feminine women in their articles and discussing the topics of beauty and fashion. This trend was seen as progressive as it gave women agency over their sexuality; however, the media's prolific promotion of femininity enforced the significance of physical beauty, essentially subscribing to traditional patriarchal conventions. Consequently, this led to the public's familiarization with the female body as a "source of visual pleasure," which normalized its commodification. Thus, marketers quickly jumped onto the idea of "sex sells."

"Of Vodka, Watermelons, and Other Sexy Fruit" delves into greater detail on hyper-sexualized female bodies in recent marketing. Ibroscheva relates how even non-sexual products, such as coffee, incorporated sexed up vixens in their advertising. The various marketing campaigns for the popular Bulgarian vodka, Flirt, serves as a catalyst for her argument. Flirt's advertisements are so sexually charged that they border on soft-pornography, promoting a "porno-chic" culture. The author also links the rise of the popularity of the genre *chalga* (pop-folk) and its lyrical emphasis on consumption to the promotion of the commercialized sexual female body.

The final chapter, "Sex and Politics," examines female politicians' portrayals in media coverage and political advertising. The widely circulated Bulgarian newspaper *Trud* was analyzed to discover how female politicians were represented in both visual and written content during the 2005 parliamentary election. It was found that women received significantly less coverage and, when covered, were evaluated based on traditional gender stereotypes such as how they balanced their career and family time and how well they performed their domestic duties as wives and mothers. Female politicians were frequently addressed by their first names and referred to as "girls," while male politicians were addressed by their formal names. Given this political climate, there is a trend for female politicians to sell themselves as sexy: they appear on magazine covers in sexually suggestive outfits and create provocative virtual videos, exactly like the one described in the first paragraph.

A weakness of the book is the lack of visual elements. Given that Ibroscheva's thesis concerns advertising's effect on gender construction and the fact that she frequently references specific print advertisements, it is perplexing that images were entirely absent for the reader. However, Ibroscheva does an excellent job at describing every advertisement and article chosen by detailing the exact features, placement, and content of the subject, painting a clear picture for the reader to conceptualize.

Another issue within the book is sentence length. While many sentences are four lines or shorter, there also exist a great deal of sentences as long as five to seven lines, often forming entire paragraphs. While this may seem a trivial criticism, such long lines add a level of density, which fundamentally lowers the ease of readability. As this book will most likely be read in an academic environment, undergraduate, and even some graduate, students will struggle to focus on such lengthy segments, which will influence their understanding (or lack thereof) of the author's message.

The book's greatest strength lies in Ibroscheva's ability to deconstruct concepts and present content in relatable terms; no abstraction goes without an explanation and an example. Ibroscheva also possesses mastery over creative reiteration of her thesis. She seamlessly connects points and ideas introduced in earlier chapters to later ones without repeating the exact language. This strengthens her argument as it introduces different or new angles, which creates dimension for the topic and produces a stimulating read for the audience.

Overall, Ibroscheva offers a thorough examination of advertising's effect on gender construction in the post-socialist Balkans. Her experience as a native Bulgarian adds a unique perspective on the subject, enriching the text with privileged knowledge. This book not only adds to the field of sex and gender studies, but to the field of international advertising as well.

Media Smackdown: Deconstructing the News and the Future of Journalism.
Abe Aamidor, Jim A. Kuypers, and Susan Wiesinger. New York: Peter Lang, 2013. 224 pp. $139.95 hbk. $38.95 pbk.

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Sometimes a bit of tough love is just what is needed—and Abe Aamidor, Jim A. Kuypers, and Susan Wiesinger deliver a healthy dose to the news industry. Despite the title and subtitle, they do not content themselves just with criticism of journalism, and offer a number of well-considered recommendations for self-reform of the news industry in the last chapter. But the bulk of the book is devoted to a detailed analysis of the trouble the news industry finds itself in, and it can be in places quite a bleak picture. Clearly, the authors care about the profession of journalism and believe the press has a vital role to play in democratic governance; it follows that if the press is to carry out its watchdog mission (i.e., acting as an agent of the public at large in its scrutiny of the big institutions of the social system), then fair-minded but tough scrutiny of the press, its substructure, its practices, and its product is likewise vital.

The preface succinctly lays out the authors' understanding of the problem: "Journalism is in crisis." The first chapter surveys the landscape. Staffing levels are declining in the mainstream outlets and bureaus are being closed, print outlets are disappearing, public trust in the news media as an institution remains at abysmally low levels, infotainment seems to be supplanting serious reportage, the divergence between the left and right on the proper functioning of the press grows ever more polarized, consolidation of ownership has left a burdensome level of debt, evolution of reporting practices led to a number of high- and low-profile failures, fueling alienation of the news audience. The chapter title reflects the authors' concern about the plight of the news industry: "Why Journalism Matters."

They follow with a chapter summarizing the arc of the news media from the revolutionary era, through the expansion at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, to the contraction at the millennium mark. Tellingly, this brief

history is titled "The Rise and Fall of the Newspaper Industry." Next, there is a similarly concise chapter on ways the rise of online media has disturbed the legacy media's equilibrium, then a chapter on the history of the federal government's involvement in the press; the latter is a useful summary of such things as the postal subsidy of print product, the origin of the FCC, the creation of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, legislative attempts to preserve newspapers, and the familiar contemporary issues of fair use, cross-ownership of outlets, minority ownership, and net neutrality.

The next chapter explores a variety of new business models outlets are trying, as ways of dealing with the pressing economic problems: decreasing advertising revenues, decreasing circulation, and burdensome debt. The analysis deals primarily with newspapers, but has application to broadcast outlets as well. Paid access to online content ("paywalls") has been tried a number of times, and succeeded only in certain cases of high-value content; it does not appear to hold much promise for local newspapers, for instance. Some outlets have converted to nonprofit organizations, and pursued revenue sources other than sales, such as grants. Public funding has long been advocated by some academicians, but does not appear palatable to the public. The industry has tried to cope by migrating to contract/freelance workers or buying content from outside firms, and there have been some successes with a local co-op (or community-owned) model. The illustrations provided in this chapter demonstrate there is no panacea.

The next two chapters deal with the perennial issue of media bias. In the first, bias is taken as a given, based on rising public perception of bias measured by Pew Center polling. The chapter has a theoretical orientation, in that it lays out a typology of content bias, and provides suggestions for a critically minded reader or viewer to keep in mind as indicators of distortions in coverage. Its companion chapter takes more of a mini–case study approach, examining coverage of a number of major national stories from recent years with regard to the bias question.

The final chapter is the money, to me. Here is where the authors go beyond other works in this area; having elaborated on criticism of the present state of the industry and factors threatening its viability, they do not content themselves either with a vague "something needs to be done," or (a pet peeve of mine) a blithe "regulation should address this." Rather, their suggestions consist of sensible things the profession of journalism could *do* to *help itself* get out of the current predicament. Sensible, yes; easy, by no means, given the familiar inertia in every institution's routines and the constraints of competing in a crowded marketplace for their product. (That is, it is often thought to be safer to imitate than to take risks and innovate—and failed innovations supply evidence for the caution.) Still, this reflects the authors' concern for the profession, their recognition of its contribution to society as a whole, and their hope for some kind of restoration of the cohesion-enabling effect of an earlier time. I share their hope for a revival, even if I personally tend to see it potentially coming more from strenuous competition in the content market more than industry-wide reflection.

It seems to me this book stands out from the crowd in a number of respects. First, it is a blunt critique of journalism's ailments, but is clearly sympathetic to the

profession and clearly recognizes the societal benefits of a healthy industry. This is not a requiem, but a diagnosis. I'm thinking the combination of authors with considerable experience in the industry and noteworthy media research publications has proven fruitful.

Second, the book does not shy away from a complex analysis of the problem in favor of a more simplistic, conventional viewpoint. Journalism is suffering from financial problems (e.g., burdensome long-term debt resulting from a consolidation bubble), market problems (e.g., technologically induced shifts in consumption patterns, such as Web delivery and mobile devices), and self-inflicted wounds (e.g., bias aka partisanship, shallow research, shallow writing, rushing stories to publication/air). There are multiple factors identified in this analysis.

Third, the book is not easily pegged as a critique from the left or a critique from the right. The authors seem to have taken pains to avoid this impression, in the writing; this is particularly apparent in discussion of cases supporting their analytical points. Along this line, they draw on media theory, but did not allow theoretical perspectives to constrain their analysis.

To me, an academic book that is thoughtful and thought-provoking is about as good as it gets. I guess a review is incomplete without pointing to a couple omissions, though, so mine take the form of three suggestions to add to the authors' self-help program in the last chapter.

It would be good for journalists to train in rigorous critical thinking—not the sham of politically correct support of fashionable advocacy causes, but the skilled and non-ideological/nonpartisan scrutiny of evidence, warrant, and claim. Those are the critical elements of Toulmin's familiar model of argument. In my view, they can both provide good guidance to journalists as they process their information sources and create their own content.

It would be good for journalists to cultivate a professional routine of detaching from their own preconceptions and preferences, particularly when writing stories about subjects to which they are personally sympathetic or hostile. I appreciate the pressure they are under to win the race to publish/broadcast first, but the competition is not just about speed, but also about depth, factual accuracy, and fairness. I suspect the tendency to "go with your gut" or—worse—"be true to who you are" has contributed to the public's perception of biased coverage.

And along that line, it would be good for journalists to have a good grounding in all three major strands of American political thought: classical liberalism (the founding principles), progressivism (the contemporary left), and modern conservatism (the contemporary right). I suspect a good amount of the negative stereotyping in press coverage comes from ignorance, more than malice.

The bottom line about this book, in my opinion: this is a thought-provoking read, and a good use of the time spent in reading it.