of a private person who sees things that professional politicians and historians do not see. This truly is a report of what life was like at that time and at that place. The end of the war meant more than just the cessation of hostilities: a new world was ushered in, but some of Zakopane's inhabitants remained blind to these changes well into the 1920s.

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Coming of Age under Martial Law The Initiation Novels of Poland's Last Communist Generation

By **Svetlana Vassileva-Karagyozyova**. Rochester: Univ. of Rochester Press and Boydell and Brewer Ltd, 2015. viii + 224 pages. Index. ISBN 13: 978-1-58046-528-1. Hardcover.

Jacek Koronacki

The author, who is Associate Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures at the University of Kansas, argues convincingly that the cohort of Poles born roughly between 1960 and 1975—the '89ers, for short—forms a generational community clearly marked by the experience of the cataclysmic fall of communism in 1989 and conscious of a shared experience of social turbulence. This is so despite important differences between those born in the early 1960s and those born in the late 1960s or early 1970s. Indeed, it made a tremendous difference to live under communism and then see the leap to democracy (of sorts) when one was a teenager or in one's twenties. It must have made those beginning their adult life under a competitive

economy, all other things being equal, develop a different attitude toward work and life than of those who entered adult life in the last years of communist rule in Poland. Yet, to quote Vassileva-Karagyozyova, “the Polish '89ers seem to be on two completely different agendas only at first glance. In fact, they are closely intertwined and function symbiotically” (17).

A multitude of scholarly works on Polish literature from 1989 until today has been published. Vassileva-Karagyozyova is well aware of this fact and wisely relies on much of this work. She is thus equally well aware that hers should not be just another minor addition to this legion. Her aim is much more ambitious, and well described by Irena Grudzińska Gross on the book's cover: “The author places the ‘developmental novels’ she discussed within their literary, cultural, anthropological, and sociological contexts, thus moving her analysis out of the realm of area studies and into the common language of scholars working on all kinds of literatures and cultural phenomena.”

In the first chapter Vassileva-Karagyozyova examines the political manifestations of the intergenerational conflict as depicted in the self-thematization narratives of the '89ers in the Polish press between 2002 and 2014. She notes and provides her own explanation for a kind of a leitmotif found in these narratives: “self-blame for the inability of the group to organize itself as a community with a unified and distinct voice and considerable social influence” (12).

Vassileva-Karagyozyova begins the second chapter with a brief overview of the developments of the genre of the Bildungsroman since late eighteenth-century Germany to the present time to focus on the post-1989 Polish initiation novels. She elaborates on what she summarizes thus: “Instead of experiencing healthy maturation and smooth integration into an affirmative society, the young protagonists in Polish works adopt a wide range of escapist strategies to resist societal pressures urging compliance with normative values and behaviors and also as a means of psychological survival (self-arrest in an infantile stage of development

to avoid engagement with an intolerable reality)” (12).

The analysis in the third chapter, titled “Emasculated Men, Absent Fathers,” “focuses on the father-child dyad and illuminates the detrimental effects of the physical and emotional unavailability of the '89ers' fathers (having been robbed of their manhood under communism) on the emerging subjectivity of their offspring” (13). Vassileva-Karagoyozova distinguishes between three partly overlapping groups of paternal images in the initiation novels: fathers who are physically absent due to death, divorce, emigration, or involvement in the Solidarity movement; fathers, who are intimately involved with the Communist Party and have successful professional careers; and by far the largest group of fathers, who have failed to successfully position themselves in the professional sphere and have found themselves at the margins of both public and family life. She aptly and movingly describes testimonies of inadequate fathering during late communism, which abound in the Polish initiation novels. The testimonies pertain to groups of fathers whose masculinity is either elusive due to their absence or only “officially” sanctioned (as with the party functionaries); or has been defeated (in the third group of fathers) leading to alcohol abuse, promiscuity, and physical violence. Vassileva-Karagoyozova also describes psychological consequences of inadequate fathering and hence deviant mother-child relations with father withdrawn and mother overburdened.

In chapter 4, titled “Exorcising Mother-Demons: The Myth of the Polish Mother Revisited,” the author turns to the presentation of Polish mothers in the initiation novels. She begins with her account of the nationalistic myth of the Polish Mother to conclude that her analysis of fictional portrayals of socialist motherhood shows that the '89ers' mothers unconsciously became collaborators in the political and social oppression of the younger generation and, ultimately, became their own children's victimizers. It should be emphasized that Vassileva-Karagoyozova does not refer back to any feminist clichés but relies on the rather sincere testimonies of lived childhood

experiences found in the initiation literature, which give ample evidence of too much deficient and obstructive mothering in late-communist Poland. Again, such testimonies are described both aptly and movingly.

In the last chapter Vassileva-Karagoyozova argues that “the post-1989 Polish initiation novels reflect the Polish youth's departure from institutional Catholicism (which had become too conservative and inflexible) and their aspirations toward a more inclusive spirituality. . . . On a deeper level, these childhood narratives link the decline of organized religion with the disintegration of the traditional family and, ultimately, with the demise of patriarchy” (13).

Dr. Vassileva-Karagoyozova deserves much praise for this book, which is the fruit of much outstanding scholarly work. That readers may on rare occasions get confused as to what is the author's own stand on a given issue is inessential, since it is hidden behind too many quotations from other researchers. She is at her best in accounts of important and dramatic situations found in the initiation novels of the Polish '89ers. She should be applauded for not falling too easily into the traps of oversimplification and militancy set by feminists and postmodern ideologues. As a shrewd scholar, she not only notes that “female patriarchy dependence is now replaced with complete detachment from any roles that might potentially threaten women's independence” (129), but also realizes that nothing good can follow from such detachment.

Yet when it comes to her general conclusions, one cannot help but feel much disappointment. There is no doubt that women's family problems should be addressed with understanding and compassion, but should we start addressing them from a nonmilitant feminist viewpoint, as Dr. Vassileva-Karagoyozova does, where everything that pertains to gender is expressed in feminist stereotypes and gender differences are in fact negated, and where multigenerational extended families, perhaps modestly and wisely patriarchal, are fairy tales of sorts for senile elders? I hardly dare mention here Christianity is the only civilization so far to give a firm

foundation to women's rights in particular and human rights in general, and which—at least in principle—has made the lives of men and women in the West worth living.

More generally, except for references to literary critique (Vassileva-Karagyozyova refers to a host of distinguished experts), her background on social and political issues seems too one-sided. Given that the author's aim was more ambitious than merely providing a new account of the initiation literature, some omissions concerning post-1989 literature produced by the '89ers are also surprising. Let me confine myself to two examples, Rafał Ziemkiewicz's (b. 1964) *Pieprzony los kataryniarza* and Jacek Dukaj's (b. 1974) *Xavras Wyżryn i inne fikcje narodowe*. While neither qualifies as a bildungsroman, both—one within science fiction and the other within the genre of fantasy—are good illustrations of how the two genres mentioned have entered the field of serious reflection on nationhood, Poland, Polish patriotism, and so on. If one writes about the process of Bildung among Polish '89ers, one cannot skip the work of those who were happy enough to avoid the sad path to unrooted adulthood. Let me give one more example of the Bildung among the '89ers, this time referring to a seventy-six-page-long essay "Rosja i rewolucja—Zygmunt Krasiński" by Andrzej Nowak (b. 1960), now a distinguished historian but a twenty-two-year-old student at the time of the writing. Interestingly, the essay was first presented at a seminar held by Professor Maria Janion.

The aforementioned examples bring me to my main objection: Vassileva-Karagyozyova's one-sidedness in her analysis of both the social context within which the Polish '89ers were coming of age, and the intellectual landscape they formed in the 1990s and later. As has already been emphasized, her study does justice to the hardships that many adolescent '89ers endured, but the overall picture and explanations she offers do not tell the whole story, as these three examples already suggest. With her hostility toward the Catholic Church, borrowed from or shared with liberal/postmodern/feminist scholars and commentators, she equates

Catholicism with clericalism, and staying with tradition and cultural identity with aggressiveness and politicization. She goes so far as to claim that the ultimate aim of the Church in the early 1990s was to establish a confessional state. Uncritically, she repeats postcommunist propaganda of that period, claiming that the Church hierarchy ignored public criticism (what specifically, she does not say), thereby weakening its moral authority. Apparently Dr. Vassileva-Karagyozyova does not know that this was the time when the Church was under permanent attack by the influential *Gazeta Wyborcza*, and that remembering the past was unwelcome, to say the least, within the circles educated by the *Gazeta*, while the word "patriotism" (understood as "chauvinism" by postcommunists) was deleted from the vocabulary. Admittedly, since the advocates of such views virtually monopolized the media and the university, many people lost their sense of direction and an ability to distinguish between true and false or even right and wrong.

However, many of the '89ers neither fell victim to this kind of confusion nor allowed themselves to become uprooted. To the contrary, writers, philosophers, and publicists of the 1989 generation associated with such journals or think tanks as *Arka* (later *Arcana*), *Fronda*, *Teologia Polityczna* and *Ośrodek Myśli Politycznej* have been consistently shaping Polish culture and political and social thought with valuable contributions. Unfortunately, except for one opinion by Marek A. Cichoński cited by Dr. Vassileva-Karagyozyova in a footnote (in which he mentions, among others, Paweł Lisicki, Piotr Semka, Piotr Zaremba, Rafał Ziemkiewicz, and Igor Janke), and a few references to Dariusz Gawin, no other insights of an intellectual from the circles mentioned are included in the book reviewed.

Overwhelmed by what she imbibed from authors of the majority of initiation novels and the postmodern/postsecular publicists whose failed social conditioning and fragmented self-identities she takes for the whole picture, Dr. Vassileva-Karagyozyova can neither provide a full picture of the Polish 1989 generation nor explain in depth its attachment to or rejection of

Polish Catholicism and the Polish way of being, the latter seen by her as a set of Polish stereotypes. However, this does not deny the importance and accuracy of many insights that can be found in her book. Δ

Selected Drama And Verse by Franciszka Urszula Radziwiłłowa

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Barry Keane

Franciszka Urszula Radziwiłłowa (1705–1753) is a remarkable historical figure of the late Baroque era, whose life and considerable literary achievements have been explored, presented, and celebrated in this major work of scholarship and translational endeavor. Barely known to Polish letters, although nominally occupying the title of Poland's first woman dramatist, Radziwiłłowa brought to her plays and poetry the worldview of aristocratic women, which proffered cautionary advice to young ladies on matrimonial issues whilst also providing a confessional perspective, in particular about the challenging position of marital life for a woman surrounded by the "spying" eyes of court.

Franciszka Urszula née Wiśniowiecka was born into an influential noble family with historically royal links, and who possessed vast tracts of land in Ukraine. Indeed, many of the male members of her family occupied the highest positions in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, while the females were charismatic and powerful members of the royal

court. Franciszka's education was overseen by her father Janusz Wiśniowiecki, governor of Kraków who in his youth had undertaken the European tour and who himself had harbored literary ambitions with a penchant for writing frivolities. Janusz would engender in his daughter an understanding of literature that was seen as the possession of powers that were both formative but also self-creating; a perception that "the treasure must be there" (195).

Perhaps because of her close relations with her enlightened parents, Franciszka was able to spurn suitors and choose a husband who would make an "impetuous advance." The fortunate individual was Michał Radziwiłł (1702–1762), who was both governor of Vilnius and Field Commander of Lithuania, and whose residence was in Nieśwież located in today's Belarus. Their marriage was a tender affair, and founded on strong emotions and mutual regard, although Franciszka would in time come to harbor warranted suspicions about her husband's fidelity, and conveyed to him in her letters and poetry complaints of his neglect and indiscretions:

Men often break faith, so I have heard tell.
Deceive your eyes, they're good at that as well.
Though onto his checks no cheat rouge applies,
The virtuous face mask conjugal lies. ("Response to her husband," p. 357)

Franciszka experienced some twenty-nine pregnancies, although she succeeded in raising only three children to maturity. She undertook to take a direct hand in the raising of her children and the orphans of her close relations, and following her father's example she engendered in her charges the importance of artistic achievement and self-fulfillment in respective fields. To this end, she established a theater at her residential court, which relied principally on the participation of family and friends. Needless to say, it came to be "a unique kind of school for young actors and audiences." As Barbara Judkowiak writes, "these short plays, thanks to their clear, concentrated dramatic structure, were eminently suited to the formation of the theatrical taste of an unsophisticated audience. Their compactness was also better suited to the