

Dora D'Istria and the Springtime of the Peoples in South-Eastern European Nations

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ABSTRACT Following the revolutions of 1848, Romania, as most of the countries of South Eastern Europe, succeeded, by diplomatic or even by violent means, in forming a separate nation state. This chapter examines the determining role Dora d'Istria's writings played in the movement to have Balkan people recognised as nationals. In spite of her importance, Dora d'Istria remains almost unknown in Romania because she never wrote in Romanian. Dora d'Istria's fellow countrymen could only have had access to her writings via an 1876 translation of some of her works.

WHILE WELL RECOGNIZED IN HER OWN TIME,¹ despite the prejudices against her gender (from which she was not exempt),² Dora d'Istria is now little known. In spite of the effort to assign women writers and scholars a different place from that which was infamously assigned by Molière's comedy, *Les Femmes savantes*, Dora d'Istria deserves to have her work considered in a

¹ See, for example, what Swedish author Frederika Bremer wrote on her: "La nouvelle Corinne" in her book *La vie dans le vieux monde* (quoted in Romanian translation in *Operile domnei Dora d'Istria*, trans. Gregorie G. Peretz, t.I, București, Typographia Curții: 1876: 364-368), or Mario Ruffini: "spirito universale lottante per gli ideali di liberta del suo tempo, rispettata nel mondo intellettuale della seonda metà del secolo scorso como lo era stata in precedenza George Sand", Mario Ruffini, "Il golfo della Spezia nella descrizione di una principessa romena" in *Il Comune della Spezia*, anno XII, 1934, n. 4: 3-4.

² Even her most well-known biographer, B. Cecchetti, whom she herself had picked as the writer to introduce her to Romanian readership, begins his presentation (see "Despre viața și operile principesei Dora d'Istria", *Operile domnei Dora d'Istria*, Gregorie G. Peretz(tr.) , Bucuresci, Eforiei Spitalelo, 1876-1877, vol. I: 3-6), by overtly declaring that a woman's place is at home with her family, and only after having completed all her motherly and wifely duties should she think of her „social life”. As for the exceptional case of Dora d'Istria, the key-phrase that he uses to justify her lifestyle is: "for her marriage had been neither happy, nor fertile" (*ibid.*, 14).

new light. Through her writings, she became involved in the movement to have Balkan people recognised as nationals. Following the revolutions of 1848, a period usually known as the ‘Spring of Nations’, most of the people of South Eastern Europe succeeded, by diplomatic or even by violent means, in forming separate nation states. It is high time Dora d’Istria’s voice was examined as playing a determining role in this process.

Dora d’Istria, born Princess Elena (or Ileana)³ Ghica (1828, Bucharest – 1888, Florence), was a Romanian writer who often wrote in French. She had been exiled, along with her family, arriving in Potsdam in 1848, eventually returning to Moldavia in 1849, where she married the Russian prince Alexandr Koltsov Massalski, and lived in Russia until 1855. After they separated, she went first to Switzerland, and then to Italy, where she lived for five years in Turin, Genoa, and, finally, Florence, where she died. Through her truly remarkable literary contribution, she helped inform the readership of her time in the most accurate and complete manner she could of the national identity issues of South Eastern European people (Romanians, Greeks, Albanians, Serbs, Bulgarians and Turks). Her writings, frequently published in *Revue des deux mondes* or *Il Diritto*, as well as in individual volumes – the best known of these being *Des femmes en Orient* (1859) and *Des femmes par une femme* (1869) – translated and annotated in several European languages⁴

³ According to a Greek source: *Hai Ionioi Nēsoi hypo tēn despoteian tēs Henetias kai tēn Anglikēn prostasian: kai hē en autais Hellēnikē poiēsis (Hē Hellēnikē poiēsis en tais Ioniois Nēsois ... (La poésie grecque dans les Îles-Ioniennes ..., griech./neugriech.) meta perilēpseōs tinos tēs archaias autōn historias (Hai Ionioi Nēsoi pro tēs Anglikēs prostasias. (Aus d. Ms. übers.), hypo tēs Komēsoēs Doras d'Istrias (Countess Dora d'Istria, d.i. Ileana Ghica; d. i. Elena Kol'cova Massalskaja, metaphrasthenta ek tu Galliku hypo M.K. Rhallē [M.K. Rallēs], ekd. hypo Th. Thermogiannē kai D[ēmētriu] Eirēnidu, M.K. Rallēs (tr.); Th. Thermogiannēs, Athènes: 1859; Peri tōn en tē Anatolē gynaikō: syngamma, Athènes, Chrēstou Douka: 1861.*

⁴ *Des femmes en Orient*, Zürich: Meyer & Zeller Year, 1859, and *Des femmes par une femme*, Paris: Librairie internationale / A. Lacroix, 1869. For an essential bibliography (extremely vast even in her lifetime), see Katharina M. Wilson (ed.), *An encyclopedia of continental women writers*, vol. I. A-K, New York-London: Garland Publishing, 1991: 465; Helena Verdel and Traude Kogoj (eds). *Die hundert bedeutendsten Frauen europäischen Ostens*, Klagenfurt: Wieser Verlag, 2003: 105-108; Francisca De Haan, Krassimira Daskalova and Anna Loutfi, *A Biographical Dictionary of Women's Movements and Feminisms. Central, Eastern, and South Eastern Europe*, Budapest & New York, Central European University Press: 2006; Antonio d'Alessandri, *Il pensiero e l'opera di Dora d'Istria fra Oriente Europeo e Italia*, Roma: Gangemi, 2007. See the excellent website, [www.ghyka.com/Divers/Dora d'Istria/Dora](http://www.ghyka.com/Divers/Dora_d'Istria/Dora)

(such as Albanian, English, Greek, Italian, Romanian and Turkish), some of which appeared during her lifetime, and others after her death, contributed to a better dissemination and understanding of these peoples' history in the West. The folk poetry of these people (which was sparsely studied at the time) was also further disseminated, being regarded by Dora d'Istria as an exclusive testimony of their strong ethnic spirit and historical path.

The long road that European civilisation travelled towards the consolidation of national identities into nation states is manifested in the centrifugal movement which defined the end of the *Ancien Régime* in Europe. These transformations mainly targeted the Habsburg Monarchy and the Ottoman Empire, but the balance of European powers demanded that the majority of great nations in the Old Continent take an explicit stance, on one side or the other of the very real fight on the barricades, among the peoples concerned with every moment of this long process of dissolution of the vast imperial administrative systems.⁵

Even though politics belonged, as always, more to the cabinets of ministers and summit meetings rather than to newspaper columns and book pages, one must not overlook the weight of public opinion regarding the leaders' political choices. In this sense, we now consider the efforts of those romantic quills,⁶ male or female, who, through their writings, stirred up sympathy within their readers, subsequently exerting pressure on political decisions, as worthy of attention. Starting in the late 18th century, Romanticism had devised a complex system of depicting the concept of personal, as well as collective identities, which, at the level of nationality, found its best and most authentic representation in folk poetry, as an

d'Istria.htm and all the information about her reception in <http://www.womenwriters.nl>.

⁵ On this matter, I checked the following sources: Charles and Barbara Jelavich, *The formation of the national Balkan states*, Washington: University of Washington Press, 1977; Georgios Prevelakis, *Les Balkans. Cultures et géopolitique*, Paris: Ed. Nathan, 1994; Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997; Stevan K. Pavlowitch, *A History of The Balkans*, London: Addison Wesley Longman Limited, 1999; Mark Mazower, *The Balkans. From the End of Byzantium to the Present Day*, London: Phoenix Press, 2002; Gheorghe Zbucea, *Românii și Balcanii în epoca modernă*, Craiova: Ed. Scrisul Românesc, 2003. None of these works mentions Dora d'Istria, but her views and her information are most often confirmed.

⁶ For instance, the translation of Romanian folk poetry, *Les Doinas – poésies moldaves*, J. E. Voïnesco (tr.), Paris: de Soye et Bouchet, 1853.

exclusive means of expressing a person's soul. In Herder's view,⁷ for instance, writers must find their inspiration in the language and culture of their people. The entire world of letters, and most notably poets, regrouped themselves into casual folklorists and ethnologists, enthusiasm sometimes eclipsing their competence, making room for actual collections of folk songs and local traditions that would establish the foundations of a new branch of discipline with a bright future: ethnology, ethnography and folklore.⁸

The approach which Dora d'Istria chose for her series of articles concerning the Balkan people, and their reflections in folk poetry, published in *Revue des Deux Mondes*,⁹ falls perfectly under the discourse in favour of the national rights of these peoples. To each article, she adds a subtitle which specifies the name of the collection of folk poetry she relies on for her demonstration. Looking to promote these people favourably, she begins her articles each time with a short history destined to acquaint the Western reader with the specific issue of each group of people in the region, then moving on to a selective and personal presentation of the material she makes use of, on which she comments in her own manner:

Had this rebirth of Romanian poetry not been preceded by the really original trials of unknown poets who maintained in the soul of the multitudes a very keen feeling of nationality and the legitimate hope of seeing it overcome all kinds of obstacles that paralysed its awakening? [...] Deeply convinced that the race to which he belongs is inferior to no other, that he is even superior to the neighbouring Austrian, Russian and Turkish peoples, through his illustrious origins and highly ancient civilization, the peasant proudly answered whoever talked to him about the coming enslavement of his country: 'I fear not, because I am Romanian'. Even beyond the Danube [...] when one of

⁷ *Une autre philosophie de l'histoire pour contribuer à l'éducation de l'humanité*, Max Rouché (tr.), Paris: Aubier/Montaigne, 1943.

⁸ On the connection between Dora d'Istria and the emergence of these disciplines in the second half of the 19th century, see: Liviu Bordas, "Etnologia ed orientalistica romantica nei nuovi stati Italia e Romania. Angelo de Gubernatis, Dora d'Istria e gli studiosi romeni nella seconda metà dell'Ottocento", in *AION. Annali dell'Università degli Studi di Napoli "L'Orientale"*, Napoli, 65, nr. 1-4, 2005 : 103-119.

⁹ "La nationalité roumaine d'après les chants populaires" in 1859, "La nationalité serbe d'après les chants populaires" in 1865, "La nationalité albanaise d'après les chants populaires" in 1866, "La nationalité hellénique d'après les chants populaires", in 1867 – although preceded by "La poésie grecque dans les Iles-Ioniennes" en 1858 "La nationalité bulgare d'après les chants populaires" in 1868.

these rough shepherds meets a Vlach, without hesitation he gives him the beautiful name of *frate* (brother), which has remained so Latin, that its mere pronunciation is a protest in favour of Romanian nationality.¹⁰

She thus summarises or quotes from translations of popular ballads which praise the exploits of national heroes, whether they be princes like Marko Kraleovich, the Serbian *cneaz* Lazar, Stephen the Great of Romania, or much loved brigands, such as the Wallachian *haiducs* and the Greek *klepts*, to whom the popular imagination attributed the role of defenders of the people. Of course, given the purpose she had in mind, one should expect syntheses, rather than original research or personal contributions. She does indeed record real events and local traditions in her travel writings, which are studded with charming descriptions of folk tales, ballads and lore, later put to good use in her most famous books, such as *Les Femmes en Orient* or *La vie monastique dans l'église orientale*.¹¹ Her only endeavours in historical research are leafing through the pages of archives and chronicles, mainly concerned with glorifying her family's past, in the published outcomes of which she introduces herself as Romanian, Greek or Albanian, depending on her momentary needs.¹² Yet, the comments which accompany this exhibit a

¹⁰ "La Nationalité roumaine d'après les chants populaires" in *Revue des deux mondes*, 15 mars 1859 : 430; sub-title: *Ballades de la Roumanie*, in t. 1: 1852, and t. 2: 1853. *Les Doïnas*, the Moldavian poems of Vasile Alecsandri, translated from the Romanian by J.-E. Voïnesco, Paris: Imprimerie de De Soye et Bouchet, 1853. The second edition (Paris: Cherbuliez, 1855) mentions *three* translators, Vasile Alecsandri, J.-E. Voïnesco and Georges Bell.

¹¹ *La vie monastique dans l'église orientale*, Paris/Geneva: Cherbuliez, 1855; Paris: Cherbuliez, 1858.

¹² *Gli Albanesi in Rumenia, storia dei principi Ghica nei secoli XVII, XVIII e XIX su documenti inediti degli archivii di Venezia Vienna, Parigi, Berlino, Constantinopoli, etc.*, Francese di B. Cecchetti (tr.), Firenze, Tipografia editrice dell'associazione: 1873 (partially taken from *Rivista europea*, 1871-1873). This book was to cause a scandal within her family, as they had considered themselves Romanians for many centuries (her uncle had been elected *Romanian* reigning prince of Wallachia in 1821), or, at least, Greeks (in the 18th century, the Ottomans had accepted the Ghica, as Phanariot princes of the Romanian Principalities, that is to say as members of the Greek community of Constantinople). As for their 'Albanian' origins, they had considered themselves as belonging to the Aromanians of Albania (also known as Vlachs), which explained their perfect integration among Romanians after only one generation, according to 17th century sources. Moreover, Dora d'Istria herself speaks warmly of these ambassadors of the Roman East, whom she calls "the great, powerful

genuine talent for writing which outshines the overflow of rich and varied information, which is not always sufficiently understood and often expressed in a foreign language (most notably in French). Historian Nicolae Iorga, the greatest and most famous Romanian historian (1871-1940), noted that:

It is true that writing in languages other than her native tongue, *ban* Mihail Ghica's daughter could not have had the profound vibration of a true writer's words in the entirety of her vast oeuvre [...] But it is astonishing to see the amount of knowledge this exceptional woman's mind has gathered and how effortlessly she could bring it to the front every time there was a battle to fight. For she was a preacher of militant credo. Anticlerical liberalism found a tireless defender in her. And so did the nations' right to live. Has this theory of hers sprung out of love, as shown by her histories, presentations and romantic formulations, for the nation from which, not forgetting the distant Albanians, she drew her origins? Or did this genuine love, although poorly disclosed, or, at least, rarely acknowledged, lead her to general her considerations concerning the sufferings of nations and their legitimate aspirations? We believe the latter to be true. Therefore, a belated feeling of heartfelt gratitude goes to Elena Ghica, a descendant of Romanian princes.¹³

At her death, one of her many Italian admirers wrote that “[there was] never another person in the whole of Europe to represent them [the Balkan nation, its Principalities and populations] more brilliantly than this woman of noble descent”¹⁴.

The first articles she dedicated to the Romanian cause are dated 1856-1859, a time of diplomatic conflict concerning the unification of Romanian Principalities. The collection of *Romanian Ballads* (Iași, 1856-1859), compiled by the poet Vasile Alecsandri and published in Paris in 1855, served as an opportunity and basis for Dora d'Istria's study *La nationalité roumaine*, in which she resumes her endorsement of romantic theories

Romanian-Greek tribe of the high valleys of Albania”, in “La nationalité hellénique”: 595.

¹³ Nicolae Iorga, “Prefață”, in Magda Nicolaescu Ioan, *Dora d'Istria*, Cartea Românească: București, 1932: 7-8.

¹⁴ Enrico Pazacchi, “Dora d'Istria” in *Nuova Antologia*, vol XVIII, 1888: 772.

regarding the meaningful link between the rebirth of a nation and the (re)connection to its folklore:

Wasn't the rebirth of Romanian poetry preceded by truly original essays written by unknown poets who preserved in the hearts of so many a burning national sentiment and a legitimate hope of seeing it triumph over obstacles of all kind currently paralyzing its awakening? The *Hellenes'* great national revolution of 1821 was salvaged only by the crowd's generously stubborn devotion; In *Servia*, the intrepid shepherds who had risen along Karageorge were careful not to approve of the perilous concessions to which their leaders had given in. National poetry had therefore stirred, to some extent, a noble impulse. Were the Romanians less happy than the Greeks and the Serbs? [...] Among Romanians, at the worst of times in their history, the vigorous mountaineers of the Carpathians sang the glory of Mircea, of the Hunyads, of Stephen the Great, of Michael the Brave. Deeply convinced that the race to which he belonged is no way inferior to any other, him being actually superior to the neighbouring peoples, the Austrians, the Russians, the Turks, by illustrating his origins and the high antiquity of his civilization, the peasant would proudly reply to those speaking of the imminent enslaving of his country: 'I have no fear, for I am Romanian'. [...] Even beyond the Danube [...] whenever one of these fierce pastors meets a Wallachian, without hesitation, he beautifully calls him *frate* (brother), a noun which has stayed so Latin that its very pronunciation makes up an argument in favour of Romanian national identity.¹⁵

The symmetry of the titles in this series clearly suggests that her interest revolves around the people from this part of Europe. As such, "La nationalité serbe d'après les chants populaires"¹⁶ was inspired, particularly, by Vuk Stephanovitch Katadijitch's successful *National Poems*. It has already been noted that the Serbs were an object of concern for her, as an inherent part of Balkan reality, where folklore often played the role of a collective consciousness: "If the Serbs have been hardly able to preserve by means of methodical procedures the memories of their great figures, they have nevertheless found within their poetic genius a faultless way of

¹⁵ "La nationalité roumaine d'après les chants populaires" in *Revue des deux mondes*, March 15, 1859: 430.

¹⁶ "La nationalité serbe d'après les chants populaires" in *Revue des deux mondes*, 15 janvier 1865: 315-360.

immortalising, along with the names of their heroes, the stories, the struggles and the sorrows of their race.”¹⁷

As for the Bulgarians, to whom she also dedicates a study, she notes that:

Bulgarian national poems are so foreign to Western Europe, that we can only hope that a study on the matter will be met be greeted by chance in a time in which deal so frequently with the aspirations of the Bulgarian people. We felt it was better to interview naïve poets who represent the people’s very core, rather than to lend it ideas and feelings which are more often than not unfamiliar to its spirit. This study, which will not prove useless to those concerned with the still very little known literary history of the East, will also be of interest to politicians.¹⁸

Here, however, her efforts are still far from being appreciated by scholars. To this day, there is very little reference in Bulgarian literature to Dora d’Istria. Could it be that readers might have disapproved of her displaying little confidence in the future of their political struggle? This is certainly what she suggests on the subject:

Revolts are not the main means of regaining a contested independence. Getting rid of the language imposed by the conquest, and the foreign manners, reawakening national intelligence numbed by centuries of ignorance, recovering the sound thought of one’s ancestors, calling the attention, by generous efforts, of all those who have mind of their own to be part of the general movement of ideas and the liberal aspirations of elevated souls. [...] admitting by all means that there are no other motives other than the independence, happiness and freedom of one’s country, these are the better non-violent means of reclaiming a lost place in a civilized world.¹⁹

¹⁷ Admittedly, Serbian experts are not convinced by Dora d’Istria’s efforts in approaching their historical and cultural realities. Thus, Zivomir Mladenović, considers the opinions expressed in this article either compilations, or mere fabrications. See “Dora d’Istrija i srpska narodna poezija” in *Zbornik Matice Srpske za knizevnost i jezik*, Beograd, vol. XLVII, n. 2-3, 1999: 201-220.

¹⁸ “La nationalité bulgare d’après les chants populaires” in *Revue des deux mondes*, July 15, 1868: 319.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

Lastly, and in order to remain faithful to Dora d'Istria's reasoning, the Turks must also be included among the people of this region who interested her, being full members of the Balkan world, and having brought a rich cultural heritage which fruitfully coexisted with other cultures in the region. She writes detailed, well-regarded studies of Ottoman poetry.²⁰

Certainly, the same could be said of Greece, even though they had, at this point, already succeeded in creating their own nation state.²¹ After having taken a stance in her articles *La poésie grecque dans les Îles-Ioniennes* and *Les Îles-Ioniennes sous la domination de Venise et sous le protectorat britannique*²², militating for the restitution of the seven islands to Greece, Dora d'Istria, resumed the cause of her dear Greece in 1867 with "La nationalité hellénique d'après les chants populaires", written on the occasion of the Cretan revolt (August 1866). This time, the object of her comments was Claude Fauriel's remarkable work, *Chants populaires de la Grèce moderne*, which, having been published in 1824, two years after the massacres on Chios Island and the defeat of the first Greek uprising against the Ottoman Empire, was nothing less than a manifesto for this nation's right to independence.²³ In her comments, Dora d'Istria expresses her ideas freely, but not without some bitterness:

²⁰ "La poésie populaire des Turcs orientaux" in *Revue des deux mondes*, 1 feb. 1873: 513-583.

²¹ Nothing could be found in the literature suggesting that her pen name, "d'Istria", was inspired not only by the former name of the Danube (Istros), as it is generally believed, but also by the name of the first leader of the modern state of Greece, Ioannis Antonios Kapodistrias, Giovanni Cappelletti in Italian, assassinated in 1831.

²² These articles were very favourably received in Greece and also translated: *Hai ionioi nēsoi hypo tēn despoteian tēs Enetias kai tēn anglikēn prostasian, kai hē en autais hellēnikē poiēsis*, tr. M.K. Rallēs; Aristotelēs Valaōritēs, Athènes: Typographeion D. Eirēnikon, 1859; *Hai Ionioi Nēsoi hypo tēn despoteian tēs Henetias kai tēn Anglikēn prostasian: kai hē en autais Hellēnikē poiēsis (Hē Hellēnikē poiēsis en tais Ioniois Nēsois ... (La poésie grecque dans les Îles-Ioniennes ..., griech./neugriech.) meta perilēpseōs tinos tēs archaias autōn historias (Hai Ionioi Nēsoi pro tēs Anglikēs prostasias hypo tēs Komēsoēs Doras d'Istrias (Countess Dora d'Istria, d.i. Ileana Ghica; d. i. Elena Kol'cova Massalskaja), metaphrasthenta ek tu Galliku hypo M.K. Rhallē, ekd. hypo Th. Thermogiannēs kai D[ēmētriu] Eirēnidu, M.K Rallēs (tr.), Athènes: Th. Thermogiannēs, 1859; additionally, she collaborated extensively with the Greek press at the time, publishing especially for *L'Espérance* paper in Athens.*

²³ Anne-Marie Thiesse, *La création des identités nationales: Europe XVIIIe-XXe siècle*, Paris: Seuil, 1999: 61-67.

Through this study, and by resorting to several new publications, I would like to outline an idea, if not entirely new, at least more complete, of this people, the Greeks, throughout the long trials which have changed them. Their bold life, their beliefs, their moors, all these are reflected in their songs; therefore let us examine successively, in this order, this vast *romancero*.²⁴

The oldest Greek folk songs date back to a time when the Turks were threatening the Byzantine Empire [...] My understanding of a Greek muse is that of a folk muse. The upper classes, in fact, endured the insults of the Turks quite patiently and did not resent helping them lay down without too many impediments, their domination over Europe.²⁵

Here she also refers to Turkish domination of Romanian territories in the 18th century, made possible with the help of the Greek ‘princes’ of the Phanar quarter (amongst whom were some of Dora d’Istria’s ancestors), and the oppressors’ invaluable allies. It is true, however, that the cooperation of the Ghica family with the Turks had met a bloody end. The last member of the family to reign as a Phanariot prince was assassinated by a Turkish emissary, late in September 1777, for having protested too vocally against the Austrian occupation in northern Moldavia. The sultan had offered Mary-Therese the territory as a reward for the support she had given the Ottoman Empire during the Russo-Turkish war of 1769-1774. Dora d’Istria would always proudly remember this episode, where a member of her family had sacrificed himself for the Romanian people (an episode which was rewarded with the election of her paternal uncle as reigning prince of Moldavia): “Ah! I said to myself, if a vivacious patriot, if Grigore III Ghica, if the indomitable prince of Moldavia, or Grigore IV the Restorer Ghica would then reign in Bucharest, Michael the Brave’s crown would not have served as a toy for diplomats and degenerate despots from Stamboul!”²⁶

She also focused on the Albanians and the richness of their folk poetry in the very same spirit, and by consulting a rich bibliography in Italian, French and German, as well as quoting from works in Albanian. With undeniable warmth, she states that:

²⁴ “La nationalité hellénique d’après les chants populaires”, in *Revue des deux mondes*, August 1, 1867: 588.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 589.

²⁶ *Des femmes par une femme*: 53.

Albania's past, as it reveals itself to us through its folk songs, touches upon present issues more than we would think, and moreover, it always makes an interesting spectacle to follow a small people through the trials of being conquered and exiled without ever losing the qualities which make up their powerful national spirit. [...] Their zealous way of preserving national traditions, their eagerness to inquire about Western scientific progress, their desire to get the civilized nations interested in their Eastern world make a powerful contribution to the awakening of their nation.²⁷

Dora d'Istria's history of connections to the Albanian people cannot, however, be summarized so neatly. Even though she took joy in writing the first letter in *Des Femmes par une femme* as a first-person account of an Albanian woman from Parga, this does not make her that particular woman. As far as she is concerned, she was born in Bucharest, as shown by her official papers, and often declared herself Romanian, in her writings. If she had gone to look for a different ethnic identity, her mother's Greek origin would have been closer to her than that of her distant ancestors, who had left Albania more than two centuries before. Indeed, despite the past and present efforts of a few scholars,²⁸ Dora d'Istria remains almost unknown in Romania. The cause is simple: having never written in Romanian, her fellow

²⁷ "La nationalité albanaise d'après les chants populaires" in *Revue des deux mondes*, May 15 1866: 382.

²⁸ See Radu Ionescu, "Doamna Dora d'Istria" in *Revista română*, vol. I, 1861: 427-448, 783-806 and vol. II, 1862: 17-44; Cezar Bolliac, "Doamna Dora d'Istria" in *Trompeta Carpaților*, 22 July and 26 August 1873: 2; Vasile Gr. Pop, *Conspect asupra literaturii române*, București: Editura Eminescu, 1876, vol. 2: 147-148; Claudia D.C. Zaharia, *Dora d'Istria. Viața și opera sa*, Bistrița, s.n., 1932; Magda Nicolaescu Ioan, *Dora d'Istria*, București: Cartea Românească, 1932; Nicolae Iorga, "Lettres de Dora d'Istria" in *Revue historique du sud-est européen*, Paris – Bucarest, IX, no. 4-6, April-June 1932: 153; Petre Ciureanu, "Dora d'Istria" in *Revue des Études Roumaines*, n. 2, 1954: 169-192; n. 3-4, 1957: 82-110; Adrian Fochi (ed.), *Bibliografia generală a etnografiei și folclorului românesc, I (1800-1891)*, București: EPL, 1968: 11 entries (3, 92, 152, 216, 823, 824, 3637, 6073, 6707, 6977, 7048); Iordan Datcu, "Dora d'Istria și unitatea românilor" in *Memoriile secției de filologie*, seria IV, tom X, 1988: 91-96; Cristia Maksutovici and Georgeta Penelea-Filitti, *Dora d'Istria*, București: Criterion, 2004; *Dicționarul general al literaturii române*, București: Ed. Univers Enciclopedic, 2004: 719-721; Liviu Bordas, "O insulă exotice a culturii române: Dora d'Istria" in *Revista de istorie și teorie literară*, n.1-4, IV, 2010: 317-328.

countrymen could only have had access to her writings via an 1876 translation of some of her works. Dora d'Istria's works in the original can only be found in major libraries. In response to Charles I's act of moral compensation,²⁹ she offered a very generous gift and donated part of her fortune to the city of Bucharest. It seems, also, that a school was named after her. If there are testimonies assuring us that for a while it had been known as "Dora d'Istria" School, this name is now long lost.³⁰

²⁹ Reigning Prince Charles I of Romania offers her a BENE MERENTI gold medal (*Monitorul Oficial*, 4-16 May 1876).

³⁰ It still appears with its old name (later changed to *Școala Silvestru*) in several articles, published on the Internet on September 30, 2009. See: <http://foaienationala.ro/tag/cotul-donului>.

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