



ORIGINAL PAPER

Being a Character in Migjeni's Optic

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Abstract:

Being a character in Migjeni's optics means being pulled to pieces by him, both mentally and spiritually. Migjeni was a psychologist for suffering souls. He was brave enough to construct such characters in his works. Migjeni also dared a lot when he wrote the Cubi's kiss (Albanian: *Puthja e Cubit*). In this story, he narrated in detail "the emotional explosion and physical desire for sexual intercours" of a 17 years girl named Dila – a character constructed by him.

Migjeni also dared a lot when he constructed the character of Nushi, a man educated under the censorship of his authoritarian parents and traditional principles. The character of Nushi realized of being surrounded by a stifling environment, for the sake of some society rotten mindsets, which "flourished" at the expense of completely powerless human beings. Besides Nushi, Migjeni was able to create many other figures. Migjeni's characters grew up in a space similar to a miniature.

Through the examples described above this article aims to elaborate a theoretical approach in regards to some social issues and their reflection in everyday and traditional life that prevailed in Northern Albania.

Keywords: *Woman; highlander; beggar; misery.*

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Introduction

"We don't need world masterpieces. We need writers who can reflect the reality of our life, the ones who see without curtains, without fear (Migjeni 2002).

Being described as a "hurricane" in Albanian literature, Migjeni was an author who removed the cover of social wounds that prevailed over the life of Northern Albanian inhabitants. Migjeni's appearance in Albanian literature was just the appearance of Jesus in the heart of Christian believers. Thus, Migjeni was a precious asset in Albanian literature who "honoured Shkodra, Albania, Balkans and Europe" (Zeqo Moikom 2011).

Migjeni's prose was known for its wide range of topics. The life of the Albanian village, particularly of a highland village, occupies a specific position in Migjeni's prose. (Sinani Shaban 2019).

Migjeni appeared in Albanian literature as a volcanic "Eruption" and disappeared as an "earthquake tremor" as a result of the famous disease of that time – tuberculosis. This disease physically defeated the northern writer, but he left an outstanding legacy in the history of Albanian literature.

Migjeni was both a predictor and a victim; he was subject to what laid in his creations. Thus, Migjeni's creatures were a fortune predicted by him. Migjeni is an extraordinary writer in Albanian literature in terms of original treatment of phenomena and creations of immortal characters in time, so we may soundly ascertain that Migjeni's characters are as immortal as the world masterpieces.

Migjeni was a detailed observer of social wounds in which the characters he created found a proper environment for actions; he involved these characters into the spectrum of psychoanalytic studies. In his verse Migjeni stated:

*"I am suffering along with a child whose parent does not buy a toy,
I am suffering along with a young man who burns in eroticism,
I am suffering along with a fifty-year-old man who drowns in the apathy of life,
I am suffering along with an old man who trembles fear of death,
I am suffering along with a farmer who fights the land,
I am suffering from a worker who was suppressed by iron..." (Migjeni 2002).*

Migjeni was very sensitive to social phenomena, human injustices and above all to extreme misery. This was evidenced through a letter that Bojka addressed to Olga, both Migjeni's sisters, where she said that Migjeni was suffering due to social injustices, but anyway he never become a pessimist. Through his optimistic smile, he was looking for another new smile, he was looking for the new man, he was looking for the "Superman" to wake up from the spirit of centuries, and the will that calls knows how to suppress, and addresses to them:

*"Hey, repressed wills...
Hey, repressed wills..." (Migjeni 2002).*

According to the researcher Moikom Zeqo, Migjeni bore all concerns from the most insignificant ones to those that arose into a big problem, the life-destroying ones (Idrizi Rinush 1992).

Migjeni's pen remained factual, through two genres – poetry and prose – his discourse can be compared with the world literature. First of all, Migjeni belongs to himself, whereas the personality and individual creativity are applied to the national cause (Raifi Mensur 1979).

Through his literature, Migjeni reflected not only the reality, but as a psychologist of details, he elaborated them one by one, identifying them as a social

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phenomenon, as a loss of identity, as a spiritual pain and as lack of love. His characters are easily recognized as Migjeni's characters in Albanian literature.

Any new reading about Migjeni offers new dimensions of understanding, undiscovered substrata of world ideological values to which his characters refer, which are also related to the time and later historical and cultural times (Kryeziu Resmie 2004).

The core of his prose treated the *Man*, doubting on his being and seeing the human personality doubled. This can be illustrated by the following word: *De jure he became Socrates, but in fact he was just a pig* (Migjeni 2002).

This was the concept of Migjeni about the *Man*. But according to Migjeni, the *Man* itself was in dilemma as to which alternative to choose, that of Socrates or the pig.

Through this story, Migjeni calls the *Man* to preserve his human dignity at the end, but anyway, the *Man* still cannot go beyond his frame of thought and action.

Sometimes the Man cannot hide the qualities of a pig and is presented as actually, he is (Migjeni, Vepra: 2002).

Koco Bihiku, a scholar that studied Migjeni's works stated: *through the Socrates Migjeni forcefully hit the hypocrisy as a harmful defect of human nature* (Bihiku Koço 2004).

Migjeni elaborated the nakedness of reality and over it created his characters that reflect wounds, wounds and only social and spiritual wounds.

Migjeni's works mark a living and immortal matter of Albanian culture. It stands out as one of the greatest national treasures (Zeqo Moikom 2011).

Migjeni constructed such characters mainly in his novels: Novels of the northern city (Albanian: *Novelat e qytetit të veriut*). Migjeni completed these novels at the end of the year 1936, but they were printed only in the year 1944, after his death.

The scholar Nathalie Piégay-Gros in her work "The poetic of intertextuality" stated: *Based on the reference that a character may make over the work, the narration when putting into the scene the readings of the same character, give you an example on psychology, shadow and persecution, but also the knowledge, cultural ability and hence, through a sociological standpoint, or its belonging towards a given environment* (Piégay-Gros Nathalie 2011).

The characters in Migjeni's optic have a common point as they live in a common environment. Their eyes look at the sky and they beg; they have only names because Migjeni was their last name:

1. – A highlander woman (Albanian: *Malsorja*), story: "Do you want coal, sir?" (Albanian: *A do qymyr, zotni?*)

The highlander becomes concerned about her way back to the mountain. She was looking at the sun, as it was moving towards the west. How she could go back home when darkness falls? In fact, she was not afraid of hobs or animals, but... she would not be afraid if she was old... she remembers two or three cases when she was chased and she was not aware what they wanted from her..." (Migjeni 2002).

2. – Luli, story "Little Luli" (Albanian: *Luli i vocërr*)

The character of Luli symbolized misery, poorness and extreme poverty. Through the character of Luli Migjeni not only wrote about poverty but also within the word "misery" he gave some shocking impacts of the age when he lived:

Misery – a piece of food, misery – seal, misery – mature child, misery – a flame of desires, misery – libido, misery – eye light, misery – polishing page, misery – indelible stain, etc. That is the way Migjeni talks about the misery; he suffers within the misery and explains all phenomena within it.

“When Luli enters into the schoolyard, he smiles a little but doesn’t talk to anyone. He walks slowly, looking on the right and left, but he still walks until he reaches his destination. He likes to stay just in front of the school path. That is his target, enjoying the sunshine warm of the autumn. Luli leans against the wall, put his small fingers in the pockets, brings her red nose from the cold towards the morning sun and ...he looks. What most attract his attention are boots worn by some of his friends. How beautiful they are! How they shine! – thinks Luli and suddenly his eyes go through his balloons, through which the five fingers of the barefoot are seen well” (Migjeni 2002).

3. – The bagger, story *“God bless you”* (Albanian: Zoti të dhashtë)

Migjeni’s bagger

“The beggar must get something. He leaves one door and enters into second, third, fourth, and so on, to all the doors of that street. This street is the space of his action for today. Maybe another street tomorrow. The action spaces of our citizens are different” (Migjeni 2002).

4. – Dila, story *“Cubi’s kiss”* (Albanian: Puthja e Cubit)

Migjeni’s Dila

Migjeni didn’t shorten the life of spring flowers by putting them into a winter tent, because the tent does not protect them, but only fades them similar to that of age enthusiasm of Dile’s character, who just has appreciated and became aware of her age.

“How strongly Dila feels her 17 years! When she is conquered by a desire, she put her palms under her head and stretches harder, she feels like her blood was hardly running through her ears and nipples and that makes her requiring more” (Migjeni 2002)

4. – Nushi, story *“Student in the home”* (Albanian: Studenti në shtëpi)

Migjeni’s Nushi

Nushi is a dual character that challenges his conscience. Nushi’s lectures in front of her sister evoked beautiful feelings, but to abandon them as soon as he left the room. Agia cries, but she hides the tears. She suffers, but she hides suffering, she rejoices later... but apart from the fact that she hides her love, she will deny herself and she will kill this secret pleasure. More or less Agia was Migjeni himself. She undergoes a moral metamorphosis, Nushi undergoes an intellectual metamorphosis, as it happens to the skull, whereas their father undergoes a metamorphosis of another kind – from a monster he turns into a screaming singer. From that it seems:

“...the so-called family ideal was based on the interest” (Migjeni 2002).

“I am immoral, the concept I thought – not to say ideological – does not agree with the morality that the society imposed. But I perceive her moral superficially, and on her back, I play the game I wanted to play. Just like I did, hundreds of other people play the same game. Therefore, my friends, if you hesitate to play after your back, please change the form. Remove the brakes” (Migjeni 2002).

At this corpus of characters, even at Nushi, there is no death although it was mostly announced. Nushi could not die. He was educated in the West.

5. – Lukja, story *“A history of one of them”* (Albanian: Historia e njëres nga ato)

Migjeni’s Lukja

The crazy eroticism as a natural power was described by the characters of the story *“A history of one of them”*. Since they were many, or to say differently, they are many of them having a life, bed, same lovers, some worries, same pains, but they have a soul. Very often Migjeni considers Luke as a goddess, an icon or statue presented between gentlemen and students as a tradeswoman, who does not how to advertise her goods:

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"Students got confused, they were talked about, looked at each other, blushed and left. Then Luke burst into laughs, laughed heartily, caught their hands and moved them in her room. Sometimes she quarrelled with them because any of them kissed her naked arm or touched her face, just as a man who laid a crown on the priest of imam has the right to grab his wife" (Migjeni 2002).

Luke is aware of her trade, but the society pushes and coerces her; her death may come either from hunger, misery or poverty like her brothers and sisters in Malesi or she would go mad or die under the lustful power of a big city where she decided to love. Migjeni provided two solutions to the characters of "A history of one of them":

Or so...

Or so... (Migjeni 2002).

Luke's character had no middle way between these two solutions. Between two deaths Luke accepted the farthest one – the career of an inexperienced prostitute or even of a completely innocent prostitute. She was the goddess of her grace she never achieved to possess. But Luke was used to assessing something when she was hurted spiritually, she recalled she was a woman and such she had a reproducing instinct, but her remembrance was late because her instinct was linked with material interests. Perhaps she wanted to reproduce, as reproduces the mother-land or any other live being (Migjeni 2002).

Luke feels pain and sadness. Migjeni built the character of Luke bitterly, hardened anxiously and carved her sadly, along with her career in order to making her part of the insanity that is used to lose crazy people and Luke... Luke was chased by her career.

... Who gives a charity to a former prostitute?! (Migjeni 2002).

6. – Lili, story "*Forgive our daily bread today*" (Albanian: *Bukën tonë të përditshme falna sot*).

"Bread! Bread for Lili! Hey... do you want some bread? When you get bread you will ask then for some butter, some meat and finally a sunny home...

Hey, no! It can't be like that. No! There is no bread!

Bread! Please! Lili died" (Migjeni 2002).

The relation between the concept of poverty and wealth was elaborated by Migjeni in the relation between the beggar and master. The expression: *Lord, Lord, please lord, forgive me something* was repeated over 5 times in the story "God bless you" and it comes as a bell of misery.

This expression was an expression of my city, Migjeni said. Nobody else than the poor inhabitants of this city may spell this refrain better and then added: this melody can be sung only over pavements of my city and it was listened only by citizens of our city (Migjeni 2002).

The appearance of a highlander woman in the city means that Migjeni was the first writer to have brought the literature from the village into the city.

Migjeni reached the peak of his character production with the novel "*Do you want some coal, sir*" (Albanian: *A do qymyr zotni*). The pretty highlander woman was selling coal in the city. Coal means "fire" and the price of coal was in question. In fact, the question was between the price and coal similarly as between the highlander woman and the boy who wanted to "buy". A quick feeling, something just on the eve of an adventure.

"What is the price of the coal?"

Highlander woman moves. She knows him and asked (Migjeni 2002).

She sold coal once and said:

What about 8 Lek?

No... It is expensive ... You either made me angry that day, he said lightly when he was also looking on the right and left side. The highlander woman blushes, she laughed as the coal may laugh. It warms my freezing heart of this poor world in the chimney of the buyer (Migjeni 2002).

Academician Shaban Sinani gave his opinion regarding the prose of Migjeni: Migjeni's prose was known for its wide range of topics. The Albanian village, especially the highland village, occupies a great space in Migjeni's prose (Sinani Shaban 2019).

In our opinion, there is no doubt that Migjeni is an important modernist of Albanian literature and his literature is mostly civic one.

"It can't be forgotten that he changed the Albanian literature. We are all going to pay attention to Migjeni, not just to understand him but to understand ourselves. Migjeni is a literature of the future" (Zeqo Moikom 2011).

Humanity – this time inventor, that is more destructive than a builder of civilizations – is in crisis, both morally, culturally and economically.

"Man against humanity, it means a war in itself, or by other words: revolution!" (Migjeni 2002).

Mankind was no longer inspired, it was converted into the ice where the human cruelty against each other was like the expression: "A man is a wolf to another man".

Conclusion

As said and repeated, without a doubt, any writer is a product of the reality and the place he was born and grew up; it has happened often that the truth, circumstances, love and anxiety of diseases have built a proper and talented writer. If we go back to this study, the situations described above are very tangible in Migjeni's work. The characters he created represents a gallery of catastrophic situations and circumstances.

The conclusions in the stories offer no solution, not even through additional comments that the author provides in the end. Moreover, even in the cases when Migjeni interferes, they only harden the dilemma so, this is the reason why the writer opens alternatives: "Was Socrates a suffering man or a satisfied pig?", or, "or"... , etc.

Migjeni's figures were in deep economic and spiritual misery, they suffered from a lack of love but this doesn't mean that the characters don't love their life, because they die loving their life.

Seen as a whole table these novels have a connecting point. The characters of Migjeni live in the same environment, where the main course of study was to elaborate the phenomena of a woman, mainly of a highlander woman, who moved from the village to the city.

The move to the city, not only of her, demonstrates the abilities of the writer to describe her authenticity, with her nakedness, loneliness and above all – with her boundless misery and poverty.

The characters created by Migjeni break the boundaries of each nature and category, which aim to unite and reunite through love, disregarding the psychology of rumours in the living environment.

Through his characters Migjeni indicates the factors that make him tired but he cannot find an explanation. The song of his characters was deformed by the weight of misery and the force of the Kanun (traditional law). These were two oppressive factors of the life/production of Migjeni and of the reality of the time.

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Luke's character finally divorces the "husband". Nushi advised her sister to avoid being upset about the fact of being pregnant because she may hurt the baby, although his mind continued to elaborate secretly on the identity of the baby's father. Luli entered into the marriage crown of his master, whereas the nun discovered her thoughts in front of God.

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