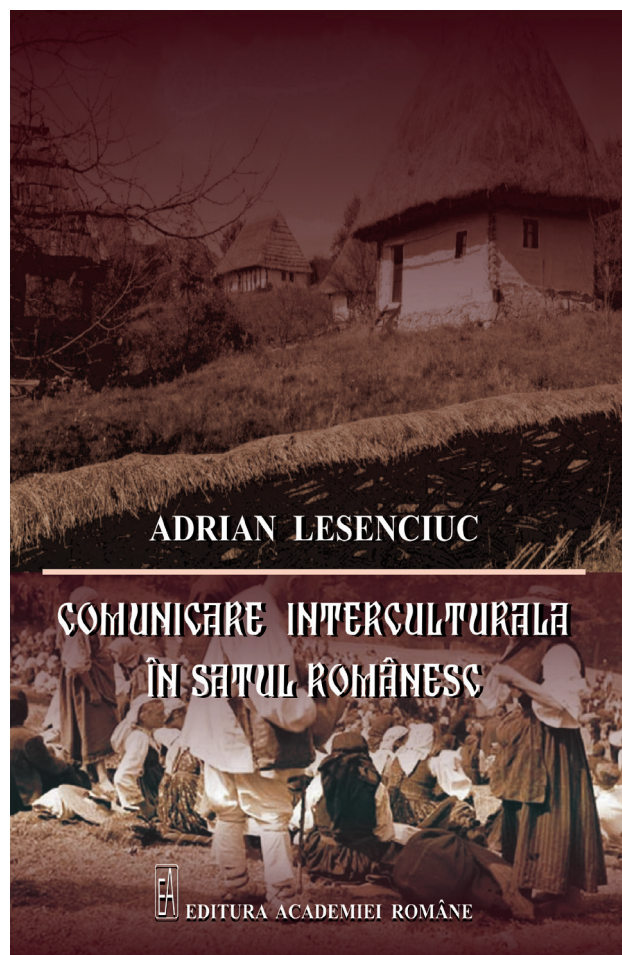

PATTERNS OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION WITHIN THE ROMANIAN VILLAGE

Review of the volume *Comunicare interculturală în satul românesc*
by Adrian Lesenciuc, Bucharest, The Romanian Academy Publishing House, 2015

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Adrian Lesenciuc, *Comunicare interculturală în satul românesc*. Front cover.



Mr. Adrian Lesenciuc's work, *Comunicare interculturală în satul românesc* [*Intercultural communication within the Romanian village*] is an outstanding book, dense in ideas, thoroughly developed, and written with passion and responsible involvement. It is a book that refines rich and appropriate Romanian and foreign references. Although it was written with the mark of an author inclined to philosophical introspections and reflections, the work has its centre of gravity and interest in its applied part, which is Adrian Lesenciuc's original contribution to the inter-cultural communication in rural areas research.

The theoretical framework proposed by the author to highlight various aspects of the approached issues is interdisciplinary, connecting areas of related knowledge, such as philosophy of culture, anthropology, sociology, communication and language theories, history of scientific ideas, discourse analysis and ethnography of communication. These combined approaches are necessary because the theoretical stake of the author is to find underground correlations between:

a) cultural openness of a human community (its receptiveness to other cultural models and its capacity to take and adapt them to its own needs);

b) predisposition of a human community to interethnic and intercultural communication (its willingness to develop comprehensive relationships and to establish harmonious forms of cohabitation with the “others”);

c) openness to social and cultural change, existence of some favourable attitudes towards new social practices and lifestyles.

Studying the intercultural relationships and the social change within the Romanian modernity, the author stresses, in flexible manner based on critical reflexivity, a particular type of syllogism, through which he builds a chain of expressive correlations, links and conditionings between factors and processes expressing the complex equation of the investigated phenomenon: the Romanian rural intercultural communication.

The first chapter is an original theoretical construct. The author reveals thorough knowledge of the Romanian culture and the streams of ideas that critically approached the Romanian society's transition to modernity, including the one of Romanian village. The general assumption that directs the research is the following one: in the case of a community built on open cultural structures, such as the Romanian nation or such as some well structured Romanian rural communities, „identificarea predispoziției spre anumite forme ale schimbării culturale este convergentă cu identificarea predispozițiilor etnopsihologice spre comunicarea interculturală” [the identification of the predisposition toward particular forms of cultural change is convergent with the identification of ethno-psychological predispositions to intercultural communication] (Lesenciuc, 2015:1).

Chapter II is dedicated to the methodological apparatus. The author formulates the research main questions and research objectives, the selection of the research methods, techniques and procedures in relationship with the characteristics of the social and human environment under investigation. As theoretical and methodological pattern, Mr. Lesenciuc's approach could be placed in the perspective offered by the ethnography of communication, which is the ambitious project of anthropologists Dell Hymes (1972; 1974) and John Gumperz (see Gumperz & Cook-Gumperz, 1982).

Chapter III, „Pattern-uri ale comunicării interculturale în localitățile Cața și Breaza” [Patterns of intercultural communication in the villages of Cața and Breaza] is the most consistent and original part of the entire work. Two models of standardized communication practices “în două sate în care experiența interculturală face parte din istoria acestora” [in two villages where intercultural experience is part of their history] were studied in the third chapter. The research is very complex and rigorously follows the methodology. After presenting the geographic background, the demographic and ethnic structure, and many other historical and cultural relevant data of the two villages, appealing to statistics, tables and graphs, the author describes and illustrates specific elements of the intercultural communication based on the S-P-E-A-K-I-N-G scheme and analyzes the eight components of the communication act in Dell Hymes' perspective (Hymes, 1974). The author behaves like a true anthropologist, interested observing on the spot people's attitude toward other cultures, religions, traditions and habits, particular ways of reporting to others and intercultural communication practices specific to these two villages. He organizes and groups these specific attitudes and communication behaviours in ‘patterns’, perennial structures of values, beliefs and attitudes, that have an identity function for the Romanian cultural space, well known as a space of tolerance and convergence between different cultural models.

The author is unrestricted to consider that the members of these multiethnic communities, under the pressure of some pragmatic imperatives, with many common social goals, developed “transetnică, translingvistică și transconfesională” [trans-ethnic, trans-linguistic and trans-religious] forms of communication and social solidarity, even built distinct discourse communities, despite the primary level of ethnic differences.

It is appropriate to notice a remark of the author concerning the meanings of the cultural openness and closeness of Romanian villages: “Există, mai degrabă, o formă a închiderii în raport cu exterioritatea comunității, cu societatea și civilizația care îmbie la schimbarea vechilor forme de organizare rurală, decât o închidere în raport cu celălalt, locuitor al satului, dar îmbrăcând haina culturală a altei etnii” [There is, rather, a form of closeness related to the exteriority of community, to the society and the civilization that tempt to change the old rural organizing forms, than a closeness in relationship with the other, inhabitant of the same village, but wearing the cultural costume of a different ethnic group] (Lesenciuc, 2015:204). This is an important conclusion which the author rightly points out. Mr. Adrian Lesenciuc warmly and convincingly pleads for the role of intercultural communication as a factor that decisively contributes to the non-conflicting cohabitation and to the harmonious collaboration between ethnic groups that differ from each other in language and cultural endowment.

Mr. Adrian Lesenciuc’s work distinguishes by a high degree of conceptualization, an appropriate critical apparatus, and a very expressive manner of writing.

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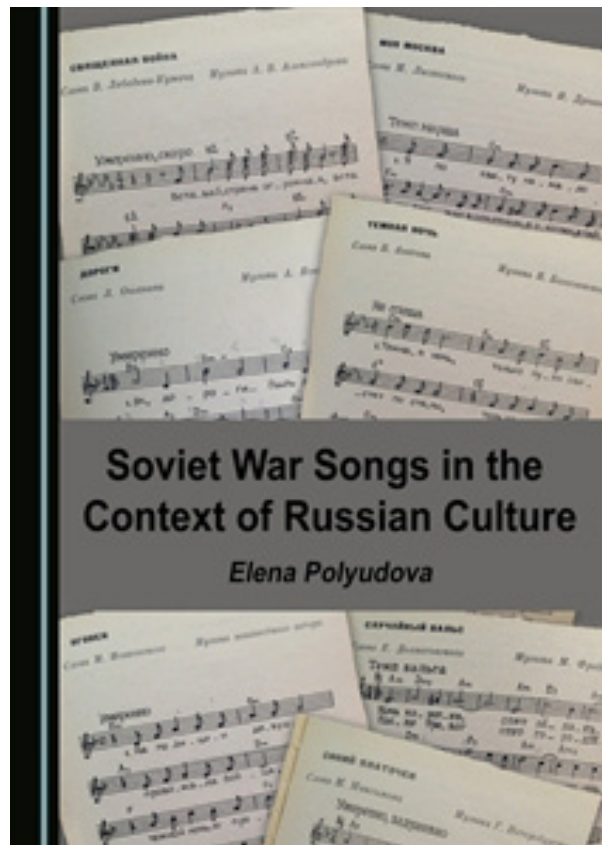
WAR SONGS AS A TREASURE OF COLLECTIVE MEMORY

Review of the volume *Soviet War Songs in the Context of Russian Culture*
by Elena Polyudova, Newcastle upon Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016

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Elena Polyudova, *Soviet War Songs in the Context of Russian Culture*. Front cover.



This volume provides valuable insight into a topic which is less known for the contemporary Western public, the Soviet war songs. A strength of the volume derives precisely from the topic discussed, as the book fills a significant gap regarding English-language studies on Russian musical culture. A second strong point consists in the bibliography used by the author, which is widely in Russian language. The volume therefore provides the readers with a large amount of scientific and documentary information which would have been difficult to access otherwise.

The division of the content in four chapters is well-structured and balanced. The first two chapters have an introductory function, providing the theoretical basis for the analysis. The first chapter is the most general one, presenting the significance of songs in the Russian culture, while the second one focuses on war songs.

It is important to note that the volume does not discuss the messages of the Soviet propaganda, but the creations which have enjoyed the appreciation of the public and become a part of the identity of modern Russian culture. The topic selected allows an interdisciplinary analysis, which the author fruitfully applies in the third chapter, the most extended one of the volume.

The originality of the work is clearly manifest in the analytical section, which encompasses the selection of the musical pieces, the presentation of their background, the context of their creation and the analysis of the text. The historical period chosen is that of the World War II, which is further divided in more subsections, regarding the pre-war, the years of the war and the post-war period. For each year between 1941 and 1945, an outline of the major events in the unfolding of the war is given. The historical background serves as an anchor for the ulterior introduction and analysis of the songs composed in each period. Elena Polyudova proposes here an interesting selection of some of the most famous songs of the time, such as “Sinij platochek” (“Blue Scarf”), “Moya Moskva” (“My Moscow”), “Ogonek” (“Glimmer”), “Sluchainyi Val’s” (“Accidental Waltz”), “Temnaya noch” (“Dark night”), “Dorogi” (“Roads”) and others.

A special strength of the volume consists in the author’s ability to link each piece analyzed not only to the history of events, but, more important, to the cultural frame. A very interesting direction of analysis is represented by the various references to Russian literature, ranging from the world of Russian folklore, with such information as the representation of the heroes in the folk tales or the personalization of death as an old woman, to canonic Russian authors such as Pushkin or Gogol. Another direction of research exploited by the author regards the linguistic level, as Elena Polyudova selects specific terms appearing in the texts of the songs and explains, in a clear but scientifically grounded manner, their etymology, their polysemantism and discusses the problems of their translation to English language. Such is the case, for instance, with the term *svyashchennyi* (“holy”) or with *dolya* (“fate”). In other cases, she explains linguistic features of Russian lexis, such as the use of the diminutive suffixes. Literary and linguistic references are further connected to the visual arts, as in the section presenting the image of the road in the Russian culture. Moreover, the author enriches the analysis by introducing references to the real and symbolic geography of the Russian territory, as it happens in the section on historical places in Moscow, and information regarding general knowledge, like the explanation of the assignment of the name *Katyusha* to a rocket-launcher. The varied cultural data provided make the analysis interesting not only for specialists in musicology, but also for the wide public, even to those who are not familiar with Russian language.

The fourth chapter connects the theoretical information and the analysis with the field of pedagogy and art education. Here, the author discusses the possibilities to employ the war songs presented in classroom teaching and gives suggestions for teachers. Further, Elena Polyudova presents a project implemented recently at the Music School in Moscow, which functions both as an example and a demonstration of the relevance of the topic for the younger generations of students.

The general impression is that this a work which may serve as a reference for future studies on Soviet music and for applied linguistics or teaching materials. As the author herself mentions, the topic treated regards the general area of humanities, with a focus on history, literature and world art culture. The information given and the manner of presentation have indeed the merit of connecting the ‘official’ history, which encompasses the chronological succession of events, with the “history of the private life”, in the terms proposed by Philippe Ariès and Georges Duby. One of the most interesting sections of this work consists in the description of the context in which the analyzed songs have been created. The histories of the songs impress because of the richness of the information and the clear presentation. Moreover, they are also touching, as Elena Polyudova manages to depict fragments of the lives of officers and soldiers fighting in the “Great War”.

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She points out the connection between each musical piece and real events, like the battles, the episodes of fierce fight or desperate resistance in front of the enemy. Whether the context of creation is provided by a tragic and heroic battle, like for the song “On the Nameless Height”, or by a brief encounter between an officer and a beautiful girl, as in “Accidental Waltz”, the author demonstrates that history is, above all, a story, created and carried on by real people, with their dreams and hopes, with sorrows and joy, fears and ideals. From this perspective, an idea outlined by Elena Polyudova needs to be mentioned, for its truth: the war songs were no instruments of propaganda, but served to remind to the army people on the battlefield and to the population at home that they had a reason for fighting, a personal motivation given by love, whether it was love for the country or for the dear ones. A paradoxical conclusion thus emerges, that love and sensibility can be found even in the most unexpected contexts, nurturing resistance and survival.

In fact, the general message of the entire work can be interpreted as a appeal for an approach that is personalized and centered on moral values, either in the specific act of teaching, or in the interpretation and transmission of cultural information. The domains to which this work contributes are, therefore, varied, ranging from musicology, educational sciences, art teaching or Russian language teaching to more general areas such as cultural studies, cultural history, European modern history or the modern history of Eastern Europe. The volume will be of interest for diverse audiences, encompassing teachers and scholars in the fields mentioned above, but also graduate or undergraduate students and a general public, interested in modern Russian culture and language.

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