

Natalia Krzyżanowska (ed.), *Kobiety w (polskiej) sferze publicznej* (English translation: *Women in the (Polish) public sphere*), **Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2012, pp. 324** (Olga Wadowska-Wróbel*)

The presence of women in a public life in Poland is determined by patriarchal society, gender stereotypes and socialization as well as the influence of the Roman Catholic Church. These factors collide with both “a Polish mother” archetype and economic reality. Polish women are trapped between precept of being a perfect wife and mother and successful at work. *Kobiety w (polskiej) sferze publicznej* by Natalia Krzyżanowska is not only an interesting analysis of this topic, but also a very needed one.

The conceptual framework of the book provides considered and clear structure of the analysis. It is divided into four parts and nine chapters, consisting of classic conceptions of public sphere and women presence in this sphere; history of three waves of feminism; history of women’s public activities in Poland and analysis of gender discourse in Polish public sphere. The author starts with describing three most important and most influential ideas of public sphere – provided respectively by Aristotle, Hannah Arendt and Jürgen Habermas – and compare them with traditional and modern notions about citizenship and women participation in this citizenship. She also discusses changes in the understanding of what is political activity and how to define it in the name of feminism.

Feminism is also the center of the second part of the book – the author delivers an overview of three waves of feminism. In the first one the most important was equality, the second – difference, and the third is focused on deconstruction, referred to as trying to explore how the difference between men and women is made and how it affects their social and public activities. The author emphasizes that the third wave of feminism is currently ongoing, so our opinions and conclusions about it could be changed in time, as well as the importance of connection the theory of feminism with history of suffrage and women’s right movement.

The third part starts with a history of Polish women’s public visibility – as well before 1989 and after. The author analyses how Polish women were trying to get their part in freedom movement such as Solidarność. She also emphasizes that transformation from socialism to democracy did not bring along either awaited enlargement participation of women in public sphere or raising the awareness for their main causes. Inequality in fields of power is prevailing and common at all levels although is changing, also because of actions taken by Polish feminist movement – which is analyzed by the author likewise.

Critical discourse analysis, research method used in the book, is the main issue in the fourth part. This interdisciplinary approach to the study of discourse which assumes that language is a social practice is the most suitable research method that could be use in the field of women’s representation in public sphere. Author underlines the gender and social features of CDA and its appliance mentioned specifics of polish society. She also emphasizes that critical discourse analysis is

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trying to explain how women act in politics, in work place or medias, why there are still minority and why it is so important how we talk, write and think about it.

Empirical part of the book is focused on analyzing what and why happened in Polish politics and media during the “sex-affair in Samoobrona” – a scandal that shocked Polish society in late 2006 and 2007. Press reportage from “Gazeta Wyborcza” revealed that the prominent politicians from Samoobrona party (Self-Defence party), then parliamentary, were forcing their female subordinates to sexual intercourses in exchange for work offers or with a threat to lose one. The author analyzes how Polish press media were covering this story and how females were depicted back then. She also describes ways of constructing and communicating place and role for women; then concludes that double standards in such a responsive field. Pierre’s Bourdieu’s symbolic powers is the main explanation – common practice in sex-affair discourse was judging involved women by other women, often more severely than men. The problem of sexual harassment – as well in politics as in general society – was described in a sarcastic, acute way, suggesting that all the women were not really victims but beneficiaries of the affair. Bourdieu explains symbolic power as the main tool for socialization which is common in Polish society and is exemplified in cases like this.

In conclusion, Krzyżanowska’s book is an interesting, original and revealing analysis of one of the most known media-scandal in recent Poland’s history which says a lot about Polish society and women’s representation in public sphere. Critical discourse analysis is getting more attention from scholars in Poland and this work is an example of a creative use of this research method. The analysis of how gender stereotypes, socialization or symbolic power are affecting gender-related social issues is always needed although the author’s approach is innovative and earnest which makes *Kobiety w (polskiej) sferze publicznej* a must read for every researcher interested in contemporary Polish society condition.