

“Or se’ tu quel Virgilio...”

(On the dedicatee of the elegy *An Autumn Flower* by Father Gjergj Fishta)

Il n’y a pas de hors-texte?

Elegy, after the detachment from a primarily metrical and thematically variative identity in antiquity, as a lyric mode of articulation, (at least since the 16th century),¹ is modeled and functions on a *more or less* codified topology. Besides the topological matrix – lamentation, contemplation, and consolation – it is also characterized by a specific melancholic and reflective tone, a sepulchral, pastoral, mortuary and gothic figurativeness and imagery, and many other conventional motifs (e.g., “memento mori”, “vanitas”, “danse macabre”, “ubi sunt”, “timor mortis sontubat me”, “tempus fugit”, etc.). Among these, elegy is also characterized predominantly by a defined dedicatee who may be real or fictional, historical or mythical, and in personal or impersonal relation with the elegist. Therefore, the nominal marking of a dedicatee, whether in open, synecdochical, metonymical, or abbreviative form, can be said that the elegy has historically internalized as a genre arch-convention. The dedicatee is inscribed either in the title, subtitle, in referential paratexts, or is intratextually vocativized as the addressee, either to preserve the purpose of the specific dedication or to perform the function of a rhetorical pretext; I think it suffices to consider the countless examples in ancient Latin lyric as well as in English and Italian elegy.²

¹ See, J. A. Cuddon, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* (5th ed.), Wiley-Blackwell, 2013, p. 229 ff.

² In Latin lyric, e.g., Corinne in Ovid's *Amores* (even if it is just an archetypal paradigm of the maiden), Tibullus in the *Elegy for Tibullus*; Epicurus in *De Rerum Natura* of Lucretius; Veranius, Licimius, Fabul, Lesbia, Manlius, Ortalus and brother to Catullus; to Horace Alceus, Virgil, Tibullus; Cynthia, Calimah, Filetas in Propertius; Delia, Nemesis, Sulpicia to Tibullus etc.; in English elegy: e.g. Henry King to Milton's *Lycidas*, Clough to Mathew Arnold, Donne to Thomas Carew, Ben Johnson to Cleveland, *The Unfortunate Lady* to Pope, Mr. Robert Levett to Dr. Johnson, Duke of Wellington to Tennyson, Yeats to Auden, etc. In Italian elegy: Silvia in *A Silvia* and *The beautiful lady* in *Sopra il ritratto di una bella donna scolpito nel monumento sepolcrale della medesima* by Leopardi, Giovanni in *In morte del fratello Giovanni* by Foscolo, etc.

Therefore, the dedicatory tribute in elegy explicitly indicates more than in other lyrical forms, the personal offering, or at least to some extent, the important inspirational role of the death of “someone” to induce in the poet the mournful and reflective elegiac stimulus. Due to the dominance of reflectivity or contemplation that is strongly substantialized in elegiac discourse, elegy diachronically has not conventionalized the anonymity of the dedicatee. In cases where this has happened or happens,³ we are not primarily dealing with anonymous intentions of dedication *per se*, but with the actualization of a quasi-dedicative variant of elegy that is constructed rather as an *elegiac idiom*.⁴

In this variant, therefore, the lamenting, contemplative and consolatory mode is developed, embodying provisionally an object, concept or situation that is metonymically or symbolically linked to death, to meditation of death, temporality, vanity, the perennial tragic fate of humanity, etc. In this version of actualization of elegy, the universalizing intention of elegiac meditation is truly felt more strongly, because from a receptive position, we are freed from those limitations that the dedicatory act of the canonical elegy itself can potentially presuppose and which, as such, encourage personalization and contextualization, respectively directing receptive and interpretative orientation towards the *sitz im leben*.

Taking into account what we have said, Father Gjergj Fishta's poem *Një lule vjeshtet* (*An autumn flower*)⁵ appears quite idiosyncratic when viewed from the perspective of elegiac genre conventions, actualizing a non-typical convention for canonical elegy to which it belongs, namely the anonymity of the dedicatee, which in this poem also has the status of the addressee.⁶ Regardless of whether we tend to relativize it for the sake of the “misinterpretation” of the *Il n'y a pas de hors-*

³ E.g., in Hervey's *Meditations among the Tombs*, Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*, Pope's *Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady*, Leopardi's *Sopra il ritratto di una bella donna scolpito nel monumento sepolcrale della medesima*, or even in other cases in the altered format of contemporary modern and postmodern elegy where nominalization is symbolic and often ironic, e.g., Cesare Pavese's *Death shall come, using your eyes*, Anna Akhmatova's *Death of a Poet*, Ali Podrimja's *My Dead King Diocletian* and *Dumvenio* or Azem Shkreli's *The death of the Highlander*, etc.

⁴ One of the scholars of English elegy, David Kennedy, suggests that in modernity we can also speak of an elegy which “is as likely to be a distinct idiom, mode of inquiry or species of self-description as a distinctive form.” He even raises the dichotomy between canonical and contemporary elegy and between its role as a subgenre and as an idiom. In one instance, he cites Hollander, who explains that in English poetry, “elegiac tone [is] a mood rather than ... a formal mode” (David Kennedy, *Elegy*, Routledge, New York, 2007); although for these authors the object of inquiry is English elegy, the phenomenon as such is universally configurable, i.e. the co-functioning of elegy as a subgenre and as *stimmung*.

⁵ Hereafter abbreviated and cited as *AAF*.

⁶ Since the elegiac mode presupposes a specific addressee where “the dedication and the text are con-substantial” (see for this Gerard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, Cambridge University Press, p. 117). Genette insists on identification, however in some cases this should be viewed with caution because the dedicatee can also be referred to as an inspirational instance, but the elegiac addressee may not necessarily be him/her/it, but the “concept of death” itself placed in the role of an anthropomorphized addressee, both in the sense of the implied reader and as a concept.

texte,⁷ the main component that makes this poem special is precisely this latent dedicatee. However, for elegiac poetic *techné*, a nominally marked dedicatee/addressee, although it represents, as we mentioned, an elegiac arch-convention, does not necessarily have canonical genre significance or artistic value in itself. Nevertheless, when we consider the poem *AAF* which unfolds as a monologic litany with a strong conative focus (but also equally phatic and metalingual, in a Jakobsonian sense)⁸ within intrapoetic communication, and also when we compare it with Fishta's richly dedicatory and elegiac poetry where the convention of nominal dedication is always present, the impression is inevitably created that in *AAF* this absence is significant because, as Genette defines it: "the absence of a dedication in a system that includes the possibility of one is as important as degree zero."⁹ Acknowledging also the Staigerian conception of lyric, where its optimal realization is emphasized at the point where the distance between the lyrical subject and the object, as well as between the lyrical subject and the recipient is eliminated,¹⁰ the poem *AAF* seems to become a sublimation of this elimination, which, moreover, makes incredibly inquisitive the absence of the dedicatee, who is suggested and anticipated and who is everywhere and nowhere concomitantly.

In addition to the particularity in the elegiac genre perspective and in contrast with the conventional precedence cultivated in other dedicatory poems,¹¹ *AAF* also reflects a double "exception", both, within this poem itself (when considering the religious persona of the author), and also within the standard Fishtian *techné* in terms of artistic creation. Regarding the former, it is striking how Fishta employs consolatory proceedings. Although all typical elegiac conventions are realized (with a modicum of exceptions),¹² the most distinctive aspect remains the order of consolatory poetic revelations that inevitably leads to a hierarchical-axiological interpretation of this sequence. Thus, when considering the religious vocation of the poet (his priestly status), one cannot help but notice the lack of religious compensation in consolation, as a typical and anticipated compensation when considering the author's vocation. Consequently, it is expected that the consolation will be concluded with that famous "No," that comes after the agnostic question:

⁷ For a treatment of "misinterpretation" of *Il n'y a pas de hors-texte*, see the review, Max Deutscher (Macquarie University/University of Queensland), "IL N'Y A PAS DE HORS-TEXTE"—ONCE MORE, Symposium, Vol. 18, Issue 2 (Fall/Autome, 2014).

⁸ Roman Jakobson, *Linguistics and Poetics on Modern Criticism and Theory – A Reader* (Third Edition) edited by David Lodge and Nigel Wood, Pearson Education Limited, UK, 2008, p. 141 ff.

⁹ Gerard Genette, *ibid.*, p. 135.

¹⁰ See, Emil Staiger, *Basic Concepts of Poetics* (Grundbegriffe der Poetik), Pennsylvania University Press, 1991.

¹¹ We are talking about other dedicatory poems published either in *Pika Voestet* or later in *Mriži i Zanavet*.

¹² For a list of elegiac conventions (primary and secondary) see: Peter M. Sacks, *The English Elegy – Studies in the Genre from Spenser to Yeats*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985.

But, is it likely that death swallowed you into nothingness
and left you nothing but a handful of bones and dust?¹³
(verses 25-27)

or at least with the heavenly imagination where the addressee is imagined while dancing with the angels under the gaze of God. However, this religious form of consolation, as well as the second variant of consoling through personal and virtuous memory where the addressee becomes an *imago virtutis*,¹⁴ although simultaneous, are not axiologically equal because after them, the elegist proceeds further with the interjection “Oh”. So, “Oh! How many times, when, in the dark of night, nature fades.../and then I think about you”.¹⁵ What does this exclamatory sigh signify after all that previously triumphant articulation of the victory of eternal life over death; an articulation which, apart from other figures, through a cacophony that emerges through lexical abbreviations and the prolonged poetic sentence, reaches even a suffocating effect on reading? The image of the fading nature (“Oh! How many times, when, in the dark of night, nature fades...”) with the previous heavenly light (“And there, in that light full of sweetness...”)¹⁶ is a powerful antithesis where the eternal can be read as something consciously provisional. The final and reviving consolation that balances the anxiety and the initial mourning, is the construction of the “Memorial over the grave” through the “author's upcoming songs” (*heroic songs* and *sharp arrows* symbolizing epic and satire) to be transformed then into “the song of dedicatee/addressee” that will be sung “as long as the sun falls on the earth.” This is supported also by the sedimentary position of the subject with an orientation towards writing/reading in the first two modes of consolations (note: in the religious consolation: “And now, while I myself am writing these letters,/ You, perhaps, walking through eternal meadows...”,¹⁷ and in the consolation through the *imago virtutis*: “Oh! How many times (...) / I, exhausted over the letters of ancient wise men”).¹⁸ Therefore, the final consolation of the poet is

¹³ Henceforth, all translations of the poem *AAF* in English are my own (ib) taken as they are from the Rilindja edition (Gjergj Fishta, *Lirika*, Rilindja, Prishtinë, 1997, p. 200-201), which is an identical variant to the complete edition of Fisha's works in 1941. Except in rare cases, we have followed a fairly literal model of translation for reasons of semantic clarity since Fishta's language is dialectal, even with many sub-dialectal nuances that make it difficult to understand. Also, except in rare cases for explanatory needs of a linguistic nature, from now on we give the verses of the poem only in English.

¹⁴ (e.g., verses 111-118: “On your grave, indeed, I am beginning to keep/ the word given for the sake of our friendship;/ (...) / to give a hand to the weak and let the strong/ not be flattered; when it is time for justice to be spoken/ to not turn our gaze away from the goal which mind/ desires to reach, and we should never weaken/ Even through the toughest times, that the years might bring us.”); in Gjergj Fishta, *ibid.*, p. 212-213.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, verse 75.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, verse 68.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, verse 50-51.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, verse 75-78.

constructed not through meditation and reflection on letters/books (so not from a sedimentary and passive disposition), but from the performative act of the pledge of honor (in Albanian, *besa*), to create the upcoming songs. Thus, axiologically, this final consolation of the poet emerges neither as a belief in religious immortality, nor the paradise topos, nor the comforting memory through virtues, but as *the song*, which stands in antithesis with the recollections and memories, just as letters/books (writing and reading) stand in antithesis with the song/songs (singing/listening).

The other exception is that of Fishta's standard artistic *techné*. Fishta, within his standard literary discourse, regardless of genre convention, does not cultivate crypticism or ambiguity in any dimension of the literary text, and very weakly tends towards figurative discourse. Even when he does so, whether in satirical, dramatic, or epic mode, except in specific cases and due to genre and compositional modalities, he does not tend towards the ambiguity of references and mainly relies on a symbolic or allegorical model easily decipherable or entirely arbitrary (e.g., the mythic battle of the Dragon with the Kulshedra; the situations and functions of mythical characters: Fairies, Hours and Nymphs; the hypertextualization with allegorical or symbolic tendencies in the *Odyssey*,¹⁹ *Judas Maccabeus*, or in *Jerina or the Queen of Flowers*). Thus, Fishta's literary cognition does not employ heavy figuration and even less crypticism – perhaps to “prove” by this, the predilectional poetic background that his religious and (specifically) Franciscan vocation, gives him, namely taking into account his discipleship in the order created by the author of *Laudes Creaturarum* and being, albeit distantly, a *frāter* of Jacopone da Todi. This approach, as can be understood, is primarily due to the permanent dominance of the missionary motivation, national-centrist, and Christian-centrist ideothematic dimension, to which other dimensions of Fishta's literary text are somehow subordinated, competing with it, perhaps even surpassing it, only the powerful literary language.²⁰

Due to this, it is also possible to understand the somewhat unrefined expression of the scholar Aurel Plasari that *AAF* emerges as a surprising oasis,²¹ because here Fishta steps outside the horizon of expectation (*Erwartungsrichtung*)²² by not

¹⁹ For this reason, it is worth mentioning a letter from Fishta addressed to Father Pal Dodaj on 5-XII-1909, where, among other things Fishta reveals his consciousness in relation to the potential of the symbolic interpretation of his work *Odyssey*. See: At Gjergj Fishta OFM, *Letërkëmbimi*, Botime Françeskane, Shkodër, 2020, p. 98.

²⁰ For the Fishtian literary language and its style at all levels, we suggest the work of Shefkije Islamaj, *Gjergj Fishta* (Gjuha dhe Stili) I & II, Instituti Albanologjik, Prishtinë, 2012, but also the thoughts in this report by Eqrem Çabej, Mark Ndoja, Lasgush Poradeci, Namik Resuli and Ernest Koliqi quoted in Aurel Plasari, *Fishta i dashuruari* (An adventure of criticism), Marin Barleti, Shkodër, 1996, p. 31-32.

²¹ Revista *Jeta e Re* (Nr. 3), Prishtinë, 1996, f. 410.

²² See, Hans Robert Jauss, “Theory of Genres and Medieval Literature” in *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1982, p. 76-109.

determining the identity of his elegiac dedicatee. It is precisely this latent quality that, we believe, prompts Plasari (the first to deal with it specifically, far from the brief reviews of Mark Ndoja and Klara Kodra) in the early 90s to engage with it, and as it is easily noticeable, with high doses of critical speculation that are consequences of a reading with one eye closed of many signs of the text, or better yet, by filling them ambiguously, which to some extent makes sense in my opinion, with the aim of an alternative reading way out of the “Reformed Albanian Reading Church” of the first post-dictatorial years, which once again, as has happened almost everywhere in similar situations, was euphorically proving the truth of the Tacitean aphorism: *punitis ingeniis gliscit auctoritas*.²³ Fishta's insistence on preserving the latent addressee in this poem, as is evident even from a rudimentary reading, gives it a genuine personalism that merges with intimacy, a quality that in my readings has always been symptomatic of a real addressee and not, as was claimed by the most famous commentator of Fishta, Viktor Volaj that the Poet “first wanted to express the feelings of pain for this or that specific person, but, in the development of drafting, came stripping it” “i.e., the person” (emphasis added) *by whatever distinctiveness...*²⁴ Nevertheless, considering Fishta's “literary cognition” and “culture of behavior”²⁵ in literary writings generally, and more narrowly, considering some of the textual references articulated in a proleptic mode, as well as the continuous pulse of absence and longing that, beyond digressions and figures, neither fades nor disintegrates, the real dedicatee for me, perhaps quite naively, has been simply a concealed acrostic awaiting revelation, yet not as easily revealed as Plasari brought it out in his famous text.

The “Kranjčević” hypothesis

After many assumptions that have circulated discursively saying he could have dedicated this poem to his mother or brother, a girlfriend from his youth or some local or national hero, etc., the veil with which the mystery of the dedicatee was wrapped has already been removed by the scholar Blerina Suta, whom I believe has defined it quite accurately. According to her, he is precisely the friend of

²³ See, Aurel Plasari, *ibid.* From here, whether we consider it as a hermeneutic indifference, a dysphoria with the sublimating euphoria of reading Fishta or an alternative reading *per se*, Plasari's approach is understandable when considering the critical-literary climate that prevailed at the time of writing this text. Fishta, returned from the coma where the communist regime had pushed him for fifty years, was appearing once again before the Albanian public and critical cultural-literary community that somnambulantly, but full of enthusiasm, was squirming to catch up with the countless threads of cultural-literary perspectives that were denied for half a century.

²⁴ Gjergj Fishta, *ibid.*, p. 200.

²⁵ For the concepts of “literary cognition” and “behavioral culture”, see the Croatian edition of Rexhep Murtez Shala, *ANALIZA kognicija i modeliranje*, Izdavačka Illyricum-dea, Zagreb, 2017.

Fishta's youthful years and studies, the renowned Croatian poet Silvije Strahimir Kranjčević.²⁶ In two essays dedicated to this case, Suta, firstly, through documentary and archival research, has undertaken a very serious philological work to identify Kranjčević as the real dedicatee of the poem. Without delving into a critical analysis of Suta's two essays, which is not our aim here, regarding the second one which exclusively deals with the argument that it is precisely Kranjčević the dedicatee of *AAF*, we can say that Suta, in approximately eleven arguments she provides, has succeeded in justifying her hypothesis even in textual analysis, in addition to contextual arguments – the friendship between Fishta and Kranjčević and the time context of the publication of *AAF* which coincides with less than a year after Kranjčević's death. In terms of textual argumentation, among others, we would highlight: a) the connection noted between some images of the poem *Al valente poet Mr. Silvie Kranjčević* (an unpublished poem that Fishta had dedicated to Kranjčević in 1892) and the poem *AAF*, b) the evocation of Kranjčević's ideas about the Genius Poet and their materialization by Fishta both in *AAF* and in his entire opus, c) the potential interpretation that in the first published version of the poem in the book "Pika voeset" (1909) the verse: "kan me i rritun/ Me shum kujdes per çark silvija t'blera" (Eng: "they will raise/ with great care around green cypresses")²⁷ the form "silvija" (Eng: cypresses) besides being a printing error, may present an intentional solipsism, as if to say: "willingness to mention his friend's name"²⁸ (that is Silvie); however, we note that the similar form "silvija" is also found used by Mjedja in the poem *Andrra e Jetës* (p. II, v. 42): "Ndoshta po avitet nji djal' i ri,/ I holl'e i giatë porsi'j silvië..."²⁹ (my emphasis) and it is likely that we are dealing either with a sub-dialectal form of the lexeme or with an intentional literary usage established in dialectical literature of the time (perhaps as a background indication of the cultural-linguistic influence of the Latin *sylvia* to rival the popular form /selvi/ so commonly used and clichéd in folk lyric songs; [cf. *Dictionary of Bashkimi* (1908) which perhaps due to the selection of the super-dialectal forms gives it as /Sélvii/]);³⁰ d) the heterogeneous intertextual relations between Kranjčević's poetic figuration and that which is embedded multi-layeredly by Fishta in his opus, to indicate with this, according to Suta, Fishta's specific dedication to him; this includes: stellar symbolism, ideas about the Genius Poet, the Prophet Poet, images of death, the grave and paradise, imaginary situations in poetic fictional contexts, and other Christian, ancient, and natural symbolism. Accepting Suta's discovery but convinced that it suffers from an excessive philologi-

²⁶ See, Blerina Suta, *Hulumtime mbi veprën e At Gjergj Fishtës*, Onufri, Tiranë, 2018.

²⁷ Gjergj Fishta, *Pika Voestet*, Zader, Vittaliani, 1909.

²⁸ Blerina Suta, *ibid.*, p. 71-72.

²⁹ Ndre Mjedja, *Vepra I*, Rilindja, Prishtinë, 1982.

³⁰ "Fjalori i Bashkimit", Rilindja, Prishtinë, 1978.

cal zeal to necessarily link the first poem that Fishta dedicates to Kranjčević *Al valente poet Mr. Silvie Kranjčević* and *AAF*, (although it is understandable that this poem in such an investigation serves as a *sine qua non* argument), I will try here in an expository manner and only to further reinforce her arguments, to provide some additional indications of the intertextual relationships between *AAF* and Kranjčević's poetic work in general, in order then to move on to what interests us most: why Fishta, as in the first edition as well as in all subsequent editions, does not reveal Kranjčević's name.

“Oûtos estin o Plátōnos ánthrōpos?”

The poem *Kad mi klone*³¹ by Kranjčević is one of his poems that thematizes the poet's own death. Through the proleptic mode, Kranjčević projects his death and expresses feelings, thoughts, and desires on the afterlife, his grave, and figuratively intertwines ideals of freedom and sacrifice for his people (the nation), as lasting beyond his physical death. Although the entire poem contains lexemes and images also found in *AAF* (e.g., grave, flowers, nightingale, song) worth examining, we will focus only on one typical phrase that we consider to be consciously reconfigured in *AAF*. In these two poems, we notice the analogy between the phrase “Samilosna ruka” within the lines: “Kad mi mrtve oči sklopi /Samilosna ruka koja...” and the somewhat equivalent Fishtian phrase, “qi e pershpirtshme nji dorë ta vu te kryeni” (Eng: “that a soulful hand placed it over your head”). Although “Samilosna” and “pershpirtshme” (soulful) are not entirely equivalent, they are not far apart, as the latter also denotes the semantic reference to 'mercy' (cf.: the third meaning given by *FGJSSH*)³² albeit in a more focused religious aspect, while its primary meaning is 'devotion', specifically – if we follow grammatical logic – 'a [devoted] hand' in our case, which is also cited in the *Dictionary of Bashkimi* (1908)³³ in the Italian explanation: “Pio, divoto”, which also highlights Viktor Volaj, prioritizing rightly the reference to the meaning 'charitable': “a charitable hand, prompted by religious feeling”.³⁴ However, if we were to consider and attempt to interpret theoretically the specific *forma mentis* generally sublimated in the elegiac poet, we can say that the poetic creation which derives from a lamentable inspiration, primarily reconfigures in a paraphrastic mode rather than applying the *ad litteram* citation in the case of articulating the iconic signs of the elegiac

³¹ All of Kranjčević's poems quoted here are taken from Silvije Strahimir Kranjčević, *Izabrane Pjesme*, Bulaja naklada d.o.o., 2011 (e-book edition).

³² PËRSHPIRTSHËM/ËM(i), ~ME (e) mb. 3. (...) who is merciful (according to the morality of religion). See, *Fjalor i gjuhës së sotme shqipe*, Rilindja, Prishtinë, 1981, f. 1466.

³³ *Fjalori i Bashkimit*, Rilindja, 1978, Prishtinë, f. 342.

³⁴ See comment № 16 of V. Volaj in, Gjergj Fishta, *ibid.*, p. 204.

addressee, in this case, his verses. Therefore, we suppose that Fishta, to a considerable extent, has created under such inspiration and state that primarily articulates under a paraphrastic mode (thus also in the case of the reconfiguration of the quotation), prioritizing the articulation of intertext over the basis of mnemonic modification, rather than a kind of citation where the intertext is clearly differentiated.³⁵ However, we believe that this syntagmatic reconfiguration is intentional, not only due to the powerful inspiration that may modify the intertext internally, but also because it seems that in the part of the poem where it is articulated, Fishta plays quite a lot intertextually. Thus, it is preceded by the Horace intertext, “Deka, qi baras m’derë t’pellazvet / Trakllon, si m’trinë t’kolibavet”³⁶ (Eng. “Death, which knocks on the door / of palaces, as on the wicket of huts”) that emerges in parentheses, as well as the Foscolo intertext which is not referred to but highlighted by Volaj: “kur dielli bjen me shndritun mbi kobe t’ dheut”³⁷ (Eng. “when the sun shines on the evils of the earth”). The Horatian intertext translated and configured almost literally may indeed contest the procedure we defined as articulation through a “mnemonic transformation”, however, it is interesting also in this case (besides the replacement of “derë” [Eng. door] with “trinë” [Eng. wicket), the placement of the non-essential emphatic apposition “ku i vorfni me lot njomë buken...” (“where the poor softens the bread with tears”) which Fishta adds to the intertext. This apposition reflecting a modification of the idiom of the folk source, demonstrates a Fishatian tendency for articulation, if not entirely paraphrastic, at least modified. However, the co-presence of the Horatian and Foscolo intertexts in the same poetic sentence (notice in verses 9-14 the non-disruption of articulation while constructing the poetic image of ‘the coming of death’) and immediately after them (verse 16) the articulation of the phrase “qi e përshpirtshme një dorë...” (Eng. “that a soulful hand...”) we can assume that they come both simultaneously (in the cognitive-paradigmatic plane) and successively (as observed in the syntagmatic plane) as stimuli of the *lyrical remembrance* (Ger. Erinnerung),³⁸ in the sense attributed to this word by Emil Staiger in relation to the essence of lyric, and which also resem-

³⁵ In such cases, we assume, even potential later editing is unlikely to filter or cohere in favor of citation correctness, because in that case, it would take away much of the poetic sensibility and articulative spontaneity that is also conditioned by a proclassical proceeding through the eleven-syllable blank verse (in the *Leopardian* manner which tends towards a somewhat cumulative syntax and therefore without strict supervision of phrases and sentences). In addition to the lyrics, this is a proven practice of Fishta in almost all his work, but especially in the epic, where Fishta incorporates and merges the typical popular idiomatic register into the authorial text.

³⁶ Cf. *Pallida mors aequo pulsat pede pauperum tabernas/ Regumque turres* (Q. Horatius Flaccus (Horaci), *Carmina*, I-4, v. 13-14); see, *Horatius Opera*, edidit Friedrich Klingner ‘Editio Stereotypa Editionis Teriae (MCMLIX)’, Walter de Gruyter, 2008, p. 7.

³⁷ Cf.: “...e finché il Sole – risplenderà su le sciagure umane” (Ugo Foscolo, *I Sepolcri*, vv. 294-5; see comment no. 13-14 of Volaj in, Gjergj Fishta, *ibid.*, p. 203.

³⁸ See chapter *Lyric Mode: Remembrance*, in Emil Staiger, *ibid.*, p. 43 ff.

bles Fishta's own conception on this issue.³⁹ Here, however, we are using it more technically, to signify the author's *lyrical remembrance* in relation to readings that at the 'momentum' of creation and articulation of lyrical expression on a specific topos, either they "wake up" and are consciously configured as a recapture (hence appearing co-present in the same poetic sentence), or the others after they first emerge and are unconsciously articulated within what is known as *free association* in psychoanalytic terminology. However, since the phrase above "qi e përsh-pirtshme nji dorë..." (Eng. "that a soulful hand...") is articulated anastrophically as in the original text ("Samilosna ruka koja..."), we consider primarily that we have to do with a conscious configuration of this minimal intertextual form, with allusive intention through the condensed level of syntagmatic form. This is because the anastrophic articulation, beyond the well-known Fishtian proclassicism in modeling lyrical verses, is likely to suggest in this case the Kranjčevićian reference, precisely through maintaining the syntactic logic of the Croatian language, namely by preserving the same structure, which indeed sounds 'poetic' in Albanian and which also prompts Volaj to comment on this syntactic inversion pro-aesthetically: "The placing of the attribute before the name, here in this instance, is to emphasize the feelings of that hand..."⁴⁰ Therefore we consider that the input of this phrase is to suggest the cognitive-emotional relationship of Fishta with certain Kranjčevićian poetic expressions, and that here, it is evidence of (and perhaps an internal demand to demonstrate) the recognition and passionate reading of his work.

Similar to this, there is another syntagmatic analogy which may suggest even something more. In the poem *Uspomeni August Šenoa (In Memory of August Šenoa)*,⁴¹ dedicated to the memory of one of his favorite authors, Kranjčević among other things, reflects poetically:

Izvedljiv vid mi na sve željan pado,
I gledah nebu one kruge tajne,
A lagan uzdah kidao se rado
Pod vedre zvijezde – božje oči sjajne⁴²

Here, it is much easier to notice the intertextual relationship between the last verses and verses 82-83 of *AAF*: "E kqyri hyjt, qi, thue, se njaq sy Zotit/ Flakojnë mbi dhe..." (Eng. "I look at the stars, so that your mind goes, that as many eyes of God/ Shine over the earth...") and that after the poetic *exempla* ("...perhaps, to scare..."), concludes the sentence with: "e atë botë mendoj per ty" (Eng. "and then

³⁹ See the letter he sends to Pal Dodaj (Shkodër, April 6, 1910) in Gjergj Fishta, *Letërshkëmbimi*, Botime Françeskane, Shkodër, p. 102-103.

⁴⁰ See comment № 16 of V. Volaj in, Gjergj Fishta, *Lirika*, Rilindja, Prishtinë, p. 203.

⁴¹ Silvije Strahimir Kranjčević, *ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

I think of you” suggesting through the double semantic coding of the verses, both the identification (further in verses 86-89) of the brightest star with the dedicatee of his poem, as well as the play at the metatextual level, as an expression of the internal revitalization of the motives of his friend's poetry; considering this double coding, even the concluding sentence resonates more powerfully semantically than simply as a conclusion of a poetic *exempla*. We also note that, as in this case, as in many of Kranjčević's poems, there is a strong presence of the aspect of contemplating and invoking nature as a particular mode of proxemic language that generates meanings, suggests states, or makes figurative allusions with specific references. However, what is specific to him is the contemplation of the sky, stars and the sun, which is likely to be connected with the beginning of *AAF* and the much-discussed verse: “... Aty dy sy t'jan errun / Ku qiella prirej me sa hana e diella / Terthores s'eper m'sharte vrejn t'njertzimit!” (Eng. “... Those two eyes have dusked / Where heavens mirrored with all the moons and suns / From lofty orbit they deem the human plight”). We base the possibility of such an allusion on an aspect of Fishta's literary cognition that manifests itself in other dedicatory poems, e.g., *On the day of the name of an Albanian Franciscan* or *To F. Anton Zannoni S.J* (written at that time, in 1908, but published only in 1931), where the author tends to enumerate explicitly (in eidetic disposition) or sometimes through minimalist allusions, specific character or biographical references to those to whom he dedicates the poems. However, regarding the latter allusion, we cannot claim interpretive validity, because in this case, the influence of Foscolo and Leopardi, namely the beginning of *Dei Sepulcri* and *A Silvia* can be just as close, as in both cases successively, we have references to sight and hearing, so indexically, to the eyes and then the voice as signs of memory for the deceased.⁴³

Another slightly more complex intertextual relationship, which intertwines and can be justified in terms of hypotaxis with the previous example, can be observed between some highly commented verses of *AAF* and the poem *Ja sam (I am)* of Kranjčević. The poem *Ja sam* articulates, among other things, this poetic thought: “... / Niz koji me sudba rinu, / Lutajući, kako luta / Mrtva zvijezda kroz prazninu./”⁴⁴ and continues in the second and final stanza that we are providing in full:

Al kad tvoje oko pane
Na tu zvijezdu, moje dijete,
Tada pjesma opet plane

⁴³ Cf. first to Leopardi: “Silvia, rimembri ancora/ quel tempo della tua vita mortale / quando beltà splendea / negli occhi ridenti e fuggitivi...” and in the second stanza: “Sonavan le quiete / stanze, e le vie dintorno./ al tuo perpetuo canto...”; while in Foscolo: “... Ove pru il Sole / per me alla terra non fecondi questa / bella d'erbe famiglia e d'animali/” and which continues there, “Ne da te, dolce amico, udrò più il verso / e la mesta harmony che lo governa/...”

⁴⁴ Silvije Strahimir Kranjčević, *ibid.*

Ko da iskre nebom lete; –
A ti gledaš kako sjaje
Ispred tvoga čista vida,
A ne znadeš, dušo, šta je
Kad se srce tako kida!⁴⁵

It might be a bit difficult to grasp the intertextual relationship that Fishta build with this poem through the verses:

And, where I see a brighter star shining/
with myself I say that there you have your place/
I keep my eyes fixed on that star and it seems to me
that I'm looking at you. By name then I call you
through the night...
(verses 86-90)

So the basis of the intertextual relationship we are suggesting has to do with the fact that Fishta within one of his own poetic motives, precisely that of contemplating the sky and stars when nature fades into darkness (note: “Oh! How many times, when, in the dark of night, nature fades... I go out the window to see the tent... I look at the stars”), Fishta implants precisely the “visionary” topos of Kranjčević in the poem “Ja sam”, where he identifies himself with the star (initially with the dead star wandering through the void and then in the second stanza with the star that begins to shine when the ‘intimately implied reader’ (note the emphatic vocatives: “moje dijete”, “dušo”) fixes his eyes on it and sees its sparks flying and shining in front of the pure vision of the one ‘who sees’: “Al kad tvoje oko pane / Na tu zvijezdu, moje dijete,/Tada pjesma opet plane/Ko da iskre nebom lete; – / A ti gledaš kako sjaje/Ispred tvoga čista vida”. Therefore, we can say that in this case Fishta configures exactly that “moje dijete” through himself. If Fishta's desire for dialogue with his dedicatee is merely projected (note: “e m’bahet si me t’pa”, [Eng. “and it seems to me that I’m looking at you”]; “me emen/Un t’thras atbëbotë n’per terr”, [Eng. “By name then I call you through the night...”]; “e m’duket/Se bisedoj me ty!...” [Eng. and it seems that/ I’m talking to you!...]), this projection takes place within Kranjčević’s “visionary” topos in the poem *Ja sam*, which Fishta appropriates intertextually without decontextualizing it but simply by changing the roles of the communication constituents; the lyrical ‘I’ of *AAF* articulates in the role of the implied reader of *Ja sam*, while the lyrical ‘I’ of *Ja sam* becomes the ‘implied reader’ of *AAF*.

Another example that connects *AAF* and Kranjčević's poetry could be the poem *Neznani grob* (*The Unknown Grave*). The intertextual relationship estab-

⁴⁵ Ibid.

lished by Fishta with this poem is constructed through the metonymic principle, wherein the insertion of signs from Kranjčević's text into *AAF* metonymically alludes to the identification of the unknown hero (junaka) of the poem with its author, Kranjčević, who embodies in Fishta's poetic discourse the attributes of the hero and consequently reconfigures as the Hero with an unknown grave. The first thing we notice in the intertextual relationship between these two poems is the topos of the 'unknown grave'. The signs we encounter in "Neznani grob" regarding the attributes of this unknown grave are reconfigured periphrastically in *AAF*.
Note:

Al na grobu nepoznatom
Nema krsta, nema znaka;
Nitko ne zna gdje se skriva
Osušena krv junaka.⁴⁶

Just as unknown and desolate is poetically conceptualized the grave of the dedicatee of *AAF*. In Fishta's poem, the cross is not missing (cf: Nema krsta), but it is lost among thorns and mandrake, hence equally missing:

... Today the nettles and mandrake
on your grave have bloomed. A juniper cross,
That a soulful hand placed it over your head
Among them has been lost, not another thing
Do not soften the sadness of your tomb...
(verses 14-18)

Moreover, within the poem *Neznani grob*, a poetic image is shaped that we can reasonably assume echoes suggestively in *AAF*. This image is that of the guardian angel which in Kranjčević's poem emerges as a symbol of care and protection against even the slightest noise that disturbs the song of freedom emanating from the unknown hero's grave. The last stanza of *Neznani grob* highlights the angel guarding the unknown hero's grave: "Već slobodno srce igra, / Slobodnom se pjesmom blaži – / Ah, otako anđel valjda / Na neznanu grobu straži!!/" which Fishta remodels through a proleptic mode as inspiration for his work through the metaphor of the Fairy:

... The Angel of God,
Who as a faithful watchman, keeps away the dark powers/
So that they do not disturb your death sleep/
Until the moon and the sun are extinguished in the sky/
And time stops and the whole world is destroyed/

⁴⁶ Ibid.

And come the day of judgment of the world/
He will be my Zana⁴⁷...
(verses 122-128)

In the absence of a Fishtian *Dichtung und Wahrheit* that would not let these interpretations emerge as a *bricolage* of compared intertexts, we are adding something we believe somewhat strengthens the arguments in favor of Suta's hypothesis that this poem is dedicated to Kranjčević. Within the context of Fishta's correspondence with Pal Dodaj, perhaps his closest friend, as evidenced by the quantity and content of the letters they exchanged, there is a letter from Fishta to Dodaj sent from Shkodra on February 3, 1909, several months before the publication of his book *Pika Voestet* in Zara and, as understood, before the first publication of *AAF*.⁴⁸ The letter is fragmented in many parts, or more precisely, self-censored by Dodaj in some parts indicated by dots, therefore we only have its beginning and end. According to the information provided by Dodaj himself, this is a response from Fishta to a letter he sent earlier, in which he requested assistance with references for an article he wished to publish regarding the literary reviews made of Fishta's work up to that time.⁴⁹ What is relevant for us in this context is the last part of the letter where Fishta, after the references he was supposed to give Dodaj in the first and missing part of the letter, adds the following data:

Dr. Patsch of Sarajevo wanted to send, by all means, to the Museum, for which he is supervisor, a manuscript of my own, and has told me that when the new Museum is built, which is going to cost 1,800,000 crowns, there will be a section for Albanian literature, in a room, which could simply be a facsimile of my work. (...)⁵⁰

As is known, Karl Patsch (1865-1945), a linguist and archaeologist, founded the Institute for Balkan Studies (Institut für Balkanforschung) in Sarajevo in 1908,⁵¹ and as understood from Fishta's information, immediately after its establishment, he asked Fishta for a manuscript to be placed in the Museum within the institute, which also had a room dedicated to Kranjčević. Now, we have two testimonies for two manuscripts by Fishta in the museum room dedicated to Kranjčević at the Balkan Institute in Sarajevo. The first is the manuscript of the poem in Italian that Fishta dedicated to Kranjčević, "Al valente poeta sig. Silvie Kranjčević",

⁴⁷ Here Zana (Fairy) means and embodies 'poetic inspiration'.

⁴⁸ The publication of the book *Pika Voestet* must have happened after July 1909, because the poem *Peng Nderimi* is intratextually dated as written in July 1909.

⁴⁹ See Pal Dodaj's footnote to *Gjergj Fishta 1871-1940* (Commemorative number published under the care of Father Benedikt Dema OFM, 1943), Nositi, Prishtinë, 2011, p. 74; also, for something more related to this, see Ernest Marku, *Libri i Fishtës*, Botimet Fishta, 2020, p. 76.

⁵⁰ Gjergj Fishta, *Letërshkëmbimi*, Botime Françeskane, Shkodër, p. 92 ff.

⁵¹ Robert Elsie, *Historical Dictionary of Albania* (second edition), Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2010, f. 249.

which was found, transcribed, and published in 1927 by Vladimir Ćorović and later published several times⁵² (most recently in Albanian, translated and accompanied by the aforementioned study by Blerina Suta). The other manuscript, which has not been found so far, is mentioned by Ljubomir Maraković in an article from 1927 titled *Na rub Kranjčević pjesama*:

It happened to me to see in Sarajevo, in the room dedicated to the memory of Kranjčević at the Balkan Institute, the verses in the Albanian language by Gjergj Fishta from a later period, when, passing through Sarajevo, he visited the room of memories of his unfortunate friend, who was then resting under the sign of a disputed genius, in the cemetery of Koševo.⁵³

Suta connects this latter information with Viktor Volaj's paratextual explanation: "Some say that the first manuscript was lost",⁵⁴ and thus it is possible, as evidenced by this letter from Fishta to Dodaj, that Fishta sent Patsch exactly the manuscript of the poem *AAF* upon request, which although we do not have precise information, we suppose he may have written only after the request from Karl Patsch. This assumption can only be loosely supported based on a characteristic of Fishta's literary cognition: I believe that Fishta is an author who, in addition to 'individual talent', is always dependent on external stimulation in creation, and here we have in mind the essayistic testimony of his friend Pashko Bardhi, who, in relation to the idea of creating the epic poem *Lahuta e Malcis* (his greatest work) among other things, emphasizes: "although all glory and honor belong to Father Fishta, we will know a small part of the praise to Marash Uci, because if he had not met him, perhaps Father Fishta would not have written "Lahuta e Malcis."⁵⁵ The same can be said for his dramatic works, which, as Fishta himself points out, took shape after a long study of Shakespeare,⁵⁶ while the earlier ones were mainly based on well-known models, with familiar subjects that Fishta subordinated to an appropriate adaptation for Albanian cultural context.

In addition to this, there is also a justifiable textual argument at the figurative level of the text. Fishta's poem begins with an almost Gothic tone and a declarative expression that terrifies with its simplicity:

In that dead assart within the ghastly tomb
Now dust thou are.
(verses 1-2)

⁵² See, Blerina Suta, *ibid.*, p. 41 ff.

⁵³ *ibid.*, p. 65-66.

⁵⁴ Gjergj Fishta, *Lirika*, Rilindja, Prishtinë, 1997, p. 200.

⁵⁵ At Pashk Bardhi, *Si xuni fill "Lahuta e Malcis"* in *Gjergj Fishta 1871-1940* (Commemorative number published under the care of Father Benedikt Dema OFM, 1943), Nositi, Prishtinë, 2011.

⁵⁶ See Letter addressed to Pal Dodaj (Shkodër, January 20, 1911) in Gjergj Fishta, *Letërshkëmbimi*, Botime Françeskane, 2020, p. 106.

while it ends with the name of the addressee inscribed in oaks (an old topos that will be discussed later) which will grow together with them, to become much clearer after a few centuries, for later grandchildren to sing and never be forgotten.

Volaj's semantic explication for the spatial deictic: "rrah" (Eng. assart) is self-evident and comes as a paraphrase from the *Dictionary of Bashkimi* (1908), therefore Volaj evaluates it simply as a metaphor for the *simulacrum* of the cemetery. However, we believe that here Fishta also amalgamates a figurative meaning that coheres when placed in parallel with the final verses and image constructed through them. "The assart" – explains Volaj – "is the name for the place where trees have been cut to be converted into agricultural land..."⁵⁷ Thus, Fishta begins his poem with the suggestive image of a destroyed forest, a "cut" forest (lat. *Caedua Silva*), indicating an allusion through spatial reference, namely the name of his deceased friend "Silvije" since *Silva* in Latin, and in variations in other pre-Latin languages, denotes a forest. Taking into account, as we said, the final image of the poem with the name engraved in the oak, which grows together with the oaks to become clearer, we clearly observe the parallelism, and at the same time the contrast that Fishta constructs. Initially, the cut, destroyed, dead forest, is synonymous with the state of the friend who bears the name of the "forest" (Silvije), and in the end, the change of state, namely the projection of reforestation, indicated by the grown oaks and name that grows with them. It is highly suggestive, the chiasmic conception at the eidetic level, considering the initial and final focalization. The poem opens with a closure and closes with an opening. From the graveyard, to the darkness of the grave, to the dust, to the dark eyes, and then, from the razor to the oak, from the oak to growth, from growth to clarity, until it arrives in song - a symbol of immortality. Chiasmic structure is very noticeable. Its osmoses that we notice between the beginning and the end, are all conceived chiasmatically and through the *chiaroscuro* technique, whether at the level of minimalist images or even at the level of more cohesive structures.

We allow ourselves to call these considerations of ours, a "surplus of arguments" of Blerina Suta's hypothesis, although we are aware that they do not escape the aprioristic character of the justification of that hypothesis, because as it is understood, like a *circulus in probando*, takes Kranjčević for granted as the dedicatee of the poem *AAF* and tends to argue in favor of that conclusion. However, taking this into account, we can say that in essence, as was hypothesized even before Suta's philologically based revelation, the poem *AAF* is a poem about a friend, the death of a friend, a variant that many other scholars have taken into account (although without a concrete name and with a "glance" towards his Franciscan brethren or other friends).

⁵⁷ See comment № 1 in Gjergj Fishta, *Lirika*, Rilindja, Prishtinë, 1997, p. 201.

Now, indeed, anyone could bring a plucked chicken and tell us, as Diogenes the Cynic did: *Oútós estin o Plátōnos ánthrōpos*. Nevertheless, we consider this *anagnorisis* is a necessary premise in the hermeneutical perspective to understand the special proceeding of Fishta in *AAF*. As such, the recognition of the dedicatee of *AAF* is not a philological eureka *per se* nor simply a satisfaction of the Fishtian reader's curiosity, but it generates new and important questions for Fishta's poetics. Being one of Fishta's most distinctive and almost universally resonant poems (where the historical setting is very neutral), it is important to understand why Fishta chooses only in this case an absolute pronominal vocativity, whereas the poem deifies this dedicatee more than each of the other dedicatees of other dedicatory poems. Is there a compulsive relationship between deification and latentism and what can draw an interpretation of Fishtian cryptic intention? Let us consider two hypotheses.

The Prudence

The first hypothesis takes into account the fact that latentism is primarily determined by a self-censoring effort of Fishta that is based on the almost controversial aura of Kranjčević's personality and what he and his work were claimed to represent from a religious, namely clerical, point of view. As the scholar Ellen Elias-Bursać informs us in a brief and concise biography of Kranjčević, after the publication of the second book "Izbrane pjesme" (1898) and the third book *Trzaji* (1902), Kranjčević became the subject of great controversy between Catholic literary critics and Liberal anti-clerical critics.⁵⁸ According to Bursać, Catholic literary critics began to attack Kranjčević's work from a religious perspective. The first of these, Antun Mahnić, attacked the anti-dogmatic implications in the Kranjčevićian philosophy *that people find solace and strength in work and nature rather than in the Church* (emphasis added).⁵⁹ He accused Kranjčević in an article in the periodical "Hrvatska straža" of having socialist tendencies because *Kranjčević expressly calls work a source of human salvation* (emphasis added) and accuses him of being a Darwinist; and although he says that Kranjčević uses the name of God in his verses, Mahnić sees this only as a mask hiding the weakness of his godless science,

⁵⁸ See *Silvije Strahimir Kranjčević* (February 18, 1865 – October 19, 1908) by Ellen Elias-Bursać, in *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, Volume 147: *South Slavic Writers Before World War II* (Edited by Vasa D. Mihailovich), University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Gate Research Inc., Detroit, 1995, p. 108. (Note: such a typological conception of the Croatian critical currents of the time is under the competence of the above-mentioned scholar; our knowledge of these phenomena is limited, therefore we carry them descriptively without problematizing them, although it is likely they may be ideologically motivated or reflect atrophies that have been established due to historical perspective and temporal distance).

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

materialism, pantheism, and Buddhism, accusing Kranjčević of replacing belief in God with belief in one's own power and work and emphasizing that these beliefs stem directly from modern socialism.⁶⁰ Other liberal or relatively less conservative critics like Jakša Čedomil, Ferdo Rožić, and Milan Marjanović tried to defend Kranjčević, as Elias-Bursač says, by giving him a more generous *reading*.⁶¹ These problems of ideological interpretation of his literary work also had consequences in other aspects of his life, e.g., in the case of the proposal (after the closure of the magazine *Nada* where he had worked for a long time) for his appointment, or as director of the women's teaching college, or as supervisor of the education of women and girls there (i.e., in Sarajevo, my emphasis).⁶² The latter proposal was immediately opposed by Josip Štadler, Archbishop of Sarajevo, who accused Kranjčević of having written “travesties completely stripped of the Christian spirit, severely hurting Christian religious sentiment.”⁶³ He refused to allow such *an infidel* (emphasis added), to act as superintendent of the Catholic girls' school in Sarajevo.⁶⁴ This is probably also the reason why the scholar Ljubomir Maraković refers to him as an “opposed genius”.⁶⁵ However, it seems that Kranjčević's conflict with the ecclesiastical authorities of the time has a history that precedes the stigmatizing ideological interpretation of his later literary work. Already in adolescence, Kranjčević had shown rebellious tendencies against authorities, both ecclesiastical and administrative-secular. As we learn, during secondary school he was encouraged to partake in political activities culminating in his membership in the Stranka Prava movement led by Ante Starčević, the latter being a representative figure of radical Croatian nationalism opposing what was known as Illyrianism.⁶⁶ In one case highlighted by Elias-Bursač, in his last year of secondary school (late 1870s), encouraged by this fiery emotional rhetoric (of Starčević, my emphasis), clashed with the Franciscan authorities administering the school and *offended the Franciscans* (sic.), which resulted in their refusal to give him his matura.⁶⁷ Without further delving into the other troubles Kranjčević had with the Austro-Hungarian political-administrative authorities, especially on identity policies they applied in Bosnia,⁶⁸ we conclude that Fishta must have been aware of the controversial aura surrounding

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ See, Ljubomir Maraković, *Na rub Kranjčević pjesama*, in: “Hrvatska Prosvjeta”, year XV, №. 2, 25.02.1927 and №. 3, 25.03.1927, f. 64; quoted in Blerina Suta, *Hulumtime mbi veprën e Át Gjergj Fishtës*, Onufri, 2018, p. 66.

⁶⁶ *Silvije Strahimir Kranjčević* (18 February 1865 – 19 October 1908) by Ellen Elias-Bursač. Ibid., p. 105.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 106.

Kranjčević's public personality after 1900 (because of the polemic we mentioned) but also after his death. Is it not likely that this post-mortem controversy is also indicated by the verses:

... Now the nettles and mandrake
on your grave have bloomed
(verses 14-15)

and

that pile of stones that weighs on your grave,
even to soulless cruelty that kills people,
on the run when he passes near the grave, they look to him like witches
And a shudder then crosses his heart.
(verses 21-24)

So (o heresy of paraphrase!), now, after death there are even more insinuations and rumors against you that weigh you down (nettles, stones, mandrake) that terrify even a murderer. “Mandrake” also, considered as quite a unusual lexeme here in relation to nettles, has the potential to suggest an allusion to Machiavelli's satirical comedy *La Mandragola*, where within the framework of the dramatic action, built the very action that has already received the name Machiavellianism and where among other things, a corrupt clergyman is depicted represented by the character of Brother Timothy.⁶⁹

Therefore, we believe that the thirty-eight-year-old Fishta (in 1909), established in the positions he held (as a Franciscan cleric, director of Franciscan schools, one of the first definitors of the Albanian Franciscan Province, guardian of the Gjuhadol Assembly, with sufficient contributions and experience in many fields, at the height of the fame he was gaining through literary publications and engagement in cultural issues,⁷⁰ and also with problems and troubles of a political and administrative nature that had happened not long ago from the time of the publication of *AAF*,⁷¹ certainly, had developed much more prudent awareness⁷² in rela-

⁶⁹ See *The Comedies of Machiavelli 'The Woman from Andros, The Mandrake, Clizia'* (Bilingual Edition), edited and translated by David Sices and James B. Atkinson, Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., Indianapolis/Cambridge, 2007.

⁷⁰ Precisely at the time of Kranjčević's death, Fishta was active and among the main exponents of the 'Congress of Manastir' for the solution of the issue of the Albanian alphabet.

⁷¹ Here we can mention one of the problems that had arisen for Fishta two years earlier, when – to paraphrase – “it is not known for what reason, in 1906 he was dismissed from the position of director of the Franciscan schools of Shkodra and ordered to return from where he came, namely as parish priest in the village of Gomsiqe...” See Tonin Çobani, *Gjergj Fishta – Fillimet letrare*, Botimet Fishta, 2017, p. 81 ff.).

⁷² By 'prudent awareness' here I presumably mean Fishta's maturation in terms of the complexity of social and bureaucratic life (both religious and national), his dysphoria in the relationship between ide-

tion to what Plasari once called, demands of “social imperative” or “institutional dispositions”,⁷³ which would have made him hesitant to display through dedication, the friendship and identification at an ideal level, with such a “controversial” figure as Silvije Strahimir Kranjčević. We believe that Fishta neither had the enthusiasm of his student years, when just a few months after his first meeting with Kranjčević (December 12, 1892), he dedicated a poem to him with a dedication in the title, *Al valente poet sig. Silvie Kranjčević*, nor the characteristic youthful rebelliousness that disregarded the authorities when he thought they were interpreting something unfairly.⁷⁴ Although uncompromising in the ideals he held and aimed to express in his work, we believe that now much more mature and consolidated, Fishta did not want to “lower his behavior grade”⁷⁵ as he did in secondary school, nor to be dismissed from the position of director of Franciscan schools as had happened two years prior (in 1906), when he had been ordered to “return from where he came, that is, to become a parish priest in the village of Gomsiqe...”⁷⁶ when, although the reasons are not known, Father Dodaj notes that the problem had occurred “prompted by the anger of some, who did not understand Fishta...” As evidenced by the poem *AAF*, he kept on a pedestal the respect and memory of his former friend, and did not hesitate to express it there in the form of lament and euphoric glorification, but self-censored the display of the friend's name, to, as Father Dodaj said “not incite anger of some” who probably still “wouldn't under-

ality and reality and, of course, as a consequence, a necessary and imposed conformism in relation to many institutional-religious issues as well as in terms of national issues. To illustrate this, we can quote here, among other things, only part of a letter sent to Dodaj on 15.X.1907: “You tell me: “...never have I suffered in my soul as in these days [1] the miseries of the Motherland; I feel all the bitterness of the abyss we are in.” You're lucky that you haven't passed your thirties and you can still have pathetic feelings! As for me, to tell you the truth, today I would try to kill such thoughts, if nothing else, with a bottle of rakija; because it would be the same as if we wanted the impossible: and it is impossible to have a Fatherland according to our ideal. (At Gjergj Fishta O.F.M, *Letërshkëmbimi*, Botime Françeskane, Shkodër, 2020, p. 86-87); also see his personal attitude in relation to the clergy in another letter addressed to Pal Dodaj on April 8, 1909 (*ibid.*, p. 93-94), in which a subtext such as in the previous letter can also be assumed, so that “...it is impossible for us to have a clergy according to our ideal.” Beyond the assumption of this ‘prudent awareness’ that Fishta may have developed over time, he nevertheless knew how to be unpredictable with his temper; that is why even much later, he “knew how to forget” he was wearing the Franciscan robe. It is enough, among so many examples, to mention his speech at the grave of Avni Rustemi (assassin of former Prime Minister Esad Pasha Toptani), which caused him so much trouble with his superiors, that the Minister General of the Franciscan Order in Rome, Padre Bernardino Klumper OFM, through a complaint to Dodaj as Provincial of the friars, makes serious remarks to Fishta, threatening to, let us paraphrase: “ban the publication of the magazine where the speech was published, even with punishment” (See, Frano Kulli, *Fishta - Riliximi në kohën e lirisë*, Botimet Fishta, 2022, pp. 61-62.).

⁷³ Aurel Plasari, *ibid.*, p. 24.

⁷⁴ Blerina Suta, *ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ See footnote № 67.

stand”, to avoid “friction” with the clerical authorities, who, as we have seen, saw the personality and literary work of Kranjčević with stigma, especially in terms of faith, something which, understandably, the clergy cannot compromise. Could this second hypothesis make us reconsider more carefully some of these almost final verses of the poem,

... And his children then
They will sing your name. The field and the mountain
Always fresh, counting terrible frenzies
Sweet from your name will echo.
They will write on the oaks with the tip of the razor
In letters known only to shepherds:
The oaks will grow, because neither the ax nor the lightning
don't touch the wood where that name is written:
As the oaks grow, the letters will grow
And so clearer after several centuries
The grandchildren will sing them
And your name will be sung as soon as the sun sets on the earth
(verses 151-162)

where the proceeding through conduplication (*conduplicatio*) namely the quadruple articulation of the word 'name' only in the last eleven verses of the poem, suggests the author's compulsion for non-nomination, relativizing Volaj's thesis that he is lost, in the sense that he is abstracted (Volaj as understood from the commentative paratext, conceptualizes the addressee of *AAF* as a chimerical figure, which starts as something defined but loses its contours; it seems that Volaj is not convinced that there could exist a concrete person that Fishta idealizes so much). However, precisely because of this strong reference to “the name” (i.e. “the name” as a syndecode and metonymy of the addressee), Fishta demonstrates that he is not developing his motives “in the air”, he is not engaging in an Ovidian-like rhetorical exercise by monotonizing it through atypical prolongation for lyric, nor is he consciously falling into the trap of universality of poetic discourse *per se*. No, but it is precisely the real referent, his friend who stands before his mind's eye in an eidetic mode, and even if the temptation of nomination no longer existed, the insistence through the conduplication of 'name' reveals this awareness. Indeed, the “name” may have the semantic surplus of Albanian ethnocultural axiology, which marks the “sublimation” of the man, his emblematic transformation into the “extraordinary” in “the name”, however, this may be only suggestive because we believe that here we are primarily dealing with indexicalization due to the suppression of the desire for nomination; thus, it is an emphasis of self-awareness and compulsion for lack of a signifier. This becomes even more clearer if we observe in two of the verses we just quoted, Fishta's materialization of a double coding:

They will write on the oaks with the tip of the razor
In letters known only to shepherds
(verses 155-156)

From Volaj, the literal meaning of these verses is taken for granted, which simply relates to the bucolic convention of writing signs on trees by shepherds. However, within the framework of the hypothesis we have given, here we also see two possibilities of figurative interpretation. The first is the allusive marking within the Christian figural code, where the *ordo clericus* is marked through the shepherds. There are two levels on which we believe Fishta could have constructed such an allusion. The first is the dedicative-specific allusion, which may refer to its closest brethren, that “only from them” the name of dedicatee of *AAF* is known, while the second may be the ironic allusion, where the *ordo clericus* could denote all the “clerical” adversaries who stigmatized Kranjčević as “infidel”. Within the framework of the ironic allusion, the Fishtian subtext of this verse is understandable. Meanwhile, the second figurative interpretation beyond the Christian figural code, we believe, can be linked to Virgil's Tenth Eclogue. The topoi of 'writing on trees' (known and widely used in literature in poets such as Theocritus, Virgil, Propertius, Ovid, Ariosto, Boiardo, Tasso, Shakespeare, Sidney, Spenser, etc.) is present in both texts, although we do not have congruence between the situations being poetized. What links Virgil's Tenth Eclogue and *AAF* through the somewhat thin layer of the archaic graffiti in wooden material, is their common dedicatory object: in both, characters are poets esteemed by their poet friends, namely the poet Gallus by Virgil and Kranjčević by Fishta, but discredited by authorities, the former by Octavian and the latter by the clergy. Due to a lack of ancient evidence and absence of the poetic work of Gallus (considered from an Ovidian projection also as the first elegiac poet),⁷⁷ scholars have concluded that this suggests a *damnatio memoriae* initiated against the poet;⁷⁸ although the reasons are speculated, Ovid in *Tristia* (2.1.445-6) attributes this fall to his *licentia* (freedom of expression) when he was intoxicated. In relation to this (although ambiguities are mentioned),⁷⁹ Virgil in the aforementioned Eclogue poses a significant question: “neget quis carmina Gallo?” (Ecl. 10.3, and who could deny Gallus's poems?)⁸⁰ alluding to the prohibition of his work. Considering Fishta's classicist influence, education, and preference, it seems possible that at least the motive for this intertextualized topos came

⁷⁷ *Tristia*, 4. 10.53-4, taken up by Quintilian in *Institutio Oratoria*, 10.1.93.

⁷⁸ See Emmanuelle Raymond – *Caius Cornelius Gallus 'The Inventor of Latin Love Elegy'* in, *The Cambridge Companion to Latin Love Elegy*, edited by Thea S. Thorsen, Cambridge University Press, 2013, f. 60-61.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* p. 60, footnote (11).

⁸⁰ Also, Ovid, in a part where the immortality of poets is sublimated in *Amores*, takes up the image of Gallus in this form: “Gallus et Hesperis et Gallus notus Eois / et sua cum Gallo nota Lycoris erit” (*Am.* 1,15, 29-30).

from knowledge of the real and poetic context, and perhaps at the euphoric end of his poem, it may have stemmed as 'intertextual unconsciousness', as a syllepsis in the sense given by Riffaterre.⁸¹ However, the integration of such intertextualization of the image of 'writing on trees' that we are claiming for the construction of a suggestive partial analogy for the similar relationship of 'appreciation' for admired poets, as well as the compulsion to not accept the *damnatio memoriae* for them [which is explicitly in Virgil (with official imperative) while in Fishta as implicit pressure (which suggests the latentism of the name)], can be argued beyond "intertextual unconsciousness", so as an allusive technique of Fishtian articulation itself. This technique, I consider, is manifested to us already in the paratextual motto of the book *Pika Voestet: carmina proveniunt animo deducta sereno*, which in a way can be read as ironic and contrastive because in the Ovidian text it serves to highlight the opposite of what this verse claims, namely his state and consequently the nature of his poetry which that state inspires. This is indicated by the subsequent verses in *Tristia I, I, 39-42: carmina proveniunt animo deducta sereno;/ nubila sunt subitis tempora nostra malis,/ carmina secessum scribentis et otia quaerunt;/ me mare, me venti, me fera iactat hiems*. (Beautiful verses come from a calm mind;/ my days are clouded by sudden misfortunes/ the verse demands a writer with time and solitude/ I am crushed by winter storms, by tempests, by the sea). Therefore, we think that the poetic context oriented towards the Gallusian issue is implicitly indicated in the topos of "writing on trees". Perhaps it is too much to emphasize that Virgil's eclogues have long been given an allegorical interpretation in political terms.

"For you, silence is praise" or epistolary conception

If we were to start from the assumption we gave, that Fishta had not yet written *AAF* when Karl Patsch asks him for a manuscript for the Balkan Institute Museum, namely for Kranjčević's museum room, then we believe that the modeling strategy of the text took other forms that are worth discussing on a hypothetical level.

First among them is that after Patsch's request, the status of the addressee has taken on contours of a rhetorical pretext rather than being a mere mnemonic inspiration. Thus, its placement in the museum as a manuscript (as Patsch requested) has meant that Fishta did not feel the need for explicit mention of the friend's name because the very act of physically submitting the poem and placing it in the museum has internally inscribed the specific dedication to Kranjčević. Thus, Fishta may not have even considered its publication in the book *Pika Voestet*, (a publica-

⁸¹ See, Michael Riffaterre, *The Intertextual Unconscious*, *Critical Inquiry* 13 (Winter 1987).

tion that could have been realized quickly once the opportunities were offered in 1909)⁸² and he conceived it epistolarily, simply as a poem that would remain in manuscript in the friend's museum room. The strong delineation of the addressee as a 'rhetorical pretext' in Fishta's intermediate epistolary conception of the elegy is also justified by the opening verses of the poem, which indicate both the implicit Dantesque influence and explicit Gurakuqian reconfiguration. Implicitly Dantesque in the sense of the initial image that, through hypotyposis and similar tone, truly alludes to the obscurity of the beginning of the *Divina Commedia*, i.e. to that "selva oscura" and "esta selva selvaggia e aspra e forte" except in Fishta's poem with a cut down forest, but equally "oscura" and equally "aspra e forte". However, this Dantean influence becomes doubly implicit due to the explicit appropriation of this metaphor by Luigj Gurakuqi, namely his poem *Dega e Zanavet* (Eng. *The Branch of Fairies*).

In that assart of dark pain, in that place of desolation⁸³

where Gurakuqi reconfigures in the Dantesque context the topos of Limbo. Thus, this double Dantean influence and explicit Gurakuqi influence indicate the pretextual rhetorical delineation of the addressee in Fishta's work: he, in Patsch's request, certainly enthusiastic in the midst of his "troubles" that we have emphasized, so "in the middle of the path of this life" ("Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita"), has finally found (even if only imaginatively) his own Virgil to lead him through hell (cf. verses 107-110: "me, for whom the world and a desire for freedom/ have paved a steep road in life/ verily, my heart upon thy afflicted grave,/ stirs me to good works and to manhood"). However, if we stick to Patsch's demanding assumption, also intertextuality (especially in relation to Kranjčević's work) proves how much it will have played a role in the authorial cognition and predispositions that each poet has in advance in relation to his audience, a potential translation later. Consequently, the intended Fishtian audience for this poem-manuscript in the museum is no longer the Albanian mass audience (as for his epic and satire) nor elite audience (his friends and intellectuals of the time) but the Croatian-speaking one, which has certainly modified the atypical textual strategy of the Fishtian proceeding. In this case, Fishta presumably forcibly strove for the universalist tendency of the poetic proceeding by not contextualizing it through nominalization and leaving the interpretation open.

⁸² The problems of publishing at the time of Fishtian literary activity are already known; most of these publications were institutionally financed by offices, consulates or certain circles with cultural and political interests. The publishing problems are indicated by Fishta himself in several cases in his correspondence. See, Gjergj Fishta, *ibid.*

⁸³ Luigj Gurakuqi, *Vepra 1*, Rilindja, Prishtinë, 1988, p. 50.

On the other hand, after the experience with the epic poem *Lahuta e Malcis* (the first two cycles) and satirical poem *Anzat e Parnasit* (essentially with a pro-popular aim) which we notice have achieved a very good and strong reception, in the mainly lyrical book *Pika Voestet* and specifically in *AAF*, Fishta is in the field of preferred classic and pure lyric, which even the most lyrical Albanian poet, Lasgush Poradeci, appreciates as an undeniable feature of Fishta even in epic. He uses the enthusiasm provided by Patsch's request to build a virtual dialogic monologue with the admired poet (or rather the precursor) to whom he once in the poem *Al valente poet sig. Silvie Kranjčević* asked to write an epic about Skanderbeg. Now that the epic project was taking shape in his mind, we can see the need for virtual dialogue, and also the compulsion to surpass the predecessor in a Blumian sense. After his death, the epic idea he once entrusted to his abilities is revitalized; not only is it revitalized, but "it must" be carried out in his name: (cf. "Then I will build heroic songs.") This may have led Father Fishta due to the Kranjčevićian "controversiality" on matters of faith, in a struggle with himself, in a *terror animi*. How many "Oh's" and "Alas's" after each crescendo, how many returns to a sedimentary position "on letters and books", how many paradise imaginations full of light and love, how many virtuous aspects do not calm Fishta's struggle with himself. Only *the song* (Alb. Kanga) survives this struggle, both as *meaning* and as consolation.

As we tried to lay out in this paper, the essence of elegiac poetic dedication in its canonical form, is the lamentation of *absence*. This *absence*, apart from the need to be articulated, equally requires compensation, so it must be overcome. Formally and substantially, as both a convention and *stimmung*, elegy is an idiom where the poet exercises the craft of lamenting the absence, aims to overcome it and artistically surpasses it. In the elegy *AAF* Fishta for the first and last time sublimates a surpassing of personal pain that we will later encounter only in the initiatory investment and self-sacrificing purpose of his fictionalized epic characters. After the beginnings of his epic project (*Lahuta e Malcis*), a "little" satire (*Anzat e Parnasit*), and some translated Manzonian *Te Deum*-s, Fishta was shaping his literary and life project. And, surprisingly, in these first euphoric but equally troubled steps, he returns to youth, he returns to an old friend who had just died; he returns to where friendship was formed and a pledge given "ideally". To lean on and find his own Virgil! To overcome the pain as well as his precursor (Kranjčević), To detach, in order to move on! Fishta here has "turned to himself" and in loneliness develops a dramatic monologue with his friend and with other 'literary friends' (we are referring to the multitude of intertexts not only by Kranjčević) achieving almost an eclogiac elegy. Fishta is alone here in the narrowest sense of the word and from today's perspective we can say that: if in his epic *Lahuta e Malcis* he "cuts and grinds" in the epic sense of the phrase and in satire "he swears and spits" in the satirical sense, but always with a public-dependent eye, in order "to create" an ideal Albanian and to educate him, in *AAF* Fishta is alone, without the need to convince anyone of anything, except perhaps himself. Because as Shtaiiger says: "The

poet who is not addressing anyone and is speaking only to a few spirits similar to him, does not need the powers of persuasion. That is where the concept of lyricism excludes all rhetorical effect.”⁸⁴ Fishta sublimates in this unaddressed artistic text the type of devotional poetry that old Albanian writer Pjetër Bogdani (1685) had initiated for the first time in Albanian literature and which he also dedicates to a Croatian friend, Andre Zmajevic. And we are also concluding the paper with a Bogdanian psalmic quote desacralized only quantitatively, as a way to more proverbially conceive the essence of this Fishtian poem: “For you, silence is praise.”⁸⁵

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⁸⁴ Emil Staiger, *ibid*.

⁸⁵ Pjetër Bogdani, *Cuenus Prophetarum* (Çeta e Profetëve), Botim kritik, përgatitur nga Anila Omari, ASHSH, Tiranë, 2015, p. 6.

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SAŽETAK

“OR SE’ TU QUEL VIRGILIO...”

(O ADRESATU ELEGIJE JESENSKI CVIJET FRA GJERGJA FISHTE)

“Kanonska” elegija kao lirski modus artikulacije, uz topološke (lamentacija, meditacija i utjeha) i tonske (melankolične, refleksivne) žanrovske konvencije, imala je, povijesno gledano, strogo definiranoga adresata. On je bio ili inspirativni poticaj ili retorički povod za pjesničku meditaciju o dihotomiji između života i smrti. Kanonska elegija *Nji lule vjeshtet (Jesenski cvijet)* poznatoga albanskog pjesnika Gjergja Fishte ističe se upravo latentnošću adresata, što je osobito zanimljivo u svjetlu uzvišene glorifikacije neimenovanoga primatelja, kao i načelne nekriptičnosti fishtijanske poetike. Novija arhivska istraživanja i filološke

Znanstvene rasprave na engleskom jeziku

analize upućuju na to da je pjesma posvećena Fishtinu starom prijatelju, poznatom hrvatskom pjesniku Silviju Strahimiru Kranjčeviću. Stoga se u ovome radu nastoje dodatno podastrijeti argumenti u prilog toj tezi te se iznose određene hipoteze o razlozima zbog kojih je Fishta oklijevao javno obznaniti svoju posvetu Kranjčeviću.

Ključne riječi: elegija, adresat, Gjergj Fishta, Silvije Strahimir Kranjčević, latentna posveta