

Kare Dergi

International academic journal on comparative literary, cultural, linguistics, and folklore studies.

ISSN: 2536-4596, Kayseri / Turkey

Volume 1, Issue 1, p. 27-46

www.karedergi.net

RELIGIOUS AND NATIONAL IDENTITY IN TURKISH AND ENGLISH POETRY OF WORLD WAR I

Mustafa GÜLLÜBAĞ¹

ÖZET

Bu çalışma dört yıl süren ve bu kadar büyük ölçekteki mekanik bir savaştaki askerlerin din ve milliyet duygularının onların savaşa iradeleri üzerine ne tür etki yaptığını ve propaganda amaçlı şiirlerin onları savaşa güdülemek için nasıl kullanıldığını incelemektedir. Dinsel motifler taşıyan şiirlerin güdüleme aracı olarak kullanıldığı, dinsel motifli şiirlerin ızdırapları dindirme amacıyla kullanıldığı bu çalışmada gözlemlenmiştir. Bunlara ek olarak mensubu oldukları ordu içinde farklı/yabancı hissetmelerine yol açan dinsel veya milli farklılıkları dönem şiirleri çerçevesinde ele almıştır.

ABSTRACT

This particular study examines what sort of effect the poems had on soldiers' will to fight in a mechanical war at such a magnitude which lasted for four years and how the propagandistic poems were used to goad them into the war. It has been observed that the poems which have nationalistic motifs had been used as an implement to goad, and the poems which have religious motifs were used to both goad and reconcile the soldiers. In addition, the religious or national differences which led them to feel alienated in the army of which they were a member is handled in terms of the poems written during the particular period.

¹ Yrd. Doç. Dr. Adnan Menderes Üniversitesi İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Bölümü, mgullubag@adu.edu.tr.

In time of war, states are to unite the population under one single aim and to steer their efforts in one particular direction to what is known as “war effort”. Men and women, combatants and non-combatants must come together either to defend their motherland or to defend their rights and honour. In this context, national and religious identities turn to be important aspects to unite the supporting and antagonistic groups under one single effort. Therefore national and religious identity of a certain group becomes a turning point to gather a nation together or to degrade the opponent forces. While a nation exalting its own nationality and religion may degrade those of the other nation attributing some negative epithets to their religious and national identities. Hibberd and Onion elucidate the issue stating:

In 1914 and later, verse and cartoons in left-wing periodicals contrasted Christ the pacifist with man’s new violence. Supporters of the war altered this a little by insisting that the violence was the work of devil and his friend, the Kaiser; the nation had joined in what was ‘manifestly a war between Christ and the Devil’ (1994: 16).

On the Turkish side, a statement titled “Declaration of Holy War”² was prepared by a group of people called “Commission of High Science”³ and was signed by Sheikhulislam and other 29 religious authorities, which states that “the declaration of the holy war is against those who are the enemies of Islam and Caliphate; friendly and peaceful politics are to continue with those who are loyal to the treaties made by those with the Ottoman Empire” (Sarısaman, 2002: 453).

Mehmet Emin Yurdakul’s poem titled “The Epic of the Army” of September 1915 and dedicated to the warriors of Gallipoli addresses the Turkish army. The poem prominently deals with religious and national identity of the fighting soldiers who defend the country. The fifth stanza of part five is like a repetition of the above mentioned declaration. The stanza reads thus:

This Caliphate, this magnificence, this land...
Its golden countries, its Ka’bahs,
Its palaces, its temples, its mausoleums,
You entrust the whole country to us!⁴..

In official declarations national identity is a prominent aspect to gather the nation together.

² Cihad-ı mukaddes beyannamesi

³ Meclis-i Ali-i İlmî

⁴ Bu Hilâfet, bu saltanat, bu memleket...

Onun altun beldeleri, Kâ’beleri, Sarayları, ma’bedleri, türbeleri, Bütün vatan sizden bize bir emânet!..

From the very beginning of the war, 'righteousness' of the English cause is strikingly conspicuous. Edmund Gosse directly appeals to the eligible soldiers in his poem "Wake Up, England" pointing out the English nation is the 'peacemaker'. In an urging tone he addresses:

Thou careless, awake!
Thou peacemaker, fight!
Stand, England, for honour,
And God guard the right!

National identity of the soldiers is supported by the religious aspect that their righteousness will help them in their cause, for God is on their side. While English soldiers fight against an invasion, enemy's national identity is disparaged with a negative adjective like 'wicked'. Despite E. A. Mackintosh's poem "Recruiting" "examines the motives of the civilians who urge others to enlist" (Crawford, 1988: 35), it also reveals religious and national aspects of the clashing forces. According to Mackintosh, the German soldiers are 'wicked' and the country must be protected against them:

Help to keep them nice and safe
From the wicked German foe.
Don't let him come over here!
"Lads, you're wanted—out you go."

The following stanza reveals the fact that their death is not in vain for the soldiers of the previous wars are calling them 'to share their 'martyrdom':

There's a better word than that,
Lads, and can't you hear it come
From a million men that call
You to share their martyrdom.

Mackintosh's poem "Recruiting" reflects religious and national identity as a combination. "Despite the superficial differences between his ironical appeal and others' appeals to English Empire, Mackintosh's poem emphasises the same essentials: duty to country, necessity for sacrifice, and purification in war" (Crawford, 1988: 36).

Sacrifice is another important religious criterion for a soldier, which finds repercussion both in English and Turkish poetry. Dying in the battlefield is not an ordinary death but it is a sacrifice for both the country and God. In "The Epic of Sergeant Tosun" Kazım Nami Duru depicts the scene thus:

There was a call-up; for those who are eligible to be soldiers
May those who are courageous enough gather up
Whose hearts beat, skins lose the hue

They are going to shed blood in the name of God.⁵
To be an eligible soldier is a means to prove one's manliness in Turkish culture. Mackintosh works out a similar image in his poem "Recruiting" stating that:

You shall learn what men can do
If you will but pay the price,
Learn the gaiety and strength,
In the gallant sacrifice.

Such a 'gallant sacrifice' is a necessary act for a soldier, for the enemy is ruthless and the modern warfare is horrific. The real life account of Rupert Brooke, the devastation of Antwerp, wakes him into another reality against which one should take his guard. In a letter, as quoted in Crawford, Brooke narrates what he observed in Antwerp as follows:

I marched through Antwerp, deserted, shelled, and burning, one night, and saw ruined houses, dead men and horses: and railway-trains with their lines taken up and twisted and flung down as if a child had been playing with a toy. And the whole heaven and earth was lit up by the glare from the great lakes and rivers of burning petrol, hills and spires of flame. That was like Hell, a Dantesque Hell, terrible (1988: 41).

At the sight of such a devastation, Brooke, on his return home, wrote the first sonnet of his sonnet cycle "Peace" where he considers that fighting against such an aggression and dying for such a cause is 'leaping' into 'cleanness'. Therefore Brooke is thankful to God for such an opportunity and their fight will free them from their sins. Brooke reasons his case in his sonnet "Peace" as follows:

Now, God be thanked Who has matched us with His hour,
And caught our youth, and wakened us from sleeping,
With hand made sure, clear eye, and sharpened power,
To turn, as swimmers into cleanness leaping,

War, in this sense, is a means of purification for the fighting soldiers. Like Brooke, Fazıl Bayraktar observes the war as a means to get to the Creator. In "The Epic of 57th Regiment's March to God", Bayraktar depicts the scenery of war as a banquet for the soldiers who get to their Creator:

As if we were not at war, but in a banquet or a wedding,
We are on a holy day when man gets to his Creator.⁶

⁵ Bu Hilâfet, bu saltanat, bu memleket...
Onun altun beldeleri, Kâ'beleri,
Sarayları, ma'bedleri, türbeleri,
Bütün vatan sizden bize bir emânet!..

⁶ Savaş değil de sanki toydayız, düğündeyiz,
Kulun Hakk'a vardığı bir mukaddes gündeyiz. (Ersavaş, 2000: 62)

The employment of indefinite article 'a' before 'holy' is noteworthy, for any day when a soldier is killed in action is 'a holy day' for him; he gets to the Creator and this is the 'banquet' or 'wedding' ceremony of him.

Ali Ekrem Bolayır, in "My Marytr Son", identifies the motherland with the mother and makes a wounded soldier speak of his country as his mother. National identity of the soldier is prominent in this particular poem and his only anxiety is to save the country from the invading forces. The wounded soldier begs his mother:

Mother, said he, let me go to the battlefield,
Rout the enemy of my motherland;
My real mother is my country, what need do I have for you?
I cannot let the enemy trample on my country!⁷

Like his Turkish counterpart, an English soldier cannot refrain himself from defending his motherland. He considers his country as his *raison d'être*, therefore staying inactive is dishonour. A. E. Housman voices such self-sacrifice for patriotic deeds in "Here Dead Lie We" thus:

Here dead lie we
Because we did not choose
To live and shame the land
From which we sprung.

Life, to be sure,
Is nothing much to lose,
But young men think it is,
And we were young.

On these lines Crawford comments stating that "the consolation is implicit: these have avoided dishonour by sacrificing their well-being for their country, an idea which may seem as outdated as the inversion 'lie we'" (1988: 73). Yet many poems reveal the fact that self-sacrifice for the country is still important. Isaac Rosenberg's poem 'The Dead Heroes' of 1915 points out that a country, here it is England, stands upon the blood of the dying soldiers:

Their blood is England's heart;
By their dead hands,
It is their noble part,
That England stands.

Which immediately associates Mithad Cemal Kuntay's famous untitled couplet that describes what flag and country are:

⁷ Anne, dedi, bırak harbe gideyim,
Vatan düşmanımı berbad edeyim; Asıl anam vatan, seni n'ideyim?
Vatanımı çiğnetmem düşmanıma! (Ersavaş, 2000: 75)

What makes a banner a nation's flag is the blood stains upon it
And the soil is the homeland if there's somebody having died for it.⁸

For Kuntay, flag and country require sacrificial devotion and only this makes a land 'the country' and a flag 'the flag', this is why to fight in a war is an important deed for country's youth. By their deaths, 'flag' the symbol of independence will fly in the air and 'country' will be a holy and precious piece of land. Both Kuntay's and Rosenberg's soldiers die for their country and their land. However Mehmet Akif Ersoy's soldiers both save the country and the religion in "To the Martyrs of Çanakkale". Akif addresses the fallen soldiers stating:

Hey, Soldier who has fallen on earth for this land!
Your ancestors may well come down from above and kiss your brow.
How glorious you are that your blood saves the Religion...
The lions of Badr were only this much illustrious...⁹

In time of war both national and religious identity may become a unifying factor in a country where many different ethnic groups live. In the case of the Ottoman Empire in the First World War, religious identity of the people becomes a prominent factor to fight against the invading armies. Mehmet Emin Yurdakul sees the religion as a unifying factor in the face of a foreign threat. He attributes his poem "In Front of the Tigris River" to "the Iraqi Army" and depicts both natural and historical background of Iraq. Then he focuses on the religion that unifies the two nations. In his poem "In Front of the Tigris River", Yurdakul cries out: "Let them see that today we are together again"¹⁰, suggesting the Arabic Iraqi and Turkish people, the following stanzas reveal the difference:

It is true that Arabs and Turks are not the same,
These sprang from different sources.
Turk is a different race; Arab is a different generation,
These cried out in different raids.¹¹

Yet the religion brings them together to fight against the invading forces.
Yurdakul explains such unification as follows:

⁸ Bayrakları bayrak yapan üstündeki kandır
Toprak, eğer uğruna ölen varsa vatandır. (Ersavaş, 2000: 29)

⁹ Ey, bu topraklar için toprağa düşmüş asker!

Gökten ecdâd inerek öpse o pak alını değer. Ne büyüksün ki kanın kurtarıyor Tevhid'i...

Bedr'in arslanları ancak, bu kadar şanlı idi... (Ersavaş, 2000: 21) An alternative translation by Bernard Lewis reads thus:
Soldier, you who have fallen for this earth/ Your fathers may well lean down from heaven to kiss your brow./ You are great, for your blood saves the True Faith/ Only the heroes of Bedr are your equals in glory. (Menemencioglu, 1978: 176)

¹⁰ Görsünler ki yine bugün berâberiz; (Tansel, 1969: 214)

¹¹ Gerçektir ki, Arap ve Türk bir değildir, Bunlar ayrı kaynaklardan fişkırmışlar. Türk başka soy, Arap başka bir nesildir, Bunlar ayrı akınlarla haykırmışlar. (Tansel, 1969: 214)

Yet the Koran made these races siblings,
Two nations admit one God as their God.
In two souls, a celestial love thrills,
Two brows bend towards one Ka'bah.¹²

Though Mehmet Emin Yurdakul sees the religion as a unifying factor, the official ideology takes no heed of Ahmet Haşim's Muslim identity due to his Arabic background. During the Çanakkale battles, a group of artist was sent to the front in June 1915 to observe the battles directly where they take place. The group was required to reflect their observations in artistic expressions, in poetry, prose and painting. The artists were Celâl Sahir, Enis Behiç, Mehmet Emin, Muhittin, Ahmet Yekta, Ağaoğlu Ahmet, Ömer Seyfettin, Mehmet Selahattin, Yusuf Razi, Hıfzı Tevfik, Orhan Seyfi, Edip Servet, Ali Canip, İbrahim Alâettin, Özkul Hamdullah Suphi, and painters Nazmi Ziya and Çallı İbrahim (Gövsâ, 1932: 11). The poems written by this group were compiled in a book entitled *Traces of Çanakkale*¹³.

Unlike the above mentioned group of artists Ahmet Haşim had a different background. He was born in 1885 in Baghdad and when his mother died, he was eight. His father Arif Hikmet, being an Ottoman governor, sent Haşim to İstanbul to learn Turkish and accomplish his education. One year after his coming to İstanbul (1897), Haşim became a boarding student at Galatasaray Lycée. After his graduation in 1907, he worked in various jobs and in 1917 he was conscripted into the army as "reserve conscripted officer" (Nesin, 1973: 176). Aziz Nesin narrates Ahmet Haşim's battle experiences quoting from Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu thus: "Each time he [Ahmet Haşim] came to İstanbul when he was on leave from his military office, he told us stories that had nothing to do with actual realities. Those stories were reminiscent of weird stories of fantasy writers" (1973: 177). Then Karaosmanoğlu asks for some real account of war, and Haşim answers:

None, there were sounds of enemy's bombardment which reminds of a sound of a bed-sheet being torn in the air. . . . Were you expecting an epic of bravery from me? You listen to the epic from the group of artists who were invited to Çanakkale with honour and respect after everything has gone. It is merely reserve conscripted officer Mr. Haşim who speaks to you here at this very moment (1973: 178).

Karaosmanoğlu comments on what he hears from Ahmet Haşim as follows:

¹² Lâkin Kur'an bu ırkları kardaş etmiş,
İki vicdân Bir Tanrı'yı Rabb biliyor. İki ruhta bir semâv î aşk titretmiş,
İki alın bir Kâ'be'ye eğiliyor. (Tansel, 1969: 215)

¹³ Çanakkale İzleri

It is almost inevitable to hear a wry yearning in Ahmet Haşim's last words. Isn't it so, indeed? A group of poets and writers were sent up to the battlefields of Çanakkale only to hear the artillery shelling from a distance, so that they should write the epics of victory. Yet nobody remembered to assign such a duty to the poet by the name Ahmet Haşim who experienced the cost of the victory at the very place and experienced the terrific hours of front line skirmishes. Perhaps somebody remembered him, but, as he was from Baghdad, i.e. being an Arab, he was not found suitable to take part in the group most of whom were pan-Turkists and nationalists (Nesin, 1973: 178-9).

National and religious identities of the soldiers have been an important criterion for their development as either patriotic or unpatriotic. Another aspect that affects their patriotism was their cultural and inherited background. In this context Haşim's position poses a similar common ground with that of Isaac Rosenberg. Haşim's national identity is different, Rosenberg's religion. Rosenberg was born in Bristol on 25 November 1890 into an emigrated Russo-Jewish family. He was a natural born painter and poet who attended Slade School of Fine Art. "On leaving Slade, he considered going to Russia, but it was difficult for a Jew¹⁴ to get a passport" (Stallworthy, 2005: 162) His Jewish origin was not a handicap to be a soldier but it did pose a problem to travel Russia. Despite the impossibility of revealing the truth, "Rosenberg never rose above the rank of private" (Bergonzi, 1966: 109); yet his religious and social background have affected his opinions on war. Ian Parsons tells of his attitude towards war thus:

Rosenberg did not enlist for patriotic reasons. He hated war, and had no wish to be a combatant. Killing people was as abhorrent to natural instincts as it was to the faith in which he had been brought up. He enlisted purely in order to help his family, having been told that half of his pay could be paid to his Mother as a 'separation allowance' (1979: xxiv).

Rosenberg, as George Parfitt puts it:

... can hardly be seen as 'Tommy'. He was a Jew of Lithuanian-Latvian origin, whose family moved from Bristol to London's East End when he was seven.

¹⁴ Italics mine.

He was at the Slade from 1911 to 1914. His foreign ancestry, his time at school, and his Jewishness all mark him as exotic; although both his working- class location and his education at Stepney Board School (which he left at 14) align him with hundreds of thousand rankers –as does his service in the army. Rosenberg enlisted as a private in the King’s Own Royal Lancaster Regiment in 1915 and was killed on the Western Front in 1918 (1990: 74).

Rosenberg remarks his idea on war in a letter, as quoted in Bergonzi, as follows:

I never joined the army from patriotic reasons. Nothing can justify war. I suppose we must all fight to get the trouble over. Anyhow before the war I helped at home when I could and I did other things which helped to keep things going. I thought if I’d join there would be the separation allowance for my mother (1966: 109).

Rosenberg freely borrows themes from the Hebrew history and mythology. The poem titled ‘The Jew’ can be considered to be the only reference to his Jewish background, where he reminds the reader of the Table of Ten Commandments. Obviously, the Ten Commandments include the principle “not to kill”. In this poem Rosenberg considers fighting people to be ‘lampless’(4), suggesting they are in darkness, and he portrays all the human races on earth ready to kill one another (‘Why do they sneer at me?’), which might suggest his sense of insecurity in a Christian society as well. ‘The Jew’ reads as follows:

Moses, from whose loins I sprung,
Lit by a lamp in his blood
Ten immutable rules, a moon
For mutable lampless men.

The blonde, the bronze, the ruddy,
With the same heaving blood,
Keep tide to the moon of Moses,
Then why do they sneer at me?

As a descent of a different religious and social background, Rosenberg develops different attitude towards patriotism. Therefore, “in “The Dead Heroes” Rosenberg writes (much more convincingly than usual) of soldiers as ‘they’(22); as other than himself” (Parfitt, 1990: 76):

England — Time gave them thee;
They¹⁵ gave back this
To win Eternity
And claim God’s kiss.

¹⁵ Italics mine

The most dissimilar poet to Rosenberg is Julian Grenfell. To contrast the attitudes of these two poets, George Parfitt states, “Julian Grenfell’s war was never likely to be Isaac Rosenberg’s” (1990:14), because he [Julian Grenfell] was born in 1888, the eldest son of Lord Desborough, and educated at Eton and Balliol, where he was part of the legendary pre-war generation, so many of whom perished in France. Like others of those brilliant semi-mythical young men, Grenfell seems to have excelled at everything. He was an accomplished classicist, a dedicated sportsman and, by all accounts, a superb athlete. He displayed, too, considerable talents at drawing and writing verse; despite his passion for physical activity—notably for riding and boxing—his letters made it clear that Grenfell also had an alert and lively intelligence. After Oxford, he went into the regular army, which he enjoyed immensely—he wrote in one letter, ‘I’m so happy here. I love the Profession of Arms, and I love my fellow officers and all my dogs and horses’—and for several years served in India and South Africa (Bergonzi, 1966: 45-6).

Obviously Grenfell dedicated himself to the cause and maintains Brooke’s mysticism in his early poems. He was so excited by the war that the opening lines of the poem titled “Into Battle” depict the spring time and dying in such a time and in battle is a transition from one to other form, which is reminiscent of Rupert Brooke’s third sonnet “The Soldier”. The concluding line of the first stanza asks for sacrifice for the country in increasing numbers. “Into Battle” begins with nature imagery:

The naked earth is warm with spring,
And with green grass and bursting trees
Leans to the sun’s gaze glorying,
And quivers in the sunny breeze;
And life is Colour and Warmth and Light,
And a striving evermore for these;
And he is dead who will not fight;
And who dies fighting has increase.

The mass death is a part of warfare and Grenfell seems to have admitted this reality, being a professional soldier rather than a volunteer from civilian life, and his response to war was different from his contemporaries’ in a number of ways. For instance, Grenfell, having served in different parts of the Empire, manifested a genuine enthusiasm for the imperialist ideal, as opposed to the England-centred patriotism of the Georgians (Bergonzi, 1966: 46-7).

His poem ‘Into Battle’ continues with imagery of rebirth in other form:

The fighting man shall from the sun
Take warmth, and life from the glowing earth;
Speed with the light-foot winds to run,
And with the trees to newer birth;
And find, when fighting shall be done,

Great rest, and fullness after dearth.

Yet before long Grenfell's idea on war was to change. The national and religious identity had effect on the soldiers' attitude in defence of their motherland. Grenfell, being a pure English patriot and a member of high class family, was ardent for war and warfare, as Bergonzi puts it:

Grenfell was quickly in action and proved an extremely intrepid fighter, delighting in single-handed riding exploits in No Man's Land: during his short wartime life, he was awarded the DSO¹⁶ and twice mentioned in despatches. . . . unlike the belligerent armchair patriots at home, and unlike an innocent such as Brooke, he was well acquainted with the nature of the battle (1996:47).

Rosenberg and Grenfell best portrays how religious, national and cultural backgrounds have impact on the attitudes of the soldiers towards war. Similarly, Robert Graves was a fighting poet with poems rich in Biblical and mythological allusions. Bergonzi suggests that

Graves's Irish background gave his work a quality that separated him from the more conventional love of rural England of the other Georgians. His attachment to myth was a constant element in his poetry, whether it was the prettified fairy-stories of his earliest verse, or the powerful myths. . . (1996: 65).

In "Goliath and David", Graves borrows a Biblical story where the weaker one kills the stronger. "The bible story of David and Goliath demonstrates that God can help the weak triumph over the strong, and it informs the propaganda of the war, especially around the idea of 'gallant Belgium' standing up to the German bully" (Parfitt, 1990: 131). To Graves, the reality is different, because:

. . . the historian of that fight
Had not the heart to tell it right.

David stands his ground at the face of a terrible threat, trusting in God:

Loud laughs Goliath, and that laugh
Can scatter chariots like blown chaff
To rout; but David, calm and brave,
Holds his ground, for God will save.

Graves seems to have lost his faith in the righteous cause of England supported by God, for '(God's eyes are dim, His ears are shut.)'(41) and David is killed:

I'm hit! I'm killed!' young David cries,
Throws blindly forward, chokes . . . and dies.
And look, spike-helmeted, grey, grim,

¹⁶ Distinguished Service Order

Goliath straddles over him.

To signify the enemy, Graves employs a metonymy ‘spike-helmeted’(45). In “Dead Cows Farm” Graves borrows a biblical story wherein Adam and Eve are licked into life by ‘the First Cow’(2) (Parfitt, 1990: 133). The battlefield is cold, wet and there is no life around. The world is in primeval chaos, and this time there are no cows around to lick the cold stones into life. ‘Dead Cow Farm’ reads as follows:

An ancient saga tells us how
 In the beginning the First Cow
 (For nothing living yet had birth
 But Elemental Cow on earth)
 Began to lick cold stones and mud:
 Under her warm tongue flesh and blood
 Blossomed, a miracle to believe:
 And so was Adam born, and Eve.
 Here now the chaos once again,
 The primeval mud, cold stones and rain.
 Here flesh decays and blood drips red,
 And the Cow’s dead, the old Cow’s dead.

Grave’s Christian background allowed him to borrow stories from the Bible, and use them in the way he wishes to express his own feelings about the war. His Irish background might have saved him from blind patriotism, so much so that in “When I’m Killed” Graves parodies Brookean patriotism stating:

When I’m killed, don’t think of me
 Buried there in Cambrin Wood¹⁷

As Rosenberg’s Jewishness appears through his poetry, so does Graves’s Christianity. Naturally Wilfred Owen’s Christian upbringing and identity frequently appear in his poetry. Yet Owen’s Christianity is there not to advocate sacrifice or martyrdom, but to criticise ‘the distorted Christian dogmas’ and his disillusionment about established religion. “Parable of Old Man and the Young”, which reflects Owen’s disillusionment, portrays Prophet Abraham disobeying God’s command:

But the old man . . . slew his son,
 And half the seed of Europe, one by one.

In “At a Cavalry Near the Ancre”, Owen tries to adapt a biblical detail to fit the war. “Its [the poem’s] position is based on the sayings of Christ - ‘Love one another’ and ‘Love your enemies’. The enactors of these precepts in the poem are soldiers” (Parfitt, 1990: 99).

¹⁷ Brooke’s 5th sonnet ‘The Soldier’ reads thus:
 If I should die, think only this of me:
 That there’s some corner of a foreign field
 That is for ever England. . .

The concluding stanza reveals how the priests, ‘the scribes’, push the soldiers into battle and satisfy the requirements of the state:

The scribes on all the people shove
And bawl allegiance to the state,
But they love the greater love
Lay down their life; they do not hate.

Owen cannot bring the exhortations of Church and State together with the Christian doctrine and perceives that “pure Christianity will not fit in with pure patriotism” (Purkis, 1999: 76).

In time of such crisis, national identity of a group becomes an important distinguishing feature. In the depths of history there are many wars which were initiated deliberately to stop the civil war in a country and to unite the nation. In times of war, national identity is emphasised frequently to ascribe positive epithets while the opposite “propaganda works by blackening your enemies and by simultaneously projecting a view of your own nation as morally worthy” (Parfitt, 1990: 103). Therefore, both English and Turkish poetry include such negative propaganda for the enemy and the positive one for their own nation. In “Epic of the Army” of 1916, Mehmet Emin Yurdakul employs negative propaganda defining the enemy as ‘savage’:

Those muzzles filled with lava like volcano
Fire vomiting armadas,
All savages are here today
From five continents the white, the black, the red, the yellow.¹⁸

Like his Turkish counterpart, Harold Begbie, though his poem criticises the ‘dirt of war, names the enemy as ‘brutes’(5) in “War Exalts”. It is quite probable that his discourse was affected by the official propaganda, for, as Parfitt suggests, “[h]e uses dichotomies, in terms of which Germans are feudal, tyrannic, barbarous, and shifty; while British is to be ‘free- born’, chivalric, honourable and trusty; ...”(1990: 104). Harold Begbie’s poem “War Exalts” of 1914 reads thus:

By War the brave are tested, and cowards are disgraced!
Show God His own image shrapnel’d into paste.

Fight till tyrants perish, slay till brutes¹⁹ are mild!
Then go wash the blood off and try to face your child.

¹⁸ O yanar dağ gibi lavlı ağızları
Ateş kusan donanmalar
Beş dünyanın beyaz, siyah, kızıl, sarı
Vahşileri hep buradadır. (Tansel, 1969: 184)

¹⁹ Italics mine.

Another epithet widely used by the poets is 'Hun' which gives reference to Asiatic nomadic peoples who dominated much of Asia and East Europe before 300 BC. Huns invaded Roman Empire in the 4th and 5th centuries AD and brought down the Roman Empire. George Parfitt conveys Bertram Dobell's view on Germans stating that "the modern 'hordes' are merely 'Prussian' (reducing the racial and historical complexity of greater Germany to the Prussian element, with its ready associations of militarism and aggression)" (1990: 41). Lord Ronald Gorell Barnes asserts both his national identity and the 'Hun' image for the Germans in "Song Before the Battle" of 1916 thus:

We, who have clung for long, long months
To battered lines of knee-deep mud,
Fixed targets for your slope-set guns
To drench the ooze with British blood;
We who have toiled through winter's rain
With sand-bag, shovel, plank and wire,
Riveting marshy parapets,
Building protection from your fire—
We have weapons now, O Huns!

In "The Happy Warrior", Herbert Read calls the German soldier as 'Boche' which was a derogatory slang during World War I. The poet figure in this particular poem observes the fight between an English and a German soldier. The German soldier, 'Boche'(10), is killed by the English one. The persona in "The Happy Warrior" describes the last moments thus:

I saw him stab
And stab again
A well-killed Boche.

On the Turkish front of the war, Mehmet Emin Yurdakul presents the enemy as 'wild', for, until World War I, the western countries were considered to be the centre of civilisation, in Joseph Conrad's words they were "something like an emissary of light, something like a lower sort of apostle" (1990: 10). Yet the status quo had already changed by the Boer War in South Africa and the death of Queen Victoria, which, as Simon Featherstone puts it:

... called into question the base of late Victorian nationalism. The latter version of Englishness was underpinned by the success of military and imperial policy, and an accompanying commercial pre-eminence, but in the early years of the twentieth century the nation faced with the consequences of military defeat [by the Boers] and serious economic competition.

The Boer War broke a consensus on empire formed in previous twenty years and caused a questioning of the idea of English destiny.

The struggle could not be represented as one to civilize 'savage' territories, but involved fellow Caucasian Christians (1995:27-28).

World War I is the proof of this 'wildness', and Mehmet Emin Yurdakul observes the real western ideology like Conrad and states that westerners are far out of humanism; making a religious allusion to Judas he asserts that they are 'wild' and 'liars' in 'Epic of the Army' as follows:

Humanism, this is a dream! which gilds the tongues
Those matters of civilisation. . .
Those voices form the deceitful chairs shouting for right, for justice
Each of them is a lie, like the words of sly Judas!
Everythin' is here: Those nails, those choking bombs
Point out that the Westerners go out of humanity;
Those ambushes, those caves which are full of treachery
Evoke hatred in men's hearts who most love.²⁰

Similarly Mehmet Akif Ersoy draws attention to 'western savagery' in 'To the Martyrs of Çanakkale' thus:

How can this "be an European" with the savagery he displays
Makes one say wild, ruthless, horde of hyæna,²¹

The observers of the war tend to see the enemy as 'savage' and 'devil', like Mehmet Akif Ersoy and Mehmet Emin Yurdakul; Ivor Gurney defines the enemy in "To England - A Note" of 1916 in a similar jargon thus:

Are these the heroes - these? Have kept from you
The power of primal savagery so long?
Shall break the devil's legions? These they are
Who do in silence what they might boast to do;
In the height of battle tell the world in song
How they do hate and fear the face of War.

On the other hand, both English and Turkish soldiers are quite associative with their apostles. The English soldier is 'Jesus Christ' and the Turkish is 'Mehmetçik'. 'Mehmet' is a Turkish derivation of 'Mohammed' with a diminutive suffix '-çik', which means 'little Mohammed' suggesting both soldier's youth and his religiously lower rank than the apostle ('Mehmetçik' first appeared in Turkish language during Çanakkale battles).

²⁰ İnsaniyet bu bir hayâl! O dilleri yıldızlayan Medeniyet dâvâları...

O düzenci kürsülerin hak, adâlet sadâları Hepsi dessay Judalar'ın sözü gibi birer yalan!

Bur'da herşey: Şu çiviler, şu boğucu kumbaralar Artık Garb'ın insanlıktan çıktığını göstermekde; Şu pusular, şu hâinlik dolu olan mağaralar

Ençok seven insanların kablerine kin vermede. (Tansel, 1969: 185)

²¹ Nerde gösterdiği vahşetle "Bu, bir Avrupalı"

Derdir yırtıcı, his yoksulu, sırtlan kümesi, (Ersavaş, 2000: 19)

From the English standpoint “Britain is seen as champion of freedom, its soldiers being ‘True offspring of your dauntless sires of old!’²²” (Parfitt, 1990: 40). So, Parfitt further elucidates the issue stating that: “The desire to believe that ‘we’ were involved in a chivalric war is understandable enough. It is the positive to those negatives of propaganda that present the German as Attila or Antichrist” (1990: 86). In William Evans’ poem it is possible to detect the fact that the Germans are ‘Antichrist’. ‘Evans’ poem “The War” of 1916 states:

Man was arraigned;
For Christ was challenged by another king,
The king of Might, with hatred in his wing,
And strength arrayed.

Christ called from Heaven
For noble martyrs in His glorious cause,
To justify the Cross, and Christian laws,
His love for men.

We heard the call;
And England’s manhood stood by Christ the King,
Who comes with love and healing in His wing,
And gives His all.

With changèd eyes,
And faces glowing with holy ray,
Our boys, transfigured by the conflict, pray
In Paradise.

The dying soldiers are martyrs and go to Paradise, for they have died for Christ the King. Mehmet Emin Yurdakul draws a similar imagery for the Turkish soldiers who fight for his country. Soldiers’ blood is holy, as he fights both for his religion and his country. In “Epic of the Army” Yurdakul states:

For us, the path taken for God,
And the voice crying out for the nation is honoured;
The fighting arm for this holy country,
And the blood shed for the right is holy.²³

In the following lines soldier’s national and religious identity is heavily asserted and presented as comfort provider:

You are the sword of God;
You are the grave digger of tyranny.²⁴

²² The line has been quoted from Bertram Dobell’s poem titled ‘To our soldiers’.

²³ Bize göre Allah için gidilen yol, Millet için haykıran ses muazzездır; Şu mübârek vatan için savaşılan kol, Hukuk için dökülen kan mukaddestir. (Tansel, 1969: 190)

²⁴ Sen, Tanrı’nın kılıcısın,
Zulme mezar kazıcısın. (Tansel, 1969: 196)

Naturally religious doctrines have been influential upon the soldiers' psychology in the battlefields. Almost all Turkish soldiers are social and cultural products of an Islamic surrounding and they have the notion of 'martyrdom' in their minds. Therefore, their acceptance of death is different from that of the opposing forces. In Çanakkale battles, the Commander of Anafartalar Group Mustafa Kemal orders his soldiers thus: "I order you not to attack, but to die. By the time we all die, some other troops, other commanders may cover our grounds" (Tuncoku, 2000: 79). After the war Mustafa Kemal comments on the battles stating: "The Çanakkale victory is an example of wonder raising and congratulation deserving spiritual strength in Turkish soldiers. Be sure that it is this spiritual strength that made possible to win the Çanakkale Battles" (Karakoyunlu, 1987: vii). The Koran's verse that advocates 'martyrdom' is in 'the 'Imrans', verse 3:169 reads as follows:

Never think that those who were slain in the cause of God are dead. They are alive, and well provided for by their Lord; pleased with His gifts and rejoicing that those left behind, who have not yet jointed them, have nothing to fear or to regret; rejoicing in God's grace and bounty. God will not deny the faithful their reward (Dawood, 1995: 57).

In part 'Women', verse 4:67, the Koran heralds: "Let those who would exchange the life of this world for the hereafter, fight for the cause of God; whoever fights for the cause of God, whether he dies or triumphs, We shall richly reward him" (Dawood, 1995: 68).

Some official declarations for the defence of religion and caliphate are distributed to soldiers. Similar propaganda was made among the English soldiers. The idea of self-sacrifice is to be redefined by the church, John Purkis quotes:

War is not murder, as some fancy; war is sacrifice. The fighting and killing are not of the essence of it, but are the accidents, though the inseparable accidents; and even in these, in the wide modern fields where soldier rarely in his own sight sheds any blood but his own, where he lies on the battle sward not to inflict death but to endure it -even these are mainly purged of savagery and transfigured into devotion. War is not murder but sacrifice, which is the soul of Christianity (1999: 44).

Therefore Britain's call was God's, for Christian soldiers are to lay down their lives for his friends, the French, to smash the tyrant. Harold Begbie's poem titled "Fall In" of 1914 ends in stating:

Is it naught to you if your country fall,
 And Right is smashed by Wrong?
 Is it football still and the picture show,
 The pub and the betting odds,
 When your brothers stand to tyrant's blow
 And Britain's call is God's?

On the other hand John Oxenham employs a discourse which is a mixture of above quoted Moslem doctrine in the Koran (Women 4:67) and "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (St. John 15:13). Oxenham's poem "Vision Splendid" ends with the following lines:

O, not in vain has been your great endeavour;
 For, by your dyings, Life is born again,
 And greater love hath no man tokened ever,
 Than with his life to purchase Life's high gain.

In "Solomon in All His Glory", G.A. Studdert Kennedy equalises English soldier uniform with the clothes of Jesus Christ. They are 'earthly kings'(14) in English uniforms:

Purple robes and snowy linen,
 Have for earthly kings sufficed,
 But these bloody sweaty tatters
 Were the robes of Jesus Christ.

Herbert Read identifies the English soldier with Christ, yet his anger at the war does not calm down in 'My men go wearily'²⁵:

My men, my modern Christs,
 Your bloody agony confronts the world.

Both English soldiers and Turkish soldiers are exalted for their national and religious identities and honourable deeds. While poets are doing these, the negative propaganda works for the opponent forces. Some negative epithets are attached to the enemy, they are either uncivilised savage or pagan or inhuman. The bravery of the opposing forces are scarcely mentioned in English poetry. Though there are some examples of 'comradeship' between opposing soldiers, there is not any flattery for the enemy. In Turkish poetry there are some examples that flatter the bravery of the opposing forces. In "Anafartalar Victory", Haluk Nihat Pepeyi describes the actual war scene in detail, but does not miss to depict the gallant fights of Anzac troops:

Achi Baba did not fall, Kanlisirt in danger;
 Artillery is challenging both the flesh and the steel...

²⁵ Title of the poem was originally written without capitalisation.

Valiant Anzacs are attacking with hope today,
If not for young governor, they will get over the hill²⁶.
...
The darkness of fear covers their hearts,
Bravery wins bravery again.²⁷

To conclude, the national and religious identities of the soldiers are significant in their attitude towards war. Those poets who were the sons of both English and Christian parents seem to be more patriotic. Isaac Rosenberg who was a Jewish combatant poet and Robert Graves who was an Irish originated combatant poet never developed blind patriotism like Rupert Brooke. They performed their duty as soldiers and did not stray from the English cause. Yet it did not take long the other patriotic poets to change their views on war after they had seen the horrors of it.

On the Turkish side, such differences do not appear due to the fact that there is hardly any warrior poet. Consequently, the observers of the war did not feel the destruction as an actual combatants did. Therefore, they wrote only their own feelings and ideas into their poems. The only written record of Ahmet Haşim reveals that he was not found suitable to write poems about the war due to his Arabic background. A similar fate to that of Haşim on English side was shared by D.H. Lawrence. He complained the locals about the war and with a German wife he was considered suspicious. He had moved into this coastal cottage in order to send signals to German U-boats in coastal waters? A local boat was torpedoed. Perhaps Frieda's white scarf was a signal, or the way she arranged washing on the line. To help matters along a bit Lawrence took to singing German folk songs. Their house was searched for incriminating documents on 12th October 1917 and although none was found the Lawrences were given three days to get out of Cornwall (Roberts, 1999: 227-8).

This compulsory migration to London did not stop Lawrence writing poems about the war.

Religious and national identities of the fighting soldiers have affected their observation of war differently. Their deeply rooted histories have given them a strong sense of nationalistic stand and duty against the aggressors both in the Turkish and the English case. Religion is sometimes used for urging them into battle, sometimes as a source of reconciliation.

²⁶ Alçitepe düşmedi, Kanlısırt tehlikede; Toplar meydan okuyor ete de, çeliğe de... Ümitle saldırıyor bugün cesur Anzaklar, Genç kaymakam olmasa tepeyi aşacaklar. (Ersavaş, 2000: 254)

²⁷ Kalplerini sarıyor korkunun karanlığı, Kahramanlık yeniyor yine kahramanlığı. (Ersavaş, 2000: 254)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bergonzi, Bernard (1966). *Heroes' Twilight: A Study of the Literature of the Great War*, New York: Coward-McCann, Inc.

Crawford, Fred D. (1988). *British Poets of the Great War*, Cranbury: Selingsgrove Dawood, N. J. (translator) (1995). *The Koran*, Middlesex: Penguin,

Ersavaş, Fahri (2000). *Çanakkale Geçilmez Şiir Antolojisi*, İstanbul: (Private Publication) Featherstone, Simon (1995). *War Poetry*, London: Routledge

Gövsa, İbrahim Alaettin (1932). *Çanakkale İzleri*, Ankara: Atatürk Kültür, Dil ve Tarih Kurumu Y.

Güzel, Abdurrahman, Prof.Dr. (ed.) (1996). *Çanakkale (Yeni Mecmua'nın Özel Sayısı'nda neşredilen Çanakkale Savaşları Üzerine Değerlendirmeler*, İstanbul, 5/18 Mart 1331/1915), No.:1, Çanakkale:Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart Üniversitesi Y.

Jones, Nigel (2003). *Rupert Brooke: Life, Death and Myth*, London: BBC Books Karakoyunlu, Sadri (1987). *Türk Askeri İçin Savaş Şiirinden Seçmeler (1914-1918)*, Ankara:

Atatürk Kültür, Dil ve Tarih Kurumu Y.

Menemencioğlu, Nermin and Fahir İz (eds.) (1978). *Turkish Verse*, Middlesex: Penguin Nesin, Aziz (1973). *Cumhuriyet Döneminde Türk Mizahı*, İstanbul: Akbaba Y.

Parfitt, George (1990). *English Poetry of the First World War: Contexts and Themes*, Hertfordshire: Harvester & Wheatsheaf

Parsons, Ian (ed.) (1979). *The Collected Works of Isaac Rosenberg*, London: Chatto and Windus

Roberts, David (1999). *Minds at War: The Poetry and Experience of the First World War*, West Sussex: Saxon Books

Stallworthy, Jon (2005). *Anthem for Doomed Youth: Twelve Soldier Poets of the First World War*, London: Constable & Robinson

Tansel, Fevziye Abdullah (1969). *Mehmet Emin Yurdakul'un Eserleri-I: Şiirler*, Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Y.

Tuncoku, A. Mete (2000). *Anzakların Kaleminden Mehmetçik*, Ankara: Atatürk Kültür, Dil ve Tarih Kurumu Y.

Sarısamam, Sadık, Doç. Dr. (2002). "I. Dünya Savaşı'nda Türk Cephelelerinde Psikolojik Harp", in Hasan Celal Güzel (ed. et al.), *Türkler*, Vol. XIII, Ankara: Yeni Türkiye Y.