

Aspects Concerning the Perception of the English Liberalism by the Transylvanian Romanians during the XIXth Century

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Abstract: *Constructing Gender in Romanian Proverbs.* In Romanian proverbs, the woman is evil, lazy, shrewed, weak, talkative, but she can also be beautiful, diligent, good, honest and still she is not like a man. Anyway she does, the woman stays in a man's shadow, even if she reaches the superior limits of her abilities, this will only mean the inferior limits of men's abilities, all these proverbs seem to be transmitting to us through time. They undoubtedly come from a past reality – most of them were gathered and published in collections at the end of 19th century – though it is impossible to find a period of origin. More important is the fact that they prove some valability today and this denotes a too little or no change at all regarding the attitude towards woman and her perception in society.

Keywords: gender identity, male discourse, proverbs, Modern Epoch, Romanian folklore

Rezumat: *Construirea genului în proverbele românești.* În proverbele românești, femeia este rea, leneșă, vicleană, slabă, guralivă, dar poate să fie și frumoasă, muncitoare, cuminte, cinstită. Totuși, ea nu este ca un bărbat. Orice ar face, femeia este mereu în umbra bărbatului. Chiar dacă atinge limita superioară a posibilităților sale, aceasta înseamnă de-abia atingerea limitei inferioare a capacităților masculine – ne spun toate aceste proverbe. Chiar dacă vin dintr-o realitate trecută, majoritatea fiind culese și publicate în colecții de folclor din secolul al XIX-lea, este imposibil să le datăm cu exactitate. Mai important este însă faptul că ele își dovedesc valabilitatea și astăzi, ceea ce denotă o schimbare foarte redusă în ceea ce privește atitudinea față de femeie și percepția ei în societate.

Cuvinte-cheie: identitate de gen, discurs masculin, proverbe, epoca modernă, folclor românesc

The contribution of this study implies a better understanding of the formation of the Romanian modern culture by analyzing the perception of the English liberalism by the Transylvanian Romanians during the XIXth century. The influence of the English political model on the Romanians from the Habsburg Empire, and especially on George Barițiu

(1812-1893), was analyzed by several Romanian historians¹ but today, with the discovery of new sources and thanks to the new studies dedicated to the image of England², we can more profoundly study this influence. In our research we want to analyze the perception regarding the ideology of the English liberalism and also of several liberal reforms implemented in England during the XIXth century.

The Romanians from the Habsburg Empire took a first contact with the English culture in 1685, when a religious book written by an English author was translated from Hungarian to Romanian. In the next centuries contacts between the Romanians and the English culture were settled with the help of the Habsburg authorities, which modified several philosophical and theological concepts in order to fit with the catholic faith and the enlightened absolutism³. Many important political figures of Transylvania during the XVIIIth century were interested in the English culture, like Samuel von Brukenthal (1721-1803) and Teleki Sámuel (1739-1822), who had in their great libraries 366 respectively 372 books written by English authors. The same interest can be also identified at Timotei Cipariu (1805-1887), an important scholar from Blaj, who possessed in his library 151 books written by English authors and also knew English⁴.

With the beginning of the third decade of the XIXth century, the Hungarian nobility gained a special interest in the countries of Western Europe and England, with its institutions and liberties, became the most important model for Hungarian reformers⁵ like Szechényi István (1791-

¹ We refer to the works of George Em. Marica (ed.), *Ideologia generației române de la 1848 din Transilvania*, București, Editura Politică, 1968, pp. 251-252 and Vasile Netea, *George Barițiu: viața și activitatea sa*, București, Editura Științifică, 1966, pp. 167-170.

² The main book dedicated to this subject, Dana Pantea, *Imaginea Angliei și a englezului în cultura românească din secolul al XIX-lea*, Oradea, Editura Universității din Oradea, 2011, doesn't have many information concerning the Transylvanian Romanians. A more relevant study on the image that the Transylvanian Romanians had on the English, the Scotsmen and the Irish can be consulted in Elena Andreea Trif-Boia, *Imaginea Celuilalt în cultura românească din Transilvania. Secolul al XIX-lea*, Cluj-Napoca, Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2012, pp. 138-143.

³ Carmen Maria Andraș, „Receptarea literaturii iluministe engleze de către scriitorii români (1780-1830)”, in Ioan Chiorean (ed.), *De la Umanism la Luminism*, Târgu-Mureș, Editura „Mica Doris”, 1994, pp. 143-145.

⁴ Carmen Maria Andraș, „Coridoare culturale create de cărțile engleze intrate în bibliotecile iluministe din Transilvania (sec. XVIII - prima jumătate a secolului XIX)” in *Marisia - Studii și materiale. Arheologie - Istorie*, no. XXV (1996), pp. 80-84.

⁵ Vermes Gabor, *István Tisza: The Liberal Vision and Conservative Statecraft of a Magyar Nationalist*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1985, p. 4.

1860) and Wesselényi Miklós (1796-1850). The writings of these reformers⁶ were intensely debated in that time and we have clear evidence that the teachers and pupils of Blaj read them more or less clandestine⁷. One of these readers was, according to the testimony of a former colleague, the future journalist and political leader George Barițiu⁸. We consider that the first contacts of the Romanian elites with the English liberalism came through the Hungarian elites and the Hungarian and German press, which popularized the English political model.

The Hungarian noblemen who wanted reforms, as well as their followers, admired the English liberalism with its two main political directions: the development of a parliamentary regime opposed to absolutism and individual liberties⁹. These political ideas originated in the Christian theism and in John Locke's (1632-1704) political philosophy, which brought an important contribution to the English liberalism by establishing a connection between the private property and the personal liberty, but also through his optimistic vision regarding the possibility of a free society¹⁰.

The English liberals were mentioned for the first time in 1838, in the pages of *Gazeta de Transilvania* (*The Transylvanian Gazette*), where George Barițiu named the Whigs *liberaliști* (*liberals*) opposing the conservatives (Tories)¹¹. The first Romanian political journalist of Transylvania, George Barițiu, admired England and in his writings he referred many times to the political regime of this country. *Gazeta de Transilvania*, the first political journal of the Transylvanian Romanians, had a column dedicated to the political and social events that occurred in England, where news and even speeches of the statesmen were

⁶ For several considerations regarding the works of Szechényi and Wesselényi see Ervin Pamlény (ed.), *Histoire de la Hongrie des origines à nos jours*, Budapest, Corvina, 1974, pp. 250-255 and Paul Lendvai, *Ungurii: timp de un mileniu învingători în înfrângeri*, București, Humanitas, 2013, pp. 203-218.

⁷ George Barițiu, *Părți alese din istoria Transilvaniei pe două sute de ani în urmă*, vol. I, Brașov, Inspectoratul pentru cultură al județului Brașov, 1993, p. 578.

⁸ Ștefan Pascu (ed.), *George Bariț și contemporanii săi*, vol. VI, București, Minerva, 1983, p. 308.

⁹ John Gray, *Liberalismul*, București, Du Style, 1998, p. 38.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 39. See also Basil Williams, *The Whig Supremacy (1714-1760)*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1949, pp. 3-9 and Pierre Manent, *Istoria intelectuală a liberalismului: zece lecții*, București, Humanitas, 1992, pp. 66-86.

¹¹ *Gazeta de Transilvania*, nr. 14, 11 iunie 1838. A fragment of this article was published in George Bariț, *Scrieri social-politice*, ed. Victor Chereșteșiu, Camil Mureșan, George Em. Marica, București, Editura Politică, 1962, p. 50.

published. In 1839 Barițiu published in *Foaia pentru minte, inimă și literatură* (*The Paper for the Mind, Heart and Litterature*) a very important study named *The Statistics of England*, which contained many information regarding the political regime of this country.

From the beginning of his study the author stated that England is the most important country in the world, with the best economy¹² and it should be a model for the other countries, a landmark from which *the faith of the world should take its future direction*¹³. The Englishmen are different from other people because they possess in a high degree *the spirit and the sense of freedom*¹⁴. Barițiu considers that the Englishmen are a conservative people because they kept their ancient institutions and liberties against the absolutist kings that wanted to repeal them. In his opinion, the liberty granted to the individuals and to communities in England is one of the factors that helped the country to prosper: *Two [factors] are more preeminent in determining England to be always victorious with an immense power and energy: the blessed condition of the English nobility and the large liberty given to every patriot and peasant, both individual and also to larger communities*¹⁵. The English society is not only free, but it also allows a large degree of social mobility because meritocracy is a fundamental principle and every man can rise through his talents and his efforts¹⁶.

In his analysis of the English political regime, Barițiu referred to Montesquieu (written as *Monteschiu*) and also defined the main contribution of this author to the political philosophy, the separation of powers in the state: *many people, inspired by Monteschiu, argued that the energy of the English constitution lies in a strict separation of the three powers, which are the executive, the judiciary and the legislative, still we can't consider this theory totally true*¹⁷. The objections to the full separation of powers in England refer to the connections between the Parliament, the judges and the executive, and to the fact that the king has both juridical and legislative prerogatives.

In his description of England, Barițiu defined the prerogatives of the key political actors, like the king (he always referred to a king

¹² For England's economy in the first half of the XIXth century see Frank McDonough, *Imperiul Britanic (1815-1914)*, București, All Educational, 1998, pp. 21-24.

¹³ *Foaia pentru minte, inimă și literatură*, no. 24, 11 June 1839, p. 191.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 190.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 192.

¹⁶ *Idem*, no. 25, 18 June 1839, p. 196.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 197.

although in that time England was ruled by Queen Victoria) and the Parliament. He showed that the king's prerogatives are limited by several treaties concluded with the nation during the ages¹⁸. The king of England is *above all responsibility*, which represents *one of the main pillars of the English Constitution*¹⁹. This situation was explained further because it was an unknown situation for the subjects of the Habsburg Crown: the king was by definition a defender of the law and for each illegal action that he might have committed, his advisers would be charged.

Regarding the prerogatives of the Parliament, *these are limited only by the normal helplessness, and it can do nothing against the public opinion*²⁰. The power of the public opinion is illustrated by the right of the people to assemble wherever they want²¹ and by the freedom of the press, which Barițiu considers to be *the key of the English constitution and the true shield of the rule of law*²². The individual liberty is defended by Habeas Corpus, an act which was described as a protection against the abuses from the authorities²³, and no Englishmen can be denied to do something that is not forbidden by the law. Although he doesn't give many details about this situation, the author said that in England the state is not very concerned about controlling the people's life so that *the people can solve by themselves many problems connected to the administration*²⁴.

This study also presents the main texts on which the English "constitution" is based: *Charta libertatum, Magna Charta, Petition of Rights, Habeas Corpus, Declaration of Rights* (he probably refers to the Bill of Rights of 1688), *the succession acts of 1701 și 1705, the acts of the union with Scotland (1707), the acts of the union with Ireland, the Roman Catholic Relief Act 1829, the Reform Bill of 1832 for all the three countries*²⁵.

George Barițiu didn't give many explanations about these acts in 1839 but it's clear he knew well all the elements which compose the English political regime. He expressed several times his admiration on England and its institutions and even used these knowledge in the political debates in which he was involved. On the 28th of July 1878, almost four decades after the publication of this study, an electoral

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 198.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 199.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 198.

²¹ *Ibidem*.

²² *Idem*, no. 26, 25 June 1839, p. 204.

²³ *Idem*, no. 25, 18 June 1839, p. 199.

²⁴ *Idem*, no. 26, 25 June 1839, p. 204.

²⁵ *Idem*, no. 25, 18 June 1839, p. 198.

conference started in Sibiu, presided by the vicar Nicolae Popea (1826-1908). The sixty five delegates presented at this conference debated about abandoning the passive tactic concerning the elections, but in the end they decided to continue in this way²⁶.

The delegates that supported the passive tactic were led by George Barițiu, who tried to contradict one of the arguments which had been used by the supporters of the active tactic, the success of Daniel O'Connell in the British Parliament²⁷ that proved, in their opinion, that an active parliamentary opposition is always a solution for obtaining the political rights²⁸. The famous Romanian journalist, who in 1861 was acclaimed as "a Romanian O'Connell"²⁹, answered by comparing the political regimes of Austria-Hungary and England: *before searching an O'Connell between the Transylvanian Romanians, the minority should have shown us where is the Magna Charta, where is the Habeas Corpus, those earthly cherubs of the civil and political liberty of England? Where is the unlimited right of assembly, where is the absolute freedom of the press? Where is the right to form committees and gather money from all communities of the country? Without these priceless freedoms, the fate of O'Connell in our country would be only captivity*³⁰. This speech shows us not only Barițiu's desire for a functional liberal regime in Austria-Hungary but it also proves that the author and his listeners (the sixty four delegates) were familiar with the British political life. Four decades after the detailed presentation of the political regime of England, the renowned journalist reaffirmed his admiration for the liberty of the Englishmen, which allowed a real opposition against the political authorities. The bases of that liberal regime were the Magna Charta, the act that gave birth to England's Parliament in 1215³¹, Habeas Corpus, the freedom of assembly and the freedom of the press.

In the first half of the XIXth century another important source for the Transylvanian Romanians concerning England was the well-known

²⁶ Keith Hitchins, *A Nation Affirmed: the Romanian National Movement in Transylvania (1860-1914)*, Bucharest, The Encyclopaedic Publishing House, 1999, p. 121.

²⁷ For the perception of the Irish national emancipation by the Transylvanian Romanians see Sorin Mitu, „Modelul irlandez și românii ardeleni” in Idem, *Transilvania mea: istorii, mentalități, identități*, Iași, Polirom, 2006, pp. 387-413.

²⁸ This argument can be found at one of the leaders of the activists, Ioan cavaler de Pușcariu, *Notițe despre întâmplările contemporane*, partea a II-a: *Despre pasivitatea politică a românilor și urmările ei*, edited by Nicolae Josan, București, Editura Scriptorium, 2004, p. 30 and pp. 90-91.

²⁹ Sorin Mitu, *op.cit.*, p. 410.

³⁰ *Observatoriul*, no. 58, 19/31 July 1878.

³¹ Hagen Schulze, *Stat și națiune în istoria europeană*, Iași, Polirom, 2003, p. 31.

geography book of Ioan Rus (1811-1843)³², *Icoana Pământului (The Earth's Icon)*, which was published in Blaj between 1841 and 1843. This work contained both geographical and political information because the political regime of the countries was presented and the countries themselves were classified according to their regime. Through this book, the Romanian readers would find information that helped them to place in a wider context the news which they read in the press. In the first volume, Ioan Rus classified all the countries and defined two types of monarchies: the *limited* and the *unlimited or absolute monarchies*. The *limited* monarchies are those *in which the sovereign hold the entire executive power, but shares the legislative power with the people or with a part of it*³³, and the *unlimited* ones are those *in which the sovereign has not only the right to administrate the state, but he can also legislate according to his own pleasure, without requiring the permission of the people; yet he has no right to dispose over the life, the freedoms or the people's fortune*³⁴. Great Britain³⁵, Hungary and Transylvania³⁶ were considered limited monarchies while Austria was considered an absolute one³⁷.

In his presentation of England's political regime, Ioan Rus mentioned the main acts on which this *form of administration* is based on: the Magna Charta (he dated it wrong in 1100, with several additions in 1215 and 1272), the acts of 1688, 1707 (the union with Scotland), 1800 (the union with Ireland) and 1832. According to these acts, the legislative power is in the hands of the sovereign, the aristocracy and the people, while the sovereign holds the executive power. The author also mentioned the structure of the Parliament and the composition of the two Houses: the House of the Lords and the House of Commons³⁸.

The monarch is considered the most important magistrate of the country, with prerogatives related to the external affairs (starting wars or concluding treaties) or with the granting of ecclesiastical or civil offices (Rus mentioned that not all the civil offices are granted by the king). The author also explained the limits of the royal power: *The king can do a lot of*

³² Ștefan Pascu, Iosif Pervain (ed.), *George Bariț și contemporanii săi*, vol. III, București, Minerva, 1976, pp. 349-357.

³³ Ioan Rus, *Icoana Pământului sau carte de geografie*, vol. I, edited by Florica-Elisabeta Nuțiu, Doina Elena Horhoi, Adrian Vasile Podar, Târgu Lăpuș, Galaxia Gutenberg, 2011, p. 107.

³⁴ *Ibidem*.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 130.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, vol. II, p. 24.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, vol. I, p. 130.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, vol. II, p. 132.

good but he cannot harm anybody. He cannot control the public revenues yet has an annual payment, like other members of the Royal House; he doesn't take part in trials and he must administrate the country through ministers, which must answer for their deeds³⁹. This paragraph explained very accurately the limits of the king's power and one of the most important features of the English political regime: the sovereign had no legal responsibility for his actions.

Another important author who commented the English political regime was Ion Codru Drăgușanu (1818-1884), an educator and clerk, who is also the author of *Peregrinul transilvan (The Transylvanian Pilgrim)*⁴⁰. In these fake travel memoirs⁴¹ the English and the French are considered the only important European nations. The author was very fond of France and the French⁴², but he also made a detailed presentation of the English. Regarding their political regime, the narrator wrote about a discussion he had with an English helmsman, who told him that *England is the mother of political liberty* and will use all its military capacity to defend it⁴³. Unfortunately, Ion Codru Drăgușanu didn't write a detailed description of England's political institutions, which are barely mentioned. In another of his "letters", dated in 1843, the Transylvanian pilgrim wrote that in England there is no censorship, and every important public figure could be criticized, even the queen herself. He also mentioned the two main English parties, the Tories and the Whigs, indicating that the first is an aristocratic party and the second a democratic one⁴⁴. Drăgușanu considered the English a selfish people⁴⁵ and he even accused them that, because of that selfishness, they were not capable to share with other peoples the talent of liberty⁴⁶.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 133.

⁴⁰ Ion Codru Drăgușanu, *Peregrinul transilvan*, edited by Corneliu Albu, București, Sport-Turism, 1980. For an analysis of the pilgrim's travels to England see also Dana Pantea, „The Image of England and the English in Ion Codru Drăgușanu's *Transylvanian Pilgrim*”, in *Transylvanian Review*, vol. XX, Supplement No. 3, 2011, pp. 88-94.

⁴¹ Florin Faifer, *Memorialistica de călătorie (până la 1900) între real și imaginar*, Iași, Timpul, 2006, p. 109.

⁴² Gheorge Lascu, *Imaginea Franței la românii din Transilvania până în anul 1918*, Cluj-Napoca, Casa Cărții de Știință, 2000, pp. 181-182.

⁴³ Ion Codru Drăgușanu, *op.cit.*, pp. 120-121.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 222-223.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 119.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 226.

During the XIXth century, the Transylvanian Romanians formed a very positive image about England and especially about its institutions. This image was popularized in the Romanian press, which was read by the elites, but we can find it also in the schoolbooks. The geography manual written by professor Zaharia Boiu (1834-1903)⁴⁷, the orthodox parish priest of Sibiu, for the pupils of the orthodox schools didn't describe the English political regime but affirmed that England's institutions serve as a model to other peoples⁴⁸. As George Barițiu said in his 1839 study, England was a landmark in the field of political institutions and administration. In a letter sent in 1838, Florian Aron (1805-1887), who taught history in Wallachia, said that the situation of this principality would improve only with the creation of a small nobility, *like the Whigs in England*⁴⁹.

The Transylvanian Romanians associated the English political regime with the civil liberties. We can very clearly see this fact in *Dicționarul limbii române* (*The Dictionary of the Romanian Language*) published by the Romanian Academic Society between 1871 and 1876, under the direction of August Treboniu Laurian and Ioan C. Massim. George Barițiu wrote, in the second volume of this dictionary, the definitions for the words that began with the letters L and M⁵⁰, which included the word liberty, with a secondary meaning of *civil liberty*. The last concept was defined as *those political rights that are given and guaranteed to every citizen by the country's constitution*. Two sentences illustrated that concept: *the Great Chart obtained by the English from King John is the foundation of their liberties; the Golden Bull given to the Hungarian aristocracy by King Andrew was the foundation of the liberty and of its debauchery*⁵¹. In our opinion, the vicinity of these examples is not random and its role is to reflect a contrast between Hungary and England, a country with which served as a model for the Hungarian political elites. Barițiu has an interesting point of view when he states that the Golden Bull of 1222 brought also debauchery in the Hungarian nobility, but we

⁴⁷ Mircea Păcurariu, *Dicționarul teologilor români*, București, Editura Enciclopedică, 2002, *sub voce*.

⁴⁸ Zaharia Boiu, *Elemente de geografie pentru scoalele populare române greco-orientale*, Sibiu, Editura și tiparul tipografiei arhidiecezane, 1869, p. 211.

⁴⁹ Ștefan Pascu, Iosif Pervain (ed.), *George Bariț și contemporanii săi*, vol. I, București, Minerva, 1973, p. 13.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 199.

⁵¹ August Treboniu Laurianu, Ioan C. Massim, *Dictionariulu limbii romane dupo insarcinarea data de Societatea Academica Romana*, colaboratori Josefu Hodosiu si G. Baritiu, vol. II, I-Z, Bucuresti, Noua typographia a laboratorilor romani, 1876, p. 159.

think he criticized the autonomy of the nobility, granted by this important privilege⁵².

Despite their admiration for England, the Romanian intelligentsia was aware that this society was not perfect and, on the contrary, had numerous social and political problems, like the hard living conditions of the working class and the Irish Question. Several other problems discovered, some even related to aspects which the Romanians admired. Barițiu, for example, admired greatly the freedom of the press, but he also warned Dimitrie Moldovan (1811-1889)⁵³ that the British press often manipulates the public opinion⁵⁴.

We consider that, in order to understand the Transylvanian Romanians' perception of the English liberalism, we should see how they perceived a few liberal policies implemented in England during the XIXth century. We have selected several important liberal policies that had an important role in the modernization of this country: the Great Reform Act (1832), the repeal of the Corn Law (1846), the Second and the Third Reform Act (1867 and 1884). The perception of these reforms will be presented in their chronological order.

The Great Reform Act of Great Britain led to the growth of the people that had the right to vote and new cities won the right to send deputies in the Parliament. The struggle for this important reform was initiated by the Whigs in 1831 and was voted, after a heated debate, in 7 of June 1832. The number of voters increased by 50% reaching 814000 for the British islands⁵⁵. When this reform was voted, there was no Romanian Press in the Habsburg Empire. Despite this fact, the Great Reform Act was later analyzed by the Romanians in their journals and, as we earlier showed, George Barițiu and Ioan Rus mentioned it between the acts that regulate the English administration. In his 1839 study, Barițiu wrote several considerations regarding the reform of 1832. He considered that *the greatest objective of this reform was to bring the elections back into the hands of the middle class, so that the taxes and other laws would be settled by those that had the heaviest burden*⁵⁶, and also presented its main

⁵² Pál Engel, *Regatul Sfântului Ștefan: istoria Ungariei medievale (895-1526)*, second edition, Cluj-Napoca, Mega, 2011, pp. 122-123.

⁵³ Ștefan Pascu (ed.), *George Bariț și contemporanii săi*, vol. V, București, Minerva, 1981, pp. 105-112.

⁵⁴ Simion Retegan (ed.), *George Bariț și contemporanii săi*, vol. X, București, Editura Enciclopedică, 2003, p. 218.

⁵⁵ Walter L. Arnstein, *Britain Yesterday and Today: 1830 to Present*, fifth edition, Lexington, D.C. Heath and Company, 1988, pp. 11-17.

⁵⁶ *Foaia pentru minte, inimă și literatură*, nr. 26, 25 iunie 1839, p. 202.

consequences. Ioan Rus didn't insist very much on that date and only specified that the Parliament was reformed⁵⁷.

The debates about the repeal of the Corn Laws were very heated and lasted several years. The Corn Laws were several laws voted in 1815 which banned the cereal import if there was no famine danger because of the high prices⁵⁸. These laws were criticized by free trade economists, which were influenced by Adam Smith, David Ricardo and James Mill, and also by influential business circles of London⁵⁹. An important step for the repeal of the Corn Laws was the foundation of the Anti-Corn Law League, in 1839. This league tried to convince the public opinion that these laws only favored the rich owners and were an obstacle against the cheapening of food. An important consequence of this campaign was the emergence of the Manchester School, which played an important role in the history of English liberalism⁶⁰.

Lasting for seven years, these debates were reproduced in many European journals. *Gazeta de Transilvania* mentioned in March 1839 the English debate against the *food custom laws*⁶¹ and favored the repeal of the Corn Laws. George Barițiu, the editor-in-chief of this journal, expressed his admiration for Lord Henry Brougham (1778-1868)⁶², one of the political figures that pleaded for the repeal. Even though the liberals the campaign, the repeal of the Corn Laws was implemented by the conservatives (Tories), in 1846, while Robert Peel was Prime Minister. Peel became convinced of the importance of the free trade especially during the Irish famine (1845-1846), that caused the death of over a million people⁶³.

In February 1846 an article was published in *Gazeta de Transilvania*, which informed the Romanian public about Robert Peel's plan of repealing the Corn Laws. The article supported this measure and stated that the Corn Laws only favor the rich landowners at the expense of the common people⁶⁴.

⁵⁷ Ioan Rus, *op.cit.*, vol. II, p. 132.

⁵⁸ Walter L. Arnstein, *op.cit.*, p. 37.

⁵⁹ Frank McDonough, *op.cit.*, p. 25.

⁶⁰ Guido de Ruggiero, *The History of European Liberalism*, Boston, Beacon Press, 1959, pp. 124-129.

⁶¹ *Gazeta de Transilvania*, nr. 10, 5 martie 1839, p. 37.

⁶² <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Henry-Peter-Brougham-1st-Baron-Brougham-and-Vaux> (consulted in 24.10.2016).

⁶³ Walter L. Arnstein, *op.cit.*, pp. 40-44.

⁶⁴ *Gazeta de Transilvania*, nr. 11, 4 februarie 1846, p. 43.

In May, when they announced that the repeal of the Corn Laws was voted by the House of Commons, the Romanian journalists wrote an interesting comment about this event and the British political life: *we won't hesitate to mention an event that echoes from England to all the other constitutional countries of Europe. It is a rare example to see people which, even if in their heart know that others have a wiser and more useful opinion, decide to renounce their own opinion and adopt that of the others: especially intelligence and selfishness prevent people to adopt a good idea that somebody else had. But today we can see that between the deputies of Great Britain were 106 conservatives that accepted the liberal measure proposed by the conservative minister Peel [...] This is a good example for what patriotism truly means*⁶⁵. Beyond the admiration for the conservatives that renounced at their vanities for the sake of the common good, this article also reveals us that the Romanian journalists were aware of the liberal feature of this measure, despite the fact that the conservatives initiated it. This ideological compromise for the common good was seen by *Gazeta de Transilvania* as a proof of patriotism, which they appreciated.

A few months later, the same journal reproduced a small fragment of a speech held by the bishop of Oxford, Samuel Wilberforce (1805-1873)⁶⁶, about the repeal of the Corn Laws. The fragment contained a pleading for economic competition because *only combat and training the powers can make a man happy, regardless of his social class, peasant or manufacturer*⁶⁷. Several days later, *Gazeta de Transilvania* wrote about the joy of the English when the Corn Laws were repealed⁶⁸.

During the debates on the repeal of the Corn Laws, the Romanian journalists from Transylvania supported only the repeal of these laws, because they were convinced of the benefits which that measure will bring for the poorer classes. The many news related to this debate and the appreciative portrait of Robert Peel, published in *Foaia pentru minte, inimă și literatură*⁶⁹ prove that the Transylvanian Romanians considered this debate to be very important. Another mention of these debates and especially of the Anti-Corn Law League's activity can be found in the third volume of *Enciclopedia română* (*The Romanian*

⁶⁵ Idem, nr. 42, 23 mai 1846, p. 168.

⁶⁶ <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Samuel-Wilberforce> (consulted in 24.10.2016).

⁶⁷ *Gazeta de Transilvania*, no 53, 1 July 1846, p. 212.

⁶⁸ Idem, no. 54, 4 July 1846.

⁶⁹ *Foaia pentru minte, inimă și literatură*, no. 41, 7 october 1846, pp. 323-326.

Encyclopaedia), in the article dedicated to the free trade, written by Constantin A. Ionescu (Caion)⁷⁰.

The Second Reform Act of 1867 led to the growth of the electorate from 1,359,000 men to 2,455,000⁷¹. The Romanian press of the Habsburg Empire didn't analyze this reform when it was adopted, but only wrote several news about the desire to extend the suffrage⁷². These omissions could be explained in those days by the important changes that were taking place in the Habsburg Empire, which culminated with the installation of the dualist regime, so the Romanian journalists mainly focused on these internal events. On the other hand, we can see that the Romanian press doesn't publish as many news related to foreign countries as it did in the first half of the XIXth century. Usually, the country to which they often refer is Romania. This might be another reason why important political events, like the Education Act of 1870⁷³, were not mentioned at all in the Romanian press, with the exception of a small note in *Federațiunea*⁷⁴. In 1882 *Observatoriul*, a journal from Sibiu, discussed the English election law and presented a project of Prime Minister William Gladstone against the electoral frauds, which contained severe penalties not only for the corrupt candidates, but also for the constituencies, because they would temporarily lose the right to send deputies⁷⁵. This article mentioned again the conditions due to which liberalism flourished in England: *the personal freedom (Habeas Corpus), the freedom of meeting and assembling, the freedom of the press and the security of each home*⁷⁶ and compared this to the situation of Austria-Hungary, where these freedoms are not respected although the Hungarian political elites often declare their admiration for the English political regime.

After the Third Reform Act of 1884 the number of voters increased from 3,150,000 to 5,700,000, so that the majority of adult men

⁷⁰ Corneliu Diaconovich (ed.), *Enciclopedia română*, vol. III (Kemet-Zygmotic), Sibiu, Editura și tipăriul lui W. Krafft, 1904, p. 97. About Constantin A. Ionescu see Lucian Nastasă, „Cazul Ionescu-Caion: câteva precizări aparent nesemnificative” <http://www.baabel.ro/disputandum/283-lucian-nastasa-cazul-ionescu-caion-cateva-precizari-aparent-nesemnificative> (consulted in 24.10.2016).

⁷¹ Walter L. Arnstein, *op.cit.*, p. 118.

⁷² *Gazeta de Transilvania*, no. 16, 26 February/10 March 1867 and no. 55, 16/28 July 1867. Other important Romanian journals of the Habsburg Empire, like *Albina* or *Telegraful român*, didn't write anything about this reform.

⁷³ For information about this law see Walter L. Arnstein, *op.cit.*, p. 122.

⁷⁴ *Federațiunea*, no. 13, 8/ 20 February 1870, p. 47.

⁷⁵ *Observatoriul*, no. 38, 15/27 May 1882, p. 149.

⁷⁶ *Ibidem*.

could vote, except those who didn't have any permanent address⁷⁷. This reform was slightly discussed in the Romanian press of the Habsburg Empire, major journals like *Gazeta Transilvaniei* and *Telegraful român* (The Romanian Telegraph) didn't mention this event at all, only *Tribuna* (The tribune) wrote a short presentation of this event and spoke of the joy of the English liberals⁷⁸.

In order to better understand the perception of the English liberalism, we will now analyze the way in which the Transylvanian Romanians perceived the most important English liberal of that time, William Ewart Gladstone (1809-1898), who was the Prime Minister of Great Britain between 1868-1874, 1880-1885, 1886, 1892-1894⁷⁹. We will now present the opinions of the Transylvanian Romanians on Gladstone's personality and on his political activity.

The Romanians appreciated Gladstone's personality and political activity, considering him *the greatest English statesman of the XIXth century*⁸⁰. The Romanian press published touching articles shortly after his death, in 1898. The journal *Biserica și Școala* (Church and school) spoke about the importance of religion in his life and considered that his religiosity made him such an important statesman⁸¹. Another journal, *Tribuna poporului* (The People's Tribune) presented him as a *great and universal man*⁸², with a noble heart, one of the most honest statesmen, who always fought against oppression⁸³. William Gladstone was also evoked in *Telegraful român*, who's editors named him *the generous defendant of the oppressed*⁸⁴ and in *Foaia poporului* (The People's Paper), where he was praised for his love for truth, justice and freedom⁸⁵. A detailed biography was published in *Tribuna poporului* several days after

⁷⁷ Walter L. Arnstein, *op.cit.*, p. 147.

⁷⁸ *Tribuna*, no. 185, 1/13 December 1884, p. 737. Unfortunately we didn't have any access to the journal *Observatoriul* for the year 1884 to check if this reform was discussed there..

⁷⁹ <https://www.britannica.com/biography/William-Ewart-Gladstone> (consulted in 26. 10. 2016).

⁸⁰ Corneliu Diaconovich, *op.cit.*, vol. II (Copepode-Keman), 1900, p. 562. The article was written by I. I. Nacian, who taught political economy in Bucharest.

⁸¹ *Biserica și Școala*, no. 19, 10/22 May 1898, p. 250.

⁸² *Tribuna poporului*, no. 89, 12/24 May 1898, p. 433.

⁸³ *Ibidem*, p. 434.

⁸⁴ *Telegraful român*, nr. 51, 9/21 mai 1898, p. 203.

⁸⁵ *Foaia poporului*, nr. 21, 17/29 mai 1888, p. 244.

his death⁸⁶. In that text, but also in the preceding article from *Foiaa poporului*, we can find references to the sympathy which Gladstone had for the Romanians, from both Romania and the Habsburg Empire⁸⁷.

The Transylvanian Romanians associated William Gladstone with one of the most important political issues of Great Britain in the XIXth century, the Irish Question. In the second half of this century the Romanian press resembled many times the situation of the Romanians in the Habsburg Empire with the situation of the Irish in the British Empire⁸⁸. Gladstone was very concerned about the improvement of this situation and proposed a series of reforms. His most important actions regarding the Irish Question were the two attempts of Home Rule in 1886 and 1893, which were not voted by the Parliament⁸⁹. An important article about the English and the Irish, compared to the Hungarians and Romanians was published in 1893 in *Unirea (The Union)*. Related to Aurel C. Popovici's conviction of 1893 because of a manifesto⁹⁰, the article was a warning for the Hungarians to pay attention to the damaged relationship between the English and the Irish and to imitate the first in trying to improve the lives of their national minorities. The author was optimistic that the Romanians' situation will improve because of a historical law which he saw applied in England: *a few years ago the English were persecuting the Irish stronger. Their relationship began to be pretty tensed. And now, a few days ago, the English Parliament received Mr. Gladstone's Home Rule project, which gives autonomy to Ireland. Things must happen in the same way for us. History has its laws that always apply. The paroxysm of the Hungarian chauvinism proves that the end is getting closer. And the greater are the persecutions, the closer is the end*⁹¹.

During the XIXth century, from a political point of view, England was a model for the Transylvanian Romanians. As we showed before, the Romanian elites understood the ideological basis of the English political regime (the importance of civil liberties and decentralization)

⁸⁶ *Tribuna poporului*, no. 93, 17/29 May 1898, pp. 454-455. A small biography was published in 1909 in *Tribuna*, to mark a century since his birth (*Tribuna*, nr. 275, 17/30 decembrie 1909, p. 6)

⁸⁷ About Gladstone's relationship with the Romanians see George Moroianu, *Legăturile noastre cu Anglia*, Cluj, Tipografia Națională S.A., 1923, pp. 17-20.

⁸⁸ *Federațiunea*, no. 13, 8/ 20 February 1870, p. 47, *Observatoriul*, no. 34, 1/13 May 1882, p. 133.

⁸⁹ Walter L. Arnstein, *op.cit.*, pp. 154-163.

⁹⁰ Magyari András, Thomas Nögler, Ioan-Aurel Pop (eds.), *Istoria Transilvaniei*, vol. III, Cluj-Napoca, Academia Română. Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 2008, p. 439.

⁹¹ *Unirea*, no. 36, 9 September 1893, p. 290.

and knew the main legal acts on which the regime was relying. We can say that the English political life was, at least for the first part of the XIXth century, a real political school for the Romanians that lived under an absolutist regime, in the Habsburg Empire. The Romanian elites read and popularized information about England because they knew, as Barițiu said in 1839, that it is the most important country in the world and they must be informed about it. Over the century, this country remained a landmark in the political culture of the Transylvanian Romanians, who never ceased to compare their country and their situation with the most representative place for a liberal regime.

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