

"Milosao" and Its Three Editions

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Introductory remarks

Greek poetry started not on the Greek mainland but in the Greek settlements of Asia Minor. Likewise, Albanian poetry was born not in Albania proper, but in the Albanian villages of Southern Italy. The parallel holds also with respect to another consideration. Albanian poetry, which is preponderantly epic, was oral and rhapsodic in its first stage, until some talented poets of the nineteenth century collected and elaborated it into unitary poems. Of these poets *Girolamo de Rada* was the one who set the example with his "*Milosao*".

The Albanians in Italy are found mostly in Calabria and Sicily. The majority of them still speak Albanian and call themselves Albanians ("Arbëresh").¹⁾ Half of them follow the Greek rite, the other half are Catholics. The followers of the Greek rite have their own distinct church which is, however, united with the Roman Catholic Church.²⁾

The Albanian settlements in Italy date from the 15th century, when an Albanian expedition was sent at the request of the King of Naples, *Alphonse I of Aragon*, to help subdue Calabria in revolt.³⁾ During that century Albania, under the leadership of *George Castriota*, whom the Turks called *Scanderbeg*, bore the brunt of the Turkish penetration into the Balkans. At that time the Albanians were all Christians, Roman

¹⁾ According to the 1901 census, there were 81 Albanian settlements with a population of about 200,000. Giuseppe Schirò, *Storia della letteratura albanese*. Milano 1959, p. 18. In our century the population is over 300,000. The *Annuario statistico dei comuni italiani* (Rome 1958, pp. 47—50, 80—81) lists 36 settlements with a total population of 103,234. Not included in this list, however, are a number of villages which are not of commune status. Domenico Zagari, *Le Colonie italo-albanesi di Calabria, storia e demografia, secoli XV—XIX*. Napoli 1941, pp. 48—50, reports 36 localities only in Calabria. George Nicholas Nasse, *The Italo-Albanian Villages of Southern Italy*, Washington 1964, lists 44 localities of which 42 are albanophones. With regard to religion, 21 follow the Greek rite and 23 the Latin rite.

²⁾ Their church is organized in two dioceses with centers in Lungro, Calabria, and Piana degli Albanesi, Sicily. Their most important cultural center is the Basilian Monastery at Grottaferrata near Rome (Badia di Grottaferrata), which is a well known center of Byzantine studies.

³⁾ Vincenzo Dorsa, *Su gli albanesi, Ricerche e pensieri*. Napoli 1847, p. 85.

Catholic in the North, and Greek Orthodox in the South. Their nationalistic resistance took on the aspect of a religious war against "the infidel", and as such it was supported by the Kingdom of Naples, Venice, and the Holy See, which were themselves threatened by Turkish invasion.

The Albanians performed a valuable service for Western civilization by containing the Turkish expansion in the Balkans for about a quarter of a century. *Scanderbeg*, called the *Champion of Christendom* by Pope *Nicholas V*, died in 1468, and Albania was overrun by the Turks. Many Albanians were forced to leave their country. The exiles came mostly from Southern Albania, and some came from Greece where they had previously migrated. They did not mingle with the indigenous population, but lived in isolated ethnic enclaves, intermarrying, and thus preserving their language and their customs. Although with time they came to participate more and more in Italian politics — one of them, *Francesco Crispi*, even became Premier of the united Italian Kingdom — they continued to consider themselves as exiles in Italy, which to them remained "dheu i huaj" ("the foreign land"), and from which they hoped to depart one day to their own country. They lived thus for centuries, estranged from the rest of the population, with dreams of epic memories of the Albania of *Scanderbeg*.

Albania could not have existed today, had she lost that which characterizes her as a distinct ethnic group: the Albanian language. The fate of Albania has depended on the survival of its language during two thousand years of foreign occupation. The Albanians, it is true, were one of the last ethnic groups in Europe to achieve independence. Their history shows them eager to achieve domination rather than independence, which they did within the framework of multinational states, such as Rome, Byzantium, and the Ottoman Empire. Religion, which they changed and exchanged for political advantages, was not their forte either. But they never gave up their language, their real treasure, the remnant of one of the distinct branches of the Indo-European group of languages.⁴⁾ This is true for the Albanians in the mainland no less than for the Albanian minority in Italy.⁵⁾ Reflecting on the history of the Albanians leads one to the conclusion that their survival as an ethnic group rests upon a sense of values which is rather exceptional. Their option for linguistic rather than political, or religious, individuality goes hand in hand with their traditional mode of life,

⁴⁾ Albanian is, in greater part at least, the representative of the Illyrian, one of the ten or eleven languages constituting the Indo-European family of languages.

⁵⁾ About half of the population of Greek Orthodox origin became Catholics; two-thirds of the population in Albania converted to Islam.

which is poetic in its heroic primitivity. The term "poetic" here is used in the sense *Vico* gives it in his *Scienza Nuova*, where he maintains that poetry reaches sublime heights not in epochs saturated with culture but in wild epochs of emergent civilization, when language and poetry are one and the same. According to the Italian philosopher, civilization begins with poetry in a time when even legislation is a "severe poem". A study, on the one hand, of the Albanian rhapsodies and, on the other, of the medieval code of customary law known as the *Code of Lek Dukagjin* confirms *Vico's* assertions.⁶⁾ It is a pity that such folkloristic monuments continue to remain inaccessible to the public.

Language and Subject of "Milosao"

At the time *De Rada* wrote "*Milosao*", there was no uniform Albanian alphabet and the author had to devise his own phonetic instrument. His alphabet is basically Latin, but with a substantial number of Greek letters (γ, δ, θ, ζ, λ, χ, υ, ζ). The vocabulary is another peculiar trait. Since the Albanians had been living in Italy for more than three centuries when the work was written, one is not surprised to find in the text a host of Italian words. The less obvious reason for the presence of many Greek words can be explained by the fact that Southern Albania, from which the Arbëresh came, was a zone of Byzantine influence during the Middle Ages. The Turkish vocabulary, on the other hand, which abounds in Albanian proper, is almost non-existent in Arbëresh and does not appear in *De Rada's* work.

The point here is that this idiom has remained, apart from the Italian words added to its vocabulary, fixed and without possibility for development. The phenomenon is understandable if one realizes that for a language to survive on foreign grounds, mechanisms for the preservation, and not for the development, of the language must be worked out. While language in the mainland developed normally and was in the past century sifted and elaborated until it reached the status of a modern literary language, Arbëresh remained a medieval dialect with a limited vocabulary and restricted syntax. The difference between Albanian and Arbëresh is roughly analogous to that between Middle English and Modern English as to morphology and syntax, and to that between Old English and Modern English as to vocabulary.

⁶⁾ The Albanian rhapsodies in question are those of Muji and Halil cycle, heard in the northernmost part of Albania. They were collected and published by the Franciscan fathers, Bernardin Pala j and Donat Kurti, *Visaret e Kombit*. Tirana, vol. II, 1937. Translations of some of them have occasionally appeared in various periodicals. The *Code of Lek Dukagjini* has been translated into Italian: *Codice di Lek Dukagjini ossia diritto consuetudinario delle montagne d'Albania*. Rome 1941. The translation inadequately conveys the poetic language of the text, the Code being a work on ethics as well as a work of poetry.

By using an old-fashioned language, or rather a dialect, extremely poor for expressing conceptual thinking and shades of feeling, but apt for rendering sense impressions, *De Rada* was able to bring the infant Albanian literature to adolescence in one leap. This leap was "*Milosao*", first published in 1836.

"*Milosao*" is a sequence of lyrics which tell the life story of a fictional character of early fifteenth century. The son of the *Prince of Scutari* has fallen in love with a girl of low birth. The story of their love fills most of the work, and concludes with their marriage — made possible only after an earthquake destroys Scutari, thus leveling down their differences of social class. To the happy parents is born a son who, however, soon dies. Soon afterwards, the mother also dies. *Milosao*, inconsolable but faithful to her memory, never marries again. He continues to drag out his life for some years, until he falls in battle against the Turks.

The dominant theme in "*Milosao*" is love, in counterpart with patriotism which, however, remains in the background. After the heroine's death, a third theme becomes dominant, weariness or tedium of life, somehow tempered by love of nature, a feeling which runs through the whole work like a thread. Such elements define "*Milosao*" as a romantic work peremptorily. One can hardly fail to perceive that *Milosao* is a kind of Albanian *Ortis* — to be sure, more popular and less sophisticated than the hero of *Foscolo's* autobiographical novel.

If the subject of "*Milosao*" is unmistakably romantic, its language presents striking differences from the language of romanticism in general. The originality of "*Milosao's*" poetic language is perhaps its greatest charm. *De Rada* uses uncommon metaphors and similes, part of which he derives from popular poetry. Not seldom the language is vague and at times even obscure as a consequence of the poet's elliptical way of expression. The obscurity of *De Rada* is, however, not intentional and it frequently comes from his expressive *inopia* (to use a Viconian term), i. e. from his lack of linguistic apparatus. But what might look as a defect is more often than not a poetic boon, the twilight of meanings being most suggestive and inviting.

The publication of "*Milosao*", faced by the Italian translation, drew some attention on the young Albanian poet. *Lamartine* complimented *De Rada* in a letter, and *Mistral* praised "*Milosao*", which somewhat resembles his own "*Mireille*" on account of the popular background common to both works. What made *De Rada* famous, however, was his *Rapsodie di un poema albanese* (Rhapsodies of an Albanian Epic) published in 1866. The work is a collection of folk songs, in part retouched by the poet himself.

De Rada never reached again the peak of "*Milosao*", although he continued to write poetry to the end of his life. He died almost ninety. His other more important poetic works, *I Canti di Serafina Thopia* (The Songs of Serafina Thopia) and *Scanderbegu i pafaan* (The Unfortunate Scanderbeg) add little to his glory which rests, according to the almost unanimous verdict of critics and scholars, on the masterpiece of his early years.

De Rada published many other works, in Albanian as well as in Italian. In 1848 he edited the first Albanian paper, *L'Albanese d'Italia*, and organized two linguistic conferences dealing with problems of the Albanian language and culture. He taught Albanian continuously during his life, and spent his little fortune in buying a printing-press to print his own writings.

Comparison of The Three Editions

We pass now to the second and more important part of this article: the comparison between the three editions of "*Milosao*". *De Rada's* masterpiece has appeared in three versions published in 1836, 1847, and 1873 — they will be called A, B, and C respectively.⁷⁾ The three versions are different from each other.⁸⁾ But whereas the differences between B and C are not important, B is a drastic alteration of A. The fact is well known, but none, to my knowledge, has investigated the question the differences involve. Mine is an attempt to shed some light on that question.

We shall first list the differences between the second and the third editions.

I. Differences Between B and C

The differences in the poetic text concern a) the dating, and b) the composition of the chapters into which the work is divided.

a) The dating of the chapters is the same in B and C from I to XXIX for the period of time 1405—1413. But from XXIX to XXXVII, the period of time is 1413—1418 in B, and 1413—1423 in C.⁹⁾

⁷⁾ Poesie albanesi del secolo XV. Canti di Milosao, figlio del despota di Scutari. Napoli (Guttemberg) 1936. Poesie albanesi di Girolamo de Rada. Napoli (Fibreno), vol. I, 1847. Poesie albanesi di Girolamo de Rada. Corigliano Calabro (Tipografia Albanese), vol. I, 1873. — Our comparison of the three editions is based on, Girolamo de Rada, *I Canti di Milosao* (traslitterazione, varianti delle edizioni a stampa e traduzione) by Giuseppe Gradilone, Firenze (Olschki) 1965. "*Milosao's*" text in Gradilone's volume is that of the third edition, but he gives the variants of the other two editions in footnotes.

⁸⁾ The differences in spelling are not considered here.

⁹⁾ According to the chronology in C, the heroine who is said to be twenty-five when she dies (XXXI), would have the improbable age of seven when the hero first meets her (1405).

b) Chapter XI in B has been eliminated from C. The number of chapters, however, is thirty-seven in both B and C, since a composition in B is not numbered (the one entitled "Vale nats Pashkëvet" — "Easter's Eve Carol"). The order is also the same, with the exception of XI and XII in C which correspond to XII and XIII in B. Chapter XXIV is radically changed: a passage in C (lines 32—42) does not appear in B, while another passage in B (lines 45—68) has been replaced in C by two lines (27—28); lines 10—25 in B are also lacking in C. The following lines from other chapters in B have been eliminated from C: XIII, 48—52; XXIV, 10—25; XXXI, 28; XXXVI, 1—6. Minor changes occur in XXXI (one line) and XXXV (seven lines).

C has in addition the text of a letter (September 1839) which the poet sent to his father from the prison of Naples where he was held for conspiring against the *Bourbon* regime.

II. A vs. B: Changes in Title and Introduction

We shall start our comparison of the first and the second editions with an examination of the external changes which reflect internal changes of structure and style. The external changes concern a) the title, and b) the introduction of the work.

a) Title. A's title is *Poesie albanesi del secolo XV. Canti di Milosao, figlio del despota di Scutari* (Albanian poems of the 15th Century. Songs of Milosao, the Son of the Despot of Scutari), whereas B has on its cover page simply: *Poesie albanesi di Girolamo de Rada* (Albanian Poems by Girolamo de Rada). Since the author's name is omitted from A, the poems would seem to be the work of an Albanian medieval bard called *Milosao*. The example of *Macpherson* who presented his *Fingal* as translation from the Irish bard *Ossian* comes to mind.

The author's name which is spelled out in B's title removes the romantic *supercherie* of A's title. It is true that the front page following the introduction in B retains the second part of A's title, *Canti di Milosao, figlio del despota di Scutari*. But the subtitle only modifies the title. The reader is informed thereby that the *Albanian Poems* by Girolamo de Rada tell the tale of *Milosao*, the son of the Despot of Scutari. The change in title suggests a shift of stress from the popular and anonymous to the learned and personal. The analysis of the poetic text in A and B brings out what their titles imply.

b) Introduction. The introduction in A consists of a letter which *De Rada* wrote to a former college friend, *Raffaele Zagarese*. The letter dated 20 October 1834 contains precious indications about the genesis of "*Milosao*".

During a visit to Sant'Adriano College from which he had graduated the previous year, *De Rada* hears a popular lyric which he records in his letter. The song which is about the parting of two fiancés or lovers reminds *De Rada* of his departure from his bosom friend. The poet recalls how much he hoped of life before graduation: "The Earth would smile at me from every corner I looked at".¹⁰⁾ In such a frame of mind, and with *Anacreon* as a model, he composed the canto which was to be the poem of *Milosao*. He would sit on a hill and watch the sea; "The North wind would shake the whitish olive branches underneath me and the blue-green mirror of the sea would be shattered in foam; that corner of land exposed to the agitation [of the waves] and the whistling [of the wind] represented the tumult of the human life."¹¹⁾

While writing poems inspired by *Anacreon*, *De Rada* wrote others in the fashion of the Albanian folk songs he had been collecting during the same year. In this way was born his "doppio romanzo lirico" ("two-sided lyrical romance"). The epithet "doppio" signifies that "*Milosao*" combines the author's classical reminiscences with the Albanian popular motifs heard in his village. A "romance" the work is, in the sense that the author has projected in it "his own love adventures in great part" — we know from other sources that the object of his love was a shepherd's daughter.¹²⁾

The genesis of "*Milosao*" as explained by the author is then the felicitous meeting of Greek melic poetry with Albanian popular poetry, a meeting which was made possible — we can add — by the intermediary of Italian poetry. An allusion to *Ariosto* is indicative of the influence Italian chivalric poetry had on young *De Rada*.¹³⁾ And it is easy to recognize the traces of *Leopardi* and *Foscolo* in the letter: the resemblance is great indeed between *De Rada's* hill and that of *Leopardi* in "L'infinito", while the expression, "The Earth would smile at me", is reminiscent of a passage in *Foscolo's* "Ultime lettere di Jacopo Ortis".¹⁴⁾

¹⁰⁾ "La Terra mi sorrideva da tutte le parti ch'io la guardava."

¹¹⁾ "Il vento di tramontana urtava sotto di me i rami biancastri degli olivi e tutta l'azzurra superficie del mare lontano era rotta in spuma: quel lato di terra abbandonato all'agitazione e al fischio mi figurava il tumulto delle umane generazioni."

¹²⁾ "Avendori per la più parte le avventure mie proprie dipinto." *Autobiologia*, I, p. 16. — This autobiographical work of *De Rada* (Cosenza-Napoli, 1898—99) consists of four parts, or books, which will be referred to as I, II, III, and IV respectively.

¹³⁾ "Or parmi che quest'anno mi sia passato sopra, come a'cavalieri erranti nel castello d'Atlante."

¹⁴⁾ "A queste parole tutto ciò che io vedeva mi sembrava un riso dell'universo: io mirava con occhi di riconoscenza il cielo, e mi pareva ch'egli si spalancasse per accoglierci." (14 maggio, a sera).

We shall see, when we analyze A, how pertinent this introductory letter is to the spirit informing the poetic text. One word describes that spirit: naturalism. We shall also see that naturalism is almost absent from B which is instead pervaded by a different spirit: Christianity. The fact that the letter to a friend in A has been replaced in B by a prayer to the Madonna is a clear indication of the poet's change in his vision of life.

The prayer bears the date of December 1840. The poet invokes the Virgin to heal his sickness — tuberculosis — and then mentions vaguely the idyllic love of this youth, which was followed by his revolutionary activity that threw him on a "strada [. . .] bagnata del sangue d'uomini vissuti meco". The image of the Virgin saved him then from perdition, as she will save him now from the sickness that has brought him "near death".

The pathos of these words is brought to light by recalling that *De Rada's* Christian faith had been rather tepid during his youth.¹⁵⁾ The eve of the Immaculate Conception he woke to the sound of bells chiming and songs of peasants accompanied by bagpipes. He rose and wrote his prayer. The next day he was already feeling better and after a week he recovered completely.¹⁶⁾ From that day until the end of his life, *De Rada* was a devout Christian.

Seven years passed between this "sign of divine favor" and the date of the publication of B. Most of these years *De Rada* spent in the house of the Marquis *Spiriti*, as his son's tutor, longing in vain to win the heart of the Marquis' daughter. He lived during those years "isolated" "from the vulgar crowd", all-absorbed in his two "ideals", "Albania and the lady".¹⁷⁾ During the same time, he tells us, he revised A and made the changes that appear in B.¹⁸⁾ These changes must, one presumes, also reflect his aristocratic love and more generally the aristocratic life in which he found refuge. The high society life in the capital of the Kingdom was too great a change from his Albano-Calabrian rural environment not to leave traces in the new version. The comparison of the two editions will show that the version of "*Milosao*" reflects directly the author's reversion to the Christian faith and indirectly his aversion from the revolutionary ideals of his youth.

¹⁵⁾ "E l'amicizia lení in me l'appassimento della fede mancata a Gesù Cristo." *Autobiologia*, I, p. 10; se also p. 19.

¹⁶⁾ *Autobiologia*, II, p. 16.

¹⁷⁾ "Già io mi era isolato, e dal vulgo che altro Dio non ha fuori che l'Utile che in sé può adagiarlo, era rifuggito all' ideale della mia Patria e della donna." *Autobiologia*, III, p. 10.

¹⁸⁾ "Al *Milosao* dopo il 1841 avea nelle ore felici aggiunto creazioni semplici omogenee che ne connettevano artisticamente la tela." *Autobiologia*, III, p. 18.

III. A vs. B: Changes in Structure and Style

The changes in structure and style — they are inseparably connected — will be considered together in this chapter. The structural changes can be brought under four categories in increasing order of importance: a) changes in the temporal frame; b) transpositions; c) modifications; and d) additions.

a) **C h a n g e s i n t h e t e m p o r a l f r a m e.** The consideration of the temporal frame in A and B suggests a shift of stress from lyrics in the former to narrative in the latter. While in A the only temporal reference is that of the 15th century contained in the title, the chapters in B are dated for a period of time going from 1405 to 1413. By providing a thread connecting A's fragmentary units into a certain episodic order which is characteristic of epic poetry, the lyric impact of the cantos in A is weakened. As a matter of fact, the very word "kangjel" ("canto") is dropped in B where the units are chapters instead. The dating transforms the "lyrical romance" into a diary, it turns the "legend" into a chronicle.¹⁹⁾

b) **T r a n s p o s i t i o n s.** The transpositions in B are less frequent than in C. A case in B is very telling. Canto XVIII A is a woman's expression of sorrow for the absence of her husband who has gone to fight the Turkish enemy. The woman is unnamed and unspecified, as in the folk songs whose theme is the husband's departure for war. In XXIX B the woman is *Milosao's* wife. The canto in A precedes in time *Milosao's* marriage with the heroine, whereas XXIX B follows in time that marriage. After this chapter comes another which precedes the elegy on the death of *Milosao's* wife. The chapter in question, modified by the addition of a lengthy coda, is a preliminary step to that death. A detail in B points to that conclusion: a partridge is shown feeding the woman's child in his cradle. In A the detail is a popular motif interwoven in the canto's texture lyrically, whereas in B it has the psychological function of preparing the reader for the woman's death. In the light of the death episode contained in the coda — *Milosao's* wife recalls her grandmother's death — the feeding of *Milosao's* child by the partridge becomes an omen. In fact, the next chapter tells about the child's death, which is immediately followed by that of his mother.

c) **M o d i f i c a t i o n s.** More important are the modifications of sections of one or more lines. They are so many that a list of them would take us far beyond the scope of this article. Suffice it to say that of the thirty cantos of the original, not less than eighteen have been modified, some of them substantially. We shall select three examples for examination.

¹⁹⁾ The description of "*Milosao*" as "leggenda" is found in *Autobiologia*, I, p. 15.

Canto IXA contains the following passage:

Ashtë bilj të nëmurish	Thus the sons of the poor
pá veshur, pá ngrënë	ill-clad and ill-fed,
si të ndajtur ka të ljumët	separated as they are from the fortunate [rich]
ka inë Zot së shoghën mirë	have no help from God
besën e kanë mbí vetghën.	and must rely on themselves.

The irreligious note in A, stressing the poor man's confidence in himself and not in God, is absent from XIII B, in which the corresponding passage reads as follows:

Pse biljt e të nëmurvet	For the sons of the poor
pá veshur e pá ngrënë	ill-clad and ill-fed,
si të ndajtur ka të ljumët	separated as they are from the fortunate [rich],
kanë pak o fare sá	have little or nothing
mbanë jeta e bënë me monë.	from what life offers, accumulated in years.

The passage in A contains a revolutionary charge which is lost in B.

In XIII A, *Milosao* going to war is thus addressed by the anonymous speaker who is most probably the chorus:

Sieljsh ti nj'ushtë fanmirë	May you come back with your victorious army
të na ghapinj këta rehe	to open these hills
ljeftëris çë buartim.	to the freedom which we have lost.

In XVII B, the corresponding passage reads as follows:

Sieljsh ti nj'ushtë fanmirë	May you come back with your victorious army
me na mbajtur këta rehe	to keep these hills
pá hé zotërash	free from [foreign] domination,
si më ju zakontim.	as we have been long accostumed.

In the original, part of Albania has already been occupied by the Turks when *Milosao* leads his men against them; war here is a war of liberation. In B, Albania is still free and the hero defends her from a Turkish attack. The difference is relevant for the understanding of *Milosao's* tedium which informs the rest of his life after his wife's death. His tedium is essentially an expression of remorse for having abandoned his country in order to marry the girl of his heart. The poignancy of the hero's remorse is really convincing only if explained as failure to assist his country in her most critical moment. From the point of view of patriotism, abandoning one's country in time of war is more reprehensible than the same action in time of peace. If failure to do one's patriotic duty in time of peace is an act of cowardice, the same failure in time of war is an act of treason. Here the modification affects the poetic truth.

The third instance concerns the substitution of a single word. After the death of his wife, *Milosao* expresses his mourning in an elegy (XXIV A) ending with the following lines:

Oh! kúr t'ikënjën këto ditë!	When will my days end?
U të ghinj ndër iljëzit,	So that I may enter the stars,
të më njogh, e ka legha	find her and from the group [of souls]
të përdorë të reshtemi	leave hand in hand
më të mos ndaghem.	never more to part.

The passage is the same in XXXIB, only "iljëzit" ("stars") there is replaced by "jeta e ré" ("the new life"). The expression has Christian overtones, it means "other-worldly life". On the contrary, "to enter the stars" is naturalistic language — the astral form of life is this-worldly. True, *De Rada* here thinks of the stars not as living beings, which is what the Greeks thought, but as heavenly dwelling-places for the souls of the dead, thus following the Christian tradition in general and *Dante* in particular — the Dantean expression "new life" in B makes his thought explicit. But such an expression stressing the transcendental and the other-worldly fits ill into the context of a canto, a lament on life cut in the prime, which is construed with naturalistic language.²⁰⁾

d) Additions. Let us now see how the additions modify the structure of the work. Its size is increased conspicuously thereby. A has thirty cantos and three songs ("vjershe"), while B has thirty-seven chapters, an elegy, an Eastern carol and four songs: ten pieces more. Many chapters have also been amplified by the additions of lengthy paragraphs. There are omissions too, but all considered, the size of B is roughly a third larger than the size of A.

Most of the additions, as well as modifications and transpositions, are functional in transforming the heroine of the original into the *Gavrile* of the version. In the original, the girl is called "bilj'e Kologrés" ("the daughter of Cologrea"). Designating someone by his mother's name is unusual and implies disparagement or belittlement. Indeed, "kalogrea" in Greek means "nun" "sister in charity" — the periphrasis, which is equivalent to "the poor woman's daughter", is meant by the author to underline the low birth of the girl. But *Gavrile* (*Gabriella* in Italian) is the name of the Marquis *Spiriti's* daughter with whom *De Rada* fell in love while living in Naples.²¹⁾ The name of *Gavrile* is found rarely in B (Chapters XI²²⁾, XXVIII) — it reappears in *Scanderbegu i pafaan* as the name of a romanesque character — the heroine's usual name is "the daughter of Cologrea". But her nature has been altered, like a fresh and delicate painting that has been retouched and bungled.

The change of the heroine's name reflects a change in her poetic role and function. The heroine's role in A is to give salience to the hero's figure: in fact, there she is called a "cloud" — in the language of popular symbolism — while he is "the sun". In B her role is no longer subordinate to that of the hero. This is true to such an extent that a

²⁰⁾ In C, the passage has been amended to read as follows: "When will my days end? / So that I enter the new life, / leave together hand in hand / never more to part."

²¹⁾ Michele Marchianò, *Poemi albanesi di Girolamo De Rada, scelti e tradotti e illustrati*. Vecchi (Trani) 1903, p. 211, n.

²²⁾ Chapter XI was eliminated from the third edition: *De Rada* realized that the chapter was a mere appendix.

more appropriate title for B would be: *Milosao and Gavrile*. In B the "cloud" covers "the sun".

We saw that *Cologrea's* daughter grew in the poet's imagination from a real person who was a shepherd's daughter. There is in A a clear correspondence between the role of the feminine persona poetica and her social status. Can we infer, by way of analogy, that the increased importance of the heroine in B reflects the noble rank of the real *Gavrile*?

Not necessarily, of course. The figments of imagination are not, as a rule, good measures of the real situations from which they derive. In the case of *De Rada*, however, they are. For *De Rada* is one of those poets who project real experience in imagination without always being able to draw a line between the two. This is true for all *De Rada's* creations that are the work of imagination — clearly not his forte — the only exception being the original "*Milosao*", a work of almost pure perception.

Because poetry in A is perceptive — as we can infer from the introductory letter — the daughter of *Cologrea* is a static character, similar to the figures engraved in Greek bas-reliefs. But *Gavrile* undergoes, being largely a phantasy creature, a whole process of development according to a preconceived idea in the author's mind. We shall consider here those additions and modifications which mark the stages of her development.

In VB, we read that *Gavrile* stays at home instead of going to Easter mass. Her religious tepidity is confirmed in the next chapter in which an old shepherd blames her for her "carpe diem" attitude, sinful by Christian standards.

The additions so far point out *Gavrile's* religious indifference. The Easter's Eve carol, a radical modification of Canto XA, focuses on the decay of the Christian religion among the Albanians as a consequence of their increasing commerce with the Turks. Canto XA bears on social differences instead: the Lady mother catches sight of her son holding the hand of the poor girl who remains as if petrified by her look. This canto is much shorter than the corresponding "carol" which contains a story — another coda — whose theme is religious laxity. *Milosao's* uncle in Adrionopolis forgets his country and neglects his faith for the love of a Turkish beauty whom he marries. "God then abandoned him, / who was no longer seen in the churches."²³) His Turkish wife runs away and his father is killed by the Turks. The young man in dejection throws himself into the sea. This edifying story combining love of country with Christian devotion is quite in keeping with the kind of versified tales that *De Rada* began to write in the period of his

²³) "Dhe inë Zot jo më e parë / qishvet, s'i vuri ré."

maturity. *Quattro storie*, a collection of such tales, was published in the same year as B. The same mixture of lyric and epic elements occur in both.

The "carpe diem" motif is heard again in XIVB, this time in counterpoint with *Gavrile's* "Weltschmerz". But only in XXIIIB does *Gavrile* reveal her sophisticated nature. That chapter, corresponding to XXA, contains the earthquake episode which is central to the work. In A, the heroine asks *Milosao*:

I bardhë bir buljari,
se ti më merr, ti kú më qelë?
Nëng jam u zonjë madhe
si bushtra ë jot kunat.

Where are you taking me,
my lord, if you marry me?
I am not a lady,
like your proud sister-in-law.

In B, *Gavrile* repeats the three first lines, but the fourth is completely different: "and you will get tired of me as God [did]."²⁴) The implication of the elliptical sentence is that God grew tired of the sins of the population (we learned from the "carol" that their nobles married Turkish women) and punished them by an earthquake. God shows his ire by first making the church's belfry collapse in B. No church is mentioned in A where men are seen exposed to the "violence of the earth" ("volë e dheut") among howling beasts, uprooted trees and houses in ruins. The earthquake in A is a natural phenomenon powerfully portrayed; in B, it is adventitious without really being, as it purports to, apocalyptic.

In A, *Milosao* answers the girl's question in a straightforward manner:

Skutari së thughjet
më katund: për tej malj
priftëra janë të na martonjën.
U me akul e parmentë,
ti më ruan kaljivjen
e më lanë të veshurat,
vet për mua të vetëmith.

Scutari will no longer
be called a town. Beyond those mountains
are priests who can marry us.
I [hunt] with arrows and [till the soil] with plough.
You take care of my house,
and wash my linen,
you the one for me alone.

In a sense the hero welcomes the earthquake that sets him free from the bonds of his nobility. It is the democratic *De Rada* who speaks thus with *Milosao's* mouth. And listen now to *Milosao's* speech in B:

Ai na lja po edhe të ndiemi
kët ajër ç'u ngre të ftoghinj.
Ena: katundi na rá
e aq e gjerë frima a vëdekes
na porsín të dive,
se të di kemi një mál
e një besë të sheghur gjirit
kë ndë jatër më së vëmi;
na ljidhi një gjughë e mali.

He himself [God] has spared us, and we now feel
this wind which rose to refresh [us].
Come: the town is in ruins,
and this vast voice of death
warns us both
that we have one love
and one faith deep in our hearts
where no other can find place.
One language and one love bound us together.

This speech which adroitly links love with patriotism and religion sounds too much of a sermon to appease the girl's doubts. She wants

²⁴) "Prá e më varesën si inë Zot."

to marry her prince in their native city, not in foreign lands. In the next chapter XXIVB — an addition — *Milosao* pleads that she ought not be so attached to the sinful city that God destroyed.

Njeriu çë t' shkuamavet	He who holds fast
i ljidhet mbanë një hé	to the past holds a shadow
ka dhe qiela u ndá.	from which Heaven separated itself.

But the girl perceives in his condemnation of the city quite another motivation: if he married the poor girl in the sight of his subjects, he would lose decorum. The prince replies that she "who is used to trust / no one except herself" ("e u zakone e s'ké besë / po përjashta vethés") distrusts him too, who "takes from his riches / to feed strangers", thus "imitating" Christ. The daughter of *Cologrea* takes his Christian gift of a marriage for what it is, an alms, and retorts by implying that, had he such a Christian heart, he would have marry her right there, among the ruins, and would have stood with her in their country, away from the riches and the splendor found in foreign lands. *Milosao* then defends himself in these words:

Më u s' mbanj; e mirë e pé	I possess nothing, you [can] see it yourself.
sot e afërmja e zëës,	Today I lost what was dearest to me,
nesër pra gjela më bie.	tomorrow I may lose my life.

The meaning of these obscure words is that life itself seems precarious to him now that he lost his country and his possessions (notice the association). His answer eludes the girl's question while arguing that his love for her is proven by her generosity to marry her, in spite of his own destitution. Love here is weighed, in typically bourgeois fashion, against a balance of property values couched in charitable language.

The reluctant girl marries her prince finally, a son is born to them. Her happiness is perfect — and that is exactly what worries her:

Mirrfilë	No one
ndë dhé mos njeri psoi	on this earth achieved
të i frighej mali. Fati	love fully. My hapiness
im i bukur mbí zakon	extraordinarily beautiful
bën e kjo erë e madhe	signifies to me through this mightily blowing wind
mua thotë: Ni të fjeturomi.	that now we [must] fly.

It is the Greek concept of *hybris* (excess) which *De Rada* expresses thus through *Gavrile* in XXVIII B (another addition). The Greeks believed that, since fortune rotates, man should not wish to reach the highest point lest his fall begin; things superlative are the privilege of gods, but human beings should recognize their limits. The myth of *Polycrates* illustrates that belief well.²⁵⁾

²⁵⁾ This handsome young man, afraid of his god-like happiness, threw his ring into the sea as a token of sacrifice in acknowledgment of the superiority of the gods. When the ring was found in the body of a fish that had swallowed it, he knew that the gods had not accepted his offer and he was doomed. In fact, he was killed by his enemies not long afterwards.

The heathen *Gavrile* who has no confidence except in herself, recalcitrant to both husband and God, pays for her *hybris* with her death. *Milosao* who loves "the stranger" is punished by being deprived of her and his son. The heroine's death in A is a natural event without religious implications. True, she is called a "stranger" also in A, but only on account of her social birth, so different from *Milosao's* princely condition. In Canto XXIA, the hero invokes the Madonna's protection on his bride-to-be in these words:

Shën Mëri mosë na ljësh,
 prá çë të m'ghinj mbë shpi
 e stoljiturëz me arë
 bëljëreshavet e pritur
 e rëmpien gjitonevet
 si ka barët nj'jothi
 çë bufetavet t'i merinj.

Holy Vergin, do not abandon us,
 when she, adorned with gold,
 enters my house
 attended by ladies,
 she ravished from her neighbourhood
 like a violet from the grass
 to perfume our tables.

Here *Milosao* expresses his fear that the poor girl, divorced from her natural environment, will not survive in the new milieu where she is being transplanted. Her death in A is a consequence of her lack of social adjustment.

Our analysis shows that, while the daughter of *Cologrea* has an idyllic nature, a sister to *Nerina* and *Silvia*, *Gavrile* is a sophisticated person whose peasant gown ill hides her refined nature. Rather than a person, she is the personification of an idea in the author's mind. That idea which governs the plot in B (the plot in A is quite different) is that disaster awaits those who challenge divine Providence.

All considered, B stands to A much as *Gerusalemme conquistata* stands to *Gerusalemme liberata*. The alteration can now be defined in terms of style. Speaking of "*Milosao's*" style in A, the author characterizes it as "bare and active" ("stile nudo e attivo"). The style in B is, on the contrary, ornate and redundant, marred by emotional outpourings. A's lyrical quality is largely lost in B which is a hybrid blend of lyric and didactic elements. The slim youth that was A has grown fat in his mature years. One example may suffice. In XXIA *Milosao* says:

Nesërith ndë kët gherë
 uljet te shtrati im,
 më jep çërën për të puthur
 nënë lorën më ljë këshën.

Tomorrow at this hour
 she will rest on my bed,
 offering her face to my kisses,
 yielding her hair to my arm.

In XXVIB the corresponding passage reads:

E pra ghinë dieli
 i nesërm, e kët gherë
 vëghet fjën te shtrati im,
 e zonjë me këshën e butë
 me gjí ëmje fat-bardhë.

Then comes the sun
 tomorrow, and this time
 she falls asleep in my bed,
 the lady with the soft hair,
 with her blessed maternal bosom.

The woman is still a lover in A, the language is earthly and direct. In B, she is a mother and a "lady", the language is edifying and refined.

IV. Changes in the Author's Life in the Period of his Maturity

My surmise that *Gavrile* is the projection of *De Rada's* love for the Marquis' daughter is corroborated by the consideration of a higher level of civilization in B with respect to A. The Lady mother is shown lying on a "velvet carpet" (XIIB), the maid servants bring "carpets and golden vases" (XIXB), and *Gavrile*, "her princely ring on her finger", "leans against a column" (XXVB). The last detail in particular fits well into the picture of the Neapolitan lady in her palace.

The transformation of the heroine's poetic nature reflects a radical change in the poet's conception of poetry and life, which is to be explained, in the last analysis, by the author's changed conditions of life.

De Rada's revival of Christian faith coincides with his political *apprivoisement*. Soon after his release from prison, the former revolutionist entered the service of the Marquis *Spiriti*, his life took another direction. A reading of the third and fourth books of his *Autobiologia* gives a measure of the changes that occurred in the poet's existence from that time until the revolution of 1848.

It should be said at this juncture that the history of the Albanians of Calabria and Sicily has a long record of battles for freedom and democracy. The Albanian Professor *Pasquale Baffi*, a distinguished Hellenist and one of the founders of the Neapolitan Republic of 1799, was sentenced to death when the short-lived republic was overthrown.²⁶⁾ The College of Sant'Adriano in San Demetrio Corone, where *De Rada* studied, was called a "nest of reptiles" by the King *Ferdinand II* on account of its anti-Bourbon activity. The Mazzinian poet and conspirator *Domenico Mauro* organized insurrections in Calabria (1837, 1838) and was a commander of the revolutionary troops during the 1848 revolution in that region. The priest *Angelo Basile* led a group of demonstrators in the streets of Naples during the same revolution.²⁷⁾ A former student of Sant'Adriano College, *Agesilao Milano*, attempted to take the King's life in 1856 and was put to death. *Francesco Crispi* organized the resistance in Sicily where the revolution for the unification of Italy started under the leadership of *Garibaldi* — the great majority of the Albanians followed him. *Piana dei Greci*, an Albanian town in Sicily, was the stage of bloody confrontation between the governmental troops and the popular masses organized in the socialistic "Fasci" during the uprisings of 1893.

De Rada devotes a central part in his *Autobiologia* to the political situation of the times. We learn from it that the poet took part in the

²⁶⁾ A cursory description of the Albanian contribution to the Italian Risorgimento is found in: Giovanni Cava, *Gli Italo-Albanesi nel Risorgimento italiano: Shêjzat — Le Pleiadi*, VIII (1964) 7—10, pp. 312—331.

²⁷⁾ *Autobiologia*, IV, p. 5.

1837 insurrection. At that time *De Rada*, a member of the "Giovine Italia", still believed in revolution as a means of social regeneration.²⁸⁾ In August 1839 he was arrested in Naples, together with three other Albanian conspirators. He remained in prison for about a month. A year later he entered the house of the Marquis *Spiriti*.

His love for the "young virgin of high birth" is described in vague and elusive terms. It must have been a courtly love — he calls her a "cloud", his love for her is like "following a cloud". The anecdote told to prove her infidelity to him really proves her infidelity to another person.²⁹⁾ Much more interesting is another detail bearing on financial matters. *De Rada* says his rupture with her was providential, for it removed from him the suspicion that "he loved not her person but her dowry consisting of 50,000 ducats".³⁰⁾

His fellow Albanians resented his "aristocratic love which had corrupted and debased his heart".³¹⁾ Some of the facts relating to the 1848 revolution are worth mentioning here. The Dominican Father *Raffaele Orioli* informed the poet that Calabria was preparing to rise in revolt and that the Albanians wanted him to put his paper, *L'Albanese d'Italia*, at the service of the revolution. *De Rada* instead went to see *Carlo Poerio*, Director in the Ministry of the Interior, and advised him to incarcerate *Mauro*, the leader of the conspirators: "Arrest Mauro first, and his herd will disband."³²⁾ A few days later the constitution was proclaimed, which *De Rada* sincerely favored. But when the revolution broke out and the King ordered his troops to squash it, the poet sided in his paper with the forces of order. He quotes a leader of the Liberal party, *Giuseppe de Cesare*, who wrote to him on that occasion: "Dear De Rada, you are the only real patriot, only you saved the Kingdom."³³⁾ On the other hand, an Italian poetess, *Giuseppina Guacci*, who was a literary friend of *De Rada*, told him: "De Rada, you wounded the country in the heart."³⁴⁾

²⁸⁾ "Giovine Italia" was the conspirative organization founded by *Mazzini* aiming to establish a democratic republic of united Italy.

²⁹⁾ *Autobiologia*, III, p. 16.

³⁰⁾ *Autobiologia*, III, p. 17.

³¹⁾ "Fu chi rispose che un amore aristocratico avea corrotta ed invilita la mia anima." *Autobiologia*, IV, p. 16.

³²⁾ "Ponete in arresto nel Castello Mauro per primo, e la sua gregge si dissiperá." *Autobiologia*, IV, p. 17.

³³⁾ *Autobiologia*, IV, p. 21.

³⁴⁾ *Autobiologia*, IV, p. 22.