

WORLDING BEYOND THE WEST

Border Thinking on the Edges of the West

Crossing over the Hellespont

Andrew Davison



BORDER THINKING ON THE EDGES OF THE WEST

Drawing on scholarly and life experience on, and over, the historically posited borders between “West” and “East,” the work identifies, interrogates, and challenges a particular, enduring, violent inheritance – what it means to cross over a border – from the classical origins of Western political thought. The study has two parts. The first is an effort to work within the Western tradition to demonstrate its foundational and enduring, violent conception of crossing over borders. The second is a creative effort to explore and encourage a fundamentally different outlook towards borders and what it means to be on, at, or over them. The underlying social theoretical disposition of the work is a form of post-Orientalist hermeneutics; the textual subject matter of the two parts of the study is linked using Walter Benjamin’s concept of the storyteller.

The underlying premise of the work is that the sense of violent possibility on the borders between “West” and “East” existed well before the more recent “age of imperialism” and even before there was a “West” or an “East” to speak of. That sense is constitutive of a political imagination about borders developed deep within the revered sources of Western culture. On the other hand, confronting the influence of such violent imaginaries requires truly novel modes of hermeneutical openness, hospitality and solidarity.

Seeking to offer a new understanding and opening in the study of borders, this work will provide a significant contribution to several areas including international relations theory, border studies and political theory.

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I wish to thank Yaşar Kemal for his generosity in permitting me to convey extensive selections from *İnce Memed*, volumes 1–3, İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları. *Şu dünyada ne iyi insanlar var.*

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PREFACE

Working in, on, and beyond the imagination of the West today

You and I were walking along the river towards the railway bridge and we had a heated discussion in which you made a remark about “national character” that shocked me by its primitiveness. I then thought: what is the use of studying philosophy if all that it does for you is to enable you to talk with some plausibility about some abstruse questions of logic, etc., and if it does not improve your thinking about important questions of everyday life, if it does not make you more conscientious than any ... journalist in the use of the dangerous phrases such people use for their own ends. You see, I know that it’s difficult to think well about “certainty,” “probability,” “perception,” etc. But it is, if possible still more difficult to think, or try to think, really honestly about your life and other people’s lives. And the trouble is that thinking about these things is not thrilling, but often downright nasty. And when it’s nasty it’s most important. – Let me stop preaching. What I wanted to say was this: I’d very much like to see you again; but if we meet it would be wrong to avoid talking about serious non-philosophical things. Being timid I don’t like clashes, and particularly not with people I like. But I’d rather have a clash than mere superficial talk.

Ludwig Wittgenstein¹

What is entailed, both imaginatively and in practice, in *crossing over* the most symbolically meaningful borders in our experience? What is entailed in *being on*, or *going to*, “the other side”? What can someone who has traveled with the hope of conveying something understandable across borders – the original purpose of the Fulbright dissertation grant I was privileged to receive in the early 1990s – someone who, as a result, now lives across the divide, give back? I seek to resuscitate the memories of first encounters – places and spaces where we all seemingly first met, as collectivities, and in the process created powerful first impressions, many of which emerged and disappeared too quickly, some of which remain accessible through the study of history, literature, and other modes of artistic expression.

I began the thinking and research for *Border Thinking on the Edges of the West: Crossing Over the Hellespont* before the attacks on Washington and New York on September 11th, 2001, but my efforts were spurred on by the

subsequent US invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq and the ongoing battle that the society I inhabit most of the year continues to wage against what it officially calls its “enemies” (“terrorists,” “extremists,” etc.). The work is now complete, and after concluding this preface, I will lower from the wall of my office, just above my desk to my right, a reprint of a sketch of General Louis-François Lejeune’s famous painting *La Bataille d’Aboukir*. The sketch is entitled *Victoire d’Aboukir*, and depicts Napoleon’s attack on Ottoman forces in July of 1799 at the Battle of Aboukir, on the Mediterranean coast of Egypt. The original painting is on display in the Palace at Versailles. I first saw the print at the French Army Museum in Paris in late September of 2001, during a visit to Europe that I had planned earlier that year as part of my sabbatical. My goal was to visit museums and monuments in several European cities to study Europe’s aesthetic rendering, if you will, of its encounter with its Islamic neighbors. After the attacks on September 11th, 2001, the intellectual curiosities of my project reverberated with relevance in a way I could never have foreseen.

I had been studying several aspects of the West’s relationship to Muslim societies for over a decade: in my work on secularism and modernity in Turkey; in my studies of the ideological foundations of US foreign policy in relation to Islamist resistance in the societies of the Persian/Arabian Gulf; and in a new project entitled, “Europe and its Boundaries,” that I was about to co-direct with my colleague at Vassar, Himadeep Muppidi. We were in the process of articulating a new scholarly and pedagogical agenda that examined political modernity from both within and outside the conceptual borders of Europe. This project involved deep consideration of the interpretive and ethical dilemmas of “border” encounters. *Border Thinking on the Edges of the West* gathers and evolves my thinking on these issues by examining two prominent political imaginaries on what are prominently considered the cultural and civilizational boundaries of “the West.” As a prelude to developing these reflections, I want to explain why I’ll be lowering *Victoire d’Aboukir* from my office wall.

That fall of 2001, I visited tens of museums in Paris, Berlin, Madrid, Granada, Seville, Cordoba, Toledo, and Istanbul, from where I had set out. I had already been to the museums of London, Athens, and Rhodes the year before, and was also later to travel to Brussels with the participants in the project on Europe and its boundaries. My visits to the museums of Europe were like a refresher course on historical precedents for the US/NATO invasion of Afghanistan. Whatever the *casus belli*, the new war clearly reiterated the violence of the European imperial and colonial pasts. Western armies, promoting themselves as vigilant defenders of freedom, civilization, and forces for nothing but good, and, while “aiming only to hunt down terrorists,” righteously expanding their global power by crossing into foreign lands and attacking and subduing all within sight. One could read about the roads that had been paved by European experience in Muriel E. Chamberlain’s

excellent *Formation of the European Empires, 1488–1920*, which I had in my pocket during my European travels. Or one could also visit the museums and see this history profoundly alive in the monuments, museum displays, and public sculptures and architecture of Europe.

Not surprisingly, my visits to naval and military museums were especially illuminating – museums like the Museo del Ejército in Madrid, the Alcázar in Toledo, and Musée de l’Armée in Paris where I saw *Victoire d’Aboukir*. I was struck by the elaborate and extensive displays and descriptions of colonial adventure and warfare, from rows upon rows of material and symbolic accoutrements of war to the actual spoils of conquest, large and small. The Algiers display in the Army Museum in Paris, for example, contains both a gold standard on which the principles “Liberté, Égalité, Vigilance, Discipline and Subordination” are embroidered and a constructed model of pre-conquest Algiers. Near the model, a small showcase displays a pair of girl’s shoes brought back from Algeria to France.

I have spent over a decade looking above my desk at the scenes of *Victoire d’Aboukir*. The sketch portrays the all-out French assault on the Turkish garrison at Aboukir. The French had suffered a defeat in Aboukir Bay at the hands of the British a year earlier. Napoleon’s campaigns in Syria and Palestine had been pushed back as well. Napoleon and a huge French fleet now arrive with zeal on the shores of Egypt for what will be a two-year occupation.

A clear sky takes up almost the entire top third of the sketch. Below it, the sea, a fortress at the end of a long peninsula on the shore, and a beach on which tens of well-ordered columns march against “les Turcs.” Plumes of smoke rise from the ships and around the Turkish troops on the beaches. In the foreground, Napoleon sits atop his horse on a hill overlooking the beach. He is directing his troops towards a group of Turcs. Some of the latter appear to have been rounded up and subdued by the French, some continue to fight, in vain. The faces of several turbaned men who have fallen to the ground grimace with agony, fear, and despair. One man holding a dagger raises it just as a French soldier is about to pierce his chest with a bayonet. An old man crouches in fear behind a cactus on top of which a tent or some kind of cover has fallen.

Napoleon’s horse is leaping in the air at full gallop out from an area with several palm trees, on the left side of the sketch, just in front of a hilltop fortress tower out of which the body of a dead Turc hangs, next to another who is exchanging fire with French soldiers below. His efforts, too, are in vain. The French are about to seize the tower.

Napoleon’s fully erect posture, with one arm on the reins of his horse and the other pointed straight ahead, contrasts with that of a turbaned Turc who has fallen on the ground several meters away. Balancing his body with one arm on the ground, the Turc raises the other, palm open, above his head as if pleading to the rider on the horse above him to be rescued from his fate. To his side lie several sprawled bodies, Turcs and French. One, a Turc, covers

the decapitated body of a French soldier. The latter's severed head lies next to a curved sword in the hand of the dead Turc. A wounded fighter is getting attention from the French. A camel kneels by a cactus, its fruit carts spilt beside it. To its side, a fallen palm tree lies across the ground.

With Napoleon's confident pose and the Turks succumbing under his power, the French certainly have the look of control, of *victoire*. We know who wins this particular battle, one that will also be sculpted into the east side of the *Arc de Triomphe* in Paris within the next twenty years, wherein the names of General Lejeune and General Joachim Murat, the commander given credit for the victory by personally subduing his Turkish rival, will be engraved as well. In the bas-relief on the *Arc*, entitled *La Bataille d'Aboukir* and carved by Bernard Gabriel Seurre, we again see a scene of capitulation in the immediate context and aftermath of the violent encounter at Aboukir. Turks surrender and submit to a military leader on horseback. A turbaned body lies below the horse, near or under its rear hoof. The horseman is most likely Napoleon. The rider could also be General Murat, since the scene resembles another famous painting of the bloody battle, Antoine Gros's *Murat at the Battle of Aboukir* (1806). In that painting, just as in the bas-relief on the Arch of Triumph, turbaned bodies lie sprawled on the ground, trampled under the hooves of the gallantly poised leader's horse.

This is what I observed in Europe's encounter with Islam in some of Europe's most treasured artistic spaces: Victorious Europeans attacking or triumphantly trampling over Muslims. The Art of Triumph, of glorious killing and enemy submission. Of course, insofar as much of this art aimed to "recapture" the historical record, it made a great deal of sense. "Between 1800 and 1812, no less than 70 paintings deal with the Egyptian campaign under the leadership of [the French Museums Director] Vivant Denon."² Similar efforts have been underway in the United States since the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, and, in Europe, well before Aboukir. Since the Crusades, the *Reconquista*, and the Ottoman sieges of Vienna, warfare against and resistance to the power of Muslim empires has been very much a part of Europe's historical self-understanding. It is the depth of the ongoing projection of this self-understanding that I learned about and wish to underscore. I seemed to encounter it everywhere I went.

In Granada, Spain, before entering the *Capilla Real*, the Royal Chapel designed to sanctify the place of Ferdinand and Isabella in the history of Christianity, guests are greeted by "The Capitulation of Granada," a huge wall hanging of Francisco Pradilla Ortiz's (1848–1921) famous painting depicting the surrender by the last Muslim ruler of Granada, Muhammad XII (Boabdil), to Ferdinand and Isabella. Inside the entombment chamber in the chapel, a carefully sculpted relief on the end of Ferdinand's marble coffin that visitors stroll by shows a rider, presumably Ferdinand, on a horse trampling over several turbaned bodies, at least two of which receive direct blows from its hooves.

In Seville, the symbolism of the tomb of Christopher Columbus in the Cathedral of Seville is less obvious, but no less poignant. The monument shows four pallbearers carrying Columbus's coffin. The bearers represent the four kingdoms of Spain at the time of the Reconquest and Columbus's voyage to the Americas – both in 1492. The two front figures support the coffin with one arm and hold a sepulcher in the other. The front right figure represents the Kingdom of León. It bears the red lion design of Alfonso VII of León (1105–57), a renowned local crusader against the Moors in his time. The sepulcher in his hand does not rest on the ground near his foot. Its sharpened end pierces a partially split pomegranate, the symbol of Andalusian Granada. The Spanish word for pomegranate is *granada*, and the fruit is still understood as the symbol of the city's past. The cover brochure, for example, of “El Archivo Histórico Municipal de Granada,” which I picked up on a visit, shows the *Sello de Cera Ayuntamiento, 1493* – the partially split *granada*. Although this symbolism of the pierced *granada* escapes the attention of many visitors to the tomb, I learned of the connection from personnel in the cathedral, who pointed my attention to the *granada*. The message is profound. With Granada in possession, Columbus sought the conquest of the world, and that is what would eventually follow.

The art of these particular monuments came together in Brussels, in one of its many monuments to Europe's colonial self-understanding. The statue above the main entrance to the King of Spain Building (*Den Coninck Van Spaignien*) at the Grand Place – a “World Heritage” site – sports a triumphant bust of the king, surrounded by a wreath and various military insignia. Below, on both sides of the bust, roughly where the legs of the king might be, sit two full figures. To the king's left a Native American, and to his right a bearded and turbaned Moor. Both are loosely clad. Their hands are bound behind their backs, their heads tilted inward and, showing effects of coerced subordination, only slightly lifted towards the king. This is nothing but a monument to conquest, bondage, and enslavement.

More art and more ships arriving at sea, more columns of neatly ordered troops firing and slaying ahead, more disorderly, turbaned Moors vainly firing back in *Débarquement de l'armée Française en Afrique 14 Juin 1830*, a sketch from an old manuscript that caught my eye in a used bookstore in Paris. Even more troops, artillery, and plumes of smoke at the “Batalla de Wad-Ras en 1860,” during Spain's invasion of Morocco. The painting hangs in the Sala de Africa in the Alcázar in Toledo.

There are other forms of art related to the encounter between Europe and Islam. Many paintings of the European Orientalists, for example, display less violent imagery. Perhaps the most famous, most complex, and most political works are those of Eugene Delacroix, some of which I had the chance to view in Paris. In paintings like *Algerian Women in their Apartments* (1834) or the many other European depictions of “the Orient” by Delacroix's contemporaries, one sees fascination with the beauty of the peoples, architecture,

and lands over the border. Indeed, some of these paintings are truly beautiful works of art. However, when viewing a magnificent effort to depict scenes of life in a Muslim setting like *Algerian Women in their Apartments*, it is somehow difficult to escape the knowledge that European access to this beauty came on the heels of conquest. The privacy of the Algerian women in their apartments feels shattered by Delacroix's skillful brush, their homes invaded and subordinated to a power-laden European gaze. As the women sit in their apartments, one can almost hear the swishing and creaking of hundreds of naval ships arriving on the coast, see the thousands of troops hauling themselves and their artillery onto the shore, hear their commanders, bursts of fire, shouts and screams. You can almost smell the smoke that filled the air as the Europeans arrived. One can almost see everywhere, without even having to see it, the ultimate image to come: that of a proud leader riding high, having confidently and triumphantly slain, defeated, and subdued the enemy. European access to the beauty of Algiers required ambush and invasion.

Moreover, accompanying many of these masterful strokes of beauty is a culture of fear, suspicion, and hatred expressed through the artist's brush. Delacroix's *The Fanatics of Tangier* (1838) shows a political rally that Delacroix is said to have personally witnessed. A priestly man on a horse carries a green banner. Contorted, bearded, turbaned and cloaked bodies seem to throw themselves around him in a wild frenzy. Contrast that image with *Victoire's* neatly ordered columns. Similarly, Delacroix's *Massacre at Chios* (1824) aligns closely with this deep historical memory as it reverses it: At Chios, les Turcs are guilty of massacre. The painting shows the Turk as the mounted victor, standing above slaughtered and traumatized Greeks, women and children. The account of the violence is debated by historians. Delacroix's painting was said, along with writings by Hugo and Byron, to have mobilized European sympathy for the Greeks in their battle for independence from Muslim rule. More cultural underpinnings, in the texts of the great poets. The horror of the violence against the European, which is similarly represented in the 1822 painting *Firing of the Turkish Fleet*, on display in Chios (and available for purchase as a postcard or poster at the Chios Nautical Museum) or in Theophilos Hatzimichael's *Death of Marcos Bot-saris* (1823) on display in the Theophilos Museum in Mytilene, contrasts with the triumphant glory of the violence against the Turc-Moor-Arab-Muslim. When the conquered is the European, it is terror; when it is the Muslim, it is glorious, even sacred. In the Museo de Bellas Artes in Valencia, Spain, a painting hung too high for me to read its caption shows a crusading fighter descending from the heavens through a storm of clouds. A bright red cross adorns his breastplate armor. The fighter also holds a sword in his hand above his head at the same angle as the cross. The cross and the handle of the sword make two crosses descending for battle towards Earth.

With war led mostly by Christians and Muslims erupting again in September of 2001, it was sometimes difficult during my trip to keep the historical contexts distinct. In their huge glass advertisement showcases, newsstands in Paris posted blow-up covers of weekly magazines that addressed the events of the present with images and concepts resonant of the past. A cover of *L'Express* shows a face, half covered by a black veil. Under it, the advertisement for the lead story: *Le fanatisme, ses mystères, son histoire, ses ressorts*. A similar poster of the latest edition of the *Le Nouvel Observateur* has a picture of turbaned Afghani fighters holding anti-aircraft missiles. Its heading: *Afghanistan, Pakistan, Asie Centrale: La Poudrière du Monde*. Both were published in the third week of September 2001. The cover images and art combined like the cross and the sword: similar images, similar messages. The outside world resembled the collection in the museum, the collection in the museum spoke to the outside world. In Europe's art of encounter, the bodies of the Muslim seem always to appear in battle and contained on the other end of Europe's sense of power.

This remarkable consistency occurs in Europe's most cherished spaces, but such art is not of course unique to the centers of Europe. One sees similar battle art on its edges, for example, in the modern Ottoman art of conquest and glory in Istanbul's Military Museum. There, the turbans reside, for the most part, on the heads of the victors. Similar Art of Triumph may be seen as well in Istanbul's public monuments, even some of its contemporary public art. The colorful wall mosaics placed in 1999 in the city's new subway stations to commemorate the 700th anniversary of the founding of the Ottoman Empire depict the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453. The mosaics show the Ottoman navy making its heroic preparations to sail upon the ancient city. Ships approach and armed soldiers scale and capture the walls of the city. One scene shows the victorious Fatih Sultan Memed – Sultan Memed the Conqueror – leading his army inside the gates of the city. The art depicts the glory of the arriving Turks and the submission of the Christians. There are no fallen bodies in the mosaic, but other paintings of these scenes as well as paintings of other historical encounters between the Muslim Turks and Christian European armies provide plenty of blood, horror, and glory, including the victorious leader atop his horse, like Napoleon, pointing forward. One could substitute Napoleon for a victorious sultan and reverse the various banners and bodies of Émile Jean-Horace Vernet's *Bonaparte at the Battle of Aboukir* and produce a copy of some of the art in Istanbul's Military Museum.

If the Art of Triumph is not limited to Europe's centers, it's also not particularly new in the history of the world either. The *Alexander Sarcophagus*, circa 325–311 BC in the Istanbul Archeological Museum that I visited just before setting out on my trip to Western Europe contains the same motifs as the Art of Triumph. "Alexander the Great," reads the caption of one postcard from the collection, "mounted on a horse and chasing a Persian

soldier.” “A mounted Persian charging a Greek; a Persian archer; a Persian lowering his dead friend,” reads another. “A Greek commander charging a Persian who is falling from his horse.” “A mounted Persian charging a fallen Greek and a Greek killing a Persian.” More bodies under more hooves of more stampeding horses ridden by more soldiers, one of them perhaps Alexander. They thrust their weapons into the bodies of the turbaned others, some of whom already lay dead, mouths agape, sprawled on the ground beside or under the horses’ hooves.

There is a strange parallel between the posture of two of these vanquished fighters, kneeling on the ground and trying to shield themselves from further blows, and the turbaned Turc in *Victoire d'Aboukir*. There is also a similar concordance between Alexander’s triumphant charge and that of Napoleon. Alexander’s arm is raised back at a ninety-degree angle, either to hurl more objects at the enemy or to spur on his horse which, with its front legs in the air like Napoleon’s, is in full stride. The two fighters cringing in fear are about join others in death under the trampling hooves of the conquerors. Alexander’s horse, like Napoleon’s in the *Arc de Triomphe*, rides over a fallen body on the ground. Indeed, it is said that Napoleon had launched his invasion of Egypt partly to emulate Alexander’s conquest of the world. In this sense, the Art of Triumph above my desk participates in a longer history of Europe’s own proud encounters with others, stretching back to ancient battles between European and Asian powers. Many of those battles, I underscore, began or involved an important crossing over the Hellespont. For those of us on the other side of all these crossings, it has been one conqueror after another. One comes and goes, and then another.

With the historical depth of the violence of this encounter in mind, I embarked on the specific project that has led to *Border Thinking on the Edges of the West: Crossing Over the Hellespont*. I feel deeply grateful to many friends whose thoughtful company sustained and propelled this project. Thank you so much to Cevdet Akçay, Bruce Baum, Andrew Bush, Olga Bush, Ece Doğrucu, Dan Frank, Aapta Garg, Hannah Eidman, İgal Ers, Richard Friedenheim, Luke Harris, Anton Hart, Katie Hite, Mark Hoffman, Bill Hoynes, Gürol Irzik, Sibel Irzik, Brian Johnson, Tim Koechlin, Gün Kut, Şule Kut, Bill Lynn, Rick Matthews, Beth McCormick, Himadeep Muppidi, Nesrin Mutlu, Sam Opondo, Taha Parla, Joe Perl, Sahara Pradhan, Katherine Restuccia, Martin Sampson, Jonathan Schultz, Paul Soper, Ron Steiner, Britt Van Paepeghem, Greg White, and Steve Wolf. Steve, Paul, and Andy have been wise and most generous companions in thought from the beginning of the project, and Nesrin and İgal were there in these ways halfway through. I can’t thank them enough. I am also deeply grateful to Sahara for extensive conversion and her patient and meticulous work with the manuscript during the final phases of the project.

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PREFACE

Bilgin; by Nicola Parkin, Peter Harris, and Dominic Corti of Routledge; and by Alison Neale. Similarly, I am deeply indebted to tens of students at Vassar College over the last decade – especially my interlocutors in the classes Seminar in Political Theory, Political Modernity in Turkey, and Diasporas: Borderline Jews (co-taught with Andrew Bush) – for their willingness to engage and reflect in unconventional ways upon questions of border life.

In what follows, I make every effort to engage the texts I examine in this study as much on their own terms as is humanly possible, and I openly acknowledge the extent to which my interpretations are significantly shaped by my deep unease with current political conditions, especially the ongoing violent encounters – both material and symbolic – between the United States and especially the Muslim societies and milieux (that is, including within the United States) in and over which it exercises its power. In relation to this work, I have viewed this unease somewhat as enabling much of the value-driven, passionate intellectual engagement that follows. My unease has also produced in me less a desire to celebrate naively the “alternatives” I have experienced over the conceptual borders of the West (where they are not “alternatives”; they just are), or to comfort myself falsely by condemning the violence I espy and feel within in a particular dimension of the Western political imagination. Instead, my unease has propelled me to listen with every ounce of interpretive energy I can muster to the voices and expressions of each disposition, each way of being in the world. In relation to the violent dispositions of conquest, I try to understand their grip upon – so as to begin to shed their influence over – our collective imagination and constitution. In relation to being outside that imagination, to resisting conquest and thinking – and living – borders between us differently, I seek to convey something about understanding and being in the world differently that I have learned and experienced as a result of the privilege of conversation I have enjoyed on the other side of the various Hellesponts in the Western imagination. There are many dilemmas and difficulties involved in this project. I discuss and grapple with them the best I can along the way.

For now, as my next movement within a different way of being, I will lower *Victoire d'Aboukir* from the wall of my office. For over a decade, it has reminded me almost daily of the needs to digest and transcend the cycle of mutual and reciprocal assault, to consider and reconsider the meaningfulness of “crossing” borders, and to contemplate alternative ways of crossing, including perhaps, as I shall discuss, not *crossing* at all. I will lower the print now because it represents, repeatedly, a concept and orientation towards others that I seek to purge from my constituted being. This is no easy task. The legacy is profoundly deep. I will probably fall short of this goal. Yet the imperial aura of subduing the other, the bayonet about to pierce the man’s heart, the futile hope for rescue, the crouching in fear, the severed head ... like the daily news reports of never-ending slaughter from the current pursuits of glorious victory, they’ve all become entirely too distasteful, too

dishonorable. Moreover, their effect on us needs to be something other than repetition, something to counter the inherited impulse *to cross* again. “We stand,” writes Hamid Dabashi, “mere individuals, upon a heap of old, scattered, useless and yet dangerous memories. Whether they control us or we control them is the key criterion to any meaningful future.”³ If the grimaces of agony, fear, and despair, on the one hand, and the proud slayer of the other, on the other, say anything to me, it is that a real transformation in the direction of more hospitable solidarities and forms of mutual regard is necessary. In lowering the print, I am not eliminating, I cannot eliminate, the violence from memory. I am relocating myself in the history of the West, of the world. It’s time.

In the midst of this work, fate took hold and I fell in love on the other side of the Hellespont, at the base of the Taurus Mountains. I wish I could express in words how much I have learned in being with Evrim Uyar-Davison and becoming part of her family. Some of what I feel comes to expression indirectly in what follows. The rest I wish to convey by dedicating this work to her and to our families, especially to Barbara Davison and Hatice Uyar, Maxwell Davison and Hüseyin Uyar.

To my mind, the conflicts of today and tomorrow are not between “West” and “East.” They are and will be between two dispositions that only sometimes neatly map along geographical, “cultural” or “civilizational” axes: one predisposed to crossing over borders or entering unfamiliar spaces well armed and prepared to subdue and dominate all one encounters, and another prepared to inhabit relationships favoring just forms of social accompaniment and solidarity in the meaningful and life-affirming spaces of experience. In reality, the constellation of possibilities often equals more than two; things are often much messier than “either this or that.” After years of study on this question, however, I’d like to suggest that sometimes the options are that simple. It is the work and self-scrutiny it takes to admit the simplicity of it that are difficult.

Notes

- 1 L. Wittgenstein, “Letter to N. Malcolm, 16.11.1944,” in B. McGuinness (ed.) *Wittgenstein in Cambridge: Letters and Documents, 1911–1951*, London: Wiley and Blackwell, 2008, 370.
- 2 G.-G. Lemaire, *The Orient in Western Art*, Cologne: Könemann, 2001, 109.
- 3 H. Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent: The Ideological Foundation of the Islamic Revolution in Iran*, New York: New York University Press, 1993, 519.

A NOTE ON THE USE OF ITALICS FOR FOREIGN-LANGUAGE WORDS

As discussed in the Introduction, this work employs a hermeneutical approach to issues of translation and dialogue. The non-italicized use of foreign-language terms in many parts of this work is purposeful.

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>H</i>	Herodotus, <i>The History</i> , David Grene (trans.), Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987.
<i>HA</i>	Quintus Curtius Rufus, <i>The History of Alexander</i> , John Yardley (trans.), New York: Penguin Books, 1984.
<i>İM1</i>	<i>Yaşar Kemal, İnce Memed 1</i> , Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2006 (1952).
<i>İM2</i>	<i>Yaşar Kemal, İnce Memed 2</i> , Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2007 (1953).
<i>İM3</i>	<i>Yaşar Kemal, İnce Memed 3</i> , Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2004 (1953).
<i>İM4</i>	<i>Yaşar Kemal, İnce Memed 4</i> , Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2007 (1955).
<i>PW</i>	<i>The Landmark Thucydides: A Comprehensive Guide to the Peloponnesian War</i> , Robert Strassler (ed.), Richard Crawley (trans.), New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996.
<i>RM</i>	Livy, <i>Rome and the Mediterranean</i> , Henry Bettenson (trans.), New York: Penguin Books, 1976.

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Since these concepts are indispensable for unsettling the heritage to which they belong, we should be even less prone to renounce them. Within the closure, by an oblique and always perilous movement, constantly risking falling back within what is being deconstructed, it is necessary to surround the critical concepts with a careful and thorough discourse – to make the condition, the medium, and the limits of their effectiveness and to designate rigorously their intimate relationship to the machine whose deconstruction they permit; and, in the same process, designate the crevice through which the yet unnamable glimmer beyond the closure can be glimpsed.

Jacques Derrida¹

Openness to voices, familiar or strange, may well have to be the first criterion of the shared self which transcends nation-states, communities, perhaps even cultures themselves. A direct, sharp awareness of man-made suffering, a genuine empirical feel for it, may be the second.

Ashis Nandy²

I Synopsis

Drawing on scholarly and life experience on, and over, the historically posited borders between “West” and “East” and “Europe” and “Turkey,” *Border Thinking on the Edges of the West: Crossing Over the Hellespont* offers an interpretive study of two paradigmatic political imaginaries concerning life on what “the West” constitutes as one of its most historically and mythologically significant borders, the shores of the Hellespont. The two major parts of the study are linked by a political and ethical initiative to identify, interrogate, and challenge the grip of a particular, enduring, and violent inheritance from the classical Greek-Macedonian-Roman origins of the Western political imagination.

Specifically, in Part One, “When words maintain their meanings and the world is an abode of war,” I identify and describe the tradition of

constituting border crossing as essentially a violent practice that requires going well armed and prepared for both danger and plunder. I interpret the meanings, purposes, and practices associated with border crossing in classical thought as exemplifying an important instance of conceptual stability at the origins of the Western tradition, one that reaches into contemporary literature about the classical period as well as contemporary thinking and literature about the borders of “West” and “East.”

In Part Two, “On the fatal boundaries,” I converse with an alternative tradition and political imaginary found precisely where the Western border imaginary posits fear and death – across the Hellespont in the Taurus Mountains that the Romans once named and understood as “the fatal boundaries.” Part Two is an effort to develop and demonstrate both the limits of the Western imaginary and a hermeneutically textured alternative to what it might mean to approach border spaces otherwise. In this regard it is written from across every Hellespont in the Western experience, where border spaces are teeming with abundant life, beauty, and the struggle for justice against conquest, not war and possible booty.

An underlying premise of this work is that the sense of violent *possibility* on the borders between “West” and “East” – at the real and metaphorical shores of the Hellespont – is neither very new nor accidental. These sentiments are constitutive of a political imagination about border experiences found deep within the inherited sources of Western culture – well before the Crusades or the more recent “age of imperialism,” even before there was “a West” or “an East” to speak of. The study thus first engages and describes a tradition of “pre”-“Western” thinking about the border spaces between what have come to be called “the West” and “the East,” and then explores in depth one kind of creative, hermeneutical effort required to resist the ongoing influence of the inherited violent imagination. What follows in this Introduction is a more detailed summary of the goals and purposes of each part of the study.

II

Part one: When words maintain their meanings and the world is an abode of war

Part One illuminates in detail the meaning of crossing over a border in classical Greek and Roman historical understanding. Finding a fundamentally stable meaning across these historical periods, I demonstrate the need for an important refinement in the dominant and paradigmatic understanding in the field of political theory that the movement from *polis* to empire entailed a fundamental shift in the constitutive languages of political life. I argue that at the borders of the *polis* and empire, as well as within imperial borders, “crossing over” consistently means going well armed and disposed towards violence, conquest, and the accumulation of riches. A

corresponding, embedded understanding is that in addition to spoils, life on the other side of the border contains threats and dangers, and that subduing such threats and overcoming such dangers by crossing “to the end of the world” brings both fame and glory to those who cross over.

To show this consistent and deeply constitutive understanding from *polis* to empire, I provide an exhaustive, contextual, and hermeneutical reading of the explicit and implicit expressions of border crossing in the seminal historical texts of the era, especially: *The History* of Herodotus, *The Peloponnesian War* by Thucydides, Quintus Curtius Rufus’ *The History of Alexander*, and major sections of Titus Livy’s *Rome and the Mediterranean* (*Ab Urbe Condita*). I elaborate upon the methodological rationale for the selection of these particular texts slightly more at the end of this Introduction and in greater detail in the early sections of Part One.

Because of the imaginary significance of the Hellespont in the Western tradition, from Homer and Ovid through Lord Byron, the study begins by engaging the meaning of “crossing the Hellespont” in the seminal historical texts as they narrate the historic crossings by the Persians, Greeks, Macedonians, Romans, and the armies of Antiochus III. *Crossing the Hellespont* is a common idiom in all the classical texts. I examine the embedded and contextual meanings of this idiom in each usage. The work then extends outward from the Hellespont, to the ends of the (known) world in both directions, east and west, to engage the meanings of additional border crossings in the context of the multiple epic conflicts narrated in the classical texts. In each usage and with only very rare exceptions (also discussed), the meanings and purposes of crossing over remain fundamentally the same, in each direction, from *polis* to empire, Athens to Rome, the borders of Greece and Persia to the shores of Sicily, and from the Hellespont to what the Romans termed the “fatal boundaries”³ of the Taurus Mountains in Anatolia. To illuminate this fundamentally violent concept of border life, I provide contextualized accounts of the kinds of violence that were undertaken when one party or another crossed over to the other side.

As I discuss in the early parts of the study, I focus on the period in question because of its status in the political theoretical tradition as the exemplary historical period wherein the distinct character of the Western tradition as a tradition constituted by conceptual change took shape. I also show that this particular instance of conceptual stability reaches far into the present, specifically into contemporary political and historical literature about both the period in question and the imaginative significance of the Hellespont, literature that essentially repeats the meaning and usage of crossing over found in the classical texts. While there are counterexamples through time, I thus illustrate the enduring quality of the classical understanding of crossing over in the Western imagination. This consistency in meaning across time suggests that alongside significant conceptual innovation in the transition from *polis* to empire lies an equally tenacious human conceptual

phenomenon – a phenomenon of permanent and persistent conceptual reaffirmation of longstanding meaning in the history of “the West.” I thus suggest a slight shift in emphasis in “the West’s” self-understanding as a tradition of conceptual innovation, one drawn from the era in which this dimension is understood to have taken shape. Innovation in “the West’s” political conceptual capacities should be seen against this background of, and even in the context of, conceptual fixity. Moreover, my hope is that this exercise of disclosing, revealing, remembering, and highlighting the destructive and life-negating associations of border crossing, of embracing them for reflection and scrutiny,⁴ allows us to challenge their demonstrable, lasting grip on us.

To this end, in the latter part of Part One, I scrutinize other border experiences accounted for within the classical texts in pursuit of alternative, less and/or non-violent ways of understanding borders and what it means to cross them. I argue that there exist significant moments of alternative possibility within these texts – in, for example, Herodotus’ cross-cultural inquiries, Alexander’s renowned empathetic practices towards those he and his armies conquered, and several subaltern figures within the texts. An example of the latter on which I reflect extensively is the figure of the Medizer, the said betrayer of Hellas who goes to “the other side.” I consider these alternatives seriously but maintain that provocative as they are, they remain expressed and contained within the dominant discourse of crossing violently. They thus fail to offer or exemplify alternative ways of approaching, conceptualizing, understanding, thinking, and/or being on or with borders otherwise. Part Two is an effort to address this difficult task.

III

Part two: On the fatal boundaries

Part Two seeks to challenge the enduring classical Western violent understanding of crossing the Hellespont by presenting – relative to the meanings explored in Part One – an “other” and “counter” political imaginary about life on its boundaries – that is, on or over the other side of every “Hellespont” within its political imagination. Specifically, I converse with the languages of life on one of the borders central to the texts of the classical period – the “fatal” boundaries on the Taurus Mountains – where a different, living imaginary resides, one that resists the conception of it as a space of danger, threat, and death. In this part, moreover, I seek to display the fundamental, complex, and radical shift in consciousness and being required to approach all liminal spaces between “the West” and those on the other side of its borders in a more open and coeval fashion. This discussion is informed by non- and post-Orientalist hermeneutical theory,⁵ contemporary ethical theories of hospitality,⁶ my more recent scholarly work in the field of global or comparative hermeneutical political inquiry, and vast personal

experience in professional and, through marriage, family milieus in Turkey, including in the Taurus Mountains, over the last fifteen years. I do not, however, meta-theoretically explicate my project in Part Two. I “do” it through a display of my learning and experience within languages across the Hellespont, on the “boundaries” that the West posits as “fatal,” that is, as requiring preparation for danger and death.

My main focus is to convey, in an original, hermeneutical fashion, stories from a masterpiece of contemporary world literature written from the milieu of the Taurus Mountains: the four-volume epic *İnce Memed*, written by the acclaimed writer in Turkey, Yaşar Kemal (1923–). Yaşar Kemal grew up in the *Toroslar* (the Taurus range, in Turkish) and its *Çukurova* (Cilicia) plains below – the historic lands of many Anatolian peoples, where the Greeks and Persians clashed, Alexander marched, and the Romans battled. In the period under examination in Part One, these were the boundaries where armies feared to pass and “heroic” efforts were made to *cross* them, especially the Cilician Gates, the steep and narrow gorge that Alexander traversed against all odds. Most of the stories in Yaşar Kemal’s magnificent *oeuvre*, including *İnce Memed*, are imaginative portraits of the people and environs of the area. These works are deeply informed by an awareness of the meaningful history of the *Toroslar* and, more significantly, they powerfully speak for a different conception of precisely those spaces that the Western political imaginary posits as *fatal*. *İnce Memed* is Yaşar Kemal’s most acclaimed work. The stories within it portray existence on what “the West” understands as its “fatal boundaries” to be teeming with life, beauty, and the widely shared understanding that violence of the kind that is narrated and normalized in the classical Western texts – and which of course occurs in the stories of *İnce Memed* as well – must be fought, resisted, and, at some point, brought to an end. This imaginary – “counter” in relation to the classical tradition of understanding what lies across the Hellespont – is embodied in the character of İnce Memed as a creative expression of the steadfast humaneness constitutive of the people of the Taurus Mountains, precisely those whose world is seen within the dominant Western imagination as necessitating a violent and fearful encounter, not one of coeval regard and esteem.

There are certainly other ways to stimulate alternative reflection about “crossing over the Hellespont,” such as accounts of alternative border philosophies, reviews of the many “Western” and/or “Eastern” intellectual sources over time that have challenged violent border discourses or presented entirely non-violent conceptions of life. Such work is ongoing in many disciplines and is very useful. I have chosen to attempt a more unconventional approach, informed by contemporary literature on the political significance of thinking on and from borders between hierarchicalized and colonially ordered societies, premised upon the idea that dialogical engagement on and from such borders is one route to replacing colonial relations with more coeval forms of human regard. Seen from the perspective of the Western

tradition, *İnce Memed* is a text from the borders. Bringing the imaginary contained within it to expression necessarily contrasts and contests “the West’s” imagination of its border spaces, opening up a possibility for a fundamental reconceptualization both of “the border” and possible relations to, on, and across it.

This part of the study is further premised upon the idea that works of art like *İnce Memed*, the imaginative quality of which is purposefully grounded in lived language and experience, offer valuable sites for theoretical reflection on the nature of political life and existence. Literature, in particular, can work against inherited, hegemonic traditions by offering a repertoire of different voices, potentially opening readers up (through empathy, identification with characters or plots, and so on) to various forms of life other than their own (or perhaps repressed or subordinated within their own). Yaşar Kemal writes with vast life experience in the Taurus milieu, a profound awareness of its legendary significance, intense identification with its peoples, and mastery of its poetic and literary forms. As a youngster, he was an accomplished bard in the tradition of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century oral poets, Karacaoğlu and Dadaloğlu; in school he dreamed of becoming a scholar of Eastern cultures; and after finishing university, he first worked as a journalist in the *Toroslar*, gathering stories, poems, and songs and reporting for one of Turkey’s prominent newspapers, *Cumhuriyet*.⁷ The first volume of *İnce Memed* was first published as a serialized installment for the paper.

I didn’t just fall out of the sky. I was born in a village in *Çukurova*; I lived life in a small town and was nourished by the natural environment within a plot of land, and I experienced the *Toroslar* and the Mediterranean ... Even the *Iliad* mentions the inhabitants of Cilicia as participants in the Trojan War. I am proud of my land, and I am telling you about Cilicia to brag a little. The Cilicians came to the aid of Troy with their beautiful horses. Throughout its history my country has been famous for the beautiful horses that are raised there. When the Assyrians occupied Cilicia – during our captivity – every year we paid a tribute of 360 purebred horses. Do you realize where I come from? The *Çukurova* is the entire Mediterranean. My country is hemmed in by the *Toros* Mountains, which encircle it like a new moon fronting the Mediterranean before us. I am a man of the mountains, the plains, and the sea.⁸

In *İnce Memed*, Yaşar Kemal provides imaginative portraits of the villages and peoples of *Çukurova* and the *Toroslar*, and pages upon pages of descriptions of the plains and mountains.

Moreover, he has written with the explicit purpose of bringing the languages of the *Toroslar* and *Çukurova* into literary expression. Kemal has described the language of his stories as a creative fusion of several different

languages, what he has called the “local speech” of *Çukurova* and the “speech of Istanbul,” the urban center of contemporary literature in Turkey.⁹ Within that milieu, Kemal pioneered the phenomenon of bringing the oral languages of village life in Turkey into written literature.

I wanted to create a new kind of narrative, beginning with a whole new language. The oral literature that I knew did not lend itself well to the language of the written literature. I thought that particular Western narrative techniques were linked to the nature of those languages and civilizations, although some vestiges remained of the oral traditions that existed before the transition to written literature occurred. In contrast, in Anatolia, we were still living with the freshness and intensity of the oral traditions that had been forgotten in the West. In Anatolia, hundreds of bards and poets still traveled from village to village. However, the written language was conservative and closed to change; Turkish, a living language in the art of the bard, was nonetheless a dead language when institutionalized. My land belonged to a world in which a dead language reigned without competition.¹⁰

That *İnce Memed* is written from these linguistic borders is clear to the reader of these works in Turkish. Understanding some of the expressions and idioms requires familiarity with the languages of the Taurus milieu. Some of these are not even to be found in Turkish dictionaries, let alone Turkish–English dictionaries. Turkey’s most famous linguist, Ali Püsküllüoğlu, sought to address this gap by producing the *Yaşar Kemal Sözlüğü – A Yaşar Kemal Dictionary* (1974)!

Thus, while there are significant differences between *İnce Memed* and the seminal texts analyzed in Part One, both bring the languages of experience of the peoples under consideration to expression in the widely familiar idioms of their day, and both provide sites for reflection upon the dominant political imaginaries of life. In these ways, the authors of all these works may be seen as what Walter Benjamin calls *storytellers*.

IV

A link: Storytelling as counsel

“Counsel is less an answer to a question than a proposal concerning the continuation of a story which is just unfolding,” writes Benjamin in his essay “The Storyteller.”¹¹ “In every case the storyteller is a man who has counsel for his readers,” he writes. This is in part because the greatest of storytellers are those for whom the written tale, in drawing from “experience which has been passed on from mouth to mouth ... differs least from the speech of the many nameless storytellers” whose stories they convey. Significantly,

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Benjamin considers Herodotus to be “the first storyteller of the Greeks,” because he traveled to know the local tales and traditions of the many societies he visited.

However, Walter Benjamin laments: as familiar as the name of the storyteller “may be to us, the storyteller in his living immediacy is by no means a present force.” Benjamin maintains that, “The art of storytelling is reaching its end because the epic side of truth, wisdom, is dying out.” Rather than storytelling from in-depth travelers like Herodotus or “resident tillers of the soil” like Yaşar Kemal, we receive “information” and read, as individuated audiences, the works of solitary novelists. Benjamin gathers such phenomena under the rubric of “secular productive forces of history” that have denuded the art of storytelling of its perpetual wisdom in the form of counsel.

Counsel woven into the fabric of real life is wisdom. The art of storytelling is reaching its end because the epic side of truth, wisdom, is dying out. This, however, is a process that has been going on for a long time. And nothing would be more fatuous than to want to see it merely a “symptom of decay,” let alone a “modern” symptom. It is, rather, only a concomitant symptom of the secular productive forces of history, a concomitant that has quite gradually removed narrative from the realm of living speech and at the same time is making it possible to see a new beauty in what is vanishing.

Reaching back to Herodotus and forward to the tales of Yaşar Kemal, this study works to display, against these secular productive forces of history, how the languages of epic narratives remain embedded quite profoundly in the realm of living speech and, simultaneously, the beauty that Benjamin locates in the art of storytelling, especially in the form of counsel it provides for its readers. Such counsel “does not expend itself. It preserves and concentrates its strength and is capable of releasing it even after a long time.”

To exemplify the power of storytelling, Benjamin points to the story told by Herodotus of the conquered Egyptian King Psammenitus who stood “mute and motionless” and showed no emotion as the Persians paraded his own family members by him on the way to execution, but beat his fists against his head in tremendous grief at the sight of one of his elderly and impoverished servants going off to the same fate. Benjamin describes Montaigne’s interpretation of the story of Psammenitus. Montaigne wondered why the king grieved openly when he saw his former servant.

Montaigne answers: “Since he was already overfull of grief, it took only the smallest increase for it to burst through its dams.” Thus Montaigne. But one could also say: The king is not moved by the fate of those of royal blood, for it is his own fate. Or: We are moved by much on the stage that does not move us in real life; to the king,

this servant is only an actor. Or: Great grief is pent up and breaks forth only with relaxation. Seeing the servant was the relaxation. Herodotus offers no explanations. His report is the driest. That is why this story from ancient Egypt is still capable after thousands of years of arousing astonishment and thoughtfulness. It resembles the seeds of a grain which have lain for centuries in the chambers of the pyramids shut up airtight and have retained their germinative power to this day.

It is similarly the underlying view of the present study that storytelling has a germinative power over our imaginations, for better and worse, and can indeed provide astonishingly inexhaustible and open counsel for our times.

Throughout both Parts One and Two, I therefore seek to occupy what Benjamin describes as the position of “a man listening to a story.” That person “is in the company of the storyteller; even a man reading one [a storyteller] shares this companionship.” I seek to do so in Part One with the first storyteller of the Greeks and those who followed him in his tradition, and I seek to do this in Part Two with Yaşar Kemal whose epic tales of İnce Memed speak, in poignant ways, back to the counsel provided in the stories of the classical storytellers. We have seen Benjamin’s regard for Herodotus as a storyteller. That Yaşar Kemal ranks as what Benjamin describes as a “great storyteller” is beyond question as well. “The great storyteller will always be rooted in the people.”

Border Thinking on the Edges of the West: Crossing Over the Hellespont is a product of sitting in the company of these great storytellers for over a decade. In the company of the classical historytellers, I have listened to their stories with an ear towards how they conceptualize hundreds of border crossings. I have listened and heard a kind of violence and hostility that I believe tragically remains alive in our speech and experience – all of us, “West” or “East,” who have, in some sense, inherited the memory of these stories, for whom these stories constitute our, or part of our, tradition(s). “Memory,” writes Benjamin, “creates the chain of tradition which passes a happening on from generation to generation,” and these texts have been passed on, or their stories shared, around the world, certainly around the worlds that have inherited the impact of their key actors (the Persians, Greeks, Egyptians, Rome, etc.). As the story of the Egyptian king demonstrates, there is much counsel in the stories of the classics, but I seek to challenge one particular, dominant dimension of this counsel: the counsel that crossing over a border requires going prepared for violence. This wisdom – and this *is* considered wisdom on a huge scale, especially among “realists” in my profession of Political Science who view these texts as profound sources of guidance for state behavior in international relations.¹² The memory of this wisdom needs, I suggest, to be awakened in a different way, its tradition called into question and challenged.

I sit in Yaşar Kemal's company differently. I sit with him in the *Toroslar*, one of the borders across the Hellespont that various actors in the stories of the classical historians either feared to cross or crossed for greater glory. I listen and receive the gift of Kemal's stories teeming with life, hospitality, and the constant struggle for justice against violent conquest. That is, I sit in the company of Yaşar Kemal to illuminate the germinative power of a different epic account of humanity and to gain a glimpse of "the unnamable glimmer beyond the closure"¹³ of the Western narrative of *crossing over*. Of course, as I have emphasized above, it is "different" or "alternative" only from the perspective of that narrative. For the people whose stories Kemal tells, it is their story, their form of life.

I do not attempt to present the entire story of İnce Memed, nor do I aspire to translate all that could be translated within the story. Instead of a one-to-one translation, I sit in Yaşar Kemal's (and the reader's) company and convey extensive but selected parts of the stories within each volume of *İnce Memed* that, when juxtaposed with the stories told in Part One, provoke thoughtfulness – in Walter Benjamin's sense above – about the flaws, indeed fatal flaws, of the inherited Western imaginary of *crossing* borders. This reflection gets provoked through the demonstrable existence of another narrative precisely where one is not, within the inherited Western tradition, expected to exist.

Only volumes one and two of *İnce Memed* have been translated and published in English, but I have not relied upon these translations. Outstanding works in many ways, some of the nuances of the "local speech" to which Kemal refers go missing from the text, which then appears as a more or less direct translation. This is not unusual in translations of Turkish literature, and the language of these works is especially difficult to translate, but these nuances may be brought to the surface in a creative hermeneutical effort, one that suspends the expectation that only the (literary) language into which a story is being translated should appear in what is called a translation.

My approach to (non-)translation, or conveying, is informed by the hermeneutical and ethicopolitical underpinnings of this study that emphasize exploring the difference between different discursive grammars by bringing to awareness the liminal space of difficult or impossible translation between languages in conversation. My efforts in Part Two thus amount to something other than a translated reproduction of *İnce Memed* in a second language. The intricate nuances of hermeneutical interpretation are important to this effort, particularly a radically open sense of what understanding may mean in conversational accompaniment: how it may include an openness to understanding what is difficult, opaque, inscrutable or resistant to translation as much as it may entail a fuller and seemingly more complete understanding of another's meanings. Hermeneutical understanding through conversation may even mean understanding that some things expressed in another language may not be understood (easily, at all, right away, etc.),

even that there may be nothing “there” to be “understood.” These forms of understanding are not *not* understanding. They become visible through a hermeneutic understanding of the limits of understanding, and they are ways of understanding otherwise or, in the important idiom of Hans-Georg Gadamer, *understanding differently* that may be experienced when, as a result of significant differences between languages in conversation, one naturally finds oneself experiencing something other than ease of translation. One may find oneself receiving another language that one understands oneself as not understanding. Bringing this liminal space between languages in conversation into awareness, rather than suppressing it, is one form of understanding (understanding of the condition of liminality), and it is something that can be displayed in what I am calling conveying. The image I am working with is as follows: I am sitting between Yaşar Kemal and the readers of this work, in the company of both. The storyteller tells his stories, I listen and convey to you, his other listeners.

V

Conclusion: Perhaps not crossing at all

In *Border Thinking on the Edges of the West*, then, I endeavor to display the differences between the narrative of crossing over analyzed in Part One and the life-world imaginary brought to expression in Part Two in order to provoke thoughtful and critical, re-reflective re-engagement with the inherited violent, classical imagination in favor of a different imagination of what exists on or over what it considers a border. The goal is not necessarily to understand the Other (e.g. Memed) as such, but, by receiving astonishingly different counsel, to make possible other understandings of the border and those on its “other” “sides.” The effect of establishing a liminal space between crossing over and being otherwise suggests that other things can happen in the understanding one has of “the” “other” “side” and what it may mean to “go” there.

Ultimately, I seek through my retelling of the astonishing stories of İnce Memed to demonstrate the possibility of learning to be otherwise in relation to borders. Especially in writing otherwise – in style, form, rhythm and pulse – from one of what “the West” considers its fatal boundaries, I seek to expose the highly contingent and provincial (non-universal) character of the inherited Western understanding of crossing over, its destructive impact, and to move readers to be otherwise in relation to what it means to be at or on the Hellesponts of our lives. This work attempts, therefore, to provoke a different relation to all borders characterized within any tradition, in one form or another, as fatal.

By way of conclusion, I explore the implications of the juxtaposition of these stories for how we, as members of humanity whose memories have been shaped by these stories, live in a bordered world. I engage in these

reflections because for me, following Walter Benjamin, “the storyteller joins the ranks of the teachers and sages.” In both sets of astonishing stories, the storytellers with whom I am in company are teachers and sages. Within their stories, they pose questions we have yet or may never know to pose, and what they provide are not single answers but continuations of the posing, of the story, and of the life that continues to unfold. If we are fortunate, if we pay attention, we may receive wisdom from them. As Benjamin concisely puts it, “The storyteller is the figure in which the righteous man” – the man or woman willing to receive the powerful wisdom of another – “encounters himself” (or herself).

It is important to underscore that I understand myself experientially to live in both traditions analyzed here, and thus that in this study I dwell within both in a deeply hermeneutical fashion, attempting to explore their constitutive webs of meaning concerning borders, to identify the valences of significant terms within those webs, and to show how they meaningfully constitute consciousness and existence within each respective tradition. In Part One, one could say that I express and, for the purposes of understanding, embrace¹⁴ the violence that I am aware of within my “home” tradition. Similarly, in Part Two, one could say that I express and embrace the meanings of another tradition within which I (have learned to) live – that of those on the other end of the power of those who have crossed over in a violent fashion. From within the narrative of crossing over, spaces between are considered “borders.”

I believe that the juxtaposition between the kinds of violent power associated with crossing over borders examined in Part One and the life-affirming resistance to such violence depicted in Part Two allows us genuinely open reflection about the enduring validity of the Western tradition’s conception of the border spaces at its edges, its Hellespontos. As stratified societies (as in “the West”), these spaces of course also contain violence. However, as is clearly the case with *İnce Memed*, the political imagination available within them is not limited to the exercise of coercive violence and, moreover, glorifies not the expansion of power through violence but the affirmation of life through resistance to, and the end of, such violence. In this regard it offers a different heroic narrative in relation to the heroic narratives of the conquering border crosser. As I show in Part One, a disposition of counter-violence is unavailable within both the dominant and subordinate (e.g. Medizer) discourses of the seminal texts of the founding Western experience, whereas it is eminently present, and properly valorized, within the seminal texts of the Taurus Mountains.

The effort to think borders otherwise is not new within contemporary Global and Border Studies. A central premise of global political thought is that borders need not be seen (only) as hedges against violence that they (ironically and tragically) fail to contain; they may be spaces of possibility where relations of esteem, regard, and solidarity may occur. With Yaşar