

Johnnies and Mehmetts. Take two*

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A much-repeated text attributed to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk claims that the bodies of foreign invaders and Turkish patriots are equivalent: “There is no difference between the Johnnies and the Mehmetts to us”. The historical authorship of the text has been strongly contested, with analysis of its various translations and interpretations involving the normal fare of competing interests, strategic omissions, distributed intercultural agency, and inscriptions in that most transcendent of technologies, stone. The historians, on both sides, have nevertheless not considered seriously the role of languages and the vicissitudes of translation. A translation analysis can find some justification for the questioned text. Further, an ethics of cross-cultural communication might legitimize the transcendence of this text as an appeal to historical resolution based on the commonness of human suffering.

2015, April 24: Çanakkale / Gallipoli

This actually comes from a casual conversation in Vienna in May 2015. I had invited Professor Dilek Dizdar to speak there in a lecture series on the politics of translating, and so we talked about translation and politics. Now, a Turk and an Australian really only have one major point of historical contact that might concern translation: an unsuccessful British-led campaign against the Ottoman Empire in Çanakkale, or Gallipoli, that ran from April 25 1915 to January 9 1916. The campaign was important for Australians because the killing of thousands of their young men has been seen as the birth of the Australian nation on the international stage. The confrontation was similarly important for Turks, since one of the Ottoman commanders was later to be known as Kemal Atatürk, and the Turkish victory has been seen as marking the beginnings of the modern Turkish nation. We were not, however, congratulating each other on our wonderful homelands.

We noted, for starters, the cynicism with which the Turkish government arranged the centenary celebration on April 24 2015, when every other ceremony has always been on the 25th. Why one day less? Apparently in order to coincide with and overshadow the centenary of the Armenian massacres, which also took place on the 24th. This might be the first trick of remembered messages: it’s not just *what* you choose to remember, but *when* you mark the remembrance. Remembering one thing works to hide something else. Look for absences.

And then I brought out the case of what I thought was a rather clearer hoax, the words supposedly uttered by Atatürk about the dead at Çanakkale, or Gallipoli, words that have been granted multiple transcendence, addressed, supposedly, to “Australian mothers”:

Those heroes that shed their blood and lost their lives ... You are now lying in the soil of a friendly country. Therefore rest in peace. There is no difference between the Johnnies and the Mehmets to us where they lie side by side here in this country of ours ... You, the mothers who sent their sons from faraway countries, wipe away your tears; your sons are now lying in our bosom and are in peace. After having lost their lives on this land they have become our sons as well.

Read it again, carefully. Yes, the Turkish commander and father of the nation is saying that the Australian and New Zealanders now lie in a friendly country. What is past has passed, and they are all the same: the suffering is shared, or so would run the first parts of the text. What is this if not reconciliation, *Versöhnung*? The second part of the text is then explicit consolation. Surely these are sentiments that truly merit transcendence?

Which they have been indeed granted: the words appear engraved on the Kemal Atatürk Memorial, Anzac Parade, Canberra, and also on monuments in Wellington and Arı Burnu, Turkey, plus at least seven other sites in Australia. This would be poetic remembrance of shared suffering as a common denominator. In the words of the mostly excellent journalist Robert Fisk (2006), these would be “the most compassionate words ever uttered by a Muslim leader in modern times”.

But did he say them?

2015, March-April: *Bütün Dünya*, Baskent University, Turkey

It is possible to claim that, in a confrontation like Çanakkale/Gallipoli, there was no common suffering: there were Allied *invaders*, there were Ottoman *patriots*, and those two things are quite different in value and thus incommensurate.

Writing from that perspective, the Turkish patriot Cengiz Özakıncı (2015), in the journal *Bütün Dünya*, claims there is no evidence of Mustafa Kemal’s authorship of the compassionate words “[t]here is no difference between the Johnnies and the Mehmets to us”. No matter how many times the words are carved in stone and engraved on plaques in different places in the world, their offer of reconciliation would be little better than a pseudotranslation, a vain desire for the other to be otherwise.

So are the words an entire fabrication? Özakıncı’s argument has been accepted and reproduced by several writers in English (STANLEY & STEPHENS 2014, DALEY 2015); the claims have been lent serious credence. Here I thus enter a tangled wood of document and argument, some of which I suspect is spurious. I will present, step by step, what I have found since our casual discussion.

Of course, I am by no means neutral: Özakıncı (2015), in insisting that the words do not belong to Mustafa Kemal, brings together evidence to imply that Australians were *always* unreliable translators in their dealings, direct and indirect, with the Turkish leader. As an Australian, of sorts, I am called upon to defend our honor as translators!

Let's see. Özakıncı presents a telegram that Atatürk sent in 1934 to the Australian newspaper *The Star* (April 25) when they asked for a statement on Gallipoli. In French, the diplomatic language of the day, the telegram reads:

Les combats débarquement [sic] Gallipoli 25 avril 1915 et ceux qui eurent lieu dans presque île ont montré au monde à la fois héroïsme de tous ceux qui y versèrent leur sang et combien furent douloureuses pour leurs nations les pertes que cette lutte a causées.

The first noun phrase here is telegram language; its literal rendition would be: “The combats landing Gallipoli 25 April 1915”. But the translation made sense of it:

The landing at Gallipoli on 25 April, 1915, and the fighting which took place on the Peninsula will never be forgotten. It showed to the world the heroism of all those who shed their blood there. How heartrending for their nations were the losses that this struggle caused!

This translation is actually pretty good, I think. The potentially injurious part was the addition, within the cited text, of the phrase “...will never be forgotten”, which complements the defective initial noun phrase in French. For Özakıncı, that is sufficient proof that Australians are unreliable mediators, given to inserting words into renditions from Turkish, and thus apparently unworthy of further communications from Atatürk. For the anonymous Australian translator-journalist struggling with the sheer length of the French sentence, which had to be cut into three for newspaper consumption, that first noun phrase simply needed a predication, so one had to be supplied. For those unsympathetic to the logics of translation, it will always seem that the journalist added something that was not in the start text. And yet the added information was potentially implied in the communication act itself: after all, the message was sent in remembrance. Why else would it have been sent? And in case there were any major doubts about the translation, *The Star* did publish the French telegram on the same page.

Özakıncı seems to imply that because of this rude translation, Atatürk refused to give any further information to Australians: “His decision may have been affected by the fact that the Australian newspaper had foisted into the text the expression ‘will never be forgotten’ which did not exist in Atatürk’s French wire” (ÖZAKINCI 2015; English Part 2: 6). Özakıncı concludes: “The only statement that Atatürk sent to the Australians is this statement that we report at the beginning of this article, and that was published by *The Star* in Australia dated 25/04/1934” (ibid.). Stephens (2015) nevertheless links to messages from Atatürk reported in Australian newspapers on April 25 1930 and April 25 1931.

So much for the early telegram. Now, what about the “Johnnies and Mehnets” translation, the one that is on monuments and not just in old newspapers? I admit that, as a critical Australian, my first reaction was to accept Özakıncı’s arguments at face value, as have others, and to have a quiet laugh at the false translation engraved on so much nationalist stone.

Beyond that, however, I do care a little about scholarship and the validity of argument. You see, it is relatively easy to show that something *was* said, but next to impossible to demonstrate that something was *never* said. In order to do precisely that,

Özakıncı brings together all the authentic documents that he has found, in the apparent hope that the abundance of irrelevant evidence will hide a missing authorship. As I said, you have to look for what is absent.

Drawing mainly on İğdemir (1978), Özakıncı (2015) and Stephens (2015), I construct the following time line, in the hope that a few missing items might appear.

1929, November 16: Paris

A communiqué from Mustapha Kemal Pasha states that “[t]he people of Australia and New Zealand need have no fear in regard to the graves of the men of Anzacs who sleep on the narrow strip of soil that was the scene of their deeds of valor. No one knows better how to respect a brave enemy than the Turk” (*The Mail*, Adelaide, November 23, 1929).

1930, April 12: Paris

Agreement is reached between the French and Turkish governments for the future protection of the graves of the French who fell there. “A protocol provides that the agreement is to apply to the Anzacs and other British dead as well” (*The Mail*, Adelaide, April 12, 1930).

1930, April 25: Paris

A message sent “through the usual diplomatic channels” attributes to Mustapha Kemal the following words:

There is not one of us who went through the ordeal of the world war who has not the deepest respect for the men of Anzac, for we found in them worthy foes, and the glory that was Anzac has inspired among our former fighters sentiments of respect and admiration that no other wartime experiences since the days of the Crusades have inspired. [...] In these days when you are paying homage to your dead I trust you will not take it as an intrusion on my part if I tender on my own behalf and on that of the new-born Turkish, our reverent tribute to your heroes. (The Mail, Adelaide, April 26, 1930)

1930, July 9: Paris

French General Henri Gouraud gives an interview to an Australian correspondent. He discusses a monument he has just unveiled in Çanakkale to the French who died at Gallipoli (cf. Gouraud 1930). Among much else we read:

I should like the Australian people to know that my visit confirmed my impression that the soil sacred to the memory of much valour is treated as sacred by the Turks, who were our foemen. [...] It was from the Turkish side that there came to us the suggestion that we should alter the character of our monument by making it a monument not only to our French dead, but also to the Anzacs. (Sunday Mail, August 17, 1930).

1931, August 25: Çanakkale

The Turkish Minister of the Interior, Şükrü Kaya, delivers a speech said to have been written by Mustafa Kemal. The next day, a Turkish newspaper prints a transcription of the speech, which includes references to the “invaders”, “the greatest force of all the West”, “the greatest force in history”. The two opposed sides are moreover clearly unequal in moral virtue:

Tomorrow, the history of civilization will judge those lying opposite each other and determine whose sacrifice was more just or humane and who to appreciate more: the monuments of the invaders, or the untouched traces of the heroes left here in the form of sacred stones and soil, these traces of heroes. (cit. ÖZAKINCI 2015: 28)

Note that the bones here lie “opposite each other”; they are by no means mixed; they stand in no possible relation of equivalence to each other. The speech also points out that there are no marked graves for the Turkish soldiers, whereas there *are* monuments and graves for the invaders. Further, says the transcript, there *should* be no more monuments on either side:

While the Turkish nation looks with respect at these monuments and remembers the dead of both sides, the sincere wish that lives in their mind and conscience is for such death monuments never to be erected again, on the contrary, to heighten the human relations and human bonds between those who erected them. (ÖZAKINCI 2015: 28)

Indeed, instead of remembering the past in stone, the speech calls for an active *forgetting* of prior atrocities; it appeals to a national future based on human relations: “We Turks are confident that, forgetting the meaningless, irrational, intricate tortures of the past, we have created a new life.” (Exactly which tortures do you want to forget about?)

Nowhere in this speech is there anything like the “Mehmets and Johnnies” passage attributed to Atatürk. But there is a clear ideological position: invaders and patriots are not equal, but the important thing is to look to the future.

1934, April 25: Melbourne

The Melbourne newspaper *The Star* publishes the French telegram that we have just seen translated into English. In this later communication, addressed to Australians and not to Turks, the combatting forces that were opposed to each other in the 1931 speech are now presented as parts of a collective subject (“*tous ceux qui y versèrent leur sang*”); there is no mention of the ethical asymmetry of invaders and patriots. The ideological position depends on the receiver of the discourse. Mustafa Kemal is quite capable of sending one message via international channels and producing another for domestic consumption.

The international message is repeated in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of April 26 and then by several other newspapers, admittedly without the French telegram.

1934, May 4: Istanbul

The liner *Duchess of Richmond* is in Istanbul carrying “700 pilgrims” to Gallipoli, including “Captain Wetherall (Australia) who will lay a wreath at the Anzac monument”: “The President (Mustapha Kemal) sent a message of greeting” (*Launceston Examiner*, 5 May 1934: 4). It has been speculated (DAVIS 2008: 209, STANLEY & STEPHENS 2014) that this message might possibly have been the “Johnnies and Mehmets” text. If so, it went strangely unremarked. The reported message seems actually to have been: “I am much touched by your cordial telegram. I send warmest wishes to all of you during your devout pilgrimage” (DALEY 2015: unpaginated). That is scarcely the kind of transcendental message that some historians would like to celebrate. The “Johnnies and Mehmets” text must have been elsewhere.

The liner is reported as being on its return voyage on May 11 (*Daily Standard*, Brisbane, May 11, 1934).

1934: London

Lieutenant W. E. Stanton Hope, who was with the delegation of “pilgrims”, publishes *Gallipoli Revisited*, wherein one finds a photograph of the Turkish Minister of the Interior Şükrü Kaya at a wreath-laying ceremony (reported in STEPHENS 2015: unpaginated; DALEY 2015: unpaginated). There is no mention of Kaya saying anything at the event, apparently.

1953, November 10: Istanbul

On the 15th anniversary of the death of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in 1938, the newspaper *Dünya* publishes an interview with Şükrü Kaya in which the former Minister of the Interior affirms that in 1934 (not 1931) the Turkish leader required him “to speak with all the eloquence of your tongue beside the Mehmetcik monument” (İĞDEMİR 1978: 38). The Minister of the Interior agreed, but then Mustafa Kemal required more:

You will speak more than that and very differently from it. You will speak as though addressing the whole world. There in the Dardanelles you will not mention solely our martyrs with reverence and respect, but also those heroes that shed their blood in this soil.

- Pasha, I cannot do that, because these are sublime words that can only be uttered by yourself.

- No, you will do it. You will speak in this way facing all the nations of the world. [...] Şükrü Kaya takes leave of Atatürk to meet once again that evening. Then Atatürk hands Şükrü Kaya a piece of paper. On this paper the speech that will be made in the Dardanelles is written. Atatürk prepared it himself. And Şükrü Kaya departed for the Dardanelles with this statement in his hand. There he made the statement by the side of the Mehmetcik monument. (İĞDEMİR 1978: 38-39)

İğdemir (1978) then reproduces the “Johnnies and Mehmets” passage as part of the text

read on that occasion in 1934. In the Turkish part of his pamphlet, though, the text does not mention any “Johnnies”: the corresponding sentence is “Sizler, Mehmetçiklerle yanyana, koyun koyunasınız” (İĞDEMİR 1978: 6), which I will analyze below.

One should not take Şükrü Kaya’s account as gospel truth. In the report reproduced by İĞDEMİR (1978), no date is given for the 1934 speech: some historians assume it was on March 18, Çanakkale Victory and Martyrs’ Day, but I can see no mention of this in the text. More important, Şükrü Kaya’s story is written down by a journalist who notes that the former Minister of the Interior is “carried away with the torrent of memories”, all in repeated praise of the “Great Man” (İĞDEMİR 1978: 37). As Daley (2015: unpaginated) colorfully imagines it, “Ataturk’s uplifting, consoling, Johnnies and Mehmet’s speech may well have begun as a Turkish whisper in a newspaper interview with an ageing acolyte and devotee of the dead president in 1953”. Kaya could have made it up.

The reported mission to speak “as though addressing the whole world” is indeed hard to square with the apparent absence of any other record of the event. This one account of the interview mentions that “a few foreign [sic] newsmen who had been present recorded the statement” (İĞDEMİR 1978: 40), which they reported

to their respective newspapers and it was spread throughout the world. And not a week has passed that scores of telegrams began to pour in. After many days letters arrived from as distant lands as Australia and New Zealand. These letters were coming from old mothers with tears, from brothers, political personalities, and soldiers. (İĞDEMİR 1978: 40)

Strangely enough, there is no trace of these exchanges in the newspapers (although I have seen no reports of any systematic search of the Turkish press). Something is seriously wrong.

So was this 1934 speech merely an old man’s concoction? Perhaps. Then again, a Minister of the Interior is not likely to give forth with this sort of international lyricism all by himself. In fact, in this remembrance published in Turkish in 1953, Kaya’s political supplication to Atatürk hagiography was not obviously advantaged by the suggestion that the great leader non-patriotically forgave the invaders. At best, the former Minister of the Interior would have a personal interest in the idea that past atrocities should be forgotten. In sum, Kaya’s background and political interests make it hard to believe that he would have (or could have) entirely invented the 1934 speech, although he might have had just enough involvement to recount it. Further, Kaya *was* reportedly captured in a photograph laying a wreath in the Dardanelles in 1934 (but is the photograph dated?). And as a minister, he would very probably have had a few words to say while laying that wreath. And his words on the prior occasion in 1931 had indeed reportedly been written by Mustafa Kemal, so we might assume the practice could have been repeated in 1934. And this time, in 1934, when the 700 pilgrims visited on the *Lady Richmond*, there were indeed representatives from many nations present, along with the international press, so one might have presumed to “as though addressing the whole world”. All those parts of the story add up, more or less. The only thing missing is some international (or indeed national) repercussion.

Could the riddle perhaps be solved by something as basic and simple as the speech having been delivered in Turkish (we have no reason to believe Kaya would have spoken

in English), without translation? (How is it that all the histories of this event have systematically forgotten about the need for translation?) It would be an elegant solution for a Minister of the Interior who had been ordered to say something he didn't really want to say: he could have looked at the foreigners ("facing all the nations of the world"), he could have spoken to them ("as though addressing the whole world"), but in Turkish only. The words could have thus been said but not received. The hypothesis is at least worth entertaining (until the photo is discredited).

1960: The Dardanelles, Turkey

A delegation of Gallipoli veterans visiting the Dardanelles is read "a special message from the Turkish government" (reported in Brisbane's *Courier Mail*, April 25, 1964 – four years after the event?). Part of this text reads:

Oh heroes, those who spilt their blood on this land, you are sleeping side-by-side in close embrace with our Mehmeds. Oh mothers of distant lands, who sent their sons to battle here, stop your tears. Your sons are in our bosoms. They are serenely in peace. Having fallen here now, they have become our own sons. (DAVIS 2008: 83)

This is a passable translation of the Turkish text that had been published in the 1953 interview with Kaya – and it makes no mention of "Johnnies" being "all the same". Of course, this was not the translation that would find its way to the later monuments. It is a powerful text nevertheless.

1969: Eceabat, Turkey

A booklet called *Belgelere Göre Eceabat Kılavuzu* (Documented Eceabat Guide) is published in Turkey. It includes the Turkish version of the "Johnnies and Mehmeds" passage (without the "Johnnies") and attributes it to Atatürk, without any specific reference (İĞDEMİR 1978: 35-36; ÖZAKINCI: Part 1, 24).

1977, April 15: Anafarta Valley, Turkey

A former Anzac soldier meets Tahsin Özeken, a Turkish primary school teacher, while in the Anafarta Valley, Turkey, and learns about what is written in the "documented guide" (İĞDEMİR 1978: 34; ÖZAKINCI: Part 1, 24). The Australian later attends a meeting of the Anzacs Veterans Club in Australia and reads the words (from whose translation?, from the primary school teacher's account?) (İĞDEMİR 1978: 34).

1977, September 12: Brisbane, Australia

Alan J. Campbell¹, Chairman of a Gallipoli Fountains of Honour Committee in Brisbane, Australia, writes to Özeken, the primary school teacher, seeking further information about the words. He is considering adding the text to a memorial called "The Gallipoli Stones", to be included in the Anzac Fountain in Brisbane: "If you could support the

quotation with some official confirmation would [sic] greatly help us in using it” (İĞDEMİR 1978: 35).

1977, October 13: Somewhere in Turkey

Özeken forwards Campbell’s letter to the Turkish Historical Society (İĞDEMİR 1978: 34-35).

1978, March 1: Brisbane

The Anzac Memorial Fountains are officially opened in Brisbane. Campbell might have put the words on the memorial. If so, from whose translation?

1978, March 10: Ankara

Uluğ İğdemir, General Director of the Turkish Historical Society, sends a letter to Campbell informing him about the words mentioned in the 1953 interview with Şükrü Kaya and stating that the passage is from a speech written by Atatürk in 1934. İğdemir (1978) seems not to include the text of this letter (yet he includes all the other letters!), so it is not clear what kind of translation he sent in English. There should have been some kind of translation (Campbell did not read Turkish), so it was either done by himself, picked up from Özeken, or was the version that had circulated in 1960 (although no events of 1960 are mentioned by İğdemir). The omission of the initial translation into English could have been designed specifically *not* to question the alternative translation that Campbell would later propose.

This strategy of omission is similar to that used by Özakıncı (2015), to opposite ideological effect. İğdemir presents a host of authentic documents so as to hide the main document that could challenge the words etched on the monument; Özakıncı also presents as many authentic documents he can find, precisely in order to hide the absence of the 1934 text altogether. Özakıncı (2015), of course, goes one step further in this strategy: he questions in detail the one sentence about “Johnnies and Mehments” so as to hide the absence of arguments concerning the rest of the passage carved on the monuments. The centenary commemorations on April 24, 2015, of course, played a similar gambit, celebrating one thing in order to forget another.

1978, April 7: Brisbane

Campbell writes to İğdemir indicating that the words have been inscribed on a metal plaque at the Fountains memorial: “it varies slightly with the advices you have sent me. But the difference makes no difference in solemn meaning and inspiration, it is very beautiful indeed” (İĞDEMİR 1978: 44). So “the difference makes no difference” (keep this in your pocket for a Derridean translation theory): the words differ but the sentiment remains. The variation may be due to Campbell altering what İğdemir had sent, but it might also be because the words were put on the plaque prior to İğdemir’s letter (the opening of the memorial had been on March 1).

1978, April 15: Istanbul

The Turkish daily *Milliyet* publishes an article by İğdemir on the Anzacs and Atatürk's "historical attitude". İğdemir assures us that some people read the article with tears in their eyes: "This humane, international and great statement of Atatürk was indeed touching" (İĞDEMİR 1978: 42).

1978, April 18: Ankara

İğdemir asks Campbell for a photograph of the metal plaque: "Thus, I shall be able to have a detailed and close view of the inscription" (İĞDEMİR 1978: 48). He has perhaps noticed that the memorial was opened *prior to* his letter about the supposed 1934 speech, so anything could have happened. (There was a translation of the "Johnnies and Mehments" speech in 1960, perhaps another in 1977, and then the one that İğdemir himself had sent. So which one had been engraved?)

1978, May 17: Brisbane

Campbell replies, promising to send the photograph (in lieu of which, he sends photographs of the fountains at a distance – decidedly unhelpful!). Here he mentions previous correspondence in which Tahsin Özeken, the primary school teacher, had requested books. One might thus conjecture that somewhere in these previous exchanges the "Johnnies and Mehments" passage had initially been translated into English. Campbell also mentions that he has distributed the article İğdemir has published in *Milliyet*, after first having it "transcribed" (on June 16 he says he has had it "translated") (İĞDEMİR 1978: 50, 61). So who was the translator for that?

1978, May 31: Brisbane

Campbell at last sends İğdemir a close-up photograph of the inscription on the memorial (İĞDEMİR 1978: 52).

1978, June 8: Ankara

İğdemir replies that several changes are necessary: the year 1931 should be 1934 (but where did the reference to 1931 come from?); Atatürk's name "Kamel" should become "Kemal" (oh dear!). "It would be very nice that they are corrected" (İĞDEMİR 1978: 55). He continues:

The Memorial and the beautiful statement of Atatürk [Atatürk'ün bu güzel sözleri] are very meaningful; both advise people not to nourish inimical feelings toward each other [insanların birbirlerine düşman olmamalarını... öğütleyen sözler olarak], but to love one another in this troubled world of ours. (İĞDEMİR 1978: 21, 55)

The mistake in the year suggests that the plaque had indeed been engraved prior to

İğdemir's letter of March 10, since it is unlikely that İğdemir himself would have made such an apparent error. That could mean the translation emerged from exchanges between the primary school teacher and the sheep farmer, perhaps with an anonymous professional translator on hand somewhere.

İğdemir makes no further comment on the translation: he apparently agrees that the difference makes no difference. Özakıncı (2015: 25) glosses this as follows: "he did not ask for removal of the statement 'there is no difference between the Johnnies and Mehmetts to us' that the Australians added to the monument as Atatürk's words, and expresses that he likes the addition to 'Atatürk's beautiful words'." In İğdemir's text, however, I can find no reference to an "addition", neither in English nor in Turkish. So the "Johnnies and Mehmetts" might have been put there by the primary school teacher, by İğdemir, by Campbell, by a translator employed by one of these, or through discussion and negotiation between any combination of these agents. At the present state of play, we can only assume a distributed intercultural agency, which is a fancy way of saying that people on both sides were involved and it doesn't really matter who did exactly what.

1978, June 26: Brisbane

Campbell replies that he will try to rectify the two errors in the plaque (İĞDEMİR 1978: 57).

1978, July 17: Brisbane

Campbell sends a photo of the plaque, presumably corrected (since he mentions *Kemal Atatürk*) (İĞDEMİR 1978: 63).

1978: Ankara

İğdemir publishes the bilingual pamphlet *Atatürk ve Anzaklar / Atatürk and the Anzacs*, reproducing his correspondence with Campbell. On the basis of this evidence we might suppose that:

1. The words were uttered in a speech given in 1934, not 1931.
2. A first translation into English was done in or around 1960. A second translation was done in 1978.
3. Whatever translation was sent by the Turkish mediators, it was modified in Australia or on its way to Australia, introducing "differences that make no difference", with İğdemir's subsequent approval.

On the strength of that evidence, Özakıncı (2015) could be quite right in at least one respect: technically, that particular sentence was not pronounced by Atatürk (although the rest of the passage might well have been); it seems to have been produced in the translation process. However, I cannot find anything to support Özakıncı's assertion that Campbell himself authored the words ("[...] which we have proven to belong to the Australian Alan J. Campbell", says Özakıncı (2015: English version Part 2: 8, dutifully cited by DALEY 2015). There are several other possibilities.

Transcendence builds up its own momentum; once translated, the words were carried further through history. Here is an abbreviated timeline for subsequent events (mostly drawn from the website *Monument Australia* (<http://www.monumentaustalia.org.au>):

1980: The Australian Government requests that Turkey use the place name “Anzac Cove” on all official maps, indicating where the Australians and New Zealanders landed. Turkey replies that this can be done, but in exchange for a monument to Atatürk being built in Australia (ÖZAKINCI 2015: Part 1, 25).

1985, March 18: The Turkish government grants the request. Australian Prime Minister Hawke announces that, in exchange, there will be an Atatürk Memorial Garden near the Anzac War Memorial in Canberra, part of the lake shoreline in Canberra will be renamed “Gallipoli Reach”, and the channel leading into Princess Harbour in Albany, Western Australia, will officially be named “Atatürk Channel” – “for many of the troops it was their last sight of Australia” (*Canberra Times*, March 19, 1985). There will also be monuments and plaques. Place names and inscribed stone thus enter into exchange: one appeal to transcendence for another.

1985, April 25: The Kemal Atatürk Memorial is dedicated in Canberra. The “Johnnies and Mehmetts” are there.

1985, April 25: The Kabatepe Ari Burnu Beach Memorial to Atatürk is unveiled in Gallipoli by the Australian Minister for Veterans’ Affairs. It too has the “Johnnies and Mehmetts” passage.

1990, April 26. A further monument to Atatürk is unveiled by the Turkish Minister for Agriculture in Wellington, New Zealand, with the “Johnnies and Mehmetts” set in stone once again.

1992, 10 December. The Martyr’s Cemetery for the 57th Regiment is opened. It bears the following words (FEVZI 2003: 6):

We left the Gallipoli Peninsula having fought the Turks and having lost thousands of men. We respect and admire the patriotism of the Turkish soldier. Australians love them like they love their sons. The Turkish soldiers’ patriotism is an example for all humanity.

—with indebtedness and deep respect, Lord Casey

Lord Casey was Australian Governor-General from 1967 to 1971 and had been a First Lieutenant during the Gallipoli campaign. It is not hard to see his phrase “Australians love them like they love their sons”, in stone, as responding to Atatürk words, also in stone.

1995, 25 April: Bundaberg, Queensland. Dedication of a memorial plaque bearing the “Johnnies and Mehmetts” text, here described as an “ode”.

2001, 25 April. Albany, Western Australia. A statue of Atatürk is dedicated on a site overlooking Ataturk Channel. The “Johnnies and Mehmetts” are not only present but are now given a new origin: “At a dawn service in 1934 in Gallipoli referring to the ANZAC troops he [Atatürk] said: ‘Those heroes that shed their blood...’.”

2008, 4 November. Brisbane. Unveiling of the Gallipoli Memorial, replacing the Fountain of Honour that had been opened in 1978. More “Johnnies and Mehmetts”.

2008, 11 November: North Adelaide. Unveiling of Atatürk’s Tribute, with “Johnnies and Mehmetts”.

2010, 10 December: Oberon, New South Wales. Dedication of the Mustafa Kemal Atatürk monument. Yes, “Johnnies and Mehmetts”.

2015, 13 April. The Australian Turkish Friendship Memorial is dedicated in Melbourne. Yes, the “Johnnies and Mehmetts” are there.

2015, 19 February. Hyde Park, Sydney. Unveiling of a plaque commemorating Atatürk, with the full “Johnnies and Mehmetts” text.

This is a paroxysm of monuments and plaques, all reinforcing each other, with a certitude that creates its own history.

Somewhere along the way, the transfers have also picked up a few embellishments. We have seen that the Albany monument imagines Atatürk speaking at a dawn ceremony at Gallipoli. And perhaps with similar fantasy, on the website of the Turkish Embassy (2015) in Canberra we find the “Johnnies and Mehmetts” text described as “Atatürk’s words to the Anzac mothers” (it is not clear when or where he might have contact with any such mothers), along with an unreferenced reply from “an Australian mother”, part of which reads strangely like a translation from Turkish:

Your words are a consolation to me as a mother. Now we [sic] are sure that our sons rest in peace in their eternal rest. If your Excellency accepts, we would like to call you ‘Ata’ [father/forebear], too. (Turkish Embassy, Canberra 2015)

The authenticity of this response is far harder to test than is the passage about “Johnnies and Mehmetts” – and the latter is not easy!

A translation analysis

The historians’ debate about the “Johnnies and Mehmetts” passage is couched in terms of existence, authenticity and possible fraud: the words “do not belong to Atatürk” (ÖZAKINCI 2015); they are “not good history” (STANLEY & STEPHENS 2014); their authenticity “remains dubious” (DALEY 2015). But if you look at their arguments closely, these historians are partly arguing about whether or not one sentence has been *translated* correctly. And yet they do not take the fact of translation into account.

I turn to some linguistic evidence, since that is what translations provide. Here again is the passage carved on the monuments:

Those heroes that shed their blood and lost their lives ... you are now lying in the soil of a friendly country. Therefore rest in peace. There is no difference between the Johnnies and the Mehments to us, where they lie, side by side here in this country of ours. You, the mothers, who sent their [sic] sons from far away countries, wipe away your tears. Your sons are now lying in our bosom and are in peace. After having lost their lives on this land they have become our sons as well.

(ATATÜRK 1934)

Various sources, dating from the 1953 Kaya interview but now also including the website of the Turkish Embassy in Canberra, give a corresponding Turkish text:

Bu memleketin toprakları üzerinde kanlarını döken kahramanlar! Burada bir dost vatanın toprağında-sınız. Huzur ve sükûn içinde uyuyunuz. Sizler, Mehmetçiklerle yanyana, koyun koyunasınız. Uzak diyarlardan evlâtlarını harbe gönderen analar! Gözyaşlarınızı dindiriniz. Evlâtlarınız bizim bağrımızdadır. Huzur içindedirler ve huzur içinde rahat uyuyacaklardır. Onlar, bu toprakta canlarını verdikten sonra, artık bizim evlâtlarımız olmuşlardır.

(ATATÜRK 1934)

There are variant interpretations of the first sentence², but the important point for us here is that, as mentioned, the phrase “There is no difference between the Johnnies and the Mehments to us” does not appear in the Turkish as such. Instead we have “Sizler, Mehmetçiklerle yanyana, koyun koyunasınız”. The Turkish version has no term for “Johnnies”; there is nothing for “no difference”; there is no structure corresponding to “to us”. So Atatürk did not say those particular things, obviously.

Then again, Atatürk used Turkish, so of course he did not pronounce the English words.

The individual Turkish words come out something like this:

Sizler: You (intimate, plural) are

Mehmet-: common Turkish given name, hence metonym for “rank and file soldier”

-çik-: diminutive, expressing affection

-ler-: plural

-le: with

yanyana: side by side

koyun koyunasınız: lying embracing each other (as friends, or cuddled up like children)

The word-for-word analysis clearly struggles to defend the official English text as a valid translation. However, translators rarely work word-for-word. Let me try to play devil’s advocate for a while.

How would you render “Mehmet” in this phrase? It is a Turkish common name possibly being used to refer not only to Turks but to Australians and New Zealanders as

well, since they are all on the same level. Something like “common soldier” or even “unknown soldier” would certainly lose the sense of intimacy. The Turkish name alone would carry a risk of being misunderstood. Under the circumstances, the addition of “Johnnie”, as a correspondingly common name – intimate but not insulting – for the other men being referred to, could be an astute application of cultural correspondence and explication, bringing to the surface values that are implicit in the Turkish text.³

The phrase “to us” can similarly be seen as explication. If the dead foreigners “have become our sons as well” (“artık bizim evlâtlarımız olmuşlardır”), then the relation must clearly be “to us”.

So what about “no difference”? Much the same argument can be made: if you recognize them all as sons (the last sections of the Turkish passage are more or less as translated in the official English), then this could imply that there is no difference between them. This is not how I would have translated the sentence, but you can see at least some logic behind the claim that “the difference makes no difference”.

Of course, as any parent knows, for as much as you officially love all your children equally, you always have your private preferences. It all depends, in that particular respect, on whom you are talking to, and why.

A pragmatic analysis

In 1931, when sending a commemorative speech to be read to a Turkish gathering at a Turkish wartime site and to be issued by the Turkish Information Agency for publication in Turkish newspapers, it made some sense not just to express respect for the dead soldiers on all sides, but also to insist that some soldiers were invaders while others were patriots. The whole point of that 1931 speech was clearly to *oppose* the “monuments of the invaders” to the *lack* of monuments on the Turkish side: Atatürk was explaining why the Turkish bones had simply been left in the field, since the important thing is the construction of the future, not “death monuments” or the glorification of the past.

In 1934, on the other hand, the written speech was to be delivered at the site of a Turkish monument, or so we are told (the Şükrü Kaya interview insists that it was delivered at the “Mehmetcek monument”). So this time a leader could hardly argue against the construction of monuments, could he? This text was ostensibly to be delivered before an international audience; it was not just for Turkish consumption. Yet it was perhaps not as innocently equitable as one might believe. Given Atatürk’s position three years earlier, this speech could be read as an argument *against* the Australian and New Zealand war graves project, that is, *against* the attempt to separate the remains of the soldiers and give them individual graves – a collective monument, perhaps, but not the recovery of bones, please. Surely that is what this text would have been about, at that place, at that time, with that kind of imagined audience: wipe away your tears, leave the bones where they are, and let’s get on with the future. (Note also that in November 1934, a few months after that speech, Mustafa Kemal adopted the name “Atatürk”, “father of the Turks”, so the extended paternal metaphor was perhaps not far from his thoughts.) If someone did not like that argument, they may not have wanted to have the speech translated.

In 1953, in the reminiscences of the former Minister of the Interior, the import of the text lies more in its indication of Atatürk’s desire to turn his back on the past and to offer

reconciliation. This active forgetting of “the meaningless, irrational, intricate tortures of the past” (as it is put in Kemal’s 1931 speech) could have an obvious ideological attraction for Kaya, whom Daley (2015) implicates in torture of Armenians and Kurds. Forgetting is sometimes all too convenient.

In 1960 and 1978, when the text gains a properly intercultural dimension, the communication events become rather different. Old soldiers, historians and politicians are anxious to promote international goodwill, and if the cult of Atatürk could help with that, so be it. In those years, now far from actual conflict and the separation of bones, the potential negativity of the text went unheard.

Now move to Brisbane in 1978. How could Australians ever justify, to their own national and nationalist society, a memorial to a foreign leader who had been in command of enemy forces? It would not be an easy sell, under any circumstance. The likes of Alan Campbell thus needed, for the sake of minimal acceptance in a specific discursive situation, something high-flying, poetic, and unmistakably conciliatory. And that is precisely what they got, one way or another, thanks to the negotiated “Johnnies and Mehments” translation: they needed that particular message, as an offer of both affection and equality, and not at all as an argument against war graves.

So the translation, with its emphasis on intimate names for the two sides and ostensibly the lack of difference to the Turks, went part of the way to achieving that ideological aim. Something more was possibly done by the 1978 memorial itself, which put stones from Gallipoli on top of gravel from Australia: the mix was in the symbolic stones, not in any remaining bones. The sum result was effectively a new interpretation of the words, a new application to a new context, a sublimation of any anterior messages about unwanted graves.

And from there, once the message had been translated, interpreted and legitimated as conciliation (by the General Director of the Turkish Historical Society, no less), the path was open to as many monumental reproductions and interpretations as you like. Transcendence effectively formed its own extended speech events: monument to monument, speaking to unforeseen passersby.

A small community of intermediaries, including myself along with my Turkish colleagues working on the above story, but also Özek, İğdemir and Campbell in their day, can discuss the text, bring out various possible messages, and nudge it on its way through history. Other intermediaries, certainly the patriot Özakıncı but also the historians Stanley, Stephens and Daley, who give credence to Özakıncı’s arguments, question the authenticity of the entire text and would thus redirect it down a rather different historical path. The text’s plurality is nevertheless recoverable, for those in a position to explore its provenance. At the same time, in the actual movement from Turkish culture to Australian and New Zealand culture, in the constitution of its most prominent monumental transcendence, only one side of that plurality has been exploited. In introducing “differences that make no difference”, translators allowed common suffering to carry the text on as a minimalist understanding, and to hide the rest.

The text was communicated from mediator to mediator, as the various receiving cultures manipulated its meaning.

Resolution?

I do not know who produced the text attributed to Atatürk: authorship merely provides the occasion for debate; it offers no hope of wider resolution.

Not all texts merit transcendence, but this one might, with or without authorship. This is not because of the external banalities of the story: the receptive moment reconstructs in its interests; historical forces work through individual translative actions; memory requires strategic forgetting. There is still something in the text itself, and it is this: through all of its various readings here, it touches the shared commonness of suffering, a basic level at which one culture can grasp something of another's experience. I draw on Popper's negative ethics (1952: 570-571), calqued on the postulate that there is no symmetry between happiness and suffering. Cultures differ widely in their views of what happiness is and should entail: divergent ethical aims of this kind might indeed be one of the main ways in which cultures differ. Yet there is a certain human commonness in what suffering is and what it entails. An Australian will never be sure of knowing what a Turkish death feels like, nor vice versa, neither for the dying soul nor for the bereaved; I will never fully share your suffering. Yet the transcendent traces of the other's suffering can still recall values to each, as a step towards resolution.

The alternative might be perpetual enmity.

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* A version of this text was presented as “On cross-cultural reception: Choice and transcendence” at the Center for Translation Studies, University of Vienna, on June 1, 2015; a previous version was in a talk on “Translation and transcendence”, Yonsei University, Seoul, Korea, on May 15, 2015. A fuller earlier version of the text is available on the author’s website as “On the passage of transcendent messages: Johnnies and Mehments”.

¹ Alan Campbell (1895-1982) was aged 82 at the time. He was from a sheep grazing family and had seen action for five months at Gallipoli and later in Sinai and Palestine, where he was injured by a bomb blast. There is no indication that he knew any Turkish. He was instrumental in the formation of the nationalist right-wing Queensland Country Party, resigning from the presidency of the party in 1951. He then traveled the world: what impressed him most in Turkey was a research center working on sheep and goats (İĞDEMİR 1978: 59). In 1977 the Country Party was in power in Queensland, which no doubt helped the building of national monuments. For Campbell, “the Gallipoli Campaign [...] gave Australia nationhood” (İĞDEMİR 1978: 62).

² Jones (2004) gives the following translation, apparently based on ARTUÇ (1992: 388): “Over [our Turkish] home flows the blood of these heroes: you lie here a friend in [our] native land. Repose within, at ease and tranquil. Side by side with our Mehments, you each embrace. Mothers of sons sent to battle from foreign lands far away: wipe away your tears. Your sons are in our hearts. They will sleep within so very calm and in peace. From the moment they gave up their lives in this soil of ours, they became our sons as well.” The implied possessives in the first sentence of this translation would clearly provide a significant counterweight to the equivalence trope: Turkish sovereignty is underscored. Unfortunately there are no possessives as such in the Turkish version of that first sentence: there are merely the deictics “this country” (*bu*=this, *memleket*=country, *topraklar*=lands) and “here” (*burada*), both of which position the speaker. In any case, there is no major concealment in the now-standard “Johnnies and Mehments” translation, which does include “this country of ours”.

³ Jones (2004: 4) offers a similar justification based on the form of the second person selected by Atatürk: “Atatürk showed he was in earnest by his respectful use of the polite form of the indicative, addressed to invaders whom he honoured un-named, in the abstract. Using the

informal form of ‘you’ must have seemed too endearing, the violated ratifying their violation. The ‘them’ form we might expect must have seemed too aloof to Atatürk. The fine translator who crafted the English in the monument on the shore – the version quoted first – opted to evoke the link by turning the ‘you’ into named British everymen: ‘Johnnies’. He blessed them beside everyman ‘Mehmets’ whom every Turk already named in pride.” Despite this justification of “the fine translator” (at last a historian who at least cares about translation!), Jones’ own rendition of the Turkish is devoid of Johnnies and indifferent differences. As for his explanation of the form of address, the sentence under scrutiny is addressed to *siz*, which could be either an informal second person plural or a formal second person singular (like *vous* in French). Since the recipients are clearly in the plural, it seems more plausible to read this as the intimate second person plural, as when a father addresses his sons. This is the intimacy (along with the diminutive *-çik*) that could justify the use of “Johnnies”.