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**Forms of Pamphlet Discourse in the
Romanian Media during the Interwar Period**

Fănel Teodorăscu¹

Abstract: The interwar period is characterized by a veritable explosion of pamphlet, not only in the journalistic or literary texts, but also in the theoretical concerns. Approached by many journalists, as well as important representatives of literature, the pamphlet has undergone true theoretical debates regarding its condition. We will not allocate a very large space for the theoretical issues, as this has already been done by other authors. Our theoretical approach is required for understanding the functioning of the pamphlet.

Keywords: pamphlet; journalism; speech; blackmail; rhetoric

1. Theoretical Benchmarks

Despite the fact that it had, in various forms, an intense movement since antiquity, the pamphlet earns its fame in the West, particularly in France of the 17th century and the beginning of the 18th century, “in the philosophical and literary disputes, through the famous Blaise Pascal's *Provincial Letters*, and the Voltaire's *Epistle to Urania*” (Rotund, 2004, p. 7). The interest for theoretical categorization of the pamphlet manifests only in the 19th century. At its inception, the pamphlet was designated as *small writings*, circulating under the form of leaflets. More exactly, *the pamphlet* was a *booklet*, *brochure*, containing no less than 5 pages and no more than 48, according to some sources, or 96, according to others. *Literary terminology dictionary* states that pamphlet is characterized by verbal violence. The same source indicates that the pamphlet does not explain or demonstrate, it only accuses, and its value is given by the strength of conviction and by the passionate temperament. According to Cornel Munteanu, the pamphlet, before existing in the written literature, stated and circulated in oral and anonymous form. The adequate terms for the pamphlet for that stage of its creation are: Hand-held papering (*palme-feuillet*), booklet (*libel*), *mazarinade*, *pasquil*. This form of manifestation answered to “some advertising, commercial needs, for immediate and effective contact with the daily events of the wide public.” (Munteanu, 1999, p. 73)

Regarding the origin of the term *pamphlet*, the situation is not very clear. There are two hypotheses on this matter. In the first case, the term *pamphlet* forms as a result of the alteration of the surname of a Latin comedy XII century, *Pamphilus seu de Amore* / *Pamphilus or about love*, the transition from

¹ Senior Lecturer PhD, “Danubius” University of Galati, Faculty of Communication and International Relations. Address: Galati, 3 Galati Boulevard, 800654 Galati, Romania. Tel.: +40.372.361.102, fax: +40.372.361.290. Corresponding author: teodorascu.fanel@univ-danubius.ro.

English to French. The name of Pamphilus / pamphlet was given to strong critical writings (Nițu 1994, pp. 7-8). The second hypothesis refers to the Greek word *pamphlectos*, which consists of two parts: *pán* = everything and *phlégō* = to burn. The word thus formed, *pamphlet*, had the meaning of the “one who burns everything.” Over the years, the pamphlet has been the subject of much debate. The most vehement of them were those that focused on the extent to which the pamphlet belongs to literature or journalism, as a consequence many authors have included it to the border literature. A clarification in this regard brings Nicolae Round: “It [the pamphlet] passed from pure rhetoric and press to consolidated literary genres, which has determined the course of its destiny. In fact, there is a return to the womb, if we consider, as it is natural, it was taken to journalism from its beginnings in the literature.” (Round, 2004, pp. 7-8)

According to Cornel Munteanu, in the Romanian area, the pamphlet’s origins are found in the 19th century. In his opinion, *the premises of a satirical literature, with strong pamphlet nuances*, were set up by *the threat of introducing the Hungarian language in the curricula in Transylvania’s schools, the danger of Russian expansion, the emergence of the first germs of political parties, the Romanian media appearance etc.* Cornel Munteanu says “We may now rightly speak of the first age of our pamphleteer literature, which, paradoxically, is far from being just a literature in an experimental phase” (Munteanu, 1999, p. 54). The author places the beginning of the second age of the Romanian pamphlet *around the 20th century*: “This second age of the Romanian pamphlet requires by the press and polemics, the literary pamphlet as kind of narrative fiction, as we see it in the *rightful place writings*” (Munteanu, 1999, p. 56). Munteanu establishes also two categories of pamphleteers: the *classical* one and *the interwar*. In the first category he placed: Eminescu, Caragiale, Slavici, Macedonski, Hașdeu, Bacalbașa, and in the second one he placed Arghezi, Călinescu, Cocea, Vinea, Paul Zarifopol and Iorga.

The Romanians’ passion for nature *satirical* texts is demonstrated by a collection of *political satire*, collected and published in 1884, by C.D. Aricescu. In the mentioned work there are collected a lot of political satire, which circulated in the public, signed or anonymous, between 1840 and 1866. The need for people to write, on the one hand, and to read, on the other, the *satire* is explained by C.D. Aricescu in the *Preface*: “The lack of freedom of the press, the public awareness was obliged to manifest its opinion, clandestinely, against arbitrary acts, scandalous or vicious of public people; criticism, as a satire, quickly spread through manuscripts” (Aricescu, 1884, p. 3). Some authors argue that the most inspired pamphlet’s definitions belong to the creators of pamphlets (Mihuleac, 2009, p. 16). Unfortunately, there are few Romanian pamphleteers who were concerned about the pamphlet’s poetics (Munteanu, 1999, p. 27). Therefore we will begin with Paul Louis Courier, who was considered as being the founder of modern pamphlet in the universal literature.

In “*The pamphlet of pamphlets*” (1824), a masterpiece of the genre, Courier shows that the pamphlets are some *rags*, i.e. fifteen or sixteen pages of writings, passing from hand to hand and which tell to contemporaries about the daily facts and happenings, and the pamphleteering expression includes exposure of the opinion in a clear way, in a few words. But for a pamphlet to be useful to the world, the thought of whom writes it should be “developed, concise and clear, with evidence, documents, examples” (Courier, 1960, p. 299). This requirement is not easy to achieve. Few people have the ability to concentrate many meanings in a few words. Nevertheless, the effort to achieve such writings remains without reward. The battle of ideas waged through pamphlets has as results perfecting innovative thoughts.

A *Small treaty of pamphlet’s poetics* (Munteanu, 1999, p. 30) is given by Tudor Arghezi. He mentions in his writings some theoretical rules on the pamphlet art. We will focus on three texts: *The pamphlet*

(1916), *The pamphlet* (1925) and *The fist against stupidity* (1928). Thus the pamphlet, a *sort of freeing the pen against the grain*, is a *literary genre half actual and half eternal*. The pamphlet is a *fast and alive genre* and it represents for the art, science and compensations necessary for the social life, an invigorating work. A good pamphlet is rare, as it requires *active personal invention* of the one who makes it, which is why it was practiced only by intelligent people, such as Voltaire, Veuillot, Bloy, Maurras, Leon Daudet. In order to make a pamphlet it is not enough to present a problem widely recognized. It is well written, if it can determine the *pamphletized character* to doubt himself. The pamphlet has the role to depreciate an individual and to work in him an “immoral self-confidence.” (Arghezi, 1979, p. 132).

To become a pamphlet character, an individual “must show a vulnerable side, ridiculous by the difference between social and the real quality” (Arghezi, 1979, p. 12). The field of interest of the pamphlet is between *private business* and *political issues*. In order to achieve its goal, it “must necessarily be materialized visually and to correspond equally to the subject; it works in depth, with intuition and image. The pamphlet goes around the object with a certain raven beauty: between two circular flights, it pinches, scratches, bites, breaks. The pamphlet works with knitting needle, with wire brush, with grater or jeweler's saw; and sometimes in supreme moments with butcher's tools” (Arghezi, 1979, p. 10). Contributions to defining the *pamphlet* are brought also by Radu Gyr. In his opinion, the pamphlet is an acid writing, which assumes all the violence attributes: disfigurement of the opponent, invective, the furious vocabulary, the virulent hyperbole, etc. Gyr believes that the pamphlet can become a work of art, only if the signer fails to live up to a high level of stylistic virtuosity, to a glittering aggression, supported with verve and talent. (Gyr, 1996, p. 134)

A different outlook on *the pamphlet* is found at E. Lovinescu. According to him the pamphlet, which *howls from all sides like a raging storm, dragging all the mud, is the expression of an era and it answers to a phase of cultural evolution*. The critics divide the pamphlet into two *breeds*: one of ideas, the pamphlet of another pamphlet and words. To achieve an ideas' pamphlet, there can be used two ways: *the power of the logics and the measured word and the sentimental logic, the lava of the enthusiastic verb*. A *pamphleteer of ideas* knows only friends or enemies (Lovinescu 1982, p. 308). For writing a *words' pamphlet* does not need culture, ideas or moral sense, the talent is enough. The existence of this pamphlet breed is due to *a need to defile the beautiful*. According to Lovinescu, N. Iorga and Tudor Arghezi are representatives for the two types of pamphlet. The first is the model of the pamphleteer fighting for an ideal, and the second is the head of *literary school* promoting the words' pamphlet.

At N. Davidescu we find the idea that the pamphlet, in its essence, is superior to many literary genres and it involves a conflict between the *author's beliefs and feelings and between the outside circumstances*. Also, a pamphlet is a work of art where you can see the author's beginning of tearing down by a *major violation* a situation which is in contrast to an ideal. Regarding the artistic value of the pamphlet, in relation to other genres, the critic believes that it can be good or bad, being valued by the personal talent of the author. In other words, a discussion on the pamphlet's artistic value compared to other genres can be only achieved for each work (Lovinescu 1982, p. 173). The pamphlet is not a gentle text, but an odious one, because it represents, firstly a “denunciation” (Vinea, 1929, p. 2), as Ion Vinea shows in 1929. The same author argues that the pamphlet can be considered as “an attack with acid on the monuments, statues, busts, effigies of the forum”. The Pamphleteer's targets are always alive characters. The author of the pamphlet is “*a vitriolic of the current glory*”, as an exception it can be shown Pamfil Șeicaru, which in 1926 published in *Cuvântul/ The word* the article “*La Catafalcul Porcului/To the catafalque of the Pig*”, a text which was addressed to Alexandru

“Alecu” Constantinescu (*the Pig*). The mentioned pamphlet was published after the funeral of the former politician. According to Vinea, the pamphlet has taken roots in our country because the “Romanian language and sensitivity” are favorable for this kind.

2. Cursing

In the structure of a pamphlet, cursing occupies an important place, but the pamphleteer cannot use it at random. Cursing in the text should appear only when it is needed. For the pamphlet, the role of ratings is that of decreasing the attacked one in the eyes of the reader. According to Ion Vinea, cursing is “the hardest of the word’s arts.” For this reason, for it to be employed with “use and beauty” (Vinea, 1984, pp. 52-53), it takes a man with special qualities. Among the pamphleteers who rose *cursing* at a level of art is the terrible journalist, Pamfil Șeicaru. The linguistic inspiration and inventiveness of most of the invectives used by the famous man has led some authors to talk about a *genius in cursing* (Florescu, 1998, p. 56). According to Șeicaru, the invective must appear in phrase in a natural way “as a high note of a rebellion feeling” (Șeicaru, 2002, p. 150). It is true *that the attack to a person* occupies an important place in the structure of a pamphlet, but it must be accompanied by other arguments. Questioning the honesty, character and intelligence of the attacked one, in order to prove the falsity of the ideas that they support or represent, it is part of the usual argumentative arsenal of a pamphleteer, but the wound must contain more than the *ad hominem* argument.

Pointless swearing is appreciated, especially by the younger public, and this is not just a feature of the times in which we live. I. Agârbiceanu, more than eight decades ago, noted: “there are young readers who take in hand the newspaper only for the strong word and epithet, for the invention of insult, for trivial expression. They search for novelty, or what it was hitherto new for the printed letter. And if they find it, they read it, enjoying themselves. Often you will see one reading intensely articles clothed in violence, listening to others with joy, with pleasure painted on their face. The newspapers that replete in language with violence, the strong epithet, even trivial, are more sought.” (Agârbiceanu, 1928, p. 1018) With almost three decades before the intervention of Agârbiceanu, Basile C. Livianu said in a study on the main causes of *suicide*, that the media “is the most effective means of social education,” it cannot fulfill its mission due to the language used by most of the journalists, and it becomes “a propagator means of corruption and anarchy”. (Livianu, 1900, p. 27)

After two decades since the fall of communism, the Romanian pamphlet finds itself in a situation that does not make it honorable. In an article published in 2011, Nicolae Manolescu condemns the post-communist pamphlet productions, with their poor quality due to the lack of literary talent: “The bad news is that the pamphlet claims literary talent. If you do not know how to write accordingly, it is better not to write pamphlet at all. What I noticed at plenty of the people in love overnight of the pamphlet’s verve and color is the confusion between expressiveness and triviality. It is amazing to realize how much rudeness people are capable of, otherwise quite small minded people; a rudeness that exists not only in language, but also in ideas. It may even be said that the pamphlet has blunt their pen and mind” (Manolescu, 2011, p. 3). For Manolescu, the post-communist pamphlet is the equivalent of *an extermination war*, which places the authors of pamphlet texts to a shameful intellectual level.

3. The Polemist and the Pamphleteer

In 1940, Nicolae Roșu speaks of, in an article published in the *Universul literar/The Literary Universe*, about the difference between the polemic and the pamphlet, the polemist and pamphleteer. The text is consistent and it refers to many aspects differentiating the pamphleteer from the polemist, but also those connecting the two. For the distinction between pamphleteer and polemist to be as clear as possible, the author begins by showcasing the feature of the represented genre. So the *polemics*, which has its origins in the Greek word *polemos* (war), is a *war of ideas*, which is led, especially in literature (Roșu, 1940, p. 1). Based on this idea, the author outlines the polemicist's profile which, having a combative temperament, knows how to use the pen with the same effectiveness with which the duelist handles his sword. He is gifted with a brilliant intelligence and is a "bold promoter of the word." Moreover, the polemist cannot be controlled, as it is "a barricade soldier" who "commands himself". On the other hand, the work of a pamphleteer is "a satirical, deforming and defamatory writing". Unlike the polemicist, the pamphleteer attacks not only the ideas but also the man who represents them. Text pamphleteer's text resembles a lot with *mockery* and *caricature*. It appears, therefore, one of the elements that separate the two: "the polemist can be confined to his purpose of being impartial and not being obliged to be also a pamphleteer. A pamphleteer, by contrast, is an innate polemicist, the connection between ideas and people being very close." (Roșu, 1940, p. 1) The socio-political moments with major impact on the development of the European continent has created great polemicists and pamphleteers.

In Romania, the 19th century is characterized by an invasion of extremely violent polemical and pamphlet writings, "the best-known writers are not afraid of this temptation. The weapon was used with skill and the opponents strike relentlessly. Satire and rhymed chronicles were published" (Roșu, 1940, p. 1). According to Roșu, a pamphlet enjoys public appreciation when its actions are based on good faith. The mentioned author even gave the definition of good faith: "When he was wrong, when the accusation was not based on authentic evidence, when further development of the person has shown to be different, the good faith pamphleteer finds himself forced to reconsider his views, to rectify the style, to do an act of justice by restoring the truth. But these cases are very few." (Roșu, 1940, p. 6) Another problem which arises for the pamphleteer is the *temperament*. Regarding the differences between a *polemicist* and a *pamphleteer*, Nicolae Roșu indicates at the end of the text, that both *polemics* and *pamphlet* represent the fight of *barricade ideas* and the value of a text, polemic or pamphlet, is the existence of an idea, regardless of being praiseworthy or not, on behalf of which the author acts.

4. The Booklets

The pamphlet published as a booklet enjoyed great appreciation from the reader during the inter wars period. The pamphlet text written in the form of *booklets*, as we saw above, is not a figment of the years between the two world wars. The proof of the appreciation of these booklets is that pamphleteers wanted for their attack to have a greater effect, they would gather pamphlet texts written in a certain period, in the newspaper where they were working, against a certain character, in order to publish them as a whole, in such a work. The appearance of the book gave to the content an air of credibility. The booklets were not always signed. In many cases, the authors used pseudonyms for signature by the desire to avoid some intentions of revenge from those they attack. There were not rare the cases where those considered to be slandered in an article to call the author to a duel (Nedelescu, 1926). Nevertheless, the signed booklets added a plus to the trust chapter. Signed or not, they produced their

desired effect, more or less, placing the attack person in the doubt area. For example, we stopped on several such booklets.

The booklet *Un braconier politic: Octavian Goga/A political poacher. Octavian Goga*, which bears the signature of Zaharia Boilă, has only 32 pages; it drew our attention, beyond the name of the person concerned for the pamphlet attack, the fact that in its preface the author warns the reader that in this paper, they will not *poke* the “private life of Mr Goga”. In this way, the author of the booklet is put into contrast with the newspaper editors *Țara Noastră/Our Country*, whose director was Octavian Goga, “which, in the absence of other arguments, they are engaged in the description of the nationalist leaders and, by placing some fantastic slander, they are trying to produce favorable evidence for their political tightrope” (Boileau, 1924, p. 4). However, as a pamphlet, the text could not miss the personal attacks. Thus, Goga is sketched by the author of the booklet in the following lines: “a negative spirit, mediocre mentality of politician, destructive nature, cunning, jealous and ambitious beyond any limit, Mr Goga has not ever disavowed from the day of his entry to the political scene to this day” (Boileau, 1924, p. 8). Goga's main sin, according to the author, is that instead of being a poet and a journalist, occupations where he was very good at, he decided to ruin his reputation by entering into the politics, a domain for which he had no calling.

Another booklet is called *Domnul Pamfil Șeicaru/Mr Pamfil Șeicaru*, under the signature of Ștefan Florescu. At page 4, we find the following announcement: “The present edition was printed in fifty copies, on vellum paper, numbered from 1 to 50, not being released on the market.” Unlike the other booklet, the pamphleteer’s target is attacked on all levels. Appealing to the irony, the author ridicules the *victim’s* physique: “the seductive physique of journalist-deputy externalizes a rare soul, where courage and unselfishness are hidden, shy, behind modesty and discretion” (Florescu, 1929, p. 8). Then, the attacks are against Șeicaru’s family: “the Child Pamfil being very early precocious for the compulsory primary education, from the age of 7 years and a half he started learning the ABC primer and arithmetic. The diligent child graduates his first four primary classes under the direct supervision and authority of one of his analphabet grandmother” (Florescu, 1929, p. 9). After the grandmother, is the journalist’s father’s turn, the author of the booklet claims that he used to steal money from the treasury CFR (the Romanian Railway) where he worked as a clerk. The largest part of the booklet, which has 78 pages, is reserved, as it is natural, to the political and journalistic activities of Pamfil Șeicaru. The basic idea of the booklet is that the current director of the newspaper *Curentul/The current*, the “*gologanii/dough*” is more important than the “*virtue*”.

The booklet *Viața unui aventurier - Cine este Stelian Popescu. Cine conduce „Universul”/The life of an adventurer - Who is Stelian Popescu. Who runs the “universe”*, written probably in 1922, with 46 pages, which bears no signature, includes the summary of the campaign conducted by the unknown author, for four months, in *Aurora* newspaper, to show to the public’s opinion the true face of the Director of the most powerful Romanian newspaper during the interwar period. As shown even in the *Preface*, the author called the booklet a “*conscientious biography*”, trying perhaps to avoid the pamphlet label, which could bring a shadow of doubt over the content. As the things are not exactly so, we can see even in the following words: “Where this man has passed, he has left traces of authentic dirt. In school, he was an impertinent student; in the army, a deserter soldier; in magistracy, a sadistic judge; in the Bar, a testament buffoon; politics, simple tachist; as minister, only ridiculous; in journalism, illiterate trader, - in all hopelessly ineffective” (p. 6). The author promised to release a second booklet, but only the first will succeed in bookstores. We do not know what happened to the promise of the author.

It came into our attention also the booklet *Țigani în Biserică (Partea I-a)/Gypsies in the Church (Part I)*, signed by C. Cernăianu, published in 1928. The text covers 48 pages. The “Heroes” of the booklet are two famous journalists of that time, Nichifor Crainic and Pamfil Șeicaru, but also a high Church personality – The holy Tit Simeleu, vicar of the Holy Metropolis of Hungarian-Wallachia. We will present an excerpt from the text to show why the three deserve, according to the author, the worst possible punishments: “These are people who, as in the forest, attack, shoot and rob whoever comes along. A posse must be organized to exterminate these hijackers of the Romanian press and writing, ruffians in church and in the society. Seeing what is happening in our church life, we should give the cry of alarm: Intervene folks, gypsies in the church, for robbery, for plunder and putting on fire! The Gypsy criminals are, as you can see, some clergy, but especially *young people, the laymen*, who claim to bring back to Christianity the Romanian people and especially the *intellectual youth*. By this mask, as they come to church to pray, they were thrown by surprise and deception to robbery and murder on the church and on the holy servants” (Cernăianu, 1928, p. 48). The attack on the three personalities is, as you can easily notice, extremely violent, but it is justified by his “holy” aim - punishing those who spin “the devil’s mill” in the Church and in society. Booklets were released after the end of the Second World War, but on those pamphlet productions there is the suspicion of the interference of the political regime representatives established after 23 August 1944, which forced, using whatever means they had at hand, the annihilation of opponents.

5. The Pamphlet Today

The freedom of expression, brought by the regime generated by the political events from December 1989, has been misunderstood by some journalists, many in number, who turned the pages of the newspaper in that *bowl of slops*, which Pamfil Șeicaru was talking of. The post-communist pamphleteers have enjoyed great success from the public who just taste the *new* journalistic product. Pamphleteer productions existed also in the years of communism, but they could not be compared with the texts of the same kind, for example, from the interwar period. In general, the pamphlets were allowed by the representatives of the communist regime only when they were targeted people who were not liked by the political leaders.

Released from the reins of the communist officials, the pamphlet has found a much high leveled post-communist journalistic market, from the technical standpoint, compared to those during the interwar period. Thus the pamphlet productions could be followed by this genre’s public on TV or radio, not only in the media. Unfortunately, the technology has not been matched by the knowledge of the basic elements that must be included in the structure of a pamphlet. For this reason, the pamphlet has entered into obscurity.

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