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Heritage

Migjeni: the poet of misery who died at 26

Millosh Gjergj Nikolla from Shkodra, the teacher in Vraka and Puka, the Free Verse censored in 1936, and a voice that changed Albanian literature before tuberculosis silenced it

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Translated from the Albanian original by the editors.



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Millosh Gjergj Nikolla, known by the pen name **Migjeni**, was born on 13 October 1911 in Shkodra, into an Orthodox family. He lost his mother as a child. He studied at an Orthodox seminary in Manastir, but did not become a priest. He returned to Albania and worked as a teacher.

The teacher

Migjeni taught first in Vraka, a village near Shkodra, and then in Puka, in the northern highlands. There he saw deep poverty up close: hungry children, cold houses, families without hope. These experiences became the material of his work.

The poetry of misery

Unlike many earlier poets, who wrote about the homeland, history and nature in a heroic or romantic tone, Migjeni wrote about everyday **misery**. In poems such as "Song of Misery" and "Poem of Misery", he describes in harsh and honest words people suffering from hunger, illness and injustice. But his verse also contains a strong longing for change, for a future in which people can live with dignity.

He also wrote short prose, sketches and stories, in which he mocked social hypocrisy and showed the life of the ordinary people of Shkodra.

> *Migjeni did not embellish reality. He showed it as he saw it, and that is precisely what made him unusual.*

Free Verse

In 1936 his poetry collection **Vargjet e lira**, "Free Verse", was printed for the first time, but the authorities of the day censored it and did not allow it to circulate. The collection was published in full only in 1944, after his death. The title has two meanings: verse in free form, without strict rhyme and metre, and verse that seeks freedom.

An early death

Migjeni suffered from tuberculosis, a common and often fatal disease at that time. He was admitted to a sanatorium in Torre Pellice, in northern Italy, where he died on 26 August 1938, only 26 years old.

His legacy

1. **He brought social reality into Albanian literature** with a new and honest voice.
2. **His free verse** influenced many later poets.
3. **His work reminds us** that sensitivity to others' suffering is part of culture.

Sources

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