

# The beginning of the satirical press in Romania

---

**Andreea Maria UNGURIAN**

University of Suceava  
[andreea.ungurian@yahoo.com](mailto:andreea.ungurian@yahoo.com)

**Résumé:** L'apparition de la presse satirique en Roumanie a représenté une nécessité pour l'information, l'éducation, la sensibilisation et la conscience des éléments politico-sociales des XIX-XXe siècles. Les événements cruciaux historiques de Transylvanie ont alimenté la naissance d'un élément complexe qui reflète précisément la réalité politique de cette époque à travers l'injustice, la perfidie et les vices.

**Mots-clé:** presse satirique, discours satirique, contexte socio-politique, réalité discursive.

## 1. Introduction

The style of the satirical press has an elitist character, the irony being built in a very subtle, sometimes bookish way. Its purpose is to implement subtlety in an veiled writing, accessible to almost all social categories.

We can associate the appearance of the satirical press with the need to express historical events in writing, this kind of pu-

blication being also a true observer of the political, economic and social life.

The introduction to the satirical media sphere is represented here by the presentation of the first publication of such kind. As in any research topic, we will begin with an identification of satirical press foundation, introduction necessary for understanding this concept.

## 2. The Satirical Press in Romania

In Romania, the satirical press begins somewhere in february 1859. *Țîntarul* (this is how the first satirical Romanian publication was called) hosted Rosetti's writings, who urged land-owners that had always criticized the European Convention to have the Convention papers read on their dying bed. Rosetti wrote the following quatrain, which remained in collective consciousness as an epigraph: "Saltă, saltă Romînie / Ai scăpat de Anarhie / Zaci acum în amorțire / Vecinica ta pomenire!". The incisive pamphlet continues with the development of its "companion" *Spiridușul*, that will survive only a month, agreeing with the reforms that Alexandru Ioan Cuza commanded, but also ridiculizing the efforts to prevent those reforms. We distinguish a sharp criticism of Kretzulescu government, fact that contributes to the suspension of *Spiridușul*. Under Orășanu's mark, on July 27, 1859, *Nichipercea* appears, a publication that will later be called *Gura Satului*, and which will be a sequel of *Spiridușul*. In the same note, *Nichipercea* is a tough judge of the aristocrats, idealizing the democracy system and ideology, making a priority from the accession to a democratic system: "Ciocoiful face astăzi patriotism și libertate, face ca măgarul îmbrăcat în piele de leu, dar care, crăpându-i pelea și ieșindu-i o ureche afară, a ajuns de răsul copiilor". The diachronic approach of the satirical press includes the entry of *Sîrșîlă*, in 1866, under the leadership of Ion Geanoglu. This publication will mean a strong vote against Alexandru Ioan Cuza, sometimes the criticism gliding to a level of personal attack: "Acum 5 ani, după ce toți în toate părțile alergară să găsească un cap pentru noi romîni, de chin de vai aleserăm pînă

culeserăm pe ăst Vodă de azi, dar care nu mai știm câți ani împli-nește ori câți mai are de împlinit pînă i-o ieși măseaua de minte”.

*Sîrsîilă*'s successor is *Ghimpele*, one of the longest satirical publication from the XIXth century. Initially, *Ghimpele*, started in 1866, acts as a true advocate for “Amor patriae nostra lux”, declaring war to Al. I. Cuza. Later, things will change radically, everything culminating with an eulogy written in the moment of Cuza's death. *Ghimpele* is not unprecedented, mocking the so-called “patriots” by convicting the demagogy. *Ghimpele* takes his role of a judge very seriously, using a real linguistic arsenal: “Noapte! Tăcere!... și gârbaci!... Ai să rîdem! Țeara a reintrat pe calea legale!”.

This paper will be continued by *Moftul român*, under Caragiale's signature. This last publication will function on recurrence and will characterize the whole attitude of those times. *Moftul român* appears in January 1893, suggestively subtitled “Revistă spiritistă națională, organ pentru răspîndirea științelor oculte din Dacia Traiană”. *Moftul român* had a major contribution in the satirical press area. This satirical magazine represents the peak of Caragiale's journalism, along with the independence and humorous free spirit. Caragiale “felt huge and saw monstrously”, as himself admits in *Grand Hôtel “Victoria Română”*. This will cause a great passion for humour and irony, all these facts standing as a principle for his publication.

Constanța Trifu (1974:7) believes that “în presa umoristică nimic nu este ireversibil. Prietenii se fac și se desfac după necesitățile momentului politic. Instabilitatea acționează doar în interiorul taberei”.

Therefore, can we associate the satirical press with a way that can be excused by the mean? A political history tool compelled to be constantly in a attack position?

Mircea Iorgulescu said that one of the common occupation in Romania when the satirical press appeared was the talking. As simple as that. Therefore, it's inevitable the question: Caragiale, Orășanu, Geanoglu etc. were talking with their readers through satirical texts?

### 3. Conclusions

In the articles of these publications, we often identify figures of morality, ideology and culture, also the efforts of Transylvanian people to preserve their existence as a social entity in those dualist times of political regime, 1867-1918, when the satirical press became a way of keeping people informed about reality. Analyzing some of the above-mentioned publications, we identified a social political trend that either appreciated or depreciated aspects of political life, convicting or supporting certain public figures of that time.

### Bibliography

BREAZU, Ioan, *Literatura Transilvaniei: studii, articole, conferințe*, Editura Casa Școalelor, București, 1944.

CARAGIALE, Ion Luca, *Grand Hôtel „Victoria Română” – Nuvele*, Editura Herra, București, 1998.

SILVESTRU, Valentin, *Umorul în literatură și artă*, Meridiane, București, 1988.

TRIFU, Constanța, *Presa umoristică de altă dată*, Minerva, București, 1974.

#### Magazines:

*Ghimpele*, no. 3, 1869.

*Nichipercea*, no 3, 1859.

*Sîrsîlă*, no 2, 1867.

*Țințarul*, no 3, 1859.