New Age of Romanian Media and Journalism

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Résumé: Le discours médiatique est devenu pour tout le monde une seconde nature, car il n'y a pas de personnes qui ne prennent pas du contact chaque jour avec lui. Donc, les journalistes présentent la réalité, mais, ils cherchent aussi la déchiffrer, cela signifiant la manipulation de l`opinion publique. Cette manifestation apparaît aussi quand le journaliste impose son opinion sur une situation politique ou sur une personne publique, en arrivant au dénigrement ou à l`exagération. Aussi, l`apparition de nombreuses tabloïds a eu et a encore, comme résultat, une de-culturalisation (vulgarisation) permanente de la population.

Mots-clés: manipulation, seconde nature, opinion, dénigrement, vulgarisation (de-culturalisation).

The relation between *language* and *reality*, defined by the first religious books of humanity[1] as explanation and transitoriness by means of the word[2] – as the Antiquity peoples heavily

[1] Lao Tse, *Cartea despre Tao (Dao de jing)*, Minerva, Bucuresti, 1988, verse 1: "ceea ce are nume este obîrsia celor zece mii de fiinte si lucruri" (The named is the origin of the ten thousand beings and things – *our transl.*); verse 15: "În vechime, cei meniti sa se desavîrseasca întru Tao erau nestiuti, (însa) atotstiutori; atît de adînci, cu neputinta de a fi cunoscuti… nedeslusiti – pareau încetosati" (In ancient times, the ones who were destined to reach perfection within the Dao were unknown, but omniscient; so profound, impossible to understand... elusive – they seemed opaque – *our transl.*).

[2] Lao Tse, *op. cit.*, verse 1: "Ceea ce nu are nume este începutul Cerului si al Pamîntului" (The unnameable is the beginning of Heaven and Earth – *our transl.*).

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emphasized the associations[3] – but deciphered, since Polybios' time, as a tendency to manipulate[4], means, within the context of this theme, a relationship that, according to Matilda Caragiu Marioteanu[5], also manifests as a *linguistic variety* (common language, standard language, national language), and especially as *social variants* of the language (sociolect, jargon, slang) and as *particularities of individual speech* (idiolect). Historically speaking and due to language users, in the relationship between language and reality – from usage to norm in media and publicity discourse – there are certain reminiscences from the language of the illumination (*luga suryaniyya*)[6], i.e. from the literary discourse (writers, who practice journalism to provide the bare necessities of life), that operate with symbols previous to individual thinking[7], but there are also elements of vulgar or unargued opinions[8], the so-called futile literature practiced by the gossip columnists (journalists, politicians, media "stars"), hence the media production can be defined as degeneracy due to the descendent course of the human cycle[9].

The media discourse users do not aim to depict reality, but to elucidate it (even in the sense of the Daoist elucidation, meaning a reconstruction of reality or of a reality substitute), depending on the interests they represent and on the reception availability of their target audience. Media, advertising included, does not serve REALITY, but the REALITIES, therefore the perspective, illusion and gullibility, "without them representing stages of exis-

[3] Polybios, *Istorii, I-II*, tome II, Editura Stiintifica, Bucuresti, 1988, p.17.

[4] *Idem*, tome V, p. 75: "mi se pare ca, dintre toate vietuitoarele, omul, care se crede ca este cel mai iscusit, este cel mai usor de înselat" (it seems to me that, of all creatures, man, who considers himself the most skillful, is the easiest to be fooled – *our transl.*).

[5] Matilda Caragiu Marioteanu, *Compendiu de dialectologie româna / (nord-si-sud dunareana)*, Editura Stiintifica si Enciclopedica, Bucuresti, 1975, p. 78.

[6] René Guénon, *Simboluri ale stiintei sacre*, Humanitas, Bucuresti, 2008, p. 60.

[7] *Idem*, p. 55.

[8] *Idem*, p. 60.

[9] *Idem*, p. 71.

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tence of the same reality"[10]. It is not reality that operates through media, but saturation and exaltations as components of manipulation, with political or advertising purpose.

When the media discourse user is a writer, the norms of the Romanian language survive timidly through the correct use of the language, but less than before (together with the disappearance or the counterfeit of the reportage), through the observance of orthography and punctuation rules; nevertheless, literary writing is implacably interwoven with a lampoonist decadence the writer resorts to from the necessity, often discreet and unknown, to fit in with the media socialites.

Worthy of being an example in this respect, and entirely illustrative, are some editorial fragments signed by the playwrights Mircea Radu Iacoban and Catalin Mihuleac, and by the poet Lucian Avramescu, on the same newspaper page, in which they cover, once a week, the space dedicated to opinion leaders.

Mircea Radu Iacoban, successful in keeping himself away of the riot and the political disputes, lives the sacrality of Space and Time, by recollecting moments and places from the city of Suceava of his time, with narrative elements of the innate writer: "An evocative line of Adi Cusin says, impeccably cadenced, that «On a street in Suceava there was a smell of ripened apples». In the same olfactive sense, I had the feeling of reencountering the town of my childhood as I smelled, on Easter eve, in a street in Itcani, the aroma of home baked bread"[11].

Catalin Mihuleac, young playwright, restless and revolted, finds fault with society and its evils, but he exposes them, just like Iacoban does, within the parameters of the "publicist's literature", as the editorials are called*:* "These are the special days of the year, days we charge with meaningless significance to make a mountain out of the molehill of human qualities. All the selfish ones choose these sacred days to strike the attitude of a

[10] Ioan Oprea, *Comunicare culturala si comunicare lingvistica în spatiul european*, Institutul European, Iasi, 2008, p. 9.

[11] Mircea-Radu Iacoban, *"Arome"*, in *Monitorul de Suceava*, n° 98 (4696), 28th of April, 2011, p. 2.

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great lover of his neighbor, whom he embraces, fondles and crumples with special gifts; and we, the rest, we accept the game with serenity, probably because it lasts a little, only a week a year, which passes quickly"[12].

It is only when the writer who survives journalism becomes, without knowing and admitting it, a politician (a kind of *outlaw* of politics), that literary writing resorts – through the pamphlet technique – to *rough words*, to literary expression, it is true, but undermined by caricature attempts by no means satirical, the difference between caricature and satire being the aggression against a certain character and not against some particular typology: "What a mess! Believe it or not! The candidate for the party in power, Mister Emil Boc, also haphazardly chief in function of this famous formation by moving the doctrine from one hand to another, goes home in a car (a car is a way of speaking, because the prime-minister's car is in fact a motorcade) and reaches the destination in another one. He leaves Bucharest in a Mercedes and in the Kingdom of Far, Far Away he gets off from a minibus, one of the few minibuses for the few commuters with jobs that still exist in the Kingdom of Far, Far Away. Is Boc an illusionist, a fakir, a horse power prestidigitator? Has the prime-minister turned himself into Samantha?"[13]

The purpose of these three short quotes is to demonstrate that, in the case of press materials that have writers as authors, language – in its defining coordinates – does not have to suffer, and communication – always brilliantly and attractively argued – militates, indirectly, in favor of authentic values, "so that the aristocracy and the intellectualism can become authentic phenomena and reference points in the life of the community"[14]. Unfortunately, the percentage of writers in media is almost insignificant, as politicians, journalists and media "stars" provoke,

[12] Catalin Mihuleac, *"Traiasca si înfloreasca zgârciobanii! Moarte generosilor!"*, in *Monitorul de Suceava*, n° 92 (4690), 20th of April, 2011, p. 2.

[13] Lucian Avramescu, *"Boc tine urma masinilor lui Basescu"*, in *Monitorul de Suceava*, n° 105 (4703), 06th of May, 2011, p. 2.

[14] Ioan Oprea, *op. cit.*, p. 398.

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with unpremeditated complicity, a large and diversified tabloidization of the press, from both an editorial and a consumerist perspective, which are equally degrading from a social viewpoint. The purpose of such tabloidization is, undoubtedly, the manipulation of the masses, and the scheme according to which media functions seems to be the one exposed in the famous *Protocols of Zion*, elaborated, as Francis Dessart, the successor of Otto Strasser in the philosophy of the European unification[15], argues from a Masonic lodge of Catholicism, called *the Temple of Zion*: "The press, which we entirely master, serves to inflame passions or to maintain the controversy of the party. The press is untrue, ignorant and useless. Most people do not understand the meaning of it. / We have transformed journalism and publicity into a terrible weapon. Nothing is made known to society without our consent […]. We made out of press an instrument which substitutes thinking, a way of educating the peoples. Everything we print is cheap and read by everyone. Everything we print creates the illusion of diversity of opinions. / By means of press, we make the elector think that he shares the opinion of his party, that he acts according to principles […]. We thwart and temper as much as it is necessary, because we know that we sometimes promote the truth, other times the lie, confirming the facts or contesting them, taking after the impression they make on the public"[16].

Without falling into the temptation of the universal conspiracy scenario, we must admit that, due to the grave interference of politics in the Romanian media in the last decade, inclusively through journalistic labor conscription, it seems foredoomed to *the spirit of passions* and to *the maintenance of the party controversy*, it seems that the media of the last decade creates the illusion of the diversity of opinions, in order to convince *the elector that he shares the opinion of his party, that he is acting according to principles*, but the cause of these communicational

[15] Francis Dessart, *Reconquista*, Carpatia Press, Bucuresti, 2005, p. 60.

[16] Ion Dragusanul, *Ultimul testament al lui Adolf Hitler*, Editura Musatinii, Suceava, 2000, pp. 225-226 (*our transl.*).

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degeneracy seems to be not only the lack of culture and of professionalism of the political class, but also those of the journalists and media "stars", therefore, of the exponents of a *media product* that sells.

The promotion of the *social variants of the language* (sociolect, jargon and slang), but also that of the specificities of the *individual speech* (the idiolect), by means of the contemporary media, seems to have been implemented by the politicians, creators of an awkward idiolect, a kind of neo-phraseologism which combines – with manipulative purposes – the technique of the slogan with an insulting stereotypy, such as: *basca lui Iliescu*[17], neo-phraseologism intended to compromise the collaborators of the Social-Democrat Party; *cucuveaua de la Cotroceni*[18], insult which became a phraseologism, against the former president, Ion Iliescu; *mafia portocalie*[19], neo-phraseologism for the act of government under the auspice of the Democrat-Liberal Party, etc.

Due to the intellectual upstartism of the politicians, who, by writing (inclusively interviews and press conferences) and by speaking on the radio and television, have become pseudo-opinion-leaders and, indirectly, role models in what prude expression is concerned, primnessly encourage the use of the pleonasm, of incorrect and pathetic expressions, such as *fortuit de împrejurari*, *diametral opus* (as if the diameter wouldn't necessarily be the opposite), *sedinta lucrativa* (intended as *work session*, where *lucrative* means *rentable*, *profitable*, because of the confusion with *lucru*, 'work'), *luxurios* (used as an adjective related to *luxury*, when in fact in Romanian it means *depraved* and *debauched*), etc., but also the incorrect use of the comma between

[17] *"Boc: PNL a pus basca lui Iliescu pe valorile si principiile liberale"*, in *Gîndul*, 24th of November, 2009.

[18] *La Palatul Cotroceni cînta cucuveaua / Iliescu si ai lui si-au gasit beleaua* (*At the Cotroceni Palace the owlet sings/ Iliescu and his fellows have found their trouble – our transl.*), a slogan coined in the University Plaza, taken and institutionalized by the entire Romanian media.

[19] Corneliu Vadim Tudor, *Tricolorul*, 14th of January, 2011.

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the subject and the predicate or between the comparison term and the compared one, in formulations as: *politica, corupe (the politics 'comma' corrupts* in oral expression) or *frica, ca o neliniste (the fear 'comma' as an anguish,* in discourse); such constructions are abusively employed in order to avoid cacophony.

The *language blunders* made by the politician Marian Vanghelie (the incorrect usage of the plural of *almanacs: almanahe* instead of *almanahuri* and the incorrect pronunciation of "Google" ['gwa-g?l]) or the ones made by MEP Elena Basescu (also ignorant of the correct formation of plural in Romanian: *festivale, succesuri, libertarieni,* etc.) are already well-known, some of these already lexicalized in the individual speech, due to the promotion of the misfortunate terms with an insufficiently expressed irony, so that they need no more comments. The comments should be directed towards the invented terms, rarely as neologisms (the temptation of the neologism is justified, on the one hand, by the status of specialized terms acquired by an imported word, and, on the other hand, by the subjective certitude of the speaker that by using it, he will create the impression of a well-informed person, master of the information), and more often by the far-fetched use of the vocabulary; such 'upgrades' are due mainly to the so-called technocrats (the science of the political communication does not take language theory into consideration), who disguise, mandate after mandate, the dilettantism in the art of governance hiding behind the smoke screens of some terms which appear as social variants of language (sociolect, jargon, slang).

The political terminology, both in the correct and incorrect component, has been transferred and still is being transferred massively into journalism, but also into the common language, by means of precious renderings of traditional terms (*cauza sfînta, altarul libertatii, sacra constitutie, anarhie, patriotism, diplomatie,* etc.), by means of neologic variants imposed in the Romanian language by the Europeanization process, namely by foreign words *(management, mass-media, marketing, feedback, impeachment,* etc.), by means of the inclusion of terms in a certain lexical-grammatical class, by means of grim loans (*gestionarea crizelor*,

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rendering the French expression "gestion des crises", or *dezvoltare durabila,* rendering the English expression "sustainable development", not to take into consideration the famous grim *sustenabil* which, in the usage of political communication and Romanian media, does not suggest *durability,* but the impossibility to *sustain* a certain financial project).

No doubt, the political terminology already established (i.e. the terminology of political sciences), which is similar in all European languages *(hegemonie, charisma, gerontocratie, iredentism, glasnost, jihad, etatism, camarila, gherila,* etc.), no matter their linguistic origin (Ancient Greek, Latin, English, French, Russian, Spanish, Arabic or Japanese) has a double affiliation, in communication – namely use and norm – as happens in the case of the terms which only benefit of semantic mobility until becoming polysemantic *(liberalism, geopolitica, biopolitica,* etc.). When interfering with politics, journalism has created, in its turn, a terminology that is specific to the political environment *(partide verzi, portocaliii lui Basescu, functionalism, secera si ciocanul, a treia cale,* etc.); politics and media, together, have created not only an accepted political jargon *(reforma, privatizare, antamare* etc.), but also another one – more vague, more trivial in its aggressiveness –intended to substitute the satire and the humor, although it is nothing else but plain *mockery*.

Journalists, and here I refer to those in the category of Cristoiu's "bimbos" (news reporters and gossip presenters, with no literary abilities, poorly educated, but who *look pretty on screen*), involuntarily implement a *chickens-born-alive* type of subculture, that enters quotidian communication through vulgar or merely scandalous expressions, such as *ipostaza de pitipoanca*[20], *cretin si încerc sa-l decretinizez*[21], *pitigoi psihopat*[22],

[20] *"Simona Sensual si-a aratat, în direct, sfîrcul siliconat. Capatos:* ***Tu esti normala?****"* in *CLICK! VEDETE*, 29th of April, 2011.

[21] *"Simona Sensual se trage dintr-un* ***popor cretin****"*, in *Adevarul,* 05th of February, 2009.

[22] *"Dupa ce l-a facut pe Patapievici* ***pitigoi psihopat****, Patriciu sterge pe jos si cu* ***filosofeanul*** *Liiceanu"*, in *Ziaristi Online,* 20th of February, 2001.

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tîmpit si nesimtit[23]; this kind of verbal violence is also used, surprisingly, in the title of an excellent article about politics and the floods in Moldavia (from which I quote the ending): "In the other side of the country, in the North of Maramures, Elena Udrea gets off from the helicopter, dressed in a traditional costume, happy and loose like a wild peony, grown accidentally in the middle of the village pasture. The Minister came to inaugurate a future ski track, an exceptional occasion to update her personal image. It's been long since she stopped being called «the blonde from Cotroceni». Now, she is only: Elena Udrea. And it is enough. It is Romania. The local officials utter hypocrite speeches, the press takes photos of the traditional costume she's wearing and of its bearer, who insipidly smiles. «Do you see what a surprise I have made to you? It is part of the country brand!». In the river bed of the Siret River, the elders cry. They do not have a place to sleep at night and the warnings of new huge floods never cease to come."[24]

In today's Romanian press, well-defined trends already operate on a linguistic level, the "anglicisms – forms of activation of the phatic function, which, judging from their purpose, can classify in: *denotative* or *necessary*, that do not have a Romanian translation (*tennis, nylon, sandwich*) and *luxurious connotative*, words that have a Romanian translation coming with an extra explanation at a semantic level. Their use is not strictly necessary, so it occurs out of stylistic reasons (the alternation of the old term with the new one, taken from English, in order to avoid the repetition (e.g. *living-room, talk-show, week-end*)"[25].

One may also encounter an incredible violence of speech on a socio-cultural plan, *(batuti mar*[26]*, snopit în bataie* [27]*, si-a zburat*

[23] "*Cristian Boureanu l-a facut pe Sever Voinescu-Cotoi* ***tîmpit si nesimtit***" in *Bitpress*, 01st of March, 2011.

[24] *"Potop cu martafoi si paparude"*, in *Ziua veche*, 07th of July, 2010.

[25] Mihaela Morosan, "*Tendinte lingvistice în presa scrisa contemporana"*, in *Revista Româna de Jurnalism si Comunicare*, IIIrd year, n°4, 2008, p. 45.

[26] *"Batuti mar pentru ca au înjunghiat o barmanita"* and *"Trei frati batuti mar la Cumpana"* in *Telegraf*, n° 257 and 262, November 2005.

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creierii[28]*)*, the same violence of speech being registered in the political discourse, outspread in the media (*huiduit*[29], *javra ordinara*[30], *prostanacul*[31] *etc.).* From the same category of violent press and media discourse terms is the radical change of connotation of some terms *(marxism, bolsevism, comunism, capitalism, proprietate particulara, piata libera, concurenta),* having opposite persuasive reasons, but also the naturalization of some lexical and phraseological elements, specific to the oral stylistic variants, the so-called *'colorful expressions'*, so the elements in the familiar and slang language, to which I have already referred to, but which exacerbate the vulgarity until the haggling of the Romanian language through lexis and formulations, and also through attitudes.

The tendency to minimize by means of insult has created a special slang language (*spaga, spagari*, instead of *bacsis, mita, spert*, although long time ago *spa(n)ga* had the meaning of 'sword, short and thick spear'), meant to serve the opposite political interests, by a double language – the one that, to a certain limited extend, respects the theory about writing a press text and about the language that is specific to the press; in the theoreticians' opinion, this kind of language "represents a specific means of selection and assembling of the language facts, as a consequence of the rigors imposed by a situation of communication, the journalistic text being defined as any text produced to be broadcast by a mass-media channel/support (newspaper,

[27] *"Snopit în bataie de un grup de barbati"* in Ziarul de Bacau, 7th of May, 2011; *"Imagini socante. Doi oameni au snopit în bataie un bodyguard dintr-o sala de jocuri"*, Antena3.ro.

[28] *"Un politician si-a zburat creierii în direct"*, jurnal.md/ro; *"Si-a zburat creierii cu pistolul din dotare"*, Indexstiri.ro.

[29] "*Boc huiduit de oamenii PSD-ului?"*, romanialibera.ro; *"Basescu huiduit la Iasi"*, ziare.com.

[30] *"Javra ordinara si Alba ca Zapada"*, romanialibera.ro; *"Sa traiti, javra ordinara!"*, evz.ro.

[31] *"Prostanacul si Gogomanul"*, catavencu.ro; *"Prostanacu' Geaoana: Cea mai buna fapta a me"*, stareapresei.ro.

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radio program, television program)"[32], to serve the state, whose purposes and functions do not seem to have changed since Aristotle[33]. Within the double discourse, the press also promotes instinctually the state interests (of the government or of the parties in power), but also the citizens' interests ("The people always wishes the best, but does not always see it by itself. The general will is always just, and the judgment which leads is not always brighten", as the philosopher said[34], and the contemporary journalist assumes with an ostentatious arrogance the role of a philosopher, of 'luminary' of the people, even when he writes only a trivial piece of news, although he is, together with the politician, only an ideology merchant[35]).

Apparently, both political and press language, equally colloquial and tough because of the vulgarity of the words acquired by the use of invectives, injuries and slang language, recall surprisingly the slang of the young rebels who make an identity mark out of the incorrect use of grammar and out of the violent language.

Despite its degeneracy, press language is still the most alive, the most dynamic and the most versatile and open to new possibilities of self-adjustment, taking into consideration that, for the moment, press language is the precise expression of the awful deterioration of the political, social and cultural climate. The very option of the audience for this climate, the excessive appetite of the media consumers regarding the worldly, the sensational and the star notoriety, practically forces the media producers to approach and promote a certain 'social fauna'.

Romania has always suffered from an overthrow of the "ladder to the Sky", meaning the upheaval of the hierarchy of values due to general neglect, to indifference and lack of respect

[32] Luminita Rosca, *Productia textului jurnalistic*, Polirom, Iasi, 2004, p. 21, respectively p. 69 (*our tansl.*).

[33] Aristotel, *Politica*, Editura Antet, Oradea, 1996, p. 3.

[34] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Contractul social*, Editura Moldova, Iasi, 1996, p. 101 (*our tansl.*).

[35] Jean Baudouin, *Introducere în sociologia politica*, Editura Amarcord, Timisoara, 1999, p. 98.

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towards fond and form, and together with the press – which seems to have permanently lost its stylistic zest in favor of the stereotypical and shallow political language – the common speaker fails as well to communicate and to intercept the cultivated language or at least the normal forms of the linguistic politeness. As a consequence of this interlink, a *verbal hooliganism*[36] can be detected; this is nothing else but a degeneracy and a final denial of creation and, implicitly, of the symbols through which human thinking is manifested ("the creation is the work of the Verb"[37] or, in other words, "any expression, any wording, whatever it may be, is a symbol of thinking translated outwards; in this regard, language itself is nothing else but a symbolism"[38]), the father of this depreciation and linguistic infection being, surprisingly, a writer, poet and historian, Corneliu Vadim Tudor (*putoare fara rusine* – about a judge, *sef de rahat, oligofrenul D.*, etc.) and the language aggressions in his attempts of unleashing the press victims covers many report registers (*sobolani, porci, golani, derbedei, retardati, scursuri, putregaiuri*, etc.). It is obvious that verbal hooliganism has at its disposal a whole arsenal of invectives, exploited in offensive metaphors and metonymies or in puns with a lewd effect.

"It seems that Romanian genius is, by nature, boor"[39], in the conditions in which "in the secret corners of his being, every human creature longs to be the centre of existence"[40] and this is why the journalist, as well as the politician or as any user of language (writer, priest, professor, lawyer, reader, etc.) has the pride of his own *truth*, which he must impose to the others by all means.

[36] Mioara Avram, *Probleme ale exprimarii corecte*, Editura Academiei, Bucuresti, 1987, p. 22.

[37] René Guénon, *op. cit*., p.19.

[38] *Idem*, p.16 (*our transl.*).

[39] Alexandru Cistelecan, *"Iritarea la români"*, in *Bucurestiul cultural*, VI, n° 7, 2006, p.1 (*our transl.*).

[40] Lucian Blaga, *Trilogia Cosmogonica*, Minerva, Bucuresti, 1988, p.177 (*our transl.*).

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The media discourse is the expression and the exponent of a political, social and cultural reality (rarely with inverted priorities: cultural, social and political), and its epic and language represent pieces of reality, means of feeding egoisms, rancor or ludic ecstasy. Only when the society flourishes, in all its components, when the consumerism heals of the fever that bewilders it, will the press raise to the standard of that reality. In a society in which Traian Basescu has 6.100.000 references on the internet, Laura Andresan 265.000, and the couple Romulus Vulpescu[41] and Ileana Vulpescu[42] only 10.550 references, there isn't room left for hope regarding the near future of the Romanian press.

Romanians are interested in politicians, stars and violence (12.900.000 results), they buy politics, gossip and violence, and this is why press cannot allow to offer them culture and cultural reference points. In fact, just like the contemporary society, press is a business desperately seeking profitable opportunities. Press is, nevertheless, a reflection of reality with all its chronic diseases, the moral ones included.

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[42] Romanian novelist.

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