One of the components of public life that have most eagerly reflected and rapidly responded to the fall of communism, television in Romania has changed its looks and approaches at an amazing speed since 1989. It has been getting closer and closer to the conventions of the global media, to the point where it now bears little semblance to the heavily ideologised, state-controlled, timetable-restricted communist television. Whilst a distinction needs to be drawn between television in the 1990s – which heavily reflected the general state of social and political confusion that dominated the country at large – and Romanian television after 2000, when negotiations for EU accession had gained momentum and efforts were made in the country to cope with EU requirements, it can be argued that the process of borrowing elements of the global media into Romanian television started in the early 1990s.

As television was arguably the major instrument that orchestrated both the tedious “transition” process and the process of EU accession, being – or claiming to be – in tight connection with the audience and functioning as a major opinion shaper, I will analyze it as a main point of contact between a so-called “public space”...
Changes and Challenges in Gender Stereotypes in Romanian TV Shows

accessible to everyone and considered to a certain extent representative of the public image of a country. For the sake of specificity, I have chosen to look at one particular TV genre that specialises precisely in establishing points of contact between the public sphere that represents a country’s image and the private universe of the audience’s everyday life: TV-shows. Within this framework, I shall look at how representations of femininity find a place in TV-shows and how they are negotiated between traditional local representations and trends borrowed from western televisions for the sake of what has been felt as a necessary tuning to a global imaginary that has accompanied the changes made in the light of EU accession. The time frame considered is mainly the years immediately preceding the moment of EU accession (January 1st, 2007), which, however, will be interpreted in the light of the longer post-1989 developments and the spectacular changes they brought in contrast to the communist years. I shall rely on media studies and cultural analysis in an attempt to discuss the impact of television space on the reflective private space of the audience and the dialogue between the two in the formation of a new public sphere tuned to the expectations of EU accession.

In considering the TV-show format as an area of political debate between the public and the private, an important set of questions must be raised. How does television challenge stereotypical thinking – a strong characteristic of patriarchal societies such as the Romanian one – and in what direction? Does it reinforce already

pirna точка помеѓу таканаречениот „јавен простор“, достапен секому, за кој се сметаше дека до одреден степен ја претставува јавната слика за земјата. Во интерест на конкретноста, јас одбрав да разгледувам еден определен телевизиски жанр којшто е специјализиран токму во воспоставување допирни точки помеѓу јавната сфера, којшто ја претставува сликата за земјата и приватниот универзум на секојдневниот живот на публиката: телевизиските шоу програми. Во овие рамки, јас ќе разгледувам како претставите на женскоста го наоѓаат своето место во телевизиските шоу емисии и како се резултат на преговори помеѓу традиционалните локални претстави и трендовите позајмени од западните телевизии во име на тоа што се оценило како потребно штимување во согласност со глобалното имагинарно коешто беше придружник на промените правени во правец на пристапувањето кон ЕУ. Временската рамка на која се задржуваат се главно годините кои непосредно му претходеа на моментот на пристапување кон ЕУ (1 јануари 2007 година), којшто сепак ќе биде толкувана во светлината на долгите настани по 1989 година и спектакуларните промени кои тие ги донесоа во однос на годините на комунизмот. Јас ќе се потпраам на медиумските студии и на културната анализа во обидот да расправам за ефектот на телевизискиот простор врз рефлективниот приватен простор на публиката и дијалогот помеѓу нив во формирањето на нова јавна сфера којшто ги следи очекувањата за пристапување кон ЕУ.

Vo разгледувањето на форматот на телевизиските шоу емисии како област на политичка дебата помеѓу јавното и приватното, мора да се постави важно множество прашања. На кој начин телевизијата го предизвикува стереотиopianото размислување – истакнатата карактеристика на патријархалните општества
existing stereotypes for the sake of strengthening an alleged ‘national specificity’ or does it destabilise them? Within the complex sets of stereotypes that usually go into the definitions of national identities, especially at times of integration within larger political bodies such as the European Union, what is the situation of gender stereotypes, considering the fact that they can be expected to rank high in a society as rigid in its traditional patriarchal thinking as the Romanian one?

Starting assumptions:
The TV-Show Format in Romanian Television

In the last couple of years preceding the fall of communism in Romania in 1989, national Romanian television consisted of one channel broadcasting between 8 and 10 pm daily, with a few extra hours at the weekend. The programmes were restricted to films that were severely censored and whose titles were abusively changed to evade copyright laws and to news programmes designed only to pay homage to the Ceausescu regime. Audience discussion programmes as such were virtually non-existent and there was no space for a dialogue of any kind between the media and the audience. There were the so-called ‘entertainment shows’ at the weekend, which were either humorous forms of escape from reality or rehearsals of the same perpetual ideological message that was delivered in news programmes. The only programmes that involved an in-studio audience were the so-called entertainment shows that ran at the weekends, which were based around music and humour.

Poјдовни претпоставки: Форматот на телевизиските шоу емиси на романската телевизија

Wo последните две години кои му претходеа на паѓот на комунизмот во Романија од 1989 година, националната романска телевизија се состоеше од еден канал којшто емитуваше програма секој ден од 8 и 10 навечер, со некој екстра час за време на викендите. Програмите беа ограничени на филмови коишто беа жестоко цензурирани и чии наслови беа сурово менувани со цел да се избегнат законите за заштита на авторски права, и на нови програми направени само со цел да се оддава почет на режимот на Чаушеску. Програмите со разговори со публиката практично и не постоја и немаше простор за дијалог од каков било вид помеѓу медиумите и публиката. Имана таканаречени „забавни шоу емиси“ за време на викендите кои или беа хумористички форми на бегање од реалноста или проби на истата вечна идеолошка порака којашто ја пренесуваат новите програми. Единствените програми со публика во студи...
and in which the audience played virtually no part whatsoever. The absence of dialogue was an expected feature, as it characterised the whole society. In a regime of oppression and double-speak, the main purpose of television was to confirm and strengthen the dominant ideology.

It should come as no surprise that one of the first reactions to the liberation of Romanian television – which for a while even went under the name “Free Romanian Television” – in December 1989 was to bring it as close as possible to a platform for free speech. In an article entitled “News as Performance: The Image as Event,” Margaret Morse quotes a CNN reporter recording the immediate aftermath of the Romanian revolution, who notices that the first reaction of people to the liberalisation of television is the wish to talk:

“Now everyone wants to talk,” said the reporter in a stand up. “Hold on a minute. Here’s someone who wants to talk to you.” The video image cuts to a man who is looking directly at the camera, saying it was his first time on Western television and he had some words for the Americans.

Yet, as the title of Morse’s article suggests, this impulse to talk is not innocent of a certain desire to appear on television and to perform one’s own version of history, after decades in which history had been performed the way an abusive government dictated. On the other hand, though, the result of this uneasy combination between a strong desire for completely uncensored conversation and the will to perform led to endless debates in the
early nineties around the topical subject of building democracy, which went far beyond the degree of freedom of speech expected on democratic televisions. Talking a lot, without necessarily saying much, seems to have been one of the plagues that characterized the highly chaotic atmosphere of the 1990s in Romania. A proliferation of a stereotype of talkative Romanians, who spent hours talking – in the Parliament, on TV, at home, in the streets – and often arguing over political matters that had little bearing on their individual lives seems to have been the funny aspect of the struggles of the age.

It is no wonder that TV-shows flourished after the fall of communism. Of course, as widely known nowadays, the TV-show format – like that of any show, really – is always highly edited, to the extent that even the most ‘authentic’ audience discussion programmes contain a whole set of lead-in strategies of various degrees of manipulative power. However their popularity lies in the illusion of public debate they give. Sonia Livingstone and Peter Lunt define audience discussion programmes as “part of social space, as places where people congregate for public discussion, even as a ‘forum’” which facilitates “parasocial interaction.” They are an allegedly real conversation between a host and an audience, in which the audience is supposed to participate, ask questions and contribute ideas, even though in reality there is always a higher degree of control than the show will admit. Even thus, there is no comparison between the clear outspoken manipulation of the kind practised by the communist regime and the much more subtle one in TV-shows – audience discussion programmes covering themes of general interest, framed by various forms of entertainment – where the illusion of free, open speech between the host and the audience is shrewdly covered.
емиси – програмите со разговори со публика кои покриваат теми од општ интерес, врамени со различни форми на забава – илузијата на слободен, отворен говор помеѓу домаќинот и публика, итро се прикрива со посебни формули. Непосредно поврзана со потребата од градење јавна сфера отворена за автентична дебата и со форматите кои брзо се увеzuвaa од Западот, телевизиските шоу програми беа најверни одговори на потребата да се говори, на којашто сигнализираше Морсовиот репортер на Си-ен-ен, како и на желбата на романско декретираше дека е посападни најмногу што може.

Во годините кои непосредно му претходеа на пристанувањето во ЕУ, романските телевизиски канали ги зголемија своите напори за подобрување на нивниот „изглед“ за да ги задоволат европските стандарди. Ова подобрување беше сфатено на амбивалентен начин: како имитација на западноевропските телевизиски програми и како свесен напор да се произведе оригинален материјал, кој е во состојба да се произнесе за локалните, конкретни прашања. Порано потиснатата публика, принудена да репродуцира шеми на размислување во кои кон крајот на еден режим никој повеќе сериозно не веруваше, сега се вдаде во новоотворениот простор на јавното емитување. Подобрувањето на локална јавна сфера којашто би воспоставила валидна соработка помеѓу медиумите и демократијата, постојаното информирање на публика и овозможувањето таа да учествува во одлуките кои се односеаат на земјата, се мешаше со желбата да се позајмуваат формите и шемите на западните телевизии со цел да се биде „поевропски“.

Оваа амбивалентност оди подлабоко од обична желба да се задоволи европскиот „голем брат“. Тоа е поврзано со традиционалнито чувство на by specific formulae. Directly connected to the need to build a public sphere open to genuine debate and to the formats that were quickly imported from the West, TV-shows have been the most faithful responses to that need to talk signaled by Morse’s CNN reporter, as well as to the desire of the Romanian society to become as westernized as possible.

In the years immediately preceding EU accession, Romanian television channels increased their efforts to improve their “looks” in order to live up to European standards. This improvement was understood in an ambivalent way: as an imitation of Western European televisions’ programmes and as a conscious effort to produce original material, capable to voice local, specific concerns. The formerly repressed audience, forced to reproduce patterns of thinking that nobody seriously believed in any more by the end of the regime, was now springing into the newly opened space of public broadcasting. The need for the creation of a local public sphere that would establish a valid co-operation between the media and democracy, keeping the audience more informed and enabling them to participate in the decisions concerning the country mixed with the desire to borrow the forms and patterns of Western televisions in order to be “more European.”

This ambivalence goes deeper than a mere desire to please the European “Big Brother.” It is connected to a traditional feeling of essential in-betweenness that goes
suštinska međusostojba koja je del od definicijata za romanština, kojašto dolgo se создаваше во смисла на метафори на граничност (tampon zoni, мост помеѓу Истокот и Западот, помеѓу латинскиот јазик/култура и нелатинските култури, помеѓу Отоманската Империја и Австро-унгарската монархија, помеѓу Балканот и Европа.) Така, дефинирањето на романскиот идентитет отсекогаш било голема работа, а во последно време тоа е уште понагласено. Желбата да се „влезе во Европа“ поттикну kompleksna потрага за секогаш присутен, автентичен европски идентитет којшто требаше само да биде разоткрен под остатоките на комунистичкиот менталитет.

Under such circumstances, it is no wonder that TV-shows flourished, and among them the ones that flourished the most were the ones led by women. The visual media in Romania have recently shown an increase in the number of interactive programmes such as TV shows as these assume a defining function in the formation and education of a civil society in the new EU-accessing countries. This increase may not be altogether artificial, as surveys prove that the audience of TV shows in Romania is also on the rise. Initially regarded with a suspicion inherited from the “old regime” in which nothing that came out on TV was deemed to be believable, genuine and free from ideological processing or “connections,” TV shows have settled in as people grew into the habit of watching them as part of everyday life. This is precisely the aim of entertainment-oriented programmes such as “Sunday in the Family” (with Mihaela Radulescu, Antena 1, Sunday 15:30-18:30) or of comic shows such as “Teo” (ProTV, Monday-Friday 17:00/17:45-20:30). Such entertainment-oriented programmes are meant for fun, so they are based on a sometimes gross chauvinistic humor with desired exotic touches, which reiterates old gender stereotypes such as the wife in the kitchen, the fashion model whose social rise is due to a series of male protec-
Other shows, however, assume a serious mission and as such – without renouncing the entertainment function – mix the humorous message (which, since Shakespeare and even earlier, has been seen as useful when one has difficult things to say) with an allegedly world-changing purpose. The purpose may vary from the political obsessions of the country to concerns for the population’s quality of life. It is, as we know, part of the TV show format to place a lot of weight on the host’s shoulders. A lot of any TV show – irrespective of topic, range of interests or target audience – happens around the host, who most often is a smart woman with a success story to back her up and with a good claim to the attributes “young” and “beautiful.” Surprize, surprize (Surprises, Surprises), a Romanian version of a consecrated European format of the charity-oriented show, heavily relies on the central figure of Andreea Marin, the female version of the deus ex machina who steps into the world of the audience’s pain and solves their problems by just clapping her hands, in a way slightly reminiscent of the British Jim’ll Fix It charity show. However, despite the charity frame, the hostess stands out as the fairy queen who wears a different expensive night dress produced especially for her by the trendy fashion designer Doina Levintza. The clash between her glamorous outfits and the sometimes meagre relief the show offers to the audience members involved is striking. Moreover, the show is used as a space for commercial publicity spots whose obvious profit and pleasure-oriented intentions have little to do with the charity nature of the show. The show is clearly meant to
sell well – for charity purposes, but also clearly for the benefit of the producers – so it has to look glamorously European, regardless of the content clashes. It promotes a self-exoticising image of dealing with poverty from the heights of success in which two types of discourses contrast stridently: the heavy touches of soap melodrama and the reassuring charity organization tone meant to offer not just relief, but also empowerment. Whilst being loudly intent on helping the poor, the show reinforces the gender stereotypes and the inferiority complexes of what Maria Todorova would recognize as the Balkan macho culture.  

Even though there is an awareness of the need for political correctness, the commercial, market-oriented nature of TV shows and publicity reflects in a maintenance of patriarchal gender stereotypes as they are thought to have been transmitted in folklore and jokes and which at times can still be worryingly chauvinistic. Such stereotypes are perceived as funny and expected to ensure audience success as they are tuned to the audience’s “traditional” stereotypical thinking. The foreign models provided by satellite television are perceived and translated in such ways that they are only used to reinforce already existing stereotypes. This signals a genuine need to raise the awareness of the audience as to the real significance of such stereotypes – an educational need that still has to be filled in.
The popularity of women-hosted shows has continuously grown despite their being outnumbered by shows hosted by men. In what follows I am going to refer to the three most famous ones, which have dominated the scene of audience preferences in the latest years: *Surprise, surprise* (Surprises, surprises), *Teo* and *Duminica in familie* (Sunday in the Family), with more focus on *Surprise, surprise*.

**Gender Stereotypes and Romanian Women-Hosted TV Shows**

TV shows are artificially constructed, edited, directed social platforms meant – at least apparently – to respond to a need for parasocial interaction. The presence of a studio audience that debates current ideas with a host in a show is meant to invite the TV-watching audience to feel part of the show as well, therefore free to ask questions. TV-shows, though, are more than just spaces of interaction; they are community builders and opinion formers, providers of role-models that are – to a degree that depends on the seriousness of the show – transmitted to the audience. The success story, prestige and image of the TV-show host essentially condition the impact of the show; therefore they are bound to have a strong audience impact.

TV-shows hosted by women inevitably address the gender stereotypes which circulate in a society. They do that in their choice of topics (often centered on “feminine” issues such as love, fashion or caretaking), in the carefully designed looks of the presenters, as well as in the emotional rhetoric which is often used and which is clearly meant to appeal primarily to a female audience.
There is also a conscious, careful consideration of how the psychology of stereotyping functions, since success can depend significantly on whether the audience’s expectations are met.

Romanian gender stereotypes are numerous and can be ascribed to various sources. Yet it is important to acknowledge in Romanian gender culture the overlap of a number of macho-type attitudes in the construction of gender roles which generally characterize Balkan cultures. In this sense, the encounter between traditional constructions of gender roles in Romania and the pre-EU-accession anxiety of living up to European standards can be analyzed in terms of Maria Todorova’s distinction between Balkanism and Orientalism. If Said’s Orient was feminised by the Empire, Todorova’s Balkan culture is perceived by Western Europe as savagely masculine. It will therefore encourage a construction of femininity that, even in its more powerful forms, is subordinated to the requirements of patriarchy. Even though Romania has traditionally debated its liminal positioning between Balkanism and Europeanism (as it has never quite considered itself a Balkan country in terms of either geographical positioning or cultural belonging), a lot of Todorova’s remarks apply to the Romanian space very well.

On the other hand, attempts to accommodate neo-colonial stereotypes adopted from the Western European visual media (accessible to Eastern European audiences via satellite television) are torn between the

сe користи и кoјa ε јaснo нaменeтa да јa привлечe прeвeнствeнo жeнскaтa публика. Пoстои и свесно, внимателно размислувањe за тoа како функционира психолoгијата нa стереотипите, бидеjки успехот во голeмa мepа можe да зависи од тoа дaли сe задоволени очекувањeта нa публиката.

Романските родови стереотипи сe мнoгуброjни и можe дa сe припишат нa различни извори. Сeпaк, вaжно e во рoманскaтa родова култutra дa сe увиди преклопувањeтo нa неколку мачовидни ставови во конструкuirанетo нa родовите улoги коjи генералнo ги каpактeризиратe балкaнските култuri. Во оваa смислa, средбата нa традиционалните конструкции нa родовите улoги во Рoманиja и анксиозностa во пepиодт пepд пpистапувањeтo кон ЕУ за исполнувањe нa европските стандарди, можe дa сe aнализира во смислa нa дистинктивaтa пометb олкaнизмoт и ориентализмoт нa Мариja Todorova. Аko Oриентoт нa Сaнд (Said) бeше феминизиран од странa нa Имpeриjата, балкaнскaтa култutra нa Todorova сe пeрциpира каapo дивjачки мaскulina од странa нa Западна Евpoпa. Зaтoа тaа ќe oхрабрува конструкциja нa женскoст кoјашто, дури и вo неjзините помоjки форми, e пoтчинетa нa барањата нa патриjaрхатoт. Иакo Рoманиja традиционалнo дебатиpала зa свoетo грaничнo позиционаpиранe пометb олкaнизмoт и европeизмoт (бидеjки никoгaш и нe сe сметала сeбeси за балкaнскa зeмja и во смислa нa гeографскo позиционаpиранe ili културна пripадност), мнoгу oд забелeшките нa Todorova истo тaка дa сe однесуваат и нa рoмaнскиот prostor.

Од друга странa, обидите дa сe задоволат неоколониjалните стереотипи усвоени од западнoеврoпските визуелни медиуми (дoстапни нa истoчнoеврoпскaтa публика преку сателитскaтa телeвизиja) сe рaстp-
market orientation of commercial programmes such as TV shows and publicity – whose main requirement is the need to please the audience – and the EU-oriented anxiety of political correctness. Hence, we are at the moment witnessing an interaction of traditional and modern gender stereotypes (the *femme fatale* versus the practical girl who can do things and for whom the looks come second, the wife confined to the private space – most commonly the kitchen or the laundry – versus the woman of success who runs her own business. In a book on women’s identities in the culture of globalization, Madalina Nicolaescu notices that in recent years in Romania there has been a strong pressure on women to change their looks following the models imposed by Western magazines. This emphasis on change in the appearance goes hand in hand with what is perceived as a change in the image, which is where strength lies: it matters little who one is; the condition of power is to give the right impression. If fashion conditions female identity, one must abide by the latest trends in order to be a woman of success. For example, while there is no tradition that women should be doing exercise in Romania – hence most of them, irrespective of age, do not – the contemporary media, especially TV-shows and lifestyle television channels such as Euforia TV promote a new, different, Western-adapted model which implies the obligation to do sports if one wants to be in step with the requirements of today’s world.⁶

Whilst this is common to TV programmes worldwide, there is a worrying question hovering over Eastern Europe: what is, realistically, the connection of all these
televised representations and their correlatives in the real world? To what extent is television representative of actual gender roles and to what extent does it provide artificial models? I will attempt to explore the possible answers to these questions with reference to women-hosted Romanian TV-shows.

In an article on “Race, Ethnicity and Film” Robyn Wiegman shows that the predominance of racial stereotypes in Hollywood cinema is largely due to their visual – hence cinematically observable – nature:

To the extent that all stereotypes of human groups are predicated on the reduction of complex cultural codes to easily consumable visual and verbal cues, the film stereotype is paradigmatically linked to racial discourse. This does not mean that all stereotypes are raced, but rather that the logic of race as visually discernible underwrites the production and circulation of the stereotype.

Like race, gender is also predicated on a whole set of visual signs that are equally stereotypical. When it comes to television, where image plays a central part, a lot of the entertainment comes from the pleasure of watching, which often involves satisfying the audience’s preconceived expectations. Thus a certain degree of predictability is required for a programme to be successful.

In Romania, the TV-show business is dominated by three competing female hosts: Andreea Marin, Mihaela Radulescu and Teo Trandafir. They host different types of shows on different channels, at different times and as part of different daily programmes. Among them, the one that ranks highest in terms of length of time, scheduling
Među niv, највисоко во смисла на траење, распоред и привлечност за публиката – три часа во саботните вечери од 8 до 11 на првия канал на Националната телевизија, што значи најударно време – стои Sur-prize, surprize (Изненадување, изненадување) на Андреа Марин, следено од Teo, на Тео Трандафир и Duminica in familie (Недела во семејство) на Михаела Радулеаску. Sur-prize, surprize на својата интернет страница е опишано како „динамично шоу насочено кон пошироката публика во обид да ги обедини љубовта и солидарноста, покрај разликите во години, пол или социјален статус.“ Пет години по ред освојува титула за најдобро забавно шоу од општествениот живот, којашто ја дodelува списанието ВИП за неговата кампани „Негувајте го животот“. Шоуто на Тео започна во 2001 година и до нејзиното заминување од ПРО ТВ во 2007 таа ја имаше највисоката гледаност по часован сегмент. Една од причините за тоа беше фактот што тоа беше емитувано пред ударниот термин на сите канали, именно токму пред интервалот од 7 до 11 часот навечер. Недела во семејство, пак започна во 1998 година и направи пауза поради породилното отсуство на водителката. Тогаш, во март 2004 година, Михаела Радулеаску се врати во улога на водителка на шоуто кое од тој момент стана водач на пазарот на гледачи по часован сегмент.

Покрај некои разлики, нивните шоу емисии споделуваат одделни елементи кои што ја обезбедуваат предвидливоста којашто ја споменав погоре, на што во голема мера се потпира успехот кај публиката. Меѓу нив, вредно е да се спомене дека водителките ги споделуваат своите лични животи со нивните гледачи. Моделот го поставја меѓународни телевизиски водители, од кои можеби најпозната е Опра Винфри бидејќи се гордее со фактот што публиката and audience appeal – three hours on Saturday nights between 8 and 11 p.m. on the National TV 1 channel, which means the maximum peak time – is Andreea Marin’s Surprize, surprize (Surprises, Surprises), followed by Teo Trandafir’s Teo and Mihaela Radulescu’s Duminica in familie (Sunday in the Family). Surprize, surprize is described on its website as “a dynamic show addressed to a large audience, trying to unite people under the symbols of love and solidarity, despite differences of age, sex or social stratus. It has won the title of best social entertainment show for five years in a row awarded by the VIP Magazine for its ‘Cherish Life’ campaign.” Teo’s show started in 2001 and up until her departure from PRO TV in 2007 she had the highest ratings on her hour segment. One of the reasons for this was the fact that it was placed right before the prime-time of all channels, namely just before the interval 7 p.m. to 11 p.m. Duminica in familie, on the other hand, started in 1998 and took a break on account of the host’s maternity leave. Then in March 2004, Mihaela Radulescu returned to host the show, which from that moment has been an audience market leader for its hour segment.

Despite some differences, their shows share certain elements that ensure the predictability I was mentioning above, on which audience success largely counts. Among them it is worth mentioning the hosts’ sharing their personal lives with their audiences. The model was set by international TV-show hosts of whom Oprah Winfrey is probably the most famous as she prides herself on the fact that her audience is always the first to know the important things that happen in her life. Whilst Teo
always discussed her weight problems and the diets she tried to overcome them on air, Mihaela Radulescu constantly shares her family experiences and the joys of raising her baby girl in her show. The one for whom personal matters are an inseparable part of her very business is Andreea Marin, who bases an important part of her show on “fixing” the audience’s personal problems, hence she sees it as a fair part of the deal to also bring her own life in. Thus her romance with the well-known actor Stefan Banica, Jr. – as a result of which she became Andreea Marin-Banica in 2005 – made the substance of a significant amount of confession material in her show. Likewise, in good Oprah fashion, her audience was the first to learn the good news of her pregnancy, which not only placed her in the position of an actual mother – after nine years of playing the part of the good caretaking mother-figure of the nation – but also fulfilled the stereotype of the successful woman who has it all but who is not actually fulfilled until she has children. All three hosts meet the requirements of being well-dressed and good-looking – another element of stereotypical thinking which promotes the traditional thought that there is no success for a woman in the absence of beauty and family fulfilment. Even Teo, who seemed intent on breaking these patterns for years, became a happy mother by adopting a child and was recently revealed to have given in to the fifth proposal coming from her “secret lover” Marian Constantinescu, having become very careful and vulnerable after the failure of her first marriage.⁹
Surprise, surprize is the one Romanian TV-show which enjoys the largest audience. This is due, among other things, to the fact that the concrete cases on which the shows are built are not just presented, but the surprise of actually fixing the problem does occur. Everybody knows that if a case is shown on Surprise, surprize it means that the crew behind it is going to solve it somehow and the spectacular outcome will be shown on TV. This show has been going on since 1998 and, despite criticism surrounding its soap-opera-like sentimental presentation of heart-breaking cases, usually backed up by matching music that increases its appeal to tender-hearted audience members that might consequently contribute to the fund-raising often involved, it seems that nothing can get in the way of its large audience appeal. Its Saturday night peak time on national television contributes to this, as there are still areas of Romania where only national television channels are accessible. Another important pro is the show’s reality connection. Apart from details about the host’s private life – a convention observed by all TV-shows, especially women-hosted ones – individual people are actually helped to solve problems related to health, family, and life opportunities and so on. Moreover, the show, which has declared charity orientation, has been involved in larger campaigns. One example would be fund-raising for victims of floods in the summer of 2006, during which time Andrea Marin has been very active, even though there is a large amount of performance in her supportive caretaking role full of understanding and compassion for people in need, which she performs in a way that meets the expectations the audience has of a woman. After all, even though her Levintza-designed outfits are the insignia of a social status which is far above the level of the cases presented in the show, one cannot deny the fact that they are very persuasive elements of a body rhetoric that serves the cause of “the people” very effectively.
ведува на начин што ги задоволува очекувањата кои публиката ги има за една жена. Конечно, дури иако нејзините парчиња облека дизајнирани од Левинца се знак за социјалниот статус којшто е далеку над нивото на случајните презентирани во шоуто, не може да се негира фактот дека тие се многу убедливи елементи на телесна реторика којашто многу успешно му служи на „народот“.

Оваа реторика функционира на начин што внимателно ги потврдува барањата кои ги поставува екстремното патријархално размислување, бидејќи е дел од она што традиционално е познато како „добра женска стратегија“: добриот изглед, добрата тоаleta и препреденото однесување се извори на женската моќ во патријархалото општество. Како што покажа истражувањето направено од Флорина Браидеану (Florina Bradeanu), една од моите кандидатки за магистерска работа во 2007 година, луѓе од сите возрасти, родови и социјални позиции ја гледаат Изненадување, изненадување поради способноста на Андреа Марин да прави добро и да ја игра улогата на „добра та вила“. Разширено е верувањето дека најголем дел од нејзината публика се луѓе од руралните делови, но тоа не е вистина бидејќи низ разговор со луѓе од урбаните делови открив дека голем дел од нив го гледа шоуто. Фактот дека публиката е дел од маратонското продуцирање срцепарателни и плачливи изненадувања им се донеса на толку многу Романци што шоуто на Андреа Марин испаѓа најгледаното во нејзиниот термин. Неодамнешно признание за моќта на Андреа Марин беше нејзиното учество во започнувањето на уште една програма со разговор во студиото во јуни 2006 година, која што го приручи националното испитување на јавното мнение за најголемиот Романец на сите времиња. Кампањата Големиите Романци, којашто пак од својата страна позајми формат на Би-

This rhetoric functions in terms that carefully confirm the requirements of hard-core patriarchal thinking, being part of what is traditionally known as “good female strategy”: good looks, smart outfits and feline behavior are the sources of female power in a patriarchal society. As shown by a survey done by Florina Bradeanu, one of my MA dissertation supervisees in 2007, people of all ages, genders and social positions watch Surprize, surprize because of Andreea Marin’s ability to do good and perform the “fairy godmother.” It is widely believed that the largest part of her audience is formed by people from rural areas, but this is not real, since when talking to people in urban fields, I have discovered that a large proportion of them watch the show. The fact that the audience is part of a marathon of making heart-breaking and tears-shedding surprises appeals to so many Romanians that Andreea Marin’s show turns out to be the most widely watched in its time segment. A recent acknowledgement of Andreea Marin’s power was her involvement in the launching of another studio discussion programme in June 2006, which accompanied a national survey meant to determine the greatest Romanian of all times according to public opinion. The Great Romanians campaign, which in its turn borrowed a BBC format that was also run in other European countries such as France, Germany and the Netherlands, appealed, through the voice of its presenter Catalin Stefanescu, to the support of Surprize, surprize on the night of its launching. On
биси којшто се емитува и во други европски земји како Франција, Германија и Холандија, преку гласот на нејзиниот водител Каталин Стефанеску, упати повик за поддршка од Изненадување, изненадување истата вечер кога почна да се емитува. Во таа пригоذا, Андреа Марин достоинствено го прифати повикот и понуди нејзиното шоу да ја помогне на кампањата коешто таа ја нарече најголемиот заштитник на народот во земјата”. Додека со право признаната моќ на Марин се должи најмногу на нејзиниот импресиивен список на достигнувања, како што покажа интернет страницата на Изненадување, изненадување, таквите гламурозни моменти се потврда на фактот дека моќта на личниот имиџ на еден човек игра уште попреспудна во однос на привлечноста за публиката.

Заклучок

За да се поврзе влијанието врз публиката и учеството на публиката, речиси и не постои сомнеж дека моделот на женскост којшто го претставуваат романските телевизиски шоу емисии водени од жени, за кои се расправаве погоре, се ниша удобно помеѓу традицијата и еманципацијата и, порадо отколку да донесува одлука во корист на едното или другото, презема ризик на промовирање на женски модел кој ги задоволува двете, што тешко може да го следат луѓе од реалноста. Телевизиските шоу програми водени од жени навистина промовираат слика на силна независна жена, успешна во својата работа, но овој успех смета, барем делумно, на исполнувањето и зацврствувањето на веќе постојните барања кои ги поставуваат предрасудите поставени од стереотипните патријархални погледи. Популарната телевизија секогаш повлекува линија помеѓу традицијата и еманципаци-

Conclusion

To connect audience impact to audience participation, there is hardly any doubt that the model of femininity proposed by the Romanian women-hosted TV-shows discussed above wavers comfortably between tradition and emancipation and, rather than making a decision in favour of one or the other, assumes the risk of promoting a female model that satisfies both, difficult to reach by real people as it may be. TV-shows run by women hosts do promote an image of the strong independent woman successful in her business, but this success counts, at least partially, on meeting and reinforcing the already existing requirements of prejudiced thinking set by stereotypical patriarchal views. Popular television always draws a line between tradition and emancipation which is fine enough to maintain the interest of as wide a range of audience categories as possible. Yet the pressure put on women’s shoulders by this new type of double-think that seems
to have come in a package with EU accession is quite significant, the more so as, given the virtual absence of an active feminist movement with any significant social impact in Romania, the trend-setters tend to be the TV-shows.

Notes:

1. Entertainment programmes such as “Se cauta vedete” (“Looking for Stars”) or “Steaua fara nume” (“Stars without a Name”) launched an important number of stars of Romanian pop music such as Corina Chiriac, Mirabela Dauer, Olimpia Panciu, Dida Dragan, Adrian Romcescu or Angela Similea. Gender codes back then... The dialogue with the audience was minimal, or better said it did not exist at all.


5. Idem.


References:

Primary Sources:

*Surprize, surprize (Surprises, Surprises)*, with Andreea Marin, TVR1, Saturday 20:10-23:10.

*Duminica in familie (Sunday in the Family)*, with Mihaela Radulescu, Antena 1, Sunday 15:30-18:30.

*Teo*, with Teo Trandafir, ProTV, Monday-Friday 17:00/17:45-20:30 (with or without intercalated News programme).
Oprah, with Oprah Winfrey, taken over from ABC, Euforia TV, Monday-Friday 22:00-23:00.

Secondary Sources:


Internet страницы:


Websites: