

Krzywicka, Irena. 2008. *Kontrola Współczesności. Wybór międzywojennej publicystyki społecznej i literackiej z lat 1924-1939* [The Control of the Present: Selection of Social and Literary Journalistic Articles], edited by Agata Zawiszewska. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Feminoteki, .517 pp., index of names.

This book contains a wide selection of Irena Krzywicka's journalistic and essayistic writing from her debut till 1939, collected and edited by Agata Zawiszewska, a Polish scholar from Szczecin University, Poland.

Irena Krzywicka (1899-2004) is one of the most recognized feminist figures in Poland of the interwar years. She is known mainly from her memoirs, *The Confessions of a Scandalous Woman (Wyznania Gorszycielki)*, edited by Agata Tuszyńska and published in 1992. Krzywicka indeed provoked many scandals because of her brave, openly woman-centred journalistic writing. She was identified as a sharp, intelligent, curious journalist and essayist, who did not avoid any topics, however taboo. She wrote openly, for instance, about menstruation pains and how much they may affect a women's life. "The professors pretend that they do not see what is happening to a female pupil; while they wink and smile to each other in a knowing and sleazy manner": thus she bravely addressed the issue in 1932 in *Woman's Secret (Sekret kobiety)*, p. 41).

Irena Krzywicka is mainly recognized for her interwar writing, after the war she wrote a few novels, but they were never well received, as Agata Zawewska explains in her preface. In the interwar years Krzywicka wrote three novels. Apart from her debut novel with its ambiguous title *First Blood (Pierwsza krew)*, recently re-edited by the author of this review and published by Krytyka Polityczna 2008), Krzywicka never gained much appreciation as a prose writer.

Yet, many of her essays were well known to literary studies second-hand, as mentioned in the articles and books on Polish interwar women's writing. This is why Agata Zawiszewska's work of collecting Krzywicka's writing in one volume is especially important. Zawiszewska has gathered Krzywicka's works on social and literary matters and divided them into seven chapters. First are Krzywicka's columns from the most prestigious Polish interwar literary magazine "Wiadomości

Literackie”. They include columns on such topics as sex in prison, menstruation or children’s sexual education. The second part consists of so-called “trial reportages” (reportaże sądowe): engaged overviews of the most interesting trials of that time. The third part, “Sketches about Literature” (“Szkice o literaturze”), is devoted to her short essays on such themes as woman’s style, metaphors, the poetry of Maria Pawlikowska or the writing of Narcyza Żmichowska. The fourth and fifth parts contain reviews of Polish and foreign books (among the authors are Michał Choromański, Elżbieta Szemplińska, Antoni Słonimski, Erich Maria Remarque, Radclyffe Hall and Colette). Theatre reviews (of Polish and foreign plays performed in Warsaw’s theatres) are collected in the last two chapters.

When following her interwar writing, we can see Irena Krzywicka as an empathic and interesting spectator and reader. Her writing is a document of her time. It can be also seen as a map of directions indicating the path which the emancipating movement ought to follow. The map still seems up-to-date. Agata Zawiszewska’s preface to this new edition of Krzywicka’s journalist and critical writings, “‘The Explorer of Life.’ Irena Krzywicka (1899-1994)” should also be mentioned as a very useful critical introduction to the writer’s work and life, explaining Krzywicka’s impact on Polish interwar culture.

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