

The Perception of the Myth of Occident in Migjeni's Work



Literature

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Abstract

The modernism in European Literature was preceded by historical developments determined by intellectual revolution that put in question the metaphysical thought of the previous European tradition. Modernism has become a literary movement that reflects the innovation of the creation on the ruins of the previous tradition. L' Occident as a new modern spirit with the intellectual development of emancipation has become as a myth for the small nations. The Albanian Literature, dominated theretofore by a tradition of the national spirit, well known as the Albanian Renaissance, feels the pressure of these changes, reflecting it through creations of Albanian authors that have been educated in the West. Although this literature has inherited the feature of delay compare to other westerns literatures, these authors, attracted from the changes the literature was going through, dare to write in different literary European trends. The myth of Occident in the work of Migjeni has been observed since in the beginning from the scholar Arshi Pipa ... "as an epochal vocation..." Migjeni has sensed the new European spirit, not only as a magnetic attraction to new sudden developments, but as a movement to destroy entrenched systems of thought that were returned to the myth of peoples for centuries. He did come as a wrecker of its cultural tradition, but not as much as a result of his own choice of being in the footsteps of his followers,⁹⁵ rather than as the direct result of his consciousness of being subjected to a powerful temptation; to rise against the ancient myth as the world itself is, which shocks the foundation of faith upon which was built the whole European civilization. The myth of Occident to Migjeni is represented to readers as an expression of the will of detachment from the "rule" and the influence of the Christian religion.

At times when the intellectual revolution with the theory of relativity of Einstein that puts the man in front of a universe ignored the rules of measurement; when philosophers questioned the metaphysical thought of the previous European tradition by opening new ways of thought and reasoning about the world and the human being, when the revolutionary studies of Freud overturned the concepts about the human mind, at a time when it started a new faith, atheism that put under pressure the religion, which until the nineteenth century was regarded as the source of moral values and meaning of life, the European Letters created a special relation with the philosophical thinking and aesthetics, bringing so a new trend of the literary development. Two main literary directions of the nineteenth century that has laid the groundwork of modernism in the twentieth of century were symbolism and naturalism, that overturned the notions of critical realism. With the trend of making the innovation everywhere and in everything, the modernism began in the days of the so-called crisis of personality. In order to deal with this crisis, it has initially to deal with the previous tradition. That's why the poets and the authors of the twentieth century are different, with another new vision and spirit. "Modernism, - becomes so,- a shelter where is developed the innovative phenomena"⁹⁶ If in Europe the accelerated civilization would bring numerous challenges for those that could not keep up with it, in Albania, the peripheral waves of this European development would make its influence. The Occident, as the sign of emancipation and development was already turned into a myth for small nations, as they were writhening with a delayed rhythm of their walk toward prosperity with "their burned faces by the flames of the heady epopees of their nations".⁹⁷ A large number of intellectuals have been abroad and have "touched" the changes of the western society. Fascinated from a rapid industrial development and a completely new system of thought and conception of the world, they wondered what place Albania would take in this development by making it as the major topic of debate in the different journals of the time, focusing especially in the new developments of the culture and literature. The national and

⁹⁵ "I want to be the follower of the french (writers) / Dua të jem nxënës I francezëve!" has said Migjeni as signs their tracks, especially in the two most significant attribute the french poets such as Bodler, Rembo have done with their works; the innovation and destruction of the previous tradition.

⁹⁶ Tufa Agron, "A look on the modernist developments of the avant -garda of twentieth of century – Një vështrim mbi zhvillimet moderniste të avangardës së shekullit të XX-të », in «The phenomenon of avantgarda in the Albanian literature – Fenomeni i avangardës në Letërsinë shqiptare», Sh B Arbëria, Tiranë, 2004, pg 224.

⁹⁷ "- Të gjitha kombet po dehen n'epoepa të veta, / flakë e zjarrmit të tyne na i përzhiti ftyrat" taken from "Let's birth to a new human – Të lindet një njeri", Migjeni – The Work, Cetus Tirana, 2002, pg 8.

the political frame has been the main orientation of Albanian literature up to this time. The period of Albanian Renaissance was that one, that, more than any other period, molded and shaped the Albanian literature determining many of its later features. Driven primarily by the economical and spiritual crisis Albania of '30-s in twentieth of century was passing through, the critical thinking had begun to seek another kind of literature that would differ from the patriotic and historical thematics, inherited from the national platform of the period of Albanian Renaissance. The national spirit of this period has predominated the literature holding back the development⁹⁸ in the same rhythm as the other European literature have. Here is how it is presented this time, especially on the impact of the European modern literature in the development of the Albanian Literature and Culture from an well-known scholar Dhimiter Shuteriqi: "Different influences traversed in our country at that time. Thus, while one has not finished yet with Baudelaire the other could not break away from Leopard or another from d'Annunzio, and finally a fourth, Migjeni, would suck in one and all, without forgetting Dostoevsky and above all Nietzsche"⁹⁹. This environment of influences has been reflected in the works of the Albanian authors at this time. It is the time when these authors were attracted and dare to write according to different literal orientations such as: expressionism, futurism, impressionism, naturalism, surrealism, symbolism etc. The demonstration of these modern literary trends¹⁰⁰ were isolated phenomena in different writers or even within the works of the same writer. "The developments of the first half of the twentieth century (in Albanian literature – my note) look like strange compression of creations that can meet the most varied current trends located near each other in a narrow space of time."¹⁰¹ At this phase the Albanian literature becomes aware of itself for its aesthetic function, attempting to get separated from the previous mentality of Renaissance, that has already done its function decades ago.

This literature is represented by many writers that differ from each other. There is an author such as Faik Konica shaped with western culture under the influence of French poets; there is Fan Noli with a broad culture taken from the best English and French literature; Ernest Koliqi who tries out to make the sprout of the western civilization engrafted with the ancient real values of tradition; Lasgush Poradeci who brings the glamour of verses in a new context and of course there is another author as Migjeni who reflects his sharp erudition taken from the experience on the journey with the French writer Hugo and the Russian author Dostoevsky, under intimate philosophical concerns of Augustine to Nietzsche. The myth of Occident in the work of Migjeni has been observed since in the beginning from the scholar Arshi Pipa, not as a romantic myth, as it is shown in the poetries of Naimi¹⁰², but as an epochal vocation..., at a time when "the nations are exhilarated in their own

⁹⁸ "Literary trends that have manifested before in the West reappear in Albania with a delay of several years till decades leading to the so-called "the future of delay - Drejtimit letrare të shfaqura në Perëndim më parë, rishfaqen në Shqipëri me vonesën prej disa vjetësh deri në dekada që çon në të ashtuquajturin tiparin e vonesës" Taken from Jorgo Kristaq in the paper "The Albanian realm in Literary Map of Eastern Europe - Areali Shqiptar në Hartën Letrare të Europës Juglindore".

⁹⁹ "Influenca të ndryshme kryqëzoheshin në vendin tonë. Kështu, ndërsa njëri nuk kishte mbaruar ende me Baudelaire, tjetri nuk arrinte të shkëputej nga Leopardi apo nga d'Annunzio, dhe në fund një i katërt, Migjeni që i përpinte të gjithë, pa harruar Dostoevskin e mbi të gjitha Nietzsche". Taken from the monography of Dhimitër Shuteriqi "Migjeni", published in the journal "Our Literature" 1948.

¹⁰⁰ These are ideas that have come from outside and, because they have not been absorbed naturally into our culture, continue to reflect the turmoils and dilemmas that leave the text open for interpretations. These ideas were unable to get transformed into a radical change of the Albanian Literature and Culture of the first part of the twentieth century compare to the European Literature. These changes were not enough and properly assimilated, due to the delay feature in developments of our literature and culture, as well as due to the unnatural stance of development with the forced intrusion of just one orientation of the literature, (the socialist realism orientation) during for more than four decades. Indeed, there is no line of comparison between the worldly and european levels of literature with the Albanian one, as one of the scholars has identified, Robert Elsie who confirms that: "... however these new developments in Albanian literature are not compared to those of European Belles Lettres ("The History of Albanian Literature" 2002), but in a narrower national context, we can say that these movements, although sporadic and somewhat troubled and not eventually concluded comprise innovation in Albanian letters. This is the special feature of Migjeni-author that approaches him more with outsiders-european writers than with insiders-albanian writers, being accepted as outsider.

¹⁰¹ "Zhvillimet e gjysmës së parë të shekullit të XX-të duken si ngjeshje të çuditshme krijimesh që mund t'u takojnë rrymave nga më të ndryshmet të vendosura pranë njëra-tjetrës brenda një hapësire të ngushtë kohore" Taken from Xhiku Ali, "The Albanian Literature as a Poliphony - Letërsia Shqipe si Polifoni", Publishing House "Dituria", 2004, pg 22.

¹⁰² Naim Frashëri, an Albanian author from the period of Albanian Renaissance, as well as one of the most important writers that have made the foundations of the platform of Albanian Renaissance.

epopeas"¹⁰³. "Migjeni lived in the historic horizon of a social avant-garde development, in the horizon of creation of new social projects..."¹⁰⁴ Certainly Migjeni and his work was a product of the '30-s, the result of "the spiritual nutrition" of a complex psychological environment"¹⁰⁵ where are combined these developments and realities that sometime go along and sometime collide; sometime questions about an opinion or a deep rooted belief and sometime light a new thinking pouring our author into dilemmas and thrills. Migjeni has sensed the new European spirit, not only as a magnetic attraction to new sudden developments, but as a movement to destroy entrenched systems of thought that were returned to the myth of peoples for centuries. He did come as a wrecker of its cultural tradition, but not as much as a result of his own choice of being in the footsteps of his followers rather than as the direct result of his consciousness of being subjected to a powerful temptation; to rise against the ancient myth as the world itself is, which shocks the foundation of faith upon which was built the whole European civilization. The myth of Occident to Migjeni is represented to readers as an expression of the will of detachment from the "rule" and the influence of the Christian religion. "Monasteries, useful for education in the first phase of civilization, became an obstacle to its growth and detrimental to his development"¹⁰⁶. Monasteries, as an institution and as a mean for human cultivation, were good in the tenth century, controversial in the fiftieth century and worthless in the nineteenth century.¹⁰⁷ It is known that the western culture has been developed under the impact of Greco-Roman antiquity, however is rightly noted by researchers that the impact of the Holy Biblical Scriptures in this culture has been crucial. Northrop Frye, one of the well-known scholars that has done studies specifically on this field has determined the Bible as the fundamental work of the universal culture.¹⁰⁸ The Biblical Scripture and Christian mentality seems to become an untouchable myth for the western mentality by giving so an unquestionable authority to this religion, as it has been permeated and become the base of the development of western european culture and civilization.¹⁰⁹ In a similar line of development, depending on the specific national factors that have influenced the slow pace of development compare to the literature of the same continent has moved the Albanian culture and literature. From the origins of the the first Albanian scriptures, the Albanian literature is created in close relation with the biblical text, the latter has become the key factor of the existence of this literature. From its beginnings this literature was built on the main biblical references as a model of liturgical literature or a narrative religious. Then has continued in relation with this source, once open and once modified, in a progressive development of determining the scripture that is present like mentality through themes, imagery, motifs, characters, metaphors, symbols, etc. However, it is known the fact that the literature of the twentieth century, just at the time of diming the authority the religious Scripture has had in the European culture, has shown a tendency to decode ancient myths, including the Biblical one. The rise of new systems of human development in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century led directly over the dominant authority of Christianity. Religion, which until this century was regarded as the source of values and of human meaning of life became invalidated and insufficient under the influence of critical and rational thinking of science. Atheism, as the opposite of religion, became important and led to existentialism as a movement, because the destruction of the religious tradition in Europe aggravated the sense of impalpability of life while the mankind was involved deeply in systems of thinking and technological developments as well as in historical

¹⁰³ "Të gjitha kombet po dehen në epopea të veta" taken from "Let's birth to a new human – Të lindet një njeri", Migjeni – The Work, Cetus Tirana, 2002, pg 8.

¹⁰⁴ "Migjeni jetoi në horizontin historik të avangardës shoqërore, në horizontin e krijimit të projekteve të reja sociale" Taken from Feti Sefedin, The work of Migjeni and criticism, Pristina, 1984, pg 21.

¹⁰⁵ "ushqimit "shpirtëror" të një atmosfere psikike" Taken from the Notes of Migjeni "Peltje – Zakonet dhe arti i Revolucionit Francez – The costumes and the art of French Revolution", Migjeni – The Work, Cetus Tirana, 2002, pg 203.

¹⁰⁶ Migjeni meditates about the church and its functioning in years, but not so much from his own experience than influenced by the spirit and the thoughts of Nietzsche.

¹⁰⁷ "Manastiret, të dobishme për edukimin e parë të qytetërimit modern, u bënë pengesë për rritjen e tij dhe të dëmshëm për zhvillimin e tij. Edhe si institucion, edhe si mjet për formimin e njeriut, manastiret, të mira në shekullin e dhjetë, të diskutueshme në shekullin e pesëmbëdhjetë janë për t'u përbuzur në shekullin e nëntëmbëdhjetë." Taken from Notes "Hygo – Të mjerët – Hugo – The miserables" at Migjeni - The Work, pg 204.

¹⁰⁸ Frye Northrop "Anatomy of Critique - Anatomia e Kritikës", Rilindja, Prishtinë, 1990, pg 175.

¹⁰⁹ It is the fact that the biblical text, treated not just as a dogmatic text, but as a main source on creation of the best works in literature and other kind of fine arts, has served as the foundation of western culture. There is an endless number of artists that have referred to the Bible as an inspiring model for their works, creating special reports with it depending on their intentions and trends of development they have been part of.

events that determined its own existence. It was the age of reason that brought a new confidence in science, technology, trade and human skills to progress. Not surprisingly this era presented or confronted with a number of critical problems for the church, including key ideas such as; the biblical inspiration, the absolute authority and the ultimate truth. Progressively, the church came under attack whenever was in question the human reasoning and especially when was confronted with the fact of the revelations of God. Atheism, as the new illuminated faith, tried to replace the so-called old faith as a traditional authority, the truth of which was not anymore absolute. It seems that philosophers are the first that initiate and confront these changes and the new way of thinking. In these circumstances, where it is driving out the role of the church and God in the human life and in efforts to find a solution for the meaning of life, some philosophers defended openly the atheistic arguments, by not just denying God but proclaiming his death. There is Nietzsche who believes that the collapse of religion was a crucial cultural fact on which will be build a new conception of human existence. He imagined a new day when the man – the superman will reach the highest levels of development as the full expression of his intellectual, physical and emotional power. The new day for Nietzsche is the day when the Christian ethics that essentially denies the life will be replaced with that ethics that will confirm the life. On the other side is the group of those thinkers who returned to religion in order to rediscover what they believed they had escaped without being understood and taken into account by rational thinkers. Kierkegaard, the Danish philosopher, who is regarded as the founder of existentialism, defended the fact that Christianity and the meaning of God's Word was severely deformed by sinner clerics. Kierkegaard transformed his arguments in a deep psychological analysis where he separated the human anguish and his end because of alienation from being essential. According to him, inside of the human exist closely two natural states: the essential nature that requires the connection to the infinite and the existential condition that is the result of alienation due to separation from the infinite, the eternal God.

The philosophical load of Migjeni's work with a deep interpretation of life reflects these concept-views that noted philosophers of the nineteenth century, who had felt the crisis of philosophy, aesthetics and classic arts, tried to envision a new vision for the future of European culture and mentality. What identifies Migjeni as an author with this new worldview is precisely the behavior and the attitude towards Christian mentality versus the urgent need for a new system of thought that will determine the resolution of mysteries, the truth and the meaning of existence. Migjeni does in a minor way with his own work in the Albanian Literature what the western great writers and thinkers have done earlier with a traditional system of thinking in European civilization, with Christianity. The history of these earlier decades showed with a countdown enumeration the time of the religious authority in a whole European mentality and culture with the result of its paleness in the nineteenth century until its devastation in the twentieth century. It is the story of defiance against Christianity and its representatives; it is the time when, according to our author, what has been considered useful now is worthless. Thus, there are the direct influences from the European notable writers of this time such as: Goethe, Hugo, Dostoevsky, Rimbaud, Baudelaire, as well as the most important thinkers of the nineteenth century and the twentieth century, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Kiergaard, that "produce" Migjeni as a writer, an "outsider"¹¹⁰ of the traditional school of Shkodra¹¹¹, as well as of the Albanian culture and literature of this time. In fact the environment of Shkodra, the psyche of that environment led to reflection on the lack the Albanian culture inherited from the past that became more evident facing the European culture that was advancing towards new paths. Hence, his affirmation as a young writer of the first period of the twentieth century came through the denial of the previous tradition he has found among of contemporaries. It is observed earlier by scholars a unique

¹¹⁰ Elsie Robert "The history of Albanian Literature - Historia e letërsisë shqiptare", Dukagjini, Pejë 2002.

¹¹¹ In the nineteenth of century and early twentieth of century the Franciscans and the Jesuits that were located in Shkoder played an important role in the developments of the Albanian culture and literature. The influence they had through two schools with their representatives Gjergj Fishta for the Franciscan school and Dom Ndre Mjeda for the Jesuit school was decisive on establishing a tradition of valuable heritage on which the writers got orientation.

relationship between the myth and Migjeni's literature. "He is the most persistent destroyers of myths"¹¹² ... of those myths rooted at "frozen" codes of Albanian mentality. But, while he destroys those myths, he does what the European writers have done with the historical and psychological exploration of myths under the spirit of modern creation, becoming so an author - inventor¹¹³ of myths. The new mythological originates where previously were destroyed "A man that destroys and builds again!"¹¹⁴, conceiving a mythological strategy through covert literary figures on the ruins of traditional myths. "Thus, the new mythology became enable to image the endless metamorphoses of essence"¹¹⁵.

Migjeni does what others before him in Albanian culture have not done; down the gods on earth, decapitate the idols, traverse corner to corner the hell¹¹⁶ but not to find an answer as Dante Alighieri does in his journey in the "Divine Comedy", but to "defreeze" the divine and heavenly concepts. He does not "throw away" the biblical scripture, instead. Knowing primely the biblical text and already released from its authority, he gives himself the space through Free Verses, to remodel and adapt it according the spirit of modernity. Motivated under the sensitive influence of later changes, through the direct contact with the works of European writers and thinkers¹¹⁷ he dares to touch the sacred, he wants to possess it with intent to destroy "the classic god"¹¹⁸, because he is aware that only then "It (will) recover a New Time"¹¹⁹ and it will create "an epopee"¹²⁰ for his own nation like other nations have had. This intellectual "revolution" through Migjeni's literature toward the Christian mentality and the biblical text requires the necessity of another formal revolucion, through the literary language. It is the exploration of language as a system of correlative signs that gives that power to Migjeni's word in Free Verses. It is the moment of the word, already liberated from the authority of tradition in seeking its full potential to express these great movements of modern era. This makes Migjeni an author as original and different from his national contemporaries that similar and comparable with the European writers of the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. The myth of Occident is presented in Migjeni's work as an expression of the will of detachment from the "rule" and the influence of the Christian religion. "The myth of the Occident to Migjeni is more due to the conditional role that the Bible historically has had in all European cultures"¹²¹. Migjeni has sensed it with his sharp intuition. It is this intuition that in the creative act becomes a direct way of experience and knowledge, serving as an inspired prevision, like a foretold prophecy.

This is the revolutionary reaction of Migjeni to the western myth of Christianity, a free conscience and thinking¹²² through Free Verses "triumph of conscience and free thinking"¹²³, as a reaction to the culture and "a

¹¹² "Ai është rrënuesi më i pamëshirshëm i miteve" Matoshi Liman, "Migjeni, poet i veçantë – Migjen, a spcial poet", in « The phenomenon of avant-garda in the Albanian literature – Fenomeni i avangardës në Letërsinë shqiptare», Sh B Arbëria, Tiranë, 2004.

¹¹³ The scholar Blerina Suta identifies that the great writer stands in the leve of invention. He creates literary myths. See Suta Blerina, Koliqi dhe Migjeni në kuadrin e modernizmit të letërsisë shqiptare të viteve 30-të – Koliqi and Migjeni in the framework of modernism in the Albanian Literature of 30's", in « The phenomenon of avant-garda in the Albanian literature – Fenomeni i avangardës në Letërsinë shqiptare», Sh B Arbëria, Tiranë, 2004.

¹¹⁴ "Burrë që shkatërron dhe ndërton sërish!" Taken from "Natë pa gjumë – The slepless night" at Migjeni – The Work, Cetus Tirana, 2002, pg 63.

¹¹⁵ "Mitologjia e re aftësohet kështu që të përshkruajë metamorfozat e pafundme të qenësisë".21 in Tufa Agron, "A look on the modernist developments of the avant -garda of twentieth of century - Një vështrim mbi zhvillimet moderniste të avanguardës së shekullit të XX-të », in « The phenomenon of avant-garda in the Albanian literature – Fenomeni i avangardës në Letërsinë shqiptare», Sh B Arbëria, Tiranë, 2004, pg 228.

¹¹⁶ "Due t'i bie pash më pash ferrit", taken from "The scandalous/flagrant Song", at Migjeni – The Work, Cetus Tirana, 2002, pg 32.

¹¹⁷ It is the fact that Migjeni has read the works of the well-known European writers and thinkers in their languages because he was able to read in different languages.

¹¹⁸ "perëndinë klasik" Taken from "Bukuria që vret – The beauty that kills" at Migjeni – The Work, Cetus Tirana, 2002, pg 112.

¹¹⁹ "mkambet një Kohë e Re" Taken from "Let's birth to a new human – Të lindet një njeri", at Migjeni – The Work, Cetus Tirana, 2002, pg 8.

¹²⁰ "Një epope" Taken from "Let's birth to a new human – Të lindet një njeri" at Migjeni – The Work, Cetus Tirana, 2002, pg 8.

¹²¹ "Miti i Perëndimit" tek Migjeni është më shumë për shkak të rolit kushtëzues që ka pasur historikisht

Bibla në të gjitha kulturat europiane" taken from Sinani Shaban, "Teksti biblik në veprën e Migjenit – The biblical text in Migjeni's work", Studime Filologjike / SF 3-4 2012.

¹²² "Christianity, - says Mircea Elliade, in "Sacred and Profane, The Nature of Religion" is a religion of the historic and modern man who willingly revealed his own personal freedom and the continuous time in front of cyclical time" Eliade Mircea, "Sacred and Profane, The Nature of Religion", A Harvest Book, Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., New York.

¹²³ "ngadhënjim ndërgjegje dhe mendimi të lirë", taken from "Let's birth to a new human – Të lindet një njeri" at Migjeni – The Work, Cetus Tirana, 2002, pg 8.

revolutionary act of unconsciousness".¹²⁴ He had already declared his mission: ... "The Old sun, the sun of a thousand, five thousand, ten thousand and who knows how many years old. No, no, I don't agree with you sun, I do not agree with your ironic laughter that has fouled your face!... The only desire I have right now is to scoff at him, to put my tongue out toward this sun that is gone down behind the mountains."¹²⁵

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¹²⁴ "... një akt revolucionar i ndërdijes" Fraj Northrop, "Anatomia e kritikës – The Anatomy of Critique", Rilindja, Prishtinë, 1990, pg 465.

¹²⁵ "... dielli i vjetër, dielli një mijë, pesë mijë, dhjetë mijë e kushedi sa vjet i moçëm. Jo, jo, diell nuk pajtohem me ty, nuk pajtohem me të qeshurën tand ironic që ta kanë ndy fyturën!... e vetmja dëshirë që ushqej tashit asht me ju ngërdheshë, me iu diftue gjuhën këtij dielli, që aq indifferent prendon prapa maleve" Taken from "Greetings from the village – Te fala nga fshati" at Migjeni – The Work, Cetus Tirana, 2002, pg 221.