

AFTER BABEL

СЛЕД ВАВИЛОН

Империите отслабват и се срутват, но не винаги умират напълно дори след края на политическото си съществуване. Нови държави и общества се появяват на мястото на старите империи, но макар и нови, те си остават наследници на старите империи.

Никоя империя не може да премине в прашасалите страници на историята без престъпления, кръвопролития, бунтове и войни. И всяка мъртва империя остава в езиците, културата, вярата, ежедневието, в стремежите, забавленията и тъгите на новите общества.

Това е съдбата и отличителният крайъгълен камък, отграничаващ обществата, наследили всяка обширна империя. Това, което прави балканския стремеж да се живее собствената история върху географското пространство на загиналата империя различен от подобни опити в други части на света, е вечната обреченост да се съжителства с „формата на живот” на призрака на империята.

Една империята е рухнала и са се появили националните държави, османците си отиват, идва сталинизмът, рухва „Желязната завеса”, следват граждански войни, създават се нови национални държави и животът продължава, но въпреки тези промени всички и всичко на Балканите си остават „балкански”.

Духът, допринесъл за тази балканска неприемствена приемственост, е османското наследство, дори толкова години след като османците са изчезнали. Животът на Балканите днес, въпреки всички различия, е подхранван от определена общност или поне близост в областта на музиката, облеклото, градското пространство, кулинарните традиции, сватбите и церемониите. Общите следи, отпечатък от „духа”, могат да се открият не само в турски думи като чаршия, бакалия, кале, джамия, бит пазар, сокак, симит, капъ, пенджер, хан, кебап, чорба, кюфте, зехтин, фасул, долма, патладжан, айран, салата, туршия, самун, софра, бардак, татлъ, каданф, баклава, наргиле, кафе и др., но и „семејната прилика” между балканските народи, използващи тези думи.

Крайно необходимо е, заради всички балкански народи, да се разбере балканският Вавилон. Макар и различни по език и вяра, балканците споделят общи „форми на живот”, както ги определя Витгенщайн. Тези форми са нашата история и съдба, точно както е и все още бродещият на Балканите „призрак на османците”.

Ключови думи: империя, Балкани, континюитет, езикова игра, толерантност.

Empires do wear down, weaken and crumble however they may not die even after they have disappeared are long ago. New states, regimes or powers could flourish on the ancient geographies, histories and languages of the pristine empires.

Nevertheless those new states and societies are always the new states and societies of the old empires. The empire's legacy contexts are the ones that could not be consumed by the new states or societies, nevertheless, they are prolific enough to consume those.

No any empire can let itself pass into the dusty pages of history without crimes, bloodshed, rebellions and wars. And still no any dead empire can avoid being a part of the new societies' language, culture, religion, routines, strives, amusements and grief in the history.

That is a destiny carved out of the history's knife and a significant milestone discerning a large empire's heirs from any other living in other geographies. The thing that renders a Balkan trying to live its own history in a dead empire's geography different from the others is the everlasting "form of life" of the ghost of an empire.

An empire had fallen and nation states had been founded, the Ottomans were gone and Stalinism came, the "Iron Curtain" collapsed, civil wars raged, new nation states were founded and life goes on yet still everything and everybody remains "Balkan".

It is not very surprising to see something said to be dead can permeate and haunt everything somehow. According to Derrida, in cultural processes there are neither sudden beginnings nor abrupt ends:

"I do not believe in decisive ruptures, in an unequivocal 'epistemological break', as it is called today. Breaks are always, and fatally, re-inscribed in an old cloth that must continually, interminably be undone. This interminability is not an accident or contingency; it is essential, systematic, and theoretical." (Derrida 1982: 24)

This continuity is ensured by the "ghost" which is a non-negative metaphor much favoured by Derrida (Derrida 1994). Ghosts are with us and they are the very evidence that history does not have a beginning or an end – it is continuous and ever moving. Ghosts are both our past and future. It is necessary that we know how to live with them.

The "ghost" facilitating the non-continuous continuity of the Balkan peoples have been the Ottomans even after all the years after their demise. For instance the very word "Balkan" itself is a Turkish word meaning bushy, rugged terrain covered with forests. Hence the Balkans are Ottoman not only in cultural and political terms but also in geographical and lexical terms as well.

Today the daily life in the Balkans for all its differences is being nurtured by a common form of life: from music to dress and finery, the texture of the cities to the spirit of the spaces, culinary culture to weddings and ceremonies Ottoman life style is always in the background. The common traces imprinted by "the ghost" are to be pursued not only in Turkish words like *çarşı*, *bakkal*, *kale*, *cami*, *bit pazarı*, *sokak*, *simit*, *yemek*, *kapı*, *pençere*, *han*, *kebab*, *çorba*, *köfte*, *zeytin*, *fasulye*, *dolma*, *patlıcan*, *ayran*, *salata*, *turşu*, *somun*, *sofra*, *bardak*, *tatlı*, *kadayıf*, *şekerpare*, *baklava*, *nargile*, *çay*, *kahve*, etc. but also in the "family resemblance" of the Balkan people using

those words. Then it would be necessary to have a look at the Wittgenstein's "language games", "family resemblances" and "forms of life" metaphors.

Wittgenstein, abandoning the assumption that the structure of the language determines the structure of the reality which he posited on the *Tractatus*, has renounced the view that the language has an essence in his later work *Philosophical Investigations*. Wittgenstein christened the totality consisting of language and the actions woven into language as "language games". The functions of the language are so diverse that it is not possible to find a distinctive underlying essence.

"Game" is a good metaphor in this case because it is also not possible to find a common thing with the games. All you see are resemblances. Wittgenstein characterized those resemblances as such:

"I can think of no better expression to characterize these similarities than 'family resemblances'; for the various resemblances between members of a family: build, features, colour of eyes, gait, temperament, etc., etc. overlap and criss-cross in the same way. – And I shall say: 'games' form a family." (Wittgenstein 1997: 32)

There is no common essence of language and game. But this does not mean that the concepts are mutually exclusive items. In fact they have "family resemblances". Under the general heading of "language" there exist family resemblances emanating from the plurality of the language games causing a plurality of meaning.

In order to provide a better understanding, we need to dwell on another crucial concept of Wittgenstein: forms of life. For Wittgenstein, the meaning of a word originates from its use in the language. When language games change, there comes a change in the concepts and with the change in the concepts a change in the meanings follows. Words only take meaning within the language games and language games are forms of life. The plurality of the forms of life corresponds to the plurality of games of language and vice versa. The plurality of both incessantly takes new forms in the endless dynamics of life. Words have meanings only within the flow of life. Meanings are deployed in the functions carried out as signs between the people sharing the same activity. Therefore a meaning of a word should be sought in the activities that determine and encompass its uses which are its "form of life". The meaning always gains vitality in the vessel of those language games. This usage is the very form of life itself.

To use the language and play language games is a feature of activity or common form of life. Ergo, *to speak* a language is sharing a common form of life. It is what people call as true or false and people come into accordance on the *language* they use. This is not an accordance of ideas but an accordance of forms of life for only available forms of life are to be accepted. For this reason to conceive a language is always to conceive a form of life. To understand a sentence is to understand a language and understanding a language in turn is understanding a form of life (Demir 2007).

Macedonian intellectual Luan Starova's novels are texts that have grasped the Balkan language and the Balkan form of life, inviting us further to understand it (Starova 2000; Starova 2000a; Starova 2007; Starova 2008). Starova tells us how the small nation states, vanishing from the moral horizon of the Ottomans, lost their way in the mazes of the empire's legacy. According to Starova those tiny nation states have paid a heavy price for changing ideology and religion. It took time to reach equilibrium in the Balkans wherein the borders are constantly being recast. Even after a huge disaster such as Stalinism, the Ottoman legacy of language and religion has been a guarantee of this genuine equilibrium. Modern Balkan history has been another quest for this equilibrium, be it by cherishing the ghost or fighting it.

Reading the history of the Balkan people through the Starova's novels with a Wittgenstenian or Derridian perspective would allow us to see the embracing tolerance of common "Balkan form of life" which will enable the Balkans to live in peace in global world without further Balkanization.

It is essential for all the Balkan people that we understand the Balkan Babel. Because though they are from different languages and religions Balkan people share the same Wittgensteinian forms of life. Forms of life are our history and destiny, just as the still lingering "ghost of the Ottomans" in the Balkans.

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