

## THE HISTORY OF GJERGJ FISHTA'S LYRIC POETRY

### ABSTRACT

Fishta's lyric creations are included in the volumes *Mrizi i Zanavet* and *Vallja e Parrizit*. The author himself did not follow any structure or system in their publication. Unlike the epic work of *Lahuta e Malcis*, the poet's lyrics do not constitute a poetic system. *Mrizi i Zanavet* was published three times in 1913, 1924 and 1931 during the poet's life. The ranking of poems for each publication seems to be random; it is not based on any series of principles or content and form criteria which could be brought to the reader as a poetic system. However, the lack of a poetic structure does not weaken or diminish the aesthetic values of the author's lyricism; even in this form, they may create different typologies of systems and constitute the poet's best artistic creativity.

Soon after Fishta's death in 1941, Father Viktor Volaj published the lyrics *Mrizi i Zanavet*. This publication is different from the three previous ones both in content and structure. The 1941 publication, being the first publication, is also accompanied with a preface and a series of comments. We must note that apart from Volaj's meticulousness as a curator and publisher of the poet's work, this publication also respects Fishta's will. Almost all of Fishta's poems included in this volume have been provided with introductory notes, explaining the origins of the poem in question, the history of its publication, the messages it conveys etc. The lexical, linguistic, dialectological or semantic comments that Volaj makes on a series of words used by Fishta in his poems are also invaluable. The publication of *Mrizi i Zanavet* by Volaj is the book that has undergone the greatest number of reprints since the 1940s. *Mrizi i Zanavet* of 1941 is considered as the most complete and best publication of Fishta's lyrics and Volaj, the most loyal commentator and publisher of the author.

*Vallja e Parrizit* was published only once during Fishta's lifetime, in 1925. In 1941, Father Viktor Volaj, initiated the second publication of *Vallja e Parrizit* after having completed the fourth publication of *Mrizi i Zanavet*. For Volaj, the need to collect those religious poems that the poet published later was stronger than demands for the publication of the text which was no longer available. As in the case of the selection for publication of *Mrizi i Zanavet*, it is evident that Volaj has been cautious in respecting the genre criteria. Many poems in the 1941 publication were accompanied by informative-explanatory texts while explanations have been provided for rare poetic words and expressions.

A quick look into the publications of Gjergj Fishta's lyrics and into the changes he made in the content of the material as well as into other revisions in particular poems shows that Fishta was continuously concerned to give his creations the look of a harmonized and proportional construction. But it seems that Fishta was not always satisfied with what came out of his hands. So it is no surprise that he trusted Father Viktor Volaj with this task. He cooperated with Volaj during all his life and later it was up to his skilled friend and collaborator to give a final form to the organization of his lyric poetry.

## THE HISTORY OF THE PUBLICATION OF GJERGJ FISHTA'S LYRIC POETRY

Fishta was a poet above all. He wrote more than 50,000 epic, lyric and dramatic lines. Lyricism is of course a very important component of his creativity. In fact, even the epic poetry and part of his drama are characterized by a strikingly lyrical nature.

Fishta's lyrical creations have been collected in the volumes *Mrizi i Zanavet dhe Vallja e Parrizit*.<sup>\*</sup> (*Pika Voestet* which was published in Zarë by the Vitaliani Printing House, was no longer printed under this name in 1909). The author himself did not follow any structure or system in their publication. Unlike the epic work of *Lahuta e Malcis*, ' (The Highland Lute), the poet's lyrics do not constitute a poetic system. The ranking of poems for each publication seems to be random; it is not based on any series of principles or content and form criteria which are come to the reader as a poetic system. Even their separate publications in different periodicals, have not been carried out under pre-determined criteria or typologies.

However, the lack of a poetic structure does not weaken or diminish the aesthetic values of the author's lyricism; even in this form, they may create different typologies of systems and constitute the poet's best artistic creativity.

*Mrizi i Zanavet* was first published in 1913 by the Nikaj Printing House in Shkodra. On its frontispiece, there was a dedication to Father Severin Lushaj.

The first publication of Fishta's lyrics is divided into three parts. After the Preface entitled *Bisedë, Auktorit, Shtypshkrojsi*. (*Conversation, Author, Printing House-Publisher*) the first part contains *T'kryqzuent; Ngadhnjia e kryqit; Mater Dolorosa; Sh'Françesku i Asizit; Ujtë t'Jordanit; Shqypnija*. In the second part *Shqyptari i gjytetnuem* there are: *Gjuha shqype; Shqyptari i gjytetnuem*. The third part *Gjuha e msimit* contains: *Gjuha e msimit, Nevoja e msimit, Dijsja*. Thus, among eight poems, six of them are religious lyrics, a considerable part are drama work, such as the satirical drama *Bisedës së Auktorit me Shtypshkrojsin, Gjuha e msimit, Nevoja e msimit, Dijsja* which will later belong to *Anzat e Parnasit* as well as the melodramas *Sh'Françesku i Asizit, Shqyptari i gjytetnuem*. The first publication of the *Mrizi i Zanavet* can be described as lyric, satirical and dramatic. Apart from the fact that the abovementioned creations are poetical creations, it seems that Fishta has not made use of other artistic criteria in the publication of his volume.

The second publication in 1924 was made by the Papërlyemes Printing House in Shkodra. The first part is entitled *Atdhetaret* and includes patriotic lyrics, the melodrama *Shqyptari i gjytetnuem* and the *Juda Makabe* tragedy in the order: *Shqypnija; Shqypnija e lirë; Shqypnis; Gjuha shqype; Diten e të shuemvë 1913; Nji gjamë desprimt!...; Surgite, mortui! (Çohi, të dekun!); Nevoja e msimit; Shqyptari i gjytetnuem; Emancipacjoni i komit shqyptar; "In hoc signo vinces"; Hymni i flamurit komtar; 28 nanduer 1913; Juda Makabe*. The second part, entitled *Jehi i shpirtit*

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\* We must note that several poems by Fishta published in the compilation *Anzat e Parnasitare* are pure lyric creations.

contained ten patriotic and religious lyrics and the play *Odisea* in the order: *I dbuemi*; *Gjaksorve*; *Nji misjonarit franciskan*; *Në ditë t'ëmnit të nji franciskanit shqyptár*; *Pëng nderimit*; *Burrnija*; *Nji lule vjeshtet*; *Dita e gjygit*; *Mí vorr t'Á. Anton M. Zannoni S. J.*; *Mí vorr t'Á. Alois Paliq O. F. M.*; *Odisea*. In the third part Fishta includes the translations: *Prozodi latine. Rregulla të përgjithta mi shkurtsi e gjatsi të rrokeve..* (Translation from Latin); and two farces: *Nji darkë në konvikt*. (A one-act farce); *Shkolla e muzikës*. (Comedy in one act).

Gjergj Fishta's care to include in the second publication of the *Mrizi i Zanavet* patriotic lyrics is obvious even when one considers only their sheer number.

In the third publication of the author's lyrics (1931, the Franciscan Printing House, Shkodra) a poem entitled *Geni* was added, some translations were removed and the volume was structured along parts. The tragedy *Jude a Makabe*, was replaced by the melodrama *Shqyptarja e Gjytetnume*. At the end of the book, there was also added the research on the mute letter *ë* and a glossary of rare words. The 1931 publication can be described as a third filter in the search for genre purity. Fishta's moves even when he goes beyond his lyricism, as in the case *Juda Makabe* serve the purpose of clarification and genre purity.

In 1931, *Mrizi i Zanavet*, under the poet's will, we believe, came out with this structure: *Shqyptarja*; *Shqyptarja e lirë*; *Shqyptaris*; *Gjuha shqype*; *Diten e të shuemvet 1913*; *Nji gjâmë desprimi!*; *Surgite, mortui!* (*Çohi, të dekun!*); *Nevoja e msimit*; *Shqyptari i gjytetnuem*; *Shqyptarja e gjytetnueme*; *Geni*; *Emancipacioni i Kombit Shqyptár*; *Pëng nderimi*; "In hoc signo vinces"; *Hymni i Flamurit Kombtar*; *28 Nanduer 1913*; *I Dbuemi*; *Gjaksorvet* (1899); *Burrnija*; *Nji Lule Vjeshtet*; *Dita e gjygit*; *Mbi vorr t'Á. Anton M. Zannonit S. J.*; *Mbi vorr t'Á. Alois Paliq O. F. M.*; *Për këndimin metrik të vjerrshavet*; *Zhvillimi i disa fjalve të librit*.

Soon after Fishta's death, in 1941 Father Viktor Volaj O. F. M published the lyrical work *Mrizi i Zanavet*. This publication is different from the three previous ones both in content and structure. The 1941 publication comes as the first publication which is accompanied with a preface and a series of comments. We must stress that apart from Volaj's meticulousness as a curator and publisher of the poet's work, this publication also respects Fishta's will. "For the publication of the definitive text, - writes Volaj in his preface, - I followed two texts examined by the author himself: of the second and third publications. In orthography, I was based on those criteria, along which, two months before his death, together with the poet we examined the first thirteen songs of the Lahuta." <sup>1</sup> Almost all of Fishta's poems have been accompanied with context which explains the genesis of the poem in question, the history of its publication, the messages it conveys etc. The lexical, linguistic, dialectological or semantic comments that Volaj makes on a series of words from Fishta's poems are also invaluable. We are maybe confronted with parallel poetic and prosaic readings, the latter bringing to the reader Volaj's desired expectations i.e of Fishta himself. The publication of *Mrizi i Zanavet* by Volaj is the publication that has undergone the greatest number of reprints since the 1940s. The work contains: *Për këndimin metrik të vjerrshavet*; I. *Shqyptarja*; II. *Shqyptaris*; III. *Gjuha shqype*; IV. *Atdheut*; V. *Shqyptarja e Lirë*; VI. *Hymni i Flamurit Kombtar*; VII. *Diten e të shuemvet*; VIII. *28 Nanduer 1913*; IX. *Nji gjâmë desprimi*; X. *Surgite, mortui!* XI. "In hoc signo vinces"; XII. *Emancipacioni i Kombit Shqyptár*;

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<sup>1</sup> Volaj, Viktor: Parthânje.- At: Fishta, Gjergj: *Mrizi i Zanavet*, Shkodër, Shtypshkroja "A. Gj. Fishta", 1941, p.7

XIII. *Peng nderimi*; XIV. *Burrnija*; XV. *Gjaksorvet*; XVI. *Meshtari i Malcís*; XVII. *Mbí vorr t'A. Alois Paliq O. F. M.*; XVIII. *Njij misjonari françeskan*; XIX. *Per paqë t'Europës*; XX. *Geni*; XXI. *I dbuemi*; XXII. *A. Anton M. Zanonit, S. J.*; XXIII. *Gurravet të Jordanit*; XXIV. *Kataklizmi i rruzullit*; XXV. *Mbí vorr t'Á. Anton M. Zanonit S. J.*; XXVI. *Nji lule vjeshtet*.

In the 1941 publication, Volaj removed the two melodramas *Shqyptarja e qytetnume* and *Shqyptari i Qytetnuem*, while new poems such as: oda A. Zanonit, *Atdheut* and three other religious creations which for Volaj are “little or not known at all even by those who claim to know them!”<sup>2</sup>. In this volume, the new poems are: *Gurrave të Jordanit*, *Meshtari i Malcís* dhe *Për paqë t'Europës*. The curator of the publication of Fishta's lyrics, Father Viktor Volaj explains the different structure of this publication compared to the previous ones. He appreciates Fishta's satirical and dramatic creations published in the previous publications but which are not included in the 1941 edition. Although they are a precious jewel for the national feelings, the language and poetic uniqueness, he writes both for the *Shqyptari i qytetnum* and *Shqyptarja e qytetnume*, - which portrays especially the latter, I wanted to publish in this volume only the lyric poems. And this, not on my own mind. Among the poet's manuscripts, I came across a paper where he had made a sketch of his definitive publication of all his poetry works: there he excluded from *Mrizi i Zânaveit*, and along with them, even the song *Nevoja e mesimit*, which closes the satirical conversation under the same title... In the selection of the abovementioned poems, among others, I also had in consideration the different meter.”<sup>3</sup>

The 1941 publication is considered as the best and most complete of the Fishta's lyricism and Volaj as the poet's best commentator and publisher. Fishta's researcher, Father D. Gjeçaj notes that "The fourth publication is the most precise and complete. We say this, - writes Gjeçaj, - because this publication... has been provided with a detailed commentary by Father Viktor Volaj and this Franciscan who knew Fishta's works in detail, not only because he was a student of Fishta but even because he consulted him often and explained the lyrics from direct contact with the poet, offering the proper understanding of words, expressions and facts.”<sup>4</sup>

For the first time, *Vallja e Parrizit* was published in 1925 by the Franciscan printing house in Shkodra. The volume contained 19 poems and two melodramas based on a religious argument. The lyrics of this publication follow a thematic principle. In 1925 Fishta's religious lyrics had this structure: *Të kryqzemetit*; *Ngadhnija e Krygjës*; *Fjala e Zotit*; *Të zânunt e pafaj të së Lumes Virgjines Mrì*; *Të lèmt e Zojës*; *Nuncjata*; *Mater Dolorosa*; *Të grishun per muej të Majit*; *Urata e atdhetarit shqyptár*; *Engllit Rojës*; *Meshtari*; *Gurrave të Jordanit*; *Sh'Françesku i Asizit*; *Meshtari i Malcís*; *Emni i Jezus*; *Shkodra Zojës*; *Zoja Shkodrës*; *Në të paren Meshë të nji*

<sup>2 2</sup> Duka-Gjin, Pal: *Gjergj Fishta, Jeta dhe Veprat*: Assisi, 1992, p. 7 “ A critical review on Fishta's lyric art – says Volaj- which does not take into consideration his religious poems, would not only be incomplete, but completely wrong. Indeed, what value can a review have which claims to determine Fishta's lyric art but does not know *Mater Dolorosa*, *Krishii mbret*, *Gurravet të Jordanit*, *Meshtari i malcís*, *Nuncjata*, *Per paqë t'Europës*, *Të kryqzemetit*? And the review which wants to exclude from the lyric spirit the melodramas *Shqyptarja e qytetnueme* e *Mbretnesha e lulevet*, which took him several years to create?”

<sup>3</sup> Same, p.6,7.

<sup>4</sup> Same p.187.

*Meshtarit të ri; Zëmrës së shugurueshme të Jezu Krishtit per pagjë t'Europës; Barit e Betlemit, melodram; Sh'Françesku i Asizit, melodrama.*

In 1941, Father Viktor Volaj, initiated the second publication of the *Vallja e Parrizit* after completing the fourth publication of the *Mrizi i Zanavet*. For Volaj, the need to compile those religious poems that the poet published later was stronger than demands for the publication of the text which was no longer available ...”<sup>5</sup> This was the reason that Volaj does not include in this publication the two religious melodramas *Barit e Betlemit* dhe *Shën Françesku i Asizit* which were later published as parts of his drama.

Many poems of the 1941 publication have been accompanied by informative-explanatory texts; and rare poetic words and expressions have also been explained. Under the title of each lyric, the year of the first publication has been placed. “As far as orthography is concerned, - notes in the preface, - we followed those criteria, which we examined in the fourth publication of the *Mrizi i Zanavet*”<sup>6</sup>

This second publication preserves the content and the structure of the first one until the first twenty poems. Only the title of the poem *Zëmrës së shugurueshme të Jezu Krishtit per pagjë t'Europës* (1925 pub.) changes to a short form of *Per paqe t'Europës*. Part of this volume are also the translations included in the volume *Vjershat e Përshpirtshme* published in 1906. As a continuation of the first publication, as if to complete Fishta's religious poems in this publication are also included the poems: *Në ditë t'emnit të nij françeskani Shqytár; Fuqija e Fjalës së tenzot; Krishti Mbret; Këshndellat (Manzoni); Të psuemit (Manzoni); rrshajët (Manzoni); Emni i Zojës (Manzoni); Zemrës së Zojës (Silvio Pellico); Shën Françesku i Asizit (mbas Zanellet); Dora e Mashtarís; Të damit e njeriut prej shekullit; De profudis; Pange lingua; Lam lucis orto sidere; Hyji (Metastasio); Nihma e Zotit (Metastasio); Urata e nadjes (Metastasio); Feja (Metastasio); Shpresa (Metastasio); Dashtnija; Zâni i Zotit (Metastasio).*

It is important to note that three poems *Meshtari i Malcis; Per paqe t'Europës; Gurrave të Jordanit* first published in *Mrizi i Zanavet*, are published even in the *Vallja e Parrizit*. Volaj informs us that these poems, in comparison with others are accompanied with longer comments and explanatory notes. The genre criteria makes it possible for the curator of Fishta's work to publish these poems in both collections of lyrical poems.

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<sup>1</sup> A. Viktor Volaj: Parathanje,- Në: Gjergj Fishta: *Vallja e Parrizit*,- Shkodër, 1941, p.5.

<sup>2</sup> Same, p.5

Based on pure literary and artistic principles, Father Volaj brings to the readers lyrical, patriotic and religious poems by Fishta organized in a poetic system.

From a quick look into the publications of Gjergj Fishta's lyrics, and into the changes he made to the content of the material and other revisions in special poems, it is clear that Fishta was continuously concerned to give his creations the look of a harmonized and proportional construction. But it seems that Fishta was not always satisfied with what came out of his hands. . So it is no surprise trusted Father Viktor Volaj with this task. He cooperated with Volaj during all his life and later it was up to his skilled friend and collaborator to give a final form to the organization of his lyricism.

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