

excerpt from an article "Erasing the *Other* from the Weather Map - *Someone is missing on the Map*" available on the Liwre website

The Clandestines and Emigrants hidden in Languages

Can you believe it? The sworn enemies of a nation are not sheltered in politics, nor economics. One day, we can realize that they are hidden in the mother tongue harbouring more enemies than anything else. Do you know this? Many foreigners, immigrants and clandestines are hidden in my native language. My mother tongue is like a Trojan horse: it hosts foreign soldiers inside. But, in fact, they are foreign words –borrowed – by our culture, which was wiped by puritan cleansing.

Yes, indeed, languages can take and give among them, but can not fall in love. Love among languages is forbidden. It is banned like wars during the holy months. Maybe Darwin was right when he compared the imperfect pedigree of mankind with the not persuasive situation of languages. What we miss, we can borrow, especially when it is about words. Sometimes, we hijack them. We use them, but we never consider them "ours". We add to those barbaric words some tails (suffix) and horns (prefix), only to make them look like a devil. We persecute them by throwing them into a special vocabulary, as if we put them in a concentration camp, keeping them away of "our pure-chaste-immaculate language".

I searched *Google* for any mystical or hidden meaning of the word *Dušo* which, according to my friend, kept together the nations of Yugoslavia separated by the war. For us, the Albanians, Yugoslavia is more than a simple memory. The country had disappeared from our friendship map in 1948 when that government tried to devour Albania through currency unification, the customs union, free movement within the common territory, and the merging of our armies. What the heck? I had been totally brainwashed! How on earth did I not realize in time that the Yugoslav project was a predecessor of the European Union project? Hmmm ... our noble Europeans who keep the Balkans way of the union because they don't respect authorship rights! Apparently, they have stolen from the Yugoslavs the principles of the common currency, fundamental rights, and free movement.

I entered it again as *Duš* when *Google* suggested a second version: *Do you mean Dušman?* I read its definition on the screen: *Düşmen* - derived from OttomanTurkish - *Dushmán!* My memory suddenly exploded as if it was the head of a warlike drum. How could I recall so many *dušmans*: *Luk Dusmani—a noble of Pult; Lekë Dushman—Prince of Zadrime; Gjergj Dushmani—supported the Venetian side of the war; Pal Dusmani—Bishop of Pult, also known as Paolo Dusso; Pavle Dušman...*

But the word *dušman* was not isolated in a single language and culture in the Balkans. That word resisted the zeal of the communists who graciously believed that after the collapse of the Bolshevik and Maoist empires, Albania would enjoy alone the privilege of being a stand alone castle of communism. It also survived the dedication of the puritans who insisted on chasing any trace or presence of foreign words from the divine and pure Albanian language. The communists did not win. Neither did the puritans. The Balkan languages and the Balkans won.

I remember well an adventure, of which, I think, even Don Quixote would be jealous. Well, the story is about two scholar-linguists from a former communist country. These brain washed linguists started to clean their language from “foreign words”. Let’s clean it! Especially from Orientalism, and Ottomanism as well, particularly let’s clean it from the words of those who have conquered our Motherland. And in this way initiated the greatest cleansing in the world History. Their language had to give back all words it borrowed from other languages over the Time.

The scholars invited everyone to this cleaning action: proletarians, intellectuals, farmers, shepherds, pioneers, young people as well as elders. Everyone had to give a contribution, except for the sailors and the ex-bourgeoisie, since it was suspected they have imported foreign words or kept them alive through their nostalgia for a world left behind. Their ardent desire for a pure linguistic race and a pure nation of users, made them lose their mother tongue, along with the words which had survived several cultural floods. It is believed that they remained without their language and after a while this nation became dumb. It is believed, that probably this is a fictional fabula, written by an anonymous, to teach people more about love and hate. But, it is also believed that meanwhile, a Balkan author is writing this story. In Balkans collective body there still live happily the minorities of foreign words, which migrated as nomads within each linguistic territory from the earliest times of communication among cultures, when the perception, the feeling, and the need were together; a condition that Julia Kristeva defines all of this in a single word: *khôra*.

The Inventors of Hedonism covered with the Placenta of Hostility

I loved the maps, since when I was just a kid. At that time, I didn’t know about reading, but I knew enough – I knew about pronunciation. Who cares! I was a good listener. My mom used to read to me. She was my bard. I learned the first things about the world in a proper way. Like in old good times – through orality. As I remember, if I remember it well, one of the first books, my mother read to me was the *Treasure Island* by Robert Louis Stevenson. It had a map, and everything else a little boy wants: pirates, golden money, ships, battles and waves. Later on, very late, I heard something strange about the translator of this book.

After the fascist invasion of Albania, he emigrated to England, where he worked as a journalist for Radio London. His name was kept secret during the communism, as he spoke for an “enemy” radio broadcast of that regime. Because of Radio London, the name of the true translator was never revealed in none of the publications of the *Treasure Island*. His work was stolen, and published under another translator’s name – not such a rare fact for Albania of that time: a country where main human rights were ignored and violated, the copyright was considered a matter of luxury, of course. He lost his translation’s copyright, but won the all the children who were raised not only with a map, but with the treasure of a great book, which taught them about the fight between good and evil of literature and the past, but not the ones of the real life and of the current time. I always believed that with that map, I could arrive till the end of the world: in good sunny weather and bad weather too.

But, beyond literature, when you travel in the Balkans, you need to adjust to the weather and stay prepared for any event. You may think it’s summer, but you do not lose anything if you put a sweater or jacket in your travel bag. Because, what in other regions is just a thunderstorm, in the Balkans can be a gunfire not to warn or start a marathon, but the beginning of a world war. For this, you should pay attention not just to routine programs, but also to the news: especially to the weather forecast at the end.

The first lightning in my head: - What if, due to heavy rains, my flight to Tirana is canceled? To clear up my doubts, I pick up the remote control and start looking for any television station broadcasting a weather forecast.

No 1 on the remote control: BHT 1-Sarajevo. No. 2: Vojvodina-BECTИ Novi Sad. Then Ljubjana. Skopje. Podgorica. Porn Movies +18. A program about some expensive bio products. Political debate. Kitchen utensils and jewelry for online sale. Eurolloto on the screen. Cooking program without garlic and onions, allowing people to kiss, without any embarrassment from the stinky puff and the exotic burp of the Balkans’ satiety. There was everything, but not what I wanted. Unexpectedly, a singing dance appeared on the screen, the motive of which I also heard when I traveled from Shkodra to Montenegro. "*Ajde Jana, 'ajde dušo, kolo da igramo.*" It was a quiet 7/8 musical rhythms which, since the Balkans started fighting under martial paces, remained without ethnic affiliation. A unknown Jana of the song is invited to participate in the joy, to get crazy, to dance with her boyfriend, to sell the horse and the house, just to avoid leaving in the midst of the dance. But who on earth was getting crazy about love? Neither Serbs with their monody, nor Albanians with their polyphony of the South, which promised “I’ll pick up the saw / I’ll cut my cypress / I’ll admire you / When I’ll collect roses, / oh for love,” did go crazy anymore. The time when people grabbed not the weapon but the saw, to cut off the cypress, which prevented the lover from seeing the beautiful neighbor beyond the house, was a poetic time within the form of time. Therefore, Serb lovers do not sell the horse; neither do they sell the house. So the Albanian lover never got the saw. From the inventor of hedonism and comedy, the Balkans had become a nutritional placenta for hostility. Few remember it. When did that hostility begin among neighbors in the

Balkans? Newspapers, screens, and politicians mention hundreds of years of wars and centuries of hatred that have come from the times when *"in each other's rancor we are born / we have in between a sky and an earth!"* Hence, the impression is that someone hardly expects to give chauvinistic meaning to the cultural hero Marko Kraljević, who, on behalf of the Sultan, with the help of his own Fate and the knife hidden in the belt, killed the Albanian soldier with three hearts or three serpents in the chest, as it is described in the epic of Vuk Karadžić, which also includes this repentant verse: *"Merciful Lord! I have killed a person better than himself."* And every time you hear speeches or news about inter-ethnic marriages in the Balkans, it seems that someone will remind you of Marko Kraljević's wife, who complains to her husband that he did not *"bring a fresh young Albanian man, to have him as a babysitter for our kids"* according to the epic Song of Gjergj Elez Alia.