

# Guzin Yamaner

## East and West

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drought of the east  
and the green of the west.  
It realised the reason  
for its journey.  
Bursa was the only place it  
could have a glass of water,  
from Baghdad far behind  
to Istanbul far ahead.  
As East got closer to West,  
West realised the value  
of Time. Water and  
Time became good friends.*

Dear Jill, Julia and Geddy,

Once upon a time East had not yet gone to the West. The East had not yet known east as east, nor the West, west as west. Some say there were two easts and two wests: one for the places, the other for the people. Some said that the road would always start from the east.

One day, a gap named Time occurred while East was travelling to the West. Time had always been fluent, carrying things in front of it. West assumed it was moving, but actually, West was an east who had gone west. West said: "I am who I am!" East replied: "I go".

Time had always left East behind, while taking West ahead. West took its place in front of Time while East took place behind Time. East arranged its location according to Time.

Both East and West had very different dreams: one was nomadic, the other was stationary. West found a place and built a house for itself at the west of the east and settled down. West made someone clean the house, put up curtains and changed the bricks as it pleased. East looked for a house, but couldn't find one. It emigrated in search of a house, thought it had found one, but since the house was not its own, it couldn't change or fix it, so it looked for another one. The curtains it brought from the previous house did not fit the new one. East repeated: "It is not my own house!"

East had to crack the plaster in one of the houses where it stayed, because its cupboard didn't fit in the wall. The cupboards of the west could not be moved and West did not have to crack the plaster: it had ordered its cupboard to be set on the wall.

Life had three parts: childhood, youth and adulthood. West was a child in its childhood, young in its youth and young in

its adulthood. East was adult in its childhood, old in its youth, and a child in its adulthood.

For years West left its home for vacation only in the summers. East always left its home, staying away for years. When East left the cities, people cried: "Come back!" East cried as well and said: "I don't want to come back". But East would return to the city it left and cry again where it had cried before, and leave and return again and again.

Some said the cities of the east were distant, airless, dusty and arid. So when East cried, the dust would be cleaned a little and small clouds would gather. The clouds knew the east as east and west as west and flew over the cities accordingly. East did not like this, how the cloud would know when it was over West and pour its rain there whereas the cloud over dusty East would say: "I cannot rain on dust".

East was moving and was afraid to be left behind by Time. So it put Baghdad and the desert at the farthest point, Konya in the middle and Istanbul to the other side. It forgot a napkin sized steppe right in between them. Later a man with ocean eyes came out of the water and called that steppe Ankara. Ankara was on a piece of steppe that was born arid and thirsty for water. In this napkin city, a few pine-trees grew and their roots drilled into the ground. The water reached into the depths of the underground leaking down through the roots of the pines.

East was exhausted, as it walked from Baghdad and through the desert heading towards Konya. The dust of the desert was on its back, it had drops of sweat on its face and the yellowness of heat in its eyes. East carried the baked soil of the mud tower and looked for a place to drop its burden. Konya said: "Where is my dignity, if Konya is a meadow? If you won't drop the yellow heat of the desert in my meadow, why am I sepa-

rated from Istanbul?" Tired and undecided East replied: "Where shall I drop my burden?" And the mountains around Konya said: "Drop your burden on us!" And then Konya became very hot and East acquired the habit of dropping its burden of dust in its cities.

East wanted to ask for another favour. Konya was neither east nor west and said: "You may ask what you wish. My mountains will open wider and you will find what you are looking for. What you find on yours is yours. You have the right to whoever passes by; the right of what your eye sees."

East liked Konya's behaviour: "A glass of cold water please!" The clouds and dust heard and got very upset: "Here is the emerald ring of our Lord, the gift of our Konya. Won't you take this instead of lifeless water? Couldn't you walk a little further to find green Europe and ask for your cool water there?" East regretted having asked for a glass of water. It was ashamed. It was sorry for embarrassing its host: "No! I don't need your Lord's emerald ring! I don't want it! My thirst is already over. Don't worry."

East thought: "I shall walk more and find the big waters ahead." East was woman! And women cannot pass the big waters! East stayed in Konya instead for a little while; then got back on the road realising she wasn't going to be able to find a glass of cold water. East turned back and asked Baghdad: "Where is Istanbul?" Baghdad answered: "None of your business. It's not ours yet!" And East: "Nowhere is ours!"

East was tired and Baghdad asked: "Why are you so tired? Haven't you dropped all the hot sand and muddy soil on the outskirts of Konya? Haven't you grumbled enough? I can't leave my roots to gather all you have scattered around." East then revealed its secret: "No need for more of your toil, I have silk under my skirt, light in



Tablet in envelope with cuneiform letters, 1950-1850 B.C., Anadolu Museum collection, Ankara

weight, but heavy in value. I should leave it somewhere near Istanbul. Show me the way. Where is Istanbul? Your eyes can see far ahead, you who are at the end of east." Konya intervened: "I have got wheat, which is enough for me! Drop your silk in Bursa on the way." East turned its eyes to Konya: "Where is Bursa? Show me the way!" "Go straight west! You will find it!"

East took Konya's advice and dropped the silk in Bursa and asked again for a glass of water. Bursa gave the water: "Here! Take! Drink!" East then understood the drought of the east and the green of the

west. She realised the reason for her journey. Bursa was the only place she could have a glass of water, from Baghdad far behind to Istanbul far ahead. As East got closer to West, West realised the value of Time. Water and Time became good friends.

West realised the value of time, as the East got closer to the West, jumping over Istanbul. Every single part of Time of the West was equal in value to East's silk, silver, wheat, walnuts and cherries. West was annoyed at how East had come to it and made its Time valuable. The West had lots of water. The good friends Water and Time relaxed on the cloud, rained on the ground and had fun. They rained and knew when to stop, and rained again. East could not make the water or the cloud or time listen to it. East didn't have water and had lost its Time.

East searched, walked, got dirty and emigrated. Her feet hurt and bled. Her antelope skin shoes were worn-out from the streets of the east. East preferred clean, well-kept, unbroken pavements. West even had pavements for its bicycles.

East settled its towns in places so as to make the women and children carry water. West always had streams or a river through its towns and cities. West wore rivers around its towns like necklaces.

Some say that the women of the east were many, while there were no men. Some say that in the places where freedom does not exist, life is restricted for men and enforced for women. Some say that in the places where freedom exists, men are men while women are women.

There were three women in one west: three west women! East went to find the Wests. East is a woman and the Wests she found are women like her. One West Woman said: "I have had terrible boyfriends, but my husband is good." East replied: "Is there a man who is not terrible,

even if he is your husband?" Two West said: "I like the difference between men and women. Diversity is good." East kept silent and listened. Two West was born in one west, spoke the language of a second west, ate and drank water in a third west. Three West told her husband: "You can make your own decisions and I will make mine." East listened in silence again.

East observed how One West, Two West and Three West looked at their husbands and men. And she observed how she herself looked at her own husband and man. She saw the kindness after malice, the possibility for difference between men and women, and for women making their own decisions. East decided to stay in her east with this knowledge. She decided to forget about what all the Wests had taught her. While One West, Two West and Three West contributed to her life, day by day she dreamed of her own east. She looked at her own east, at the dust of the desert she had left when the broken pieces of her east were cutting her eyes! She remembered before she was born. Her own east had a language that she did not speak: the east of her east. "The language you don't speak is not a language!" said her Istanbul to her. "The language I don't speak is mine, even if I keep silent. The half spoken languages I speak will make up a whole when put together. The absence of my language was my way of looking at my man and I have made it whole. I have built up my language," said East to her Istanbul adding: "Keep on growing and blowing the things coming from east, going to west with one hand while embracing them with your other hand!"

East got to know One West, Two West

and Three West quite well. For three years she went to One West, Two West and Three West and they came to East. After three years, with the womanhood of three west women, East said: "One day all my sorrows will end! Because from now on, my language is my silence! My half language, my whole! The language I don't speak is my own language even when I keep silent! And my half language will end my sorrows."

Lots of love,  
Guzin

GUZIN YAMANER (Turkey) was born in 1968 in the eastern part of Turkey. She graduated from the Fine Arts Academy and has two Masters' degrees in Theatre Studies, one on postmodern stage design and the other on the history of feminist theatre, and a PhD on the comparison between male and female playwrights search for meaning in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Guzin has translated feminist plays into Turkish and has written a feminist play on female obsessions. She is a theatre critic.