

Melika Salihbeg Bosnawi, an author
to Edin Numankadic, a painter

PALIMPSEST OF EXISTENCE

A script on the scribbles

Bismillâh

A lesson is to be taken from it, once and for all. Namely, from the fact that words remain to be best and only universal tool of the whole human communication. If were not so, then why has never any musician been asked to compose a piece, meant to recommend or otherwise a literary work? (We are not talking here about the case in which one's literature might inspire a musician to compose on his own). Or, has ever a painter been asked to perform such a task? However, as to the men of letters...

There was a demand to pen on his painting. I agreed, but a game started at once: nothing less than that tool, namely pen, describes what I've been using for almost three decades now, to convey my literature. Nevertheless, my common sense's joined the venture as well asking the question: is a working device an exact description of the artistic performance? Not ever! I belong to the family of artists (or artisans) to who it matters not at all whether a piece of wood, or feather, or quill-pen, or pencil, or chalk, or typing machine, or, latest, keyboard, is the instrument of the producing their art. Since in each instance, a tool of symbolising changes not a fundamental symbol, being in our case a letter. Which is, on its turn, just a sign, representing a sound, in whose initial composition, that is in a word "Be", there is waiting for us all, in ambush, our real start, and real initiation into every our doing; including artistic one.

(But why to rash?).

Indeed, for more than a decade now I'm employing not any other writing device apart from keyboard while sending through it, for further word-processing, my literary strokes on it.

But lo! The farther I am from the hand lettering my literature, the more similar to a manuscript's becoming its picture. Obviously, the very names of our artistic doings, namely writing and painting, have deserted their traditional definitions. Just in Edin's and my case? Never! But why, and since when?

Since long! Yet, I'm not disposed to try now to answer the second question, why? For I'm not a historian of art, or critic, rather an artist who's a producer and prey altogether, of the historical changes made not only in the field of the artistic tools, but far more important in the artistic thoughts, consequently.

Edin Numankadic's paid, as most of his colleagues have, his bill to what the painting's supposed to be in its very nature. Said in short, a visual gesture of the soul performed with the help of colour within a span of time, and within determined space. Therefore, no doubt, Edin is a painter.

But look! Since a certain point of his painting life, he increasingly uses some meaningful words, i.e., their visual representation - letters, in producing his own art. To take it for granted, or ask several questions, like, for example, does this Edo's artistic experience coincide with his life's? Yes, indeed, and that is exactly why I do prefer to accomplish my own inquiry.

Let me ask then some preliminary questions:

Q: When Edin Numankadic started that adventure, namely lettering on his painting?

A: During the war; Bosnian!

Q: Where did he live at the moment when his visual art began borrowing from words?

A: Within a besieged city; of Sarajevo!

Q: What was at that time and within that space his chief need?

A: Not less than of bread, that was a need of sending message to the world, infected by the prolonged silence over the unspeakable crimes which we all had to suffer. (I'll dismiss here his own post-mortem statement that his war-art was not a call for help whatever, nor any kind of message, rather his monologue, a way to save his own mind. I'll drop that obvious untrue, for he knows not any answer to my doubt: if it were so, then why would have he ever tried hard, even by travelling abroad in the middle of that chaos, to make as public as possible his own "soliloquy". Along with the works of other artists who shared with him Sarajevo's war-shop?).

Q: To whom and what kind of message he was in need of to send?

A: A human to another human! And, a universal one!

Q: Could his visual art be sufficient for such a comprehensive charge?

A: No, of course not! Because:

The more inhuman was the world, both inside and outside, the bigger was Sarajevo war-population's exigency to communicate their

torture to the rest of humanity; in an universally understandable language. Could it be any other but the one of words; be they said, or heard, or written, or read, or even translated!

Q: Was Edin Numankadic, a human and artist, any exception?

A: Not at all! He was a painter who felt irresistible need to complete his visual outcries with some message-carrying words.

Q: What did he do then?

A: He simply took a chalk, and lettered on his paintwork. I remember his gorgeous *Quartet* from the time, on whose dark-plain-painted ground he wrote in white: *today, yesterday, never, tomorrow*. Nothing was used by mere chance in that performance: either white, or black, or word, or paint. (I wonder whether Edo ever changes, in privacy of his atelier, this arrangement, finishing it, for instance, with the word *never*, or erasing all of them, then rewriting on it just the one, for example, *tomorrow*, four times. Obviously, many combinations are possible, because words and their meaning, if written with chalk, are so easily erasable!).

Let us go back now to the wartime, to the beginning of the words' challenge to Edo! Soon, his innocent need of a single word, or only a sentence grew into serious necessity for the entire and more expressive text. Being not himself skilled with words rather their fan, he "appropriated" some other artists' texts, more particularly, those, carrying a message just such one as he needed to convey; to himself (as he claims today), or to others, all the same, but always a message!

Although feeling an irresistible need to rewrite them (namely, others' thoughts) into his own art, E.N. did not restrict himself to his paintings as the only ground for them. He applied them equally on the different kind of framed surfaces, a mirror, for example, into which he used to look at himself, or a glass of the broken window, through which he might have stared in the future. (I advice you, my friend, sound down your today's post-mortem telling that, because it was not but your own monologue, you could inscribe them, those texts, on a cloud, or the whole vista, seen through your window! My dear painter, get rid of that posterior inferiority complex! You know well that we can "read" today only those from among your "soliloquies" which you'd materialised with the help of some quite tangible grounds, and thereupon offer them to be "read". My poor chap, why to feel embarrassed because... Do not rash, here I am, warning myself on time).

Such was, namely, a painter's answer to the war uproar. That way, Edin Numankadic, an artist of the coloured gesture, expressed his protest, or call for help: visible and readable, at the same time. (Have I

done here a kind of sociological, psychological, or even political research? Yes, a bit of each! Because, there is no chance to omit it while writing on Edin's war and post-war painting. His artistic circumstances *absolutely* coincide with his existential ones).

In addition to these, Edin has produced some other kind of the artistic works during and after Bosnian war. Ordinary things with whose help he used to live and with whose help he survived both physically and spiritually the war-day-to-day life were more than worthy of an artistic record. And, if he could not eternalise their arrangement within the war context, he could at least offer them his *homage* with the help of (temporary and uncertain, but still artistic) installations.

Though, we are concentrated here on Edin's "*manuscripts*" only. Letters, words, or texts continue their presence in his post-war painting. True, not quite same way, because the sending manifest messages to the world is no longer an act of rescuing. (Therefore, be gone, be gone! I'd almost swear that today so unthankfully and impolitely, Edin, a painter, tries to get rid of his war weakness for the text).

As we said earlier, the use of well-ordered words in his painting art was Edin's answer to the war-ado. Naturally, such times are not suitable for reflection to which Numankadic's visual art is so much inclined. During that ordeal, without any second thoughts, he did, quite simply, totally openly, feeling neither shame or guilt, had admitted a communicative superiority of the words by the very use of them in his art.

However, the war is over. Edin has survived it. His painting as well, although possibly both pretty changed. Not so much, or at all, in their external forms, as much...

Thanks God, E.N. has not become a war-invalid. Neither the war calamity invalidated his art. Yet, after such an overwhelming synthesis, as it was the one of ours, come the times for the individual analysis.

Numankadic, now a thinker as well, cannot resist his need to inquire into his own war-works. Why did he, namely, need to build into his *art of intuition* some and someone's explicit ideas? Because of the forms of their letters in which they are represented, or because of their very subject? As to the forms, the answer is, not at all, (since we are so tragically impoverished for the eastern wisdom of *Jafr*)! As for their universally understandable message, perhaps! Or, to be more honest, of course! Yet, where from the universality of words comes? To find the answer to that question, Edin has taken as his priority task; once when the war hazards ended in the (hazardous) peace.

What does he do now in that aim?

Let us start first from his hypothesis, that most likely reads: *There must be something higher that reposes behind the transparent forms and meanings of words, something so powerful that we flee to it even when all other symbols, including the life itself, breaks down under the heaviness of an all-encompassing nihilism.* In order to find it, to reach the essences, Edin has first to take away from words, both their clear form and appropriate sense. He is first to make them, and then, as soon as possible, to unmake, in order to, as we usually say, reveal the true.

(He dreams not either how close he is to Her!).

And, here we are, amidst what can be now generally seen in Edin's workshop. Amidst the bundles of scripts, as he and his school-critique wrongly name his scribbles, partly of the shrieking colouring. Here we are, as leafing through their thick maps, and asking ourselves: indeed, why there remained in the end just a meaningless scrawl from what was, most surely, a meaningful script in the beginning?

Let's go back! To the very beginning, because in those coloured scribbles there is still recognisable the whole procedure. Let us reproduce it, with a bit of necessary imagination, in order to discover how and why these scribbles, pretentiously (?!) called scripts, came to existence in the workshop of a creatively-neurotic but intellectually-serious artist as Edo is!

Let us imagine to ourselves: he, as taking first his acrylic colours, and then paints the paper. (Now with umbra, now with orange, and now there cries out the madness of yellow). Here he is, afterwards, as taking a chalk and writes with hand on that painted plane some words, or texts, or just letters; all the same! Then, as quicker as the very nature of acrylic allows him, he paints them out. Moreover, he tries to erase them, mercilessly, with spatula (oh, the innocent builders' device!), all this in utter agitation to have his own manuscript, his, God forbid! message, deleted from the face of his paintwork, and face of being. To send it, inarticulate, to the Non-being. Then he himself to follow it, into the behind...

All this over and again; several times. Until the Painter's spirit's been satisfied, or his hand exhausted. The lettering, then the painting over the scripts, then a harsh rubbing off; ever more impatient, ever more arrogant towards what should repose behind transparent forms and meanings, somewhere...

And, here they are! The two inverse palimpsest. For the more layers of colour Edin puts over his original script, i.e., text/word/letter, while tries to annihilate it with the new one and help of the abrasion, turning it into mere scribble, the more layers of the palimpsest of

existence he removes. On which, this last one, there shows up itself, ever clearer, from under the layers of the existents, the original text, which we all universally and unmistakably read, and which itself reads: "*Be!*"

Has E.N entered so the field of Mystery of coming into being? I'd say, truly yes! But it's not quite sure that he's performed that penetrating in a fully conscious way. The conclusion is with you.

What Edo Numankadic found at the end of the making his own, and simultaneous unmaking the palimpsest of existence, he simply named Energy. An elementary energy.

I object, by both my heart and my mind. Because the name risks describing not but a physical aspect of the Primordial move; the pure absurd, if denied of another one, implicit, and intelligible. I'd rather call it Primordial Communication, Primeval Message, Initiation into Existence, Bringing into Being, in a word, Creation.

But, would it - that Primordial message - be possible at all without the existence of a Universal Messenger, Communicator of the isness, Creator of everything, the Existence as such? Which had, at the time when nothing had existed, not space, nor time, sent, for whatever reason, a message (or order, or invitation) to the Non-Existence: to come forward.

Of course not! The first message to the Non-entity to become an entity is what Edin Numankadic probably "reads out" at the end of his artistic meditation. If he really traces the True in his *scripts* (or *scribbles*, all the same!), then he must, along with all of us, discover and acknowledge that he himself does nothing but follows that very paradigm of the creation.

It means, he sends the messages (or calls, or orders) to his hypothetical works of art to show themselves before his, in like manner our eyes. But, while the Absolute Existence performs it only with a word (be it thought, or wished, or expressed, all the same, but always represented by letters), look! he must use so many different, and already existing entities, or tools, like: hands, colour, paper, chalk, spatula (even it, itself).

Let us resume! As being an effect of the Primordial message, the life itself is but a message. And, along with it every our doing; including artistic one.

Edo is however quite right. The all-existing not necessarily needs a text/word/letter to express itself. One can be an unbeliever (in the One and Only), one can even be totally indisposed to the art of words, and consequently disbelief in the fact that the Initiating message "*Be!*" which brought the world into being, is universally symbolised just by them. Still,

no one can undo, cannot deny the fact that we all had been first its recipients, that we all had first universally heard it, read, or felt..., while having individualised ourselves. And before we, arrogant, started sending our own message, and trying to have the original one, without which we would have not been at all, hidden. Even erased, as we've been adding over it our own layers of the palimpsest of existence.

This true is a common place, a starting point of the every our artistic performance. The superiority of the art of words needs not to be commonly admitted, or quarrelled about. It is too obvious. However, what is also obvious is that the fact by itself makes not the men of letters inevitably superior to the all other kind of the creators. A *Guernica* is more talkative than many written pages. On the other hand, a mysterious silence into which sinks, at the end, every real 'irfâni (that is, şûfî) poetry, is more silent than any abstract painting.

Will Edin N. succeed in a complete removing, the layers of the passing existents from the palimpsest of Existence, in order to reach Her, Absolute one? Will he, as erasing his own scripts, know how to read out the First one? Will he hear the composition of the two sounds, recognise the sense of the two letters, will he arrive to the Creator of all creators? He might! Because, he's entered the essence, he's already annulled his own script-message, in order to arrive to the original one, inscribed on the Table of Being. Despite of his refusal to recognise it not but through its one and sole attribute: as a power, that is, a pure energy.

Our integral realisations depend on the integrity of our personalities. Our moral completeness, and our intellectual and artistic uprightness altogether. Shall I be extremely unjust if express my pessimism regarding number of those who've performed the self-integration? Most of us, including Edo, are similar to the some from among Moses' people, peace be on him! before whose eyes the fishes had been presenting themselves...

If we do not read out correctly, in both our arts and our lives, the original message which reposes under the layers of our transience, we will then all have to strive hard to prove our spellings, our different scripts, our scrawls, even probably our lives that we lead, to be not just a bluffing. Or, just an illusion!

In any case, never soliloquy, never and at all a monologue. But always a dialogue, always a communication (even when somebody shoots from up, and somebody is killed, underneath). Because, in the world of plurality in which we are necessarily by our very being, it is our natural condition, and the natural situation of our arts. Even when it is only visual, or only tonal, even when it is a gestured, or mute, or completely

inarticulate, even when it is not but a meaningless scratch, it's always a message. As it is, to repeat, our very being, as the effect of the First one, or its carrier, and transmitter, or the creative sender of our own.

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