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THE INFLUENCE OF ORIENTAL LITERATURE ON ALBANIAN ROMANTIC POETRY: FROM HYPOTEXTS TO STYLISTIC TRANSFORMATIONS

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the influences and intertextual connections between Oriental literatures (Indian, Persian, and Turkish) and Albanian Romantic poetry, with particular focus on the works of Jeronim De Rada and Naim Frashëri. Through the analysis of specific examples—recurrent narrative scenes, paratextual references (such as titles and explicit mentions of Oriental poets), and stylistic transformations—it demonstrates that contact with Eastern traditions did not constitute mere borrowing, but rather a creative process of recontextualization. In De Rada's oeuvre, the hypotext of Dandin's drama and other Eastern epics function as artistic sources that intertwine with a distinctive lyric-narrative structure, endowing his poems with semantic density and typological originality. In the case of Naim Frashëri, Oriental paratexts (Rumi, Saadi, Nizami) serve as a foundation for the construction of national metaphors and symbolism, transforming the poetic voice toward educational and patriotic purposes. The theoretical framework draws on Riffaterre's concept of the reader as the agent who uncovers intertextual links, as well as on Eliot's notion that literary value emerges through dialogue and intersection with other traditions. Ultimately, the study argues that engagement with the Orient revitalizes the typology and aesthetic significance of Albanian Romanticism, opening productive avenues for further comparative research.

Keywords: Intertextuality, Oriental Literatures, De Rada, Naim Frashëri, Reader.

INTRODUCTION

Albanian Romanticism, developed within a multilingual and intercultural context, is the result of an ongoing dialogue with other literary traditions, in which relationships with Oriental literatures play an essential role. Influences from Persian and Turkish culture are not limited merely to thematic aspects but involve a complex aesthetic, symbolic, and structural interaction that has contributed to shaping the poetics of the major authors of this period. The works of Jeronim De Rada and Naim Frashëri offer a rich reflection of these intertextual connections, demonstrating that Albanian Romanticism cannot be understood solely within national boundaries, but rather as part of a broader network of references and creative transformations.

However, existing studies on Albanian Romanticism have mainly focused on its relations with European traditions, while the Oriental dimension has often been treated peripherally, as a general cultural influence. Without a structured comparative methodology, such approaches fail to explain how Oriental elements are transformed within Albanian poetics, leaving unclear the ways in which Oriental hypotexts are rewritten, re-semanticized, and functionalized within the national context. This study aims to fill this interpretive gap by analyzing the intertextual links between Oriental literatures and Albanian Romantic poetry through recurring narrative scenes, paratextual elements, symbolic figuration, and stylistic transformations.

From a theoretical perspective, the study relies on the concept of intertextuality and on the active role of the reader in uncovering networks of meaning (Riffaterre), as well as on the idea of tradition as a continuous dialogue between authors and epochs (Eliot). Within this framework, literary work is viewed not as an isolated creation but as a space of discursive interweaving. The findings indicate that the dialogue with the Orient has enriched both the typological and aesthetic weight of Albanian Romanticism, opening new perspectives for comparative and intercultural studies.

Objectives

1. To identify and analyze the intertextual connections between Oriental literatures (Persian and Turkish) and Albanian Romantic poetry by highlighting narrative motifs, symbolic figuration, paratextual elements, and stylistic structures present in the works of Jeronim De Rada and Naim Frashëri.
2. To examine the creative transformation of Oriental hypotexts in the works of De Rada and Naim Frashëri, demonstrating that this influence does not function as direct borrowing but as a process of aesthetic and ideological recontextualization aimed at constructing an original national poetics.
3. To assess the role of intercultural dialogue in the typological and aesthetic enrichment of Albanian Romanticism by situating this period within a broader comparative context and demonstrating that the literary value of these works increases through their interaction with other literary traditions.

Research Hypotheses

This study argues that Albanian Romantic poetry, particularly the works of Jeronim De Rada and Naim Frashëri, has been shaped through a profound intertextual dialogue with Oriental traditions, in which Persian, Turkish, and Indian models do not function as passive borrowings but as hypotexts that are creatively recontextualized and transformed, producing original poetic forms and enhancing the typological and aesthetic dimensions of Albanian Romanticism.

From this central hypothesis derive several specific hypotheses:

- In De Rada's poems, narrative structures, motifs, and symbolic models linked to Oriental hypotexts can be identified, which are transformed into the service of an original lyrical-narrative poetics and a semantic hermeticism.
- In Naim Frashëri's work, paratextual references and symbolic figuration of Oriental origin serve the construction of a national poetic discourse with educational, moral, and patriotic aims.
- The aesthetic and typological value of Albanian Romanticism increases through its intersection with other literary traditions, confirming that literary creativity develops through dialogic relations rather than cultural isolation.
- The reader, through the discovery of intertextual connections, plays an active role in the production of meaning and in the re-evaluation of the literary text.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of the relationships between Oriental literatures and Albanian Romantic poetry is grounded in the concept of intertextuality, which considers the literary text as part of a broad network of references and dialogues with preceding texts. According to this approach, literary work is not an isolated creation but a space where diverse traditions, models, and cultural codes intersect and are reshaped within new historical and aesthetic contexts.

The term intertextuality was first articulated by Julia Kristeva who, drawing on Bakhtin's ideas of dialogism, emphasizes that every text is a "mosaic of quotations" and the product of the absorption and transformation of other texts. In this sense, the works of De Rada and Naim Frashëri may be read as the result of a dialogic process with Oriental traditions, in which borrowed elements do not remain unchanged but undergo functional and semantic transformations. This theoretical approach helps avoid the concept of influence as passive dependence, replacing it with the notion of creative interaction. As contemporary theories of intertextuality suggest, the meaning of a text can only be understood in relation to other texts; no work stands alone but is interwoven with the literary tradition that precedes it and the cultural context in which it is produced (Allen, 2022).

An important contribution to the study of intertextuality is also made by Michael Riffaterre, who shifts attention from the author to the reader. According to him, the deeper meaning of a text emerges precisely from the reader's ability to identify the "traces" of other texts and to reconstruct the network of hidden references. He assigns a central role to the reader of the text. For Riffaterre, it is the reader who recognizes these intertextual connections, and their discovery enables the literary work to gain in complexity. As he notes, "Intertextuality is the reader's recognition of the relationships between a given work and other works that have preceded or followed it. These other works constitute the intertext of the first" (Gros, 2011, p. 28).

On the other hand, Gérard Genette, through the concept of transtextuality, offers a more detailed typology of intertextual relationships, distinguishing forms such as intertextuality, paratext, metatext, architext, and hypertext/hypotext. These categories are particularly functional for this study: Naim's direct references to Oriental poets may be treated as paratexts, while the narrative transformations in De Rada can be analyzed as hypertextual relations with Eastern models. This theoretical framework enables a more systematic and methodical identification of connections between texts.

In the same line, T. S. Eliot's reflections on literary tradition emphasize that no author possesses full value when detached from his predecessors, since every new creation enters into a dialogic relationship with the past. According to Eliot, work gains meaning and aesthetic weight precisely through this intersection with other traditions. This idea reinforces the thesis of the present study that Albanian Romanticism, far from being an isolated literary movement, developed through continuous interaction with different cultures, thereby enriching national poetry both typologically and aesthetically.

Regarding existing scholarship, Albanian criticism has addressed the stylistic and thematic features of De Rada and Naim Frashëri, as well as their relationship with national and European traditions; however, Oriental influences have often been mentioned only fragmentarily. Consequently, this study seeks to fill this gap by offering a systematic intertextual and comparative approach that analyzes these relationships not as historical coincidences but as essential elements of their poetics.

METHODOLOGY

The study is based on a qualitative approach of an analytical and comparative nature, combining textual analysis with intertextual and comparatist methods. Initially, a close reading of representative works by De Rada and Naim Frashëri is conducted, aiming to identify motifs, stylistic figures, narrative structures, and paratextual elements that demonstrate the presence of Oriental hypotexts. Subsequently, these elements are compared with source texts from Persian and Turkish traditions in order to highlight similarities, transformations, and the new semantic functions they acquire within the Albanian context. This comparative approach makes it possible to distinguish between direct influence and creative re-elaboration.

On the theoretical level, the analysis relies on the concept of intertextuality and on the reader's role in decoding meanings (Riffaterre), as well as on the theory of tradition and the dynamic relationships among authors (T. S. Eliot). In addition, the historical-literary method is employed to situate the works within the cultural and ideological context of Albanian Romanticism.

The combination of these methods aims to ensure an integrated interpretation, treating the text simultaneously as an aesthetic, historical, and intercultural product.

HISTORICAL ASPECTS OF THE ROMANTIC PERIOD

If we refer to the multilingualism that characterized the Romantic period, dialogue with other literature appears as inevitable and necessary. Romantic authors were well acquainted with the Turkish language. Many of them lived, at least temporarily, in Ottoman territories, such as Pashko Vasa, Thimi Mitko, Filip Shiroka, and others. During this period, De Rada drew on Indian

literature, whereas Naim Frashëri relied on Turkish and Persian literary traditions. It cannot be denied that Oriental poetry served as an inexhaustible source of inspiration for many authors worldwide.

Oriental literature exerted a profound and lasting influence both on world literature and on Albanian literature during the Romantic period. The thematic elements, symbolic figuration, and lyrical spirit of this tradition are clearly reflected in the works of Albanian authors. Literary criticism notes that the ninth song of the poem *The Songs of Serafina Topia* shows marked similarities with the grandeur of biblical imagery, both in its imaginative dimension and in its solemn tone and spiritually charged descriptions.

Thus, Nehas Sopaj argues that “lyrical hermeticism is preceded by the sacred books... where a high level of abstraction and an aestheticization of the lyrical subject exist. In J. De Rada’s poems there is a subjective–objective discursive system that contains a high aesthetic degree, which cannot be explained otherwise than as semantic hermeticism” (Sopaj, 1998, p. 13).

Indian literature, during De Rada’s time, experienced a notable revival and became an important source of inspiration for many authors, who found in it motifs, figures, and thematic structures for their creative works. The heroine Savantasena from Dandin’s drama *Mrhakatika* (an Indian poet of the 7th century CE) may have served as a motivating impulse for De Rada, given that a character with a similar name appears in his poem *Skënderbeu i pafan*. In the drama, this character faces a tragic fate, preparing to burn together with her children, but is ultimately saved by her husband, an element that emphasizes the dramatic and sacrificial dimension of the female figure.

Relying on the primary text, Dandin’s drama—which in this case functions as the hypotext in De Rada’s work—similar events and motifs can be observed reappearing in his literary production. A meaningful example is the scene of Evoda’s death in the second version of *Serafina Topia*, where her figure confronts a tragic end as a result of the political revenge of the people. However, this remains only one interpretative possibility, since another potential hypotext may have been Tasso’s *Jerusalem Delivered*, a work known to De Rada. In this poem, the character Sophronia is sentenced to burn on a pile of wood together with her beloved but is ultimately saved through the intervention of a third character, Clorinda, thus restoring the motif of rescue and sacrifice as a key element of the dramatic structure.

The intertextual connections that De Rada’s poems establish with different literary and cultural traditions once again testify to their particular artistic value, not only within the historical context in which they were written but also in the present day. This interweaving of motifs, figures, and narrative structures place his work in an open dialogue with world literature, making it richer and more meaningful. A contemporary approach to the major work of Jeronim De Rada enables a different, more critical and interpretative reading, leading to its re-dimensioning and re-evaluation, while revealing new layers of meaning and the continuous relevance of this body of work. “Sources may be understood as traces of values and new meanings” (Gros, 2011, p. 59). Michael Riffaterre also assigns an important role to the reader, arguing that it is the reader who recognizes these intertextual connections, and their discovery increases the complexity of the literary work.

“Greater typological originality was achieved by the Arbëresh Romantic poem in De Rada. This extraordinary originality astonished and disoriented scholars of the great poet. Marchiano expressed himself as follows ‘In ancient and modern literature there is no poetry that resembles

De Rada's. First of all, there is no literary genre in which we may place it. *Milosao*, which appears lyrical, is in fact a series of tableaux that combine lyrical and narrative elements, with intermezzi of dramatic form... Since he had not fully assimilated his conceptions, there arises the lack of a predetermined plan'" (Kodra, 2000, p. 22). Thus, according to Marchiano's assessment, De Rada stands apart with his poems as unique in their kind.

COMPARATIVE INTERTEXTUAL APPROACHES BETWEEN THE DIALOGUING WORKS

Hypotext: Dandin's drama *Mrhakatika* – the heroine Savantasena

Albanian poem: *Serafina Topia* – the scene of Evoda's death

Element	Oriental hypotext	De Rada's hypertext	Creative value
Female character	Savantasena – faces a tragic fate but is saved by her husband	Evoda – faces severe punishment but is saved through Clorinda's intervention	The character is adapted to the Albanian context and dramatizes patriotic sacrifice
Dramatic scene	Prepared for burning as an act of sacrifice	Sentenced to burning on a pile of wood, rescued at the end	The scene becomes lyrical-narrative, combining drama and lyricism
Theme	Sacrifice, tragedy, love	Sacrifice, heroism, morality	Recontextualization: Oriental theme → Albanian patriotic context

As illustrated in the table above, in De Rada's *Serafina Topia* one can observe the clear reliance on the hypotext of Dandin's *Mrhakatika*, where the heroine Savantasena faces a tragic fate but is saved through her husband's intervention. In De Rada, this motif is reused in the scene of Evoda's death, who faces severe punishment on a pile of wood but is rescued through Clorinda's intervention. The transformation that occurs here is not merely borrowing; rather, the character is adapted to the Albanian context, dramatizing patriotic sacrifice. The scene becomes a combination of lyricism and drama, where the themes of sacrifice and heroism acquire new meaning, thus recontextualizing Oriental motifs within an Albanian aesthetic and ideological perspective.

On the other hand, in his poetry Naim Frashëri directly mentions major authors of the Oriental tradition, such as Ferdowsi, Nizami, Saadi, and Rumi, thereby demonstrating his awareness of belonging to a broader cultural and literary horizon. In Naim's work we encounter numerous references that help the reader identify intertextual relationships and the dialogue he constructs with these preceding models. The motif of the candle, which burns itself in order to illuminate others, derives from this symbolic tradition, while the image of the moth circling around it and burning its wings recalls Nizami's verses, although it is reintroduced within a new semantic context.

In the poem "Fyelli" (The Reed Flute), Naim also provides clear paratextual signs of a direct relationship with Rumi's homonymous poem. The very title functions as an intertextual marker, guiding the reader toward the source of inspiration. However, the material drawn from the

paratext is not simply reproduced; rather, it is reshaped according to the author's intentions, acquiring a new aesthetic and ideological function. In this way, the voice of the predecessor fades, making room for the original song of Naim's flute, which articulates his own sensibility and poetic vision. Thus, Naim distances himself from the hypotext in order to express his personal poetic purpose:

“It struck the sky and illuminated it,
It struck the heart and warmed it,
It struck the soul and intoxicated it.
It gave fragrance to the rose,
It gave light to beauty,
It gave song to the nightingale,
It gave flavor to the universe”. (Frashëri, 2007, p. 112)

Naim Frashëri's reliance on the Oriental poetic tradition stems from his aesthetic conviction regarding the high artistic values that this literature embodies. He himself states: “The poetry of Asia possesses great beauty, rich taste, fine structure, pleasing measure, chosen words, and various artistic devices” (N. Frashëri), thus emphasizing its formal and thematic richness. This statement clearly demonstrates his admiration and deep knowledge of Oriental poetry, as well as his conscious desire to draw upon this literary tradition, using it as a source of inspiration and as an aesthetic model for his own creative work.

In this context, the flute does not appear merely as an instrument that produces musical sound. It acquires the attributes of a symbolic being which dissolves into tears and lament, separated from its source and condemned to perpetual longing. Although people hear its voice, they remain unable to penetrate its inner world, as they fail to perceive the hidden spiritual “fire” that sustains it. This metaphor is further deepened through the idea that, without the fire of love, the cosmos itself would lose its function and meaning: the sky would darken, the sun would remain cold, the rose without fragrance, the nightingale without song, and beauty without vitality. In this way, love is not treated as an ordinary human emotion but as an ontological principle and a divine force that grants life and meaning to the universe.

From an intertextual perspective, this symbolism is directly linked to Rumi's mystical model, in which the flute represents the soul separated from its divine origin and yearning for reunion with the Absolute. However, in Frashëri's re-creation, this mystical metaphor does not remain confined to the Sufi plane; rather, it expands toward an ethical and national dimension, transforming into a poetic voice that articulates the pain, consciousness, and spiritual mission of the lyrical subject. Thus, the Oriental hypotext is not imitated but recontextualized and transformed into the service of a new cultural and ideological vision.

Naim Frashëri, one of the authors examined in this study, became through his work the poetic voice of an entire epoch. As Eqrem Çabej observes, “it is difficult to judge the literary work of this author, because in him the prophet and the poet are one. The purpose of Naim Frashëri's literary activity was the national cause. It is difficult to separate the writer from the patriot,” and he continues, “The idealist Naim Frashëri is a symbol of the Albanian conception; he is myth, a complete legend” (Çabej, 2009, p. 48).

COMPARATIVE APPROACHES BETWEEN HYPOTEXT AND HYPERTEXT

Albanian poem: “Fyelli” (The Reed Flute)

Oriental hypotexts: Rumi, Nizami (symbolism of the candle and the moth)

Element	Oriental hypotext	Naim’s hypertext	Creative value
Candle motif	The candle burns to illuminate others – a spiritual symbol	The candle burns to illuminate others – used as a metaphor for education and patriotism	Recontextualization of symbolism for national and moral purposes
Moth figure	The moth burns its wings for love/spiritual development	The moth circles and burns, linked with the sacred spirit and collective national feeling	Aesthetic transformation: from spiritual → ideological/patriotic
Title “Fyelli”	Rumi has a homonymous poem about the musical instrument as a spiritual metaphor	Naim uses the flute as a poetic voice, a means to express sensitivity and poetic vision	The hypotext becomes paratextual; not reproduced but recreated

In Naim Frashëri’s poem “Fyelli,” Oriental influences are clearly visible through the hypotexts of Rumi and Nizami, particularly in the symbolism of the candle and the moth. The candle motif, which in Oriental authors burns to illuminate others as a spiritual symbol, is transformed by Naim into a metaphor for education and patriotic efforts, thereby acquiring an ideological and national meaning. The figure of the moth, which in Rumi is associated with spiritual development and love, appears in Naim circling the candle and burning, yet becomes connected with the spirit and collective emotions of the people, transforming spiritual symbolism into a patriotic and moral message.

Frashëri’s poem “Fyelli” may be considered a direct hypotextual relationship to the homonymous poem that opens the first book of Rumi’s *Masnavi*. Drawing a parallel between these two texts reveals, first of all, the correspondence of the title, which functions as a clear paratextual sign and a conscious signal of intertextual connection. Through this choice, Frashëri openly acknowledges his inspiration from his predecessor—an author of universal scope and broad influence within the Oriental literary tradition—thereby guiding the reader toward the poetic source.

From a structural and thematic perspective, Frashëri’s poem opens with an invitation to listen to the lamenting voice of the flute, expressing longing and inner sorrow, and closes with a sense of abandonment and existential uncertainty of the lyrical subject. This emotional trajectory creates a clear affinity with Rumi’s model, while simultaneously demonstrating a creative transformation in which Oriental mystical symbolism is recontextualized within a new aesthetic and national function.

Frashëri writes:

“Listen to what the flute says,
It tells of desolate exiles...”
“...If you have a soul, do not abandon me.”
(Frashëri, Fyelli, pp. 111–113)

Whereas Rumi states:

“Listen to this flute as it laments,
Its melody tells of separations...”
“If the days have passed, let them pass,
O pure man, at least remain alive!”
(Rumi, *Song of the Reed Flute*, trans. from Persian by Mitat Hoxha)

In both cases, the question arises as to who should not depart: God with His love for humanity—the love that gave life to the cosmos itself—or the beautiful song of the flute that intoxicates us with its mournful sound. It may be argued that both dimensions coexist simultaneously. Up to this point, the poems correspond to one another, insofar as one text operates within the external framework of the pre-text, thus maintaining a direct intertextual relationship.

An intertextual approach to these two poems—Naim’s “Fyelli” and Rumi’s “Reed Flute”—renders Naim’s poem even more valuable. As Eliot observes: “No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone; his significance is appreciated through his relations with other poets and artists” (Eliot, 1982, p. 15).

Respecting Naim’s call for silence, we may conclude with his lines:

“Another voice I now hear,
That burns my heart,
It burned, I can endure no more,
The nightingale has begun to sing.”
(Frashëri, 2007, p. 123)

From a theoretical perspective, Eliot opposes the idea that poetry should be read merely as an expression of the poet’s personal emotions. He contends that poetry reveals not the poet’s identity, but the craft of poetry itself—this distinct form of expression influences the reader. Therefore, attention should shift from the poet’s personality to the poetic craft. Consequently, poetic tradition should be understood as the continuation of the work of those who directly preceded us (Çapaliku, 2024, p. 174).

If poetry were conceived solely on the basis of the poet’s biography, we would not be able to fully appreciate poetic art. As Hartman concludes, “Art does not add itself to the world of meaning; it exists within meaning itself,” reminding us that the poet is not the text, and the critic is not the author (ASHIGJL, 1996, p. 216).

From a comparative perspective, Oriental intertextuality functions differently in the poetics of the two authors. In De Rada, the hypotext appears primarily at the narrative and structural level, through the recreation of dramatic situations, sacrificial scenes, and character typologies, which are transformed in the service of Albanian historical and patriotic mythology. In contrast, in Naim

Frashëri the dialogue with Oriental texts develops mainly on the symbolic and metaphorical level, where mystical motifs such as the candle, the moth, or the flute are resemanticized to articulate a national and educational ethics. Thus, while the former absorbs the Oriental model into the structure of poetic narration, the latter translates it into the language of symbol and cultural ideology. In both cases, we are not dealing with imitation but with creative processes of transformation that demonstrate the ability of Albanian Romanticism to integrate Oriental heritage into an original poetic system.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the analysis demonstrates that Albanian Romanticism cannot be understood as a literary formation isolated within national boundaries, but rather as a dynamic space of cultural interaction, in which Oriental traditions play a fundamental role in shaping its aesthetic, symbolic, and typological features. The relationship of Jeronim De Rada and Naim Frashëri with Persian, Turkish, and Indian literatures does not appear as a linear influence or mechanical borrowing, but as genuine processes of intertextual transformation, through which Oriental hypotexts are recontextualized and functionalized within an original national poetics.

Unlike previous studies, which have primarily examined Albanian Romanticism in relation to European traditions, treating the Oriental dimension sporadically and without a clear analytical framework, this study offers a systematic intertextual and comparative approach. This perspective shifts the focus from the traditional notion of “influence” to the concept of intercultural dialogue and poetic transformation, enabling a deeper understanding of the mechanisms through which Oriental texts become an organic part of the aesthetic structure of the works.

More specifically, it was observed that in De Rada, the dialogue with the Orient manifests mainly on the narrative and structural level, through the recreation of dramatic situations and mythic typologies, whereas in Naim Frashëri, it develops on a symbolic and metaphorical level, through the re-semanticization of mystical motifs such as the candle, the butterfly, and the flute. These functional differences demonstrate that the interaction with Oriental traditions does not diminish the authors’ originality; on the contrary, it strengthens and consolidates it, transforming foreign heritage into a constituent element of the national poetic identity.

Consequently, this study contributes to revising the traditional paradigms of Albanian literary history and repositions Albanian Romanticism within a broader intercultural map, as part of Mediterranean and Oriental aesthetic circulations. Such a reading not only enriches the interpretation of the works of De Rada and Naim Frashëri but also opens new avenues for research on intertextuality as a fundamental mechanism of literary creation and the construction of cultural identity.

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