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SPHINX OF TONGUE

a word about translation

Bismi'llâh

This word ... came into existence from blood, from each drop of blood, from each red drop of blood flowing through my veins in the course of writing of the greatest part of my poems. The first winter of One Thousandth Nine Hundred and Eighty Second year, why shouldn't I say, just as it was happening, a January and February chill; a rheumatic fragility of the attic's floors; twenty two degrees centigrade over my hands, and only thirteen beneath my feet; nowhere a living creature, but a certain plenitude in my bosom, perhaps the word fullness is more full, there is probably too much pain not to be knowledge, the suffering's a birthplace of every learning, and lo! It is being written out, this collection, each of my poems knowing more than I, and that knowledge, knowledge pouring out like a torrent, while only somewhere towards the end it struck me: that is it, that Word, that miracle of Creation, only now completely animated, sensual, and just from my, just from my maternal, just from my mother tongue. Here it is, from that miracle, this *word about translation*, one would almost suspect madness because of it, but then I came to know that the science of linguistics has found the same. However, until it comes over here to us, I shall remain a bit mad.

Rien. I do not dream rather entirely conscious search: which word from my mother tongue would take refuge in that summary of absence (in the presence) of the French *rien*? One should not immediately stop. One should not mistrust common sense. One should remove that fatigue of pre-fixation. One should repeat with me (mistrusting not, of course, common sense) that French *rien*. That absence, which is almost a gesture. The move of a hand by which one removes a picture. Nullifies an unwanted, insufficient or wrong scene. A gesture by which one returns to the beginning, almost to the very start of Creation. A gesture resembling the pause of a hand in the air with the fiddle-bow which is about to embrace a virgin greed of the strings. It already vibrates, that string, in the presentiment of Thanatos reposing in tiredness of pre-fixation.

Should I obey philologists, then *rien* is *ništa* of my language. But this *ništa* is not absence. Nor is it the *nothing*, carrying in itself the vanity of a notion. That French

stands in front of Creation, this English annuls the resistance of Being. But this *ništa* of my Bosnian? It is amidst. It is a millstone stripped of the motive power of waters. Robbed of the efficient cause, stopped at once by the strength of an instant.

What therefore do the philologists know? Perhaps *ponoć* (midnight) of my mother tongue is that French *rien*. That entire absence which can always be the presence, and beginning, and end. Or, simply, *majka* (mother), whose belly just got rid of its burden by a swift gesture, a jerk, however still fertile. Or ... I should trace for long in order to find, for that *rien*, a due semantic equivalent in the heart of my mother tongue. Habit and comfort may mistrust my common sense, then I would spend too much of myself to convince them. A word speaks the same even when we do not understand it. A word lives out its life even when we do not hear it out. Words do pair, in Cosmos, through sympathies differing from the one of ours – philological.

Il n'est plus, says a Frenchman after one's funeral. It is the question of good taste whether to translate it at all. For, *He died* reveals a vulgar. Or, again, *Nema ga više* a virtual ignorant. Or... So yes, entirely awoken, I do ask how to translate, with what, and whether to do rendering at all? I remain ashamed before Language whose one stream seemed to me once worthless. Small. Ignorance somehow, knowledge by no means justifies a sin. I apologise first to my mother tongue. There are no small languages. There are only small senses of Language. I praise today my maternal one with the right with which praises his own the possessor of *rien* and that of *nothing* (cold as a sphinx).

There is a linguistic instruction in the rule according to which Islamic prayer is to be done. In whichever part of the World performed, it is valid only if said in the language of the Holy Book. Indeed, how much there would be recognizable at all the meaning, transferred from the word (and it is both sound and gesture, warp and woof, a sense above all) of the Arabic language into another semantic environment, after centuries of philological renderings? Unless perhaps in the manner of our comparison of *ništa*, *rien* and *nothing*, decipherment of the Secret of Language wise as a Sphinx.

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