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***(EX) SLAVE IDENTITIES SHAPED BY JOURNEYS ABROAD:  
AFRICAN-AMERICAN FREDERICK DOUGLASS  
IN HIS AUTOBIOGRAPHIES AND  
ROMANIAN RROMA SLAVE DINCĂ IN GHEORGHE SION'S  
EMANCIPAREA ȚIGANILOR***

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**Abstract:** *The paper proposes a comparison between two important 19<sup>th</sup> century figures of the abolitionist movements, one in America and the other in Romania, whose personalities and identities were shaped by a journey to England and to France, respectively. Frederick Douglass, arguably the most famous slave of his time, who ran away and successfully escaped slavery, wrote three autobiographies, and became both an accomplished orator and an anti-slavery activist in the U.S. This paper will deal with his first two autobiographies, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave. Written by Himself<sup>1</sup> (1845) and My Bondage and My Freedom<sup>1</sup>(1855). The first was written before his visit to England, while the second was composed after his visit. His final work, Life and Times of Frederick Douglass: the Complete Autobiography (1892) lies beyond the scope of this essay. Dincă, a Rroma<sup>2</sup> slave said to have contributed to the abolitionist movement in Romania, is the subject not of his own autobiography but of one written by Gheorghe Sion, a Moldavian writer. The first part of my paper will analyze how the two slaves perceived themselves before their trips to England and France respectively, two European abolitionist countries. The second part deals with what happened to each of them in Europe, and after that, in their home countries.*

“Instead of a democratic government, I am under a monarchical government. Instead of the bright, blue sky of America, I am covered with the soft, grey fog of the Emerald Isle. I breathe and lo! the chattel becomes a man.” (Douglass *My Bondage* 374)

“...căci el, deprins acum a frecvența mai cu plăcere muzeele, școlile și bulevardele, se simțea prea puțin dispus a se condamna la atmosfera unei bucătării [...] “De rămâneai acolo, cucoana nu te putea reclama și rămâneai liber” “Aș fi făcut-o, căci simt și știu ce este dulceața libertății”. (Sion, *Emanciparea* 159)

This essay compares the stories of two slaves, an Afro-American and a Rroma; one described by himself in an autobiography and one described by an outside Romanian observer. The usefulness of this project lies in the similarities in these works: both Frederick Douglass and Dincă began as slaves in the countries of their births; both were of mixed races; both went to a foreign abolitionist country and there they were made to perceive themselves as free and equal to the whites. The method used for this comparison emulates that of Michael Bennett's in his 2005 book *Democratic Discourses: The Radical*

<sup>1</sup> This title will further appear as *My Bondage*

<sup>2</sup> I use the word “Rroma” in the title and in my comments, because it is the way this community calls itself today. I use the word “Gypsy” for the characters and fragments in the story, because this is how they were called by Romanians at the time of writing.

*Abolitionist Movement and Antebellum American Literature*. His approach has been praised by Australia Tarver: “Bennett’s use of the critical pairings of such writers as Frances Watkins (Harper) and Walt Whitman, can also be viewed as “texts” in the sense that both writers are critiqued as textual bodies advocating democracy” (Tarver 202), in this case, advocating abolitionism.

Since identity and self-concept offer keys to Douglass’ intellectual and political, and Dincă’s intellectual development, it is useful to discuss the first important step in constructing both characters’ identity: their parentage. Frederick Douglass’ *Narrative* was written after running away from the States, and after having been both befriended by the white abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, whose newspaper, *The Liberator*, he read religiously, and recognized as an effective lecturer of abolitionism for white audiences. This is known as the “Garrisonian phase” of Douglass’ life. In fact, Garrison wrote the “Preface” of Douglass’s first autobiography. In this book, Douglass introduced himself by means of his heritage. He writes:

My mother was named Harriet Bailey. She was the daughter of Isaac and Betsey Bailey, both colored and quite dark. My mother was of a darker complexion than either my grandmother or my grandfather. My father was a white man. He was admitted to be such by all I ever heard speak of my parentage. The opinion was also whispered that my master was my father; but of the correctness of this opinion I know nothing; the means of knowing was withheld from me (*Narrative 2*).

Douglass uses the facts of white paternity, his personal experience and the common knowledge of exploitation of black women by white men to undermine the scriptural argument preached in Southern States as the religious justification for slavery: the curse of Ham.

If the lineal descendants of Ham are alone to be scripturally enslaved, it is certain that slavery at the South must soon become unscriptural; for thousands are ushered into the world, annually, who, like myself, owe their existence to white fathers, and those fathers, most frequently, their own masters (*Narrative 4*).

These two fragments suggest that in this “Garrisonian phase” Douglass believed he had a white father. The reason for this might have been, as Waldo E. Martin Jr says in his book *The Mind of Frederick Douglass*, his “ambivalence toward whites in general, and white paternal figures such as William Lloyd Garrison, his major abolitionist mentor, in particular” (Martin 4). This changed in his second autobiography, ten years later. This time the Preface was written by his friend Dr. James M’Cune Smith, who declared himself to be black and “the son of a self-emancipated bond-woman” (*My Bondage* 124). The book was dedicated to “Honorable Gerrit Smith”, a leading United States social reformer, abolitionist, politician and philanthropist from the Rochester organization, in opposition to the Garrisonians, in esteem “for his character, admiration for his genius and benevolence, affection for his person, and gratitude for his friendship.” (*My Bondage* 104) Here both his mother and his grandmother had a full chapter which included wonderful childhood memories and great descriptions of each character. This time we have a black grandmother “held in high esteem” (*My Bondage* 140), “good nurse, capital hand at making nets for catching herring” (*My Bondage* 140), the best in the “preservation of seedling sweet potatoes” (*My Bondage* 140), the whole world to little Douglass. While his mother, we find out now, was the “only one of all the slaves and colored people in Tuckahoe who enjoyed the advantage of reading”, the consequence in this book being that:

I fondly and proudly ascribe to her an earnest love of knowledge. I am quite willing, and even happy, to attribute any love of letters I possess, and for which I have got – despite of prejudices – only too much credit – NOT to my admitted Anglo-Saxon paternity, but to the native genius of my sable, unprotected, and uncultivated MOTHER – a woman who belonged to a race whose mental endowments it is, at present, fashionable to hold in disparagement and contempt (*My Bondage* 156).

These passages demanded a new look at the previous emphasis on the white father. A few lines later, the father is completely dismissed:

My mother died without leaving me a single intimation of who my father was. There was a whisper that my master was my father; yet it was only a whisper, and I cannot say that I ever gave it credence. Indeed, I now have reason to think he was not (*My Bondage* 156).

When talking about his way of perceiving his parentage, and as such, his identity, we should also keep in mind an episode from the year 1848, described by the same Waldo E. Martin Jr. It occurred immediately after his return from England and during his activity at his first newspaper called *The North Star* (1847-1851). This involved a letter sent by M'Cune Smith to Gerrit Smith, saying that “only since his (Douglass’) editorial career has he seen [*sic*] to become a colored man” (Martin 58). To this Smith answered:

I have read his paper very carefully and find phase after phase develop itself as regularly as in one newly born among us. The Church question, the school question, separate institutions, are questions that he enters upon and argues about as our weary but active young men thought about and argued about years ago, when we had Literary Societies (Martin 58).

Waldo E. Martin Jr. first comments that Smith implied that “Douglass’s thought and activity” proved his “heightening race consciousness” and his “becoming more comfortable with the black half of his mulatto identity” (Martin 58), and later he notices this difference in the two autobiographies in terms of Douglass’s “lost white patrimony”. For Martin Jr, the second autobiography tried to obscure it and enhance “his black identity at the crucial juncture where he was fast becoming the representative Negro American and the preeminent race leader” (Martin 100).

Having described Douglass’ life from around the year 1848 until 1855, when *My Bondage* was written, I will now consider what was happening around the same period to the Romanian character, the Roma slave Dincă. The Romanian author Gheorghe Sion began his story with Dincă’s mother, Maria, a Roma slave who, like Douglass’ mother and grandmother, was the best in everything she did, in addition to being “a true Gypsy beauty”. She was the best in housework, hairdressing, tailoring, washing, sewing and ironing. The author dedicated at least four whole pages in a story of forty-seven to describe all her qualities. Douglass devoted almost the same number of pages to the description of his mother and grandmother’s. The only piece of information we have about Maria’s parents is that they were both Gypsies, as Douglass’ grandparents were both black, and her father was a shoemaker and her mother a washerwoman. Another similarity between Douglass and Dincă’s parentage revolves around the father figure: the former was descended from a white American master, and the latter from a Romanian boyar. However, the difference here is that the Romanian author had only good words to say about Logofăt Dumitrachi Cantacuzin called Pașcanu, a man of “beautiful feelings, right and kind”, “honest”, a proof of “true patriotism” (Sion 133), who had distinguished himself by “the generosity with which he was helping the poor” (Sion 133), even if aware of his power over his slaves. Another difference is that, seeing Maria breast feeding their little baby, Pașcanu wrote her a “letter of forgiveness”<sup>3</sup> that we are shown in the first pages of the story, when Maria is allowed to marry a Romanian man.

Another difference between Maria and Harriet is that the former could not read, whereas both Dincă and Douglass knew how to read. However, a second important point of similarity regarding these characters’ identities is that both used language well: Standard English even cultivated English in the case of Douglass, and Standard Romanian in the case of Maria and Dincă. In his article “Dialect and Identity in Harriet Jacob’s Autobiography and Other Slave Narratives”, Albert Tricomi notes:

Among the relatively few works that boast the subtitle “Written by Himself” – one finds those by Frederick Douglass (in his *Narrative of the Life*), William Wells Brown (in 1848), Henry Bibb and

<sup>3</sup> “letter of forgiveness” = “carte de iertare” = scrisoare/hârtie de eliberare

William Grimmes. A striking pattern emerges: these are first-person autobiographies, composed throughout in Standard English (Tricomi 620).

Analyzing Douglass's autobiographies in terms of language, Tricomi observes that a runaway slave's interest was to show "one's educational attainments" (Tricomi 620), in order to contradict a prejudice by whites that slaves have a "very low" status. And he sees such works in opposition to what he calls "pseudo-slave narratives", naming those written by white abolitionists, such as Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom* or Mattie Griffith's 1856 *Autobiography of a Female Slave*. Here the white authors chose black dialect characterized as one linguist puts it "mainly by "vulgarisms and colloquialisms", plus the truncation of syllables, plus eye dialect" (Tricomi 622), whose function is not to "transcribe the way words actually spoken but solely denotes the ignorance or the low class of the speaker." (Tricomi 623) As Tricomi further shows, the skin color made the difference in the white author's way of constructing his/her characters, so that, for instance, Stowe's Eliza, the "dazzling quadroon" (Tricomi 623), had "grace of character" (Tricomi 623) and spoke Standard English. Its ideological function is, according to this article, to "permit the narrator to address the reader" (Tricomi 624), and to "ally the narrator's heroine with the higher class of whites" (Tricomi 264).

The same reasons that encouraged white abolitionists to choose Standard speech for their favorite mulatto characters seem to have led former slaves Harriet Jacobs and Frederick Douglass to write their own works also in Standard English. As Tricomi explains, the reason for this is that it "was the accepted mode", because "it lent authority to her testimony", because "she was a literate woman who had risen above her circumstances", because "her brother John was an anti-slavery lecturer and her own children were all literate", and we are told, she was writing "even private correspondence in Standard English". In all these circumstances Tricomi sees a "statement of identity" (Tricomi 629) that Douglass also made.

Now, what about Maria and her son, Dincă. Here we have the Romanian abolitionist white writer, making a statement about his characters, real figures of 19<sup>th</sup> century Moldavia. Unlike other pieces of literature featuring Roma slaves speaking, or, unlike Roma characters even in today's media, the two Roma speak only Standard Romanian, like that of any non-Roma characters in stories from this same period. This may have been an attempt to prove to Romanian audiences of that time that Roma were intelligent people, like themselves, and deserved their freedom. Unfortunately, unlike Douglass's case, we don't have, up to this moment, historical documents to prove the impact Sion's story had upon the public. The first piece of information comes from Mihaela Mudure in her article "From the Gypsies to the African-Americans"; we are told, "there were singular voices, such as the Romanian writer Gheorghe Sion, for instance, who talked about the necessity of offering vocational education to the manumitted Gypsy....." (Mudure 62) Speaking about the use of Standard English or Romanian as a proof of a good character and of education, in the cases of Douglass and Dincă, I will now pass to the third section of the identity issue: observations on their education.

And here we have one point that is the same in both Douglass' autobiographies, regarding his life until New Bedford, and this is his life in Baltimore where his good mistress Sophie Auld dearly and willingly taught him the first letters of the alphabet, so that he could start reading the Bible, until her husband forbade her to do this, not to spoil the slave. The only difference is that this chapter from his life is much more developed in *My Bondage*. Here, he both reported anti-slavery thoughts like "Why am I a slave? Why are some people slaves and others masters? Was there ever a time when this was not so? How did the relation commence?" (*My Bondage* 178) prior to his life in Baltimore, that is, back in childhood, and expressed these ten-year-old boy's thoughts in a manner that makes one wonder how could any child think in such ways and words. A possible answer may be given by William M. Ramsey, in his article "Frederick Douglass, Southerner". This author sees Douglass as "the kind of person who must ask questions" (Ramsey 27) and who was led by "his sufferings, originally narcissistic and I-focused" to "developing literacy and then, in an outward turn, to an ideological deciphering of the Southern social order" (Ramsey 27). And, analyzing his way of speaking and writing:

He continues in an oratorical mode learned much later than his teens – after his mastering of dramatic

irony, alliteration, metaphor, sentence balance, antithesis, and the high style of diction. Houston Baker is right to claim that this appropriation of discourse removes the black autobiographer from an authentic voice of the slave quarters. However, Douglass's self-presentation acts as a rhetorical assault on his audiences. This moment was comparable to a chimney sweep breaking into German heroic opera which is to say it carried a subtle shock. Aggressively, Douglass has appropriated a literate voice that Americans socially either denied or did not expect of him, going beyond the simple rendition of facts that his abolitionist mentors asked (Ramsey 28).

Other ideas from this chapter that are common in both autobiographies are the powerful abolitionist influence of *The Columbian Orator* and *Webster's Spelling Book* that taught him how to write. Three crucial influences that are mentioned only in *My Bondage* are his meeting of Hanson, a white Methodist minister, "who thought that all men, great and small, bond and free, were sinners in the sight of God" (*My Bondage* 231); Charles Johnson, "a good colored man" who "told me to pray, and what to pray for"; and, finally and most importantly, "a good old colored man, named Lawson" (*My Bondage* 232), who predicted him he had a great mission in the world.

"The good Lord," he said, "would bring it to pass in his own good time," and he knew he must go on reading and studying the scriptures. "*Trust in the Lord.*" When I told him that "I was a slave, and a slave FOR LIFE," he said, "the Lord can make you free, my dear. All things are possible with him, only *have faith in God.*" "Ask, and it shall be given." "If you want liberty," said the good old man, "ask the Lord for it, *in faith, AND HE WILL GIVE IT TO YOU*" (*My Bondage* 233).

In the case of Dincă, Sion's first concern was to show that, through education, a Gypsy child, or, in this case, half Gypsy, half Romanian, could behave like any Romanian child. Such a child did not exhibit the bad features that characterized the stereotypical figure of an uneducated, full Gypsy child and slave:

(Lady Profirița) always gave him something good to eat, she watched his clothes and his cleanliness; then she recommended every day the best principles for upbringing to his intelligent mother, principles that she rigorously observed; so that Dincă did not know what pilfering, or lying or any other bad habits were; so common otherwise in Gypsy habits and education ( Sion 148) (*my translation*).

Now that he separated this child from the other Gypsies, Sion proceeded to education proper, on the one hand following the pattern of a regular Romanian (especially boyar's) child, but, on the other hand, still keeping his condition of a Gypsy slave. And, like his mother, Dincă was able to learn everything and be the best. While Sophie Auld stopped teaching Douglass at her husband's advice, Lady Profirița offered the best education to her little slave.

The quicker Dincă was growing, the more handsome and the lovelier he was becoming, and the more Lady Profirița's sympathy towards him developed. When he was ten years old, he was able to read. The candle light from the poor Sfântu Nicolae's church, was paid for by this Lady in order to give him lessons: the boy, good and applied, could soon pretty well read any book, any letter, he could even write pretty well for his age.

Dincă was also yeught to be a servant. From the age of twelve, putting on his livery, he was assigned, at the Lady's orders, different domestic services (Sion 149.) (*my translation*).

The complete separation from the other Gypsy slaves came when he was sixteen; at that point he was dressed like a boyar, and educated like one, so that he was taken by certain ladies in Iași for a boyar.

When Dincă was alone for a walk or went by coach to the Copou, people took him for an elegant little boyar. The second and third class ladies were trying to discover his name and wanted to be introduced to him. And who knows how many noble ladies the happy slave of Pașcanu might have conquered (Sion 149) (*my translation*).

So, one great difference between the two slaves would be the way in which they received their education. While Douglass was mostly self-taught and wrote three autobiographies and created his own voice and point of view, Dincă was, or became, a character in a work by a Romanian abolitionist writer who portrayed him as a happy slave whose education was received through the benevolence of his mistress Profirița. The one similarity, however, is that, they were both mulatto slaves who were able to read and write from their teens, a point both writers found very important to mention when constructing their characters' identities.

A second great difference between the two slaves was Douglass's need to become a man through his famous fight and triumph over Covey, the Negro-breaker, an episode with many details in both of his autobiographies discussed in this paper, while Dincă had no need to do so, at least not at this stage of his life. The last step for Douglass before running away from Baltimore was to learn a trade, something which Dincă learned only when in France -, calking that is, a trade that he later tried to use in New Bedford, but without success, due to the color prejudice there. What he did not confess in the *Narrative*, but fully developed in *My Bondage* was the Garrisonians' refusal to let him speak his own mind; he only repeated the same story in his lectures, over and over again. What we find in this second book is the consequence of having written the first one, and the reason for having written it. Not being able to always obey Garrison's rules, Douglass often sounded much too wise and educated for white people wishing to listen to a true slave. Therefore, he had to write it down by himself, in order to give data, facts, names and places. Of course, even if protected by the Garrisonians, he was now threatened with the possibility of being recaptured by his former masters, because of the success of his *Narrative* in U.S. and abroad. The only solution they saw was to send him to England:

The writing of my pamphlet in the spring of 1845, endangered my liberty, and led me to seek a refuge from republican slavery in monarchical England. A rude, uncultivated fugitive slave was driven, by stern necessity, to that country to which young American gentlemen go to increase their stock of knowledge, to seek pleasure, to have their rough, democratic manners softened by contact with English aristocratic refinement (*My Bondage* 370).

The fact that up to that moment Douglass was still thinking of himself as a slave, an unimportant creature, was first suggested at the end of the *Narrative*, when he was first asked to speak to a white audience. Although speaking, made him, apparently, feel free, we should keep in mind that, at this stage of his life, Douglass was still legally a slave:

I felt myself a slave, and the idea of speaking to white people weighed me down. I spoke but a few moments, when I felt a degree of freedom, and said what I desired with considerable ease. From that time until now, I have been engaged in pleading the cause of my brethren – with what success and with what devotion, I leave those acquainted with my labors to decide (*Narrative* 111).

While aboard the British vessel Cambria:

American prejudice against color triumphed over British liberality and civilization, and erected a color test and condition for crossing the sea in the cabin of a British vessel. The insult was heavily felt by my white friends, but to me it was common, expected, and therefore, a thing of no great consequence, whether I went in the cabin or in the steerage (*My Bondage* 371).

This leads us to the second part of the paper, where we see what happened to Douglass in England and to Dincă in France, and the results of the trips for both future lives in America and Moldavia.

In a letter to Garrison, Douglass chose to publish in *My Bondage*, as a best way to describe his feelings at that time, we see him first rejecting America as his country, or his belonging to any nation whatsoever:

As to nation, I belong to none. I have no protection at home, or resting place abroad. The land of my birth welcomes me to her shore only as a slave, and spurns with contempt the idea of treating me

differently; so that I am an outcast from the society of my childhood, and an outlaw in the land of my birth (*My Bondage* 372).

Next, we see him actually declaring himself a new man: “I have spent some of the happiest moments of my life since landing in this country, I seem to have undergone a transformation, I live a new life!” (*My Bondage* 374) And what did this new, happy life, look like:

Instead of a democratic government, I am under a monarchical government. Instead of the bright, blue sky of America, I am covered with the soft, grey fog, of the Emerald Isle. I breathe, and lo! the chattel becomes a man! I gaze around in vain for one who will question my equal humanity, claim me as his slave, or offer me an insult. I employ a cab – I am seated beside white people – I reach the hotel – I enter the same door – I am shown into the same parlor – I dine at the same table – and no one is offended. [...] I meet nothing to remind me of my complexion. [...] When I go to church, I am met by no upturned nose and scornful lip to tell me: “*We don’t allow niggers in here*”. [...] People here know nothing of the republican Negro hate prevalent in our glorious land. They measure and esteem men according to their moral and intellectual worth, and not according to the color of their skin (*My Bondage* 374).

In Dincă’s case, we have seen that he began by being educated by his mistress both in reading and writing, and also in housework. The next important moment for him, the crucial one, was when Lady Profirița decided to go to Paris and took him with her. There, the first thing she did was to sell her trip equipment to an Englishman, including her other Gypsy slave, the coachman. The Englishman very reluctantly bought him, since he was against slavery. Then, after having employed this Gypsy to teach another coachman, the Englishmen “sent him, on his expense, through Marsilia to Galați, with a long letter of forgiveness and some pounds (sterling) for a tip” (Sion 151). (*my translation*).

A very interesting point Sion makes here is about his sources of information regarding Dincă’s trip to Paris: “The following details I gathered and wrote from the very letters that Dincă sent to his mother from Paris” (Sion 151) (*my translation*), but, unfortunately, he could not keep them because Maria made him read the letters to her and then stored them as a treasure, under her pillow. So, what did he gather from these letters?

First, we are told that Dincă was made Lady Profirița’s footman and given a comfortable and well-lighted room. Then, she ordered him to start learning French, something for which he went to the Latin Quarters in Paris where he had heard there were Romanian students and found himself a teacher of French among them. What his teacher informed him of, besides French lessons as such, was “all enlightenment centers in Paris: he led Dincă in all parts of the town showing him the museums, the monuments, the gardens, the palaces, the libraries, the picture galleries, the schools, the theatres” (Sion 152) (*my translation*). So that, while Douglass discovered racial equality and the beauties of England, Dincă was introduced to skills and culture he did not know from home. However, Lady Profirița chose to make Dincă the best cook, not the best intellectual, a decision to which he knew he had to submit since he “was a slave” (Sion 153). While training as a cook, he met Clementina, a French cook, who, unaware of his origins and social status, made him promises of love and marriage and came with him to Moldavia.

What was the effect and which were the consequences of Douglass’s trip to England? We already saw he now felt a new man. Even more, he was encouraged by English abolitionist ladies to remain in England and not to go back to that country where he would be in danger of being caught. Considering his duty to return to his still enslaved brethren, these ladies gathered money to buy his freedom. And here we have, besides the letter of freedom, as in the case of Maria, quite an interesting reaction from the Garrisonians:

Some of my uncompromising anti-slavery friends in this country failed to see the wisdom of this arrangement, and were not pleased that I consented to it, even by my silence. They sought it a violation of anti-slavery principles – conceding a right of property in a man – and a wasteful expenditure of money (*My Bondage* 377).

So, now, Douglass received the papers from his masters and was free indeed. And, regarding himself, perhaps for the first time, a truly free man, he presented to his true liberators his plans for the future, the creation of a newspaper:

...many reasons led me to prefer that my friends should simply give me the means of obtaining a printing press and printing materials, to enable me to start a paper, devoted to the interests of my enslaved and oppressed people. [...] I further stated, that, in my judgement, a tolerably well-conducted press, in the hands of persons of the despised race, by calling out the mental energies of the race itself; by making them acquainted with their own latent powers; by enkindling among them the hope that for them there is a future; by developing their moral power, by combining and reflecting their talents – would prove a most powerful means of removing prejudice and of awakening an interest in them (*My Bondage* 386) .

He did receive nearly two thousand five hundred dollars to begin his paper. A paper which will have, among other effects, that of provoking the break with his Garrisonian friends and start his post-Garrisonian phase, when *My Bondage* was written.

Dincă's fate was not so happy, unfortunately. He also returned home (to Moldavia), but as a slave, not as a freeman. He dearly embraced his Gypsy mother; Clementina fainted when realizing she was in love with both a Gypsy and a slave. She made their love and possible marriage depend on his freedom. This is the moment when we discover, through some discussion between Dincă, a "beautiful, tall, well-built, dark boy, with delicate features, with a small black moustache, with his little beard yet untouched by the razor, with a clean and well-tailored suit, with noble and respectful manners" (Sion 159) (*my translation*), and Sion, that while in Paris, Dincă had actually been acquainted, just like Douglass, with newspapers and the intellectual movement there. Unlike Douglass, he had made these connections in schools, attending history, philosophy, political and economics lectures. He had also met Priest Vârnav, a real character from the 1848 generation, whom he had valued for his liberal and patriotic ideas and his devoted soul. Like Douglass, it was proposed to him to remain in Paris, as a free man, instead of returning to Moldavia. And, just like Douglass, although for other reasons--even if also from duty and love, but to his dear mother and dear mistress--he refused to stay. He did so although now he knew the taste of freedom and was not a happy slave anymore; he was, on the contrary, very much upset by his condition and by the fact that such condition did not allow him to help the Gypsy emancipation movement of which Sion was a part. Dincă's life came to a tragic end of when Lady Profirița refused him freedom, for fear he would really marry Clementina and go to Paris again. Her last gesture, despite even the Moldavian Grigore Ghica ruler's pleading in favor of Dincă's freedom, was to slap him in his face, saying "Take this, a Clementine, you impertinent Gypsy" (Sion 170) (*my translation*). The humiliation could not be greater for poor Dincă, for the first time in his life actually treated as a Gypsy! He could not bear this, but he did not run, or fight back, as Douglass had done against his masters: he took a pistol bought in Paris and killed both Clementina and himself.

So, how did this Rroma influence abolitionism in Romania? According to Sion, his case made such a painful impression on both the ruler and the boyars around him, that he blamed himself for failing to convince his aunt to free Dincă and ordered the process to begin. Lady Profirița went into permanent mourning and wrote letters of forgiveness for her other Gypsy slaves. Without asking for any financial compensation, which was offered by the rulers, she set free all her slaves.

The last question that remains regarding Dincă's case is: is it true or not? And the second piece of information we have, besides Mihaela Mudure's article, comes from Neagu Djuvara's book *Între Orient și Occident: Țările Române la Începutul Epocii Moderne*, where, in a note, he explains that "The author, Gheorghe Sion, had played a direct role in the drama we're going to read: he had taken as a servant, after she had been freed by Cantacuzino-Paşcanu, the mother of the young hero of this story, and he will be the one who will present the case to Grigore Ghica" (Djuvara 386.) (*my translation*).

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