

Political satire in Italy: a successful television genre

Rossend Domènech

- *Political satire is present in every Italian media, specially on television. The author examine in this article the most outstanding satirical scheduled programmes and analyses its evolution. He ends claiming that politics has been transferred to the television stage, instead of any Parliament, and it has also assumed the television language, even satire.*

Keywords

Political satire, television, Italy, Berlusconi, *Le Iene*, *Blob*, *Striscia la notizia*, *Parla con me*, *RaiOt*, *Che tempo che fa*, *Crozza Italia*.

There's a lot of political satire on Italian television: two daily programmes on national channels and four weekly programmes, not to mention the doses of satire dotted throughout many programmes that are not specifically satirical. During the last season (2006), there were five exclusive daily programmes and, in previous seasons, from 1994 to 2006, half a dozen appeared and disappeared. Since spring 2007, and in addition to these programmes, broadcasters have started to show new comedy and satire programmes in general that sometimes include political sketches.

At the same time there has also been a proliferation in the country of satirical cartoons in the press, and every year one or two books appear on this area. But, where the genre is most abundant is on the Internet, principally since Silvio Berlusconi entered politics (1994), when satire on the ruling classes was more difficult to carry out by means of traditional public and private instruments. This was due to relentless censorship of this category. We can therefore say that satire has become fashionable. What is not so clear is for what reason or reasons.

"The history of Italian satire is made up of great explosions, followed by great silences" wrote Adolfo Chiesa¹. But satire, at least the sharpest satire, has always been thus because it usually proliferates when it has strong adversaries who inspire it. As happened under the fascism of Benito Mussolini and, afterwards, during what was a practically immobile political system with 40 years of government by the Christian Democrats (DC). Mussolini, the DC and Berlusconi have been, or are, the three great inspirations for creators of satire.

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1 CHIESA, A. *La satira politica in Italia*. Ed. Laterza, 1990

1. The programmes

The most aggressive satirical programme this season is *Le Iene* ('Hyenas') on the channel Italia-1 (Mediaset group), for which Berlusconi is the main shareholder. The oldest, just having celebrated its 18th anniversary, is *Blob*, on RAI-3, although its paradoxical content is close to satire. The most strident is *Striscia la notizia* ('Scratch the news') on Canale-5, also owned by Mediaset, with the subtitle of "the voice of turbulence". *Glob*, on RAI-3, is defined as "the obscene person of the village". On *Che tempo che fa*, on RAI-3, the subjects are more reasoned. *Parla con me*, also on RAI-3, delivers constant irony on contemporary issues, including political.

Four of the six totally or fundamentally satirical programmes are broadcast on RAI's channel 3. It's probably a result of the history of Italian politics and its relationship with television. During the period incorrectly called the First Republic (1948-1993), which started when the DC won an absolute majority in the country and ended with the 'Clean Hands' trials that finished off the traditional parties, the three channels on public television (RAI) were distributed among the areas of influence: RAI-1, for the Christian Democrats; RAI-2, for the Socialist Party (PSI), and RAI-3, for the Communist Party (PCI). As the PCI was always in opposition, "its" television channel (RAI-3) is the one that most cultivated political satire. Studies on this genre say that satire is an instrument against those in power. "Satire must goad the powerful", says Sabina Guzzanti², author of the film *Viva Zapatero!* and behind various satirical programmes, such as the present-day *Parla con me* and the previous *RaiOt* (2004), censored and suspended after just one episode. Neither is the Italians' overall disinterest in politics in general strange³. Curiously, in the period 1996-1998 and as from 2006, when the centre-left has governed or is governing

together with the communists from the PCI of RAI-3, which are now "ex", political satire has become diluted and embraces everyday life in its entirety. By strict logic, with a now progressive government, in Italy there should be more right-wing satire, but there isn't. On the other hand, the broadening of satire to the whole of everyday life has been influenced by the Europeanisation of politics and the globalisation of the national economy. An example of this internationalisation is the turmoil started in Denmark because of the Mohammed cartoons, which then spread all over the world. An Italian minister⁴ helped to keep the fires burning by printing one of these images on a tee shirt that was shown on television, helping to inspire the creators of satire.

The actors or presenters only dress up physically as the figures they are satirising on one of the programmes already mentioned and, even in this case, it's only insinuated. Perhaps Giulio Andreotti's hump, Berlusconi's baldness or Romano Prodi's village priest air. The only exceptions are Sabina Guzzanti and her brother Corrado, who imitate the voice, tics and style of dress. With regard to swearwords and oaths, all the programmes mentioned bleep these out. Some make an exception for the word "cazzo", literally "prick", which in Italian usage is the equivalent of "shit!" or "bloody hell!" in English.

Le Iene

For Aldo Grasso, the most popular television critic in the country⁵, this programme "is the only true investigative journalism" existing in Italy, although he attributes to it "a moralising vein" that, in his opinion, gives it a negative connotation.

The writers dedicate themselves to denouncing facts of ordinary illegality or misery at the speed of lightning, documenting these with images. The current Pope is one of the frequent themes, as he is for many of the other programmes

2 Interview published in the newspaper *Il Manifesto* (09/02/2006).

3 See, among others, the analysis of the Italian electoral campaign in 2001 in *La posta in gioco*, by Paolo Mancini and other authors. Ed. Carocci, 2003.

4 Roberto Calderoli, minister for Institutional Reform for the Northern League, in Silvio Berlusconi's second government (2001-2006).

5 Collaborates regularly for the newspaper *Corriere della Sera* and has written several books and encyclopaedia on Italian television.

mentioned. One professional category often attacked by the writers is politicians, to show up their ignorance, hypocrisy or deals. They dedicated one number to showing that a third of politicians had consumed drugs in the 48 hours before being interviewed on the state budget, which was only a pretext. During the conversation, a make-up artist rubbed their foreheads with wetted cotton wool that was actually a chemical kit to detect drugs.

The writers were denounced for violating private life. Another day they surveyed the level of culture of Italian politicians as these were leaving Congress. One of them answered that Olmert⁶ was the president of Portugal; another that the current president of Venezuela was called Gómez and another explained that the "greenhouse effect" is caused by the Earth cooling. One placed Dafur⁷ in the Lebanon; another admitted that he didn't know what CONSOB was⁸ and another said that Mandela⁹ was the president of Brazil. One answered that ETA operated in Ireland and that the father of Cain and Abel was Isaac. In another programme, an accomplice approached the MPs, pretending to be a "close business friend" inviting them to "an important meeting" that same evening. More than one, and without even asking who he was (in fact, they didn't know), accepted the invitation. "It's a friend I've done a favour for," they explained afterwards to the TV cameras. This episode brought them several complaints from some MPs, who were offended by the kind of false complicity implied by the invented relationship. In another episode, to investigate what Italians were thinking about, seeing as they weren't interested in politics, they went and asked people for their opinions at a film set where they were making a hard porn movie. The actors and actresses, naked and occupied in all kinds of sexual

activities, both alone and in pairs or groups, gave their opinions with all the comic ambiguities that can be imagined. "Each person finds his own path," answered one who was masturbating; "politicians should be more inventive," said one who was doing it with three women at the same time; "citizens should be pushed more", said another who was taking a young woman from behind. "I don't know who to vote for," added a girl who also didn't know who to choose from the three who were attending to her. They dedicated another space to parliamentary turncoats, who were defined as "buffoons on loan to politics", who were asked insistently about "how much they had charged to change allegiance".

Paolo Kessissoglu, one of the programme's four writers, has explained. "We get requests for help from all over Italy and we're stopped on the street to hear complaints about anything"¹⁰.

Blob

This programme takes its name from the horror film of the same title (1958), made by Irving S. Yeaworth Jr., and has the subtitle of "Fuori strada" ('off track', or 'wrong track' and also 'it's not that') and "Di tutto di più" ('About everything and more', a well-known advertising slogan for RAI). It lasts twenty minutes and starts with a threatening blob of magma that expands from the cinema screen to the streets like a strange beast, while the audience run away, terrified. It's made via a montage of both famous and unknown fragments of films, documentaries, adverts and TV news, in order to express that, on television, everything is manipulated. The voice of Enrico Ghezzi, one of the programme's two writers¹¹, is not synchronised with the lip movements. The

6 Ehud Olmert, the Israeli prime minister.

7 Region in the south of the Sudan, in the news because of the particularly violent war being fought there.

8 The Italian equivalent of the Securities Board that supervises shares quoted on the stock exchange.

9 Nelson Mandela, former president of South Africa, who had previously been considered a terrorist and had been sentenced to life imprisonment for opposing apartheid.

10 Interview published in the *Venerdì* supplement to the newspaper *La Repubblica* (30/03/2007).

11 The other is Marco Giusti.

asynchronic effect, added to the fragmented montage, thereby attracts our attention to the content of the images. The resulting political satire is due to the paradoxical combination of the images, always related to contemporary themes and always actually broadcast.

An example: On 18/04/2007, television around the world gave air time to the demonstrations against Vladimir Putin in Saint Petersburg and the fact that, according to the Russian president, few people had taken part. The small number of demonstrators was also highlighted on Italian television channels by Silvio Berlusconi, Putin's personal friend, who was accompanying him at the Saint Petersburg festival. That evening, *Blob* placed TV news images within the montage from Italia-1 (owned by the Mediaset group, Berlusconi's TV company), with the voice of the presenter¹² as he was saying that hardly anyone had demonstrated and that nothing important had happened. Having said this, the channel connected with a special correspondent sent to the Russian city, who started to talk about the outrageous violence used by the police to suppress the demonstrations. The channel also continued broadcasting, be it knowingly or not, the sound and images from the studio, where the presenter, who didn't know he was on air, first showed his incredulity and then his anger and, later, his rage, with oaths and swearwords. "Images always seem exaggerated" he justified at the end to the viewers. In another case, after showing a montage of fragments of images about various themes, *Blob* went back that evening to the same presenter from Italia-1¹³. It was night-time, in front of a fashionable club. A passer-by said something to him, the presenter spat

in his face saying he'd been insulted, the passer-by called the police and reproached the celebrity: "you insult half Italy every day from your half abusive news programme"¹⁴. You are the little friend of Silviuccio (Berlusconi); all of you are made from the same stuff, from the same money, the same games. Aside from Viagra there is dignity! You are the embarrassment of Italian television!" The image continued to show another presenter and commentator from the Media-set group¹⁵, while he said: "On what basis can it be ruled out that the present-day world has got worse?"

Another day (10/04/2007), in the context of passing an act on common law couples and the kidnapping of an Italian journalist in Afghanistan, the series of images included: a right-wing leader painted as Julius Caesar in the middle of a lot of women, while saying "I want to marry whomever I want"; images of the leader of the government, Romano Prodi, edited in parallel to those of an ice dancer and those of Berlusconi talking about "humanitarian reasons".

Images then appear of the former president of the Republic, Francesco Cossiga, talking about God and man, while one of the writers of *Blob* imitated the politician trying to put on a pad (used for incontinence).

When celebrating its 18th anniversary, *Blob* broadcast an hour's programme in blocks, with the best montages of its history. In one of them, there was Cicciolina¹⁶, who offered to allow herself to be raped by Saddam Hussein if he would let all the hostages go free. There was also the execution of Saddam mixed with images of a disabled person in a wheelchair; a scene from the programme *Castaway* and another of the news presenter from Italia-1 wheezing. Another block

12 Emilio Fede, a self-proclaimed defender of Berlusconi, for whom he reserves affectionate words in the TV news programme. A very popular person with satirical programmes.

13 Italia-1, since it has been broadcast, should have been switched to the satellite channel because this was the ruling given by the Constitutional Court, as it considered that Mediaset (owned by Berlusconi) already occupied too many national frequencies. But, inexplicably, the ruling has never been enforced.

14 Beppe Grillo, a comedian who performs monologues in Italian theatres. His block is the most famous abroad. His work focuses on illustrating events that the public and private media have not announced, principally those related to multinationals, which are afraid of him.

15 Giuliano Ferrara, director of the newspaper *Il Foglio*, whose shareholder is Veronica Lario, Berlusconi's wife.

16 Ilona Stalher, erotic and pornographic actress famous in the seventies and eighties, who was an MP for the Radical Party.

was about Osama bin Laden: the famous images of the Taliban walking in the mountains were underscored with the music from *Heidi* ("Your nest is in the mountains / in the city you were sad [...]"), followed by images from the film *Apocalypse Now* and *Apocalypse Show*, a RAI programme that had been a disaster.

Striscia la notizia

The setting is always the same: a TV news presenter's desk, two journalists, two dancers moving their hips and who, from time to time, dance on the presenters' desk, and a puppet dressed up as some kind of animal. Every evening the programme gives real but alternative news, a kind of counter-information about things that have not appeared on the official TV news bulletins.

"Good night, citizens" started a broadcast a short time ago, before announcing that, because of the impending municipal elections, it would not deal with any political themes¹⁷. "We don't usually send politicians to hell nor do we let them do the same to us", they explained. They then repeated a series of surveys on false sickness claims, a false machine for medical diagnoses and another on the real possibility of buying drugs from chemists without a prescription when one was actually required by law.

Another evening, one of the initial headlines for the news stories they were going to talk about said, literally, "Berlusconi has been invited to the conference of the Left Democrats (DS) party and has reserved five seats... for his companions". A few days earlier, a weekly publication had published photos of the former head of government in the company of four young ladies entitled "Berlusconi's harem". Another headline informed that, according to data from the parliament, Prodi (head of the centre-left government) was the poorest politician of all. For this reason Prodi, they said, had declared that this "is the fault of the current government and, next time, I'll vote centre-right". During the last period

of "political silence" due to elections, the programme decided to dedicate two minutes to politicians from the two coalitions, using the system of asking one leader and then editing an answer out of context, selected from archive images. This day they asked Alessandra Mussolini, from the right wing, what Francesco Rutelli, leader of the progressive centre, should do with the Democratic Party he had just set up. The paradoxical answer was: "He should make it work and become trans or transsexual". After they asked Berlusconi how the right would react to the new Democratic Party: "We will lie, we will demonstrate in the streets, we will boycott everything they do. Because, what can you do when faced with intimidation, destruction of political offices and the fires we are suffering from?".

Parla con me

This programme is produced from a stage in a theatre, where there is a sofa and an orchestra. The presenter, Serena Dandini, who collaborates with Sabina Guzzanti, coordinates the appearances and the orchestra underlines the best witticisms. This programme by person behind the film *Viva Zapatero!* usually uses some Iberian elements, such as a Spanish-Italian accent, music or castanets¹⁸.

One of the episodes this year, made after a series of fatal accidents on building sites, started with a monologue. "I am in front of the window to see builders falling / my wife has another illness because she supports the left / I'm not interested in politics, I prefer fatal work accidents / the dead don't exist today in the newspapers either / they are the most beautiful deaths of the week, they are slowed-up deaths / the more that die, the more the bosses take on / the rich can travel to see the dead in the refugee boats / they can get indigestion like a hunt in the zoo / you can always find a builder that falls". Then the titles introducing the programme start immediately. Afterwards there was an interview with the author of a book on the family that, in reality,

¹⁷ An act known as *de par conditio* rules that, a few weeks before an election, the length of time depending on the kind of election, no political programmes can be made except those agreed by the parties and a parliamentary committee. These programmes must grant identical time to each party.

¹⁸ The left political base in Italy shows a lot of sympathy for the president of the Spanish government, while the progressive leaders fear him, never inviting him to any event, not even electoral, because of the problems that Spanish socialist politicians have created with the Catholic church. In Italy, the Vatican is closer than in Madrid.

was about the different types of families existing in today's society. Given this fact, the presenter underlined that politicians live "distanced from reality. Let's stop talking about politics and go on to reality", interrupted the interviewer. "Politics are twenty years behind and 30 have already passed" the other said. "Children grow up and leave but politicians always stay the same" the first answered.

A usual guest on the programme commented after the main news of the week: "The Pope has written a book about Jesus. Who does he think he is? Corrado Augias?¹⁹ We haven't voted for a year now and, after one year, we still don't understand Prodi when he talks, while there are children who, at one year old, already talk and walk". After announcing the positive fact that, since the current progressive government had been in power, taxpayers declare more profits and that has given an economic margin to the government, the personality of the day sang: "We're living in hard times, at the end of the week or the month it's difficult to find, in the words of those who represent us, anything that helps us to look to the future". Then the orchestra played a lullaby that ended by calling for the help of the "*Vaticano...e poi non ho più niente in mano*" ('and after I'm left with nothing'). On another occasion, one part of the programme was dedicated to finding out who was responsible for everything that was going wrong. They explained that, when a dentist looks at your teeth, he's concerned about "what the previous one had one" and this was also the case with mechanics, locksmiths and everyone. They continued by saying that "the new government arrives and says that the previous one has left a hole of one billion in the budget. All the country is moving forward like that, in a series of frauds carried out by those who were there before and before and before, like a 'chain of Saint Anthony'²⁰ that's tying up the whole nation, developed with errors committed by others. The true miracle is the chain itself".

Che tempo che fa

This programme was actually created to talk about the weather but, little by little, the weather concepts took on another meaning. Like those of the "weather man", the Radio Nacional de España (RNE) presenter, who during Franco's reign decided one day to read out that "*a fresh one* (wind or person) *from Galicia is spreading throughout the whole mainland*". He was sacked, while his Italian peers on this programme were given more space and now have good ratings. The programme lasts just a few minutes and has an interview like the fragment below. The national context on that day was a mini-crisis in Prodi's government, having failed to get enough votes to pass its foreign policy and having to depend on the votes of life peers: "- What has the government crisis shown us? - That political professionals are mere amateurs. Look at D'Alema. He's a relapsed Machiavellian. He had said: "And if we don't get the necessary votes, we'll all go home!" And they didn't get them! How can that be? Incredible. They're doing their utmost so that (life peer) senator Pininfarina can come to Rome from Turin in enough time to vote, but they haven't bothered to find out who he'll vote for (in effect, he voted against the government). They said they had also counted on Giulio Andreotti's vote in favour of the government (he voted against). How can it be that, in 2007, there's still someone who relies on the word of an Andreotti!"

Crozza Italia

One of the most daring programmes has been *Crozza Italia*, a name taken from the surname of Maurizio Crozza, its inventor and promoter²¹. Every day he would have a go, in addition to politicians, at the current Pope, to the point that *Avvenire*, the newspaper for bishops, dedicated an extensive article criticising him. The secretary of Benedict XVI also made a public appearance to censure it. *Crozza* ended the programme as was planned, but never again spoke of

19 A TV presenter who runs programmes on mysterious events and people and unresolved cases.

20 This is the name given, in Italy, to the chains of messages of all kinds that must go from one person to another, sometimes with serious threats for anyone who dares interrupt the chain. Lately this also takes place on the internet.

21 Broadcast on La7, a channel created as a possible third alternative to overcome the duopoly of RAI and Mediaset.

the Pope, to whom it dedicated an ending in which Benedict XVI came out of the famous window of his office and spoke via handwritten bills hanging on the window, which afterwards flew up into the air. "See you in two thousand years' time" said more or less the last of these phrases.

In another programme, the presenter interviewed the at that time conservative minister for Telecommunications²², represented by an actor dressed up. The politician answered regarding the act that he had drawn up on the new plan for the whole area of telecommunications, of particular interest for Berlusconi, who occupies a pre-eminent and conflictive position in the country that has never been resolved. Concerning the act in question, which aimed to resolve the conflict, the minister replied: "Look, I didn't write the act. In fact, I haven't read it either. Want to do me a favour? Make me a 20-page summary and write a few questions and answers for me, easy and difficult, so that, when I'm asked, I'll know how to answer. Y'know what? Write it in Spanish". Then there was a sketch about the anniversary of the election of Benedict XVI, who was getting confused with the dove of "peace" (pax), which didn't want to fly from fear of bird flu, and the "PACS" or act putting homosexual couples on a par with heterosexual couples. Then *Crozza* talked about the "candid" sexually transmitted disease... But also of the white tunic or "càndida", from which the word "candidate" comes from. The monologue continued: "I wonder, when I go to vote, is that a candidate or does he have a criminal record? It's just that, in the last parliament, there were 26 people who had been given a definitive sentence and 16 in the current parliament, one out of every ten MPs." Suddenly, we hear the melody, famous in Italy, of "*Zapatero, Zapatera / one per cent of your charisma is enough here / the people want a strong and passionate leader / Prodi grumbles like a prelude / like this song is sad / we dreamed of Che Guevara and we have a Borbón / One day I'll find a true leader for me / there should be at least one in humanity*".

Things were worse for *RaiOt* (RAI-3), by Guzzanti, than for *Crozza*: Mediaset (owned by Berlusconi) took RAI to court.

22 Maurizio Gasparri.

23 Interview included in the aforementioned book, *La satira politica in Italia*.

24 GRASSO, A. "La politica nel salone televisivo". In: *Il Mulino*, núm. 3 (2006).

The public body took fright of the compensation being demanded from it and suspended the programme after the first episode. The courts found for the writer, saying, "she did not defame but exercised the right to criticise and satirise".

In the spring of 2007 there was an explosion of satire on the TV channels. They replaced game and quiz shows. They are easygoing programmes on RAI-2, like *Piloti* and *La grande notte*; and *Glob* on RAI-3, from the sitcom genre, that include specific political references. They make jokes like "Bush and the Pope have decided to make war on gays by bombarding them with hormones", "electoral silence can be avoided by talking about elections to Second Life... but afterwards the results that count will be those, not the ones in real life".

2. Final comments

In the sixties the newspapers *La Stampa* and *Il Giorno* asked their cartoonists not to draw caricatures of politicians. For this "offence", in 1951 Carlo Manzoni and Giovannino Guareschi were sentenced to eight months in prison. But, with the fresh winds of 1968, there was an explosion of cartoons and satire that, until then, and probably due to the effects of Fascism, had been considered a genre of the right-wing. However, creators of satire continued to be considered the minstrels of the powers that be. "Present-day satire does not touch the true interests of people", lamented the writer Tullio Pericoli in 1990. In his opinion, the genre had become a "boring and repellent" stereotype²³. The country's great *viveur*, Ennio Flaiano, wrote, "with the arrival of wellbeing in Italy, the drawn caricature has died".

But television had also arrived and, many years later, when Berlusconi arrived in politics, this was transferred to television. Principally, "almost all politics is carried out on television", wrote Aldo Grasso²⁴. In the electoral campaign of 2001, Berlusconi decided to sign a famous contract with

electors in front of the cameras of *Porta a Porta*, on RAI-1, a programme by presenter Bruno Vespa. This is a programme with the participation of three to eight people who are usually politicians, journalists, actors or *soubrettes*. It's not a simple chat show. Proceedings are held there that are similar to those held in the courts and world exclusives are reserved for it, such as the death of John Paul II.

All the other channels have created a similar programme so that, in order to know what a government is doing or where it's going, you have to watch television, because it's the most direct and updated source. Parliament isn't, neither are the newspapers. Angelo Agostini has written that "politics has been transferred to television because it had no other place to develop, as all places had lost their legitimacy. The only place (to go) was television, which naturally imposed its own toll: the reality show... It's not *Vespa* that has changed politics but politics that has deliberately become *Vesperised*²⁵. Television does not have more political debates but has a lot of talk shows in which politicians take part", so that "politics is trying to take over the rhetoric of the media"²⁶. The Italian comedian, Pippo Fanco, said one day to politicians: "Up to now we have laughed at you, now make us laugh" and, according to Agostini, "politics is one of the most successful television genres"²⁷.

We can better understand the joke by Daniele Luttazzi, presenter of *Satyricon*, an old programme of scathing satire, who was forced to leave by the head of the government, Berlusconi. Referring to the programme, the president of the Congress²⁸ said: "Italy does not resemble you, Mr. Luttazzi". His answer was: "I know. Italy resembles you, Casini, that's the problem". Politics having therefore gone to television to explain itself, it has had to modernise itself in television terms, with all its consequences. This is made clear by some characteristics of the aforementioned programmes.

One of these is the fact that politics has taken to using, or has had to use television language, including that of satire. Another is that, at a time when citizens are more distanced from active politics, this has gone to find them wherever they are, thereby leading to a new popular kind of participation. A third consequence is that, due to the poor politics on offer and, moreover, whose reputation has been lost through constant scandals, television channels and the satire they produce are acquiring a replacement role: they are changing the concept of participation. Luca Bizzarri, co-writer of *Le Iene*, says that "people don't trust the state and we all end up talking about the moralising role that seems to increasingly belong to comedy programmes".

By definition, because satire "ridicules defects", politics comes out of this quite badly and only becomes important because it can be ridiculed. So it becomes banal and uninteresting. Dandini goes further: "Today there is no politics; therefore, there is no satire". Thanks to television satire, citizens can laugh at politics or take part in mocking it, but they can also get involved, especially in the case of satire on the internet. According to sociologist Sara Bentivegna, with this last form of presenting satire "the established power relations alter and central importance is returned to citizens, situated under the condition of freely exercising criticism and disseminating irreverent opinions"²⁹. But there are still a lot of questions, which can be summarised in the question asked by the writers of *Le Iene*: "Why do people call us and not the fire brigade?"

25 AGOSTINI, Angelo. "Lo spettacolo nella politica". In: *Il Mulino*, núm. 2 (2006).

26 Aldo Grasso, *op. cit.*

27 Angelo Agostini, *op. cit.*

28 Pier Ferdinando Casini, from the centrist party UDC.

29 BENTIVEGNA, S. *Campagne elettorali in rete*. Ed. Laterza, 2006.