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Meeting Edith Flusser

I wrote this text in German and then translated it into English. Translation and self-translation are a way of living and looking at the world: the first thing I learned from Edith and Vilém Flusser.

Munich, July 1998

I first met Edith Flusser in Munich, at the Flusser-Archive, when it was still located at the Prinzregentenstraße. We had exchanged a few letters in which she invited me to come to Munich. She was sitting at a desk in front of a computer translating one of Vilém Flusser's text. I think it was *On Doubt*. Edith was constantly worried about the survival of her husband's work, until the very end. This is the first image I am including of her. At the time, she gave me a text on translation which she had also translated into German. It had a direct impact on my future research and I began to study translation and self-translation in Vilém Flusser's work.

I stayed a couple of days in Munich and went every day to the Archive. We went for lunch in an Italian restaurant. I was surprised how quickly she moved despite her age. In the restaurant, she devoured all the bread on the table and asked for more. She invited me to dinner in her Munich apartment. We sat on the balcony conversing about her life in Prague and Brazil. When I asked her about her own experiences, she was surprised. She probably believed that her life played a secondary role when compared with that of her husband. Without Edith Flusser's continuous and persistent help and protection, however, Vilém Flusser's work would not have been written. I would go even farther and suggest that Edith coauthored Vilém Flusser's oeuvre and extended it through her translations.

Puchheim, March 1999

Half a year later, I met Edith again at a Flusser-Symposium (<http://www.claudia-klinger.de/flusser/start.htm>). Irmgard Zepf, an old friend, accompanied her. In the following years, I kept meeting her at the different Flusser-Symposiums. She did not miss a single one.

New York, August 2000

We met several times in her apartment on Broadway, where she was living with her daughter Dinah and her nephew Benjamin. I also met her son Victor and his family there. The Flussers kept an open house and a cosmopolitan plurilingual atmosphere.

Lugano and Ascona, October 2001

Despite the terrorist attack of September 11 and the tense situation that ensued, Edith decided to come to Europe. On the phone, she remarked that she had to come because it was the tenth anniversary of Vilém Flusser's death. On October 24, a severe accident took place inside the tunnel of the Gotthard, which remained closed for several days. This is the second image: courage and determination in the face of peril. Edith was 81 years old. She spent a night at our home in Lugano, and the next day I drove her to Ascona where the 10th International Flusser Symposium was taking place (http://www.equivalence.com/labor/lab_vf_info.shtml). The group photo, by Pierpaolo Bianda, was shot on October 28. On the right side are Louis Bec and Irmgard Zepf, on the left side Wolfgang Martin and Gustavo Bernardo and in the background Nils Röller and Silvia Wagnermaier who at that time was still working for the Flusser-Archive in Cologne.

New York, August 2003

We met again in America. On August 13, I called Edith from a telephone booth in Brooklyn. She asked me to come to Manhattan. I proposed to postpone our meeting. Shortly afterwards, a blackout paralyzed the whole Northwest. This is the third image I am including: Vilém and Edith escaping catastrophe by inches.

Philadelphia, December 2004

I saw Edith again at the *Annual Convention* of the MLA. She had travelled on her own by train from New York to Philadelphia to listen to a couple of conferences on her husband. She reminded me of an idea we discussed over the phone: the publication of the complete works of Vilém Flusser. In her view, this long-term project would definitely help preserve the memory of her husband's work. I suggested the creation of an online journal. Half a year later, I founded *Flusser Studies*, together with Anke Finger. Edith's enthusiasm was contagious.

Germersheim, October 2006 and Prague, November 2007

Edith participated also in the symposium in Germersheim. She looked weak and tired. One year later, in Prague, I met her again, together with her two sons Miguel and Víctor. To the very last, Edith did all she could to support her husband's work. Then I stopped seeing her for quite some time. She no longer came to the symposia. I did not return to New York.

New York, August 12, 2013

The last time I saw Edith was in her apartment in New York. Dinah and Benjamin were also there. Edith was sitting on a chair smiling. A Brazilian nurse was taking care of her. She was wearing long pigtails, which gave her a teenager-like appearance. The pigtails were bound together with colorful hair ribbons. Edith looked cheerful, but distant. She did not say a word, just looked at me from time to time. Most probably, she did not recognize me anymore.

The tombstone in the New Jewish Cemetery of Prague, where Vilém and Edith Flusser are buried, bears the following Portuguese inscription: “Não morreremos conjugados. ‘Nós’ nunca morreremos porque apenas eu e tu, a solidão é para a morte.”

Although we die alone, we survive together in the conversations of those still alive.

Lugano, November 17, 2014