

Rediscovering the Genesis of Girolamo De Rada Romantic Poetry: *Songs before Millosao*

Serafina Lajçi

Department of Albanian Literature, Faculty of Philology, University of Prishtina, Kosovo

Abstract—This paper explores the evolution of Girolamo de Rada's poems, specifically focusing on *Songs before Millosao*. By scrutinizing De Rada's original manuscripts and comparing them to the early published versions of his poems, we delve into his creative process and examine the modification of verses, characters, and themes over time. This study also investigates the presence and progression of political and patriotic elements in De Rada's work, providing valuable insights into the cultural and historical influences on his poetry. Central to this paper¹ findings are the transformation of his protagonists, shedding light on the author's evolving perspectives. The analysis highlights De Rada's continuous endeavor to refine his works, making them more enjoyable, refined, and valuable to his readers. Through the close examination of De Rada's manuscripts and early publications, this study offers a deeper understanding of the author's early concepts and the subsequent evolution of his poetic work. Ultimately, this research contributes to the ongoing scholarly conversation about De Rada's significant role in the Albanian literary renaissance and his unique portrayal of the nation's historical and cultural identity.

Index Terms—Romanticism, Renaissance, Arbëresh poetry, Literary interpretation, Comparative analysis

I. INTRODUCTION

A. The Historical Context and Importance of De Rada's Work

The work of De Rada marks the beginnings of Arbëresh Romanticism while simultaneously representing a significant turning point in the culture of Albanian literature. As such, it has been the subject of observations, studies, and numerous historical-literary, analytical, critical discussions, in an attempt to give it its deserved place within the corpus of Albanian literature. Despite its particular historical-literary importance, De Rada's work has not always taken its merited position, falling victim to numerous misunderstandings. Rightfully, the scholar Shaban Sinani (2012) in the preface to Mandala's work, *Philological Studies on Arbëresh Romantic Literature* would assert that Arbëresh Romantic authors have been among the most misunderstood and their work has often been subjected to a flawed critical mechanism.

B. The Publication of De Rada's Literary Work

Today, when contemporary studies have returned to the Arbëresh Romantic authors, especially to the literary work of De Rada, the results have not only brought new insights and greater importance for literary criticism and the history of Albanian literature, but they have also unveiled this author's work in other dimensions. This merit, alongside known scholars of Arbëresh Romantic authors, particularly belongs to two of their most renowned researchers, Francesco Altimari and Matteo Mandala who shared the common idea of the re-publication of De Rada's Literary Work.

This publication from 2014 presents to the reader for the first time the full authentic publication of this classic of Albanian literature's poetic work, which includes "Songs Before Millosao", "Songs of Millosao", "Songs of Serafina Topia", "Tales of Arber", "Arbëresh Rhapsodies" and the poem "Unfortunate Skanderbeg" (De Rada, 2014). Since the first volume includes all the manuscripts before the 1836 period (1833-1835), it is titled meaningfully *Songs Before Millosao*.

This publication of De Rada's literary work and especially the publication of the early manuscripts, brings the reader closer to the process of creating De Rada's poems, revealing to them the creative method of this author, acquainting them with the prehistory of the published poems, especially the poems "Songs of Millosao" and "Songs of Serafina Topia".

II. GENETIC CRITICISM AND THE IMPORTANCE OF PRE-TEXTS

The issue of publishing pre-texts in Albanian literature, as a consequence of a lack of suitable structures, including cultural and institutional ones where published work manuscripts could be preserved and studied, has been and continues to be one of the main factors impeding the finding and identification of literary evidence. The importance of manuscripts in Albanian literature is best demonstrated by De Rada's literary work, which clearly indicates that "recent

¹ This study has undergone continuous research and an initial draft was once published in the University of Prishtina's journal, "Filologji" (Nr. 25, 2020, July). This is the definitive version of it and is the sole iteration available in the English language.

advancements in the field of studies for De Rada have come thanks to the discovery and publication of a part of his manuscripts” (Pipa, 2013, p. 19).

With this manuscript of De Rada's literary work, the study of this author's work undergoes a new, richer and more complete scholarly process than ever before. Therefore, genetic criticism, which took off in France during the 70s, considering pre-texts as an essential part of the writing history, made them the subject of its discipline. According to scholar Louis Hay (2002), genetic criticism is a new field of research that “implies a new study objective: not only the text, but also the writing, not only the result, but also the process” (p. 99). Supporters of this criticism argue that textual genetics, its main objective, goes beyond textual criticism, giving particular precedence to drafts, notes, evidence, and other texts related to the text's creation process. Scholar Cesare Segre (2007), highlights the importance of genetic criticism, stating that “with a movement precisely opposite to that of destruction, or fragmentation, we manage with the evidence provided by genetic criticism, to prove the strong structural compactness of the literary text, presenting to unprejudiced observers, its distinctive and unmistakable personality” (p. 9). Segre, will also note that thanks to genetic criticism, a researcher could have “greater clarity based on interpretation” (p. 9).

Genetic criticism, by confronting the pre-text with the text, constructs the prehistory of the literary text, right down to its possible transformations. This procedure, scholar Ag Apolloni (2016) calls “protean poetics, or process poetics, because it reveals the continuous changes,” which reveals “the author's method, by highlighting the layers of writing and correction stages, including interventions within and in the margins of the text: additions and removals of words, guiding lines drawn by hand, correction of mistakes, etc” (para. 3). This phase precisely demands that the researcher's preparatory work with the manuscript material be done directly. Besides the collection and preparation of the text, simultaneously, the resolution of the authenticity issue requires adequate experience and special knowledge, sometimes even beyond the researcher's self-experience and professional background. Having concluded this phase, which is primarily related to the collection and classification of material, the researcher's task is further complicated by substantial difficulties such as the problem of text editing and its preparation for publication. This plays a functional role in the history of literature studies, hence the scientific compactness of the literature researcher, in this case, must be closely linked with the function of the literary historian.

Starting from all the above statements, the collection of De Rada's manuscripts has been one of the most challenging points to achieve because the complexity of numerous problems necessarily determines the research structure, which besides specific knowledge, also imposes a specific methodology.

III. THE HISTORY OF THE DE RADA MANUSCRIPTS AND TEXT STRUCTURE

In his scholarly work "Hieronymos De Rada", Arshi Pipa (1978) asserts, “since Milosao A is the first work published by De Rada and simultaneously his poetic masterpiece, any manuscript preceding and related to it holds a higher value than any other poetic material” (p. 272). This claim was a significant impetus for making available any possible De Rada's manuscripts, despite the challenges of researching these manuscripts. “This long, strenuous, yet astonishing exploration of the pre-De Rada writings, which began in 1991, initially sought to identify and classify De Rada's manuscripts from the period before the first publication of *Songs of Millosaut* (1836). These manuscripts were found with great difficulty in various libraries and public and private archives in different countries (Italy, Albania, and Denmark)” (De Rada, 2014, p. 9). The Frascineto Manuscript (Kozenc ë), the Tirana Manuscript, and the Copenhagen Manuscript, best demonstrate what Pipa had long noted: De Rada “never carelessly discarded preliminary sketch-ideas or first drafts” (Pipa, 2013, p. 19).

One of De Rada's earliest manuscripts, discovered in 1970 in the village of Frascineto by priest Antonio Bellusci, is a collection of Arberesh folk songs, which would later be known as the Frascineto Manuscripts, referring to the place where they were found. Given that folk material was one of De Rada's first contacts with poetry, referring to an early age, still not fully formed by the impact of reading, the discovery of these manuscripts corresponds to the time when De Rada had begun collecting folk songs, encouraged by lawyer Raffaele Valentini. According to Altimari (2014) “this is evidenced by the alphabet itself, still unprocessed and unstable, unable to clearly and fully express the phonetic system of Albanian” (p. 18). Linking this important fact and carefully analyzing De Rada's epistolary fund, paying considerable attention to his correspondence with friends and intellectual figures of the time, as well as comparing the final results of graphological analyses, it can be conclusively determined that the Frascineto Manuscripts do indeed belong to De Rada, thus ruling out all other hypotheses. However, while the resolution of the authorship issue was one of the key points in the process of researching these manuscripts, it posed other challenges such as the analytical interpretation of the alphabet used, temporal determination, and the relationships of these songs with the songs of De Rada's published poems, especially his first poem "Songs of Millosaut".

In connection with this situation, literary theorists and researchers Rene Wellek and Austin Warren (1963) rightfully note that “If we have to consider undated manuscripts, chronological difficulties may multiply and even become insoluble. We may have to resort to a study of the evolution of an author's handwriting. We may have to puzzle over stamps or franks on letters, examine the calendar, and trace very carefully the exact migrations of the author, since these may give a clue to the dating” (p. 65). This process also includes the preparatory work of De Rada's manuscripts, which in the absence of a specific date that would shed light on the actual temporal verification, reveal the production date of the watermark with which most of the songs within these early compilations are written. However, the risk in this

situation is notably more pronounced and does not fully satisfy the research; therefore, the identification of the alphabet, which was primarily based on the Latin alphabet but supplemented with Greek letters, was one of the decisive indicators that played a significant role in determining the temporal reality. It served as an indicator of the Arberesh writing tradition, which is linked to the time period in which De Rada wrote, always using his early writings and creations as a model.

IV. DETAILED ANALYSIS OF DE RADA'S MANUSCRIPTS

A. *The Frascineto Manuscript*

The Frascineto Manuscript is essentially composed of two compilations of Arberesh folk songs, with the exception of the third compilation, parts of which link to the poems "Songs of Millosaut" and "Songs of Serafin ë Topia". To distinguish between them, the compilations are marked as F1, F2, and F3. The first compilation, F1, contains only two songs spanning 12 pages, whereas the second one, F2, comprises eight songs over 24 pages in total but seems incomplete and non-final due to the absence of the part connected to the final song. F1 provides an intriguing observation of song construction. We deal with songs explicitly associated with wedding rhythms, representing familial and friendly bonds, as well as songs related to death, signifying detachment from the ongoing life cycle. In the wedding ritual, the main motif reveals the marital history and advice given to the bride and groom, drawing on typical folklore imagery where the bride is compared to a mountain's depth, the whiteness of snow, and the groom to the firmness of rock.

Original Manuscript	English Translation
<i>Moj th ël ëza çëvjen malit</i>	<i>Oh quail, coming from the mountain</i>
<i>Vjen më kraghëzit pjo(t) bor...</i>	<i>Arriving with wings full of snow...</i>
<i>Bie mb ëder t ëdh ënd ërrit,</i>	<i>Falling on the groom's door,</i>
<i>Si bor ëza e bardh?</i>	<i>Like a white snow?</i>
<i>(De Rada, 2014, p. 54).</i>	<i>(Our translation).</i>

Meanwhile, the death motif highlights the poignant narrative following the death of the Albanians leader, Skanderbeg, encompassing 14 verses in total. F2, unlike F1, contains more songs, a total of eight, and depicts the Arberesh world in all its hues. The songs continue from the wedding tradition intertwined with the songs from the first collection, progressing with songs of Skanderbeg and the Renegade, Death of Skanderbeg, Wedding of Konstandin, Ghost of Konstandin, Betrayal, Wonders of the Soldier, Anibek and Milloshi. This was the period (1833) when De Rada devoted himself to collecting Arberesh folk songs. The other manuscript compilation, F3, first published in 1963 by Father Giuseppe Ferrari, contains, along with folklore material, songs that belong to De Rada's first poems in "Songs of Millosaut" and "Songs of Serafin ë Topia". This collection, however, demonstrates De Rada's nature as a poet and not merely as a collector and classifier of folk songs. Following the model of Arberesh rhapsodes, De Rada began to create his own verses because "for him, true poetic creativity and the work of a folklore collector were part of the same literary commitment" (De Rada, 2014, p. 27).

His literary work best exhibits the significant impact that folklore had on shaping De Rada as a poet, suggesting that for him, folk poetry was a model of language and a distinct artistic style. The influence of folklore on De Rada's work is best reflected through these songs, the structure of which precedes the structural construction of De Rada's poems. The eight-line verse, which is a characteristic element of De Rada's style, alongside seven, six, and even five-line verses, is constructed based on the model of these folk songs verses, without being connected to the poetic motif which is the main exhibitor of motifs and ideas in De Rada's poems.

The primary merit of verifying this manuscript belongs to Francesco Solano, who through careful attention and refined philological analysis, concluded that the compilation of these songs was authored by De Rada. This compilation also serves as the initiator of the process of comparing the manuscript texts with those published from 1836 onwards.

B. *The Manuscripts of Tirana and Copenhagen*

Both manuscripts are concretely related to the poems "Songs of Millosao" and "Songs of Serafina Topia". The Tirana manuscript, initially published in 1974 in a transcribed version by Dhimit ër Shuteriqi, holds a total of forty songs, all interspersed within the two aforementioned poems by De Rada. Observing the form of this manuscript and the fact that the pages are filled with sketches, side-page rewrites, erasures, and noticeable improvements, it is believed to be a clean copy version. To distinguish the songs within this manuscript that are related to the songs published in Millosao and Serafina, the manuscript is specified and divided as Tm and Ts.

On the other hand, the Copenhagen manuscript, despite its incompleteness due to numerous absences throughout the songs as a result of damage and loss, is of equal importance. However, as Altimari (2014) argues, since "a significant portion of the songs comprising it present similarities with the "Songs of Serafina Topia" contained in the second part of the Tirana manuscript" (p. 23), it can be completed by adding the Ts songs. Despite the fact that a considerable part of this manuscript has not been found, referring to the first part identified by Pipa as "Proto Milosaon B", which, from a chronological perspective, should be placed after the Frascineto manuscript, F3, the determination of whether this collection was written before or after the Tirana manuscript remains unclear. The lack of Italian translation alongside

the Albanian texts is another significant element revealing “the incomplete nature of this collection” (De Rada, 2014, p. 26), taking as a reference point the well-known fact that all Arberesh creators, alongside Albanian texts, included Italian translations so that their works could achieve wider dissemination.

V. COMPARISONS BETWEEN MANUSCRIPT VARIANTS AND THE WORKS AS FIRST PUBLISHED

When comparing these manuscripts not only with each other but also with the first publications of the works, specifically, in this case, the poems “Songs of Millosao” and “Songs of Serafina Topia”, the results obtained provide a new perspective on De Rada's work, which now has a well-known prehistory.

A. F3 and Tm – Pre-Text of Millosao

The comparisons between the songs of the manuscripts and the first publications of De Rada's poems have been analyzed and interpreted by researchers such as Francesco Solano, Dhimitër Shuteriqi, Arshi Pipa, and more recently by Arberesh researchers Francesco Altimari and Matteo Mandala. All these comparisons have been placed in separate tables within Literary Work I, where the "Songs before Millosao" are located to enable concrete analytical interpretations. Altimari, comparing these correlations and putting them through his scholarly lens, provides interesting observations, always without imposing his analytical impact, but guiding researchers and readers towards effective new conceptions.

The Frascineto manuscript F3, as we mentioned earlier, includes songs that are part of Milosao A and at the same time, these songs also appear in the Tirana manuscript Tm, which is another variant of these songs. Considering that F3 is believed to mark the end of 1833 and the beginning of 1834, it is the first variant, which precedes the Tirana Tm, belonging to the year 1834. The seventh song of F3, which portrays Milosao's meeting with Rina and the gifting of apples she gives him, is similar to the tenth song of Tm.

Variant	Original Manuscript	English Translation
F3	<i>Ish e diella m'ënat E i biri zonjës madhe Ngjitej tek e bukura Po t'i lipën një çik uj Se ish et' i djegurith; (De Rada, 2014, p. 123).</i>	<i>It was Sunday at midnight And the son of great lady Was ascending to the beauty To ask for a bit of water For he was thirsty the burned one; (Our translation).</i>
Tm	<i>Ish e diella m'ënat E i biri zonjës madhe Ngjitej tek e bukura Të m' i lipën një çik uj Se ish et' i i djegurith; (De Rada, 2014, p. 198)</i>	<i>It was Sunday at midnight And the son of great lady Was ascending to the beauty To ask her for a bit of water For he was thirsty, the burned one; (Our translation).</i>
Milosao A	<i>Ish e diella m'ënat E i bir' i zonjës madhe ngjitej tek e bukura Të m' i lipën një pik uj Se ish et' i djegurith. (De Rada, 2014, p. 18).</i>	<i>It was Sunday at midnight And the son of the great lady Was ascending to the beauty To ask her for a drop of water For he was thirsty, the burned one. (Our translation)</i>

The fifth song of the F3 manuscript, which reveals Milosao's prehistory, elicits greater interest, yet in Milosao A, it is not presented in the same perception. While in the second song of Milosao A, we understand that Milosao returns from Thessaloniki where he had been studying, in F3, the story of Thessaloniki appears in the fifth song, as a part detached and independent from the other songs, not merely as a brief narration but as prehistory:

Original Manuscript	English Translation
<i>Ish një em e vetëmez, Kish një bir t'ëvetëmith, E ndëskollë e d'ërgon. (De Rada, 2014, p. 121).</i>	<i>There was a lonely mother, She had a single son, And off to school, she sent him. (Our translation).</i>

As the first variant of "The Songs of Milosao" and when tracing the influence of folklore from the collection of folk songs, it can be easily observed that the F3 compilation is a fusion of these songs and De Rada's early poetic concepts. This can be seen throughout this compilation and when we come to Milosao's journey to Thessaloniki, we are here linked to an early folk motive where birds are the bearers of news or messengers. Milosao from Thessaloniki, through the birds, forewarns his mother that he will return to his birthplace under specific circumstances:

Original Manuscript	English Translation
<i>Kur dejt i bënëjardin Aghierna it bir vjen; Kur korbi t' bënëjpellumb Aghierna it bir vjen. (De Rada, 2014, p. 122).</i>	<i>When the sea becomes a garden, Then your son will come; When the raven becomes a dove, Then your son will come. (Our translation).</i>

Such parts are missing in Milosao A which reinforces the fact that De Rada continually returned to his texts to review them, but also to recontextualize them. The similarities between F3 and Tm are numerous, especially between songs 6 (F3) with 10 (Tm), 7 (F3) with 9 (Tm), 11 (F3) with 16 (Tm), 16 (F3) with 13 (Tm), 18 (F3) with 5 (Tm), 19 (F3) with 14 (Tm), 20 (F3) with 6 (Tm) 23 (F3) with 2 and 11 (Tm), 29 (F3) with 1 (Tm), 31 (F3) with 8 (Tm) and 38 (F3) with 3 and 4 (Tm), in which either many similarities appear or they are the beginning of ideas that will be expanded and developed further in Milosao A.

In a comparative context, it is interesting to observe six distinct songs in Tm, which are not related to F3, allowing us to determine that these songs are new, and besides being a continuation of the songs of F3, they are closer to the songs of Milosao A. In this case, we can take as an example the ending of Milosao that remains unfinished in F3, but in Tm (as well as that of Copenhagen) resembles that of Milosao A:

Original Manuscript	English Translation
<i>Ik ën t'ëkultuarit</i>	<i>Gone are the cultured ones,</i>
<i>Gëzimet e vashavat:</i>	<i>The joys of the maidens:</i>
<i>Ato mbjidhen mbr'ënanet</i>	<i>They gather in the evenings</i>
<i>Nd'ëkatund, nd'ëvat ër'ë,</i>	<i>In the village, by the hearth,</i>
<i>U m'i lë si ëndërrëz.</i>	<i>Leaving me as if in a dream,</i>
<i>S'ë më e Millosat.</i>	<i>Is not of Millosat anymore.</i>
<i>(De Rada, 2014, p. 220).</i>	<i>(Our translation).</i>

In Milosao A, the vibrancy and continuity of life is no longer reflected through the cheerful maidens, but through Milosao's comrades, who embody the continuity of his youthful dreams:

Original Manuscript	English Translation
<i>Mbjidhen shokt mbr'ënanet</i>	<i>Friends gather in the evenings</i>
<i>Nd'ëkatund nd'ëvat ëret;</i>	<i>In the village, by the hearth,</i>
<i>U m'i lë si ëndërrëz.</i>	<i>Leaving me as if in a dream.</i>
<i>(De Rada, 2014, p. 330).</i>	<i>(Our translation).</i>

What is crucial to analyze is also the absence of patriotic elements in the manuscript of Milosao. As Pipa (2013) classifies it, "Proto Milosao A is merely a refined romance devoid of any patriotic elements" (p. 42). Knowing the outcome and the circumstances that develop in Milosao A, which at the same time, alongside its more emphasized lyrical line, constructs and gradually develops the epic line, in Proto Milosao, the hero is not only unstructured along this line, but strongly resembles the type of the European romantic hero, who appears disillusioned by life and engaged in profound spiritual contemplation. The answer to this lies in the later life circumstances of De Rada and his involvement with political life in the country, which significantly influenced the development and enrichment of his poems with new motifs and ideas, to a different extent than those of the manuscripts.

One of the characteristic points of these collections is their relationship with the published work of De Rada, a unity that, as has been noted, is not abruptly severed and isn't rigidly placed within final frameworks, since these pretexts vary from one poem to another. For instance, if in Milosao A we read the song *Vjersh' i të biles Kolloghres*:

Original Manuscript	English Translation
<i>Nd'atë katund çë sonde të m'arrësh</i>	<i>In that village where tonight you'll take me</i>
<i>s'ëke t'ëfol ë (t)an, s'ëk ëti shpi,</i>	<i>You don't have your talk, you have no home,</i>
<i>atje s'ë kopshti it, s'ë del me ndër.</i>	<i>there is no garden of yours, where you emerge with honor.</i>
<i>aj zem ër guri si s'ë rri me n'ë?</i>	<i>This heart of stone, why doesn't stay with us?</i>
<i>(De Rada, 2014, p. 272).</i>	<i>(Our translation).</i>

In the Copenhagen manuscript, it appears as part of the prologue of Serafina, titled *Verses of Serafina*:

Original Manuscript	English Translation
<i>Nd'atë katund çë sonde të m'arrësh</i>	<i>In that village where tonight you'll take me</i>
<i>S'ëke t'ëfol ë (t)an, s'ëk ëti shpi,</i>	<i>You don't have your talk, you have no home,</i>
<i>atje s'ë kopshti it, s'ë del me ndër.</i>	<i>there is no garden of yours, where you emerge with honor.</i>
<i>Oj zem ër guri si s'ë rri me n'ë?</i>	<i>This heart of stone, why doesn't stay with us?</i>
<i>Epigram {ma} di An {acreonte}</i>	<i>Epigram {ma} di An {acreonte}</i>
<i>(De Rada, 2014, p. 272).</i>	<i>(Our translation).</i>

We encounter a concrete example of this in the love story between Rodhavani and Fjaleva found in Proto Serafina B, which is transferred to Milosao A as the construction of the story between Milosao and Rina, with a particular emphasis on the latter's status. Song 28, which is part of Milosao A, is identical in both theme and language to song 4 of Proto Serafina B, in which a despondent Milosao, having fallen victim to his feelings of love for the maiden, forgets the matter of his homeland. This situation is strikingly similar to that of Proto Serafina B, in which a mother scolds her son for marrying a foreign girl, whose love has influenced the dimming of his patriotic duty. The prefiguration and interconnectedness of the main characters, appearing as derivatives of these manuscripts, up to Milosao A, is revealed

in terms of their refinement and development. In F3 and Tm, it is Viola who in Milosao A becomes the daughter of Kollogre, with no major changes. The lyrical hero depicted in these manuscripts, reflected in the character of Milosao, who appears here as Milloshin (later his name will change), as we have noted, creates a parallel link with the European romantic hero who is lost in thought, wandering around the mazes of his fate, which he cannot and does not have the ability to avoid. The hero of Proto Milosao also exhibits these characteristics, thus reflecting his deep lyrical nature as a presentation of the inner world and its fluctuations.

B. Ts and C – Pre-Text of Serafina Topia

While the pretext of Millosaut appears to be more comprehensive in terms of the number of songs, that of Serafina is notably smaller, owing to the fact that the Copenhagen manuscript is incomplete. In the Tirana manuscript (Ts), the number of songs is twenty, whereas the Copenhagen manuscript accounts for twenty-one, always referring to the songs related to the pretext of Serafina. Ts contains Proto Serafina A and according to Shuteriqi, the central figure of this collection appears to be not Serafina, but Rodhavani, an influence passed down from the previous hero, Milloshini. Similar to Ts, the songs in Cs are described with the deeds of heroes such as Radhavani, Milloshini, each of whom also has a female protagonist, Fjaleva and Viola. The name of Bozdari is not part of these manuscripts, as within them is Vortani, the brave man with whom Serafina falls in love. All these characters that precede in this part of the pretext will change in the published works section, Fjaleva into Paraylle, Viola into Rina, the daughter of Kollogresa, and Vortani into Bozdari. Just like in the published poem, in the songs of these manuscripts, Serafina cannot marry her beloved because her parents do not approve of her love and as a result, she is forced to marry a lord whom she does not love. Vortani, unlike Bozdari, falls in battle as a valiant hero. In connection with this situation, Pipa (2013) will assert that “Serafina A is linked with Proto Serafina, its genesis, with very thin threads; this poem is almost an entirely new creation, reflecting the author’s participation in revolutionary activity in Calabria after the first period of residence in Naples” (p. 167). Not only from this assertion by Pipa but also from De Rada’s observation that he wrote the poem “Songs of Serafina Topia” in 1837, precisely driven by this dynamic surge of political developments, we can conclude that this work marks another turn, clearly broader in the first variant of its publication. Therefore, similar to “Songs of Millosaut”, this poem also takes on a different form and character and is noticeably more complete than in her remaining manuscript:

Variant	Original Manuscript	English Translation
Ts	<i>Vash u rrita ghadhiare Tek vat ër e prindvet, Si nj ëdeg e ardhur ëz Hjesore rritiet... Vash u rrita e zilisur Ka gjitone e ka t ëghuaj. (De Rada, 2014, p. 224).</i>	<i>A girl grows up gracefully At her parent’s hearth, Like a healthy branch Growing in elegance... The girl grew up desirous She has foreign neighbours. (Our translation).</i>
Cs	<i>Vash u rrita ghadhiare Tek vat ër e prind(ë)vet, Si nj ëdeg e ardhur ëz Hjesore rritiet... Vash u rrita e zilisur Ka gjitone e ka t ëghuaj. (De Rada, 2014, p. 272).</i>	<i>A girl grows up gracefully At her parent(s) hearth, Like a healthy branch Growing in elegance... The girl grew up desirous She has foreign neighbours. (Our translation).</i>
Serafina A	<i>Vash u rrita ghadhjare tek vat ër e prindvet, si nj ëdeg e ardhur ëz hjesore rritiet... Vash u rrita e zilisur Ka gjitone e ka t ëghuaj. (De Rada, 2014, p. 18).</i>	<i>A girl grows up gracefully At her parent’s hearth, Like a healthy branch Growing in elegance... The girl grew up desirous She has foreign neighbours. (Our translation).</i>

The connection of these verses, as can be observed, appears similar in all three cases, but it does not maintain coherence with the further progression, since in Serafina A, only the first song is composed of 96 verses, unlike Ts and Cs, which collectively yield 29 verses that are mainly, but not entirely until the 23rd verse, aligned with the verses of Serafina A. Unlike the manuscripts of the poem "Songs of Millosaut", in the two manuscripts of "Songs of Serafina Topia" (Ts and Cs), the patriotic or political element, as Pipa prefers to call it, is not missing. Although Serafina is no longer the main character around whom the narrative is built, the main character that emerges in this manuscript, Radhavani, constructs the type of the epic hero, entirely different from Milosao. This hero synthesizes both self-love and patriotic love, always opting for the latter in the face of the former. This makes Serafina’s manuscript similar to the first publication variant, always connecting with the national idea and doctrine, which, unlike the first publication, the lyrical hero here appears more of the knightly type, entirely invincible and victorious.

VI. CONCLUSION

Songs before Millosao provide valuable insights into the creative process of Girolamo De Rada, shedding light on the evolution of his poetic style and his motivations as a poet. This work marks a turning point in the appreciation and understanding of De Rada's literary contributions, necessitating a re-examination of his work within the context of contemporary literary scholarship.

Through careful analysis of De Rada's manuscripts, especially the Frascineto Manuscript, the Tirana Manuscript, and the Copenhagen Manuscript, we are able to trace the development of his poems and their relation to the poet's early influences, particularly folk songs.

Genetic criticism has proved to be an invaluable approach in understanding De Rada's creative process. By comparing the pre-texts with the published texts, we are able to reveal the continuous changes, revisions, and refinements made by De Rada, providing a deeper insight into his poetic method. The manuscripts showcase De Rada's dedication to crafting his poems, leaving behind traces of his constant revisions and improvements to ensure the poems' clarity, aesthetics, and value for readers.

The comparison between the manuscripts and the published works, specifically "Songs of Millosao" and "Songs of Serafina Topia," has allowed researchers to recognize the impact of De Rada's life circumstances and political involvement on his poetry. The evolution of Millosao's character from a European romantic hero in the pre-texts to a patriotic and complex figure in the published version reflects De Rada's engagement in revolutionary activities and the development of his poetic expression. Similarly, the evolution of the character Serafina compared to the pre-texts of "Songs of Serafina Topia" indicates the influence of De Rada's evolving perspectives on the central characters.

These findings offer a deeper understanding of De Rada's early concepts and ideas. The preliminary knowledge of the protagonists and the comparison with the final publications help frame a more profound understanding of the poet's motivations and the main stimuli behind his poetic reinvention of Arberia. De Rada's deep lyrical nature, influenced by his interactions with folk songs and his experiences, comes to the forefront in these manuscripts, presenting him as a poet in constant exploration and development.

As for future researchers, the study of "Songs before Millosao" opens new avenues for further exploration. Researchers should continue to delve into the manuscripts and analyze other aspects of De Rada's work, such as his relationship with the Arberesh folk tradition and his contributions to Albanian literature. Additionally, the examination of De Rada's correspondence with his contemporaries and intellectual figures of the time can provide valuable insights into his creative process and the motivations behind his poetic choices.

Moreover, the re-examination of De Rada's work should extend beyond the literary aspects to include a broader exploration of his contributions to Albanian cultural and national identity. Understanding the societal and historical context in which De Rada wrote can illuminate the significance of his work in shaping the national consciousness and literary heritage of Albania.

In conclusion, the study of "Songs before Millosao" and the comparison of De Rada's manuscripts with the final publications have provided a deeper understanding of the poet's creative process and motivations. This research marks a significant contribution to the appreciation and recognition of De Rada's place in Albanian literature and cultural heritage.

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Lajç Serafina, born on July 17, 1989, in Pejë, Kosovo, is an accomplished researcher and academic who has significantly contributed to the field of Philology. Her scholarly journey began at the University of Prishtina, Prishtina, Kosovo, where she received her Bachelor's degree in Philology in 2012. Her pursuit of knowledge did not end there, as she advanced her studies in the same institution and earned her Master's degree in Philology in 2014.

Currently, Ms. Lajç is a doctoral candidate at the University of Prishtina, where she is on the verge of completing her Ph.D. studies. Her doctoral work further underscores her commitment to the field and promises to contribute significantly to our understanding of Philology.

Alongside her academic pursuits, Ms. Lajç holds a regular assistant professorship at the Faculty of Philology at the University of Prishtina. Her role in the faculty enables her to impart her rich knowledge and insights on the subject to the next generation of scholars, thus shaping the future of Philology in Kosovo. Ms. Lajç has a substantial number of publications in various journals, mainly focusing on romantic literature, demonstrating her ability to contribute to the literary discourse. Her contributions to the field go beyond academic articles. She has published a monographic book titled "Lirika e dashurisë - Arapi dhe Shkreli" (Love Lyric - Arapi and Shkreli), a significant contribution to the literature, and is preparing for the publication of her second book of literary studies.