

## **Reinserting the Name of Women in the Field of Media Studies and in the Classroom**

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Media studies has been a history of works, theories, and research by male authors. The stories it tells about the field meticulously ignore female authorship and leadership, building its foundation on the shoulders of male giants. In addition, this history has also been written in a majority way by men. Thus, the textbooks we use, which are charged with teaching and transmitting the traditions and canons of the area from generation to generation, speak to us of men from the perspective of men. The list is long and easily found in the syllabus of courses in the various countries where media studies are present. One of the founding myths of these studies presents us with a quadrangle of men: Harold Lasswell, Paul Lazarsfeld, Carl Hovland, and Kurt Lewin. Except for one name or another (as in the case of Herta Herzog), very little is known about the role of female researchers in these studies. Despite this, we know: women were there, in universities, in laboratories, in improvised spaces in homes, studying in the midst of domestic chores.

*The Ghost Reader: Recovering Women's Contributions to Communication Studies, 1925–1968*, edited by Elena Hristova, Aimee-Marie Dorsten, and Carol Stabile, breaks with this prevailing narrative, not only by pointing out its gaps and failures but by rewriting the past of media studies giving centrality to women who were, themselves, giants. Through research and detailed profiles, the book provides its readers with information about authors whose contributions to the field have been minimized, neglected, or even erased over the last century.

In this way, *The Ghost Reader* tells the stories and intellectual trajectories of 19 women in the field of media studies based on an engaged, rigorous, and feminist historiography. Not only should this volume occupy a prominent place in libraries and on bookshelves, it should also occupy a prominent space in the classroom, where teachers will be able to use this volume in different ways.

Among the possible ways of using this work as teaching material, some stand out: 1) as an integral part of discussions on the historiography of the field, from an epistemological perspective; 2) as a starting point for a presentation of media studies from a feminist perspective; 3) as a complete course, which presents the authors represented in *The Ghost Reader*, following the order of the chapters or not; 4) as inputs to a far more complete presentation of the theories of the field, with men and women receiving their due credit and their due insertion in the intellectual history of media studies.

There is also a fifth possible use for *The Ghost Reader: Recovering Women's Contributions to Communication Studies, 1925–1968*, in teaching. The book is a work that shows, behind each profile, how many methodological routes are possible and tries to look back to seek the elements of the past that are no longer visible in the present, such as consulting archives, interviews in depth, the search for rare bibliographical references, the attentive observation of the available materials.

Most of the women presented here do not have a biography or even an encyclopedia entry (not even a Wikipedia entry). Thus, for example, in the case of the entry about Dorothy Blumenstock Jones in *The Ghost Reader*, the path was to find her descendants and even collect her date of birth from them. The details of the existence of these figures that *The*

*Ghost Reader* brings us back to were lost in time, as much as the notion of their importance for the field of Communication.

Although the authors say that *The Ghost Reader: Recovering Women's Contributions to Communication Studies, 1925–1968* is not a work to establish a new canon, it will certainly change the way current and future generations will understand women's contributions to media studies – and how we teach its history.