

# On the passage of transcendent messages: Johnnies and Mehmet<sup>\*</sup>

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Anthony Pym  
Intercultural Studies Group  
Universitat Rovira i Virgili  
anthony.pym@urv.cat

*“There is no difference between the Johnnies and the Mehmet<sup>s</sup> to us”*

*(Attributed to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk)*

I want to broach a discussion, an old and dangerously Romantic one, albeit perhaps in a slightly new way.

We construct messages in situations, in specific speech events: this I say for and with you, and you with me, with these other people in some way present, potentially present, or eavesdropping elsewhere in time and space. I take that kind of situated event to be deceptively normal: technologies these days simply allow too many eavesdroppers, and it is safer to believe that all speech events can be extended well beyond our control. Nevertheless, I propose, some messages are especially pulled beyond the events of their construction; they are materially moved across time and space, sometimes across languages, to places where they become parts of further, receptor speech events. Let me call these messages ‘transcendent,’ in the simple sense that they have been moved from one event to another – they are considered to have transcended a place of initial enunciation. To start, I mean nothing more than that.

The interest of transcendent messages for the study of translation should be immediately obvious: translation is one of the ways in which messages are so extended in history, creating the *Fortleben* or *Nachleben* announced by Walter Benjamin (1923/1977), entering the extended life or *sur-vie* reformulated by Derrida as iterability (1979), and creating the symbols of lingual borders in the act of the crossing. That deep concern with life and its half-negations is all fine and well, but I do not propose to explore its metaphoricity today. I am nevertheless particularly interested in one of its preferential cultural technologies: messages engraved in stone and etched on metal, as in

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memorials and graveyards, to speak to an uncontrolled future, apparently seeking future memory.

I propose that transcendence is first and foremost a quality of *reception* processes, of an active search-and-retrieval across space and time, rather than of anything uniformly to be found in the situations of production. These messages are *pulled* across time and space, rather than being sent. Their transcendence is for the most part *projected back* from the situation of reception, rather than being created by any special mode of initial transmission. And from this perspective, I think clearly, the role of translation becomes key.

My study here is based on a very specific event. On April 24 and 25, 2015, representatives of the armed forces of several countries met in Gallipoli (Çanakkale in Turkish) to commemorate the terrible armed conflict that took place there one century previously: the Gallipoli Campaign claimed almost half a million lives, if you include those who died of sickness. The memory of Gallipoli comprises many graves, quite a few stone monuments, and a certain literature, brought out for the occasion. The remembrances are events designed for the exchange of transcendent messages.

At the ceremony, some of those messages were spoken directly by those present, notably the religious prayers, strangely Church of England, while the Turkish President looked on. The more significant pieces were drawn from those involved in (or close to) the conflict itself: poetry, to be sure, some of which had certainly been authored in search of transcendence (Prince Charles read from the Poet Laureate John Masefield), but also, more movingly, personal descriptions, memoirs, letters home, accounts from quotidian experience, initially expressed so that something be known, or something be said, because it cannot remain forever inside. The commemorative event itself brought those messages across a century: they were retrieved, remembered, copied, brought forward, and in some cases translated. They were brought together for the sake of a particular kind of transcendence.

At one point there was a Turkish account from a personal memoir. But the BBC coverage had no interpreter on hand, so I have no idea of what the Turkish soldier had to say. Instead of listening to the personal account in a foreign language, we were cut away to a commentator who usefully explained that the Ottoman forces lost some 85,000 lives in the military conflict – far more than anything bothering an Australian –, that Mustafa Kemal (later Atatürk) was one of the commanding officers, and that the Ottoman victory thus became a key event in the formation of modern Turkey. The commentator gave us consumable history instead of affording transcendence to the text in Turkish.

### **Why transcendence?**

Why mark an event by reaping in such messages? The reasons are not always noble. Each empire seeks to inherit legitimacy from the previous ones, in a movement once known as *translatio imperii*, the ever westward movement of the imperial burden, but very often working through translations as such: in the Western tradition we form ourselves upon Greece translated by Rome translated by Britain translated by the United States translated by... China, perhaps? According transcendence to the prior power legitimizes the current power. That is one reason why some messages are pulled across time and space.

A second kind of reason might certainly be sought in the great religions of the word, where transcendence is part and parcel of the experience on offer. Of little import whether the projection is based on translation (as is the case of Christianity) or non-translation (Judaism and Islam): the whole point of the exercise is that what is experienced now was also experienced long ago, in distance places, and in the future, in all possible places. Even when the transcendent word does not actually change into further languages, the projection of transcendence still comes from repeated performance and indefinitely continuable commentary: the very act of discursive updating, bringing some kind of understanding closer to the believer, serves to underscore that this set of messages has come from afar, from an inscrutable other, and must thus somehow be worth *more* than others. In religion, transcendence begets transcendence, becomes value, and stifles critique.

And what about literature? Would it involve a wholly different kind of transcendence? Probably not, I suggest. Relayed narratives are the very stuff that bolsters empire and inculcates belief. Even when there is nothing remotely imperialist or sacred in the stories themselves, even when there is work on the level of crosscultural subversion, their messages can be drawn into the game: Chinese can render *Finnegans Wake*, so Chinese culture can inherit the extreme masterpieces of the West, which may then be why the text is accorded transcendence.

Both these ideals – inheritance and ubiquity – are operative in the foundation myths of the modern nation states. Identity is gained as one enters the order of prior identities, you become one of them, you earn your monuments.

### **On the role of cultures**

Let us leave the purposes there (I will soon come to others). Consider what this basic approach could mean for translators (here I draw on old arguments, formulated in Pym 1992, 1993).

In principle, any message could be called up for transcendence, if and when it suits the purposes of the receptor speech event. Yet someone has somehow to know that the message is there, prior to and away from relative presence, and someone has to know how to access the text in a way that can make it meaningful. That is where our societies have recourse to a range of what we might call the bearers of transcendence: searchers and retrievers, decoders and guides, experts in distant texts. Such people are sometimes ensconced in universities, safely out of the way of everyday society, while others are allowed to roam free, partaking of myriad job titles. They are people who know the languages and ways of far-away places, people who can be trusted as more or less reliable informants. And translators, yes, they are very much involved in that social function, often using the non-translation skills they possess. We become enactors of transcendence.

It would be precarious to assume that we mediators act solely in the interests of our paying societies. When someone rewards you for finding out something they do not know, the situation is one of what information economics calls ‘asymmetric information’: you know more than your client does about the matter in question, by definition, so they cannot really control what you are doing, at least not in any close way, and you thus work on the basis of mutual trust. Scholars, mediators, translators, by the very nature of their

tasks, thus gain a certain freedom to look further than their pay packets, entering into exchanges and real or figured conversation with peers in many different cultures, in many different historical periods. For as much as we may have allegiance to particular cultures or language communities, or indeed to particular states in the case of those of us who are paid as public servants, there is also a professional level on which we belong to cross-national intercultural spaces, to overlaps of primary cultures. In this second space, that of professional mediators, there can develop a different kind of transcendence.

This is easy to misunderstand: in intercultural space, the primary structures of belonging by no means disappear; we are not magically elevated above or beyond the callings of nations or the obligations of states. We simply have a professional area in which to develop networks and make decisions; we have these intercultural spaces in which communication can and does proceed. And in intercultural space, it makes sense that intermediaries converse with intermediaries, about the nature of their tasks, about the extensions of their knowledge, and about the material and intellectual mechanics of enacting transcendence. Intercultural spaces thus become the spaces in which transcendence is first done. For the commemorative event at Gallipoli, a whole range of diplomats and protocol officials had to plan and organize the event, between some seven countries, with recourse to translators where necessary. Except for the personal account in Turkish, for whom no translator was present.

Similarly to ward off misunderstanding: There is no immediate access to originals, as deconstruction reminds us and as blunt materialism can demonstrate. The texts entering into transcendence are only known as copied, edited, glossed, contextualized, translated, pre-understood, even in the space of presumed initial enunciation. The names are lived, used, made meaningful, well before they are inscribed on the stones. And when our eyes fall directly on an authentic initial manuscript, as can happen – and the moment can be moving, as an encounter with a trace of authenticity –, that text has generally been stored, maintained, protected, by the power that has invested value in that very extension over time. Few discoveries are as innocent as the Dead Sea Scrolls. Generally, when dealing with transcendent messages, there is a chain of prior mediators, of which we are merely the most recent, and rarely the last.

I am attempting to piece together a schema in which the role of the mediator is quite different from what we find, for example, in most current models of translation. For the dominant models, a message is formulated in one language-culture then transmitted by the translator to another language-culture. For some, ideal transmission would be when the value on the start side is the same as the value on the target side; for others, higher ideals are to be sought in the mediator's transformational role, as an agent of shifts, swerves, improvements, modifications, interventions, and other words for changes. Such would be one millennial Western debate about translation: sameness and/or transformation. On both sides of that divide, however, sameness or transformation is always measured with respect to... to what exactly? Normally with reference to the values of the start position, in the start language, in the start culture. And the role of the mediator is what precisely? Usually to perform as an agent of a precarious balancing act, minimally a language switch, the intricacies of which may or may not be concealed.

What if, though, the prime communication event were not from culture to culture but from mediator to mediator? What if we took seriously everything I have just said about intercultural spaces as extended spaces of exchange and communication, where the

mediator affecting transcendence necessary works from and with chains of prior mediators?

To make the idea simple: transcendent messages, on the dominant view, would be transmitted like this, from one culture to another and another (Pym 1992/1993, 1993):

. . . Culture A, Tr, Culture B, Tr, Culture C, Tr, Culture D . . .

Traditionally you take this chain of events and identify minimal links in the following way:

... Culture A, Tr, Culture B...

The translator enables a message to go from one culture to another. Some think a revolution has taken place in Translation Studies just because we have learned to look more at the target side (B) than at the start point (A). Such might be the import of both Descriptive Translation Studies and *Skopos* theory, and that shift is indeed assumed in a view of transcendence as a pulling rather than pushing process – the metaphor is not unmotivated: both sides meet in Martha Cheung’s ‘pushing hands’ approach (2012). In all those models, though, we are actually using the same basic link as the previous approaches that focused on A. There has been no radical change in the underlying geometry. However, if the mediator’s position is hypothesized as being actively intercultural, we could start from the initial act of mediation, the first backward projection of transcendence, or indeed at any such link along the way:

. . . Tr, Culture A, Tr . . .

Now, in this second model of communication, messages are relaying from mediator to mediator, from and to and between those trained and sometimes paid to engage in such things. So what is the role of the cultures involved? Surely the *cultures* have now become the places where the transcendent message is transformed? Far from the mediator being the agent of disturbance, the non-mediating primary cultures, with their primary languages, are the causes of resistance and change in transmission. To risk crass simplification: mediators transmit, cultures distort. In a fairer representation: they all transform texts to the extent that they are all, in varying ways and to different degrees, in cultures (some primary, others professional: the intercultural overlap is not somehow ideologically transcendent in itself), but they do so in different ways.

This apparent reversal of roles might be music to the ears of all the mediators who have endlessly been accused of treason in minor guises, or who have surreptitiously borne the implicit guilt. Those who most accuse us of deviations are now themselves the prime cause of misunderstanding! So when my student translators are struggling against some apparently insolvable mismatch of worldviews, I occasionally remind them that they are not the ones at fault, that they should not feel guilty because of their struggle: they are actually fighting against the millennia in which different primary cultures actively create different shibboleths of membership, precisely to complicate any attempt at intrusive transcendence. Cultures constitute a formidable opponent.

This revised ‘basic link’ model assumes a view where transcendent messages both enter and leave a culture. The points of translation, of struggle against cultural differences, conveniently mark the spatial and temporal limits of particular primary cultures. That is surely the easiest way to define where one culture ends and another begins. Of course, marked *non*-translations can also work in similar ways, creating the opacity of otherness. In both these ways, translation defines the limits of cultures, and not the other way around.

Cultures can thus enact their identities by actively selecting messages for transcendence and in some way marking them for future passage.

Of course, many cultures can select similar messages, even the same ones, while shaping the place of that culture by refusing other messages. This can create problems with the same messages are supposed to found more than one national identity.

### **Çanakkale / Gallipoli**

On April 25, called ‘Anzac Day’ in Australia and New Zealand, I would go with my father to a dawn service in memory of those fallen at Gallipoli. That was the day on which we marked Australian identity, with the New Zealanders in some kind of marginal perturbation of the memory. The story handed down is that Australians and New Zealanders (‘Anzacs’) were killed in useless attacks commanded by the British, who played the villain of the piece.

So when the BBC put before me the centenary ceremonies on April 24, 2015, enacted in Seddulbahir, Turkey, there were suddenly many more messages than I had been prepared for: Princes Charles and Harry, for a start, and a British army chaplain, were not at all there to apologize for sending 10,000 or so Australians and New Zealanders to their useless deaths; instead were commemorating the 50,000 or so soldiers killed on the Allies side. And then there were representatives of not just the United Kingdom but also France, India, Ireland, and Newfoundland, I think, elements of a story I had been told nothing about. And of course, there was the enemy *d’autrefois*: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan presented the biggest wreath of all, since he was the host of the show. Through the event, in the excess of international transcendence, I came to realize that the historical experience was for more than Australians. More than one national ideology called upon the conflict.

How dare they usurp the symbol of my national identity! But once that exclamation is made, multiple transcendence should call up something further.

### **On the commonness of suffering**

How can one compare numbers of dead and wounded? How could such things ever become meaningful, understandable? The poems and first-hand accounts presented at that ceremony might go some way to humanizing the abstract tallies. Yet there are particular conditions, I suggest, under which this very particular kind of transcendence is achieved.

First, let me posit, there is a basic level at which one culture can grasp something of another’s experience. Here I draw on Popper’s negative ethics (1952: 570-571), calqued on the postulate that there is no symmetry between happiness and suffering. This is of interest not just because of the ethical priority of eliminating suffering before

increasing happiness (applied to translation theory by Chesterman 1994, who usefully suggests that we should reduce misunderstanding before seeking complete understanding). I am instead more intrigued by the idea that 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 ways in which cultures differ. Yet there is a certain human commonness in what suffering is and what it entails. After all, it has to do with the body, with nerves, pain, loss, the human psyche. In suffering, I suggest, there are elements of a certain common denominator, a shared value, that can make all other values minimally meaningful and thus initially graspable: we stand a chance of becoming involved in the foreign message. An Australian will never be sure of what a Turkish death feels like, nor vice versa, neither for the dying soul nor for the bereaved. Those closest to actual conflict, by many accounts, do gain something like this understanding, and are the first to seek resolution. Things become harder as the scene moves away, however, and much harder when a daughter or son has died in a place you have never heard of. Yet the transcendent traces of the other's suffering can still recall values to each, as a step towards resolution. In this, the transcendent messages can create something like an exchange value, an abstraction that in itself makes otherwise incommensurate individual experiences nevertheless comparable. Only thanks to abstract exchange, pointed out Baudrillard (1972), can individual uses be invested with value.

To be sure, each culture has its secret forms of suffering, just as they have forms of humor that they claim no one else can understand. Some cultures have elaborate genres for specific categories of anguish, associated with specific historical experience and maintained as shared identity structures: because we have suffered this, in this particular way, no one else can ever understand us. Such emotive specificity is highly laudable as a collective response to traumatic historical experience; it is not to be underrated, neither as therapy nor as an element of collective stability. However, each claim to absolute untranslatability always invites its facile counterpart: if I cannot understand your suffering, then by the same logic you cannot understand mine, so we have no way of ascertaining our differences. Few remain satisfied with such a state of absolute universal non-comprehension. Most would admit elements of common suffering, especially when the alternative is perpetual revenge.

Here I am not talking about compassion or consolation, which I see as desires or actions designed to help those that suffer. This has far more to do with empathy, a feeling-with, an association of the other's suffering with the past or future suffering of the self. Such transcendence seeks commonality but does not in itself assume action.

All the elements of common suffering as a basic exchange value are in the first parts of this text:

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.

The words appear engraved on the Kemal Atatürk Memorial, Anzac Parade, Canberra, and also on monuments in Wellington and Arı Burnu, Turkey, and at some seven further sites in Australia. This would be poetic remembrance of shared suffering as a common denominator.

The second part of the text is then explicit consolation. 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?

### **Understanding as recall**

There is an intriguing model for this kind of understanding. One formulation of it comes from the fourth/fifth-century theologian Augustine of Hippo (Aurelius Augustinus). In *De catechizandis rudibus* (2.3. 1-6) Augustine offers an analogy that would explain why translations can each be different and yet talk about the same thing. Here the process of communication goes from ideas to ‘traces’ or ‘vestiges’ (*uestigia*), and only then to language:

[...] the idea erupts in my mind like a rapid illumination, whereas my speech is long and delayed and not at all like the idea, and while I speak, the thought has hidden in its secret place. The idea has left no more than a few vestiges imprinted in my memory, and these vestiges linger throughout the slowness of my words. From those vestiges we construe sounds, and we speak Latin, or Greek, or Hebrew, or any other language. But the vestiges are not Latin, nor Greek, nor Hebrew, nor of any other community. They are formed in the mind, just as a facial expression is formed in the body. (c.400; my translation)

We might say these days that what is communicated is a particular firing of signals in the cortex, with the release of certain hormones, or just a feeling. No matter: what is communicated is here anterior to the actual speech event, and thus potentially available to anyone who has had a minimally similar experience. Although Augustine is talking about production, his model can logically be applied to reception. Our words will have sense for someone who has glanced at the same light. In fact, if pushed, this model does not say our texts communicate messages as such; our words, in whatever language, help receivers recall the illuminations that they have previously found for themselves. The message of suffering recalls the suffering of the self.

This kind of understanding is written into our words for transcendence messages carved in stone: ‘monument’, from the Latin *monēre*, to remember, translated by Luther as *Denkmal*, an external support for thoughts.

On this basis, recognizing the manifold imperfections of language, translation can proceed.

### **Understanding as forgetting**

Dilek Dizdar (2015) reminds me that translation necessarily involves a certain forgetting of translation. This is embedded in the cultural technologies of translation and can be



understood in quite pragmatic terms: if we paid attention to all the minor shifts and doubts, the cognitive load would be so onerous as to preclude effective communication. So we suspend disbelief, as in all fictions that work, and proceed. Such forgetting is, I think, compatible with the moment in which Augustine recognizes that “the vestiges are not Latin, nor Greek, nor Hebrew, nor of any other community”; there is stored experience, emotive memory, and to reach it we need to forget the details of passage. That is how translation can enact transcendence without necessarily impeding it.

There is a more serious forgetting, however, not in the moment of passage but in the selection of which texts are accorded transcendence. Selections are necessary, since cultural technologies cannot hold all texts, yet they are rarely innocent.

When I saw the 2015 Gallipoli commemoration through the BBC, there was something else wrong in the scene, besides the presence of the annoying British: in Australia the celebration I remembered was always on April 25, but here, in Turkey, this particular commemoration was on April 24. Why the shift? Surely something to do with the Turkish hosts? It turns out that the date actually marked nothing in particular on the Turkish side, who in previous years had also marked the event on April 25. Instead, in 2015, it was chosen to coincide with the parallel centenary commemoration of the Armenian massacres at the hand of Ottoman troops: the Turkish government was quite pleased to make the Western press look one way so as not to look too attentively in the other direction. The light from one remembrance darkens the other. There was a desire to remember this event, on this particular day, so as to encourage a forgetting of another nation’s destruction.

### **So who wrote the words?**

One take on this play of remembrance and forgetting is to be found in the working of pseudotranslations, texts that are presented as translations but are in fact not translations – they are forged acts of transcendence, if you will. The question here is whether it really matters: if all transcendence is a projection back on the past, does it really matter that there was no past there in the first place? If the Christian Bible were shown to be devoid of all historical basis, would the Catholic Church collapse? Not at all, I suggest: transcendence begets transcendence.

It is possible to claim that, in a confrontation like 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 Özakıncı (2015a) claims there is no evidence of Mustafa Kemal’s authorship of the compassionate words “[t]here is no difference between the Johnnies and the Mehments to us”. No matter how many times those words are carved in stone 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 and Stephens 2014, Daley 2015). So here I enter into a tangled wood of document and argument, some of which I suspect is spurious. I approach step by step.

Özakıncı, in insisting that the words do not belong to Mustafa Kemal, concocts a farrago of evidence that seems to be partly based on the claim that Australians were always unreliable translators in their dealings, direct and indirect, with the Turkish leader. 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" (Özakıncı 2015a; 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 (2015a) 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).

So why is this message channeled through Paris (as were the following ones)? It is not just because French is the diplomatic lingua franca of the day. The issues of military remembrance of Gallipoli seem to have been negotiated with the French first, possibly because the French played a role in having Turkish sovereignty over Eastern Thrace recognized at the Lausanne conference of 1922-23. Access to the military sites was one concern of that sovereignty agreement; Turkey had every interest in ensuring the world of that continued access.

### **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. Özakıncı 2015a: 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. (Özakıncı 2015a: 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 Mehmetts” 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 Mehmetts” 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 15<sup>th</sup> 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 reportedly 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 Mehmet” 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” (İğdemir 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 of the interview. 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” (İğdemir 1978: 37). As Daley (2015: unpaginated) colorfully imagines it, “Ataturk’s uplifting, consoling, Johnnies and Mehmet 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” (İğdemir 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. (İğdemir 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. In support of this view, Özakıncı (2015b) offers a further article in which he points out that Kaya, in addition to being Minister of the Interior, was also a noted speechwriter and, yes, translator. He rendered *Robinson Crusoe* in 1919 while exiled by the British on Malta for his involvement in the deportation of Armenians (the text was not published until 1923) (see Ekmekçi 2008: 122); he also translated various works from French, and Elsie Buckley’s *Children of the Dawn, Old Tales of Greece* (1909), originally written for

children and initially rendered by Kaya, it seems, as an exercise with his children: “When my children were in high school, we would sometimes translate parts together” (cit. Özakıncı 2015b: 2). Özakıncı draws on this latter translation in particular to suggest that Kaya could indeed have invented the 1934 speech, and that his glorification of Atatürk might actually be of Greek inspiration, particularly in the Homeric trope joining of noble foes after death. Özakıncı cites Priam’s words while lighting the pyre of his son Paris: “by his death he may join together in friendship those hands which by his sin he made to draw the sword upon each other” (Buckley 1909: 347). The parallel is intriguing. In shared death there is the wiping away of sin, presumably the sin of the Anzac invaders. This figuration of resolution may indeed have entered Turkish through translation, and then left it through translation again, with a symmetry that remains highly seductive for my mission here.

Then again, surely the sin of Paris was on the Asia Minor side of history? Surely the Homeric prayer is offered by the father on the side of the sinner? And surely none of the Englished Greek words are actually in the Turkish text? The suggested parallel is beautiful but imperfect. More pragmatically, in this remembrance published in Turkish in 1953, Kaya’s political supplication to Atatürk hagiography seems not obviously to be advantaged by the claim that the great leader non-patriotically forgave invaders. True, the former Minister of the Interior could have had a personal interest in the idea that his own involvement in past atrocities should also be forgotten, but that particular motivation would have been better served by silence.

The one piece of evidence that perturbs Kaya’s hypothetical authorship of the speech is the report that he was photographed laying a wreath in the Dardanelles in 1934 (but is the photograph dated?). As a Minister of the Interior, 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 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 really 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 perhaps worth entertaining (at least 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 Mehments. 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 Mehments” passage (without the “Johnnies”) and attributes it to Atatürk, without any specific reference (İğdemir 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” (İğdemir 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?) (İğdemir 1978: 34).

### **1977, September 12: Brisbane, Australia**

Alan J. Campbell<sup>1</sup>, 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” (İğdemir 1978: 35).

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<sup>1</sup> 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 (İğdemir 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” (İğdemir 1978: 62).



### **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 (2015a), 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 (2015a), 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” (İğdemir 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" (İğdemir 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 Mehmeds" 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 Özekin, the primary school teacher, had requested books. One might thus conjecture that somewhere in these previous exchanges the "Johnnies and Mehmeds" 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") (İğdemir 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 (İğdemir 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. (İğdemir 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 (2015a: 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*) (İğdemir 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 (2015a) 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 (2015a: 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.monumentaustralia.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 (Özakıncı 2015a: 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” (Özakıncı); they are “not good history” (Stanley and Stephens); their authenticity “remains dubious” (Daley). But if you look at their arguments closely, these people are partly arguing about whether or not one sentence has been *translated* correctly. And yet they rarely 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:

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

As mentioned, the phrase “There is no difference between the Johnnies and the Mehments to us” does not appear in 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, apparently.

Then again, Atatürk wrote in 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)

A word-for-word analysis 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 here.

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” would certainly lose the sense of intimacy, becoming almost an insult. 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 soldiers being referred to, could be an astute application of cultural correspondence and explicitation, bringing to the surface values that are implicit in the Turkish text.<sup>2</sup>

The phrase “to us” can similarly be seen as explicitation. 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 text was ostensibly to be delivered to before an international audience; it was not just for Turkish consumption. Yet it was perhaps not as innocently equitable as one might believe. Given Mustafa Kemal’s position three years earlier, this speech could be 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

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<sup>2</sup> 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”, Jones offers his own literalist rendition of the Turkish, devoid of Johnnies and indifferent differences. (At last a historian who at least cares about translation!) 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”.

are, and let's get on with the future. (Note also that in November 1934, a few months after that hypothetical 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 see 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 had an ideological attraction for Kaya, whom Daley (2015) implicates in tortures against Armenians and Kurds. Forgetting is sometimes too convenient.

In 1960 and 1978, when the text gains a properly intercultural dimension, the speech 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 even 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 (by the General Director of the Turkish Historical Society, no less) as conciliation, 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, perhaps myself along with my Turkish colleagues working on the above story, but also Özeken, 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 his arguments, question the authenticity of the entire text and would thus redirect it down a rather different historical path. The text's plurality is thus recoverable, for those in a position to explore its provenance. However, 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. QED.

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