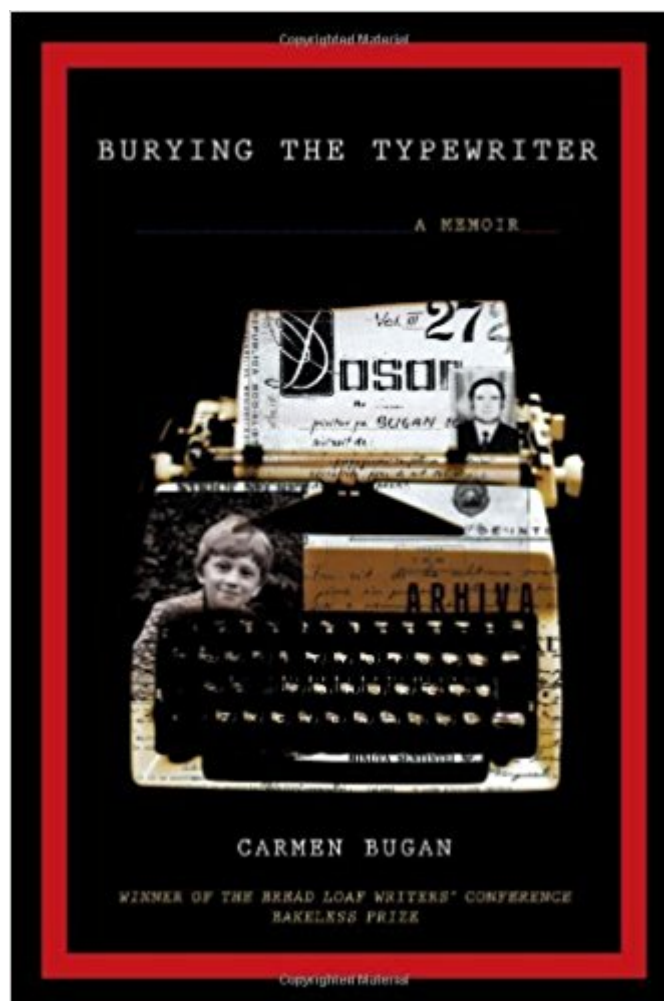


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# Burying The Typewriter: A Memoir



## Synopsis

Finalist for the Dayton Literary Peace Prize, August 2013  
Finalist for the George Orwell Prize for Political Writing, April 2013 (UK)  
Winner of the Bakeless Prize for Nonfiction, a childhood memoir of political oppression and persecution during Romania's Ceausescu years  
Carmen Bugan grew up amid the bounty of the Romanian countryside on her grandparent's farm where food and laughter were plentiful. But eventually her father's behavior was too disturbing to ignore. He wept when listening to Radio Free Europe, hid pamphlets in sacks of dried beans, and mysteriously buried and reburied a typewriter. When she discovered he was a political dissident she became anxious for him to conform. However, with her mother in the hospital and her sister at boarding school, she was alone, and helpless to stop him from driving off on one last, desperate protest. After her father's subsequent imprisonment, Bugan was shunned by her peers at school and informed on by her neighbors. She candidly struggled with the tensions of loving her "hero" father who caused the family so much pain. When he returned from prison and the family was put under house arrest, the Bugans were forced to chart a new course for the future. A warm and intelligent debut, *Burying the Typewriter* provides a poignant reminder of a dramatic moment in Eastern European history.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Carmen Bugan is the author of the collection of poetry *Crossing the Carpathians*. Her work has been published in *Harvard Review*, the *Times Literary Supplement*, and *Modern Poetry in Translation*.

There are many reasons to read Carmen Bugar's compelling memoir about her family life during the communist regime of Nicolai Ceausescu (1965-1989). Her vivid memories in rural Romania play in the mind like small films streaming from a happy childhood. Fearlessly grounded grandparents and voices from the pages of beloved books remind us that poetic spirits unfold from unexpected sources. The honesty and sensitivity with which she confronts the cost of her father's choices sets an admirable example for how to write about those we love. And the quiet tribute to her mother embedded in these pages enlarges the ways we might think about "women's liberation" in a global context. These themes could be the "stuff" of any other coming-of-age memoir. There is even a "first love" that helps to universalize Bugar's narrative. What sets this book apart is the context of surveillance, deprivation, and terror imposed by Ceausescu's secret police (the "Securitate"). As the family sleeps together in their clothes, just in case there is some sort of disturbance in the night, Bugar's early years are transformed by this book into a revelation of two "secrets" that even the Securitate could never have discovered, much less understand. On one hand, the young girls' journey at the heart of the story reveals how loss of innocence feels in beautifully unadorned prose. The deeper secrets are harder to unravel and eventually become a quest of reconciliation with a hidden past. This "book within the book" is an act of bearing witness, of unmasking the masquerade of a brutal totalitarian regime. In comparison to the "coming-of-age journey," this other journey can only begin to find a destination years after the Bugar family emigrates to Michigan in 1989. It would be almost 20 years before the child in the story learns the reality of her father's years in Romanian prisons and the so-called reasons for his being incarcerated. Over 1,500 pages of released documents helped Bugar to write this book. Since its publication in 2012, she has gained access to more thousands of pages and, no doubt, to more memories, questions, and insights. It is, perhaps, the ongoing journey of archival evidence that causes this book to feel, somehow, unfinished-- even with the added Appendix of sample documents that are, it should be noted, too small to decipher on a Kindle. Indeed, Bugar's journey IS unfinished, even if she has found a way to write about it and reclaim a measure of dignity for herself, her family, and the Romanian people. Burying the Typewriter has unearthed far more than the pages of an award-winning book. In the last chapters, long after the family dog is poisoned and the boyfriend's flowers have been cast aside, I had the uneasy feeling that Carmen Bugar's work of excavation had just begun.

Carmen's story is deeply meaningful and lovingly written. Although much of her early life was wrecked by a totalitarian regime I envied how close her family was especially what she got from her

grandmothers. I can't do justice to the book by describing the plot however I would highly recommend it for anyone interested in the "Iron Curtain" countries and what happened to them after WWII.

After hearing about this book on NPR, I fed my memoir addiction and am glad I did. Bugan writes beautifully and tells a fascinating story about growing up as the child of a Romanian dissident. I will recommend this to my book club because it should generate good discussions on the relationship between the individual and the government and how political actions influence social relationships.

Poetic language which conveys the idyllic childhood of the author. I found it hard to put down and had a sense of loss when I'd finished reading it. Hard to find anything as satisfying to read after.

A charming and informative piece about life in communist Romania.

Great story.

Excellent

My book club picked this book. Found it hard to get into the story . Interesting how they had to live their lives in only recent times hard for us to imagine that sort of treatment s ugh cruelty and not knowing who to trust the fear of informers . We did have good discussion on the book so for that reason alone it was a good one for a book club

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