

EBRU

WATER'S FACE

Ebru Gültekin Ilıcalı

(31.7.1971 – 11.7.2012)

What is not noticed in its presence comes into focus in its absence. When the ones who are close – from whom we may stand a step away from time to time - sail too far away, we somehow feel a strong desire to run towards them right in an instant...

Presence and absence. The words quoted above are from a conversation from some time in the past now. A conversation that we had with our dear friend, our beautiful sister, our lovely colleague Ebru Gültekin Ilıcalı, with whom we had been walking the same path since 2000... Slipping away from our hands and our embraces, she passed away in July in a terrible train accident, namely ‘a public transport murder’ caused by a long list of governmental negligence.

Presence and absence, while denying one another on the one hand, create each other on the other: It is so obvious; one defines the other. Would we ever think of writing about Ebru in the past tense? Would we ever have thought that her passing away, her absence would be so close, so sharp and so irreversible? Never.

She was there, present. We were breathing on the same land, we were watching the same blue skies, the same clouds were passing above us, the same wind was making us fly, the same rain was dripping through our hair. We might not have been side by side or arm in arm during all the time passing, but we were the children of the same tide and season. Our scholarly interests and directions were the same, our attitudes and perceptions in and of social incidents were the same. Our approach to translation phenomena and translator training were the same. As women, working and doing science, as women who have an intention of doing science, our persistent desire was the same, decreasing from time to time and multiplying afterwards with anger and tenacity due to all the constraints imposed on us by this part of the world. The things that made us weary and the things that we criticised and advocated were similar. Our decisions and plans were in line with each other's. Our actions were in common.

She's gone now, absent. Now, for us, the universe of being is incomplete. This incomplete universe now requires us to continue to walk the path she paved, we have to carry her studies on from the point she left. There is now a need to share her scholarship, to bring her questions forward and to search answers for them.

Which questions were of primary concern for Ebru? Which questions led her to which results and from there, what kind of new questions arose in her mind? What kind of a contribution did she provide to the shared history of our field, using her personal history as a scholar, a lecturer and a translator? For her BA degree, Ebru had studied foreign language teaching, and she got her MA degree from Istanbul University, Department of Translation Studies. The title of her MA thesis was “Translator Training: The Practise of Translator Training in State and Foundation Universities Following the Shift in the Translation Studies Paradigm”. She combined in her thesis her own experience both in foreign language teaching and in translator training in the light of contemporary perspectives and approaches offered by

theories of translation. Her thesis was one of the leading studies that contributed to the formation of the newly-established Translation Studies departments at private universities. Along with her thesis, she presented papers, at both national and international symposiums, dealing with questions and problematics on a variety of subjects such as, for instance, “Memory Training for Translators”, “The Limits of Freedom of a Fantastic Literature Translator”. In 2007, she was admitted to the Interlingual and Intercultural Translation Studies PhD Program at Yıldız Technical University.

The title of her unfinished PhD thesis was “Historical Novel Translations and their Translators regarding the Interaction between the Fields of Translation Studies and History”. She continued to present papers all the while. Some titles from her studies are: “The Desire for Absoluteness and Translating”, “Missing Stories in the Turkish Translation of ‘Delights of Turkey’ by Eduard Roditi”, “Looking from The Past to the Future (of) Methodologies in Translation Studies: An Analysis of MA and PhD Theses Written in Boğaziçi University – Turkey” and “Looking at a Case of Censorship from the Perspective of Translation Studies: Donna Leon and the Untranslatibility of Dedective Brunetti Novels into Italian”. It can be clearly seen that her research subject shifted towards the study of the history of translation and translators in parallel with her dissertation title. A review of her studies reveals that the researcher evolved along with her research subject, that her field of interest and study became more focused and crystallized.

In June 2012, in order to complete her dissertation, Ebru resigned from her position at Okan University where she had worked for 9 years. When Assoc. Prof. Ayşe Nihal Akbulut, who had expanded our horizons, supported and guided us all through our MA years, founded the Department of Translation Studies at Okan University back in 2003, the cadre of the department had five members: Assoc. Prof. Ayşe Nihal Akbulut herself (head of the department), our very dear and precious friend, a very brilliant scholar Dr. Elif Daldeniz, who unfortunately lost her fight to cancer and passed away in September 2012, Ebru Gültekin Ilıcalı, Meral Camcı and Aslı Takanay. Under the guidance of Assoc. Prof. Ayşe Nihal Akbulut, filled with boundless enthusiasm and determination as members of a newly-established department, where we would be able to contribute to our field and to the training of competent translators/ communication experts, we all worked together very hard and very happily doing anything and everything we could to create a strong foundation for our department: we provided the schedules and the course contents, as well as the necessary technical equipment for the department and arranged visits for many valuable theoreticians and scholars of our field to contribute to our department as well. In those first years, buoyed by the hope promised by a new beginning, we had the chance of learning from and working with Prof. Hans J. Vermeer, Prof. Turgay Kurultay, Prof. Işın Bengi-Öner, Prof. Ömer Demircan.

We were a team, and we kept our team spirit alive in subsequent years, whether we were working together or not. Despite all the handicaps of living in this country and this city, and despite all the hassle of our daily lives, we kept our friendship and sisterhood, scholarly discussions and exchange of ideas alive during our gatherings –although we could not gather as often as we wished. We never played deaf and blind to the realities of the country, we never sat back and watched. We tried to look, hear, touch and understand. We always believed that another education system, another academy, another life were possible. We insisted. *Yet* we insisted. *Yet* we lived. *Yet* we continued our academic studies.

Our personal histories overlapped. And more than once: at Istanbul and Okan Universities, at ARC (Disaster and Emergency Interpreting Volunteers), at IFF (Labour Film Festival) to name a few. No matter how tiny these parallel personal histories may be in the context of the greater social history, they mean a lot in our own universe. They also mean a lot for some in our reach. Ebru was a pure raindrop falling into the waters. She was water's face. As Turgay Kurultay and Çağlar Tanyeri perfectly described her, she was a silent protestor. She was our Sylvester. She was part of the 'Holy Trinity', keeper of equilibrium. She was our dear friend, Akın's precious lover, Ege's beautiful mother.

We know that Ebru's passing away cannot be explained away by fate or bad luck. Ebru is a member of this society from whom the rights to live, to public transport, to be a mother, a scholar, and a working woman, to create and to share what one creates have been taken away. We are determined to fight against the social history and structure which caused the systematical negligence that led to her death.

We will go on. We will go on and she will be there with us every step we take, in every study we undertake, in every moment we share with our friends.

Meral Camcı-Aslı Takanay
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