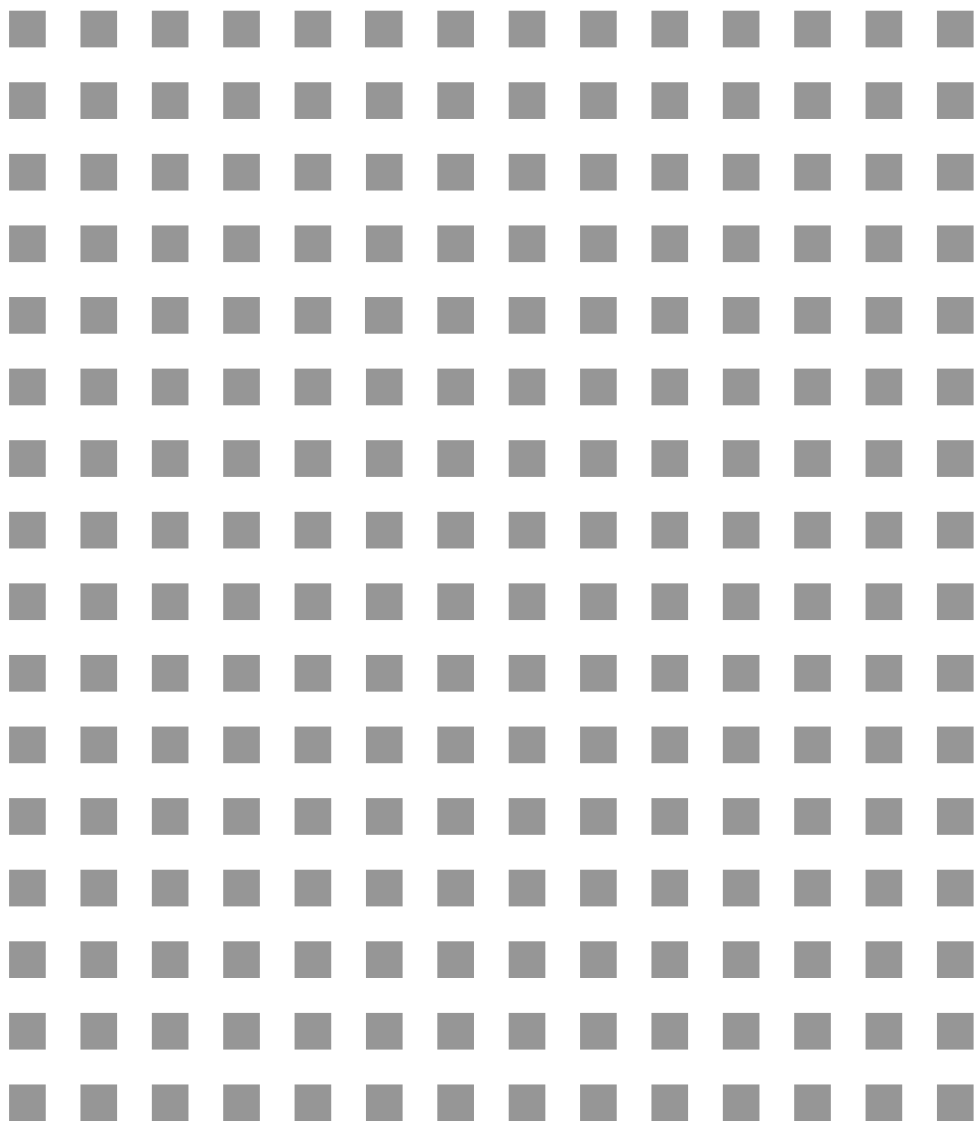


Book reviews



Maria Raicheva-Stover, Elza Ibroscheva (eds.) (2014). *Women in Politics and Media: Perspectives from Nations in Transition*. New York, London, New Delhi and Sydney: Bloomsbury Academic, pp. 352, ISBN: HB: 978-1-6289-2087-1.

The authors argue that despite the fact there have been some breakthroughs in female political participation which were visible and covered by media, there is still need for public discussions about the role of women in politics. In this context also important is the role of media and especially the way of media construct and presentation of political actors and coverage of women politicians. The authors indicate the gendered nature of political reporting and politics. They also claimed that there is quite a large number of studies on the interactions between women participating in politics and media from established democracies. *Women in Politics and Media: Perspectives from Nations in Transition* provides a broader perspective. To select the countries named “nations in transition” (to distinguish them from established democracies) the authors used mainly Inglehard and Norris’s categorization which examined the relationship between gender equality and cultural change. It was also important to examine the countries from different regions. The book contributors point out in the introduction that they aimed at:

(1) shifting the focus of attention to countries in transition, which have not been the usual suspects of scholarly investigation, and (2) featuring a diverse group of scholars who could provide valuable insights into the latest developments in each region. (p. 7)

This book was created by 2 editors, Maria Raicheva-Stover and Elza Ibroscheva and 20 contributors come from different parts of the world and from diverse disciplines and usually specialized in journalism, political science, and communication studies. The book presents 16 essays and consists of three parts: “Framing the Message: Mediated Representations and Journalistic Practices” (1), “Managing the Message: Self-representations” (2) and “Navigating the Public Space: Class and Beauty” (3).

The opening chapter by Einat Lachover presents how women’s magazines in Israel covered women who take part in national politics. The study focuses on two female leaders, Tzipi Livin and Daphni Leef, during the period when they play an important role in public discourse and also shows the relationship between specific types of media like women’s magazines and woman participation in politics. Mary Griffiths and Sara Chinnasamy dedicate their chapter to the role of new technologies as an area of democratic participation in Malaysia. They analyze the media image of human rights lawyer Ambiga Sreenevasan and her counter-discursive practice. The next chapter, written by Elza Ibroscheva and Maria Raicheva-Stover is the historical analysis of the press coverage of female politicians in Bulgaria. The authors point out gendered coverage and aim to look at what part of gendered mediation plays in the representation of Bulgarian women politicians in the national press. Twange Kasoma presents in her chapter the press coverage of

Zambian Women who are Members of Parliament. She shows the results of content analysis and face-to-face interviews with journalists. The media visibility of Tunisian women politicians in traditional and new media is the subject of the chapter by Maryam Ben Salem and Atidel Mejbri. The essay is an analysis of media coverage of women politicians after the revolution in Tunisia and shows obstacles that women who are active in politics have to face. In the next chapter, Munira Cheema presents the gender dynamic of current affairs talk shows on Pakistani television. It is an attempt to fill the gap of academic literature about the presence of women active in Pakistani politics in broadcast media. Gendering in Russian culture of political journalism is a topic taken up by Liudmila Voronova. She emphasizes the contradiction between an idealized vision of quality political journalism and the impossibility of avoiding gendering. The last chapter in this part, written by Tania Cantrell Rosas-Moreno and Ingrid Bachmann, is dedicated to a comparative analysis of how the press in three countries: Germany, Liberia, and Chile covered the successful election of Angela Merkel, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf and Michele Bachelet, who became heads of governments again.

The opening chapter in the second part of the book by Teke Ngomba, explains the phenomenon of Edith Kah Walla in the context of the 2011 presidential elections in Cameroon. The paper examines the campaign style of Edith Kah Walla and shows media coverage of women from Africa running for high political office. Pedro G. dos Santos and Farida Jalalzai focus on Dilma Rousseff, who was elected the first woman president of Brazil. The authors present gender roles, campaign strategy and elections of this woman leader in a male-dominated political system. The next chapter is dedicated to visual framing of Romanian women politicians in blogs during the 2012 parliamentary elections in Romania. Camelia Cmeciu and Monica Pătruț are interested as to how women politicians have been using visuals during election campaigns. Closing the second part is the chapter by Sonila Danaj and Jonila Godole, which focuses on women politicians in Albania. In this case the authors are not interested in media coverage of them, but how women politicians view their media coverage.

The last part of *Women in Politics and Media: Perspectives from Nations in Transition* is opened by a chapter dedicated to the first female president of Chile, Michelle Bachelet. Claudia Bucciferro shows how the personal and political interweave could have an influence on the rise of leaders. The next chapter explains media coverage of women active in politics in Venezuela. In this paper Elizabeth Gackstetter Nichols shows the positions of two women — Irene Sáez Conde, who was candidate for the presidency and Lina Ron, who was an activist and supporter of another candidate — inside and outside the political power structure as a way of explaining the public image and role of women politicians in Venezuela. Elizabeth Gackstetter Nichols is the author of another chapter in this book. She presents also “ultra-feminine women of power” from Argentina and focuses on two women and their political careers — Eva Duarte de Perón and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner.

As the author says “Twitter is a community. People are clients who follow the brand only because they like it; because it makes them interested in it; because it gives, not only takes; it develops, informs, entertains and excites. It sometimes rewards, but not bribes” (p. 97). This sentence give the readers informations to how they should prepare their communication strategy. Mistewicz argues the opinion that Twitter is not important as a tool for communication. He describes common myths about Twitter and attempts to dispel them. Mistewicz writes that there are ten myths about Twitter: that it is too difficult; it simplifies the world; it gives nothing; it is dominated by the left or the right; it is for politicians and people interested in politics; it won’t give people money; it is a waste of valuable time; it is an endless river; it is a place where people have to fight with trolls; it has no future. Most of the myths which are presented in the book are connected with the limit of 140 characters and its “difficult” environment. I will recount here one of the myths and one explanation. First: “it is a limitation [140 characters] to express the whole spectrum of the world around us” (p. 27), which is the most common uncertainty among users, that they will not be able to present their whole thoughts in such a short message. Secondly: “we don’t need to follow the whole world and even the most important [...] senders. If they write something important, then even if we don’t follow them, their words will be repeated by others and we will see it” (p. 38) which is Mistewicz’s answer for the fear that the user has to follow many others to find his newsfeed interesting.

The part where the author teaches us how to understand the reality of Twitter is very well prepared. He answers the question about the influence of Twitter by writing that the most important follower on Twitter is “the one who is followed by people and who wants to follow us and popularize our posts” (p. 44). He shows us that “good histories in 140 characters are: moving, short, bright, black & white, engaging, compelling the answer [...], with the pictures and link” (p. 49). He teaches that “We don’t need to use all the available 140 characters [...] we need to intrigue.” “Don’t be ashamed of emotions if something touched us” (p. 60), he says.

The chapter which is very important for every reader is the “Internet — the killer of reputation.” Mistewicz presents ten rules which every user of Twitter should know if she or he doesn’t want to ruin her or his image (like writing without selection of an idea; lying; spamming or disrespect) (pp. 83–85). This Twitter Decalogue is one of the most important fragments of the book, because it may be used for private and public communication and may help prevent problems in the communication process. According to brand creations, the author prepares a guide for each person who wants to “tell stories on Twitter” (pp. 88–92). This is that they know how to behave on Twitter to achieve good results from communication.

In the following section the reader can find many other examples of the usefulness of the Twitter platform. Mistewicz describes Twitter as a channel of communication for human resources (p. 103) and employer branding (p. 109), as a tool for engaged marketing (p. 105). But putting a fly in the ointment and showing that

Twitter is not only a marvel and the “promised land,” Mistewicz discusses the problem of false accounts, verification of information, communication crises or viruses.

Finally, the author presents a list of the 100 most interesting Twitter accounts in Poland, based on reach, uniqueness, culture of the debate, quality and transparency (pp. 133–145) and presents examples of famous Twitter users by giving them the chance to comment on their adventure with this communication platform.

As Mistewicz writes, we need to remember that “Twitter creates the new architecture of the opinion leaders” (p. 44) and we cannot really say how to organize the communication process if we don’t know what to do. Mistewicz’s book is prepared for every reader — the language of the book doesn’t contain technical terms, but is well-prepared for even the reader who is not an active member of the internet community.

By using the author’s words from the introduction: “I invite you to travel in the world of digital narrative” (p. 13). I invite all the readers who are interested in a new media process of communication and who want to create their own or their company’s image among this interesting and important platform.

Maciej Myśliwiec

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Sławomir Wieczorek (2014). *Na froncie muzyki. Socrealistyczny dyskurs o muzyce w Polsce w latach 1948–1955 (On the Musical Front. Socialist Realist Discourse on Music in Poland, 1948–1955)*. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, pp. 292, ISBN 978-83-229-3453-1.

During World War II, Poland incurred huge losses with regard to its culture, including its musical culture. The authorities of the People’s Republic of Poland quickly started its reconstruction, by reopening cultural institutions and launching artistic initiatives. Culture in general, including musical culture, became the area of direct interest of the state. The state took on the role of the sponsor of culture and art and it delivered on the ideological principle of democratisation of culture, meaning general access to objects and values of culture. It also decided that in the political system in Poland after 1945, culture would be one of the most important elements for shaping political awareness. Soon after that, an idea germinated that culture should be developed in one model only — the socialist realist model. Socialist realism was a phenomenon that was copied and enforced in Poland from Soviet Russia. According to this model, all pieces of art (literary, visual, films or music) should be realist in their form and socialist in meaning.

The subject of the book by Sławomir Wieczorek is a discourse on music, a discourse that can be described as socialist realist, in the years 1948–1955. As the

author writes, in the case of music, it is assumed socialist realism was introduced to musical creation during the conference of composers and musicologists in August 1949 in Łagów Lubuski. However, according to the author of the book, there were no words said there that had not been already spoken in 1948, and therefore he decided to start his analysis of the social realist discourse in Poland from the year in which the International Convention of Music Composers and Critics was held, inspired by Andriej Żdanow.

As the author emphasises, many researchers who deal with social realism have doubts if their subject is worthwhile at all. It is because social realism did not dominate art, including music, for too long — only several years, also, social realist works were not very valuable in terms of their artistic or aesthetic value. However, according to the author, neither the short-term nature of the trend, nor the dubious value of its examples hinder its research. Such an approach from the author gives the readers a very interesting book on social realist discourse in Poland in the years 1948–1955.

For the authorities of the People's Republic of Poland, music was not the top priority in the hierarchy of social realist arts, and therefore perhaps pressure from the authorities in musical circles was much lighter than on artists creating literature or visual arts. Despite this, the socialist realist discourse on music was there in Poland and Sławomir Wieczorek chose it to become the subject of his book. The author analyses the views on contemporary music and its history, formulated in the speeches of the representatives of the then authorities, studies on music aesthetics and theory, musicological analyses, biographies of composers, reviews of musical pieces and feature films on composers. These broad source materials are mostly related to biographies, social, aesthetic, or semiotic aspects of social realist discourse of music. The sources analysed by the author operated in the official discourse and these included minutes from various cultural events held during the Stalinist era i.e. meetings, conferences, conventions, congresses, or auditions with the participation of composers, artists, musicologists, and representatives of authorities, as well as the scripts of lectures given before the concerts organised by ARTOS. The author applies a broad, semiotic understanding of texts, therefore, apart from written sources, he also analyses film sources (feature films and newsreels) and iconography such as museum exhibitions. The author also analyses the press: national specialised journals such as *Muzyka* and *Życie Śpiewacze* and national cultural magazines, such as *Przegląd Kulturalny*. So, the book draws on written sources, films, and iconography.

The book is structured around three main subjects that recur in the analysed texts: contemporary music, musical aesthetics, and the history of music. Each of these subjects are also reflected in specific principles applied. With regard to the debate on contemporary music, it is the hierarchical structure, in the case of music aesthetics — the rule of exegesis, and for the history of music — the rule of hagiography.

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Sławomir Wieczorek's analysis of this extensive source material shows that musical discourse in the Poland of 1948–1955 had many features typical of a totalitarian discourse on art — the hierarchical structure of speech, hagiographical presentations of the life and work of selected composers, as well as the exegesis-like reflection on the opinion of political leaders on musical aesthetics.

The book by Sławomir Wieczorek fits within the broader context of research on the Stalinist era, covering research on social realism. It will certainly be of interest not only for researchers in the history of music or culture, but also those interested in the use of culture and its creators for ideological and propagandist purposes.

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