Signs for an Act of *Consignatio.*

Herta Herzog's Contributions to Sociology and Communication Studies[1]

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Zusammenfassung: Herta Herzog (1910–2010), eine Pionierin in Soziologie und Kommunikationswissenschaften, ist immer noch eine der am meist übersehenen und dennoch einflussreichen Wissenschaftlerinnen des 20. Jahrhunderts. Sie schaffte Bahnbrechendes im Bereich der Forschung zur Soziologie der Massenmedien, entwickelte innovative interdisziplinäre Methodologien, darunter die Erfindung der Fokusgruppe, und schuf die Grundlage für den uses and gratifications Ansatz in der Kommunikationswissenschaft. Trotz ihrer wegweisenden Arbeit, wurden ihre Beiträge häufig überschattet oder fälschlicherweise männlichen Kollegen zugeordnet, wie Robert K. Merton und Hadley Cantril, was den systemischen Gender Bias in der Wissenschaft widerspiegelt. Diese Abhandlung untersucht ihre methodischen und theoretischen Innovationen, ihre Rolle bei der Formung der qualitativen Sozialforschung und die Hürden, die ihr als Soziologin in einem männerdominierten Feld im Weg standen. Konkretes Ziel ist es, ihre Beiträge mithilfe der Technik der consignation nach Derrida zu beleuchten, d. h. Sammeln und Neuzusammenstellen von Hinweisen aus unterschiedlichen Quellen, um ihr intellektuelles Vermächtnis zu rekonstruieren.

Abstract: Herta Herzog (1910–2010), a pioneering figure in sociology and communication studies, remains one of the most overlooked yet influential scholars of the 20th century. She made groundbreaking strides in sociological and mass media research, developing innovative interdisciplinary methodologies, including inventing the focus group and laying the foundation for the uses and gratifications approach in communication studies. Despite her seminal work, her contributions were often overshadowed or misattributed to male colleagues, such as Robert K. Merton and Hadley Cantril, reflecting systemic gender biases in academia. This paper explores her methodological and theoretical innovations, her role in shaping qualitative research, and the barriers she faced as a woman sociologist in a male-dominated field. The specific aim is to shed light to her contributions through a Derridean act of consignation – gathering and reassembling signs from various sources to reconstruct her intellectual legacy.

1. Introduction

W.E.B. Du Bois (2017 [1935]) exposes in his book Black Reconstruction in America the complicity of many social science academics with the slave system and concludes his argument with a specific call for ethical standards in research:

1 The paper is based on my talk at the Conference "Women in the History of Sociology" at the University of Braunschweig on November 9–11, 2022 as well as on an entry in the online-series published by Soziopolis: "Herta Herzog (1910–2010). The Real Inventor of the Focus Group and a Pioneer for Qualitative Research in Communication Studies" (Gjergji 2023a).

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> If history is going to be scientific, if the record of human action is going to be set down with that accuracy and faithfulness of detail, which allow its use as a measuring rod and guidepost for the future of nations, there must be set some standards of ethics in research and interpretation (Du Bois 2017: 637).

These same ethical standards invoked by Du Bois must be applied when critically examining dominant narratives surrounding the contributions of early women sociologists, which have often been misrepresented or entirely omitted from mainstream scholarly discourse (Lengermann/Niebrugge 1998). Such distortions of truth in academic narratives, shaped by the biases of (white) male-dominated academic groups, have turned research and knowledge into devices of exclusion. To fulfill the discipline's potential in understanding and interpreting social phenomena – or even in resisting "all forms of […] power-loaded transactions and institutions" (Touraine 2007: 71) – it is paramount to confront and rectify the gender-based discriminations within its community.

Herta Herzog's case serves as a poignant example. From the 1930 s onward, she pioneered studies in sociology of communication and developed important empirical methodologies. However, despite her groundbreaking contributions, her name has been largely erased. The primary goal of this article is to recover parts of her contributions from oblivion. To achieve this, textual ethnography (Clifford/Marcus 1986) will be employed as a method to investigate works and biographies (Laslett 1991). Sources will be scrutinized – *i. e.* scientific essays, documents, interviews, private letters and even FBI files – and signs will be gathered in order to shed light on the 'Herzog scandal' within the history of sociology.[3] It is a Derridean act of consignation, where signs are collected to "articulate the unity of an ideal configuration":

> By consignation, we do not only mean, in the ordinary sense of the world, the act of assigning residence or of entrusting so as to put into reserve (to consign, to deposit), in a place and on a substrate, but here the act of consigning through gathering together signs. It is not only the traditional *consignatio*, that is, the written proof, but what all *consignatio* begins by presupposing. *Consignatio* aims to coordinate a single corpus, in a system or synchrony in which all the elements articulate the unity of an ideal configuration (Derrida 1996: 3).

2. Herta Herzog: A Brief Biographical Portrait

Herta Herzog (1910–2010) was born in Vienna to a bourgeois Jewish family, although formally converted to Catholicism (Fleck 2021: 56). From a young age, she developed a passion for ancient languages and enrolled at the University of Vienna. Her academic trajectory shifted after meeting Karl Bühler, a prominent German linguist and director of the Institute of Psychology in Vienna (along with his wife, Charlotte Bühler), who became her mentor and inspired her interest in psychology (Herzog 1994: 1).

Within the vibrant and female-supportive intellectual milieu[4] of the Institute of Psychology, Herzog collaborated with groundbreaking scholars such as Charlotte Bühler, Marie Jahoda, Else Frenkel, Käte Wolf, and Paul F. Lazarsfeld, who also supervised her PhD

3 It is important to acknowledge that a significant progress in this direction was made with the book *What Do We Really Know About Herta Herzog?* (Klaus/Seethaler 2016).

4 "Bühler Institute was one of the most fertile environments supporting women in their academic efforts early on" (Fleck 2021: 51).

thesis Stimme und Persönlichkeit (Herzog 1933). It was during this period that Herzog initiated innovative sociological investigations into radio communication.

In 1935, Herzog emigrated to the United States to escape Nazi persecution. She married Paul F. Lazarsfeld in 1936 and joined him at the Bureau of Applied Social Research as senior researcher in 1937, following a brief period as research assistant to Robert Lynd. At the Bureau, she made significant contributions to the advancement of qualitative research in sociology and communication studies.

Herzog left academia in 1943 – not (quite) voluntarily – to pursue a successful career in market research, joining McCann Erickson, where she became a celebrated innovator in advertising and was later inducted into the Market Research Council's Hall of Fame in 1986. After retiring, she moved back to Europe in the 1970 s, initially settling in Germany and then in Austria following the death of her second husband, Paul Massing, a former member of the *Frankfurt Institut für Sozialforschung* (Wiggershaus 1993: 43). In the 1980 s and 1990 s, Herzog re-engaged with qualitative research in the field of mass media and resumed the academic teaching at the universities of Tübingen and Vienna. She passed away in Leutasch, Austria, in 2010.

3. Herzog's Contributions to Sociology and Communication Studies

Herzog's studies, particularly in the field of mass media research, firmly established her as a foundational figure in sociology of culture and communication studies (Katz et al. 2003). Her doctoral thesis explored the relationship between the speaker's personality and voice in radio communication. This study laid the groundwork for her innovative sociological approach to mass media analysis. By combining Bühler's theory of language with Lazarsfeld's empirical methods, Herzog developed a unique theoretical and methodological framework that integrated the sociology of communication with psychoanalytic concepts and methods. She further advanced this approach in the United States, at the Columbia University's Bureau of Applied Social Research. Indeed, from 1935 onward, Herzog's research largely focused on radio audiences' reception of mass media communication, resulting in several papers published in prestigious journals and books: Professor Quiz: A Gratification Study (1940); On Borrowed Experience: An Analysis of Listening to Daytime Sketches (1941); What Do We Really Know About Daytime Serial Listeners? (1944); Radio: The First Post-War Year (1946); Psychological Gratifications in Daytime Radio Listening (1947); Motivations and Gratifications of Daily Serial Listeners (1954); Why Did People Believe in the "Invasion from Mars"? (1955).

During the 1980 s, Herzog redirected her attention from the audience reception of radio programs to that of television series, notably exploring German audiences' reactions to American soap operas such as Dallas and Dynasty. Her research culminated in three key articles: Decoding Dallas (1986a); Dallas in Deutschland: Eine Pilotstudie (1986b); and Der Stich ins Böse. Dallas und Denver Clan, garantiert anders als der Alltag (1990).

In these works, Herzog pioneered the study of serial programs as a distinct genre and, most importantly, established the foundational principles of what is now recognized as the uses and gratifications approach in communication and reception studies. She was the first

scholar to investigate the socio-psychological motivations behind mass media consumption, the gratifications it provided and how consumers used mass media products. This represented quite a revolutionary perspective in the reception studies, shifting the emphasis from communication content and quantitative audience measurement towards the underlying motivations behind audience behaviors. Her favorite question was: "why?" (Herzog 1994: 3). Not *how* or *what* people listen to on the radio or watch on television, but primarily *why* they choose to listen or watch certain programs. "The art of asking 'why'" (Herzog 1994: 2) was a defining feature of the qualitative interview which, as Herzog highlighted in an interview, was "the specialty that had been developed in Vienna at the *Österreichische Wirtschaftspsychologische Forschungsstelle*" (Gladwell 1999: 79) where Herzog had worked before her emigration.

Yet, Herzog's remarkable contributions extend beyond these achievements. She authored numerous texts that remain unpublished, which, according to Christian Fleck (2011: 346–347), are at least thirteen, composed of 457 pages.[5] However, there are additional works and methodological innovations by Herzog that are not credited to her, being instead attributed to male colleagues. Therefore, any comprehensive evaluation of Herzog's contributions must consider these overlooked yet significant aspects of her academic trajectory.

4. Herta Herzog and the Saga of the Focus Group

To map Herzog's intellectual contribution to social science, one should begin with what she was most proud of: the focus group, one of the most important research methods of qualitative sociology. As she said to Gerhard Kleining a few months before her passing: "That is my invention. I did not invent very much, but the focus group for sure" (Kleining 2016: 133). Nevertheless, Robert K. Merton is widely recognized as the inventor of the focus group, as documented in sources such as Wikipedia[6], academic textbooks, and mass media communication. An emblematic example could be the obituary published by the New York Times upon his passing:

> His adoption of the focused interview to elicit the responses of groups to texts, radio programs and films led to the 'focus groups' that politicians, their handlers, marketers and hucksters now find indispensable. Long after he had helped devise the methodology, Mr. Merton deplored its abuse and misuse but added, "I wish I'd get a royalty on it" (Kaufman 2003).

When explicitly asked about Merton, Herzog categorically stated: "He was interested in the program analyzer that Paul [Lazarsfeld] invented, and he was mainly interested in theory" (Kleining 2016: 134). Herzog's response leaves no room to suggest that Merton had any claim to the invention of the focus group. This does not imply that he does not deserve credit for formalizing and further developing the renowned qualitative research method, making it applicable in much broader contexts than Herzog had ever done. However, he was neither the one who invented it nor the first to implement it.

5 Fleck's research, which is limited to the archive housed at Columbia University, also reveals that Herta Herzog was the lowest-paid member of the research group at the Bureau of Applied Social Research (Fleck 2011: 350). Currently, there is no single archive that gathers all of Herzog's unpublished works.

6 Following the publication of my book on Herzog's research (Gjergji 2023b), the Italian-language Wikipedia page now attributes the invention of the focus group to Herta Herzog.

To understand how Merton came to receive credit for Herzog's invention, it is necessary to trace a series of signs that lead back in time. The first one appears in the 1946 article by Robert Merton and Patricia Kendall, published in the *American Journal of Sociology*, and titled *The Focused Interview.* In this article, Herzog's name is mentioned twice, acknowledging her role as the first scholar to use the focused interview:

> The focused interview was initially developed to meet certain problems growing out of communications research and propaganda analysis. The outlines of such problems appear in detailed case studies by Dr. Herta Herzog, dealing with the gratification found by listeners in such radio programs as daytime serials and quiz competitions (Merton/Kendall 1946: 542).

The second sign can be found in the 1956 manual authored by Merton, Kendall, and Fiske, also titled *The Focused Interview*, where Herzog's name is mentioned three times: once in the preface and twice in the introductory paragraph, which contains merely repeated sentences from the earlier article. However, in the preface Herzog is thanked for her assistance while working with the manual's authors: "We are indebted also to Herta Herzog for her considerable help while she was working with us on studies of mass communications" (Merton et al. 1956: v). This thorny acknowledgment, rather than recognizing Herzog as the inventor of the new research method, somehow serves to distance her. It portrays Herzog as an external collaborator of the research group who worked on and reflected upon *The Focused Interview*, thereby implicitly dismissing the possibility of attributing its invention to her.

The final sign is found in Merton's 1987 article, *The Focused Interview and Focus Groups: Continuities and Discontinuities.* Here, Merton attributed the invention to a chance encounter with Lazarsfeld:

> It all started in my first inadvertent work session – a thoroughly unplanned work session – with Paul Lazarsfeld back in November 1941. That story has been told in print several times […], but never in tracing the seedbed of the focused interview. I retell it here in that new context (Merton 1987: 551).

Considering that this article was later used as the introduction to the new edition of The Focused Interview (Merton et al. 1990), it becomes evident how Herzog's name was progressively and effectively erased as the inventor of the renowned qualitative research method.

Yet, a lingering question haunts the saga of the focus group: why did Herzog remain silent, never challenging the claims staked by Merton and his colleagues over the years? Her silence, no doubt, played a role in erasing her name as the 'mother' of the focus group. While one could endlessly speculate, Christian Fleck's evocative arguments in his article Lazarsfeld's Wives, or What Happened to Women Sociologists in the Twentieth Century offer valuable insight on the matter. Herzog's muted response – or complete lack thereof – may stem from her deliberate detachment from the (male) "academic reputation game" (Fleck 2021: 56), a stance shared by many early women sociologists. It also seems reasonable to assume that, since Herzog did not claim 'motherhood' for such a long time, Merton may have rightfully come to see himself as the 'single parent' of the focus group, having theorized, described, and further developed it.

5. A Male Academic Divorce and its Collateral Damage

The history of The Invasion from Mars: A Study in the Psychology of Panic (Cantril 1940) – one of the most influential works in Communication Studies and Social Psychology – requires revision to rightfully acknowledge Herta Herzog's substantial contribution to the book. This calls for a thorough examination of both FBI[7] (Gentry 1991; Keen 1999) and academic archives (Calhoun 2007). Recent findings reveal that Hadley Cantril, the author of the book, was not only under FBI surveillance but also acted as an informant for the agency (Schwarzkopf 2016: 202). In the FBI records there are signs of a contentious dispute between Cantril and Paul Lazarsfeld, whom the FBI nicknamed "The Viennese Romeo" (Schwarzkopf 2016: 202). The conflict seems to have arisen when Cantril accused Lazarsfeld of sexually harassing his wife, Mavis L. Cantril, as detailed in Stefan Schwarzkopf's research on the FBI's engagement with American sociologists:

> Sometime in 1938, [Lazarsfeld] and [my wife] and [retracted name][8] and I were to have dinner together. We were to meet at [Lazarsfeld's] apartment. My wife arrived a little ahead of me and later she told me that Paul put his arm around her and his hands started to roam. [My wife], naturally, stopped him as she was very embarrassed and mortified. Paul, according to [my wife], thought nothing of the incident and he did not bother [my wife] anymore. I called Paul on the incident and he was very apologetic. I, naturally, was very mad at the time as no one had ever made any passes at [my wife] before (Schwarzkopf 2016: 203).

This conflict led to what might be described as an "academic divorce" between the two male scholars. Meanwhile, Herta Herzog – who had conducted, as Cantril states in his book, "an independent survey"[9] and "the initial study of the checks attempted by the listeners and analyzed the case studies reported in Chapter VIII" (Cantril 1940: xiii) – was excluded as a co-author of The Invasion from Mars[10]. Additional evidence from academic archives, as noted by Peter Simonson, reveals that Cantril heavily relied on Herzog's notes and reports to shape the book's overall structure:

> I hate to impose on Herta – and at the same time, I simply haven't the freedom not to do the job myself, much as I should like to. The situation is that I simply MUST have the piece finished for the press around the middle of November at the latest…. So COULD Herta go at the job in the very near future? […] God knows what her reward will

7 In the early 20th century, many sociologists in the United States found themselves under the watchful eye of the FBI. This relentless scrutiny likely stemmed from sociology's inherently critical approach to social phenomena. Ironically, however, in the absence of other archival sources, the FBI's records sometimes provide a window into the lives of many women sociologists.

8 Most probably, the retracted name was that of Herzog.

9 It may be useful to note that Herzog, in the letter sent to Perse, writes: "I still recall with pleasure the interviewing the day after the CBS broadcast of 'The Invasion from Mars' to find out why some listeners had been scared" (Herzog 1994: 6). While Cantril, in the preface to his book, states: "The interviewing began one week after the broadcast and was completed in about three weeks". In Herzog's essay, titled *Why Did People Believe in the 'Invasion from Mars'?* (Herzog 1955), there is an editorial note beneath the title: "On the morning after the famous Orson Welles broadcast, Frank Stanton, then Research Director of the Columbia Broadcasting System, commissioned a small number of detailed interviews. The purpose was to discover the main factors which accounted for people becoming excited under the impact of broadcast. The present selection is a memorandum written to Dr. Stanton by Dr. Herzog, who was in charge of these interviews. Her observations are clearly organized around an accounting scheme in the sense of this section. Subsequently, a major study was carried out and published by Cantril, Herzog, and Gaudet, The Invasion from Mars (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1940)" (Herzog 1955: 420).

10 On the cover of the first edition of Cantril's book (Cantril 1940), a subtle line, written in smaller print, reads: "With the assistance of Hazel Gaudet and Herta Herzog". Over time, however, this modest acknowledgment quietly vanished from the covers of subsequent editions and was only preserved on the title page.

be – except my continued admiration for her ability and a eulogistic footnote in the last chapter (Simonson 2016: 66; Cantril to Lazarsfeld, n.d.; Princeton folder, Lazarsfeld Archives, University of Vienna).

Although Herzog's response to this intellectual ostracism remains unknown, Lazarsfeld voiced his disagreement with Cantril. Many years later, Lazarsfeld wrote that he had hoped that Dr. Herzog would have received a significant credit for the study that ultimately resulted in The Invasion from Mars (Lazarsfeld 1982: 54). But, as noted by Jefferson D. Pooley and Michael J. Socolow,

> the book was produced at the peak of an already-bitter dispute between the two men [*Cantril and Lazarsfeld*]. Archival evidence suggest that the pair reached a negotiated settlement in 1939: Lazarsfeld dropped his and Herzog's claims to IFM [*The Invasion from Mars*] credit, and Cantril agreed to the PRRP [*Princeton Radio Research Project*] move to Columbia University. In the scholarly equivalent of divorce proceedings, Cantril got the book, and Lazarsfeld the research institute (Pooley/Socolow 2013: 1921)[11].

Taking all these elements into account, Cantril's actions bear the signs of a calculated act of 'revenge' against Lazarsfeld. Once again, Herzog's scientific contributions seem to have been collateral damage in this retaliation, played out within the confines of a male-dominated sociology. However, her silence remains somewhat inexplicable. Her passive role in this unpleasant episode (which occurred before the focus group saga began) in her academic life may have stemmed from either a lack of interest in the academic reputation game – as her focus was more on exploring uncharted territories of research than on recruiting admirers – or from a combination of factors defining her situation: she was a woman, an immigrant, Jewish, and held a low position in the academic hierarchy. Unlike Cantril or Lazarsfeld, she was not a professor; she was a researcher. Yet, she could have spoken out in later years, after leaving academia, but clearly chose not to. This attitude may have, to some extent, facilitated the predatory approach towards her work.

6. The Uses and Gratifications Model and Herzog's Contribution

The uses and gratifications model, as previously mentioned, redirects the focus of investigation from the functions mass media perform in reproducing social systems and their effects on audiences to how individuals, groups, and organizations use mass media to meet their needs. Thus, a media message's effectiveness is believed to rely on its ability to meet audience expectation. This approach is now widely acknowledged in textbooks as the most distinctive application of the structural-functionalist theory of Parsons, Merton and Wright to mass media communication.

Elihu Katz is widely regarded as the pioneer of this new communication paradigm: "The uses and gratification approach was first described in an article by Elihu Katz (1959) in which he was reacting to a claim by Bernard Berelson (1959) that the field of communication research appeared to be dead" (Severin 2014: 293). However, Elihu Katz, Hadassah Haas, and Michael Gurevitch, in their talk at the 20th International Congress of Psychology, held in Tokyo in August 1972, and then published under the title On the Use of the Mass Media for Important Things (1973), classified Herzog's article – Professor Quiz: A Gratification Study –

11 All the explanations in square brackets within the citation are mine.

as the foundational work in gratification studies, but inexplicably they attributed it to Hadley Cantril:

> Early in the history of communications research (Cantril 1942), an approach was developed to studying the "gratifications" which attract and hold audiences to the kind of media and the types of content which satisfy their social and psychological needs. Although its career has been chequered, and it has been much overshadowed by the study of "campaigns" to change opinions and attitudes, this approach has persisted, grown in sophistication, and even undergone something of a revival lately (Katz et al. 1973: 164).

This misattribution was unlikely a simple error, as Cantril is repeatedly cited as the founder of gratification studies, even in the article's explanatory footnote, where Herzog's name is also mentioned, among others, but, curiously, only as the author of an article published fourteen years after Professor Quiz (Herzog 1954):

> The early studies are essentially based on lists of functions suggested or confirmed by respondents. The best known examples are Cantril's (1942) analysis of quiz programs; Herzog's (1954) and Warner and Henry's (1948 studies of the functions of the daytime serial; […] (Katz et al. 1973: 164).

To understand the origins of this misattribution, it may be useful to examine whether and how the editorial context of Herzog's article contributed to this outcome. Published in Radio and the Printed Page, a book edited by Paul Lazarsfeld in 1940 (and not 1942, as Katz and colleagues suggest), Herzog's name – as the author of the article Professor Quiz: A Gratification Study – did not appear in the book's index or beneath the article's title, as editorial conventions typically require, but rather in a small footnote:

> This study was conducted and written up for this publication by Dr. Herta Herzog. Dr. Herzog wishes to express her appreciation of the help she received from Professor Hadley Cantril (Lazarsfeld 1940: 64).

Herzog's name was also mentioned by Lazarsfeld on the last page of the foreword to the book: "Dr. Herta Herzog contributed the study of the Professor Quiz program which she conducted and wrote under the direction of Dr. Cantril" (Lazarsfeld 1940: x). However, the book was presented on the title page as a work authored by Lazarsfeld, rather than edited by him. As a result, any distracted reader or someone unfamiliar with scholarly essays easily might overlook the footnote. However, this should not be the case for Katz and colleagues. The ambiguous way in which Herzog's name was presented in Lazarsfeld's book, combined with Lazarsfeld's statements in the foreword and Herzog's expression of gratitude toward Cantril – "for the help she received"[12] – allow Katz and colleagues to believe that both Lazarsfeld and Cantril had collaborated with Herzog. However, this was quite insufficient to support the claim of Cantril's authorship of the article Professor Quiz: A Gratification Study. Either deliberately or unintentionally other male sociologists seem to have played a role in diminishing Herzog's scholarly merits.

7. A Misconceived 'Mother'

In Canonic Texts in Media Research (2003), Elihu Katz and colleagues adopt a rather unusual approach to Herzog's theoretical contributions. On the one hand, they formally position

12 It is worth noting that the sentence, crafted in the third-person singular, signals Lazarsfeld as its author, not Herta Herzog.

Herzog's *oeuvre* within the framework of the Columbia School, while on the other hand, upon closer content analysis, they associate it with the Frankfurt School, which is traditionally considered as opposed to the uses and gratification approach: "the Frankfurt School refused to accept that audience likes and dislikes had any bearing on understanding the culture industry" (Katz et al. 2003: 10).

This (apparent) schizophrenic interpretation may largely result from a classificatory zeal, typical of a project aiming to establish canonical texts. However, what Tamar Liebes writes about Herzog reflects the intellectual unease shared by a significant group of scholars who align themselves with the uses and gratifications paradigm, as developed by Katz and colleagues (1973) and further expanded by others (McQuail/Gurevitch 1974). She acknowledges Herzog's study on radio listeners to soap operas – *On Borrowed Experience* (Herzog 1941) – as pioneering within the uses and gratifications tradition and "first in line of women scholars who study feminine genres from a feminist perspective" (Liebes 2003: 44), but also questions whether it should be considered a classic:

> In the tradition of uses and gratifications, Herta Herzog's study on listeners to daytime soaps on radio is regarded as a pioneer. "On Borrowed Experience" (1941) is an example of early research based on listening to listeners (that is, asking *them* to report on what they are getting out of media), one which attributes greater power to audiences than did earlier research. The question is whether Herzog's study is correctly remembered. Should it be considered a classic in the gratification tradition? Does it contribute to the image of audiences as empowered consumers, aware of their needs, who make considered choices vis-à-vis both the media and their social environment (Liebes 2003: 39).

In general, Liebes argues that typical gratification research views audience members as conscious consumers, capable of making informed choices in their interactions with mass media and within broader social contexts. In other words, they are seen as active receivers. In contrast, Herzog, from Liebes's perspective, seems to adopt a fundamentally different stance:

> Herzog does not adopt the perspective of her interviewees […] but rather that of a distanced observer who psychoanalyzes their unconscious layers from a strictly predetermined Freudian perspective. Her analysis draws a picture of disempowered listeners driven by unconscious motives and 'fulfilled' by false and harmful satisfactions (Liebes 2003: 40).

Thus, what Liebes rejects as part of the gratification tradition is Herzog's critical interpretation of audience words and behaviors. Herzog's dual approach – allowing the audience to speak for itself and then somehow undermine it through critical interpretation – is seen as incompatible with the core principles of gratification research. That is why Liebes concludes that "Herzog's analysis fits beautifully into the Frankfurt School tradition" (2003: 42) and, moreover, her view of audience is "a far cry from that of the type of research she is supposed to represent" (2003: 43).

Years later, Liebes no longer completely excluded Herzog from the gratification tradition. She argued that, in some ways, "Herzog was able to combine two seemingly opposing theoretical and methodological traditions: Columbia and Frankfurt" (Liebes/Klein-Shagrir 2016: 87) However, she also noted that this synthesis was made possible by the still-developing discipline of communication research in the 1940 s, as well as "Herzog's closer affinity to scholars of opposing critical theories" (Liebes/Klein-Shagrir 2016: 88).

Yet, Liebes and her colleagues did not address why Herzog continued to use this 'combined approach' in her 1980 s research on television soap opera viewers, when communication research had become much more solidified, nor did they mention that Herzog's

interest in psychological issues stemmed from her research experiences at the *Wiener Institut für Psychologie*, rather than the *Frankfurt Institut für Sozialforschung.*

8. On Herzog's Methodological Approach

Both sociology and psychoanalysis emerged as scientific disciplines almost simultaneously at the beginning of the twentieth century, drawing on the exceptional intellectual and social ferment of that historical period (Bastide 1972). In many respects, these disciplines also faced similar challenges in gaining public recognition and securing a place in academic institutions, which led them to view themselves as transformative sciences, particularly in relation to earlier intellectual approaches (Chancer/Andrews 2014). The close relationship and shared conditions between the two fields form the basis of the scientific approach at the Vienna Institute of Psychology, directed by Karl and Charlotte Bühler. Indeed, every scholar at the Institute embraced this unique fusion of sociological and psychoanalytic perspectives to explore the complexities of social phenomena. It was not merely about acknowledging the complementarity between the two disciplines, but about crafting a qualitative and interpretative methodology inspired by psychoanalysis, which they integrated with quantitative data. Herzog's studies stand as the most representative of this approach.

In her PhD thesis, Herzog employs psychoanalytic tools to both construct and interpret questionnaires. In subsequent studies, these tools are seamlessly integrated into her interview techniques, where she applies listening methods commonly used in psychoanalytic sessions. For Herzog, the interviewer – much like a psychoanalyst – should be attuned to capturing everything: words, tone of voice, context, and the biographical and social backgrounds of the interviewees. It is not merely what is said that holds significance, but also what remains unsaid:

> It was interviewing not with direct questions and answers but where you open some subject of the discussion relevant to the topic and then let it go. You have the interviewer not talk but simply help the person with little questions like 'And anything else?' As an interviewer, you are not supposed to influence me. You are merely trying to help me. It was a lot like the psychoanalytic method. […] Later on, I added all kinds of psychological things to the process, such as word-association tests, or figure drawings with a story. Suppose you are my respondent and the subject is soap. I've already talked to you about soap. What you see in it. Why you buy it. Dislike about it. Then at the end of the interview I say, 'Please draw me a figure – anything you want – and after the figure is drawn tell me a story about the figure' (Gladwell 1999: 79).

Herzog's methodology also blends the interpretation of words and voices with a psychodynamic exploration of respondents, seeking to form a coherent syndromic set. In On Borrowed Experience, for example, she not only analyzes the interviewees' responses but also uncovers and exposes the subtle aggressiveness they project through their words and behavior:

> How closely the aggressiveness against the radio characters is tied up with the listener's desire to find compensation for her own troubles is demonstrated in the following remark of a listener. She has had a hard time bringing up her children after her husband's death. She choses programs which have as their heroine a self-sacrificing woman. Her comment about one of them is: "*I like Hilltop House. The woman there is always doing things for children … I wonder whether she will ever get married. Perhaps it isn't right for her to do it and give up the orphanage. She is doing such a wonderful thing. I really don't think she would get married*". This listener compensates for her resented fate by wishing a slightly worse one upon her favorite radio character. In return for the death of her own husband she wants the heroine

to have no husband at all. She expects her to sacrifice herself for orphan children, whereas she herself is sacrificing herself for her own (Herzog 1941: 73).

Herzog's interest in the psychological insight of her interviewees led her to also incorporate projective personality tests and even the eye camera into her research. In her study of German television viewers of *Dallas*, for instance, she used these projective tests to identify sado-masochistic personalities among the participants:

For viewers having a hard time to maintain control of themselves "Dallas" provides a chance to let go emotionally. A retired government employee with marked sadomasochistic tendencies he controls with great difficulty says: "I am looking forward to this weekly sprinkler". It is of course "mindless night entertainment", he stresses yet he furnished unusually detailed descriptions of many of its incidents, mostly the catastrophic ones. The process of watching is for him the opportunity to experience feelings, to emote, something he ordinarily does not permit himself (Herzog 1986a: 75).

The historical context and psychosocial evolution of a given community are crucial elements in the mosaic that Herzog creates to unravel the unconscious motivations of her interviewees. In *Professor Quiz* (1940), for instance, it is the psychosocial context that enables her to interpret certain listeners' aversion to the radio quiz program:

The Puritan attitude toward pleasure is still influential in this country. So, if recreation can be combined with serious effort, people feel less guilty about spending time in recreation. On the other hand, a resigned reluctance to undertake any serious hobby also exists. If serious activities can be combined with fun, the reluctance decreases, because there is a stimulus strong enough to overcome the feeling that one is "not able anyhow" (Herzog 1940: 82–83).

This in-depth exploration leverages individual perspectives to interpret and explain social phenomena. Herzog's approach proved valuable in the field of communication during the early twentieth century, a time marked by remarkable technological advancements. The rapid pace and growing complexity of communication technologies bridged distances between places and individuals, fostering new social habits and relationships while challenging people's sense of self and their perception of the world.

To understand the impact of radio (or television) programs on listeners (or viewers), Herzog believed it was essential to lower the analytical perspective to their everyday lives. This meant stepping into the rooms where they listened to the radio, observing their environments and the objects that surrounded them, listening to their words and voices, and situating all of this within the context of their psychological biography and personality. Within this complex analytical framework, Herzog identified and 'measured' the uses and gratifications of radio listeners and television viewers, as well as the capacity of soap opera content to influence their behaviors. From this 'lowered' and necessarily focused perspective, an active audience emerged – one that engaged with radio and television programs in ways that were gratifying. This view portrayed listeners and viewers as dynamic and involved, rather than passive.

However, when the research perspective was broadened to include the content of communications (or market dynamics in the communication field), the autonomy of listeners' and viewers' decisions seemed less distinct to Herzog, appearing more like instinctive response to external stimuli. This led Herzog to consistently emphasize the importance of analyzing the content of radio and television programs, which she believed to be one of the most significant factors influencing the behavior of mass media audiences:

It seems essential to me that research systematically and impartially collects data on the social role of these programs and compares their quite differentiated functions in the lives of viewers, as suggested by the present study. This

includes, however, not only information about the ways that these programs are experienced and implemented in social experience, but also the systematic, critical analysis of their 'texts': the screen content in general that triggers the audience reaction. (Herzog 1990: 207–208)

Psychoanalysis not only shaped Herzog's methodological approach, but also influenced her theoretical inclination towards *totality.* By totality is not meant here a top-down perspective that seeks to encompass all that is visible in the analysis; rather, it is a tendency to explore the hidden realms –the unconscious desires and behaviors that shape human experiences.

9. Brief Concluding Remarks

All signs recorded and illustrated in the previous paragraphs offer only a glimpse into the vast tapestry of Herta Herzog's work. Much remains to be uncovered, studied, and interpreted to construct a fuller portrait of her trailblazing oeuvre. But reconstructing the contributions of early women sociologists is no easy task. Their names and studies are often overlooked, textbooks remain silent, and archives rarely offer more than scattered remnants. Only a few letters, brief mentions, and faint traces of their work survive, often found in the correspondence of their better-known male colleagues.

It requires time, patience, and dedication to piece together a complex mosaic of forgotten biographies, intellectual contributions, and historical documents. Moreover, this effort demands interdisciplinary study and collaboration between universities and, of course, the "archive fever" (Derrida 1996). This means that a broad and collective effort has a much better chance of achieving the desired outcome: *i. e.* restoring early female sociologists to their rightful place in the history of sociology and establishing much-needed ethical standards in research.

However, this collective project could hold deeper significance beyond historical justice. For contemporary women sociologists, it would serve as a vital means to address what Melanie Klein (1948) describes as the primitive anguish of abandonment, *i. e.* the profound pain of perceiving themselves as 'motherless' within the intellectual lineage of the discipline. Addressing this symbolic void could do more than heal historical erasure; it would set the stage for the necessary metaphorical 'matricide', which Julia Kristeva (2001) conceives as a foundational act in the process of subjectification and the *conditio sine qua non* for accessing the symbolic order:

And yet […], the cult of the mother, which is paramount, is transformed into *matricide.* The loss of the mother – which for the imaginary is tantamount to the death of the mother – becomes the organizing principle for the subject's symbolic capacity (Kristeva 2001: 129–130).

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